



GORGETILLICUM

Neighbourhood

NEWS



Scene from the Light Up the Gorge Event. Photos by Karinka Karpes

cast enchanting shadows under the tree.

An impromptu procession awoke the potential for next year's event to include a ceremonial lantern walk of some kind, and plenty of ideas for community building were sparked.

A lone kayaker drifted by, lights reflecting in the still waters, evoking the dream of lantern flotillas at future events.

Lighting Up the Gorge

It was a cold, wet day in December, but that did not stop people from turning out in droves for the first annual Lights on the Gorge Celebration, held under the giant sequoia tree in Gorge Waterway Park.

Volunteers set the scene with tents, a craft area, warm drinks and snacks. Hot roasted chestnuts were a big hit, along with delicious chai tea, cider and hot chocolate. With the stage set, people flowed in to share songs, conversation

and their own creativity. Lights were strung on the tree by hand, and by the time dusk arrived, the cold and wet had abated as if the clouds themselves had lifted in response to the warmth and festivity under the tree. The last minute addition of propane patio heaters added to this effect, one of many spontaneous contributions and much appreciated.

One week before, our library hosted a popular lantern making workshop. Upwards of 200 people flowed through the space, creating lanterns from the materials assembled, including clay diyas, the traditional oil lanterns of Diwali. Some of those handmade creations could be seen at Lights on the Gorge, along with a varied collection of handheld lights and candles. Homemade ice lanterns, whose fiery hearts flickered within frozen vessels,

Voices joined in song and performances by musicians drew people into a circle where smiling faces glowed, lit by candlelight against the gathering darkness.

Lights on the Gorge celebrated the fact that community is not something that is done for us, rather it is something that is done by us. During one of the darkest times of the year, people brought their willingness to ignite community spirit to our local waterway, co-creating a successful grassroots event for Gorge Tillicum. Many thanks to all who contributed their talents, and to all the community members, organizations and local businesses who donated to make it a success! Everyone is invited to begin dreaming up their lanterns, crafting their performances, and summoning their co-conspirators to create the highlights of next year's Lights on the Gorge.

To find out more about volunteering with future events you can contact the Gorge Tillicum Community Table at belle.leon1@gmail.com or 250-382-1328. — Kyla Hubbard

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NOTICE is hereby given that the

ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING of the
Gorge Tillicum Community Association
will be held at G.R. Pearkes Recreation Centre

Thursday, April 11 at 7pm.

All members and residents of the community are encouraged to attend. Join us as we begin our 15th year by reflecting on the GTCA's past accomplishments. Refreshments will be provided.



GORGETILLICUM

Neighbourhood News

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

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Additional articles posted online at:
www.gorgetillicum.ca

Newsletter delivery help needed on Portage Rd.
contact Ray Farmer

a word from the president

Has it been 15 years already? Time sure flies when you're busy working on community projects. For me it started in 1998 with Harry and I attending a few of the old West Gorge Ratepayers' Association meetings around the time that the new theatres were being proposed for Tillicum Mall. We could see those hard working folks struggling to deal with both city officials and the developer resulting in a less than satisfactory result. (Why couldn't the theatres have been located at the corner of Tillicum and Burnside with a welcoming design for the neighbourhood?). The rest is history.

Of course there is much more to be said. If you want to hear more, we will be telling the story for the record at our AGM on April 11th at Pearkes. This is your chance to not only meet all those who contribute their skills and time for the benefit of the community, but to add your voice to the conversation.

As I write this, the work has begun with tree removal and the careful excavation of the grounds around Craigflower School. Construction of a new bridge may lead to a better understanding of our first nations' history in the area as digging proceeds. Be prepared for a summer full of construction activity along Admirals Road, Gorge Road, and the new sidewalks on Dysart Road. (We have been guaranteed that for every tree removed, we will get two replacements.)

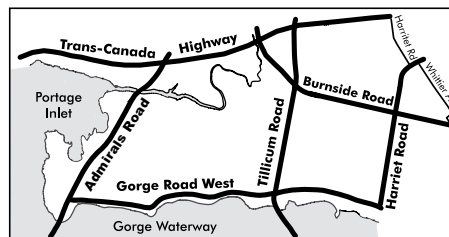
By the time you read this, we should well down the path of consultation about the concept of a new community garden proposed for Gorge Park. If you have not yet been to any of the open houses and would like to learn more, please contact us.

If developments or community gardens are not your thing, maybe you would be interested in traffic calming. From advocating for reduced speeds on residential streets to redesigning roads like Gorge Road between Tillicum and Harriet (less like a freeway and more like multipurpose transportation link within our community). Who wants to walk along a road where cars and trucks roar by at an average speed of 64 km/h with very little enforcement?

Of course environmental issues are at the forefront of why some of us got involved. We continue to be advocates for improved regulatory regimes to help both home owners and suppliers become more aware of their responsibilities about home heating fuel oil and old storage tanks. The experiences on Adelaide should be enough to scare anyone into action.

As you can see, there is much to do and we need your help if we are going to continue to grow the strength of the GTCA over the next 15 years. Won't you come out and join us.
— Rob Wickson, President

Gorge Tillicum Community Association www.gorgetillicum.ca



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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. You are welcome to attend. Please email us at least one week prior to the board meeting for any additions to the agenda.

Interview with Paul Gerrard

The Association and The Neighbourhood: Past, Present and Future

CB: Let's start with the history. How did the Gorge Tillicum Community Association (GTCA) come into being? And how were you involved in that?

PG: The GTCA started in the late 1990s with a group of people interested in improving the quality of life in this neighbourhood. The Association came to prominence with the first Gorge Canada Day Picnic in 1999, which was Harry Lewis's idea. Harry was the Association's first president; I took over in 2002 when he went to Australia and was president till 2008; Rob Wickson took over after I was elected to Saanich Council in 2008.

CB: So the Gorge Canada Day Picnic was the Association's big early achievement?

PG: Yes, it was big for us when it started. We were amazed when Mayor Leonard agreed to close the road during the Picnic. We knew then we had a real event on our hands, and it's grown ever since. It's now in its 15th year, and we calculate that around 8,000 attended the last one.

CB: What else was the Association doing in those early days?

PG: Well, we had input into the Tillicum Local Area Plan, which was endorsed in 2000. Then we got a grant of \$20,000 to put on a charette. This was a weekend meeting involving the Community Association, Saanich staff, community members, architects, business people, developers, Transit, and so on. Out of this weekend eventually came the Tillicum Burnside Action Plan, which was endorsed by Saanich Council in 2003. This document is a practical and visionary blueprint for making our area into a vibrant community. It integrates proposals about schools, recreation, green spaces, businesses, the pedestrian environment and services, which would all be within walking distance for the area's roughly 10,000 residents. This document supersedes the Local Area



Plan and is still the most relevant vision for our area.

CB: What's your proudest achievement during your time as president?

PG: In 2007, I was chair of the Greater Victoria Public Library Planning Committee, and with federal and provincial grants we built Saanich Centennial Library, which is a valuable focal point for our area. But a president is only as effective as the group he's part of, and I'm particularly proud of the GTCA for its work on projects like local traffic calming, the outfall readings in the Gorge, the music events in Rudd Park, clean ups of Gorge and Cuthbert Holmes Parks, tree plantings, and so many more valuable contributions.

CB: What are the current and future projects that are most important for the Association and the area?

PG: The replacement of Craigflower Bridge is coming in 2013. This is a collaboration between View Royal and Saanich, but the Association has had input into the design. And it's a good design: traffic lanes, bike lanes and

wide pedestrian sidewalks. The bridge-work even allows places for fishers to stand out of the way of the traffic. GTCA is currently working on proposals for an art component for the bridge. The Association is also working in an ongoing way with Saanich Parks over plans for Cuthbert Holmes and Gorge Parks. The proposal for a community garden in Gorge Park came out of this ongoing relationship, though the Association won't be directly involved in developing the garden.

CB: So does this mean that everything that needs to be worked on in the Gorge Tillicum area is happening in the way you'd like it to?

PG: No, not by any means. I've run a construction firm for many years, and, particularly as a father of two adult sons, I've always been concerned about the need for affordable housing in Victoria. The building that EY Properties is developing at the corner of Burnside and Tillicum is the first affordable rental property to be built in this area in the last twenty-five years. We need much more of this. Saanich Council approved Rio Can's proposal for two tower blocks in Tillicum Centre a while ago, but the economic climate has apparently not been favourable for building these. Young people often have to leave Victoria because they can't afford to live here, and that's not something we should accept. And many of the other quality of life issues we identified in the Charette and the Action Plan are still not in place. We still need to go back to that Plan and work from an integrated model for our neighbourhood.

CB: Is there anything else you'd like to say to the Newsletter readers?

PG: Only that, though I'm working on Saanich Council now, I'm still very committed to this area. Pat and I have lived here for thirty-five years, and this is an area with great green spaces and so much potential. — Chris Bullock



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The Green Space

How Secure is Your Oil Tank?

After seeing the Adelaide street oil tank fiasco, I had my tank checked by my oil company. The tank was approx. 15 years old and was showing what I thought was some reasonable wear and tear. Little did I know. After the tank was removed the contractor showed me something very alarming. Near one of the legs of the tank, covered by what I thought was a small surface rust patch, was a pinhole breach developing. He put the nose of his pen into the hole and pushed. With very little effort the pen slid into the tank easily. This shocked me as I had NO idea my tank was in such bad shape. Also, it had just been filled a few days previously. I was THAT close to an Adelaide St. mess. Tanks rust from the inside out. The tank appeared to be solid, but it wasn't. I now have a new tank, double hulled, that came with a \$1 million insurance policy-included in the price. It's also earthquake strapped to the pad, unlike the previous tank. I strongly encourage folks to take a very close look at your oil tank. If in doubt, get an expert. I cannot overstate just how close I came to a serious environmental and economic disaster. — Russ Godfrey



Dysart Book Box Opening. Two new neighbourhood book boxes have emerged in the west Gorge neighbourhood, one on Austin in front of Betty and Russ Leech's home, and this one on Dysart in front of the Lewis home. Photo by Rob Wickson.

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Forest "Gardening"

Restoration Activities in Gorge Park & Cuthbert Holmes Park

Do you like to garden? How about adapting your gardening skills to restore natural ecosystems in the local forest? Volunteers with the Saanich Pulling Together program work in the parks to enhance the health of native species and ecosystems.



Members of the "Salal Rescue Team" working in Gorge Park
Photo by Craig Elder

Here are some examples of the restoration work (from a gardening perspective):

- Weeding – our forest weeds are invasive species like Scotch broom, Daphne, gorse, and English ivy. And of course there is always the Himalayan blackberry. Ongoing vigilance is the key to removing these invasive species. We are careful to use methods that are safe for the volunteers.
- Planting – in areas where the invasive species are removed, the ground is often bare and ready for the planting of native species. Planting is usually in the fall once the rains begin. Typical plantings include Garry oak, Oregon grape and salal, which will hopefully thrive and make it harder for invasive species to re-establish.

- Seeding – for example, we pick the fruit from salal in one part of the forest, and distribute these seeds in other areas where the habitat is appropriate for these plants.
- Watering – in the drought season we water Garry oak seedlings to ensure that they survive the drought and will have lots of energy stored in their roots to prosper next spring. We focus on Garry oaks in the hope that we can help re-establish a Garry oak ecosystem in the parks.
- Native Plant Rescue – it is fun to discover a cluster of native plants surrounded by invasive plants, remove the invasives, and watch the native plants thrive.

If you would like to be notified of when the Gorge Park work parties are scheduled, send an email to gorgepark@uniserve.com and you will be added to the email notification list.

For information about Cuthbert Holmes Park work parties, email

CuthbertHolmes@telus.net

To protect your privacy, all notification emails are sent as "blind copies" and individual email addresses are not shown. — Craig Elder

Proposed Gorge Park Community Garden

The District of Saanich has proposed that a community allotment garden be built in Gorge Park on part of the open field close to Cedar Shores.

A local Community Garden Working Group has been established to gauge community opinion regarding this proposal and, should the community support it, to take the necessary steps towards its establishment and ongoing functioning.

For details, or to participate:

www.saanich.ca/parkrec/parks/projects/current/newcommunitygardens.html

www.saanich.ca/parkrec/parks/projects/open.html (re local Open House)

www.gorgetillicum.ca | Gabe Epstein at belle.leon1@gmail.com or 250-382-1328

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Celebrating Local Artists: Belle Leon, Ceramic Artist

It seems a long journey from being a lecturer in zoology and medical physiology at the University of Cape Town in South Africa to being a ceramic artist in Victoria with a studio close to Esquimalt Lagoon and a house in Gorge Tillicum.

This, in any case, is Belle Leon's journey, and it's a journey with some very interesting stops on the way.

Belle was born in Southern Rhodesia, now Zimbabwe. Early in life she developed a love for expeditions into the bush, and it was this love that led her to South Africa to earn a PhD in zoology and a degree in medical physiology and then to a career as a lecturer and scientific researcher. A different impulse—an impulse for social justice during the era of apartheid—led her also to work in an academic support program for black students in UCT's Medical School.

When she married Gabe Epstein, and moved to Toronto, it was her work in this program that led her to work at the University of Toronto in the Transitional Year Program, an access program for marginalized students who had left high school without university qualifications. While she was working in this program, she was also working with ceramics in a cooperative pottery studio. Her love for clay and artistic creativity prompted her to shift careers into becoming a full-time potter. Inspired by an intensive ceramics course at the Haliburton School of the Arts, she did make the shift, and when she and Gabe arrived in Victoria four or so years ago, she immediately sought a space where she could set up a ceramics studio. This she found at the Coast Collective Gallery in Colwood.

I was curious about the seeming distance between lecturer in zoology and full-time potter, but the more I talked to Belle about her work, the less this distance seemed to be. For, it was being in nature that originally drew Belle to zoology, and her pots are full of references to nature,



to the animal and plant kingdoms. These references sometimes appear as abstract designs such as seascapes, a tree or mountain design on a set of dinner plates, or they might appear as representations of animals directly painted on a bowl, a sculptural piece with free standing elephant and hippo, or versions of seed pods.



I'm about to ask my usual local artist question about the significance of Gorge Tillicum for her, when seeing a set of bowls with painted seals and waves, and a jug with a blue-green marine pattern starts to answer the question. Belle says she's always inspired by nature, and it's the Gorge that has provided the inspiration for a number of her pots.

I ask a question about how one of these marine painting effects was achieved, and am immediately deluged with references to underglazing, multiple glazings, low firings, naked raku and the like. Belle takes the technical component of pottery extremely seriously. A large part of her work is functional pottery—bowls, cups, plates and the like—but she plays with how such forms can be decorated in exploratory ways. So she describes herself as a ceramic artist with a decorative focus. But I see another way of describing her, because I suddenly see that the scientist she was earlier in life hasn't disappeared at all, but has become transmuted into a researcher into the use of glaze chemicals to achieve varied surface effects.

And so, if the scientist hasn't disappeared, I wonder, as my final question, whether the big city dweller in her is still there, and if so, how that part finds living in the distinctly small city atmosphere of Gorge Tillicum and Victoria. And what about the part of her that was so interested in equality in a multi-ethnic society? Her answer is a mixed one. She does miss the multi-ethnic diversity of a city like Toronto. So, one of her strong wishes for this area is that the various ethnicities here have more of an overt presence. But, on the other hand, the close presence of nature in Gorge-Tillicum and Victoria in general is an important advantage of this part of the world, in her view. And so the animals, terrestrial and marine, and trees and bushes will continue to flourish on her pots, to the pleasure of people like myself (who have several of them) and many others.

— Chris Bullock

Neighbourhood Speed Don't Retreat from the Street!

The streets where you live, when they were designed and built in the early 1900's, were dirt tracks where motor vehicles had almost no place. People walked or rode bikes and children played free and wide.

But now our youth have missed gaining the perspective of the pedestrian because they were driven to school, driven to soccer and baseball, and even driven to their 'play dates!' What are the consequences and how can we reverse this?

50km/h is the speed limit on Gorge Rd and Blanshard St (where there are 3 lanes of traffic, a center divider, bike lanes, boulevard trees and wide sidewalks on both sides.) Most of our side streets have no sidewalks, no bike lanes and the boulevards are generally scattered with parked cars. 50km/h is too fast!

Many have suggested lowering residential speed limits. Here in Gorge Tillicum, we continue to work with Saanich to support logical traffic calming measures within our community. But what else can we do to fix some of this problem ourselves?

"The speed of traffic on Residential Streets is governed, to large extent, by the degree of psychological retreat of the residents." -David Engwicht, (a lecturer on transportation and community issues.)

Some things we can do to influence the speed of traffic on our streets:

- Try walking rather than driving. Or, ride your bike. When walking where there are no sidewalks, (nearly all our side streets!) don't 'retreat' from the road. Be careful, but show drivers that we all share the space on the road. A friendly wave to racing drivers works better than an angry fist!
- Move some of your 'backyard activities' out to the front yard and engage with your neighbours and passersby. Sit on a chair, read a book, have a drink or play the guitar...in the front yard! Have a Street Party, Garden Crawl, or Block Party.
- Children can put out traffic cones on the edges of the road (as long as they don't block traffic,) so that drivers know they are out and about. Supervise children, teach them to 'listen' and give them a chance to learn about traffic.
- Park your car out on the edge of the road and create your own 'pinch point'.
- Road Side Attractions: Blur the boundary between your front yard and the public space and the roadway! Flowers, art, benches, friendly 'signs', seasonal decorations, painted telephone poles and book boxes all slow curious people down as they pass by. A kind of "Mental Speed Bump".
- Form a 'Walking School Bus' (Children walk to school with a neighbour children).
- Be a 'Pace Car' when you drive. Set the speed when you're on the road with pedestrians in mind.
- Plant a tree on the boulevard. creating a 'narrowing effect' on the road, which condenses the driver's view, slowing traffic. (www.saanich.ca for information on boulevard trees.)
- Lobby Saanich, tell them you are concerned about traffic speeds. — Scott Karpes

Upcoming Events

Saanich Trails & Treks: Gentle Walk & Talk – Colquitz Park to Galloping Goose: Thurs, April 11, 9:30 – 11:00 am. Meet at Colquitz River Park sign near Silver City Theatre at Tillicum Centre. Suitable for all walking abilities. No fee or registration required. For details call 250-475-5408.

Gorge Tillicum Community Association AGM: Thurs, April 11, 7:00 – 9:00 pm, Pearkes Recreation Centre.

Author Shirley Langer: Anita's Revolution: Wed, April 17, 7:00 – 8:30 pm at Saanich Centennial Branch. In 1961, over 100,000 Cuban teenagers volunteered to help eradicate illiteracy in rural Cuba. Meet local author Shirley Langer to learn about this fascinating chapter of history and her novel. Register online at www.gvpl.ca or at 250-477-9030.

Gorge Tillicum Urban Farmers Meeting: Wed, April 17, 7:00-9:00 pm at Saanich Neighbourhood Place in Pearkes Rec Centre. Focus: Honey Bees; Soil; and Building Vegetable Beds.

Annual Earth Day Gorge Park Clean-Up: Sat, April 20, 9:00 am – 1:00 pm, Gorge Park East, across from the Fairway Market on Gorge Road. Free coffee and refreshments.

Jane's Walk – Sun, May 5 (tentative). www.gorgetillicum.ca for updates.

Gorge Tillicum Urban Farmers Meeting: Wed, May 15, 7:00-9:00 pm at Saanich Neighbourhood Place in Pearkes Rec Centre. Focus: Growing & Cooking with Herbs / Plant Swap

Origami with Stephen: The Art of Paper Folding: Fri, May 17, 10:30 – 11:30 am at Saanich Centennial Branch. For ages 6-9. Register www.gvpl.ca or at 250-477-9030.

Victoria Symphony Storytime: Sat, May 25, 10:30 – 11:15 am at Saanich Centennial Branch. Join two musicians from the Victoria Symphony and their puppet friend, Kathy Cadence, for a performance that matches music to words and feelings. Presentation includes an instrument petting zoo. Parents and caregivers are welcome to participate. For ages 3-4. Register: www.gvpl.ca or 250-477-9030.



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Membership Application

Join us for our **Annual General Meeting, 7pm, April 11** at Pearkes Rec Centre. If you haven't renewed your membership yet, you can do so in person at the AGM. Membership is required to vote at the AGM and to run for board positions. Please help us reach our ambitious goal of 500 members this year. Thank you to all the GTCA members—you have helped make our neighbourhood a better place to live.

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DETAILS:

Per GTCA By-law #3: Membership is open to any resident or property owner who is 19 years old or older living within the area defined in Article 5 of the Constitution, and persons engaged in business within the Association territory.

Per GTCA By-law #5: Membership is from January 1 to December 31 of the year. New membership shall be valid from the time of payment of membership fees to December 31 of the same year.

Per GTCA By-law #7: Membership is available in two categories:

- (a) Single is open to individuals and carries the right to one vote at meetings.
- (b) Corporate is open to businesses operating in the Association territory as defined in Article 5 and carries the right to one vote at meetings.



Energy Efficiency Lighting Systems Coming to G.R. Pearkes

The federal government and Saanich have committed \$56,000 each toward a \$112,000 lighting upgrade to the Gold and Green ice rinks and lobby of Pearkes Recreation Centre.

The facility will see new lighting systems added to both of the ice rinks. This new system will increase the quality of light in the arenas, as well as reduce the energy consumption by almost 40%.

Additional lighting upgrades will also be done to the arena lobbies and field house, where both areas will see motion sensors and high efficiency lighting installed.

This is not only great for the facility users, as they will enjoy better quality lighting during their activities, but also the facility will reduce the cost associated with operating.

These upgrades will commence soon and conclude by mid spring.

For current schedules and latest news: www.saanich.ca/parkrec/recreation/pearkes.html



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