

Congratulations to **Keiko Honda**

2017 Larry Hnetka Community Builder Award Winner!



Keiko Honda, through action, passion, and commitment, has created numerous opportunities for community members to come together, create together and pursue a common goal for the good of all.

Trained as a health research scientist, Keiko was living a busy life in Manhattan and had worked in the field of cancer epidemiology as a faculty member at Columbia University before she was suddenly struck by acute spinal cord inflammation which confined her to a wheelchair to date. Shortly after that tragedy -- which

she now she truly thinks of as a gift -- Keiko moved to Vancouver in 2009 with her family, and started volunteering as a director of Kerrisdale Community Centre Society while adjusting to a new place and a new pace.

Yearning to re-create her culturally stimulating life in Manhattan, especially the open exchange of ideas and dialogues with like-minded people of all ages and background, Keiko started hosting her "intergenerational cultural salon" at her residence in the quiet Dunbar-Southlands neighbourhood in 2010. It is precisely how her now well-known **artists-in-residence salon** came about. True to her vision, Keiko continues to bring neighbours and friends together to share passions and discuss things that matter, such as art, intuition, the environment and social issues. She has hosted nearly 120 salons in the last 7 years, thanks to all the people who participated and continue participating. Among her favourite Japanese teachings, she likes this proverb the most, "*Treasure every meeting, for it will never recur.*" "Mindfulness was everywhere and became a way of life throughout my upbringing, so I really never paid attention to it until I moved to North America," Keiko says. In retrospect, she attributes her strength in adversity to her cultural heritage and intuitive mindfulness.

In 2014, she received the *Remarkable Women Award* by the City of Vancouver. In that same year, she founded her non-profit organization called, **Vancouver Arts Colloquium Society** in order to promote the work of emerging artists (we all are artists) and build cultural resilience and empathy in communities through art. She truly enjoys her non-profit work as her creative outlet and she finds the process exhilarating when an idea becomes a reality.

Keiko has also been active with the Westside Neighbourhood Small Grants for over 3 years, both as a project leader and as a member of Resident Advisory Committee. You may have come across some of her Westside NSG projects over the years – the range of her NSG projects are vast and diverse and include projects such as her numerous gardening workshops, her Neighbourhood Seed Library, and her cultural workshops such as Japan's "Mamezara"

cooking and dining workshop, Storytelling through Weaving, and Clothes Upcycling, and many more that have not been included in this list and I'm sure there are a few others that Keiko just hasn't gotten around to doing yet!



In summary, Keiko is a visionary leader who is passionate about the community and has built something long lasting; human relationships. She builds community through her many and varied interests and her ability to connect people to each other. More importantly, she embraces each and every encounter, like in the Japanese proverb. Between her busy work and family life, she continues to volunteer for Kerrisdale Community Centre Society, Park Board Neighbourhood Matching Fund Advisory Committee, Rick Hansen Institute Consumer Engagement Committee, and Westside Neighbourhood Small Grants Resident Advisory Committee (RAC).

Last but not least, "Being a mother is my greatest achievement and happiness of my life." says Keiko. "And, my daughter agrees with me!"

There were many worthy nominations submitted this year and Keiko certainly had some competition in being chosen for this award! Keiko Honda's contributions to building community, not only here on the Westside but all through the City of Vancouver, truly made her stand out in a group of what are simply amazing community builders and leaders.