

Helijet

The world's largest winter gathering of bald eagles happens right here in B.C.

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A participant enjoys B.C.'s Sea-to-Sky Country from the comfort of a TrailRider, designed to allow individuals living with physical disabilities to explore the outdoors safely.

# Everyone belongs in nature

#### By Dana Hutchings

Chief Operating Officer, Power To Be

FEEL A SENSE of pride every time I board a Helijet and see those words boldly emblazoned across the body of the helicopter: *Everyone Belongs in Nature*. It's a welcome reminder of what is at the very heart of our mission at Power To Be — to remove barriers for those with cognitive, physical, and social limitations, and to get them out to enjoy the benefits of being in nature. We are thankful to our valuable partners, like Helijet, for helping to make this happen.

Many people have asked me how we have managed to deliver for our participants over this past year, and what kind of an impact the pandemic has had on us as an organization. It goes without saying, this

past year has certainly not been without its obstacles. But, as an organization whose entire mandate is to remove barriers, we did what we do best — we focused on our participants and what we could do to serve them during this time. In addition to quickly implementing some virtual programs, we put together one-on-one physically distanced hikes and programs for household bubbles.

In an ever-changing environment, Power To Be was able to discover even more ways to connect with participants while keeping health and safety at the forefront of each adventure. It was remarkable to see how staff, volunteers, and supporters pulled together to create memorable experiences, even at a distance.

This summer, we were able to safely get back to offering our core programs at both our Victoria and Vancouver locations. To see happy participants hiking, kayaking, camping and taking in all that nature has to offer was priceless and provided hope for the future. And soon, there will be more excitement and positivity for Power To Be as we look ahead and build a place of belonging.

Our new home, currently under construction at Prospect Lake in Victoria, sits on 78 stunning acres of nature, thanks to the generosity of the Steele family, who believed in our mission so greatly they offered to lease the land to us for one dollar a year for the next 25 years. This kind gift is a giant step in helping us to achieve our dream of promoting health, inclusivity and sustainability.

By next spring, we'll welcome participants to their new accessible and inclusive space, with activities and adventure all within reach. We are proud to incorporate achievable aspects of the Living Building Challenge — the world's most rigorous standard for green buildings — into this project. Living Buildings strive for net-zero or net-positive energy, are free of toxic chemicals, and lower their energy footprint many times below the common commercial structure.

This project, now four years in the making, aims to be a place of universal acceptance, with elements worked into the design that respect gender inclusivity, stimuli sensitivities and limited mobilities, to name a few. We envision a place of gathering for our community, where connections can be fostered among like-minded individuals and provide new opportunities in which current and prospective volunteers can make a positive change in their community.

The path to this project would not be possible without the incredible support we've received from several generous donors who have continued to believe in us throughout this journey. As we move forward, with additional funding, we plan to expand our plan by implementing waterfront program support space, accessible trails and pathways, and outdoor play spaces. In this time of uncertainty in the world, watching this project come to life before our eyes has been a beacon of hope for all of us.

The support we've received, and continue to receive, extends far beyond this project. It is because of a community of individuals, partners, donors, and volunteers that we are able to make opportunities in nature accessible to all. Among that community is Helijet, who have been unwavering in their dedication to championing our mission. So, next time you walk off your Helijet flight and are greeted by one of the smiling faces on our banners and see the words *Everyone Belongs in Nature*, I hope you feel inspired and grateful for the hope and healing that nature can bring. **①** 





"If I had a flower for every time I thought of you...
I could walk through my garden forever."
- Alfred Tennyson

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# EXCEPTIONAL WORK ETHIC

ALVIN RAGANAS WAS only eight years old when his mother left home in 2003. Like many other Filipino women, she went abroad to work as a housekeeper, sending earnings home to help support her family of six. For the next five years Raganas attended school and worked alongside his father, brother and two sisters in the family's noodle factory in Manila. The next time Raganas saw his mother was in 2008 when she returned to the Philippines to collect her family and move them to Scarborough, Ontario.

"Mom left so she could give us a better life," says Raganas. "I saw how hard my parents worked for us, and I learned about giving back to family."

Raganas remembers the day he arrived in Canada:

"It was October 19, and it was cold! When we got to our apartment we ordered pizza to celebrate, but because delivery took longer than 30 minutes the order was free. Every year after that our family marked October 19 with a pizza party."

The move to Canada was an enormous culture shock for young Raganas, but he felt welcome in the community and soon made friends at school. He even got used to wearing a parka.

Upon graduating from high school Raganas attended Centennial College where he studied Hospitality Management. He fast-tracked the two-year program inside of one year, all the while working two jobs — one as a manager at McDonald's and another as night auditor at the Hilton Toronto/Markham.

# "Work allows us to reach our goals in life."

#### **Calvin Raganas**

Helijet's Lead Ramp Services Agent in Victoria

After graduating in 2015 he moved to B.C. to work as a night auditor at the Double-Tree by Hilton in Victoria. The following year he was hired as a bell-man at the Hotel Grand Pacific, while also working part-time at Red Barn Market. In February 2018 he accepted a full-time position with Helijet as a Passenger Services Agent (PSA). Two years later he moved over to the Cargo Department to work as a Ramp Services Agent (RSA), and was then promoted to Lead RSA in Victoria in October 2020. Ever busy, he spends his days off from Helijet working as a bellman at the Delta Ocean Pointe Resort.

"I like to stay busy," says Raganas. "I learned the value of work from my parents."

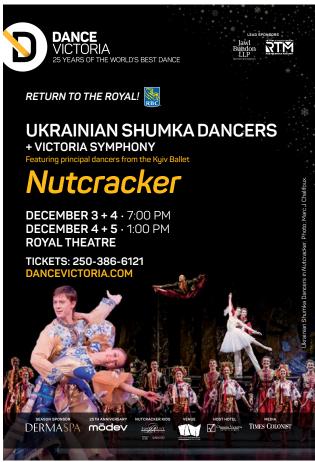
He notes that his wife, Anika, is like-minded; she also holds down two jobs.

"Work allows us to reach our goals in life. We both love to travel, experience new places, and try new foods."

Raganas finds work fulfilling in its own way, providing experiences, challenges and new goals to realize. Indeed, his biggest frustration at work over the past year has been the overall decrease in activity due to pandemic-related travel restrictions, but he looks forward to flight schedules returning to normal as people begin travelling again.

"I like the steady year-round employment and variety of work available to me at Helijet," says Raganas. "I enjoy heliport operations — working outside, fuelling and loading aircraft throughout the day. In between flights I'm able to help out with company IT issues." He adds, "I enjoy the corporate culture and the work-life balance the company provides, and I look forward to staying with Helijet long-term, progressing within the organization."





#### VANCOUVER FRINGE FESTIVAL

#### **SEPTEMBER 9-19: VANCOUVER & STREAMING**

Building on the success of last year's Mini-Fringes, this year's Vancouver Fringe Festival will be a hybrid event with 15 in-person shows, two livestream shows and more than a dozen pre-recorded digital shows. Carrying on the tradition of celebrating theatre for everyone, the 2021 festival theme is "Renewal!" with live performances taking place at four Granville Island venues. **vancouverfringe.com** 

#### **HSBC WORLD RUGBY SEVENS**

#### **SEPTEMBER 18-19: VANCOUVER**

Rugby fans rejoice! The World Rugby Sevens Series 2021 will return to BC Place this September with both a men's event and a women's fast-four tournament. Players will head to Edmonton the following weekend for the continuation of this season's truncated world circuit, which includes just five men's rounds and two women's rounds. **canadasevens.com** 

Photo: Tourism Vancouver / Vision Event Photography Inc



### CONCORD PACIFIC DRAGON BOAT FESTIVAL

#### **SEPTEMBER 18-26: VANCOUVER**

Dragon boat racing got its start in Canada during Expo 86 when the government of Hong Kong gifted six teak dragon boats to the city of Vancouver in the spirit of sport, harmony, cultural understanding and friendship — themes that seem more relevant today than ever. Usually held in June, this year's festival will take place end of September and will feature cultural programming, exhibits, performances and a weekend of exciting dragon boat races.

#### concorddragonboatfestival.ca

## 40TH ANNIVERSARY VANCOUVER INTERNATIONAL FILM FESTIVAL

#### **OCTOBER 1-11: VANCOUVER & STREAMING**

VIFF will celebrate its ruby anniversary by doing what it does best: mining and showcasing exceptional international and Canadian cinematic gems. This year, films will be screened at the beautifully renovated VIFF Centre, other partner theatres and on the festival's streaming platform, VIFF Connect. Running October 8-10, the VIFF AMP Summit explores the essential role of music in film and will feature opening and closing keynotes from multiplatinum record producer and songwriter Linda Perry and five-time Emmy winning composer Laura Karpman. viff.org

#### YOKO ONO: GROWING FREEDOM

**OCTOBER 9, 2021 - MAY 1, 2022: VANCOUVER** 

This major exhibition at the Vancouver Art Gallery is organized in two parts. The first emphasizes Ono's radical approach to art, in which she invites and instructs the viewer into the artistic process and by doing so thwarts the conventions of the art market. The second part presents collaborative peace projects undertaken by Ono and her late husband John Lennon, including their legendary *Bed-Ins for Peace* from 1969. vanartgallery.bc.ca

#### **VANCOUVER FALL HOME SHOW**

**OCTOBER 14-17: VANCOUVER** 

Whether you're looking to simply refresh or completely rebuild, the Vancouver Fall Home Show is a good place to start. Returning to the Vancouver Convention Centre West Building, local exhibitors at this year's tradeshow can assist with everything from appliances and electronics, to landscaping and construction management. vancouverfallhomeshow.com



### VANCOUVER WHITECAPS VS. SEATTLE SOUNDERS

**NOVEMBER 7: VANCOUVER** 

Cheer on the Vancouver Whitecaps for the last game of the regular 2021 Major League Soccer season as they kick-off against the Seattle Sounders at BC Place Stadium. whitecapsfc.com



## THE LEGENDARY GORDON LIGHTFOOT IN CONCERT

**NOVEMBER 12 & 14: VICTORIA & NANAIMO** 

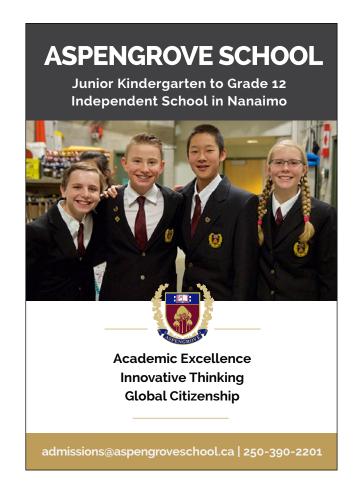
Beloved by music fans around the world, Gordon Lightfoot is recognized as one of the most prolific songwriters to emerge from the 1960s and 1970s. Now in his early 80s (he'll celebrate his 83rd birthday on November 17), Lightfoot is still writing new music and touring, making stops this time at the Royal Theatre in Victoria and the Port Theatre in Nanaimo to highlight the release of his brand-new studio album *SOLO*. **rmts.bc.ca & porttheatre.com** 

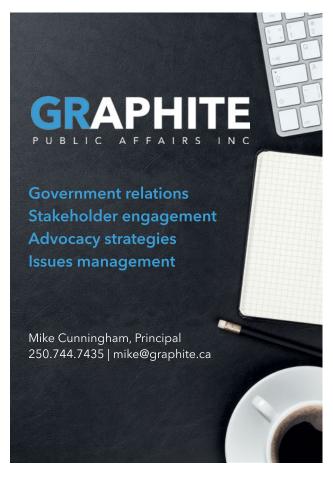
# Save the date! VICTORIA DANCE PRESENTS UKRAINIAN SHUMKA DANCERS' NUTCRAKER

**DECEMBER 3-5: VICTORIA** 

Returning live to Victoria's Royal Theatre, this year's performance of the *Nutcracker* will combine the grace of classical movement with the power of Ukrainian folk and character dance. Those who missed the annual tradition of attending this beloved Christmas performance will want to purchase their tickets as soon as early bird sales open on September 15.

dancevictoria.com





# GOING the DISTANCE

DISCOVER B.C.'S ONE-OF-A-KIND BALD EAGLE MIGRATION



Every fall like clockwork, thousands of bald eagles make their way south to the tiny community of Harrison Mills, where the Harrison and Fraser Rivers meet. Drawn by warmer climates and an all-you-can-eat buffet of salmon, this annual migration stop is the largest winter gathering of bald eagles in the world.

Scientists estimate that some 500 breeding pairs of bald eagles call the Lower Fraser Valley home year-round, but as late fall turns to early winter, the local bird population is joined by thousands of migrating eagles who have travelled south from Alaska, the Yukon and northern B.C. in search of a good meal. By mid-December, this kitchen party can swell to as many as 7,500 hungry bald eagles, making it the largest gathering of its kind.

#### A journey borne of necessity

"Coastal B.C. has a really great breeding population," says Gillian Radcliffe, a wildlife ecologist and founder of The Raptors, an educational and wildlife management centre in Duncan. "But in the fall, as lakes and rivers freeze over in the North, bald eagles tend to move south from river to river to find the salmon they need to survive."

It's a long commute, Radcliffe says, but for these mighty giants a relatively easy one.

Adult bald eagles, otherwise known by the scientific name *Haliaeetus leucocephalus*, are typically about one metre in length, head to toe, with a wingspan twice as wide. It's this incredible wingspan that allows bald eagles to fly as high as 3,000 metres, soaring on rising columns of air known as thermals as they glide southwards searching for food.

By the time they reach the Lower Fraser Valley, migrating eagles have travelled 1,600 to 2,400 kilometres, making various stops along the way to hunt,



socialize and rest. Some will carry on to Washington and Oregon, but many will make their final pit stop along the Harrison River, considered one of the most significant rivers in North America for its abundant and diverse salmon.

#### It all starts with the salmon

"The Harrison River is one of Canada's most productive salmon rivers and is home to all five salmon species, which benefit from unique physical and behavioral traits that have helped them better adapt to climate change," says Jason Hwang, vice president of salmon at the Pacific Salmon Foundation.

"The abundance and diversity of these salmon benefits various resident wildlife there, including the famous population of bald eagles," he notes. "Wintering eagles will gorge on salmon, but the salmon that don't become meals will rot, depositing nutrients back into the ecosystem along with the by-products eagles and other predators leave behind. All of this fertilizer nourishes vegetation along streams, keeping water cool and clean for the fish. It's a symbiotic system that starts with salmon!"

Opportunistic feeders that they are, bald eagles are more than happy to eat the carcasses of spawned out salmon, but their plumage also gives them a distinct advantage when going after live fish: their white heads and tails break up their silhouette making it difficult for salmon to see them coming.

#### **Enraptured by raptors**

The word raptor comes from the Latin *rapere*, which means to seize or plunder — an apt description for these carnivorous birds. And, like all members of the raptor family, bald eagles sport three additional "tools" essential for hunting success: sharp powerful talons, incredibly keen eyesight and strong hooked beaks.

Although bald eagles are not the apex hunters of raptors (those would be the golden eagles), nor the fastest fliers (that claim of fame goes to peregrine falcons), they hold the title for largest nest builders. Breeding pairs mate for life and have been known to build nests up to three metres wide and six metres deep. Incredibly, the largest bald eagle nest ever recorded weighed over 2.5 tons — more than a Volkswagen Beetle car.

Typically, eaglets start to hop around the nest at two months old and by three months they are fully grown and ready to fly on their own. Within weeks, the parents will abandon the eaglets to leave for migration, expecting their young to follow suit on their own.

It takes about five years for bald eagles to acquire their distinctive adult plumage and yellow beaks, making the young ones sometimes more challenging for novice birdwatchers to identify.

"For the first year, young eagles are dark all over," says Radcliffe, "but they have longer primary feathers than adults, which actually makes them look larger." In the second year the wing shape starts to change and over the next several years brown feathers are replaced by white ones and the dark beaks of juveniles transition to the recognizable bright yellow beaks of adults.

Come late January and early February, single eagles and mating pairs will journey back to their original nesting grounds and the cycle will begin again.

#### Make a day of it

Grab a pair of binoculars and one of these day-trip itineraries for prime bald eagle viewing opportunities.

#### **Fraser Valley**

Head east on Lougheed Highway 7 towards Maple Ridge and you'll soon discover why this stretch of road is fondly known as the "Scenic 7." It's a 90-minute drive through Maple Ridge, Mission and



beautiful farmland to get to Harrison Mills, deep in the heart of "Sasquatch Country."

A left turn onto Morris Valley Road will soon lead you to **Sandpiper Golf Resort** where a riverside trail, viewing bridge and waterfront gazebo provide panoramic vistas of eagle feeding and resting grounds at the edge of the Chehalis Flats Bald Eagle and Salmon Preserve.

Grab a bite to eat at the River's Edge Clubhouse Restaurant before heading to the park and dike just below the Kilby Historic Site for more eagle viewing spots, or take a Fraser River Safari, popular for its knowledgeable guides and heated boats.

#### **Brackendale, North of Squamish**

The Squamish River Valley has long been recognized as a critical habitat for wintering bald eagles and is an easy one-hour trip from Vancouver. Just past Squamish on the Sea-to-Sky Highway, take Exit 99 at Garibaldi Way into Brackendale and head north on Government Road. You'll soon find the **Eagle Run Viewing Shelter** to your left with covered seating, informational signs about bird watching and fantastic views of eagle activity along the river. A gravel path hugging the riverbank makes for an easy birdwatching stroll and the **WaterShed Grill** is a great place to stop along the way for a burger, beer and unobstructed views.

#### **Vancouver Island**

Every October, thousands of Chum salmon return to Goldstream River in search of a spot to spawn and eventually die. By early December, the riverbed has transitioned to a feasting ground for hundreds of bald eagles eager to grab a ready-to-eat meal.

Just 20 minutes from downtown Victoria, the riverside trails and observations platforms at **Goldstream Provincial Park's** day-use area provide vantage points to watch eagles swoop down from the trees above. For best viewing conditions plan to arrive at low tide, when the salmon are exposed and the bald eagles are most active.

From Goldstream Park, make a stop at the newly opened Malahat SkyWalk for soaring views over Finlayson Arm before proceeding 30 minutes north to The Raptors in Duncan. Here you'll discover a one-of-a-kind opportunity to get up close and handson with a wide variety of hawks, falcons, owls and eagles. Learn how raptors and their handlers play a part in wildlife management at landfills, industrial sites and airports, including our very own Vancouver International Airport. If you're lucky, Hercules, an eight-year-old bald eagle, will swoop by during one of the flying demonstrations, showing off his impressive fishing skills and piercing stare. ①

# George Kane Straith

(1955 - 2021)

BY GARTH EICHEL

Andrews Square in Downtown Victoria you may notice a business sign denoting Kane Straith Clothing. Behind the heavy glass door entrance of this remarkable store is a luxury man cave brimming with colourful designer clothes and accoutrements, most of which are hand-made and European in origin. Every inch of the store is stocked floor-to ceiling with the finest men's suits, shirts, pants, shoes, ties, socks, housecoats, cufflinks, colognes and more. It is worth visiting if only to enjoy the visual experience. Better still was the great pleasure of visiting with the owner and founder, Kane Straith.

I first met Kane in 2014 when my wife encouraged me to brighten my wardrobe with colour and quality. What was intended to be a quick purchase of a couple shirts turned into an afternoon-long personalized shopping experience, which evolved into a friendship and a business relationship. (When Kane learned I published Helijet's inflight magazine he recognized an opportunity to reach new and existing customers. He booked an ad in the Summer 2014 edition and became a regular advertiser.)

Kane was a modest man, but as we got to know each other he occasionally revealed fascinating snippets of his rich and varied life. I learned he was an avid rugby player in his day, and he did a stint as a deep-sea fishing guide in Maui. He also competed in the Hawaii Iron Man Triathlon. But what struck me most was how he got his start in business, and his dedication to tailoring.

George Kane Straith came from a long line of tailors. His grandfather, George Straith, founded a men's fine

"The only man who behaved sensibly was my tailor: he took my measure anew every time he saw me, whilst all the rest went on with their old measurements and expected them to fit me."

- George Bernard Shaw



clothing store on Douglas Street in Victoria in 1917. The store moved to a larger location on Government Street in the 1940s, where it was run by Kane's father, George Straith Jr., until it was sold in 1993.

When Kane expressed an interest in the family business, he followed his father's advice and travelled to Europe to work in the finest clothing factories in England and Italy. He worked for free just to learn the trade – how to measure and cut quality fabrics to produce an exceptional garment. He was inspired by the handwork, attention to detail and passion of the best tailors, and the service they provided their clientele.

Kane eventually carried on the family tradition with his brothers Larry, Troy and Dean, opening a men's clothing store in the Hotel Vancouver in 1986. He returned to Victoria in the early 90s to work in his parents' store, and in the early 2000s he put out his own shingle. Over time he developed a loyal following of repeat customers who valued his talent and wares as much as his gregarious character.

When Kane's health faltered, two of his sons, Manny and Adam, moved to Victoria to help run the business and take over when the time came. Now that time has come. While he will be dearly missed by friends, family and customers, his spirit and reputation live on in the family business.



# **En Route with Helijet**

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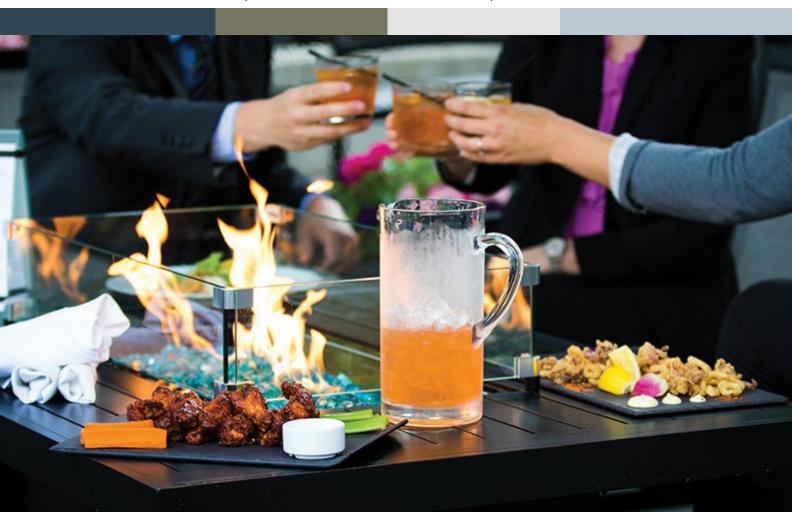
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