



A Chat with David Suzuki

Vancouver's world-renowned geneticist, environmentalist, author and broadcaster—and proud grandfather—shares his thoughts on the future **BY SHERI RADFORD**

"Hello, this is David Suzuki."

When the voice comes down the phone line, it's as familiar as your grandpa's. It is, after all, a voice Canadians have been hearing regularly since Suzuki's first radio show, *Quirks and Quarks*, hit the airwaves in 1974. His many decades hosting the television show *The Nature of Things* on the CBC have earned him an unmatched level of recognition and loyalty. In fact, *Reader's Digest* recently named him Canada's Most-Trusted Influencer of 2015.

At age 79, Suzuki considers himself an elder, and he finds himself contemplating the responsibilities that role brings. In his new book, *Letters to My Grandchildren*, he reflects on his life and writes frankly about difficult topics such as racism, aging and death. He finishes with six chapters—each filled with advice and love—that address his six grandkids directly.

Throughout his career, Suzuki has repeatedly sounded the alarm about climate change. How does he continue to have hope? "I'm enough of a scientist to see where all of the curves are going, in terms of population, the amount of pollution, the rainforests, the state of the ocean," he says. "But I always say you have to have hope." He continues, "Nature's got a lot of things up her sleeve yet, but we have to give her a chance." To help, he implores us all to make little changes that ultimately add up to something bigger: exercise more, buy less,

get out into nature more and "be thoughtful about the way that you live."

Suzuki acknowledges that Vancouverites have a natural advantage when it comes to caring about the environment. "We can be outside 12 months a year," he says. "And we still have vast tracks of wilderness within easy reach." He's a huge fan of Vancouver's initiatives, such as committing to being the greenest city in the world by 2020 and to using only green energy within 20 years,

and he loves all the bike lanes:

"I think Vancouver is doing a fantastic job on that. I'm very, very proud of this city."

As a regular traveller, Suzuki admits that his efforts to reduce, reuse and recycle can't match his huge carbon footprint. To compensate, he purchases carbon offsets that have been certified as Gold Standard by the United

Nations, and he urges other frequent fliers to do the same.

What's next for the tireless scientist? Suzuki says his wife has ordered him to keep working. "She said you believe in what you're doing, you think it's important, and you enjoy doing it. So stop talking about retirement." Then he mentions his grandchildren: "They're like a little shot of adrenaline that makes me more committed to speaking out about the environment. For their sake."

Find Letters to My Grandchildren (\$24.95; Greystone Books) at local bookstores (page 31). 

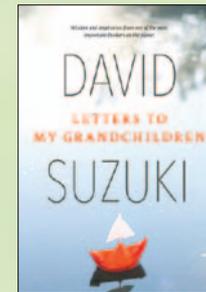


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