



Local Montagnard women in traditional dress are joined by advocates Kara Ardan (second from left) and Haley Howe (far right), two of the founders of Eka Cooperative, a community service based in Hastings Sunrise. Below right, Montagnard members of the Highland Gong Society perform sacred music and dances at local festivals.

## Montagnards Find a Home

They may have come from Vietnam, but the 150 Montagnard refugees in East Vancouver want you to know that they are not “Vietnamese” – and they have found a champion in Hastings Sunrise resident Kara Ardan.

Montagnards is the name given to a group of peoples from 30 different tribal groups from the central highlands of Vietnam. Although they speak different languages, their languages have more in common with each other (and Malayo-Polynesian) than Vietnamese.

“Their cultural practices are also more similar to each other and they came together for a peaceful prayer vigil to protect their sacred lands,” said Kara.

“Given their struggle to protect their indigenous lands and the continued oppression by the Vietnamese government, and imprisonment of those who speak out against injustices, many Montagnard fled the violence seeking asylum, no longer able to maintain their traditional ways of life,” she said.

Rather than continue to live in fear and oppression, many have become refugees. Their transition from Vietnam to Canada, however, has been particularly difficult.

Not enough was known about them when the Canadian government agreed to admit them, and they were resettled as if they were Vietnamese. Not only were they unable to communicate with their guide to their new home, the person had the face of their oppressor.

Being housed together certainly helped them feel more at home. However, given their experience with the Vietnamese police harassing, arresting, and beating them if they are in groups larger than three, once they arrived in Canada, they would rarely venture out in groups. If they got lost in their strange new city, they were afraid to seek help from the police.

Enter Kara Ardan, a resident of Hastings-Sunrise who, together with Ashley Arden and Haley Howe, co-founded Eka Co-Cultured Communities Cooperative, a non-profit service that has worked as an advocate on behalf of the Montagnards.

Kara has also worked diligently to lessen anxieties caused by years of oppression. Knowing that the Montagnards fear the police, Kara approached Clair MacGougan, HSCPC Executive Director/Coordinator, for help.

Clair took the time to visit and talk to them about Canadian police officers and the role of Community Policing Centres in Vancouver. Four or five meetings later



trust in and a connection to the policing community was formed. Clair also helped put them in touch with Vancouver Police Department representatives, VAST – the Vancouver Association for Survivors of Torture, which offers vital support and counseling services for them – the Collingwood Community Policing Centre, and Collingwood Neighbourhood House.

Eka has been their liaison with the Collingwood Neighbourhood House, helping the Montagnards access vital resettlement services, including ESL classes. Through the Neighbourhood House, cultural sharing opportunities with the Gitksan have been possible and both cultures have found they share a talent for weaving.

Currently, Eka co-founder Ashley Arden is working on setting up a weaving cooperative to help the women with small

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## Volunteer Profile:

# Building a Better Community



Brenda Penton

Volunteering comes easy for Brenda Penton, a 10-year veteran with the Hastings Sunrise CPC and its current president.

“I come from a long line of community-minded people,” she says. “My father was known as ‘the unofficial ombudsman of Brandon’.”

From her childhood in Manitoba to her life here as a wife and mother of two, Brenda has played an active role in her community.

In Vancouver, she started by volunteering at her children’s school, Hastings Elementary. Next came participation in the school’s PAC – Parent Advisory Council – which led her into an advisory group formed to fight cuts to school funding.

“We did that for 10 years, advocating for funding for inner city schools,” she says. “We had a few successes. Volunteering at an inner city school led naturally into fundraising.”

A highlight was the VanTech Seat Sale. Brenda and her PAC partner, Annie Ehman, helped raise over \$90,000 for the renovated Vancouver Technical School auditorium by affixing donor plaques with personalized messages on seats for each \$250 donated. “There are still seats that can use plaques!”

Other involvements include the Hastings East Community Programs Society, which supports out-of-school programs run by the Templeton Community School Team, and CLICK (Contributing to Lives of Inner City Kids) which raises funds for programs in Vancouver’s inner city.

Brenda’s energy, reliability and organizational skills have played a big role in the HSCPC’s success over the past decade.

“She’s not just the president,” says HSCPC executive director Clair MacGougan. “She’s been a major contributor in so many ways. She’s very involved, she helps us organize events, she’s always there when

we need her – Brenda is an absolutely vital part of our organization right now.”

“I’ve been fortunate to have a job where I work only about two hours a day,” says Brenda. “That means I can be available in the daytime, when a lot of volunteering is needed.”

“I call myself a professional volunteer. Instead of working -- I volunteer!”

Her peers describe her as a person who will go above and beyond for the community, humble yet tenacious, passionate and dependable.

But Brenda is quick to say how much she benefits from volunteering at the HSCPC.

“You find out what’s going on, you get to meet lots of people, you can get outside your comfort zone. You also get the opportunity to learn new skills in a safe environment,” she says.

“Now in the neighbourhood it’s almost like living in a small town – you know so many people!”

## Don't Be a Victim - Read the Book!

The next time a fraudster tries to con you online, by mail, door-to-door or by phone, you can throw the book at them.

It is called *The Little Black Book of Scams*, a federal government publication that can be your best defence against con artists who typically target the lonely, the trusting, the elderly and the desperate.

The free 30-page booklet is packed with examples of scams ranging from phony lotteries and charities to pyramid schemes and internet scams.

It shows how to tell when someone is trying to scam you, what to do next – and how to reduce the damage if you become a victim of fraud.

Some are get-rich-quick schemes that target the greedy and gullible: remember, if it sounds too good to be true, it probably isn't.

But a particularly nasty scam preys on trusting seniors, often grandparents who receive a phone call from someone pretending to be one of their grandchildren who needs money to deal with an emergency.

The book offers an ingenious solution to anyone who gets such a call: ask the caller questions that only your loved one would be able to answer, to see if he really is who he says he is.

There is more excellent advice throughout the booklet.

The average victim of fraud in 2011 lost more than \$4,500, according to the Canadian Anti-Fraud Centre.

“Scammers target people of all backgrounds, ages and income levels,” warns the booklet. “They know how to push your buttons to produce the response they want.”

You can obtain a paper copy by phoning the Competition Bureau Canada at 1-800-348-5358 (toll-free). A PDF copy can be downloaded from the bureau’s website at:

[www.competitionbureau.gc.ca](http://www.competitionbureau.gc.ca).

■ Chester Grant



# Plastic Money Harder to Counterfeit

No longer does “paying with plastic” refer solely to using your credit card.

In an effort to shift to more durable, though expensive, currency, the Bank of Canada has started introducing new polymer bank notes into circulation. \$100 and \$50 bills are already out in the field. \$20 bills will be entered into circulation starting in November this year while \$10 and \$5 bills will follow in just over a year’s time.

The new notes feature plenty of security features that should make them harder to counterfeit. These include:

- Raised ink on the words BANK OF CANADA and BANQUE DU CANADA
- Dashes on the left side of the note that become a solid line when held to the light
- A ghost image that appears in the center of the bill when held up in the light
- Irregular marks on the front and back of the bill that form a complete number when held in the light
- Numbers and maple leaves on the side that change colour when the bill is tilted back and forth.

The bills are expected to last at least 2 ½ times longer than the current paper money in circulation. A paper note is currently in circulation for around seven years.

Compared to the 3,000 paper notes that were returned in damaged condition each year, only 197 of the new notes had been returned as damaged as of early July. Note that the more common \$20, \$10 and \$5 bills haven’t been introduced so that figure should increase fairly substantially once they hit the market.

Heat has been a problem for the new bills. The Bank of Canada has maintained the bills can withstand temperatures up to 140 degrees Celsius without melting. However, there have been some reports across the country – Kelowna, B.C., and Cambridge, Ont., - of the notes melting in extreme heat.

Here in Vancouver it shouldn’t be a problem but leaving the notes in your car on a particularly hot day might see you return to a shriveled mess of money.

The new polymer notes are also a bit stickier than the older paper money, though that might change as they see more use.

Despite these few issues, and some resistance to this new “funny money,” these notes should be welcomed by merchants as they are harder to counterfeit and last much longer.

■ Bryce McRae

Continued from page 1, Montagnards...

children earn an income and pass along cultural traditions. Through dialogues with the Montagnards, their service providers, their political representatives, concerned community members, and others she is helping give them a voice in their own integration with Canada.

As advocates, the Eka staff helps the Montagnards’ transition into Canadian life. They minimize problems due to the language barrier, working with their sole translator to fill out government documents, get the health care they require, and educate them on dietary issues that arise given the vastly different foods that form the average Canadian diet.

Liaising with government organizations is an important part of Eka’s work. There remains a lot of red tape for the Montagnards to go through upon their arrival, including filling out the requisite applications to bring family members to Canada. Eka has launched an investigation with the Canadian Ministry of Foreign Affairs regarding the tragic death of a Montagnard father in Vietnam in August. He had returned to Vietnam to visit his wife whose reunification application was denied.

However, through educating the public about the Montagnards, Kara has helped them with the fundamental problem of identity. They want us to know who they are. When they were told about this article, they were happy someone was letting the larger community know about them. Our recognition of who they are will help give the Montagnards the sense of belonging taken from them in Vietnam.

For more information on EKA, please see their website: [www.eka.coop](http://www.eka.coop).

■ Luella Iwasiuk

# Sunrise Summer Kickoff Thanks Our Sponsors!



Chief Constable Jim Chu of the Vancouver Police Department welcomed young street hockey players to the annual Sunrise Summer Kickoff, held in early July. About 2,500 people attended the annual festival put on by the Hastings Sunrise CPC and Hastings North Business Improvement Association.



## This Issue

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## Community Displays

- |                   |                        |
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| Kids Help Phone   | Vancouver Giants       |
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| Life Supply       | VPL                    |

## Save the Date!

**Sunday Nov. 18 – It's the annual Big Day with the Vancouver Giants !**

**Community event with food and refreshments from 1pm, WHL Junior hockey action at 4pm.**

**Advance tickets only \$16 (save \$6!). Partial proceeds go to Hastings East Community Programs Society and Hastings Sunrise CPC.**

**For tickets call: 604-717-3584 or email: info@hscpc.com**

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