



2014 FFK Participants,
sponsors and volunteers



Silver Wheaton Catch &
Release team and FFK
Committee member,
Suzanne Stunder
releases a tournament
entry Chinook

THE WEST COAST FISHING CLUB'S FISHING FOR KIDS TOURNAMENT

Big Fish and Big Donations

STORY BY DON WELLS

For a few rambunctious moments off Langara Island's McPherson Point last August, you would have thought veteran NHL defense man Willie Mitchell had won a third Stanley Cup.

In truth, however, it was the former LA King and Vancouver Canucks' fishing partner, Bruce Langereis, who was the champion this time. Langereis had just won a tense overtime battle against a 42-pound Chinook salmon in the final hours of The West Coast Fishing Club's Fishing for Kids Tournament, held for the ninth consecutive year at The Clubhouse lodge. Confident the fish would ice the competition and secure a cheque for \$200,000 for Langereis, the tournament teammates celebrated in an audible manner along with veteran Clubhouse guide Jordie Stromquist, who reportedly delivered a punishing hip check to the downrigger in a desperate game-clinching swipe with the net. Once the magnificent fish had been officially measured and safely returned to the depths, the triumphant trio continued their celebration.

"I watched my partner skate around the ice twice hoisting the Stanley Cup, and the look on his face was magical," said Langereis. "I am sure he was thinking the same thing about the look on my face that day. After dragging thousands and thousands of herring through the water over these past nine years, karma was finally good to me."

Along with the \$200,000, Karma also netted Langereis the coveted FFK trophy, presented by West Coast Fishing Club co-owner Brian Legge at a post-tournament reception back at Vancouver International Airport's south terminal. While he will keep the trophy for a year, he returned the cheque as a donation to the Canucks Autism Network (CAN), which

has been the beneficiary of tournament proceeds since The West Coast Fishing Club teamed up with CAN and Vancouver Canucks co-owner Paulo Aquilini in 2009. Langereis's generous and classy gesture contributed significantly to the \$800,000 total raised for CAN at this year's tournament, bringing the all-time total amount raised to \$5.8 million since the inaugural event in 2005.

Mark Smith of Ruskin Construction, who took first prize in the coho pool with a 20-pound northern monster in the opening morning of the two-day derby followed suit, handing back a cheque for \$24,000. Runners-up also signed over their cheques, maintaining a tradition of winning contestants giving back their spoils of victory, and further securing the tournament's widely recognized reputation as BC's most prestigious and benevolent sport fishing competition.

"We always felt confident that we could offer an amazing tournament and a memorable experience for participants, but the overall success of Fishing for Kids has exceeded our expectations quite considerably," said Courtney Hatfield, Vice President of the Fishing For Kids, Tournament Director and Corporate Sales Di-

20 lb. Coho – Shawn
Crawford – WCFC Guide
, Mark Smith – Ruskin
Construction, Brian
Grange – WCFC



Trophy Presentation –
Brian Legge, President
WCFC, Bruce Langereis
2014 FFK Tournament
Winner, Fin



Ledcor Champion Family – Christopher Ure & Father Dave Ure.



rector for The West Coast Fishing Club. “The support of sponsors has been pleasantly overwhelming,” added Hatfield, in reference to presenting sponsor Macquarie and a litany of corporate partners that includes the Vancouver Canucks, The West Coast Fishing Club, Ledcor Group of Companies, Ruskin Construction, Delta Land Development Ltd., and Helijet.

As in previous years, the 2014 event was kicked off with a private reception at downtown Vancouver’s Rosewood Hotel Georgia. While Juno Award-winning re-

FOR THE ENSUING TWO DAYS OF COMPETITION, THE ACTION WAS SPOTTY ALONG GRAHAM ISLAND’S WELL-KNOWN TYEE HANGOUTS OFF GUNIA POINT AND BOULDER BAY, BUT CRAZILY ON FIRE AT TIMES ALONG THE EAST SIDE OF LANGARA ISLAND, INCLUDING MCPHERSON POINT, WHERE LANGEREIS CONNECTED WITH HIS DERBY WINNER OFF THE CLIP AT A DEPTH OF 120 FEET.

cordova artist Tom Cochrane performed some of his signature hits, including the chart-busting *Life Is a Highway*, contestants and sponsors sipped cocktails and snacked on delicate appetizers.

The following day began with an early check-in and breakfast at the airport, fol-

lowed by departure via chartered aircraft to Masset, and then helicopter shuttles to the friendly and luxurious confines of The Clubhouse, The West Coast Fishing Club’s flagship property overlooking Henslung Cove on beautiful and remote Langara Island.

After a buffet lunch and orientation, the field of 42 contestants set off for a fun day of fishing, which for most translates to scouting out the bite prior to the competition at all the usual hot spots within a region that consistently lives up to its

reputation of offering the world’s best salmon fishing. For the ensuing two days of competition, the action was spotty along Graham Island’s well-known Tyee hangouts off Gunia Point and Boulder Bay, but crazily on fire at

times along the east side of Langara Island, including McPherson Point, where Langereis connected with his derby winner off the clip at a depth of 120 feet.

In the evenings, contestants dined on exquisite gourmet meals and took part in games of chance and live auctions for pres-

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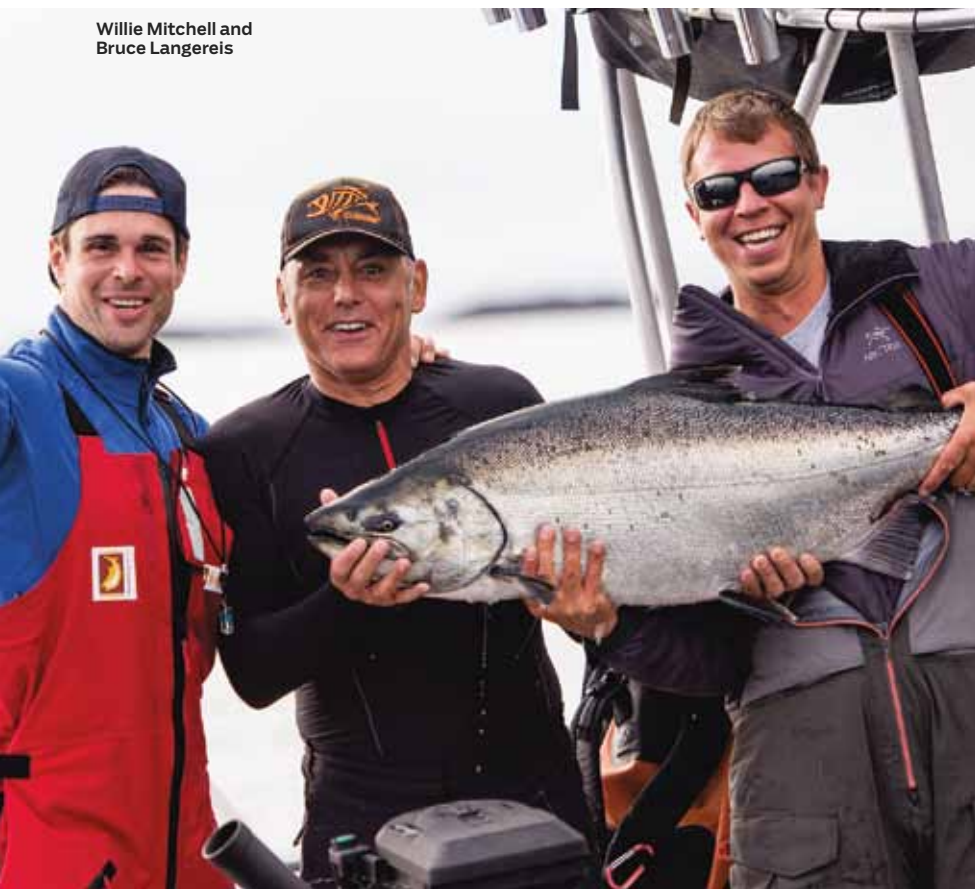
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Willie Mitchell and
Bruce Langereis



tigious merchandise, entertainment and travel experiences, all of which resulted in a good number of generous business and community leaders happily parting with additional funds to enrich the lives of families affected by autism throughout BC. And at some point over the course of the proceedings, all contestants took time for friendly chat with 15-year-old Christopher Ure, this year's Leducor Champion Child, and his father David, who shared words of gratitude and insight on the challenges facing families of autistic children.

And as in previous years, the Vancouver Canucks were well represented among participants, led by team co-owner and CAN founder Paolo Aquilini and his sons Matteo and Christian Aquilini; Canucks players Dan Hamhuis and Ryan Stanton; coach Willie Desjardins; assistant coach Glen Gulutzan; general manager Jim Benning and assistant GM and VP of Hockey Operations, Laurence Gilman. Although Mitchell was traded from Vancouver to the LA Kings in 2011, he teamed up with Langereis for the ninth consecutive year. Now a Florida Panther after winning Stanley Cups with the Kings in 2012 and 2014, Mitchell grew up on the saltwater bays and

rivers surrounding his home town of Port McNeil on northern Vancouver Island, and is a regular guest at The Clubhouse as well as its sister lodge, The Outpost, located on the sheltered waters of Port Louis on the northwest edge of Graham Island.

With the books now closed on the 2014 Fishing For Kids Tournament, and the proceeds turned over once again to the Canucks Autism Network, Hatfield and her organizing colleagues are already looking ahead to next year, and coming up with a power-play formula to make the 10th edition of the Fishing For Kids Tournament more extraordinary and profitable than ever. Whether that is even possible or not remains to be seen, but Langereis and Mitchell are among those who have already secured their spots for 2015.

And who can blame Langereis if he still has a bit of swagger in his step at next year's kick-off reception after karma was finally good to him off McPherson Point a few weeks back? "A wise man once said, 'he who follows is always behind,'" he laughs cheekily, in anticipation of his and Mitchell's promised return when the action heats up again August 23-26, 2015.

"Catch us if you can." ●



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