



BEYOND THE CALL

CELEBRATING OUTSTANDING ACHIEVEMENTS OF THE MEN AND WOMEN OF THE VPD

VANCOUVER POLICE DEPARTMENT

VOLUME 1 | NUMBER 1 | APRIL 20, 2005



Constable Al Arsenault before the transformation.

High Risk Sting Operation Saves Seniors from Attacks

Undercover constable survives a knife at his throat



Constable Arsenault in his "old man" disguise.

CONSTABLE AL ARSENAULT HAS SEEN A LOT in his 26 years of patrolling Vancouver's toughest streets, but he says that what he saw on his video monitor on an August night last year, "made my blood boil."

Al and his partner Toby Hinton had just received videotape shot by one of the residents of the Downtown Eastside, known across the country as Canada's poorest postal zone. It's a community plagued with drug dealers, addicts, thieves and pimps. It's a place where the strong routinely prey on the weak, but this time

their cowardly actions were caught on tape.

Al and Toby watched the action caught from a second storey window over an alley, where a group of thugs had surrounded a senior citizen who appeared disoriented and vulnerable. They appeared to taunt him; one sprang out of the circle delivering a devastating elbow blow to the old man's face that dropped him to his knees. The group swarmed him, kicking, punching and robbing him of what little he had. One of the thugs was a woman who seemed to take particular delight in her work.

There were other attacks on other victims also caught on tape and it was apparent that it was going to take more than traditional police work to solve these crimes. Even though the faces on the tape were familiar to the police, the victims, for a variety of reasons, were not going to make formal complaints.

"We didn't want to stir up the area and let them know they had been filmed," said Constable Arsenault. "We had to catch them in the act, but we didn't want any other seniors at risk."

Instead, Al Arsenault decided to put himself at risk. He was going to disguise himself as a disabled senior and lay down in the alley waiting to be attacked. Toby and many other fellow officers would hide nearby to spring the trap.

"This sort of undercover operation is not normally done in Canada," said Constable Arsenault. "The danger to the decoy makes it rare."

Constable Arsenault is a far cry from a vulnerable senior. He is a veteran officer and a recognized martial arts expert, but in order to be convincing he would have to risk serious injury or death.

"If they hit me from behind or stabbed me when I was pretending to be asleep, I would never see the knife coming."

Despite the dangers he and his team pushed on. A make-up artist added twenty years to his appearance, a camera was concealed in his headgear and another recorded the action from a nearby observation post.

He entered the alley leaning on a cane. After pretending to smoke crack, he laid down in a doorway that would shelter his back from attack and closed his eyes pretending to sleep.

"I could hear them making their plans for me. I couldn't open my eyes, but I had my whole body braced, waiting to be kicked in the face. The woman came toward me. I could smell the crack on her breath and hear the knife in her hand. She had the knife near my throat as she sawed

through the strap on my bag."

As she tried to pull the bag away, Constable Arsenault began to struggle, which signalled the team to flood the alley. The drug dealers and thieves had no place to run. They were all charged with robbery and trafficking.

The video, which eventually played on every national newscast in Canada, showed the brutality of the attacks on the seniors and the knife an inch away from the neck of the police officer who risked his life to put an end to the attacks.

Policing Native Youth

A different approach BY CONSTABLE IAN BARRACLOUGH

CULTURE, CEREMONY AND TRADITIONS take centre stage, as police and Native youth build relationships paddling down British Columbia's mighty Fraser River.

It's four o'clock Sunday morning and a Native woman, doggedly determined to end her life, is lying down on Southwest Marine Drive. She is narrowly missed by traffic before police and paramedics arrive on the scene.

It was my last call of what had been a very busy Saturday night policing in Vancouver. Responding to emergency calls such as this had been my only experience with Canada's Aboriginal community since graduating as a constable earlier in the year. However, the start of my next shift, which was to last for seven days and seven nights and entail a water-borne journey upon an ancient highway over a hundred miles long was about to change all that.

On the eastern fringes of Vancouver's Lower Mainland lies Harrison Hot Springs, known to many of us as a tiny resort town nestled beside Harrison Lake. Fifty miles of tree-lined shores border the glacial waters that are fed from the snow-capped mountains of southwestern British Columbia. Tranquillity and serenity are still the order of the day here, especially when bubbling away in a hot spring pool, which is exactly what I was doing after sleeping off the exhilaration of my previous night's patrol.

A glance at my watch indicated that my squad-mates would be cruising city streets

again, responding to an unpredictable array of 911 calls. Tonight I would miss them, although my shift had also begun as I walked around the pool in swim shorts and acquainted myself with at-risk teenagers from various Native urban youth groups. Our mission for the next seven days and nights was to navigate the waters from the shores of Harrison Lake, down the Harrison River to the mighty Fraser River and reach the salt waters of the Pacific alongside Vancouver's Stanley Park.

Most of the Native youth that I was to share this adventure with were well known to police. Many had spiralled down at an early age into a life of crime, arguably the result of stark and impoverished family backgrounds, categorised by abuse and neglect; some barely had a chance to experience childhood. Robbed of their innocence, many had grown up all too fast into a society that they would barely acknowledge and that, tragically, would barely acknowledge them. The fine line between their world and ours is the thin blue line that they would regularly choose to cross, whatever the consequences. As dusk settled about our shores, the futile cat and mouse game that frequently characterized our relationship was almost magically transposed; we stepped onto a parallel plain that afforded us a precious opportunity to recognize and respect each other for the human qualities with which we are blessed.

continued on page 4



Murder on the Beat

Street cops give homicide detectives the edge

WITH TEMPERATURES CLIMBING on a hot summer's day in Vancouver's notorious Downtown Eastside, tempers flared as two men fought near a pond in Livingstone Park. A fatal stab wound put an end to the fight and an end to the life of 39-year-old Guy Marquis.

Two beat cops were among the first to arrive at the scene: Constable Ryan Masales, who has three years on the job and Constable Duane Vanbeek, with two years experience. Both of these officers are assigned to the City Wide Enforcement Team, a dedicated unit assigned exclusively to this high crime neighbourhood.

With assistance arriving to control the situation, the pair followed a blood trail that led them to a highly agitated group of onlookers. Constable Masales' knowledge of his beat was so extensive that he could identify Guy Marquis' girlfriend in the crowd. His partner took her to a secluded place of safety where she described the other man in the fight, as well as his girlfriend, "Rebecca", who was apparently celebrating her birthday that day. With that description, Constable Masales' beat knowledge paid off once again.



Constable Duane Vanbeek and Constable Ryan Masales use computer data banks to catch a murderer.

He uncovered Rebecca's last name and, armed with her birthday, checked it against police computer data banks, which revealed the name of her boyfriend. His description matched that given by the victim's girlfriend. From his time on the beat, Constable Masales knew that the murderer and his girlfriend were locals in the Downtown Eastside, involved in many acts of

violence, strong-arming and thefts.

The two beat cops passed the information to homicide detectives and the search was on. They eventually found Rebecca and followed her to her boyfriend. When they arrested him he tried to ditch a knife. He was also wearing a heavily blood-stained jacket. Two days

after the fight in the park, Eric Miskimack was charged with second degree murder.

While it is clear that technology and computers played a key role in the investigation, it is also clear that nothing will ever be more effective in solving crimes than the street knowledge acquired by a good beat cop.

Foot Chase Through Yards and Alleys Nabs Armed Killer

Officers ignore the risk to make the arrest

WHILE THE VERY NATURE OF OUR ROLE as police officers carries with it an often high element of risk, there are times when that risk turns into extreme danger. That's what these officers faced on May 2, 2004, when they found themselves chasing a desperate man with a gun who had just shot and killed another man.

When the early morning call came in that a man had been shot in the chest at 1495 Venables, Sergeant Pellizzari and his team moved in to contain the scene. But the situation quickly changed when a man with a gun bolted from the building. Sergeant Pellizzari and Constable Machiuk reacted immediately by giving chase on foot. Constables Marsh and Hill joined the chase, cornering the suspect at gunpoint in an alley, but once again the suspected killer broke and ran. The officers now split up, as the chase raced between houses and yards. It ended abruptly when the man ran into an area confined by a retaining wall. Police later recovered a gun he had thrown away.

Two other officers who had joined the chase, Constables Mah and Giese, held the man at gunpoint, taking him into custody without incident.

Sergeant Pellizzari said, "It was a pretty tense time, as a couple of officers had to draw down on the guy who kept running. It was a great job by everyone that was involved. Everyone was feeling pretty good, as it isn't everyday one gets to arrest a murder suspect on view like we did that day."

All these officers put themselves in extreme danger without hesitation. Their actions, the pursuit and the arrest were all performed in a professional and textbook manner.

Because of their exemplary skills and courage, these officers were all awarded the Chief Constable's Commendation. Their actions are in keeping with the highest traditions of policing and reflect great honour on themselves, their colleagues and the Vancouver Police Department.



Chief Christmas volunteer, Janice Williams

WHEN YOU WORK among more than a thousand men and women who are dedicated to making the community a better place to live, it's easy to understand how the efforts of one person might go largely unrecognized for years. Add to that the fact that Janice Williams never sought or wanted recognition and you come closer to understanding why her story has never been told until now.

A Christmas Story that Deserves to be Told

VPD volunteers put the arm on the grinch

It's a story that begins more than ten years ago on a rainy winter's night in December (Vancouver seldom has snowy winter's nights). Janice was enjoying a Christmas season with her husband, son and family, but she wanted to reach out to others who might have less to celebrate.

She sought out Constable Anne Drennan, who administered the VPD Community Fund, and together they hatched a plan. They approached the Lower Mainland Christmas Bureau that provided them with a list of 12 families. They decided that this wasn't going to be just another donation of coupons or food.

"We wanted to give them an entire Christmas," said Ms. Williams, with her trademark smile. "We were going to get everything - trees, decorations, turkeys, fixings and gifts for everyone."

They asked the families what they needed and what they wanted (an important, but often overlooked, distinction by many well-

meaning social agencies).

"We got kids' coats and gloves and other clothes and then we got them what they really wanted. That first year my husband and I put together four or five bicycles. Then we threw in cookies, chocolates and candies."

As Janice remembers the many families they helped over the years, it would be anyone's guess who touched who more profoundly.

"There was one single mom who really touched my heart," said Janice. "It was the simplicity of what she wanted. Some families were asking for ghetto blasters, but not her."

"She had two boys and she just wanted warm blankets. Her son wanted a Bible. We got them bikes, but they were stolen. We had them over for Christmas dinner. They made that Christmas very special for all of us."

Over the years Janice and her team of volunteers from the VPD have made

Christmas special for many others.

Members of the department contribute to a fund that has bought clothes, food and toys for families in need. VPD school liaison officers have joined in by speaking to their schools' principals to find needy families. They get the list and Janice does the shopping. Every year she heads up a wagon train of shopping carts at the Metrotown Zellers store, where they generously give her a 20 per cent discount.

For her many friends and colleagues who helped shop, wrap and deliver, and for all the grateful families every Christmas, Janice Williams' story deserves to be told.

VPD Officers Crack Missing Child Case for the FBI

Child safely returned to grateful grandparents

EVERY UNIT OF THE VPD has its regular responsibilities and duties, but there are times when circumstances dictate a response that requires action above and beyond the regular. This was one of those times.

For three years, U.S. police forces, including the FBI, had been searching for little Sierrah Findeison, who had been kidnapped from her grandparents when she was a year old. The kidnapers were her natural parents, both known drug addicts and criminals.

When the mother was spotted in Vancouver, the only surveillance team available was the District 3 Street Crime Enforcement Unit. They followed the mother, hoping she would lead them to the child. The trail led them far from their district, all the way to Agassiz, where the mother got off a bus and tried hitchhiking. Afraid they would be spotted in this remote area, the team quickly improvised. Two members posing as "locals" picked her up and, feigning concern for her safety, took her all the way to her home. This allowed Strike Force

members to recover the child and arrest the parents, putting an end to three years of fear and uncertainty for the grandparents.

"The District 3 SCEU was ecstatic with the return of Sierrah to her grandmother where she belonged," according to Sgt Jim McCardell, who ran the operation. "Most of us have small children, so this file really hit home given the bad situation created by the kidnapping. The experience gained from this international case was also very rewarding because of the scope of the investigation."

The SCEU was originally created and trained primarily for surveillance by foot in connection with property crime. By adapting quickly at a crucial moment, they accomplished something that no other police agency, including the FBI, had been able to do: return Sierrah Findeison to her rightful guardians.

In recognition of exemplary performance, determination and dedication to duty, the members of the District 3 Street Crime Enforcement Unit were awarded the Chief Constable's Unit Citation.

Conquering Fear to Save a Life

Team Executes High Risk Rescue

ONE OF THE FEARS that all humans are born with is the fear of falling. It is deeply engrained in our psyches. On the night of September 25, 2004, Constables Michelle Davey, Phil Chambers and Warren Tutkaluke had to conquer that fear because a man's life literally hung in the balance.

The suicidal male had climbed to the top of a construction crane screaming that he was going to jump. He threw two hammers at the officers, narrowly missing them, then tied a rope around his neck and prepared to kill himself. Constables Davey, Chambers and Tutkaluke, without safety gear, began their dark climb up the dirty, slippery crane to a small platform more than 150 feet in the air. From this precarious perch they carefully negotiated with the man for more than two and

half hours. His mood swung wildly from calm and rational to psychotic and delusional, always on the verge of plunging off the crane to his death.

Constable Davey, with skill and compassion, managed to keep him calm and persuade him to come down safely to the ground where he was taken to hospital for evaluation. If these three officers had not risked their lives to climb the crane, it is likely that this man, in his psychosis, certainly would have perished.

Because of their exemplary courage, Constables Michelle Davey, Phil Chambers and Warren Tutkaluke were awarded the Chief Constable's Commendation. Their actions are in keeping with the highest traditions of policing and reflect great honour on themselves and their colleagues and the Vancouver Police Department.



Replica guns like this one can be fatal for those who use them.

Replica Gun Nearly Costs Shooter his Life

Police make the right split second decision

ONE OF THE MOST frightening situations an officer ever has to face is when he or she has a split second to decide whether they should take a life to possibly save another. All their years of training and experience will come to bear in that split second, as they make a decision they will live with forever. On September 18, 2004, Constables Steve Carroll and Biant Padam demonstrated outstanding courage and professionalism when it became their time to make that decision.

Constables Carroll and Padam were about to set up at the front door of a restaurant and look inside to see if they could spot a man who was reported to be armed with a gun. But just as they did, the man came out, saw the police, realized his escape route had been cut off and sat down at an outdoor table. Constable Carroll approached with his sidearm at the low ready. Constable Padam had his hands free to handcuff the man.

In microseconds, the situation turned. The man pulled a .45 calibre pistol and pointed it across the street. It was unclear whether anyone was in his sights. In an instant, Constable Carroll had to decide whether to shoot to kill.

"It was a tough spot to be put in. I thought this guy was going to take a shot at someone. What made it even more interesting was that there were people everywhere," said Constable Carroll.

He decided it was not safe to shoot, since too many people were in the line of fire. "The only real option we had was to move in on him. Luckily, I was able to knock the gun out of his hand." But just as he made contact, the man pulled the trigger. It was only then that the constables realized it was a replica gun.

Both constables showed tremendous composure.

"I honestly thought I may have had to shoot him," said Constable Padam.

Their measured and insightful action prevented what could have been the tragic death of a person demonstrating classic suicide-by-cop behaviour.

"To this day it amazes me how lucky this guy was that he wasn't shot and killed. He came so close to being shot over a stupid fake gun," said Carroll.

Because of their exemplary performance, determination and dedication to duty, these officers were awarded the Chief Constable's Commendation.

Smart Crimes Prompt Smarter Police Work

Police woman sets a trap for fraud artist

THE COMPLEXITY of fraud investigations often makes them one of the toughest crimes to solve. Catching ingenious fraud artists requires ingenious police work, the type that Detective Leslie Stevens demonstrated when her efforts resulted in the arrest and conviction of one of Vancouver's "Top 10 Fraud Targets."

During October 2003, Detective Stevens investigated the case of a woman who had been defrauded of a sum of money. She discovered 22 other victims and transformed this seemingly small file into a large multi-jurisdictional investigation, involving major losses.

Many police agencies had tried and failed to capture this particularly wily fraud artist. Detective Stevens developed

an innovative and imaginative plan to trap him. Knowing that he frequented a specific internet chat room site, she created a "perfect victim" to bait him into a conversation and ultimately gain his trust. It worked, resulting in his eventual arrest and conviction.

"Here I was, married with kids, and I was worried that he wouldn't want to go out with me," said Constable Stevens. "I tried to create the 'perfect victim' profile on the Lavalife website. The spin-off from that was a whole lot of other guys wanted to date me, too - well the person I created."

Because of her exemplary skills, dedication and imaginative police work, Detective Stevens was awarded the Chief Constable's Commendation.

VPD Officers and Families Threatened by Hells Angels

Their courage nets first convictions in B.C.

THERE ARE FEW CRIMINALS more frightening and loathsome than those who threaten us, our families and loved ones with death and injury in reprisal for doing our jobs. These thugs get away with their crimes when their tactics of fear and terror silence their accusers. But in January, 2001, the members of Project Nova showed the Hells Angels outlaw motorcycle gang that no amount of intimidation would stop them from doing their duty.

During the course of an investigation into the drug dealing activities of the Hells Angels, investigators were victims of threatening phone calls to their homes and visits to their homes by unsavoury characters. One investi-

gator's retired parents received a visit from a man on a motorcycle; another investigator, in the company of his children, was photographed by the Hells Angels. Both prosecuting lawyers on the Project Nova were subjected to intimidation; one was personally confronted by a Hells Angel, who threatened his life.

Despite the danger, the members of Project Nova remained immovable and steadfast. Their efforts and their courage resulted in the first convictions of Hells Angels in the history of British Columbia. Two gang members each received four and half years in prison for selling cocaine, while a third received eight months for uttering

threats and attempting to obstruct justice.

Inspector Andrew Richards, when asked about the project replied, "I'm extremely proud of the work we did. But it goes beyond us. Strike Force, Drug Squad and ERT were essential and there was no way this landmark case would have been successful without the leadership of three very important people: Ray Canuel, Ken Higgins and Peter Ditchfield."

For actions that went far beyond the call in dealing with a project that was staggering, complex and groundbreaking, the above members of Project Nova were awarded the Chief Constable's Unit Citation.

Risking Their Lives to Save Others

Two VPD officers put it all on the line

IF THERE IS ONE universally recognized symbol of courage in the world it is the willingness of someone to run into a burning building putting their own life at risk in order to save another. All police officers know from their first day in the academy that day may come and all wonder how they will do when faced with that test.

On Saturday October 4th 2003, just after midnight that test was faced by Constables Laing and Stevens when they saw smoke coming from an upstairs window in a house at 556 Powell Street. The Fire Department had not yet arrived. There were people still in the building. Constables Laing and Stevens didn't hesitate. Without a second thought for their own safety, they rushed into the building fighting their way to the second floor through clouds of choking black smoke.

They were able to get the remaining tenants out of the building and only left themselves after everyone was safely outside. On the sidewalk, while still coughing the smoke from their own lungs they helped a tenant who was suffering from smoke inhalation.

Constables Laing and Stevens purposely put themselves in harm's way, risking their lives, to ensure that others might be saved. They did that day, what every police officer hopes they will have the courage to do when their time comes.

Because of their exemplary courage and life-saving action, they have both been awarded the Chief Constable's Commendation. Their actions are in keeping with the highest traditions of policing and reflect great honour on themselves, their colleagues and the Vancouver Police Department.



Constables David Laing and Ben Stevens risk their lives.

Helping the Community and Catching the Bad Guys

It's why we signed up

BY CHIEF CONSTABLE
JAMIE GRAHAM

I'VE BEEN POLICING FOR A LONG TIME. When I started I was full of optimism and buoyed by the seemingly limitless possibilities of being able to make a difference. Over the term of my career, I learned that there are some things that I could always count on, some things I could not count on and many things that just happened.

A long foot chase after an offender, followed by an arrest, was always a heart-pounding experience no matter how many times you do it. Witnessing a child's pain will always affect you - it sure did me. And you will always be able to count on the respect and trust of the public you serve and protect.

I treasure the trust the public has in what we do and modern police forces cannot operate without it. I would go further to say that the public's trust in its police is an essential resource that prevents a crucial pillar of our democracy from crumbling or deteriorating.

Over the years, whether I was a recruit on patrol or a "long-in-the-tooth" plain-clothes supervisor, I was reassured knowing that the community respected and believed in their police. The first time I was asked to sign someone's passport to verify their identity was a reminder that my country believed in the integrity and honesty of its police officers and their signature was simply enough.

Today, it is reassuring to know that despite the often widely quoted critics, people still want to be police officers for the very same reasons that drove me to the job.

The Vancouver Police Department recently completed a survey of its members aimed at helping us identify the messages and drivers that would attract the



Vancouver Police Chief Constable Jamie Graham says people choose a police career to make a difference.

PHOTO: PAUL JOSEPH

best and the brightest as VPD recruits. We asked a firm at UBC to conduct an entirely anonymous and independent survey.

A significant sample of our members shared with UBC poll takers their private thoughts on what made them want to be a police officer; what were the best aspects of the job; what did they expect to get out of a policing career; what did they actually get out of it. The answers were broken down by gender and four different lengths of service groupings. I was very pleased with the results.

The majority of those who responded said that they joined policing to do community service and to help others. It was the number one response across the board, regardless of length of service. It was followed by the desire to fight crime, the desire for a challenge, job variety and the prospect of a good career.

When asked what they expected to get from a policing career, the majority, in fact almost half of all respondents, said they expected to have an interesting, enjoyable

and fulfilling career. The ability to make a difference was also a major expectation.

Interestingly, when asked "what is the best aspect of being a police officer?", doing community service and helping others slipped slightly to second place; more than a third said it was the camaraderie and being a team member.

I understand those sentiments. I have always been very proud to be a police officer and I have never been prouder of leading a group of fellow officers than I have been of the men and women of the Vancouver Police Department. By the very nature of our cosmopolitan and diverse city, they face one of the most challenging policing jobs in the country. In just one part of the Downtown Eastside, VPD officers can face more life threatening situations in a week than some other officers in Canada face in a year.

Perhaps because it is tougher, it is also easy to understand why the third most common description of the best aspect of being a police officer was having respect,

pride and acknowledgement. I find it easy to agree with this one as well.

Every morning I listen to the senior officers tell me what our members encountered during the previous 24 hours. Every morning I am impressed with the actions of our officers who go routinely beyond the call of duty. It is important that we all share and celebrate those successes. In some outstanding cases they will merit an Award of Valour or a Chief Constable's Commendation, but in all cases they merit recognition of a job well done.

Our members should also know that the public supports them and appreciates all their efforts to keep them safe. Every survey of the public done on our behalf or independently indicates the highest levels of trust and respect for the members of the VPD. It is important to remember that in the face of those who would have you believe differently.

Despite all the challenges, despite the ever present critics, the members of the

VPD told the UBC survey takers that their career in policing had met or exceeded their expectations. As they looked back on their careers, weighing the pros and cons, more than two thirds of their answers reflected a positive view. Among the positive, the comments included camaraderie, variety of work and the ability to make a difference. Among the negative, comments included excessive paperwork, an unresponsive Criminal Justice System and the ever unpopular shiftwork.

As I look back on my career, also weighing the pros and cons, I can tell you that being the Chief Constable of the Vancouver Police Department is among my proudest moments. It is difficult to describe the emotions I feel at our commendation ceremonies when I listen to the inspirational stories of courage and dedication about the men and women who have made such an incredible difference to their community.

We should all be proud and very pleased for them. After all, that's why we signed up.

BEYOND THE CALL

Beyond the Call is a bimonthly publication produced by the Public Affairs and Marketing Section of the Vancouver Police Department with articles submitted and written by civilian and sworn members. For more information please contact 604-717-2680 or email at media@vpd.ca

EDITOR

Constable Anne Drennan

PHOTO EDITOR

Constable Sarah Bloor

DESIGN

Sharm Vanderkist

CONTRIBUTORS

Laurel Kennedy
Constable Tim Fanning
Constable Howard Chow
Constable Ian Barraclough
Chief Constable Jamie Graham

Policing Native Youth

continued from page 1

And so, as the sun disappeared behind the smallest branches of the tallest trees, an impressive array of 160 Native youth, elders and police officers gathered together, hand-in-hand, in a prayer circle. The Shaman gave thanks to the Creator for the gifts of life and prayed for our safety on our challenging voyage ahead.

In ages past, canoes would regularly line this wooded shoreline, as fortune seekers made camp here on their passage up through the gold rush trails. It felt like a step back in history when I woke to a mass of bodies labouring enthusiastically, gathering bundles and paddles together for stowage inside sixteen canoes that waited to take us on our adventure.

The scent of sweet grass and the rhythm of drumbeats and farewell chants gently faded from the crowds gathered on the shore to send us off. Their cheers were soon replaced by the gentle swishing of

paddles creating eddies beside our canoes. With the wind at our backs and the sun upon our shoulders, our impressive fleet paddled magnificently toward Echo Island before veering westward towards the river's mouth.

Having left the calm and still waters of the lake, we found ourselves cruising gently down the emerald green waters of the Harrison River. The rat-race of Vancouver living quickly ebbed away, as the sounds of contemporary urban life were replaced by soothing wind whistling through swaying branches and sand rushing against the hull of our canoe. A glance into the clear, fresh water sent shadows cascading through the ripples that were visible at the very bottom, while atop the tree-lined banks eagles soared. The sweetness and serenity provided by the natural setting was gently syncopated by the inspired chantings of the skipper in an adjacent canoe, whose heart was

full of song as he sang Native pulling songs to his novice crew.

After a day paddling down river we came upon the shores of Chehalis. The skippers of each canoe made a traditional salute and requested permission to land. Permission was granted by the Chief with hands raised in greeting. Canoes were beached and hungry crews made their way up to the Longhouse, which was filled with the smell of smoked salmon. A soccer game kicked-off before dinner. With little energy remaining from a hot day of paddling, goals were nevertheless scored on either side, though teams changed frequently and the match was interspersed with water fights. As nightfall approached, ravenous appetites were satiated with a hot salmon dinner that was eagerly consumed by all. Feasting was soon replaced by singing and dancing, bringing Native culture and tradition alive for the

entertainment of the elders of today and the education of the elders of tomorrow.

Paddlers finally succumbed to their exhaustion beneath a star-filled sky and by midnight all was quiet. Before drifting asleep, I reflected upon the wonders of our first day and the fun that had been shared. I contrasted that with what my policing experience had taught me about Native youth to date, which was largely comprised of theft of and theft from automobiles. I thought of one particular 14-year-old in our canoe whose rap sheet was exactly that. I wondered if a change in environment would affect his outlook toward those whom life had taught him to hold in disregard. Time would only tell. However, during the next six days of our adventures together, I was heartened to observe that a child, given half a chance, will be a child. I felt fortunate to be a part of that experience.