

The crew of *The Greenpeace* on their first voyage to protest nuclear testing at Amchitka, Alaska, in 1971.

FIFTY YEARS AGO,
THE
SUMMER OF LOVE

**BROUGHT
REVOLUTION
TO VANCOUVER**

Hippie smoke-ins, anti-war protests, free-love, nude-ins and rock 'n' roll overwhelmed a strait-laced town

BY DANIEL WOOD

It probably wasn't a good idea that Vancouver's mayor, Tom—aka "Terrific"—Campbell called the thousands of hippies who had descended on his town "slum-culture." Or his labelling people protesting the plan to build a massive bridge over Burrard Inlet, "Maoists, pinkos and hamburgers." But Campbell stood for all that was smug in a place that called itself, without the least irony, Terminal City. Forestry ruled. Sawmills lined False Creek. And shoreline beehive burners belched black, dystopian smoke. Vancouver in the mid-'60s was a place without pretence or, as future mayor Mike Harcourt would say: "It was a dull, grey, Presbyterian city where—if you wanted to impress your date—you'd buy her a Triple O hamburger at White Spot."

But what began during the spring and summer of 1967 obliterated Vancouver's small-mindedness. Gone were crewcuts and the belief in chastity of their parents' generation. In were long hair and newly-available birth control pills. Gone was conformity. In was rebellion, idealism, confrontation and a naive sort of universal love. Taboos were challenged, and fell. Public protests erupted. New social and cultural forces arose. Established political powers collapsed. And prompted by the unique alchemy of that time, Vancouver became the crucible for ideas that produced one of the most admired places in the world.

Arriving from California that year, hundreds of American draft resisters

and hippies carried with them an unease with American militarism and consumption, and sought in Vancouver the freedom to be different. They carried, as well, fresh memories of the Jefferson Airplane's psychedelic lyrics and concealed in their backpacks Mexican marijuana. Arriving from this country's

ONE PILL MAKES YOU LARGER AND ONE PILL MAKES YOU SMALL AND THE ONES THAT MOTHER GIVES YOU DON'T DO ANYTHING AT ALL

—"White Rabbit" (1967), Jefferson Airplane

hinterlands, thousands of west-bound Canadian youth hoped to partake of the Holy Trinity purported to be available in Vancouver's budding Lotus Land: drugs, sex and rock 'n' roll.

They called it then "The Summer of Love." And many would not be disappointed.

IN THE SPRING of 1967, a small group of Vancouver anti-war activists began gathering at the Point Grey home of Irving and Dorothy Stowe. The American military was deep into preparations to explode a series of atomic bombs beneath Alaska's remote Amchitka Island and the group was determined to stop them. But they needed an ocean-worthy boat. Joni Mitchell volunteered to do a benefit concert at the Pacific Coliseum (and brought her folk-singing friend, James Taylor) and soon the anti-war group had a boat.

At a subsequent meeting, Irving Stowe closed the gathering by raising a two-fingered V-sign, a hippie 'peace' gesture, and a departing member of the group said, "Make that a green peace." And so in the years that immediately followed, a few dozen Vancouver anti-war activists first took on the U.S. government (propelling global protests that halted further atomic tests), and then—embracing environmentalism—turned to harassing Russia's Pacific whaling fleet (and brought about an international moratorium on whaling) all under the banner of Greenpeace.

Today, with 49 regional chapters and 2.9 million members, Greenpeace is the world's largest environmental organization.

In April, 1967, *The Vancouver Sun* reported the counter-culture invasion with a story titled: "Hippies Taking over 4th Ave." Drawn to working-class Kitsilano by \$125-a-month house rents and the

appearance of shops with weird names like Advance Mattress Coffee House and The Sound of Om, hundreds of guitar-strumming, peace-proclaiming, long-haired transients provoked apprehension among civic authorities and police who found themselves overwhelmed by a contagious youth rebellion. With Vietnam in the news, there had already been a big Peace March downtown. And in Stanley Park, the first Be-In drew 1,000 hippies who danced to Mother Tuckers Yellow Duck and tossed inflated, joint-filled condoms above the crowd.

This, inevitably, produced a backlash. The Kitsilano Chamber of Commerce warned parents about the dangers of "hippie free-love practises." Local barbers offered free haircuts to the district's hirsute visitors. And on the corner of Arbutus and 4th Avenue, The Arbutus Cafe (now Sophie's Cosmic Cafe) posted a sign: "We do not serve hippies or beatniks."

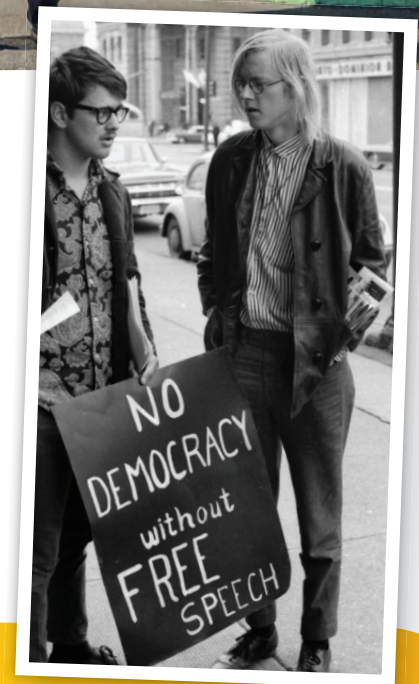
It was, in fact, directly across the street from the cafe that then 24-year-old, poet-physicist Dan McLeod observed a pair of Vancouver policemen issue an ultimatum to four hippies, telling them they had 24 hours to leave town. Their crime: loitering, a quaint legal term for "doing nothing." Upset by this and other affronts to young people's civil liberties that spring, McLeod went to his Kitsilano apartment, and with \$150 and an IBM Selectric, created Issue No. 1 of *The Georgia Straight* (datelined May 5, 1967). Within four months, Mayor



The Georgia Straight's Dan McLeod in front of Sophie's Cosmic Cafe; McLeod (blond) in the late 1960s.

Campbell tried—for the first, but not the last time—to shut the crusading newspaper down. But every threat from authorities only prompted McLeod and his counter-culture supporters to run stories or cartoons more outrageous than those previous.

One of his last legal entanglements was prompted by his running a 1969 article on Cynthia Plaster Caster, a California woman who gained brief notoriety for using a dental mold-making substance to create casts of rock stars' penises, including superstar Jimi Hendrix. Not amused, the mayor branded the *Straight*, "a filthy, perverted paper" and sent in



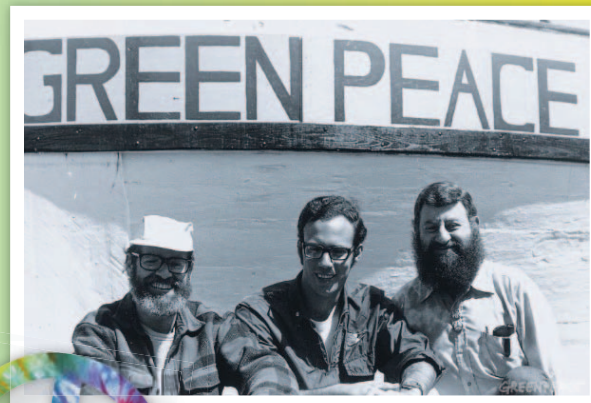
THE TIMES THEY WERE A-CHANGING

1967

In Stanley Park, the first 'Be-In' features music, marijuana and 1,000 hippies

The city's first Peace March against the Vietnam War

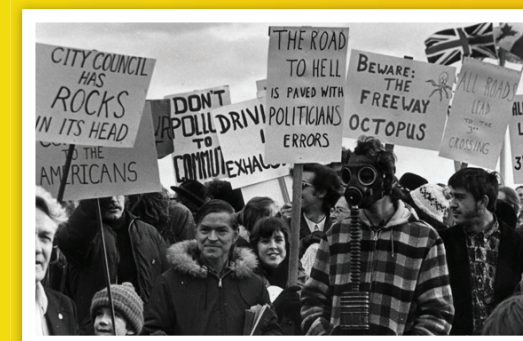
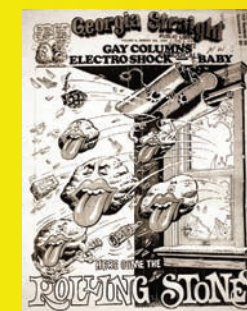
Thousands of Canadian drifters and American draft resisters arrive



Early meetings in Point Grey of anti-war group that would morph into Greenpeace



The Georgia Straight is launched (within four months, editor Dan McLeod is arrested)



Average house price in Kitsilano: \$26,000

Big protests against proposed eight-lane freeway through downtown Vancouver

1968

Centennial Museum (now MOV) and Planetarium (now HR MacMillan Space Centre) open

3,000 rebellious students and yuppies occupy UBC Faculty Club



In belled-cap and tights, Joachim Foikis becomes Vancouver's Town Fool



the police. In an effort to defend himself, McLeod went to the door of the mayor's home, and was about to serve Campbell with a counter-subpoena when the mayor opened the door just wide enough to release his dog. By McLeod's calculation, he faced 40 arrests, paid \$20,000 in fines and legal fees and suffered a dog bite defending freedom of the press.

Today—at age 50—McLeod's *Georgia Straight* is the last survivor of scores of '60s alternative newspapers.

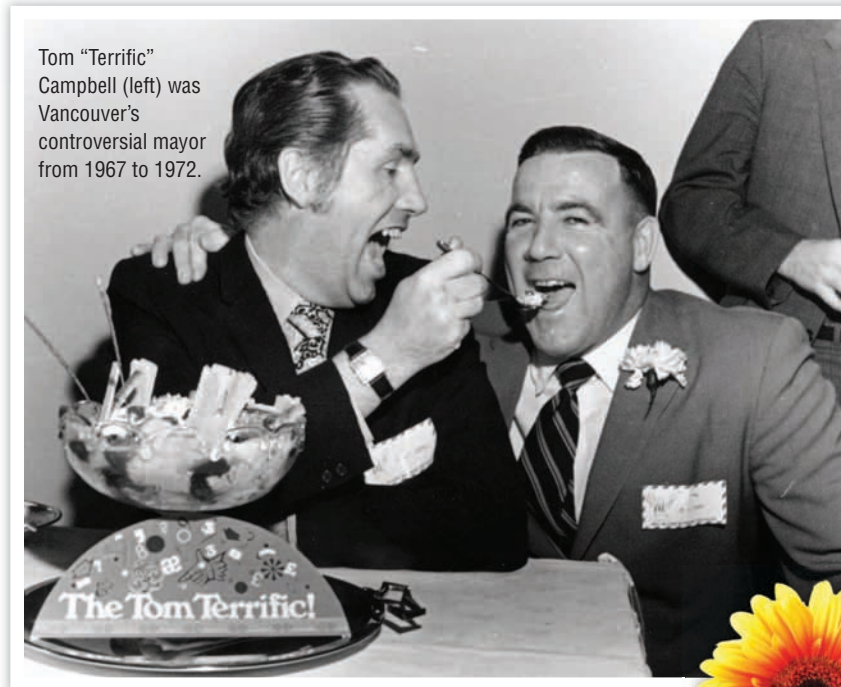
Reflecting today on those early years, McLeod says, "There was a sense of hope then. Vancouver suddenly seemed bigger, more tolerant, more creative, more worldly than before. There was an optimism that all this crazy stuff might work, that all these changes could be extended throughout society. It was a happy time."

IT WOULD BE misleading to believe that this '60s happiness had its source solely in the good vibrations of that time. Moving outward from the youthful hippies into straight Vancouver society were a lot of drugs. Resinous bricks of Moroccan hashish, the size of two decks of cards, would arrive—concealed in hollowed-out books—from European friends. Rural pastures would fill each October with stooped, psilocybin-mushroom hunters. Hollywood Hospital in New Westminster offered legal LSD trips to those seeking psychedelic insight. (One issue of *The Georgia Straight* claimed that an area on the front page was soaked with LSD, and scores of gullible readers ate the paper.) But it was the plentiful pot, sold then in baggies for \$15 a lid, that provided much of the impetus for the general goofiness of those times. If you were living in Vancouver and were

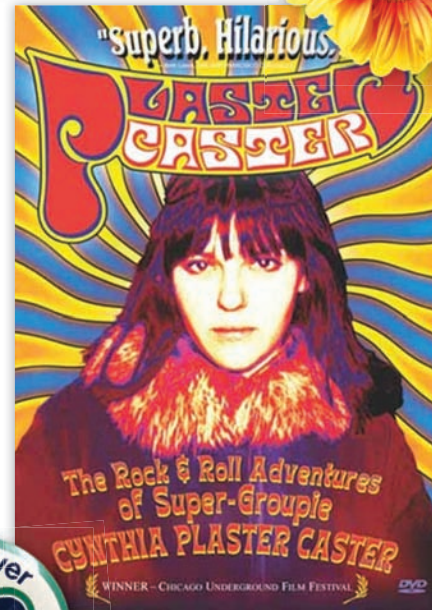
under 30, you almost certainly inhaled.

It's really not surprising that, during the intervening 50 years, Vancouver developed the most tolerant attitude toward drug-use in North America—from policing to Insite's supervised-injection facilities to the 100-plus marijuana dispensaries currently in the city.

MOVING IN TANDEM with the northward flow of youthful Americans came the central, generation-defining feature of the late-'60s counter-culture: psychedelic music. California bands like The Grateful Dead, Country Joe & the Fish, Cream and Jefferson Airplane appeared in Vancouver. Some performed in Kitsilano's Russian Hall (directly across



Tom "Terrific" Campbell (left) was Vancouver's controversial mayor from 1967 to 1972.



1969

Canucks play first NHL home game (they lose)

Sunday services at U Hill United Church feature rock 'n' roll and go-go girls

First 'Nude-In' at Wreck Beach; 120 disrobe and 13 arrested

The Georgia Straight runs article on "Cynthia Plaster Caster" who makes celebrity penis castings

Mayor Tom 'Terrific' Campbell launches 12th obscenity suit against *The Georgia Straight*



Riot-equipped American police and youths from Blaine, Washington, confront 500 Canadian anti-war protestors at Peace Arch Park, near the border.

TOP LEFT & RIGHT: CITY OF VANCOUVER ARCHIVES X2

4th Avenue from today's Lululemon), and later crashed at Point Grey Road's famous—or notorious—Peace House, where artists, activists, musicians and groupies met at a convenient intersection of drugs and desires.

At 21, long-haired aspiring Vancouver rocker David Wisdom was resident-landlord of The Peace House at that time and has fond memories of hanging out with members of Cream, hearing accounts

of Jerry Garcia and his band wandering the house naked and heading up to the Russian Hall for a 1967 Jefferson Airplane concert. Like millions of his contemporaries, rock 'n' roll was a vehicle of escape to a zanier, more sensual world. For a few hours, you became the music. Wisdom remembers it all vividly. Psychedelic paintings framed the stage,

and when Grace Slick launched into her famous, LSD-inspired "White Rabbit," Wisdom and everyone in the hall knew the words:

"If you go chasing rabbits, and you know you're going to fall, tell 'em a hookah-smoking caterpillar has given you the call..." And—heedlessly—into the rabbit-hole you tumble, bellbottoms over headbands, surreal visions over reality, weightless with joy.

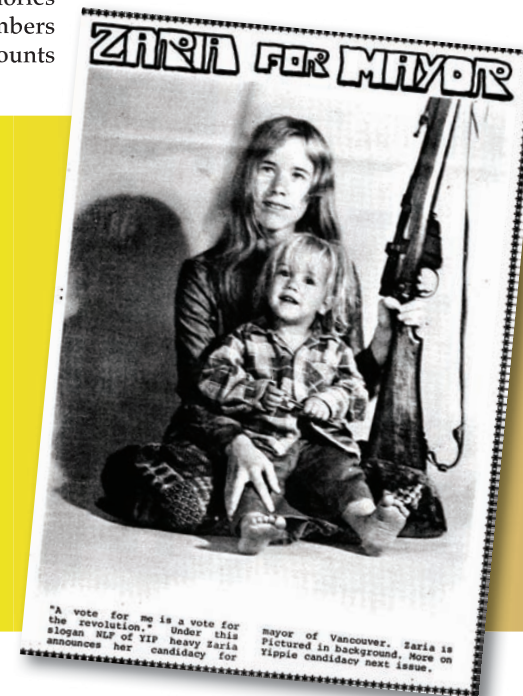
"You felt you're at the apex of the ▶

1970

Benefit at Pacific Coliseum features Joni Mitchell and provides start-up money for Greenpeace

500 anti-war protestors "invade" Blaine, Washington (Seattle paper says: "the greatest insult since the Alamo")

Yippies stage "Be-Out" and tear down fencing around Burnaby's Oakalla Prison



"A vote for me is a vote for the revolution." Under this slogan MSP of YIP heavy Zaria announces her candidacy for mayor of Vancouver. Zaria is pictured in background. More on Yippie candidacy next issue.

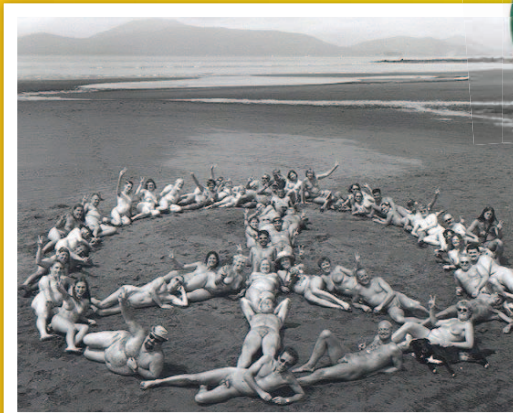
1971

Vancouver Free University opens with hundreds of courses, including "Creative Lovemaking"



Police attack hippies during infamous Gastown "Smoke-In" (later deemed "a police riot")

The Naam vegetarian restaurant opens on 4th Ave



world," he says now of the song's mounting crescendo that night, and its final dictum: "Feed your head! Feed your head!" "You felt nothing could be better than this," he adds. "A new generation had arrived. There was such idealism then!"

The word idealism comes up again and again in conversations about those years. Idealism propelled local artists, social activists, urban planners and visionaries to initiate projects that flowered into B.C. fixtures. The Be-Ins became the annual Folk Festival. An abandoned church became the East Cultural Centre (known as "The Cultch" today). Free hippie Feed-Ins became food banks. A 1969 Nude-In became Wreck Beach. Numerous new magazines, alternative schools, art galleries, book publishers and performance groups appeared. Urban planning, previously run top-down, became a required interaction between developers and affected Vancouver residents. Idealism—of a satirical, late-'60s nature—even funded Joachim Foikis, who in belled cap and tights wandered Vancouver for years as the city's Town Fool.

BUT NOTHING—ABSOLUTELY nothing in the city's history—was more important than what a resident of Vancouver's low-income Strathcona district did. Mary Chan had lived on Keefer St. most of her 50-plus years. When she learned in the late '60s that plans were moving ahead to push an elevated, eight-lane superhighway through East Vancouver, Strathcona, Chinatown, Gastown, along the Coal Harbour waterfront and then north on a Burrard Inlet-spanning bridge over Stanley Park, Chan realized that her house lay in the bulldozers' path. And that in order to save her home, she would have to stop the impending freeway. But her English was poor. So she

asked her 21 year-old daughter, Shirley, for help.

It was in 1969 that the Chans, accompanied by Darlene Marzari, a young social planner at City Hall, showed up at the storefront office of a 26-year-old lawyer named Mike Harcourt to ask him if he

would be interested in helping them the stop the freeway. Harcourt asked Marzari, "Who are we taking on?"

She replied: "Don't worry about it, Mike. It's just City Council. The provincial government. The federal government. The auto manufacturers. The oil and gas industry. The developers. The construction companies. And the unions. Other than that, no big deal."

And retelling his funny, oft-told story, Harcourt laughs. "There was a youthful cockiness then. We were troublemakers.

We were idealists. The freeway was a horrible idea! I agreed to help."



Mike Harcourt and Shirley Chan at the Mary Chan House in Strathcona today.



LEFT: DANIEL WOOD



The first Be-In festival in 1967, where Stanley Park hosted 1,000 hippies.

Soon, placard-waving citizens, mostly Chinese and often numbering 1,000, paraded along Pender Street and filled City Hall with protesters.

Then one day in early 1972, Mayor Campbell, frustrated by endless delays, denounced the highway protesters as: "Maoists, pinkos and hamburgers." (When later asked by a journalist what a "hamburger" was, the mayor replied, "Someone who doesn't have a university education.")

On March 15, 1972, a meeting was held in Vancouver's Eric Hamber Secondary School where the public and civic officials sought to share views on the freeway's latest incarnation: a harbour-spanning bridge. On the stage was Mayor Campbell. Hundreds of people, many with long-hair and attitude, filled the auditorium. Well into the evening, when

nothing new seemed possible to be said, the doors to the auditorium burst open, and a half-dozen young men, carrying loaded trays and dressed in chef's white hats and aprons, strode down the aisles shouting, "Hamburgers! Hamburgers! Anyone want a hamburger?" And with everyone laughing, scores of real, tissue-wrapped McDonald's hamburgers were hurled above the crowd and caught by outstretched hands. Suddenly, the air was full of flying—and in some cases, disintegrating—airborne hamburgers. People were incredulous. And up on the stage, Campbell sat, slack-jawed at the intrusion.

Within a few months, Campbell and his pro-development party were defeated in the 1972 civic election that brought a reformist, anti-freeway party to power. The elevated, eight-lane freeway

through downtown Vancouver was finally dead. A few months after that, B.C.'s Social Credit government, which had also backed the freeway, fell to the socialist New Democratic Party. Granville Island, a grimy industrial site, was soon rezoned for public use, and is now one of Vancouver's biggest tourist attractions. The south shore of False Creek, a toxic stretch of sawmills and foundries, was rezoned for low-rise, low-income housing. Today, it's globally-recognized as a model of great urban planning. And Vancouver—with its downtown and waterfront both highway-free, and its heritage communities intact—is widely recognized as one of the world's most liveable cities.

Mary Chan got to live at 658 Keefer Street for 30 more years. In saving her home, she had also saved Vancouver.

Prime Minister Pierre Trudeau, 55, secretly marries West Vancouver's Margaret Sinclair, 22, and—nine months later—Justin Trudeau is born



Greenpeace sails from Vancouver to protest nuclear test on Alaska's Amchitka Island

Riot outside Rolling Stones' Pacific Coliseum concert, dozens injured



10-kilometre Stanley Park Seawall finally completed (began in 1914)

Scores of transients occupy "People's Park" to stop Stanley Park hotel development

1972

NPA Mayor Campbell calls local protesters "Maoists, pinkos and hamburgers"

Protesters hurl hundreds of real (wrapped) hamburgers at Eric Hamber Secondary public meeting, as mayor watches from stage



Reformist TEAM party wins civic election; ousts NPA and Campbell

Provincial NDP overthrows B.C.'s long-ruling W.A.C. Bennett SoCreds

Granville Island conversion from industrial to public use begins

South False Creek conversion from industrial to low-rise residential begins

Freeway plan killed: Chinatown, Gastown and Coal Harbour waterfront saved

