



## Geoff & Judith Benson Family Endowment Fund



After exploring BC by camper, Geoff & Judith Benson were attracted to the Shuswap as a retirement possibility. The choice was a wise one. After living in Salmon Arm for three years, they have found people who shared their interests: birding, hiking, skiing, environmental activities and the arts. Born and raised in Joliet, Illinois, Judith graduated from Michigan State University with a degree in Elementary Education, majoring in Early Childhood Education. Geoff was born and raised in Cumbria, UK and studied at Cambridge before obtaining a PhD in Nuclear Physics at the University of Manchester. They met and were married in Manchester, then immigrated to Canada, arriving in Kingston, ON with their two children in 1974, where Geoff took up a position in the Physics Department at Queens University. Their daughter Shelley teaches Communication at Oakland Community College, and son Aaron practices law, both in Michigan.

While at Queens, Geoff made a career change. He acquired an MBA, and relocated to work for Federated Co-operatives Limited in Saskatoon, SK. In 1980 he joined the Potash Corporation of Saskatchewan, where he worked until his retirement in 2008. Once settled in Saskatoon, Judith earned a diploma in the Education of Exceptional Children, after which she taught Kindergarten to Grade 8 for twenty-five years. Since 1995, she has been writing and publishing books for children and youth. Judith and Geoff became naturalized Canadian citizens in 1979.

During their thirty years in Saskatoon, both were actively involved in the community. They sang in the University of Saskatchewan Chorus, were awarded several conservation awards and were co-founders of SOS – Save Our Elms, an organization dedicated to educating the public on how to protect Saskatoon's beautiful American Elms from the threat of Dutch Elm Disease.

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Here in the Shuswap, Judith and Geoff have become members of the Shuswap Singers, Shuswap Men's Chorus, SABNES, Shuswap Naturalist Society, a book group, Shuswap Association of Writers, and the Shuswap Writers' Group. Geoff has taken up the cello, which he plays with the Shuswap String Orchestra.

When Geoff retired, he left the company with stock options which had to be exercised within three years. He and Judith familiarized themselves with the philosophy of Shuswap Community Foundation, and chose to donate the proceeds from some of the options to the Foundation. Earnings from their fund will be disbursed at the Board of Directors' discretion, under Judith and Geoff's guidelines regarding geographic locations and/or fields of interest.

The first grants drawn from the earnings of the fund were awarded at the Annual Community Meeting of the Foundation in October of 2012.

• Notes by Ineke Hughes & Judith Benson 2011