I don’t think we are going to completely understand the
impact that had until we can study it more in retrospect, she says.
In the meantime, Mackenzie says her role and its focus hasn’t changed much in recent months (aside from a heavy increase in media calls and no flying). Instead, the pandemic has highlighted everything she has been working on since the start of her career in elderly care. Concerns such as a senior’s right to live independently, consequences of social isolation and other quality of life considerations are more pressing than ever.

This ability to stay focused on the long-term issues is what Gustavson taught me to do,” she says.

However, Mackenzie is optimistic about what’s ahead. “Are we going to be a gentler and kinder place when the pandemic is over? We’ve already shown how much we care for our seniors, so I am hopeful. The challenges faced by our elderly and those who care for them have come to the fore now, and with the pandemic expected to be around for a couple of years, we will continue to learn and hopefully make sure our elderly don’t feel neglected and alone. My job is to help build a better system to support seniors and convince the policy makers to provide the necessary resources to implement it. Or, to put in more in business terms, find an unmet need, build a product to meet that need and sell the product to those who need it... very much what Gustavson taught me to do.”

Mackenzie (an investment and wealth management practice) has continued to flourish; his motivational speaking about exploring remote places continues to inspire others and he is preparing for the release of his first book: A Story of Karma: Finding Love and Truth in the Lost Valley of the Himalaya. And yet, ask Mike about his greatest achievement, and he would say it’s seeing two little girls, Karma and Pemba—who he and Chantal met in a remote Himalayan village on a climbing trip to Nepal eight years ago—grow into well-educated young women.

Meeting Karma marked a profound moment in his life—one that has shaped his personal and business worlds. When the Schauchs travelled to Nepal to document the newly opened Nup Chu Valley, Mike pursued a dream he had of climbing a particular mountain he had seen in an image. “It just called to me.”

However, sometimes a mountain just isn’t meant to be climbed. The adventure turned sour when Mike became trapped in a snowstorm at 17,000 feet en route to the mountain, and then his mule ran away with his climbing gear. The adventure turned sour when Mike became trapped in a snowstorm at 17,000 feet en route to the mountain, and then his mule ran away with his climbing gear. He was forced to turn back and go to a small local village, where—fortuitously—he met the little girl Karma. “I just felt this karmic connection to this girl,” he says. “She had this longing to learn. She was seven years old, teaching the other kids English numbers and, when she approached Chantal and me, she pulled out this little card with English words on it, motioning to Chantal to teach her the words.”

After chatting to Karma’s mother and learning about the family’s future plans, the challenges of education in the area and the importance of aligning that with Karma’s Tibetan culture, the Schauchs started researching how they could help. Today, Karma and her sister Pemba attend a boarding school in Kathmandu that also fosters their unique ethnic heritage and values, and Mike has discovered his passion for helping make education more accessible around the world. He and Chantal are honoured to act as mentors to Karma and Pemba.

Mike didn’t make it to the top of that mountain, so he can’t say for certain what the experience would have been. However, he knows that his experience of meeting Karma and her family taught him to step outside of himself. “When you see things through different worldviews and find meaning, you make better decisions in business and life. Continue to be curious and ask ‘why?’ We can make the world a better place if we start by understanding others.”

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- ISobel Mackenzie, MBA ’97

Climing the largest mountain near his home in Squamish, BC, Mike Schaudt, BCom ’03, pauses for a moment. It’s unpredictable terrain, and yet in that moment, standing on the slopes of Mt. Garibaldi, he feels an inner peace and clarity. Up here, everything just makes sense. It’s a feeling he’s come to value during the hundreds of climbs he’s made over the years.

“When I’m in the mountains, it can be very chaotic and unpredictable. You have to pay attention. But in that moment it’s like everything has its place, and is doing exactly what it needs to be doing. You can get a lot of clarity by removing yourself from the modern world and spending time in nature. It’s a chance to recalibrate things,” he says.

In the five years since Business Class first shared an update from Mike and his wife, Chantal Schaudt, BCom ’03, he has climbed a lot, and made up for the mountain he felt he missed in Nepal. His business, Sjostedt & Garibaldi, he feels an inner peace and clarity. Up here, everything just makes sense. It’s a feeling he’s come to value during the hundreds of climbs he’s made over the years.

“For me, it’s a mental reset. It’s a way to keep my mind open to new ideas,” he says. “It’s like the mind is preparing itself for the next challenge.”