



Metchosin Muse

Vol. 34 Issue 5

May 2026

metchosinmuse@gmail.com www.metchosinmuse.ca

From Coast to Capital – Westmont High School Visits Orleans

Alex Brooksbank, Kaiden Garson, and Oliver Irwin

In March, the high school of Westmont Montessori had an incredible opportunity to visit Orleans, Ottawa, as part of an exchange program with Sir Wilfred Laurier Secondary School. Our twin school was incredibly welcoming and encouraging as we transitioned from mountainous terrain and lush forests of the west coast to blankets of snow and a bitter winter breeze that blew through the streets of Ottawa. Despite the combination of both jetlag and culture shock, upon our arrival we quickly adapted to our surroundings with support from our welcoming homestays and partner school. This allowed us to be immersed in our trip and comfortably settle in with our homestay families.

The weather in Ottawa was among the coldest conditions any of us have ever experienced. Throughout the trip, the temperatures never rose above -8 deg.C. and fell as low as -35 deg.C, which we experienced on our first night of the Winterlude celebration in Gatineau. Vast snowdrifts surrounded us for most of the trip, and we had great fun pushing each other in them.

On our third day, we took part in an indigenous guided tour through a museum and

the surrounding area in downtown Ottawa.

We learned how the land we stood on was the traditional territory of the Algonquin people, the historical and cultural significance of the land, and Algonquin people's relationship with it today.

In addition, we were distraught to learn that indigenous veterans did not get the same benefits as other WWI and WWII veterans, despite their service and sacrifices.

Later we met up with one of our students' uncles who owns and operates a maple syrup farm and sugar shack. We explored the property on snowshoes, ate maple taffy, and learned all about the process to make maple syrup and the dedication and time you must have to produce it.

Later in the week we spent a morning at Sir Wilfrid Laurier Secondary School, in which we learned about daily life on the other side of the country. We experienced the true life of a public school in Ontario, where they play the national anthem every morning, and move around between classrooms for each lesson. It was something most of us have not experienced before.

We spent a morning at Madahoki farm, an indigenous-run farm in Nepean, Ottawa. During the morning, we learnt about three different

indigenous cultures, and were taught how to make dream-catchers, which are traditionally given as a gift to someone of importance. Which is why, when we were making them, we learned we had to make sure we put positive energy into them, instead of negative energy.

In conclusion, we had an incredible experience and learned a great deal about different Canadian cultures and the diversity within our wonderful country. We formed meaningful bonds with our homestay families and look forward to seeing them in May! If you wish to donate to this awesome experience, please reach out to luke@westmontschool.ca to find out more!

Experiences Canada is a nationwide program that enables Canadian schools to visit different parts of our country and partner with other schools. During the exchange, students stay with homestay families, which allows them to experience daily life and culture in another part of Canada. Westmont has participated in this program for the past four years, and it is still a unique experience in which we are grateful to be able to partake. The experience has taken high school students from Westmont Montessori school to Tsiigehtchic NWT, Biggar SK, and Sagkeeng First Nation MB.



Outside the Parliament building in Ottawa. Colin Groves photo



Westmont students in the snow. Luke Cantrill photo.

Community Says Neigh to Bylaw Revisions

Allen Jones

The Council meeting on March 23 was full of interest. During public participation, attendees were particularly keen to make comments about the proposed industrial zoning of 3659 Sooke Road and the Good Neighbour Bylaw 2026 No. 716. It was a long meeting and Mayor Little, who was chairing the meeting, had to request observers not to cheer popular speakers and remain silent in order not to intimidate others present.

Fortunately, the threat of clearing the chamber proved unnecessary and matters proceeded with due dignity. In respect of the light industrial use it was noted by speakers that this had been shown to be compatible with agricultural use in other districts and the property taxes gained were significant and needed in Metchosin. Alternative narratives pointed out the increased dangers to busy traffic using

Sooke Road and the environmental concerns related to the watershed of the Buffer Lands. Former mayor John Ranns also wished to support the proposal noting that the existing official community plan already considers this usage and would produce revenue of about \$500k without being a drain on services.

However, most of the public speakers wished to address the Good Neighbour Bylaw which was to replace the Noise Bylaw, 2016, No. 260 and the Unsightly Premises Bylaw, 2004, No. 474 that were deemed necessary to update. This was presumably to reflect the changing demographics and increased population of Metchosin.

A common message was that Metchosin was rural and included farm animals and pets that made noise occasionally. While farmers on agricultural land were exempt from the bylaws, small holders with a few chickens or horses were apparently not. Council

was told that guard dogs were meant to bark when predators were around livestock and horses need to nicker at times. An interesting tell from a resident off Kangaroo Road was that she was most concerned when the yard was quiet as that was likely due to a predator lurking nearby.

Another source of noise was garden machinery – we are talking mowers and chainsaws. It was proposed to further limit the times for using this equipment. Chainsaw use would be limited on weekdays and Saturdays to between 7:00 am and 7:00 pm (currently unto 10:00 pm). Lawnmowers and small garden tools could be used until 9:00 pm with Sunday use unchanged between 9:00 am and 6:00 pm. One speaker found this to be a difficult imposition as he worked long hours during the week and needed the longer use during the week and at weekends.

Council are proposing to include in the new bylaw

a means of controlling the proliferation of alien invasive species – flora not fauna. This would include 21 plants and 26 terrestrial vascular plants as listed in BC's Environmental and Wildlife Regulations. It includes various thistles, grasses, knapweeds, and sedges, as well as camomile, Scotch broom, English ivy, Himalayan blackberry, St John's Wort, hogweed, hemlock, baby's breath, balsam, garlic mustard, laurel, tansy ragwort, and yellow flag. I did not find Daphne on the list but, if you were thinking of sowing wild oats, don't as it is on the list.

Concerns expressed during Public Participation included possible conflict with neighbours as a lot of invasives are spread by wind and bird propagation. It was noted that most road verges in Metchosin were full of listed invasive species and no remedy was proposed for this source of the perceived problem. Council were also reminded that St. Mary's Blackberry Festival

was dependent upon patches of blackberry bushes along the roads and trails of Metchosin.

With the penalty for not complying with the new bylaw increasing from a maximum of \$2,000 in the existing dated bylaws to \$50,000, as well as the prospect of legal fees, the reaction from the public in attendance was not favourable. After some discussion and Councillor Gray noting that the new bylaw would be "complaint driven", it was agreed to have staff relook at the proposals.

P.S. With a balanced budget for Metchosin due on May 14, the Muse will be reporting on this concerning item in next month's issue. At the time of writing a figure of 9.8% increase has been raised at Council which would be lower than Sooke and Langford are proposing but, to quote Mayor Little, "the picture beyond 2030 is very worrying".

Metchosin Muse

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AD AND SUBMISSION DEADLINE AND HOW TO SEND COPY

All articles are due by the 13th of the month. Advertisements due by the 15th. Please send copy as an email attachment in Microsoft Word, text or RTF to: metchosinmuse@gmail.com. Do not send PDFs (ads excepted). Photos should be high resolution and be in jpg or tif format only. All submissions may be edited for length, style and suitability of content and language. Submissions are accepted on this understanding. Please visit our website for more information: www.metchosinmuse.ca

ABOUT THE MUSE

The *Metchosin Muse* is a local non-profit, arts, interests and activities publication, produced by the *Metchosin Muse Society*. The opinions expressed in articles are those of the authors, not the paper. The *Muse* endeavours to promote respectful and open dialogue in the community and aims to interest a broad cross-section of the residents of Metchosin and Beecher Bay.



Council News

MAY 2026

2026 Property Tax Notices

Metchosin residents should expect to receive their 2026 property tax notices by end of May, early June. If you have not received your notice by mid-June, please contact the municipal office. Taxes are due on Thursday, July 2, 2026.

Claim your Home Owner Grant

If you are eligible for the Provincial Home Owner Grant, please claim your grant with the Province of BC by the property tax due date July 2, 2026, to avoid a legislated mandated penalty on that portion of taxes. You can submit your grant application online any time during the tax year. However, the best time to apply is after you receive your property tax notice and before your property tax due date.

If you apply before your property tax notice is available, your home owner grant application will remain in a pending status until your tax notice is made available.

Taxes do not have to be paid to claim the grant. Complete the application online at gov.bc.ca/homeownergrant or by phoning Home Owner Grant Administration at 1-888-355-2700 or 250-387-0555.

Deferment of Taxes

Eligible BC residents apply or renew their applications online to the Province of BC Property Tax Deferment Program. Find out more at gov.bc.ca/propertytaxdeferment. For questions about property tax deferral, please call 1-888-355-2700 or 250-387-0555.

Remember if you plan to defer your taxes, you must apply before July 2, 2026 to avoid penalty. You will still need to apply for your Provincial Home Owner Grant by July 2, 2026 as well. Repayment of your tax deferment loan is not done at the Municipal Hall. See BC Government website about "Property Tax Deferment Program" or call the same phone numbers above for more information.

Residential Backyard Open Burning CLOSED May 31, 2026

Burning is permitted :

- from October 1 to May 31 only (unless otherwise posted)
- 6:00 am to 6:00 pm only.
- Fires must be completely extinguished by 6:00 pm – no smoldering fires.

Please see metchosinfire.ca>Regulations> for more detailed information, or call Metchosin Fire Department 250-478-1307.

District of Metchosin Meeting Schedule – May 2026

The 2026 Schedule for Regular Council Meetings and Standing Committee Meetings is posted on the website: www.metchosin.ca-council-meetings

Please see below meeting dates for May 2026. Meetings are held in the Council Chambers unless otherwise stated.

Meetings are subject to change. For updated information and times please check the website at www.metchosin.ca or call the Municipal Hall at 250-474-3167.

Council Meeting	May 4.
Agricultural Advisory Select Committee	May 5.
Committee of the Whole	May 11.
Parks and Trails Advisory Select Committee.....	May 19.
Council Meeting	May 25.
Healthy Community Advisory Select Committee.....	May 26.
Metchosin Environmental Advisory Select Committee	May 26.

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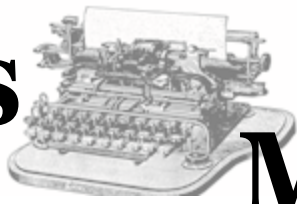
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Word of the month.

petrichor (noun)

The pleasant, earthy smell that follows the first rain after a dry spell.

Editor's Musings



Allen Jones

With our District elections due in the autumn, some of our readers have registered concern that the *Muse* will be targeted to include articles that unfairly influence voters. Readers can be assured that we have codes of practice in place that will prevent this from happening. The purpose of our code is to protect and foster the bond of trust between the *Muse* and its readers, and therefore to protect the integrity of its journalism. By observing the code, contributors will be protecting the standing and reputation of themselves and the *Muse*.

"A newspaper's primary office is the gathering of news. At the peril of its soul, it must see that the supply is not tainted." Our most important currency is trust. This is as true today as when C.P. Scott marked the centenary of the founding of the *Guardian* with his famous essay on journalism in 1921.

We will continue to gather news for some time to come thanks to the generosity of our readers. Please see our list of donors who, with matching donations of \$6000 provided a revenue of over \$17,000!

Donor Names: Rachel French de Mejia, Judith Auringer, Taylor-Olson family, Hajveer Singh Bains, Arianne Berteau, Shawna Lyn Cole, Jay & Nicole Shukin, Gwen Nowlan, Susan Gunnarson, Rosemary Invik, Maureen Marwood, Paul Chazottes, Margaret Mawle, Doug & Barb Sawatsky, Linda Quin, Wendy

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We thank you all!

P.S. To have letters and articles considered for the June issue, please note our deadline of May 13.

Letters to the Editor

The *Metchosin Muse* welcomes letters to the editor, of not more than 200 words. Your letter may be edited for style or length. Please email your letter to metchosinmuse@gmail.com (with electronic signature if possible). An address and telephone number are required but will not be published. *Editor's note: The opinions expressed in letters to the editor are those of the authors, not of the Muse.*

Redact Me Not

Many residents of Metchosin write letters to mayor and council to be included as part of meeting agendas. They are usually carefully constructed, taking time and effort to share with council and residents their opinions, facts, alternatives, and constructive criticism on the topic at hand. I wrote such a letter regarding light industrial zoning on Sooke Road. I was dismayed to find my letter had several odd redactions....I shared my experience of living close for

36 years to Lombard cement works (light industrial zone)... this part was redacted and yet the reference to Lombard Road being a mess was not? I was shocked as I read other letters to find most of them also haphazardly redacted rendering most of them nonsensical. They all appeared to be respectfully written and referenced facts from what remained unredacted. This is a dangerous trend for transparency, indeed democracy. Such arbitrary redactions reduce

the purpose, power and intent of these letters and nullify the valid voices of residents. Municipal staff: "Please let Metchosin residents speak respectfully and freely. There should be no need to obfuscate the opinions and facts residents present. This is not USA."

Owen Clarke

Editor's note: We have redacted the writer's address for privacy reasons.

Preschool News

Metchosin Co-op Preschool is now enrolling for September 2026. Families can learn more about the program and register at www.metchosinpreschool.com.

From May 2-16, the preschool is also hosting a

fundraiser raffle, with a grand prize of one round-trip flight for two guests to any destination WestJet flies. Last year's lucky winners travelled to the Dominican Republic. Tickets are available

at: www.rafflebox.ca/raffle/metchosinpreschool

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Baha'i Writings



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Seniors' Association Celebrates Another Successful Year



All twelve seniors driven out to the Rocky Point Bird Observatory by Pearson College driver, Jeff Taylor, were thrilled to have close-up views of feathered friends. Deirdre Chettleburgh photo.

Deirdre Chettleburgh

At the Annual General Meeting of the Metchosin Seniors' Association (MSA) in March, the board executive and Seniors' Resource Centre (SRC) Manager, Yvonne Cottrell, reported on a successful 2025 year.

The MSA acknowledges with gratitude, the funding and support received from the District of Metchosin, and the Province of BC through the United Way.

The Year in Review

- The SRC Manager responded to 696 requests for information and met with over 300 visitors to the Centre. She arranged for volunteers to drive seniors to 152 medical appointments, logging 3,282 kilometres. She organized/facilitated a total of 160 visits and wellness checks and collaborated with specialist volunteers to provide 45 people with tech support.
- Twenty educational and health presentations were made. These presentations ranged from Estate Planning, to Housing and the Care Continuum to Birds of Metchosin. Average attendance was 14.
- MSA received \$15,000 in July for an Aging in Motion (AIM) grant offered by the United Way. This grant allowed seniors to register for an online driving course and/or receive one-on-one coaching from a driving instructor (Joan Wallace Driving School). As well, MSA was able to provide transportation to medical appointments for those with mobility challenges.
- In the spring of 2025, an agreement was made with Lester B. Pearson College to offer seniors up to two trips a month on the Pearson College bus. There were 12 two-hour excursions in 2025. Destinations included the Royal Bay Shopping Centre, the Sooke Fine Arts Show, and the Rocky Point Bird Observatory.
- In partnership with Family Caregivers of BC, the SRC is available for a caregiver support group meeting every third Thursday of the month. Average attendance was 11.
- In 2025, and in response to requests, the social worker who co-facilitates the Caregivers Support Group meetings, offered a Grief Support Group that met in the SRC on the first Monday morning of every month. Average attendance was five.
- Volunteers (including board members) contributed approximately 1,500 hours.
- The largest fundraiser of the year (raffle ticket sales for a six-course gourmet dinner for eight), realized \$4,480.00. At the 2025 dinner held on February 14, 2026, guests of the hosts donated \$300.00 to the Seniors' Centre. Thank you to all who purchased a ticket. Your support is greatly appreciated.
- On June 7, 2025, the courtyard in front of MACCA was once again transformed into a French Café, attracting over 70 people, who enjoyed French pastries, coffee, or tea.
- For the second year Metchosin Pharmacy partnered with the Metchosin Fire Department and the MSA to offer a vaccination clinic on Saturday, Nov 1. Three hundred and fifty-two COVID and flu vaccinations were administered. Seventy-five percent of the people attending were 65 years and older.
- In cooperation with the Community House, volunteers made delicious soup that was frozen in single portions and was available by donation from the Community House and the SRC.
- MSA held its third Festive Lights Tour on December 18, 2025, raising \$650.00. Twenty four seniors (some of whom find driving at night difficult) enjoyed an extensive tour provided through the generosity of LA Limos, before returning to the SRC for hot chocolate, warm apple cider, and cookies.



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community.

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Opportunities are Growing for Metchosin Farmers with Agritourism

Robin Tunnicliffe

The future is looking brighter for Metchosin farmers who are looking for additional income. On March 31, over 30 farmers from Metchosin and area gathered at Bilston Creek Farm to network and learn about agritourism, an emerging sector in BC. Agritourism is a broad term that can encompass everything from hosting big events on farms to providing U-pick experiences. It can include hosting school and group tours, to one-on-one experiences with tourists, and everything in between. The event was hosted by the Metchosin Agriculture Advisory Select Committee (AASC) as an attempt to 'workshop' the implementation of our area agriculture plan. The afternoon included social time and two featured speakers: Karma Brophy and Rebecca Papadopolous.

"The type of tourist who will come to savour the experiences that farms can offer is very different from typical tourists," explained agritourism specialist Karma Brophy. Karma described how Metchosin fits perfectly into the emerging field of experience-based tourism. Sustainable tourism is gaining traction in a world becoming fatigued with extractive commerce. These tourists have a light footprint on the region but make a big financial impact because their dollars get

leveraged to benefit rural experience providers. "They come for stories, special curated experiences and good food!" Karma encouraged farmers to be creative and to reach out to her for support in curating their ideas.

Rebecca Papadopolous provided experience-based advice for farmers. She and her husband, George, farm poultry, sheep, and pigs on their heritage property in Cowichan. In addition to their market offerings, they have guest cabins and they host weddings and special events. "The revenue from the agritourism enables me to farm sustainably," said Rebecca. She described how farms that are implementing conservation measures can promote biodiversity as a draw for customers which is a true win-win. She quoted a study from the Willamette Valley in Oregon which found that 11 jobs are created in a community when an agritourism operation starts up. Rebecca encouraged farmers to work to their strengths and to create experiences for guests that fit their farm and their lifestyles. She is interested in creating an agritourism working group to help problem-solve regulatory and by-law issues that farmers are encountering across the province.

Mayor Little was in attendance, and she was inspired by the potential offered by this value-add to the agriculture sector. "Farms engaging in



Metchosin farmers meet at Bilston Creek Farm. Shelly Donaldson photo.

agritourism actively promote and support local food systems, which catalyses greater sustainability compared to industrialized agriculture." She was quick to draw a link between Metchosin's values and the potential of agritourism. "Agricultural businesses that incorporate tourism often combine and support the farm-to-table and slow food movements, which embrace the principles of mindful consumption and strengthen the connection between consumers and the land." The mayor has expressed interest in setting up future discussions with Rebecca and the Agriculture Select committee to inform what Council can do

policy-wise to protect and promote all strategies of farming.

Farmer Sasha Kubicek appreciated the breadth of opportunities presented. "I like that it's something you can do one time rather than signing up for a regular commitment. I really think it's the glue that can hold all farmers together. We need help selling our products, and this angle can help bring customers to all of us, and to deepen their relationship with Metchosin."

Farmers were left with questions and are eager to gather again to talk about next steps. No specific agritourism events are planned but we have a list of attendees in addition to the main email list of farmers in

Metchosin. If you'd like to be added to our list, please reach out.

The AASC will be having its next public event on May 5 at 7:00 pm in the Metchosin Council Chambers. Speaker Shawn Dirksen of Northstar Organics in Saanich will tell us how he sells on-line and at Moss Street Market and reaches low-income customers by redeeming Farmers' Market Nutrition Coupons from the Ministry of Health. The Metchosin Agriculture Alliance is considering an on-line market to help all Metchosin producers sell their products collectively to reach a wide customer base in the region.

Bilston Watershed Habitat Protection Association AGM

Alison LeDuc

The Bilston Watershed Habitat Protection Association (BWHPA) will hold its Annual General Meeting on Thursday, May 27, at 7:00 pm in the South Vancouver Island Rangers Hall, 3498 Luxton Road.

We will provide an update on the past year's activities and a look ahead at our ambitious plans for 2026-27, including stream assessments, habitat inventories, streamflow monitoring, and coastal cutthroat trout population surveys that will provide key information on the current status of Bilston Watershed. The field work will be carried out by environmental professionals with volunteer support and will present excellent training opportunities.

We are fortunate to have two guest speakers: Brendan Anderson from the BC Ministry of Water, Land and Resource Stewardship will discuss the biology, provincial significance, and conservation status of coastal cutthroat trout, which is considered an

indicator for sentinel species in Bilston Watershed. Cutthroat trout face significant threats province-wide, and Brendan will provide an update on the Provincial Risk Assessment that he is working on.

Stephanie Gurney from Peninsula Streams Society will give a presentation on the grassroots *Rain Gardens to Headwaters* program, which provides Green Stormwater Infrastructure education and capacity building for local communities and schools. We would love to help expand this largely volunteer program on the West Shore so please bring your ideas!

We will have information at the AGM about the invasive European Green Crab (EGC), a small number of which were detected in Witty's Lagoon in 2025. EGC are extremely destructive to tidal lagoon habitat, but the population is not considered 'established' in Witty's, so it is important to act immediately to protect the Lagoon from this threat.

BWHPA will collaborate with Peninsula Streams Society to trap and try to

remove the invasive crabs this summer. Working with an experienced team leader, volunteers will bait and set traps at low tide, then return the next day to process the traps one by one and fill out datasheets. The Capital Regional District is supporting the EGC monitoring program at Witty's Lagoon with educational signage and social media posts, and by facilitating research permit approvals.

Please reach out if you are interested in volunteering with us in any capacity, including serving on the board of directors and planning community events. Email info@bilston-watershed.org or visit the 'get involved' page on our website and specify your interest in the message box.

Light refreshments will be provided at the AGM. Doors open at 6:30 pm. All welcome, including non-members, but of course we appreciate new and renewed memberships! The business portion of the meeting will follow the guest speakers, and attendance for the business portion of the meeting is optional.

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The *Muse* endeavours to promote respectful and open dialogue in the community and aims to interest a broad cross-section of the residents of Metchosin and Beecher Bay.

Among the Lilies of St. Mary's

Reflections and guidance from the churchyard of St. Mary the Virgin

Ms. Dale Morrison, Cemetery Manager

I have the honour of caring for a place that holds both memory and hope. Our churchyard, known for its spring lilies, is more than a resting place—it is consecrated ground, where lives are remembered, prayers are offered, and the promise of resurrection is gently held.

Through this column, I hope to offer simple guidance and reflection on the customs and meaning of the cemetery, and to answer some of the questions people often ponder in moments of contemplation.

Q: What makes a church cemetery different from others?

A: A church cemetery is consecrated ground—set apart and blessed for burial. It is a place where we honour the dead, entrusting them to God's care, and where the living may come to pray, remember, and find peace.

Q: How should I behave when visiting the cemetery?

A: Visitors are invited to walk gently and speak quietly, mindful that this is a sacred space. Whether one comes in grief, remembrance, or simple reflection, a spirit of reverence helps preserve the peace of the place for all.

In this place of lilies and memory, even small acts of respect become a quiet form of prayer.



A view of St. Mary's in April. Allen Jones photo.

Wally Builds a Canoe: A New Chapter, Part 2

Katie Pirquet

Last month, we saw Wally and Donna Berndt in the late 1990s, building their new home on the former Tiswilde Road property of Ormond Griffin. Griffin's 41 ft. ketch was plying local waters and having completed and launched the "O.R. Griffin", Cos Loustalot had taken on his own, even more ambitious sailboat project, a majestic, 55 ft. Dutch galleon, in his own boat shed on Beecher Bay. Although Laustalot died in 2025 with his own dream still unfinished, the "Tiswilde Itch" is relentless, and a new chapter unfolds:



Wally and Kina testing the outrigger. Donna Berndt photo

In the year 2017, Wally Berndt – whose workshop and skills are seldom idle – and his wife, Donna, had constructed and furnished a beautiful, comfortable, and functional home. As a chap who also loves to spend quality time outdoors, Wally decided he needed to build himself a boat – a sleek, hand-crafted Western red cedar canoe. So, Wally and his eager beaver next-door neighbour, Dave McKellar, felled two great trees on Dave's property. They used Dave's sawmill to produce what proved to be more than enough suitable lumber. There would be no metal fasteners, just glue and fibreglass. Each long, clean cedar sapwood strip was milled, carefully dried, and planed to a precise ¼ inch x ¾ inch. The edges were shaped for bead-and-cove joinery and secured in place with white glue. The strips had to be assembled just two at a time, with many clamps and weights holding them in position until set and ready for the next two. Some things just cannot be rushed.

This project would be a "Bob Special" – a modified Prospector design, fashioned from cedar strips, with light maple flooring salvaged from the gymnasium of the old Belmont High School in Langford for trim. It would be protected by transparent epoxy over woven-roving fibreglass matting, and a durable polyurethane finish. There would be no metal fasteners, just glue and fibreglass. Each long, clean cedar sapwood strip was milled, carefully dried, and planed to a precise ¼ inch x ¾ inch. The edges were shaped for bead-and-cove joinery and secured in place with white glue. The strips had to be assembled just two at a time, with many clamps and weights holding them in position until set and ready for the next two. Some things just cannot be rushed.

Wally carved a custom-made yoke of dark red-cedar heartwood, shaping it carefully to fit his own neck and shoulders exactly, for maximum comfort on portages. He fashioned extra-wide, comfortable seats with sturdy oak frames, hand-strung with complex, patterned webbing. He reinforced the floor with

extra fibreglass to prevent flexing and protect it from abrasion.

As well as a fine thing of grace and beauty, the canoe was light (55 lbs.), strong, and roomy. He fabricated some paddles, and then a handy cart with outsized wheels to ease access to remote wilderness destinations. Homemade inflatable outriggers helped to stabilize things when the family dog, Kona, rocks the boat.

Two years later, Wally just had to fabricate another canoe, which he packed securely in a custom-built crate, and shipped off to his brother in Ontario. Apparently, it takes crafting more than one small boat to scratch the "Tiswilde Itch". Neighbour Dave still lives next door, so it may be contagious.

Not so long ago, Wally was driving on a highway on the mainland, with his canoe on the car's roof. He was pulled over by an RCMP officer, and Wally feared that his rig, or his driving, had run foul of the law. Turns out there was no violation; the officer just wanted to tell Wally about his wedding.

The young man said that he and his wife were married in a cedar strip canoe, and Wally's boat reminded him of that wonderful day. Apparently, a hand-crafted boat can be far more than just a way to travel; it ignites things of the spirit, of the heart... dreams, connections, stories, wanderlust, creativity. Could the "Tiswilde Itch" have suddenly jumped to the mainland?

"Now," says Wally, thinking of Ormond Griffin and Cos Loustalot, "I wonder who will step forward at the appropriate time to finish that Dutch galleon?"

The next chapter awaits in Beecher Bay.

What's Coming Up in Moralea's Meadow?

Merrilee Hoen

April 9, 2026 marked a milestone for Moralea's Meadow when it became an Official Geocache Site. Geocaching is a popular international hobby with millions of participants and caches worldwide. Equipped with a Global Positioning System receiver, participants use coordinates and other clues to locate hidden caches which are often boxes containing a logbook. (Ours is located outside the fence.) Within a few hours of the site receiving its official designation, an FTF (first to find) logged in. It was a Metchosin resident who said they had not previously known about the Meadow and described it as "very special place". We hope that this will be the first of many geocachers to discover the Meadow and the wider Metchosin community. If you would like to participate, please visit geocaching.com.

We extend a warm welcome to our two newest volunteers, Vicky and Eve and wish to remind everyone that new volunteers are always welcome. On-the-job training is provided. Use the contact information below to find out more.

We have been asked to provide a presentation for the May Talk and Walk series. Look elsewhere in the *Muse* for details about this.

May 10 is a highlight on the Meadow calendar. It is Mother's Day, the opening day for the Metchosin Farmers' Market and the third annual Open Day at Moralea's Meadow. As usual, our gates will be open next door to the Market, and we will have an information table. Garry Oak seedlings and other plants will be available by donation. Group members will be available to show you through the Meadow and answer your questions about restoration and native plants.

Plants in bud or bloom: June Plum, Red Flowering Currant, Fawn Lily, Shooting Stars, Miner's Lettuce, Spring Gold, Oregon Grape, and Western Buttercup. Come to see them before they fade.

Plants sprouting: Alum root, Yarrow, Satin Flower, Woolly Sunflower, Camas, Self-heal, Nodding Onion, Fool's Onion, Red Columbine, Farewell to Spring, Sea Blush, Sword Fern, Field Chickweed, and Licorice Fern.

Animal activity in and around the Meadow: Thatching Ants, their nest is decades old.

For more information about volunteering or to arrange a group tour, please use the contact information below.

Contact information:

Facebook: Moralea's Meadow – Metchosin.

Email: info@moraleasmeadow.ca

Website: www.moraleasmeadow.ca



Red Flowering Currant. Merrilee photo.

May 2026 Talk & Walk: Moralea's Meadow

Andy MacKinnon and Kem Luther

The Metchosin Biodiversity Project (metchosin-biodiversity.com) has three objectives:

- Increase our understanding of Metchosin's species and ecosystems.
- Share natural history information with interested people.
- Use this information to protect Metchosin's species and ecosystems.

The primary way we "Share natural history information with interested people" is through our Talk & Walk (T&W) series, Friday night talks followed by Saturday walks. The T&Ws are always free, fun, family-friendly events, featuring tea and cookies. The first T&W was in 2006 – two decades ago!

Our first 2026 T&W was in February, by Kem Luther and Andy MacKinnon, reviewing the exceptional year 2025, where the Metchosin Biodiversity Project added approximately 450 new species to our list for Metchosin. Our April T&W was Cara Herrington's fabulous presentation on her research on one of Metchosin's most charismatic creatures – the Turkey Vulture.

Our April T&W encouraged us to look up at our vulture-filled skies. For our May T&W, our eyes will turn to the ground - specifically, to the wonderful spring blooms in Moralea's Meadow. Metchosin T&W #130 happens on Friday, May 15, and Saturday May 16. The Talk will take place Friday at 7:00 pm in our new venue at the Metchosin Arts Centre in the upstairs event room, across the street from My-Chosen Café. As always, cookies and drinks will be provided at the talk. On Saturday morning May 16, 10:00 am, the Moralea's Meadow team is excited to host a visit to the Meadow, which should be at the height of its spring wildflower bloom.

As a passionate champion of the natural environment, Moralea Milne always recognized the potential of the small plot of Garry oak and Douglas-fir located on the Metchosin municipal grounds. After her untimely death, a group of Metchosinites came together in 2018 to restore this meadow as a living memorial to a woman dearly missed by the community. At the talk on Friday night, Katy Nelson will discuss the work completed in the Meadow to date, lessons learned along the way, the current status of the Meadow, and the group's future plans.

Please join us.

PS. Many of you knew Hans Roemer, who helped us a lot with species inventory in Metchosin. His Celebration of Life will be on May 10, 2:00 pm, at the Horticulture Centre of the Pacific, in Victoria, BC.



Wildflowers in the Meadow. Bev Hall photo.



Moralea joins Katy Nelson (right) to start work on the Meadow. Photographer unknown.



Entrance sign to the Meadow. Bev Hall photo.

Distracted Realism: When What We See Meets What We Feel

Phyllis Schwartz

This spring, Metchosin ArtPod Gallery invites visitors into a rich in-between world where realism blurs into memory, emotion, and imagination. The new exhibition, *Distracted Realism*: deviations from the norms of realism, offers a fresh look at how artists move between what they see and what they feel. It invites viewers to slow down, look a little longer, and notice how their own memories and emotions colour what they see on the wall.

The artists in *Distracted Realism* push beyond the visible, rather than presenting straightforward pictures of the world. Images are fragmented, layered, and sometimes distorted, inviting viewers into that moment when a familiar scene slips into possibility and intuition. This is where a landscape becomes a memory, a figure becomes a feeling, and the line between realism and abstraction begins to dissolve.

Running from May 8 to June 28 at 4495 Happy Valley Road, the show brings together paintings and mixed media works that occupy the shifting territory between what is clearly seen and what is deeply felt. The gallery is open on Friday, Saturday, and Sunday from 11:00 am. to 4:00 pm.

The exhibition explores themes of identity, place,

memory, and personal experience. Each artist brings a distinct approach, but all share a commitment to honouring the artist's inner perception as much as the outward subject. Serving as juror and featured artist is mixed media artist Sheryl Fisher, known for her interest in abstraction and figurative painting. Over the course of her studio practice, Fisher has moved fluidly between representational and abstract approaches, working primarily with acrylics and mixed media.

Her earlier work often focused on characters with compelling stories: passionate musicians, quirky street performers, women with attitude, and the abandoned dogs she encountered in Mexico. These narrative subjects laid the groundwork for the more introspective direction of her current work.

Today, Fisher's practice centres on personal discovery through collage. She begins with a concept, then lets intuition take the lead – selecting papers and paint colours, arranging, and layering them, then scraping or sanding back areas to reveal what lies beneath. At times, she scribbles thoughts directly onto the surface, then rearranges and repeats these processes until the work feels true. As she works, memories surface or a sense of

clarity emerges. Her abstract pieces become a kind of visual journaling: a private exploration that still leaves space for the viewer's own response.

A free artist talk, *Disrupting Realism: Art that Challenges Perception* will be a feature of the show. On Saturday, June 27, 1:00-3:00 pm, ArtPod member Diana Smith will invite participants to explore the disrupting nature of art. Disrupted realism, the theme of the artworks chosen for the show, is an art category usually seen as a bridge between realistic imagery and abstraction. Instead, Diana will give this blend of recognizable imagery and abstraction a room of its own. She will consider how the genre has potential to challenge our view of reality that may be more realistic than we thought.

To complement the exhibition, Metchosin ArtPod is hosting a *Distracted Abstract Collage* workshop with Cindy McMath on Saturday, June 20, from 1:00 to 4:30 pm. at 4495 Happy Valley Road, Metchosin, BC. The cost is \$85, and supplies are included. Open to all skill levels, the workshop emphasizes play, exploration, and composition.

The gallery's spring programming around *Distracted Realism* includes two solo exhibitions that echo the show's

central themes. From May 1 to 17, *Dream Fragments* by Cindy McMath explores the role that dreams and daydreams play in her creative process. Prone to vivid dreams, McMath often finds herself painting in her sleep. On waking, only traces remain: a cluster of colours, a sense of shapes, or a fleeting mood. During the day, she jots down ideas and doodles designs, trying to daydream her way back into those nocturnal images.

Later in the month, from May 22 to June 7, the exhibition *Dare to Be Happy* by

Pierrette Vezina takes centre stage, with a Q & A on May 23 at 1:00 pm. Working in an abstract, intuitive style, Vezina embeds collage and script onto her surface, then uses a limited palette to build tonal variations and visual harmony. Bold brush strokes and large, messy marks are central to her work – a visual declaration of a life lived fully and authentically.

For more information about the exhibition, related events, and the workshop, visit metchosinartpod.ca.



The Waiting Room: part of the *Distracted Realism* exhibition. Cindy Mcmath photo

Westmont Students in the POV Gallery

Jessica Veinot - director MACCA

From April 30 until May 24, students in Grades 7 and 8 (ages 11-13) from Westmont Montessori School present their work at the Metchosin Arts and Cultural Centre in an exhibition centered on the theme "Change". Open-ended and expansive, this theme invites reflection on transformation in many forms; personal, social, economic, and political. Their work offers insight into how young people see and interpret a world in motion.

The art program at Westmont is deeply connected to the classroom. Rather than standing alone, it moves alongside studies in geography, science, mathematics, language, and social studies. Ideas are explored across disciplines, and learning becomes a cycle: inquiry leads to creation, and creation deepens

understanding. Students are given the freedom to choose their materials and direction, while guided lessons support both technical skill and conceptual growth.

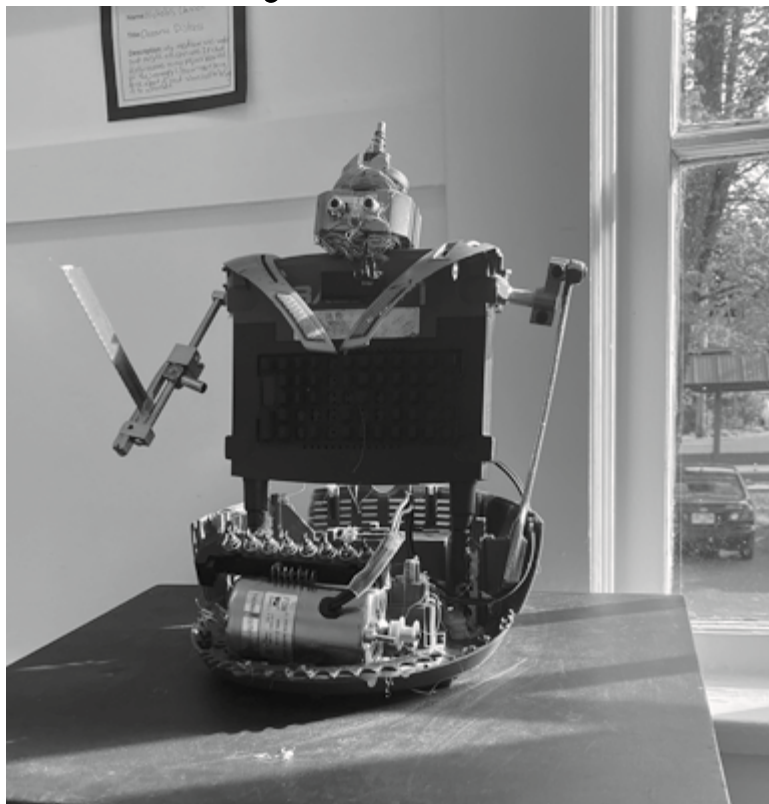
Under the topic Change, students have explored ancient trade routes and the lasting impact these routes had on societies and landscapes. They have considered how the movement of goods also carried ideas, technologies, and cultural practices across regions. Alongside this, students have engaged with the complexities of climate change, examining Earth's systems and the ways environmental shifts affect human life. First Peoples' knowledge and histories are an essential part of this learning, grounding students in perspectives that emphasize relationship, responsibility, and continuity

Change becomes the thread that connects these

explorations. In their artwork, students reflect on transformation over time and in the present moment. They ask questions about movement, impact, and adaptation and consider their own place within these shifting systems.

This exhibition is a collection of those reflections. It is a space where student voice, curiosity, and perspective come forward offering a glimpse into how the next generation is learning to see, understand, and shape an increasingly changing world.

Studio Space Available!
The Metchosin Arts and Cultural Centre Association is taking applications from artists of all disciplines for studio space coming available soon. Application forms are available at metchosinartcentre.ca/studios



Junk Bot.

Half Full or Half Empty?

Carol Voyt

The District Chief Financial Officer's recent analysis of the Old School property provides an opportunity for some reflection and factchecking.

Regarding the gym's rental status, I have heard local residents expressing concern that the gym is under-utilized and others claiming that pickleball players are monopolizing the gym. So, let us review the facts. If we consider a usage level for a public gymnasium to be twelve hours per day, seven days per week, then the district's gym is currently booked and utilized about

50% of that time. Thus, at its current 50% utilization rate, gym rentals (combined with revenue from renting the playing field) are providing a revenue of 50%. This is close to the district's 60% cost recovery target. If gym bookings were to increase by a further 10% of the available time, the district's cost recovery target for that component of the Old School would be met.

The bulk of the gym's current rentals come from the Metchosin Pickleball Club (MPC). Individual MPC members typically use the gym for only two to four hours per week. In addition to providing a steady and substantial

District revenue stream, having this unique local venue for pickleball has brought hundreds of people together to learn, play, exercise, recreate, and socialize. A spin-off benefit has been the post-game patronage of Metchosin's village core businesses by scores of pickleball enthusiasts.

A more varied picture emerges in reviewing utilization rates, levels of cost recovery success, and contribution to community well-being from the other users of the Old School. Lease rentals from other parts of the Old School (e.g. Mile Zero Brewery) are delivering the highest level of cost recovery rate (> 100%) and

thus helping to offset lower returns from other school users. Tenants like the Metchosin Pre-School and Seniors' Resource Centre are delivering important social benefits for younger and older members of our community, while ArtPod is providing a very popular venue for local artists with gallery space for visitors. In contrast, two school components exist for which original aspirations and expectations have been slower in materializing. The commercial kitchen in the newer portion of the school, developed at a capital cost of about \$400,000, remains at a low utilization rate and a cost recovery level (combined

with classroom rentals) of only 13.0%, while the 42% of rentable Old School space currently managed by MACCA is attaining a cost recovery rate of only 8.5%. This may warrant a re-envisioning of optimal uses for a community asset that is meant to serve residents' needs and interests, over the long term.

Whether you envision current Old School utilization as a glass half full or half empty, finding a pathway toward enhancing use and cost recovery would seem like a worthwhile undertaking.

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Evening Knitting Café	1st & 3rd Mondays	7:00 pm - 9:00 pm
Drop-In Art Group	Tuesdays	10:00 am - 1:00 pm
Afternoon Knitting Café	2nd & 4th Tuesdays	1:00 pm - 4:00 pm
Embers	Tuesdays	6:15 pm - 8:15 pm
Weights & Measures	Tuesday Mornings	8:30 am - 10:00 am
Scouts	Thursdays	6:30 pm - 8:30 pm
Creative Rug Hooking	1st & 3rd Fridays	12:00 am - 3:00 pm
Parents & Tots Program	Fridays	9:30 am - 11:30 pm
Friday Social	Last Friday of the Month	1:00 pm - 3:00 pm
Ukulele Group	3rd Friday of the Month	5:00 pm - 6:30 pm
Friday Night Films	Last Friday of the Month	7:00 pm - 10:00 pm
Rough Voice Singers	3rd Sunday of the Month	2:00 pm - 4:00 pm

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EVENTS at METCHOSIN

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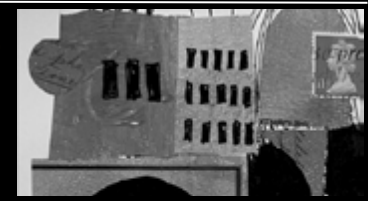


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Metchosin ArtPod



May 22 - June 7
Q&A Sat 23 May (1-2 PM)
Metchosin ArtPod

Pierrrette Vecina
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Not Living in Denial

Charmaine Welch

When we moved from Gordon Head, in 1989, I was reluctant to leave my former neighbourhood and all the nearby conveniences. My partner, Pete, started school in Metchosin and moved away in grade six, so it was a bit of a repatriation for him.

My previous history with Metchosin was a bit tenuous. My father's family rented a house, two blocks from where we live now, for a couple of years during the Depression. In a manner of speaking, our arrival in this glorious municipality felt like a homecoming.

Our little family consisted of Mike, who was entering kindergarten, and Jen, who was in grade three. Max and Rudy were born after our migration, three years apart. These four mini adults were slated to be the keys to our social and community life.

In 1989, in the short distance between Lombard and Taylor Roads, our block boasted 21 kids: four girls and 17 boys. Today we have two girls and four boys (we recently welcomed newborn Simon Watson next door). This is proof that our Metchosin population has been on an aging trajectory for a long time. We may have lost our Metchosin Elementary School to this youth-depressed population.

Our busy lives quickly included many children and their parents met in our neighbourhood, at the elementary school, and preschool. Many of the relationships forged back then are still going strong.

The obvious reason that so many townies gravitate to our beautiful environs is the beautiful environs! So many parks and trails. So much wildlife



WANTED: Moodini. Heather Buchanan photo.

and tame life (isn't tame life the opposite of wildlife?)

For quite a while we had Moodini, the cow who, in 2017, shunned the easy life of being a domestic heifer for the privilege of roaming erratically through said environs. Unfortunately, Moodini was very closed-mouth when she reappeared a year later, in the field from which she had escaped — pregnant. The randy father never stepped forward, and Moodini has not ever revealed what happened during

that year she chose wildlife over her tame life. Another happenstance that arose from that whole episode, I believe, is that Heather Buchanan became a millionaire from the sales of the famous Moodini poster she created to commemorate all the cow sightings on the Galloping Goose Trail.

I love living in our windy town and hope it never turns into a Windy City.

I do not know where Denial is, so I will stick to living out my fairytale life here!

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**World Migratory Bird Day and
RPBO's Victoria Bird Week**
May 10 - 17, 2026



World Migratory Bird Day

Every bird counts...your observations matter.
Register through the Event Calendar at rpbo.org



LA LIMOUSINES
"... it's how you get there."

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BBB ACCREDITED BUSINESS

For information on local events, please see **Important Dates & Events, p. 11.**



DO YOUR SHOES FIT PROPERLY?




123-755 Goldstream Rd.

Stop by for a **FREE shoe fitting with a Fit Expert** at Fronrunners Langford in Goldstream Village.

www.fronrunners.ca

Seniors' Resource Centre

M E T C H O S I N

Yvonne Cottrell, Office Manager

We still have five spaces available for our United Way grant-funded, in-person seniors driving lessons, at no cost to you. Call to register.

WEST SHORE GRIEF & LOSS PEER SUPPORT GROUP

Monday, May 4 10:00 - 11:30am

Contact: Marianne at 250-896-5179

65+ BUS TRIPS!

Thursday, May 7, 1:00 - 2:00pm - Juan De Fuca Library

METCHOSIN CAREGIVER SUPPORT GROUP

Thursday, May 21, 10:00 - 11:30 am

Share the experience of caring for family members or friends.

Register at cgsupport@familycaregiversbc.ca or phone 250-384-0408.

FRIDAY SOCIAL AT METCHOSIN COMMUNITY HOUSE

Friday, May 29, 1:00-3:00 pm

Metchosin Community House, 4430 Happy Valley Rd. Join us for coffee, tea, delicious snacks, and friendly conversation. Hosted by the Baha'i Group, supported by SRC.

Homemade Soup by Donation: : Graciously made by Volunteers in partnership with the Community House, pick up there or at SRC.

Looking for help with your laptop, computer, printer, or cell phone? Our wonderful volunteer Ken Black is here to help by donation to the Centre!

Please contact SRC to register for presentations and rides to our events. Join our Better at Home Program! Volunteers offer friendly visits, rides (medical/groceries) to help seniors live independently. Call for details!

Become a Lifetime Member for a one-time fee of \$20.

Metchosin Seniors' Resource Centre (SRC)
1047-4495 Happy Valley Road
250-478-5150 • info@metchosinseniors.ca • www.metchosinseniors.ca

RCMP

CallOuts MARCH 2026

West Shore RCMP | GRC de West Shore

There were 70 calls for service in Metchosin for the month of March. A summary of the calls for service is reported below, however, due to privacy concerns, limited information is provided, and not all 70 files are included.

- | | | | | | | | |
|--------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Mar. 6 | Traffic school zone patrols at Hans Helgesen Elementary School. | Mar. 7 | Traffic patrols in the 4100 block of Metchosin Road. | Mar. 12 | Police attended a collision on Sooke Road at Impala Road in which a vehicle had struck a deer. Vehicle had minor damage and was able to drive away from the scene. | Mar. 26 | Police attended a report of an assault with a weapon in a residence. Suspect was arrested and held for court. |
| Mar. 6 | Report of a bylaw noise complaint near Albert Head Lagoon. Source of noise gone prior to police arrival. | Mar. 8 | West Shore RCMP assisted Metchosin Fire with a report of a possible explosive device washed on shore at Weir Beach. Canadian Armed Forces explosive unit was contacted and disposed of the marine flare. | Mar. 15 | Traffic patrols in the 4400 block of Happy Valley Road. | Mar. 28 | Police responded to a report to check on a female walking in the middle of the roadway on William Head Road. Police patrolled the area but did not locate the female. |
| Mar. 7 | Report of a loose dog in the 4000 block of Sooke Road. Dog ran into a nearby forest and was not located by police, despite search efforts. | Mar. 10 | Police attended a report of two males fighting in a residence. One male was located and arrested for being intoxicated in a public place and held in RCMP cells overnight. | Mar. 20 | Police responded to a theft report, in which a boat trailer license plate was stolen while parked at Pedder Bay Marina. | Mar. 28 | Police attended to a stop sign that had been knocked down at Rocky Point Road and Liberty Drive. Emcon was contacted to repair the sign. |
| Mar. 7 | A two-vehicle collision between an SUV and motorcycle occurred on Lindholm Road at Kangaroo Road. Based on the circumstances of the event, the motorcycle driver was issued a violation ticket for <i>Change Lane Unsafely</i> . Minor injuries sustained, impairment not a factor. | Mar. 11 | Traffic school zone patrols at Westmont Montessori School. | Mar. 20 | Police attended a report of a firearms offence, which was determined to be a pellet gun. The suspect was located and warned for utilizing the pellet gun. | Mar. 29 | Officers set up a preventative impaired driving check stop in the 3700 block of Sooke Road. Approximately thirty vehicles were stopped, and no impaired drivers were found. |
| | | Mar. 11 | A driving complaint received regarding a commercial vehicle. Company of vehicle issued a formal warning letter regarding the driving behaviour. | Mar. 24 | Traffic patrols in the 4300 block of Metchosin Road. | | |
| | | Mar. 12 | A report of a possible impaired driver unable to maintain their lane. Driver was located and determined to not be impaired. They were warned about their driving behaviour. | Mar. 26 | Traffic patrols in the 4500 block of Happy Valley Road. | | |
| | | | | Mar. 26 | A vehicle and motorcycle were reported to have been racing in the 4500 block of Metchosin Road, resulting in the motorcycle losing control and sliding approximately 30 feet. After investigation, both drivers issued violation tickets for <i>Driving Without Consideration</i> . | | |

Important Dates & Events

MAY

- May 2 Co-op Preschool raffle start..... p. 3
- May 8 Distracted Realism exhibition opens p. 7
- May 10 Mother's Day/ Farmers' Market.....
- May 13 Muse deadline
- May 23-24 MCA Garage Sale p. 8
- May 18 Victoria Day
- May 22 Exhibition opening: Dare to be Happy p. 7
- June 6 Hans Helgesen bottle drive starts
- Council Meetings p. 2
- House Happenings p. 8

Fire Department Call-Outs

MARCH 2026

Dan Verdun ECFO, Fire Chief
Metchosin Fire Department

March had a total of 41 callouts as follows:

Medical	30
Motor Vehicle Incident	3
Fire	2
Burn complaint	3
Public Assist	1
Alarms	2

What's happening?

If you know, we'd love to hear about it.

metchosinmuse@gmail.com

What We've Learned About Rocks and Minerals

Alwen Rambo and Division 5
(Grades 2 and 3)

One of the highlights of our year together in division 5 is our study of rocks and minerals. We learned about the formation of the three rock families and how minerals combine to form different rocks. We drew diagrams and conducted experiments, and we studied lots of different rocks! Everyone got to build their own rock collection to take home.

This year we made paint from a special kind of shale that was given to us by the Quinney family. We also experimented with paints made from different minerals and made our own colour charts with drawings of the minerals that each paint was made from. We created a rocks and minerals museum to share our learning with our families. One of our favourite parts was demonstrating the amazing colours in the fluorescent minerals with different types of UV lights.



Rocks change into new types of metamorphic rocks when exposed to immense heat and pressure. Joannie Challenger photo.



Lennon, Maddi, and Emmie with our collection of mineral paints. Joannie Challenger photo.



Our volcano model shows where different types of igneous rocks are formed. Joannie Challenger photo.

Birds of Metchosin: The Black Oystercatcher

Katie Pirquet

One of Metchosin's less frequently celebrated, but most worthy birds is the remarkably adapted Black oystercatcher. Inhabitant of rocky shores, these large, glossy black birds are easy to spot, with their long, straight, bright red bills, startling yellow eyes ringed in red, and strong, pink legs. These are not aquatic birds (no webbed feet!); but they do inhabit stretches of rocky shoreline, numerous small, rugged islands, and occasionally sand or mud flats such as Esquimalt Lagoon. They forage mostly for shellfish, "prying" their way into or under mollusc shells with their laterally flattened beaks, which are also fine tools

for poking into small, rocky crevices and probing gravel, sand, or mud. Oystercatchers feed primarily on shellfish – mostly mussels, and limpets, but they also enjoy crustaceans such as crabs and barnacles. Oddly, they rarely feed on oysters.

These birds are fun to watch. They are noisy, active, and quite territorial, with several different calls and piping whistles when in flight, alarmed, or posturing. If you catch them courting, their weirdly charming, synchronized dance routine will richly reward some patient observation.

Oystercatchers spend time together, mostly in pairs or family groups, with vigorously defending territories

during the summer. They will form large flocks in winter, especially where mussels are abundant.

Monogamous couples produce one brood a year, with the females laying several small, lightly speckled pebble-like eggs in depressions in the stony substrate – no comfortable nests for these hardy souls! The young are mobile very quickly after hatching. Fledglings are fed by both parents and will be ready for their first flight in about a month. It is not an undemanding life for these industrious birds, but they are protected in both Canada and the USA, and their populations are relatively stable throughout their range, from Alaska to Mexico.



Black oystercatcher. Marian Brown photo.

A sorrowful farewell to Heidi

Muse Traveller



Johnny Ranns doing volunteer work for Water operators without Borders in British Virgin Islands. Marcel Masiraca photo



Councillor Donaldson with Heidi. Allen Jones photo.