



# NATURE SKETCH

Bateman Foundation connects kids with art and nature



by Sasha Milam

**P**ICTURE A SUNNY, BREEZY MORNING IN SPRING: flowering boughs of arbutus wave from a craggy outcrop as a group of children clamber along a path below, chattering as they settle down by a stream and turn to fresh pages of their sketch pads.

Quiet gradually falls as an instructor demonstrates the technique they are practicing that day and many pencils start to move—tentatively, at first—across paper. As the

minutes tick by, confidence and curiosity slowly unfurls. The drawing is interspersed with questions: How many flowers does a tree have? Did anyone else see the squirrel? How do you draw wind?

This is Nature Sketch in action.

Leanne Cadden, BCom '05, approached the Bateman Foundation in 2016 and proposed the idea for a program that connects kids with art and nature. An artist and



Leanne Cadden  
and Robert  
Bateman



mother herself, she had looked in vain for such a program for her daughter.

“I believe that nature is one of the greatest transformative powers on the planet, and art is the expression of this transformation,” says Cadden. “Nature Sketch combines these two forces and offers kids a place to freely explore who they are in shared habitats and ecosystems that we as humans are interconnected with.”

For Cadden, the seed of the idea was planted when her great-grandmother put a pencil in her hand at the age of three. Art gave her a medium to express her love of animals and nature, while also learning about herself and her creativity. That was the kind of opportunity she wanted all kids, including her daughter, to have.

It was a clear fit for the Bateman Foundation, whose mission is to engage people with the beauty and importance of nature. Peter Ord, BA '87, the foundation's executive director, says that demand for the program has increased exponentially. Since Nature Sketch's first group of young artists forayed into the woods with their sketchbooks in 2016, more than 1,000 young people have taken part. Reaching beyond Victoria, it is offered in five locations throughout Canada, and is poised to expand.

“Alongside general increase in interest, our Nature Sketch partnerships with hospitals and health groups in particular

have seen a major growth,” says Ord.

“There is a real value for many who suffer from anxiety or depression in spending time in nature. Our partners in the healthcare sector see real benefit from the mindfulness that comes with contemplating nature through art.”

Cadden, who has led many sessions of Nature Sketch herself over the years, has seen firsthand how students respond.

“The power of nature has a way of transforming young people's daily struggles—whether they are feeling sad about a family situation, coping with trauma or dealing with a health problem,” she says. “Even if they don't quite know how to express what they are going through, nature allows them to deal with it in an environment surrounded by other species.”

In 2019, Cadden accepted a role as Artist-in-Residence for the non-profit National Environment Treasure, and is hard at work illustrating their 24-point Canadian biodiversity action agenda authored by Women For Nature – Nature Canada.

“Nature Sketch holds such a special place in my heart,” says Cadden. “It helped me discover my true passion: the natural world.” This passion has translated to thousands of people, young and old, discovering the transformative power of a pencil and the outdoors. ■

## DID YOU KNOW?

Want a fresh perspective on part of your business? UVic MBA students work in teams to complete capstone consulting exercises during their final year. The Bateman Foundation invited an MBA team to focus its capstone on Nature Sketch in 2019, providing an analysis of the right business model to take the expanding program into the future. While it's early days to see the implementation of the team's recommendations, Ord was impressed with the students themselves.

“My advice for others working with a capstone team would be to incorporate them into operations as much as possible. The students are amazing in their own right. Their project might be focusing on a particular aspect of the business, but they may have additional insights on unrelated areas that are helpful.”

Businesses can apply for consideration in the capstone program by reaching out to our MBA administrative director: [mbadira@uvic.ca](mailto:mbadira@uvic.ca).

Illustrations & Photo: Leanne Cadden