



## Obama's era: Return to the Yaletown pub

By Tom Sandborn November 5, 2008 02:27 pm

At 8:00 p.m. November 4, as CNN announced that Barack Obama would be the next President of the United States, the chill, rain-slick dark on Vancouver's Mainland Street rang like a huge iron bell.

Cheers and a triumphant chant of "O BAM A, O BAM A" boiled out of the Yaletown Brew Pub, where Vancouver's Democrats Abroad and Canadians for Obama were hosting a public election party. Inside, a jubilant Sean Lauer, chairman of the Vancouver chapter of Democrats Abroad, yelled to the Tyee reporter who had interviewed him earlier in the evening: "We did it!"

Just past Lauer, Vancouver realtor Darius Martinez, born in New Mexico, watched CNN coverage of McCain's surprisingly gracious and almost eloquent concession speech and whooped when the camera turned to his Republican running mate.

"Let's hear it for Sarah Palin!" he laughed. "She gave Obama a lot of votes."

Martinez told the Tyee that he had relatives who went to church with Obama in Chicago.

"Now, I wanted to know if the man was for real, so I called my cousins. They told me Barak is the real deal, no bullshit. Tonight is a night of inspiration and responsibility for black people in America, and it's about time. I've lived all over America and I never thought it would come to this. Sometimes you pick your time, and sometimes the time picks you. Tonight the time picked him."

NPA mayoral hopeful Peter Ladner was in the crowd, and excited about what the Obama win meant.

"This is a historic moment. It represents the engagement of so many who had given up hope. It has to be good for politics in general. There is going to be an injection of new energy."

(Ladner's executive assistant, Mike Meneer, works with Vancouver Democrats Abroad as a volunteer with their media team.)

If Sean Lauer was one of the happiest men at the Yaletown, his opposite number in Vancouver Canadians for Obama, 28-year-old addictions researcher Ajay Puri, was a good match. On a crutch from a recent bicycle accident, Puri still danced through the crowd exchanging hugs, high fives and heartfelt thank-you's with every third person he passed.

Puri is one of the founders of the Vancouver Canadians for Obama group, which self-organized using Facebook and sent volunteers south to help organize Obama support in a number of American states. More recently, the local group has been making long distance calls to potential Obama voters across America to help get out the vote.

He told the Tyee that the Vancouver Facebook group for Canadians for Obama has topped 900 members and is still growing. He doesn't expect his group to disband now that the election is over, musing about an ongoing

political role that might include continued volunteer support for Obama in the US and a possible role in Canadian politics.

His candidate for the Canadian Obama?

“I'm inspired by Gregor Robertson.”

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