



CANADIAN

CONSTRUCTION JOURNAL

Interviews & Projects

MOLNAR GROUP

Geography Contracting's

Paul Shepski

Spotlight

YO BRO | YO GIRL

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Continuing Coverage of the CHBA BC Georgie Awards & Intro to Yo Bro

Cover Photo: Exterior of the Molnar Group's "Hendry Place" in Vancouver. Credit: Molnar Group



Photo: Livingroom in Molnar Group's "Hendry Place" development.
Photo Credit: Molnar Group.

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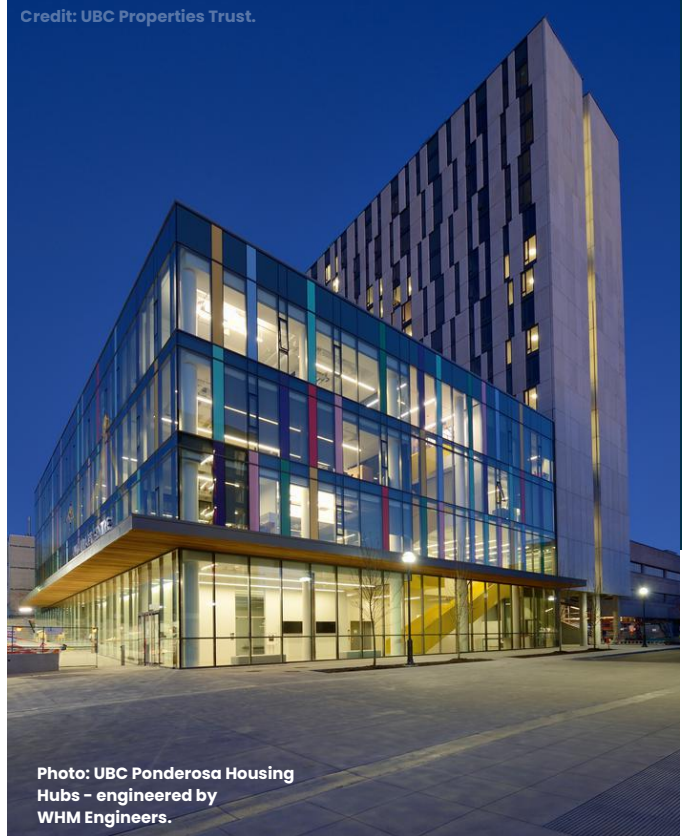
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clinton@cantower.com

Editor's Note

Paul Harrison



We are back with another B.C. exclusive issue, following up with several more 2022 and 2023 Georgie nominated and award-winning builders and developers. We have two major themes running through this issue. The first is a mini spotlight on Passive House and Net Zero homes. We begin with Geography Contracting's Georgie-nominated project, Grandma's House (designed by dpl Architecture), and follow with Kingdom Builder's Queen Mary and Changing Gears projects. This is followed by a spotlight on the Molnar Group, WHM Engineers, and Yo Bro | Yo Girl Youth Initiative (YBYG).

Of course, we are far from done with our coverage of British Columbia. In the coming issues, will we will continue with coverage of more CHBA BC members and Georgie-winners, and add a few big surprises from the Pacific coast along the way.

In sharing this issue you help promote a number of charitable causes, including Yo Bro | Yo Girl Youth Initiative. YBYG "runs a series of strength-based programs in Vancouver and the Lower Mainland. YBYG cultivates resiliency in at-risk youth and empowers them with tools to avoid the perils of drugs, gangs, crime and violence."

We at the Canadian Construction Journal are proud to partner with YBYG. Over the course of the coming issues, we will feature a series of articles on YBYG's work. Stay tuned for more ongoing coverage of YBYG, as we delve deep in YBYG's history as well as their future initiatives.

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Cynthia Harrison, Writer
C. Ross Harrison, Writer
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In this Issue

We are back in the saddle with British Columbian building at its finest! There is so much to cover in this very special issue, which we have been anticipating for many months.

To start things off, we chat with Paul Shepski from Geography Contracting about his objective to blend cutting-edge science with classic aesthetics. Geography's Georgie-nominated project, Grandma's House, brought unique challenges with it. Partnering with dpl Architecture, who, specialize in Passive House design, Geography was able to completely overhaul an existing 1960s single-family home into a modern Passive House duplex.

This was an astounding feat, which allowed Geography and dpl to prove their mettle. Joining them on the interior design on Grandma's House was former Canadian Construction Journal feature, Designs by KS, who, as always, brought a sense of transcendental beauty to the duplex. And of course, the natural resplendent light was invited into Grandma's House through VETTA Windows and Doors.

Lucio Picciano from dpl Architecture joins us to elaborate further on Passive House design. We discuss his specialized training in the field, the advantages of building to Passive House standards, and his relationship with Geography Contracting.

Paul Lilley, from Kingdom Builders, continues our exploration of Passive Homes as he walks us through two of his projects: Changing Gears, a 2022 Georgie nominee, and the Queen Mary, a 2023 Georgie winner.

Next, we shift gears to multi-residential rental units as Dak Molnar of the Molnar Group talks to us about his 2023 Georgie-winning project, Hendry Place...

Dak walks us through the Molnar Group's illustrious history, outlining how his father, Andre, pioneered the concept of the condo in 1970s Vancouver. Dak also outlines the need to remove red tape in the permitting process so that builders and developers can begin to solve the ongoing housing crisis.

Following the Molnar Group, Brian Maver from WHM Structural Engineers talks with us about his company's history and some of their recent projects. From Casinos in Ontario and British Columbia to high rise towers and Tesla plants, WHM's services can be found in many sectors. Brian also discusses the intricacies of engineering when dealing with seismic activity. Needless to say, we had an earth-shaking conversation! Given that I live on a fault line in Ottawa, I have a particular fascination with the subject.

For the past several issues, we have been floating tidbits regarding the Yo Bro | Yo Girl Youth Initiative (YBYG). Well, at long last, and through the generous sponsorship of the Molnar Group, WHM Engineers, Skyview Mechanical, NRG Electric, True Mechanical, and Nemetz Consulting Engineers, we are proud to present the grand introduction to our special feature on YBYG. Joe Calendino tells his story of his life as an outlaw biker, with a penchant for violence and all-consuming drug addiction.

Joe illustrates for us how a young boy in East Vancouver in the 1970s developed an insatiable appetite for destruction. His exploits cost him his business, his family, and even his reputation with the Hells Angels. Broken and at death's door, Joe found an unexpected friend in a police officer, Kevin Torvik, who helped Joe on the road to recovery, and who eventually provided Joe with the opportunity to tell his cautionary tale to youth all over the Lower Mainland. This is the first part of the story of the birth of YBYG.

Paul Harrison,
Editor-in-Chief



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**GEOGRAPHY
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**GRANDMA'S
HOUSE
NEVER
LOOKED SO
GOOD**

At look into
Geography Contracting's
GRANDMA'S HOUSE Project



AN ARTICLE BY EDITOR-IN-CHIEF

Cynthia Harrison

AN INTERVIEW WITH PAUL SHEPSKI OF GEOGRAPHY CONTRACTING



Paul Shepski is the owner of Geography Contracting, a Vancouver-based company, specializing in building high-quality customized built homes. The philosophy of Paul's company is to build homes that are in balance with nature and that create space for happy, healthy living.

Growing up, Paul had a firm foundation in carpentry. But it was only in the last few years that he finally decided to go into business for himself. Thus Geography Contracting was born.

In addition to his work in the trades, Paul had always had an interest in the environment, having received his degree in Environmental Science from the University of Waterloo. Creating Geography allowed Paul to blend his two areas of expertise: "It is this desire to build sustainable homes that keeps me going," Paul says.



GEOGRAPHY CONTRACTING



➤➤➤ PASSIVE HOMES

Although not all the houses he builds are passive homes, Paul has a passion for this type of house. Passive Homes are environmentally friendly but not necessarily “off grid homes.” Paul explains: “when a passive home is built, it is still fully connected to the grid; however, the demand on the grid is much lower. It is not resource exhaustive.” According to Paul, “passive homes use about 90% less energy than regular homes.”

Right now, British Columbia has a Five Step Program to which all builders must adhere. By 2030, the government plans to have the entire province on Step Five. This puts many requirements on all B.C. builders. It is hoped that by 2030 that net zero efficiency will be reached. “In other words,” says Paul, “more energy will be produced than what is being used.”

Paul informs us that “the way this will be achieved is building houses with less air leakage. This is done by pressurizing a house with a fan for air exchange. Passive homes have 0.6% air exchanges per hour, or ACH. There is less heat loss, which is good for both the homeowner in terms of energy costs and for the environment in general. Right now, Step Five homes have a 1.0 ACH.

“Vancouver,” Paul tells us, “has been pushing these incentives for home owners and leads the way for the rest of Canada. Although the Five Step Program is somewhat restrictive for builders, in the long run, it will be good for everyone.”



**Passive homes
use about 90%
less energy than
regular home.**



Paul Shepski



➤➤ GRANDMA'S HOUSE

Paul tells us he is especially proud of a passive home his company recently renovated. "Grandma's House, located in Kitsilano, got its name from the original owner. She was a Greek immigrant, who moved here, and purchased her home over 60 years ago. She left the house to her two grandchildren who did not want to sell it or knock it down. Instead, they wanted to live in it and convert it into a back to front duplex. They heard about Geography Contracting and next approached us to turn their house into an energy efficient, passive home."

This project was quite complex and innovative for Paul's company since it involved lifting the house on stilts in order to build a new foundation. In addition, the house had to be bumped up to new building code standards. "New seismic requirements were built into code. In other words," says Paul, "it was seismically compliant."



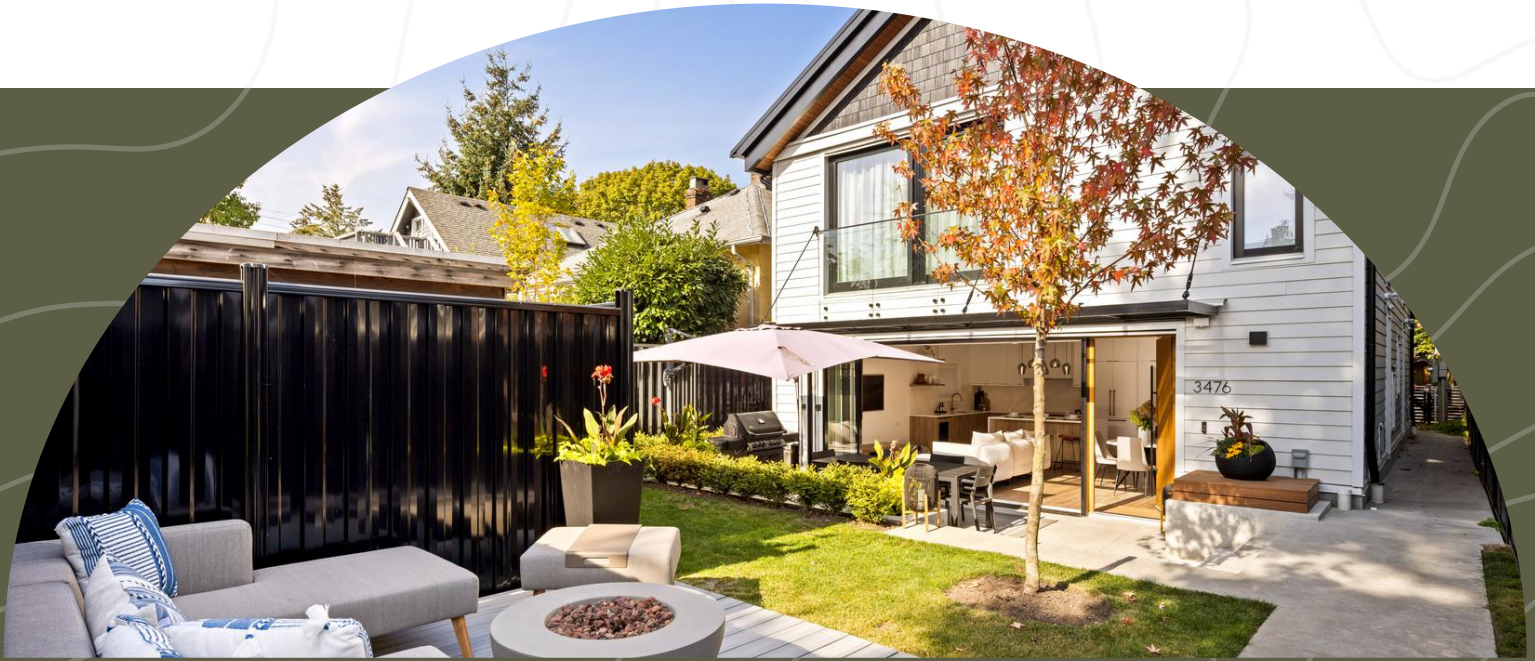
The house was finally lowered onto its new foundation and could now be classed as a passive home.

This was quite an endeavour," says Paul, "but we were successful."



➤➤➤ PARTNERSHIPS

Paul wants to pass on accolades to the following companies and people who helped to make Grandma's House a success: DLP Architecture designed the home; Nicol Bros House Lifting lifted the house onto stilts while the new foundation was being built; Vetta Windows and Doors made a complex accordion door for the house; And Designs by KS did the beautiful interior designing.



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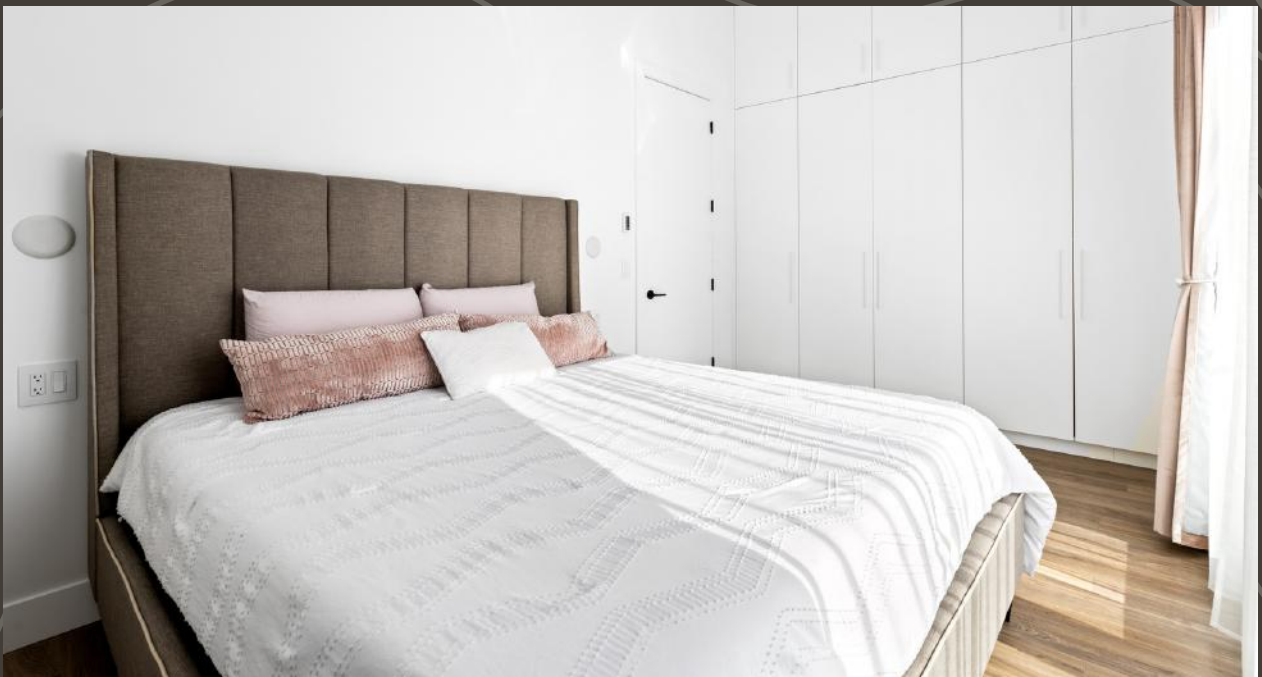
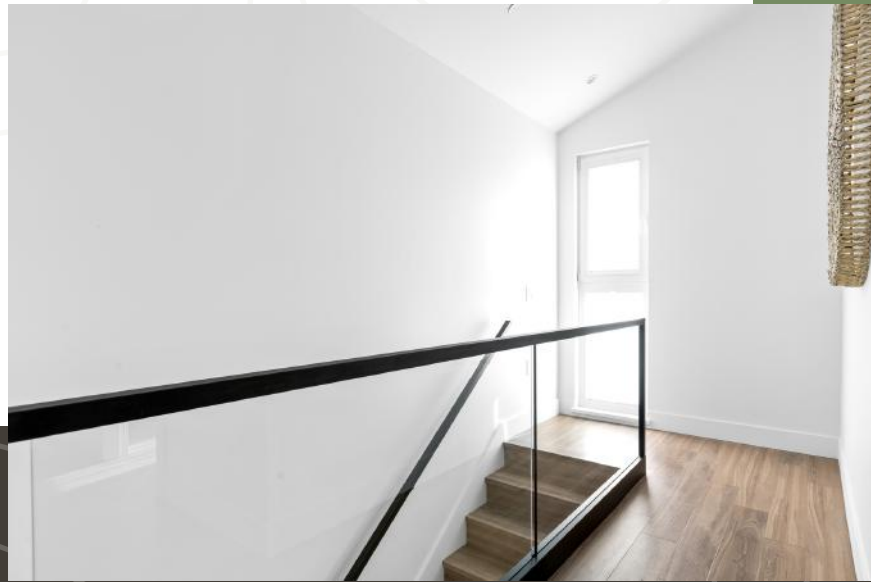
**CERTIFIED
PASSIVE HOUSE
DESIGNER**

➤➤ ADVICE FOR DOING A RENOVATION

Paul advises that “you try to utilize as much of the original material as possible. For instance, wood, and even used studs, will keep the costs down. There is inefficiency at first but, as time goes by, you learn to save more materials.” The reclamation of old materials is one of the simplest and most effective ways to combat environmental damage. Though it is becoming a more common practice, Geography has been ahead of the curve in this respect.



When asked to give one great tip for homeowners who are looking to build or renovate, Paul responds with one word: “Prioritize.” He elaborates: “This helps the owners, the environment, the materials, and the house. You want a healthier, more holistic way to live in a house. This way, everyone benefits.”



➤➤ NEW PROJECTS

Paul notes that “we have another passive home: a custom house being built in Vancouver. We also have a home being built on the Sunshine Coast. It’s not a passive home, but we are using reclaimed wood. It’s built out of old materials. It has an exposed rafter roof using old beams. This way, we’re helping the environment by not cutting down new trees and by keeping waste out of the landfills.”



GEOGRAPHY
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AN INTERVIEW WITH LUCIO PICCIANO

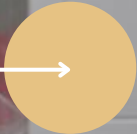
Architect/Founder of dlp Architecture

By: Paul Harrison



How long has your company been in operation? How did it get started? What led you to found/join the company?

We began doing design-build of custom homes in 2008. I had a history in the building industry, then obtained my architecture degree. After working in Seattle for several years, I started out on my own in Vancouver by acquiring properties, then building on them and selling them.



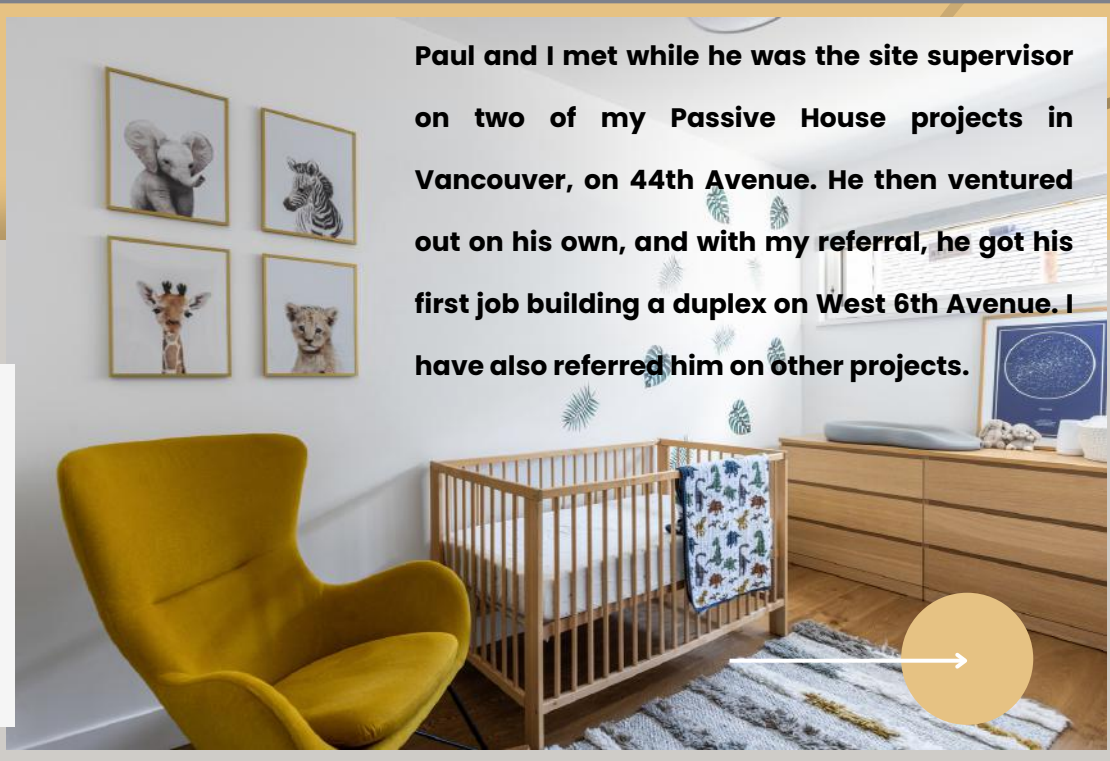
Tell us about what your company does in general?

We do projects of all sizes, from laneway homes to multifamily homes, as well as medical offices and daycares. We specialize in high performance, contemporary design (Passive House).



What is the nature of the work you do for Geography Contracting?

Paul and I met while he was the site supervisor on two of my Passive House projects in Vancouver, on 44th Avenue. He then ventured out on his own, and with my referral, he got his first job building a duplex on West 6th Avenue. I have also referred him on other projects.



Are there any key vendors, suppliers, subcontractors, or partners who help you with your work?

I mainly use VETTA Windows, Small Planet Supply, and Zehnder for HRV/ERV systems.

You specialize in Passive House architecture. How did you get into this field and what training did you have to go through to master this particular design skill?

I took the Passive House design course in 2014 and decided to build my family home to the standard; this was actually the first certified house in Vancouver. Since then, and following its success, over 80% of the work we do in our office has been on Passive House projects. The City of Vancouver used our home to upgrade the RSI zoning and start the guidelines for incentives to use the Passive House standard.

Building on the last question, how does designing a Passive House differ from a “traditional” build?

It starts from the moment you put pen to paper, and it never stops – even while the building is inhabited. Passive House design and building changes the approach to construction with all the major trades, and influences the behaviour and comfort of the occupants, long afterwards. These changes are all positive. Once you go passive, there is no going back to code standards.

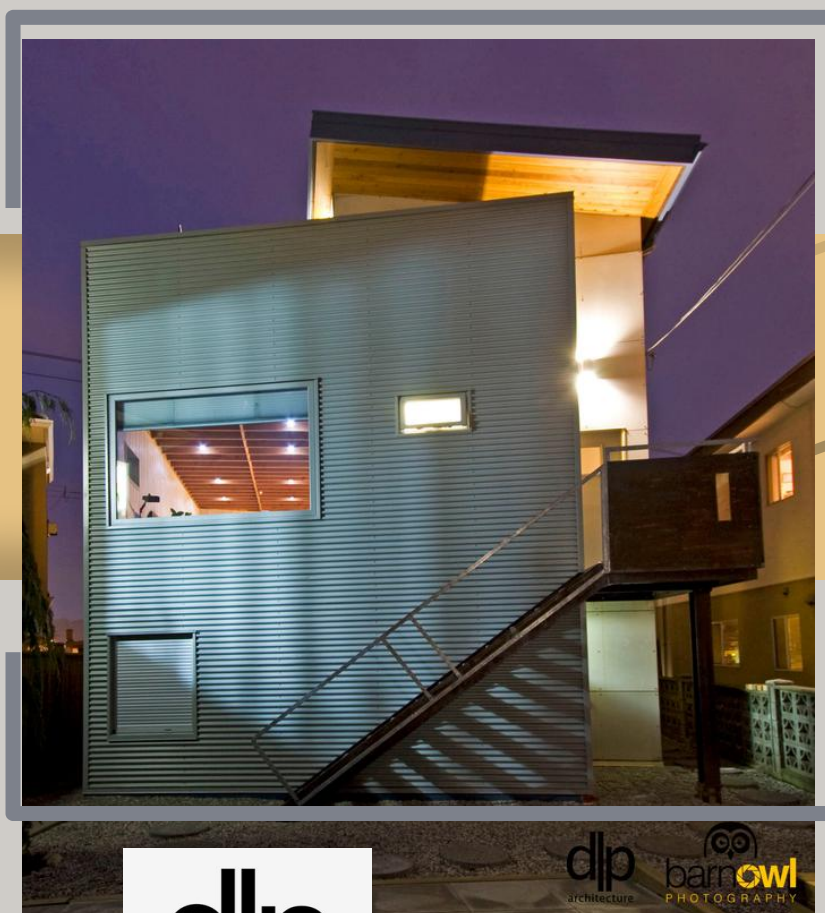


Walk us through the process you go through when a client or a builder calls you. How do you go from the consultation session to a finalized design? Moreover, how do you ensure the builder follows the designs?

The builder has no choice but to follow the design as sealed drawings require signing off at every stage of construction from all registered professionals involved. Following our designs has never been a problem for anyone involved. The decision to build one of our designs almost always comes from someone having seen one of our past design and falling in love with it. Almost always, the client has already researched the high performance and comfort, which comes with a Passive House. If not, then City or Provincial incentives are usually enough to convince the less knowledgeable client to pursue Passive House.

Building on the last question, how important is for you, a Passive House architect, to work alongside a skilled Passive House builder, like GeographyContracting? How important is the relationship between architect and builder?

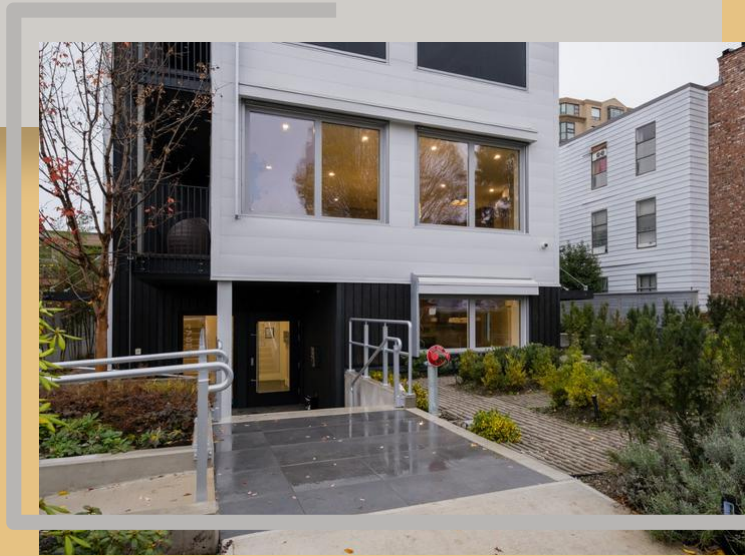
The relationship makes everything easier, but it isn't essential. It is easy enough to train trades on site if the details are simple enough to follow. But working with Paul and his team at Geographymakes it much easier for me as I can rest at ease, knowing that everything will be executed properly by him and his team.



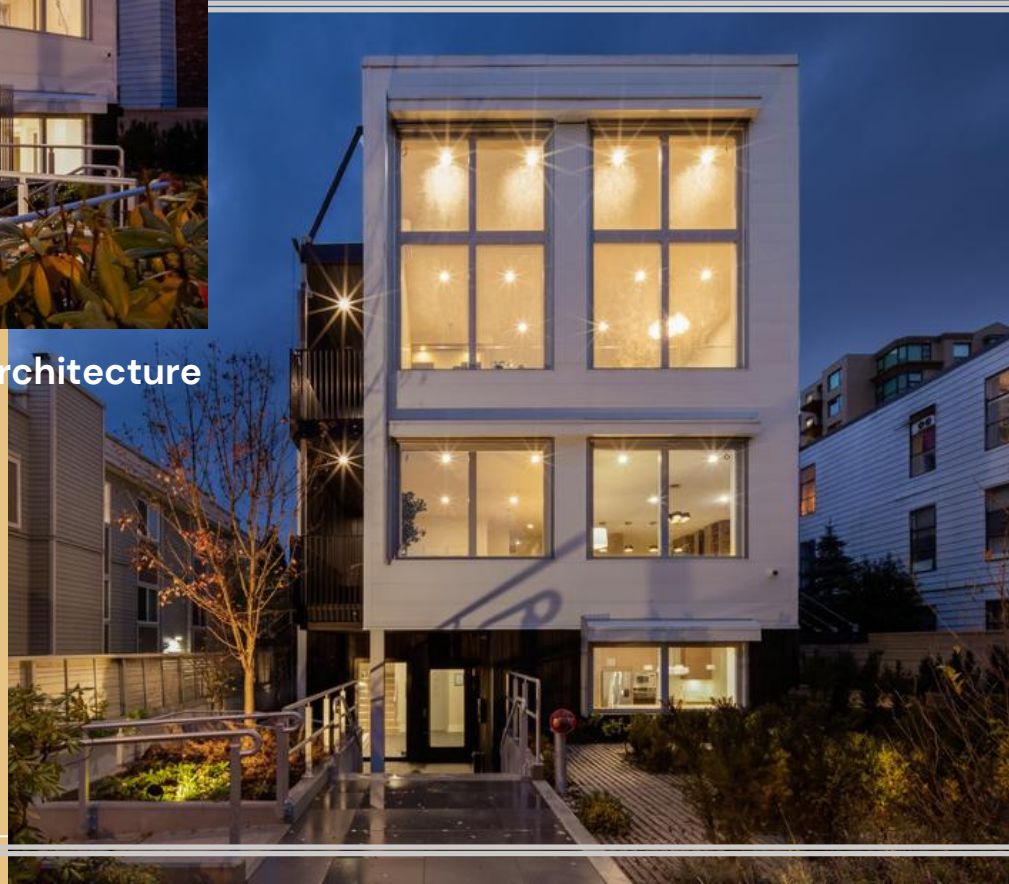
Do you have any exciting new projects on the horizon, or any others that you might have just wrapped up?

We have many completed Passive House projects with the most interesting of them still in the permitting phase. These include: a new medical office building in Chinatown, and a very large Passive House and mass timber development, over 14 acres large; this one is built in a colder climate.

Lilac Haus in Kitsilano



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**KINGDOM
BUILDERS**

BUILDING PLACES YOU CAN CALL HOME



By: Paul Harrison

An interview with Paul Lilley of Kingdom

Builders



History

Paul Lilley is the general manager of Kingdom Builders, who operate in the Lower Mainland of British Columbia. They specialize in custom homes, energy efficient homes, and step-code five homes or net-zero homes. Kingdom Builders is the initial point of contact for all types of projects; they handle all construction planning, management, and support their team through all the construction process.

Prior to founding Kingdom Builders in 2005, Paul worked as a mechanical engineer in industrial project management and softwood lumber manufacturing. He recounts his past work: "As a project manager, I was involved in a \$90 million facility with Weyerhaeuser. I was on the steering committee for this project, so I was quite knowledgeable on the construction level. I was involved in project management, such as scheduling, budgeting, estimating, and managing construction. In some cases, the standards in industrial construction are a lot higher than what is expected in residential construction. This was a big benefit.

"My brother-in-law and I started Kingdom Builders together. He had years of experience under his belt as a licensed carpenter, building custom homes. He was very familiar with the industry and home-building in general. When I jumped in, I brought my project management skills and learned the intricacies of residential construction, and to this day, 20 years later, I'm still learning as there is always more to figure out."



The Ins & Outs of Residential Building

Entering the residential building space came with some changes for Paul. "Having a homeowner involved is very different," Paul comments. "It's not just a business transaction, where we are doing [the build] to create revenue – although there is that aspect to residential building too, because building or renovating does add value. Most of the time, building a new home for someone is not being done for business. This is where they will be living and raising their family, so people tend to pay a lot more attention to the intricate details. This raises the bar for expectations. Whereas in commercial or industrial, things have to look good, but the main thing is that the building serves the purpose for which it was intended; it's obviously a different beast."



Partnering with Interior Designers

Kingdom's award-winning work is not built in a vacuum. They rely on a variety of partners to complete their projects. This often includes working in concert with an interior designer. Paul explains: "We try to focus on what we are good at – which is construction. But when it comes to architecture or interior design, we always rely on the designer. We also offer construction services to help with the construction assemblies, quantity surveying, value engineering, and budgeting. We clarify the scope of the work and scheduling for the project. And once construction starts, we have a dedicated project manager for each project as well as our own site team to work alongside the subtrades. Our team ensures everything is in line with the designer's goals, we also provide direction to our on-site carpenters, and our site-team manages scheduling and quality control."



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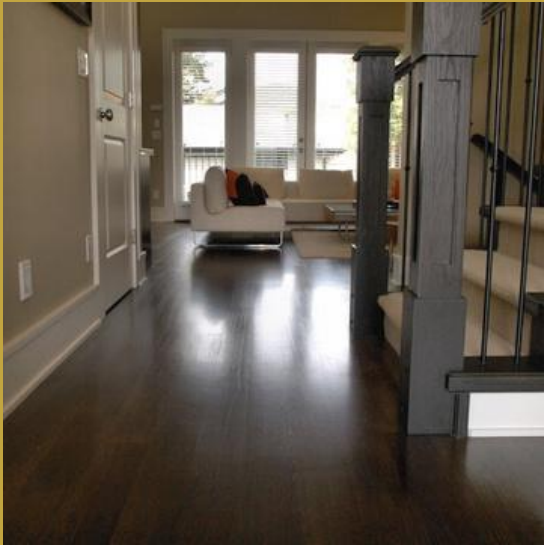
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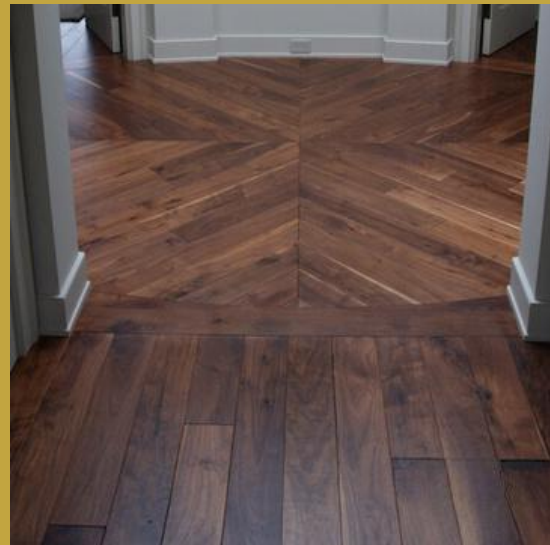
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Other Partnerships

Of course, not only interior designers work with Kingdom, but many other trades help complete their projects. Paul adds: "Fowlstone Electric is one we do a lot of work with. Capilano Hardwood Floors is another key partner. Vancouver ICF also helped on a passive home we did; but they weren't on these 2022 Georgie-nominated projects." In addition, InGrain Custom Millwork provides the beautiful millwork on many of Kingdom's projects and Caprice Countertops provides finishing touches with beautiful counters.



Passive Homes

Since their founding, Kingdom Builders have sought to be on the cutting edge of energy efficient builds. Paul explains: "We have always had a focus on energy efficient matters, even going back to 2005, before Passive Homes were on the radar. We were using high-efficiency appliances, LED lighting and that sort of thing. It really depended on what the client wanted back in the early days before mandates.

Now, we see more of this, whether it's people wanting the Passive House standard, or just to be in line with what the BC Step Code requires – step one is entry level efficiency, and step five being, more or less, in line with Passive Home. Since the government has mandated the step-code, people haven't had a choice. We are now incentivized to build to the highest standard. That's a game changer for us.



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Passive Homes Cont'd

"Passive builds do cost more, but they are the best way to build, so why compromise on such a major investment? Step three might be adequate today, but soon Passive House / step five standards will be in place, so why not be at that standard ahead of time, so your house resale price is high down the road? We have a lot of expertise in this sector. One of our clients is very excited about solar energy and wanted his house set up to take advantage of solar power generation, for example. This client asked: 'why wouldn't you use the sun to generate power? The sun doesn't send you a bill like utility companies do!' I thought that was clever."



Passive builds do cost more, but they are the best way to build, so why compromise on such a major investment?



Paisley Home



**KINGDOM
BUILDERS**

One highly unique home on which Kingdom Builders worked is the Paisley Home. Paul recalls the challenges which the property presented: “The Paisley Home is built to step three in the step code. It was a fascinating build; it was built for a couple who had lived on the property for many years. It took a long time to get the project approved because it is built on an embankment over a stream. You usually have to build at a certain height above the embankment, but this house had been built below that level.

“We had a consultant look at the stream, and they had to predict the 200-year flood level. We couldn’t have any wood framing below that flood level. The foundation had to be designed specially to handle a flood event, where, if the water level were to rise, the house wouldn’t suffer any damage. So, the project was highly consulted when it came to doing any work on the foundation and around the stream. We needed special permits.

“Another thing about the Paisley Home is that the owner requires the use of a wheelchair. It was difficult for her to get in and out of the home so far below the road. We installed an elevator, and a bridge from the main floor over to the sidewalk; when the home was done, she could get on and off her property and go to the local village without any trouble. It was a neat project to work on.”

Queen Mary Passive House Showcase



**KINGDOM
BUILDERS**

For more information on Kingdom Builders, visit: www.kingdombuilders.ca/



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THE MOLNAR GROUP: BUILDING A BRITISH COLUMBIAN LEGACY FOR OVER FIFTY YEARS



BY: PAUL HARRISON



An Interview with Dak Molnar from the Molnar Group



Andre Molnar
Founder & Principal

Dak Molnar
Principal

Dak Molnar joins us to discuss the history and growth of the Molnar Group, as well as their 2023 Georgie Award-winning development in the Cedar Cottage / Commercial Drive area of Vancouver: Hendry Place. Dak also tells us about an organization close to his heart: Yo Bro Yo Girl (YBYG). Through Dak's introduction, the CCJ has begun a partnership with YBYG. This article represents the earnest start of the YBYG ongoing spotlight.



**The Westwind
Condo, built
1975**

The Early Days

Originally established by Andre Molnar in 1969, Molnar Group has been a powerhouse in residential development in Western Canada. With properties stretching from Saskatchewan to Vancouver Island, Molnar Group's work can be found at the centre of many Canadian communities; their primary market focus, however, is the Lower Mainland and Vancouver Island.

As the second generation in the family business, Dak Molnar is proud of his family's legacy, but refuses to rest on his laurels. While the Molnar Group helped to pioneer the concept of condominiums in Vancouver in the 1970s, they have focused mostly on rental property developments in the past two decades. It is in this period when Dak began to work at Molnar Group in earnest. Under his tenure, the company has produced an average of 150-200 apartments and townhouses annually.

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Early Days Continued

Andre Molnar's story is an epic Canadian success tale. Dak recalls: "My dad started the company as an immigrant from Hungary. He had no money, no friends, no language – he didn't speak English. But he had skills as a carpenter from a trade school he attended before he escaped the communist regime in 1964. So, he started slowly, building one house at a time. In those days, you could buy a house for \$14,000. He was able to sort of beg, borrow, and steal and make enough money to scratch up to buy one little house. Then he would renovate it and sell it for \$28,000. So, he would put a few thousand into the renovation and make a small profit on the resale. Then, he'd do it again and again. He did 14 houses in this manner, and then decided to try his hand at a small building, which was in East Vancouver. But this time, it was a rental building."

““ ***My dad started the company as an immigrant from Hungary. He had no money, no friends, no language...*** ””



Above: The Westview Condo, built 1976



Left: The Westport Condo, built 1976

The Coming of Condominiums

Though Andre Molnar didn't know it at the time, he was on the cusp of a major innovation in both building and real estate. Dak recounts: "Funnily enough, condominiums didn't exist in those days. So, if you were going to build multifamily, it had to be rental. My dad built the building and kept it and then built another building. But the second building was condominiums. He actually came up with the idea to sell apartments, which was very novel in the late 60s and early 70s. There were co-ops in this country for multiple unit dwellings, but there weren't strata as we know today. Such things didn't exist. So, the fracturing of these units was a special thing. But my dad was convinced that he could do it. His first few buildings were done differently; it was the pre-strata world where you could title a building and then you could carve up the units afterwards."

Andre Molnar started the condominium phenomenon in Vancouver, which spread throughout all of Canada eventually. By the early 1980s, Molnar was one of the biggest developers in the Lower Mainland. Vancouver would undergo a major period of growth after Expo 86, and Molnar expanded in tandem with the city. Andre Molnar was a founding member of the group that really spearheaded all the small-to-medium, and eventually large-scale, residential development that occurred in Vancouver in the past 30 years.

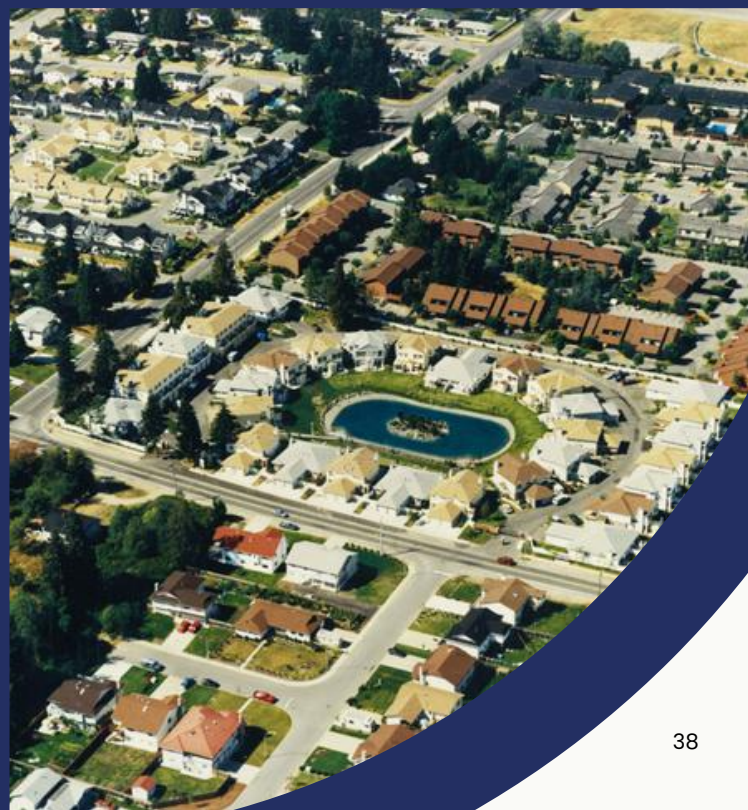


Left: Sunrise West Condo, built 1975

Below: Orchard Lake, built 1987

Dak Molnar Joins the Family Business

Dak Molnar graduated high school in the early 90s, went to university, and spent the next 18 years away from the family business. He worked at Colliers and also built his own real estate business, which specialized in shopping centres. But eventually, Dak returned to the Molnar Group to work alongside his father. "My dad and I started this Molnar 2.0, which is basically rental multifamily, rental developer and landlord," Dak explains. "And then we have a small commercial business as well. We have a couple of shopping centres, some office buildings, and a hotel. But our focus, and really the mainstay of our business day-to-day, is building multifamily residential apartments."





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HENDRY PLACE

A 2023 Georgie Award Winning Project

Recently, Molnar Group expanded their reach by building rental units in the highly sought-after neighbourhood of Cedar Cottage / Commercial Drive. Despite its popularity, new developments were few and far between in the area. "In order to get new developments," Dak explains, "you have to participate in these land assemblies because it's quite tightly held by single family homes mostly.

"But the City of Vancouver passed some zoning laws that allowed you to increase density if you are within 50m-100m of an arterial road or a Skytrain track or station. This land is virtually on the Skytrain line, so you could apply for increased density in these areas. Moreover, this land is on a hill. It's unbelievable! It's got sweeping mountain views, park views, it's close to one of the city's best community centres; it has ice rink hockey, tennis, and a big lake you can swim in. It's a really high amenity area and it just hadn't had a lot of new construction.

"So, we assembled several houses in a square on this cul-de-sac right off Commercial Drive. And, after a long time, we were able to convince the city to let us build - I'm not going to lie to you, this took six years to get entitlement and was quite a painful process for us. In the end, we wanted to do 120 units of high-end rental, but the city had other plans.

In short, the city took us from four and five storey apartments with 125 doors down to 68 doors; it's now mostly townhouses and one small apartment building. Given that there is a housing crisis, three-bedroom units are in short supply, so we built those, and they have been rented out."



It's unbelievable! It's got sweeping mountain views, park views, it's close to one of the city's best community centres...

It's a really high amenity area and it just hadn't had a lot of new construction.

Hendry Place Continued

Dak continues: “We have a very good collection of tenants there now. We are fully rented with zero vacancy. Rents are at the top of the market in terms of value, but people love it. It’s condo quality. I was just there today looking at one of our display suites and I am still blown away by how well it’s designed and built. It feels like a new home construction. It doesn’t feel like a rental, which is what people appreciate – especially in this increased interest rate environment where it’s much more difficult in Vancouver with our housing prices to qualify for a mortgage. So, the higher rental price for somebody who initially planned to buy a home is perfect. We’ve slipped into a nice market in that regard.”

The Lone House at Hendry Place

As one glances through the townhouses of Hendry Place, they are sure to notice the classic single-family home in the midst of modernity. Dak chuckles with frustration as he tells the home’s story: “Well, at the insistence of the city planning department, we had to save that tiny house, which was one part of the assembly of homes we initially bought. But it had been renovated so many times over. The city basically forced us to keep it. They forced our hand and made us restore it and put it on the front of the property as a showpiece. There’s a heritage restoration department here in Vancouver, and they have major lobbying power. So that one unit is beautiful. It is.”



Dak laughs as he continues: “The house cost three times as much as it would have to build a new home because we had to completely restore an old house. Also, where it sits was supposed to be an extension of the apartment building, so it would have been another 20 units – maybe ten units minimum. So, it was a big sacrifice. But we were told by the city that if we didn’t restore the heritage home, we weren’t going to get a permit. So that’s the story of that home. It looks cute, and we were able to get the colours to match the neighborhood.

“At the end of the day, it looks good, but it certainly didn’t do anything to provide more housing to our housing crisis, which should always be a priority. I’m a big housing advocate and I speak regularly at these functions at city hall. It is no secret that I would much rather have demolished that home and built 20 more doors, than do a cute little heritage house where somebody can live. There are probably 15–20 people out there that are looking for rental housing and it’s not there because we had to keep the little house. We could have done the continuation of the apartment building all the way to the corner instead, creating 15 more units. But the city gets its way to the detriment of the renters.”

In the end, the city’s policies brought Hendry place from 125 units (as initially planned) down to 68 units. But regardless of these policy setbacks, Hendry Place still managed to take home a Georgie Award for “Best Multi-Family Townhouse Development (Production) over 10 units including mixed use.”

Hendry Place came together with the help of many people both within the Molnar Group itself and from external sources. The Molnar crew, led by Dave White and Alexander Edwards, “stickhandled [the project] to the end.” They worked through Covid, and the wild price swings that accompanied it, to bring the project to a successful close, even if it was “way over budget. They finished with a good profit margin in the end.” This was an amazing feat during such unprecedented times.

Molnar Group’s subcontractors played crucial roles in the development of Hendry Place. Palmieri Bro handled civil work, Houston Landscaping transformed the surroundings, Steel City managed drywall and insulation, Ploutos Flooring provided real wood flooring and Lore Electric took care of electrical.

In addition to these subcontractors “WA Architecture, designed the building beautifully, achieving a high livability score in terms of amenities in the building, appliance packages, real stone countertops, real wood flooring – not vinyl. Some of these touches are very much appreciated by our tenants. Our engineers at WHM Engineering made the entire project possible with their excellent work ethic and knowledge. Skyview Mechanical handled plumbing and HVAC. Reinbold Mechanical covered all aspects of mechanical engineering. And although NRG Electric did not work on Hendry Place directly, they have a strong partnership with the Molnar Group and have worked together often. The same is true of Nemetz consulting engineers. Justin Sherwood, who supplied the lumber, also has a longstanding relationship with Molnar and has provided materials on countless projects.”

Housing Crisis

Dak Molnar does not shy away from expressing his opinions on the housing crisis, the costs of building, and the ineptitude of staffers in the permitting department at city hall. Dak holds that it is erroneous to point the finger at the politicians, because this problem persists through every administration, and has done so for 20 years. “It’s the planning department policy makers who have basically stood in the way of housing,” Dak chimes. “They put policy ahead of housing. The staff don’t change when elections come and go. These are the people that are always there and they’re dictating the zoning bylaws and controlling what can and can’t be done. What needs to be done is we need to peel the Band-Aid off and just build as many houses as we can. But right now, it takes five to seven years to get a project off the ground. You have to be very patient and very well capitalized to get anything built.”





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Yo Bro | Yo Girl Youth Initiative

At the end of the day, to see people housed is Dak's business. His frustrations with city hall stem from a desire not only to do business but also to ensure that people have a place to live. One does not need to look far in Vancouver to find rampant destitution and homelessness; the city's east side is notorious for drug and gang problems. As such, Dak has paired with Joe Calendino's organization, Yo Bro Yo Girl (YBYG), in order to try to break the cycle of drug addiction and crime that helps feed the homelessness crisis on Vancouver's east side (and beyond).

Joe Calendino came from the world of crime and drug addiction himself. Having defeated the demons of his past, Joe now seeks to offer children and teenagers a path away from drugs and gangs by teaching discipline and commitment through the martial arts and after-school programs. YBYG also offers kids a place to do homework and socialize. Teenagers learn to mentor younger kids, which teaches leadership and responsibility.

Dak has made YBYG one of his charities of choice. It was through Dak that we at the CCJ discovered YBYG ourselves and have since helped Joe's organization find other partnerships throughout B.C (particularly in Kamloops – see the July/August 2023 issue).

Inspired by YBYG's work, and by the Molnar's Group community-driven example, other B.C. construction companies have contributed to Joe Calendino's organization; Femo Construction, Dick's Lumber, Skyview Mechanical, NRG Electric, Nemetz consulting engineers, WHM Engineering, WA Architects, and True Mechanical have all given generously to fund YBYG's 2023 summer program.



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Future Projects

The Molnar Group have several projects currently under construction. One 100-unit rental building is going up alongside a Skytrain station. Elsewhere in Vancouver, beside another Skytrain station, is an 85-unit building currently underway; both are eight storey concrete builds. On Vancouver Island, construction has now begun on a 150-unit building near Nanaimo. In the future, Dak plans to work more in Nanaimo and northwards as this is a beautiful area, which is beginning to see rapid growth. Moreover, unlike Vancouver, municipalities there are actually amenable to developers and ensure permits are granted efficiently and without hassle.

Tips for New Developers

Despite the struggles with Vancouver city hall, Dak feels that it is still a great time for people to get into the development business. "There are many markets in this country where a developer could set up a shop and make a business work. But I think Vancouver and the Lower Mainland and Southern British Columbia is a very tough market in which to start. I would be very careful and make sure you buy your land right, and you know what you're doing. But I think overall, the homebuilding and development business in Canada is very robust. There are great markets in Alberta and right across this country where this business is something that people could do and make a decent living. And in the meantime, you provide jobs and homes to your community. So, it's not a bad job, right?"

For more information on the Molnar Group, visit <http://molnargroup.com/>



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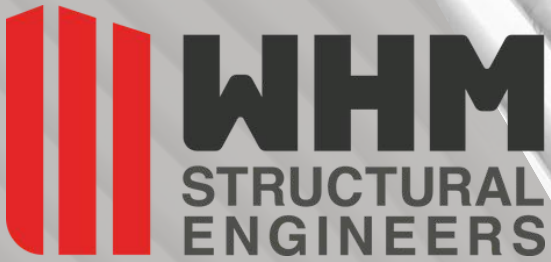
LOCATIONS

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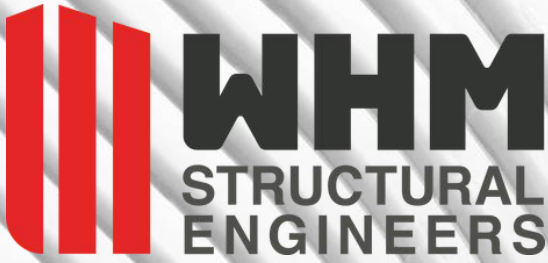
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Photo courtesy of Splyce Designs

INTEGRITY

BY: CYNTHIA HARRISON



**STRUCTURAL
INTEGRITY**



An Interview with Brian Maver of WHM Structural Engineers

History

In 2006, three engineers – Dan Wicke, Richard Herfst, and Brian Maver – joined together to establish their own structural engineering and consulting firm. Thus, WHM Structural Engineers was born. Initially, the company consisted of its three founders and a drafter, but within a few short years the number of employees had tripled. Today, WHM has a team of nearly 50 people, and specializes in the engineering of commercial, residential, institutional, and educational facilities across North America and overseas. It is located at 2550 Boundary Road in Burnaby, British Columbia.

Over the past 18 years, WHM has earned a stellar reputation for providing innovative and practical design solutions. They have worked on a wide variety of projects including condominiums and mixed-used developments, as well as entertainment, educational and recreational facilities. They also specialize in structural engineering of multi-million-dollar luxury homes.

Rendering courtesy of Sh'ft Architecture



HUE CONDOS

STRUCTURAL INTEGRITY

A Family-Oriented Business

Though the team has grown substantially since 2006, Brian still sees WHM as a mom-and-pop business at heart. “We try to balance work, home and family,” he says. “Many of our team have young children so we have to be flexible in case their children take ill or if some family emergency arises.” The company even provides a nap room where team members can rest for a while in order to recharge their batteries.

WHM’s Process

By carefully managing workload, the Principals and Associates are able to maintain a hands-on approach throughout the entire life of each project from schematic design through to construction. This allows for continual participation in each of their projects. Additionally, WHM is a company that strives to make a difference for their clients. They care deeply about quality and understanding their client’s objectives and priorities – and that’s reflected in the building projects they do.

LEGACY ON PARK AVENUE



Photo by Calvin Owen Jones



STRUCTURAL INTEGRITY

Casinos

WHM's clients hail from various parts of North America. Recently WHM completed the Pickering Casino Resort in Pickering, Ontario, just east of Toronto. Brian noted that "it is one of the largest casinos in Canada. In total, there was 1.7 million square feet of suspended structure, which includes two parkades. In addition, it has a 2,500-seat theatre, a 14-storey hotel with 275 rooms and a large gaming floor."



Renderings courtesy of Chris Dikeakos Architects

The Pickering Casino Resort was architecturally designed by Chris Dikeakos Architects, and a deliberate effort to pay homage to the environment by incorporating nature-inspired elements into the design. The entrance canopy takes on the form of a leaf, and various features resembling raindrops are scattered throughout the atrium. WHM introduced distinctive horizontally-curved trusses that simulate the shape of a fish. This innovative truss structure enabled an unobstructed atrium of over 16,000 square feet to welcome guests into the fantastic entertainment facility.

WHM has provided their services for several other casinos in Ontario: The Great Blue Heron Casino in Port Perry, the Shorelines Casino in Belleville, and the Shorelines Casino in Peterborough. The design of these casinos differs widely, but they all deliver the sense of grandeur one hopes to find at such facilities.

STRUCTURAL INTEGRITY

Luxury Homes

Other recent projects include high-end family homes in B.C. Brian describes one particular home in Whistler: "This house is cantilevered 30 feet over a cliff. The architect, who was from Spain, worked alongside with local designers, Evoke International Design in B.C. to design this unique structure. Being of contemporary design, the roof is flat, not peaked like roofs on most mountain dwellings. Therefore, because there isn't opportunity to shed snow, the large cantilever needed to withstand the vast amount of snow expected at a winter resort."

Photo by Fernando Guerra



Photo by Fernando Guerra



FLAG HAUS

Brian tells us of "another recent project on Green Lake called White Glacier which is constructed on a peninsula that extends out onto the lake. It is extremely large and includes a yoga studio, a guardhouse, and a series of independent pods." Brian describes the whole compound as being "very futuristic and could very well be the setting for the next 'Mission Impossible' movie."

STRUCTURAL INTEGRITY

Mid-Rise Mass Timber Frame Builds

Another creation Brian speaks enthusiastically about is the Virtuoso Project, built in conjunction with the builder, Adera Development Corporation, and RH Architects. It is a 6-storey hybrid light-wood frame and mass timber residential building in the Westbrook Village neighbourhood of the University of British Columbia (UBC), Vancouver Campus. CLT was used for the floors in this project, making this a great leap forward in Canadian construction methods for market residential projects.



Cross Laminated Timber (CLT)

Brian explains that CLT “is becoming more and more popular. It is being used for floors and wall panels and is very rigid and strong. WHM works with many suppliers of CLT in British Columbia.” Brian continues: “Legacy, another market residential project in Langley, BC, uses CLT for floor plates and firewalls,” Brian states. The firewall was the first of its kind made with CLT in Canada.

STRUCTURAL INTEGRITY

Prepared for Seismic Activity

Due to B.C. and much of the Pacific Coast's being more prone to earthquakes than other places (with the exception of eastern Ontario and Quebec), engineers have to design their structures with seismology in mind," explains Brian. "Gravity induces vertical loads but seismic loads are primarily horizontal, so buildings must be constructed with this in mind. In the case of a high magnitude earthquake, we know that there could still be damage, but the intent is to prevent collapse. This way, people can safely escape the building should an earthquake occur.

"As per the code, we design structures like schools and community centres with 30% increase in seismic load since these are the buildings where people will congregate after a seismic event," says Brian. "Firehalls, police stations, and emergency centres generally require 50% increase in seismic load and require specific detailing to ensure ductility. These seismic provisions can be costly but very necessary considering the area in which we live," Brian adds.

PITT MEADOWS FIRE HALL



Photo courtesy of Jacob Bros Construction

WHM's Professional Partners

Over the years, WHM has formed close partnerships with a variety of other companies in the construction industry. Kalesnikoff Lumber supplies much of the CLT used in some of the projects WHM has completed recently. Builders and developers, such as Polygon Homes, Intracorp, Beedie Group, and architects, such as WA Architects, MGBA, Integra, CDA, Arcadis, Keystone and Lamoureux Architects, frequently turn to WHM to work on their projects.

STRUCTURAL INTEGRITY

Upcoming Major Projects

The team at WHM are keeping busy with a variety of new projects currently underway. On the institutional side, the West Kelowna City Hall & Library is nearing completion, as are three schools – David Lloyd George, Henry Hudson, and St. John Paul II. On the light-industrial side, the 65,000 square foot Tesla Delivery Centre in Coquitlam is in development. On the commercial side, WHM has recently finished working on the first Gordon Ramsay restaurant in Canada, which is located at the Hard Rock Casino in Coquitlam. Finally, WHM is involved in a variety of new towers going up all over the Lower Mainland.

Since their humble beginnings in 2006, WHM has seen itself grow into a household name in British Columbia's (and Canada's) construction sector. Their vision and leadership, as well as the dedication of their team, have made WHM the respected industry innovator that it is today.

One River Park Place by Intracorp Homes



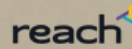
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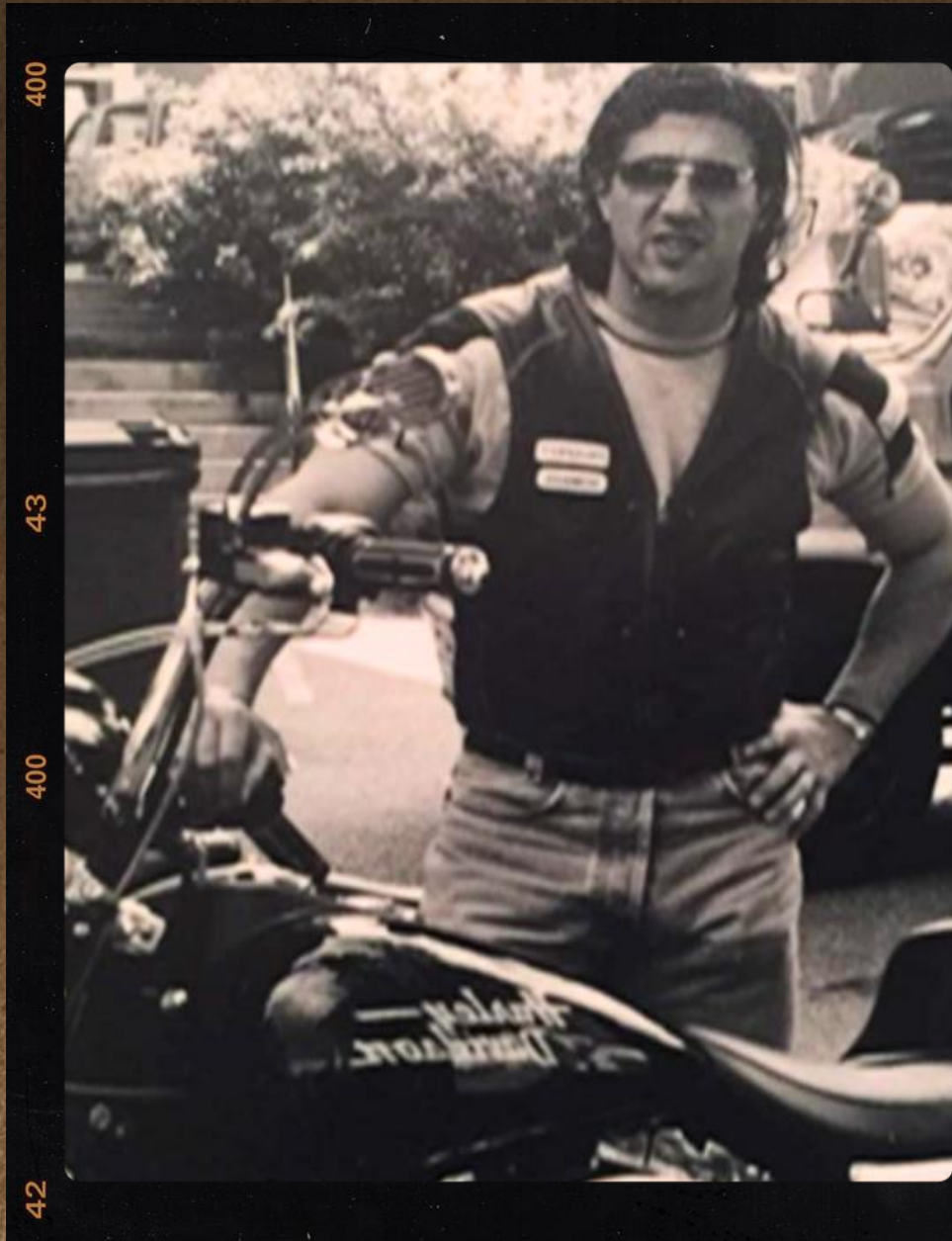
WHM is a proud supporter of the Yo Bro / Yo Girl Youth Initiative. Their generous support helped to fund YBYG's 2023 summer program.

**WHM Structural Engineers & The Molnar Group,
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YO BRO | YO GIRL series
on Joe Calendino's compelling story**



PART 1 IN THE YBYG SERIES

LIVE TO RIDE AGAIN.



JOE CALENDINO'S
REFORM AND THE
FOUNDATION OF YO
BRO | YO GIRL

BY: PAUL HARRISON

Part 1 in the YBYG Series

Introduction

Who is Joe Calendino and what is the Yo Bro Yo Girl Youth Initiative (YBYG)? Before I first talked to Joe, I was pondering these questions myself. Naturally, I Googled Joe and YBYG. What I found was a story of tragedy and of hope; of destitution and redemption; of katabasis and ascent. I discovered a fallen angel who battled his way out of hell and seized life from the jaws of death. But Joe's redemption story was not simply one of self-salvation. In fact, Joe's first step to reform his life came when he realized that he never wanted to see a child end up in the position in which he found himself at that moment: writhing in anguish on a cold jail cell floor. When this selfless thought entered the mind of this notoriously violent biker, not only was Joe's life itself saved, but the seed of YBYG was also planted. As time passed and Joe embraced sobriety, YBYG grew and saved many lives in the process. This is the paradoxical, but true, story of how a hardened criminal founded an outreach program for at-risk youth.

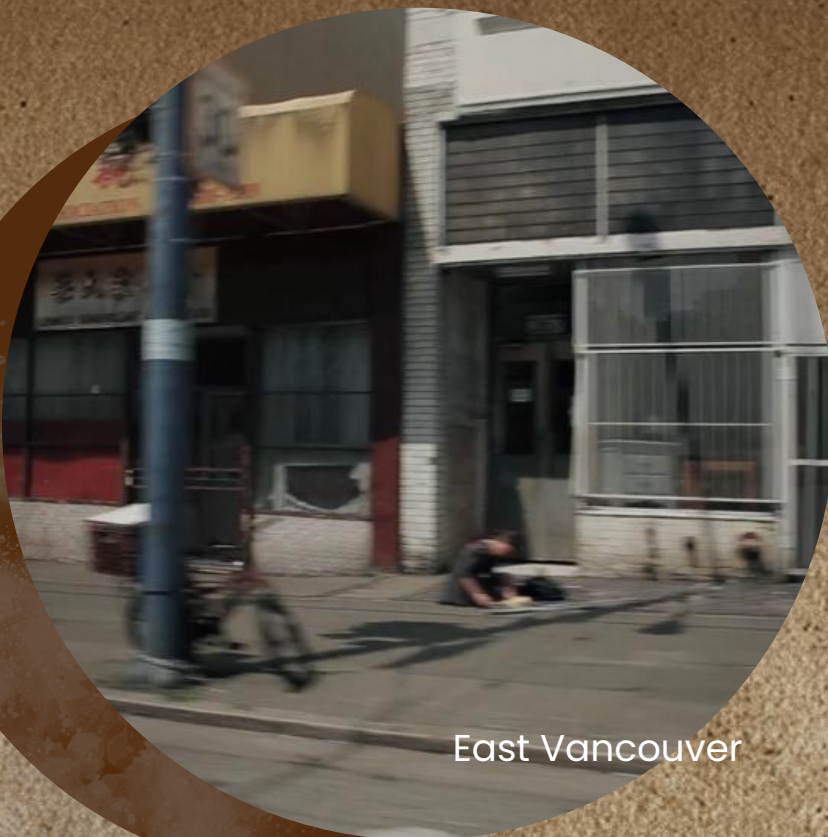


Joe Calendino

Youth Gone Wild

Joe grew up in East Vancouver of the 1970s and 80s. It was already rough then, but not yet what it has become today with its open drug markets and rampant crime. In many ways, Joe's life trajectory parallels the neighbourhood that shaped him. Joe recalls: "I was making negative choices at a very young age. I came to identify with the glitz, glamour, and glory of the gang lifestyle, which was already starting to become prominent in East Vancouver. Eventually there were the drugs. But going back to the 1980s, the gang lifestyle did not reflect our current landscape. People would fight, but guns were uncommon. Drugs, however, were a part of my young life.

"I wasn't big on academics. School was a place to hang out with friends. And fight. I loved to fight. I loved to rumble in the jungle. This was a part of the gang lifestyle that really appealed to me, and at which I excelled. But as I grew and matured, I got away from drugs and gangs in my twenties."



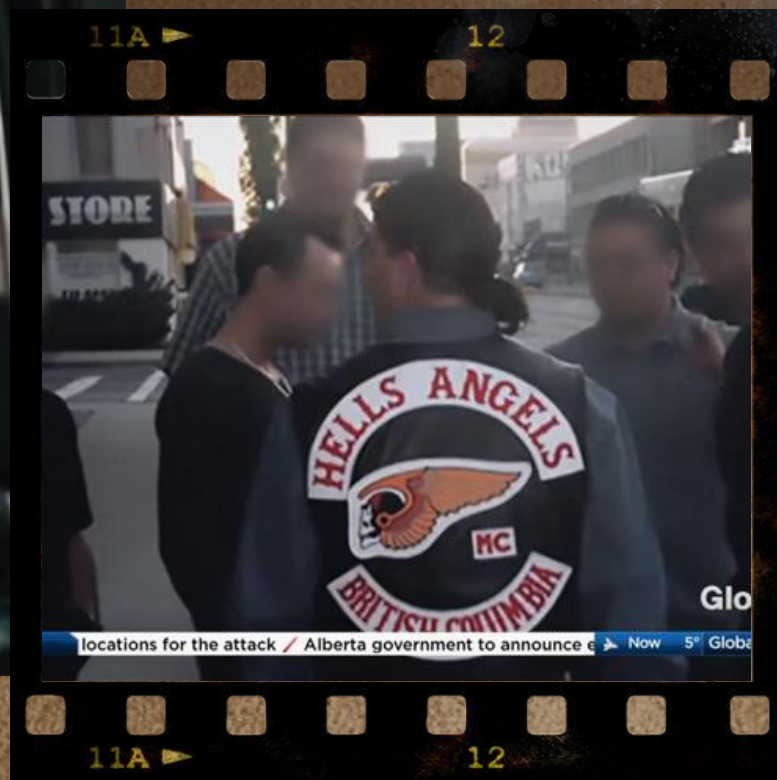
East Vancouver



A Moment of Peace

Joe seemed to be on track for a “regular” life. He went back to school, got a degree in business, and was soon working for a major retailer. In a short time, he advanced through the ranks, and came up for a major position in a multi-million-dollar organization. He did not, however, get the promotion. Ever the fighter, Joe walked up to the owner and quit on the spot. He remembers: “I wasn’t willing to accept this oversight.”

Joe’s tenacity would not allow him to stay down after he left his job. He bought a cellphone for himself, and shortly thereafter, he created a chain of successful cellular phone stores. Everything was perfect. Joe had it all: financial success, a wife, and children. By most measures, he was living a great life. But sometimes, the apparent road to the future leads to the past.



Welcome to the Jungle

“It took one second,” Joe recalls. “One second and my old life walked through the door, and the journey began all over again.” An old friend from Joe’s past came by one day and invited Joe to hang out. Soon, the two men began to communicate regularly. While Joe had been excelling in business, his old friend had excelled within a different organization: the Hells Angels. “I identified with that,” Joe explains. “I wanted that membership and the life that comes with it.” Whatever gang lifestyle Joe had lived up to this point in his life, it would pale in comparison to what would come next. His ride to hell was just beginning.

“Here I am in the game again, in that lifestyle: the glitz, glamour, and glory. The Hollywood lifestyle: real red carpet.” Joe recalls: “This would have been 2002 or 2003. I’d be walking into bars, and everyone would be paying me respect. Everybody would identify with me and would want to join my team. I loved it.”

Welcome to the Jungle Cont'd

Never short on ambition, Joe excelled within the organization, and when it came time for a major promotion, he would pass with flying colours. Joe was now a full-patch member of the notorious Hells Angels Motorcycle Club. He had the accolades and adulation he had sought for in his youth and had been unable to find in the "regular" world. As the years rolled on, the "regular" world would become increasingly distant to Joe.



Master of Puppets

With his return to gang life came a return to acts of violence and drug use. At first, Joe's drug use was casual, but gradually, it escalated. He found himself with a full-blown crack-cocaine addiction. His behaviour quickly became more erratic and unpredictable. Joe was frequently in fights, failing to keep the low-profile the Hells Angels demands of its members. One fight at Lake City Casino in Kelowna in 2005 (now known as Playtime Casino) landed Joe a spot on the 6pm news. The fight was recorded by the casino's security cameras, and the footage was seen all over Canada. Joe's drug-fueled behaviour was becoming too much for even the Hells Angels. He was promptly kicked out of the club.

Joe's life began to spiral out of control. He had lost his business, his family were increasingly distant from him, he was facing various criminal charges, and he was no longer a member of his beloved motorcycle club. In a matter of months, Joe was wandering the streets of East Vancouver as a crack addict without a home. But sometimes, the apparent road to the future leads to the past.

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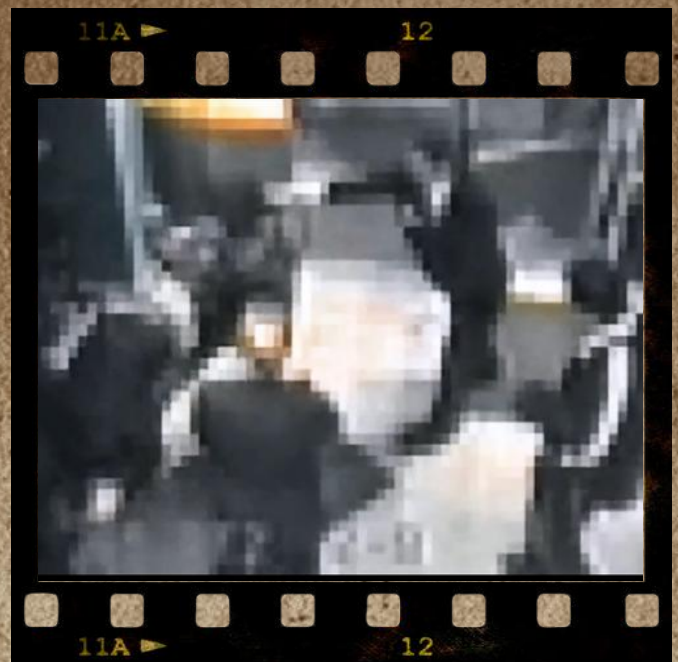
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I Fought the Law...

In his youth, Joe had attended school with a boy named Kevin Torvik. While the two had never been close friends, they had a mutual respect and would occasionally cross paths; their relationship had always been amicable. Of course, as the years rolled on, Joe and Kevin lost touch, and in the intervening years, they had walked two contradictory paths.

Around the time that Joe earned his full-patch status within the Hells Angels, Kevin pulled up to Joe's driveway one day as Joe was working on his motorcycle. "Hey Joe! How are you?" Kevin exclaimed. Looking up from his work with a wrench in his hand, Joe immediately recognized his old school pal. Kevin was clean cut with perfect hair, but he was now sporting a police uniform. "It's been a long time Joe," Kevin continued. "Just thought I should let you know that I am now in the outlaw motorcycle division of the police force."

Joe explains: "At that point in my life, I hated cops. I would chase them away from me. I would say to them: 'take your gun and badge off. Let's go out on the street.' I had that kind of mindset. So, when I saw Kevin that day, I told him to get off my property. I maintained a level of respect for Kevin because we grew up together, but I was not polite to him at this encounter." Kevin, however, maintained his calm and told Joe: "No problem, Joe. I'll leave. But I will arrest you one day. Goodbye."

During the years when Joe was still a full-patch member of the club, he and Kevin would cross paths from time to time. Both parties maintained a level of respect for each other at these meetings; Kevin was a man whom Joe admired, and though Joe did not know it at the time, this admiration ran two ways.



**Join us in the next issue for the continuation of Joe Calendino's story,
in which Yo Bro is born.**

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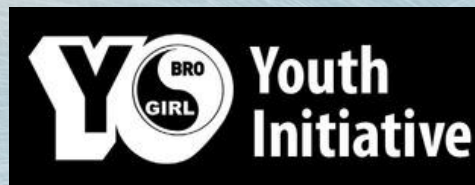
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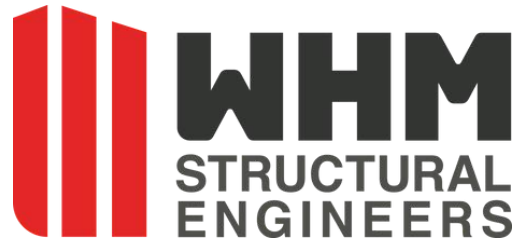
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