



WINTER WONDERLAND

Celebrate the
Holiday Season

04



Photo courtesy Richmond Sentinel

Tour Richmond City Hall inside and outside display of Winter Wonderland presented by Sunset Rotary Club.

OUR CITY

Richmond

'GOOD TO KNOW'

by Florence Gordon

Did you know for extra revenue, you can register your property for future film projects?

In the past, B.C.'s film and tourist industry flourished from the investment of many production companies from other countries. They liked the diversity of B.C.'s mountain range, the forests, the ocean, the climate, an international airport, tax breaks and their dollar was worth more in Canada. Richmond was one of those communities that benefited from the film industry until the pandemic. It wasn't just actors or film crew that lost jobs it impacted everything from transportation, hotels, restaurants, locations, makeup artists, food suppliers, animation houses and the list goes on. The industry has finally gained momentum as the international film companies are encouraged to return to Hollywood North.

Richmond is a popular location when it comes to filming

An island city covering more than 129 square kilometres or 50 square miles, containing a large variety of urban and natural environments with parks, waterfront trails, farmland, a modern Chinese/East Asian shopping district, an historic fishing community, diverse neighbourhoods and a culturally diverse population.



Photo via visitrichmondbc.com



Photo via freepik.com



Photo via canada.ca

Host a film production

Register your home or business as a film location

Home and business owners can also share in the revenues generated by filming in our community while helping to provide employment opportunities in B.C. Property owners typically earn from \$750 and up per day for hosting a film production. Owners are able to form agreements with the film company to ensure that their own needs are met. Register your property as a filming location with *Creative B.C.* Find out how by visiting their website.



Photo via freepik.com



Photos courtesy City of Richmond

Access is everything

Ideally located in the Greater Vancouver region, Richmond offers unique access by land, air or sea. By air it's a two and half hour flight from Los Angeles into an international airport and a 20 minute drive from the US border.

We have it all

Historical sites: a quaint fishing village, an 1880's farm house; modern high density urban settings and older, low-density urban neighbourhoods; agricultural lands, waterfront parks, trails and beaches with scenic mountain backdrops and world-class recreation facilities; all provide ideal filming locations. Did you know that an average of 50 film and television productions are shot in Richmond every year.

Richmond Film Office: 604-247-4659; **email:** filloffice@richmond.ca

Filming in your neighbourhood

Richmond is a popular location for film production. Your patience and understanding when crews are filming in your area is appreciated. Every production company working in British Columbia is required to notify neighbours of their intentions to film. The locations manager is the producer's representative who is responsible to communicate with the community. The letter you receive should have the name and phone number of the location manager or assistant location manager. Please contact them first to see if your issues can be resolved by them.

If you still have concerns, please contact the Richmond Film Office. You can find a list of productions filming in B.C. by visiting *Creative B.C.*'s website to view the *Film List*.

Economic benefits of filming

The film industry employs thousands of British Columbians and creates business opportunities in our community. Direct spending in B.C., 2022 by the film, television, animation and post-production sector grew to \$4.9 billion and to October 2023 the television and film sector component alone saw a record of \$4.9 billion. In addition, the portion of those dollars spent in our community were re-circulated, creating employment in other sectors and multiplying the financial benefit we receive by attracting film productions to Richmond. For further information go to richmond.ca



Photo courtesy Plug-in Richmond

Plug-in Richmond's John Roston met with Josie Osborne, minister of energy, mines and low carbon innovation, and Kelly Greene, MLA for Richmond-Steveston to discuss additional steps the government could take to promote the installation of charging in multi-family residential buildings.

Using an EV to power a house

On Wednesday, Nov. 15, John Roston, representing Plug-in Richmond, met with Josie Osborne, minister of energy, mines and low carbon innovation, and Kelly Greene, MLA for Richmond-Steveston, at the solar EV charging station in Garry Point Park to discuss BC Government support for EV charging and plans to use EVs to meet household electrical demand during peak periods.

They discussed what additional steps the government could take to promote the installation of charging in multi-family residential buildings (MURBs) and the installation of more level 3 public charging stations.

Looking ahead to 2025, they discussed how the government can prepare for bi-directional charging in single family residences. In particular, how to implement rate incentives and subsidize the installation of a home transfer switch that would switch from the electrical grid to an EV battery to supply a home's electrical demand during the peak evening period and then switch back to the grid after 11 p.m. to recharge the EV battery. This could benefit the consumer financially and dramatically reduce the need to expand the grid to meet increased consumer electrical demand. It would also provide household emergency backup power in case of a power blackout.



Screen grab from Google Maps

A poppy engraved road sign of Gage Road.

In honour of our soldiers: Donald Irwin Gage

By **SAMUEL CHENG**
Reporter

In a series of Richmond's 'poppy' street signs in memory of our fallen soldiers, we share the story of Gage Road.

On January 20 in Bow Island, Alberta, a little boy by the name of Donald Irwin Gage was born. He was 12 years old when he and his family moved to Richmond. Upon arrival, he attended Mitchell School before graduating from Richmond High School later on.

Unlike most young adolescents, Gage did not immediately find a job elsewhere, but instead, started his career by working for his father, Ernest Carlton Gage, for a couple of years. The Gage family used to own a poultry farm.

It wasn't until the January of 1941, when Gage found another job opportunity with Buckerfields, in which he worked as a driver and laborer for five months. In the same year, he married Blanche Lorraine Lauder and went on to join the Canadian Army on June 19, 1941, a mere five days after his wedding.

Gage was enlisted with the 4th Fortress Company stationed in Vancouver, where he served as an engine hand. Engine hands are responsible for the daily routine of keeping, maintaining and cleaning of the engine room on a ship. It is a vital role that works closely with engineers to make sure the functionalities and operations of a ship run smoothly and kept up to date.

About 11 months later, Gage was discharged from the 4th Fortress Company and he then joined the Royal Canadian Air Force. Gage became an official member of the R.C.A.F. on June 1, 1942.

Upon enlistment with the R.C.A.F., Gage was stationed in Edmonton and became one of the many airmen. An airman is a small but vital position of the air force as they are responsible for a multitude of duties ranging from repairing and maintaining mechanical equipment, including but not limited to missiles, engines, automobiles and more.

Gage was promoted to lance corporal in 1942 and pilot officer by April of 1944. He was quickly transferred to be a part of the bombing crew that was responsible for bombing Germany after his training in Manitoba in 1943.

On May 12, 1944, things took a turn when Gage and his crew, Lancaster Bomber #ND 919 went missing on a night of an operation against Louvain, Belgium. His body was never recovered nor found. Up until this point, Gage successfully performed 30 operational flights and the 31st flight, was the one he was tragically killed in. Gage was survived by his wife Lorraine and daughter Vicky Lynn Gage.

Today, Gage Road can be found on the north side of Bridgeport Road, east of Garden City Road and nearby Highway 99.

•taic@richmondsentinel.ca

Richmond Sunset 22nd Winter Wonderland

Rock around the Christmas trees at the Rotary Club of Richmond Sunset's 22nd edition of Winter Wonderland at Richmond City Hall (6911 No. 3 Road).

This year's display includes beautifully decorated trees inside the Galleria (available for viewing on weekdays until Friday, Dec. 22), and twinkling live trees outside on the North Plaza (available for viewing until Monday, Jan. 1). After the event, the live trees will be replanted in various city parks.

Visitors enjoying the festive display are also encouraged to take photos and bring along a non-perishable food item to drop-off in support of Richmond's local food bank.

The public can also enjoy the following musical matinee concerts set against the event's wintery backdrop:

Saturday, Dec. 9

- 1 to 2 p.m. – Dr. Libby Yu Piano Studio
- 2:30 to 3:30 p.m. – Richmond Music School

Saturday, Dec. 16

- 1 to 2 p.m. – Richmond Emmanuel Music Group
- 2:30 to 3:30 p.m. – Sound Direction School of Music

Each Winter Wonderland tree is sponsored by a local business, organization or individual and all funds raised are reinvested into the local and global community. In addition to tree sponsors, the Event Sponsor is ASPAC Developments and the Gold



Photo courtesy Richmond Sentinel

The Rotary Club of Richmond Sunset will be back for their 22nd edition of the Winter Wonderland at Richmond City Hall.

Sponsor is Concord Pacific. The City of Richmond is a Supporting Partner and the *Richmond News* is the Media Sponsor.

For more information on how to support Rotary programs, please contact Jim Ling at 778-980-2688 or jpc.ling@gmail.com

MyPermit, Richmond's new online permit portal

The City of Richmond has launched a new online permit portal, providing customers with the flexibility to apply for and manage their building-related permits online, eliminating the need to visit city hall in-person.

MyPermit streamlines the trades permitting process for simple permit types, such as plumbing and gas permits, through a convenient, online self-service option. Applicants will also be able to make online payments and review the status of their application in real-time.

"The MyPermit platform is a key milestone in the council-approved Permitting Optimization Project and a further step toward streamlining permit applications to improve accessibility for business owners and developers," said Mayor Malcolm Brodie. "The city has again demonstrated its commitment to convenience and efficiency by leveraging technology to improve the customer experience and reduce the processing time for building and development related applications."

Trades contractors and permit applicants can access MyPermit by logging on to MyRichmond (richmond.ca/myrichmond) to apply for a new plumbing or gas permit. MyRichmond is the city's portal for accessing a number of city services online and MyPermit is a new tool available within that platform. This design provides users with a consistent and streamlined experience accessing city services.

Enhancements to the MyRichmond mobile application are also being released, which will allow applicants to manage permits from their phone or tablet.

The introduction of MyPermit to the MyRichmond portal is significant contribution to the ongoing implementation of the city's Digital Strategy, which aims to make numerous city functions available online through a single, seamless point of entry. For more information and to sign up for MyRichmond / MyPermit, visit MyRichmond (richmond.ca/myrichmond).

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Teacher and KPU alum receives premier's award

A Kwantlen Polytechnic University (KPU) alum is being recognized for shining the spotlight on social justice issues in the high school classroom and beyond.

The B.C. Premier's Awards for Excellence in Education has honoured Michael Taylor in the category of Social Equity and Diversity.

"Social justice issues are deeply important to me as an educator because they impact the quality of people's lives and are fundamental to answering questions about the kind society we want to create," says Taylor, who graduated with a bachelor of arts from KPU in 2011. "Issues like poverty, homelessness, truth and reconciliation, LGBTQ+ rights, ecological justice, and human rights touch so many lives and will continue to define our future. Students inherently see the relevance of these issues and recognize the connection to their own lives."

Taylor, who teaches social studies at Hugh Boyd Secondary in Richmond, accepted the award at a ceremony Oct. 26 in Victoria. The annual awards recognize the dedication and leadership of teachers, administrators, and support staff working in B.C.'s educational system.

In creating a social justice course that emphasizes not just academic knowledge but also hands-on engagement with the community, Taylor is moti-



Photo courtesy Kwantlen Polytechnic University
Michael Taylor (left) and Rachna Singh, B.C. minister of education and child care.

ivating students to make positive change. A recent example: leading students to raise funds to supply each school in the Richmond district with an Every Child Matters flag as a meaningful symbol of reconciliation.

"Understanding the difficult truth and the grave injustice of the residential school system instills a sense of empathy and justice in students and allows them to reflect upon how they can play a role in reconciliation today. Teaching reconciliation to me is about teaching students to take action is pos-

itive ways that will improve the circumstances of those impacted most by the legacy of residential schools," he says.

Taylor's students have participated in other projects that reach outside the classroom, including creating a magazine and podcast that feature student articles and interviews on equity and justice issues. His students have also participated in various service learning projects, such as handing out 500 flowers at a seniors centre to raise awareness of social isolation and loneliness among the elderly, and creating an award to acknowledge the moral courage and community spirit of outstanding grades 4 to 7 girls.

The Premier's Awards for Excellence in Education presented awards to three recipients in each of 10 categories. Also recognized in the Social Equity and Diversity category were teachers Perry Rath (Bulkley Valley) and Kristina Carley (Burnaby).

Nominees of the award must have provided experiential learning opportunities for students to build understanding of a diverse society, developed a sense of social responsibility in students, engaged students beyond the classroom on complex social or environmental issues, and supported students to take action that results in positive change.

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Bid in the Richmond Christmas Fund's online auction

The Richmond Christmas Fund's 4th Annual Online Auction kicked off Nov. 21, giving you a chance to bid on over 180 items, from restaurant gift cards to rounds of golf.

100 per cent of auction proceeds will support the Christmas Fund's mission, as it works to provide grocery vouchers, toys, and gift cards to residents who can't afford a holiday celebration.

A program of Richmond Cares, Richmond Gives (RCRG), the Christmas Fund is operating this year at Lansdowne Centre, in a storefront next to ICBC.

"It's a very central, accessible location," says Ed Gavsie, president & chief executive officer of RCRG. "That's important, because, with the rising cost of living, we know that many people will be seeking help."

The Christmas Fund is supported almost entirely by donations from the community, and the auction is among this year's major fundraising activities.

"Our ability to help our neighbours in need is tied directly to the generosity of Richmond residents," says Gavsie. "Every donation makes a difference, and so does every bid in the auction. It's a grass-roots effort involving the entire community."

While the goal is to raise as much money as possible, the auction also promises some eye-popping deals, with low starting bids on bottles of wine, home appliances, sports tickets, and more.

"We want auction participants to have fun," says Gavsie. "That might mean bidding in a friendly competition against family and friends, or winning an item well below its fair market value. If participants



Photo courtesy Richmond Cares Richmond Gives

For the fourth straight year, the Richmond Christmas Fund is running an online auction, with proceeds helping to brighten the holidays for families in need.

have a positive experience, we'll raise more money, and the Christmas Fund will be able to help more families."

To register for the auction, and view a complete list of items, visit rcf2023.givesmart.com

Bidding ends at 7 p.m. on Dec. 7. Shortly thereafter, winners will be notified by email, and given in-

structions on when and where to claim their items.

Richmond Cares, Richmond Gives (RCRG) is a registered charity that serves as a hub for volunteering and giving. RCRG is also a direct service provider, operating a Child Care Resource & Referral Centre, the Richmond Christmas Fund, and a variety of Seniors Community Support Services. rcrg.org

Businesses recognized at Business Excellence Awards

On Nov. 22, the Richmond Chamber of Commerce recognized the top business leaders in Richmond at the 46th Annual Business Excellence Awards.

Awards were handed out in ten categories, as well as a hall of fame induction, which honours a Richmond business with at least 25 years of history in the community. The gala event's nautical-inspired theme paid homage to Richmond's strong connection to the Pacific and its rich maritime heritage. Like skilled mariners, Richmond business leaders have set their course and are "riding the wave of success".

Many of the sponsors and award recipients spoke of their deep connection and appreciation of Richmond. Many, growing from humble beginnings, credited their team for



Photo by Chung Chow

The 46th Annual Business Excellence Awards recipients pose for a photo along with the Richmond Chamber chair, Lisa Cowell, president and chief executive officer, Shaena Furlong, and executive-at-large, Lisa Wong.

their successes.

The full list of 2023 Business Excellence Award

Recipients and Hall of Fame Inductee is as follows:

- Association of the Year: Touchstone Family Association
- Green Business of the Year: Salt Spring Coffee
- Young Entrepreneur of the Year: Dr. Romi Fung, Naturopathic Doctor
- Outstanding Workplace of the Year: Dillon Consulting Ltd.
- New Business of the Year: Petsville Animal Hospital
- Innovative Enterprise of the Year: Layfield Group
- Business Leadership of the Year: ZE PowerGroup Inc.
- Small Business of the Year: Spread'Em Kitchen Ltd.
- Mid-Size Business of the Year: 505-Junk
- Large Business of the Year: The Radius Group
- Hall of Fame Inductee: Richmond Auto Mall

Embracing the spirit of Christmas

By TAMMY LO
Student writer

As the air becomes crisp and the days grow shorter, the world eagerly anticipates the arrival of Christmas, a festive season that transcends cultural boundaries and brings people together in the spirit of joy and love. Christmas, celebrated on December 25 each year, is a time for reflection, gratitude, and the creation of cherished memories with families and friends. In this article, we delve into the rich tapestry of Christmas traditions, exploring the origins, customs, and universal themes that make this holiday a truly magical and heartwarming time of the year.

The roots of Christmas can be traced back to ancient times, with various cultures and civilizations of customs that we recognize today. While the Christian elaboration commemorates the birth of Jesus Christ, many of the traditions associated with Christmas have their origins in pre-Christian winter festivals.

One such example is the Roman festival of Saturnalia, a period of feasting, gift-giving, and revelry held in honour of the god Saturn. Similarly, the winter solstice, marking the shortest day and longest night of the year, has been celebrated in various forms across cultures, symbolizing the triumph of light over darkness.

Central to the Christian celebration of Christmas is the Nativity story, re-



As the air becomes crisp, and days grow shorter, Richmond awaits the arrival of the holiday season.

File photo by Jaana Björk

counting the miraculous birth of Jesus in Bethlehem. This narrative has inspired countless works of art, music, and literature, becoming a timeless symbol of hope and divine love. Nativity scenes, depicting the Holy Family in the stable with shepherds, angels, and the three wise men, are a common sight in homes and churches, reinforcing the spiritual significance of the season.

The festive ambience of Christmas is further enhanced by the vibrant decorations that adorn homes, streets, and public spaces. The iconic Christmas tree, adorned with lights, ornaments, and a shining star or angel at its pinnacle, is a symbol of life, renewal, and the enduring spirit of the

season. Wreaths, mistletoe, and holly are also popular additions, each carrying its own unique symbolism.

In the City of Richmond, there are countless events and ongoing displays for Christmas lovers exhibiting holiday cheer. At the Gulf of Georgia Cannery, the Steveston Festival of Trees will be on display for members of the public to vote on. The Steveston tram will also be making a return, with a holiday twist, exploring the history of interurban travel in Richmond. There are also holiday displays in Steveston Village, as well as Christmas lights all around the city. City Hall will also feature the Rotary Club of Richmond Sunset's 22nd edition of a Winter Wonderland.



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For the love of golf, part 2

By FLORENCE GORDON
Contributing writer

Born in England, Robert Trent Jones' family moved to East Rochester, New York when he was five. As a young man, Jones attended Cornell University, where he designed his own course of study to become a professional golf course designer, taking courses in landscape architecture, agronomy, horticulture, hydraulics, surveying, public speaking and economics. During his studies at Cornell, he designed the back nine of Cornell's Robert Trent Jones Golf Course. Jones later returned in 1954 to complete the front nine.

After receiving his college degree, Jones formed a partnership with Canadian architect Stanley Thompson, and helped design several courses in Canada, including Capilano in Vancouver and Banff in the Canadian Rockies. In the late 1930's he struck out on his own and began designing and building local golf courses in America. Shortly after World War II, Jones got his first big assignment designing the Peachtree Golf Club in Atlanta in collaboration with golf legend Bobby Jones. Despite the similarity of their names, the two men were not related. In fact, Robert began using the middle name "Trent" shortly afterward to avoid confusion.

Jones continued working well past retirement age, he died peacefully just a few days short of his 94th birthday. Jones received the 1987 Old Tom Morris Award from the Golf Course Superintendents Association of America, GCSAA's highest honor. He was also inducted into the World Golf Hall of Fame in 1987.

Playing the Robert Trent Jones Golf Trail is an experience you should consider when planning your next golf vacation. The Trail holds the accolade of the largest golf course construction project ever attempted—a collection of 26 courses on 11 different sites across the state of Alabama. This collection of public courses certainly confirms Jones' reputation as one of the finest golf-course architects, the game of golf has seen.

My husband and I made arrangements to meet our golf friends who lived in Atlanta Georgia to go on a road trip playing the Trail from the north all the way down to the Gulf of Mexico. The day before leaving Vancouver, hurricane weather shut down the Atlanta airport. Our friends reassured us the weather would be fine by the time we arrive the next day, and right they were.

Our first stop Opelika, Alabama at the Grand National voted the #1 public golf facility in America by Golf World. Built around a 600-acre Lake, and host to LPGA and PGA championships we had the opportunity to be challenged by 3 differently designed courses.

The Lake course a well treed, scenic course with

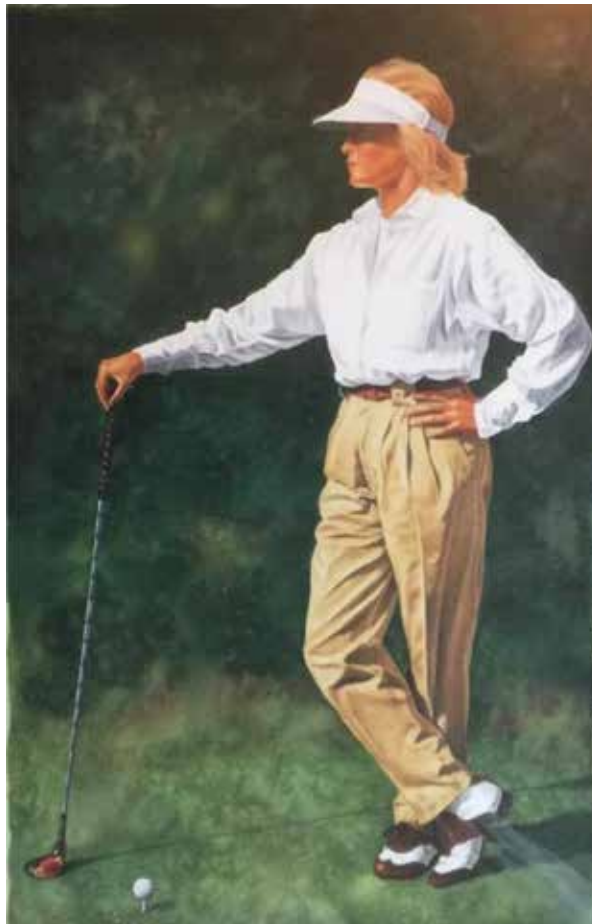


Photo courtesy FJ Gordon

12 holes hugging the lake and a 230-yard island green with a reputation of being the prettiest single hole on the Trail was a challenge with so much water that came into play. The Links course is without a single weakness featured the very best greens and a definite must-play along the Trail. The Short course 18 holes, all Par 3's and considered to be the finest anywhere in the country should have a sign posted at the first Tee "golfers beware". It was long, it was challenging and no matter how good a golfer, it will beat you up.

We spent the first two days here, and if you book through a golf travel expert, they will help you with accommodations and tee time packages. Our next stop Prattville or Montgomery Alabama known as the courses at Capitol Hill are worth the stay over. Allow yourself 2 to 3 days stay as they offer you 3 magnificent, yet drastically different courses built on 1,500 acres and ranked among the Top 10 new courses in the nation by *Golf Magazine*.

The Judge course was built amongst the backwaters of the Alabama River with a first tee 200 feet above the fairway with water on both sides. Fourteen of the holes are affected by water and a bulkheaded island green with par 3's that are a challenge even for the best golfers. There's one hole that's over 700 yards from tee to an elevated green and pretty impossible to achieve a par 5. The reviews on this course—beautiful views but, everyone should play from the front tees (it's that

difficult).

There's a personal story connected to this course. The four of us played The Judge in the morning stopped for lunch and the guys decided they had to replay the course while my girlfriend and I relaxed by the pool. When we figured they should be coming up the eighteen fairway, we noticed they were playing with one golf ball taking alternative shots. When they finished putting out using one ball puzzled, we asked "what's going on". They sheepishly admitted the course got the better of them, they lost all their golf balls and on the 18th tee, they were left with one ball. So, the reviews you read about The Judge are true.

The Legislator course is a traditional course that plays in and out of pine trees and along a bluff overlooking the Alabama River. But the thing I remember the most is the "eerie drive" through the cypress swamp between the holes, it reminded me of the creepy movies like *Creature From The Black Lagoon*.

The third course was The Senator, a Scottish-Links style course which I'm not a fan of. The Senator course was exhausting with its 160 pot-hole bunkers 20 to 40 feet in depth hiding the green and the fairway from view. It will give you a good idea of how tough St. Andrews' golf course in Scotland is.

The one thing about the Robert Trent Jones Trail was the Pro shops were aware of our trip plans and were so good to keep us updated on the weather for our next stop. Our plan was to continue our road trip south to Mobile, Alabama. When we finished playing The Senator the Pro Shop notified us there was a weather warning. Another hurricane was travelling across the Gulf of Mexico and Mobile was in its path, so at the recommendation of the Pro shop they booked us to play the two golf courses at Birmingham, Alabama so we packed up and headed north.

In Birmingham, we played The Ridge course first, which offered numerous elevation changes, heavy tree cover and incredible scenery. As a tribute to the area's mining past, the green at the Par 5, third hole is supported by a shelf of exposed shale rock. When we putted out on the 18th green, the Pro was waiting for us. He advised that the Hurricane was heading in land and they were shutting down the golf courses. With that in mind, we knew we had about a three-hour drive to Atlanta so we went on the internet to check out flights to Vancouver. We were cutting our trip a little short but felt it was wise to fly out before the storm hit Atlanta airport again. We were so fortunate to find a window of blue sky between two storms enabling us to have a wonderful journey with friends that we cherished. In the last publication, I mentioned the friends and memories you make along the way through the love of golf and this is one of many stories.

KidSport 12th Give the Gift of Sport campaign

KidSport™ has launched their 12th annual Give the Gift of Sport™ fundraising campaign, calling on British Columbians to donate this holiday season and help more kids participate in organized sport in the coming year. The campaign, which launched on Nov. 20, runs until Jan. 8, 2024.

Sport is an invaluable part of many children's lives. Unfortunately, the rising cost of living is putting pressure on many British Columbians to afford basic necessities, and that means enrolling a child in sports is simply not an option for many families. KidSport aims to remove the financial barriers to sport participation by providing grants to help cover the costs of registration fees so more children and youth can experience the joy of a season of sport.

Last year, KidSport chapters in BC distributed more than \$1.7 million to fund a season of sport for 5,377 kids in 180 communities across the province. So far this year, the number of approved grant applications for the first ten months of 2023 totaled 6,231—a 16 per cent increase over last year (with year-end figure projected to be 25-30 per cent over the 2022 mark).

At the same time, the number of grant applications (in communities in which there is not a KidSport chapter) for 2023 currently total 1,093, compared to 733 for the 2022. Calendar year—a 49 per cent increase and counting.

Examples of processed grant applications (by community) include the following:

Community	2023	2022	Year-Over-Year Increase
Abbotsford	138	109	+27%
Chilliwack	156	81	+93%
Creston	65	55	+18%
Fort Nelson	134	124	+8%
Kamloops	273	173	+58%
Nanaimo	161	110	+46%
New Westminster	113	93	+22%
Powell River	29	13	+123%
Prince George	86	67	+28%
Richmond	355	285	+25%
Salmon Arm	54	37	+46%
Squamish	39	24	+63%
Surrey/White Rock	697	516	+35%
Tri Cities	330	242	+36%
Vancouver	417	359	+16%

"We are seeing a significant increase in grant applications in comparison to the past couple of years and donations are needed to ensure we can con-



Photo via flickr.com

The 12th Annual National Give the Gift of Sport campaign organized by KidSport will run until Jan. 8, 2024.

tinue to meet the growing demand for support," says Angela Crowther, KidSport BC's director. "We rely on donations from the public to ensure we can continue providing grants for kids in need."

"Sport BC is proud of our signature program, KidSport and its efforts to help more kids benefit from organized sport," says Rob Newman, president & chief executive officer of Sport BC. "We know participation in sport is good for a child's physical health, but it can also have benefits for their mental health, and provides important opportunities for kids to build friendships, gain confidence and create positive community connections that help fuel their potential."

Contributions to KidSport through the Gift Of Sport campaign, have a direct impact on a child's life and help alleviate stress for parents who are struggling to make ends meet. The organization receives numerous messages each year from parents who are grateful for the support, like this one:

"Oh, my goodness. I don't know what to say. My

son has a huge passion for hockey and loves to play, he even is up and ready for the early morning practices before my alarm goes off. As a single mom, his fees and equipment put us in a position where I was holding off paying bills and really cutting back on spending any where we could. This grant is amazing, I can breathe and not stress at night about how I am going to afford the next month's fees. Thank you so so much. There is nothing more joyous than watching your child do what they love; you made this possible and now completely stress free for our family this hockey season."

The KidSport program, which is celebrating its 30th anniversary this year, was created by the board and staff at Sport BC in 1993 to help address the challenges many families face when registering their children in organized sport. Since then, KidSport has expanded to become a national entity with 11 provincial/territorial chapters and over 160 community-based chapters across Canada, including 39 chapters in communities throughout British Columbia.

The Give the Gift of Sport campaign gives supporters the opportunity to bring the power of sport full circle by donating to help fund KidSport grants and provide lasting memories for the kids who are given the chance to participate in the coming year. To learn more about the campaign, or donate, visit KidSport.ca/GiftOfSport





2023 Richmond Sports Wall of Fame Inductees

By MATTHEW CHEUNG
Reporter

On Nov. 27, the Richmond Sports Wall of Fame welcomed two inductees to the wall. Trish Nicholson, who coached Team Canada in Women's Field Lacrosse and Women's Wheelchair Basketball, and the 1986 U14 Oldon Pirates, who won the 1986 National Championships, were inducted into the Richmond Sports Wall of Fame at city hall.

In a news release by the City of Richmond, the Wall of Fame is an opportunity to celebrate the history of sport in Richmond and provides a hub for the community to recognize the outstanding achievements of all the inductees and their contributions. The Wall of Fame is comprised of eight induction categories: Pioneer, Builder, Coach, Official, Athlete, Masters Athlete, Team, and Special Achievement.

Trish Nicholson started off her playing career at the age of 13, playing box lacrosse for the Richmond Roadrunners. She would go on to play for the Richmond Senior Women's team and the Burnaby Kirby Klipettes in later seasons. In 1983, the 5'10", 160-pound player joined the B.C. Selects Women's Field Lacrosse Team, having an impactful role on a team that would go on to win eleven consecutive National championships. The legendary team was then inducted to be part of the 2014 Lacrosse Hall of Fame. Nicholson would also go on to play for Canada's National Field Lacrosse Team in the 1986 and 1989 World Cups. She spent forty years playing the sport that she loved, playing for as many as six teams in both field and box lacrosse around the Lower Mainland. In 2022, Nicholson was inducted into the Class of 2022 Canadian Lacrosse Hall of Fame in the Player category.

After retiring as a player, Nicholson would go on to begin her coaching career coaching not only lacrosse teams but she would also go on to join the Cana-



dian senior women's national wheelchair basketball team coaching staff as an assistant coach in 2002, 2009, 2010, and 2011. In addition to coaching at the national level, Nicholson had also been coaching in Richmond at the high school level, spending approximately 36 years coaching the youth at McRoberts Secondary School. Nicholson takes a unique approach to coaching, starting with a team in Grade 8 helping develop their skills and sharpening them for the following five seasons until they graduate before beginning with the next group. Coaching both the school's volleyball team and basketball team, the Hall of Fame decorated coach was named High School Female Coach of the Year in 2016. After an illustrious playing and coaching career, Nicholson retired in 2019 after 33 full seasons at McRoberts Secondary. She is now working as a Kinesiologist at Balance in Motion.

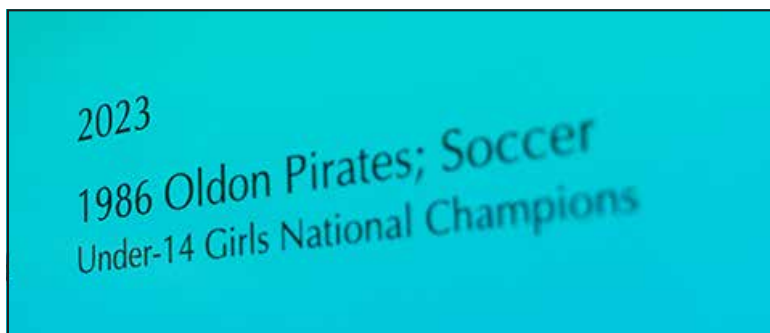
The 1986 Oldon Pirates were also inducted into the Richmond's Sports Wall of Fame. The team was formed in 1980 and played together until 1990. A large majority of the players grew up and attended schools in Richmond, a core part of the team started playing with the team around the age of eight, with the remainder of the team championship team joining when the U12 team began playing at the Metro Level.

In 1983, the U11 Oldon Pirates secured the Richmond League Champions, a year later that same team were recognized as the joint winners of the U12 BC Provincial Cup. Two quick years later in 1986, when they were around the age of 14, the team were named the best team in British Columbia, securing both the BC Coastal Cup Championship and the BC Provincial Championship.

That same U14 team would go on to secure the title of U14 Canadian National Champions, a feat that no other Richmond Girls Soccer Team has accomplished since 1986.

The Richmond Sports Wall of Fame and digital kiosk are free for public viewing. The wall is located on the left, in the lobby after entering from the parking lot. Nominations for the 2024 Inductees into the Richmond Sports Wall of Fame have now opened and can be submitted at rswof.amds.ca

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Photos courtesy Richmond Olympic Oval

Inductees Trish Nicholson and the 1986 U14 Oldon Pirates were inducted into the Richmond Sports Wall of Fame.

Rika Mansingh: Mindful eating for the festive season

By MATTHEW CHEUNG
Reporter

Jim Gordon (JG): *The addition of Rika Mansingh a registered dietitian and clinical consultant, has proven to be popular with our viewers both in print and on video. Rika, they love the fact that you offer information about the body, the mind, healthy eating while keeping it simple and easy to follow. This is the fourth of a series, and today I understand with the holiday season we're going to talk about mindful eating during the festive season.*

Rika Mansingh (RM): It is so important to recognize the difference between emotional eating and physical hunger.

To differentiate between the two, emotional eating happens rapidly, you're triggered, and you want to eat immediately. True hunger develops over a longer period with a willingness to eat a variety of foods, the opposite to eating in response to emotion. Emotional eating is not just a question about what you're eating but also what is eating you.

I always tell my patients before you eat pause and ask yourself 'am I really hungry or am I eating because I'm stressed or bored?'. Drink a glass of water or do a different activity, wait for 15 minutes, and revisit those feelings. It's important to eat only when you're hungry.

JG: You don't want to overthink this but it's almost like you need a strategy to get through the festive season. Some of the things I wanted to talk to you about was, the mindful eating strategies to get you through the holiday season without over-indulging.

RM: I think being mindful and having a heightened awareness is key, only when you're aware of what you're doing can you make a change. I like to refer to the festive season as the food festive season because our routine is interrupted and that's when the inevitable overindulging occurs.

Doing something like eating on the go, you're rushing, your brain does not register that you have eaten and what happens is you eat more food and crave faster. You will actually miss your mind sensation of fullness, it takes your mind 20 minutes to recognize that you're full. If you eat slowly, and savour each bite, you'll get full faster.

Another strategy is being mindful of associations, for example, don't eat while watching tv, because these things can easily form habits. Another association is the movies, automatically we stand in line to get our sugary beverages, extra-large popcorn, because that's what we do at the movies, but do you really need the popcorn. A strategy for that is have a light snack before you go to the movies, and then decide if you want a large popcorn or a small popcorn.



Photo via freepik.com
A healthy festive dinner.



RIKA MANSINGH

JG: I find that I get stressed if my apartment is messy, in your book you write a section called 'catch those tricky traitors', what are some tips to cope with the emotions when triggered, without turning to food?

RM: All habits are patterns and when you're aware of a pattern you can change it. When it comes to emotions, it's important to be aware, if you're eating unhealthily what did you see, think, hear, feel, before that triggered the habit to happen. It's usually the same thoughts, feelings, and behaviours that follows. Most people, either overthink the future or over-remember the past. What you have to do is to bring yourself to the present moment. Focus on being grateful in the present moment, inhale for four seconds hold then exhale for four seconds. Do a different activity and switch to gratitude.

There's a science behind gratitude, the brain cannot think a negative thought if in a state of gratitude. If you're feeling stressed and suddenly say what am I grateful for, and do that and the breathing, eventually the stress will subside interrupting the pattern. Another good technique to bring a person to the present moment is, a neuroscience back technique. It's called the five, four, three, two, one, technique.

At the point you're stressed pause, breathe, bring to your awareness, five things you can see, four things you can touch, three things you can hear, two things you can smell, and one thing you can taste. That will send you to the present moment, where you're not overthinking the future or over-remembering the past. You can only do those

techniques if you catch yourself, if you're aware and not on autopilot.

JG: Let's talk about your advice on the subject of the upcoming festive season. One needs to stay motivated and it's tough because the season is long and there are lots of social gatherings. What can you advise in terms of staying motivated and on track during that period.

RM: With a lot of my patients, I tell them to make realistic goals, don't aim to achieve weight loss over the festive season, a realistic goal would be to maintain your weight. The second thing is to plan ahead, if you know you're going to a buffet or social gathering have a light snack beforehand to curve your appetite so you don't over-indulge.

Another thing is to exercise more, have a balance. It's important to enjoy your favourite foods, and it's very important to watch the negative self-talk after you've overindulged the night before. Guilt hinders progress, you want to have love and compassion for yourself and know that every day is a new day and it's okay to have those days where you overindulge.

JG: I find personally, that exercising the next day is kind of a reward. Focusing on food and over eating, whether you're at a family or a social gathering, what recommendations could you give for food swaps?

RM: There's many food swaps a person can do, the first thing is to avoid foods that are deep fried, battered, crumbed, and overly sautéed, for those foods that are baked, boiled or steamed. An interesting swap is instead of using your oil based creamy dressings on a salad, use a vinaigrette because even if you use two tablespoons of a vinaigrette dressing on your salad, it actually delays the digestion of carbohydrates in your meal.

You could swap fruit for dessert and with refined carbohydrates which we spoke about in our last segment like white bread, white rice, or white pasta, go with the wholegrain, multigrain, brown or wild rice and quinoa. A good idea is also when you place an order at a restaurant while dining out, ask for your sauces and gravy on the side so you can decide how much you're going to use. If the portions are too large, take the rest of it home or share it with somebody else.

JG: Do you have any final words of wisdom for our viewers this festive season?

RM: I would like to say that we should all embrace the festive season with joy and nourishment. Choose wisely, remember it's not a time for deprivation, enjoy your favourite foods and find a way to make it work for you. What's very important is to savour each bite, as a celebration of your wellbeing. You are alive and breathing, and I wish you a very happy, healthy, festive season.

To watch the video interview, go to richmondsentinel.ca/videos

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Celebrate women-owned businesses with WeBC

This holiday season, every dollar spent at a small business can make a big difference, helping to keep local businesses open and communities vibrant. To encourage shoppers to look local first, WeBC is on a mission to promote and celebrate women-owned businesses in the Lower Mainland.

WeBC is a not-for-profit organization that supports B.C.-based women business owners with startup and growth capital, business expertise, training, and regionally based mentors. As part of WeBC's efforts to propel and celebrate women entrepreneurs, the organization is encouraging local support for women-owned businesses this holiday season.

"At WeBC, we support thousands of talented women entrepreneurs across the province and the holiday season is one of the most important times of year for these small businesses," says Shauna Harper, WeBC chief executive officer. "We know that 69 per cent of women entrepreneurs integrate social impact into their businesses and 63 per cent prioritize sustainability and eco-friendly practices. During the holiday season, we have a choice and power with our spending dollars. When we support local women-owned businesses, we're investing in the sustainability and growth of our communities plus helping to move the dial forward in gender equity."

Melanie MacInnes is the proud owner of Locality Brewing in Langley, a community-focused brewery surrounded by the very ingredients that are used in the "Field to Glass" Locality craft beer. Locality is a welcoming space where locals can gather and enjoy handcrafted brews.



Photo courtesy Locality Brewing
WeBC this holiday season is on a mission to promote and celebrate women-owned businesses in the Lower Mainland.

MacInnes highlights the importance of shopping at local, women-owned businesses this holiday season, saying, "It's a powerful way to uplift our community. It not only celebrates diversity and inclusivity but also empowers women in business, encouraging future generations to pursue their entrepreneurial dreams. Choosing to shop locally goes beyond the products, it's about fostering a sense of pride in our local business landscape."

MacInnes emphasizes her dedication to the community, expressing, "We're committed to giving back through charity events, locally sourced ingredients, and a welcoming environment. Our partnerships with the Wayce Métis society, Langley Farmers Institute, and BC Farm Museum demonstrate our commitment to the well-being of our local community."

The holiday season serves as a reminder of the positive impact that intentional shopping can have on local businesses and the broader community. This initiative aligns with WeBC's commitment to supporting women entrepreneurs and fostering growth in the Lower Mainland. MacInnes is a participant in the WeBC Mentoring Program, which connects women with experienced entrepreneurs to gain support, advice, and networks to grow their businesses.

Holiday shoppers can follow WeBC on Instagram to learn more about local women-owned businesses they can support this season. Women entrepreneurs looking for support for their business can connect with WeBC directly. Learn more at we-bc.ca

BC's strong fiscal foundation remains stable

British Columbia's economic and fiscal plan remains stable in the face of a slowing global economy and high interest rates as the Second Quarterly Report forecasts a lower deficit than in the previous fiscal update. "People's budgets have been squeezed by global inflation and high interest rates are making the already high cost of buying or renting a home even more expensive," said Minister of Finance Katrine Conroy. "While other governments cut the services people rely on when times are tough, we have built a strong fiscal foundation and will continue to support people."

The province's updated financial position shows \$1.4 billion more in revenue. This is driven by improved 2022 personal and corporate income tax results based on the latest Canada Revenue Agency assessment data and an additional \$358 million of expected federal funding for wildfire recovery. B.C. is now projecting a \$5.6-billion operating deficit this year.

As outlined in the First Quarterly Report in September, the fiscal plan was impacted by record spending to protect people and communities from the devastating wildfire season and volatile global natural gas prices. B.C.'s economy is diverse and layers of prudence are built into the fiscal plan, including contingencies and a forecast allowance, which shielded the province from greater impacts.

B.C.'s debt affordability remains among the best in Canada with low debt-servicing costs and an improved debt-to-GDP ratio of 17 per cent. B.C.'s open economy is being impacted by slower economic growth around the world as well as high interest rates in Canada. B.C.'s economic activity has shown resiliency through 2023, particularly in housing starts and population growth, while exports and consumer spending have slowed.

B.C. is on track for modest economic growth of 1.0 per cent in 2023, which is slightly lower than previously forecast. "As B.C. experiences slower global growth, our actions to build a diverse economy and put people first help bring stability to our economic and fiscal plan," Conroy said. "We

will continue supporting people by helping to ease the pressure of everyday costs, delivering the homes, schools and hospitals people rely on, and building a clean economy that works better for people who live here."

Next week, the minister of finance will meet with the Economic Forecast Council to discuss the economy and future forecasts ahead of Budget 2024. The Third Quarterly Report will be released alongside the budget on Feb. 22, 2024.

Quick Facts:

- Housing starts are up 11.8 per cent year-to-date and the province's forecasts for 2023 and 2024 are above historical average.
- B.C.'s employment has grown by 1.4 per cent year-to-date to October 2023, including a net increase of 15,430 private sector and self-employed jobs.
- B.C.'s population grew 3.0 per cent year-over-year, which is helping support the labour market. Net migration to B.C. in the first half of 2023 is up 25.1 per cent compared to the same period in 2022.
- Building the schools, health facilities, housing and transportation infrastructure that communities need is expected to cost \$11.2 billion this year, \$1 billion lower than forecast at the first quarter, with some transportation expenses shifted to future years.
- Capital projects approved since the First Quarterly Report include:
 - o Nanaimo long-term care facility
 - o St. Paul's Hospital Clinical Support and Research Centre
 - o University Hospital of Northern B.C. redevelopment site preparation
 - o Highway 1 improvements through the Fraser Valley – 264th Street to Mt. Lehman Road

Learn More:

To access the Second Quarterly Report, visit: gov.bc.ca/gov/content/governments/finances/reports/quarterly-reports

From the Bachelor's kitchen: Yogurt Cheesecake

By **SAMUEL CHENG**
Reporter

The subject of food and drinks have been a universal language across cultures and nations around the world. The *Richmond Sentinel* shares delicious food and drinks recipes that anyone can make in the convenience of their own home.

Today, we share the recipe of mango yogurt cheesecake.

Utensils:

- a 7-inch removable bottom cheesecake pan (6-inch and 8-inch pans are also acceptable)
- mixing bowls
- a blender
- a whisk
- an icing bag (optional)
- a pot
- a heat-resistant bowl
- 1 ziploc bag
- plastic wraps
- 1 Rubber spatula

Ingredients:

- gelatin sheets: 8 grams
- digestive biscuits/Graham crackers: 7 pieces (about 85 grams)
- unsalted butter: 40 grams
- mango: 1 (can be substituted with canned peach or other fruits)
- cream cheese: 200 grams
- icing sugar: 40 grams
- unsweetened yogurt: 250 grams
- whipping cream: 80 mL

Steps:

1. Soften the 250 grams of cream cheese by taking it out of your fridge 30 minutes to an hour prior to making the recipe.
2. Place 8 grams of gelatin sheets in cold water for about 10 minutes for it to soften up (Note: If you are using vegetable gelatin or agar-agar, reduce the amount to 4 grams. Please keep in mind by substituting gelatin with vegetable gelatin or agar-agar, the texture of the cheesecake will become slightly crispier)
3. Place 85 grams of digestive crackers or Graham crackers in a ziploc bag and crush them into small, fine crumbs.
4. Pour the cookie crumbs into a bowl and add 40 grams of melted unsalted butter.
5. Mix well before pouring the butter-crumbs mixture into the 7-inch cake mold. (Note: 6-inch and 8-inch pans are also acceptable, the cake will just be of different height)
6. Evenly spread the buttered crumbs across the bottom of the cake pan and press down firmly with other utensils such as a small glass to create the crust of the cheesecake.
7. Place the cake pan in fridge to further harden the crust.
8. Wash and peel the mango. Cut half of the



Photo courtesy MASA's Cooking ABC

Recreate this mango yogurt cheesecake without the use of an oven.

mango into slices and place them on a paper towel for it to absorb the excess liquid. (Note: Feel free to use your favorite fruits in this step)

9. Cut the remaining half of the mango into chunks and place them into a blender to make mango purée.

10. Pour the mango purée into an icing bag and set aside. (Note: If you do not have an icing bag, simply set the mango purée aside)

11. Check to see if the gelatin sheets have softened up. Once softened, place the gelatin sheets on top of a pot of boiling water for it to melt into liquid.

12. Pour the melted gelatin into a separate bowl when it is fully melted.

13. Check to see if the cream cheese has softened up.

14. Once softened, put the cream cheese into a mixing bowl and whisk it until it becomes smooth without any chunks.

15. Add 40 grams of icing sugar to the cream cheese mixture and mix well.

16. Add 250 grams of unsweetened yogurt, mix well and set aside. (Note: Be sure to add the yogurt a little at a time while mixing it to prevent the cream cheese from forming chunks)

17. Pour 80 grams of whipping cream in a separate mixing bowl.

18 Whisk until the whipping cream mixture becomes a mayonnaise-like consistency.

19. Scoop and ladle full of the cream cheese mixture into the bowl of melted gelatin and mix well.

20. Pour the small bowl of cream cheese-melted gelatin mixture back into the main cream cheese bowl and mix well. (Note: Make sure that the melted gelatin is fully incorporated with the cream cheese)

21. Pour the whipping cream mixture into the

cream cheese batter and mix well.

22. Take the cake pan out of the fridge and pour about half of the cream cheese-whipping cream batter into the cake pan.

23. Spread the batter out evenly across the cake pan.

24. Gently place the sliced mangoes in a spiral pattern across the cake pan.

25. Pour the remaining batter into the cake pan and spread evenly. (Note: Pour the batter slowly as the mango slices may move and shift out of position)

26. Cut a small hole in one of the corners of the icing bag and drizzle the mango purée onto the top of the cheesecake to create a pattern of your desire. (Note: If you did not use an icing bag in the previous step, simply spoon the mango purée and use a toothpick to carve out a pattern of your desire)

27. Cover the top of the cake pan with plastic wrap.

28. Put the cake pan into the fridge and let it sit overnight.

29. Take the cake pan out of the fridge and remove the plastic wrap.

30. Carefully remove the cake from the pan by utilizing the removable bottom of the cake pan. (Note: Proceed this step with patience and care as this crucial step will determine the final outlook of your cheesecake)

31. Once the cake is removed from the pan, use a knife to gently move the cake onto a plate.

32. Cut the cake into desirable slices and serve.

Voila. A delicious mango yogurt cheesecake is ready for you to share with family and friends. For the full recipe, please visit youtube.com/watch?v=R0oHaJRBf88

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OUR CITY *tonight*

SPOTLIGHT ON A COCKTAIL, NOVEL & THE STAGE



Photo courtesy Glowbal Restaurant Group

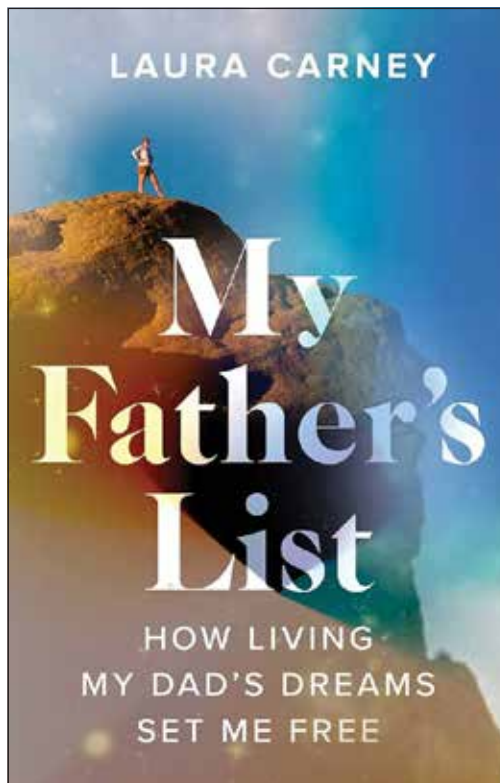


Photo courtesy of Laura Carney

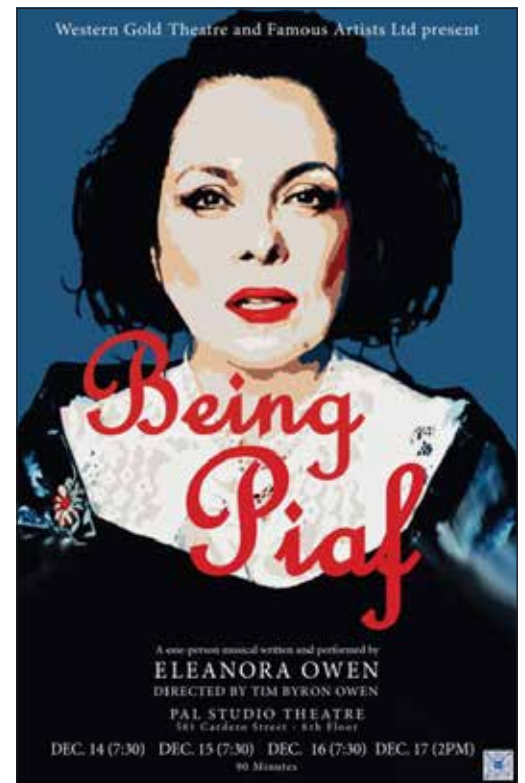


Photo courtesy of PAL Studio Theatre

The Classic Cocktail – Brandy Alexander 15

Continuing our holiday cocktail spotlight, we turn once again to one of our trusted cocktail creators, Martin Kovalcik, Bar Manager at Glowbal Restaurant. There are a eight holiday-themed choices on their *Tis the Season* cocktail menu (which is available until Dec. 31), and Kovalcik chose the classic, *Brandy Alexander 15*, which contains St-Rémy VSOP, Crème de Cacao, single cream, and nutmeg. Like all the cocktails we feature, this one is certainly easy to make at home for your guests and, as Kovalcik says, "it is a timeless classic recipe that never changes, and it feels like Christmas and the holidays with every sip." After sampling, we certainly agree. glowbalgroup.com

The Holiday Gift – *My Father's List:* *How Living My Dad's Dream Set Me Free*

She appeared earlier this year on *Our City Tonight* and in the pages of *The Richmond Sentinel*. Author Laura Carney, who was struggling with grief after the tragic death of her father, committed herself to his long-lost bucket list that had been discovered, and through that journey later found freedom, healing and herself. This story is touching, and so full of honesty it became one of our book recommendations for 2023. As we gather to celebrate this holiday season, we are reminded of one of Carney's great observations that comes near the book's end: There is an emotion more expansive than grief and that is love. *My Father's List* is a perfect gift for that lover of great stories in your life. bylauracarney.com

The Legend – *Being Piaf*

There were a handful of legendary 20th Century singers whose way with a song was so uniquely their own – Sinatra, Ella, Louis Armstrong, come to mind – and that list would be incomplete without French singer, Edith Piaf, best known for her songs in cabaret and chanson genres (*La Vie en rose* is her signature song). If you are a fan, you will want to see *Being Piaf*, during its three performances, Dec. 15 – 17, at the PAL Studio Theatre. This one person play has enjoyed acclaimed engagements in Los Angeles, as well as New York City, and in 2024, is headed to London. The play's writer and star, Eleanora Owen, brings Edith Piaf to life through song and performance. 300 - 581 Cardero Street, Vancouver. palvancouver.org/theatre

Offering the guidance with a personal touch

By JIM GORDON & LEETA LIEPINS
Contributors

Shannon Jackman, Grayden Biffart and Ryan Mulligan are part of the IGL Benefit Consultants. They specialize in providing innovative and strategic employee benefit solutions designed to meet their client's specific needs. Recently, *Our City Tonight* sat down with two of the three, Shannon Jackman (SJ) and Grayden Biffart (GB).

OCT: Please, tell us about IGL Benefit Consultants.

SJ: IGL Benefits Consultants focuses on the group benefits marketplace. Our intention is to not just email a quote when an enquiry is received. The relationship begins when we connect through a virtual meeting or an in-person meeting and that's where I believe, our area of specialty benefits our clients.

OCT: That's one of the main points we've noticed with IGL—that your team stresses the personal touch, even with the smaller businesses, you take the time to see everybody personally, and treat them with the same importance and respect as your larger clients. Let's talk about your relationship with the Chamber of Commerce Insurance plan. I understand they are a partner of yours, can you explain how they fit into with your plan in this market.

GB: We are a full-service brokerage, so we have the opportunity to work with any insurer and the Chamber of Commerce program is one of the plans we offer. It's very unique as it's structured for small businesses.

OCT: Can we talk a little bit about the program, not-for-profit and the concept of pooling.

SJ: How the Chamber of Commerce plan works is that it's actually in a not-for-profit structure, so it is administered separately. All the revenue from the program's surplus stays inside that structure so that helps with renewals and with the inflation we're all experiencing. Finally, this relates back to the concept of pooling. There are two aspects to most benefits for those people that are familiar. There is your experience rated



Photo courtesy IGL Benefit Consultants
From left to right, Grayden Biffart, Shannon Jackman, Ryan Mulligan.

health and dental. Then there's the fully pooled parts that are the life, the long-term disability, and the short term.

The Chamber of Commerce insurance is different in that, their pool benefits are truly pooled nationally so that's unique. We have not had a base rate increase in long-term disability premiums for years, and that's unusual in this industry. The other aspect is the health and dental. We pool provincially and its true pooling. It doesn't matter what industry you're in, it doesn't matter if you are a larger or smaller company. The pool works together. It is all one pool. The stability of our renewals system is unparalleled.

OCT: Let's talk about some of the additional services your programs offer that increases the benefits to your clients. For example, the employee assistant programs and the business assistance service.

SJ: The business assistance service is specifically for owners or managers, and it is a program that provides up to nine hours of telephone advice like HR, legal, and accounting questions. As a small business owner, one will typically not have these services or an individual with this experience on the staff, so this is an opportunity for a business owner to ask questions at the cost of the plan rather than at the cost of the business. The employee assistant program is an assistance program for employees where they can

access up to 12 hours of face-to-face counselling for any issues they deem necessary, whether that be relationships or even personal.

OCT: Let's talk about some of the partnerships you have including Pocket Pills and how this unique program works.

GB: Pocket Pills is basically a virtual pharmacy so it allows our members to dispense prescriptions with the convenience of home delivery or delivery at work. The advantages are that there is a 10 per cent increase in the amount reimbursed to the member. For example, if you have an 80 per cent drug plan with us, you'll have a 90 per cent drug plan covered, if you have 90 per cent you have 100 per cent. It's all

about the ease of dispensing.

OCT: Let's talk about Teledoc because one of the things you pride yourselves on is virtual healthcare, which you've been doing long before Covid impacted our communities.

SJ: Teledoc is an app platform that partners with the Chamber of Commerce. We actually had virtual healthcare before the pandemic so we know how important this was to a lot of people. Teledoc offers something which we call a second opinion service which, if I'm in any kind of a serious medical situation, I can request a deep dive into diagnosis, symptoms, and treatment, which will be reviewed by a chosen best doctor.

We also offer a mental health program, which is very new. This was offered due to responses from Teledoc and the increase in mental health concerns occurring right now. If I am in mental health diagnosis, I can have the same procedure of a second opinion. I can have a professional walk me through that diagnosis and the treatment options, the medication offered, and they can provide context around improvements in ways to have a better outcome. This is just one more aspect that I think puts us one step above, especially for small businesses. You can watch the video interview in full at richmondsentinel.ca/videos and for more information, go to iglbca.ca

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