

# Everything is one and all is interconnected

by Nikki Attwell



“Hishuk Ish Tswalk” – it means “Everything is one and all is interconnected” in the language of the Nuučaan̓ł (Nuu-chah-nulth) peoples whose territorial land is on Vancouver Island in British Columbia, Canada. The phrase also beautifully encapsulates a multi-faceted story that starts some 40-odd years ago and concludes at the 17th International Handbell Symposium in Vancouver this July. Let’s explore the different strands and see where they take us.

## **Various locations in Alberta and British Columbia, late 1960s and early 1970s:**

Shelley Hartman, growing up in Seattle as an only child, loves to go camping with her parents. “I have many happy memories of camping trips to Jasper, Lake Louise and Banff in Alberta, Canada, and Penticton and on Vancouver Island in British Columbia. One of the most memorable trips was to the Nanaimo/Port Alberni area on Vancouver Island. I remember being with my Dad near Nanaimo and walking out about half a mile into the water and it was warm like a bathtub.” Sadly Shelley lost her dad when she was just 15, so those early memories of camping trips are particularly poignant for her. “I cling to those happy memories of

camping in Canada with him,” she says. Shelley and her memories are destined to have a key role in this story.

**Vancouver Island, August 10, 2013:** Symposium co-chair Anne Hill and her husband, Jim Watts (a former professional photographer) are on an extended sailing trip, circumnavigating Vancouver Island in their 35-foot sailboat, “Paradigm Shift”. On this day, while moored in Nootka Sound, Jim creates an eerily compelling photo of the midday sun over a starkly treed landscape, obscured by fog and looking more lunar than solar. He titles this image “Nootka Sun”. It is destined to have a key role in this story.

**British Columbia, March 2015:** While the member guilds of the International Handbell Committee each contribute one title to the repertoire list for an International Symposium, the host guild/country is granted a second piece. Accordingly, the IHS2016 Planning Committee and the British Columbia Guild of English Handbell Ringers (BCGEHR) decide to commission BC composer and percussionist Bruce Henczel to write a piece that will represent BC and Canada. Independently of any instructions given to Bruce regarding style, format, content or theme, Bruce takes his inspiration from the paintings of the famed Canadian expressionist painter, Emily Carr, who frequently travelled and painted among many indigenous peoples of British Columbia, particularly on Vancouver Island. Bruce titles his piece “Hishuk Ish Tswalk.” It is destined to have a key role in this story.

**January 21, 2016:** A teleconference between Tim Schuback, president of Malmark Bellcraftsmen, and Symposium co-chairs Anne Hill and Nikki Attwell is scheduled, to discuss Malmark’s potential sponsorship of the Symposium. The conversation soon morphs into a discussion of a new instrument

recently co-developed by Malmark and percussion specialists Steve Weiss Music Inc., the bell plate. Through a process known as “sublimation,” an image can be imprinted on the bell plate, and for some time, Tim has harboured the thought of creating a multi-dimensional art experience by combining a piece of art and the bell plate in a performance (see sidebar piece below). The Symposium, and specifically the inspiration and mood of “Hishuk Ish Tswalk,” provide the perfect outlet for this idea. Tim offers to provide a sublimated bell plate for use in the piece. In an act of extreme generosity, he then offers to donate the bell plate for auction, the proceeds of which would be shared between the Symposium and an appropriate cause associated with youth and the First Peoples in BC. The bell plate, and this donation, are destined to have a key role in this story.

Now to take these seemingly random events and close the circle. Let’s see how everything is indeed interconnected.

The first step for Anne and Nikki to make the most of Malmark’s donation is to find just the right image for sublimation that will tie the bell plate to the Symposium and increase its value and meaning to Symposium delegates. As Anne and Nikki explore several options, they remember the ‘sun behind fog’ images that were used at the beginning of the Symposium’s promotional video from 2014 and decide that Jim Watts’ “Nootka Sun” will nicely link to those first images that introduced the Symposium to the world.

They then realize that the compositional elements of the images are not the only connection between the “Nootka Sun” and the Symposium—Nootka Sound is on the traditional territorial lands of the Nuu-chah-nulth peoples, from whose language the title of our commissioned piece, “Hishuk Ish Tswalk,” is taken. After discovering these connections, it is a simple decision to choose the First Nation of the Nuu-chah-nulth Tribal Council on whose exact territory the image was taken, as the recipient of a portion of the funds raised by the auction of the donated bell plate.

Nootka Sound is also very close to the places on Vancouver Island that Shelley Hartman holds so dearly in her heart. She is instantly drawn to the imprinted bell plate, upon first seeing it on display in Malmark’s booth in the Symposium marketplace. Although she initially assumes it is the moon, not the sun shrouded in fog, and it brings to mind the beautiful moonsets near her home on Puget Sound, she says “the picture on the bell plate spoke to me even before I knew the history behind it or where it had been taken. It is breathtaking to me and brings up the memories of those moonsets. From the moment I saw it I was drawn back to it several times and knew I just had to have it.”

And her determination is called for. Following the final massed rehearsal on Friday, July 29, with Tim Schuback as the auctioneer, the bidding goes to a staggering \$3,050 (CDN) before Shelley can finally call the bell plate her own. “I don’t know, call it fate or whatever, but I just believe it was meant to be for me to have it,” she says. She will keep it at her home as a treasured keepsake but is willing to let her bell choirs borrow it if the need arises.

As if this story is not already bursting with elements of fate or coincidence: Shelley, who was adopted, tells of finding her birth mother when she, Shelley, is 33, twenty-five years ago. “Her maiden name was Ish, just like in the title of the piece.”



*Shelley bidding on the bell plate.*

Whether you consider this story a confluence of coincidences or a series of things that were meant to be, there’s no denying that it is a fitting manifestation of how everything is one and all is interconnected, so relevant to the theme of this year’s International Symposium. Handbell musicians

understand that concept well – we practice it every time a group of individuals gather to play our single instrument. The deepest gratitude of the IHS2016 Planning Committee goes out to all those who have a part in this heartwarming story, especially Tim Schuback and Malmark, who made it happen.

## SIDEBAR PIECE

### An Idea Comes to Life

by Tim Schuback

The project started as a general idea I had and a random meeting with someone.

Malmark started designing our Bell Plates about two years ago. Right around the same time I happen to meet John Karpi of Ranco Precision Sheet Metal who introduced me to the process of sublimation. I always looked at the bell plates as not only an instrument but also as a blank canvas but up until meeting John I had no idea how to get an image onto the plate. I thought how cool it would be, perhaps at a gallery opening, to sublimate an artist's work on the bell plates and then have the bell plates played in a musical performance during the premiere or opening of the work. This would create a multi-dimensional art experience. Although I thought this idea was great I never had the opportunity to put it to use until Nikki Attwell and Anne Hill of Handbell Guilds of Canada approached Malmark to be a sponsor of the 2016 International Handbell Symposium in Vancouver. At that meeting I floated the idea to both Nikki and Anne and thankfully they loved it.

The plan was for Malmark to provide bell plates for the performance of the closing piece of the Symposium's final concert, a First Nations-inspired piece composed by Bruce Henczel. A First Nations-inspired image would be sublimated on the plate. The image that was selected was of Nootka Sound on Vancouver Island. The image was a photograph of Nootka Sound made by Jim Watts, and the photograph was called "Nootka Sun."

The process of sublimation is where a solid is transformed to gas, skipping the liquid phase. And although John Karpi was positive that he could sublimate the image onto a plate he was not sure that he could do it on the size plate that we were requesting, the C2 bell plate being almost 3' by 2'.

The project went down to the eleventh hour. I picked up the plate on Friday July 22, just two days before I was going to hop on a flight to Vancouver. After picking up the plate I immediately checked the tuning of the plate, which was meant to be tuned to a C2 (or roughly 65 hrz). However the sublimation process left the plate some 30 cents flat. So, I need to raise the pitch roughly half a semi-tone, without damaging the coating and or the image. I immediately called my head machinist John Facht and asked him to meet me at Malmark first thing Saturday morning. On Saturday, John and I ran some tuning tests on some scrap plates till we felt comfortable that we would be able to tune the plate without damaging it. After about six hours and several scrap plates later we finally got the tuning to where it needed to be.



*Key players in the story.*