



## LAKE COUNTRY

Upgrades proposed for  
longtime Minoru Park  
attraction

03

A city staff report is proposing significant upgrades to the popular Minoru "Lakes District."

Photo by Don Fennell

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# City aims to double child care spaces

Richmond is looking to double the number of licensed child care spaces in the city during the next decade.

Adopted by city council April 12, the Richmond Child Care Action Plan builds on the City's Child Care Needs Assessment Strategy of 2017 which has seen the number of child care spaces increase by 21 per cent in the last five years.

"Access to child care remains an issue for many families across the country," said Mayor Malcolm Brodie. "Richmond has worked hard to significantly increase the number of child care spaces for families in our community with over 1,200 new spaces created in the past four years."

Brodie noted that since 2018, Richmond has opened three new city-owned child care facilities with another centre and two early childhood development hubs to open over the next two years. He said council is committed to working with community partners and other levels of government to address the continuing demand.

The number of licensed child care spaces in Richmond grew from 5,802 in 2016 to 7,022 spaces in 2020, while the number of facilities has reached 384.

The city currently owns 10 purpose-built child care facilities throughout the community. The new facilities will add another 201 licensed child



Photo via pxhere.com

**Richmond wants to create 3,700 new child care spaces over the next 10 years.**

care spaces to Richmond's child care supply within the next two years, increasing the number of child care spaces in city-owned facilities to 585 spaces.

The Richmond Child Care Action Plan was developed using demographic information of children and families across Richmond; as well as public and stakeholder input and a review of existing policies and guidelines related to child care development in the city. It outlines a target to create a net increase of 3,741 new child care spaces by 2031 that will include:

- 25 spaces per 100 children under the age of 36 months;
- 55 spaces per 100 children aged 30 months to school-age; and
- 25 spaces per 100 school-aged children.

The plan also aims to create spaces for school-aged children that are on-site or within walking distance of all public and independent elementary schools in Richmond, and focuses on providing flexible, licensed child care for families who need part-time or intermittent child care or seek care during non-traditional hours due to employment.

## Have your say in Richmond's 10-year youth strategy

The City of Richmond is seeking input from youth aged 13 to 24, their parents or guardians and those who work with youth to inform the development of the 2021-2031 Richmond Youth Strategy.

This new Youth Strategy will provide the city and those working with youth with an important framework to support and meet the unique needs of youth here.

The public is invited to share their experience and thoughts on the unique needs and priorities of youth in Richmond. Those who are interested in sharing feedback, including youth and young adults, their family members and those working with youth in Richmond, are encouraged to visit [LetsTalkRichmond.ca](https://letstalkrichmond.ca) to learn more and complete the online survey. The survey will be available through May 9.

Richmond strives to be the best place in North America to raise children and youth, and has a long history of supporting the needs and aspirations of youth in the community. The 2021-2031 Richmond Youth Strategy will build on the successes of Richmond's existing 2015-2020 Youth Service Plan, and will continue to act as an important guide for the city.

As outlined in the 2015-2022 Youth Service Plan—2020 Update, the city has continued to support youth through the COVID-19 pandemic and adjusted how youth services are delivered to ensure that opportunities continued to be available for youth over the past year. For example, in 2020, multiple programs, activities and events were moved to a virtual format to continue to provide meaningful connections and engagement throughout the pandemic. This includes leadership programs, youth councils, the Green Ambassadors Program, youth arts



**Richmond youth aged 13 to 24, along with others, are being encouraged to share their thoughts on developing a city-wide strategy for the next decade.**

and media programs, Friday Hangouts, and the PAINT (People for Acceptance and Inclusion, Not just Tolerance) program. More information and updates on the 2015-2022 Youth Service Plan are available online at [richmond.ca/services/communitysocialdev/youth/strategy.htm](https://richmond.ca/services/communitysocialdev/youth/strategy.htm)



# Update considered for Minoru's 'Lakes District'

*Staff report proposes upgrade of popular inner-city area*

By **DON FENNELL**  
 @rmdsentinel

An update is being considered for Richmond's beloved "Lakes District."

As part of city council's strategic plan for 2018-2022, staff has drafted a report of a Minoru Lakes renewal project for council's consideration. If approved, the next step would be to proceed to the awarding of a contract and construction stages.

In the report submitted by Parks Services director Todd Gross, staff notes that the Minoru Lakes were designed and constructed in the 1970s, nearing some 50 years ago.

"Due to their age and general wear-and-tear, the lakes infrastructure including the pump, liner and banks have surpassed the end of their useful life and have failed. As a result, the water quality is poor in terms of health-and-safety and aesthetics," the report says. "As a result, the water quality is poor in terms of health-and-safety aesthetics. Over the past several years, allocation of city resources towards maintenance of the lakes, including potable water and staff time, have increased."

Meanwhile, the neighbourhood around the area has also continued to grow. From 2011 to 2016, the population of the city centre increased by 25 per cent and has seen the highest density development in Richmond. About 20,000 people reside within a five-minute walk of Minoru Lakes and that number is expected to double by 2041. The report suggests the existing park infrastructure such as pathway widths, furnishings and landscapes no longer meet the needs of an ever-growing surrounding community.

Originally envisioned in the 1970s as a pastoral strolling garden centered around reflecting ponds,



Photo by Jaana Björk

Minoru's "Lakes District" has been a popular urban getaway for nearly 50 years.

the area remains largely unchanged and remains a popular feature of Minoru Park. The report suggests that should largely be retained as a central feature of the area. This is also based on feedback received during the Minoru Park Vision Plan process.

The proposed lakes have a surface area of about 7,000 square metres and a volume of 9,000 cubic metres. Depending on the extent of damage to the existing liner, the report suggests either repairing or replacing it with geotextile that has a protective aggregate layer overtop. The proposed depth would be 1.4 metres maximum, with the edges of the lakes finished with a durable stone and concrete retaining walls.

The report also recommends the primary north entry align with Alderbridge Way to improve connections to the growing Richmond Olympic Oval and Lansdowne Village areas north of Westminster Highway.

New seating areas of varied scales are also proposed to be installed along the lake edge, along with a renewed east-west bridge, and improved canal bridge crossings.

As well, the current north island would be removed and replaced. The existing north island is lower than the proposed lakes' high

***Due to their age and general wear-and-tear, the lakes infrastructure including the pump, liner and banks have surpassed the end of their useful life and have failed. As a result, the water quality is poor in terms of health-and-safety and aesthetics.***

water level and it contains willow trees that are in poor condition. The new island would include a bridge connection and viewing platform both for public and maintenance access. As well, two new flexible open spaces are to be included on the northeast and southeast sides of the lakes. These areas would offer opportunities to gather, relax, connect with nature, and view the lakes. Both areas would include picnic tables, information seating, open lawn, and shaded trees.

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Photo by Don Fennell





Photo courtesy pxhere.com

The Steveston Farmers and Artisan Market is planning to open at the Easthope Parking lot this year.

## Steveston market set to re-open

By DON FENNELL  
@rmdsentinel

Plans are afoot to re-open the Steveston Farmers and Artisans Market in May.

While it will be smaller this year due to health restrictions and required distancing between vendors, committee chair Alan Sakai says between 25 and 40 vendors—depending on the day—are expected. That includes many of the past favourites.

"Some of our vendors are having difficulty because seasonal workers are not available, so our first markets will feature flower baskets and bedding plants and artisan goods rather than fruits and vegetables," he says. "The fruits will be coming later in the season."

Sakai says the market will offer people a place to get out and soak up the summer sun. But, he stressed, all protocols that apply to vendors and volunteers will also apply to patrons.

"People are looking for safe ways to get out and exercise and socialize and the market can be one of those places," he says, noting that limiting the number of vendors and patrons will ensure people remain safely distanced and that hand sanitizing stations will also be in place.

The planned opening date is May 9, with hours of operation from 10:30 a.m. to 3:30 p.m. Additional dates scheduled are June 6 and 20, July 4 and 18, Aug. 1, 15 and 29, and Sept. 5. The same hours will apply to each day.

The market will be located in the Easthope parking lot on Moncton Street, across from the Steveston Community Centre.

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## Van accessible parking considered

By HANNAH SCOTT  
Local Journalism Initiative reporter

City staff is proposing the addition of one van accessible parking space in Steveston village.

The recommendation follows a review of existing accessible parking throughout Steveston, which determined that there are currently 33 spaces. The area surveyed is roughly cut off on No. 1 Road to the east, and Chatham Street to the north.

Staff noted that, of the existing spaces, eight are on-street, one is public off-street and 24 are private off-street. The spaces are distributed evenly throughout the area.

After consulting with the Richmond Centre for Disability, staff is proposing the introduction of one van accessible parking space in the city-owned lot on First Avenue, which currently does not have an accessible parking space. There would be a reduction of one standard parking space. If approved, staff said the aim is to have the work completed before this summer.

Staff noted they will also investigate possible widening of existing accessible on-street parking spaces in several locations on First Avenue. This work will also be completed before the summer.

The total projected cost to revise pavement markings and add signage is \$3,700, which staff said can come from existing approved capital budget.

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Photo by Hannah Scott

City staff is recommending the addition of more van accessible parking in Steveston.

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## Road improvement projects discussed

By HANNAH SCOTT

Local Journalism Initiative reporter

Several proposed road improvement projects, to be partially funded through an annual partnership with ICBC, got the green light from the public works and transportation committee last week.

The proposals for 2021 include installations of four special crosswalks, one full traffic signal and one pedestrian signal. Six traffic video cameras are being advised, mainly on Westminster Highway or No. 5 Road. Staff is also proposing the installation of 20 overhead LED street name signs.

A major upgrade is recommended for the intersection of Cambie and No. 5 roads, projected to cost \$2.76 million. Half of that project will be funded by TransLink.

Further proposed improvements include the addition of pedestrian pathways and multi-use pathways/cycling facilities in a number of locations, as well as some individual projects.

The total projected cost is just under \$13 million, of which \$4,728,340 will come from TransLink. The city's senior transportation engineer Fred Lin said the expected funding from ICBC is roughly \$200,000 to \$300,000, comparable to other years.



Photo courtesy Vancouver Coastal Health

Six electric vehicle charging stations have been installed at Richmond Hospital.

## Hospital marks Earth Day with EV parking installations

Just in time to celebrate Earth Day, Richmond Hospital is now home to six electric vehicle charging stations.

But it only represents the first phase of what will be the largest installation of electric vehicle chargers in British Columbia.

The project will see a total of 30 electric vehicle (EV) charging stations installed on the ground floor of the Richmond Hospital parkade which will be available for staff, medical staff and patients with electric vehicles requiring a charge.

The service is first-come, first-served and free of charge. EV charging etiquette is in place. Pre-registration is not necessary, but staff will be required to display a valid employee parking pass.

Vancouver Coastal Health (VCH) is committed to reducing energy consumption and reliance on carbon-producing fossil fuels, supporting projects that provide environmental health benefits to its staff and community.

According to a recent VCH survey, 34 per cent of staff plan to own an electric vehicle.

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# Richmond boy imagines a better tomorrow

*Mike Huang earns international acclaim in Toyota art contest*

By **DON FENNEL**  
@rmdsentinel

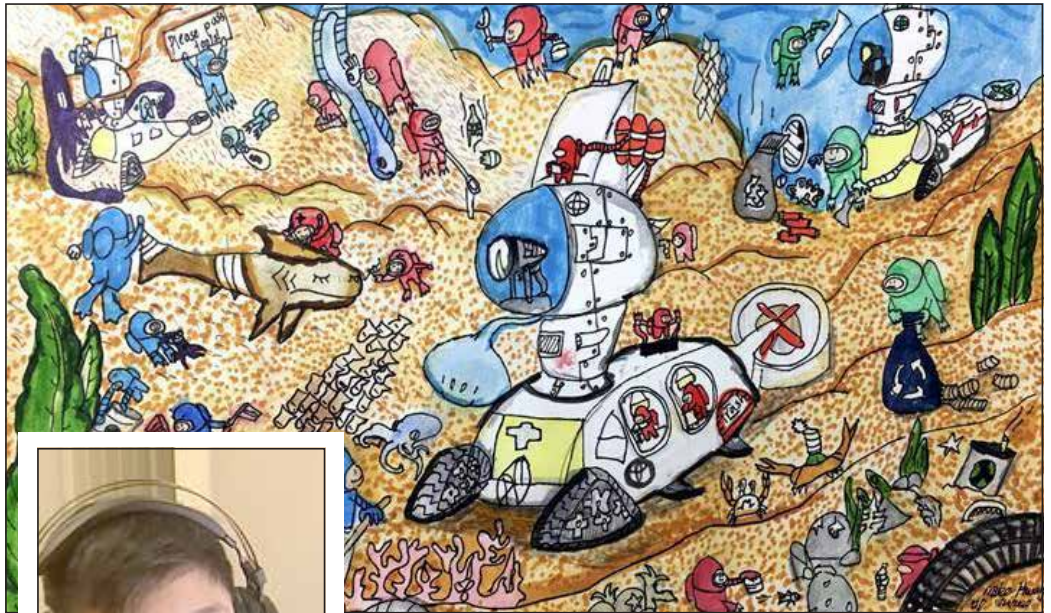
Now that he recently turned 13, Mike Huang is getting ever closer to that popular teenage dream scenario: possessing his own driver's license.

But the Grade 7 Richmond Christian School student has his sights set on exploring much greater depths—as revealed through his art submission that landed Huang top marks in a global competition presented by Toyota.

"My passion and talent (for art) comes from my mind. I have always loved sea life and usually dream about exploring the depths of the ocean," he says, explaining the inspiration to join other kids from around the world in offering a glimpse of a brighter future.

Huang's entry was one of nine Canadian children's creations that have been selected to be submitted to the international Toyota Dream Car Art Contest. The submissions are being globally recognized for investing vehicles to make the world a better place.

Huang is an active boy according to his moth-



Photos submitted  
Richmond's Mike Huang used his imagination to design the OALPS Explorer in Toyota's Dream Car Art Contest.

*My passion and talent  
(for art) comes from  
my mind. I have always  
loved sea life and usually  
dream about exploring  
the depths of the ocean.*

— Mike Huang



A Grade 7 student at Richmond Christian, Mike Huang has loved art and Lego since he was little.

er, who says he loves drawing, sports and Lego.

"When he was a little boy, he could draw whatever he liked. It might help him to have (an) open mind. That is also the reason why he can freely express his ideas through his artwork."

An art student at VSA Art + Design Studio, Huang learned about the contest from his art teacher. His entry, titled "OALPS Explorer," (which stands for Oceanic, Animal Life Preservation Society) combined with programmed "med-bots" to help injured animals.

"Over the years, the Toyota Dream Car Art Contest has evolved from an art competition to an opportunity for children to bring forward their world-changing ideas," says Larry Hutchinson, president and CEO of Toyota Canada and one of this year's Canadian judges. "I'm truly impressed by their ideas—from making our planet more sustainable, to fighting virus and bacteria, to making the world more inclusive through physical accessibility."

The distinguished panel of judges also included Jennifer Flanagan, CEO of Actua; automotive journalist and children's

book author and publisher Petrina Gentile; journalist and broadcaster Buzz Bishop; and Caitlin Keeley, creative director at Dentsu McGarry-Bowen.

"I am so inspired by these young artists and inventors," says Flanagan. "It was amazing to see their imaginations interpret how mobility can help solve our most pressing global challenges and create a sustainable future."

"This year's entries really showed a reflection of our times," Bishop says.

As for his role in the future, Huang says: "Well...I have always wanted to become a marine biologist and study sea life, but if that doesn't work, I do love engineering and creating things. I don't have any plans at this time (for) how to make the world a better place. But I do hope that I can study marine biology so that people will learn more about Earth's oceans."

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# 'Hate has no place in Richmond'

## Police address possible growth of racially-motivated incidents

Recent incidents suggest a possible growing trend of racially-motivated incidents in Richmond, according to local police.

"Hate has no place in our community. I want to reassure the public that any investigation with potential hate motivated undertones will be given our fullest attention and oversight," said Richmond RCMP Chief Superintendent Will Ng.

Police received seven reports of incidents involving apparent racial undertones in March, with three of these still under investigation as hate crimes. They involve allegations that hate is a motivating factor during the commission of criminal offences. The RCMP says that the victims are of various ethnicities.

One incident involved allegations of an anti-Semitic text exchange between students at a local school, and is being dealt with under the guidelines of the Youth Criminal Justice Act. The second incident involved allegations of racial slurs and an assault of an Asian café manager. An arrest was made, and the matter is still under investigation. The third

*Any investigation with potential hate motivated undertones will be given our fullest attention.*

– Chief Supt. Will Ng

incident involved allegations of a man allegedly yelling racial slurs before crossing a street to punch a South Asian man who was sitting at a bus stop. A suspect has not yet been identified in what is believed to have been a random attack.

"There are specific hate offences in the Criminal Code which include promoting genocide and inciting hatred, which includes the distribution of hate propaganda, but most of the incidents being reported to police are not hate crimes," said Cpl. Ian Henderson. "When a person makes a racist, homophobic or other abhorrent comment at a stranger, it is not a criminal offence, and typically police are unable to pursue a criminal investigation much further."

Last summer, Richmond RCMP updated its guidelines for hate crime and hate incident investigations, and all frontline officers received training to ensure

adherence to these updated guidelines.

Over the past year, Richmond RCMP has also engaged a number of initiatives aimed at promoting inclusion and tolerance while encouraging victims of hate motivated incidents to speak out.

These include the creation of the Diversity Unit, which works with various community partners to recognize the cultural diversity of our city while promoting acceptance, inclusion and tolerance. As part of the Richmond RCMP Community Engagement team, the Diversity Unit has access to a variety of resources including Victim Services, Block Watch and other volunteer programs, which play an important role in victim resilience and recovery.

In collaboration with the City of Richmond, Richmond RCMP also launched a "Hate has no place" poster campaign which encourages victims to call police.

"In order for police to deal effectively with hate crimes and hate incidents, we need to know when they happen," said Henderson. "We also need people to call us before posting video of hate crimes or hate incidents online."



WILL NG

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# Police present boy, 12, with new bike

A Richmond boy unexpectedly received a new bike after his was destroyed by a hit-and-run driver in March.

RCMP officers presented 12-year-old Mashrural with the replacement, which was donated by Richmond Cares, Richmond Gives.

While on the scene of the collision, police learned that Mashrural had purchased his bicycle the day before with money he had been saving for some time. His family was unable to buy him a new one, nor did they have insurance to cover the cost of replacing it. So police reached out to their partners at Richmond Cares, Richmond Gives.

"We are very fortunate to have such a strong relationship with Richmond Cares, Richmond Gives," said RCMP Cpl. Ian Henderson. "We can't thank them enough for making this kind donation possible."

Police said Mashrural was "blown away" in astonishment. He and his family expressed a humble and heartfelt thank you to the generous donors.

"We are so pleased to be able to support our community partners at Richmond RCMP in bringing joy to this otherwise unfortunate incident," said Richmond Cares, Richmond Gives president and CEO Ed Gavsie.

Police are still looking for the driver of the white SUV involved in the incident, which occurred around 12:30 p.m. on March 7 at the intersection of Westminster Highway and Cooney Road.

If you happened to witness this collision, or if you have dash-cam video, contact the Richmond RCMP at 604-278-1212, quoting file number 21-6168. Should



Photo courtesy Richmond RCMP

**Twelve-year-old Mashrural received a new bike after his was destroyed by a hit-and-run driver last month.**

you wish to remain anonymous, call Crimestoppers at 1-800-222-TIPS (8477) or visit them online at [www.solvecrime.ca](http://www.solvecrime.ca)

## Asphalt Paving Advisory

The City of Richmond has contracted All Road Construction to grind and pave the following locations in Richmond from **March 8 to October 15, 2021**:

### PROPOSED 2020 PAVING LOCATION DETAILS

Garden City and Alderbridge Way	Intersection only
8000 Block Westminster Hwy	Eastbound lanes only
Bridgeport Road and Viking Way	Intersection only
6000 Block Cooney Road	Granville Avenue to Westminster Highway
11000 Block No. 3 Road	Intermittent spot repairs for vibrations
8000 Block Lansdowne Road	No. 3 Road to Garden City Road
10000 Block No. 4 Road	Williams Road to Steveston Highway
11000 Block Railway Avenue	Steveston Highway to Moncton Street
Colbeck Road	
Palmberg Road	
Kozier Drive	Vibration complaint
8117 No. 1 Road	Vibration complaint
6651 Blundell Road	Westbound lane – vibration complaint
13000 Block Cambie Road	Jacombs Road to No. 6 Road
Gilbert Road	Northbound lanes (River Road to Elmbridge Way)

Work hours will be 7:00 a.m. to 10:00 p.m. on weekdays, and 7:00 a.m. to 8:00 p.m. on weekends. Night time work hours will be from 7:00 p.m. to 5:00 a.m. (typically).

Traffic will be reduced to single-lane and there may be temporary lane closures. Delays may occur. The use of an alternate route is strongly encouraged.

This work is weather dependent and dates are subject to change without notice.

The scope of the advertised work may be adjusted or cancelled in line with available funding.

Questions may be directed to Wasim Memon, Supervisor, Engineering Inspections, at 604-276-4189, or visit the City's paving program webpage at [www.richmond.ca](http://www.richmond.ca) (City Services > Roads, Dykes, Water & Sewers > Construction Projects > 2020 Paving Program).



Photo courtesy Richmond RCMP

**Mounties presented a special congratulatory message from Her Majesty The Queen to Maria Huber on the occasion of the Richmond woman's 100th birthday recently.**

## Richmond woman joins centenarian club

Richmond Mounties took time to ensure Maria Huber's recent entry into the centenarian club was extra special.

Wearing their red serge, typically reserved for special occasions, Richmond RCMP were on hand to present the Richmond woman with a congratulatory message from Her Majesty The Queen to mark her 100th birthday on April 19.

"Congratulations Maria," police said. "It was truly a pleasure to be a part of your very special day."



# Rogers joins 4 on 'Richmond' Olympic team



By **DON FENNELL**  
@rmdsentinel

It was a Saturday that Camryn Rogers won't soon forget.

While there have been countless other weekends in which the Richmond hammer thrower has raised the bar, this one could possibly have earned her a trip to the Olympic Games.

At the West Coast Classic in Eugene, Ore. (a community long one of the most appreciative of track and field dating back to the introduction the Oregon Relays), the McMath Secondary grad achieved the Olympic standard in the women's hammer throw with a throw of 73.09 metres. It came on her first throw of the meet to pass the Olympic standard of 72.50 metres.

Her career-best, the mark lifted the University of California-Berkeley senior to No. 4 all-time in the NCAA.

Rogers is one of five Richmond athletes so far named to the Canadian Olympic Team for this summer's Games.

Evan Dunfee, who captured the hearts of Canadians with his strong sense of sportsmanship at the 2016 Olympics, has again been selected to the athletics team and will compete in the men's 50-kilometre race walk.

First learning his craft at Richmond's Dynamo Fencing Club, Shaul Gordon will compete in the individual men's sabre event at the Games, while fellow Richmond fencer Eli Schenkel has also earned his ticket to Tokyo.

Finally, Mo Zhang earned herself another opportunity to compete at the Olympics and will represent Canada in women's singles table tennis play at these upcoming Games.

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*Photo courtesy Cal Athletics/klcfotos*

A product of the vaunted Richmond Kajaks Track and Field Club, Camryn Rogers qualified for this summer's Olympic Games in Tokyo.



## ACCEPTING FAMILY APPLICATIONS

Habitat For Humanity Greater Vancouver is looking for families to partner with on 2 Bedroom home equity opportunities in Richmond. This is an ideal situation for single parents or families with young children.

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## RAPS COMMUNITY REPORT Caring for the animals who care for us

# Helping animals ... and their people



*Eyal  
Lichtmann*

A person who is experiencing domestic violence is likely to remain in the situation longer or return to it sooner if there is a pet in the house. This disturbing fact is one of many indications of the unintended consequences on humans of housing policies that discriminate against companion animals.

A review done a couple of years ago indicated that, of Canada's 452 women's shelters, just eight accept pets. There is little reason to believe that much of significance has changed since then.

RAPS advocates with governments to encourage pet-friendly policies. Especially in a housing market like Metro Vancouver's, policies that discriminate against animals have tangible and sometimes catastrophic effects on families.

For several years now, RAPS has recognized that the key to helping animals is helping their people too. More animals would be rescued if we could simply find ways of helping their guardians also. This is true across the board. But it is especially true for households facing economic or other hardships.

Richmond is fortunate to be home to many superb social service agencies, including emergency shelters and temporary housing. RAPS is working with these organizations to ensure that households with animals do not fall through the cracks.

RAPS works with superb organizations like Chimo Community Services and Salvation Army's Richmond House to provide care and support to people and their animals. Residents who have pets come to us for routine and urgent veterinary care. Through our RAPS Thrift Stores, we also provide clothing, household furnishing and kitchenware to



*Photo submitted*

**The RAPS Animal Hospital has programs to help people who otherwise might not be able to afford veterinary care for their pets.**

people forced to rehome. In addition, compassionate boarding and fostering is available for animals in households that find themselves temporarily homeless or otherwise unable to remain together.

At the RAPS Animal Hospital, we also have programs to ease the burden on households—even those not facing emergencies. As a community asset, our goal is to provide the maximum services we can to the community. With recent reports that a shocking number of Canadian families are just a few hundred dollars from insolvency, an unanticipated vet bill can be a terrible burden. RAPS offers partial or wholly subsidized veterinary care or we provide no-interest wellness payment plans. Over

the past three years RAPS has provided millions of dollars in subsidized care to animals.

Animals deserve care in their own right. But we recognize that caring for them means caring for their people too. We are able to do this because we have the support of a community who understands the centrality of animals in the lives of humans and that by caring for the humans, we get to care for the animals. RAPS is constantly looking for new, innovative ways to help animals and their people and look forward to partnering with more community service agencies.

*Eyal Lichtmann is CEO and executive director of the Regional Animal Protection Society.*

## MY NAME IS PEANUT

Peanut is a handsome cross-eyed boy, who also has a very strong personality and lots of energy. Peanut does great with people, but can be a bit of a bully towards other cats who are submissive. He will do well in a home where he is the only cat. However, he may also do well in a home with a cat that has similar energy and play levels as him, or a cat who can show him his place if he gets too rough. A household with a cat-savvy dog may also work well for him.

**\*\*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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rapsbc.com | City Shelter: 604-275-2036

Head Office: 604-285-7724



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The RAPS Animal Hospital and Animal Ambulance are supported by Applewood Nissan





# Staging company finding its way

*Richmond-based Scene Ideas Inc. successfully adapting to pandemic*

By **HANNAH SCOTT**

*Local Journalism Initiative reporter*

Despite their industry being challenged by the pandemic, Isaac Kinakin and his Richmond-based staging and event design company are persevering.

"This is the only industry I've ever (worked in)—it's very near and dear to my heart," says Kinakin, the director of business development at Scene Ideas Inc.

During the initial stages of the pandemic, Kinakin says things changed "within one fell swoop." Initially smaller cuts were made to extraneous spending and wages, but after a couple of months the company had to shut down everything for about a month.

While the closure enabled Kinakin to spend more time with his family, he was constantly worried about the future of his company. He and his team considered many plans, and eventually settled on one: "try to keep going, reinvent ourselves, basically hold on for dear life and hope for the best."

Initially the team made pieces for temporary hospitals (including one that was set up at the Vancouver Convention Centre last spring) and COVID-19 testing centres, as well as barriers and face shields. Those pandemic-specific pieces remain part of their offerings today, along with custom options. The company also took on some charitable projects like making lawn signs for the CKNW Connecting Kids fund.

After reopening, growth was slow at first. Kinakin credits the availability of government subsidy programs as a factor that helped his company survive. He says one of the biggest changes is the fact that

the company is more community focused now, mainly working with other Richmonders and making connections through the city and chamber of commerce.

"That's what sets us apart through this whole pivot—we're not just importing a company and shipping it out for profit. We're manufacturing everything in Richmond, supporting the local economy. We've managed to hire everyone back, hire new people and invest in new technology. That's the most important thing throughout COVID—reconnecting and making more deep and meaningful connections with neighbours."

The biggest unforeseen challenge was figuring out a retail sale process overnight, including setting up an e-commerce platform and opening a storefront. Scene Ideas also opened a warehouse space in Toronto to expand business across the country.

The company began as four friends in an East Vancouver garage in 2006, and moved to Richmond two years later. Kinakin describes the current Shell Road location as a combination of warehouse space, manufacturing, and a "paint and fit-up bay" where set pieces are tested and packaged to ship.

Over the years, Kinakin has worked on many projects, big and small. The Grey Cup halftime shows, where the company creates big rolling platform stages, are a standout.

"One of the most memorable (projects) was two or three years back in Ottawa," he says. "There were three of us out there with hundreds of volunteers and crew. It was an ambitious setup."



*Photo courtesy Scene Ideas Inc.*

**Isaac Kinakin is one of the four founders of Richmond-based Scene Ideas Inc., a staging and event design company.**

After flawless rehearsals, everything was planned out. But the morning of the game, it started snowing and all the existing plans had to be scrapped.

"There were about 11 or 12 stages that connected up like a Transformer, and I was using the marks on the field to align things. It didn't occur to me—I honestly thought they would have cleared a bit of the snow for the game. (But when) we're getting ready, it's coming up to halftime, I peek on (to the field)—and can't see any of the markings because of the snow."

Kinakin had to make do, and the set pieces ended up in a different location on the

field. After performing, Shania Twain was meant to descend through an on-stage elevator, but with the regular elevator operator at the hospital after crushing his finger, Kinakin had to learn how to work the elevator at the last minute.

"The show must go on," he says. "We're not up to failure—we're just going to keep going, and we'll figure something out."

While the pandemic has posed many challenges, Kinakin is optimistic about the future. The company has started to look at the experience as an accelerator rather than a disruptor, using the opportunity to improve technology and efficiency.

"I don't easily give up," says Kinakin. "I needed to do something—I didn't want to lose the company, I wanted to do right by all the people who work for me and all the good people that I get to work with."

"We're going to be a much stronger company for being tempered through this whole ordeal."

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## RICHMOND AT A GLANCE

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# Student artist commemorates grad class with mural

By HANNAH SCOTT

Local Journalism Initiative reporter

Teenage artist Leo Li will leave a legacy at his school when he graduates this year.

For the last few months, his spare time has been consumed with painting a large five-by-five foot mural to commemorate his fellow graduates and the challenges they've faced this year. Chosen from an open call by the grad committee, the Steveston-London secondary Grade 12 student is headed to Cornell University to study architecture in the fall.

"For as long as I can remember, I've been an artist," says Leo. "In Grade 10 my lifelong love of art and design also drew me to pursue a career in architecture, which is an art that fundamentally facilitates living and aids society."

The plan, according to grad committee teacher sponsor Jeff Mah, is for each subsequent graduating class to keep the tradition going by creating its own mural.

"We hit one out of the park with (Leo)," Mah says.

The painting was created over several months in the school hallway outside Mah's classroom. Leo says he appreciated being able to paint in the school which provided a connection between the work and school community, as well as interacting with students and staff who passed by him while he was painting.

"I savoured these convening moments," Leo adds.

After Leo finished painting, members of the graduating class signed their names around the outside of the painting. Grad committee president Shirley Li notes it was a challenge to incorporate pandemic protocols into the mural signing.

"Not all of the grads are in school at once, which means we had to set up a lunchtime signing period and an after school signing period," she says. "We had to sanitize all the pens used and stand beside the mural at all times. I myself found that reminding the grads to maintain social distance has been the most chal-

lenging part. Most arrive with their friends to sign the mural so they weren't always socially distanced from each other—trying to separate them was truly a challenge."

But despite the challenges, the painting was appreciated by those who saw it, and Mah says it was good to be able to start a new positive tradition this year and honour Grade 12 students whose milestone year looked very different. Despite the cancellation of many typical events—the winter dinner dance, the after-grad celebration, and even regularly scheduled classes and opportunities to connect—the painting helped create a sense of connection.

"(The painting) sat outside for months and no kid ever toyed with it," says Mah. "People would just walk by and look at it, and it was a real community feeling because kids would ask questions about it."

The painting's background, featuring a blurred image of the school building and masks flying through the sky, was inspired by Japanese artist Katsushika Hokusai.

"Throughout the sky, masks fly like birds, which replaces the concept of restraint usually associated with our face coverings with the idea of liberation," Leo says.

The running figures in the foreground are based on the paintings of Leo's artistic mentor Jianjun An, a Chinese artist and designer who runs an art school in Richmond. Leo says the bold colours and "expressive linework" of the figures represents the persistent and undefeatable energy of his fellow graduates.

"Through illus-



Photos submitted

**Leo Li, a Grade 12 student at Steveston-London secondary, created a mural commemorating his grad class. Grad committee teacher sponsor Jeff Mah intends to continue the new tradition annually.**

trating these figures, I hope to be able to capture a small portion of the collective optimistic drive that defines the grads of 2021, instead of portraying a muted reflection on adversity," says Leo.

Shirley says the committee was fascinated by Leo's artistic ability, as well as the symbolism in his proposal.

"In particular, what stood out to us about his art was the background with the flying masks, and how the grads were setting themselves free as they run off to the distance," says Shirley.

She says it was inspiring to be able to watch Leo's painting progress day by day, and it brought her a sense of hope that her peers will be able to overcome the challenges of the pandemic. That's a sentiment echoed by Leo when asked about the legacy left by the project.

"I hope that the painting not only reminds students of the power of art, but also prompts their own thinking of what values and traits define themselves, and what their aspirations could be. The artwork itself is one of many examples of efforts within the Steveston-London community to make the days during the pandemic school year—however different and alienating—hopeful and encouraging."

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# Comic-Con encourages creativity

*Westwind teacher runs annual event celebrating art, storytelling*

By HANNAH SCOTT

Local Journalism Initiative reporter

Every year, Westwind elementary teacher Carlos Victoria runs a Comic-Con at his school.

While COVID-19 restrictions saw the 2021 version of the beloved event pared down to just two classes, Victoria says it was also an opportunity for more creativity.

"What's really cool is this is also the first year I've gotten this much variety in terms of stories, and also the (best) quality in terms of what the kids produced," he says.

Comic-Con was born five years ago when a few "super engaged" students with a passion for illustration and art asked Victoria to help them start a comic club.

In developing criteria with his students, Victoria encourages them to include a "wow factor." He asks them: "If somebody comes to (see) your work, what are you going to do to make them pause and say 'wow'?"

This year, the entire process took about nine weeks, with students creating any number of comics and then proposing two to the rest of the class for voting on which would move forward to the main Comic-Con event.

Other students from Grade 3 to 7 nominated their favourite comics for individual awards like "Most Original Story" and "Coolest Character." Then, the two participating classes held an awards ceremony—which was a new element this year. As part of the ceremony, which Victoria says "unfolded in a beautiful way," students learned how to present a speech and incorporate feedback.

For example, Grade 4 student William Richardson described his Comic-Con journey as "epic": "because this has been a long trail of excitement and wondrous ideas."

"I love receiving feedback from children," says Victoria. "This year I kind of disguised the feedback pieces as part of their thank-you speeches."



*Photos submitted*

**Westwind elementary Grade 4 students Conor Gannon (left) and Hailey Mulgrew display their comics. The stuffed animal next to them represents another student's original comic character, created with help from his mom.**

During the speeches, students were asked to reflect on how they were able to find creative success, with Grade 4 student Aubrey Cruz attributing her success to "thinking of the things you love."

And for Victoria, the process is a labour of love too. While the changes required this year resulted in a different experience, he's proud of his students for taking ownership of their learning, including recognizing their strengths and providing honest and authentic feedback.

"Some kids are not the best drawers, but they're good presenters. Some are really quiet, but really artistic. It's about recognizing their strengths, and teaching them how to find strategies to push themselves and persevere."

And in a year when connecting is important, Grade 4 student Senna Wilson says Comic-Con was special, "because I got to do it with my friends."

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***It's about recognizing (students') strengths, and teaching them how to find strategies to push themselves and persevere.***

— Carlos Victoria





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# Public art adorns Canada Line stations

Two unique photo-based artworks are displayed at Aberdeen and Lansdowne Canada Line stations as part of Capture Photography Festival. The installations are a partnership between Richmond Art Gallery and Richmond Public Art.

At Lansdowne Station, *The Left Space* by Brendan Fernandes uses historically significant patterns to tell stories of power, camouflage and resistance. Evoking a sense of urgency and emergency, “dazzle” patterns, which were painted on warships to confuse the enemy, are coupled with purple and magenta plaid, which at once symbolizes British colonial rule in Kenya, a warning to predators in the wild, and the flashing of police lights. Fernandes playfully wraps this symbolic print across Lansdowne Station. The gesture offers a moment to contemplate solidarity, resiliency, protection, and care during these trying times.

At Aberdeen Station, *The Misfits* by Chun Hua Catherine Dong utilizes digital techniques and photography to illustrate the rich symbolic value of Chinese textiles to explore issues of gender and culture. The phoenix and dragon are interconnected symbols in Chinese culture and are often used together to symbolize auspicious and blissful relations between husband and wife. In ancient Chinese history, the phoenix could be male or female. However, as the dragon became associated with Chinese emperors as an imperial symbol, the phoenix became exclusively associated with female identities.



Dong’s 2020 works titled “The Misfits.”



Photos courtesy Chun Hua Catherine Dong

Within this diptych installed at Aberdeen Station, Dong envisions the phoenix and the dragon not as opposites but as mirrors of each other. Adding her own twist to a traditional medium, the artist uses blue to return masculinity to the phoenix and plum blossoms to offer femininity to the dragon. By placing these symbols within the rainbow sea and mountain patterns, the artist suggests a contemporary perspective on Chinese tradition.

Each image is animated with augmented reality through a free app that can be downloaded on a mobile phone or tablet. Once the image and sound are activated, graphic elements begin to dance, paired with an ethereal score of traditional Chinese music. The art will be displayed through Sept. 1.

## STR8TS

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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