**BACKGROUNDER**

**The Didi Society**

*…Empowering Women Globally, Educating Youth Locally*

**What Didi Does**

The Didi Society is a Victoria-based non-profit society working to empower women globally through fair trade, and educate youth locally on social justice issues.

**What *Didi* Means**

*Didi* means older, respected sister in the Hindi language. The society chose this word as a representation of the relationships it aspires to maintain with the cooperatives it partners with as well as the groups that it works with locally.

**Who Didi Partners With Globally**

Didi partners with three women’s cooperatives: two in India and one in Guatemala. The two Indian cooperatives are SHRAM (with stands for Self-help, Recycling, Altering and Manufacturing) and Shaki Kunj. The Guatemalan cooperative is Pixan House of Design - Asocicion de Mujeres del Altiplano.

“We work extremely closely with the women's groups that we partner with,” says Julia Norman, Didi’s executive director. “Not only do we purchase their products under a fair-trade model, but we work to offer them capacity-building opportunities. The relationships we build are extremely strong and take time to develop. The idea is that a strong, solid relationship will result in a strong, solid partnership. We want to work with our partners for the long term.”

Didi sells the coop products locally through markets like the Videa Fair Trade Fair and the Salt Spring Island Market. It also sells through retail outlets like Niagara Grocery, Global Village Store, Moksana Yoga, Bikram Westshore Yoga, Broken Paddle Coffee House and Paws on Cook.

**Who Didi Partners With Locally**

Since Didi was established in 2011 it has partnered with dozens of Victoria-area businesses, groups and organizations. Besides its most recent partnership with The Belfry Theatre on the Create Local: Tackle Global art exhibition and sale, other partners include: Camosun College, Pearson College UWC, Victoria Yoga Collective, Moksana Yoga, Fernwood Yoga Den, One Yoga Victoria, Bikram Westshore Yoga, Community Micro-Lending, Fortis BC, Saint Margaret’s School, Ecole Victor Brodeur, and George Jay Elementary School.

**What We Do Locally**

*Social Justice Youth Conference:*

Educating youth is one of the most valued objectives of The Didi Society. A holistic and permanent change at the global level needs to include local awareness about the global impact our local decisions have. The most effective way to bring about change locally is through youth. We held our fourth annual conference this February at Central Middle School for youth in grades 7 – 12.

*Social justice Youth Leadership Training Program:*

The Didi Society hosts a six-month program for youth ages 16-25 that combines online theoretical studies, in-session learning from local, experienced facilitators, and on-the-ground experiential learning and practice in the community.

Youth attend weekly evening sessions for the first two months and are then partnered with a mentor to practice their facilitation skills in classrooms and community groups arranged by The Didi Society. As well, they facilitate the annual Social Justice Youth Conference in February.

*Social Justice Workshops*

Our facilitators also provide four different workshops: gender equality, fair trade, environmental sustainability, and privilege and discrimination. We have provided workshops for schools, community groups and youth groups.

*Summer Social Justice Short Course*

The Didi Society offers a Social Justice Short Course for teenagers between the ages of 11 and 16. This is a great opportunity for teenagers interested in engaging in topics of social justice with others their age. During the four, full days youth delve into and engage with the topics of gender equality, sustainable development, fair trade, and privilege and discrimination.

Aside from activities that deepen their knowledge, the teens come to understand the importance of leadership in the community, and are challenged to become the next Social Justice Youth Leaders.

*Global-to-Local Program*

Every September we undertake a back-to-school program where we purchase fairly traded backpacks and pencil cases from our cooperative partners in India and Guatemala. We then fill the backpacks and pencil cases with school supplies and distribute them to children in need right here in Victoria.

Fortis BC has been our generous sponsor for three years now, providing more than 150 students with fairly traded pencil cases and backpacks filled with school supplies.

**Learn More:**

The Didi Society online: [www.thedidisociety.org](http://www.thedidisociety.org)

The Didi Society on Facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/thedidisociety/?fref=nf>

The Didi Society on Twitter: @TheDidiSociety

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