



## From the President's Desk - January/February 2024

January was named after the Roman god Janus who was the god of beginnings and transitions. Julius Caesar developed the Julian calendar in 46 BCE, which formed the basis of the calendar we know today naming the first month of the year after this deity. When we think of Janus we see a Roman god with two faces; one looking back and the other looking forward to the coming year.

Looking forward in terms of the BCGREA means we will have some administrative changes that will result in a new schedule for the Branch.

There is a major change in our accounting system as directed by the Provincial Association. Previously our branch accounting year was from July to June with elections in May of any given year. This year we are moving to a standardized accounting system in which all branches will use the calendar year as their accounting year (January to December). This means budgets etc must be ready by January of the new fiscal year, and funds will be received in March of that year. This may also affect the timing of our branch elections – so please stay tuned on that.

Secondly you will notice that general meeting dates are changing and seem no longer to be fixed for the second Tuesday of the month. As you know we hold our meetings at the Pro-Patria Legion Hall on Gorge Road. While we try to meet 8-10 times per year we are not always able to book the Legion hall for our particular Tuesdays. We will endeavour to meet on a Tuesday afternoon but it may not always be the same Tuesday every month. So please pay attention to the e-bulletin or the [website](#) to find out what dates have been confirmed for our general membership/speaker presentation meetings.

For example we have a Fraud Prevention presentation from a constable in the Saanich Police at our general meeting at the Pro Patria Legion Hall on **February 6<sup>th</sup>**. Hope to see you there.

February, as we know it today, was first assigned as a month by the King of Rome Numa Pompilius in 700 BCE, then it had 23 days. Our old friend Julius Caesar changed it centuries later (46 BCE), so that February had 28 days and 29 days every four years. Our calendar months have been around for a long time. The latest change, when we moved to our current system, was made under Roman Catholic Pope Gregory in 1582. So now we use a Gregorian twelve month calendar.

February 10, 2024 is the beginning of the Chinese Year of the Dragon, a year of creativity and opportunity. The sign of the Dragon is a part of a twelve year cycle in Chinese astrology.

It is also a leap year in 2024 so I would like to wish anyone born on February 29 a very Happy Birthday. Birthdays are probably more precious if you only have one every four years.

February 29 is also known as the Bachelor Day or Ladies Privilege in Ireland and Scotland, as it was the only day when patient women could propose marriage to their men. I am sure that the traditions of February 29 are not limited to Ireland, but available throughout the world. - Just sayin'!

Stay Warm and Well this winter.

Barbara Golder, President

BCGREA Victoria Branch 1200

## Upcoming Events for 2024

### February 2024

You are invited to an in-person presentation only with Saanich Police's Community Engagement Division Liaison Officer, Constable (Cst.) Berle Zwaan.

- What is **fraud**?
- How is it **committed**?
- How do we **identify** it?
- How do we **prevent** it?

**Date:** Tuesday, February 6th, 2024

**Location:** Trafalgar/Pro Patria Legion

411 Gorge Road East, Victoria BC

**Time:** 2:00 pm—4:00 pm, doors open 1:30 pm

**In order for Marilyn Spencer to plan this event please RSVP no later than Jan 28th** so that we can advise the venue the number of attendees expected. Refreshments will be provided.

Please email to our **victoria branch email address— by clicking below:**

**Subject:** [February 6th Meeting](#)

**Member Name:**

**Guest Name:**

Parking is limited so please consider carpooling!

Cst. Berle Zwaan is in her 28<sup>th</sup> year of policing. She has served in Traffic, Mountain Bikes, Administration, Patrol, and the Child Abuse Team. Cst. Berle Zwaan has recently joined the Community Engagement Division after several years in the Detective Division as a Financial Crimes Investigator. This is where she learned about the changing landscape of current financial crime trends and some of the skills and techniques which she will pass on to you during this very informative session.

### March 2024



March isn't just about the return of Spring but alas, the sharpening of pencils (physically or on-line) as we attend to the annual filing of the personal income tax return.

Here to assist us is our Guest Speaker for March, Sarah Bennett, CVITP and Benefits Outreach Officer, Western Region of the Canada Revenue Agency (CRA). She will give her annual presentation providing you the opportunity to ask questions and learn more to complete your taxation return for 2023.

**Date:** Tuesday, March 12, 2024

**Location:** via Zoom only

**Time:** 1:30 - 3:00PM. Virtual room opens at 1PM.

Zoom meeting details will be sent out in early March.

We look forward to hearing more about this very important topic!

## Members Corner

### Long Standing Members



If you have been a member of the **BCGREA for 20 years or more**, please tell us so that we can honour your achievement with a Life Member pin at one of our events!

Please email your name, and **month** (if known) and **year you joined** to:

[victoriabranch@bcgre.ca](mailto:victoriabranch@bcgre.ca)

Subject: Life Member Pin

Also, if you have a story to share of your time with the BC Government or Broader Public Sector and your retirement life, I would love to hear from you!

Please contact Laura Lam, Editor, Victoria Branch News, at the email above.

## 2023 Monthly Gift Card Winners



A complete list of winners for gift cards drawn during our General Meetings is now on our website. Congratulations to our winners!

[2023 Monthly Gift Card Winners – BC Government Retired Employees Association \(bcgre.ca\)](#)

## From the Head Gardener of Horticulture Centre of the Pacific

### Let's Talk Seasonal Plants!

Poinsettias (Euphorbia) are the most popular holiday plants.

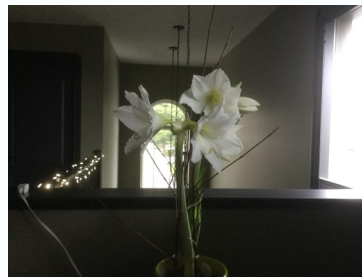
Native to Mexico, they change color in response to day length.

Their flowers are made up of the colorful bracts (modified leaves) and the tiny yellow flower is in the center of the bracts.

They need to be kept away from heat and cold drafts.

Indirect light and constant moisture will keep them looking good for several months.

The plant produces a latex in its stem and can cause skin irritation.



Amaryllis (Hippeastrum) brightens the darkest days of winter.

Once planted, it takes about 6-8 weeks to bloom.

Once growth appears, move to a brighter room (avoid direct sunlight) and water more frequently.

Stake flowers if needed and cooler temperatures prolong flowering times.

Waxed Amaryllis are super easy to grow—they require no soil or water.

The bulb contains all the water and nutrients it needs to flower.

Simply place it on a plate/saucer in a well-lit room and watch it grow!

Paperwhite Narcissus adds color and fragrance to your room.

They can be planted in stones in a shallow pot with no drainage holes or in a pot with soil and good drainage.

Keep them in a cool, dark area until growth appears and then move them into a bright room, cooler temperatures prolong the blooming period.

Linda Petite

Head Gardener, Horticulture Centre of the Pacific



The Lunar New Year will begin on February 10, 2024. It will end on January 28, 2025. In 2024 the Chinese zodiac features the Year of the Dragon.

Years of the Dragon include 2024, 2012, 2000, 1988, 1976, 1964, 1952

Famous people born in the Year of the Dragon include Bruce Lee, Martin Luther King Jr, and John Lennon.



## Christmas Luncheon, December 12, 2023



The Victoria Branch Executive was very happy that so many of you came to celebrate and socialize with us at **Vista 18@Chateau Victoria** for our sold out Christmas luncheon!

A most appreciative thanks to members of the Board and the hard working team of House and Social Director, Marilyn Spencer for doing a beautiful job as always. Thanks Marilyn, Marita, and Susanne!

Second Upper Right Photo:

Anne and Jim

Third Lower Right Photo:

Left: Gord, Vic, Neela, Right: Ian, Astrid and Mel

Bottom Lower Right:

Brian and daughter Michele

Also celebrating her 70th Birthday is Elizabeth S! L-R: Susan, Elizabeth, Barb & Vicki.



## Your Favourite Travel Memories



## Falling in Love with Canada on a Greyhound Bus

We asked our readers to share with us a memorable travel experience.

I have many good travel memories, especially from my decades of diving in various locations in the world.

My favourite is finding an underwater “treasure” in a bay on Newfoundland’s east coast.

Clay containers - both glazed and unglazed - had been found in this area before, and I was poking around in 60 feet of water, when I noticed a coral encrustation, a couple of square inches in size, which looked too regular to be a rock. I began pushing my neoprene-mitted hand down beside the object, and it kept going farther and farther along a smooth surface. After about 20 minutes, I had dug out of the sand this fully intact relic. I was thrilled!

When asked for information, the Royal Ontario Museum informed us that in the 16th and 17th centuries, Portuguese, Basque and Spanish ships fishing the Grand Banks would anchor in the bays on the east coast of Newfoundland and toss overboard vessels whose contents were used up.

My clay pot contained remains of pitch, used for caulking seams of wooden boats.

This find, back in May 1981, ranks as my favourite travel memory.



Laura Carolina, 1981 Nfld Clay Pot

In 1972 I was a twenty-year old English university student ‘doing’ America. After working on Long Island, New York State for the summer I purchased a \$99.00 Greyhound bus ticket and set off to see the United States for three weeks. My ticket took me to San Francisco where I had to make a choice – to go south to the Grand Canyon or north to the Canadian Rockies. I tossed my trusty lucky British sixpence and smiled as the Queen’s head came up. My course was set, so I took the bus to Seattle and the Princess Margarite ferry to Victoria and the rest of Canada.

Coming from the UK, Victoria seemed normal to me, and my schedule required I had ten days to travel back to the New York and my flight back to Blighty. The new BC Ferries were in service, but the Schwarz Bay terminal was not complete, so the bus took passengers to Nanaimo where we caught the ferry to Horseshoe Bay.

It was an interesting journey over the Malahat with views over the fjord I now know as Finlayson Arm. The bus drove onto the ferry, crossed the Georgia Strait (now the Salish Sea) and arrived in magnificent and awesome Howe Sound, where six thousand foot mountains rose from the sea.

The bus pulled off the ferry and took us to the Upper Levels Highway and then it happened – I looked down on the City of Vancouver and felt my breath ebbing away, my heart racing, and butterflies dive bombing my innards as I fell hopelessly, undeniably and completely in love.

I was suddenly thrust into a new reality in which Stanley Park and the glass fronted high-rise buildings in the West End looked like a shimmering castle on a lily pad. The magical city with its alluring beauty caused my brain to buzz but

loud enough to suppress the words going through my head “I must live here”.

Love at first sight can do that to you. I took me three more years before I cleared immigration in YVR as a Landed Immigrant, and I have been in love with Canada ever since. Vancouver has not lost its beauty, but studies and life circumstances brought me home to Victoria for the last 40 years.

BTW I still haven’t seen the Grand Canyon.

Barbara Golder

Thanks so much to Laura Carolina and Barbara Golder for sharing their special travel stories with us!

If you have a travel memory you’d like to share, please send a note to Laura Lam, Editor, Victoria Branch News at:

[victoriabranch@bcgre.ca](mailto:victoriabranch@bcgre.ca)



## Winter Olympics Word Search Puzzle Solution

Let's have fun with Winter Olympics 2026

A	L	P	I	N	E	S	K	I	I	N	G	P	Y	Q	N	C	Z
G	C	I	V	T	J	S	N	V	C	E	H	C	W	H	S	R	C
L	R	V	S	X	N	Y	L	Q	O	V	N	O	D	J	M	O	A
S	V	K	H	W	R	E	H	V	R	Y	W	J	P	C	Q	S	H
H	G	T	V	C	H	K	Y	S	T	N	X	C	Q	N	O	S	V
O	M	K	R	C	V	C	M	B	I	A	T	H	L	O	N	C	L
R	N	F	V	T	I	O	W	C	N	D	H	J	E	M	Z	O	N
T	O	B	O	K	M	H	C	S	A	S	J	O	W	N	K	U	P
T	R	Q	H	E	V	E	Y	C	D	K	W	K	P	R	C	N	E
R	D	C	A	S	Q	C	W	W	A	H	F	R	I	M	O	T	J
A	I	O	Z	S	K	I	J	U	M	P	I	N	G	P	V	R	B
C	C	T	R	E	D	H	L	C	P	V	G	C	N	Q	L	Y	S
K	C	B	E	C	P	G	U	Y	E	K	U	B	I	B	A	S	H
S	O	K	M	F	O	R	V	D	Z	S	R	N	D	M	E	K	L
P	M	W	D	V	L	Q	N	C	Z	Q	E	O	R	Y	B	I	E
E	B	A	V	I	U	K	S	S	O	C	S	M	A	N	P	I	C
E	I	Z	N	B	G	F	Y	C	C	B	K	Q	O	W	H	N	B
D	N	G	C	G	E	Y	V	G	U	O	A	Z	B	S	G	G	Q
S	E	V	F	T	H	B	R	V	D	R	T	F	W	A	I	G	Z
K	D	C	C	R	F	W	V	P	C	S	I	E	O	L	E	K	Y
A	V	B	S	K	E	L	E	T	O	N	N	H	N	S	L	S	E
T	S	V	Q	U	N	E	F	D	S	A	G	L	S	P	S	B	O
I	Q	J	Z	V	G	N	S	C	L	G	J	D	L	E	B	E	N
N	F	J	A	W	C	U	W	T	T	F	P	V	W	E	O	P	D
G	C	E	V	H	W	T	R	Q	Y	K	C	B	X	D	B	L	J
B	X	O	R	S	F	G	B	P	D	L	M	N	N	S	F	Q	L
N	J	N	A	L	I	M	S	G	C	W	E	D	E	K	L	S	I
A	R	U	A	O	S	F	I	D	N	U	A	S	P	A	W	T	W
V	I	H	V	M	P	Y	W	C	C	O	H	H	K	T	P	X	C
S	K	I	M	O	U	N	T	A	I	N	E	E	R	I	N	G	M
K	R	J	B	H	E	F	A	L	W	R	M	E	D	N	I	Y	K
A	S	G	J	E	K	V	X	V	K	D	I	P	O	G	U	N	H
G	J	S	R	C	J	K	Y	B	M	V	F	J	W	C	N	O	G

Words

Meaning

Milan	Main Host City
Cortina D'Ampezzo	Main Host City
Alpine Skiing	
Biathlon	
Bobsleigh	
Cross Country Skiing	
Curling	
Figure Skating	
Freestyle Skiing	
Ice Hockey	
Luge	
Nordic Combined	
Short Track Speed Skating	
Skeleton	
Ski Jumping	
Ski Mountaineering	
Snow Boarding	
Speed Skating	





## Understanding Your Pension

If you have questions regarding when your next pension payment is due, or want to track the history of your previous pension amounts, and/or change your beneficiary, you can register for [My Account](#) with the BC Pension Corporation, where you can view payment history for each month, payment dates for 2023, etc. It is very safe and secure and gives you information you need to manage your pension.

<https://myaccount.pensionsbc.ca/web/my-account/sign-in>



## Branch Members Contact Update

Keeping track of all our members is no easy task!

So, if you are one of the members that has recently changed carriers or obtained a brand new email, please help us by:

- 1) updating your email address by logging into the new Members Portal.

[Member Portal Access \(findjoo.com\)](#)

The first time you access the portal, you can use any password up to six characters. You can also change your password at any time later.

- 2) For those who prefer to send us an e-mail:

drop us a line to:

[victoriabranch@bcgre.ca](mailto:victoriabranch@bcgre.ca), Attn: Membership Director

**Mailing Address and Phone number updates** are welcome too and can be updated via the member portal, emailed above or sent to our mailing address. See How to Reach Us at the end of this newsletter.

## Good Will Notice

If you know of any member who is hospitalized, sick, or injured please contact Sonja Ruffell at:

[victoriabranch@bcgre.ca](mailto:victoriabranch@bcgre.ca) with the information.

**Thank You!**

## Share the Fun!

In order to keep the branch strong and growing, please remember to share our website,

<https://bcgre.ca/branches/victoria-branch-1200/>

and tell your retired friends and family who receive a Public Service pension of the benefits of joining the BCGREA.

<https://bcgre.ca/join/>

## How to Reach Us

**President: Barbara Golder**

**Email:** [chair.branch1200@bcgre.ca](mailto:chair.branch1200@bcgre.ca)

**1st Vice-Chair: George Bowden**

**Email:** [vicechair.branch1200@bcgre.ca](mailto:vicechair.branch1200@bcgre.ca)

**Treasurer: Ed Forbes**

**Email:** [treasurer.branch1200@bcgre.ca](mailto:treasurer.branch1200@bcgre.ca)

**Secretary: Karin Heimlich**

**Email:** [secretary.branch1200@bcgre.ca](mailto:secretary.branch1200@bcgre.ca)

**Membership Director: Jane Rutherford**

**Email:** [membership.branch1200@bcgre.ca](mailto:membership.branch1200@bcgre.ca)

**Social/House Director: Marilyn Spencer**

**Communications Director: Laura Lam**

**Gerry Buydens: Program Director**

**Sonja Ruffell: Goodwill/Telephone Director**

**Terry Prentice: Director at Large**

**Sarf Ahmed: Director at Large**

To message our team directly please visit our **Contact Information** on our website:

<https://bcgre.ca/branches/victoria-branch-1200/>

Our general branch email is:

[victoriabranch@bcgre.ca](mailto:victoriabranch@bcgre.ca)

**Contact Phone: 250-751-8814** Please leave a message on the voicemail.

**Mailing Address:**

BCGREA Victoria Branch 1200, PO Box 9017,  
STN PROV GOVT, Victoria, B.C. V8W 9L6

Or: <https://bcgre.ca/contact/>

Take care and see you next time!