

BUSINESS IN VANCOUVER

LOCAL BUSINESS INTELLIGENCE

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Giving generously

Corporate philanthropy is a key part of business in B.C.

Kamal Mroke has seen, perhaps more clearly than many, the direct benefits of corporate philanthropy.

The Davie Street restaurateur travels to India for three weeks every year to help fund and oversee three-day medical camps where people receive sight-preserving cataract surgery, eye glasses or medications. He is among a large band of Vancouverites who go abroad to perform philanthropic work.

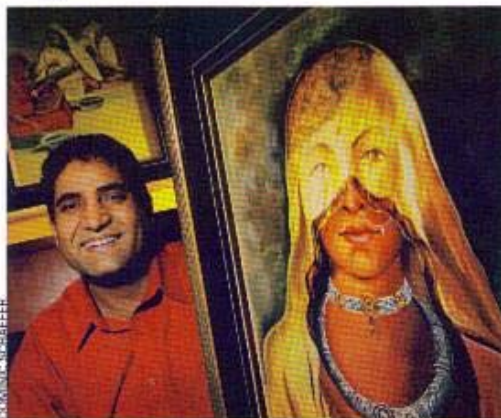
Mroke told writer Glen Korstrom that he finds going in person, rather than simply writing a cheque, helps him feel better inside and gain perspective on his busy life in Vancouver the rest of the year.

"You realize that when you spend three to four weeks in India helping poor people, it does a lot of good," he said.

Corporate giving certainly plays a significant and ever-growing role within B.C.'s business community. Mroke's story is among the many, many examples of philanthropy outlined in this year's special White Edition published by *Business in Vancouver* (enclosed with this week's newspaper).

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Often it is individual donors like Mroke that shell out the big donations. Indeed, with a little imagination, small businesses can have a big impact through well-placed giving, suggests **Peter Mitham** in his report for



DOMINIC SCHAEFER

Eye contact: India Bistro owner Kamal Mroke visits his birth region of the Punjab each February to finance and oversee eye surgeries for the poor

the White Edition.

BIV introduced the White Edition a year ago to focus attention on the connection between charitable organizations or non-profits and the business community. In this edition, we examine how companies are incorporating the principles of philanthropy within their overall business strategies, and how individual entrepreneurs are making their philanthropic marks.

The White Edition is the last of this year's four-part COLOUR series, following the Black (Profitability), Green (Sustainability) and Blue (Investment) instalments, in what *BIV* sees as the four primary colours of business.

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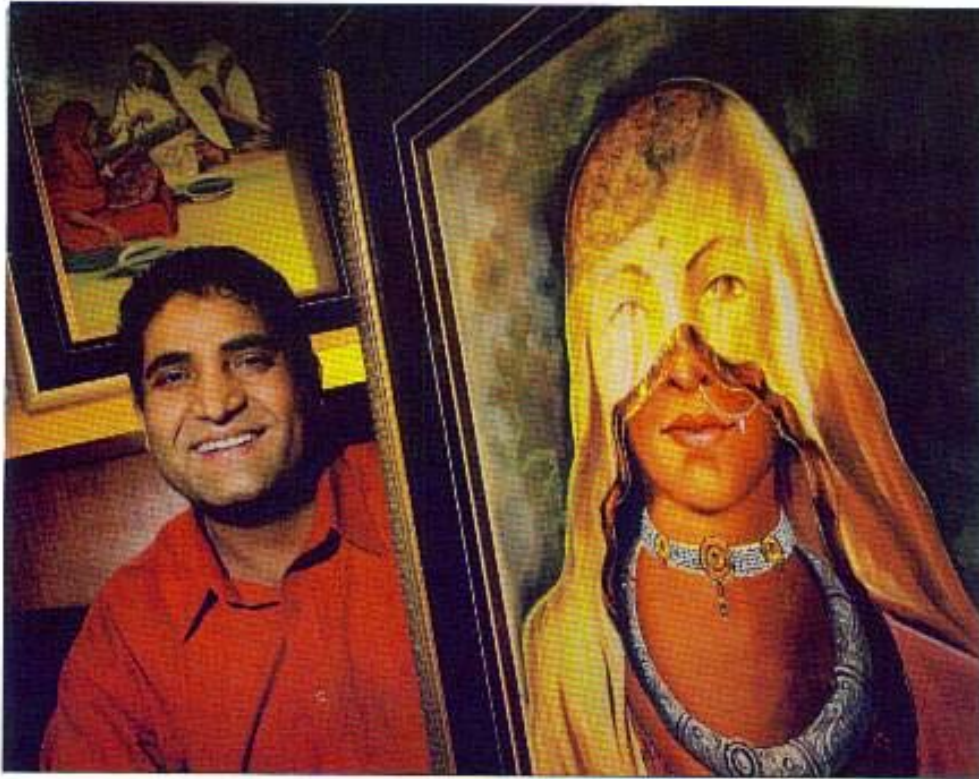
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“It’s the system. I won’t say corruption,
but Indian systems are different.

This way, I control my money” -India Bistro owner Kamal Mroke

on why he visits India in person to supervise his philanthropy helping the poor get eye surgery.



Eye contact: India Bistro owner Kamal Mroke visits his birth region of the Punjab each February to finance and oversee eye surgeries for the poor

Babicki is probably best known to many Vancouverites for being the guy who engineered the former **Westcoast Energy** building on West Georgia between Jervis and Broughton streets in the late 1960s.

That earthquake-resistant building is now known as the Qube condo development.

Babicki’s volunteer project was in conjunction with both **Industry Canada** and Vancouver-based **Builders Without Borders**.

That non-profit organization (www.builderswithoutborders.ca) has facilitated other relief projects in Turkey, India, Sri Lanka, Haiti and the Maldives.

Its president, **Neil Griggs**, co-founded the organization seven years ago and has seen approximately 25 people travel to these regions to volunteer on building projects.

Griggs helps find volunteers and con-

TOP PHOTO: DOMINIC SCHAEFER

nects them with projects but he also volunteers abroad himself. He has been to all of the countries where his organization has had projects except for the Maldives, he said.

Volunteers such as Vancouver engineer **Bob Culbert** have gone on more than one excursion.

Culbert helped organize the rebuilding of 135 child centres and medical clinics for **Save the Children Canada** following India’s 2001 earthquake. Earlier this year, he used three weeks of his vacation time to take part in a **World Vision** project to help rebuild Pakistan following an earthquake.

“They needed somebody with my sort of experience to help them with initial reconnaissance and planning of how to rebuild schools in remote locations,” he said. “It’s no vacation, let’s put it that way. But, I’m happy to do it.” ■