


"A rare and special soul"



MEMORIES OF JAMES HAGGERSTONE


AUGUST 20, 1960 — NOVEMBER 23, 2020



This book was created in memory of James by his friends and colleagues.
His death at age 60 was a shock to many – he will be truly missed.

SUMMER 2021

COMPILED BY ZDENKA MASAROVA AND ANNE SCOTT, WITH PHOTOS AND TEXT FROM
MANY OF JAMES'S FRIENDS AND COLLEAGUES – OUR GRATEFUL THANKS TO ALL.



WHO WAS
JAMES
HAGGERSTONE?



TULIPS PLANTED BY JAMES ADD COLOUR AND BEAUTY TO THE BACK PATIO OF BOOKS & COMPANY IN PRINCE GEORGE.



JAMES AT AGE 30 AFTER FALLING OFF A TRAMPOLINE AND BREAKING HIS ANKLE.



JAMES AND HIS PRECIOUS JORDIN.

A planter outside the HSBC building in Prince George brimming with multicoloured tulips. A community garden at 10th and Vancouver Street that brightened the scene for Prince George passersby (and provided fresh vegetables!). More flower gardens at Books & Company, and 5th and Carney. Warmth, help, and friendliness to all who needed it, with a special connection with those of Indigenous heritage.

And finally, the generous love and support of a father figure for one very lucky little girl.

This was James Haggerstone, who passed away on November 23, 2020 after a short illness.

James was predeceased by his parents, Wyn and Ted, and his brother Bruce. His sister Jain and twin brother John, nieces Haley, Sarah and Taryn, and nephew Travis, will all remember James fondly.

Born in Revelstoke, James also spent time in Sri Lanka as part of a Canada World Youth exchange program. After earning a Bachelor of Science in Health Informatics from the University of Victoria, James moved to Prince George to accept a position at Northern Health, eventually rising to the position of the Regional Manager of Health Informatics. In 2007, James received the BC Public Sector Award for Citizen Engagement, and in 2017, he graduated with an MBA from the University of Northern BC.

IN THE WORDS OF HIS OBITUARY*,

He championed the community garden and created many smaller gardens in places he knew would bring joy to the neighborhood. James developed friendships with people everywhere he went and spent his time selflessly helping those in need. He cared deeply for people and his ability to connect with them made him truly special. Always ready with a practical joke or a smile to lighten the moment, in everything he did, James embraced advocacy, honesty, empathy, personal humility and the promotion of others. Rest in peace, brother.

*Used with the kind permission of his family; see <https://www.legacy.com/obituaries/princegeorgecitizen/obituary.aspx?n=jameshaggerstone&pid=197246430>



JAMES THE GUERRILLA GARDENER

A COMMUNITY GARDEN AT 5TH AND CARNEY IN PRINCE GEORGE
THAT JAMES CREATED WITH FARA KASHANCHI.

James had a passion for making beauty bloom in unexpected places – without permission, without funding, and without hesitation.



THE MANY FACES OF JAMES THE GARDENER, SHOWN AT THE GARDEN HE CREATED AT 10TH AND VANCOUVER IN PRINCE GEORGE.

“He did everything possible to bring joy and happiness to less fortunate people, especially through his numerous gardens around Prince George, where he would meet people and talk to them. Some of them would even pitch in and help him with the gardening!”

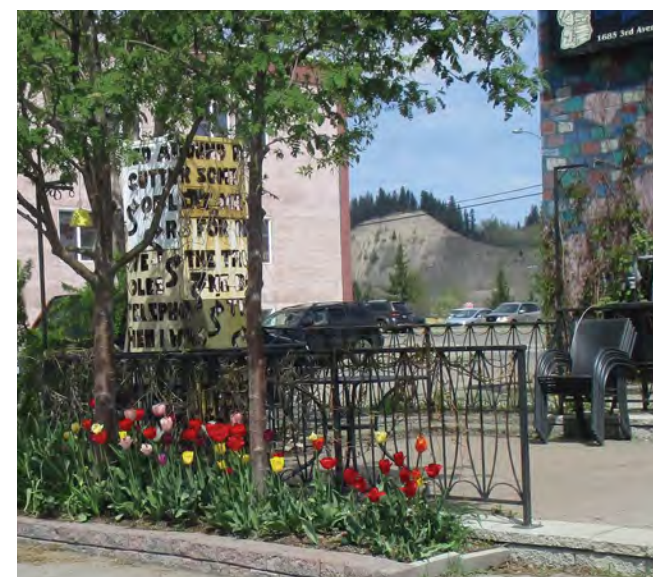
– *Zdenka Masarova*



JAMES MAY HAVE GROWN THE FLOWERS CAPTURED IN THIS PAINTING BY HIS MOTHER.

“He always had his mom’s painting in his office. It was a painting of poppies, plants that James would plant everywhere, all over the city, making the city workers mad, as they had to weed the poppies out.”

– *Zdenka Masarova*



THESE BEAUTIFUL TULIPS WERE JUST A SMALL PART OF JAMES’S MANY FLORAL PROJECTS AROUND PRINCE GEORGE.

“He championed the community garden and created many smaller gardens in places he knew would bring joy to the neighborhood.”

– *Obituary*



JAMES THE GUERRILLA GARDENER IN ACTION ON 4TH AVENUE, PRINCE GEORGE.

“He often told stories of just sprinkling flower seeds along his way where he thought colour would be nice to see.”

– *Sue Rasmussen*

“His many bags of wildflower seeds will be planted as a lasting memory.”

– *Obituary*



JAMES AND HIS MOTHER WYN ENJOYING THE LUPINES ON THE ARROW LAKES. JAMES'S LOVE OF GARDENS STARTED EARLY.

"PLANT SMILES, GROW GIGGLES, AND HARVEST LOVE." A HEALTHY CROP OF NUTRITIOUS VEGETABLES AT THE 10TH AND VANCOUVER COMMUNITY GARDEN.

"Many summers between semesters were spent at the family home in Revelstoke building flower gardens to ensure Wyn always had flowers, the subject of her paintings."

– Obituary

COMMUNITY GARDEN
Volunteer receives city recognition
 TERESA MALLAM
 arts@pgfreepress.com

Green thumbs are just part of the picture. The vision and inspiration for a community garden on the corner of 10th Avenue and Vancouver Street came years ago from senior citizen Laura Sandberg. She saw a need to help beautify the neighbourhood. So with donations from local businesses, youth groups and individuals, Laura began transforming the vacant lot into a beautiful garden area for flowers and vegetables. She was later joined in her efforts.

"I offered to come and weed the garden and, as the story goes ... one thing led to another," said James Haggerstone. "We ran a garden hose from the neighbour's house. Soon we were watering and weeding on a regular basis and we trimmed the low-hanging branches from the trees."

The enthusiasm spread. "The neighbours started to notice and two young guys came by in a pickup truck and hauled away the debris. Someone came in with a weed eater. Plants started to magically appear and it seemed everyone liked the idea of reclaiming that little garden on the corner."

And the garden is not just another "pretty face" in the neighbourhood. It provides fresh vegetables as well.

"Laura, the master gardener, works in the garden every day and she always has cakes and cookies to share with me while we wait for the vegetables to grow," said Haggerstone. "We had our first taste of the radishes last weekend. The peas and beets are another month away."

On Sunday, Haggerstone was awarded the city's Good Neighbour Certificate of Appreciation for his work and volunteer

hours spent on the garden. He is regional manager of health information analysis at Northern Health. When he's not at work, he can be found digging in community gardens or working on his MBA through the UNBC school of business.

EnhancePG, with the support of mayor and council, is providing residents of the city an opportunity to recognize individuals and groups whose actions have made a positive difference in the community. From small gestures to large actions, modelling community spirit, improving the safety of a neighbourhood or enhancing its beauty are examples of actions worthy of recognition.

"It could be something as simple as helping a neighbour whose garden needs watering while they're away," explained committee member Betty Burbee.

Good Neighbour Certificates of Appreciation will be signed by the Mayor of Prince George and the Chair of Enhance PG.

If you want to recommend someone for the award, fill out a short form indicating why you think that person in your neighbourhood is worthy of a Certificate of Appreciation and return the form to City Hall's Service Centre. The form can be found at www.princegeorge.ca. Forms are also available at City Hall Service Centre or by calling the Community Services Department at 250-561-7640.

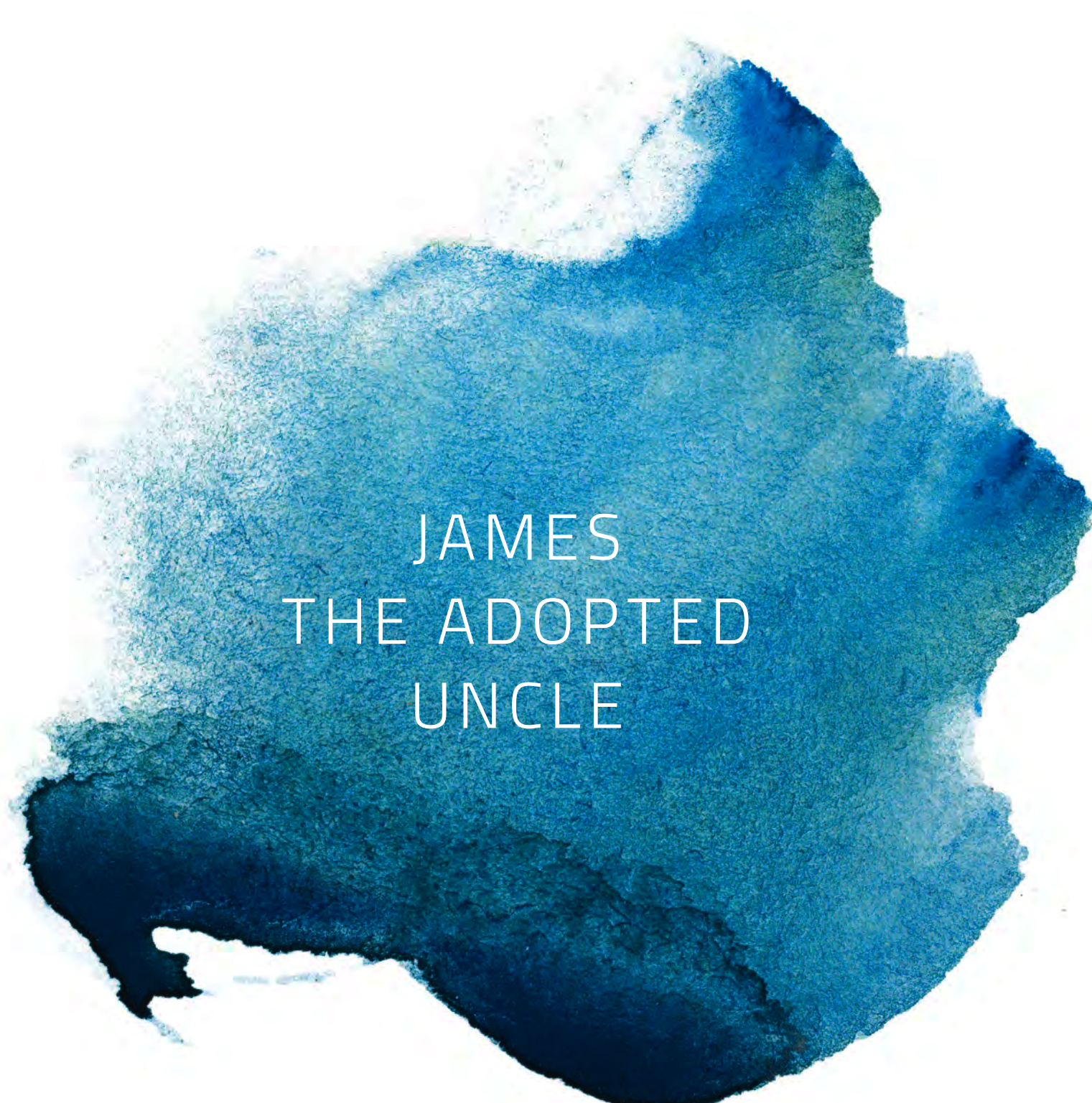
Ginny Jenkins presents James Haggerstone with an Enhance BC Good Neighbour Certificate of Appreciation on Sunday for his work turning a vacant lot on the corner of 10th and Vancouver into a beautiful garden area with flowers and vegetables.

TERESA MALLAM/Free Press

IN 2012, JAMES RECEIVED AN AWARD FROM THE CITY OF PRINCE GEORGE FOR HIS WORK CREATING A NEIGHBOURHOOD GARDEN AT 10TH AND VANCOUVER.

"He was impressive in his capacity for giving, his enormous caring for others' needs, and his guerilla tactics for beautifying our community."

– Deb Woods and Shawn Smith



**JAMES
 THE ADOPTED
 UNCLE**

What role did Jordin, James's informally adopted "niece," play in his life? She embodied his all – encompassing benevolence towards his fellow humans, distilled and focussed onto one small girl. Helping give Jordin a life of happiness and possibility was a never-ending delight for James. As his life drew to a close, knowing that he would not live to attend her high-school graduation was one of his deepest sources of grief.



"I'll always remember ...all those stories you shared about your little girl near and dear to your heart..."

– **Zdenka Masarova (Anderkova)**

"His relationship with Jordin really was amazing. The time and the gifts crafted so thoughtfully, especially for her; the books, summer camp experiences – he loved doing it all and was such a positive influence. The way that he would drop everything to help the family and community."

– **Tanis Hampe**

"He would often lighten your day with his storytelling, a joke, or a recap of one of his many vivid dreams or appear saying, "Hey... would you like to join me on the 2nd floor balcony to blow some bubbles on passersby?" These thoughts often led to very creative learning gifts for his beloved Jordin such as a real treasure chest that included her favourite snack of seaweed."

– **Sue (Rasmussen) Meyer**

"James – I have many memories of the deep, deep love you had for Jordin. I remember your story of the "zing" of connection you felt, when you first met her as a tiny baby. Lots of memories of swim lessons, birthday celebrations, care package preparations, and your excitement every time you made a road trip to Kelowna. I remember Jordin and her mom or her grandmother, visiting at the end of the work day. Seeing all of the photos of Jordin and her family. The pride that James had in Jordin's growth. And always, the LOVE."

– **Christine James**

"Jordin – James will always be with you. He is there in your heart, he is there in your memories, and he is there in spirit – ALWAYS. He is there in the good deeds he did for so many people. You can draw on his love, at any time, it is always there for you."

– **Christine James**

FUNDRAISER FOR THE 'GARDENER OF PRINCE GEORGE' AIMS TO KEEP HIS LEGACY OF KINDNESS IN BLOOM

'In a world where we can be anything, we need to be kind first'

Feb 25, 2021 4:15 PM By: Hanna Petersen

Friends and colleagues of a local volunteer, James Haggerstone, known as the Gardener of Prince George, are working to keep his memory and legacy growing in the community.

Haggerstone passed away in November 2020, but has left a lasting impression in the northern capital for his big heart and love of gardening.

Described as a man who would do everything possible to spread kindness and joy, he befittingly spent his free time planting flower gardens in vacant lots and undesirable places throughout the city.

In 2012, he was awarded the city's Good Neighbour Certificate of Appreciation for his work and volunteer hours spent on a garden at 10 Avenue and Vancouver Street.

"Each spring we would all wait to see which plants were starting to bloom in the least desirable places and we knew it was James who had planted them in hope that they would make people smile and be happy," says Zdenka Masarova Anderkova, his friend and colleague from Northern Health, in an interview with PrinceGeorgeMatters today (Feb. 25).

Haggerstone worked as a regional manager for Health Information Analysis for many years. He worked to help employees and the public understand the health-care system through user-friendly data.



While very passionate about his work, he also wanted to help those in need. the perfect smile_ garden on the 10th_james_2015

James Haggerstone with one of his gardens in the city of Prince George. By Zdenka Anderkova

"He would be seen helping his visually-impaired neighbour cross the road, provide rides for people struggling to bring their groceries home. He helped people to get out of the streets and make all possible to arrange social housing for them, all on volunteer basis," says Anderkova.

"When thinking about our friendship journey together, he taught me that in a world where we can be anything, we need to be kind first."

Haggerstone was also involved with the Spirits of Burns Lake project, which provided free sports and other activities for girls in the Burns Lake Area. It received several awards, including the Kaiser Foundation National Award for Excellence.

His unofficially adopted 'niece,' Jordin, was also from Burns Lake, whom he loved deeply and supported with education materials and extracurricular activities.

"James was an amazing and honest man, true to his beliefs. He also lived on his own without any family close by and therefore, [the] Prince George community became his family," adds Anderkova.

"He went above and beyond for many people and lots of his acts of kindness are not known to the public. People like James need to be remembered in a big way."

Anderkova and her fundraising partners have already raised more than \$5,000 to help create memory books intended for Haggerstone's twin brother and Jordin, as well as a proposed memory bench to be installed in a city park.

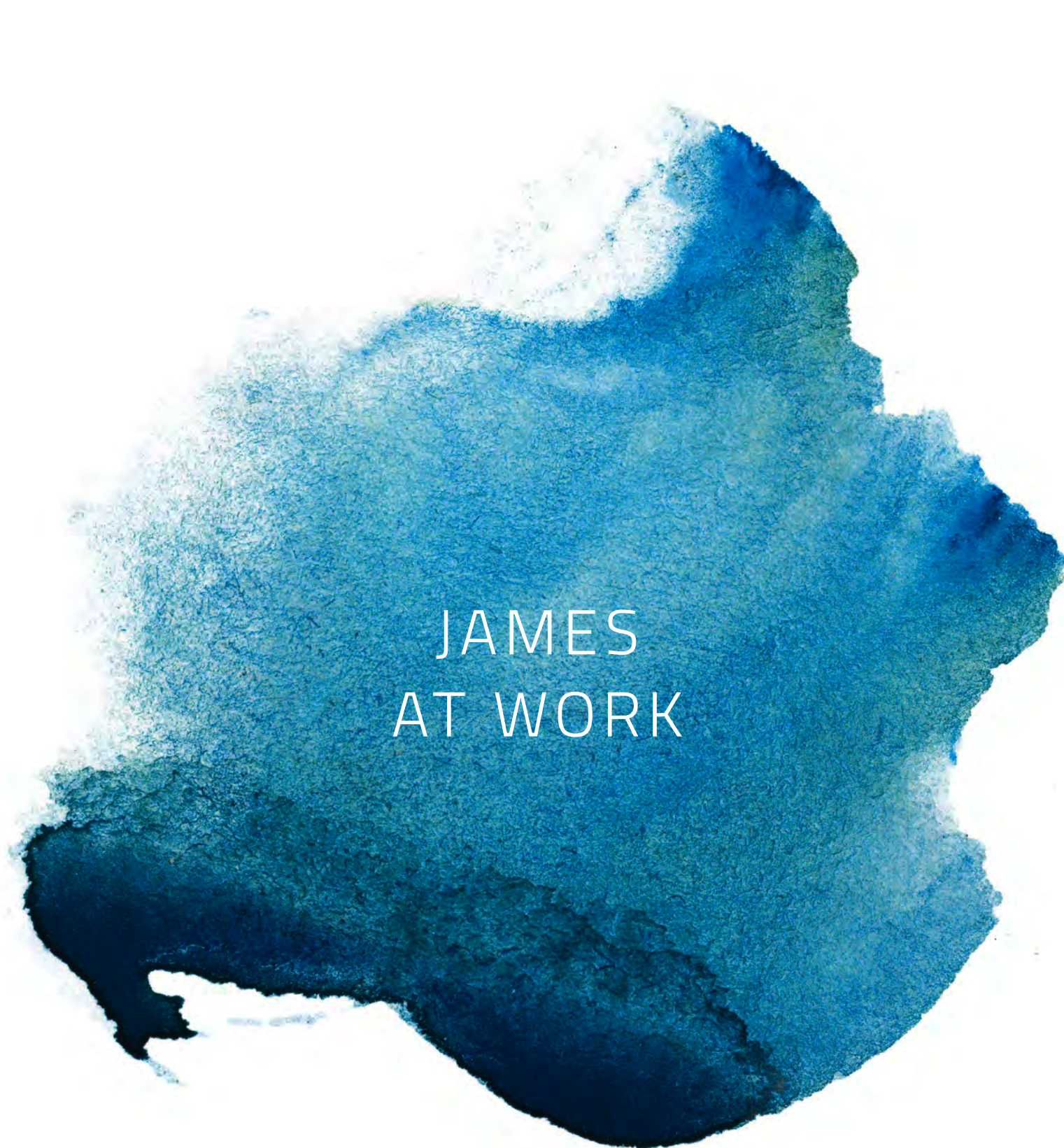
However, the third goal of the fundraiser is to create a College of New Caledonia (CNC) bursary for struggling students as he was passionate about supporting Jordin's education.

"As a fundraising team, we have decided to keep the fundraiser going for bit longer for anyone who would still like to be part of helping us creating a lasting memory of James," Anderkova explains.

"Any extra money will go to the CNC bursary through which we hope we could touch and positively impact a life of a student that otherwise may not be able to afford higher education. This is what James was all about – creating an equal opportunity for everyone."

Anderkova says she's looking forward to the spring to see the tulips blooming at Books and Company on Third Avenue where Haggerstone created two of his last gardens.

"I hope James is in a better place now, smiling wide with his big blue eyes. He has undoubtedly touched many lives with his huge heart, sense of respect, compassion and love."



JAMES AT WORK



JAMES AND THE TEAM FROM WORK AT ONE OF THEIR MONTHLY GET-TOGETHERS AT CAFÉ VOLTAIRE.
L- R: SUE (RASMUSSEN) MEYER, JIM CONDON, KEELY MAXWELL, JANA OLYNICK, SONAL BAJAJ, FARAMARZ KASHANCHI, YASER AHMED, JAMES HAGGERSTONE, ZDENKA MASAROVA (ANDERKOVA)

JAMES HAGGERSTONE

- My role is to promote the vision, mission and values of Northern Health and to thereby ensure the success of Northern Health.
- Like others, my role is to supply information and interpretative advice to the NH enterprise.
- I interact regularly with all members of our team.

From a team presentation:

James, the old man on our team, moved to northern BC in 1999 to accept a position with the former Northwest West Community Health Services Society. "I had no idea where I was headed. I just knew that I was going north and it was a long ways from Victoria."

James accepted a Health Services Analyst position at the newly formed Northern Health in 2003. This began a journey serving the varied informatics needs of Public & Population Health, Perinatal Services, Mental Health & Addictions, Home & Community Care, Primary Health Care, other program areas and our many community partners & stakeholders.

James's work can be found across the organization from corporate planning documents to community profiles and the Community Health Information Portal (CHIP). James led the work on the Northern BC Communities Mapping project: a project for which Northern Health received the BC Public Sector Transformation Award for Citizen Engagement in 2007.

Presently, James is focussed on the update and transformation of the NH Services Inventory, as well as a redesign of the CHIP, the CHSA health geographies project and supporting the broader needs of the Planning, Performance and Improvement Team. When James is not attending to the business needs of Northern Health, he can be found tending to a guerilla garden somewhere.



In James's own words (from a work presentation):

THREE SUCCESS STORIES

- Taking CHIP from concept to reality
- Completing the Northern BC Communities Map
- Being a sustained and supportive influence for a little girl and the family(s) that are raising her



REMEMBERING JAMES

Reminiscences from friends and colleagues

FUTURE SUCCESS STORIES

- Complete the Environmental Scan
- Operationalize the Service Inventory
- Continue being a supportive influence

I got to know James in the 1990s when he was recruited to the Skeena Health Unit in Terrace to support the data analytics work in Population and Public Health. I lived in Terrace at the time and James was a welcome addition to the team in Terrace. His presence enabled an increased depth of analysis regarding the health of the population in the North West.

When Northern Health was formed, he relocated soon afterwards to Prince George, where he carried on his work focused on contributions that would improve the health of the population. He had a passion for ensuring that community leaders and health care service providers understood the nature of the communities they lived within, through such contributions as a unique map of northern BC and the development of community health profiles and a portal to community level information.

There are three ways I would describe James:

- James was an artist with numbers, through his analysis of those numbers. He had a great capacity to see community health needs and issues and paint a picture that explicated these needs through his analysis.
- James saw the need for health care administrators and health service providers across the North to fully understand our own geography, including knowing comprehensively all of the communities within that geography. He worked extensively with multiple levels of government and First Nations organizations to develop an award-winning unique map of northern B.C. that is the first of its kind in Canada. This map can be viewed on walls across the North and is a highly valued resource and an important legacy of James' time with Northern Health.
- James had a huge heart and a compassion for the health and wellbeing of others. He would often be seen supporting those less fortunate than himself, organizing a community garden somewhere in the city, or adding a bright spot to someone's life.

James will be missed in so many ways in our world, and his contributions to the North and to Northern Health will live on in many ways.

– **Cathy Ulrich, President and CEO, Northern Health**

James came to work with me in Terrace in 2003 when I was MHO/CEO for the NW Community Health Services Society. (NWCHSS). I knew and worked with him until I retired at the end of 2013. James shared my vision for empowering people by giving them access to good health information, and he figured out how to do that in the most amazing and creative ways.

He found a way to sync audio files with a slide show well before there was any off-the-shelf software to do it and produced the unforgettable "MHO in a Can" CD of me speaking about health status in the NW, so that all of the multiple health authorities at the time would have good material for planning. Like so many things he worked on, such as his groundbreaking map of the North showing all of the Indigenous communities with their proper names, he spent hours and hours of his own time to get them done just because he knew they were needed. His energy and enthusiasm were a constant source of inspiration and because he preferred to work outside the box, he made work a lot more fun.

The problem with "outside the box" is that sometimes the box gets uncomfortable, and there were many occasions when I felt the weight of responsibility to do my best to keep him from getting fired. Things like taking a company vehicle and giving a ride to Burns Lake to someone who needed it were very "James," and a bit difficult for managers. I'm certain that those spontaneous acts of kindness garnered more good PR for Northern Health at the community level than any of us could have realized – or equaled by hiring a consultant and putting on a road show.

He was the one that got me started on the idea that men's health was important and that healthy men could make a positive difference in their communities. Sometimes he would just show up with some smoked fish or a bag of Saskatoons he had picked and say, "Here you go, Dr. B"....with a big smile. Thank you, James!!"

– **Dr. David Bowering, former NH Chief Medical Health Officer, retired**

A few thoughts that come to mind for me. First, his relationship with Jordin really was amazing. The time and the gifts crafted so thoughtfully, especially for her; the books, summer camp experiences – he loved doing it all and was such a positive influence. The way that he would drop everything to help the family and community.

When I started at NH, James was the first person at my door with a warm welcome and brimming with enthusiasm about research and all that we could do in NH.

He made such a difference in his public health ‘crusades’, particularly with Dr. Bowering, around road health, men’s health and Indigenous youth education and employment. He spent hours in the data and emerged with a powerful narrative that made sense to everyone.

He literally put Indigenous communities on “the map” in Northern Health which is a treasure across the region. He carefully curated the Community Health Information Portal (CHIP) to make health information accessible to everyone, and it was important that every Band Office and First Nations community had a place in the CHIP. (And he even included a picture of his dad).

He cared deeply for the north and the people who call the north home. I remember a generous soul with boundless enthusiasm.

– **Tanis Hampe, Vice President, Pandemic Response, Northern Health**

... and “If the essence of my being has caused a smile upon your face or a touch of joy within your heart. Then in living - I have made my mark.”

– **(Thomas L. Odem Jr.) Tamara Gregg**

Dear James, it was a pleasure to know you. Quick of wit and ready to prank; spearheader of office chili challenge, gatherer of basic household items for the needy, planter of tulips and iris’s wherever color was needed. You are gone too soon, we will miss that big smile, your silly jokes and generous heart. Condolences to the family of James.

– **Mona**



The first time I met James was when he was starting the work on creating the Northern Health Map. I had never met someone so bright and excited about a map! But as I talked more with him, his excitement and passion wasn’t the map itself, but more so about showcasing our northern First Nations communities, about ensuring that whenever anybody looked at a map of the North, our 55+ northern First Nations communities were front and center.

James wore his passion for First Nations communities on his sleeve, as he did his heart. I had hoped one day he might find his way over to FNHA to focus specifically on work with our communities, to foster that passion he so clearly shared with everyone he interacted with. Individuals like James carry a light that brightens a room and the lives of those lucky enough to know him. My heart goes out to all those that were dear to him, and I will carry his light and excitement in my memory as encouragement for the work ahead.

I am so happy a book is being made for him; lives like his need to be remembered and shared!

– **Nicole Cross, Executive Director – North, First Nations Health Authority**



I met James when he first started working for Northern Health. I enjoyed getting to know him and his quirky, fun-loving personality. He was a kind, compassionate, optimistic person with a joy for life and a desire to help those in need. He was also an amazing gardener. One of my favourite memories will always be the winter I helped James decorate a little Christmas tree in downtown Prince George that refused to die. The little tree was poisoned by the city and wasn't supposed to live, but it survived, which Jim marveled at. He loved decorating that little tree and one winter, I happened to find Jim in the middle of decorating that tree. He brought all sorts of decorations and he invited me to help him decorate. It was so much fun. James touched many lives, including mine and I will miss him dearly.

– *Patty Pasicnyk, Prince George*



IT'S A CHRISTMAS DECORATING PARTY! PATTY AND JAMES SHARED AN AFFECTION FOR A LITTLE CHRISTMAS TREE ON 2ND AVENUE IN DOWNTOWN PRINCE GEORGE. "HE BROUGHT ALL SORTS OF DECORATIONS AND INVITED ME TO HELP HIM DECORATE," SAYS PATTY. "IT WAS SO MUCH FUN."



I first met James shortly after starting at NH – and he greeted me with a joke, a smile and the general sense that we'd already been friends for some time. One of James' many gifts is that smile and friendly ebullience – he greeted everyone as an equal, a friend and kindred soul. James always helped me in work with information, clear explanations – and of course a tangential conversation about his latest guerilla gardening and an update on 'his little girl', his best buddy and clear light of his life who decorated his office and generated a lot of love.

James lived in my neighbourhood so we'd also meet frequently over his street gardens, with my kids (with whom he'd always find time to joke around and tease) and at the bookstore. James was light in this city, in this world. He spread joy and beauty in corners where you couldn't always find either – he did this with his flowers and artistic touches, he did this by spray painting uneven pavement and crumbled stairs so his visually impaired friends could navigate with greater ease and safety, he did this with his respect and curiosity for everyone he met and he did this with his perpetual kindness and sense of fun. I'm so sorry we've lost our friend. I hope I can honour him by sharing the light he revealed.

– *Andrea Palmer, Communications Lead, Capital Projects, Northern Health*



PLANTING FLOWERS AT ZAFFRON CUISINE RESTAURANT IN PRINCE GEORGE



I was one of the fortunate ones whose path crossed with James. At one point in our careers we actually shared an office, where I got to see firsthand how much he really cared for the people of the north. James worked a lot, most of the cleaning staff would meet him in the late evenings and he would come in on some weekends to chip away at the projects he so enjoyed doing.

James enjoyed helping navigate the system for those that did not know what to do or where to do. He developed strong relationships with many community leaders, which was one of the reasons he would fill up the lunchroom fridge with fish.

James was a giver in every way you can imagine, I remember clearly how he used to bring in his breadmaker and start a loaf of bread in the morning, and by noon the whole floor had a great smell. It created challenges for those of us that were on a diet! James had a big smile and was proud to have a plate of batter for the bread.

One of James' largest accomplishments was the map he created for NHA. He went through many iterations and took the time to learn the history and to ensure communities who had never been recognized or placed on a map, were now in fact on the map. James was an inspiration for many of us, as he championed for better health for the north. He had a unique way of displaying data and finding that needle in the data haystack.

– Aman Hundal, Initiatives Lead, Specialist Services Committee, Doctors of BC, Kelowna, BC



A HALLOWEEN GIFT FOR JORDIN



JAMES DEFENDING HIS MBA THESIS
IN JUNE 2015

When Jim first came to Terrace I was one of the first persons to show him around. At the time he arrived, we were called the Northwest Community Health Services Society. He was a little shy at first, but oh, my word, that didn't last. Jim had this Bronco truck that most likely should not be on the road but it was his – his "fishing truck."

Jim loved to make people laugh and prank folks at work to make it a fun place to be. Biggest thing about Jim, was helping others who were less fortunate. At a place he rented in Terrace, he made a garden and had some of the local street folks come over and shared it with them. He bonded with them and when I would go over there, it was awesome to see folks enjoying themselves. He would share whatever he had, and always asked if they needed anything and would find a way to help out.

Jim cared about people and trying to make things better. I am still in shock, but Jim lived his life to the fullest, helping others

– Brenda Jackson, formerly Administrator of Administrative staff in the region, now retired

It shocked me to hear of James' sudden passing. I'm going to miss seeing him around town as he worked on his many gardens, a smile on his face. Downtown Prince George just won't be the same without him. RIP, James. Thank you for all that you did during your time here.

– Dani Bastien

Beautiful human being!

– Joe

So heartbreaking for the world to lose this man. James was gold.

– Heather Elliott

Oh, James To a Dear Friend who continues to be missed and will always be remembered.

From the beginning of starting work at the HSBC Bldg. in 2007, James introduced himself with his boisterous personality to welcome me and from then on, he became a close co-worker and personal friend.

Over the years we shared work experiences and gatherings but more so gardening. James would often borrow my old squeaky wheelbarrow. It was left in my yard leaned against the maple tree so he could use it when he needed. Before he got his truck, he would walk squeaking his way through the neighbourhood to his garden on 10th and Vancouver. He often said that is how he got his raspberry cuttings as the squeaking grabbed the attention of someone along his way. Later on, he would load it up in his truck and move on to the corner at 5th and Carney (co-workers called it Fara's garden) and then on to Books & Company. He often told stories of just sprinkling flower seeds along his way where he thought colour would be nice to see. I still have some of his poppy seeds that I plan on planting here in Vernon. It is also nice to hear that my previous neighbour will now be looking after the garden at Books & Company after meeting James at my place.

James was a true friend who was always willing to help when asked. We relied on each other for rides to pick up vehicles from tire changes, he looked after my place when I was away and could always be counted on to assist with tasks if I asked. The greatest part was he always was very grateful for payment with a shepherd's pie, meatloaf, a jar of crab apple jelly or pickles.

He would often lighten your day with his storytelling, a joke, or a recap of one of his many vivid dreams or appear saying, "Hey... would you like to join me on the 2nd floor balcony to blow some bubbles on passersby?" These thoughts often led to very creative learning gifts for his beloved Jordin such as a real treasure chest that included her favourite snack of seaweed.

Some of us often cautioned him about giving too much of himself as he was forever helping someone with a ride, food or arranging housing.

James was a true humanitarian that I believe taught many of us to be more inclusive of those in our community. I am still in disbelief that he is no longer with us and will always think fondly of James.

– *Sue (Rasmussen) Meyer*

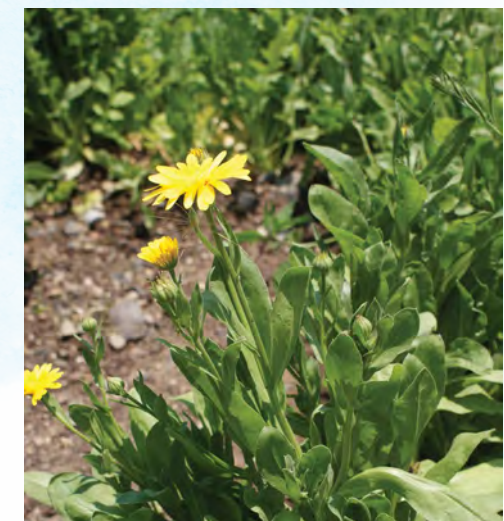
I first met James shortly after I was hired with Northern Health in 2004...he was always a guy that would show up with a smile and a story and everybody was always happy to see him. It didn't take long to know that James was always willing to help people in need, and he had his fingers in all kinds of areas, more than I think anybody would ever know.

With every conversation I had with James, I was always educated about my perspective; he always had a way to slip stuff into a conversation that gave you a real Ah-Ha moment. I don't know if he intended to, it was just that he was so knowledgeable about the struggles of people he couldn't help but tell you something you had no idea existed.

Each and every time I walked away I have to say I felt a little bit disappointed in myself for just not being more aware of many of the issues we have in Northern British Columbia and also in Northern Health... it was never disappointment in a bad way and I always appreciated the new perspective. I left every conversation with James a better person. I have to say the Indigenous community lost probably the best advocate they never knew they had.

James was an amazing light in this community, from the community garden work he was trying to drive along with the flowers he planted all over the downtown area, to all the work he did in every community across all of the north. When I learned of his passing I felt a hole in the force that will likely never be filled.

– *Bryan VanDinter, STA, ITS Client Support, Northern Health*



Memories of Haggerstone: Well – that’s easy, because there are 50 many memories. Tremendously hard too – because it’s hard to conceive that this loving, smart, creative, joyful man is no longer with us. How is that possible?

James – I was always happy that you were working (too) on those many evenings and weekends that I was there, on the HSBC 6th floor. You were my “go to” guy when I had questions on a particular community’s health structures, population characteristics, buildings, data resources and history.

You were my “go to” guy on formatting, presentation, spreadsheets and layouts. You were my “go to” guy when I had personal questions on First Nations paperwork systems, for my extra kid.

You had an incredible intellect – both right brain and left brain strength that was so rare. Of course, you were the epitome of the “square peg in the round hole”, it was always hard to focus that brain power. Yet, your creations were elaborate, intelligent, user-friendly, and helped all of us to understand and use the tremendous power of data and analytics. You were so passionate about your field. Truly, a giant.

James – I have many memories of the deep, deep love you had for Jordin. I remember your story of the “zing” of connection you felt, when you first met her as a tiny baby. Lots of memories of swim lessons, birthday celebrations, care package preparations, and your excitement every time you made a road trip to Kelowna. I remember Jordin and her mom or her grandmother, visiting at the end of the work day. Seeing all of the photos of Jordin and her family. The pride that James had in Jordin’s growth. And always, the LOVE.

James – I remember the playful adult that was James. The pranks that you played – the HSBC second floor balcony was a favorite spot, to call out to passersby and then hide. Ha ha! The laughter that my children remember, from the guy in the office down the hall. The joy in your guerilla gardening, or the anonymous seed planting in the city’s downtown planters.

The yellow edges that you painted on the city sidewalks, so that those with poor eyesight were made aware of uneven surfaces. The repairs you made to outdoor benches so that the homeless had a safe place to sit. Always playful and pushing boundaries because you cared about people, especially the vulnerable amongst us.

John– your brother was a deep and powerful man. He took a different path in life – a path of service to others, a path of alternate family structures, a path of friendship yet distance. He was a man to be proud of, a man who was very much respected by co-workers, friends and strangers.

Jordin – James will always be with you. He is there in your heart, he is there in your memories, and he is there in spirit – ALWAYS. He is there in the good deeds he did for so many people. You can draw on his love, at any time, it is always there for you.

Thank you Haggerstone, for the gift of your presence in our lives. We miss you! you amazing man.

– Christine James, Prince George

We met James when we all worked on the 6th floor at HSBC. He impressed us with his positivity, energy, warmth and juvenile sense of humour. He was impressive in his capacity for giving, his enormous caring for others’ needs, and his guerilla tactics for beautifying our community.

James was a youthful man in the best way. He lived with an urgency for experience, and wanted to share his joys with everyone around him. His passions were infectious. Driving past his community garden, our family saw James weeding. We stopped to chat and introduce the kids to James, but we left with a trunkful of vegetables. That’s James to us.

– Deb Woods and Shawn Smith, Prince George

I met James at work, not surprisingly – we were on the same team. An oddball, and basically an antisocial hermit (his words), but friendly guy who lived to help people and crack bad jokes. He was always ready to talk; in many ways he was a bit of a lifeline for me, since I was completely uprooted from my home. We did a lot of good work together, and had some good times. Very silly times, at that – he once got a pink hippo bubble maker and used it to send soap bubbles from the office roof down onto the street. Another time, he showed up at our team BBQ wielding tiki torches which he proceeded to wave around as he danced through the backyard. It’s hard to describe the effect he had on people; he was at once annoying, endearing, and amusing, but always a good man who never took himself too seriously and was always ready to help out a friend.

– Matthew Amsel, Fraser Health, Senior Operations Engineer

So very sad to hear of James passing. RIP

– Kathy Hart

I am so sorry to hear about James' passing. I knew him briefly through my husband, Matthew, who worked with James.

He was always kind, funny, and caring. I remember him with a bubble machine on the balcony at work showering passerby with bubbles. I also remember his beautiful gardens, where we would often find him. He was one of those rare people and the world was a better place because of him.

– *Jacquelyn Rosamond-Amsel*

What a wonderful person, James was. Always laughter to be heard in his presence. But mostly his compassion for those in need, whatever they needed. James genuinely cared so much for others. I miss you ... as does this world.

– *Birgit leBlanc*



A BOOK FOR JORDIN

I met James when I came to work in the Public Health program with Dr. Bowering as Population Health Lead. He was my colleague, and he quickly became a friend and ally to my efforts in making Northern Health a population health organization.

James, through his example, challenged me to live out the values of equity and inclusion in tangible ways. He introduced me to friends he met in the day-to-day course of his life, as he walked to and from work, frequented local establishments and engaged in the community. Homeless people, street involved youth, Indigenous folks living with the impacts of colonization, residential school and systemic oppression – he brought them into Northern Health's executive offices and introduced them around, reminding us of the vulnerabilities and needs of those who most needed our help.

James supported my work and that of our growing population health team with information and data, using his brilliant mind to innovate and explain the concepts of health equity creatively and effectively. His development of the interactive community health map of northern BC was an incredible innovation in its day and contributed so much to the conversation of what determines health outcomes and how health can be supported or thwarted through things like economic development, industry, policy and geography.

James was a transparent person who invited others to be transparent as well. Joy, frustration, anger, compassion, fear, love, hope were all expressed with equal candor and colour. James was perpetually dissatisfied with the state of the world, our province, our communities, policies and practices that did not reflect genuine care for the most marginalized and vulnerable among us. He continually was pushing us to act justly, challenge the status quo and adjust our practices to the needs of those we served.

James was, in many ways, like a boy trapped in a man's body. He loved to laugh and knew the value of fun. He played practical jokes on people, used self-deprecating humour to break through people's resistance, cooked and shared food generously and instigated workplace social activities. He enthusiastically bounced around from workstation to workstation, chatting with people. You could follow his path by the rippling laughter he left in his wake. He was irreverent and unfiltered, and could swear like a sailor. More than once I hummed the tune, "How Do You Solve a Problem Like Maria?" in reference to James' antics.

James worked extremely hard – too hard – spending evenings and weekends in his small, windowless office while the rest of us were home with our families. His passion for population health work consumed him and drove him.

He was a good son. He cared deeply about his mother, who lived in the Okanagan and was in long-term care, making frequent visits to see her and advocating on her behalf. He was a generous and caring friend, investing his personal resources to promote the success of others and becoming "Uncle James" to other people's children.

He walked the talk of population health, literally (he also roller bladed and biked it, but he did not own a vehicle). He participated in community gardens, got to know and checked in on his neighbours, and contributed in many meaningful ways to his community.

I affectionately called James "Staggerhome" after learning that this was his nickname in university, which he reportedly had come by quite honestly. He was a good and complicated man who made a difference.

– *Julie Kerr, Executive Director, Hull Services, Calgary*



"LET'S GO FISHING!" FARA HAS HAPPY MEMORIES OF A FISHING TRIP WITH JAMES ON THE NECHAKO RIVER IN 2017.



IN 2016, JAMES HELPED FARA CREATE 'FARA'S GARDEN' AT 5TH AND CARNEY IN PRINCE GEORGE.

I have known James for about 8 years and I have beautiful memories with him at work and outside work. Two of those memories:

- James with his amazing energy and joy for gardening told me he was planning to create this garden at a corner of Carney and 5th intersection. We went to the hardware store and he showed me all the things we needed to start the garden. I helped him couple of times, and in the first attached picture on June 22, 2016, I was amazed to see all the flowers.
- The second picture is on November 13, 2017. This was one of the times James told me, "Let's go fishing!" We went to this location near the end of North Nechako road and started fishing at one of the Nechako river shores. He taught me how to fish that day. I don't think we caught any fish, but we did catch many beautiful memories.

And so many more beautiful memories...

– *Faramarz Kashanchi (Fara), Outcomes Analyst, Strategic Analytics, Northern Health*

James was a kind, friendly man who brought a lot of beauty to Prince George with his flower gardens. Always ready with a smile and a big hello, and to help if needed. I'll miss seeing him around Prince George. RIP James.

– *Lynne Robinson*

My condolences to Jain and John for the loss of your brother Jim. I had the pleasure of chatting with him several years ago when he was visiting Revelstoke. It was fun to catch up. I have fond childhood memories of the Haggerstones.

– *Judy Deptford Mellish*

James was such a fun, giving, caring, friendly, generous man. I met him when I worked in HR; he was a good friend of a co-worker and so would pop upstairs on occasion and say hi. I was always happy to see "Jimmy"!

My mom lived just down the street from the garden James built on the corner of 10th Ave and Vancouver Street in Prince George. Before her dementia got really bad and she had to move, I was encouraging her to get exercise. Together, my mom and I (with her walker) would stroll down the street as many times a week as we could. On occasion my mom told me she would walk on her own, but I really didn't know if she had, or if she just thought she had.

Then one day, James came to me and asked if mom walked up and down 10th Avenue, and if she lived in a particular house. When I said yes, he said she walked down a few times on her own and they would visit. He walked her home a few times, and would occasionally drop by and take her some flowers that he had grown in the garden.

I was so surprised that my mom had actually gone for walks on her own and when he confirmed that he met this lovely lady and that she was my mom, walked her home and took her flowers, I was absolutely in awe of his kindness and generosity. After my mom had to leave her home and go into care, James often told me how much he missed her visits and always asked how she was. I am happy to say her last summer of being somewhat cognitive was made that much better by James.

I really enjoyed his fun-loving nature here in the office as well, but his kindness touched me at a whole different level when it came to my beautiful mom!

– *Lorrelle Hall, Administrative Assistant, Chief Communications/Ext Relations, Communications /Foundations & Auxiliaries / Business Development, Northern Health*



JAMES AND KEELY

From: Haggerstone, James <James.Haggerstone@northernhealth.ca>

Sent: Thursday, July 30, 2015 4:40 PM

Subject: Do you have any good used household items

Hi Everyone - I am helping an elder citizen with a brain injury get herself established in Prince George.

By working with a number of local agencies (including BC Housing, CINHS, CSFS, PG Native Friendship Centre, Active Support Against Poverty and the BC Ministry of Social Development/ Social innovation) we were recently successful in securing a subsidized housing-unit for this person. It is very cool indeed to see this come to fruition through the efforts of so many

Now, I am trying to get a few good used household things together to make it a home

If you have any items gathering dust....I know they would be appreciated.

Thank you so much!

James Haggerstone

Tel: 250-565-2081

Poster attached

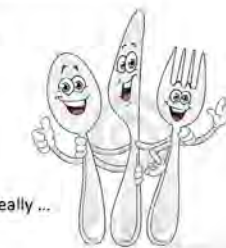
Do you have unused household items?

I am helping an elder citizen with a brain injury get herself established in Prince George.

This is a really nice story because by working with a number of local agencies (including BC Housing) we were recently able to secure a subsidized housing-unit for this person.

Now, I am trying to get a few used household items together to make it a home:

- Knives, Forks and Spoons
- Plates & Bowls
- Pots & Pans
- Bed sheets,
- Microwave
- A shower curtain
- Looking for anything at all really ...



Thank you so much !

Contact:
James Haggerstone – northern health
Teléfono: 250-565-2081
Email: james.haggerstone@northernhealth.ca

I got to know James in 2005. I was the web guy at the time, and James had a crazy idea to promote population health – he wanted a repository of population health data available to everyone, to help them understand how we could get out ahead of the strain on the acute care system. Working off the side of our desks, we created the first Community Health Information Portal. It was a massive undertaking, engaging people from other ministries and organizations, trying to find ways to bring value to them. It was truly a passion project, and in the end, anyone who used it knew they'd found a gold mine, but few knew that it was James, working behind the scenes, going above and beyond, who was the one putting in the hours, just trying to make life better for any and everyone who might benefit.

That idea of being a “wizard behind the curtain” was also a hallmark of his next big off-the-side-of-the-desk project – the Northern Health map. I initially met with him when he was wondering what the best way would be to distribute such a thing, and his vision for it was incredible, as the end result shows. As always, he was happy to let other people take the credit, and the map that eventually went to the public wouldn't bear his name, but it was James, with his characteristic personality, and relentless effort, bringing stakeholders together, working with data experts and mapping experts, to make a map that didn't just show locations, but that told a story. It was such a pleasure to walk alongside him through the map project, and the friendship that developed over the years was something I'll treasure. (Another thing I'll treasure is my copy from the first print run of the map, which he had to go out of his way to give me, but which does have his name on it!)

James' passion for people didn't just shine through his work. During the years I worked directly with him, and in the years after, his behind-the-scenes work in the lives of both individuals and organizations, and his optimism, always shone through his chatty, sometimes scatter-brained exterior. Genius is often eccentric, and James was truly a genius. More than anything else, the compassion he brought to everything he touched was a huge lesson and inspiration in my life. I'll miss him.

– Paul Taylor, CASA – HIM Innovations and Solutions, Northern Health

I worked with James at Northern Health a number of years ago. I was shocked and saddened when I saw his obit. James was kind, empathetic, and full of decency and goodness. What a loss to this world.

– Larry Leischner

I am so very sorry to hear of James' passing. He was always an extremely positive, pleasant and energetic individual and so very compassionate and eager to help others. My condolences to the family. RIP James

– Donna Atkinson

I met James when I came to Northern Health in 2005 to lead what turned into the NH Connections program. He and I shared an office for the first three or four months I was there and given that I knew no one in town when I arrived, he was great (and frequently hilarious) company. Those first few months were spent getting my bearings, and James could not have been more considerate or thoughtful in helping me make connections and understand my new home.

James' famous map of Northern Health probably influenced my thinking about how to build the NH Connections program more than anything. He spent hours identifying health services resources in each community so they would be marked properly, and it gave me a great sense of what was where so I could plan what turned into the service. Perhaps the coolest thing he did with the mapping effort was engage with First Nations communities across the region to find out whether there were communities that should be on the map that weren't, and whether or not their names were spelled right. There were several occasions that members of these communities told him that this was the first time they saw their community on a map, spelled in the way they would want. In this regard, James was leading the way towards engagement and reconciliation with Indigenous communities through his curiosity and interest in others.

I would describe James as one of the most warm-hearted people I have ever known. He had a genuine care and concern for others, especially those who were less fortunate. He was always looking to help others, particularly those from communities that didn't have a voice. His passion for NH, its people, and the people it serves was infectious. He will certainly be missed. I know I miss him.

– Sean Hardiman, Provincial Clinical Director– Coronary Revascularization, Structural Heart, & Advanced Heart Failure, Cardiac Services BC

I met James in fall of 2017. He was the warmest and most welcoming person on the team, with great sense of humour. I got to work with him for almost 2 years and I feel fortunate to be a tiny part of one of many chapters of his life at Northern Health.

James was an inspirational person both at work and outside work. He was so thorough and dedicated on whatever he did for Northern Health. James's hard work and passion was visible in all the projects he worked on. I learnt how a person's passion towards their work could bring so much satisfaction and contentment to their lives. I also learnt how to be compassionate towards everyone. James used to tell us about how he spent his evenings and weekends helping unknown people. James's heart used to bleed while sharing their stories. One could easily see how pure his heart was, and he could go to any limits to help people in need. James taught us that empathy and compassion is unconditional, and the purest form of love.

I would describe James as full of love, light, joy, and compassion. This picture of James blowing bubbles on the patio at the HSBC building completely describes James for me.

I am very grateful to God that I got the opportunity to know a person like James and share some good conversations and laughs with him. He was one of a kind, and I hope God will gift us more people like James to make our lives brighter and full of joy.

– *Sonal Bajaj, Clinical Outcomes Analyst, Strategic Analytics, Northern Health*

I had the good fortune to grow up with Jim in Revelstoke. A great guy who was always there for his friends, he will be truly missed. My sincere condolences to his family and friends

– *Derrick Needham*



THIS PICTURE
SUMS UP
THE ESSENCE
OF JAMES
HAGGERSTONE –
FULL OF LIGHT
AND JOY.



My condolences to James's family, friends, and all touched by him. I worked with James in public health and spent many hours chatting in office doorways after work. James could identify with and empathize with people in all walks of life. He did triple back flips to help people, from working tirelessly on last-minute health presentations for health authority administrators to finding housing for somebody without a home. He found furniture and other things for people who needed them. He connected people who weren't savvy of the system with healthcare. He found resources for education or needed travel and he would share what he had with people. James had an admiration for and loved learning about the culture of First Nations People of Northern BC. The simplest things in life would bring a huge smile to his face. I learned a lot from James. He will be missed by many!

– *Kathy MacDonald*

In loving memory of a wonderful person.
We will love you and miss you always.

– *Barbara Hesse*

James came to work in Prince George with the Terrace group when the Northern Health Authority was created in about 2000. I knew and had contact with him during the time I worked with Public Health. He always made time to answer questions when required. I also saw him frequently walking around town, and when he was supporting an elderly lady that could no longer keep up 10th and Vancouver. After leaving Northern Health, I often thought about him when there were no more flowers. He will be greatly missed in our community. Thoughts go out to his family and co-workers. Dr David Bowering said it — thank you, James!

– *Susan Swanson*

From: Haggerstone, James
Sent: Monday, November 05, 2012 3:34 PM
To: Kelley, Moria; vanDinter, Bryan; Cocco, Lidia; Chipman, Desa; Pasichnyk, Patty; Griffith, Roxane
Subject: Thank you from a friend

A few years ago you folks stepped up and helped a complete stranger get his feet on the ground.

Homeless and with no real possessions, this stranger had the possibility of moving into Alyward place.

You guys made it happen and gave a good man a new lease on life.

- Roxanne – you made it possible for him to move in early (don't tell anyone..)
- Patty - Once we figured out how to put it together, that great big futon, gave this man the best sleep he's had in years
- Lydia - I have to tell you how Gregg used to smile and chuckle about his new pink towels. He used them - and he bought a matching shower curtain.
- Bryan – I can't tell you how often I slept on his monster couch or I would arrive to find him trapped in it – way too funny!
- Desa – The big wooden table and chairs and those amazing end tables - they added some real class.
- Mona – the pots, pans, dishes and stuff were the foundations of many a great meal - consumed at the table of course!!

Mr. Dennis passed away last week – he was a good friend.

I know how much your generosity meant to him.

Feel good – you should!

James

ANOTHER ACT OF KINDNESS FROM JAMES

I met James here, working at Northern Health in 2007. I had many in-depth and interesting conversations with the coworker that I would come to recognize as my friend. During my time spent with James, we would hurry through the “work stuff” we had to discuss and get into the causes James was so passionate about.

The influence he had on my life is something that I never got to directly discuss with him in detail. The effect he had on my life was bringing me to a place of understanding and reconciliation with our First Nations communities. James was discussing how he supported youth in different areas one day and suggested I take the course Northern Health offers on understanding societal issues from the First Nations point of view.

Watching videos of Elders speaking was a life-changing event for me, and influenced my perspective on how reconciliation needs to occur. This led to us collaborating on an initiative he was working on for youth sports, and gave me an insight to just how devoted James was to the community, not just in Prince George, but across all of Northern Health.

James was a bright white light, who had time for anyone, and any good cause. I have always subscribed to the theory that the only things we take with us when we leave this earth, are what we leave behind. James left behind a legacy of kindness, generosity, and a lot of laughter. He left behind a lot of love for people that were lucky enough to have encountered him to share.

The world is a better place because of James, and he left an indelible mark on it. Rest easy, my friend.

– Tom Stephenson, Service Support Analyst, Client Support, Northern Health

My sincerest condolences to James’s family and friends. His passion for helping those in need and gardening was admirable. It was a pleasure knowing you, you will be missed.

– Tammy Hoefer

I also grew up with Jim in Revelstoke and have some very clear memories, like giving him 70 cents when he came “collecting” for the Revelstoke Review, but my favourite is running into him when he had just learned that Canada World Youth would be sending him to Sri Lanka. He was just beaming and almost walking 6 inches off the ground, he was so excited. When our classmate Rob Granstrom passed away a few years later, Jim called me on his way home to Revelstoke for the funeral. He asked me for advice about what to say to Rob’s parents. Jim was so kind, and he wanted to make sure that he didn’t somehow add to their grief. To John and his family, and all those mourning Jim, I would like to say the same words I suggested to Jim all those years ago: He was a good friend and I will not forget him.

– Barbara (Cameron) Grinfeld



FARZANA AND JORDIN



JAMES AS CLARK

James and I met in Northern Health in 2012. We worked on the same team. He was the most cheerful person, who came to introduce himself with his big smile on my first day of work. It made me feel welcome, despite being nervous about my new job. We were colleagues for over 6 years and friends for a few more. James's other close friend Farzana and I were with him during his last days, keeping him company. It was hard to see him go.

James was a great colleague, truly passionate about his work. He had a different way of connecting numbers to outcomes and creating stories, which was so valuable to see. He was curious and always wanted to know the story from the other side, looking at all different perspectives before coming to a conclusion.

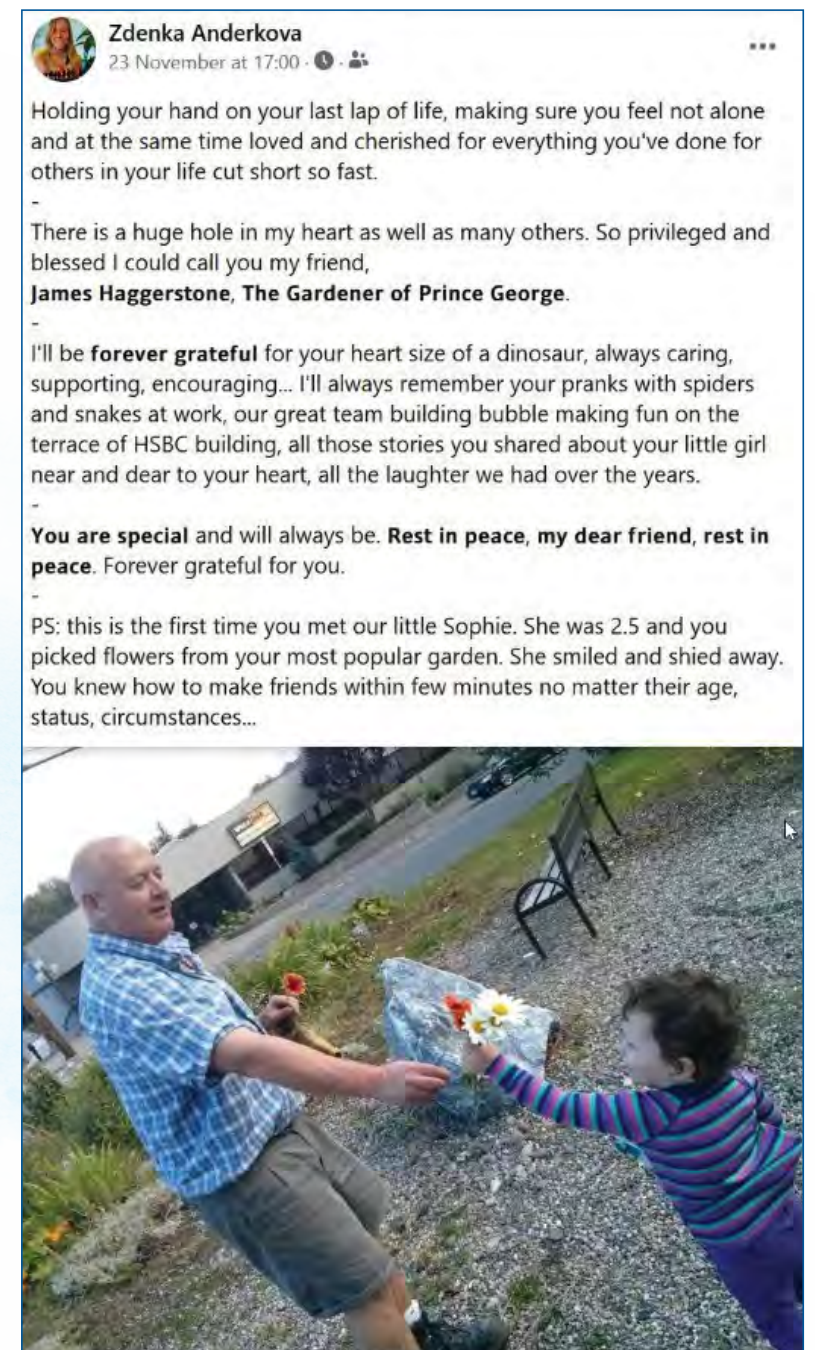
Over the years James accomplished many achievements at work (NH Map, CHIP, Community profiles, Environmental Scan, to name a few). He was well known and respected by many Indigenous communities and truly passionate about getting to know them and their languages. The number of stories he shared over the years would create a great book or two.

On another aspect of life, James was a great friend and that's something I would like to highlight above all, as that's how he would like to be remembered. Over the years we built trust and could bounce around ideas about work and life which I will treasure for the rest of my life. He met my kids several times and despite them being very shy, he always knew how to break the ice. I remember him sending them a gift of snowball makers that we still have to this day.

He was a sensitive man full of empathy who knew how to engage with everyone, regardless of their age, position, education, or status. He was a man of equity and did everything possible to bring joy and happiness to less fortunate people, especially through his numerous gardens around Prince George, where he would meet people and talk to them. Some of them would even pitch in and help him with the gardening!

When thinking about our friendship journey together, he taught me that in a world where we can be anything, we need to be kind first. He would stop a car or drop anything he was doing to help. I remember a story about a homeless man who was heading to a recycling depot. The bag with empty bottles burst open, spilling them all over the road. James noticed this right away on his way home from work and without hesitation ran to help this guy to collect it all, headed home to get a new bag, and even drove him to the depot. This is how James would operate. He would help no matter what.

ZDENKA'S FACEBOOK
FAREWELL TO HER
DEAR FRIEND AND
COLLEAGUE.





SEPTEMBER 2019: ZDENKA AND JAMES WORKING ON HIS PASSPORT APPLICATION FOR A TRIP JAMES DREAMED OF TAKING TO THE SEYCHELLES.

His passing has left a huge hole in my heart and many unanswered questions, knowing and believing the outcome could have been different. James was the most giving, encouraging, supporting and loving person that I've ever worked with. It was a privilege to call him my friend.

James was a rare and special soul, he wanted to have fun in life and not take life so seriously. He would often joke or do pranks, and those who knew him well would know he meant no harm. A few days before he passed away he mentioned this in a phone conversation, saying, "I want everyone to know that I did my best and never wanted to hurt anyone".

During his last days with us James received blessings from all different denominations: Muslim, Christians, Jewish, Hindu, and Sikh. Lots of prayers from spiritual healers, Indigenous people and those without any attachment. I've never experienced anything like this. I hope James is in a better place now, smiling wide with his big blue eyes. He has undoubtedly touched many lives with his huge heart, sense of respect, and love.

James was an amazing and honest man, true to his beliefs. He loved joking and making fun too. I remember lots of funny stories he shared about his parents and siblings (two brothers and one sister). His sense of humor probably came from his mom's side. He would always speak highly about his family and always had his mom's painting in his office. It was a painting of poppies, plants that James would plant everywhere, all over the city, making the city workers mad as they had to weed the poppies out.

However, for James, poppies and other wild flowers were not weeds. Each spring we would all wait to see which plants were starting to bloom in the least desirable places and we knew it was James who had planted them, in the hope that they would make people smile and be happy.

And sure enough, they did. I am looking forward to the spring and all the tulips blooming at Books & Company where James created two of his latest gardens. I'll make sure to grab a hot chocolate and sit at the spot where I signed his passport application last September. James wanted to visit the Seychelles.

I'll miss him dearly. He wanted me to teach him beekeeping, which he was planning on starting once he moved to the Okanagan to be closer to his twin brother John, as well as his informally "adopted" niece Jordin. I will make sure to dedicate a hive to his memory next year.

Rest in peace, my dear friend... rest in peace!

**– Zdenka Masarova (Anderkova), Advisor,
Workforce Planning & Analytics, Human Resources, Northern Health**

GARDENER OF PRINCE GEORGE TO BE COMMEMORATED WITH BENCHES, BURSARY

Catherine Garrett, contributor, Sunday, Feb. 28th, 2021

Submitted by Zdenka Andrekova

Known as ‘the gardener of Prince George,’ James Haggerstone’s roots in the community run deep.

Haggerstone’s friends and family are hoping to continue his legacy after his passing in November — with memory books, a commemorative bench, and a CNC bursary in his name.

Zdenka Anderkova, Haggerstone’s colleague at Northern Health describes her big-hearted friend as a ‘true example of humanity,’

“We would like to do all possible to memorize him just the way he would do for every single one of us,” said Anderkova.

“He was special because he was always there to help out. He would drop everything he was doing to give someone a helping hand.”

He received a city volunteer award for a garden he looked after on 10th avenue and Vancouver street in 2012.

What started as an empty lot, turned into a sanctuary and a gathering place for the neighborhood.

“He wanted to show the nicer aspect of life. He was living a life with purpose, and making everyone around him happy,” she said.

The garden is home to flowers of all colours and even a veggie garden — grown with help from those living nearby.

He championed the community garden and created other smaller gardens in abandoned lots, places he knew would bring joy to the neighborhood.

“He cared deeply for people and his ability to connect with them made him truly special. Always ready with a practical joke or a smile to lighten the moment, in everything he did, James embraced advocacy, honesty, empathy, personal-humility, and the promotion of others,” reads his obituary.

Haggerstone, Regional Manager of Health Informatics at Northern Health, was also behind a map used by the health authority that has every First Nations community included.

Anderkova says he was passionate about helping people understand the healthcare system, and worked tirelessly to provide accessible and user-friendly data.

In addition to his green thumb, Haggerstone was involved with the Spirits of Burns Lake project, which provided free sports and other activities for girls in the Burns Lake Area.

Masarova and her colleagues have raised \$5,000 towards memory books for Haggerstone’s twin brother John, and his adopted niece, Jordin, also from Burns Lake.

The proposed bench would be placed in a city park, or close to the PG Hospice House.

His many bags of wild-flower seeds will be planted to continue his tradition of overtaking city planters with rogue flowers.

Depending on funds, they would also like to create a CNC bursary in his name that would serve an Indigenous student.

“In my last conversation with him, he mentioned to pass a message on for him,” said Anderkova.

“He wanted everyone to know he did his best, and he didn’t want to hurt anyone.”



