



GORGE TILLICUM

# Neighbourhood NEWS

## Cuthbert Holmes Park - Our Hidden Oasis

We all know the Gorge is a special place. Most of us base this statement on the beautiful Gorge Waterway, but we do not mention the spectacular natural habitat of Cuthbert Holmes Park. As early as the late-1960s, the District of Saanich showed an interest in acquiring lands along the Colquitz River. In 1968, Saanich wrote to BC Hydro with a view to obtaining land that they held in what is now Cuthbert Holmes Park, which was rebuffed: "B.C. Hydro is not interested in selling the property as it intends to go ahead with the construction of its facilities as soon as the tight money situation eases..." In the late 1980s, the footbridges and paths that we now use in the park were constructed and the park was officially dedicated in 1990.

From the waters of Portage Inlet, you can see the Colquitz River flowing under the Admirals Bridge, an Ecotone, a place where the mixing fresh and salt waters create a unique environment that supports a wide



Photo: Dorothy Chambers

Colquitz River in Cuthbert Homes Park

### Inside This Issue

- 2 > AGM Notification
- 3 > A Few Words from the President
- 4 > Cover story cont'd
- 5 > Cover story cont'd
  - >Gorge Waterway Park - Parking Lot Paving
- 6 > The Green Space: Olympia Oysters
- 7 > The Lekwungen Gorge Herring Are Back, Colquitz Fish Fence, Featured Migratory Bird
- 8 > Historic Homes of Gorge Tillicum - The Munro Residence
- 10 > Gorge Park Community Gardens Update
- 11 > Upcoming Events
- 12 > GTCA Membership Form
  - > Community Book Box Map

variety of life and natural habitat. Looking from the Dysart Bridge up and down the river you can see the how the habitat is an important part of the veins of life for the park's ecosystem. The river shoreline changes twice a day with the ocean tides providing a natural feeding ground for birds and wildlife year round. That in itself is enough to keep nature's observers like ourselves occupied all day. Recently we had a report from one of our park stewards of 30 species of birds observed between 10:00 and 11:30 on a January morning.

As we travel over the Dysart Bridge, we enter a forest that many consider enchanted with sounds, smells and beautiful visions that are rare for urban landscapes and benefit our neighbourhood. The original indigenous peoples of this area consider this a path to resources of life. Our more current history has seen many different users of this natural habitat from the sport

of archery to the study of Great Blue Herons. The fish counting project has been an annual educational experience for 100s of local students and teachers alike.

*Today we all enjoy the serenity of this place for strolling with our dogs, exploring with our children or simply taking a moment to reflect on the wonders of our natural surroundings in the middle of an urban landscape.*



## Neighbourhood News

We welcome comments—please let us know what you think of your newsletter!

### Editor:

Vera Wynn-Williams 250-595-5591  
v.wynnwilliams@gmail.com

### Copy Editor:

Chris Bullock 250-384-8236  
chrisbullock@shaw.ca

### Article Coordinators:

Christine Fedoruk 250-595-5591  
christine.fedoruk@gmail.com

GreenSpace – Dorothy Chambers  
250-381-6724 dotmot@shaw.ca

Local Artist – Chris Bullock  
250-384-8236  
chrisbullock@shaw.ca

Upcoming Events – Katherine Brandt  
250-389-1560 kmbrandt@telus.net

### Published:

Spring (March/April)  
Summer (June)  
Winter/Fall (November)

Unsolicited articles welcome.

The deadline for submissions & advertising for the next issue is April 15, 2018.

### Advertising Inquiries:

Vera Wynn-Williams  
250-516-4903  
v.wynnwilliams@gmail.com

### Distribution:

All 3,800 copies of this newsletter are delivered by volunteers, and we could always use more help. Please contact Ray Farmer at 250-883-2873.



## ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

Tuesday, March 13, 7:00 - 9:00 pm  
Lam Room, Pearkes Recreation Centre

Join Us For:

Annual Report Presentation

Board Elections

&

A Special Presentation about the Gorge Waterway by John Roe from the Veins of Life Society

Refreshments following the meeting

Gorge Tillicum Community Association [www.gorgetillicum.ca](http://www.gorgetillicum.ca)



GTCA Board of Directors 2017/18

General email: [info@gorgetillicum.ca](mailto:info@gorgetillicum.ca)

President: Rob Wickson ..... 250-812-9164  
[wickson@telus.net](mailto:wickson@telus.net)

Vice-president: Gabe Epstein  
[belle.leon1@gmail.com](mailto:belle.leon1@gmail.com)

Treasurer: Chris Kask  
[chriskask@hotmail.com](mailto:chriskask@hotmail.com)

Secretary: Vera Wynn-Williams  
[v.wynnwilliams@gmail.com](mailto:v.wynnwilliams@gmail.com)

Membership Secretary: Irena Jazwinski  
[irenajaz@shaw.ca](mailto:irenajaz@shaw.ca)

Chris Bullock  
[chrisbullock@shaw.ca](mailto:chrisbullock@shaw.ca)

Katherine Brandt  
[kmbrandt@telus.net](mailto:kmbrandt@telus.net)

Ray Farmer  
[ramon.asm@shaw.ca](mailto:ramon.asm@shaw.ca)

Marcus Fedoruk  
[mfedoruk@gmail.com](mailto:mfedoruk@gmail.com)

Russ Godfrey  
[rustyg@shaw.ca](mailto:rustyg@shaw.ca)

Trevor Hancock  
[greendoc@telus.net](mailto:greendoc@telus.net)

Scott Karpes  
[skarpes@hotmail.com](mailto:skarpes@hotmail.com)

Pam Loadman  
[ploadman@telus.net](mailto:ploadman@telus.net)

Edward Pullman  
[edwardpullman@gmail.com](mailto:edwardpullman@gmail.com)

The Gorge Tillicum Community Association is a non-profit organization that advocates for the Gorge Tillicum community. The Board meets at 7pm the first Thursday of each month from September to June at Pearkes Recreation Centre. If you want to put an item on the agenda please phone/email our president one week in advance.

# *a few words from the* president

A belated Happy New Year to all. As we enter the new year with optimism and enthusiasm I am reminded of the time 20 years ago when the seeds for the Gorge Tillicum Community Association were planted. We really had no idea what lay ahead but we knew two things; we needed to learn about our community and we needed to build our community. Now as we begin our 20th year I want ask "How are we doing so far?"

I can tell you it has been very interesting to learn and understand what makes up a community. We found out that the diversity of our neighbourhood was very unique in Saanich. Being an urban rather than suburban or rural neighbourhood is the foundation for such uniqueness. The substantial natural environment all around us that is ours to protect and enjoy.

With all this in mind, we have been working on a long list of events, community concerns, development opportunities, traffic and transportation issues, and protecting our natural environment. From the Annual Gorge Canada Day Picnic to park cleanups, traffic calming projects, counting spawning salmon, or just delivering this newsletter to every household and business requires a community working together. I am proud to say that is what I see while riding and walking throughout our community.

Now all of this community building works best with increasing participation from all of us.

The work is engaging, fun, challenging, and great for personal growth.

However, as we continue to grow we are always looking for folks to join our core group, various committees, or event volunteers. Even the smallest contribution can make a difference and all offers are accepted. Just contact us and we'll take you for coffee and conversation.

As you can see, our Annual General Meeting is now set for March 13, 2018 at Pearkes Recreation Centre; doors open at 6:30 pm for a 7:00 pm start. This is the time when we renew the GTCA Board and Executive, so please join us. If you are interested, we are always open to those wanting to join the board and there will be a few director positions open.

Speaking of the Board, there are few activities to talk about. The development proposal on Qu'apelle has engaged the application process and we have been asked for our comments. This is our opportunity to influence the way our community changes. Please take a moment to join this conversation.

Planning has begun for the 20th Annual Gorge Canada Picnic. Music in the Park will be on August 21st this year. These events are the bookends to the summer school vacation and continue to grow in popularity. Again any support offered will be appreciated.

Before I close off this message, I want to thank those directors and volunteers who are moving on. Dr. Trevor Hancock has become so busy with his university duties and his advocacy for the future of our world that he has been unable to

contribute at his usual high level. Even so, I am sure we will continue to see the "Green Man" performing on Canada Day and at the Lights on the Gorge events. Thank you Trevor for all your wisdom and contributions to our board conversations.

There is one other long term director who has decided it is time to move off the board. Our friend Ray Farmer has been with the board since we made the change from the old Rate Payers' Association to the Gorge Tillicum Community Association. Ray's contributions will not go unnoticed, from working on the Canada Day Picnic Committee where he organized the pancake breakfast and managed the main stage entertainment, leading at Gorge Park cleanups, acting as Membership Secretary, storing our tent and equipment at his company shop, and to otherwise being involved in every aspect of our work. Even for just attending all those board and executive meetings for all these years, Ray deserves a medal. Thank you Ramon.

*Lastly, I want to personally thank all of you for your continued support for the GTCA. It has been our pleasure to work on behalf of the neighbourhood, building a strong and vibrant community that has a voice in those important issues that drive us all into the future.*

Rob



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*But our park is under threats from life outside its borders, which are changing to make room for new infrastructure to move traffic faster.*

The highway road project has now been delayed until at least 2019. The stress on the park is obvious, especially as you get closer to the disruption. The cloverleaf will move the disturbance from the intersection closer to the centre of the park, and so close to the Colquitz River that we can dispute the idea that they have kept a 30 metre buffer from the river. The natural protections for the Colquitz have been reduced, raising worries about impacts. With the assistance of the neighbourhood, we have been able to monitor and document the changes.

Our most recent communication with the project manager asked us about our preference for the Portage Road sound attenuation wall colour, pale grey or pale beige. They have not discussed with us the recent concerns about noise. We have been asking direct questions about the berm without getting satisfactory answers. As a matter of fact, it is clear that as the GTCA is the only group actually asking tough questions, we are the least likely to get a clear satisfactory response. That suggests that our community is not as important as getting more highway infrastructure built for cars.

The park has been suffering from another issue and that is homelessness. Basically, this seems to have become an ongoing issue in that there are always camps in the park. This winter we have observed folks sleeping in the park with nothing but a tarp for protection. We have observed camps that obviously have been there longer than a few days or even weeks. As recently as January there was a camp that included a gas



Photo: Julian Anderson

McKenzie interchange construction encroaching on the park.



Photo: Vera Wynn-Williams

Well established homeless camp observed during tour of the park with Saanich Councillors.

generator. Just before the end of 2017, we were able to take 5 members of our council (including the mayor) on a tour of a small area of the park behind the Montana's restaurant. We have not had any further conversations about solutions, although the GTCA presented council with some analysis and recommendations in the summer of 2016. It seems that dealing with homelessness in Saanich Parks is left to the police bicycle squad who are wonderful members of our community but lack the proper resources to deal with this complex

issue. Our by-law officers do not seem to be involved at all. Meanwhile the natural habitat is under threat all year round but especially in the summer dry season.

Despite all this, Cuthbert Holmes Park remains a jewel in our midst. The natural amenity is why many of us decided to invest in our community. The deal with MOTI for the interchange included \$450,000 for the park, the majority of which will be used to implement the CHP

NDP

## Supporting a safe and sustainable Gorge Tillicum

**Randall Garrison, MP** ESQUIMALT – SAANICH – SOOKE



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Randall.Garrison@parl.gc.ca  
www.RandallGarrison.ndp.ca

management plan. In 2014/15 we worked with Saanich Parks to develop a park management plan as well. The plan can be found on the Saanich web site at <http://www.saanich.ca/assets/Parks-Recreation-and-Culture/Documents/CHTP%20Management%20Plan.pdf>.

Now is the time to see the details of how this investment is going to be made.\ and we look forward to working with Saanich Parks staff as this work continues.

Your community association along with the Friends of Cuthbert Holmes and our Fish Fence partners are determined that we do what we can to protect our park and appreciate all the support from the neighbourhood. The park is changing but nature has many ways to fight back and we can help.

-- Rob Wickson with Dorothy Chambers and Julian Anderson

## Gorge Waterway Park - Parking Lot Paving



Photo: Vera Wynn-Williams

The four-stall parking lot between Dysart Rd. and Austin Ave., which was damaged during the construction of the Austin Pump Station, is being re-paved. As part of this project, the paved area will be scaled back in order to provide more soil volume for the large Sequoia tree located in the traffic island. The grass turf that currently surrounds the Sequoia tree will be replaced with mulch and native plantings. Work on the project will be completed in the next few weeks.

For questions please call Saanich Parks at (250) 475-5494.

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<b>9-6</b>	<b>9-6</b>	<b>9-6</b>	<b>9-7</b>	<b>9-5</b>	<b>10-4</b>	<b>Closed</b>

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# The Green Space

## Oysters in the Gorge

*The native “Olympia” Oyster (Ostrea Lurida) was a favourite in 1900’s oyster bars. Over harvesting almost wiped them out along the whole coast. Interestingly, the Gorge Waterway is still full of them and World Fisheries Trust has been monitoring this population.*

While the reef “hotels,” built for oysters taken from the old Admiral’s bridge, have largely silted over (from road construction?), the new pilings attracted about 100,000 new oysters. Only 30% are surviving now, but oyster larvae are very abundant in the summer. We have 3 concrete reefballs between two yellow floats off the seawall collecting baby oysters and hope the oysters will be big enough to move to Fisherman’s Wharf in March to test re-population. The project is part of a celebration of local Naturehoods and Bird Sanctuaries. Thanks to World Oceans Day Fisherman’s Wharf, Eagle Wing Tours and the Greater Victoria Harbour Authority for the reefballs, View Royal for paying to move them, Environment Canada for help with monitoring, and kayakers for cleaning the floats.

**-Heather Wright & Yogi Carlsfeld  
World Fisheries Trust**



Photo: Heather Wright

Olympia Oysters attached to a Pacific Oyster shell.



Photo: Ronan Gunn

Artificial reef balls being placed in the Gorge.



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# The Lekwungen Gorge Herring Are Back!



Photo: Laura Kravac

Herring fishing off the Craigflower Bridge

Despite a poor showing last year, they have started coming in early this year. Let's hope that is a good sign! World Fisheries Trust is again monitoring them, this time lead by Meaghan McDonald in collaboration with the World Wildlife Fund. She is leading a crew of volunteers, monitoring fishing on the bridge, taking tissue samples, searching for spawning sites, and collecting observations from people like you! We are hoping that with better understanding of what these herring do throughout their lives, we can design effective mechanisms for their recuperation. You can contact Meaghan at [meaghan@worldfish.org](mailto:meaghan@worldfish.org).

## FEATURED MIGRATORY BIRDS



Photo: Cheryl Redhead

Hooded Mergansers are found in the Colquitz River estuary, where they dive for fish, crayfish, and other food, seizing it in their thin, serrated bills. They nest in tree cavities; the ducklings depart with a bold leap to the forest floor when only one day old.

# Colquitz Fish Fence



The Colquitz River salmon enumeration fence panels were removed on Dec. 7. They were installed on October 3.

Total Salmon:

Male...29

Female...90  
(including one mort)

Jacks...193

Cutthroat Trout...2

Chum...1

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Total 315

What a disappointing Coho spawn return all over the region. Until rain came on Oct. 19, the fish fence was dry and out of the water, and the estuary itself was only a mud flat. I had never seen the water levels so low. Salmon were entering the river from Portage Inlet during the flood tide, but being left stranded, during the ebb, and reports of dead salmon in the mud of the estuary were received.

Then on Nov. 3, a homeheating fuel oil tank leaked into Swan Creek, entered the Colquitz and contaminated to the lower reach into the estuary. The fish stopped coming again.

Thanks for all the community support we receive. And the Saanich Parks signage about our Salmon in The City project has been a big hit!

Sincerely,

**Dorothy, Sara and all the Salmon in The City volunteers....**

and PS... because everyone is asking... total fish count for 2016.... 1121.

# Historic Homes of Gorge/Tillicum:



Photos: Vera Wynn-Williams

The front view of the house as seen from Gorge Road (above ) Side view from the driveway (below).



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# The Munro Residence, 702 Gorge Road West

Most of us in the neighbourhood would know the Munro Residence as the grand red character home tucked back from Gorge Road West, right by Austin Ave.

The home was built in 1903 on a 25-acre parcel of land, and its first residents were the Munro family.

George Munro, born in Prince Edward Island about 1863, came to British Columbia in 1885 and worked as a purser on the Boscowitz, which operated between Victoria and the Skeena River. He settled in Victoria as a commission merchant and in 1891 he married Hadie (born in 1867).

This 1½ storey, front-gabled house is an early example of an Edwardian Vernacular Arts and Crafts house common in the Victoria region. The inset verandah is offset and balanced by the sweep of the shingled diagonal staircase balustrade. The east dormer is gabled and the west dormer is hipped. The verandah has square columns and balusters. An unusual feature is that the upper sashes of the double-hung wood windows are smaller than the bottom sashes.

The exterior of the home has not changed much over the years, however the neighbourhood has changed dramatically. You can see the home in the top right corner of the top photo before the large plots of land were subdivided and the waterfront was still in its natural state.

Today the house sits on a much smaller property but still stands out because of its historic design and deep red colour.

The house is currently owned by Paul and Terry Whitney. They purchased the house in 1999 and have worked to restore the house to its current immaculate condition.

To learn more about historic homes in our area check out the heritage walking tours on [www.saanich.ca](http://www.saanich.ca).



Photo: Esquimalt Archives

The Austin family canoeing in 1908.

The Munro Residence (702 Gorge Road) is visible at the far right of the photo.



Former resident Mary Harper, circa 1935. Photo courtesy Mary's daughter Susan Harper.



View from the residence in 1970.

Photo courtesy of Sara Kalis Gilbert, who grew up there in the 1960-1980's.

--Vera Wynn-Williams and  
Scott Karpes

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# First Gardens Work Party of 2018



Gorge Park Community Gardens held its second AGM at the end of January. It was a chance to consider the past year's many accomplishments, think about what we want to do next, and find the volunteers that will take us there.

The work completed on site last year was done with labour saving in mind. Hand watering the commons beds took a lot of dragging of hoses and the drip irrigation lines will allow time for other things -- like reading a book under a tree, taking time to sit and watch pollinators flit between flowers, or a leisurely game of checkers at the Gardens' cement picnic table perhaps.

Many small tasks are needed to make the Gardens hum and on-site teams have been created to share these jobs widely among our members (i.e., pruning one small area, making compost with a group, sharing weed whacking duties, etc.). Management teams similarly will share off-site tasks such as looking after memberships, bringing workshops and arts events to the Gardens, and planning all-important fundraising initiatives. We look for-



Gabe Epstein and Mal Kryklywy

Photos: Annie Pang



Mary Gasser

Mavis Pillar

ward to these new teams settling in and seeing what they will do

Two of our long-time Coordinators are stepping down this year. Brenda Pilon created our webpage, our fundraising brochures and posters for our plant sales, dances, and our fall festival, and led our irrigation team. Kay Stewart organized two dance/auctions and other events and initiatives (i.e., the Fairway Market Community Cards) that have brought in significant funds for the Gardens. Their contributions go far beyond two sentences, of course, and

the Gardens would not be the space it is today without their hard work, dedication, and unique talents. We are pleased Kay and Brenda have promised not to step away completely. We look forward to welcoming new Coordinators and a second Site Manager in the next while.

Please take a moment to check out the Gardens revised web page at <http://www.gorgegardens.ca>. The lengthening days bring the promise of a new gardening year. As always we welcome you to come join us!

-- Laurie Jones



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# Upcoming Events

**LANTasy:** March 10 – 11 at Pearkes Rec. Centre. An all-ages weekend celebration of all things gaming. Whether you're a fresh rookie or a seasoned pro, the LANTasy Gaming Society has got something for you to play. Video games, board games, roleplaying games, tabletop games, even cosplay if you've got a killer costume to show off! LANTasy - play games, have fun. More info. at [www.lantasy.com](http://www.lantasy.com)

**55+ Lifestyle Show:** Tuesday, March 13, 9:00 am – 3:00 pm at Pearkes Rec. Centre. More info. at [55pluslifestyle.com/victoria/](http://55pluslifestyle.com/victoria/)

**Gorge Tillicum Community Association AGM:** Tuesday, March 13, 7:00 – 9:00 pm, at Pearkes. See page 2 for more details

**Victoria Women's Expo:** March 17 – 18 at Pearkes Rec. Centre. More info. at [www.victoriawomensexpo.com](http://www.victoriawomensexpo.com)

**Dragon Boat Learn to Paddle:** Saturday, March 17 and 24, 12:30 – 2:00 pm. Come on down to the Victoria Canoe & Kayak Club clubhouse at 355 Gorge Road and jump in a dragon boat! If you've ever had an interest in paddling one of these big dragon boats, now's your chance. We'll have paddlers on hand to get you outfitted with paddles and PFDs and get you out in a dragon boat paddling on the beautiful Gorge waterway. The first two sessions in the dragon boat are free to non-members. More info. at [www.vckc.ca](http://www.vckc.ca)

**LEGO Mania:** March 24 – 25 at Tillicum Mall. Bring in your LEGO masterpiece featuring this year's theme – Sports and Recreation. Tillicum Centre's LEGO Mania challenge is open to participants 5 – 14 years old. Register online at [www.tillicumkids.com](http://www.tillicumkids.com) by March 15.

**Gentle Walk & Talk – Colquitz to Hyacinth Park:** Thursday, March 29, 9:30 – 11:00 am. Meet at Colquitz Creek Park sign near Silver City Theatre at Tillicum Mall. Suitable for all walking abilities. No fee or registration required. Sorry, dogs not permitted. More info. at [www.saanich.ca](http://www.saanich.ca)

**Soup Day:** Thursday, March 29: The last Thursday of every month is Soup Day at Saanich Neighbourhood Place (Pearkes Rec. Centre.) Come on down between 11:30 am and 1:30 pm for a bowl of Sheila's delicious soup and a fresh homemade bun. Proceeds go towards supporting food security programs at Saanich Neighbourhood Place. A 'souper' lunch for a great cause!

**Free Easter Skates:** Saturday, March 31, 12:25 – 1:35 pm and Sunday, April 1, 1:35 – 2:45 pm at Pearkes Rec. Centre. Attach bunny ears to your helmet and get in FREE. Have a chance to win an Easter treat. More information at [www.saanich.ca](http://www.saanich.ca)

**Lions Gorge Park Easter Egg Hunt:** Sunday, April 1, 12:00 – 3:00 pm. The Esquimalt Lions present their annual Easter Egg Hunt at Esquimalt Gorge Park. The event includes entertainment, food, crafts, face-painting, a bouncy castle (weather permitting) and a massive Easter Egg Hunt. An egg-ceptional event for the whole family! More info. at [www.esquimalt.ca](http://www.esquimalt.ca)

**2018 Wake up the Gorge:** April 14 – 15, Victoria Canoe & Kayak Club, 355 Gorge Road. Wake Up the Gorge is the VCKC's annual weekend of racing for OC6 Outrigger canoes and Small Boats. It kicks off the racing season for many of the Victoria and area paddling clubs who use the Gorge for racing. More info. at [www.vckc.ca](http://www.vckc.ca)

**Vancouver Island Pet Expo:** April 14 – 15, Pearkes Rec Centre. The fun-filled family event will feature pet related vendors along with interesting and unique entertainment. More info. at [www.vancouverislandpetexpo.com](http://www.vancouverislandpetexpo.com)

**Emergency Preparedness Presentation:** Wednesday, April 18, 7:00 – 8:30 pm at Pearkes Rec. Centre. Free. Register early to reserve a spot. FREE. More info. at (250) 475-5400 or [www.saanich.ca](http://www.saanich.ca)

**Annual Earth Day Gorge Park Clean-Up:** Saturday, April 21, 9:00 am – 12:00 pm, Gorge Park East, across from the Fairway Market on Gorge Road. Free coffee and refreshments.

**Saanich Cycling Festival:** Sunday, April 22, 11:00 am – 3:00 pm. Bike-related displays and activities, food and music from 11:00 am – 3:00 pm at Saanich Municipal Hall and festival stations along the Goose and Lochside trails where you can get bike trail and route information, refreshments and pick up your Cycle Fest passport for a chance to win prizes. More info. at [www.saanich.ca](http://www.saanich.ca)

**Hampton Concert Orchestra 2018 Spring Concerts.** Sunday, April 22 at 2:00 pm and Monday, April 23 at 7:30 pm, at Les Passmore Seniors' Centre, 286 Hampton Road. Admission by donation. More information at [www.hamptonconcertorchestra.com](http://www.hamptonconcertorchestra.com)

**Soup Day: Thursday, April 26:** Come on down to Saanich Neighbourhood Place (Pearkes Rec. Centre) between 11:30 am and 1:30 pm for a bowl of Sheila's delicious soup and a fresh homemade bun.

**Victoria's Ultimate Hobby & Toy Show:** April 28 – 29, at Pearkes Rec. Centre. More info. at [www.ultimatetoyfair.com](http://www.ultimatetoyfair.com)

**Youth Cino de Mayo Theme Patio Party:** Friday, May 4, 7:00 – 10:00 pm, at Pearkes Rec. Centre. Celebrate Mexican culture in Canada with a patio party with festive salsa dancing, delicious Mexican food and pinatas to crack open. Perhaps a Mexican wrestler will make an appearance as well.... For 10 – 18 yrs. FREE. More info. at [www.saanich.ca](http://www.saanich.ca)

**Switchblade Paddle Sport Relay Races:** Saturday, May 12, 8:00 am – 10:00 pm. If you are a fan of this fun competition and have participated in past years, organize your 6-paddler team now. Switchblade racing consists of 6 different paddling sports and is an exciting combination of race legs that will challenge any 6-paddler team to bring their best efforts both as individuals and working together. More info. at [www.vckc.ca](http://www.vckc.ca)



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## Membership Application

Beginning on January 1, 2018, membership is valid from the time of payment of membership fees to the end of the month of the anniversary date of payment. Join or renew by mail or online on our website!

- New Membership(s) or**  
 **Renewing Membership(s)**

DATE: \_\_\_\_\_

NAME: \_\_\_\_\_

ADDRESS: \_\_\_\_\_

PHONE NUMBER: \_\_\_\_\_

\*EMAIL ADDRESS: \_\_\_\_\_

\*This will be added to our distribution list for occasional emails regarding upcoming events or community issues.

If you are paying for other members of your household, please list the other Members' names:

\_\_\_\_\_

### PAYMENT:

Please enclose payment and mail to above address

**Individual:** \$5/each x \_\_\_\_\_ memberships = \$ \_\_\_\_\_

**Couples :** \$10/each x \_\_\_\_\_ memberships = \$ \_\_\_\_\_

**Business:** \$25/each x \_\_\_\_\_ memberships = \$ \_\_\_\_\_

**Donation:** Your extra support helps offset Newsletter and other costs. Thank-you! + \$ \_\_\_\_\_

**Total Payment Enclosed** = \$ \_\_\_\_\_

### DETAILS:

Membership is open to any resident or property owner who is 19 years or older, living within the Gorge Tillicum neighbourhood as well as person engaged in business in the neighbourhood.

If membership is not renewed you will remain on our email distribution list for one more year before being deleted. Memberships are available in three categories; individual, couple or business.

## Neighbourhood Book Boxes

*Take a book, leave a book or borrow a book.*



The Little Free Library movement started in 2009 and there are now over 60,000 of these book boxes all over the world. The Gorge/Tillicum neighbourhood is lucky to have ten of these book boxes, with more to come. The book boxes create a sense of community and help make books accessible to everyone.

The GTCA has now mapped all the boxes in our neighbourhood and added this to our website.

If you are interested in learning more about book boxes and building your own there is great information available at <https://littlefreelibrary.org>. The site includes plans, boxes you can order and tips on how to manage your box.



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