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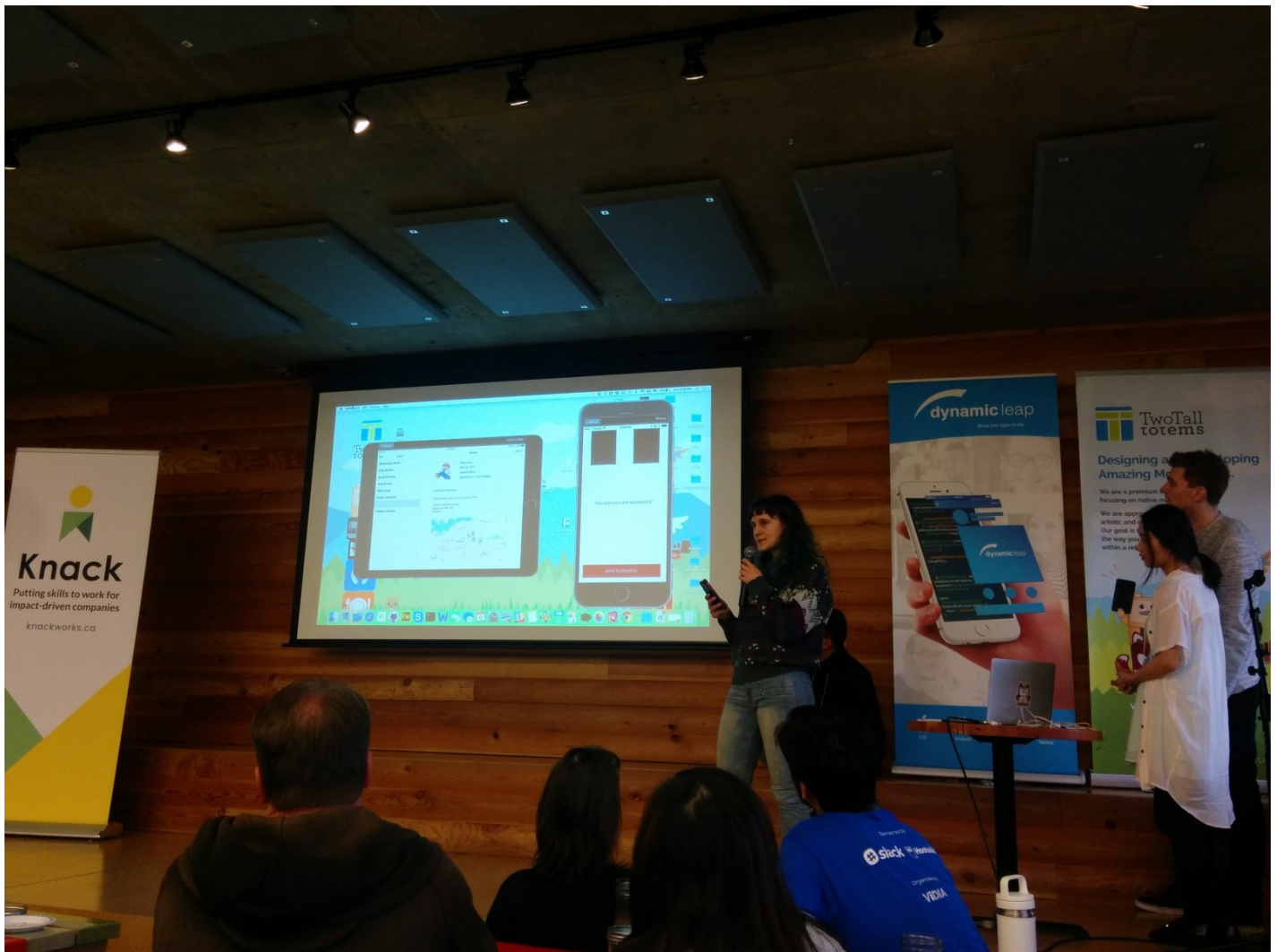
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Vancouver programmers hack their way to social good

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Would you spend a warm spring weekend locked up with a computer for 28 consecutive hours? That's just what a group of socially minded Metro Vancouver programmers did.

90 coders holed up in the Vancouver head office of Hootsuite this weekend to produce a suite of free, open source apps for local non profits as a part of the first "Hackathon for Social Good." And they paid to do it.

"This is a celebration of two communities getting together. It's the community of technologies and the non profits that are here to help out and make our society better. And we're really trying to marry that together and see if we can find some solutions that will help everyone that's doing good in Vancouver," says organizer Chris Hobbs, president Vancouver mobile firm Two Tall Totems.

Groups ranging from the Downtown Eastside's [Potluck society](#), to the [food bank](#), to the [Ending Violence Association of B.C.](#) came up with app concepts that could help them with their missions; programmers geared up to try and make them reality.

Hobbs says the event got big backing from the local tech industry, including big local names like Hootsuite and Slack, along with major players like Microsoft.

"The volunteers, the mentors, the community... I was shocked how many people were so keen to be part of this."

Battling for good

Teams building the apps were battling it out for a \$1,250 prize.

But many, like Francisco Diaz with winning team Axiom Zen, the prize wasn't really a factor.

"It's a really good hackathon. Like, it's not like some hackathons where you just go for the money. It's really like a powerful event, you're really trying to do some good in

the community.”

His team built a “panic button” for the Ending Violence Association of B.C., which could be used by people dealing with abusive relationships or walking alone late at night.

Users push the “help” button or just discreetly knock on the phone and it contacts authorities, tracks location location and starts shooting photos.

Log In

To use Facebook's social plugins, you must switch from using Facebook as Ending Violence Association of British Columbia to using Facebook as Eva Smith.

Adam Yin helped create an app Knack, a Downtown Eastside organization looking to connect homeless people with skills training, as well as possible employers.

“Individuals can attend workshops and then be awarded badges according to the skills they learn, and then employers by viewing the profiles of these users would then be able to accept applications from [them.]”

Intense weekend

But who would want to spend such a balmy spring-like weekend indoors?

Hobbs says plenty of people – the event sold out nearly immediately.

Programmer Anya McGee says the high-pressure environment has its own special appeal.

“It sounds kind of crazy, because who would want to give up their whole weekend and just sit in a room and work on your computer? But I procrastinate a lot so having that really tight deadline helps me actually get a whole bunch of things done. You get that sort of satisfaction from being able to work on a project from start to finish.”

For others, like Sebastian Valdivia, it’s social.

“Hackathons are really an experience to meet people, and it’s also really cool to see what other people are making.”

Gauging by the interest in the event Hobbs says he’d like to do it again next year, and says he hopes to see the idea spread to other cities as well.

He adds the apps produced this weekend are all open source. Non profits interested in them can connect with [VanHacks](#).

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