



HAIR-RAISING EXPERIENCE

**MLA donates locks
to Wigs for Kids**



05

Photo by Hannah Scott

Richmond–Steveston MLA Kelly Greene willingly donated her lengthy locks to the Wigs for Kids BC initiative, which provides wigs for children struggling with hair loss due to cancer treatment and other serious illnesses.

How wet was it last month? Just a record rainfall

By DON FENNELL
@rmdsentinel

In the sports vernacular, they say records are made to be broken. But in the real world it's doubtful many are celebrating November's historic rainfall numbers.

With yet another atmospheric river bringing even more precipitation to close out the month, if Richmondites felt they got drenched it may be because they did.

Asked if he'd ever seen so much rain, veteran city Coun. Harold Steves quipped: "Has anybody ever seen rain so copious?"

During the month of November, rain fell at Vancouver International Airport all but a handful of days. It began with 6.6 millimetres of precipitation on Nov. 1, with at least another 10 millimetres each of the next three days before tapering to 4.9 millimetres on Nov. 5. On Nov. 9, some 15.2 millimetres of rain fell, reaching a peak of 52.5 millimetres on Nov. 14.

A long-time environmentalist who has dedicated much of his life to the cause, Steves has no doubt humans have played a negative role in the rapid and dramatic climate changes we are experiencing.

"The time is now," he says, frustrated that few took the warnings made decades ago seriously.

Famed Norwegian meteorologist Sverre Pettersen predicted in the 1950s that by the turn of the century there would be very little life left in the Arctic, Steves recalls.

"We had no idea the changes would affect the entire planet, or when. Now, we're finding out."

In Richmond alone this year, we'll have experienced historic weather extremes that many experts are suggesting have only just begun.

The summer of 2021 was barely official when locals "suffered" through a record 32.1 degree Celsius (90 Fahrenheit) day on June 29—the highest tempera-



Photo by Jaana Björk

The month of November saw the most precipitation ever at Vancouver International Airport—312.4 millimetres.

ture ever at Vancouver International Airport.

Now, just a few months later, while the weather remains mild there is record precipitation for locals to contend with. Flooding has already caused widespread damage and disruption, with the November rainfall total easily pouring out a new all-time monthly record of some 300-plus millimetres (more than 12 inches). The average is slightly less than 200 millimetres.

Key messages in the 2019 *Canada's Changing Climate Report* concluded that Canada's climate has warmed and will warm further, driven by human influence. It said past and future warming in Canada is on average double the magnitude of global warming, and that projected precipitation will continue to increase for most of Canada, with coastal flooding expected to increase in many parts due to local sea levels rising.

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Victor Ghirra Toy Drive a labour of love



File photo

Honouring a larger than life figure whose modest generosity was pronounced, the Victor Ghirra Toy Drive is back for the 15th consecutive year.

By DON FENNELL
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In so many ways, Victor Ghirra was larger than life. But nothing illustrated that more than his devotion to others—particularly kids.

"There were so many heartwarming stories shared about his life, the great person he was, but the one that touched me the most was finding out that Victor had quietly been purchasing thousands of dollars in toys for B.C. Children's Hospital and donating them to needy children who weren't as lucky as his own," says Harvey Kooner.

This year—for the 15th consecutive—Kooner is organizing the annual Victor Ghirra Toy Drive to pay further homage to his late friend, who passed away suddenly in 2007 leaving behind his wife and four young sons.

When asked at the children's hospital, "Who are you, and where are these toys from, which organization," the modest Ghirra, determined not to have the focus on

him, would reply: "It doesn't matter. These toys are for the kids and that's all you need to know."

It turned out that Ghirra had been making trips to the hospital for well over a decade. He was purely being himself, never telling anyone what he was up to.

"When I heard (about Ghirra's efforts) it touched me, and I wanted to find a way to honour the man with a golden heart," Kooner explains. "For the past 14 years, with help from people like you, 42,650-plus toys have been collected and distributed to dozens of organizations."

So again this year, Kooner is asking for the public to join in by purchasing a new toy and donating it to the cause. Donations can be dropped off at the Richmond Grand Toy Count event from noon to 2 p.m. Dec. 11 at the Riverside Grand Ballroom parking lot (1231 Burdette St.). You're also invited to get your picture taken in the Winter Wonderland photo booth at the drive-thru event.

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Holocaust survivor lights menorah

By HANNAH SCOTT

Local Journalism Initiative reporter

The 25-foot menorah that goes up outside Richmond Cultural Centre annually serves as a beacon of light and togetherness.

Part of the Jewish Hanukkah celebration, the menorah has nine branches with a candle on each. The centre candle is the shamash, meaning “helper” or “attendant,” which is used to light the other eight candles. On each of the eight nights of the celebration, one additional candle is lit until they are all illuminated on the final night.

On the first night of this year’s celebration Nov. 28, Shalom (né Imre) Lichtmann, an 81-year-old Holocaust survivor, was the one to do the lighting.

In 1943, aged three, Lichtmann was deported to Bergen-Belsen concentration camp, where he remembers crying all the time because of his hunger. But he was able to survive and escaped with his mother, siblings, and grandparents on the Kastner train, which freed a train-load of Jews in exchange for money. He ended up in Switzerland and later moved to Israel and then to Canada.

After experiencing the horrors of the Holocaust first-hand, Lichtmann said being asked to light the menorah made him feel very emotional. He considers it to be a gesture not just for him, but for all Holocaust survivors.

“It means so much,” says Lichtmann. “It’s the first time I would ever do something like that. (And) actually I didn’t think I would, because just a month ago I was hit by a stroke, and I was in hospital and never thought I would come out of the hospital, so it’s a big surprise.”

For Lichtmann, the menorah symbolizes the positive story of Hanukkah, where a group of Jewish warriors known as the Maccabees fought for the liberation of their land and the reclamation of their Temple. And he hopes that positivity is a take-away for people going forward.

“Care for each other, and (be willing) to listen and accept each other—that is so important, not to enforce your own views only. That never works, and never will,” he says.

“Because we are small and not very powerful, we are being overwhelmed by stronger powers. That should not happen. We should all accept each other, regardless of the power that we have or don’t have. I don’t believe that religious people’s view is the correct one and Joe Blow’s is the wrong one. That doesn’t work. If we have different opinions, that’s because nature created us this way.”

The menorah originated in 1988 after Helmut and Hugo Eppich, German twin brothers from Yugoslavia and the founders of Ebco Industries, wanted to bring about more multicultural understanding.

“When they came down here, a part of the (Ebco) company policy was to bring all the faiths and religions (together), and they were doing their part to



Photo by Hannah Scott

Holocaust survivor Shalom Lichtmann lit Richmond’s iconic 25-foot Hanukkah menorah on the first night of the eight-night celebration Nov. 28.

bring some sort of multiculturalism together and get people of all faiths to respect each other,” says Joe Dasilva, Ebco’s former communications director.

“They asked me to find the leaders of different religions in Richmond and bring them to Ebco so that we could talk. One of the people I introduced to them first was Rabbi Avraham Feigelstock.”

Feigelstock, then of Eitz Chaim Synagogue, asked the Eppichs to build him a couple of small menorahs, around six feet tall. But, with the help of renowned Canadian architect Arthur Erickson, the end product had a height of 25 feet.

Richmondites come together annually to celebrate the theme of light shining through the darkness. Leaders of all faiths gathered for the first lighting in 1988, which took place at the Safeway on No. 3 Road and Westminster Highway and brought other faith leaders together, including Hindu, Muslim and Sikh. But when the Safeway was torn down and the area underwent construction, the menorah sat in storage at Ebco’s factory for more than 20 years.

The 2012 “Highway to Heaven” exhibit at the Richmond Museum, which focused on the many places of worship on No. 5 Road, led the menorah

to be displayed outside the cultural centre for the first time. Annually, this process requires set-up to occur in the middle of the night, with help from city staff, due to the large pieces that must be transported.

Although the menorah is still stored at Ebco for most of the year, Dasilva says next year it will hopefully have a new semi-permanent home that would cut down on transportation costs and logistics.

Throughout the 33-year history, the original team behind the project has given way to the next generation, who help to make it happen each year.

The Eppich brothers, now in their 80s, have retired and turned Ebco over to Helmut’s son Richard. He provides teams of tradespeople to help with preparation and cleanup. Dasilva’s son Dax, the founder of Montréal-based Lightspeed Commerce, has funded the project for the last two years. And Feigelstock’s son Mendy is a rabbi at The Bayit, which is involved in the event each year.

Although Lichtmann said he’s not used to being the centre of attention, being able to light the menorah was significant.

“All in all there was so much love, so much care, and it was just very touching.”

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'Culture Days' honours Richmond

Richmond has once again been named among Canada's top 10 cities for its annual Culture Days festivities of free, creative activities. The city also ranked fifth among mid-sized cities nation-wide.

"Richmond has a proud history of supporting a vibrant arts and culture community and has placed among Canada's top 10 cities every year since 2012," said Mayor Malcolm Brodie. "This ranking once again highlights the quality of our events and creative festivities and demonstrates our city's commitment and support to engage the community in the arts scene."

National rankings are based on the number of registered activities and programs offered during Culture Days (Sept. 24 to Oct. 24) and are categorized based on population size.

Following all health and safety protocols, arts and cultural groups and individual artists offered free hands-on workshops, demonstrations, performances and learning opportunities to take visitors behind the scenes.

Visual and graphic artist, Jeni Chen was Richmond's B.C. Culture Days ambassador, one of nine across the province. She offered in-person and online art journaling workshops during her tenure, and designed Richmond's 2021 Cul-



Photo courtesy City of Richmond

Richmond has again been recognized for its annual Culture Days program of activities.

ture Days graphic that appeared on volunteer t-shirts.

Additional highlights of Richmond's 2021 Culture Days included the opening of the Richmond Museum exhibition *Reinventing Richmond*, which will run until September 2022, and par-

ticipating in the creation of Barigord Studio's stop-motion film featuring dancing characters and a model of the Richmond Cultural Centre created entirely from Lego bricks.

The next Culture Days will begin on Sept. 23, 2022.

Richmond receives small provincial grant

Richmond was one of 55 communities across B.C. to receive an annual grant in lieu of municipal property taxes last month.

Each November, the province pays grants in lieu of property taxes to municipalities and regional districts for services they provide in their communities. These include parks, sewers, roads, fire protection and other infrastructure projects. The grants are for properties owned by the provincial government including office buildings, warehouses and courthouses. Municipalities use these grants to fund and maintain priority public services and local infrastructure projects.

Richmond's share of the more than \$17 million distributed to municipalities is \$5,167. City spokesperson Clay Adams says payments are based on the assessed value of properties subject to these taxes. Richmond's amount is for taxes related to the ambulance station on Williams Road, which is owned by the province and used for provincial

services.

"Because these payments are an annual process, they become part of the city's general revenue which is used to offset overall costs," says Adams.

Grant calculations are determined under the Municipal Aid Act. Schools and hospitals are exempt from paying municipal property taxes and are not part of the grants-in-lieu calculation. Also excluded from compensation are provincial assets, including highways, forests, and parks or land under the control, management or administration of a Crown corporation.

"The funding makes a big difference in communities throughout B.C., particularly now, as local governments and the people they serve navigate the economic impacts of the pandemic," said Minister of Citizens' Services Lisa Beare.

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MLA Greene chops hair for Wigs for Kids

By HANNAH SCOTT

Local Journalism Initiative reporter

For children struggling with hair loss due to cancer treatments or other illnesses, a wig can help with confidence.

Richmond–Steveston MLA Kelly Greene donated about 30 centimetres (12 inches) of her hair to Wigs for Kids BC last week to help the cause. Greene visited Design Tech Hair Studio on No. 3 Road for the big chop.

"I have kids, and thinking about a kid that's trying to navigate a really difficult situation but (also) be a kid who's just at school and blending in with their friends and not showing a visible change, I think is important," says Greene. "It's really important as well to think about different ways that we can help, whether that's volunteering or donating money or donating hair or blood—there's lots of different ways that we can help our neighbours."

After not getting her hair cut for a little while early in the pandemic, Greene realized that if she grew it for a little longer (to reach the minimum donation length of 25.4 centimetres or 10 inches) she could help someone out by donating it. And

she's encouraging others to do the same, if they can.

"It's easy, it doesn't have a high barrier—it's something anybody can do and it can make such a huge difference in somebody's life," she says. "Growing your hair happens automatically. As long as you keep growing your hair, you're going to have something you're able to donate and really make a difference in somebody's life."

Hair must be clean and dry, and donations must be secured in a ponytail at the top end with an elastic band. Only hair that has not been coloured or permed can be donated.

According to Wigs for Kids BC's website, it takes 10 to 12 ponytails to make a single wig. Any child or teenager in the province who has lost their hair due to cancer treatment or another serious illness is eligible. The wigs are then provided free of charge.

"It's hard enough to fit in for kids without having a visible difference, and we can help those kids by sharing our hair," says Greene.

"I think it's good to be able to show that there's different ways of giving, and don't let your shortage of time or money hold you back from helping."

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Photo by Hannah Scott

Richmond–Steveston MLA Kelly Greene donated about 30 centimetres (12 inches) of hair to Wigs for Kids BC last week.

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Lam part of library's 'IT' team

By DON FENNEL
@rmdsentinel

In the world of information and technology, Vinh Lam stands tall.

As a technical support specialist for the Richmond Public Library, Lam serves as an important cog in the library's ongoing efforts to stay on top—if not ahead—of the rapidly changing way information is gathered, distributed and absorbed.

How would you describe your role at the library?

"With the ever-present use of computer technology in every aspect of the library, I'd like to think of Information Technology's (IT) role in general, and my role to be specific, to be a vital and integral part of our library's daily operation, communication, process improvement, resource planning, customer relationship, and environmental stewardship."

How did you come to find yourself in this role?

"The interwoven nature of customer ser-



vice and technology in IT was what attracted me to this role and continues to this day."

What do you like the most about what you do?

"Enabling the library's staff and processes with technologies that, in turn, effectively support the community."

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

"My role, and that of IT in general, benefits the community in many ways. To name a few:

- Improve the quality and range of library services that are available for the public
- Ensure our technology is efficient and easy to use, to support customers in accessing up-to-date and unlimited information from different sources
- Increase the knowledge and experience of library customers
- Improve communication between staff and the public.

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Photo submitted

Vinh Lam is a technical support specialist with the Richmond Public Library.



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Photo submitted
Holiday shopping season has started in Richmond, including at McArthurGlen Designer Outlet Vancouver Airport.

Holiday shopping season kicks off

By HANNAH SCOTT

Local Journalism Initiative reporter

With its 52-foot Christmas tree lit, one of Richmond's major malls has kicked off a holiday shopping season anticipated to come close to pre-pandemic norms.

Despite a drop in customer numbers last year—amounting to a 20 to 25 per cent decline, according to general manager Rob Thurlow—McArthurGlen Designer Outlet Vancouver Airport is anticipating that number will increase by about the same figure, roughly meeting 2019 numbers.

That rise in shopper numbers is projected to happen across the country, according to Deloitte's 2021 holiday retail outlook. Canadians' holiday shopping seems set to return to pre-pandemic levels, with average spending estimated at \$1,841—31 per cent higher than 2020 and eight per cent higher than 2019.

But some Canadians experienced financial hardship during the pandemic—nearly one in five, according to Deloitte. Those people are expecting to spend an average of \$1,400, in comparison to those in a more stable finan-

cial situation who are projected to drop an average of \$2,118 on holiday gifts.

Thirty-five per cent of Canadians planned to begin shopping before November, and 49 per cent prefer to shop in-store versus online. Concerns with shopping in stores include crowded locations (65 per cent) and risk of COVID-19 exposure (56 per cent).

Some safety protocols are still in place including mandatory masks and possible capacity limits depending on store size.

To avoid crowds, Thurlow suggests people shop mid-week in the morning as peak hours at McArthurGlen are about noon to 4 or 5 p.m. Boxing Day sales, scheduled for Dec. 26 to 28, will see extended hours and many stores offering deals.

"I think it's going to be a really good, happy holiday season this year because there's so much more to look forward to and celebrate than there was last year," says Thurlow. "There's a different level of optimism out there right now than there was a year ago. We all need it—it's been a pretty tough 18 months for everybody. Coming out of this now, it's great to see some positivity and optimism out there."

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Donors step up for Richmond Christmas Fund

It's generosity that enables the Richmond Christmas Fund to successfully help make the holidays special for those less fortunate. And that's been the case again this year, as donations of time, toys, dollars and services all make a difference.

Among many special events, on the early morning of Dec. 7, the annual drive-thru event was scheduled to return to the No. 1 fire hall on Gilbert Road, with Santa on hand to greet donors. And to say thanks, McDonald's coupons were served up to grab a quick breakfast.

Another group of individuals deserving of special recognition are the Angel Donors, which includes the TD Bank Group whose \$10,000 donation reflects the company's longstanding commitment to local community causes.

It's never too late to step up and help make a difference. For more information, call 604-279-7020.



Photo courtesy RCRG

Santa was slated to be on hand to greet donors at the annual drive-thru event Dec. 7 at the No. 1 fire hall.

Nurses staged 7 O'Clock Cheer concert

By DON FENNELL

[@rmdsentinel](#)

Seven o'clock in the evening has come to have special meaning since COVID-19 reared its ugly head. And last weekend—borrowing on the ritual that started as a nightly salute to the often exhaustive efforts of frontline workers—two musically-gifted nurses organized a fundraising concert to celebrate the role health-care workers have played in carrying B.C. through the pandemic, and to support patients in need.

Richmond's Victoria Groff, along with fellow nurse David Taylor, dreamt up the idea of *The 7 O'Clock Cheer*. The performance, held Dec. 4 at the Imperial Theatre in Vancouver, was a way to combat the negative actions of a small but vocal percentage of the population who blocked hospital entrances in protest of vaccines and public health protocols earlier this year. Proceeds from the charity concert will go towards a new dementia village in Comox.

It was back in March 2020, at the infancy of the pandemic, that Taylor answered an SOS call to help at the Lynn Valley Care Centre.

"So many people died there, despite the best efforts of some truly amazing nurses, care staff, and administrators," said Taylor, now a clinic nurse leader in geriatric medicine. "It was the first outbreak of COVID-19 at a long-term care centre in the country. It really underscored the vulnerability that this population faces within current models of care for older adults in Canada."

"This was David's first exposure to COVID-19 and the plight it had on the physical, emotional and mental well-being of the residents there had a profound impact on him," added Groff.

The more Taylor reflected on the stories he was told, about what used to happen in the care facility before the pandemic (visits from animals, group activities and musical performances), only convinced him more that he needed to do something. Initially, he determined he and his band—Colour Tongues—would play an acoustic show for the residents once the pandemic was over. And while that's still on the agenda, the idea of a larger concert to celebrate the health-care workers who stood on the frontlines took hold and both Groff and Taylor worked in concert to find a venue, build a lineup



Photo submitted

Richmond's Victoria Groff helped organize a fundraising concert last weekend to pay homage to her health-care colleagues and support patients in need.

of musicians, and decide the right cause to donate the proceeds to.

In addition to performances by Taylor and Colour Tongues, Groff and Old Soul Rebel also took to the stage while local artist Donna Giraud did a live painting.

Groff said the decision to support the construction of a new dementia centre in Comox reflects the fact that long-term care facilities are the most vulnerable pockets of our population.

"This is not surprising in the least, as viral outbreaks of flu or gastrointestinal diseases are commonplace in these care facilities, but it was the merciless lethality of COVID-19 that forced this into the public's eye," she said. "In the first wave of the pandemic, March to August of 2020, 80 per cent of all the deaths were in older adult care facilities. A new model to care for our older adults is needed, and the Comox dementia village is hopefully the first of many that can provide a safer and kinder model of care for our parents and our grandparents."

It also hits close to home for Groff. The local nurse and singer-songwriter knows first-hand how hard it is to see a loved one through dementia, which she experienced with her own grandmother.

"Watching someone slowly being unable to care for themselves, or becoming increasingly angry and confused isn't easy for the person it's happening to," she said. "But it is also hard for the support system surrounding them."

Groff recounted how her grandmother would eventually not be able to remember what she had for dinner, or to identify the family member she was speaking to.

"We were so lucky to have been able to transfer her to a care home that specializes in dementia," said Groff, whose talents also extend to the softball diamond and soccer pitch, and who has always had a big heart.

"I think it's just something that's innately a part of me," she said. "It just doesn't seem right to go 'Well, that's life.' And while I know life isn't always fair, I also know that it's not that hard to make things a little better for someone else just by caring. We live in a world that is very 'me, me,' when a lot of our problems can be solved if instead we thought, 'we, we.'"

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Library learning commons accessible for students

By HANNAH SCOTT

Local Journalism Initiative reporter

The image of a library as solely a silent study space is beginning to shift. And at Richmond schools that shift is no different, with many transforming into “library learning commons” that act as information hubs.

“If you think of a traditional library as a place you would go to get a book or maybe do some quiet research, we’re now thinking about a library learning commons as a place where you go to access different kinds of technologies,” says Rebeca Rubio, the coordinator of libraries and information services for Richmond School District.

With things like green screens, 3D printers and mobile technology, revamped school libraries offer a range of options to students. Movable furniture allows for reconfiguration to facilitate activities like robotics or building that may need more space.

Rubio describes libraries as “the great equalizer,” as they provide services to anyone regardless of their circumstances. She says this element is the same at schools, where students without access to a printer or technology at home can use the resources available in a library.

“If you’re in a (technology education) program, you can learn to 3D print, but if not you may never touch a 3D printer in your entire school career. If you go to the library learning commons at lunch or after school, you can learn from the librarians how to use one.”

And for some students a library is a safe space to seek refuge or find resources.

“If a student is struggling with sexuality or wondering about race, that’s a place where you can find resources as well. That equity and safety piece is also cornerstone to a learning commons.”

The library at Burnett secondary will make use of a \$30,000 innovation grant from the school district to help teacher-librarian Dita Verma realize her

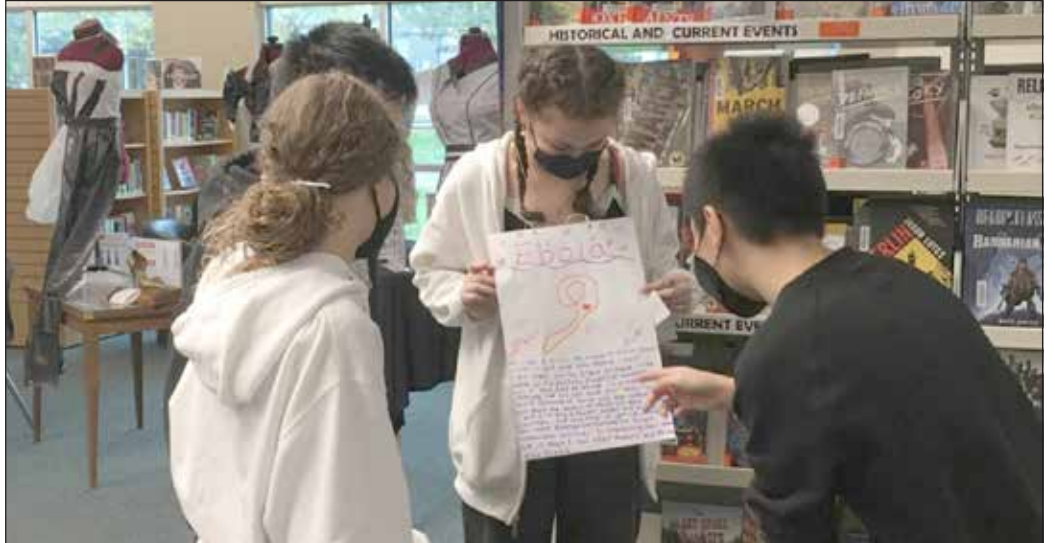


Photo courtesy Burnett secondary

Burnett secondary students use their school’s library learning commons for many activities, including sharing their science projects with peers.

wishes, with help from student input.

A seminar room has been transformed into a recording studio, complete with microphones and green screens. And a flexible central learning space has doubled as an escape room for some classes.

But the crown jewel of Burnett’s learning commons is its “maker space,” which includes a 3D printer, sewing machine, and electronic cutting machine, among other tools.

Verma says the recording studios are the most popular this year. But “unplugged” activities are also proving to be appealing, including Lego challenges and the Japanese art of *amigurumi*, crocheting small stuffed yarn creatures. Students also love the revamped reading area, and this year’s COVID-19 protocols allow more students to use the space at a time—although still not up to pre-pandemic levels of use.

Some students come in at lunchtime to be part of talent shows, situated in a corner rather than on

a stage. Verma says this reflects the direction the library is headed in.

“It’s being used like a commons, which is the idea of a marketplace where you go into a city and things are happening and you don’t necessarily have a rapt audience watching those performances. Some of them will, but others are just sitting there and having their lunch while they listen to some music.”

Ultimately, Verma says flexible and adaptable library spaces are important because they are user-friendly.

“Schools have changed. Our way of instructing students, the way students learn, the way students want to explore. Basically, what a school library looks like now is almost like a public library where you have many different areas, different services that you can tap into, and it is not a classroom,” she says.

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KPU to offer Access to Global Learning Award

Many students will have the opportunity to gain global skills thanks to the newly launched Access to Global Learning Award at Kwantlen Polytechnic University (KPU).

Funded by Global Skills Opportunity, the Government of Canada’s Outbound Student Mobility Pilot Program, the new award supports students in two categories. The first category supports Indigenous students and students with disabilities or low income. The second category is open to all students who choose to study in non-traditional destinations like Latin America or Asia. Students in both categories can apply for a student award of up to \$8,000 to support in-person study abroad experience, or up to \$1,000 to support a virtual study abroad opportunity. Over the four years, the project will impact over 250 students by directly funding their global learning experiences.

“We know financial burdens can be the one of the highest hurdles for students to overcome to access the valuable global perspectives that can be gained from immersion in other cultures and these awards will help lower that barrier,” says Zainab Al-koubaisi, director of global engagement at KPU.

“Countries that share one of the two official languages of Canada are often popular destinations for students looking to study abroad. These new awards encourage students to broaden their horizons and bring the value of those cultural experiences back to Canada.”

Students wishing to apply for an Access to Global Learning Award will need to be accepted into a KPU study abroad program or virtual exchange. Subject to any future pandemic travel restrictions, the first in-person experiences are not expected to commence until fall 2022.



Photo submitted

The small, but closely-knit Quilchena Elementary School community stepped up to help build a playground for all kids to enjoy. On hand for the Nov. 26 "official" opening were, front row, from left: Kirsten Wallace, Nichole Kusch, Ms. Powell (past and present school administrators) and back row, PAC members Ivan Tse, Brent Follett, Angela and Chris Dinnell and Alia Khan, school trustee Heather Larson, and PAC members Susan Tse and Lana Quay.

Quilchena playground a unified effort

By **DON FENNELL**
 @rmdsentinel

Collaboration and belonging have always been earmarks of Quilchena elementary, named to honour the First Nations settlement that was located nearby in the city's west side.

In every endeavour, big or small, the goal is always to reflect the school motto of "Learning, Caring and Growing Together," a mantra that each student and the closely-knit school community is proud to demonstrate daily. The "official" opening Nov. 26 of a new playground reflects that dedication.

"Building a new playground is a daunting undertaking for any school, particularly a small one like Quilchena (with a student population of less than 200)," says principal Nichole Kusch.

It was the vision and efforts of a dedicated PAC (Parent Advisory Council) and now-retired principal Janet Powell that planted the seeds for the new playground six years ago. Plans were created and revised with Habitat Systems (the innovative Burnaby-based playground equipment designer), as the team slowly worked to achieve its fund-raising goal through a variety of initiatives. From a memorable winter craft night and movie nights to a successful pub night and a multicultural potluck bake sale, current PAC chair Ivan Tse and the team continued to work diligently to see the project to its completion. The final push came last

spring when, with the help of past principal Kirsten Wallace, the district provided significant funding. Wallace advocated tirelessly on behalf of the school and the project.

"It was incredible to see parents, alumni, and even neighbours of the school quickly top up the district funds, allowing us to finally reach our fundraising goal last June," says Tse.

After six years, the playground was finally built on a very soggy Oct. 16.

"With hearts full, over 30 parent and staff volunteers braved the elements to work together, assembling the bulk of the playground that day in the rain and mud. For all that our children have been through over the past many months of the pandemic, it is such a gift to see this playground finally here and ready for our children to enjoy," says Tse.

The playground is a circuit design to create kinetic play and encourage kids to be active and get outdoors. The realized intent was to have a playground that included elements for all ages and abilities, so all could play together. Even the location was planned—adjacent to the previously-existing playground to create a more park-like environment with the garden, gathering space and picnic tables in between the playgrounds.

"We believe we created a space that not only enhanced the school experience for kids, but also would be a place for kids to enjoy all year round," says Tse.

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School board opts not to mandate COVID-19 vaccine

The COVID-19 vaccine will not be mandatory for Richmond School District employees.

In October, the board directed staff to gather and analyze data relevant to a potential employee vaccination policy. Staff reported back late last month, and the board made a decision.

The board considered the information from staff as well as Vancouver Coastal Health, the B.C. Centre for Disease Control, the Ministry of Education and the B.C. Public School Employers' Association. Information that was considered by the board included:

- Case rates of COVID-19 in the Metro Vancouver area
- Vaccination rates for those aged twelve and above in the Metro Vancouver area
- School exposure/transmission data
- Guidance from public health officials

"Since the beginning of the pandemic, the board has prioritized the health and safety of all students, staff and parents," said board chair Sandra Nixon. "After careful consideration of the information that was provided, the Richmond Board of Education has decided that a vaccine mandate will not be implemented."

The board will continue to encourage all eligible members of the community to be vaccinated against COVID-19 as per the advice of public health officials. Vaccines reduce transmission and reduce complications of COVID-19 if contracted.

The board remains committed to the health and safety of the community and will continue to have a rigorous focus on health and safety measures across the district. The district will also continue to work collaboratively with the Ministry of Education and Vancouver Coastal Health in making decisions and sharing new information as it becomes available.



Photo by Don Fennell

Following a board decision, COVID-19 vaccination will not be mandatory for Richmond School District employees.

In their own words...

Taking action to address affordable housing



Andy Hobbs
Councillor

We are in an affordable housing crisis. Home prices are skyrocketing and rentals are becoming increasingly unaffordable. It's really hard for people and families to find an affordable place to live in the region. I see my own friends and family experience this.

We need housing options for low and moderate-income working families and vulnerable populations. This requires well-planned housing options with increased density and, in particular, secure rentals.

The region does not have enough purpose built rental buildings to keep up with population growth. Richmond has led the region with its Low End Market Rental (LEMR) program and the development of affordable stand-alone housing projects such as Storeys and Kiwanis Towers. Altogether, about 2,400 rental units have been provided in Richmond since 2007. Yet, more needs to be done.

Cities have policy tools available to encourage private investment to produce more purpose built rental buildings. At a recent council meeting, I proposed two

amendments to incentivize the development of purpose built rental buildings in Richmond. Both were unanimously supported by Council.

The first amendment examines lower parking requirements for newly constructed, purpose built rental buildings in Richmond. We know that people have fewer cars these days due to ride sharing, car sharing, the expansion of public transit and active transportation modes. An additional floor of homes versus empty parking stalls would benefit our community.

The second amendment examines waiving Development Cost Charges (DCC) for purpose built rental buildings. These are fees collected from developers to help pay for sewers, sidewalks, and other infrastructure to support the community. While this would create a cost to the City, rental-building construction could be increased if this concept is used strategically for purpose built rentals.

The recent Canada-BC Expert Panel on Housing Affordability report includes multiple recommendations including continuous improvement, best practices related to rezoning and development permit processes, and multiple forms of increased housing density.

The report says that from 1960 to 1979, 109,950 private purpose built rental units were constructed in BC. From 2000 to 2020,



unbelievably, that number fell to 33,772. According to the Canadian Mortgage and Housing Corporation (CMHC), 52,059 affordable housing units were constructed from 1970 to 1989. This fell to 31,643 between 1990 and 2019.

Partnerships with the CMHC and BC Housing are crucial to effectively tackle the affordable housing crisis and senior levels of government have an important role. Affordable housing is more than just a municipal responsibility.

Providing a range of affordable housing options not only strengthens the fabric of our community, it helps to keep Richmond a sustainable, thriving city in the future.

For more information on Richmond's affordable housing strategies visit richmond.ca/affordablehousing.

City of Richmond Council Meetings Calendar

The City of Richmond Council and Committee Meetings are available online. Watch live or view previous meetings by visiting: richmond.ca/cityhall/CityCouncil.

For further information, meeting schedules and assistance in participating either virtually or in person, please visit richmond.ca/cityhall or contact the City Clerk's Office at 604-276-4007 or CityClerk@richmond.ca.

Dec 7 | 4:00 p.m.
Community Safety Committee

Dec 8 | 3:30 p.m.
Development Permit Panel

Dec 13 | 4:00 p.m.
General Purposes Committee

Dec 13 | 7:00 p.m.
Public Hearing

Dec 14 | 4:00 p.m.
Public Works & Transportation Committee followed By Parks, Recreation & Cultural Services Committee

Dec 20 | 7:00 p.m.
Council Meeting

Meetings adjourn until January 2022



For meeting agenda and reports visit www.richmond.ca. Meeting schedule subject to change

Visit www.richmond.ca/watchonline to link to live streaming or watch archived video.



Kasey hits all the 'Wright' notes

Richmond softball standout earned three golds, national title, this past season

By DON FENNELL
@rmdsentinel

Unlike in the fabled poem by Ernest Thayer, *Casey at the Bat*, there's no fear of Kasey Wright deliberately letting two strikes go by unanswered.

Gifted as she is, Wright doesn't ever rest on her laurels which is what makes her such a valued teammate and feared opponent on the softball diamond.

And as a student double majoring in psychology and sociology at the University of B.C. Okanagan, it seems certain she will make the same invaluable contribution to society—perhaps caring for at-risk youth going through the juvenile correctional system.

"I have known Kasey since 2017 when her mom, Karen, joined our Steveston Athletics women's team and Kasey was a 17-year-old playing with the 2000A Islanders," says Athletics coach Kevin Lee. "Kasey joined us for some practices that season and did not look out of place at all...in fact she was one of the better players even back then."

Fearless in her centerfield position, she's willing to dive head-first to make catches—even in practices. With a rocket of an arm to throw runners out at any base from her position in the outfield, Wright is equally gifted at the plate—hitting for power or laying down a bunt.

"On top of all that, her softball I.Q. is off the charts, smart and oh so coachable...just a fantastic kid. Kasey is easily one of the most likeable players on the team, her youthful enthusiasm is contagious and her maturity allows her to get along well with the older veterans on the team," says Lee.

A 2018 grad of Matthew McNair Secondary School, Wright recently capped a personally memorable 2021 softball season with an all-star



Kasey Wright and her mom Karen share a special bond on and off the softball diamond.

Photo submitted

nod at the national Canadian Collegiate Softball Association championships in Kelowna. Featuring the top six teams in the country, Wright suited up for the UBCO Heat and helped them secure gold with a game-clinching throw to home plate in the top of the ninth inning, setting the stage for the winning walk-off single in the bottom of the inning. The gold medal was Wright's third of the season, to go along with a silver she earned coaching rep girls' softball.

Her dream season also included a league all-star nod and a league leadership award, emphasizing the important role she played in her team winning 43 of 46 games she appeared in.

"What I enjoy most about Kasey is her competitiveness, her passion for the game, and her dedication to the sport not only as a player but also in her coaching young girls," says Lee. "She is also a total team player that will help out in any area for the team, both on and off the field."

While Wright has earned every success and accolade she's received, she has her mom, Karen, to thank for being such a positive role model.

A pitcher, and the 2019 recipient of the Female Adult Athlete of the Year at the Richmond Sports Awards, Karen won both her starts in the Athletics' six-game undefeated run at the provincial senior championships. Karen also had an opportunity to throw to Kasey (as catcher) during one league game this past season, a unique

event that further underscores Kasey's abilities.

Kasey started out as a bat-girl at Karen's games, then started throwing the ball around, soon developing a love for the game that would rival her passion and excellence at soccer, a sport at which she won many individual awards as a goalkeeper. There are some who insist Kasey was even better at soccer than she is at softball, a nod to what an outstanding athlete she is.

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Songs in the Snow returns virtually

By HANNAH SCOTT

Local Journalism Initiative reporter

A beloved Steveston holiday event, *Songs in the Snow* returns in a virtual format this year.

While an in-person event was considered by organizers, ultimately the uncertainty brought about by the continuing COVID-19 pandemic led to the event going online for a second consecutive year. It is run annually by the Steveston Historical Society.

"Last year it was successful beyond anything we could have anticipated," says the society's executive director Rachel Meloche.

Pre-pandemic, the free event took place at Town Square Park on Moncton Street. Meloche says numbers each night ranged from 300 to 500, depending on factors including weather.

Last year's virtual attendance numbers were comparable to an in-person year, with about 600 craft kits made for participants to follow along with step-by-step crafts. While the virtual event isn't quite the same as the traditional offering, Meloche says it allows some people to enjoy the show who might not otherwise be able to attend.

I hope that we can continue to bring a little bit of magic to the holiday season.

— Rachel Meloche



Photo submitted

Annually, *Songs in the Snow* drew hundreds of locals to a small Steveston park. Following last year's successful virtual event, this year people can again tune in online to share in the holiday magic.

Thanks to donations, this year there will be 900 craft kits prepared—300 for each night of the event (the remaining two are Dec. 11 and 18 from 4 to 6 p.m.). They can be picked up from the Steveston Museum or mailed within Canada for a flat rate. And there are add-ons of drink packets (hot chocolate, cider or tea) and cookies for those who are interested.

Some old favourites will return for this year's event, including caricature artist Cartoon Katie. All artists will perform live.

For the Steveston Historical Society, it was important to continue to offer the event despite the continued change of format. And the fact that it remains free of charge is crucial with many people struggling financially during the

pandemic or the holiday season.

"The event was always meant to bring people together and to offer something for free in what can be a very difficult time of year, a very expensive time of year for a lot of people," says Meloche. "I hope people will join us again this year, I know it's been a really hard couple of years and I hope that we can continue to bring a little bit of magic to the holiday season."

The event is sponsored by G&F Financial Group, West Richmond Branch, with additional support from the province's gaming grant fund, the BC Arts Council and the city. Those who are interested can also make a donation to support the historical society's programming.

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Winter in the Village back in Steveston

Throughout the month of December, Steveston Village will again be transformed into a winter wonderland.

A holiday passport includes a self-guided tour plus discounts for some businesses. And people who check in at designated locations or redeem offers will be automatically entered in weekly prize hamper draws, with a grand prize to be announced the first week of January.

Over 30 businesses have set up window displays, competing for the title of "Best Holiday Display." People can vote for their favourite at the Steveston Museum and Post Office.

There will also be an opportunity for people to vote for their favourite light display among boats on the Fisherman's Wharf.

The Steveston Museum, Steveston Tram and Britannia Shipyards

National Historic Site will all be decorated with lights. At No. 1 Road and Bayview Street, a walk-through ornament is available for photos.

At the Gulf of Georgia Cannery National Historic Site, the *Festival of Trees* illuminates the space thanks to community-decorated holiday trees, with voting available in-person or online.

Drop off a letter to Santa (for free) at the Steveston Museum and Post Office before Dec. 10. Include a return address so he can write back, and address your letter to:

Santa Claus
North Pole
HOH OHO
Canada

Choir bringing people back together this Christmas

By HANNAH SCOTT

Local Journalism Initiative reporter

They may be singing while masked, but they're still aiming to spread holiday cheer after a season when all such concerts had to be cancelled.

The Richmond Orchestra and Chorus Association, also known as ROCA, is gearing up for its first choral concert since March 2020, planned for Dec. 12. And chorus director Brigid Coult says there was "an awful lot of eagerness" to get back together once safety protocols were in place.

Both the chorus and orchestra are much more spaced out while rehearsing, and vaccination is mandatory. But even with those measures in place, there was a scare early last month when an orchestra member tested positive for COVID-19 and their concert—planned for Nov. 6—was postponed for a month. It is now scheduled for Dec. 7.

"It's mostly us being over-careful, but we'd rather be over-careful than under-careful," says Coult.

During the pandemic, the chorus held virtual rehearsals on Zoom, and their spring session turned into a music history course, which Coult describes as "not wasted time, just different time."

The orchestra, meanwhile, met briefly in small groups as well as taking on a recording project. While unable to meet inside their regular space, an outdoor concert kept members connected.

Coult says the chorus is excited to gather for a holiday concert again. Rehearsals were also offered via Zoom for people who didn't feel able to participate in person, and the concert will be



Photo by Bill Meyer

The Richmond Orchestra and Chorus Association is connecting people through its annual holiday concert, back this year after a pandemic hiatus. (File photo from 2019.)

filmed for people who are not comfortable attending in-person.

With a large venue, even 50 per cent capacity will allow for 500 attendees. Audience members must be masked at all times and must show proof of vaccination. The usual intermission has been removed in favour of a shorter concert, which will hopefully reduce bathroom line-ups and mingling in the lobby.

"We are encouraging people to distance, and recordings will make the music available afterwards for people who would feel safer not attending" says Coult.

And chorus members will be performing in masks, which means it's even more important to communicate with their eyes.

"We just want to share with our audiences again," says Coult. "The barrier of a mask is a definite hindrance in communication, perhaps less for the orchestra than the chorus."

But she says masked concerts are possible, and has been emphasizing the importance of learning the program well enough that singers can also look out at the audience, rather than only down at their music.

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Winter on the Waterfront tours at Britannia Shipyards



Photo courtesy City of Richmond

Upstairs in the Chinese Bunkhouse where a musician will play the Chinese erhu at the end of the *Winter on the Waterfront* tour.

Listen closely this holiday season to hear the enchanting melodies of the classical violin, the Japanese tsugaru shamisen and the Chinese erhu on one of two remaining *Winter on the Waterfront* tours at Britannia Shipyards National Historic Site.

Offered on Dec. 10 at 7 p.m. and 8:30 p.m., tours combine local history and traditional music for an atmospheric journey into the past.

These 60-minute tours offer visitors the unique opportunity to take a personal guided tour through remarkable heritage buildings at Britannia Ship-

yards. Inside three of these buildings, visitors will experience live musical performances, reflecting the cultural traditions of the people who lived or worked in them.

In the Murakami House, Natalie Der, former concertmaster of the Richmond Delta Youth Symphony Orchestra, will play the violin just as Asayo Murakami once played the violin she carefully brought from Japan in 1929. Dressed in a winter kimono, Vancouver musician Noriko Kobayashi will draw upon her repertoire of folk music to play the tsugaru shamisen. Upstairs in the Chinese Bunkhouse where up to 100 men once slept in triple bunkbeds, renowned teacher Zong Cai Yang will play the two stringed erhu—an instrument with over 4,000 years of tradition in China.

Tickets for *Winter on the Waterfront* are \$20 (plus GST). Tours are limited to 15 people and recommended for those eight years and older. Register online at www.richmond.ca/register or call 604-276-4300 (Monday-Friday, 8:30 a.m.-5 p.m.). Proof of vaccination is required.

Dec. 10, 7 p.m. – Event ID #117266

Dec. 10, 8:30 p.m. – Event ID #117254

The City of Richmond is fully committed to operating safely and working to ensure all COVID-19 Provincial Health Orders and recommendations are followed. Masks are required inside all buildings at Britannia Shipyards.

For more information on *Winter on the Waterfront*, visit www.richmond.ca/culture/sites/britannia/events.

Business Excellence Award names recipients

The 44th annual Richmond Chamber of Commerce Business Excellence Awards has concluded, naming 11 recipients that represent the success of local business.

"The Business Excellence Awards gave us so many great examples of employers who worked hard to adapt and persevere throughout the pandemic," says the chamber's chief executive officer Dan Baxter.

"One of our finalists, the Layfield Group, began manufacturing personal protective equipment for the Canadian market. Our Innovative Enterprise of the Year recipient, Sharon Bonner from Bright Ideas Events actually founded an industry association and literally 'wrote the book' on virtual event planning to overcome challenges to her sector. Steveston Seafood House, our Mid-Size Business of the Year, stepped up to keep their doors open by pivoting to take-home service, and even expanding their operation to meat pies. In every corner of Richmond, we see our local organizations using their creativity and expertise to succeed."

And although last year's virtual awards ceremony was still a success given the different format, Baxter says it was great to be able to reunite in person. About 300 guests were at the Nov. 25 event, with mask and vaccination protocols in place.

"There's a certain indescribable energy generated by crowd of people that you just can't recreate virtually. There was tremendous excitement in the room," says Baxter.

The full list of finalists and recipients is below:

Association of the Year: Touchstone Family Association

- Finalist: Richmond Multicultural Community Services
- Finalist: Richmond Orchestra & Chorus Association



Photo by Rob Newell

Richmond Chamber of Commerce chief executive officer Dan Baxter was glad to be able to reunite with other members of the local business community for the 44th annual Business Excellence Awards.

Green Business of the Year: Hemlock Harling Distribution

- Finalist: Electric Go
- Finalist: WJ Packaging

Innovative Enterprise of the Year:

Bright Ideas Events

- Finalist: WJ Packaging
- Finalist: Broadway Sound and Stage Lighting Inc.

Business Leadership of the Year:

Terra Nova Medical Clinic

- Finalist: Herband Naturals
- Finalist: Advantage Speech Language Pathology

New Business of the Year:

Canadian Ecosystem Institute

- Finalist: AB Coast Aviation Services
- Finalist: Liv/EZ Co. (Live Easy)

Young Entrepreneur of the Year:

PromoChrom Technologies, Ian Wan

- Finalist: Dr. Romi Fung, Naturopathic Doctor
- Finalist: Liv/EZ Co., Angel Lam

(Live Easy)

Outstanding Workplace of the Year: Sheraton Vancouver Airport Hotel

- Finalist: Advantage Speech Language Pathology
- Finalist: Symphony Hill Properties

Small Business of the Year: Sher-E Punjab Radio AM 600

- Finalist: Seafair Gourmet Meats Ltd.
- Finalist: Chatham Dental Centre

Mid-Size Business of the Year: Steveston Seafood House

- Finalist: PromoChrom Technologies
- Finalist: 505 Junk

Large Business of the Year: Herband Naturals

- Finalist: Layfield Group Ltd.
- Finalist: Coca-Cola Bottling Ltd.

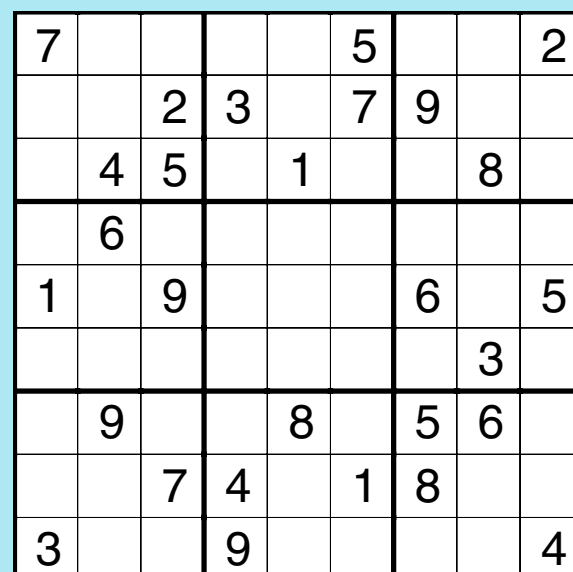
Hall of Fame Inductee: Pajo's Fish & Chips

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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