

BOWEN ISLAND UNDERCURRENT

## Torch will get a red-wave island welcome

By Martha Perkins - Bowen Island Undercurrent

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When the Olympic Torch makes its way through Bowen Island on February 10, it will be welcomed by a sea of red and white waves.

Thanks to the impassioned efforts of one woman and the generosity of local business owners, every student at Bowen Island Community School will be able to wear a pair of the iconic red mitts that day.

Cindy Brown's only regret is that she ran out of time to get a pair of mitts for every child and student on the island.

"This is a once-in-a-lifetime thing for these kids," says Brown. Not only will the torch not be on Bowen for many years - decades? - to come, but it won't be this easy to get caught up in the Olympic spirit for a long, long time. "They'll be able to tell the story to their kids and hopefully they'll still have the mitts."

Brown's odyssey started out simply enough: she wanted to buy a pair of the popular mitts for herself and her children. The mitts are red with white maple leaf emblazoned on the palm and the Olympic rings stitched on the other side. They are sold only at the Bay.

"I went to Park Royal twice, couldn't get them, couldn't get them," Brown says. "I went to the Bay



It will be a sea of red-and-white waves when BICS students welcome the Olympic Torch to Bowen Island on February 10. Cindy Brown, back row at left, was able to raise enough money to buy the iconic mitts for every student at BICS.

Martha Perkins

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Text



downtown. No mitts. I told the manager that I was from Bowen Island and I can't keep coming back. She said, 'The only way you can get a pair of mitts for sure is to order a case.' Each case had 48 pairs. Oh gosh, 48."

She decided to go ahead with the order and put a notice on the Forum to sell the extra pairs, which are \$10 each. The case was divvied up in less than two days. Whoosh.

One of the women who called asked her if she'd heard of the Mitts for Kids. Vancouver resident Mary Ann Clark is trying to raise enough money to buy the mitts for every one of the 27,000 elementary school student in the Vancouver School Board. She two-thirds of the way to her goal.

Brown was now really inspired. She'd need to raise enough money to buy seven cases of mitts at \$480 a case.

But the clock was ticking. It turns out that she only had a few days to order the mitts. The deadline was Friday at five a few weeks ago. She wrote a letter to the municipality to see if it would make a donation, but the letter was received on the Thursday and council didn't meet until Monday, three days past the deadline.

She was able to get a private loan so she could buy two cases as her contribution and then, still dressed in her nightgown, on the Friday morning of deadline day she got on the phone.

She first called the Irly building centre. Owners Peter Schmidt and Joan Wood said they'd willingly buy two cases. That was four cases down, three to go. She called Wolfgang Duntz. "Put me down for one case," he quickly said. Two cases to go. Then she called Norma Dallas at Bowen Island Marina. "Put me down for one case," she said without hesitation. One case to go. Could she do it? She dialed the number of Eddie Weismiller of J & E Backhoe. "I told him the story and he said sure, put me down for a case."

It was 3:30 on Friday afternoon. She had commitments for her seven cases.

Now the pressure was on the donors, who had to call the Bay with their Visa numbers before the five o'clock deadline. Not surprisingly, the line was often busy but they all kept their eye on the goal and made it through before the cut-off time.

"It was great," says an incredibly proud and grateful Cindy Brown.

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