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## How An Artist Helped Shape B.C.'s Wave Of Shark Fin Bans

A wave of bylaws banning the possession, trade, sale and distribution of shark fin products, has swept across the province of British Columbia this past month. North Vancouver joined Port Moody and Coquitlam in introducing a [ban on shark fin soup](#) in restaurants, a popular Asian dish that supports a vast industry that is decimating shark populations worldwide and threatens many species with extinction.

Interestingly, Artists for Conservation played an important role in this [policy change](#). Last year the mayor of the city of North Vancouver, Darrell Mussatto, attended the first annual Artists for Conservation Festival on Grouse Mountain. It was there where he first met legendary marine artist Dr. Guy Harvey, a leading advocate for the shark-fin ban, and founder of the [Guy Harvey Research Institute](#) (GHRI).

Dr. Harvey's documentary "This is Your Ocean: Sharks" premiered at the festival last November and Mayor Mussatto had the opportunity to speak to Dr. Harvey about his efforts to save sharks from extinction through his film. That encounter inspired him to support a shark fin ban in his city last month.

I was excited to also learn that research data from the GHRI was also used by the Chinese government, in its recent policy decision to leave shark fin soup off the menu in official state functions.

A key goal of the Artists for Conservation Festival is to bring important conservation topics and research information to the forefront of the public awareness, providing general public and policy makers alike with the inspiration to learn more about important conservation issues. The shark fin ban in North Vancouver is a perfect example of how art and artists can be powerful communicators and effect positive change.

This year will mark the second annual Artists for Conservation Festival at Grouse Mountain. Building on last year's momentum, there will be a discussion about shark fin harvesting, with an encore presentation of Dr. Harvey's film, along with many other pressing issues including the Northern Gateway pipeline in the Great Bear Rainforest.

There will also be an array of student and adult art workshops, lectures, and the world premiere of a short film about famed Kenyan wildlife painter and conservationist, Simon Combes and Africa's Great Rift Valley. Combes fought to conserve endangered species in Africa before tragically losing his life in 2004 to a charging Cape buffalo. His son Guy, an accomplished artist himself, and Simon's widow Kat, are successfully carrying on his legacy today in art and conservation. Both will be attending and participating in the festival this year.

[Artists for Conservation](#) is the world's leading artist group supporting the environment and it was founded right here in Vancouver. The non-for-profit group's membership now spans five continents and 27 countries and is comprised of 500 of the world's most gifted nature artists.

From Oct. 12 to 21, 40 of the world's leading conservationists and artists will attend the festival, including Robert Bateman, Pollyanna Pickering and Mark Hobson. They'll contribute 90 original paintings and sculptures worth over half a million dollars and proceeds will directly support environmental education and international conservation efforts.

Bateman has created an original oil painting of an endangered Amur Leopard exclusively for the event, valued at \$20,000. Proceeds from its sale will support AFC art and environmental education programming year-round.