

giving back

BY PAUL HERATY | PHOTO JAIME KOWAL

Gord MacDougall is the new chair of the Vancouver Foundation board. But he's a veteran when it comes to giving back to the community

Gord MacDougall doesn't know exactly when he started to volunteer and give back to the community. He's just always done it.

"I've always been involved in what some people call charity work," he says. "As I reflect on it, my parents were very involved in non-profits – my father with Montreal Children's Hospital and my mother as a volunteer at the Royal Victoria Hospital. That didn't drive me into it, but it made me aware.

"I realized it's not that hard to give. A lot of people think that to contribute you have to give money. But you don't. You can give time; you can give guidance. I enjoy that a lot."

MacDougall was born in Montreal in 1946. As a young MBA graduate, he and his wife Barbara first came to the West Coast on a summer holiday in 1972. They liked Vancouver and the outdoor lifestyle so much that they decided to stay.

"In Vancouver, my first chance to give back to the community was with Junior Achievement. I really enjoyed that because it was young people. And I was young myself then," he says, laughing.

MacDougall looks much younger than his 65 years. Must be all that fresh air.

"Barb and I love the outdoors," he says. "We do a lot of golf, hiking, biking ... used to run a lot ... and we ski, both downhill and cross-country." MacDougall also spends time on the water. A self-proclaimed fair-weather kayaker, on weekends he will often head down the stairs from his house to the beach, pull out a kayak that's stored there, and paddle to Lighthouse Park and back before anyone else is even up.

Volunteering seems to be a natural outgrowth of MacDougall's numerous business and personal interests. As Vice-Chair of Connor, Clark & Lunn – one of the largest independent investment management firms in Canada – he has the financial acumen and experience that many non-profits desperately need. And he brings an unbridled enthusiasm for giving back.

So it was perfectly natural that, after Junior Achievement, MacDougall got involved with the Heart and Stroke Foundation

of BC & Yukon. Also, for almost 20 years, he was a director on the board of Intrawest, the company that made Whistler a world-renowned ski resort.

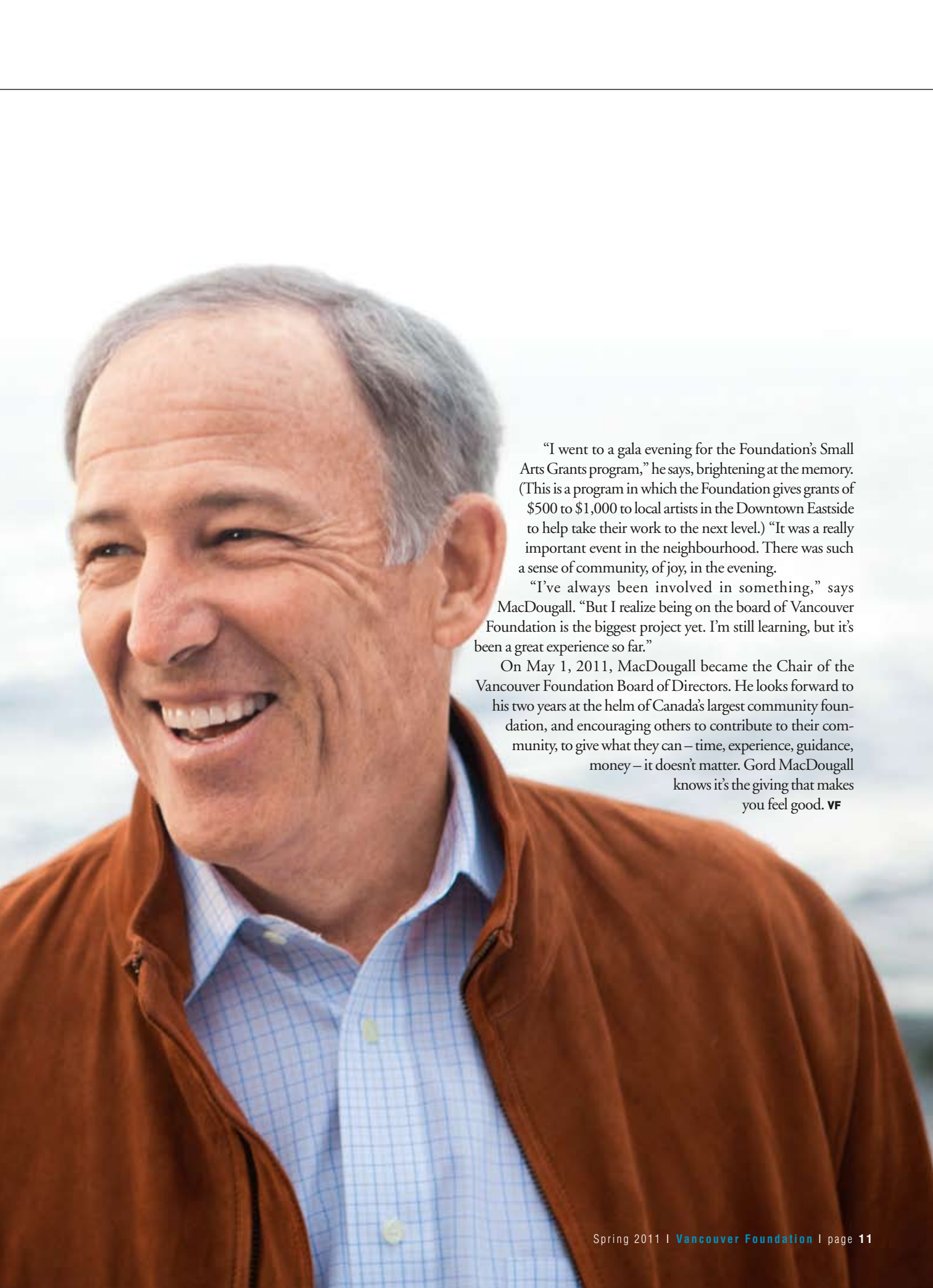
When his three kids were going to school, MacDougall started fundraising for education. And with a growing brood of grandchildren (three at last count, with two more expected this year), he may yet return to it.

Years ago, when he was just starting out in the investment field, MacDougall and his wife began collecting Canadian art – small pieces, whatever they could afford. They had a dream of eventually getting something by the Group of Seven. That early goal seems to have been forgotten. Because instead of A.Y. Jackson's windswept Ontario landscapes, their house is filled with work by Gordon Smith and Gathie Falk, along with a growing collection of West Coast art.

"It wasn't by design," says MacDougall. "That's just the way it ended up." And that's how MacDougall ended up being a director of the Vancouver Art Gallery for five years. "At the time, the Art Gallery didn't have a foundation, so we started one."

MacDougall's involvement with Vancouver Foundation began just three years ago. "I'd been aware of the Foundation for a long time, through friends and colleagues. And as I found out what the Foundation did, I became more interested because it's so far-reaching. It's in touch with a huge number of communities throughout the province."

MacDougall started by joining the Foundation's Investment Committee, which he chaired. It was his interest in art that gave MacDougall a glimpse of what Vancouver Foundation does at the grassroots level, and the impact that even a small amount of money can have.



“I went to a gala evening for the Foundation’s Small Arts Grants program,” he says, brightening at the memory. (This is a program in which the Foundation gives grants of \$500 to \$1,000 to local artists in the Downtown Eastside to help take their work to the next level.) “It was a really important event in the neighbourhood. There was such a sense of community, of joy, in the evening.

“I’ve always been involved in something,” says MacDougall. “But I realize being on the board of Vancouver Foundation is the biggest project yet. I’m still learning, but it’s been a great experience so far.”

On May 1, 2011, MacDougall became the Chair of the Vancouver Foundation Board of Directors. He looks forward to his two years at the helm of Canada’s largest community foundation, and encouraging others to contribute to their community, to give what they can – time, experience, guidance, money – it doesn’t matter. Gord MacDougall knows it’s the giving that makes you feel good. **VF**