



VOL. 5 ISSUE 22

NOT-FOR-PROFIT

NOV. 23 - DEC. 6, 2021

CLASSIC COLLECTOR

Jim Ratsoy's vintage
car collection tops 130



15

Photo submitted

After starting up several businesses in many provinces during his lifetime, Richmond's Jim Ratsoy now relishes in his vintage car collection.

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Seeing light in the eye of darkness

Richmond Jewish Day School principal rejoices in community unifying in the face of storm

By **DON FENNELL**
 @rmdsentinel

Light emanates even when it seems darkest. It's a matter of perception.

In the wake of the atmospheric river that flooded parts of Richmond, and indeed a sizable portion of the province mid-month, at least one Richmondite was able to see the positives.

"There's always a silver lining," said Sabrina Bhojani, principal at the Richmond Jewish Day School on No. 5 Road.

"I have beautiful lakefront views in my office."

Rather than dwell on the destructive fallout from the storm, which flooded the school's parking lot and left her with no choice but to temporarily close the school as city crews and independent contractors worked tirelessly to pump out the water, Bhojani instead chose to highlight how the community came together. The ethnically-diverse community that makes up the school neighbourhood is often referred to as the "Highway to Heaven" because of its many places of worship.

"There is a togetherness that happens through adversity and trying times," Bhojani said. "I think it is rather remarkable the kindness that exists among the members of the different faith groups."

The school was able to open its doors three days after the massive flooding because of the kindness. All its staff and visitors were granted permission to park at the Gurdwara Nanak Niwas on the north side of the Jewish Day School. And on the south side, Subramaniya Swamy Temple also permitted the Jewish Day School to use its



Photos courtesy Richmond Jewish Day School

In the wake of the mid-November storm that caused much flooding throughout the city and prompted a provincial state of emergency, Richmond Jewish Day School is celebrating how its ethnically-diverse neighbours have offered support. On Dec. 5, the school will hold a celebration that recognizes the diversity.

parking as a pick up and drop-off point.

As appreciative as Bhojani was of the neighbours' gestures during the crisis, she says it's increasingly apparent the community has more in common than its differences. Though she's lived in Richmond for a number of years, that is something she sees growing each day.

To help build on that positive community light, the Jewish Day School is hosting its neighbours for an evening of socializing, celebrating diversity, and singing. The evening of Dec. 5 will also see the lighting of the menorah, a nine-branch candelabrum that Jews light annually during the eight-night Hanukkah celebration. That menorah commemorates the seven-branch menorah, described in the Bible as an ancient Hebrew lampstand made of pure gold and used in the tabernacle set up by Moses in the wilderness and later in the Temple in Jerusalem.

The *Celebration of Light on the Highway to Heaven*, as the event is formally known, will be

held outdoors starting at 6:30 p.m. There will also be entertainment and snacks and joy to coincide with Hanukkah. The goal of this simultaneous communal expression of solidarity is to call out and combat antisemitism and racism, with Bhojani hoping members of city council will also be at the event.

"One of Richmond's greatest strengths is diversity, yet systemic racism targeted at minority groups is a prevalent issue in the city, despite the abundance of diverse backgrounds and cultures in the community," she said. "This can be unintentional and does not necessarily mean that people within an organization hold racist beliefs. It is often caused by hidden institutional biases in policies, practices and processes that privilege or disadvantage groups of people. It can be the result of doing things the way they have always been done, without considering how they impact particular groups differently."

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Photo via flickr.com

The weather system that wreaked widespread havoc over much of the province has led to the provincial government declaring a state of emergency.

Provincial state of emergency declared

B.C. is in a provincial state of emergency to mitigate impacts on transportation networks and movement of essential goods and supplies, and to support the province-wide response and recovery from the widespread damage caused by severe flooding and landslides.

"Provincial, federal and local governments are working with emergency personnel to make sure people and communities get the help they need as they work through yet another natural disaster," said Premier John Horgan. "Thank you to everyone for doing what you can to stay safe and to help one another as we work through this catastrophic time."

Mike Farnworth, Minister of Public Safety and Solicitor General, made the emergency declaration on Nov. 17, based on the recommendation from the Ministry of Transportation and Infrastructure, and Emergency Management BC.

"This province-wide declaration will help us with the challenges ahead as we recover from the utter devastation that's been caused by this natural disaster," Farnworth said. "Getting our rail and roadways back up and in operation is a top priority."

The state of emergency is initially in effect for 14 days and may be extended or rescinded as

necessary.

There are some 17,775 people evacuated due to impacts from the flooding, with 5,918 properties on evacuation order, and 3,632 properties on evacuation alert.

Disaster Financial Assistance (DFA) is now available for eligible British Columbians in south-west, central and southeast areas of the province and Vancouver Island who were affected by flooding and landslides from Nov. 14 to 16.

This assistance includes all Indigenous communities, electoral areas and municipalities within the geographic boundaries of these areas.

DFA is available to homeowners, residential tenants, business owners, local governments, Indigenous communities, farmers and charitable organizations that were unable to obtain insurance to cover disaster-related losses. By regulation, DFA is unable to compensate for losses for which insurance was reasonably and readily available.

Applications for the DFA event must be submitted to Emergency Management BC (EMBC) by Feb. 12, 2022.

British Columbians can access the DFA application online: www.gov.bc.ca/disasterfinancialassistance

Charity launches flood appeal

The Salvation Army has launched a massive emergency response effort to help victims of the worst flood in a century in B.C. Emergency units are on the ground in six of the hardest hit communities across the province providing food, hydration, shelter, clothing, and blankets to first responders, evacuees, and flood victims.

"We have been on the ground since day one in the hardest hit communities," says Mike Leland, spokesperson for The Salvation Army in B.C. "We have several of our trained emergency response units actively supporting the impacted communities. Our feeding trucks are there, we have been airlifting in meals, and we have set up evacuation centres in communities to receive victims of the floods."

With six emergency response vehicles in the field and evacuation centres open, teams are working around the clock to supply communities with food, hydration, and blankets.

"Several of our locations outside of the impacted areas mobilized their communities immediately to assist in the effort," says Leland. "This is a tragedy unfolding and we are here for those people and communities day and night and we will be here to the end, and see this through into the recovery phase... this is what we do, but we don't do it alone."

The Salvation Army has also launched an Emergency Flood Relief Appeal. People can help by going to salvationarmy.ca/BCFlood or call 1-800-SAL-ARMY to make a safe and secure donation.

"This is going to take everyone coming together, not only to assist right now, but to help these communities recover in the weeks and months ahead. Every dollar donated will go directly towards helping," Leland says.

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City prepared for possible winter snowfall

By HANNAH SCOTT

Local Journalism Initiative reporter

With this winter projected to be colder than average for the second year in a row, the city is summarizing its plans to be prepared for inclement weather and poor road conditions.

Last winter, Richmond experienced 41 frost/ice events and one snow event, according to a staff report in advance of this week's public works and transportation committee meeting. Thirteen centimetres of snow accumulated at the airport in total.

The report notes that the city pre-treated or de-iced 25,860 lane kilometres, as well as plowing and salting 2,304 lane kilometres of higher-priority roads.

The city's snow response route map prioritizes roads based on key travel routes. There are 217 kilometres of first priority routes, which includes all bus routes. Second priority routes, totalling 22 kilometres, are main roads through major subdivisions and industrial roadways. Third priority routes (77 kilometres) are only serviced once the first and second priority routes are under control.

This year's colder weather will be caused by a moderate to strong La Niña, based on the long-range forecast from the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration's Climate Prediction Center. La Niña amplifies the polar jet stream and



Photo by Hannah Scott

The city is preparing for another cold winter, with salt on hand and snow response equipment at the ready.

can bring colder air and more frequent storms.

The city has run its Snow Angels program annually since 2010, connecting volunteers with elderly residents or those with mobility or health challenges. Volunteers help by shovelling snow from sidewalks or walkways if there is an accumulation of three or more centimetres of snow. Last year, a record 119 volunteers registered, and more than 40 homes were helped during February's snow event.

The city has secured 1,050 metric tonnes of salt

for this winter, with 2,200 more on reserve if needed. Over 45 pieces of equipment are available for snow response, including eight vehicles with brine tanks.

Road temperatures are measured 24 hours a day at eight locations around the city. Information is available online at www.richmond.ca/services/rdws/weather/roadtemps.htm

Staff anticipate no financial impact for this winter's plans.

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Library tech carries out a 'bit of everything'

There's never—well, seldom anyway—a down day for Steven McCreedy.

As a library technician at the Richmond Public Library's Cambie branch, his job is to carry out practical tasks on a day by day basis. That may be assisting librarians or helping patrons access information. But for McCreedy it's all in a day's work, and certainly a labour of love.

What do you like the most about what you do?

"By far my favourite part is connecting with the customers. I love helping the people who come in. Working here for as long as I have, I've watched families grow. I've seen babies right from being just a few weeks old all the way through to graduation and beyond, and



knowing that I've helped them and their families throughout the years is just the best feeling."

How did you come to find yourself in this role?

"I started almost 20 years ago as a book-shelfer on the suggestion of a friend. I found that I enjoyed working in the library enough that I decided to get my library technician diploma. An opportunity came up at the Cambie branch around the

same time I finished school and I've been here ever since. I don't want to say that I fell into it but the timing really worked out for me."

How would you describe your role at the library?

"I do a little bit of everything. I answer people's questions and help them find books; I do programs like book clubs, Storytime, or the Pokémon Trainer's Gym card game club for kids."

How do you feel that you and your role most benefit the community?

"I try to make the library a comfortable 'third space' for people to belong. I feel like my role is to help people find their way and explore what the library offers. With so many different things that I do, I'm helping families learn and bond together both with the programs like Storytime and with helping them find books."



Photo submitted

Richmond Public Library technician Steven McCreedy.

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 (City Services > Roads, Dykes, Water & Sewers > Construction Projects > 2020 Paving Program).

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Photo by Geoff George/CBC

Richmond baker Caron Lau, who competed on the latest season of *The Great Canadian Baking Show*, says this mountain-inspired cake is close to her heart.

Baker reflects on show time

By HANNAH SCOTT

Local Journalism Initiative reporter

Although Richmond baker Caron Lau didn't remain in the tent until the bitter end, she describes her experience on *The Great Canadian Baking Show* as "the best time."

Lau, who was eliminated from the competition show during its third episode (which aired on Oct. 31), emphasizes the pride she felt—even when she learned she would be leaving the tent. She says she hadn't remembered how much she cried.

"There's this thing in Asian culture, or at least the way I was brought up, where we're never good enough and we can never be proud of ourselves," she says.

But after filming in a hot and humid tent during the summer, Lau says she was proud to have completed all three of her bakes during the two-day filming of the third episode, deemed "Celebration Week."

"I think someone had asked me, 'are you proud of yourself,' and then it was the waterworks because I really was."

She says her time on the show was a sign that she can achieve anything she wants. And she's also formed a close friendship with her fellow bakers, with whom she has an active group chat.

"Just knowing the amazing quality of people that I met—I can't say any better things about the group of bakers. (The fact) that the 10 of us could come together, not knowing each other, but really count on each other in our hard moments and our low moments (shows) the importance of community, especially in the time of COVID, and how baking really facilitates so much community between people."

She was glad to be able to represent B.C. during her time on the show, particularly with one of the cakes she baked on the first episode—called "Over the Rockies" as a tribute to the mountains.

After being on the show, Lau says she feels less afraid to try new things. And she would give the same advice to new bakers.

"Baking is this super fun thing that you start from loose ingredients and you end up with something that's a completely different reactant or product than what you started with. Yeah, there will be science experiments that go astray, but finally getting that perfect thing right for the first time is the most incredible feeling to know that you did that with your two hands—and an oven and probably a lot of other fancy appliances—but you did it; it's still you."

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Givers form 'Foundation' of hospital advances

By DON FENNELL

@rmdsentinel

Indeed it takes a village to raise a child. But it should also be said that it takes a community to care for each other.

During the past 34 years, the Richmond Hospital Foundation has raised more than \$120 million to help fund vital medical equipment and to enable improvements in patient care services and upgrade facilities. Its goal remains to inspire joyful giving to build a better and healthier future for Richmond.

"We continue to be excited about the transformative future ahead, as we continue to help drive innovation in support of excellent care for our rapidly growing and richly diverse community," says Natalie Meixner, president and chief executive officer of the Richmond Hospital Foundation. "Our future focus includes raising funds to support innovative technology for the new medical imaging centre and the emergency room, both important additions to the new Yurkovich Family Pavilion (which has been selected as the name of the new acute care tower slated to be completed in 2028)."

The pavilion, which honours the lifetime contributions to local health care by Dr. Tony Yurkovich and his wife Nancy, a registered nurse, will also feature a medical imaging centre and 219 in-patient beds.

The province approved the business plan for the pavilion (also known as the acute care tower) last summer, upon the completion of the Richmond Hospital Foundation's \$50 million ACT NOW campaign, the funds realized through the generosity of local donors.

Earlier this month, the foundation hosted a virtual Experience Health Care in Richmond event to share some of the advances at Richmond Hospital. By reaching its almost \$2 million goal for this campaign period, Meixner says the foundation is able to fund much-needed equipment for Richmond Hospital. The additions include minimally-invasive surgical upgrades for Richmond Hospital's operating rooms; a lithotripsy laser for the urology department to treat people with kidney stones; and a mini arm for orthopedic procedures.

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Photo by Don Fennell

Thanks to the ongoing generosity of residents, the Richmond Hospital Foundation is able to fund new additions including much-needed medical equipment.

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Operations going swimmingly at new pools

This is the fourth in a series exploring Minoru Park's history and amenities.

Old pool site will become green space

By **DON FENNELL**
@rmdsentinel

On the heels of the heavily-favoured Ohio State Buckeyes' 10-7 victory over upstart Oregon Webfoots in the 44th edition of college football's Rose Bowl game in Pasadena on New Year's Day 1958, Richmond set forth plans to build upon its own sporting legacy.

Soon after acquiring "Section 8" (the Brighthouse Park Racetrack) from the B.C. Turf and Country Club, construction began on Centennial Pool in Minoru Park. (Centennial Park was the name given to the park before it was renamed Minoru in 1960.)

Originally an outdoor facility, the pool—which opened in 1959 and became known as Minoru Aquatic Centre in 1977 upon the opening of an indoor complex—served the residents of Richmond for the better part of five decades. It is currently being demolished following the opening of new pools in September 2020 as part of the Minoru Centre for Active Living.

Given the popularity of swimming in the community, and the ever-increasing use of previously-existing facilities at Watermania in the Riverport Park complex at No. 5 and Triangle roads, the new pools at Minoru have been enthusiastically welcomed by the public. To date, the city estimates an average of 1,300 to 1,500 people a day use the pools along with the fitness facilities.

"This is the highest level since we opened, and we are no longer at any reduced capacity for the pool," explains city spokesperson Clay Adams. "As more people become vaccinated and continue to adhere to public health proto-



Photos courtesy City of Richmond

The new aquatic centre at Minoru Centre for Active Living is being heartily embraced by the public.

cols such as proof of vaccination and masks, we expect the numbers to remain steady if not increase."

The aquatic centre offers six bodies of water for all ages and abilities. Features include a leisure pool with a river run, slide and rain shower; two 25-metre pools with a total of 14 lanes for lane swimming and aqua fit classes; Canada's largest hot tub; an adult hot pool; a polar plunge cold pool set at 15 degrees Celsius; steam room and saunas; a rock climbing wall; a drop slide with a 1.5 metre free-fall drop into the water; and a diving board.

While the story of the new aquatic centre is just beginning, its predecessor—which was located mere steps away—enjoyed both a lengthy and notable history. For a time it also

housed at least two swim clubs, and served as the first home base for many elite swimmers of the future, including Olympic and Paralympic athletes Brian Johns and Walter Wu respectively.

So what will become of the space where the old pool once stood? That has yet to be determined, but Coun. Linda McPhail says she has always favoured converting it to green space.

"At the time when the location of the new Minoru Centre for Active Living was chosen, I and most of the council of the day believed that," she says. "Over the years there have been many discussions on repurposing, but the costs were prohibitive."

At the Feb. 8, 2021 council meeting, a motion passed to demolish the pool and convert it back to green space. McPhail believes the space can serve as an "excellent" entry point to the park.

A popular recreational and cultural precinct in the heart of City Centre, Minoru Park has undergone many recent changes as has the neighbourhood surrounding it. McPhail says the Minoru Park Vision Plan provides an opportunity to take a holistic approach to planning its future renewal and evolution. She says everything from green space to parking and enhancing pedestrian and roller access will be explored. The plan is expected to be back before council soon, perhaps even before the end of this year.

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A time for coming together

Hanukkah is celebrated Nov. 28 to Dec. 5 this year

By HANNAH SCOTT

Local Journalism Initiative reporter

Following a period of isolation, Jewish people across the world have more freedom to gather and celebrate this Hanukkah season.

Celebrating the successful revolt of the Maccabees, the eight-night festival (which can also be spelled Chanukah) sees families lighting a nine-branch candelabrum called a menorah. Each night, one additional candle is lit in remembrance of the oil that miraculously burned for eight days in the holy temple in Jerusalem, although there was only enough for one day.

In 2021, Hanukkah will be celebrated from Nov. 28 to Dec. 5. And this year, spreading light is more important than ever, says Rabbi Susie Tendler of Beth Tikvah.

"I showed kids at the (Richmond Jewish) Day School the other day: generally if you gave something you'd have half of it, if you gave your light it would diminish your own," she says. "The reality with light is, when you share light it magnifies it and makes it almost double. When you put two wicks together, the sum is greater than the parts. For me, that is a metaphor for this particular holiday season of us all working to get light out there and really spread communal light."

Following a year of virtual connection, Tendler says actually being able to share space with people helps communicate energy.

"When I ask people what's the difference, certainly there's a physicality," she says. "Even if you don't touch one another, our bodies generate heat, (and) we know that the best way of staying warm is to be next to another human being. And that warmth, to me, it's the same concept as light. What does light create also—warmth."

With virtual gatherings, each person appearing in a little box effectively puts walls around them.

"I feel that this season is about taking down those barriers and creating warmth and light and that's what this year for many people begins to feel like. And yet, at the same time, we need to hold those for whom it doesn't feel safe yet still very close and do our best to send that energy, surround them with that energy to make sure that they know that we are very much awaiting the day when it feels safe for them to come and feel welcomed also, to know that we're missing them."

Beth Tikvah is planning a number of Hanukkah events for kids, families and adults.

Also marking the occasion is Chabad Richmond, which will host a Hanukkah skate at Mi-



Photo submitted

It's more important than ever to spread light this Hanukkah (Nov. 28 to Dec. 5).

noru Arenas on the first night of the celebration, Nov. 28. More information about this is available online.

Rabbi Yechiel Baitelman of Chabad Richmond says it's important for people to come together, particularly at times of celebration.

"We need to find ways, as we continue to make progress with this pandemic, to safely and secure-

warmth. So at this time of year, people are drawn to each other to come together.

"Hanukkah is the message and the victory of light over darkness, of hope over despair, and it just takes one small candle to dispel lots of darkness," says Baitelman. "And so while we need to be cautious and careful, we also have to be very hopeful and positive. I'm a big believer that the happiness itself will bring a lot of goodness—rather than waiting for good things to happen and then (becoming) happy, we should be happy and good things will happen."

Chabad and The Bayit are looking forward to welcoming Richmondites of all faiths to their joint menorah-lighting event, scheduled for Dec. 5 outside the Brighthouse library branch.

Rabbi Levi Varnai of The Bayit says it's exciting to be able to hold the decades-old event again after a year off. And the fact that the event falls on the last night of Hanukkah means that people will be able to see the menorah fully lit up.

"Hanukkah is a holiday of light. The world every year needs light—especially this year," says Varnai. "I don't think we're out of the woods yet, but I think there's some light at the end of the tunnel. We need some light and hope now."

Varnai adds that dark times are not incessant, and light always ends up winning—despite the sadness that surrounds us.

"It gives us some perspective, as the world is starting to open, that light always prevails—and that's the message of Hanukkah. It was true 2,000 years ago, it's true today, and it'll be true 2,000 years from now."

hannahs@richmondsentinel.ca

It gives us some perspective, as the world is starting to open, that light always prevails—and that's the message of Hanukkah.

— Rabbi Levi Varnai

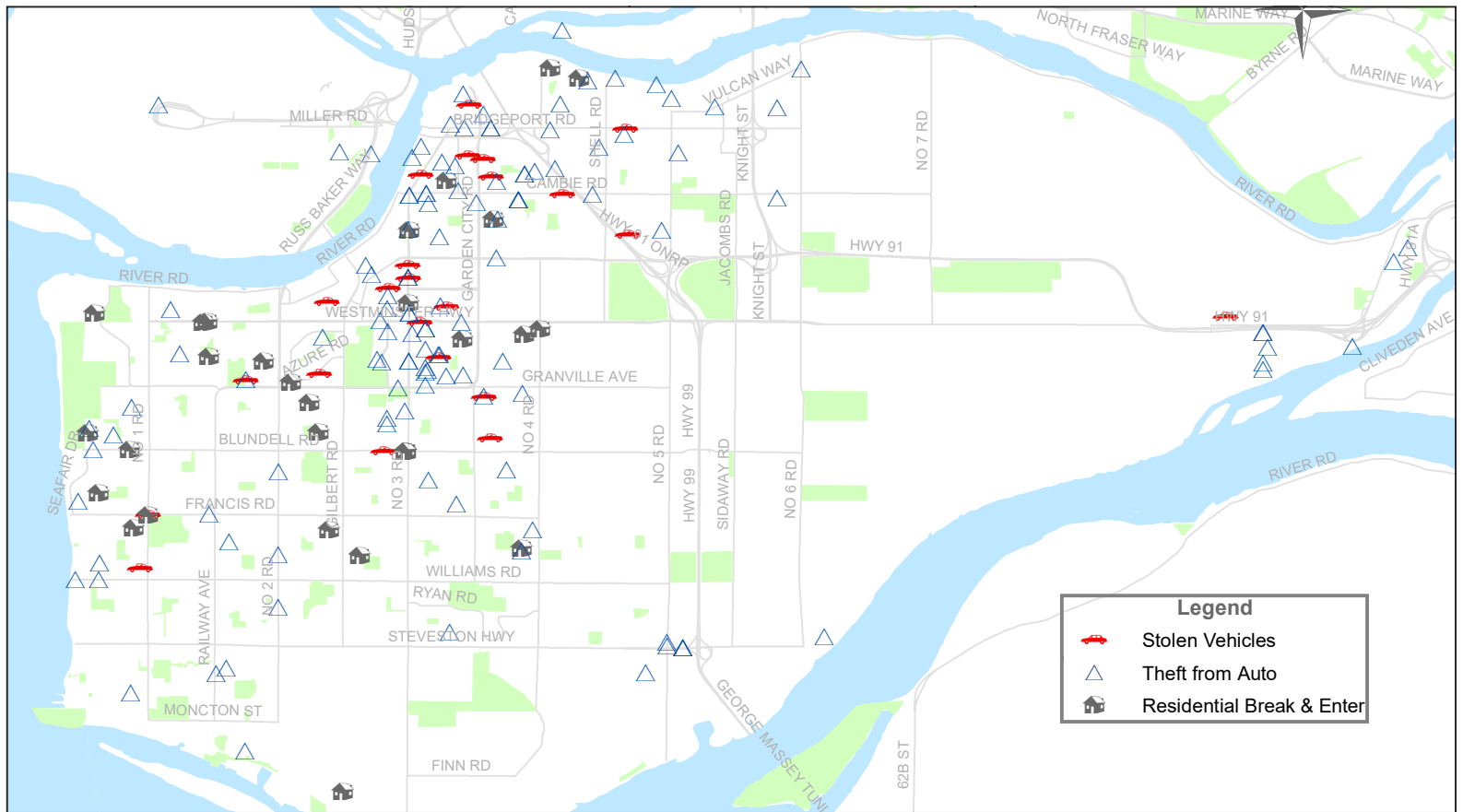
ly in a healthy way come together and be able to celebrate together and be in each other's company," he says. "It's a special connection to Hanukkah here especially. Hanukkah is celebrated with the lighting of candles—candles are beautiful in that they bring light and they shed warmth, and we are always drawn to things that are bright and warm, so we're drawn to the candles."

In Jewish mystical teachings, each human being is also said to be a candle, exuding light and



RCMP

Crime Map Oct. 1 - 31, 2021



Richmond again seeking Snow Angels

The winter season is quickly approaching and the City of Richmond is again asking volunteers to sign up to be a Snow Angel to help clear snow and ice from around the homes of residents who are elderly, ill or have mobility concerns. Families, students and businesses are also encouraged to enrol as volunteers during snowy weather.

"The Snow Angels program exemplifies the importance of community connection," says Mayor Malcolm Brodie. "This program has been giving volunteers an opportunity to make a difference in their neighbourhood for years with this vital service that helps to ensure that Richmond residents remain safe and active throughout the winter season."

This volunteer-driven program kicks in depending on the severity of a storm and the priority needs of callers. When there is an accumulation of three or more centimetres of snow in Richmond, the Snow Angels program is activated. Although assistance cannot always be guaranteed, participating volunteers make every effort to help all qualified residents.

To learn more about being a Snow Angel volunteer or to register, visit <http://icanhelp.richmond.ca>, call 604-247-4453 or e-mail parksprograms@richmond.ca. Volunteers can select the geographic community to serve including their own neighbourhoods or any location citywide.

For those that need the services of the Snow Angels program, the city is requesting residents apply by Dec. 6. Applications received after that date will be added to a waitlist. To apply, contact the Snow Angels coordinator at 604-247-4453.

For more information on other snow removal services, to volunteer for the Snow Angels program and for other winter preparedness information, visit www.richmond.ca/winter



Photo courtesy City of Richmond

Volunteer to be a Snow Angel this winter to help clear snow and ice from around the homes of residents who are elderly, ill or have mobility problems.

Jensen tabbed to lead arena team

Rod Jensen is again stepping up for one of his favourite pastimes: lacrosse.

The long-time McMath Secondary School teacher has spent much of his 59 years (40 to be exact) coaching the sport he loves. And now he's set to lead one of the four West Division teams in the new West Coast Arena Lacrosse League (ALL), with games to be played out of the Langley Events Centre starting Dec. 11. Each team will play 12 games through to the end of the regular season in mid-March. The season will conclude with a championship final on March 27.

"There is no option out there like this so I think this will be a competitive league," Jensen said. "I am excited for the players. It keeps their dreams alive and gives an opportunity to reach the next level. I think the players are going to be super hungry."

Fellow Richmondite Fred Klomp will be one of Jensen's assistant coaches.

Founded in 2017, the Arena Lacrosse League is regarded as the National Lacrosse League's minor league, with seven Ontario-based teams prior to the launch of the ALL West.



Photo courtesy Langley Events Centre
Richmond's Rod Jensen will coach one of the four West Division teams in the new Arena Lacrosse League.

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Standing tall in the face of adversity

Immigrating from war-torn Syria, Maria Karaji is making the most of her new-found opportunities

By **DON FENNELL**
@rmdsentinel

As the bombs fell across the street from her school, Maria Karaji's biggest concern was the safety of her friends.

Five years later her focus remains on the plight of others.

Since emigrating with her family from Syria in 2016, the young Richmondite has been dedicated to creating a better life for herself and those around her. Her commitment in the face of many obstacles has only strengthened her resolve to raise awareness of the dangers many women and children around the world face on a daily basis.

With keen interests in law and psychology, Karaji—who graduated from Hugh Boyd Secondary School just last June—is now studying at the University of British Columbia. Being afforded such an opportunity is only possible because of her relentless work ethic, one that enabled her to master English and garner several academic awards including the prestigious Beedie Luminaries Scholarship and the Coast Capital Standing Tall Education Award presented to exceptional students who are facing financial adversity. The Coast Capital award includes \$3,500 to help with the cost of post-secondary tuition and living expenses and is also unique because it helps youth from diverse socioeconomic backgrounds.

"During the last few years it has been hard for my family to achieve financial stability and they aren't able to help me pay for post-secondary education," explained Karaji. "Receiving this award from Coast Capital means my family will not have to deal with additional financial burdens and I can pursue my educational goals without the added stress."

Maureen Young, director of Coast Capital's Social Purpose Office, said "We believe that accessing a post-secondary education shouldn't be a dream, but a reality for anyone looking to build a better future for themselves and their communities."

Hugh Boyd counsellor Geordy Reid isn't surprised by Karaji's accomplishments.

"Her story has a narrative a lot of people can't even conceive of or would (not) be able to endure. She and her family have had to face so many hardships, but she took it upon herself (to make the most of all opportunities). Not only did she help her parents and little brother learn English, but achieved really strong grades and volunteered all over the school. When you talk to her you think you're talking to a 25-year-old, but I guess that's what happens when you've had to live a few lives."

While Karaji's efforts have earned some well-deserved help as she pursues her life goals, not once, Reid says, has Karaji ever felt a sense of entitlement.

Photo submitted
Emigrating from Syria in 2016, Hugh Boyd grad Maria Karaji earned a Coast Capital Standing Tall Education Award among other academic honours.



"She never asked for handouts, or even told her story to people who didn't want to actually seek her out," Reid says. "You'd never know (her story). She presents such a mature, articulate (demeanor) and is super humbling and appreciative."

The father of a toddler, Reid says he's thought about the sheer contrast of Karaji's childhood to the world in which his daughter will likely grow up. He's wondered about how a parent can instill those values, morals and resiliency in their child without having the same first-hand experience of the world.

"It's no surprise Maria wants to try to help others," he says. "Even in her own social life it was obvious she always wanted to be there for people, and to make those around her feel supported. She's going to be a leader; one of those kids who when we see her leading the way in the future, we will say 'I knew her when.'"

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Back to the theatre

Gateway holiday concert brings people back together

By HANNAH SCOTT

Local Journalism Initiative reporter

Gateway Theatre's first major production in almost two years will be something of a homecoming for theatre lovers.

A *Broadway Holiday*, running Dec. 16 to 23, will welcome audiences back to Gateway's Main-Stage for a unique holiday concert featuring seven singer-musicians. Gateway's director of artistic programs Barbara Tomasic co-created the show with Chris King. Initially the two had intended to present it last December, but due to increased pandemic restrictions it had to be postponed for a year.

"We got together in August, took a week and played through all the songs, arranged all the songs," says Tomasic. "It was a really amazing process. We hadn't been together creating for so long because of the pandemic."

King transcribed the song arrangements and Tomasic put together a script of sorts, which links the songs through their backstories as well as stories of holiday traditions.

"It's a really nice mix of what this season is about—things like food, being together, generosity and kindness, but also celebrating the music from these Broadway shows."

While there will not be a sing-along, audiences will be engaged in other ways. And Gateway has gone to great lengths to ensure people feel safe, putting in place protocols like mandatory masking at all times—even while seated—and spacing between groups of seats.

"What we've learned in the last year is that we have been very successful at taking care of our audiences, ushering them forward and allowing them to feel really safe while experiencing the performing arts," says Tomasic. "We didn't feel like we could all of a sudden lift all restrictions. It didn't feel in line with how we've been operating thus far. If you're sitting there thinking about someone sitting too close to you, you're not going to be present and enjoying the show."

Performers and crew members must be vaccinated, and audience members aged 12-plus must also present proof of vaccination. The concession will not be open.

For audience members who don't feel able to attend an in-person performance, the show will be filmed on its opening night and made available for online viewing several days later. Whether in-person or virtually, Tomasic says audiences can expect a moving show with familiar, nostalgic music.

"I hope we make people feel safe so that they



Photo by David Cooper

Gateway will welcome people back to its theatre for this year's holiday show Dec. 16 to 23.

*I hope we make people
feel safe so that they can
come and feel the holiday
joy, that would be nice I
think for all of us.*

— Barbara Tomasic

can come and feel the holiday joy, that would be nice I think for all of us."

Making his Gateway debut, Sean Hara is one of the performers. A graduate of McRoberts secondary and Capilano University's musical theatre program, Hara aspires to be a voice actor—a passion partly spurred by growing up watching Disney movies.

"I grew up in the 1990s so watching those kind of movies with a song and telling a story through song was really captivating," he says.

Hara is a self-taught guitar and ukulele player, and auditioned for Gateway's show as he was completing the three-year Capilano program. Although the pandemic caused some necessary

changes to the productions that are integral to the curriculum, Hara says it was still a great learning experience and presented some opportunities for unique interpretations.

"I went through school for half of COVID. After graduating, I definitely felt really lost. I feel bad spending so much time not working. Writing things and going through the creative process, you're not getting paid for that," says Hara. "I'm really fortunate that I did book (the Gateway holiday show) right out of school."

A lover of Christmas music, Hara's favourite song from *A Broadway Holiday* is a mash-up of "Home," from Broadway musical *The Wiz*, and holiday favourite "I'll Be Home For Christmas."

"I had never met the other people in the cast before. We got really close and talked about our family traditions. A lot of times our traditions would line up—it's one of those things where you think your family is so weird, and someone else says 'me too.' The last few years is a blur. I don't remember doing a lot during the holidays because of COVID. This will be a special one, because people can feel joy and it'll be a really reviving story."

For more information or to buy tickets, go to www.gatewaytheatre.com/broadway-holiday

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Business was in Ratsoy's blood

After heading several startups, Richmond man now enjoys huge vintage car collection

By **FLORENCE GORDON**
Contributor

Many know Jim Ratsoy as one of Richmond's successful businessmen and former owner of his family auto mall in the heart of the city. He's also known as a respected collector of some 130 vintage cars including classics from the 1940s and 1950s.

His story begins as a man who had very little growing up as a boy during the depression, but he created a lot, gave back more, started businesses in a number of provinces, and has made Richmond his home for over 45 years.

Jim was born in 1932 and raised on a farm in Smoky Lake, Alta. In 1937 his parents lost their farm during the depression, moved into town and opened a small second-hand store, living in a small room at the back of the store. Alberta Poultry was looking for someone to operate an "egg candling" business so his mom took on the challenge which allowed the family to move into the second floor of the building. His dad bought a truck to take the trappers' furs to sell in Edmonton and deliver milk from the farmers to the creamery. He would pick up old abandoned cars and trucks and bring them back to Smoky Lake where he and a mechanic restored the vehicles.

In 1947, his dad was offered a Mercury franchise, then switched to the Chevrolet franchise and later added the Pontiac and Buick franchise. In 1948, his mom expanded the second-hand store to include furniture and hardware making her a successful business woman well before her time.

In 1954 Jim married Marcia and over the next 15 years added four children to their family. In 1957 his dad died and at the age of 25 Jim took over the family automotive business. In 1960, with the help of an auctioneer, he dissolved the car business, leaving his mom sole owner of the Ratsoy hardware and furniture



Photo submitted

Growing up poor during the depression, Jim Ratsoy went on to establish many businesses.

store.

In 1960 Jim moved to Edmonton and opened a used car business. In 1961 he sold his business and invested in a holiday trailer franchise. In 1966 he sold the business and moved to Wetaskiwin and partnered in a Chrysler dealership then sold his interest in 1969 and moved back to Edmonton and opened a used car business. In 1969, GM wooed Jim to Winnipeg where he took ownership of a Chevrolet Oldsmobile dealership in downtown Winnipeg. In 1976 GM once again wooed Jim to Richmond for a new challenge to open a Pontiac Buick dealership. Jim and his family settled down, making Richmond their home to this day.

In 1976 Jim bought the AMC dealership on No.3 Road at Lansdowne and changed it to Lansdowne Pontiac Buick, setting up parts and service on Cedarbridge. In 1979 he found a larger property at Minoru and Alderbridge allowing him to move everything under one roof leaving the Truck franchise on No.3 Road. In 1983 Jim opened a Chrysler dealership on No.3 Road. In 1984 he added a Hyundai dealership on Lansdowne and No.3 Road. In 1984 he purchased property on Minoru near Ackroyd

and moved the Lansdowne Pontiac and Buick business. In 1986 he purchased adjacent land adding the Cadillac franchise. In 1988 Jim added another business on Minoru; Lansdowne Saturn, Isuzu, Saab and in 1993 moved the Lansdowne Chrysler, Dodge, Jeep to a new location on Minoru.

We would be remiss if we didn't talk about Jim's passion for vintage cars; some 130 classics from the 1940s, 1950s and 1960s. His team re-stored and brought life back to everything Jim bought. Jim then built a massive showroom that protected these classics but also his collection of player pianos, instruments, juke boxes and hundreds of memorabilia. This showroom is full of history and memories of the many fundraising events for charities.

Asked if he'd do it all over again, Jim said: "You bet I would. If I could go back in time knowing what I know today I would do some things different."

Video of interview at www.richmondsentinel.ca/videos

• Florence Gordon is a guest writer to the Richmond Sentinel

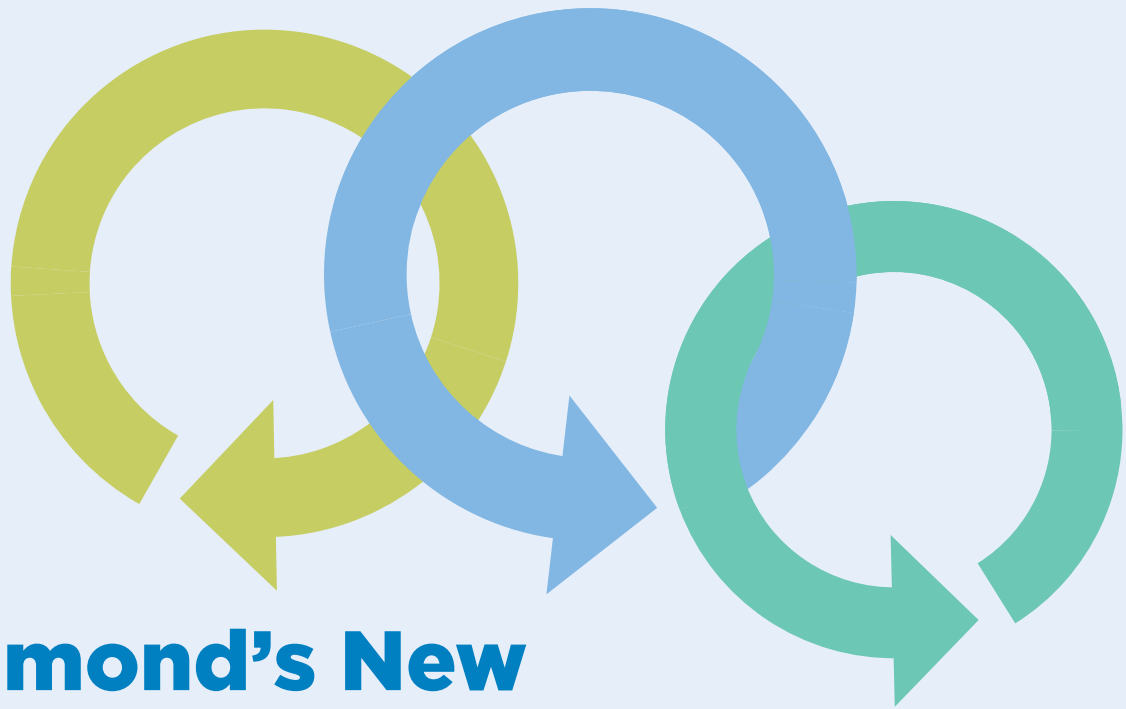
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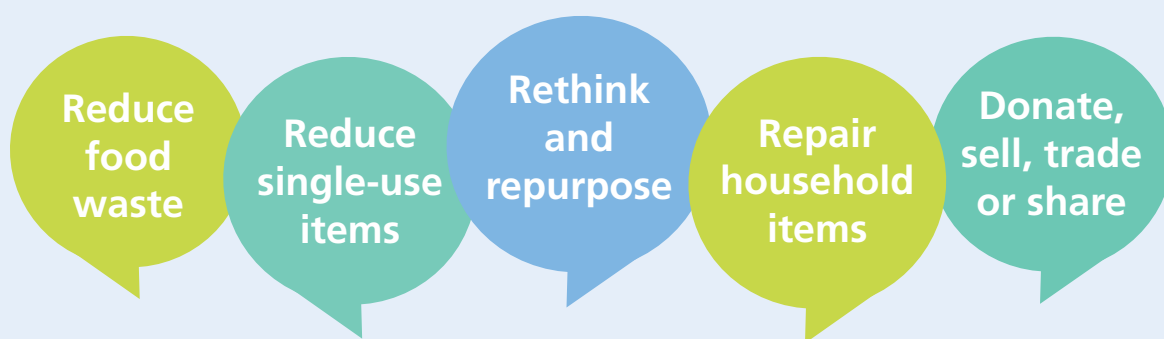
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Richmond's New Community Ideas Hub

Looking for new ideas to reduce waste, save money and help the environment?

Check out Richmond's new Community Ideas Hub and find lots of great waste reduction tips shared by community members.



Working together to rethink how we manage our waste also supports a circular economy, where the materials are used, reused, repurposed and recycled multiple times to reduce the need for raw materials. Learn more at richmond.ca/rethink.

Environmental Programs Information: 604-276-4010
garbageandrecycling@richmond.ca

