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RCMP

Man dead after stabbing in Lake Cowichan area Saturday

GAZETTE

A man is dead after an altercation in a rural home in the Lake Cowichan area on Saturday, March 26.

Lake Cowichan RCMP received numerous 9-1-1 calls reporting an altercation between two men in a residence.

When police arrived, there were several people in the residence and one man had been stabbed.

BC Emergency Health Services arrived and declared the man to be dead.

One man was taken into custody and later released.

The Vancouver Island Integrated Major Crime Unit and Lake Cowichan RCMP are investigating the circumstances along with the BC Coroner Service.

This is an isolated incident and there is no risk to the public, RCMP say.

4.09% average CVRD tax increase

BY ROBERT BARRON

The average tax increase for 2022 for property owners in the Cowichan Valley Regional District is 4.09 per cent.

The board of directors adopted the budget at its meeting on March 24, with four directors voting against it.

The tax increase in 2021 was 2.48 per cent.

Board chair Lori Iannidinardo said it's hard to keep tax increases down

while trying to meet all the needs of the community.

"The board and staff work hard to keep the tax increases as low as possible, but with the cost of infrastructure skyrocketing and the increases to the cost of living, that is getting more challenging, but the community needs to be looked after," she said.

Cobble Hill director Mike Wilson, who voted against the budget, agreed that the district, and the world, is

currently going through one of the most extraordinary financial and human changes in history, and the cost of almost everything has gone way up.

But he doesn't think taxpayers should be responsible for carrying the financial load.

"Everyone is struggling right now and this budget will increase the financial burden on [the district's taxpayers] many times over," he said.

"I'd like all [directors] to seriously

consider if we can actually afford some of the things we'd like to have. One place where I think we can reduce spending rapidly this year is the parks acquisition budget."

North Cowichan Mayor Al Siebring, who also voted against the budget, agreed with Wilson that the tax increase is too high in the current financial environment.

"We could have done some things to ameliorate that, but the board

Continued on A11

CULTURE

Historical society 'delighted' for \$35K Indigenous display funding

BY SARAH SIMPSON

The Kaatza Historical Society is "delighted" to receive \$35,689 from the Cultural Heritage Awareness fund for their project 'Indigenizing the Public History of Cowichan Lake: A Kaatza Historical Society and Ts'uubaa-asatx First Nation Partnership.'

"We are very pleased that we got this grant, and really pleased that there will be two amazing new displays for First Nations history in our museum," said Pat Foster, president of the Kaatza Historical Society. "We have a protocol agreement between us and Ts'uubaa-asatx and have really enjoyed working together so far."

Lake Cowichan town council ap-

proved a new display for outside the Kaatza Station Museum back in August 2021.

"It was just a formality," admitted Mayor Bob Day of the green light given by council following the 2021 presentation from museum staff. "The comments from council were that it was spectacular. There was no other discussion, just approval."

The money will be used on the first phase of the project, which is to update the museum's internal displays "to be more inclusive of the Cowichan Lake region's rich Indigenous history."

The second phase could include indoor and outdoor displays and events and employ members of the First Nation to direct and advise

projects.

Based on the conceptual rendering, the display could feature seating, two information panels, possibly flanking a totem. Bench seating and picnic tables may also be present. The display would likely cover 150 square feet on the front lawn of the museum.

Nuu-Chah-Nulth artist Josh Watts is the creative director for all projects stemming from the partnership.

"As a descendant of the Ts'uubaa-asatx people, I'm proud of the partnership between the Kaatza Historical Society and our people," he said. "Through working together in sharing the history of our territory I believe we can strengthen the bond between our nation and the town."

Catalyst to resume weir operation in April

BY ROBERT BARRON

In early April, Catalyst Crofton will resume regular seasonal operations at the Cowichan Lake weir which regulates water flow out of Cowichan Lake.

Once operating, a press release from the company said the weir will gradually reduce water flow from the lake to the river in order to have enough extra water in the lake to achieve the target river flow during the dry summer months.

Catalyst Crofton operates the weir under the direction of the provincial government which sets the target river flow with guidance provided by fish and fish habitat stewards, including Fisheries and Oceans Canada.

Once the weir is mechanically and electrically confirmed to be ready

for another control season, the boat lock gates will be lowered, and boater traffic must navigate from lake and river with assistance from the boat-lock operator.

While the weir boat lock is operated 24 hours per day during control season, boat passage through the locks is intended to be a daylight activity.

Adjustments to river flow are also made mostly during the day shift.

The monitoring and regulation of Cowichan Lake water levels and flow releases is part of the provincial government's ongoing commitment to maintain stream flows for all stakeholders.

Lake level, river flow and snowpack data are available under Cowichan Water Management Information at the bottom of the webpage <https://paperexcellence.com/mill-location/crofton/>



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Laketown Ranch is planning a large residential project on adjacent property. (CVRD graphic)

CVRD to host public info meeting on big Laketown Ranch development proposal

BY ROBERT BARRON

The Cowichan Valley Regional District will host a public information session on the proposal from Laketown Ranch to construct a large residential area and an industrial zone on land it owns adjacent to its music festival site.

At the board meeting on March 23, five of the district's nine electoral area directors voted that a public information session be held before the mandatory public hearing on the application so that the CVRD can explain the proposed project and answer questions from the public about it, including the implications it would have on the Youbou area and its potential benefits and concerns.

Laketown Ranch has applied for rezoning to build 182 manufactured homes, 50 cabins intended for year-round living, three single-family dwellings to be used as caretaker residences and 122 year-round RV camping sites on more than 40 hectares of land it owns.

Alison Nicholson, the director for Cowichan Station/Sahtlam/Glenora who made the motion to host the information session, said the proposal is large and complicated and she thinks it's important to host the session to answer questions from the public before the CVRD's formal public hearing, which has yet to be scheduled.

"This is important because it's my understanding that the Youbou local area plan has not been updated in a number of years and I think this project would have a huge impact on the community, so it's very important that we listen to the community on this one," she said.

But Klaus Kuhn, the director for Youbou/Meade Creek where the project is proposed, said Laketown Ranch already held a public information meeting last summer, which was well attended by about 65 people from his area, and Greg Adams, the project's proponent, presented all aspects of the application.

"The information was well received by those who attended the meeting, and there is a lot of support for this project," he said.

"I can't see why there needs to be a second public information meeting and I don't think a

lot of people from my area will show up because they've already seen the information. I think they'll wait for the public hearing."

Sierra Acton, director for Shawnigan Lake, said providing the public with more information on the project can't hurt.

"If there was a well-attended public information meeting this early in the game, I think that means there are a lot of people who are interested in this project," she said.

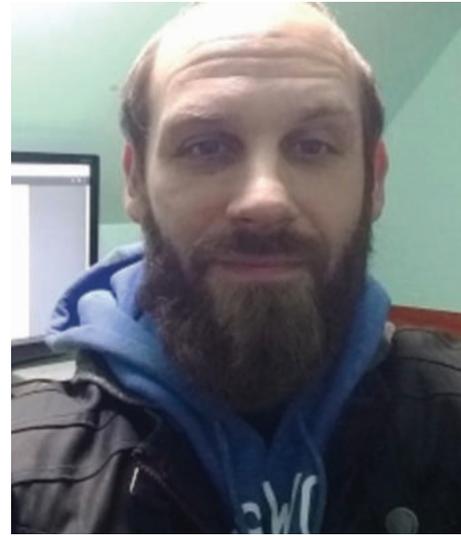
"I've been a witness to some public hearings and they can be quite confusing. People come to them and can't ask questions and can't get real clarity on things so they end up discussing things that are not even part of it so their input doesn't hold a lot of weight or interest because it's totally off topic. So educating the community on what the plan is [before the public hearing] sounds like a good idea to me."

Nicholson's motion was successful in a tight 5-4 vote, with Kuhn, Ian Morrison, director for Cowichan Lake South/Skutz Falls, Mike Wilson, director for Cobble Hill, and Ben Maartman, director for North Oyster/Diamond, voting against hosting the public information session.

A staff report on the project said there has been some feedback from the public that the location of the housing is inappropriate, given that it is outside of a growth-containment boundary, and that it is in close proximity to industrial and entertainment uses, which may lead to nuisances for the future residents in terms of noise, smell, and potentially dust.

But the report concluded that it is in the public interest to support the application for the rezoning and the amendment to the official community plan, despite having to override the growth-management policies of the OCP.

"The benefits to the community far outweigh the negatives, including the construction of up to 235 units of attainable housing to provide a housing alternative for people who are either looking to enter the real estate market or downsize their accommodations, and move a bit closer to the Town of Lake Cowichan, with all of its amenities," the report said.



An arrest warrant has been issued for Jesse Bennett who has been missing since Jan. 23. (RCMP handout)



North Cowichan/Duncan RCMP are looking for seven-year-old Violet Bennett. (RCMP Handout)

Arrest warrant issued for Jesse Bennett in abduction of his daughter Violet, 7

BY ROBERT BARRON

An arrest warrant for abduction has been issued for Jesse Bennett, who disappeared with his young daughter on Jan. 23.

As North Cowichan/Duncan RCMP officers continue to search for Jesse and his daughter Violet Bennett, investigators have now gathered enough evidence to recommend a criminal charge against him, said an RCMP press release.

As a result, a warrant for his arrest has been issued by a provincial court. Jesse is wanted for abduction in contravention of a custody order.

On Jan. 20, the Victoria Family Law Court set out a joint custody agreement and ordered Jesse to return Violet, 7, the same day to her mother, Roget Jade Hall.

On Jan. 23, North Cowichan/Duncan RCMP received a report from family that Jesse and Violet were missing from their home, located in the Cowichan Valley.

Jesse and Violet have not been seen since. "Losing your child is every parent's worst fear, and all I wish for more than having her back is to know that she's OK, something I've had to go the last two months not knowing," said Hall in a message to the *Citizen*.

Hall said she's been struggling to keep her life going and not isolate herself as her mental

health has declined with the long separation. She's been focusing on preparing to help Violet return to normal life once she returns.

"I hope Violet knows I'm fighting for her, and always will. We all miss her dearly, and just want her back," Hall said.

Jesse is described as a white man, 36 years old, 5 foot 10, 160 lbs, with blue eyes and brown hair (possibly with a shaved head or wearing hat), and a beard. Violet Bennett is a white girl, approximately four feet tall, weighing 50-60 lbs, with blue eyes and big naturally curly hair.

Investigators are continuing to communicate with Jesse's family, they said, in hopes of furthering the investigation and ensuring Violet's well being.

"I just hope that now a warrant has been given, whoever is supporting and helping him will come forward," said Hall.

Jesse could be anywhere in Canada at this point, the RCMP press release said.

If you have any information about Jesse or Violet's whereabouts, contact the police in your jurisdiction right away, or the North Cowichan/Duncan RCMP at 250-748-5522.

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OPINION

OUR VIEW

Heat pumps riding wave of popularity

The most bothersome part of getting a heat pump may be getting on the growing list of people lined up to have them installed.

Heat pump technicians in the Cowichan Valley are run off their feet the demand is so high.

And that was before the recent announcement by the provincial government that there will be no PST on heat pumps as of April 1.

Heat pumps have been promoted in recent years as a good way to heat your home that's friendly to the environment. These units run on electricity. Most of the electricity in B.C.

is provided by hydro power, so this is a good move if you're concerned about climate change and trying to do what you can to reduce greenhouse gas emissions.

But demand really began to surge after the extreme heat episodes we lived through last summer, where temperatures reached record levels. Heat pumps also serve as air conditioning units, so you get two for one. Many homes in B.C. have not been built with air conditioning in mind, since the climate here has always been moderate, especially in the southwest corner where we're lucky enough to live.

In years past, opening up windows and doors during the evening and early morning to catch the cooler air, then closing them during the heat of the day has been sufficient for most to live quite comfortably through the summer. A few fans on some hotter days, and you were set. Some who like it chilly had air conditioning, but this was seen as a luxury, not a necessity.

But last summer cooling fans and not exerting yourself weren't enough anymore for many as temperatures climbed to heretofore unknown heights, baking Valley residents. Some businesses closed during the

heatwaves as well, as not all of the ones in Cowichan have air conditioning either. Suddenly, it was a matter of public health, as the heat we were subjected to reached actual danger zones, and some people, in fact, died. There were 595 heat related deaths in B.C. between June 18 and Aug. 12 last summer, and 526 of them happened during the June 25 to July 1 heat wave.

Our local municipalities did well in opening up cooling centres in public buildings that did have air conditioning, but most people would prefer to stay in the comfort of their own homes.

If you've always thought about electric heat as being expensive, you were probably thinking of good old baseboard heaters. Heat pumps use about a third the energy, and less energy than gas and oil furnaces. Heat pumps do require a backup heat source, for when temperatures dip below freezing, but they're definitely worth a good long look.

»We want to hear from you.

Send comments on this editorial to editor@lakecowichangazette.com.

Letters must include daytime phone number and hometown.

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YOUR LETTERS

'Positive liberty' has brought about declining COVID numbers

In January 2021, I wrote to this paper outlining my 'rational hope' for the New Year. Today, as COVID numbers decline and restrictions are lifted, I am feeling somewhat vindicated. I will delight in a gradual return to 'normal', but remain watchful. In stores, on public transport and in large indoor gatherings, I will choose to wear a mask. I will observe social distancing and, if asked to show my vaccine passport or to take a test, will happily comply.

I believe I am like the vast majority of Canadians in following the science. It was this behaviour, and not the mandates per se, nor the opposition to them, that achieved this welcome outcome. In other words, by those who practiced 'positive liberty', (i.e. exerted control over a situation by acting together for the common good).

Questions remain however: are we doing enough for those who remain most vulnerable here in Canada or abroad? I don't think so. Will we respond appropriately if there is a resurgence? Based on experience to date, I am optimistic. How can we

begin to heal the differences that have emerged in regard to COVID? I suggest that on Canada Day everyone, especially those who have felt intimidated by some of the recent flag waving, display the Canadian flag on their lapels, homes, vehicles and public buildings. Our country's flag belongs to every Canadian, regardless of their opinion on any issue; in a word, it unites us!

Respect is due to everyone,

Gregg Shoop
Glenora

More letters: lakecowichangazette.com

LETTERS POLICY

Letters to the editor are welcome, but writers are requested to keep their submissions to 350 words or less. We reserve the right to edit all submissions for clarity, grammar, length — attack the issue, not the individual.

All letters must contain the name, address and a phone number where writers may be reached during business hours. Publication is not guaranteed. Submissions can be emailed to editor@lakecowichangazette.com, or sent via fax to 250-748-1552.

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LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Send your items to: editor@lakecowichangazette.com

Help songbirds survive in your own backyard

Spring is here, and with it comes bird nesting season. Already the little Anna's hummingbird that overwinters in southwest B.C. has nestlings, and these tiny birds are kept busy finding insects to feed their young. All the songbirds, including robins, juncos, towhees, and many others, are now or will soon be mating and nesting. We are aware that songbirds are declining, as are most native wildlife species. I'd like to share with you a couple of important facts that I've learned about these small birds that grace the land we share.

I spent over a decade in the tree and landscape industry. I've personally observed the destruction and abandonment of bird nests due to human carelessness. Qualified landscapers and arborists are trained to inspect trees, shrubs and hedges prior to commencing work, but many don't, either because they're busy and forget, or possibly just because it's not considered a priority. Many homeowners do their own tree and shrub pruning, and

don't realize until it's too late that they've disturbed a nest. Birds often abandon nests once scared away and the nestlings are left to die. Nature has its own ways. Many small birds such as junco will even make nests in potted plants such as grasses. You can help songbirds survive in raising their young by checking before you commence plant handling activities, even as simple as watering a container.

The other thing I've learned (and this was a complete revelation to me, and not included in my own university education) is the importance of native plants to the insects that have co-evolved with them. Insects are the bottom of the food chain and without them nothing else on this planet survives. Insects, I've learned, have a very direct connection to the plants that they require for rearing their own offspring — if they don't have these plants, they don't reproduce. Hence, insect populations decline. And small birds, being a somewhat short step up from insects in nature, require those insects, and most importantly, their protein and fat rich larvae with which they nurture

their young. While adult birds might be great consumers of many native and non-native berryed plants, they do not rear their young on berries. They need the insects and insect larvae or the brood doesn't fledge. Trees such as alder and poplar, considered by the forestry industry to be junk, are exactly the kinds of trees that insects require to produce their larvae, and it's these critters that support small bird life.

I sincerely hope you will take this message to heart and consider what you can do to be a better steward of your own back yard in helping nature survive.

Jacqueline Sherk
Lake Cowichan

We need to show compassion for each other

The divisiveness currently happening is so hard — I like things balanced and in harmony, basically the opposite of where we are right now. I am having a really hard time wrapping my head around some people's behavior — some people are so angry with some of their fellow

human beings. There seems to be an incredible increase in intolerance towards people who may think differently from one's own point of view. Yes, you all know exactly what I am talking about and it is all about COVID.

For my own sanity I need to get this off of my chest.

If you choose to get vaccinated, you are NOT a stupid, gullible, "sheeple".

If you choose to not get vaccinated, you are NOT an ignorant, selfish jerk.

Remember when there was just seasonal flu shots? No one hated their neighbour or co-worker or family members for making a different decision about the vaccine than they did.

Keep in mind that a lot of us are just afraid or fearful. Maybe you are afraid of catching COVID, maybe you are afraid of the effects of the jab, maybe you are afraid of both. Maybe it is something else all together. Just remember this if you are feeling angry right now about people who made a different decision than you did.

I needed to get this off of my chest

because some of the comments I see really bother me and make me feel so sad about where we have gotten to. I think that we all need to stop and remember, we are all human and we are all just trying to get through this time. We are actually in this all together and as such, we need to show support and compassion not the opposite.

Tanya Nuttgens
Maple Bay

Where is courtesy of old?

What is wrong with our society? While parked at either Walmart or Winners in Duncan our car was hit on the rear driver side door resulting in a dent about 18 inches long. No note was left in an attempt to notify us. They just drove off. Is this where we are as a society now? Where are the polite and caring Canadians of old?

John Rodgers
Mill Bay

For more letters to the editor, see www.lakecowichangazette.com

COLUMN**A gentle giant gifts a giant gift, gently**

Youbou's Wendy Stokes has long been a steward of the community's elk population. She has a particular soft spot for Bob, one the area's most famous elk.

"I have lived here 45 years. Back in the days we had to go to Shaw Creek to see them, now they're in your yard," she explained. "We have to respect them, we are in their territory."

Like other elk-lovers in the area, Stokes keeps an eye out for the local population and reports to conservation officers whenever the massive mammals need some medical attention (or to be sprung free from whatever clotheslines or Christmas lights they get caught up in).

These days Stokes says Bob isn't looking as spry as he once was. It comes as no surprise, really, as he seems to have been around forever. But still. It's sad.

"Bob is skinny," she said. "He's old."

About a month ago, the provincial veterinarian, Conservation Officer Mark Kissinger, and Stokes visited Bob for some tender loving care.

"We wormed him so hopefully that might help," she said.

After that, everyone carried on with their lives as usual — humans doing human things, elk doing elk things.

It's now months after the rut, and



Sarah Simpson
The bright side

Bob's antlers have served their purpose for the year so the other day Stokes asked Bob if he would kindly shed an antler in her yard for her to keep.

After all, "he is the icon of Youbou," she said. What an amazing keepsake that would be!

On March 16 Stokes got her wish. Bob dropped an antler right in her driveway.

"It makes me wonder if he understands my conversation with him," she said with a chuckle.

Thrilled with the gift, it would have made for a great story if it ended there.

It didn't.

On March 18 Bob returned to gift his second antler to Stokes. She's now the proud owner of a complete set.

"He shook his head and it landed by my gate," she said. "I said 'thank you Bob!'"

The pair have an amazing connection, one that Stokes treasures greatly. It seems Bob does too as he stands



Wendy Stokes with her priceless gifts from Bob. (Courtesy of Wendy Stokes)

outside her home and calls for her to come out for a visit.

Stokes isn't alone in her love of Bob. Such a fixture in the community is he that there's an ongoing effort to install a life-sized wooden carving of the elk in the park for all to enjoy, and to immortalize the animal.

Finally a community project that isn't being held up by red tape, lack of funding, and arguments!

Monica Ash is leading that charge and just two months in, things are looking good on the fundraising front.

As of March 18, the GoFundMe had reached \$1,525 of the \$2,500 goal. Ash also reported that Mosaic has offered \$500 cash donation while the owner of Karlite is donating half of the wood required.

"That helps immensely and we are

so appreciative," she said.

Twin Raven Counselling has also offered a donation. No doubt others that I don't yet know about have as well. It seems to have been an issue that the entire community can get behind.

Local carver, Roy Anderson, has even offered his carving services for free!

Bob comes and goes all the time. With the carving, the beloved Roosevelt elk will be able to stay forever.

While a giant wooden statue of Bob will be a spot where many will smile as they see it day to day, it won't be the same as the real thing.

"I will miss him when he doesn't come around," Stokes admitted.

No doubt the entire community of Youbou feels the same way.

To donate to the cause visit the page at <https://gofund.me/74a18f39>

Any money raised over and above the amount needed to complete the project will be donated directly to the Habitat Conservation Trust Foundation or another equitable source that will ensure the livelihood of the elk for future generations.

Sarah Simpson is a reporter with the Cowichan Valley Citizen. She can be reached at Sarah.Simpson@cowichan-valleycitizen.com

POLITICS

Province encouraging use of more heat pumps in B.C. to help battle climate change

BY ROBERT BARRON

The demand for heat pumps, and the technicians that work on them, is expected to increase dramatically with the announcement from Victoria that the government intends to exempt heat pumps from the provincial sales tax as of April 1.

Bruce Ralston, BC's Minister of Energy, Mines and Low Carbon Innovation, visited Vancouver Island University's Cowichan Trades Centre on March 22 to tour the facility's refrigeration air-conditioning mechanic shop to learn more about how VIU is preparing students to work on heat pumps.

He said the province has some very ambitious goals to reduce the environmental footprint in all of B.C.'s sectors and, as well as exempting heat pumps from the PST, the government's budget for 2022 calls for the PST on fossil-fuel heating systems to go from 7 per cent to 12 per cent on April 1.

"Heat pumps are a good way to help reduce greenhouse emissions and the PST exemption, which builds on the existing rebate program, is expected to lead to an increased demand for heat pumps and mechanics trained to work on them," Ralston said as he toured the mechanic shop, talking to students and instructors.

"A lot of people don't know what heat pumps



Bruce Ralston, BC's Minister of Energy, Mines and Low Carbon Innovation (right), talks heat pumps with Deon Lane (centre), an instructor at VIU's refrigeration air-conditioning mechanic shop located in the university's Cowichan Trades Centre. (Robert Barron/Citizen)

months and cool air in the hot season, use only about a third as much electricity as baseboard electric heaters and considerably less energy than gas or oil furnaces.

Ralston said that, while not everyone agrees, BC Hydro has stated that heat pumps are cheaper to operate in the long run because they are fuelled by electricity.

When B.C. Finance Minister Selina Robison introduced the 2022 budget in February, she said that after the climate change-related severe storms, floods and heat waves in recent years, making sure communities have the resources they need to deal with the effects of climate change will be a focal point of the budget.

Jessie Magee-Chalmers, VIU's acting campus administrator in the Cowichan region, said the university's refrigeration and air-conditioning mechanics class has grown increasingly popular as demand for heat pumps and other related products grow.

He said the 34-week class has a maximum of 18 students, and there's a waiting list of students who want to participate in the program, which has two intakes a year.

"There's more demand for the course because it's a higher-paying trade with lots of work these days, and the technical aspects of the course draws a lot of students," he said.

are, so we've begun an education campaign to inform them. The two big purchases most people make in their lives are their homes and vehicles. Climate-friendly choices can be made on both of those and we're trying to nudge people towards them."

Heat pumps, which provide heat in the colder

COVID-19 IN BC

Pediatric vaccines are designed for kids' immune systems.

Pediatric vaccines help protect children and prevent the spread of Covid-19. Designed for kids' immune systems, pediatric vaccines deliver a smaller dose than the adult dose. Canada's pediatric vaccines have been rigorously tested and are safe. Getting vaccinated helps prevent you and others from getting seriously ill and hospitalized.

Register your kids for vaccination today
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Making use of apple cores and eggshells

COLUMN



Mary Lowther
Dig In

One of the things David and I share in common is a love of the printed word. When we met he had three rooms full of books, and I knew he had serious intentions when he got rid of a few thousand of them to make room for me. For the last quarter century I have been dealing with a large pile of incoming volumes he has brought home and not yet had time to open, but two years of enforced isolation and long winters appear to have changed all this because, after a lifetime of threatening to do so, David seems to have caught up on his reading.

I reached this startling conclusion when he called my attention to a book review in a copy of *Small Farm Canada* magazine I left out. It was David who asked me if I would be interested in *The Regenerative Grower's Guide to Garden Amendments*, by Nigel Palmer. I now know how Robinson Crusoe felt when he saw that footprint in the sand.

My regular readers (both of you) will be aware that I spend a fair amount of ink writing about the need to ensure that the soil we plant in has the nutrients required to produce the healthiest crop. Author Nigel Palmer has taken this to the next step by discussing how to produce those often expensive and hard to find nutrients for ourselves. In his book he details the results of his search for cheaper, local sources in easy to use ways. Eggshells, he says, are an excellent source of calcium and rich in other minerals plants need. He includes his process, and since I have a steady supply of egg shells and apple cores and peels, I decided to test his methods.

First I made apple cider vinegar by soaking my apple leavings in water for two months at room temperature, then straining the fluid out and leaving it to ferment for another two months. In the



Eggshells fermenting in cider vinegar will be ready March 29 for use as a soil amendment. (Mary Lowther photo)

meantime I collected egg shells, careful to clean out all the albumen before leaving the shells to dry in the sun.

When I added the cider vinegar to the shells, it bubbled and fizzed just like the author said it would! This fermented concoction should be ready in two weeks, to be strained off, bottled and used. Palmer recommends a dilution of one tablespoon to four gallons of water. If I add it to my compost tea and use it as a soil drench or foliar spray, my litre of extraction should last at least as long as our growing season. Evidently the eggshells can be used two or three more times before adding the spent shells to the compost heap, but I'm going to use meat bones for my next extraction because his studies show that they provide phosphorus as well as calcium; his vinegar extraction from cow bones showed an impressive 1,691 parts per million for calcium and 509 parts per million for phosphorus, as well as several other minerals. I obviously need to make more apple cider vinegar.

Cider vinegar extraction from eggshells, oyster shells and bones is only one method Palmer uses to augment his garden. He also makes plant juices and picks up buckets of rock dust from

local quarries. He says that most quarries have an analysis of the minerals in their rock dust so I've contacted some of the ones here on the island to see if any are useful to me, but before I get the dusts, I'll have my soil analyzed to see what minerals it already contains. Once I know that, I can fill in gaps that I hope local rock dusts can provide; if not, I'll have to keep buying them because I'm learning that without a full complement of minerals, plants don't thrive as they should and won't provide me with nutrient dense food.

I found it fascinating when Palmer explained that his inspiration for the vinegar extraction method was a science experiment remembered from elementary school. It made me wonder if the teacher expected any of the students to actually listen to a word she was saying, and how gratified she would be to learn one had. Teaching seems a lot like gardening. You cast your seeds, hoping some take root. Fortunately for gardeners, rain and sunshine are more reliable than adequate government funding.

Please contact mary_lowther@yahoo.ca with questions and suggestions since I need all the help I can get.



TOWN OF LAKE COWICHAN NOTICE OF PARCEL TAX ROLL REVIEW PANEL MEETING

As per section 208 of the Community Charter, notice is hereby given that Parcel Tax Rolls are available for inspection at the Town of Lake Cowichan Municipal Office between the hours of 8:30 a.m. and 4:30 p.m., Monday – Friday, except statutory holidays.

NOTICE IS HEREBY GIVEN that the **WATER and SEWER PARCEL TAX ROLL REVIEW PANEL** will be held electronically on Tuesday **April 12, 2022** beginning at 5:00 p.m.

Water Parcel Tax - \$300 per parcel
Sewer Parcel Tax - \$250 per parcel

The Parcel Tax Roll Review shall review written complaints submitted and may review and correct the parcel tax assessment roll on one or more of the following grounds:

- an error or omission respecting a name or address on the parcel tax roll;
- an error or omission respecting the inclusion of a parcel;
- an error or omission respecting the taxable area or the taxable frontage of a parcel;
- an exemption that has been improperly allowed or disallowed.

In order for a request to be considered by the review panel, it must be submitted in writing and received at the Town Office at least 48 hours prior to the sitting of the Parcel tax Roll Review Panel on April 12, 2022.

Requests can be dropped off at 39 South Shore Road or mailed to: PO Box 860, Lake Cowichan BC V0R 2G0, Attention: Ronnie Gill, Director of Finance.

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Flanked by Rotary's Kim Barnard (left) and Gregg Perry (right) Owen van Basten is the Duncan Rotary Club's Student of the Month for February. (Kevin Rothbauer/Citizen)

Work ethic helps Laker earn Student of the Month award

BY KEVIN ROTHBAUER

Lake Cowichan School math and physics teacher Susan Barton calls Owen van Basten, "the hardest working student I've ever had."

According to Barton, van Basten has an "enormous" course load but still gets everything done "extremely well."

On top of that, the Grade 12 student works a part-time job, and competes in high school sports like volleyball and climbing.

For all that, van Basten was nominated by Barton and other staff members at LCS to receive the Duncan Rotary Club's Student of the Month Award for February.

"I'm very grateful to get recognition for my

hard work," van Basten said.

"It's amazing what he has accomplished," Barton said. "He's been quiet and capable about it all."

Perhaps the crowning glory for van Basten was the project he put together for his social justice class, creating posters to raise awareness for blood donations.

"During COVID, donation levels dropped a lot," commented van Basten, who said he hasn't donated blood himself, but he plans to.

Van Basten is taking advanced classes this year, and plans to attend the University of Victoria next year to study computer science with the goal of getting into web development.

Cowichan Valley Bluegrass Festival back June 17-19

BY ANDREA RONDEAU

After two years away due to the COVID-19 pandemic, lovers of bluegrass have reason to celebrate as the Cowichan Valley Bluegrass Festival makes its return to Laketown Ranch in Youbou.

The festival is "thrilled to be back with the best in bluegrass and old-time music," said a press release for the event, which runs from June 17 to 19.

The lineup for the 2022 festival included Pharis and Jason Romero, who are Juno Award winners; The Lonesome Ace Stringband, described as bluegrass/old time stalwarts; The Barrel Boys, who are described as rising stars; traditional bluegrass purists The Lonesome Town Painters; Eli West and Happy Trails, Prospector.

Tickets are on sale now with an early arrival option for those who want to get there Thursday. With this option people can pick their camping spot before the weekend starts and take part in a campground jam with one of the headliners.

At this festival, it's not all about what happens on the stage. Other highlights include a signature Saturday night square dance with caller Paul Silveria and the Lonesome Ace Stringband; and small concerts and workshops with Fiddle Frenzy, Bluegrass Karaoke (with a headliner for your backup band), The Grass Ceiling: Women in Bluegrass, Anytime is Old-



Pharis and Jason Romero headline the Cowichan Valley Bluegrass Festival to be held at Laketown Ranch in Youbou on June 17 to 19, 2022. (Laureen Carruthers photo)

time, and a post-bluegrass acoustic country/rockabilly session.

If that wasn't enough the guitar raffle is back, along with campground jamming all weekend long.

For full details and to buy tickets go to <https://cowichanbluegrass.com/>



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LAKE FLASHBACK

Fundraising, a hero and a \$25,000 error



Sarah Simpson
Reporting

Welcome to *Lake Flashback*. Reporter Sarah Simpson has been combing through old newspapers with the assistance of the Kaatza Station Museum and Archives so we can jog your memory, give you that nostalgic feeling, or just a chuckle, as we take a look at what was making headlines this week around Cowichan Lake in years gone by.

This week around the Cowichan Lake area...

10 years ago

It was beginning to look at lot like graduation time, a decade ago this week in Lake Cowichan. "Raising funds for a dry grad event" was the headline in the April 4, 2012 edition of the *Lake Cowichan Gazette*, and it seems the students did well with their bottle drive.

"Saturday's dry-grad fundraiser went off without a hitch, collecting nearly \$1,000 in bottles from local Cowichan Lake residents," wrote Tammy Caruso. "Julie Foster, dry-grad coordinator says the grads still have many fundraising activities planned to raise money before they head out from June 28 to June 30 to go white water rafting near Hell's Gate in the Fraser Canyon on the mainland. Volunteers and grad students attended Saturday's event to help drive and collect from all areas in and surrounding Lake Cowichan.

"LCSS and the graduating class are appreciative for all of the continued support that aids in making the dry grad event a success."

Teenagers dominated the headlines of that paper, it seems as the second story was about teen hockey.

"High performance players gather at the Lake," wrote Dennis Skalicky.

"There was a full house at the Cowichan Lake Sports Arena on the weekend as the male Under 16 Region Camp was held locally. Players from Vancouver Island and the Central Coast were in town at the camp that is designed to instruct and prepare players for future opportunities in the High Performance Program. This is a great opportunity for kids to play against players from outside their own association and for the best to play the best.

"Lake Cowichan was chosen because of the access to ice time and that it is a central location on the south part of the Island where most of the players come from. You could almost feel the tension in the air as



"Some of Laurie Sheftel's Kindergarten class at Palsson Elementary entertain parents at a nursery rhyme performance. From left are Elyssa Sahulka, Kaylen Andersson, Kierra Sauntry, Shyanne Snell and in the back row are Alicia Henderson (in pink shirt) and Esther Heppner." (Lake Cowichan Gazette, April 4, 2012)



"Hi-stepping high school students keep pace with running addict Al Howie of Victoria as he heads for home city Saturday from grounds of Lake Cowichan Secondary School. Howie ran alone from village to Victoria in seven and one-half hours while delivering \$289 raised by LCSS students for Timmy's Camp Shawnigan during a recent local run for the handicapped. Running with Howie for photographer are (left to right): Jim Ketch, Terry Peterson, Dianna Bourassa, Deven Woodland, Helenja Cummings, Lisa Crawford, Debbie Currie, Lynda Riggs, Gulnasia Khan and Frances Swain." (Lake News, March 31, 1982)

the players waited for their final interviews on Sunday afternoon to see who made the team."

25 years ago

"Small school district 'no longer justifiable' says former SB chair" graced the front page of the April 2, *Lake News*. Things sure changed in between the announcement the boards would join and the actual combining of the two, the paper explained.

"It has been four months since School Boards #65 and #66 amalgamated to form Cowichan Valley School District #79. Our local trustees' opinions on amalgamation vary, with trustee Pat Weaver being the most outspoken opponent. With the exception of Weaver, what is now being said about amalgamation, is greatly different than one year ago.

"Trustee Wilma Rowbottom has now a more optimistic attitude towards the amalgamation. Rowbot-

tom, who was chairman of School District #66 prior to amalgamation, and who, just over a year ago described herself as 'dead' when she learned of the amalgamation announcement, says now that small school districts are no longer justifiable. The problems that have arisen with amalgamation such as the complexity of the changeover and the costs involved, will be worth the effort once things are worked out and running smoothly she says."

In other news of 25 years ago, the

winners of the *Lake News's* Easter Colouring Contest were named. Do you recognize any of these folks? They'll be much older now!

In the 5-6-year-old category, Jeanie Bogaards took first with Serene Zabok and Mandie Foster second and third.

In the 7-8-year-old group, Marissa McCallum won with Cari-lynn Yablonski and Matthew Foster second and third.

Jenny Johel took the 9-10-year-old group beating out runners-up Jocelyn Lundberg and Mark Edwards.

"The work was exceptional, and it was obvious that many children spent a lot of time on their projects," said the paper.

Wondering what those kids are up to today...

40 years ago

A hero got his due this week 40 years ago, according to the *Lake News* of March 31, 1982.

"Hero logger rewarded after local fire drama" was the headline but it wasn't a soap opera type of drama. It was a matter of life and death and deserving of some serious kudos.

"A Victoria logger who rescued a Mesachie Lake co-worker from a forest fire last October has been given an award for bravery by the Workers' Compensation Board. Lyle Hallberg was fighting a fire at Harris Creek in the B.C. Forest Products Renfrew division when Will Goranson of Mesachie Lake was hit by a burning tree. Goranson's clothes caught fire and his hands and arms were burned. The wind changed direction, putting the men in danger. Gornanson couldn't make it to safety, because of his injuries, so Hallberg returned to drag him out. Witnessess said Goranson would have died if it were not [for] Hallberg's action. Hallberg received a plaque, a bronze medallion and a \$1,000 cheque."

Wow!

And finally, in the same edition, "Lake Cowichan village council has decided that the village should not have to pay \$25,000 extra because a contracting firm ran into additional costs while constructing the new village water pump house. On the recommendation of its engineering firm, council decided March 23 not to accede to a claim by Standard General Construction Ltd. that the extra should be paid to cover a costly 'sheet-piling' experiment. The construction firm had taken a sample of the soil fairly close to the sight of the pumping station to determine what sort of ground it had to work with. Once excavation started, however, it was discovered that the ground was denser and wetter than had been expected."

The error cost the firm \$25,000. Oops.

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Average tax increases by area

Continued from A1

chose not to do that, so I can't support this budget," he said.

While the average tax increase across the whole CVRD is 4.09 per cent, the actual increase will vary, sometimes dramatically, in the electoral areas and municipalities.

Drafting budgets for the CVRD is a complex process as its budget is made up of 180 individual budgets.

These budgets include regional services paid by all district residents, electoral area services such as planning and service-specific budgets like water and utilities.

The differences in tax rates across the CVRD stems from the amount and types of services each region in the district has agreed to participate in and pay for.

This is different from municipal budgets where the costs are shared equally across the municipality.

As well, the impact on taxes for individual properties will also vary depending on the change in assessment for those properties relative to property assessment changes throughout the region.

Details of taxation impacts on each electoral area and municipality in the CVRD will be included in a pamphlet with the tax notices that will be sent out, and also will be posted on the CVRD website.

Tax increase implications of the 2022 budget in each area of the CVRD:

- Electoral Area A: Mill Bay/Malahat
Average home \$882,235: Tax increase of \$65.56 per home.
- Electoral Area B: Shawnigan Lake
Average home \$919,070: Tax increase \$174.18 per home.
- Electoral Area C: Cobble Hill
Average home \$838,040: Tax increase of \$119.94 per home.
- Electoral Area D: Cowichan Bay
Average home \$739,553: Tax increase of \$149.24 per home.



The CVRD has set its tax increase for 2022 at 4.09 per cent. (Citizen file)

- Electoral Area E: Cowichan Station/Sahtlam/Glenora
Average home \$5712,769: Tax increase of \$108.19 per home.
- Electoral Area F: Cowichan Lake South/Skutz Falls
Average home \$791,384: Tax increase of \$123.30 per home.
- Electoral Area G: Saltair/Gulf Islands
Average home \$695,580: Tax increase of \$51.14 per home.
- Electoral Area H: North Oyster/Diamond
Average home \$774,763: Tax increase of \$2.55 per home.
- Electoral Area I: Youbou/Meade Creek
Average home \$975,011: Tax increase of \$370.84 per home.
- Town of Lake Cowichan
Average home \$531,921: Tax increase of \$73.72 per home.
- Town of Ladysmith
Average home \$633,999: Tax increase of \$43.97 per home
- City of Duncan
Average home \$481,259: tax increase of \$20.85 per home.
- Municipality of North Cowichan/north end
Average home \$662,266: Tax increase of \$48.53 per home.
- Municipality of North Cowichan/south end
Average home \$662,266: Tax increase of \$64.51 per home.

Huge heather sale back in Valley after two years

BY ELAINE SCOTT

The Vancouver Island Heather Society is planning to hold its 2022 sale on Saturday, April 2 at 10 a.m. until noon or until sold out. Current COVID protocols will be respected. We have not been able to hold our annual sale for the past two years and are very excited to be able to offer you more than 1,000 very interesting plants for sale.

Wilson's Nursery and Ground Effects will be the suppliers of the plants. This is the last year that heathers will be offered by Wilson's Nursery. Unusual heathers such as the ever popular tree heaths and old favorites such as Erica williamsii "Ken Wilson", Erica tetralix "Alba Mollis" and Erica vagans "Mrs. F.D. Maxwell" come from this nursery. Thus, this sale will probably be the last one in which you will be able to buy quite a wide variety of rarely offered cultivars.

If you are new to gardening on Vancouver Island you may be asking yourself why you would plant heathers in your garden. These plants are known to grow very well on Vancouver Island. They give year-round colour both from the flowers and foliage, have wonderful ground cover qualities without being invasive, are evergreen, hardy and require little maintenance. They are relatively free from pests and disease and, last but not least, other than bud bloomers the flowers provide wonderful nectar loved by our native bees. Just watch your winter flowering heather on a sunny February day and you will agree with me.

Before you go to the sale think



The heather sale is back on April 2, 2022 in the Cowichan Valley. (Courtesy of Vancouver Island Heather Society)

about where in your garden you intend to plant your heathers. Remember that they will need lime-free, well-drained well-cultivated soil, at least five to six hours of direct sun daily, will not tolerate boggy areas and need to be watered at least once a week to ensure that they do not dry out during the heat of the summer. Avoid using manures as they are too rich for these plants.

Also, you may wish to do your homework before attending the sale. You will be able to visit the listing of both the cultivars and the kits that will be on sale by visiting the Vancouver Island Heather Society web site at www.bcheathersociety.org. By going to the sale armed with your list of plants you wish to buy

you will be more likely to be able to purchase your favorites.

Past customers know full well that it is important to get to the sale early in order to be able to buy those plants that are "must haves" for your garden. The sale will take place at the Stu Armour Building, Cobble Hill Fairgrounds (Fisher Road). Members of the Society will be on hand to help you make your choices and members of the Victoria Master Gardener Association will be there to answer general gardening questions. Please note: payment at the sale can be by cash, cheque, and e-transfer.

Elaine Scott is a member of the Vancouver Island Heather Society.

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