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Publisher/Editor Garth Eichel
Art Director Brent Foote
Account Manager Garth Eichel

CONTRIBUTORS

Sue Dunham
 Garth Eichel
 Bob Loblaw
 Heath Moffatt
 Danny Sitnam

For information on display
 advertising opportunities,
 contact Garth Eichel at:
garth@archipelagomedia.com

Published by



1248 Woodway Road
 Victoria BC V9A 6Y6
 Tel 250.380.3961
 Fax 250.380.3962
www.archipelagomedia.com

Please send comments
 and suggestions to
 Garth Eichel, Publisher:
garth@archipelagomedia.com

In-Flight Review (IFR) is a quarterly
 magazine published by Archipelago
 Media Ltd. for Helijet International
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 Helijet International Inc. or Archipelago
 Media Ltd. ISSN 1916-5080

DEPARTMENTS

04 EDITORIAL Supporting Sport Fishing

BY DANIEL SITNAM,
 PRESIDENT & CEO, HELIJET

06 NEW & NOTABLE

10 HELIJET CREW Carla Kovacs

BY SUE DUNHAM

*Doug Hastie, Director of
 Instruction at Bear Mountain
 Golf Academy, sinks a putt
 on hole 15 of the Mountain
 Course. Garth Eichel Photo*

FEATURES

24 SEA TO SKY HIGH

Exotic car rentals for
 every occasion

STORY BY GARTH EICHEL

30 SUPPORTING PACIFIC SALMON

B.C.'s sport fishing
 community invests
 in Pacific salmon
 conservation

STORY BY BOB LOBLAW



18 DWELL Smart Homes

BY GARTH EICHEL

*An Aston Martin V8 Vantage
 hugs a corner on the Sea to Sky
 Highway. Garth Eichel photo*

36 MONEY MATTERS Retirement Top Up

BY SUE DUNHAM

40 INVIGORATE Late to the Links

BY BOB LOBLAW

45 EPICURIUS A Taste of Haida Gwaii

BY GARTH EICHEL

Cover: North Vancouver-based
 Sea To Sky Exotic rents a range
 of luxury cars, such as the
 Ferrari 458 Italia. Daniel
 Collins photo

Supporting Sport Fishing

B.C.'S SPORT FISHING COMMUNITY GIVES MORE THAN IT TAKES



B.C.'s sport fishing industry is responsible for more than \$300 million of provincial GDP each year. Lanagara Fishing Adventures photo

SUMMER IS AN EXCITING time for all of us at Helijet. That's because many of our helicopters, pilots, aircraft maintenance engineers and support staff head north to B.C.'s mid-coast and Haida Gwaii where they will spend the season flying guests to and from a variety of luxury sport fishing lodges.

This year promises to be another successful fishing season for the resorts we serve, and others like them. But being far removed from society means a lot of British Columbians probably don't realize the important overall contribution sport fishing lodges make to the province.

Perhaps that is owed to the perception among many that sport fishing is simply a hobby. It will come as a surprise to some then that B.C.'s recreational fisheries actually make a greater contribution in terms of economic activity than the province's commercial fisheries. In fact, according to a 2012 report from Fisheries and Oceans Canada and BC Stats, sport fishing was responsible for nearly half (49 per cent or \$326 million) of the GDP produced by all fisheries — fish processing and aquaculture sectors included — in the province in 2011. And in terms of employment it produced fully 60 per cent of all the jobs created in all fisheries sectors in B.C. What is more, sport fishing produced \$936 million in annual revenues, accounting for 43 per cent of all fisheries revenues in the province.

Some hobby.

Still, sport fishing has a difficult time getting recognition for its tremendous value. Notwithstanding the revenue it generates for a multitude of B.C. businesses, or the thousands of jobs it creates — many of which coastal communities depend on — it often gets overlooked as an important component of the province's tourism industry.

Beyond economics, sport fishing operators also do their part to keep recreational fisheries sustainable. Indeed, sport fishers take approximately 10 per cent of all salmon caught in B.C. each year, compared to the 90 per cent harvested by the commercial and First Nations fisheries, combined.

Sport fishing operators also play an important role in Pacific salmon conservation. If you turn to page 30 you will find a story about the various ways in which sport fishing operators support the Pacific Salmon Foundation in its efforts to conserve and restore salmon habitat in B.C.

At a time when so many media outlets peddle one bad news story after another about the demise of Pacific salmon and the province's fisheries, it is worth pausing to celebrate the good news stories coming out of B.C.'s recreational fisheries, of which there are many. As word gets out perceptions can only improve. **H**



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Kyle Fraser's first flight aboard a Helijet Sikorsky S76 in 1992 inspired him to pursue a lifelong dream of becoming a commercial helicopter pilot — a goal he finally realized on April 26, 2016. Chinook Helicopters photo

FORMATIVE FLIGHT

Any kid who gets to fly in a helicopter is likely to be thrilled by the experience. For a few it can be a formative experience.

That was the case for Kyle Fraser when he accompanied his aunt aboard a Helijet Sikorsky S76 from Vancouver to Victoria in 1992. Fraser, who was just five at the time, says, “I can remember the whole flight: watching ground crew load the helicopter; the sound of the turbine engines coming to life; listening to the pilots talk on the radio; and seeing people on the ground below who looked the size of ants. The experience really stuck with me.”

Fraser became fascinated with helicopters after that first flight, and in the years that followed clung to his dream of becoming a pilot. On April 26 of this year he finally made good on his goal when he successfully completed his commercial helicopter pilot training at Chinook Helicopters in Abbotsford.

“The training at Chinook was phenomenal,” says Fraser. “It was the best experience of my life. Now I’m looking forward to getting out into the industry and start flying.” He adds, “I’ll definitely be putting my resume in at Helijet!” chinookhelicopters.com

COMPASS PASSES

If you’ve been following Translink’s Compass Card program you’ll be aware that at long last the system is finally completed, fare gates are closed, and after some initial trials and tribulations, hundreds of thousands of transit riders are using the Compass Card system. This is good news for Translink and its users, but it has, however, resulted in an inconvenience for Helijet’s passengers accessing the Vancouver Harbour Heliport via Waterfront Station.

Translink and Helijet have worked together since fare gates were first proposed a number of years ago to make sure that Helijet’s customers access was recognized and accommodated as best as the Translink system could allow. The Waterfront Station SkyWalk has always been a Fare Paid Zone, meaning a valid Translink fare is required to pass through The Station, while an exception was always made for Helijet foot passengers, the closure of the Fare Gates is now enforcing that rule.

As a compromise for Helijet passengers, the system is designed to allow those using a Compass Card to tap-in and tap-out of the same station within 20 minutes to be refunded their fare. For Helijet passengers, this means if you tap your Compass Card to enter The Station, then remember to tap your Compass Card as you leave The Station, you will not incur any cost for walking to, or from, Helijet. While this is an inconvenience, Helijet Passenger Agents are available to assist with questions and offer guidance to avoid Waterfront Station on foot. The Helijet Courtesy Shuttle is available to take arriving passengers into Downtown. Ask the Helijet agents for information on pick-up times and location to get you back to the Heliport, or directions to walk down to Helijet without accessing Waterfront Station. helijet.com





TOP CHOPPED

Fresh off his successful launch of a new French bistro-style menu at O Bistro at the Oswego Hotel in Victoria in mid-April, Chef Kevin Koohtow appeared as one of the contestants on Food Network Canada's "Chopped Canada" in the show's third exciting season.

In each episode of the show, four chefs compete before an all-star rotating panel of three expert judges. Armed with skill and ingenuity, the chef competitors race against the clock to turn the mystery ingredients from their baskets into an extraordinary three-course meal. Course-by-course, the judges decide which competitor will be "chopped" from the competition until only the winner remains.

Chef Koohtow appeared in episode 18, titled, "Pepper Powerhouse," on Saturday, May 7, 2016. While the show had already been filmed, Chef Koohtow was sworn to secrecy about how it all unfolded until after the show aired.

"It was an amazing and surreal experience," says Koohtow. "The best part about filming the episode was not knowing the secret ingredients in the basket; I mean, there could have been anything in there!" oswegohotelvictoria.com

PARTNERS IN DINE.



The O Bistro at the Oswego Hotel offers a unique and dynamic West Coast dining experience unlike any other. Enjoy exquisite local ingredients for intimate dining or chillout with friends and local jazz in the lounge on Wednesdays.



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COAST BASTION TURNS 30

For the past three decades the Coast Bastion Hotel has been a landmark in Nanaimo, and a welcome beacon for travellers and the local community.

The hotel officially opened on October 30, 1985, which means it's technically 31 years old this year, but an unwelcome surprise flood in the hotel's Minnoz Restaurant & Lounge last year meant postponing anniversary celebrations until renovations were complete.

To that end, the Coast Bastion hotel is now inviting the local community and out-of-town visitors to join in a commemorative event on June 9 to celebrate Nanaimo's bastion of hospitality. Restaurant specials selected from original menus 30 years ago will be available all week long from June 6 to 12 in the fresh and fabulous Minnoz Restaurant & Lounge. www.minnoz.com



KNIT NICHE

Since 2008 Donna Gorman has combined her love of pattern, her passion for travel, and her pursuit of beauty in accessible, everyday objects. Nowhere is this more evident than in her See Design line of knitted apparel, including women's tunics, dresses and shirts.

Trained as a photojournalist, Gorman's designs are often born in the images she captures with her camera during her travels to exotic locales. The photographs serve as inspiration — visual field notes — to be transformed with brush and vivid colors into her patterns.

Now available at Leka on Fort Street in Victoria, Gorman's 100-per-cent cotton garments come in bright or neutral colours, and are suitable for most any occasion or season. Certainly, comfortable never looked so good! lekadesign.com



FAIRMONT EMPRESS TRANSFORMED

Much ink was spilled over the Bengal Lounge closing its doors at the Fairmont Empress on April 30, 2016, but lost in all the fuss was a completely new restaurant and bar scheduled to open in the hotel — the Q at the Empress.


Q represents Queen and country — a nod to Queen Victoria — but this bold new establishment will bring a fresh contemporary look and feel to one of Victoria's most historic icons when it opens in June this year.

And while many will miss the Bengal's popular curry buffet, the Q at the Empress will be featuring a new menu focused on Pacific Northwest cuisine, featuring sustainably sourced seafood, traditionally raised meats, and a variety of artisanal offerings.

The Q at the Empress is just one of several new offerings visitors can look forward to at the Fairmont Empress this year. Phase One launching in June will also reveal a sophisticated lobby lounge, an expanded Fairmont Gold with terrace overlooking Victoria's Inner Harbour, an expansive and glamorous Royal Suite, and 235 updated guest rooms. Phase Two will follow in 2017, featuring a new lobby, renovated health club and spa, renewed public spaces, and completion of the remaining 229 guest rooms.

Taken together, this \$30-million dollar rebirth celebrates the history of the Fairmont Empress, while moving it into a new era of modern luxury.

fairmont.com



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READYING FOR RIO

Canada's women's sevens team will make history this summer when they compete in the inaugural rugby sevens event at the 2016 Olympics in Rio de Janeiro, and there is a very real possibility they could return home with a medal finish.

That's because Canada's women's sevens team has been on a remarkable hot streak of late. Last year the team beat Australia to claim a first place finish in the Amsterdam Sevens Cup final — their first ever cup title in program history — followed by a gold medal at the 2015 Pan-Am Games in Toronto.

To be sure, all eyes will be on this Canadian Olympic campaign when it gets underway on August 6, with the final being played August 8.

In related news, Rugby Canada recently announced a new state-of-the-art high performance training facility will be established at the organization's home base in Langford, B.C. Here Canada's men and women rugby players will be able to increase the number of days they train together, maximize contact time between and among coaches, players and personnel, and further their pursuit of excellence on and off the field.

"To actually have access to facilities when we want and need them — to me it just seems like we'll really have a fighting chance to win a gold medal," says John Moonlight, Canada Squad Loose Forward. "I can't wait to get there." rugbycanada.ca



THE BIG CATCH

Victoria foodies will want to mark July 17 on their calendars this summer. That's because the Hotel Grand Pacific's Chef Choy and his team will be hosting The Big Catch — A West Coast Seafood Boil. The highlight of this oceanic extravaganza takes place when the seafood boil is poured out along the length of a long table for all to devour. Plenty of napkins and bibs will be provided.

hotelgrandpacific.com



GINAPALOOZA

Gin lovers can get their juniper fix this summer at Ginapalooza, a unique multi-city gin festival

that kicked off in Toronto on April 6, and has been winding its way westward through Montreal and Calgary before arriving at its final destination in Vancouver. Running June 8 to 22, the Vancouver leg of the festival involves myriad local cocktails concocted from a range of international and Canadian gins, including Vancouver Island's own Victoria Gin. ginapalooza.com





David & Emily Cooper photo

BARD ON THE BEACH

How better to enjoy Shakespeare than with sand between your toes. Celebrating its 27th Season in 2016, Bard on the Beach is Western Canada's largest not-for-profit, professional Shakespeare Festival. Presented on the waterfront in Vancouver's Vanier Park, the Festival offers Shakespeare plays, related dramas, and several special events in two performance tents from June through September.

This year's Festival includes four different and dynamic plays, including *The Merry Wives of Windsor*, *Romeo and Juliet*, *Othello*, and *Pericles*. Additionally, the Festival is hosting a variety of special events, from opera to orchestras, to talks and tastings, and much, much more.

bardonthebeach.org



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HISTORY IN THE MAKING



The historic Fairmont Empress has made history with the announcement of Indu Brar as the new General Manager — making her the first female GM of the property since the iconic hotel opened in 1908.

Brar was raised in Calgary, and got hooked on the hotel business in her first job — working the switchboard at the Chateau Airport Hotel. She worked her way up the hotel ladder and into management, progressing through various positions at Fairmont properties in Canada and the U.S.

In 2013, Brar was called to the West Coast to take on the role of General Manager at the Fairmont Waterfront in Vancouver where she oversaw that hotel's renovation of guestrooms, meeting rooms, and restaurant. No doubt, she will put that experience to work this year and next as she oversees a massive \$30+ million restoration project of the Fairmont Empress.

"The restoration we are undergoing is a nod to the nostalgic era of our past, and the stunning and sophisticated world class destination of our future," says Brar. "I am so proud and excited to be a part of, and leading this transformation at such an poignant time in our journey." fairmont.com

DOUBLE YOUR PLEASURE

Helijet's highly mobile guests are among the lucky few who can enjoy the luxury of attending international jazz festivals in both Vancouver and Victoria this summer.

Running concurrently from June 24 to July 3, the TD International Vancouver Jazz Festival — the second largest in Canada — and the TD Victoria International Jazz Festival will each be hosting more than 300 live acts performed by an eclectic mix of established and up-and-coming artists spanning all jazz genres.

For more information on performances taking place on either side of the Georgia Strait visit jazzvictoria.ca or coastaljazz.

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Above & Beyond



Heath Moffatt photo

**CARLA KOVACS, DIRECTOR,
CLIENT RELATIONS**

CARLA KOVACS has a full hat rack in the corner of her office at Helijet. As Director, Client Relations, she is a key person on a number of the company's needs, which requires her to switch hats multiple times throughout her workday — managing everything from customer service and staffing requirements, to company uniforms, IT and reservations system, among many, many other things.

"I get pulled in a lot of different directions because my job touches every facet of the company," says Kovacs. "Some days I just want to sneak in the back door to work so I can focus on specific projects, without getting flagged down by someone wanting something."

What is more, Kovacs is responsible for managing all aspects of customer service for the airline, overseeing some 40 front-line staff interacting with customers every day. As such, the buck stops with her when customer grievances arise.

"I'm very fortunate that I don't have to field a lot of complaints," says Kovacs. "I'm blessed with such a great team that I don't spend my time fighting fires all day. I owe that to the training and personality of our front-line staff."

Kovacs knows firsthand the importance of superior service. Hired in 1989 as a Customer Service Agent (CSA), she spent several years working face-to-face with Helijet's guests before moving into senior management. Over 27 years she has never lost sight that the company's fortunes depend on customer satisfaction, and the only way of ensuring it is by hiring the right people, with the right skills, and giving them the best training possible.

"Carla grew up on the front-line of the company, and she has never forgotten her roots in customer service," says Danny Sitnam, President and CEO, Helijet. "Now she's something of a corporate den mother to front-line staff, always advocating on their behalf, giving them support and a sense of ownership in how to respond to customer concerns." He adds, "She's done an amazing job building a talented team around her that go above and beyond every day."

“Working in customer service is not an individual sport. It takes a team to get the job done; if a person is only looking out for their own interests they’re not going to fit in.”

— *Carla Kovacs, Director, Client Relations*

Kovacs has hired countless Helijet employees over the years, and experience has taught her to consider character over qualifications when interviewing applicants. Specifically, she looks for people who are personable, professional, and capable of working as part of a team.

“When I hire someone I consider how they will conduct themselves with our customers, and with others in the company,” says Kovacs. “You can’t teach people to be nice and courteous. It has to be natural.” She adds, “Working in customer service is not an individual sport. It takes a team to get the job done; if a person is only looking out for their own interests they’re not going to fit in.”

The same principles apply in Kovacs’ personal life. She and husband, Ernie, are proud hockey parents to two athletic boys, Nicholas (13) and Easton (12), who play in the North Delta Minor Hockey League. They see hockey as a great opportunity for their kids to have fun, be part of a team, and learn about respect for others. But being an “ultimate hockey mom” makes for lots of early mornings and busy weekends getting the boys to practices, games and tournaments. What is more, Kovacs volunteers as the league’s risk manager, which brings her into contact with all sorts of parents.

The fact that hockey and airline travel can bring out the worst in otherwise decent Canadians is not lost on her.

“Hockey parents get a bad rap, but it’s not entirely undeserved,” laughs Kovacs. “It’s kinda’ crazy that you have to tell people to be nice to each other!”



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Carla Kovacs joined Helijet in 1989 as a Customer Service Agent and that experience instilled a profound understanding and respect for initiative and teamwork among front-line staff.

On the job at Helijet, or volunteering in minor league hockey, Kovacs says dealing with people is all the same:

“You need to be accountable, work with others, and show respect. Sure it can be taxing at times, but I like helping people and resolving problems.

“First and foremost, you have to listen to someone when they’re upset, and try to understand

where they’re coming from. If you can relate to a person by putting yourself in their situation you’re in a better position to help them, and see how a process might work better.”

Perhaps the most upsetting thing for passengers (and front-line staff) are flight delays on account of inclement weather.

“There’s nothing we can do about weather,” notes Kovacs. “There are limitations to our operational capabilities, but not in our ability to explain things to passengers. That’s why we have our pilots talk directly to guests to keep them informed when delays happen. Those passengers who regularly travel with us have come to trust us, and know we would never jeopardize their safety by flying in unsafe weather.” Still, she adds, “Time is money, and delays matter to our guests. That’s why they’ve invested their money travelling with us. We need to be respectful of that. If we delay someone by 10 minutes that’s a big thing.”

Whatever the problem, resolution depends largely on the skills and judgment exercised by front-line staff. Kovacs is a firm believer in letting her staff exercise initiative and make decisions on the spot,



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On time performance and customer service have been a hallmark of Helijet's operations since the company was founded in 1986. Garth Eichel photo

knowing they have the support of senior management to do so.

"That comes from the top down," observes Kovacs. "Danny Sitnam [Helijet President and CEO] leads by example. He is the core of how we treat everybody, inside and outside the company. His natural kindness, flexibility, and respect for others resonates throughout the company, and that naturally extends outwards to our customers."

Kovacs is well aware that Helijet's guests have choices. That's why she and her team continually strive to improve the overall Helijet experience for guests, be it with fresh-baked cookies, private works spaces, easier reservation procedures, or a complimentary glass of beer or wine at the end of a long day.

Maintaining Helijet as a leader in customer service is a job with no end, and some days it has its challenges, but Kovacs says her greatest satisfaction is receiving a letter or email from a guest complimenting front-line staff for their courtesy and professionalism.

"I'm really proud of the team we've built here," beams Kovacs. "We attract good people to the company — individuals who believe helping others and doing a good job is its own reward." 


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Smart Homes

The peril and promise of home automation technology



Above: Home automation technology is transforming how people live, but not all smart home systems are created. *Bigstock photo*

T **ECHNOLOGY IS FOREVER** promising to make our lives easier and more efficient, yet often it ends up doing just the opposite. Nowhere is this more true, perhaps, than in home automation technology.


The rise of so-called “smart homes” has spawned myriad devices capable of remotely controlling everything from security systems and lighting, to home entertainment and climate control. It doesn’t stop at that, though: there are devices and apps that can feed your pets, monitor the freshness of eggs in the refrigerator, or even keep an eye on household plants.



Consumers can't seem to get enough. Global demand for smart home devices is expected to triple by 2020, generating a market valued in excess of \$40 billion. Indeed, Amazon recently developed an entire store within a store for such devices.

Tantalizing as these gadgets may be, most smart devices don't work in sync with each other, meaning consumers end up having to learn and manage multiple apps on their smartphones. Anyone with three or more remote control devices for their home entertainment system knows how vexing this can be.

That might appeal to technology mavens and DIY types, but most people have limited patience,




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and better things to do with their time. For that reason, many are turning to streamlined integrated systems installed by professionals.

Brian Adam, a retired restaurateur from Nanaimo, first came to appreciate the value of automation in his restaurant. Through a single system he found he could easily program and manage his establishment's heating, lighting and entertainment, and keep tabs on security during and after hours.

Adam was so impressed that he subsequently hired the Nanaimo-based Wenner Group of Companies, a Vancouver Island-wide provider, to install an integrated Control 4 Home Automation System in his personal residence in Nanoose Bay.

"After using it commercially I couldn't imagine not having it in my home," says Adam. "Through the restaurant I came to appreciate the convenience of not having to constantly adjust settings — security, heating, lighting, music and entertainment — throughout the day. Once I learned the capability I wanted to apply it at home.

"Now I can control everything in my house through a single panel, or my smartphone. I hit a single button and everything is preset." He adds, "Convenience and time savings were the two big



Young homebuyers who have grown up on technology are in the market for homes with automated systems. Bigstock photo

factors behind getting the home automation system, but the economy and efficiency of power use was a consideration, too."

For example, Adam notes that he can pinpoint control the exact amount of lighting and heating in each room of his home. Likewise, his outdoor heating system uses a lot of electricity, so he has programmed his to stay on for only 30 minutes before extinguishing itself.



Above: Many consumers opt for the convenience and time savings provided by home automation systems, as well as the energy efficiency derived from precision controlled heating and lighting.



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The value of a single home automation technology platform is that it brings everything together in harmony, simplifying usage and management.

— Ryan Wenner, Director at the Wenner Group of Companies

Security is significantly improved, too. Adam notes that with a single app he is able to remotely access his entire house — managing everything from closing and locking doors, to video monitoring and motion detectors.

The beauty of it all is that he can control everything through a centralized system on a single panel, or on his smartphone. Moreover, that system has been customized to his personal preferences.

“The system Wenner installed was very user-friendly and straightforward,” says Adam. “The initial set-up and learning curve is pretty short. Anyone who has a smartphone — which is pretty much everyone — can learn to use it in a matter of minutes.” He adds, “there are limitless possibilities to how you can manage and tailor the system to your own needs.”

But will Adam’s system be robust enough to adapt to new technology and software updates over time? After all, most smartphones, tablets and computers are out of date and incompatible with new technology after just a few years.

“The Crestron and Control 4 integrated systems we install for clients like Brian are designed to be scalable as new technology comes out,” says Ryan Wenner, Director at the Wenner Group of Companies. “It has the capability to expand, and add a lot to it.”

Wenner says the value of a single home automation technology platform is that it brings everything together in harmony, simplifying usage and management. Indeed, he expects the appeal of smart home technology will only broaden in the near future as home automation shifts from novelty to the new normal.

“People are going to start expecting it,” observes Wenner. “More and more homebuyers want to see pre-wired or existing home automation systems,



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Most home automation systems are managed through a central panel, or remotely by smart phone.

especially the younger generation. As Millennials get into the real estate market it's going to be high up on their list."


Wenner's wife, Alicia Todd-Wenner, works as a realtor on Vancouver Island and is seeing the trend firsthand: "I've noticed that my clientele, whether younger or older generations, are looking at home automation as a necessity rather than a luxury.

"People moving to the Island from larger cities,

such as Vancouver and Calgary, have already been exposed to home technology, and they put a lot of value in the ability to have it in their homes. As for new homes being constructed, there is great value and ROI for contractors who are thinking ahead for these kind of systems."

Adam concurs: "I can't imagine not building a house without it now. Any mid- to high-level home will want to have it installed. If you don't have it in the future it will be a major handicap."

As enthusiastic as Adam and Wenner are about home automation systems, both urge consumer caution in the rush to smarten up homes. Specifically, they note that not all home automation systems — or the companies that install them — are created equal. As such, they encourage anyone planning to rewire their home to do their research and choose an experienced integration company that can manage expectations and deliver on what they promise.

"Technology is great when it works, but it's easy to get lost in it," says Wenner. "Home automation systems should be easy to use, and adapt to the owners. Not the other way around." 

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SEA TO SKY HIGH

EXOTIC CARS FOR EVERY OCCASION

Some things are beautiful to the point of being intimidating. Consider, for example, the effect a gorgeous man or woman can have on us ordinary folk. Fascinating and attractive, they are capable of making the most sensible among us giddy and tongue-tied, if not a tad envious. Exotic high-performance cars have much the same effect, particularly on the weaker sex — men.





*A McLaren MP4-12C finds its true
potential on the Sea To Sky Highway.*

*Story by Garth Eichel
Photography by Daniel Collins*



The Aston Martin V8 Vantage S is one of nine luxury cars in Sea to Sky Exotic's fleet of rental vehicles.

I've never been much of a "car guy". I've always prided myself on driving practical, fuel-efficient vehicles that get me from A to B with the least amount of fuss. Still, I'm self-aware enough to recognize that at one time I was a testosterone-addled young man, driven by base instincts that have not yet been fully extinguished by age and reason. That is why I still pause when an attractive redhead or red Ferrari coasts by.

Certainly, I am not alone. How else can one explain the enduring popularity of James Bond films?

Bond is the stuff of fantasy, of course, but when an opportunity recently arose to drive an Aston Martin V8 Vantage S on the Sea to Sky Highway between North Vancouver and Whistler, well, I simply had to arch an eyebrow, adjust my cufflinks, and brush up on my best Sean Connery lines.

Hosting me for the day's drive is Jonas Lohmann, Manager of Sea to Sky

Exotic, a North Vancouver business that rents a fleet of nine vehicles variously coveted by gearheads and wannabes alike. Even a poser like me knows there is something special about cars bearing

names such as Ferrari, Lamborghini, Bentley, Jaguar, McLaren, and of course, Aston Martin.

The white V8 Vantage S I'm set to drive practically oozes elegance. Sleek and refined, it has sophisticated lines that envelope engine and driver in harmonious union. Settling into the driver's seat is like being embraced from behind by a super model. (Or at least what I imagine that might be like.) The red leather seats contour around my back and thighs, molding me to the vehicle. I run my hands over the steering wheel and scan the console for signs of something familiar, but instead all I see is artistry and engineering. Rather embarrassed, I can't even find where the FOB is supposed to go.

Lohmann explains that to start the engine the FOB must be inserted into a button on the centre console sporting the winged Aston Martin logo. (I can't help wonder if the button might also double as an activator for a passenger-side ejection seat for Bond villains.) I insert the FOB as instructed and as it glides into place the car's 430-hp engine growls to life like a tiger disturbed from naptime.



The extraordinary engineering, performance and aesthetics of Sea to Sky Exotic's fleet appeal to gearheads who take their driving seriously, be it in a Polaris Slingshot (top), or a Ferrari F430 Spyder (bottom).



The Sea to Sky Highway between Horseshoe Bay and Whistler is an exceptional stretch of road where one can truly experience a luxury vehicle at its finest. Garth Eichel photo

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I feel nervous.

The engine purrs steadily while Lohmann talks me through the basics of the car's handling characteristics, particularly how to shift gears up and down using paddles mounted on the steering wheel. At the end of the brief tutorial I feel somewhat apprehensive about driving — afraid that I will embarrass myself, or worse, somehow damage this \$137,500 car.

Lohmann gently prompts me to start driving, and so I gingerly pull out on to Marine Drive, winding my way westward along the shoreline of North Vancouver. I am initially reluctant to go higher than third gear; the engine roars in protest like a caged animal. I'm happy to keep the beast subdued until I get the feel of the car, which is exceptional in terms of control and agility. Hugging the narrow corners of Marine Drive instills confidence and after 10 minutes I feel much more competent.

By the time we reach Horseshoe Bay I'm ready to let the angry cat out of its cage, albeit on a leash. We merge on to the Sea To Sky Highway, lunging forward as the seven-speed gearbox advances the speedometer needle clockwise.

Gearing down into each twist and turn of the road just seems to make the engine angry — this beast wants to run.

Lohmann knows the rush can cause clients to become overly exuberant, so he politely reminds me that it's important to observe posted speed limits, and drive safe. I pick up what he is putting down, and shorten the leash on this feral kitty.

"Obviously, someone renting a Ferrari or Lamborghini is not going to want to drive 40 kilometres per hour all over the city, but we do ask clients to drive responsibly," says Phil Garrow, President of Sea to Sky Exotic. "When we started business we even reached out to local police to introduce ourselves and let them know what our business was doing. We asked them to let us know if they see our vehicles being driven irresponsibly."

Going a step further, Sea to Sky Exotic has computer chips installed on all its vehicles to monitor speed and other factors, such as hard acceleration and deceleration, which would indicate high-risk driving. And as an added measure, the business doesn't rent to anyone under the age of 25 — a condition they developed in conjunction with ICBC



Sea to Sky Exotic began renting luxury cars in September 2015 with a focus on serving tourists and locals, but the business has also received considerable work in Vancouver's film industry.

to insure the company's fleet of luxury cars.

Fortunately, the business hasn't had to deal with any negative incidents so far.

"Most people rent our exotic cars just for the experience," reflects Garrow. "It's an altogether different driving experience most people have never felt before. No mass-produced car can compare in terms of seamless acceleration, agility and handling. And there is more to these cars than mere metrics; they are pieces of art on the road."

After a thoughtful pause, he adds, "It seems more and more consumers nowadays want to spend their money on memorable experiences instead of possessions. Driving a Ferrari or a Lamborghini is something you can reflect on for the rest of your life."

The same can be said for the Aston Martin. Driving south along the Sea To Sky Highway, I ease into the right lane and slow down to soak in the experience a little bit longer. The late afternoon sun washing over Howe Sound, bathing the Coast Mountains in golden sunlight, only makes me want to further ease off the accelerator.

Returning into North Van I notice other drivers



A Lamborghini Gallardo LP550-2 eases into view in the side mirror of an Aston Martin V8 Vantage S. Garth Eichel photo

and the occasional pedestrian watch us pass by. I can certainly relate, and for a brief moment I experience what it feels like to be on the receiving end, which makes it all the harder to hand the FOB over to Lohmann at the end of the drive.

"I know," he says with compassion. "Some guys have a tough time giving the cars back." **H**

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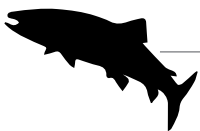
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SUPPORTING PACIFIC SALMON

B.C.'s sport fishing operators invest in Pacific salmon conservation



FEW SPECTACLES IN NATURE are as stirring as the sight of Pacific salmon returning to spawn in the rivers and streams in which they were born years before. Witnessing the phenomenon is both melancholy and uplifting: it serves as a vivid reminder of our own brief mortality, but also of the magnificent capacity of nature to regenerate itself.

Pacific salmon are tough fish. They contend with an array of predators and daunting obstacles over the course of their lives, but the one thing they are powerless to overcome is the loss of habitat, both naturally occurring and man-made. And while humans are one of salmon's biggest predators, we are also the animal's greatest benefactor.

By Garth Eichel

PHOTO (above): A Queen Charlotte Lodge fishing guide releases a large Chinook salmon off Haida Gwaii. Duane Foerter photo

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*The Pacific Salmon Foundation acts as an umbrella organization that engages, supports and coordinates volunteers for restoration and hatchery programs throughout B.C.
Heath Moffatt photo*

Sport fishermen are particularly passionate advocates for salmon, and so the province's sport fishing operators play an important role in habitat conservation and restoration through their support of the Pacific Salmon Foundation.

The Foundation began almost 30 years ago when then fisheries ministers of the day approached several B.C. salmon stakeholders about creating a non-profit organization aimed at conserving wild Pacific salmon. The federal government recognized the Department of Fisheries

and Oceans (DFO) could no longer be all things to all people, and that communities and stakeholders, such as the recreational fishery, needed to become active partners in Pacific salmon sustainability.

To that end, they developed a volunteer concept with the Foundation acting as an umbrella organization that could engage, support and coordinate volunteers for habitat restoration and hatchery programs. Some 30 years later volunteers are now the backbone of salmon conservation in B.C.

Volunteerism is crucial to Pacific salmon conservation, but so too is fundraising to support volunteer activities and projects.

As such, the founders of the Foundation traveled to Ottawa in the late-1980s to urge creation of a Salmon Conservation Stamp that would see anglers support salmon fisheries when they purchased a tidal waters fishing licence with the additional purchase of a Pacific salmon conservation stamp affixed to the licence. (Purchase of the stamp is annually required for anglers wanting to catch and retain a Pacific salmon caught in tidal waters.)

Since the first stamp came out in 1989, proceeds to the Community Salmon Program have totalled \$15.4 million for 1,924 projects with a total

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value of \$106.5 million, including leveraging from community contributions. Annual granting activity through the Community Salmon Program has grown from five annual grants in the first year to 163 in 2015.

“Annually, approximately 350,000 tidal water licenses are bought by recreational fishers, and these don’t include freshwater licences purchased to fish salmon or steelhead trout in British Columbia,” says Dr. Brian Ridell, President and CEO, Pacific Salmon Foundation. “Some of these are non-resident anglers, but the numbers still speak to the popularity of salmon fishing in B.C.” He adds, “Recreational fishers can represent a huge voice for salmon when needed.”

A significant number of tidal water licences and salmon conservation stamps are sold each year through sport fishing operators who are responsible for collecting the fees on behalf of the federal government, which in turn directs funds to the Foundation. Being on the front line of the recreational fishery makes these businesses an indispensable link between the Foundation and the recreational fishing community in B.C.

At the same time, sport fishing businesses recognize it is in their own best interest to keep the

resource healthy and sustainable, and so several may go above and beyond selling salmon conservation stamps.

In fact, a number of fishing lodges and resorts have for years asked their guests to add a few dollars to their bill for the Foundation, to distribute through its Community Salmon Program.

In 2011 the Foundation decided to formalize its relationship with the recreational fishing industry by creating the Recreational Fishing Partnerships Program. Lodges that partner through this program may choose to add an optional Salmon Conservation Contribution (typically \$25 per angler) on guests’ invoices that is re-invested in salmon projects across the province.

The giving doesn’t stop there. Numerous sport fishing operators donate their own funds, as well as in-kind contributions, such as fishing trips and gear. Many also host fundraising dinner auctions and charitable fishing derbies with proceeds towards salmon conservation.

In 2015 alone, the Foundation received more than \$200,000 in-kind and cash contributions from the recreational fishing industry. This total represents a mixture of proceeds from the Salmon Conservation Contribution fee and in-kind

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B.C.'s sport fishing lodges play a significant role generating financial support for the Pacific Salmon Foundation, which helps fund salmon habitat conservation and restoration projects in communities throughout the province. Heath Moffatt photo

donations of trips to community dinners and proceeds from charitable derbies.

For example, Langara Island Lodge in Haida Gwaii regularly hosts its “Red Boat Challenge”, bringing together leaders from the mining sector for a fishing trip that raises significant funds for salmon projects. In 2015 the derby raised \$43,000 for the Pacific Salmon Foundation, including a match of more than \$21,000 from Langara Island Lodge.

“One of the most common ways lodges can support salmon conservation efforts, other than implementing a Conservation Contribution, is by hosting a fundraising fishing derby with proceeds to the Pacific Salmon Foundation,” says Riddell. “Each year dozens of these derbies take place across B.C. and it provides anglers an opportunity to combine their love of competition with salmon conservation. These derbies play a key role in raising funds as well as awareness of the issues that salmon are facing.”

In addition to raising much needed funds for salmon conservation, fishing resorts can also play a key role in educating their guests on the importance of healthy salmon populations. Indeed, wild Pacific salmon support over 130 other species of wildlife, and their importance to the environment is incalculable. Lodges and guides can remind their guests of this, and ensure proper fish handling and release techniques are always used to help ensure minimal unintended mortality.

In the same vein, resort operators are doing

their part to keep Pacific salmon fishing sustainable. More and more lodges are gently encouraging guests to take what they need, rather than what they can.

“It’s part of the message we relay to guests,” says Duane Foerter, Marketing Manager, Queen Charlotte Lodge. “When we do an orientation we remind people of limits they are entitled to catch, but we ask them to also consider ‘do you need that much?’ People are receptive to the idea that a successful trip is not defined by how much fish you take home.”

Some fishing lodges even reward guests who release record-size salmon, knowing it will help preserve big breeding stock for future generations of sport fishers.

“Our guides go out with fishermen every day and educate them about proper fishing and handling techniques, and the importance of returning bigger breeding stock,” says Bruce McFadden, Director of Sales and Marketing for Peregrine Lodge in Haida Gwaii. “The attitude of some fishermen is changing where many choose to release big Pacific salmon — they’re excited about keeping the resource strong.”

Being on the water every day also means recreational fishers are the ones regularly taking the pulse of Pacific salmon. As such, they have a role to play in gathering valuable information, and consulting government and DFO through a variety of annual advisory panels that develop regulatory plans to meet conservation actions.

While there are areas of concern in B.C. regarding specific salmon populations, the overall trend is positive for Pacific salmon. That may come as a surprise to many British Columbians who are accustomed to alarmist news media and the dire prophecies of some environmentalists.

“Many people think Pacific salmon are disappearing because they equate salmon with the commercial fishery,” says Riddell. “Salmon are overwhelmed by negative stories, which is a real injustice to the species; the situation is much more positive than people think.” He adds, “The recreational salmon fishery is alive and well in B.C., and as the most numerous fishing sector it has an essential role to play in recruiting the next generation of fishers — and voters — who will have huge potential to protect salmon and support habitat restoration for today and tomorrow.” **H**

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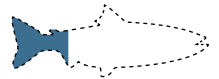
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Retirement Top Up

WHAT TO CONSIDER BEFORE RETIRING ON A PENSION



“THE BAD NEWS IS time flies. The good news is you’re the pilot.” That quote by time management guru Michael Altshuler keeps echoing in my mind as the prospect of retiring from my job looms in the not-so-distant future.

Until recently, I didn’t give much thought to retirement. I figured that after 20 years on the job my government pension plan would take care of me, more or less. I could look forward to a life of leisure with time to pursue all sorts of interests, from reading and travel, to gardening and golf.

Or can I?

With a mere six years to go to retirement I started wondering how practical my retirement goals are, and if I’ll be able to realize them with only my pension and modest savings. With that in mind, I started asking myself some hard questions, and then went in search of the answers:

DO I HAVE ENOUGH INFORMATION TO RETIRE?

The answer to this was an unnerving ‘no’. As such, I visited my pension plan’s website and started rooting around for information, resources and publications. At the same time, I attended a pension information seminar to help fill in the blanks.

All the above was helpful, but I soon recognized I may not be able to retire on a pension as comfortably as I envisioned. As such, I sought the professional perspective of Spencer Pocock, Portfolio Manager at Odlum Brown Limited in Victoria.

WHAT KIND OF PENSION DO I HAVE?

“People often don’t know what type of pension they have,” says Pocock. “All pensions — public or private — are regulated, but there are significant differences between plan types that people should understand.”

Pocock explained to me that there are generally two types of pension plan structures — defined benefit pensions and defined contribution plans.

My job is to help you retire comfortably.

“Defined benefit pension plans are the gold standard, but are becoming less common because the employer is responsible for ensuring there is enough money in the plan to pay current and future pension liabilities to all plan members,” says Pocock. “Defined contribution plans are more common nowadays. With this type of plan pension contributions into the plan are defined, but the retirement income amount is not. Contributions are invested over time and the pension benefit at retirement is based on the assets and growth accumulated within the plan.”

HOW IS MY PENSION CALCULATED?

I’m fortunate to have a defined benefit pension plan through my job with the B.C. Public Service. My employer promises to pay me an income for life during retirement. The payout is based on how many years I’ve worked, and how much I earned during that time, determined largely by my five highest income years.

If my pension was a defined contribution plan, however, my retirement income would be dependent upon the amounts my employer and I contributed over my working years, and the underlying portfolio returns over time.

WHEN CAN I RETIRE?

Reaching pensionable age means you are entitled to a pension that is not reduced because of early retirement. Depending on the terms of your plan, pensionable age can be a specific age or a number of years of service, or a combination of both. It is the age at which you, as a member or former member, are entitled to receive an unreduced pension.

Early retirement certainly isn’t in the cards for me, but what about retiring once I am eligible for my full pension?

“You may be able to retire at your earliest unreduced date and collect a pension, but you may not be taking two vacations a year,” says Pocock. “Just because you can retire doesn’t necessarily

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mean you should. Retiring when you are still relatively young and able to work means lost income during your peak earning years — the years typically when debt is paid off and savings are being maximized. That's potentially foregone money that could be saved to generate future income."

HOW LONG WILL MY PENSION LAST?

Generally, a defined benefit pension plan should continue paying out until the plan member (or their surviving spouse, depending on the pension option chosen) dies. A defined contribution plan, however, will only pay out until the assets are exhausted.

Most people take a conservative view of their pension plan, regarding it as a safety net managed by the plan's administrators. Still, some people choose to trade in security for increased financial control.

"Even if a person has a defined benefit pension plan, under certain circumstances, they may choose to commute the cash value of the plan into a self-managed account rather than leaving it and taking a deferred pension," says Pocock. "It's a personal choice that works for some, but not for others."

WHAT HAPPENS IF I GET DIVORCED?

I'm happily married, and I hope it stays that way. That's because "my" pension is not really mine at all. As it turns out, my pension is a family asset, just like our house and vehicle, which my darling husband may be entitled to a portion of should we ever part ways.

In fact, you need not even be married for your pension to be affected. Under B.C.'s Family Law Act people who live together in a marriage-like relationship for a continuous period of two years or more are considered to be spouses, and are therefore treated the same as married spouses for the purpose of dividing a pension.

Here's hoping the romance lives on!

WHAT HAPPENS IF I PREDECEASE MY SPOUSE?

Should I kick the bucket before my hubby, he will have to come to terms with my personal loss, but he may not have to deal with the loss of my pension.

"Your spouse will be entitled to the value of the pension benefit you earned up until your date of death," notes Pocock. "Circumstances vary, but if you die before retiring, your spouse should be eligible to receive a pre-retirement death benefit. This may be in the form of a monthly pension or a lump-sum payment directly to their own RRSP or locked-in account. If you die after retiring, your spouse may continue to receive a monthly pension amount from your plan if you select a joint-life option upon retirement. Essentially, the larger the amount you opt to have continue to your surviving spouse, the less you will receive during your lifetime and vice versa."

It's not a one-way street, though. My husband works in the private sector and, though he doesn't have a pension plan, he does significantly contribute to our household income, and he is saving for our retirement. Should he predecease me, both my life and lifestyle will be affected.

Which leads me to the next, and perhaps most important, question of all:

HOW MUCH INCOME WILL I NEED TO RETIRE?

The answer to this question depends on what retirement looks like for each person. For some, retirement means living large; for others it is about living simply. Like most, I am somewhere in between — wanting a comfortable existence with the occasional extravagance now and again.

To be honest, I have no exact idea what it will cost to realize that from one month to the next.

"Most people neither know exactly how much they spend each month, nor how much they will need to live the lifestyle they want after they retire," says Pocock. "To get a handle on this, I recommend clients have a financial plan prepared to help quantify and illustrate income needs in retirement, as well as where those needs will be funded from. You may think you have enough today, but there are a lot of variables to consider, and a plan helps uncover potential shortfalls or issues. A financial plan that incorporates information around pension statements and investments, as well as debts and monthly expenses will help provide clarity around a lot of unknowns."

Then there is the matter of health concerns, which become all the more pressing with age. Most pension plans provide health benefits, but the extent of coverage varies from one plan to the next. And as unpleasant as it may be to consider, there are significant costs associated with long-term care.

“A lot of people don’t want to consider health issues until they have to,” says Pocock. “But you may need a way of replacing lost income if your spouse becomes ill, or dies, especially if you are relying on this income to fund part of your long-term plan.”

Something to also consider when nearing retirement are the costs of supporting family. As often as not, those nearing retirement are what Pocock refers to as the “sandwich generation” — those whose resources may be stretched as they concurrently support children and aging parents.

This brings me back to my original question: ‘How much will I need to retire?’

After going through the planning process there appears to be a sizeable gap between my monthly income needs in retirement and what my pension plan will deliver.

“When there are shortfalls between resources and income needs clients often have a few options they can consider,” says Pocock. “First, they can think about working longer and retiring later. Second, if possible, they can increase their regular savings amount to build their resources. Third, their investment portfolio can be rebalanced, adding more equity to try to enhance returns, but the risks have to be weighed. Lastly, they may need to re-evaluate how much they can spend during retirement to prolong the life of their resources, or simply spend less.” To that, he adds, “Only you know which of these is the right answer for you.”

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Late to the Links

IT'S NEVER TOO LATE TO DISCOVER GOLF



AGE HAS AN ANNOYING habit of creeping up by degrees. Until just a few years ago, I prided myself on being able to do most any sport, and hold my own with guys 10 or 15 years my junior. That all changed in my mid-40s. Suddenly I couldn't do all the activities I once loved, and keeping up with 20-somethings became an emasculating experience. Bad knees only added insult to injury.

It was just a matter of time before sports like hockey, rugby, and soccer became impractical. But that left a void that needed to be filled. I craved a competitive activity that could challenge me in new ways, but not leave me limping days afterwards.

Golf answered the call.

I had wanted to learn for years. All my buddies did it; it seemed socially cool; and when I got into business it seemed a great way to network with clients. But the opportunity never presented itself, and now, as my 50th birthday approaches, it seems a bit late to be getting into a whole new sport.

Doug Hastie, Director of Instruction at the Bear Mountain Gold Academy in Victoria, assured me otherwise:

"A lot of people come to golf later in life for a variety of reasons. Some are semi-retired and have more free time available, while others with sporting backgrounds want to learn a new skill that will test their abilities, without the physical demands of high-impact sports."

The latter sounded a lot like me, but still I demurred; after all, I wasn't all that keen on finding something new to be bad at. Being an A-type guy means I want to be awesome at anything I undertake. Preferably within a matter of hours.

Lucky for me, golf is one of the few sports where beginners can become relatively adept in a remarkably short period of time. Hastie says it is not unusual for a first-timer to have a half-decent swing after just one lesson, and with additional practice

Doug Hastie, Director of Instruction at the Westin Bear Mountain Golf Academy in Victoria, gets into the swing of things on the Mountain Course's par 3 Hole 14. A member of the PGA of Canada, Hastie has been teaching for 26 years, and was named Teacher of the Year in 2007. Garth Eichel photo

and subsequent lessons one can become quite comfortable on the golf course.

"If you get some basic instruction once a week, and practice another day or two a week for six to eight consecutive weeks, you will become reasonably proficient, and feel like you know what you are doing," says Hastie. "Chances are you're going to break 100 pretty quick."

(To avoid looking like a rube, I Googled "Breaking 100" on my smartphone and learned it means to complete 18 holes of golf in under 100 strokes — an important first milestone for golfers.)

Hastie says newcomers to golf have to manage their expectations: "As with most sports, the better you get the more you discover there is to learn.

"It takes a while to develop the fundamental skills. It's a bit like learning the piano: you can learn to play Chopsticks right away, but learning to play a concerto takes time and practice, and you'll never completely master it."

Striving for self-improvement can be its own reward, though, and golf has the added benefit of being an activity enjoyed outdoors. Indeed, Bear Mountain has two Nicklaus Design 18-hole courses that are regarded as among the most beautiful in Canada.

The views certainly are spectacular in every direction, but I can't help noticing most of the golfers at the resort seem fairly well heeled, carting expensive-looking bags of clubs.

"Don't buy clubs right away," cautions Hastie. "Go to a course and hire a professional to give you a lesson, and see if you like the sport before investing a lot of money." He adds, "There is an unfortunate perception of golf being a rich man's sport, which is too bad. The sport is trying to shed its elitist image and be more welcoming.

"If you do decide to pursue golf you can pick up a good seven-piece set of clubs for around \$400, and some golf balls and tees for another \$20. Just

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INVIGORATE

tell staff at the golf shop you are brand new to the game and the people behind the counter will be all too glad to help.”

Hastie is a natural instructor who clearly enjoys introducing people to the sport, and keeping them interested in it. And like a good teacher he knows it's critical for students to have fun and enjoy small, early successes before dialing into the minutiae of the game.

Adhering to the maxim of keeping it simple, he explains there are three fundamental skills every golfer has to learn — a full swing, a putting stroke, and a chipping motion. Most beginners find the full swing is the most fun and so Hastie hands me a seven iron and, after a brief tutorial on how to hold the club and set up to the ball, he encourages me to start swinging away at a bucket of balls.

My first swing succeeds only in connecting with the ball, sending a clump of grass and dirt farther than the intended projectile. Hastie suggests I make a minor adjustment in posture, then have at it again. The result is slightly better, at least in so far that the ball flew more than an inch above the ground.

Hastie mercifully limits constructive criticism to one thing at a time, and shows me how to balance my weight on both feet and flex my knees slightly. My next swing feels better, but still I shank the ball and watch as it careens majestically out of sight to the right.

Hastie assures me I am getting the hang of it. To prove his point he replays a video of my swing he just shot on his smartphone. I'm surprised to see my technique looks better than I imagined, even if the outcome isn't all that impressive. He makes one



more suggestion on weight distribution, then stands back with his smartphone held high.

Putting everything I've just learned together is hard, so I take my time setting up to the ball on my next attempt, focusing on how to hold the club, correct arm position, hips back, knees bent, weight evenly distributed on both feet. With everything more or less in place, I raise my club into a backswing and transition into a downswing that connects with the ball in a gratifying "ker-PLINK" that launches the dimpled white ball into a perfect arc I can admire while lingering in the follow through.

Turning towards Hastie, it's hard to tell if instructor or student has the more self-satisfied smile. Either way, the video replay shows just how far I've progressed at "Chopsticks", and how much more there is to learn. 📱



Doug Hastie demonstrates putting technique on Hole 15 of the Mountain Course at the Westin Bear Mountain Golf Resort & Spa — home to the only 36 holes of Nicklaus Designed course in Canada, which, in part, explains why Bear Mountain is the official training centre for Golf Canada's National Team, and will host the PGA Tour Champions 2016 Pacific Links Championship from September 19 to 25. Garth Eichel photo

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Taste of Haida Gwaii

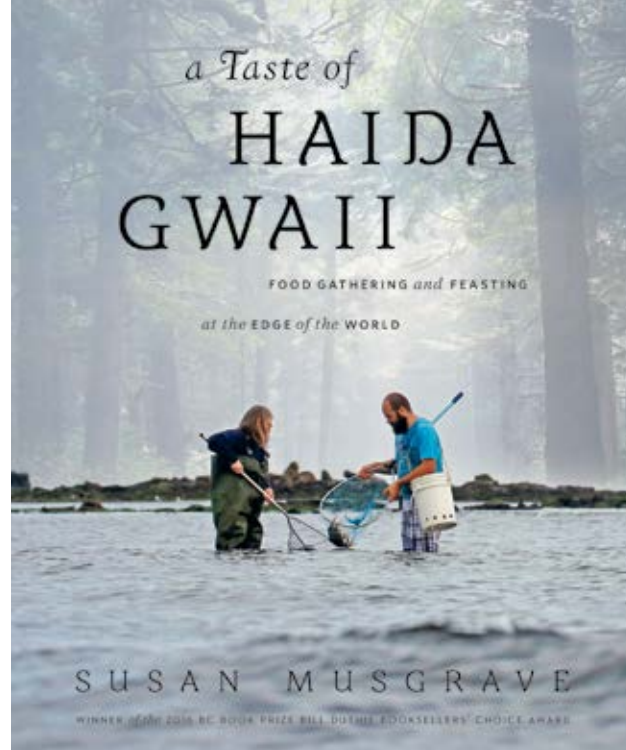
A cookbook tribute to the food and people of a special place

WEST COAST CUISINE means different things to different people. For most, it invokes a range of classic seafood dishes, such as Dungeness crab cakes, or cedar-plank-grilled Pacific salmon. Gourmands might take the concept a step further, considering rainforest delicacies like chanterelle mushrooms and venison, while the truly adventurous might salivate at the prospect of feasting on pine seeds, edler-flower and stinging nettles.

Whatever one's appetite, the common thread running through most West Coast cuisine is that it is generally obtained by hunting, fishing, or gathering. Nowhere is this truer than in Haida Gwaii (formerly the Queen Charlotte Islands), an archipelago of some 150 islands off B.C.'s North Coast.

Located far out at sea, some 172 km from Prince Rupert, Haida Gwaii is a rugged and remote place, renowned for its wild beauty. With a population of roughly 4,500, there are few services and amenities. Those who live there depend on the abundance of fresh food found in the surrounding ocean and dense rainforest.

One of those residents is Susan Musgrave, an award-winning author and poet, who grew up in Victoria before moving to Haida Gwaii in 1972. In the years since, she has developed a profound



Susan Musgrave's new book, *a Taste of Haida Gwaii*, is a tribute to the food and people of the remote archipelago.

relationship with local food sources, and the people who forage for them — so much so that she recently published a cookbook, *a Taste of Haida Gwaii*, which pays tribute to the food culture of the islands.

The interesting thing about this cookbook is that it isn't really a cookbook.

"The book is a love story with recipes," says Musgrave. "It's a food memoir about my love for the place, the people, and my community on Haida Gwaii."

Specifically, the book focuses on three particular themes: the raw isolation and beauty of Haida Gwaii; the abundance of food found in the area; and the colourful collection of individualists who survive and thrive there.

Anyone fortunate enough to visit this unique collection of islands soon learns how distinct the place is from the mainland. A remote, windswept archipelago, it is often shrouded in rain and cloud that only occasionally gives way to reveal dramatic snow-capped mountains and lush forests.

It is in this hinterland where Musgrave and her fellow Haida Gwaiians forage for a range of plants, berries, and mushrooms, as well as grouse and deer. Harvesting the wilderness doesn't stop at the waterline, though. Encircled by the sea, locals also

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Chef Cosmo Meens (left) teamed up with author Susan Musgrave to develop a seven-course menu for guests at Cook Culture Kitchen Supply Store and Cooking School in Victoria and Vancouver.

harvest seaweed, shellfish, and the abundance of salmon, halibut and rockfish found in local waters.

“We eat really well in Haida Gwaii,” says Musgrave. “There is an incredible variety of fresh ingredients, but we don’t have access to specialty stores like you find in Granville Island Market. You often have to be inventive, especially so when the Co-op is out of food because the ferry didn’t come. Sometimes you have to open the fridge door and use your imagination with what you have.” For good measure, she offers a quote by Jean-Paul Sartre: “genius is not a gift, but the way one invents in desperate circumstances.”

Indeed, Musgrave’s book revels in the culinary creativity of her friends and neighbours, many of who share her fondness for tongue-in-cheek recipes, such as salmon poached in beer and alphabet soup, sea lion lasagna, or wedding cake substituting octopus for coloured fruit.

Mock recipes such as these abound throughout the book, illustrating Musgrave’s lack of pretense — a trait she shares with likeminded residents.


“I use to cook with a lot complex sauces, but not anymore,” exclaims Musgrave. “With a beautiful piece of fresh halibut you don’t need anything more than butter, salt and pepper.” She adds, “you can find all sorts of recipes online, but it’s the story of the people and the place that make the book interesting — it’s a testament to my community on Haida Gwaii.”

COOK CULTURE

A Taste of Haida Gwaii is a splendid introduction for anyone who has yet to experience the people, place and food culture of the islands. And in an effort to bring it to life, Musgrave recently teamed up with Chef Cosmo Meens at Cook Culture to develop a seven-course meal as part of the kitchen supply store’s ongoing themed cooking classes in Vancouver and Victoria.

Your correspondent was invited to attend a demonstration class in Victoria, which involved sampling a range of Haida Gwaii-inspired dishes that spoke to the spirit of natural abundance and elegant simplicity found there. Among other things, delicacies included smoked salmon and pickled garlic scapes with spruce tips, razor clam fritters served with pickled asparagus aioli, rose petal halibut with citrus mint salad, and venison stew with mixed onions and forest mushrooms.

Exotic sounding, perhaps, but each dish paid wonderful respect to the origin of ingredients.

“When you’re dealing with really high quality food the trick is to not mess it up,” says Chef Meens. “The recipes are not as flashy as they sound. In developing the menu, I really focused on the fresh ingredients from this special place, and the elegant simplicity of how local residents cook.” After a pause, he adds, “*a Taste of Haida Gwaii* is not just a cookbook; it’s a work of art dedicated to the food and people of Haida Gwaii.” 

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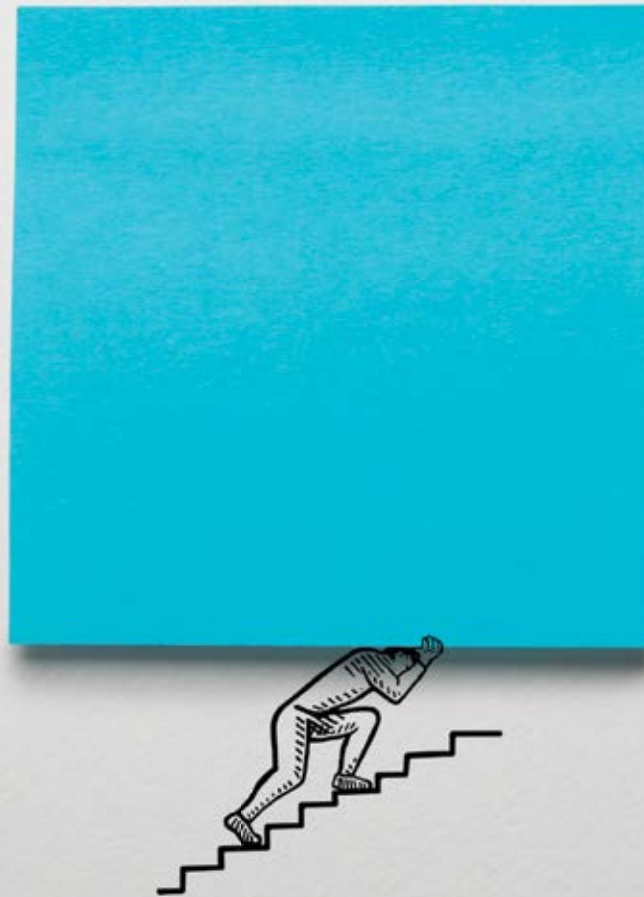


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