

TRADE TALK

Aboriginal land development on the rise

High-density housing on part of University Golf Club is one of several proposed projects by Musqueam Nation

MALCOLM PARRY
VANCOUVER SUN



GRANT'S LAND: Even aboriginal leaders can only guess at their reach into all of Canada's economic sectors. But more is bound to be undertaken by younger professionals who are gaining their spurs now. And if the Musqueam Nation's economic development coordinator, **Wade Grant**, is calling the trend right, there'll be extensive joint-venturing between the aboriginal communities that team up on relatively few enterprises today.

Colliers International's local VP and managing director **Howie Charters** is the Musqueam's contracted acting economic development manager. But Grant, 32, is being groomed for the gig. A quarter-Chinese son of former Musqueam chief **Wendy Grant** and councillor **Howard Grant**, he's a product of economic development himself. One of his grandfathers worked at a market garden generating revenue for what 11-term Musqueam chief and multi-sport athlete **Ernie Campbell**, 69, calls a "land-poor" band.

However, that land does include the site of the present-day Shaughnessy Golf and Country Club. Campbell, who once shot an 84 there, said it's "probably worth a billion dollars." That land is leased out for another three decades. As for developing the nearby Musqueam course, on which he shot a 61, "We could do it tomorrow if we wanted to."

What he and Grant *do* want to do is develop high-density housing on a non-golfing eight-hectare parcel of the University Golf Club site. The Musqueam received it after land-settlement negotiations that specified the course itself remain a golfing facility for 80 years.

Grant, who also has a 12 handicap, said the University Boulevard site might include a hotel. The Musqueam already own the Fraser Arms in Marpole, where Campbell said a casino was mooted, "but we were advised that we wouldn't be able to compete with River Rock." That latter facility made a prepaid lease on another land settlement, the Bridgeport Lands, where the Musqueam expect to double an existing marina. They and Canada Lands Co. sold a larger Richmond settlement, the 55-hectare Garden City Lands, to the City of Richmond for \$59.17 million March 31. Meanwhile, Grant said, "the highest and best use" is being debated for a 57.5-hectare Musqueam reserve in Ladner presently leased for farming.

There's plenty to do on the home-



VanDusen Botanical Garden fundraisers Nancy Dickson and Mary Butterfield can't wait for a \$22-million visitor centre right on Oak Street.

village site where, despite a new subdivision of 40 2,200-square-foot homes and eight infill residences under construction, 200 Musqueam await homes. Grant, who was assistant general manager of the 2010 Olympics Aboriginal Pavilion, now sees that structure being re-erected as a cultural centre. Between it and the band office, a \$9-million fitness-wellness-youth centre is being built with an industrial kitchen to extend band members' culinary-arts training. Two soccer fields are cleared for planting.

Grant is a 2002 University of B.C. political science grad who is serving a second term on the 10-member Musqueam council. He also spent two years in Victoria assisting then-minister of public safety and solicitor-general **John Les**: "I learned how to get things done" — make individual, corporate and institutional connections — "and that you can't take everything at face value." Working with Campbell, he learned "how to deal with government people: Be firm but don't lose your cool."

Grant is of an age with **Justin George**, the third-generation Tsleil

Waututh chief overseeing a further phase of the Ravenwoods condo complex. Or **Christopher Lewis**, the top vote-getter in December's Squamish Nation election. "We've just got to look at ways to do something different," he said. Then, surprisingly, "Where we find a lot of our hang-ups is reconciliation with the other first nations. If we come together, we can do much more than if we stay silo'd."

His 20-year prediction is that aboriginal-group syndicates "will be much more involved with real-estate development. A lot of time and money is now spent trying to clear up issues. It's not to say we wouldn't want to venture on our own, because we do. But there will be more joint ventures."

WHERE'D SHE GO? Ever wonder what happened to another Colliers International luminary, **Andrea Eng**? Hit www.helloitai.com for her huge compendium of global business and social news, plus events, reviews and the like. According to one dictionary definition, Tai Tai is "a term used in Chinese circles for supreme wife (implying a situation where a man



Andrea Eng files Asia-oriented business news and gossip on her Hello Tai Tai website.



Musqueam chief Ernie Campbell and economic development man Wade Grant see aboriginal joint ventures.

is wealthy enough to have several "wives") but no longer strictly interpreted. Term now applies to citizens of the world with an Asian viewpoint who have bounds of time and money. A Tai Tai is a privileged lady of means 2. Supreme of the Supreme is its literal translation. The term implies respect."

YOUR GARDEN GROWS: From the size of the construction crane, you'd expect a tower to rise where 36th Avenue's ghost crosses Oak Street. It's a phantom intersection because, with Eric Hamber secondary's campus on the east side of Oak, and the VanDusen Botanical Garden's hitherto-unbroken fence on the west, there's no cross-street between 33rd and 37th avenues. Still, the fence and the trees behind it partly explain why, despite drawing 150,000 visitors annually, the 22-hectare, 35-year-old VanDusen

Garden is itself a near-invisible ghost to those outside.

The crane's purpose is not to erect a tower but to lift materials over the trees for a low, 21,000-square-foot visitor centre that will be environmentally self-sustaining and may generate more energy than it consumes. The structure, with its wave-shaped "green" roof, was designed by city-based Busby Perkins + Will, whose principal, **Peter Busby**, suggested it be located in full view of Oak Street passersby.

That doubtless played well at the Vancouver park board, which contributes \$2.1 million (half from visitor- and user-derived revenue) to the garden's \$2.8 million annual budget. Its operating partner, the non-profit VanDusen Botanical Garden Association (VBGA), contributes the remainder on top of \$17 million raised to date. The board likely remembered that the Sunset Community Centre's recently enhanced presence at Main and 51st reportedly resulted in 40-per-cent increases in membership and programming.

VBGA president **Jim Brookes** believes the new visitor centre's facilities and year-round educational and interpretation programs will help double the garden's household membership to 10,000. And garden director **Harry Jongerden** believes there's more to come. He envisages someone donating a second locale on "pristine natural land with its complete biodiversity ... to practise plant conservation in the wild [and] take us outside our garden wall." Sooner, though, the present garden may construct a \$350,000-range covered stage for concerts to open-air audiences, possibly with restaurant and conference-banquet facilities. As for entertainment, Jongerden said that, when his present job was offered, several colleagues recounted amatory exploits among VanDusen's dense plantings.

Meanwhile, VBGA governor **Nancy Dickson** and campaign director **Mary Butterfield** still must raise \$2.6 million in the \$22-million visitor centre campaign. "We feel we have the wind behind us now," Butterfield said regarding \$6.35 million each from the City of Vancouver and Ottawa's infrastructure program, Victoria's \$2 million, and \$1 million from the Vancouver Foundation. Among corporate donors, HSBC Canada and BMO Financial Group kicked in \$210,000 and \$200,000, and London Drugs \$100,000. Butterfield is still seeking a \$1-million individual (park board rules forbid corporations) to put his or her name on the centre and, of course, be long visible on ever-busy Oak Street.

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CANADA

Number of EI recipients climbs for third straight month

OTTAWA — Despite a strengthening job market, more people are receiving income from the country's unemployment insurance system, data released Wednesday showed.

The number of people receiving regular employment insurance benefits in June rose by 8,400, the third straight monthly gain in EI rolls, Statistics Canada said Wednesday.

The increase brought the total number of EI beneficiaries to 691,600 in June. Despite recent gains, beneficiaries have fallen by 137,700, or 16.6 per cent, since their peak in June 2009.

Statistics Canada said beneficiaries rose in nine provinces in June, with the biggest gains recorded in Quebec and New Brunswick. Ontario was the only province where EI rolls declined during the month.

Meanwhile, the number of initial and renewal claims in June rose by 4,900 to 238,000.

Statistics Canada's monthly labour force survey showed a strong gain of 93,200 more people working in June. It reported jobs growth in each of the recent three months the EI figures have gone up, including in April when there was a record gain of 108,700 people working.

Avery Shenfeld, chief economist with CIBC World Markets, said diverging trends of the EI and labour force numbers are not necessarily contradictory. "As a recession carries on for a while, some people who are still unemployed are no longer eligible to get benefits," he said.

Derek Abma, Postmedia News

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