George Clarkson Smyth

It is with sorrow that we announce the passing of George Smyth on December 18, 2024. George is survived by his beloved wife, Christiane Leclerc Smyth, his stepson, Guillaume Bérubé (Josée Smith), his first wife and friend Lynda M. Smyth, and siblings Judy (late Robert Chambers), Elizabeth (George Cornett), and David (Martha Kelly). He will be fondly remembered by niece Lynda Chambers-Wong (Dave Wong), nephews Adam Cornett (Alana Cornett) and Mark Cornett (Katie Olsson), great-nephews Simon, Elliot, Charlie, and George Cornett, and great-niece Ada Cornett. George loved his frequent visits with them and was proud of them all.

George also left Christiane's family grieving. Remembering him with affection are Hélène (Guy Couture), Bernard (Louise Emond), Luc (Marthe Harvey), and Julie (Yves Murray). He will never be forgotten by nieces Ann-Sophie Leclerc-Murray (Richard Morin), Stéphanie Leclerc-Murray (Pierre-Luc Tourangeau), Marianne Couture, and nephew Louis-Alexis Couture, great-nieces Victoria Morin and Laura Tourangeau, and great-nephew Hugo Morin. George enjoyed regular visits to Quebec City, where the Leclerc family gathered to celebrate Thanksgiving and each other's achievements and success.

Born to George Clarkson Smyth and Edith Willoughby in Vancouver, BC, George was raised in Burnaby. He attended the Burnaby South School from 1959 to1962. For the school year 1962-63, he transferred to Burnaby Central, where he could take an electronics class. George attended the University of British Columbia and graduated in 1967 with a Bachelor of Science in mathematics and physics.
Upon graduation, George began a distinguished career with Northern Telecom's research and development lab in Ottawa. In 1971, this lab a became subsidiary of Northern Telecom, Bell-Northern Research (BNR). In February 1996, all Nortel technology resources, including BNR, merged under the Nortel

name.

George successively held senior technical and management positions within BNR after which he led the design of the world’s first family of fully digital telecommunications switching systems. He also spearheaded the development of Nortel’s portfolio of fiber-optic-based communications products.

In February 1990, George was appointed President of BNR. In 1993, he assumed leadership of BNR’s new World Trade unit, which was mandated to research and develop products meeting the needs of global markets. He was President of Nortel Technology International, based in London, UK.

George was the chief architect behind the globalization of Nortel’s Research and Development efforts. During this period, Nortel labs or partnership labs were launched in Australia, Japan, China, India, Germany, the UK, France, Austria, Russia, Turkey, and Israel. This technology-sourcing activity was an integral and strategic part of Nortel’s globalization. George was the senior executive who presented Nortel’s technical views and directions to customers in markets around the world.

Following his long career in Research and Development, George moved to Atlanta, GA, in 1997 to head the first AT&T Account Management group. His technological expertise and leadership led to Nortel’s sales success at AT&T, its former competitor. Upon ending his illustrious career of 33 years, George retired to Ottawa in 2000.

Throughout his career, George remained close to the engineers, stopping by their desks to chat and going to the cafeteria to have lunch and mingle with them. He was inspired by the brilliant and talented BNR researchers, admired and respected by all. George inspired confidence, and people would enthusiastically follow his lead. George personified the soul and heart of BNR.

George has served as a member of the Ontario Premier's Council on Economic Renewal, Chairman of the advisory board of the Institute for Information Technology for the National Research Council of Canada, and as a member of the Board of Governors of Carleton University in Ottawa. George was an honorary professor of telecommunications at the Beijing University of Posts and Telecommunications.

The fate of Nortel washed out George's many career legacies, but not done, in retirement, George traded technology for Indigenous art. After moving to Victoria, BC, in 2003, George and his wife Christiane became interested in the local contemporary Coast Salish art which, at the time, was under-represented in the native art landscape of the Pacific Northwest Coast. Their interest quickly turned to passion as their collection grew. A large cedar carving titled Salish Weave by world-renowned Salish artist, Susan Point, became the signature piece and the name of the Smyths' sizeable private collection of contemporary Coast Salish art.

Through their work, the Smyths developed personal relationships with the artists and their families, relationships that George and Christiane cherished. They sought opportunities to raise awareness of the Salish art and the artists who practiced it, supporting exhibitions through financial contributions and lending works to cultural and educational institutions.

By 2011, George and Christiane had shifted their focus to education. Partnering with the University of Victoria (UVic), they sponsored a 10-year Visiting Artist Program in Anthropology and the Summer Institute in Indigenous Education. The success of Salish Art education at a higher level prompted the Smyths to develop a school program for kindergarten to grade 12 students.

Determined to build a legacy to ensure the succession of Salish Weave, George established the Salish Weave Fund at the

Victoria Foundation in 2014, and he and Christiane transformed their private collection into a distributed public collection. Today, works of the Salish Weave Collection are part of the collections of the National Gallery of Canada in Ottawa, the Museum of Anthropology at the University of British Columbia in Vancouver, Simon Fraser University in Burnaby, BC, and the University of Victoria, BC. To further ensure the Salish Weave succession, George endowed the Smyth Chair in Arts and Engagement at the University of Victoria and the Salish Weave Chair in Salish Art Practices at Simon Fraser University.

George's life will be celebrated in Victoria on March 15, 2025, at the University Club, in Ottawa on May 10, 2025, and in Quebec City on May 17, 2025. Further details of these celebrations of life will be provided later.

In George's memory, please consider donating to the 'Salish Weave Fund' held at the Victoria Foundation. Donations can be made by phoning 250.381.5532 or mail a cheque payable to the Victoria Foundation, at 200 – 703 Broughton Street, Victoria, BC, V8W 1E2. Please indicate 'Salish Weave Fund' on the memo line of the cheque or when calling in with credit card information. To donate online, please visit www.victoriafoundation.bc.ca under Make a Donation and indicate the name of the fund in the comment box.
Condolences may be offered to the family below
McCall Gardens

www.mccallgardens.com