



## A Lifelong Journey with Music

### Catherine Hawkins and Colin McMechan, Shirley, BC

Music is an international language, yet many young musicians struggle to access instruments or lessons. This is something Catherine Hawkins and her husband, Colin McMechan, understand very well.

For Catherine, the love of music began early. ***“One of the first musical sounds I ever heard was my father practising his trumpet. By the time I was in grade school, I was encouraged to play an instrument of my own. A grand piano was located soon after, and little stars were heard twinkling on the ivories.”*** Those early impressions created a foundation that would shape the couple’s commitment to supporting young musicians.

Years later, music resurfaced in a new way. At a gospel and bluegrass festival in Coombs, Catherine heard Daniel Lapp, now Artistic Director of the Conservatory’s Contemporary School, accompanying one of his protégés on piano. The moment swept Catherine into a fantasy of becoming a fiddler. Although she was in her early forties, Daniel encouraged her, and she soon joined the Conservatory Fiddlers under the guidance of Calvin Cairns.

Through her studies, Catherine and Colin developed an even deeper appreciation for the time and dedication required to build musical skill. Catherine knew she would never reach the



▲ From left to right: Colin, violinist Nikki Chooi, Catherine’s father Jim, Catherine, and violinist Timothy Chooi, celebrating after a performance, 2015

10,000 hours needed to master the fiddle but felt inspired to help others on their musical path.

Their involvement with the Conservatory introduced them to classical violinist Nikki Chooi. Catherine had admired his talent since he was a child, and when he was accepted to the Curtis Institute of Music in Philadelphia a decade later, they felt a meaningful opportunity to help shape his future. With no children of their own to support, and a genuine desire to share what they had, Catherine and Colin chose to cover Nikki’s first year of living expenses.

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A young Nikki performs on the stage of the  
Alix Goolden Performance Hall, 2004

In 2007, the Conservatory hosted a farewell concert to help raise additional funds. The memory of that evening continues to resonate with them, and their warm connection with Nikki remains strong.

**“Supporting a young musician is one of the most rewarding experiences of our lives. The joy keeps on giving.”**

Since then, Catherine and Colin have continued their thoughtful support for young musicians. Their hope is to inspire others to help make musical dreams come true. They have also ensured that their generosity will carry forward by including the Conservatory in their estate plans, **a natural extension of their long-standing commitment.** A legacy gift to the Victoria Conservatory of Music can provide instruments, instruction, and opportunity to students who simply need someone to believe in them. Their story began with a shared love of music. Their legacy will ensure that love continues to inspire new generations of musicians.



We gratefully recognize the generosity of these recent legacy donors:

**Robert Bruce Dutton**

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**Michael David Skinner**

In thoughtful remembrance of those who thought to remember us.

## Values in Bloom: Celebrate Leave a Legacy Month

Did you know that May is Leave a Legacy Month in Canada? Each year, donors like you reflect on how they can create lasting change in the communities closest to their hearts. With the season's first blossoms appearing, it's the perfect moment to think about how your impact can grow, too.

As more Canadians consider the legacy they want to leave, research shows the impact of this type of giving is increasing. Canada now ranks third in the world for charitable bequests, and 10% of Canadians have included a charitable gift in their will (Will Power Campaign, Canadian Association of Gift Planners, 2024). Even a modest bequest can create a legacy that lives on through our students. Last year alone, **memorial gifts made \$87,000 in student scholarships possible.**

Creating a legacy is easier than you might expect. By including the Conservatory in your will, you can open doors for the next generation of music makers, like Nikki Chooi, while continuing to care for those closest to you today. What a meaningful way to let your values bloom.

If you would like to explore making a bequest this Leave a Legacy Month, we would be delighted to speak with you.

To learn more, contact:

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