



SYNCHRONICITY ON ICE



Pair skaters Jessie Sun and Victor Lum look to take next step

13

Photo by Syo Dilan Hirai

Connaught skaters Jessie Sun and Victor Lum became the provincial Novice pair skating champions in 2020. Now, they are setting their sights on national success.

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CITY BRIEFS



City to oversee pest control

An agreement between the city and Vancouver Coastal Health (VCH) will come to an end on March 30. According to a city staff report, services provided by VCH include "mosquito control, rodent management and bylaw enforcement activities relating to noise, smoking and general health." VCH is re-allocating its resources away from non-core services during the COVID-19 pandemic, so the city will assume responsibility for the services as of March 31.

Energy-efficient houses

Council voted to approve a program that will incentivize people to build energy-efficient "passive houses" through outreach, engagement, education and a density bonus to help offset the higher cost of the design.

Active transportation

The city's active transportation committee plans to update its cycling network plan and expand bike paths this year. The committee also supports offering cycling education courses to all Grade 6 and 7 students, as well as similar courses for adults pending public health protocols.

School zone safety

The traffic safety advisory committee is focusing on safety in school zones in 2021, including new crosswalks and improving parking and circulation layout.

Circular economy

The city's procurement policies will be revised to include criteria to support a circular economy—where purchased items are able to be used longer, reused, or dematerialized—to increase environmental sustainability.

No cash transactions

The city plans to extend its non-acceptance of cash transactions at city hall until March 31, 2022, pending approval at this week's finance committee meeting.



Photo courtesy City of Richmond

Provide your feedback on the design of the new Railway Bike Park through March 28.

Feedback wanted on Railway bike park

Planning for Richmond's Railway Bike Park is underway and the public is encouraged to participate.

Through March 28, the city will be actively seeking input to ensure this bike park offers an exhilarating experience for entry- and novice-level riders.

"Located at the junction of Railway and Granville avenues immediately adjacent to the Railway Greenway, this new bike park will provide yet another destination along the already popular greenway," said Mayor Malcolm Brodie.

"Where parents are looking to keep kids busy with outdoor activities, and youth may want to try something new, the construction of this unique recreational park could not come sooner.

• Attend an online virtual open house on March 10 to talk with parks planning staff and representatives from Hoots Ltd., the design and construction consultant team hired by the city to build the bike park. To request a link to this virtual open house, please email parks@richmond.ca by March 8.

Funds to be used for RCMP upgrades

By HANNAH SCOTT
Local Journalism Initiative reporter

Gaming revenue, left over from previous years, will be used to fund additional capital projects around the city.

Due to the reduced funding this year, several projects that would otherwise have been recommended were instead classified by city staff as "recommended but insufficient funding." These include an \$890,000 upgrade to the RCMP facility on No. 5 Road, where the emergency power system has failed a number of times in recent years due to hydro power failures.

"It seems to be that if the power goes out for our

community safety building the RCMP are possibly without proper resources for a few hours at a time, so it seems to me that this is something that really needs to happen, not just kind of needs to happen," said Coun. Alexa Loo.

Additionally, \$500,000 has been earmarked for replacing the Hamilton Community Centre's HVAC system, and the same amount for a city-wide sidewalk and street light replacement program.

The city has just over \$1.9 million remaining in 2020 gaming funds, but does not anticipate any additional funds this year due to the temporary closure of River Rock Casino during the COVID-19 pandemic.

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'Oyester' grateful to fill library chair

By DON FENNELL

 @rmdsentinel

Giving back is, quite simply, in Jordan Oye's DNA.

Growing up in a family that placed a high priority on extending a helping hand wherever possible, Oye and his siblings are now perpetuating on the trait as adults.

"We watched both my parents give back to the community, school and sports systems in Richmond in countless ways," he says. "(Giving back) has afforded all of us many amazing opportunities, and I think all of my family would agree that we want to provide those same opportunities for future generations so they can enjoy the same."

Oye is honoured to have been afforded that opportunity as the newly-elected chair of the Richmond Library Board. But he was even more surprised to be nominated just to serve on the board. Joining in 2016, he was looking to extend his reach beyond coaching hockey.

"As I researched opportunities the library came up as potentially a good fit," he explains. "I spent a lot of my youth at the Steveston library, and the core values of the library—diversity, inclusion, engagement, and lifelong learning—are certainly values I believe in as well. It was naturally a good fit. I am very grateful for the opportunity and fortunate to be working with an amazing and diverse board, with the support of a very talented CEO and staff."

Oye has a number of goals he'd like to see realized in his new capacity, but the immediate priority is helping the organization navigate the uncertainties of COVID-19 and the impacts it has and will have moving forward. He also wants to see the goals and priorities of the 2019-2021 Strategic Plan completed, while also starting to work on the next set of goals for the library. Advocating for and strengthening relationships with municipal and provincial governments to ensure continued support for the library is crucial. And providing the governance leadership that supports staff in continuing to provide welcoming, foundational and innovative library services is also top of mind.

"Our public library is at the heart of this vibrant community," he says. "I believe the community sees us as a welcoming and safe place for everyone, which is critical to (our) health and well-being. We all benefit from an educated, well-informed society, and libraries help facilitate that."

Oye is particularly proud of the steadfast de-



Photo courtesy Richmond Public Library
Jordan Oye was recently elected chair of the Richmond Public Library's board of directors.

termination of its staff to ensure the library remains accessible during the public health crisis.

"I am amazed at how quickly the team mobilized to continue to provide services to the public, through virtual programs, the introduction of eServices card to access digital resources, investment in eBooks and other digital collections, delivery and phone services for seniors, and residents experiencing isolation," he says. "I am also quite proud of our recent move to a fine free library. Late fines can present a significant barrier to accessing the library, particularly for those individuals who are vulnerable and those with low or fixed income. We want everyone in our community to have equitable access to resources that support lifelong learning, and this demonstrates our commitment to everyone in

I spent a lot of my youth at the Steveston library, and the core values of the library—diversity, inclusion, engagement, and lifelong learning—are certainly values I believe in.

-Jordan Oye

our community."

Spending the bulk of his day as manager of products and services for Telus, Oye may also be remembered for his prowess at hockey.

A former Richmond Sockeye, where he was bestowed with the nickname "Oyester," in part a play of his surname and partly for his proficiency as a scorer, he suited up for his hometown team during one of the team's most decorated periods in the early 2000s when the club won a pair of provincial and national junior championships.

The 2010 Richmond Sports Awards' post-secondary male athlete of the year, Oye was a hard worker who continually set out to improve on his previous effort. After graduating from the Sockeyes in 2005, he joined a team in Neepawa, Manitoba for 10 games where he averaged a point a game. The following season he found his way to the Brampton Capitals of the Ontario Provincial Junior Hockey League where he again averaged more than a point per game in both the regular season and playoffs.

In the fall of 2007, Oye played the first of four seasons at Fredonia State University in western New York. While eventually graduating as a double major in business and economics, his point totals on the ice also steadily increased. By his senior season of 2010-11 he amassed 40 points in 27 games. His efforts to successfully marry academic and athletic excellence earned him the Chancellor's Award and first-team and All-American honours by the American Hockey Coaches Association.

Oye went on to play one season of pro hockey in the Southern league, scoring 29 points in 46 games for Louisiana IceGators in 2011-12.

"Time certainly has flown by," he says. "The withdrawal was certainly difficult to begin with. I was hard to come to terms with not being at the rink every day, like I had been for almost my entire life, and to figure out what the next chapter of my life was going to look like."

Oye was also fortunate enough to have received some accolades post-career, just last month being named to the his State University of New York Athletic Conference All-Decade Team. He was also recently inducted into Fredonia's sports hall of fame, providing him with an opportunity to travel back to his alma mater, and reminisce with former teammates and coaches.

"It's brought about a nice bit of closure to my hockey career, and reminded me of how fortunate I have been to be afforded many amazing opportunities," he says.

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Six sites slated for public murals

By HANNAH SCOTT

Local Journalism Initiative reporter

City councillors discussed the merits of new public murals at last week's parks, recreation and cultural services committee meeting.

Six mural projects were recommended through the city's public art community mural program. The budget of the program is \$30,000, and this year's projects are also being funded by other sources. The proposed projects are as follows:

- Lehigh Hanson, a construction manufacturer on Mitchell Island, is anticipated to cost \$12,000, of which \$6,000 will come from the mural program and \$6,000 from a grant that supports the city's environmental stewardship work on Mitchell Island)
- McMath secondary is anticipated to cost \$17,000 of which \$8,000 will come from the mural program funding and \$9,000 from the school.
- Thompson elementary is anticipated to cost \$6,200 of which \$6,000 will come from the mural program funding and \$200 from the school.
- Homma elementary is anticipated to cost



Photo courtesy City of Richmond

Six sites across Richmond are being recommended for new public murals, like this one on the Richmond Cultural Centre by Richard Tetrault and Jerry Whitehead.

\$10,000 of which \$5,000 will come from the mural program funding and \$5,000 from the school.

- Westwind elementary is anticipated to cost \$5,000 all from the mural program funding.
- Gateway Theatre is anticipated to cost \$20,000 all funded by the theatre itself. This project was highly rated but due to its costs was only deemed feasible after Gateway said they could finance the

mural with funds from a show cancelled due to the pandemic.

Several Richmond artists are being recommended to work on these projects: Fiona Tang at Thompson, Atheana Picha at Homma and Dawn Lo at Westwind (in collaboration with a second artist).

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Gilbert Road dike improvements estimated at \$500,000

By HANNAH SCOTT

Local Journalism Initiative reporter

City staff are recommending \$500,000 be allocated to repairs and debris removal along the south dike at Gilbert Road.

Funding will come from the city's drainage improvement reserve fund, staff said in a report. Councillors were unanimously in favour at last week's city council meeting.

A king tide event on Jan. 13 caused damage to the rip-rap—rocks placed along the shoreline for protection—as well as the accumulation of a large number of logs and other wood debris. The repair work includes reinstatement of rip-rap along a 300 metre stretch as well as debris removal along a 750 metre stretch.

Staff described the work as urgent in their report, and recommended it begin immediately.

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Second modular housing project considered

By HANNAH SCOTT

Local Journalism Initiative reporter

Another temporary modular housing project may soon be built in Richmond.

BC Housing has applied for a three-year permit for properties on Smith Street and Bridgeport Road. The intention is to construct a three-storey supportive housing building with 40 studio units.

"I'm excited to see another modular housing (project) come in," said Coun. Carol Day.

The city's director of development Wayne Craig said a memorandum of understanding will be developed between the non-profit operator, the

construction company and BC Housing to ensure the security of the space. The existing modular housing project on Elmbridge Way will serve as a model for the new proposed project.

"Elmbridge was very successful and it's continuing to be successful," said Coun. Bill McNulty. "I think we need to tell people about the successes that we have. This modular housing is working and this is our second one, and we should continue maybe to do a third one somewhere down the road."

If approved by council, the building's completion and occupancy is targeted for early next year. The issue will be discussed at a March 15 public hearing.

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RICHMOND SENTINEL
OUR COMMUNITY NEWS

Published by
RICHMOND SENTINEL NEWS INC.
200-3071 No. 5 Road,
Richmond, B.C., V6X 2T4

Advertising & Sponsorship
marketing@richmondsentinel.ca
778-325-1297

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Brodie optimistic in annual address

By HANNAH SCOTT

Local Journalism Initiative reporter

In his annual address last week, Mayor Malcolm Brodie reflected on the challenges of 2020 and looked ahead with optimism.

A year ago, Richmond had a promising future and was celebrating a number of business successes, as well as recognizing the 10th anniversary of the 2010 Olympic Winter Games. But COVID-19 was a "looming dark cloud" at that time.

"Because so many in Richmond remembered SARS, as early as Lunar New Year in January more people began to avoid large crowds and voluntarily wore face masks," said Brodie.

During that time, city council made unprecedented decisions including declaring an emergency, closing city hall, and reducing last year's property tax increase by more than two per cent. Beloved events including the Steveston Salmon Festival had to be cancelled or move online. But people still wanted to find ways to connect.

"The #RichmondHasHeart campaign built community spirit and brought people together with community-based stories of encouragement," said Brodie.

Despite the challenges of the year, some positive things happened: Richmond is now home to six film studios, Brodie said, and has approved nearly 80 film permits. The city will soon build a new animal shelter. Upgrades took place on the recycling depot, and other facilities including the Steveston Community Centre and lawn bowling facility will soon be replaced. Construction is scheduled for the new Capstan Canada Line station, a new park on Lansdowne Road,



Photo screen grab from live streamed event
Mayor Malcolm Brodie delivered his annual address virtually this year.

and the Pathways Clubhouse 80-unit affordable housing building.

Brodie also pointed to some individual companies' successful pivots: Layfield Group began making N95 masks, Platinum Pro-Claim made sure protective equipment got to healthcare workers, and Lulu Island Winery manufactured hand sanitizer when it was in need.

"Though many challenges remain, we hope that the worst of the pandemic-driven destruction is in our past," said Brodie.

He said he looks forward to the resolution of the Massey Tunnel replacement, the finalization of the ban on single-use plastics and the construction of the outdated hospital facility. And, ultimately, he hopes to be able to attend

events again.

"Prior to the pandemic we were going to all the events, or as many as we could fit in. There's a social aspect to that as well," he said. "I think that social aspect, and trying to get things back to normal, at this point seems so magical."

He recognized the leadership of city council, as well as the management of staff and support of Richmond's volunteers, businesses and residents. And he expressed hope that next year will be a much different situation in Richmond and beyond.

"This year, the subtext (of the annual address) was 'if it doesn't kill you it'll make you strong.' Looking forward to next year, I hope it will be—at minimum—we see the light at the end of the tunnel.' We will look ahead and say, it didn't kill us and we're getting over this."

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By-election price tag will be \$716,504

By HANNAH SCOTT

Local Journalism Initiative reporter

A civic by-election to fill the seat vacated by former Richmond councillor Kelly Greene will cost \$716,504.

Greene, who was elected to the provincial legislature as a member of the governing NDP by winning the Richmond-Steveston MLA seat last fall, vacated her council seat late last year.

The estimated cost is higher than the 2018 general election mainly because of a mail-in voting provision. That adds another \$150,000, while a further \$55,000 covers pandemic-related costs—particularly cleaning supplies.

"The fact that we only have one vacancy, and it's only for about a year, doesn't mean that it's of lesser importance and for that reason I don't think we should compromise anything for the integrity of the by-election," said Coun. Chak Au, who was in favour of the proposal.

"We all find the cost distasteful," added Coun. Linda McPhail, who also voted in favour of the proposed by-election despite its cost.

City staff also presented a scaled-down option that would have cost \$540,000. But it failed to



Photo by Jaana Björk

City staff estimate a by-election in Richmond to replace a vacant councillor seat will cost more than \$700,000.

include a mail-in voting option. Only people who have a physical disability that affects their ability to vote, or people who will be away from Richmond during the entire voting period, would be able to vote by mail.

Councillors disagreed on the projected cost at a February finance committee meeting. In response to queries, city staff confirmed that legislation dictates the availability of advance voting as well as a sufficient number of voting places. In a report to council, staff said they will aim to spend less than the budgeted amount, but that "sufficient funding must be in place to ensure for the integrity of the election," as well as for the health and safety of all people involved.

Coun. Carol Day was in support of referring staff to take another look at possibly bringing the budget down.

"I agree that the election is important," she said. "Our hands are tied behind our back—we have to have one. But I just don't think voter turnout's going to be that great, and the smart thing to do is to take a step backwards on this one, and then let's run a full 100 per cent effective election in 2022."

While Coun. Harold Steves and Coun. Michael Wolfe were in support of the referral motion, the rest of council was opposed and the main motion, including its cost, passed. The current targeted date for an election is May 29.

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City to alter youth, seniors strategies

By HANNAH SCOTT

Local Journalism Initiative reporter

New 10-year youth and seniors strategies will be implemented in the city, replacing the previous 2015-2020 youth service plan and seniors service plan.

According to city staff reports, the new strategies will provide a framework for those working with youth and seniors in Richmond. Stakeholders and the public will be involved in the process of developing draft strategies, which will be presented to council this fall.

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Steveston playground moves to design, costing phase

By HANNAH SCOTT

Local Journalism Initiative reporter

The playground in Steveston Community Park is slated for a complete overhaul, and is now moving on to its detailed design and costing phase.

Richmond city council discussed the upgrades while meeting as parks, recreation and cultural services committee last week. The detailed design will cost up to \$100,000 for consultant services, of which half will come from the city's 2017 capital budget and the other half from the Steveston Community Society. Council is required to approve an updated plan on next steps due to the budget implications.

Last upgraded in 2003, the playground's water park was added in 2006 and its slide mound was reconstructed in 2014. A city staff report notes that most of the areas are "reaching the end of their life cycle and do not meet today's inclusive accessibility standards."

The renewal process began in 2014 and included public engagement in 2016. Council approved a location for the new playground in December 2020, and now that a location has been confirmed for the new community centre and library—which does not conflict with the playground renewal.

Construction on the new playground is expected to begin in spring 2022.

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Photo courtesy City of Richmond

The new Steveston Community Park playground will include a number of unique elements.

Cook teachers foster goal-setting, reflection

By HANNAH SCOTT

Local Journalism Initiative reporter

Thinking outside the box, two teachers at Cook elementary school are working on a goal setting project with their Grade 2 and 3 students this year.

Teachers Erin Hodder and Erica Gallagher explained that the project is intended to help build identity and personal growth during an unusual year. Their classes began working on the project in the fall, and return to their goals weekly to check in.

"Because of the uniqueness of this year, we set out to build community, belonging, social-emotional learning and celebrating our individual and community identities," says Hodder.

At Cook, students focus regularly on Cook Cares Circles, where they discuss ways to care about themselves, each other and the place they're in. For this project, Gallagher and Hodder encouraged students to explore individual identities, strengths and characteristics.

"We looked ahead into the year and set goals and intentions to focus our daily learning," says Gallagher.

The teachers asked guiding questions: what would you like to practice, and what do you want to get better at? Students came up with individual goals, including "cooperation," "imagination," and "problem solving."

The year-long project involves assessing and rebuilding goals at the end of each term, and Hodder and Gallagher are hoping to foster personal growth in their students, as well as helping them become confident in "goal-setting, self-reflection, self-advocacy and community support."

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Photos submitted

Two teachers at Cook elementary school are introducing the idea of goal setting to their Grade 2 and 3 students.

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We Are YVR: Jat Puri

The story of Vancouver International Airport began in 1931 with a single runway and a small, wood-frame building that welcomed 1,072 passengers.

Also known as YVR (a three-letter identifying code assigned by the International Air Transport Association), the airport on Richmond's Sea Island is Canada's second busiest serving 56 airlines, connecting passengers to over 118 non-stop destinations. In 2015, YVR was voted the top airport in North America by the Skytrax Awards, based on an independent survey of 13 million passengers from 108 countries. It is the only airport to have ever received this honour for six consecutive years.

Employing some 24,000 people, the airport is one of the biggest employers in the area.

Beginning with today's feature on Jat Puri, the Richmond Sentinel is privileged—courtesy of *We Are YVR*—to be able to share the stories of the employees working behind the scenes.

6 a.m.—Waffles and berries

Luckily for Jat Puri, he is more organized than he looks first thing in the morning. When he sent us his morning video clips, he laughed and said, "I really had no idea I looked like that in the morning yikes!"

Jat is one of those people (organized) who gets everything ready for work before he goes to bed, carefully ironing his suit and shirt (Jat's trademark formal work attire is pristine daily) and deciding what he wants to eat for breakfast. For the record, his breakfast of choice on this morning was waffles with yogurt and berries. Fuel for the day—he will need it with the pace he keeps.



7:30 a.m.—The early worm

Jat Puri works in the airport operations department at YVR, and that means getting to work when the passengers do, which is early. It's a good thing it only takes Jat seven minutes to get to the airport from his home in Richmond. As part of his job, he works closely with many of our great partners at YVR to ensure the terminal is always look its best.

The airport operations department at YVR is responsible for making sure every single passenger flying through YVR has a great experience. Everything from terminal cleanliness and accessibility programs to information and assistance is all under

their umbrella. It's a big job for an airport that welcomes millions of passengers per year. Nowadays Jat spends a lot of his time managing the Caretaker program, a newly-formed internal team that carefully inspects all aspects of our terminals to ensure we are providing a safe and clean environment for our passengers and employees.

Jat is the perfect person for the job.

9:30 a.m.—Floored

After a daily operations meeting which pulls together key team members for a morning snapshot of the day ahead, Jat hits the floor. The first thing we notice is how fast Jat walks. It's like he is in fast forward. As we followed him on his Caretaker walk he greeted every person with a friendly hello, kindly offered assistance to anyone who looked even remotely out of sorts and is constantly picking up something he so lovingly calls TOD (Terminal Object Debris). From cigarette butts to fallen luggage tags, Jat carefully searches for anything that might be out of place.

"I want our customers to leave with a good impression of the airport. I take pride in my community and the airport is a part of this community. If I can see the TOD, a customer definitely can," Jat remarked.

12 p.m.—Smoothie time

Jat's morning so far is both typical of a regular day at YVR but also indicative of the airport environment. Every day might look a little similar on paper, but each morning brings new passengers, new challenges and new operational issues to meet and overcome. As Jat breaks for a smoothie lunch—he's a regular at Booster Juice—you can see why he takes such pride in his work as he stops along the way to say hello to colleagues, and again, help passengers. This was a theme throughout the day as Jat left no passenger unassisted or piece of TOD remaining.

6 p.m.—Giving back

While his YVR work day has ended, Jat still has more to do. He makes his way home and quickly whips up a homemade vegetarian pizza for dinner. Jat forced us to tell you that while he did put together all the ingredients, the dough was not in fact homemade. As if that one distinction would change how mind-blowingly prepared he is for everything in his life After he takes his pizza out of the oven, he carefully plates it and sits down at his coffee table to begin his online board meeting.



Photos courtesy Vancouver International Airport
Jat Puri works in the airport's operations department, and has a busy schedule each day.

Ask anyone who works with Jat, or knows him at all, and they will likely say he is kind, thoughtful, caring and loyal. Not only has Jat spent 15 years in various jobs at YVR airport, he also sits on the boards of four different local organizations: West Richmond Community Centre, The Heart of Richmond AIDS Society, the Pacific Rim Cruise Association and Richmond Cares, Richmond Gives.

"I was working as a coordinator for the Green Coat Program and a lot of the volunteers I worked with had other volunteer commitments outside of the ones they would do at the airport," Jat said. "I'm very lucky that I work with them because they really inspired me to seek opportunities in the community. I didn't realize what I could give. I didn't realize until I got onto the boards that regardless of what age you are or how much experience you have or what jobs you've had in the past, there's always opportunities for you to give back and your experience somehow will be transferrable."

9 p.m.—Elementary

It isn't until 9 p.m. that he finally gets to unwind with a little Sherlock Holmes on Netflix (the BBC version for discerning Sherlock fans). Much like the eponymous detective, Jat's mind is always whirring away and even as he enjoys his daily dose of television, he is already mapping out the next day and planning his morning. Tomorrow's breakfast will be cereal and fruit and his favourite blue suit is pressed and ready for action.

10:30 p.m.—Lights out

Jat brushes his teeth, puts on his pajamas and crawls into bed—another day of keeping the airport clean and safe and contributing to his community behind him, he will need to rest up to do it all again tomorrow. If you ever run into Jat at the airport (emphasis on run), say hello and ask him what he's up to. If you can keep up with him, he will tell you all about the amazing things he's doing in the community and at the airport to help take care of people.

RAPS COMMUNITY REPORT Caring for the animals who care for us

Cat Sanctuary revamp



**Eyal
Lichtmann**

For many Richmond families, a welcome weekend routine included a visit to the RAPS Cat Sanctuary. This "Kitty Club Med," located in East Richmond, is home to hundreds of mostly unadoptable cats. These animals have come to us from all over British Columbia, often from jurisdictions where they would have faced euthanasia.

Like so much else, because of the pandemic, the RAPS Cat Sanctuary remains closed to the public. Staff and volunteers continue to provide the residents with all the love, care and attention they need (and demand) and the people and cats look forward to welcoming visitors back again when this health crisis is finally over.

In the meantime, we have taken the opportunity to make significant upgrades to the Sanctuary facilities. After two decades of wear and tear—the sort of wear and tear only hundreds of cats can perpetrate—some components of the facility really needed a revamp.

We have installed new pens and upgraded all cat structures, renovating flooring, roofing, sidings and insulation. Security has been improved. Landscaping projects have made the facility more pleasant for cats and people, with new garden beds, increased pedestrian safety and overall maintenance and enhancements. A spray mister was installed to help keep cats and people cool on warm summer days.

Keeping the Cat Sanctuary facilities in tip-top shape is an ongoing process, of course. So, obviously, is feeding, caring for and providing veterinary services to almost 500 cats. We depend on a



Photo submitted

While the pandemic prevents public visits, RAPS renovates the "Kitty Club Med."

small army of volunteers to deliver individualized attention to all these animals.

Another group of people who are central to the success of the RAPS Cat Sanctuary are those who sponsor cats. Through our sponsorship program, folks "adopt" a resident of the Sanctuary, contributing \$25 monthly (tax deductible), which helps cover the costs of caring for one animal. We also encourage those who can afford it to sponsor a pair of bonded cats for \$50. Other options include sponsoring a house or an entire area, such as our special sections for geriatric cats, FIV-positive cats, those with feline leukemia or new arrivals.

These contributions are extremely important to RAPS because they provide a reliable, predictable source of revenue that guarantees we can continue helping the animals already here and welcome more cats that could face euthanasia.

During the pandemic, many people have chosen to adopt pets. Maybe you don't want that level of commitment, or maybe your housing situation doesn't permit pets. Sponsoring a resident of the RAPS Cat Sanctuary is a meaningful way to connect with animals that need your support. Find out more at rapsbc.com/sponsorship.

Eyal Lichtmann is CEO and Executive Director of the Regional Animal Protection Society.

MY NAME IS YAHTZEE

We still have two kittens available for adoption from the "Y" litter. Yolo is a black long haired female and brother Yahtzee is a black short haired male. Since the kittens are only 17 weeks old, Yolo still needs to have her spay surgery done. Yahtzee was neutered last week. Yolo will be part of our foster-to-adopt program, and her foster-to-adopt family will be required to take her into the RAPS Animal Hospital to have her surgery done there when it is time—around 20 weeks old.

****Due to COVID-19, all meet and greets will be by appointment only. Please call us at 604-275-2036 to set up an appointment.****



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Richmond-born actor had gradual industry beginning

By HANNAH SCOTT

Local Journalism Initiative reporter

Some actors say they always knew a career in performing was in the cards. But not Donna Soares.

"I wasn't one of those kids who wanted to be on stage," the Richmond-raised actor says. "I came about it in a little bit of a roundabout way."

Soares was involved in performance in other ways as a youngster, including band and choir. She attended Palmer and Steveston secondary schools, but didn't get started on stage until the end of high school when she started acting in the yearly show. She also got involved in community theatre as a teenager, borrowing her dad's car to go act in shows in New Westminster and Burnaby.

"When I graduated high school and went to UBC, theatre didn't seem like an option to me," says Soares. "University was something I was always expected to do—I had to get a degree that would get a good job."

Starting off as a French major, Soares also took some electives—including theatre. But by the end of her degree she was enjoying her theatre classes so much that she ended up with a double major in theatre and French. She went on to the three-year Studio 58 program—a professional theatre training program through Langara College—and says she appreciated receiving intensive theatre training when she was a bit older rather than straight out of high school.

"The great thing about Studio 58 is they're so connected to the community and the professional theatre practitioners that basically once you get out of there, you already start to have your network of people," says Soares. "They bring in directors who are working in the field right now, who are the artistic directors of companies. By the time I was graduating I had my first booking."

Soares began working with professional actors and directors, which helped her get started in the industry. Over the years, she's gained an appreciation for the challenge and craft of acting and its intricacy.

"For me I think I had some directors, people like Maiko (Yamamoto, the co-founder and artistic director of Theatre Replacement) who took an interesting me as a person and an artist, and helped develop me as an artist," she says.

"She and Theatre Replacement have sort of been a part of my career, and I find there are other people in the industry who have helped carry me along. For me it wasn't that hard to break into it, but certainly it's not that there's always opportunity. There have been times that I've wanted to quit because there's nothing happening. It's not an upward trajectory, it's certainly up and down."

During the pandemic, like many industries, theatre has experienced a low point. Soares says it was frightening at first because it was unclear when shows would return, but once companies were able to produce shows—with necessary changes in place—things came back "pretty roaring." Still, Soares and most of the other performers she knows have to have a second job because they can't survive on theatre alone. Those jobs also tend to involve working with the public; for example, Soares works at several of the Richmond community centres.

What was really sad about it, but I appreciate now, is that that just kind of disappears. It's so ephemeral—you create this family and it goes away.

— Donna Soares

Of all the shows she's worked on over the years, Soares says a three-person play called *Cock* stands out. The show had no props, which was challenging. And she had to speak with an English accent, which was "not something in my arsenal."

"People weren't hiring people who looked like me for those kinds of roles prior to that," says Soares. "I think the

industry is certainly shifting."

During the pandemic, with most shows cancelled, Soares says she has been trying to read more. She also taught herself Korean, went for walks, and did yoga to try to stay grounded.

She says a career goal is having a recurring role on a TV show, with enough time on set to learn how all the roles interact. In her previous film and TV work, she's gone in for single days which doesn't allow for the same amount of interaction. And the format is also different from stage theatre in terms of how



Photo by Jalen Saip

Donna Soares was raised in Richmond, and didn't begin acting until high school—then found her way back to it while working on her undergraduate degree.

it's made—scenes are shot out of order, and filmed much faster than a typical stage rehearsal process.

Working on shows during the pandemic has been another change, with no live audiences and actors spaced apart according to pandemic protocols. Soares was a part of this year's East Van Panto, an annual Theatre Replacement tradition performed at the Cultch. In contrast to some virtual shows, she calls this production "a celebration of the coming together."

"We actually do get to be in a room together. We're six feet away from each other and we're masked, we can't hug, we can't touch each other, we can't necessarily see each other's smiles—but we are in a room together, and I think that has been really healing. It's a hope for the future, that our bubbles can get bigger and we'll be able to come together again."

That feeling of working together, finding camaraderie and becoming a theatre 'family' is something Soares initially enjoyed about acting back in high school.

"What was really sad about it, but I appreciate now, is that that just kind of disappears. It's so ephemeral—you create this family and it goes away," she says. "Now, as a professional actor, you might not work with that exact group of people, but you'll work with that director, that other actor or that designer again. So you still keep the connections even though the (initial experience) goes away."

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2021 street banners unveiled virtually

The 2021 Richmond street banner contest was colourfully concluded in front of city council last week.

In the virtual meeting, 10 local artists were recognized and showcased their winning banner designs, which will be installed along major streets from the beginning of March until early 2022.

"We're fortunate to have such talented and community-oriented residents in Richmond," said Mayor Malcolm Brodie. "In a year where engagement and gatherings have been difficult, we're proud to have had the opportunity to safely involve the community in beautifying our city."

The city had a record number of design submissions, with over 650, which included collages, art, photographs, graphic images and other creative designs—all of which are available for viewing online at www.richmond.ca/banners.

All entries represented one of the following themes: resilience; community; connection; wellness; active living; urban landscape; nature; sustainability; island city; and the arts. A judging panel made up of community members shortlisted 20 designs for the public to vote on, which took place on LetsTalkRichmond.ca—the city's community engagement platform that allows residents to provide feedback or have interactive discussions on im-



Photo courtesy City of Richmond

The 2021 street banner contest winners (clockwise from top left): Brian Phillips, Megan Yung, Micah Groberman, Jaida Siu, Eva Wong, Allisa Ritchie, Ver Gloriani, Paul Leung, Dawn Levelton and Jen Grimm.

portant city initiatives. In just two weeks, a record 4,600 votes were cast and the 10 designs with the most votes from each category were selected as this year's winners.

The Richmond street banner program is an initiative of Partners for Beautification, a community engagement program that encourages Richmond residents to become actively involved in creating a vibrant, beautiful community.

For more information on the program and to view the winning designs, visit www.richmond.ca/banners.

Textile Arts Guild offers online presentations



Photo submitted

Susan Purney Mark will present "An Iceland Narrative" on March 23, one of three online presentations by the Textile Arts Guild of Richmond.

Knitters, weavers, quilters and other textile-based makers—mark your calendars and get ready for some inspiration from several free upcoming online events, offered in partnership with the Textile Arts Guild of Richmond (TAGOR) and the Richmond Arts Centre.

"An Iceland Narrative" with Susan Purney Mark will be presented on March 23 from 1 to 2:30 p.m. Can you imagine spending an entire month—halfway around the world—to create your art? This is what noted BC artist Susan Purney Mark experienced in 2019.

She will share the unique "fire and ice" landscapes that inspired her work, her impressions of this unique country's impressive support of the arts, and her textile artworks that were inspired by this experience. For more information at www.susanpm.com/lectures.

The Fibre Arts Network (FAN) will present "A Tiny Seed" on April 27 from 1 to 2:30 p.m. For this exhibition, FAN members will welcome spring with their personal interpretations of the theme, which may involve the growth of an idea, an invention or the evolution of a natural or handmade form. This 90-minute presentation includes a descriptive slide show facilitated by TAGOR. For more information, go to www.fibreartnetwork.com/exhibitionsnew/FromATinySeed/48

To register and for more information, visit www.tagor.ca

Author lends name in quest to quash MS

By **DON FENNEL**
 @rmdsentinel

Like the old adage “If at first you don’t succeed, try, try again,” *The Most Magnificent Thing* centers around the idea of perseverance. And if ever there was a time that is needed it is now—in the midst of the global COVID-19 pandemic.

The story of a little girl and her best friend’s (her dog) quest to build the most magnificent thing, the much-loved children’s book encourages children not to give up on their dreams.

The book is the creative genius of award-winning author and illustrator Ashley Spires, who says it is probably her most personal work to date.

“What human being doesn’t have that struggle, when the thing in your mind doesn’t match what you are trying to do physically?” she asks. “It really applies to any challenge you face in your life. I think that’s why (the book has been so widely embraced).”

Spires, who has deep roots in Richmond, also lent her name to last month’s MS Read-a-Thon in support of people living with multiple sclerosis.

“I have a huge personal attachment,” she explains. “One of my best buddies (award-winning writer and film maker Jason DaSilva) going through high school and college, as well as Emily Carr (University of Art + Design), was diagnosed when he was just 26. I watched as his body began to betray him, but he (remains) a extraordinary human being.”

DaSilva has gone on to win Emmy Awards for documenting his fight against



Photo submitted

Best-selling Canadian children’s book author Ashley Spires lent her name to last month’s MS Read-a-Thon, to support people living with multiple sclerosis.

MS, so Spires says it was a “no-brainer” when she was approached to participate in this campaign.

Additionally, Spires says getting kids to read more—while growing their knowledge and understanding of MS—can only be beneficial.

“This is a disease not enough people know about, and that affects more and more individuals,” she says. “Admittedly, I knew very little before Jason was diagnosed. I knew about ALS because my family was hit with that as well. The similarity between the two is that it steals their body from them. And is there anything more horrific than that?”

Canada has one of the highest rates of multiple sclerosis in the world. On average, 12 Canadians are diagnosed every day. MS is a chronic autoimmune disease of the central nervous system (brain, spinal cord). It is considered an episodic disease meaning that the severity and duration of illness and disability can vary and are often followed by periods of wellness. Most people are diagnosed with MS between the ages of 20 and 49 and the unpredictable effects of the disease will last for the rest of their lives. The

MS Society provides information, support and advocacy to people affected by MS, and funds research to find the cause and cure for the disease, bringing us closer to a world free of MS. Visit mssociety.ca or call 1-800-268-7582 for more information, to get involved, or to support Canadians affected by MS by making a donation.

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Richmond to receive \$1 million for Alexandra Park

The city will receive \$1 million to upgrade Alexandra Neighbourhood Park as part of a \$30 million infrastructure fund from the province.

The fund is intended to create jobs and support recovery for people and communities affected by COVID-19. At Alexandra Park, construction upgrades will take place with an ecological focus, while adding more amenities and accommodating the expansion of the geothermal Alexandra District Energy Utility. Upgrades will also include retaining existing trees and constructing new recreational features, including a playground and dog park.

The funding comes from the Community Economic Resilience stream of the Community Economic Recovery Infrastructure Program (CERIP), which is providing \$100 million in one-time infrastructure grants for projects that are ready to go throughout the province. These projects will improve community economic resilience, develop tourism infrastructure, sup-



Photo screen grab from Google Maps

Alexandra Neighbourhood Park will receive upgrades worth \$1 million thanks to a provincial infrastructure fund.

port unique heritage infrastructure and support economic recovery for rural communities.

“The Alexandra Neighbourhood Park will revitalize an outdoor recreation space, providing a destination for people of all ages to gather and reconnect with nature,” says Mayor Mal-

colm Brodie. “Growth in the Alexandra neighbourhood has resulted in an increasing number of multi-family dwellings, and the funding provided by government through CERIP will help this area grow to become an even more vibrant and active community.”

Pair skating champions find synchronicity on ice

By DON FENNEL

[@rmdsentinel](#)

There may be a noticeable difference in age and height between Jessie Sun and Victor Lum, but there's no questioning their symmetry on the ice.

Having quickly established themselves as a force to reckon with, winning the BC/Yukon sections Novice pair skating title last December in Burnaby, the young Richmond athletes now have their sights set on a top-five placing at the national level.

"Hard work and great communication," says Keegan Murphy, director of skating at Richmond's Connaught club, when asked what makes a great pairs team. "And trust and innovation."

At the age of 18 and over six feet tall, Lum brings strength and stability to the partnership, explains their coach Jacob Cryderman. "He is able to lift and throw Jessie easily, which is a key aspect to pair skating. And Jessie, 12, on her own is a strong singles skater who brings a strong technical ability that can match her partner's. She also brings flexibility and grace."

"Even though it's a bit scary, I enjoy being lifted and thrown by Victor the most. The feeling of floating in the air for me is amazing," Sun says. "I also really like skating together as a team. It makes me feel so powerful together as one."

The Sun and Lum partnership is the result of a determined effort by Murphy and the Connaught team to provide a wide range of skating opportunities. Over the past two years they've been busy sowing the seeds for a competitive pairs program in Richmond.

"Only a handful of skating clubs in Canada have the ice time, facilities and coaching expertise to support such a refined area of our sport," explains Murphy. "This is an (especially) rare discipline in British Columbia and we are very proud of the teams we have developed so far."

Since the summer of 2019, soon after Sun and Lum were invited to give pairs skating a whirl,

Connaught has been working closely with the Skate Canada's national office and the BC/Yukon section office to access the resources needed to kick off a pairs skating program.

"Skate Canada has been wonderful in bringing us various mentorship opportunities," says Murphy. "Our main pair coaches (Cryderman and Eileen Murphy) have been incredible in learning the newest training methods and element requirements. And we have great opportunities to access the experiences of Canadian Olympians such as Meagan Duhamel, Kirsten Moore-Towers and Dylan Moscovitch."

All parties need to be open and hon-

"But after trying it with Victor, I started really enjoying it. After a month or so, the coaches and us focused a lot on it, and we started doing competitions after only three months of training."

From his perspective, Victor, who began skating at the relatively advanced age of nine (his parents were anxious for him to take skating lessons), says skating as a pair requires much more teamwork in every element. And a willingness to communicate.

"I was reluctant to transition from single skating to pair skating at first, but I got used to it with more practice," he says, adding he welcomes the chance to learn new elements and skating skills.

But there is also the added challenge of training his muscles off the ice so that he can

be confident he can carry on pair-specific elements like lifts and twists.

Both skaters are determined in the short term to learn and master new elements, with Sun adding she's anxious that once COVID-19 restrictions are lifted to "show off some of those elements we've been training for."

And long-term maybe even testing their mettle internationally.

Pairs skaters tend to also be very strong single skaters, notes Murphy. To become a strong single

skater, that process starts in CanSkate and then Junior Academy. Both Lum, who is able to draw on the mental experience of having competed at Skate Canada Challenge championships in 2018 and 2019 in Pre-Novice and Novice, are products of just that.

Sun was a precocious four-year-old when she first stepped on the ice, and has been figure skating since she was seven. Her talent allowing her to also compete as a singles skater, she says she enjoys learning new jumps like triple and working hard to land them cleanly.

"I also just got a new program and I really like the music. Overall, I pretty much love everything about skating."

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Photo by Syo Dilan Hirai

Already talented singles skaters, Richmond athletes Jessie Sun and Victor Lum are also the B.C./Yukon Novice pair champions.

est with the many factors that go into monthly training needs/seasonal goals, adds Keegan Murphy.

"What's different (about pair versus singles skating) is you actually have to work as a team with another person, and you have to communicate to each other unlike singles where you just communicate with yourself," explains Sun. "In pairs you also have a lot of different elements like lifts, twists, death spirals, throws and pair spins. If we're struggling, we always have to tell each other so we can figure out what's wrong."

Eager to try new things, Sun embraced the opportunity to try pair skating in the spring of 2019. At first, she explains, she just wanted to have some fun.

Corvus Energy powers new technology

A cutting edge Canadian-powered technology will soon be in use on Canada's West Coast.

Richmond's Corvus Energy is partnering with Seaspan Ferries in a field trial of the development and commercialization of a cutting edge energy dense battery for boats and ferries.

This new technology, called blue whales' design, could power big ferries and even cargo ships. It is up to 50 per cent more energy dense than other battery systems and reduces engine noise and engine vibration which is beneficial for marine wildlife, crew and passengers alike.

This could also be significant in the fight against climate change as energy-dense batteries for big cargo ships has the potential to help contribute to Canada's efforts to reduce GHG emissions.

Along with additional partners VARD Marine, BC Hydro, and UBC, this project is also made possible by Canada's Ocean Supercluster which is contributing \$2 million to the Field Validation of Energy Storage System Project. An additional \$2.15 million is coming from industry partners.



Photo screen grab from Canada's Ocean Supercluster YouTube

A Richmond company is part of the new Blue Whale field trial to power boats and ferries with a new battery system.

B.C. makes wholesale liquor pricing permanent

Changes to allow restaurants, bars and tourism operators with liquor licences to purchase beer, wine and spirits at the wholesale price set by the BC Liquor Distribution Branch (LDB) are now in place permanently.

"As the sector continues to pivot and adapt to meet customers' needs, this measure will better position business owners to regain stability as they navigate through the pandemic to economic recovery," said Jobs Minister Ravi Kahlon.

Temporary changes to allow for wholesale pricing for the hospitality industry were implemented June 2020 and set to expire March 31, 2021. Before that, hospitality licensees—including restaurants, pubs and tourism operators with liquor licences—paid full retail price (wholesale price, plus a retail markup set by the LDB) on most liquor purchases.

These changes permanently allow licensees to pay the wholesale price for the products they purchase, which is the same cost paid by government and private liquor stores in the province when they purchase stock for retail sale.

"This is welcome news, as access to wholesale pricing on a permanent basis will help alleviate some of the financial pressures faced by industry due to the pandemic," said Trevor Kallies, director of beverage, Donnelly Group. "Business owners can now move forward with a focus on other areas, such as the health and safety of staff and customers, and keeping our businesses alive."

Funding supports businesses to launch online

The province's new Launch Online Grant program is designed to help eligible small- and medium-sized B.C. businesses adapt to changes in consumer behaviour.

A \$12 million investment will help businesses launch or upgrade an online store that will provide the platform they need to increase their sales revenues, become more competitive and grow. Up to 25 per cent of the program funds will be reserved for regional and Indigenous businesses.

Businesses need access to the tools and supports that will help them adapt and pivot during this uniquely challenging time," said Jobs Minister Ravi Kahlon. "This program will provide business owners with the ability to expand their online presence and create a customized e-commerce site that will give them the boost they need to keep moving forward."

People have increased their reliance on online shopping with over \$305 billion in e-commerce sales in Canada in 2019. E-commerce sales are projected to have doubled through 2020 and are expected to increase further in 2021.

These grants will provide business owners, including those in hard-hit sectors such as retail, tourism and restaurants, with up to \$7,500 to build or improve their online store and promote BuyBC at a local, national and international level.

Grant recipients can use the funding for a variety of online-related expenses, including pictures, creating an online inventory system, advertising costs, subscription costs of an e-commerce platform and training staff to manage the website.

As part of the program, successful applicants must use one or more local B.C. service providers to complete their online store. Through this model, the grant funding can be reinvested in B.C.-based marketing and technology companies to generate revenues for local companies and help secure and grow jobs.

The program is administered by Alacrity Canada. Small- and medium-sized businesses are encouraged to apply online: www.launchonline.ca.

The grant program is based on a first come, first-served basis. It will run until March 31 or until all funds are distributed.

Eligibility criteria for businesses include having:

- a goods and services tax number and paying taxes in B.C.;
- generated sales of more than \$30,000 in either 2019 or 2020;
- one to 149 employees (applications can be submitted by sole proprietors); and
- repeatable products, or in the case of artists and jewellers, individual items that have slight differences (e.g., paintings and rings).



A BC Doctors of Optometry survey reveals one in two British Columbians are concerned about increased screen time and its impact on their eye health since COVID-19.

Eye health concerns raised amid COVID

The most common eye conditions during the first six months of the pandemic included dry eye and headaches. Nearly a third of British Columbians (30 per cent) did not take action to address eye health concerns.

A research survey released by BC Doctors of Optometry (BCDO) reveals that most British Columbians (73 per cent) have experienced at least one eye symptom or condition during the pandemic, and that 30 per cent did not address their concerns.

Nearly half (48 per cent) of British Columbians also express concerns about their increased screen time and its impact on their eye health. The most common eye symptoms or conditions experienced include itchy or irritated eyes (31 per cent), dry eyes (26 per cent), headaches (24 per cent) and eye floaters (20 per cent).

Perceptions that eye health concerns did not require medical attention (55 per cent), concerns related to COVID-19 (39 per cent) and lack of knowledge

of available online or phone services (20 per cent) are the three major reasons why people didn't see an optometrist or a doctor to address their eye symptoms.

There are plenty of resources to ensure that British Columbians can receive proper eye treatment without putting their safety at risk. For example, people can use the Find a Doctor tool on the BCDO website to locate an optometrist in their area or arrange a virtual appointment over the phone or using secure telehealth platforms to determine if an in-person eye exam is required.

"All the open clinics in B.C. are complying with the guidelines to ensure visitors' safety and the safety of others in the clinic," said Pria Sandhu, CEO of BC Doctors of Optometry. "Your eye health should not be ignored even in the middle of a pandemic. BC Doctors of Optometry are committed to the safety and well-being of our communities, patients and staff, while delivering care to British Columbians for their eye care needs."

Rapid testing could reduce exposures

Rapid COVID-19 testing would prevent the introduction of the virus into long-term care homes and help detect outbreaks quicker, according to new modelling from Simon Fraser University researchers.

Researchers Caroline Colijn and Paul Tupper performed a modelling exercise to see if screening with rapid testing could reduce the transmission of COVID-19 in long-term care homes. They found that if rapid testing was used for every visitor, there could be a 90 per cent reduction in the number of exposures from them. Screening staff every three days would also result in a 45 to 55 per cent reduction in the number of outbreaks inadvertently brought into these facilities by staff.

"We should be using all the tools in the toolkit and rapid screening could prevent a lot of outbreaks," says Colijn, Canada 150 research chair in mathematics for infection, evolution and public health and professor at SFU. "Rapid tests may not be as accurate as PCR tests, but the comparison here isn't to PCR tests, it's to no regular screening. Rapid tests are accurate enough for screening large numbers of people."

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No number can be repeated in any row or column. Rows and columns are divided by black squares into compartments. Each compartment must contain a 'straight,' a set of numbers with no gaps in any order, eg. [4,2,3,5]. Numbers in black cells are not part of straights but also cannot be repeated in their row or column.

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