



2024

**REFLECTING ON 2023
AS WE
LOOK TO THE FUTURE**

A Year In Review 2023





A special thank you to everyone who travelled this journey with us...

This is the time of year, that we review this past year's accomplishments before moving on to the future. It was rewarding to walk down memory lane re-reading the last 24 editions. While staying true to the original vision to publish Richmond community news, in 2023 we expanded the concept to include stories that readers in Richmond could relate to, or have an interest in. We expanded on provincial and federal news with a link to Richmond, and we added a media/video division to film interviews that covered diversified topics: such as business, elections, tourist attractions, sports, community activities, health and wellness.

It was in 2023 that the *Richmond Sentinel* partnered with *Our City Tonight* a national weekly TV series, which provided our community with an entertainment factor by adding interviews in print and in video with artists, singers, song writers, authors, actors, travel, food and wine industry.

Most recently, the *Richmond Sentinel*, added a series on video and in print with Rika Mansingh a highly qualified dietician and award-winning author. You can go to the *Richmond Sentinel* website (videos and editions) to catch up on this valuable series that's full of healthy, understandable information.

Recently Joe Leary, a well-known media broadcaster (television and radio) personality joined the *Richmond Sentinel* and with Joe will come stories from his network. In 2024, the *Richmond Sentinel* has even more plans for the print and media/video division and, we are always receptive to your suggestions for stories and community news (contact newsroom@richmondsentinel.ca).

The *Richmond Sentinel*, would like to thank you for your support over the years and from our home to yours, we wish you and your loved ones good health and happiness in 2024.



Eight notable news items in 2023

By MATTHEW CHEUNG
Reporter

Following a 2022 year that was filled with change, 2023 brought on a new year for people all around the world as they began to adapt to the new normal. The *Richmond Sentinel* recaps eight notable news items around the globe in 2023.

1. Barbie awarded Top Grossing Movie of 2023

In Fall 2009, Universal Pictures had announced that a live-action *Barbie* film would be coming in the future. After 14 years of staffing and casting changes, the film premiered at the Shrine Auditorium in Los Angeles on July 9, 2023. In as little as three months, the live-action film generated \$1.44 billion becoming the highest-grossing film of 2023 and highest-grossing film by a solo female director. The film surpassed many notable on-going movie series including *Guardians of the Galaxy Vol. 3*, *Fast X*, *Spider-Man: Across the Spider-Verse*, and *Mission: Impossible – Dead Reckoning Part One*.

2. Taylor Swift's landmark Eras Tour the highest grossing tour of all time

In 2023, American singer-songwriter Taylor Swift's Eras Tour broke the Guinness world record for the highest-grossing music tour ever. The tour began in 2023 and will continue into December 2024. With a total of 151 shows worldwide, the show broke Elton John's five-year farewell tour that ended in 2023, generating a whopping \$1.04 billion compared to Elton John's \$939 million. Each show spans over three and a half hours, featuring a set list of 44 songs.

3. World Meteorological Organization (WMO) announces global temperatures shatter records

On November 2023, it was announced by the World Meteorological Organization (WMO) that the global temperatures have shattered records, indicating a 1.40 degrees Celsius increase compared to the pre-industrial 1850-1900 baseline. Greenhouse gases were recorded to be at an all-time high showing no signs of decreasing, sea surface temperatures and sea level rise saw record levels, a record low Antarctic ice levels, and extreme weathers causing death and starvation.

4. The King and Queen of the United Kingdom's Coronation

On May 6, 2023, Charles III and his wife Camilla were coronated onto the throne at Westminster Abbey, following the death of his mother, the late Queen Elizabeth II, on September 8, 2022. On September 10, Charles was proclaimed King by the Accession Council.

5. World Health Organization (WHO) officially declared the end of the COVID-19 pandemic as a global health emergency

On May 5, 2023, after three years of a global pandemic, the WHO declared the end of COVID-19 as a global emergency. With more than 765 million cases worldwide since the early stages of the pandemic, the COVID-19 pandemic took nearly seven million lives. Government all around the world were urging citizens to get their vaccines and booster shots. The announcement does not mean that COVID-19 has disappeared from the earth but that we will be transitioning out of the emergency phase and will need continue monitoring it and take measures to protect ourselves and others.

6. India passes China as the world's most populous country



Photo via Flickr.ca

Richmond Sentinel present eight notable news items in the year 2023.

In April 2023, India officially surpassed China as the world's most populous country. China who had held the title for World's Most Populous Country since 1950, began experiencing a decline in 2022 after reaching a peak size of 1.426 billion people. India surpassed that number late April and has continued grow based on the latest United Nations estimates and projections. As of late 2023, India has reached a population of 1.434 billion people based on the United Nations' data.

7. Japanese Baseball superstar Shohei Ohtani signs massive deal with Los Angeles Dodgers

On Dec. 9, Japanese baseball superstar Shohei Ohtani announced on social media that he would be signing with the Los Angeles Dodgers. The two-time unanimous Most Valuable Player (MVP) agreed to a ten-year, \$700 million contract. He will earn \$2 million a year from 2024 to 2034, after opting to defer the remaining \$680 million to be paid out from 2034 to 2043, sparking many baseball fans to take exception to the baseball league's rules. By deferring the money, the superstar has allowed his new team to stay competitive in the free agency market.

8. Ocean Gate's Titan submersible implodes during expedition to see wreckage of infamous Titanic ship

On June 18, a submersible operated by American tourism company Ocean Gate lost communication with its mothership during an expedition to see the wreckage of the Titanic. The titan initiated emergency protocol to ascend from their location, but it never appeared. The news prompted citizens around North America to tune in as it was reported that the submersible only had 96 hours of breathable air remaining. 14 days later, debris consistent with a catastrophic loss of pressure was found. Up until early October, multiple recovery operations were conducted, as engineers recovered the rest of the debris and presumed human remains.

**RICHMOND
SENTINEL**
OUR COMMUNITY NEWS

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A Year In Review 2023**Favourite cover story**

The video interview on location with Danny Sitnam, president and CEO of Helijet was a memorable experience. Sitting on a couple of stools in their airport hangar with a helicopter as a backdrop, Danny shared his journey from pilot to creating this Incredible airline that provides travel services and medical services.

The story can be viewed on video and in print.
richmondsentinel.ca/videos or
richmondsentinel.ca/editions

**Most Informative story**

Once a year Mayor Brodie sits down in a video interview with the *Richmond Sentinel* to share his annual state of the union report. The mayor provided a lot of valuable information in his report, so much so, we felt it was well worth a second publication on page 8.

The interview can be viewed on video and in print.
richmondsentinel.ca/videos or
richmondsentinel.ca/editions

**Most challenging publication**

Although this was an honour to be selected, the agreement was well before the pandemic when we had an experienced seasoned sports writer on staff. We chose to honour the agreement in 2023 and as challenging as it was to dedicate an entire edition to a hockey tournament the new *Richmond Sentinel* team proudly succeeded and added a video interview with an Australian owner who brought 5 teams.

The event can be viewed in print and on video.

richmondsentinel.ca/videos or richmondsentinel.ca/editions

**Educational moments**

A trip by bus/ferry to Victoria to meet with leaders of the NDP and BC United parties was arranged for a group of business men and women and this included a group of young students from age 8 to 12. It was a long day, but a successful journey. The adult's memorable experience really came from being in the company of these very-well behaved young boys. We left Richmond at 7 a.m. and returned at 6 p.m. to awaiting parents and we made sure our praise was shared with the parents.

The full story can be viewed in print.
richmondsentinel.ca/editions

**Richmond students takes gold**

In 2023, Richmond athletes from Kajaks Club finished strong in Quebec. Lawrence Man and Lauren Curtis won gold, other team members won bronze and personal best achievements. Over 900 Canadian athletes competed. The story can be viewed in print.
richmondsentinel.ca/editions

**Most entertaining story**

Amazing Race Canada is Canada's most watched summer series and Richmond's Derek Gottenbos and Jaspal Sidhu were one of the teams competing. The race started in Winnipeg and then travelled to British Columbia. Production did a great job of showcasing BC, Derek and Jaspal did a great job keeping us entertained with their humour. The *Richmond Sentinel* followed the series until they were eliminated.

Their journey can be viewed in

print.
richmondsentinel.ca/editions



The highest honour

Former city councillor, Harold Steves contributed most of his life, some 50 years to serving the City of Richmond. As the province of BC's longest serving elected politician he is known for preserving farmland and heritage as well as addressing environmental issues. Farewell my friend.

The full story can be viewed in print richmondsentinel.ca/editions



An emotional moment

The *Richmond Sentinel* filmed an interview with Veteran and former President of ANAF Unit 284, William Spencer. When researching photos from the different wars Canadian soldiers fought in, I came across a song called 'Soldiers Cry, Oh Canada'. We tracked down the song writer/singer and asked permission to use his song in the video.

Listen closely to the singer/ the words and I guarantee you will find this an emotional moment. (Print Vol. 7, Issue 5, page 9)

richmondsentinel.ca/videos or richmondsentinel.ca/editions



2023 recognition City of Richmond

In 2023, Richmond was recognized as one of the most family friendly Cities in Canada, placing number six behind major cities: Quebec City, Ottawa, Calgary, Edmonton and Vancouver. Based on population, number of families with children, unemployment rate, safety index, average household income and monthly household costs, daycare cost and availability, parks and median house price.

For the full story Vol. 7, Issue 7

richmondsentinel.ca/editions



Best tourist attraction

The Richmond Night Market is more than an amusement park, it's an opportunity for small home-based businesses to experience marketing their products on the front line to a captive audience of over one million customers in a season. It's also a one-stop paradise for Asian food. Owner Raymond Cheung said in an interview "my team is working hard to bring back the popular attractions of the Richmond Night Market that has given it international recognition before the pandemic.

The full story can be viewed in print richmondsentinel.ca/editions



2023 positive long-awaited news

Launching a new era of health care in Richmond

The new nine-floor Yurkovich Family Pavilion will provide enhanced and increased health care services for Richmond's growing population including an expanded emergency department, all single-occupancy patient rooms with ensuites, 208 in-patient beds, new surgical centre, and a fully equipped medical imaging centre, to name a few. The new facility will be earthquake safe, constructed above the flood plain, and 100 per cent carbon neutral.

The full story with Link Vol. 7, Issue 8, page 11.

richmondsentinel.ca/editions



In 2023, the *Richmond Sentinel* partnered up with new talent

With the addition of TV series *Our City Tonight*, brought the opportunity to partner with Joe Leary, long time media broadcaster (TV, radio, print) and Rika Mansingh, a registered dietitian, clinical consultant media and author.

More to come in the new year from the media division.

richmondsentinel.ca/videos or richmondsentinel.ca/editions

Happy Holidays

From your
local MLAs!



We wish you and your loved ones
a safe and joyful holiday season.
We look forward to serving you in
the New Year!

<p>Henry Yao, MLA Richmond-South Centre Henry.Yao.MLA@leg.bc.ca (604) 775-0891</p>	<p>Kelly Greene, MLA Richmond-Steveston Kelly.Greene.MLA@leg.bc.ca 604-241-8452</p>	<p>Aman Singh, MLA Richmond-Queensborough Aman.Singh.MLA@leg.bc.ca 604-664-0700</p>
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Voted most informative story in 2023

The *Richmond Sentinel* sat down in June with Mayor Brodie to talk about his annual report. We filmed the interview which can be viewed on richmondsentinel.ca/videos and in print volume 7, issue 10. This interview contained so much valuable information we chose to re-publish a shorter version, highlighting the points raised.

Community safety

Richmond is a pretty safe community, but if something happens to you personally, you don't want to hear statistics how safe your city is. It's important that we work together with every resident, every service provider, every day of the year to make sure everyone feels safe.

Addition of a city centre community police office

The station was finished during COVID-19 but only opened in the last year. The RCMP was originally based next to city hall until a decision was made to relocate the station to No. 5 Road near Steveston Hwy. The distance of relocating to the south part of the city created a challenge servicing YVR and was inconvenient for the public to visit the station for routine matters. This new additional location at the former court house at Granville and Gilbert was re-developed into an additional police station.

Additional police officers (16) and firefighters (27)

We committed a number of years ago that, within the next number of years we would increase a compliment of RCMP officers by 91 officers and we would increase a compliment of firefighters by 36 to keep up their response capability. Last year was the last part of that commitment to increase in person power, so now we have completed that commitment and can move forward into the future.

Fox 80 mental health car program

People without homes and the street incidents occurring, have increased in the last 20 years with a component involving mental health or substance abuse. Specifically trained RCMP officers will work with a social worker when there seems to be a component involving mental health and they will respond together through the Fox 80 program, which is proving to be very positive.

Development of infrastructure

One of the big projects is the Steveston community centre a \$95 million project. In north Richmond at the Capstan Way, a new Canada Line station is being built, along with a new community centre that is being built which we hope will be completed by the end of 2023.

Arts, culture, festivals

Every year, we review how we can gain the interest of the residents of our city. The annual events like the Canada Day, the Salmon Festival, Maritime Festival, Doors Open and Culture Days are events the people of Richmond can once again enjoy.



Richmond city council.

Photo via [Richmond.ca](https://richmond.ca)

Economic strategy

A good sign that things are coming back is that new business licenses are up 20 percent in 2022. The city has a new APP that allows people to go on line and renew a business license called "My Business". We're trying to develop better online and virtual ways to continue with the planning process. Coming out of the pandemic has been a matter of growth and re-energizing our businesses.

Importance of social media

In terms of communicating with people you want to use every tool that you have available. Social media is accepted by so many people in our community, so it's an opportunity for us to communicate what's going on in a positive sense.

Climate change

Foremost, on our list for analysis and impact is the environment. We have an overall plan to reduce greenhouse gases by 50 percent. One of the major things we did this past year, because we worked with a private company on the district energy, we have a commitment from Canada Infrastructure Bank for funds at a very favourable rate so that we have the ability to go forward into the future. Another area is the city's fleet, half the vehicles we purchased were either full electric or hybrid electric so we can become more sustainable.

Childcare

If we want young families to live in our community, they have to have access to child care. As new buildings are developed and the city gets amenity space, very often it is used for child care. We added two child care centres this last year and we are about to open another one. We have in the neighbourhood of 600 childcare spaces that are in city owned facilities but with private operators.

During the pandemic, did you connect with the business community?

When everything was shut down, we did a number of videos talking about what was happening what our plans were, and how we were going to get through this together. Zoom events with chamber of commerce and business interest groups assisted us to reassure everyone "we will get through this and we will get to the time when this will be a thing of the past."

In closing interviewer Jim Gordon said, Mayor Brodie "you are that rare thing sir, and I put this in perspective, you were elected into office a month after 911. If you could go back in time, what is one thing you would tell yourself as a new mayor in 2001?"

"When you are a new mayor, the learning curve is very significant. One's ability to work with the city comes from the contacts with the city, the residents, the businesses, the various groups and the entire community. I think any new mayor would understand that," said Mayor Brodie. To watch the full video interview, go to richmondsentinel.ca/videos

BC's vaccination record vs. Canada

B.C. has the highest vaccination rates in Canada. However, it is crucial that people continue to get immunized:

- Interior Health has administered 236,649 influenza vaccines, compared to 244,285 last year, and 212,316 COVID-19 vaccines, compared to 176,388 last year;
- Northern Health has administered 56,381 influenza vaccines, compared to 58,969 last year, and 48,161 COVID-19 vaccines, compared to 42,341 last year;
- Fraser Health has administered 466,313 influenza vaccines, compared to 494,293 last year, and 395,868 COVID-19 vaccines, compared to 404,582 last year;
- Vancouver Coastal Health has administered 370,704 influenza vaccines, compared to 390,971 last year, and 336,461 COVID-19 vaccines, compared to 310,604 last year; and
- Island Health has administered 313,697 influenza vaccines, compared to 321,701 last year, and 297,043 COVID-19 vaccines, compared to 246,308 last year, including year-over-year comparison.

The province continues to make it convenient for people to get immunized with influenza and COVID-19 vaccines available at more than 850 pharmacies throughout the province, as well as many health-authority clinics and primary-care providers' offices. Vaccines are free and available for everyone six months and older, including enhanced influenza vaccines for seniors.

BOXING DAY WEEK

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In their own words...

Collaboration essential for housing those at risk



Chak Au
Councillor

Like many cities across Canada, Richmond is dealing with a housing crisis due to affordability, rental costs and economic pressures. For many, this means a higher than acceptable part of their income is going to the cost of keeping a roof over their head.

For others, it can lead to an even greater problem – homelessness.

Richmond, like other municipalities, is seeing an increase in the number of individuals lacking permanent shelter. There are many reasons behind this rise and it can affect anyone. Without a stable place to call home, people seek refuge in vehicles, under bridges, in industrial areas or in parks.

Nobody chooses to be homeless, and the City is committed to working in partnership with senior levels of government and the private and non-profit sectors to help meet the needs of individuals experiencing homelessness in Richmond.

In 2019, Council launched the 10-year Richmond Homelessness Strategy to

guide the City and community in ways to work together to support those without permanent shelter. It outlines several strategies and actions aimed at providing a continuum of housing and services for those in need. I urge everyone to read this to gain a better understanding of the realities and challenges of this issue.

The provincial government recently amended the Community Charter to mandate that municipalities must offer indoor shelters equipped with essential amenities like meals, showers, and laundry facilities.

Richmond, through foresight and long-term commitment, did not need such a mandate. Working with our partners, we already have a drop-in centre and emergency and extreme weather shelters in place and have worked to increase access for those in need.

I am sometimes asked why we do not simply remove people from their tents or other makeshift shelters and send them somewhere else. Because whatever their circumstances, whatever their situation, these are people. People in need. People who deserve to be treated with respect and dignity.

It is crucial to understand that homelessness is not a problem municipal governments can solve alone. The federal and provincial governments have a



shared responsibility to provide sufficient affordable housing options, but they have neglected their responsibility for decades, leading to the current crisis. They have simply pushed the issue to local governments to address.

Richmond's housing crisis demands immediate attention and action. While the City has taken commendable steps, the underlying issue of affordable housing requires a collaborative effort from all levels of government. By working together and allocating the necessary resources, we can strive to achieve a future where homelessness is eradicated, and everyone has a safe and secure place to call home. The home they want. The home they deserve.

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/WatchOnline.

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. 20 | 4:00pm
Public Works & Transportation Committee, followed by Parks, Recreation & Cultural Services Committee

Dec. 20 | 7:00pm
Special Council Meeting

Jan. 8 | 4:00pm
General Purposes Committee followed by Finance Committee

Jan. 9 | 4:00pm
Planning Committee

Jan. 15 | 7:00pm
Council Meeting

Jan. 16 | 4:00pm
Community Safety Committee

Jan. 17 | 3:30pm
Development Permit Panel



For meeting agendas and reports, visit richmond.ca/CityHall. Meeting schedule subject to change

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



Immunizations, keeping safe this holiday season

As people gather to celebrate the holiday season, the province encourages everyone to book an appointment to receive their free influenza and updated COVID-19 vaccines now to protect themselves against severe illness and hospitalization.

"We want everyone in B.C. to be safe as they gather this holiday season," said Dr. Bonnie Henry, provincial health officer. "That is why continuing to practice healthy habits is so important, so people can focus on connecting and celebrating during the coming weeks."

Based on the most recent epidemiological data available from the BC Centre for Disease Control, influenza levels continue to increase throughout the province, primarily the H1N1 strain. Respiratory syncytial virus (RSV) activity also continues to increase, and test positivity remains high among children.

Meanwhile, COVID-19 test positivity, cases, hospitalizations and deaths have decreased since early October. As of Thursday, Dec. 7, 2023, there were 182 patients in hospital with COVID-19, 17 of them in critical care.

"Even if you have caught a flu or COVID-19 in recent months, getting immunized with an updated influenza and COVID-19 vaccine if you haven't had one is still the best way to protect you from the current strains of respiratory illnesses that are circulating right now," said Minister of Health, Adrian Dix.



File photo by Jaana Björk

"Since the launch of the immunization campaign in October, almost half (46 per cent) of the provincial population of people aged 80 and older have their updated COVID-19 vaccination.

We encourage those who have not received it yet to book their immunization appointment now. It's easy, convenient and free to get immunized in B.C. We can all do our part to support each other and the health-care workers who are working hard to keep our communities healthy and safe during the holiday season."

This year's respiratory illness immunization campaign was launched to the general population on Oct. 10, 2023. As of end of day of Sunday,

Dec. 10, 2023, B.C. had administered 1,443,752 doses of influenza vaccines and 1,289,849 doses of COVID-19 vaccines. "We can all take important preventative measures with holiday meals and parties, especially those held indoors," Henry said. "This means staying home if you're sick, frequently cleaning your hands, and following proper respiratory etiquette, such as covering your coughs and wearing a mask when appropriate. This is critically important if you're gathering with friends and loved ones who may be at risk of more severe illness."

B.C. has the highest vaccination rates in Canada. However, it is crucial that people continue to get immunized.

BLUNDELL
CENTRE

M E R R Y C H R I S T M A S

AND HAPPY HOLIDAYS

PARTAKE IN CHRISTMAS FESTIVITIES AT BLUNDELL CENTRE

42 stores for all the Christmas cheer

Located at Blundell & No 2 Road

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 win-



Christmas trees.

Photo via Freepik.com

ter 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, recounting 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 to help with the festive ambience. 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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JOE BIZ—Z95.3—the beginning



Joe
Leary

When Richmond radio station Z95.3 signed on to the airwaves on May 23, 1991; it signaled much more than just a brand-new frequency for local listeners to enjoy. It finally delivered a Top 40/Pop Music format to the FM dial.

It was a landmark move. Similarly, it proved a logistical challenge.

While Canadian AM Radio Stations had largely been devoid of restrictions or limitations as to what; or how often they played “the hits”, FM stations were nowhere as fortunate.

In fact, radio stations on the FM dial were heavily-regulated by cumbersome CRTC guidelines; severely limiting the amount of airplay that any given hit record could actually receive on a weekly basis. Limitations such as these literally fly in the face of logic as listeners are driven to a particular radio station or format, seeking their favourite songs and expecting to hear them within a certain timeframe.

Through the early years of inception from the mid-sixties onward; the fast-paced format of ‘Top 40’ radio gained immense popularity for continually ‘Playing the Hits’, amid a limited; yet highly-repetitive playlist. In Canada, FM Radio regulations at that point in the early 90’s prevented Z95 from following suit. “We had 50 per cent non-hit requirements back then but we launched with a high percentage of new music on our playlist,” says original Z95 program director, Brad Phillips.

In essence, brand new or uncharted music didn’t fall within the parameters of “hits”; within the purview of the restrictive CRTC regulations. “As such we were ahead of the Top 40 chart (hit) positions on enough of our music that hit/non-hit wasn’t too much of a problem”.

You heard that right—FM radio could only play a certain ratio of hit songs versus non-hit songs. Despite such obvious obstacles, Z95 seemingly sounded like a veritable Top 40 jukebox through creative programming strategy.

“It felt like we were a hit music station—but in the eyes of the CRTC, we were totally in compliance”. It may seem convoluted logic—and it certainly was, but the intent of the “hit song to non-hit song ratio”, prevented the superior FM radio signal from simply running roughshod over its AM counterparts still playing music.

It was seemingly intended as a precautionary measure and one that would; at the very least; give a longer shelf life to AM music stations struggling to keep pace with the ever-increasing advance of FM music radio.



Z95 program director, Brad Phillips.

Photo courtesy Joe Leary

Then, there was the challenge of having to play the requisite 33 per cent Canadian Content (Can-Con); a regulation that every Canadian radio station remains beholden to. “Can-Con was tougher to be honest,” says Phillips. “Much of Canadian music at that point was rock - not dance-pop”.

People don’t often remember but Alanis Morissette had a dance-pop album out then. She came to Vancouver; we went to dinner and I said “Congratulations—we are going to play every track on your CD!”

Sheer genius, as FM radio programmers were forced to resort to creative means to abide by the CRTC guidelines, yet still attract an audience accustomed to hearing their favourite songs on a regular basis.

It was ‘Mission: Accomplished’ and to say that Z95.3 FM took the Greater Vancouver radio market by storm right out of the gate is an understatement.

Armed with a pseudo Top 40, pop music format on the FM dial and aided by a line-up of stellar on-air talent that included the likes of DJ’s, Darren B. Lamb, Buzz Bishop and Zack Spencer; ‘Z’ became an immediate force to be reckoned with in the Vancouver radio market.

“I remember our station owner, Michael Dickinson coming to me and saying, ‘Can you deliver a 3 share (3 per cent of the overall Vancouver listening audience) with this new station? We are going to do our (budgeting and projection) models on a 3

share—so we need that.”

In our first ratings release in 1991—we signed on with a 6.8 share—so there was happiness, and relief,” says Phillips. “A few years later we had a double digit audience share and became the Number One FM radio station in Vancouver”.

Known for its high-energy presentation and high visibility, ‘Z’ was equal to the task in marketing this new concept to a welcoming radio landscape.

“My number one memory was Paula Abdul coming to Vancouver to play at the Pacific Coliseum,” he recalls. “We did a promotion: “Wear a Z-shirt” to the show and if we see you, we will give you a free CD.

We went to the concert and the promo team had maybe 200 CDs to give away. I swear that if there were 10,000 people at that show—at least 5,000 of them had ‘Z’ shirts on. We handed out the 200 CDs and then basically hid under our seats.

It was exciting and terrifying”!

Today, Phillips is retired from the day to day of the radio biz but looks back fondly on such a special time in his career.

“Launching Z95 was a great experience with a great team,” he recalls.

“To this day I have people come up to me and say the station was a big part of their youth and even inspired some to get in to the radio business—which is amazing.”

@joeleary, X, @reallyjoeleary

OUR CITY tonight

SPOTLIGHT ON HOME FOR THE HOLIDAYS

The Meal – Roasted Acorn Squash

Mitra Shad, French-trained chef and culinary force behind eatbraiselove.com, returns with another fabulous holiday dish that is also easy to make at home. "Pumpkin isn't the only squash that deserves a spotlight during the fall and holiday season," Mitra tells us. To make this roasted acorn squash, just cut it in half, scoop out the seeds and "score" the flesh (criss-cross lines about 1/2 inch deep on the inside). Place the two halves, cup side down, on a baking sheet in a preheated 375F° oven for about 30 minutes. Turn the squash halves over so the cup sides are up. Put a pat of butter, a drizzle of maple syrup as well as a pinch of salt on each of the squash halves. If you like a little kick, add a tiny sprinkle of cayenne. Then put them back into the 375F° oven for another 30 minutes or until they're soft when you pierce them with a knife.



Photo courtesy eatbraiselove.com



Photo courtesy barcart.ca

The Cocktails – The Bar Cart

Chris Chuy, owner of Lavish Liquid, was moving along nicely, serving up cocktails with his teams at all the big events around town. Then COVID hit, and with it, the lockdown and no events. So Chris pivoted, and started a delivery service—known as The Bar Cart—with all the ingredients to enjoy great cocktails at home. And though his Lavish Liquid is back on the event scene again serving up great cocktails, The Bar Cart continues to offer fun gift ideas this holiday season with options like *Mule Kits*, *Bartender 101 Kits*, and *Smoked Old Fashioned Kits*. "These cocktail kits make great gifts for that cocktail enthusiast that you know," Chris tells us, "and it gives them something to enjoy over the holidays." More info orders@barcart.ca

The Holiday Card – Silly Snowmen

Today, holiday cards are often forgotten in favour of digital ones. Enter artist, Sandra Skinner. Her passion for Christmas card making came to light after her father passed away in 2020. During the first Christmas without him, she was drowning in her grief and looking for a way to cope. Painting made the grief feel lighter. Her father loved Christmas and to honour him she started *Silly Snowmen* on personalized holiday cards for family and friends. Fast forward to today and she is busy taking orders and creating up a storm for anyone who would like some of these wonderfully unique cards. "You're never too old to grow or discover new passions and unexpected paths," Sandra tells us. During the rest of the year, Sandra paints abstract art as part of her healing process and has had two sold out art shows. More info on Instagram [@Sandraskinner_vancouver](https://www.instagram.com/Sandraskinner_vancouver)



Photo courtesy Sandra Skinner



Photo courtesy Jennifer Robertson
Jennifer Robertson, *Schitt's Creek*.



Photo courtesy Our City Tonight
Jim Gordon, Leeta Liepins, Harry Hertscheg, at Vancouver Wine Festival.



Photo courtesy Our City Tonight
TJ Newman, author of *Drowning*.

Looking back at an eventful 2023

By JIM GORDON & LEETA LIEPINS
Contributors

After a busy and eventful year of *Our City Tonight* TV, hosts Jim Gordon (JG) and Leeta Liepins (LL) look back on some of their favourite moments from 2023.

LL: There were so many interesting people and events over this past year, honestly it is difficult to narrow down my choice to only two, but a couple did stand out. One of my favourite sit down interviews at our downtown studio location, inside of The Cabana Room at Hydra Restaurant was with the funny and talented Jennifer Robertson. Most of our viewers/readers would remember her from the hit TV series *Schitt's Creek* playing the mayor's wife, Jocelyn Schitt. After that award-winning show was finished, Jennifer went on to play roles in many more popular performances in well-liked series like *Ginny and Georgia* and others. It was such a pleasure to have her in the studio and face to face, grateful to have met this engaging and lovely actor this year.

JG: That was a great interview. For me, my second-choice interview of the year was one we did together last summer, and part of why I chose this one is that it has some history from several years before. TJ Newman was a former flight attendant and first-time author with a new book to promote in the early summer 2021. I had come across her then-new book, *Falling*, and her story about how she had written that book over a long period of time while working the "red eye" from LA to NYC. We had her

on the show early on that year and watched as the book skyrocketed to the top of the book lists everywhere. Last summer she was back on the show for her second book, *Drowning*. It too, sold millions of copies. We were both so happy to see that she was the same open, honest, appreciative person we met two years earlier when no one knew her name. In a cynical age, her story is inspiring to people everywhere who dare to dream.

LL: My first choice for interviews this year is not just one interview but a series that came together with one of our favourite partners, the Vancouver International Wine Festival. It was such a sign of the times to have this great event back on our show and in full swing as the pandemic was really hard on them. We love the segments we get to do with all of the brilliant wine principles and the wine festival people. Harry Hertscheg, the executive director of this wine festival, is one of those key people that pulls this wonderful event together so that Vancouver and all who attend can experience wine from around the world that we would not generally have access to. It's a fun and challenging couple of days when we film with the team, and we love the energy plus the unique opportunity to learn more about wine from around the globe and to be able to share that knowledge with our viewers on our show. The wine festival is back in 2024 and will be on from Feb. 24 until March 3, tickets will be available for purchase soon and you can check their website for event dates.

JG: I agree with you, trying to choose a number one interview from over dozens we've done

together and separately is tough. For me, part of why I chose my number one interview of the year is due to how it came about, so randomly and from so far away. Last March I was on the other side of the planet for business, in one of my favourite cities, Sydney, Australia. On the first day I arrived, I was sitting in a café drinking coffee trying to fight off jet lag. Reading through their superb *Sydney Morning Herald*, I came across an article on an Aussie singer/songwriter named Gregg Arthur. I knew the name vaguely but couldn't remember from where. Later on, I listened to his music and was blown away by his way with the classic *American Songbook*. This guy is like Sinatra and Tony Bennett rolled into one. I was also impressed by the "crooner-like" songs he wrote and arranged like *Last Call*. Two months later he agreed to come on *Our City Tonight*, via Zoom, talking about his days of singing in Vegas, impressing greats like Herb Alpert and Tony Bennett, and, in the interview's most touching part, he talked about dealing with a Leukemia diagnosis that nearly killed him several years ago. It's the kind of interview we both have done on this show where you want so much for an artistic talent like this to be exposed to as many people as possible!

Please follow us on our social media @OurCityTonight and you can catch all past episodes on our YouTube Channel at *Our City Tonight*. The team at *Our City Tonight* TV would like to wish all of our viewers, readers, partners, family, and friends a wonderful holiday season and a very Happy New Year 2024. For stories in print richmondsentinel.ca/editions



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