



Richard and Jenny

THE HEALING POWER OF MUSIC: RICHARD'S REFLECTION

Richard is one of our residents at Vancouver Hospice Society, and his journey with music therapy has become a reminder of how profoundly healing music can be. When he first joined the sessions, he admits he felt a little unsure of what to expect. "I thought it might be something formal, maybe even a bit boring," he shared with a smile. But what he found was something entirely different, a space that helped him reconnect with life, joy, and beauty in ways he had not imagined.

Through music therapy, Richard discovered a renewed relationship with sound, rhythm, and emotion. "It has allowed me to open up, to let go, and not be afraid," he said. "It has become a place where I have come to live, to enjoy, and to be enthused about life again."

At Vancouver Hospice, there are two types of music therapy sessions. Individual sessions offer a private space where the music therapist works one on one with a resident. Monthly group sessions take place in our family room, and everyone is welcome to join.

Music therapy has also helped Richard shift his focus away from illness and toward living. "It puts this thing called cancer in the background," he reflected. "I am living with it, but I am living. I am enjoying. And I see the beauty in things. I cannot think of life and beauty without the music."

Richard's words remind us how deeply music can reach into the heart and offer comfort, connection, and joy. A special bond grows between the therapist and the participant. A bond that transcends music and time.

We are profoundly grateful to Music Heals for their generous patronage, and to all of our donors who make music therapy possible for the residents of Vancouver Hospice. We also extend our heartfelt thanks to our gifted music therapists Jenny Gilmour and Josh Denny Keys for the compassion, creativity, and joy they bring to every session. Their work continues to fill our home with warmth, melody, and moments of light that truly touch the soul.

*"It has changed me. It has made me feel more at ease,
less afraid, less intimidated by life." – Richard*



VanDusen Botanical Garden

A GROWING PARTNERSHIP WITH VANDUSEN BOTANICAL GARDEN

The garden, she explained, has become a gentle companion through her grief. “There’s an incredible diversity of tone and atmosphere,” she said. “I can choose the area that best suits whatever emotions I bring to the moment. It has space for my shifts in emotion as I process the layers of grief, appreciation, and hope that arise.”

Sometimes, M.B. seeks solitude among forested paths where she can listen to rustling leaves, trickling water, and birdsong. Other times, she finds comfort in sitting near families laughing in the sun or wandering areas filled with plants from her loved one’s homeland. Each visit offers something different, a sense of connection, remembrance, and peace.

“The garden has become part of my healing journey,” she reflected. “It is an emotionally safe space where I can honour those who passed and make sense of my personal forward journey.”

We are deeply thankful to VanDusen Botanical Garden and the Garden Respite Fund for making this partnership possible. Your generosity helps bring the healing power of nature to those who need it most.

To learn more, please visit:
vandusengarden.org/funded-programs/

“The sessions bring up many important thoughts and emotions that I need time and space to sift through,” she shared. “Having a buffer space before I re-enter my daily routines has been an incredible gift.” - M.B.

INTRODUCING REY NASON

We are delighted to welcome Rey Nason, our new Operations Director, to the team. Rey brings extensive experience in health care and human resources, guided by a leadership style that combines strategic thinking with compassion.

Throughout her career, Rey has led teams of many sizes, from small groups to departments of more than seventy people, always fostering collaboration and resilience. She played a key role in introducing an electronic call-out system that improved shift coverage for a large unionized workforce and successfully guided Providence Health Care’s staffing operations through the many challenges of COVID-19 across both acute and long-term care settings.

Rey is dedicated to creating positive change and supporting her teams with integrity, empathy, and a strong commitment to excellence. We are very happy to have her join our hospice community and look forward to the care and leadership she will bring to our organization.



Rey Nason

REFLECTIONS FROM THE 2025 CHPCA CONFERENCE

The 2025 Canadian Hospice Palliative Care Association Conference in Nanaimo brought together palliative care professionals from across the country and offered a powerful reminder of the shared commitment that guides this work. For our Vancouver Hospice Society team, the experience was both energizing and deeply affirming.

The conference emphasized the importance of staying connected, learning from one another and breaking down the silos that still exist in the wider health care system. A standout moment was the plenary session Fifty Years of Hospice Palliative Care in Canada with Dr. John Fraser Scott, Sharon Baxter and Wendy Wainwright. The discussion explored the early development of palliative care, celebrated the work of Dr. Balfour Mount and encouraged all of us to look ahead with curiosity and determination as the field continues to evolve.

Learning with Dr. Holly Prince was another meaningful experience. Her work supporting Indigenous communities and community caregivers offered thoughtful guidance on collaboration and shared leadership, along with resources being developed at Lakehead University. Her teachings encouraged deeper reflection on how we can support Indigenous communities with respect and care.

Our team was proud to contribute to the conference program. Executive Director Sarah Cobb and Consultant Arndt Klos presented the vision and process behind our rebranding and reflected on how a renewed identity strengthens our connection to the community. Jenny Gilmour, our music therapist, shared the impact of music therapy in supporting emotional expression, connection and comfort.



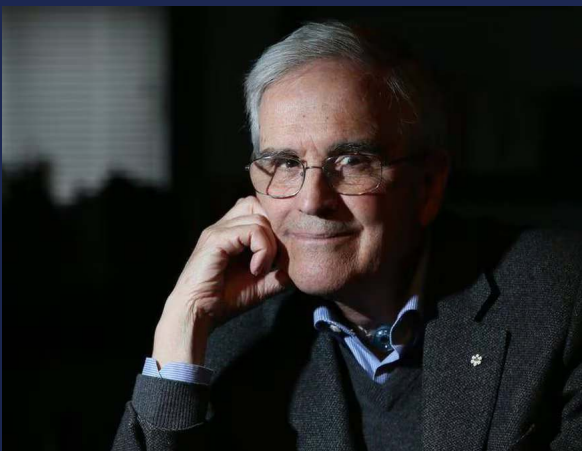
Kayla, Jenny, Bev (not pictured: Sarah, Arndt, Andrea)

Kayla Hochfelder, head of our counselling department, highlighted the evolution of our bereavement and family support programs and the importance of meeting families where they are in their grief journeys. Our social worker, Bev Nolan, spoke about our public grief events and music socials at the hospice, which foster community connection and shared understanding.

Andrea Hernandez presented on a partnership that began in 2024 between the BC Centre for Palliative Care, the Carnegie Community Centre, the Vancouver Public Library, the Kilala Lelum Health Centre and the Community Death Care Project. The collaboration focuses on offering grief and bereavement programming for people in the Downtown Eastside.

Attending the conference strengthened our sense of purpose at Vancouver Hospice Society. The connections made with colleagues from across Canada affirmed the importance of continuing to be innovative, continuing to share what we learn and continuing to work closely together. Each encounter was a reminder of why this work matters and why our commitment to families and residents is so important.

The conference offered encouragement, inspiration and renewed motivation for the work we do every day. It reminded us that together we can continue to build a future where every person receives compassionate, thoughtful and dignified care at the end of life.



Dr. Balfour Mount (1939-2025)

HONOURING DR. BALFOUR MOUNT

We acknowledge with deep respect the passing of Dr. Balfour M. Mount, whose vision transformed the way we care for people at the end of life. Often called the father of palliative care in North America, he championed comfort, dignity and compassionate support for patients and families.

Dr. Balfour's work reshaped the culture of health care and reminded us that every stage of life deserves thoughtful and gentle attention. His influence continues to guide our values, our practices and our commitment to person centered care at Vancouver Hospice Society. We honour his remarkable legacy and the lasting impact he has made on hospice and palliative care. We extend our heartfelt condolences to his family and to all who continue to carry his vision forward.

FINDING CONNECTION THROUGH CREATIVITY

Patrick Hartney has been a volunteer with Vancouver Hospice Society for many years, bringing care, calm, and compassion to the bedside and beyond. Recently, he took part in a children's grief support program, an experience that deeply touched him.

During one of the sessions, children were invited to create name tags decorated with colours, textures, and symbols that reflected their emotions. As Patrick moved around the table, a young girl noticed his own name tag and asked if she could add something to it. She placed a small heart and tear shapes on his tag, symbols of the love she felt for the person she had lost and the sadness she and her family were still carrying.

"That is what is on this name tag," Patrick recalled. "The heart and the tears representing both her love and her grief."

In later sessions, the group worked with Jenny, the hospice music therapist, to turn words and feelings into music. Each child and family member wrote down a few words that expressed their experiences of loss. Jenny then transformed those words into a song, weaving them together into what Patrick called "a bit of music magic" that brought tears, grins, and a little laughter to everyone in the room.



Patrick Hartney

The final session involved a shared ritual of creation and remembrance. Jenny brought in an old guitar, and the adults were invited to step outside, collect something from the garden, and return to help decorate the instrument together. The result was a beautiful, nature inspired piece, a collective symbol of healing and memory.

Reflecting on the experience, Patrick said, "As the old saying goes, there is no clock ticking and no calendar moving on when it comes to grief and bereavement."

His story reminds us that healing takes its own time and that through creativity, community, and compassion, we can find gentle ways to honour love and loss.



Charlie and Michele

MEET CHARLIE AND MICHELE

Charlie is a friendly Bernedoodle who visits us once a week with his handler Michele. He brings a calm, loving presence to patients, families, and staff. Known for his gentle spirit and soulful eyes, Charlie is always happy to be petted, hugged, or simply sit quietly beside someone who needs comfort.

He's also very good at supervising snack time, sniffing out hidden treats, and making sure everyone stays on schedule for belly rubs. Apart from offering comfort and connection, Charlie is also a hard worker. He lifts spirits, breaks tension, and reminds everyone that joy can still be found in small, quiet ways. His presence brings peace to patients nearing end of life, and softens the day for families going through the unimaginable.

These are big jobs, but Charlie takes them all in stride. We are so grateful to Michele and Charlie for their time, love, and the comfort they bring each week through the Pets and Friends program.

To learn more, please visit petsandfriends.org

HOSPICE OPPORTUNITY BOUTIQUE STORES UPDATE – CONTRIBUTING TO COMMUNITY, SUSTAINABILITY, AND HOSPICE CARE

Thrift shopping has become much more than an alternative to traditional retail. At the HOB and HOB Too, it represents environmental responsibility, economic accessibility, and a strong sense of community. Every donated item and every purchase supports the Vancouver Hospice Society.

HOB and HOB Too each offer something distinct to our community. HOB specializes in gently used women's clothing, including everyday essentials, vintage finds, and upscale fashion. HOB Too focuses on collectibles and furniture, providing a curated selection of home décor, small furnishings, and unique pieces that support sustainable living. Together, the two stores create a full and thoughtful thrift experience for our shoppers while supporting the work of the Vancouver Hospice Society.

Thrifting carries many meaningful benefits. It reduces waste and helps curb fast fashion. It offers affordable access to unique and high quality pieces. It connects donors, volunteers, shoppers, and partner charities, since items that cannot be sold in the store are passed along to the Downtown Eastside Women's Centre or the Salvation Army. Above all, it is a simple way for individuals to support hospice care and the values of responsible consumerism.

This past year marked a major transition as both stores adopted the Square Point of Sale system. More than one hundred volunteers were trained using a train the trainer approach. Square now provides real time data on customer flow, peak hours, and sales trends, which helps guide our work both at the till and behind the scenes. It has also made end of day reconciliation much easier.

Thrifting continues to grow in popularity, and the HOB and HOB Too remain mindful of rising competition, especially with new thrift stores opening nearby. Our priority is to offer outstanding customer service while engaging the diverse groups who shop second hand, including budget conscious families, fashion lovers, eco minded buyers, and younger shoppers such as millennials and generation Z.

Both stores are always exploring meaningful ways to engage with the broader community. This may include more pop-up events or new partnerships with local organizations. As Vancouver Hospice Society continues to expand with the addition of Cottage Hospice, we remain committed to increasing the support we provide. We extend our heartfelt gratitude to our volunteers and donors whose generosity and dedication make our work possible.

"Volunteers do not just do the work; they make it work." – Carol Pettit



