



westcoast dad & mom

Smiley Nesbitt & Jen MacCormack

Dynamic Duo

by Kelly S. Thompson | photos by Anastasia Chomlack www.anastasiaphotography.ca

Those of us living in the Lower Mainland put up with the steep cost of living in favour of access to amazing shops, beautiful views, and incredible weather. For Jen MacCormack and her husband, Smiley Nesbitt, there is no place they would rather do business, raise their family and live a thrilling west coast life; Jen as owner of the baby store, Hip Baby, and Smiley as an agent with Macdonald reality, selling properties from his company, LiveInVancity.com, where buyers can find homes in East Van, Squamish and Whistler. And when they aren't running their successful businesses, the couple is busy raising five-year-old Charley Mae, their outdoor-loving daughter. If there was ever a Lower Mainland powerhouse, it's the MacCormack-Nesbitt family.

Although she travelled the world, Jen is a Vancouver native and couldn't imagine being elsewhere. "I grew up in Vancouver and can't seem to live without the mountains and ocean," she said. "I love that you can drop your child off at school, spin a few laps on Cypress Mountain and then be working by noon." But her early career as a graphic designer brought her to Whistler where she met Smiley, then a professional skier. The pair remained friends for more than a decade before they started dating. "We shared a love of the mountains, and of the dance floor," Jen said. Eventually, with his marketing background, Smiley became a real estate agent, while Jen explored her passion for graphic design through a children's clothing business. Change was afoot in their little family.

Jen opened Hip Baby in 2009 when she was designing her line of organic children's clothing, Fig. So when a business broker approached her with the Hip Baby business, she saw the perfect opportunity to promote Fig and other positive brands that spoke to environmental consciousness. "It seemed like a no-brainer to vertically integrate our brand into a store," she said. Fig was eventually put aside to focus on Hip Baby, especially when Jen became pregnant shortly after opening. Little Charley came into the world and suddenly the couple had to figure out how to divide their time between a child, two businesses and each other. They took a modern approach, with both parents initially run off their feet with their newborn. Since Hip Baby was picking up in business, they decided it was best if Smiley became a stay-at-home dad until their daughter began school. "We wanted our daughter to spend as much quality time with us as she could before she started school," said Jen. "It was a small sacrifice with huge rewards."

From there, Jen dedicated herself fully to Hip Baby. Having grown up in the 70s, raised by whom she describes as "fairly hippy parents," Jen was taught about respecting her environment and appreciating all that Mother Nature offered. This educational background is what inspired her dedication to a sustainable baby product store. "With this many people on the planet we have to learn to be as sustainable as possible," Jen said. "That is why we [Hip Baby] heavily promote cloth diapering, wooden toys that are built to last, and recycled and



"We wanted our daughter to spend as much quality time with us as she could before she started school. It was a small sacrifice with huge rewards."

up-cycled products. "True to form, her shop is also a promoter of local products and options for all price ranges. "I try to have something for everyone," she said. When it comes to her Hip Baby legacy, Jen proudly acknowledges that it's her products and informed staff who keep the customers returning. "It is important to me that the products I sell will last and be safe, and my customers appreciate that," she said. Hip Baby also offers an online shop and a thriving gift registry.

Charley is now in kindergarten, and Smiley is back at work in his real estate business, which he sees as blending his love for marketing with the ability to sell property in an area he cherishes, hoping to give others a little slice of the haven of the Lower Mainland. "Vancity has some amazing restaurants and there is a plethora of microbreweries that I've been known to frequent from time to time," Smiley said. "You can ride your bike year-round, the food is amazing and you're surrounded by a lot of like-minded people who appreciate the geography just as much."

With Hip Baby successful and LivingInVancity.com giving other families a taste of the good life, there is a semblance of calm in the MacCormack-Nesbitt house. Despite hectic schedules, both Jen and Smiley ensure they take time for family, and owning their own businesses allows them to not only make time, but to appreciate that family togetherness. "It is very flexible and allows me to be in Charley's life a lot," said Smiley. "I think it is invaluable for both of us and has allowed me to be a pretty good dad."

If there was ever a couple that makes the most of living in such a great part of the world, it's Jen and Smiley. When they aren't managing their businesses, they're busily pursuing their other passions. An avid skier, Smiley enjoys tearing up the powder on his own terms, but as Charley gets older, both he and Jen enjoy family days on the hill. Smiley also plays in the Vancouver Ultimate League, a great opportunity to make new friends and spend time outdoors.

For quiet couple time, Jen and Smiley maintain their love by connecting in the same way they did when they first met. "Jen and I met dancing, and a night out shaking it is still just as much fun," said Smiley. They also spend a lot of time with family and friends, out exploring the water, hiking across mountains, and biking local roads. "We love seeing live music, eating delicious food and drinking good wine with our friends and family," said Jen. The family has an off-the-grid cabin in the Gulf Islands, but when they aren't in their cabin or exploring the shores of the Lower Mainland, the couple takes to Whistler, Mount Baker and more. "All of my family and friends are close by, and an endless supply of great restaurants and British Columbian wine," Jen said.

What is clear is that Smiley and Jen are intent on living life to the fullest and showing their daughter the world so that she may explore and grow as a person. "Experience as much as you can," said Smiley. "The more things my little girl can experience, the better a human being she can become, and Jen and I are her gateway to that." The family tries to have dinner together daily, and value that their jobs are flexible enough to allow them to maximize family time. With an eye towards the future, Jen is aiming to resurrect her baby clothing line, Fig, which was placed on the backburner after the birth of Charley, and Smiley continues to sell the west coast life to other families looking to get a piece of the property ladder.

Smiley and Jen have managed to create an example of the life they hope for their daughter; one that includes success, love, and family. "We want Charley to have the freedoms that allow her to be her most creative self, combined with respect of both others and her environment," said Jen. They hope that both their personal home life and their business practices show Charley how to be responsible and care for her environment, so that others can enjoy the Lower Mainland, like her family does, for generations to come. ★