

## Revelstoke Mt. Beats Festival

When Heidi Bell came to Revelstoke 7 years ago from Calgary, she brought with her a passion for music, dancing and the cultural variety that inhabits our world. Little did she know that within a few years she would be one of the primary organizers of Revelstoke's biggest single musical event – the Mt. Beats Festival, hosted on summer solstice each year.

The festival was started a number of years ago by previous Woolsey Creek Café owner and past resident, Layne Seabrooke. Although Layne was inspired to keep the festival going, the first few years were difficult financially and subsequently the Revelstoke Arts Council absorbed the festival. Shortly thereafter, the Revelstoke Mountain Culture Society was formed as an independent entity charged with the specific task of putting on the festival.

Heidi worked for Layne at the Café and helped organize the occasional night of live music at that venue. Although Heidi was a young mother with little experience volunteering, it was a natural step to help out at Mt. Beats. This was in 2005, when local veteran organizer *extraordinaire* Carol Pallidino took over the reins. Carol recognized Heidi's enthusiasm and organizational capabilities, and took Heidi under her wing. "Carol was a great mentor to me," Heidi says, "Margaret (Pacaud) has also been a huge help."



**HEIDI BELL**

Now, as chairperson of the society, Heidi oversees the entire production of the Mt. Beats Festival. Directors Rob Wall, Tracey Edwards, Cindy Powell, and Carol Mayer are part of the production scene as well. This includes over a 1000 hours a year of volunteer commitment, including: looking for and booking the music, writing grant proposals, web-site design and updating, booking tents, stages, tables, chairs, production and sound equipment, fencing, port-a-potties, garbage facilities, licensing requirements, hiring vendors and the kid's craft coordinator, record checks on all people working with children – the list goes on. Grant Leiterman is hired as site manager, a paid position, but without fail works above and beyond the call of duty, putting in many extra hours particularly on festival weekend.

Heidi also liaises with other community groups, like the local Chamber of Commerce. The event is coupled with the Ultimate Frisbee tournament organized by Jeff Colvin. The Karate Club does security for the event and in turn, receives a generous donation to the club. This year, in order to raise awareness of the festival with the younger population in town, poster design became a contest at the high school.

The learning curve has been huge but something Heidi has embraced. "When Carol handed me the box (of organizational materials), and said goodbye, it was scary, but we're doing it!" She and other society members are learning skills to produce an event of this size and caliber. They are learning to make good decisions and work as a team. Each year the whole organizational process only gets better. All in all, the weekend event runs with about 40 volunteers and for the past few years, has been 'in the black'.

For Heidi, the Mt. Beats festival is an opportunity to add to the cultural flavour of our rural community – a chance to increase musical awareness by bringing in something new each year suitable for old and young. A chance to celebrate cultural diversity and, perhaps, tolerance as well.

Of course, the event needs volunteers – 4 hours gets you a weekend pass. Check it out at [www.mountainbeats.com](http://www.mountainbeats.com).

For more information on volunteering in Revelstoke, call the Community Centre at 837-9351.

*Submitted by Jill Zacharias, Photo courtesy of Cathy Burke, CFDC Volunteer Committee members*