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WATER QUALITY

Blue-green algae spurs toxic spill scare



PHOTOS BY ELIZABETH NOLAN

Sample sent for testing

BY ELIZABETH NOLAN
DRIFTWOOD STAFF

Salt Spring Fire-Rescue was called to the scene of an unknown spill on St. Mary Lake Tuesday afternoon after residents spotted a viscous turquoise liquid rimming the shore near Langs Road.

"I was appalled when I saw it," said local property owner Jack Giles, adding he'd never seen anything like it during his nine years on the lake.

While the substance certainly looked like it could have been paint or

another unknown product with chemical origins, it was quickly determined to be a concentration of blue-green algae. North Salt Spring Waterworks District's environmental manager Meghan McKee arrived on scene not long after Salt Spring firefighter Mitchell Sherrin and confirmed the most likely identification.

"It's almost certainly algae," McKee said after scooping up a plastic bottle of forest-green liquid.

"I would stress this is normal for this time of year and it's just alarming because of its colour," she added.

McKee explained that cyanobacteria can control their buoyancy to move

Above, North Salt Spring Waterworks District's environmental manager Meghan McKee takes a sample at St. Mary Lake on Dec. 15. Top left, a close-up view of the turquoise-coloured algae concentration seen on the St. Mary shoreline.

up and down a water column, and often rise to the lake's surface at night. Tuesday morning's brisk winds pushed a concentration of algae into the northern shoreline, which is what made the colour appear so intense.

Neither of NSSWD's two


water intakes are located near that part of the lake, but the district conducts weekly water quality tests and has yet to detect any toxic bacteria this winter. Results from the recent sample probably won't be available until after Christmas. In the meantime, McKee advised

pet owners to keep their animals out of the lake and property owners who draw water directly from the lake to ensure it passes through several filtration cycles.

The Ministry of Environment and the Capital Regional District would be notified, McKee said.

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TROY KAYE

FIRE DISTRICT

TallSky report reflects shifting hall roles

Job descriptions to improve internal relations

BY ELIZABETH NOLAN
DRIFTWOOD STAFF

A new report on the Salt Spring Fire Protection District's administrative functions reveals the growing pains caused by shifting responsibilities over the past year, and makes several recommendations on how to smooth internal relations.

The district's board of trustees accepted the report by TallSky Consulting Group at its Dec. 7 meeting. The administrative review fulfills another consultant's recommendation, as one of the actions suggested in Walker Resource Group's Fire Service Review.

TallSky conducted interviews with Salt Spring Fire District trustees and administrators as well as Walker Resource Group and FireWise Consulting representatives. The consultant also assembled data surveyed from 21 other improvement districts and municipalities to attempt cross-comparisons, although differing structures made this difficult.

First among the report's recommendations is that the board make clear the relationship between the corporate administrator and administrative assistant as the current reporting relationship "is not considered optimal in the view of the corporate administrator." Several linked recommendations deal with the same issue, including suggested job descriptions.

Specifically, the new descriptions suggested by the consultant make the corporate administrator (currently Andrew

Peat) the direct supervisor of the administrative assistant. Formerly that person (currently Iris Beck) reported to the fire chief.

Peat was hired for the district's newly created position of corporate administrative and financial officer in the spring of 2014. The report notes his position was originally more one of recording secretary and grew to include more financial responsibility.

Recommendation 6 is that in addition to creating new job descriptions, the board "provide an opportunity for team building or other engagement to foster an environment of collaboration, equitable distribution of work, and clearly defined reporting structure and accountability."

Another recommendation asks the board to consider whether the current arrangement provides the corporate administrator with enough support or whether another part-time staff person should be added. The trustees may have anticipated this request, as they removed recording secretary duties from Peat's plate in October.

Adjusting remuneration for the corporate administrator is not recommended at this time. The report notes that compensation in other jurisdictions ranges from a small honorarium to salaries of \$100,000 to \$150,000 per year plus benefits. Salt Spring currently offers \$35 per hour for a .75 full time position (around \$58,000 per year).

A slight increase for the administrative assistant may be in order, however. That position is currently paid \$22 per hour plus benefits, while the typical compensation is \$25 to \$30. The report suggests the

board consider increasing the local rate to between \$24 and \$25.

Also in the report, the consultant notes the company was asked to comment on several matters it considered to be outside the scope of the review, including the fire district's payroll system, its website and trustee emails.

In response, there is a recommendation that the board look at payroll options such as either implementing the QuickBooks program's full capabilities or outsourcing the service to a specialist firm.

In regard to the website, the consultant "agrees with the opinion of the board that the website could be improved."

"The current design is well intentioned and was delivered in the spirit of passion for the SSIFPD and its mission. However, over time it has not remained cohesive and is therefore less than optimal in representing the SSIFPD to the public," the report states.

The report recognizes that board members may need to create more than one email address to deal with matters requiring confidentiality, although issues of trust and transparency also need to be considered.

"Whereas there are certainly some communications that are sensitive and that should be carefully protected, for everyday communications between coworkers, work emails are not private [from the organization]," the report notes.

The board of trustees has yet to move any resolutions related to the report. The next regular meeting is scheduled for Jan. 16 at the lower hall at Salt Spring United Church starting at 7 p.m.

"Wishing you and your family the blessings of this season of good will."



Elizabeth May, O.C.
M.P., Saanich - Gulf Islands

Please join me in 2016 at a town hall:
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NEWS BEAT

Heads up!
Community Christmas Gatherings
 Meaden Hall and Fulford Hall
 See What's On for Dec. 25 on page 16

NATURE

Blue whale skeleton begins new year with fresh look

Salt Spring company at vanguard of skeletal restoration

BY SEAN MCINTYRE
 DRIFTWOOD STAFF

Wandering into Michael deRoos and Michiru Main's workshop summons the spirits of Herman Melville, Jacques Cousteau and Jules Verne, all under the same roof.

The partially completed building on Robinson Road houses at least three killer whales, a 250-pound humpback skull, a small school of porpoises and a lone minke whale. Larger specimens sprawl across the floor. Smaller creatures are stowed in well-marked cardboard boxes or plastic bins.

"It's a massive puzzle," Main said on a recent tour. "We're pretty meticulous when we exhume them; everything is well documented and labelled."

Most of the skeletons are owned by the federal government or universities and all are in a kind of skeletal purgatory awaiting funds that will transform them into feature attractions at museums, interpretive centres and research labs across North America.

The queue of spinal columns, flippers and skulls is no indication of the couple's complacency. Along with raising two children on Salt Spring, the pair have achieved rock star status in the curious world of skeleton articulation.

"We're only a cellphone call away," deRoos said. "We work with the whale scientists; when they find something dead, we often get a heads up."

Since the couple founded Cetacea, a company that specializes in world-class skeleton exhibits, they've reassembled dolphins, minke whales, orcas and sea lions. Things progressed swimmingly and, in 2008, the couple

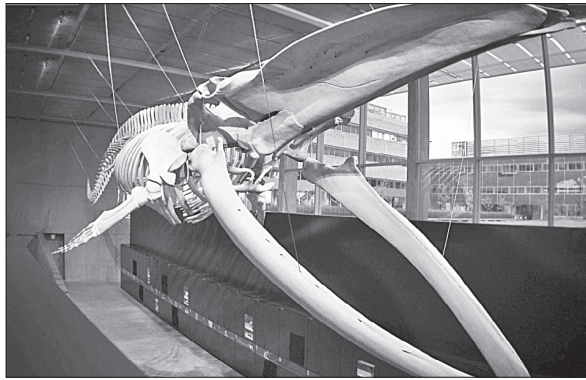


PHOTO CONTRIBUTED

Big Blue is the impressive centrepiece at the University of British Columbia's Beaty Biodiversity Museum.

took on their biggest job to date.

They've discovered reconstruction and restoration of Big Blue, a 26-metre (82-foot) blue whale suspended from the ceiling of the University of British Columbia's Beaty Biodiversity Museum, is a long-term relationship.

"We had no idea what we were getting into," Main said. "It turned into a way bigger project than we imagined."

Things really can't get any bigger than a blue whale. Blue whales are the largest known animals to have ever existed on Earth — larger than the long-necked brachiosaurus or two double-decker city buses. The creatures have hearts the size of automobiles and tongues that can weigh as much as an elephant.

The couple finished unearthing, degreasing, transporting and rebuilding Big Blue in 2010. The journey transformed a 20-year-old rancid carcass discovered buried in a Prince Edward Island beach into the largest suspended skeleton exhibit in the world without external armature.

It's also one of the world's largest dust magnets.

For three weeks in November, deRoos and Main deployed scissor lifts and industrial-scale

vacuum cleaners to remove layer upon layer of dust from Big Blue's bones. While they were at it, the team fixed fine cracks that emerged after years of exposure to variations of temperature and light.

"It turned into a way bigger project than we imagined."

MICHIRU MAIN
 Cetacea Contracting Ltd.

"The whale looks brighter and more polished," said Mairin Kerr, a spokesperson for the Beaty Biodiversity Museum. "The dust that dulled her appearance is gone. All the aesthetic blemishes have been fixed and touched up. She looks as good as new."

The average blue whale may only have 180 bones — an adult human has 206 — yet the largest (a mandible or jawbone) is longer than a pick-up truck. Blue whale cleaning is an undertaking that's not to be approached lightly.

Kerr said the whale is a huge crowd pleaser at the museum,



PHOTO BY SEAN MCINTYRE

Michael deRoos holds a pair of killer whale vertebrae that are in line for an upcoming skeleton articulation project.

where the skeleton helps staff teach visitors about conservation by showcasing the natural world's beauty and wonders.

"Big Blue helps us do this with her story," she said. "There is a great big world out there, and we are just one part of it. The natural world is full of amazing, inspiring, fascinating creatures like blue whales."

Big Blue isn't the only blue whale in Cetacea's marine mammal portfolio. In 2011, the team helped recover a 22-metre (73-foot) blue whale in northern California. DeRoos and the enormous whale bone degreaser that sits in the front pasture of his property will travel down the I-5 this spring. The Cetacea team will assist the community of Fort Bragg to give the specimen a new life as the Noyo Centre for Marine Science's star attraction. Project coordinators hope the blue whale will promote science among young visitors and highlight Balaenoptera musculus' slow but steady recovery.

Scientists believe between 5,000 and 12,000 blue whales live in the world's oceans, barely one per cent of the animal's original

levels. Though populations have rebounded since the International Whaling Commission banned blue whale hunting in 1966, the whales are susceptible to warming ocean temperatures, injuries sustained in vessel collisions, entanglement in fishing gear and ocean noise generated by sonar.

Big Blue and its smaller skeletal cousins offer people the chance to fathom the size and scale of the vast realm of creatures that inhabit the mysterious underwater world.

DeRoos compares Cetacea's work to giving the animals a second life, one in which the animals share valuable lessons long after death.

"You take something that's dead and lying on the beach, and then you can use the remains to tell stories to people and get more people interested and excited," he said. "Everybody seems to love bones. They find them fascinating. Even a single bone gets people to wonder where it comes from, how it works and what it does."

"When you see them all come together, if definitely breathes life into these creatures again."

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FERRIES

B.C. transportation minister seeks federal ferries help

Local MLA hopes for results

BY ELIZABETH NOLAN
DRIFTWOOD STAFF

B.C. Minister of Transportation and Infrastructure Todd Stone included

the coastal ferry system on his wish list during a meeting with his federal counterparts in Ottawa earlier this month.

Stone met with Infrastructure and Communities Minister Amarjeet Sohi and Transporta-

tion Minister Marc Garneau to outline B.C.'s priorities in those two areas and discuss federal investment possibilities. Included on the list of conversation points was the disparity between Pacific and Atlantic ferry systems when it comes to federal support. B.C. receives a federal subsidy of \$1.41 per passenger (around \$30 million per year) compared to \$493 per passenger (\$120 million) for the Atlantic provinces.

As the NDP opposition pointed out before the visit, getting the disparity addressed should be a top concern now

that a new government is in power in Ottawa.

"The ferry system in British Columbia is a vital piece of economic infrastructure, not just for coastal B.C., but for the entire economy," said Saanich North and the Islands MLA Gary Holman. "The B.C. Liberal skyrocketing fares have hurt families and businesses. The Christy Clark government must prove that they finally understand the importance of our ferry system by getting our federal government involved with ferries on the West Coast again."

The previous federal government had turned down BC Ferries' applications for infrastructure money to support terminal upgrades at Langdale and a new vessel for the northern coast. One of Stone's missions was to seek clarification on whether New Canada Building Fund money could be used for such projects.

Stone also made an official request that Ottawa waive duty tariffs on BC Ferries' foreign-built vessels for a savings of \$50 million, and asked for a review of Transport Canada crewing guidelines with a view toward possible staff reduc-

tions. "I guess the proof is in the pudding," Holman said about the meeting's expected results.

Holman said instead of asking for a tariff reduction, Stone should have looked at supporting coastal communities by asking for infrastructure funding that would make local shipbuilding more sustainable.

"If ferries were built in B.C. it would create jobs and return revenue to the province through taxes," Holman said. "Revenues coming back to British Columbia should be what they're focusing on."

Christmas Season ADVERTISING DEADLINES

Please note the Gulf Islands Driftwood will be closed on Friday, Dec. 25 - Christmas Day
Open for usual business hours on Monday, Dec. 28

ADVERTISING DEADLINES FOR THE DEC. 30TH PAPER:

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Classified Word Deadline: Tuesday, December 29, 9am

Please note the Gulf Islands Driftwood will be closed on Friday, Jan 1 - New Year's Day and will reopen for usual business hours on Monday, Jan. 4.

ADVERTISING DEADLINES FOR THE JAN. 6TH PAPER:

Display Advertising Deadline: Thursday, December 31, 4pm
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Classified Word Deadline: Tuesday, January 5, 9am

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WATER

NSSWD eases hook-up moratorium

Change affects Maxwell Lake side only

BY SEAN MCINTYRE
DRIFTWOOD STAFF

The North Salt Spring Waterworks District has lifted its moratorium on new water connections for the Maxwell Lake distribution area.

"It's still a risk, but it was an educated decision," said Marshall Heinekey, chair of the NSSWD, on Monday. "We balanced how well people conserved [over the summer] and weighed the factors."

The change affects NSSWD customers served by the Maxwell Lake reservoir who have been paying parcel taxes

for water service. Those customers are eligible for single-family or commercial connections. NSSWD staff said they will contact customers on the district's waiting list with further details.

The Maxwell Lake system, which covers NSSWD territory south of Ganges, accounts for roughly 40 per cent of the district's 1,700 connections.

"Requests for additional demand on a property for structures such as secondary suites, cabins or a multiplex will not be accepted, nor will requests for additional agricultural demand," reads an NSSWD statement.

The moratorium for the St. Mary Lake side of the system will continue until reservoir storage is increased by

raising the Duck Creek weir, Heinekey added.

Negotiations are ongoing with lake-side property owners who stand to lose land when the weir is raised. Heinekey said the district hopes to have the weir upgrades finished by 2017.

"We're quite pleased with the way that's progressing," he said.

The district won't accept new properties into the service area until it can increase water storage capacity in St. Mary Lake.

The NSSWD's implemented a moratorium in 2014 based on concerns about limited water supply. For further information visit www.northsaltspringwaterworks.ca.

HIKING

Manzanita Ridge solution found

The Salt Spring Island Conservancy and Salt Spring Trail and Nature Club have resolved concerns about public access to a trail along the south side of Mount Erskine.

Hikers raised concerns earlier this year about the lack of public access in the conservancy's latest management plan for the 50-acre property.

Since public access for hikers and other members of the public was touted as a potential benefit of acquiring

the property during the conservancy's fundraising campaign to buy the property, many islanders took exception to a section of the management plan that limits access to conservancy "invitees."

By clarifying that invitees refers to members of the public, the conservancy has appeased worries from trail users who traverse the property on their way to Mount Erskine from Toynbee Road.

We Wish our Salt Spring Community a Happy Holiday Season and a Great New Year



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LAND USE

Septic setback bylaw changed

New regs limited to Grantville neighbourhood

between wells and septic systems.

Trustees amended the proposed bylaw at Thursday's LTC meeting to cover the Grantville neighbourhood rather than the entire island. The LTC's decision follows meetings between Trust staff and local realtors who had concerns about the additional layer of bureaucracy.

A proposed bylaw designed to limit installation of septic fields to at least 30 metres from drinking water wells will only affect a north-end neighbourhood, if approved.

Trustees Peter Grove and George Grams declared the issue a "top priority" early in 2015 following numerous water quality concerns from area residents.

"We are fighting for the preservation of our fragile groundwater system," wrote Gayle Baker in a letter to trustees on behalf of the Homeowners of the Grantville Addition. "Without Bylaw 484, the health hazards of unregulated septic systems could destroy our community."

The Grantville neighbourhood is defined by many quarter-acre lots. Development of some smaller lots encouraged residents to call for regulations covering minimum setbacks

Installation of a septic system within the setback area will require a variance permit and oversight from a qualified professional installer.

"Bearing in mind the misgivings by realtors and septic installers, I would use this as a pilot project and remedy any problems before we apply it," Grams said, after trustees voted unanimously to give the proposed bylaw second reading.

A community information meeting and public hearing will be held in conjunction with an upcoming LTC meeting before trustees will consider third reading of the proposed bylaw. A meeting date has not been set.

RECREATIONAL AMENITIES

Playing fields debate draws full house at LTC meeting

Application deferred to allow consultation

BY SEAN MCINTYRE
DRIFTWOOD STAFF

Salt Spring's Local Trust Committee is giving the Parks and Recreation Commission a second crack at a playing fields project planned for the Brinkworthy neighbourhood near Ganges.

Trustees voted unanimously Thursday afternoon to defer PARC's application for non-farm use of a 15-acre property in the Agricultural Land Reserve. The delay is hoped to encourage further consultation with farmland advocates and neighbourhood residents.

"This is all a question of due process. It's about community engagement. It's about talking to one another. It's about dialogue," said trustee Peter Grove. "I am a complete believer in getting people together and talking about options and brainstorming ideas; when you do that, wonderful solutions very often materialize."



PHOTO BY SEAN MCINTYRE

Brinkworthy resident Samantha Sanderson addresses the Salt Spring Local Trust Committee regarding the playing fields proposal at last week's LTC meeting.

In September, PARC announced its desire to build two soccer fields, three baseball diamonds and washrooms on property for sale at 181 Brinkworthy Rd. The project comes after more than a decade of looking for an appropriate place for more sports facilities.

"Flat land that isn't in the ALR is hard to find on Salt Spring, and we have tried

and tried and tried," PARC commissioner Sonja Collombin told trustees during the crowded town hall portion of last week's meeting.

Parents and youth said the availability of larger fields will promote more island tournaments, reduce the need to travel off-island and promote active, healthy lifestyles.

"We need more practice facilities," said Malcolm Legg,

manager of Salt Spring United soccer club. "Some of our fields are just atrocious at this time of year."

Legg was part of an overflow crowd of more than 100 people who attended the meeting at Lions Hall. The audience was split between people who view the project as a vital community asset and opponents who think the property is unsuitable.

Objectors who live in the Brinkworthy manufactured home park and on Brinkworthy Road said they fear the playing fields will increase traffic, noise and congestion while reducing safety and property values. They're also upset PARC never consulted them individually about the project before filing the application.

"No amount of compromise will prevent reduced property values and quality of life for Brinkworthy residents," said Samantha Sanderson, who has helped mobilize Brinkworthy residents. "It's not fair to ask us to accept a lower quality of life."

"We're not standing in the way of playing fields, we're standing up for our quality of life."

The proposal has also drawn concern from members of the island's agricultural community, who don't want any further non-farm uses within the Agricultural Land Reserve.

The Farmers' Institute, Island Natural Growers and the Salt Spring Agricultural

Alliance have all expressed opposition to the project.

Elizabeth White, a member of the Agricultural Alliance, told trustees she worries that up to 25 per cent of the property could be covered with "hard surfaces" such as access roads, buildings and parking areas. Such areas, she added, would prove very costly to restore once developed.

Karla Campbell, the Capital Regional District's senior manager for Salt Spring, said PARC is eager to consider ways to replace the agricultural land and satisfy neighbourhood concerns.

"We want this conversation to move forward in a meaningful way," she said.

The property is listed for \$575,000. PARC's offer to buy the land is contingent on obtaining all necessary permits and approvals, including permission for non-farm use from the province's Agricultural Land Commission.

PARC could return with an updated proposal at the Salt Spring LTC's Thursday, Jan. 14 meeting.

ISLANDS TRUST

Shoreline map of First Nations sites charts leadership role

New data will be added to island's OCP

BY SEAN MCINTYRE
DRIFTWOOD STAFF

Salt Spring's Local Trust Committee has ordered its staff to allocate up to \$15,000 in unspent funds from this year's budget to develop an inventory of heritage shoreline sites.

Information about locations' heritage value and character "related to human occupation or use" will be collected and incorporated into the island's official community plan.

A staff report presented at last week's LTC meeting suggests the move gives local trustees a leadership role when it comes to the protection of First Nations heritage sites.

"The authority to protect heritage areas is underused and staff are witness to the increasing efforts of elected officials, staff, interest groups and First Nations to find more ways to do more to protect heritage values, characters, landmarks and other natural features related to human occupation or use," reads part of the staff report presented to trustees.

The same staff report also notes that the move could result in "blanket protection" of some areas that would create objections among water-

front lot owners.

LTC members suggested the undertaking could further serve as a pilot project for similar work in other areas within

the Trust's jurisdiction.

Salt Spring LTC member Peter Grove was reassured that the Islands Trust's Executive Committee has been tasked

to work with provincial representatives at the Archaeology Branch in hopes of avoiding a future Grace Islet in the Gulf Islands and elsewhere in the

province.

"What can we do to get them to smarten up?" Grove said. "They clearly let things slip when it comes to Grace Islet."

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OPINION



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Gold - Local Cartoon (Dennis Parker) | Gold - Agricultural Story (Elizabeth Nolan) | Gold - Community Newspaper Magazine (Aqua)
Silver - Editorial (Elizabeth Nolan) | Bronze - Community Newspaper Magazine (Gulf Islander)



2015 BCYCNA Awards
Gold - Environmental Writing (Elizabeth Nolan & Sean McIntyre) | Bronze - General Excellence

EDITORIAL

Dear Santa

It's been a while since we've written. The last big thing we asked you for was a sewer in the Ganges core back in the 1980s.

Thanks for that, by the way. The sewer has served us really well, but is getting a bit mangy around the edges. A few filters and spare parts would be enough to keep it in tip-top shape and ease the \$4-million repair bill.

While you're in the neighbourhood, can you take a peek around the base of Ganges Hill? You'll no doubt notice something amiss. The yellow ducks are harmless, but remember to pack your hip waders and take care to park your reindeer safely since there's no telling how deep our community sinkhole will be by the time you arrive. Maybe you can leave us an engineer with a clue about drainage to fix that little problem.

On the topic of water, we'd like a bit more consistency. Things got so dry this summer we couldn't wash our

THE ISSUE:

Christmas wish list

WE SAY:

Where to begin?

cars or flush our toilets. We were using leftover dish-water to water our flowers. Some of us were showering in buckets.

For the past few weeks, however, we've endured some major downpours. Why does it always have to

be all or nothing? Any chance we can spread things out a little bit more evenly? We've got a spare set of second-hand aerators you can take in exchange. We hear our friends in Victoria may need a set for Elk Lake.

When you're passing through the provincial capital, can you look for those reports about post-incorporation road costs and transition funding? We have a feeling they're sitting on someone's desk, so maybe keep your eyes open. Please leave us something to soothe the nerves as we embark on what could be a lively few months of debate and discussion in the new year.

We've been a pretty good bunch in 2015. We saved a First Nations cemetery at Grace Islet, re-elected Canada's hardest-working MP, won \$25,000 (and nearly \$250,000) for the Portlock Park tennis courts and plugged into one of the largest solar arrays in B.C. at our high school.

That's not bad, of course, but imagine what we could do if you gave our tireless volunteers and hardworking staffers a helping hand. Oh well, we realize it's late in the year to write, and we realize we're lucky to call a place like Salt Spring home. If all else fails, an occasional smidgen of sunshine, a dose of good cheer and a warm place for everyone will help make our holiday dreams come true. Merry Christmas.



VIEWPOINT by Jan Slakov

World struggles are interconnected

BY JAN SLAKOV

The new federal government has already taken some important steps to strengthen democracy and to increase our capacity to be a force for good in the world.

But, like all governments, it is under enormous pressure to do "business as usual," which means a steady slide towards ecological and social collapse. So, I agree with Elizabeth May that "now is a time to be hopeful and work very hard."

I'm happy to report that our Islands Trust Council chair Peter Luckham had already written to Prime Minister Trudeau and Environment and Climate Change Minister McKenna before the Paris COP21 summit, asking that they support effective climate action. In December, with the help of another Citizens Climate Lobby member, I urged the Trust to follow up, asking mainly for effective carbon pricing. Trustee Peter Grove signed up to endorse the fee and dividend proposal which we believe, with NASA scientist Jim Hansen, is an essential climate action step.

Trust Council voted that the chair send a follow-up letter to the federal government; you can find both letters on the Islands Trust website.

How do we move beyond merely having ambitious political targets, towards truly reducing greenhouse gas emissions? A complex question with a complex answer. The vision in the Leap Manifesto and the Green Party's Vision Green are two of the best places I know of to find answers, including how to pay

for what is needed.

Clearly, we do not have the political momentum, yet, for real change. The provincial government's plan to replace the Massey tunnel on the Lower Mainland with a 10-lane mega-bridge is proof of that.

If I have learned anything through years of activism, it is that a healthy democracy is a sine qua non for the changes we need. And democracy is not something we have, it's something we do.

Elizabeth May's book on the crisis in our democracy, *Losing Confidence*, spells out much of the work that needs doing. Titles of some chapters give us an idea of what's required: "Police State?," "Follow the Money," "Making the Vote Fair." "Free speech and free and full access to critical information are essential to democracy," she writes, and then provides numerous examples of how our media have failed to live up to that mandate in recent years. So kudos to the Driftwood for featuring a story about how robocall election fraud has roots in our riding on the front page of last week's issue!

Fighting for democracy, for justice and reconciliation, for a liveable future, these struggles are interconnected — and essential.

The writer is a social justice activist and Salt Spring resident.

THIS WEEK'S QUESTION:

Do you support PARC's playing fields plan? Yes No

Cast your ballot online at www.gulfislandsdriftwood.com before Monday at midnight or clip this box and drop it at our office before Monday at 4:30 p.m.

LAST WEEK'S QUESTION:

Should the robocalls probe be re-opened?

NO	28
YES	46

Driftwood

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ISLAND VOICES

QUOTE OF THE WEEK: "We're not standing in the way of playing fields, we're standing up for our quality of life."

SAMANTHA SANDERSON, BRINKWORTHY RESIDENT

SALT SPRING SAYS

We asked:
Do you have a special Christmas wish for someone in your life?



SAMANTHA TESTART
Happy love and kindness to all my family and loving friends.



NORAH BARNETT
All the best to Mr. and Mrs. Jim and Jane Black for hosting the most fabulous Christmas feasts for family and all of us misfits.



SHIRLEY KNIGHT
For my wife, just for being there.



PURPLE PHIL
A special thanks to my lover Janine for being the most blissful goddess ever and an inspiring mom to be.



HARRY WARNER
Naomi Jason at Dance Temple, because it's such a wonderful thing.

Letters to the editor

Letters to the editor are welcome, but writers are requested to keep their submissions to 350 words or less. Letters may be edited for brevity, legality and taste. Writers are also asked to furnish a telephone number where they may be reached during the day, and to sign their letters with their full name. Thank you letters will not normally be considered for publication. Send your letters to news@gulfislandsdriftwood.com

Tell it like it is

I am getting a little annoyed with all this emphasis on non-religious celebrations in the name of "inclusiveness."

When we lived in British Guiana, as it was at that time, and had been accepted as somewhat crazy Brits, we were invited to the various celebrations of our Guyanese friends. We celebrated Christmas, Easter, Phagwah, Eid-el-Fitr and others whose names escape me now. We were interested and had the rituals explained to us and often made comparisons, which led to a better understanding all round. We attended Muslim and Hindu weddings, accepting the special foods and generally entering into the spirit of the occasion. It was great.

When I was attending the funeral of a Muslim co-worker and was in the procession, males only, carrying my flowers I was quietly told that flowers were not part of

the ceremony so they were cast upon the waters of the nearby canal with no hard feelings nor embarrassment. After a somewhat boisterous cricket match one Christmas as we were wending our way home from the field we were invited in to a Hindu wedding ceremony. It was all so casual yet sincere.

At one time our house was situated midway between the local Hindu temple and the Muslim mosque and we benefitted from the early morning call and evening prayers.

The steel band from the community centre woke us up very early on another Christmas morning by playing right underneath our bedroom. Quite a start to the day that was.

All of this is what I consider "inclusive," which is the opposite of taking away any special meaning of the occasion by neutralizing the language. "Happy holidays" just does not do the job and belittles the celebration's real

purpose.

So have a happy Christmas and a healthy New Year, or Hogmanay.

KEN STRIKE,
SALT SPRING

More work on all charitable fronts

Regarding the letter titled "What about Salt Spring's forgotten?" (Dec. 16), there will never be "peace on earth, good will toward (wo)men" until humans can cross all the political, cultural, religious, gender etc. borders of the world.

We can do this locally, but must also reach out internationally as with the current refugee support efforts on Salt Spring. While I agree with the letter writer that more should be done with the needy on our island, this does not in anyway preclude helping refugees who have shown that when they arrive they will be highly

functioning and contributing members of our community. They deserve the opportunity. At the same time, we must continue to put pressure on our government to provide housing, food, education and job training for our families who already live here.

If the writer is really concerned about misplaced priorities, he or she might want to look at the proposal to spend \$3.5 billion — that's billion — on a bridge replacement for the Massey tunnel, paid for with our tax money. Then compare that with the \$100,000 being raised voluntarily by private citizens to help the local refugees from Syria.

I will probably never drive over that bridge and I resent the fact that a cheaper alternative has not been found and a huge amount of that money could be spent on the basic needs of our citizens.

DAN DICKMEYER AND DAVID PAINE,
ROLAND ROAD

Clarification

Regarding the letter by D. Penhale (Dec. 16), as members of the Salt Spring Refugee Sponsorship Group, we applaud the letter writer's efforts and concern on behalf of those in need on Salt Spring.

Certainly, there is enough need here on island and in the larger world to go around, and plenty of work for all of us to do on behalf of all people in need of support.

We are writing today to correct one of the main thrusts of Mr. Penhale's letter, so it leaves no mistaken impression upon those who read it. The \$100,000 he mentions is not an explicit goal of the SSRSG; it is a possibility, considering the incredibly generous response of our community to this crisis. Nor will it be applied to just one family, as Mr. Penhale states in error. We are already in the process of applying to sponsor refugees beyond that description.

In addition, any amount

received over the requirements of those we sponsor will be applied, if sufficient, to an additional individual or family, or, if not sufficient, it will be passed on to the Canadian Unitarian Council's Refugee Fund for the relief of other refugees, wherever the need is greatest.

Finally, there is nothing to stop the people of Salt Spring from donating to whatever worthy causes they wish to, or feel are most urgent, in whatever amount they can. There are certainly plenty of these to choose from, both right here and around the world. If our particular efforts happen to encourage or inspire just such actions, we could not be more pleased!

MARY TOYNBEE, ANNE MARSHALL, PETER LEVITT, KATHY RAMSEY, CHRIS HUMPHREYS, JO LOGAN SUSAN WETMORE, GARY UTTER,
SALT SPRING REFUGEE SPONSORSHIP GROUP

MORE LETTERS continued on 8

Choose incorporation facts over 'old mischief'

BY JOHN MACPHERSON

The anti-incorporation propaganda campaign has begun anew with a steady stream of comment designed to stir up fear and mistrust, put forward by those who long ago made up their minds. It's the same old mischief from the same old tool box.

John Sprague (DW Dec 16) says the incorporation study is feeble, using only theoretical cost estimates. The fact is, existing costs simply carry over to a municipality which pays the bills under new pricing rules. Each municipality then sets taxes according to the service levels provided. There is nothing "theoretical" here unless one deeply mistrusts well established governance process. Beyond that, I feel it's a mistake to use another's past as a guide to one's own future.

The study uses real costs as they actually are on an apples to apples basis. There is also some sensitivity analysis supposing further services are desired by a town council, such as raising road standards beyond what we will have if we remain unincorporated. This is not hard to understand. The fact is that on an apples to apples basis, the average residential assessment attracts just \$15 more in taxes. What hap-

pens in the future is up to town council.

The study uses real costs as they actually are on an apples to apples basis. There is also some sensitivity analysis supposing further services are desired by a town council, such as raising road standards beyond what we will have if we remain unincorporated. It is not rocket science. The fact is that on an apples to apples basis, the average residential assessment attracts just \$15 more in taxes. What happens in the future is up to town council.

Peter Lamb (quoted by a Dec. 9 story) likewise faults the study for not speculating about the "long-term" impact on the Islands Trust, when he well knows a full impact study has already been concluded — without speculation — to the satisfaction of the Trust. Without Salt Spring subsidies, others in the Trust area will simply pay their fair share of taxes. That is, if they want the same level of service from an organization that grew its budget by 33 per cent and staffing by 43 per cent from 2007 to 2015 without any increased demand to process applications.

Back to the future. Today is the future of 2002

INDEPTH

when the anti-incorporationists last wrung their hands about the future of taxes if we were a municipality. It was also unknown then how much taxes would go up under our current fragmented system of governance.

Now, that future is here. Under our current system, taxes for the average assessment just from our local taxing authorities — the CRD, the fire district and the Islands Trust — increased by 179 per cent from 2002 to 2013 (the year the current incorporation study process started), against a B.C. inflation rate of 20 per cent during the same period.

Many municipalities in B.C. raised taxes much less, Whistler and Nanaimo to name but two. This is likewise true with all sources of property taxation (school, hospital etc.) included. A town council has overall control over local budgeting and planning, but with our current fragmented system there is none.

This important community discussion should not be driven by outright fabrications and fear. The actual question (for now) is whether \$15 on the average assessment is a reasonable price to get: just one elected council to worry about; centralized local control over

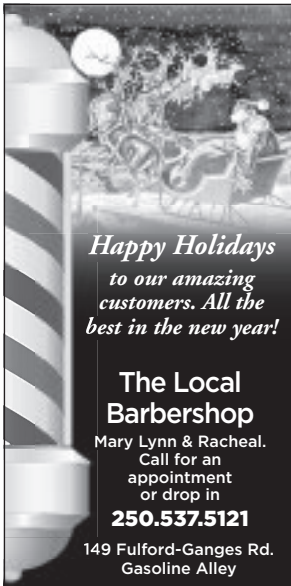
budgeting and strategic planning; greater local representation and more local decision making on land use and more; the ability to control and coordinate the delivery of services like fire fighting and water; in short, the power to steer our own ship as provided for by the Islands Trust Act, all the while and evermore guided by the mandate to preserve and protect.

Further questions concern farm taxes and roads and what specifics the province will offer in terms of a restructure transition package. The answers will develop through the spring of 2016.

In conclusion, we've been here before. I believe this time the community wants a meaningful discussion based on reason and facts so as to make an informed decision going forward. Those who persist in spreading fear through fabrications will — I hope — find lumps of coal in their Christmas stockings. To all others, good will.

My heartfelt thanks to the Salt Spring Incorporation Study Committee for their work in overseeing the production of an excellent and thorough preliminary report.

The writer chaired the 2013 Salt Spring Governance Study.



Happy Holidays
to our amazing customers. All the best in the new year!

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Call for an appointment or drop in
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149 Fulford-Ganges Rd.
Gasoline Alley

MORE LETTERS

Doing the math

John Sprague (Dec. 16 "Feeble report" letter) points out that, in science, projections must always yield to observable facts. He then applies his scientific expertise to local political affairs, inviting the Incorporation Study Committee to find exactly what happened to property taxes on Bowen Island since it incorporated in 1999.

John must expect insight from comparing Bowen's municipal experience to Salt Spring's rural model during the same period. I agree.

Old numbers can be hard to come by, so let me save John (and the committee) some legwork. For local services, Bowen raised \$4,690,000 from property taxes in 2015, versus \$2,161,000 in 1998, so taxes there are

up 117 per cent in 17 years. 117 per cent! It is no surprise that one can find Bowen residents who complain about how much their taxes have risen since their island incorporated.

Meanwhile, on Salt Spring, we didn't incorporate, sticking with our rural decentralized model. Our taxes for local services are \$10,330,000 in 2015, versus \$3,225,000 in 1998, up 220 per cent in 17 years.

Bowen incorporated. Salt Spring did not. Bowen property taxes more than doubled. Salt Spring property taxes more than tripled. Adjusting for inflation and population growth, Bowen's taxes rose 36 per cent in 17 years. Salt Spring's taxes rose 133 per cent.

NORBERT SCHLENKER,
SALT SPRING

Christmas wish

One of the most rewarding experiences of my life happened to me on the Sunshine Coast when I was a member of the Pender Harbour Lions Club.

My son Scott and I set out to deliver turkeys, food hampers and Christmas gifts to people in need. We visited older folks that were dirt poor, single moms, and others that were down on their luck.

Well, I'll tell you, they were so happy to see us at their door and us them.

Tears of joy, hugs and heartfelt thanks were everywhere. It was really awesome!

I'm hopeful everyone in 2016 could feel the joy of giving, sharing and lending a helping hand. That's what Lionism is all about.

NEALE SMITH,
SALT SPRING LIONS CLUB

Multipurpose room a win win

While I laud Wayne McIntyre's goal to keep taxes as low as possible, he is doing so based on poor future economics for Salt Spring ("Preliminary CRD budget proposes increase," Nov. 25 Driftwood).

Budgeting to spend \$50,000 on refurbishing the Portlock portable is something out of the movie *Dumb and Dumber*. That portable needs to be replaced with proper meeting space. It has a lingering smell in it that makes it unpleasant and unusable. Previous attempts to "update" it have failed. Even the PARC commissioners meet elsewhere. You can't make a silk purse out of a sow's ear.

Deciding not to follow through on the multipurpose activity room at the Rainbow Road Pool is also shortsighted. All of the PARC commissioners voted in favor of the project and there is community support for it by way of \$25,000 from SSPLASH. But more importantly, between the 2016 planned contribution and the SSPLASH contribution there is \$269,000 in the capital reserve fund to

be used for the Rainbow Road Pool. This money cannot be used for anything else, it cannot be transferred to any of the other 55 line items; it is for the pool. There would be no tax increase for this project.

In fact, this would be an income generator. The idea of the multipurpose activity room is that it would be rented out to multiple and various users. All revenue would once again top up the capital reserve fund. We are talking a significant amount of income if we use the modest rental fee of \$25 to \$30 per hour with the pool in use for 12 hours per day; equals \$300 per day. This potential income is nothing to sniff at!

Children in this community deserve places to take dance lessons, judo classes, first aid and life saving courses, and to have birthday parties. Adults could use the multipurpose activity room for meetings, adult recreation activities and courses. It could even be used for the PARC meetings, thereby replacing the Portlock Park portable.

So please get on board, Wayne, and show some leadership in what will be a real win win project for this community.

DARLENE STEELE,
SSPLASH PRESIDENT

Reflections in an olden eye

Readers of this space may recall that a decade or two ago I was the Imagen ISP and a Quixotian advocate of lost causes, such as a sinking Ganges Marina, a fatuous ice rink, and then that brick McMansion I left at the top of St. Mary Lake. After a quick change of wives and avocations, I am back on island to pursue adventures in iPad enclosures.

A decade offers good perspective, and I noted that once again the marine community is getting roughed up. It may be time to put our harbours on the same pedestal as the Saturday market and acknowledge the value of boating to Salt Spring Island.

I recently brought my '86 Canoe Cove 37 to Centennial Dock, where I had been on the waiting list for at least a dozen years, and despite verifying me at No. 3 in 2009 on an old computer, I was stiffly advised to join the waiting list for next year at Kanaka, or motor out to "Squalor Bay," as one wag terms it.

So far, not so good.

I paid off my \$718 bill for a couple of weeks there, then went begging next door. Salt Spring Marina staff counselled that my boat was too heavy for their floats over winter. Next to Ganges Marina, where my daughter Markianna had worked for a few summers, it was recommended I take a float beside a sturdy piling and point SE.

At that moment something nice happened.

I had emailed a summary of my

issue to the Harbour Authority chairperson Kathy Scarfo and with Jim Heath they artfully placed me on an outside corner of the fishing dock. As a designer I often use the boat for a studio, one more claimant for Ganges moorage, and many a small boater relies on its accessibility. I was humbled that old heads had prevailed. Seasoned management is to be appreciated.

Whether it's these marina managers or others like Steve Marleau steadying the golf course, ice rinks sensibly become squash courts and old towheads like me tie up as arranged. A very few fish boats call Ganges home port, and the federal government continues to fund marina infrastructure. No point in disturbing that tradition, especially the latter.

DWIGHT G. JONES,
GANGES

Miracle spring

In May of 2014 the Driftwood published a letter from me suggesting a numinous origin for the mysterious spring emerging unpredictably on the road in front of Embe Bakery.

In recent weeks, the spring has been dubbed a "sink hole," designated a riparian zone, cordoned off with yellow tape and provided with two small yellow rubber ducks.

Last week I ventured out to this now famous location with a turkey baster and withdrew a sample from the bubbling waters. Pouring the contents into a brandy snifter, I decided to sample the contents. To my surprise the taste was earthy and cloying, aggressively salty, with a delicate aftertaste of cannabis and a subtle bouquet of apple.

Could the fabled salt spring, after which our beautiful island was renamed, have first been observed here? My next enquiry will focus on any special healing qualities these miraculous waters may have!

KEN LEE,
BRINKWORTHY

ESL donation appreciated

We at Salt Spring Literacy were happily surprised to receive a donation from the Salt Spring Friends Book Club to support our ESL tutoring programs.

The donation was the first in response to Debbie Magnusson's challenge to island book clubs (published in the Driftwood's Dec. 2 Viewpoint space) to support our ESL literacy efforts. It is much appreciated!

We currently have learners that our tutors support from Japan, China, Korea, Russia, Spain, Mexico, France and Thailand.

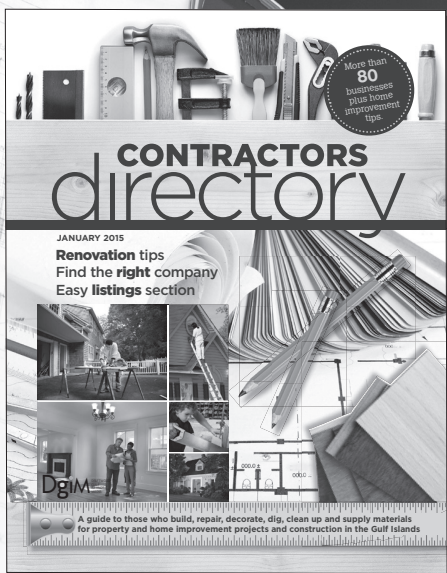
Thanks so much for your donation, SS Friends, and know it will be put to good use.

Happy holidays!
KIM BALLANTYNE,
SECRETARY,
SALT SPRING LITERACY SOCIETY

COMING SOON

The GULF ISLANDS CONTRACTORS DIRECTORY

will be published in January, watch for the magazine in your Gulf Islands Driftwood.



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JANUARY 2015
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A guide to those who build, repair, decorate, dig, clean up and supply materials for property and home improvement projects and construction in the Gulf Islands

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Driftwood
GULF ISLANDS
YOUR COMMUNITY NEWSPAPER SINCE 1960

RANTS and Roses

Viva Chorale! community choir sends 1,300 Christmas roses to everyone who attended our Christmas Caroling Food Bank Fundraiser concert on Dec. 18. Thanks to your generosity, we collected over \$1,300 plus several boxes of food for the food bank! Thank you, Salt Spring, for supporting community needs and community music!

A cornucopia of purple hellebores (Christmas roses) to say a resounding thank you for the generosity of Country

Grocer, Pharmasave and Thrifty Foods for their contribution to make the annual Brinkworthy Christmas Potluck such a success. Also, thank you to our Brinkworthy volunteers who gave their time to create a lovely evening. Eve Hinds

A bunch of yellow roses to Norm Elliott and Pat Murphy for helping Salt Spring RCMP once again with their Christmas "wood elf" initiative.

WRITING

Imagination soars in story contest

The year 2015 was a banner one for the Driftwood Christmas Story Contest, with a whopping 260 entries submitted by kids aged 4 to 17. Stories came from all schools on Salt Spring Island, some home learners, plus Galiano Community School and Pender Island School.

Thanks are extended to all the teachers who guided their students' participation and to our community judges Victoria Olchowecki, Betty Poole, Louise Nye, Janet Smith and Barb DuMoulin.

First and second place winners in each age category are printed throughout this issue of the paper. Those young writers can pick up prize-winning cheques (\$25 for first place and \$15 for second) from the Driftwood office or receive them by mail upon request.

Winners and honourable mentions (printed in no particular order) are as follows.

Ages 4-6: First place, Freya Sinoneau, Dragon and Santa. Second place, Alex Staicesku, Snow Wraith's Christmas. Honourable mention: Saoirse Ayton, The Night Before Christmas; Renee Hayden, The Cat Saved Christmas; Ayla Wirth, The Missing Reindeer; Branden Kelly, The Polar Bear Saved Christmas; Max Grzybowski, The Best Christmas Ever!

Ages 7-8: First place, Maya Reinhardt, The Christmas Surprise. Second place, Zoë Sanchez Wickland, The Reindeer Who Couldn't Fly. Honourable mention: Jane Davies, The Noise on Christmas; Pia Sparanese, The Dog Saves Christmas; Liam Docherty, The Christmas Astronaut; Xiomara, Pearl's Magical Christmas.

Age 9: First place, Lizzie Thompson, The Day the Elves

Went on Strike. Second place, Michael Paterson, A Dog's Christmas. Honourable mention: Olivia Sugden, The Elf; Ronin Gebhard, The Christmas Tree; Ronan Wardroper, Aquasphere; Ryan Dunbar, A Special Christmas; Maria Lay, How Holly Saved Christmas; Markus Stamatiou, The Christmas Clunk.

Age 10: First place, Jane Holmes, The Aurora Wolf. Second place, India Hayden, Elanora Visits Frosty. Honourable mention: William McDermott, The Journey; Annika Fleming, A Christmas Kitten for Sara; Amelia Niedziela, The Snowman.

Ages 11-12: First place, Om Decosas, The Dreadful Story. Second place, Ben Adelson, The Mountain Cat's Christmas. Honourable mention: Joseph Roberts, Snow; Malia Steele, The Angel Pup; Malcolm Colwell, The Christmas Surprise; Christopher Elwell, Sabotage.

Ages 13-14: First place, Taeven Lopatecki, Coming Home. Second place, Kaylee Lapierre, Santa's Real! Honourable mention: Mac Flett, Rudolph; Josephine Gaffney; Elizabeth Woodley, The One Where Mommy Kisses Santa.

Ages 16-17: First place, Shayce Johnston, Tourné Sol. Second place, Kaya Mongard, One Piece of Paper. Honourable mention: Kiara Johnston, Butterfly Kisses; Lily Kingscote, Christmas Lights; Sam Besley.

GISS ESL students: First place, David Sanchez Galicia, Christmas on Other Planets. Second place, Fernanda Paluri, Christmas. Honourable mention: Ryo Sakamoto, How Japanese People Celebrate Christmas; Kanae Chiba, Santa Claus Company; Jihee Choi, Under the Mistletoe; Tamaki Yoshihara, Christmas Eve.

SNOW WRAITH'S CHRISTMAS

BY ALEX STAICESKU
AGE 4-6 CATEGORY
SECOND PLACE

The Snow Wraith and Santa are out on Christmas night. A Snow Wraith is a dragon that is cold and blue like snow. It has a crystal on its head to make it powerful. The Snow Wraith flies beside the reindeer. One Christmas there was a storm.

Santa said, "Let's go higher," so they did. They went higher than the clouds. They were out of the storm.

Santa and the reindeer started to run out of oxygen. The Snow Wraith was okay. The Snow Wraith helped Santa go back down but then he fell out of sleigh peacefully. He was still asleep! He landed in puffy snow. The reindeer all screamed their heads off.

The Snow Wraith jumped in the sleigh and drove it down beside Santa. He picked up Santa. He was alive. He was still really peaceful.

The Snow Wraith delivered the presents, then they all went to yoga.

Christmas in Brazil

BY FERNANDA PALURI
ESL AT GISS CATEGORY
SECOND PLACE

For me, Christmas is a very special date. I love Christmas, love that year-end when you go to places full with Christmas lights or you go into the mall and have Santa and those thousand children in line to take a picture. I think all is wonderful on Christmas.

I will talk a little about my home in Brazil. When December is just beginning we start packing the house with Christmas stuff. My mother loves to put everything about Christmas, like cups, napkins, decorations everywhere and, of course, most especially the Christmas tree.

I forgot an important fact: In Brazil the tree is not real, you have to buy an artificial one.

About the Christmas dinner, each family cooks something different and in the end we have many foods and others are responsible for the desserts. I love Christmas food.

When December 24th comes, I'm already anxious. Usually the party starts at nine o'clock at night, so I, my parents and my brother, generally we start to get ready at 7 p.m. We take our bath, me and my mother do makeup and at 8:40 p.m. everyone is ready.



When the party is not in my house we take the presents to the other place. When the family is ready all together, the party begins. Always with music, conversation and my little cousins playing together. Everybody is very happy.

At 10:40 we begin to serve dinner. I've never been disappointed with the food, always impeccable. Then comes deserts and midnight is approaching, the most awaited time of the night.

In Brazil the tradition is to open the presents at midnight. In my family, someone always dresses as Santa for the children to be happy. Usually this person stays for a little while, gives the presents to the children and then goes away so my cousins do not realize who he is. All presents are given and after this we have more conversation and continue the party.

When it is 3 a.m. we start to prepare to leave because next day the party continues. On the 25th the celebration is at lunch time. And the same thing happens, but without presents. Food, conversation, music and joy. I do not know how Christmas is here but I think that it is different from where I live. I'm sure it will be pretty cool too because Christmas is Christmas everywhere.

The Reindeer Who Couldn't Fly

BY ZOË SANCHEZ WICKLAND
AGE 7-8 CATEGORY
SECOND PLACE

Once upon a time at the North Pole, there was a reindeer named Brownie.

This Christmas was going to be his first time helping fly the sleigh and he was nervous.

He had the month of December to practise flying. Each time he tried to fly, he fell. He didn't realize that he couldn't fly.

By December 23 he mostly realized he couldn't fly.

"I give up!" he yelled.

But, knowing he wouldn't give up, he said in a small voice, "Maybe I will try again..."

As he was Rudolph's brother, and the middle deer child (he was big brother to little Holly), he was under a lot of pressure.

Little Holly thought Brownie was very brave. Brownie's mom, Winter, and his dad, Frost, had expectations for him to be like Rudolph, a great flyer.

After a big conversation about flying it was dinner time. He ate all of the Brussels sprouts and went to bed.

That night he wished a thousand times that he was able to fly. After his thousandth wish he fell asleep. Magically, a Christmas fairy named Shimmers came and made his wish come true.

In the morning he woke up feeling very sparkly. When he went down to the water for a drink he noticed he was very sparkly. He went to his flying lesson for his last class before he would have to fly that evening. He jumped into the air with a shower of sparkles and flew!

Of course he had to shout, "I can fly! I can fly!"

When he landed they got harnessed with the sleigh and flew up into the sky to deliver all the presents to the good little children.

The only mystery was, he didn't know what had made him finally fly... He thought it was the Brussels sprouts!

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OF THE
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and we need to

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Elanora Visits Frosty

BY INDIA HAYDEN
AGE 10 CATEGORY
SECOND PLACE

Elanora couldn't conceal her joy. She had finally figured out how to travel into Christmas stories.

She was walking down Christmas Corner when she saw Frosty dance by. Elanora beamed as she ran to join.

Meanwhile, on the other side of the story, Billy, Elanora's fiancé, was reading "Frosty the Snowman" while Reena, his niece, stirred a bowl of figgy pudding.

When they were on the last page of the story, Billy noticed the words "Get me some figgy pudding, Ella," scribbled in the snow. Billy didn't know what to do. He knew that Elanora loved figgy pudding and Billy was sure that there was a lab somewhere in the house because how could Elanora travel into stories without one?

Just then Reena ran up to Billy and said, "I was in the washroom and while I was washing my hands I noticed a secret passage."

Reena led Billy down the hallway. At the end of the hallway they came to the washroom and in the washroom there was a door. Billy tried the door. Surprisingly it was unlocked. Inside there were bottles of things Billy had never heard of, Christmas Joy, Butterfly Spit and stuff like that.

Then Billy noticed a book lying open in a corner. The page that it was

open to said "Travel Into Christmas Stories."

Something on the bottom of the page caught Billy's attention. It said, "To get out of the story, mix some children's laughter, Christmas Joy and some spit from a goat." Billy sent Reena to get the required ingredients for the potion.

A minute later Reena came back with the ingredients. They mixed the ingredients together in a bowl and they started to fizz.

Billy read the last part on the page and it said, "Pour the potion on the page and let it seep through. After it seeps through the page long enough, a blue light will shine through the page and that will be your portal to the book. You will have to come out of the book in a matter of one minute or the portal will close and you will be stuck in the book forever. Have speed, and good luck."

Billy asked Reena to stay and guard the book while he was in it. When they put the potion on the book and when the blue glow emitted from the



book, Billy jumped in to find he was in "Frosty the Snowman." He looked around and saw Elanora sadly overlooking a puddle of water.

She said, "A strange blue light came from the sky and melted Frosty."

Billy shrugged and said, "I brought some figgy pudding if you want to stay."

Then Elanora said, "I think I want to go home and have some turkey dinner and a nice sleep."

So they went into the portal and went back to the house where Reena was patiently guarding the book. Billy said, "Let's eat," and they did.



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What do Paul's clients say?

Susannah Devitt says CALL PAUL!
I personally had a lot of dealings with Paul in the past few months of this year. One was a personal move where our landlord sold their place; the other was an estate property. Paul earned my trust through his thoughtful ways, professional knowledge, creative thinking and writing and his compassionate heart. He made both transactions stress-free which I am very thankful for as dealing with one property can be draining enough never mind two! Paul kept me informed at all times and honoured my feelings during these times. I was impressed with his interaction and respectful ways he spoke of the other realtors on island. This is a credit to him. I wish Paul continue success and would not hesitate to refer him in the future. -SUSANNAH DEVITT

Michelle Boizard says CALL PAUL!
My husband and I really enjoyed working with Paul. He understood right away what we were looking for in a home and made it happen in a short, stress-free time period. His patience and understanding along with his knowledge of Salt Spring Island paired with his experience of house building and renovations, makes him the best realtor to deal with. HIGHLY recommend! -MICHELLE BOIZARD

Walter & Donna Mori say CALL PAUL!
"We enjoyed working with Paul as he was respectful of our feelings during this time as this was our final move. He was eager, efficient and accommodating. He was there on closing day to lend a hand. We appreciated his service very much. -WALTER & DONNA MORI

Mark Fedikow & Ruth Bezys say CALL PAUL!
We made a decision to purchase a home on Salt Spring Island and started our search by arranging to meet with Paul Zolob of Royal LePage who would become our agent. This was our best and smartest move! Paul exceeded our expectations with his level of service. He was available at all times, often putting aside personal commitments to answer all of our questions, to drive us to every conceivable location to review a property and all the while keeping in mind the kind of home we required. Paul's friendly demeanor, his attention to detail, patience and willingness to go the extra mile to make us feel like a Salt Spring Island family made our house hunting experience a genuine pleasure. Today Paul is no longer "just" a realtor to us, but a good friend! In our opinion if you are interested in top-notch service from a knowledgeable realtor who will ensure you find that special home then Paul Zolob of Royal LePage would be your best and wisest choice. -MARK FEDIKOW & RUTH BEZYS

Grant Grayson & Elena Dunn say CALL PAUL!
We contacted Paul because of his extensive knowledge of the island and its communities and his expertise in evaluating a home's bones. He didn't disappoint. Paul took the time to show us properties at both ends of our price range and in all the communities on the island so we could evaluate for ourselves, which were most desirable within our price range. Once the decision was made, Paul helped us understand the history and construction of the home we chose, and then made the buying process seamless and hassle-free. We would definitely recommend Paul to any prospective buyer or seller. -GRANT GRAYSON & ELENA DUNN



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The Dreadful Story

BY OM DECOSAS
AGE 11-12 CATEGORY
FIRST PLACE

It was time for writing class. I slumped over in my chair. Then, my teacher, Ms. Lockwood, chirped cheerfully, "It's time for the Driftwood Christmas Story Contest."

I groaned and banged my head on the table. I felt hopeless and confused. I went up to Ms. Lockwood and asked if I could use my story from two years ago.

From her crusty lips she said the dreadful word, "No."

I walked back to my chair and sulked.

The whole period went by. I had nothing written down. I broke into a sweat. If Ms. Lockwood saw my paper, I was dead. I was desperate. I had to do something. I asked to go to the bathroom.

I snuck into the library and found the Christmas section. I found a book of short stories. I looked around to make sure no one was watching. I saw this old story that looked decent. I ripped the pages out of the book and I ran into the classroom and typed it out quickly.

I signed my name to the story and handed it in to

Ms. Lockwood. She said, "What a good story!" and looked surprised. "This is first place material!"

She was quite happy with me and so was I.

It was the end of the day. I went home and around dinner time, the phone rang. My parents picked up the phone and it was Ms. Lockwood. She was telling my parents how proud she was of me. My parents were delighted to hear that I was very focused and had written a whole story.

When they got off the phone, they said, "Who's the smarty pants in the house? Let's order pizza to celebrate!"

When I took a bite out of my favourite cheese pizza, it tasted like guilt. I couldn't eat it. My parents looked at me in alarm.

"Are you sick?" my mother asked.

"Yeah, I'm not feeling too good," I replied.

"I think ice cream and a movie could make you feel better," my dad said.

"No, I don't deserve it," I replied.

My parents both said, "Of course you do. We're so proud of you."

When I went to school the next day my teacher came running to me, saying, "You won! You won! I have arranged a class celebration in your honour."

The whole class started clapping and I cracked.

I screamed, "I can't take it anymore! I'm a fraud! I stole the story and ripped the pages out of a library book! I'm a criminal!"

My teacher's jaw dropped and so did my classmates'. My teacher was holding a cheque for a hundred dollars made out to me.

She said, "I'm shocked! I'm calling your parents!"

I realized it was time to go home and face the music.

Better to be honest than to be rich.





BY LIZZIE THOMPSON
AGE 9 CATEGORY
FIRST PLACE

Gingerbread the elf sat on a peppermint stool in Santa's workshop, squinting at a manual of terribly confusing instructions.

"Why do I have to be the one to make an iPad?" he thought as he bandaged his electrocuted finger. "I should take a break." He looked around. Jingle and Jangle were testing a remote control train, while Holly was painting a golden angel. Gingerbread's brother Gingersnap was looking over a letter he'd written.

*Dear Mr. Claus,
I am sorry to say this, but according to my recent poll, 71 per cent of the elves think they are overworked, a definite majority. We know we need to make presents for the children, but a recent stat shows that when an elf is overworked, he is less productive. Gingersnap*

At dinner, Gingersnap called a meeting. "Everyone!" he shouted above the chatter. "I've got a plan."

By the end of the day, almost all the elves were outside Santa's castle holding signs and shouting. The chief eggnog makers, Egg and Nog, threw eggs at the castle walls, while Jingle and Jangle sent protest letters inside with their remove control train.

Meanwhile, back at the ranch, Gingerbread dashed to Santa's castle. To avoid the flying eggs, he took the secret route.

He slid into the castle. It was half green and half red, and decorated with lights and tinsel. At the end of a long golden carpet, sitting in a giant armchair, was Santa himself.

"Santa!" Gingerbread gasped. "Ah! Gingerbread," Santa replied. "Look at this, a kid sent a letter telling me to say hi to the penguins! He doesn't know where penguins live! Bless me, what do they teach them at these schools?"

"Santa!" Gingerbread shouted, "The elves are on strike!"

Santa didn't seem worried at all. "I'm sure they'll sort themselves out."

Then he shouted to an elf in a chef hat. "Bell! I'd like a PB&J sandwich please." Bell brought the sandwich on a golden

plate, then threw it at Santa's face. "There's your sandwich!" she sneered as she ran to the door.

"Have you ever heard of PEACEFUL protesting?" Santa bellowed. "Those elves have taken it way too far. Time for desperate measures."

Santa pushed a button on his armchair and a gun on a podium rose from a hole in the floor.

A few seconds later, Santa burst through the door, pointing his gun at the protesters. "Go back to work. Or else."

"I'd rather die," screamed Bauble, the reindeer caretaker.

"All right. You asked for it."

A creamy liquid shot out of the gun . . . Eggnog!

"We made the eggnog that went into that gun!" Eggnog cried.

"What an ironic fate!" Nog wailed.

"If you go back to work I'll give you an extra break after lunch," Santa explained.

"That's all we wanted," replied Bell, pointing to her sign, which said GIVE US BREAKS AFTER LUNCH!

"Oh," grinned Santa. "Well, better get back to work!"

And so the elves continued working, but everything seemed just a little bit jollier.

Santa's Real?!

BY KAYLEE LAPIERRE
AGE 13-14
SECOND PLACE

I stared out my window to a fresh blanket of untouched snow glistening in the moonlight.

I sat in front of the fire on my couch, with a warm blanket and a hot chocolate in hand. The clear sky full of stars and the big white crescent moon above is the place that soon Santa Claus would fly. He would fly over the town in his big red sleigh pulled by nine adorable reindeer.

The medium-sized Christmas tree in the corner of my living room was covered in lights and ornaments, with what looked like hundreds of beautifully wrapped presents with lots of different coloured bows. The fireplace was decorated with the stockings, waiting to be filled by Saint Nick that evening.

"Time to go to bed, Celine! You wouldn't want Santa to skip our house tonight!" my mother said to me.

"Okay, mom, I will. But I'm 13. No more

Christmas stuff. Okay?" I asked my mom. My mom tries to keep my Santa thing going, but I am SO over it.

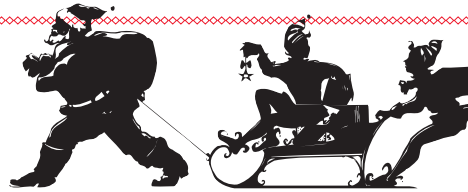
"Sure thing, sweetie!" she said, and with a kiss to my forehead she sent me to bed. My dad came to my room, kissed my cheek, and whispered gently: "Goodnight, sweetheart, Santa will be here very soon. Go to sleep!"

I stared at my dad, then rolled my eyes. He laughed and stepped into the hall and closed the door. I stared out my bedroom window, and fell into a light sleep.

I woke up and look at my clock. 12:31 a.m. I lie back down on my comfy pillow with my fluffy Christmas-themed duvet. All of a sudden I hear a loud crash, and a few clicks upon my roof.

"Daaaad, go to SLEEP!" I shout, as I thought he was trying to persuade me to believe that Santa was real. I hear no response, so I roll over and close my eyes. CLICK CLICK! I hear from the rooftop.

"That's it, I'm getting up to look for myself," I think.



I get out of my warm covers and touch the end of my toes to the cold hardwood floor. I gently tiptoe down my hallway, flashlight in hand, in my cute living room. I drop my flashlight, my mouth hanging open. I can't believe what I'm seeing.

A big man in a red-and-white suit turns around to show his fluffy white beard, half-moon glasses and red rosy cheeks. He flashes me a smile and disappears. I am not sure what just happened, so I head back upstairs to my bedroom and I have a hard time falling asleep.

I guess at some point I did because I woke up the next morning to the smell of fresh bacon. I walked downstairs to my living room as I had the night before, and saw all the beautifully wrapped gifts.

I sat down at the table along with my family, and started to explain what all seemed like a dream.

THE AURORA WOLF

BY JANE HOLMES
AGE 10 CATEGORY
FIRST PLACE

The sharp dusk air filled her lungs as Drifa trudged down the steep rocky path, milk bucket in hand, when suddenly something to her right caught her eye.

It moved silently through the underbrush. She looked a second time and it was gone.

Drifa knew she wasn't supposed to go into the forest, but she couldn't resist the thought of an adventure.

The moonlight on the fresh fallen snow made everything sparkle, but she saw no footprints.

She began to doubt herself, remembering her mother's words, "Stay out of the forest, Drifa," but she also wondered, could this mysterious creature she had seen be the reason for her parents' disapproval of her adventures?

She decided to keep searching.

As Drifa went deeper into the forest, she began to notice the looming shadows of the trees and every sound of a twig snapping or a bush rustling. She stopped in a clearing to look around. She had been in the forest before but she did not recognize her surroundings, she was lost.

Suddenly, a strange tinted light came upon her. She looked up as a spectacular curtain of green light ran across the sky: the aurora borealis.

She had seen them before but this time it was different. It was special. The pattern of a wolf running to the west was engraved in the night sky.

Drifa had a creeping feeling the wolf was calling her, showing her and guiding her home!

She ran with the wolf, following its howls, when suddenly standing before her eyes was the Aurora Wolf. It bent down, inviting her to climb on.

Drifa hesitantly straddled the enormous green shimmering creature and was surprised to feel it was ice cold! Drifa held on tightly to the wolf's soft fur as they bounded back to the path.

That night Drifa dreamed she was flying through the northern lights on the back of the Aurora Wolf. Now every winter Drifa secretly goes out to that same clearing in the woods to play with her new friend.



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Dinner 5pm-10pm



PHOTOS BY DIANA HAYES

MUSICAL MEAL: Ready to serve the guests are, above, from left, Ellen Karpinski, Margaret Mackenzie, Ken Mackenzie, Ann Muller and Sun Viner, volunteers at the Extended Care Unit Family Christmas Luncheon. At left, Kathleen and Valdy Horsdal provide some upbeat musical entertainment at the event. The hot turkey dinner with all the trimmings for 75 is prepared by Penny Jones of Penny's Pantry, who says, "I love seniors and this is my way of contributing to the hospital at Christmastime." The Dec. 16 meal was co-sponsored by the Lady Minto Hospital Auxiliary and Lady Minto Foundation. Dining tables are decorated and set up in the lounge to accommodate the residents and guests.



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Andrea Russell of Muse Masks will once again offer her skills to the community with a three-hour workshop set for Sunday, Jan. 3. Participants will learn to sculpt vegetable-tanned leather using water to create wonderful masks and costume accessories. Attendees can create their own designs, or make a mask using one of Russell's hundreds of characters and templates. Samples of the many possibilities can be viewed at musemasks.com. The finished mask will be of natural leather, and details of how to paint or decorate later on (if desired) will be provided. The class is suitable for ages 8 and up. Parents are welcome to work on something with their children if they wish.



Brown Owl mask by Andrea Russell.

Pre-registration is required to ensure enough supplies are on hand. Call Andrea or email for more info and registration at 250-539-5258 or thaifirefly@gmail.com. The workshop will run from 11 a.m. to 2 p.m., with the location to be announced.



PHOTOS BY JEN MACLELLAN

SEASONAL SALES:
Above, artist Larissa Sayer sells prints and cards at the Last Chance Christmas Craft Fair held at ArtSpring on Saturday. At left is Carla Molloy's glass crafts booth at the same fair.



Islands Trust

Our office will be closed for the holidays from Friday, December 25, 2015 through Friday, January 1, 2016 inclusive.

We will re-open for business on January 4, 2016. We apologize for any inconvenience and look forward to serving you in the New Year.

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The Christmas Surprise

BY MAIA REINHARDT
AGE 7-8 CATEGORY
FIRST PLACE

It was the night before Christmas and Jack was watching the snowflakes fall outside his window.

His mom came to him and said, "You better start to write a note."

Jack thought for a moment, he took a jar off the shelf. The label read "Jack's Money." He took all the money out. There was 45 dollars and 50 cents. Jack put the money in his pocket and stepped in his boots, put on his coat, hat and mittens and called out, "Mom, I'm going to the pet store!" His mom called back, "Be back for dinner."

Jack nodded his head and closed the door. Outside it looked like a fairy tale. The trees were covered with snow and frost, the ground was white snow. Jack thought it looked like white pearls on the ground. He hurried off through the snow. When he got there the shop door rang. There was a man sitting at the counter. The man looked up and asked, "Can I help you?"

"No thank you," replied Jack.

He looked around and there was everything from dog beds to lizards! Jack decided to go over to the beds. There were all shapes and sizes and colours. He got a medium-sized bed with gray, green, gold, brown and blue polka dots with a white background.

He got a red ball, a green leash, a purple collar and a water and food bowl. He went to the counter to pay. The man rang the till up and said, "That will be 32 dollars and 50 cents."

Jack gave the man his money. "Can you wrap it up?" asked Jack.

"Of course," said the man, "Would you like a bag?"

"Yes," said Jack.

Jack said bye and walked into the snow.

When he got home, he saw in their

driveway there were three cars. Then he remembered it was Christmas Eve. Jack rushed into the house. It was warm and pretty. His aunt asked him where he was.

"I was at the pet store," Jack said. He set the bag down and wrote the letter to Santa.

"Dear Santa -- This Christmas I would like a puppy. The breed would be a Golden Retriever, please. From Jack"

Jack put his letter in the mailbox. He went back inside, took his place at the table. Jack's father cut the ham and served it. When they finished his mom served pie with whipped cream.

"What did you ask for, Jack?" asked Jack's father.

"I asked for a Golden Retriever puppy!" said Jack.

"Jack," said his mum, "a puppy is a lot of responsibility."

"I can do it," Jack said, standing up. Jack went to brush his teeth and wash his face.

Jack climbed into bed and went to sleep. Jack had dreams about playing with this Christmas puppy . . . the puppy pulling as hard as she could on the rope. She was as soft as silk and as golden as the sun,

Jack's dream faded away by the morning sun Jack rolled out of bed and woke up his parents. He ran down stairs. He saw there was a big box with red wrapping paper and a green ribbon.

It had Jack's name on it. Jack opened the present and inside was exactly what Jack wanted! A Golden Retriever puppy!

Jack lifted the puppy in his arms, and said, "I think I'll call you Sidney!"

Jack ran and gave Sidney her presents and put the collar on her and the leash and walked out into the white snow for a Christmas walk. Sidney was the perfect present.



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Tourne Sol

BY SHAYCE JOHNSTON
AGE 16-17 CATEGORY
FIRST PLACE

"You know how when you were little and you would dream about Christmas? Remember how much you looked forward to it? How on Christmas Eve you would write little notes to Santa and leave him cookies and milk? I could never forget! The sparkle in your eyes when you woke up on Christmas morning and remembered what day it was."

I look over at my husband Keethan. He nods to me to keep going.

"You would come running down the hallway. I could hear your little bare feet scampering on the hardwood floor. Into our room you would come and jump on our bed to wake us up. I miss that. I miss you. The joy in your smile when you were giving me my first present."

I have to take a deep breath to regain control of my voice. It started falling apart at the thought of the memory.

"The look of hope on your face of how happy you would make me. Remember the first one you ever gave me? It was a dried sunflower wrapped up in this ginormous box with a big red bow on top of it. You remembered that sunflowers were my favourite flower. I can't even fathom how you figured that out."

The tears start flowing down my cheeks. I try not to let her hear my cry.

"Do you remember that? I want you to know that your dad and I love you. We love you more than anything. We also want

you to know that it's okay to let go. If you can't keep fighting, it's okay."

It was a year ago today, Christmas Day, that our baby girl Kayla went into a coma.

"You're so strong! Since you couldn't help decorate the house, your dad and I brought the decorations to your hospital room. We decided to go all out this year. It looks like a Christmas wonderland, exactly what you would have wanted.

"The Christmas tree is in the corner. You should see all the presents your friends have brought you. This year I decided to finally frame the sunflower you gave me six years ago. I'll put it beside your hand and if you're listening, honey, show me."

I place it under her hand and wait a couple of minutes. Nothing happens and I can't stand it anymore. I look to Keethan and I wrap my arms around him and fall apart in his embrace. The doctor said this was our last chance. This was the last time we could talk to her before we had to let her go.

"You tried all you could. There's nothing more you can do," said Keethan, trying to comfort me.

This just leads me to cry even harder. Minutes pass by and I'm still holding Keethan. Simply holding him. No noise, no crying, nothing.

Just as I'm about to let go, I hear a "tink-tink." I look over to see Kayla's fingers tapping the framed sunflower.



PHOTO BY JEN MACLELLAN

IN FULL VOICE: Phoenix Elementary School parents and kids sing in the ArtSpring lobby during Saturday's Last Chance Christmas Craft Fair where they also had a fundraising treats and refreshments booth.

A DOG'S CHRISTMAS

BY MICHAEL PATERSON
AGE 9 CATEGORY
SECOND PLACE

Prologue

"Ah, Christmas," I thought as I laid on my bed. Extra treats, lots of new shoes to chew on when Nathaniel's friends come over for a party on Christmas Eve, and best of all I get to tease the cat.

But Christmas can be a pain too. For some reason it gets darker quicker, so I don't get as much time outside as I would in summer. But that's really all that's bad about it. Anyway, let's get to the story about my best Christmas ever.

Chapter 1

The smell of kibble drifts lazily into my nose. "Breakfast time!" calls Nathaniel.

As I eat my kibble it dawns on me tonight is Christmas Eve. Yippee! I thought, Christmas is my favourite holiday. Halloween is too creepy, Valentine's Day is too pink, and St. Patrick's Day is too green and the shamrocks make me sneeze.

As I lick the last pieces from my bowl I wonder what I will get for a present, but this thought slowly goes away as I remember how naughty I had been this year.

Suddenly a gust of wind blew a newspaper through the open window, landing softly at my paws. It read: Missing Cat, Three Years Old, Brown Fur, \$200 Reward. I was going to find that cat!

Chapter 2

I set off through the snow, frost biting at my nose. Several times I had to stop and curl my tail over my nose to protect it from the minus 20-degree cold.



What's that? I wondered. It's the cat! But as I draw nearer I realized it was a stick. Cursing, I laid down, drifting into sleep, exhausted from the searching.

Chapter 3

I wake up, feeling a fuzzy and warm shape pushing against my back. As I turn over I see a wolf and I jump back in surprise, hitting my head on a tree, and I yelp in pain. I fall to the ground and the wolf comes over.

"You will be all right," she whispers, while licking the bruise.

Suddenly I see a brown shape! The cat! This time it's no stick. All my pain is forgotten, replaced with joy. But now it's a matter of getting back home.

Chapter 4

As we trek homeward, we say goodbye to the wolf, who needs to return to her pups. I see my house. I struggle up the stairs and start whining at the door. Relieved to see me, Nathaniel bends down to pat me, and that's when he sees the cat.

After the cat was returned to its rightful owner, Nathaniel got the \$200 reward and he spent it all on dog treats for me.

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Fitness Expert
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As we near the end of 2015, we want to take this opportunity to thank everyone who came to Rainbow Road Pool this year. Your enthusiasm, smiles, laughter and stories, make our jobs so enjoyable. We look forward to seeing all our swimmers, hot tubbers, aqua fit and swim lesson participants in 2016 for another great year.
We wish you all a Merry Christmas and all the best wishes for 2016.
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Will close Dec. 31 at 1:00 pm and will open Jan. 1 at 10:30 am.
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Mechanic
Holiday trips in cold weather may require more than a well prepared vehicle
All the regular things like snow tires, antifreeze, new wiper blades etc. are a top priority and should be checked before heading out on a holiday trip.
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One website has a rather extensive list of materials for your survival kit and attached to it are a few paragraphs of excellent advice on what to do in case you are stranded in your vehicle. Check out <http://www.21stcenturyadventures.com/advice/lists/winterSurvivalChecklist.html>
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To my clients, friends and colleagues in real estate, I continue to enjoy and appreciate working with you especially during these times of change.
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2015





what's on this week

Wed. Dec 23 **Thur. Dec 24** **Sat. Dec 26** **Tue. Dec 29**

ACTIVITIES

Festival of Trees.
Enjoy nine beautifully decorated trees and add food donations for the Salt Spring Food Bank to your favourite and/or give a donation to the Copper Kettle. Salt Spring Golf & Country Club Clubhouse. Open daily from 10 a.m. on until Dec. 30.
Poker Night at the Local.
Hosted by Albert every Wednesday at The Local. Sign up by 6:30 p.m., start at 7 p.m.
Christmas SongJam.
Sing along to Christmas hits in casual pub setting. Moby's Pub. 8 p.m.

ACTIVITIES

Midnight Mass at All Saints.
Anglican service with icons, incense, carols and candlelight at All Saints By-the-Sea. 10:30 p.m.
Festival of Trees.
See Wednesday listing.

Fri. Dec 25

ACTIVITIES

Christmas Day Mass.
Our Lady of Grace Catholic Church. 10 a.m.
Christmas Service and Holy Eucharist.
Anglican service at All Saints By-the-Sea. 11 a.m.
Community Christmas Dinner.
Everyone invited to free festive feast at Meaden Hall. Doors open at 11:30 a.m.; meal service begins at 12 noon and ends at 2 p.m.
Fulford Free-be-do.
Free community event with Christmas meal, games and socializing at Fulford Hall. Festivities get underway with brunch at 11 a.m., followed by games, snacks and music throughout the afternoon.

Thur. Dec 24

ACTIVITIES

Library Holiday Hours.
Open 10 a.m. to 1 p.m. today, closed Christmas and Boxing Day.
Christmas Eve Carol Eucharists.
Anglican Parish events at All Saints By-the-Sea in Ganges at 4 p.m., and St. Mary's church in Fulford at 7 p.m.
Christmas Eve Masses.
Family Mass at Our Lady Of Grace at 7 p.m., preceded by carols at 6:30, and 11 p.m. at St. Paul's in Fulford (carols at 10:30).
Christmas Eve Service.
Annual seasonal offering at Salt Spring Island United Church. 7 p.m.

LIVE ENTERTAINMENT

Boxing Day with the Barley Brothers.
Live music at The Local, with free appies from Dagwoods. 5 to 8 p.m.
Boxing Day Bash with The Riverside.
Live rock/dance band at Moby's Pub. 9 p.m.

ACTIVITIES

Festival of Trees.
See Wednesday listing.

Sun. Dec 27

ACTIVITIES

Roller-blading.
At Fulford Hall. 2 to 4 p.m.
Festival of Trees.
See Wednesday listing.

Mon. Dec 28

ACTIVITIES

Festival of Trees.
See Wednesday listing.

ACTIVITIES

Festival of Trees.
See Wednesday listing.

Wed. Dec 30

ACTIVITIES

SongJam.
A pub style sing-along to the soundtrack of our lives. Moby's Pub. 8 p.m.
Festival of Trees.
Winner of decorating contest is declared by most food bank donations. Salt Spring Golf & Country Club Clubhouse.
Poker Night at the Local.
See last Wednesday's listing.

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Turkey or vegetarian dinner for all
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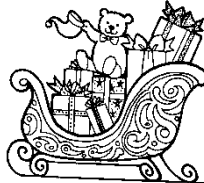
• **The Peanuts Movie** — Charlie Brown always tries his best against impossible odds. He develops a crush on the Little Red-Haired Girl who moves into his neighbourhood, while his best friend Snoopy embarks on an epic adventure as a World War I flying ace, chasing the Red Baron, while trying to win the heart of a beautiful poodle named Fifi.

EXHIBITIONS

• **Gallery 8** presents its annual exhibition of 8x8 Christmas Small Works daily from 10 a.m. to 5 p.m. through Jan. 6.
• **Mel Williamson** shares new paintings related to restaurants and food at **Auntie Pesto's cafe** for the month of December, in a show presented by **Steffich Gallery**.

EXHIBITIONS

• **Fred Ascott** shows paintings in the first We've Got Talent exhibition at **Greenwoods**, open daily from 10 a.m. to 3 p.m. through December.
• **Howard Fry's** exhibition *Vanishing Landmarks*: Photos of a BC Pioneering Heritage runs at the **Library Program Room** through December.
• **Margot W. Chisholm** has an exhibit of paintings at **Country Roasters Cafe at Country Grocer** in December.
• **Salt Spring Gallery** artists have work hanging in **Island Savings**.



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FUNDRAISER

Campaign launched to aid Katya Mycyk

Islander diagnosed with Stage 4 cancer for second time

Salt Spring is rallying around longtime islander Katya Mycyk, who was recently diagnosed with Stage 4 metastatic breast cancer a second time after achieving total remission in November 2014.

Mycyk is a fabric artist whose tie-dyed Righteous Rags products have adorned thousands of islanders and visitors. She's also a professional party planner who has put together many of the events islanders have enjoyed over the years. During much of the past five years she has simultaneously been fighting cancer without submitting to chemotherapy.

"One year ago we were celebrating the miraculous news that Katya's cancer was in remission," explains the YouCaring.com fundraiser cam-

paigned her friends and family members have launched. "After an original diagnosis of breast cancer in 2010, and Stage 4 terminal cancer diagnosis January 2014, she has been on an intense and inspiring journey, culminating in a total remission in November 2014."

Recent scans have revealed tumours are growing in Mycyk's bones, lymph system and chest again. Funds raised will help her access some of the treatments she found successful after her first Stage 4 diagnosis.

"There's a huge amount of friends trying to do something for her," said Carol Adam, who is one of those friends.

Donations can be made through the YouCaring page called Help Katya Survive Her Stage 4 Breast Cancer, or in person at Salt Spring Books.

Learn more about Mycyk's journey in surviving Stage 4 cancer once before on her blog Not Dead Yet, at <https://katyaincuba.wordpress.com>.



Katya Mycyk, right, with husband Steve Forbes.

PHOTO CONTRIBUTED

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YOUTH ISSUES

Comedian ponders problems' evolution

My life is extremely problematic.

I can find myself in situations that are so complex nobody can even begin to help. Mother Nature wouldn't listen, God would be out of sorts from the chaos, and even Life and Death would be trembling. They are problems that shoot higher than mankind's greatest works. Even the first blueprints of the wheel in this hypothetical situation would be shattered.

Teenage angst apparently always starts with these kinds



Hayden Rabson

TEENAGE ANGST

of dilemmas, which is why teenage life is the most overwhelming thing to go through. There's no stop to it either. You can be working on a mathematical problem and this existential

crisis surrounds your mind. What later awaits you in life, what's going to happen after this moment and the moment after?

My personal struggle is about acting and the constant dreams of being successful or everything below. Arguments never occur in my family on this topic, and I'm grateful that I have my parents' complete support in wanting to become a stand-up comedian. It's either rare or lucky that I'm in this position.

I am going to enjoy the rejection I have to face trying to

become a comedian. There's simply no way around it: to succeed in show business you have to suck at it first. I might be at the bottom now but I can see myself five years from now being 15 rings away from the top.

At least in five years I shouldn't still be worrying that my problems exist solely because of being a teenager.

Maybe time is the only solution to everything that's been happening. I have to be patient and hope for the best. I guess that's true about anything in life.

DUPLICATE BRIDGE

Rainy day bridge soldiers on

Less historic battles won and lost

BY JILL EVANS
DRIFTWOOD CONTRIBUTOR

Dec. 7, 1941 is remembered by so many of us very oldies as the Day of Infamy when Hawaii's Pearl Harbour was attacked so tragically, although that began the eventual triumph of the Allies over the Axis.

But now... memories linger on but we have other matters to concern us: some very serious, but others to divert us such as a duplicate bridge game. Because

BRIDGETRICKS

several players were off to warmer climes like Hawaii or Mexico and such, there were only three and a half tables at Seniors' that rainy day.

It was George Laundry and Jeff Bell who won the little battle, with Patricia Brown and Jill Evans in second place and Blanche Poborsa with Terry Clement coming third.

Dec. 14 saw four full tables on a chilly night, but the

heat was on for the Brown-Evans pair who came first, with the Poborsa-Clement combo following again, and Liz and Oleh Mycyk warming the third spot.

Christmas is coming, the goose is getting fat, won't you please put a penny in your favourite charity's hat?

And for info about these games or to find a partner, please call 250-537-1398, or email George Laundry at pastorale@shaw.ca.

There's a game on Dec. 21 for those not inundated by Yuletide preparations — and then a Merry Christmas to all!



"O holy Child of Bethlehem, descend to us, we pray."

OUR LADY OF GRACE
Roman Catholic Church

135 Drake Road

Christmas & New Year Masses

CHRISTMAS EVE: Thursday, December 24th:

7pm Family Mass at Our Lady of Grace (Carols at 6:30pm)
11pm Mass at St. Paul's, Fulford Harbour (Carols at 10:30pm)

CHRISTMAS DAY: Friday, December 25th:

10am Mass at Our Lady of Grace

NEW YEAR'S EVE: Thursday, December 31st:

5pm Vigil Mass at Our Lady of Grace

NEW YEAR'S DAY: Friday, January 1st

Solemnity of Mary, Mother of God
10am Mass at Our Lady of Grace

Our Lady of Grace welcomes you to our Masses and would like to extend our prayers that your Christmas may be full of Peace, Love and Joy.

The Anglican Parish of Salt Spring Island
Christmas Services for 2015

Thursday, December 24th

Carol Eucharists with Blessing of the Crèche
4:00 p.m. All Saints, Ganges
7:00 p.m. St. Mary's, Fulford

Icons, Incense, Carols & Candlelight
10:30 p.m. "Midnight Mass" at All Saints

Friday, December 25th

"And the Word became flesh"
11 a.m. Holy Eucharist at All Saints, Ganges

Friday, January 1st

"The Holy Name of Jesus: New Year's Day"
12:00 noon Eucharist in Celtic Christian Tradition at All Saints

here's
my card

FUNDRAISER

Artists line up to support refugees

Variety show and concert set for Jan. 1

BY ELIZABETH NOLAN
DRIFTWOOD STAFF

Salt Springers can start the new year celebrating their warm and caring community while helping others in need through a refugee benefit concert at Fulford Hall set for Friday, Jan. 1.

A star-studded line-up of Salt Spring musicians and artists will be donating their time to the event, with all proceeds going to the Salt Spring Refugee Sponsorship Group effort to bring six Syrian refugees to the island.

Kathy Ramsey is a devoted member of the sponsorship group and one of the concert coordinators. As president of ArtsBC, a provincial organization that advocates for the arts and culture community, she's had to overcome her usual reluctance about asking performers to participate without compensation.

"Every now and then, there is a compelling need for a community to unite around a common cause," Ramsey explained in an email.

"This event is not just a fundraiser but also an opportunity for every islander to feel as if they, too, helped create a space in our community for these refugees to rebuild their lives in safety and in peace."

Ramsey added she firmly believes that artists always lead the way in times like these.

"There are a lot of islanders who are really feeling helpless in the face of what's happening," she noted. "The benefit concert performers, thanks to the leadership of the Salt Spring Arts Council and the Chamber of Commerce, will bring us all together under one roof to raise funds and



GISS music student Daniel Hunter is one of the many performers who will aid the refugee effort on Jan. 1.

also to celebrate how fortunate we are to live in such a compassionate community."

Everyone is welcome to drop by Fulford Hall for the preliminary event on Friday afternoon, with an open mic coffee house and silent auction preview by donation from 2 to 4 p.m. Ramsey suggests folks go to the polar bear swim in Vesuvius at noon, and then warm up in Fulford.

The evening variety concert will include "loads of the usual suspects in unusual roles," as well as some more familiar ones. MC Arthur Black will host a show that includes everyone from award-winning writer/playwright/actor Chris Humphreys and poet Peter Levitt to Valdy and Grade 12 student Daniel Hunter, who was last year's GISS Musician of the Year.

Yael Wand, a new islander who can be heard on CBC radio, borrows elements from jazz, roots and world to serve up a scrumptious musical feast.

Tara MacLean will perform solo and in a duo with James Cowan. She believes she is just like every Canadian in her desire to help the refugees in any way she can.

"It's such a giant problem," she said. "And I feel like this is one way we can feel like we're really doing something, helping to bring this family here."

MacLean prefers performing at events that have a purpose beyond just entertainment, and is looking through her repertoire for the perfect songs to represent the occasion. The singer-songwriter has also put together a personal fundraising campaign with the goal of raising \$10,000 for the sponsorship group.

"It's all very exciting. It just feels so good — I love how the community pulls together," MacLean said.

Advance tickets are available at Salt Spring Books. Doors open at 6:30 p.m., and the show starts at 7.

"Tickets make a great Christmas gift, and if you're looking to donate to this project but can't make it to the concert, consider buying a ticket anyway and donating it to Community Services, the Lions Club or any other social services group on the island so they can pass it on to someone who might not be able to afford it, for a double donation," Ramsey suggests.

There is also a linked online fundraiser at <https://fundrazr.com/campaigns> which people can donate to until Jan. 30. Search for "Salt Spring refugees" and the page will pop up.

As of press time, the campaign was just over halfway to its \$10,000 goal.

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ISLAND HISTORY

Family memories linger at Kings Lane

Historic dairy farm now hosts medical building site

The plea for help in my last column about finding information on the family behind the Blain Road name yielded a human treasure trove in the form of Bob Rush, a longtime islander who is now in his 80s.

The Salt Spring Archives' file on street names states that brothers Colin and Ronald King owned a large dairy farm that was later purchased by Walter Blain. While no reference to the Blains seems to turn up in the regular historical material, Rush did have a phone number for Paul King, who currently lives in Nanaimo.

King has visited Salt Spring several times with his daughters and nieces and used to attend the "old timers" reunions hosted by the historical society.

Luckily his contact number is still on the "old timers list" to which Rush has access, so we were able to get first-hand information for a change. Incidentally, Rush remembers



D.W. Salty

STREETS OF SALT SPRING

walking the family cow from his childhood home at Beddis and Fulford-Ganges roads over to the Kings' farm to be bred!

Paul King was born in 1932 and was the son of Ronald and Gwladys Eileen King, who were married in 1927 and started farming life the same year. During a phone conversation King offered the information that his father and uncle were from Bristol, England, where his grandfather owned a soda water business. The King brothers apparently took up farming as part of their new pioneer lifestyle, operating the Highcroft dairy farm in the area where Kings Lane and Blain Road are located today.

"Our family house is still there. The bowling alley was where they used to milk the cows," King said. "Our house was just close to the dairy."

An obituary for Colin's wife Jean King (which the Driftwood published in 1976) says Highcroft was a 100-acre farm that stretched from Lower Ganges to Upper Ganges Road and included the land where Lady Minto Hospital now stands. The Kings' pedigree herd of Jersey cattle "provided milk and cream to a large number of residents in the Ganges area."

Colin and Jean married in 1934. They went to Bristol two years later, where Colin joined the family business.

According to Jean's obituary: "During the war, their kindly neighbours on Salt Spring Island welcomed back Jean King and her daughter, Alison and her mother, Mrs. Benzie, as evacuees. They lived in the small house they still owned at that time and which was recently demolished to make room for the Lady Minto Hospital extension."

Colin survived the war and the family lived for a long time on Long Harbour Road. Later on they made their home in Victoria.

Ronald King and his family ended their farming life in 1942 when they moved to Oak Bay, when Paul was around 10

years old. (This must be when the sale to Walter Blain took place.) Ronald worked at the Yarrow's Shipyards and the Victoria Post Office, and worked with the Salvation Army in Victoria after retirement. Gwladys ran a nursing home and worked for the Canadian Red Cross in 1950 and 1960, at which time she received the Red Cross Long Service Pin.

Paul King had an interesting life with several different career paths that took him to Saskatchewan and then back to Vancouver Island. He was a member of the RCMP and of several municipal police forces before he and his wife bought the Oyster Bay Store near Courtenay. He then worked in corrections in Nanaimo for 20 years before retiring. He and his wife are happily living there still.

A Driftwood story from 1981 reported a rezoning application that was needed to subdivide Highcroft house from the bowling alley property. The house is still there, but the bowling alley was demolished a few years back. It was rezoned to permit the future construction of a second medical-services building, next to the Kings Lane Medical Clinic.

One Piece of Paper

BY KAYA MONGARD
AGE 16-17 CATEGORY
SECOND PLACE

I've always wanted a family of my own.

Having spent the better part of my life in the foster system, Christmas has never been something I find myself overjoyed about. Just another day, in another house, with another family I won't be calling my own.

This year is a little different, though. I have been with the Georges for eight months, and they have really made me feel as though I could belong in a family. It'll be sad when I'm told to leave them. Onwards and upwards, I guess.

"Kylie, come here please!" I hear my foster mom call from downstairs.

It's two days before Christmas. She's probably wanting

help with cookies or something.

"Coming!" I call as I make my way down to the kitchen.

Funny thing is, she isn't in the kitchen. There aren't any cookies being baked either. In fact, the kitchen is completely spotless. I find she and my foster dad perched on the living room couch, looking unusually happy.

"We wanted to give you your Christmas gift a little early this year. Is that okay?"



I'm surprised they even had to ask. When would any child deny an early Christmas gift? I sit myself across the coffee table from them, and they slide a skinny, flat box wrapped in red and green across the table. I take it in my hands, rotating and flipping the box, trying to figure out what may lay inside.

"Open it," my foster dad encourages. I untie the bow from the front and let it fall to the floor. Hesitantly, I lift the lid from the box. There lies a single piece of paper. At first I'm a little confused, but then the pieces begin to fit together.

"You're kidding me," I begin to say before I'm enveloped in my foster parents' arms.

I didn't even need to read the paper. Their tears of joy told me exactly what it said.

"Welcome to the family, Kylie George."

here's my card

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Christmas on Other Planets

BY DAVID SANCHEZ GALICIA
ESL AT GISS CATEGORY
FIRST PLACE

From a record found in an alien space cab. Translated to English.

Dec. 1, 2083

Some time ago, I received a message from my friends. They went to watch the newly discovered planet: a blue point in the Milky Way with only one sun and eight neighbouring planets. On that planet we found life.

When the scientists of my planet discovered that, they immediately sent a mission to learn about those new forms of life. It was kind of amazing how the life on other planets can be composed of carbon, oxygen, hydrogen and other elements unable to sustain life on my planet. Because the atmosphere in my planet is mainly composed of carbon dioxide and sulfuric acid, living things might be composed of strong materials; elements that the other planet doesn't have.

We learnt a lot of new things. For example, they call their planet Earth, they call themselves humans, and they have been evolving for about 11,000 cycles — I think they call those "years" — and within that time they have been trying to reach space and investigate their neighbouring planets. Amazingly, one of those planets is way similar to mine. I think the humans call it "Venus."

In the human culture we have some similarities, and the one that caught more of my attention was a holiday that they call "Christmas." Here we call it "WOK," which means "peace" in an ancient and forgotten language.

Our holiday is a time when the whole planet and all 10,793 countries get a time for peace, when we remember and honour all our deaths and wars.

After the destruction of the last Great War, all my people understood that if we work together as a planet, our technology and society will evolve in the right way.

So we celebrate that moment with the WOK.

On Earth they celebrate Christmas because of a similar reason, but the great difference is religion. They celebrate Christmas because they believe their saviour — at least in one of their religions — was born on that day, and he brought peace to the human race.

On Earth, the living things have a strange mechanism to keep themselves alive — they call it "eat" — and they use the components of other living creatures to get the nutrients they need. Humans, being the superior race of their planet, started to eat for pleasure, not exactly for necessity, so they generally celebrate holidays eating something that, for them, looks delicious, like roasted birds and colourful dinners.

Here we call it "WOK," which means "peace" in an ancient and forgotten language.

We cannot do that because we don't eat; our digestive system is completely different since we absorb nutrients from the atmosphere using the respiratory holes in our back, but we can enjoy other things too.

For example, we go to the hydrochloric acid oceans, rivers and lakes and swim there. It's a tradition all around the planet. We do that because our skin, made with an amalgamation of a metal created in

our planet, gets "dirty" within the year due to metals like zinc, so we swim in the acid to clean us. We do that because it is a significant way to tell us that everybody has the same problems all around the world, and we can fight those problems together. After the acid bath we get to our respective towns, play music and dance, and have a time of comfort and joy with our family.

Amazing, isn't it? But one of the things that makes me sad is the fact that a lot of humans won't be able to celebrate Christmas, or any time like that. Homeless people, wounded people, people at war — humans are still a primitive race and culture to us, and like I said, we needed to suffer the aftermath of the Great War to understand the meaning of peace.

I am not saying that humans need to feel pain to make themselves conscious about the meaning of peace, the thing I meant to say is that they still hate each other because of stupid reasons, especially because of the different opinions they have about each other, such as religion, race and other preferences . . . those things don't matter. People need to understand that everybody lives on the same planet, and they need to take care of themselves.

One of my friends — one of those who went to Earth — brought back things that humans called "books," thin, square-like sheets in which they wrote a long time ago about something, such as a story, a scientific fact, or even their feelings.



One was a famous story called "Travels into Several Remote Nations of the World, in Four Parts, By Lemuel Gulliver, First a Surgeon, and then a Captain of Several Ships," abbreviated "Gulliver's Travels." The story was about a human called Gulliver, who travelled around the world to strange countries, and in one of those countries, called Lilliput, he found a lot of small people who were at war with their brother country Blefuscu. The reason? Some believe that they must open the boiled eggs — edible, round-shaped weird things that the birds and lizards on Earth used for reproduction — from the rounder side, and the others believed that they must open them from the pointier side.

Do you think it sounds stupid? Well, it's the same with humans. Some people think that when they die, they go to heaven, some others don't. Some people have brown skin, some people don't. Anyway, all of them are humans.

At least the majority of human people have a pretty good season in the winter holidays, and someday I'd like to hear from my friends that on Earth, peace has arrived.

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TAKING A BREAK: Members of Salt Spring's various emergency services groups — Salt Spring Fire Rescue, RCMP, BC Ambulance Service, Ground Search and Rescue, Salt Spring Emergency Program, Royal Canadian Marine Search and Rescue — gathered for a Christmas party at Ganges Fire Hall last Tuesday morning.



Dragon and Santa

BY FREYA SINONEAU
AGE 4-6 CATEGORY
FIRST PLACE

Once there was a girl. She wanted a puppy. It was Christmas. She asked if she could have a puppy. She always wanted to see Santa. She looked at the chart. It was December the 24th.

Her mother called her for dinner. It was spaghetti. After, it was her bedtime. Bedtime was 7:30. It was hard to fall asleep.

Finally it was Christmas! It was

December 25th. She had a Star Wars advent calendar. It was the last day. She went for a walk. Then she saw a red sled stuck in a ditch with a dragon guarding it. The dragon was red and green. She looked up in a fire tree, then she looked up in a pine tree. Then she looked in a fern.

At last she found Santa stuck in a maple leaf tree. Santa told her what happened. He got stuck in a storm. The dragon was nice but a mean wizard put a spell on him to make him mean. The dragon made me crash, said Santa.

"Where does the evil wizard live?" asked the girl.

Santa gave her a map. She saw a trail on the map. There was a cave on the map. After the trail and the cave there was a castle. That must be wizard's castle, she thought.

She knew she must go there to save Christmas. In a moment, Santa was gone to the North Pole. The girl decided to go to defeat the wizard. She rode her horse to the castle.

She followed her map and stopped at a gate. She tried to open it but it was locked!

She went away and came back dressed as a cook. She rang the bell at the gate and the evil wizard came out. She made some food that the wizard liked but it was bad. The wizard fell into a deep sleep.

She rode her horse back to the sleigh, but along the way she made potion to help the dragon and found the missing pieces of the sleigh. Santa felt happy and finished delivering presents. Back at the North Pole they all had hot chocolate.

Coming Home

BY TAEVEN LOPATECKI
AGE 13-14 CATEGORY
FIRST PLACE

"Lower the main sail! Slowly, now the jib!" The captain's voice drifted across the water. I was out of bed in a flash. The ships were back!

I hopped down the stairs two at a time, throwing a warm wool sweater over my nightgown and pulling on my fur-lined boots. The chill winter air hit me like a hammer as I stepped outside.

My little town sat nestled in a small valley protected on either side by tall, snowcapped mountains. It was a picturesque village of brightly coloured houses and a harbour filled with boats.

But the focus this morning was the main quay and the two old wooden sailing ships that were making steady progress towards it. The Queen of the Waves and the Lady Isabel had lowered their sails and were preparing to tie up to the quay.

I eagerly ran down the dock, careful not to slip on the ice that had formed overnight. My father was a deckhand on the Lady Isabel and had been away at sea for three months. That meant three long months of waiting, hoping for the best and occasionally fearing the worst. I scanned the deck of the ship and finally spotted him standing on the forward deck tying off the halyards. I waved frantically and he caught my eye and smiled.

That Christmas was the best ever. In the morning, I was woken up by my younger sister Anna shaking me. "Wake up! It's Christmas!" she yelled and pulled me downstairs. We were sitting around the fire opening presents when my father asked, "Who can guess what happened on the Lady Isabel?"

Anna jumped up onto his knee and began to chant. "Tell us, tell us!" "We had just sailed out from behind the headland, our course set for the trading port up the channel, when we ran into some bad weather. The wind tugged at our sails and the waves tossed us around like a piece of driftwood in a gale. The swell was so big that water was coming in over the sides of the ship."

Anna squealed. "Then, before the Captain could turn the ship back, we saw a huge wave rising out of the boiling sea in front of us. It towered over our boat and in the split second before it crashed down on us I thought to myself, "The only thing I want for Christmas is to see my family again."

He retrieved a small golden box from one of his many pockets. "This is for you," he said, handing the container to me. "It's just a reminder that I will always be here for you."

In the box was a little silver star pendant on a thin leather cord. Engraved in the metal were the words "Though we may seem far apart, I will always be there, in your heart" and from that moment on I knew that family really is the most important part of Christmas.



Seasons Greetings

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The Mountain Cat's Christmas

BY BEN ADELSON
AGE 11-12 CATEGORY
SECOND PLACE

Once upon a time there was a great mountain cat who had great powers. It was Christmas and he really liked presents, but on Christmas Day he didn't get any presents. He was very sad, even though he could summon presents at the blink of an eye. So he decided to ruin Christmas for everyone. He decided that the best way to ruin Christmas would be if everyone couldn't watch TV, so he spent hours planning his attack.

When he was done, he went to the village below and with his amazing powers he took everyone's TVs while they were sleeping. The next day everyone woke up and was like, "OH MY! WHERE ARE THE TVs?" and above on the great mountain cat's mountain, he was watching a thousand soap operas at once with all the TVs he stole. A few minutes later he heard a flush in the bathroom. It was the Goat of Christmas Pat.

"Who are you?" said the mountain cat.

"I am the Goat of Christmas Pat. NOW PAT ME!" So as the cat went to pat him they both disappeared.

They appeared in a McDonald's and the Goat of Christmas Pat ordered fries.

"Why are we here?" asked the cat.

"I was hungry," said the goat.

The mountain cat teleported back to the mountain angrily alone.

A few minutes later another goat came, the Goat of Christmas Presents.

"Not another one," groaned the cat.

"Let me guess, you want me to come with you to a water park or something, right?" asked the mountain cat.

The goat slowly slipped a water park pamphlet into his pocket and backed up into the bathroom.

A few minutes later another goat came and he claimed he was the Goat of Christmas Fruiture.

"I'M TIRED OF GOATS COMING INTO MY HOUSE! NOW LEAVE!" screamed the mountain cat, but then the goat put on a ski mask with a pineapple on top and stole all the TVs.

The mountain cat was sad, but then he heard cheering from the town below.

All the TVs he stole had been replaced with fruit! Then suddenly he heard a bell from outside. It was an elf.

"Hi, I'm Tinkle Berry," said the elf in a squeaky voice. Then he ran into the cat's bedroom.

He opened a secret safe that wasn't that secret and stole all the cat's money and flew out the window to give the money to the town folks.

So the mountain cat went down to the town and just walked around. At one point a weird guy named Clarence asked if he saw anyone named Goat Bailey. But even though he stole everyone's TVs they were still singing and dancing, so he decided to summon TVs for everyone.

A few hours later the mountain cat was lying on his couch and heard the doorbell ring. It was the town's folks. They were all holding presents because he returned the TVs, so the mountain cat invited them all in for roast beef and fruit.

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Schaughan (Johnnie) Wells
Nov. 1928 – Dec. 2015



Our mother passed peacefully into the next world on Dec. 18, surrounded by love. She joins her eldest son Micheal and her husband Barry.

Johnnie leaves behind her children Judye, Stephen (Lani), Melissa (Steve), Simon (Kristan), grandchildren Derek, Cody, Cole, Tyler, Jordan, Sophia and Roman, "adopted" kids Sandi and John and all those she scooped up into her enormous heart over the years.

Johnnie will be remembered for her feisty nature, her flair for the dramatic, her desire to help and her love of gardening.

Many thanks to Drs Shane and Ashley and to the kind and caring staff at Lady Minto.

A celebration of her life will be held in 2016, the details of which will be announced here.

Donations in honour of Johnnie may be made to the Lady Minto Hospital Foundation.

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EDWARD STEVEN PETTY
August 17, 1949 – December 5, 2015



Steve Petty, passed peacefully in his sleep on December 5, 2015 in his adopted Salt Spring home, Kunzang Dechen Osel Ling (KDOL) Buddhist retreat facility on Mt. Tuam at the age of 66 after a year long struggle with cancer. Steve is pre-deceased by his father, Edward William and his mother Audrey, nee Gazzard, Petty. He is survived by his two elder sisters, Denise Collings of Fredericton, NB and Lee McCarter of Sarnia, Ont.

Steve was born in Kitchener, Ontario on August 17, 1949. He graduated from high school in London, Ontario and attended two years of college. Having been born into a military family he was used to moving around and so after leaving college he continued in his parapatetic ways. His travels finally brought him to Salt Spring where in 1981 he settled on Mt. Tuam so that he could build the first 3 year retreat facility at KDOL. Afterwards he moved to Fulford Harbour where he built a home for he and his partner. Again the wandering spirit took hold of him and he travelled to Colorado, New York, Cape Breton, Vancouver, Thailand where he continued to use the skills he learned as a finishing carpenter to help building projects at Buddhist centres.

Steve loved the outdoors and spent a lot of his life camping, canoeing and hiking. He was an avid amateur photographer and took photos of all the places he visited.

Steve was cremated at Royal Oak Cemetery in Victoria, BC on December 8, 2015 and his ashes will be dispersed at a designated site of his choosing as per his wishes at a later time to be determined.

His family and friends will miss his kind and gentle soul, his great sense of humour. We wish to thank all those who helped him in his final days particularly Dr. Sadowski, Ron Puhky, Chuck Alsberg, Salt Spring Home Care Services and many others.

Steve's final wish was for those wanting to make a contribution in memory of him could do so by making a donation to KDOL in support of three designated projects.

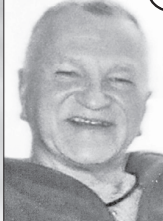
Steve will be lovingly remembered and missed by many close friends from his youth in hometown London, Ontario, especially lifelong buddies who wandered across the continent and beyond with him starting in the 1970s on a search for peace, love and beauty in this world.

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Jerzy Porebski
July 30, 1946 - December 14, 2015.



Jerzy Porebski passed away peacefully on December 14, 2015 at Lady Minto Hospital, at the age of 69 with his family by his side.

He will be remembered by his daughters Alinka Porebska and Ania Porebski, and his grandchildren Maya and Indigo Porebska-Smith and Leifen Porebska Coverdale. He will always be Loved.

Service will be held on December 30, 2015 at 1:30 at Our Lady of Grace Catholic Church, 135 Drake Rd.

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TIP OF THE WEEK:

Christmas this year coincides with the Full Moon in Cancer! When the Moon is in any of the 3 water signs: Cancer, Scorpio and Pisces, emotional levels run deeper and higher too. Out of these 3 the Moon in Cancer especially, the sign that it rules, doubles the impact. This is partially true due to the fact that Cancer is an action oriented Cardinal Sign. When the Moon is full in Cancer, the effects are tripled. The Moon enters Cancer at 9:26 pm on Christmas Eve where it will remain until December 27 at 2:31 am and the Moon comes to full at 3:11 am on December 25th (all Pacific Time Zone). On Christmas Eve the Moon squares Jupiter at 9:26 am which lends to exaggerated emotions, extravagance and foolish generosity, so keep that in mind if you happen to be doing any last minute shopping and are on a budget. Fortunately the Moon forms an inspirational trine to Neptune at 10:18 am Christmas morning supporting the hoped for magic to enchant young and old alike. An opposition from the Moon to Pluto at 11:21 pm however warns that pushing the limits late into the night when alcohol and fatigue can blend to awaken malevolent spirits could result in some uninvited disturbances. Uranus brings its own twist of magic as it turns Direct at 16 Aries 53 at 7:53 pm on December 25 after exactly 5 months of retrograde motion. Uranus is known to synchronize with unexpected and sudden shifts of measurable proportion lending another gentle reminder to exercise caution and restraint especially during the evening. With a loaded square between Mars and Pluto in the New Moon chart this point is further emphasized. So get ready for an extra emotional Christmas this year everybody. Many blessings for a fun, fulfilling and safe holiday season!

PS: Happy Birthday Justin Trudeau, Prime Minister of Canada. (December 25th, 1971)
Gift Certificates can still be purchased for Christmas and can be quickly and easily sent to you by email and the buy 1 hour and get 30 minutes BONUS is still on until 9 pm on December 26th. sunstarastrlogy@gmail.com

READ MORE IN MY NEWSLETTER. SIGN-UP IS FREE ON MY WEBSITE.

Aries (Mar 21 – Apr 20) You are in a somewhat sober mood, despite the festive season. If you do partake in consuming spirits, you could get seriously titillated. Some deep passions are stirring your ambitions, yet the required diplomacy for success may not be so easy to express. Taking action to realize your dreams requires that you have some, so allow time to meditate under the twinkling lights.

Libra (Sep 22 – Oct 22) Christmas can have the effect of deepening one's faith in life and hopefully this will prove true for you. Sometimes we need to believe more and think less, like now perhaps. It is not about blind faith so much as it is acknowledging that there exist many levels of power that cannot be empirically perceived. Allow the spirit of innocence as that of a child to remind you of magic and miracles.

Taurus (Apr 20 – May 21) A bell tolls for you in the distance. With each passing moment the jingle in your ride is a reminder that there is something special inside. Sweet as it sounds it may come with a twist of bitters linked to what you may be leaving behind. Shedding some tears for yesteryear is all part of the game, yet embracing the moment and anticipating what is to be, need not evoke shame. Change is not simply some silver coins.

Scorpio (Oct 22 – Nov 21) Have you ever wondered what the world might look like if you were perched on Santa's sled as it sails through the sky? Okay, so you have flown on a plane before, but please play along. Whatever it takes to expand your point of view will suffice. Fresh expressions of love and beauty await your command as the gift of possibilities is unwrapped in your mind.

Gemini (May 21 – Jun 21) This time of year is often filled with cheer, yet while you may feel fine it is harder to feel the fullness of the spirit this time. With this in mind, however, you could make the effort to dig a little deeper. Direct your attention to others and their joys and sprinkle with extra gratitude for all the good that is. This little recipe is ancient yet still holds the magic to open the heart allowing more love to flow in and out...

Sagittarius (Nov 21 – Dec 21) A bit more calculation than spontaneous leaps of faith afford is the frosting on your window. Jack may be nimble and Jacquelyn may be quick, but the Jackie in you best also draw upon some other tricks. Patience and determination supported by strategy and logic may not sound so magical, yet they are the timeless spell that will reveal the successes you seek.

Cancer (Jun 21 – Jul 22) Sending a message to all your relations is at the top of your list. You have much to say and at least as much to learn. Your communications will be filled with purpose and passion. Raising a glass to share a cheer feels extra important this particular year. In the glow of color lit snow a prayer for the faithful includes your name too, I thought you should know.

Capricorn (Dec 21 – Jan 19) Is that a cap on your cat or a cat in your cap taking a nap? A process of deciphering what is what, which is which and who is who, that is the task you must do. It might all seem like just a game but it is important all the same. For where do your commitments truly lie, are they solid on the ground or floating in the sky? Beyond just a riddle that annoyingly rhymes, answering it is your destiny and now is the time.

Leo (Jul 22 – Aug 23) You may feel like one of Santa's overworked elves. In addition to last minute details for this year, orders are already coming in for 2016! Your Christmas wish includes the wisdom to set an even pace and the confidence to win in the creativity race. So you have plenty of work to do but if you take the initiative and set things in motion you will receive extra inspiration to see it through.

Aquarius (Jan 19 – Feb 19) Hiding there within the tree is something for you, something to see. Nestled in among them all is some magic in a green shiny ball. It contains a special kind of strange and a weird kind of wonderful woven with power and potential. It's not a spell, just a bit of magic that could lead you to an important exit. There is a point of departure from how things are, wishes will be answered and you could travel very far.

Virgo (Aug 23 – Sep 22) Certain aspects in your chart are characterized by this time of year: contractive temperatures vie with expansive spirits. The contraction bit is based on concentrating your focus to confront fears in order to lay claim to latent powers. The expansion part is linked to expressing yourself in future-oriented and innovative ways. Think of Santa squeezing down the chimney emerging from it fully with gifts in tow.

Pisces (Feb 19 – Mar 20) Amidst the glitter and the shine that stir imaginations every time, practical considerations are on your mind. Keeping it open mind about what you perceive, what really matters about what you believe? It's for you to decide what you do, but it needs to have meaning to be relevant and true. It is not necessarily about having more, it's just that Mr. Frost as rapping at the door.

sports & recreation



PHOTO CONTRIBUTED

STANDING TALL: Players on this year's Gulf Islands Secondary School senior boys basketball team pose in front of their new scoreboard, bought with help from matching funds supplied by the Salt Spring Island Foundation.

OLD BOYS SOCCER

Coach makes full wish list

Team could use Santa's help

BY FRASER HOPE
DRIFTWOOD CONTRIBUTOR

Here is each current Old Boys player's wish for Christmas and the new year season. In no particular order:

Jim Witherspoon: A bigger megaphone to encourage the forward line. Ballistic: the top ball trajectory app for iPhone to calculate the overhead lobbs toward goal.

Dennis Shaw: A sauna aboard the Queen of Cumberland.

Scott Howe: A mulligan for those "swing and a miss" clearances. A DVD of his GK substitutions and Clean Sheets, proof of his GK prowess.

Sean Goddard: Bigger springs in his boots so that he can meet the ball at any height without having to use his head.

Martin Thorn: A bigger vehicle than a Fiat 500 or a Tardis, a year's subscription to The Globe and Mail and a BC Transit bus pass to Sooke.

Graham Tweddle: Players who answer emails. The prospect that Pep or the Special One will be tempted to take on the Old Boys as a project in the making. A medical professional, not just for Tweddle's injuries.

Ben Cooper: A GPS with maps of all the soccer fields in the South Vancouver Island region, a warning beeper that is activated by close contact with an opposing player, a drop in fouls (fully guaranteed by FIFA) and more coaching from Jeannie and Jasmine.

Downtown Donny Brown: A supporting cast of defenders and midfielders, a shopping guide to Greater Victoria

malls, a group of strikers to take advantage of his pinpoint corners and free kicks.

Andrew Haigh: Springs similar to Sean Goddard's to avoid "splitting headaches," more coaching from Aidan, especially the 270-degree spin-o-rama move, a set of Old Boys shirts to trade with on his Over-60 England field hockey teammates in the new year.

Stefan Cermak: A compass to show the most direct route to goal without the need to pass to colleagues, more goals and Golden Boot Award points, and a planning variance to help the attack and midfield to liaise and produce more goals.

Mark Aston: A fully audited report of the Golden Boot Award, a new meniscus, and enhanced team communication (other than Jimmy's exhortations).

Dave Eadie: Friendly family referees for every game.

Charley Mayer: A Guaranteed Drug Test Pass for every game to allow access to his famous muscle relaxant potion. A little more service on the outside attack of the forward line to take advantage of Charley's blistering speed.

Doug Fraser: A set of opposition team shirts as he often "stars" for the opposition, especially when they turn up short of players for a game on Salt Spring. Acupuncture somewhere to stop the "reflex hand action" that stops the ball any time he is not in goal.

Mike Bendt: Chris Cottrell's speed of yesteryear, balance to Charley on the other attack wing, school lesson plan organizer, allowing playing decisions to be made earlier than Thrifty's car park on Sunday morning.

Rainer Funk: Personal line of training videos for fellow teammates, enough playing time to make Rainer self-substitute and a sackful of pithy comments to rile the opposition, referees and, occasionally, teammates.

Matt Johnson: To win all "54-40" tackles without becoming injured, and an ability to turn to the right rather than to the left. (Or is it turn to the left rather than to the right?)

Mike McCormick: A bit of extra pace to contact the cross-the-face-of-the-goal balls to consolidate his Golden Boot points, an ability to keep his eyes open when heading for goal, and a replacement for his Movember facial hair.

David Toynbee: More goals for the Old Boys pre-season record transfer acquisition, stronger knee bandages to allow midweek training in the gym and peripheral vision testing to ascertain how close the goal line appears.

Mike Davis: Super sub Davis made few appearances this half of the season but was always willing to fill strategic needs at crucial points. He gets a special place by the team cooler.

Fraser Hope: Team statistician, assistant referee/linesman, erstwhile reporter. Hopes for more wins than losses in the new year, a bigger thesaurus of football clichés, but mostly continued good health for all the Old Boys past and present, their families, and the intrepid and faithful supporters who turn up for home games or away shopping trips, poor souls!

Editor's note: See the Sports section of www.gulfislands-driftwood.com for a longer version of this story.

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Happy Holidays!

Delivering wishes merry and bright
to all of our friends and neighbours
at Christmastime!

With sincere thanks for your
loyal support, we wish you and
yours a very Merry Christmas!

From all of us at the



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