



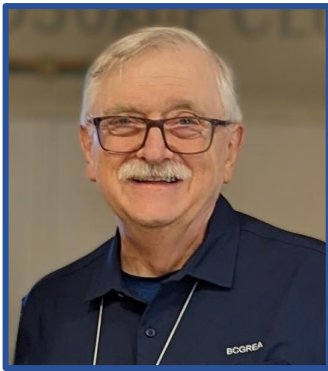
# Annual Newsletter

Western Communities  
Branch 2700

DECEMBER 2025

## BRANCH CHAIR'S ANNUAL CHECK-IN

by  
*Al Coccola*



### **2025 has been a lively and rewarding year for our Branch!**

We enjoyed a great lineup of guest speakers, and on the one occasion when a speaker didn't make it, we still managed to have a good laugh and a good time together.

Our walking group put in plenty of miles, we shared an enjoyable outing to the Chemainus Dinner Theatre, and our summer lunch was a cheerful success. Our year-end celebration at the Langford Legion is shaping up to be just as enjoyable.

To help everyone stay safe during the winter months, we scheduled Zoom meetings—always a big hit with members who live a bit farther out. All year long, we've aimed to offer a program that's both supportive and genuinely fun for our members.

Of course, there is always room to grow, and that's where you come in. If you have suggestions for guest speakers, outings, or presentations, please reach out to anyone on the Planning Committee. We truly value your ideas and will happily explore what's possible. Even dropping by an occasional gathering helps us know we're headed in the right direction. And if you're interested in joining our Planning Committee, we would be thrilled to welcome you!

.....cont'd

## IN THIS ISSUE

**BRANCH CHAIR'S  
Annual Check-in**

---

### MEMBERSHIP

Life Members

---

### MEMBER PROFILES

ARNOLD ROSSANDER

MURRAY JACOBS

---

### HIKES & WALKS

Parks Nearby

---

### GUEST SPEAKERS

What We've Learned

---

### MEMBER TRAVELS

Florence, Italy

---

## THE FUN SECTION

Recipes

Crossword

Special thanks to the members of our 2025 Planning Committee, a great group of people.....intelligent, talented, easy going (so much so, they laugh at my jokes!)

Lynda Hoel, Vice Chair  
Tammy Welch, Treasurer  
Colleen Coccola, Secretary  
Valeska Campbell, Membership  
Sharon Stewart, Facebook/Newsletter  
Dale Chandler. Hikes/Walks-Director at Large  
Helen Myers, Director at Large

We're pleased that six of our eight current committee members will be returning, and we hope to add at least three new faces. We do have a couple of changes ahead: our Secretary, Colleen, and our Treasurer, Tammy, will be stepping down due to other commitments. I will also be passing the torch as Chair. Beginning next year, Lynda Hoel will take on that role for a two-year term, while I move into the Past Chair position to support where needed. From the beginning, my goal has been for the Chair to rotate, keeping ideas fresh and avoiding burnout. I'm confident the Branch will continue to thrive in very capable hands.

Looking ahead to 2026, we're planning an engaging mix of activities and events. Our social & information gatherings will continue—and if winter weather decides to misbehave, we'll simply meet via Zoom to stay warm at home. For our June lunch, we've placed a tentative hold on the new Masonic Centre in Langford, and we'll also have two additional face-to-face gatherings later in the year. With so much on the horizon, there will be plenty of opportunities to share fun, friendship, and community.

**Please join in—and be an active part of the BCGREA.**

We look forward to spending another wonderful year together.

— Al Coccola, Chair (Soon to be Past Chair)

*• Happy Holidays •*



*Our group walked under this on one of our hikes.  
Can you guess which park it's in?*



*Answer: Francis King Park*

## ➤ **MEMBERSHIP - “Life Members”**

Our Branch is now **307** members strong! The following are recognized as having “LIFE” designation, signifying 20 years of active membership in the BCGREA:

*Member Since:*

Albert (Jim) Fisk	1996
Darlene Crighton	1997
Donald Thomson	2001
Alice (Aileen) Larsen	2002
Jim MacDonald	2002
Arnold & Sherry Rossander	2005

**Our branch thanks you for your loyal support!**





It's no secret that most of us BCGREA members have had long lives, which include many interesting chapters. Here is a section where we can share our experiences, and get to know each other. This issue, we're introducing two of our terrific members!

---

## Meet ARNOLD ROSSANDER



***TECH LEADER,  
TRAVELLER,  
COMMUNITY &  
FAMILY MAN***

---

Arnold Walter Rossander was born on Easter Sunday in April 1941 in Edmonton, Alberta, into a family with deep Danish and English roots. His maternal grandparents immigrated from Denmark in the late 1890s, while his paternal line carried generations of North American and European history. Arnold's early years were shaped by frequent moves across Canada

and the United States as his father served in the Royal Canadian Navy. He lived in Winnipeg, Calgary, Washington State, and Esquimalt before the family settled permanently in Vancouver in 1945.

In Vancouver, Arnold attended Hastings Elementary, Templeton Junior High, and Britannia High School before enrolling at the University of British Columbia. He graduated in 1966 with a Bachelor of Commerce in Industrial Engineering, a degree that launched a long and accomplished career in both private industry and the BC Public Service. Two years earlier, in 1964, he married Sherolynne (Sherry) Fenton, beginning a lifelong partnership that would grow into a devoted family of three children, eight grandchildren, and several great-grandchildren.

Arnold's work ethic emerged early. At age six he was already helping his father build houses in Vancouver, gaining practical skills he would value throughout his life. During university he worked at the Eburne Sawmill in Vancouver's Marpole area to support his studies. After graduating, he joined IBM in 1966 as a Data



Processing Marketing Representative and, true to the company's nickname "I've Been Moved," was transferred from Vancouver to Regina after only six weeks. He remained with IBM until 1974.

That year, Arnold transitioned to the BC Public Service in Victoria, joining the newly formed Management Consulting branch of the Ministry of Transportation & Communications as a Senior Consultant. Among his most notable projects was contributing to the creation of the Rentalsman Office and the Rent Commission, initiatives that helped modernize housing oversight in the province.

In 1977, Arnold moved to the new BC Systems Corporation as Manager of Corporate Systems Support and Office Systems Services, overseeing both technical and clerical support across the organization. A decade later, in 1987, he became Director of Information Systems Maintenance for the Ministry of Finance and Corporate Affairs, managing essential government systems. By 1990, he had advanced to Director of Information Systems for the Revenue Division and became one of the early leaders to hold the title of Chief Executive Information Officer (CEIO) within the BC Government. When BC Systems Corporation was restructured as HiTech, Arnold returned formally to government service and continued guiding technology modernization until his retirement in December 1997, concluding a career spanning more than 30 years.

Arnold also dedicated significant time to community service. He was a member of the Queen City Kinsmen Club in Regina, helped organize residents in the Esquimalt Lagoon area on local infrastructure issues, and served nearly three decades with the Pacific Centre Family Services Association as director and past president. His involvement extended to leading the Esquimalt Lagoon Enhancement Association for nine years, participating in the Lagoon Stewardship Initiative, serving as a Sea Scout Master, working as a Census Canada commissioner, and coordinating area efforts for the Heart and Stroke Foundation.

Travel became one of Arnold and Sherry's greatest shared pursuits. Together, they explored nearly every Canadian province, travelled widely through the United States, and ventured through Central and South America, Europe, North Africa, and Mexico. Their 14 winters in San Juan Cosola on the shores of Lake Chapala remain especially treasured.



# Meet MURRAY JACOBS



## ***WHO SAID ACCOUNTANTS ARE BORING!***

---

I was raised in Victoria's Fernwood neighbourhood and attended George Jay Elementary, Central Junior High, and Victoria High. My early working years were spent with BC Forest Products, first at the Gorge Road sawmill and later in Boston Bar. The pay was good, but I knew the work wasn't a long-term fit.

I returned to school, completed a Business Administration diploma at Camosun College, and later earned my professional accounting designation.

My first accounting position was with Eurodown Quilts, a manufacturing and retail company that gave me a solid foundation in business operations. I then joined Anthony Macauley Associates (AMA), a financial and systems consulting firm with multiple contracts in the Provincial Government. Through AMA, I spent a couple of years at the Ministry of Forests in the mid-1980s.

Seeing the Provincial Government as a place with real opportunity and room to grow, I applied directly and joined the Ministry of Health in 1988 as a financial analyst. Over the next 18 years, I held several roles within Health. I contributed to the consolidation of ministry general ledgers into what became the Corporate Financial System, and I was involved in the major restructuring of BC's health system into today's model of five regional health authorities plus one provincial authority.

In 2006, I moved to the Ministry of Tourism, Culture and the Arts, where I eventually became Chief Financial Officer, serving there for about eight years. In 2014, I returned to the Ministry of Forests as CFO and remained in that role until my retirement in 2017.

Retirement, however, proved to be more of a "transition." Over the next few years, I returned to work roughly half a dozen times, taking on contract or auxiliary roles at Ministries including Transportation and Highways, Forests, Health, Public Safety & Solicitor General, and Attorney General. These assignments ranged from a few weeks to nine months. In the last two years, though, I've decided that full retirement suits me just fine.

.....cont'd

In 2020, I joined the board of the Freshwater Fisheries Society of BC as treasurer, which inspired me to dust off my old fishing gear. I've enjoyed visiting several trout hatcheries around the province.

My wife, Susan, is also an accountant, and we are both happily retired. Together we have three daughters from previous marriages, all in their early thirties and living in the Victoria area.

When we retired, we planned to drive across Canada. We bought a 24-foot Class C motorhome just before the pandemic and made good use of it—even if it was mostly parked in our driveway with a glass of wine and a game of Scrabble. In 2022, we finally set off on a four-month, 24,000-kilometre journey to St. John's, Newfoundland and back, visiting all ten provinces. We've explored much of BC as well and are planning a trip to the Yukon next spring.



We've lived on Langford Lake for 12 years and love the peaceful lifestyle. We stay active biking, hiking, and now playing pickleball. Though currently dogless, we enjoy looking after our grand-dogs. I'm also a car enthusiast and until recently owned a 1957 Buick Special—the car I learned to drive on—now sold to a buyer in New Zealand, so visiting there is now on our bucket list!

Life is full and rewarding; I often wonder how I ever had time to work.





## ➤ **OUR HIKES/WALKS** - *by Dale Chandler*

For the past two years, Branch 2700's walking group has been exploring the Western Communities one trail at a time. Last year we completed the Galloping Goose from View Royal to Sooke in 3 km sections—beautiful, flat, and always a favourite.

In 2025, we expanded our horizons and took advantage of the many parks and trails close to home. By the time you read this, we will have completed ten walks—each with its own scenery, challenges, and stories.

We kicked off in February at Devonian Park, where the cold wind didn't stop anyone from enjoying ocean views. It was here our post-walk hot-beverage tradition began—rain-free, miraculously.

March took us to Thetis Lake, a bit hillier than our Goose outings. Our attempt to "avoid the hills" resulted in a longer route, but the sunshine made it worthwhile.



April's stroll along Langford Lake offered an easy out-and-back trail beside the water—still no rain!

In May we circled the Juan de Fuca chip trail, admiring soccer fields, baseball diamonds, a golf course, and wooded pockets before gathering in the covered picnic area for our de-brief.

June and July brought two very different walks at Royal Roads—the lower campus with ocean views, and the upper woodland trails. Both were highlights of the summer.

August saw us make use of free admission to Fort Rodd Hill, wandering past historic fortifications and sweeping ocean views. Park staff added extra insight, and many of us vowed to return.



.....cont'd



In September we visited Francis King Park, known for its accessible paths and informative signage. Our streak of dry weather ended abruptly, teaching us that even a solid path can turn slick in a downpour. Our usual post-walk gathering was abandoned in favour of warm, dry cars!

October's walk, led by intrepid guide Al Coccolla, took us around tiny Ida Anne Pond, through the woods, and along part of Florence Lake, where we admired the newly installed pier and some gorgeous fall weather.

In November we returned to Matheson Lake on a gorgeous fall day. The lake was beautifully calm, the shoreline views were stunning, and the loop back via the Goose made for a perfect finish.



It's been a wonderful year of fresh air and friendship. We typically draw 10–15 walkers—some regulars, others whenever they're able. The routes vary, but we aim for trails most people can enjoy, even if this year involved more hills than the reliable Goose.

The walks offer exercise, discovery, and great company. We plan to keep stepping our way through 2026 and hope you'll join us whenever you can. Lace up and come along!

## ➤ GUEST SPEAKERS



Time to toot our own horn. Our Planning Committee once again searched out guests to provide us with presentations about interesting, & often downright, fascinating topics. Our meetings continue to be fun, social events while offering opportunities to learn about new things. Also, because we're a good-humoured bunch, we usually enjoy a few laughs.

Here's a summary & some links for those who were unable to attend....

### ★ *Feb:* **Service Canada & Revenue Canada**

- Via Zoom, a rep from each of these government agencies provided us with tons of information and resources about Income Tax & federal government services for seniors. The following is a link to a guide so the information source remains current.
  - Service Canada's Services for Seniors Guide - [https://publications.gc.ca/collections/collection\\_2008/servicecanada/SG5-18-2008E.pdf](https://publications.gc.ca/collections/collection_2008/servicecanada/SG5-18-2008E.pdf)

### ★ *Mar:* **Victoria EV Association**

- Glenn Garry, president of Victoria's EV Assoc., provided us with past, present, & future information about electric vehicles. We learned about their development, present statistics, the impacts, and where we're headed. Up-to-date info can always be accessed on their website:
  - <https://victoriaevclub.com/>

### ★ *May:* **Downsizing**

- This may have been our most interesting & fun meeting to date as, due to a mix-up, the guest speaker was a no-show! What did we do? We improvised, gathered in a circle, and had a terrific discussion about downsizing. We shared personal struggles, tips, and successes from moving to a smaller home, readying to do so, or just decluttering in general.

.....cont'd



★ **September: Freshwater Fisheries Society of BC**

- Sounds boring? Not in the least! Andrew Wilson, FFSBC's President and CEO, gave a very engaging presentation on the formation of the Freshwater Fisheries Society in 2003, and how now, as a non-profit Society, it is funded entirely by the proceeds of the freshwater fishing licenses. It operates six major fish hatcheries and plays a role in research, conservation and education, improving angler access, and stocking several lakes in BC, including several right here in our western communities.

Also, Sue Pollard, an FFSBC project manager, spoke about some of some highly successful initiatives that the society oversees.

- <https://www.gofishbc.com/>

★ **November: Alzheimer Society of BC**

- Via Zoom, Maryam Shams, gave a highly informative presentation describing different types, early symptoms, stages, supports and treatments for dementia. The society offers a great number of resources to access:

- <https://alzheimer.ca/bc/en>
- <https://www.youtube.com/@AlzheimerBC/videos>

**Come Join  
In....**

Take the leap, find yourself a chair at one of our Branch meetings, & be surprised at how much you enjoy yourself!



Planned for January 27, 2026:  
a workshop about adjusting to retirement.

- Was it easy for you?
- Did/Do you have some challenges?
- How did you meet any challenges?

Come share your experience,  
maybe gain some tips.

(As always, if winter weather throws us a curve, we'll switch to Zoom to stay warm & safe at home.)

# ➤ WINTER LUNCHEON

December 10, 2025  
@ the Langford Legion



Good time, good company, good food & lots of laughs.



Valeska & Tammy draw for door prizes.



Life Member Awards  
presented to  
**Sherry & Arnold  
Rossander**  
by Lynda & Al





### STUDYING ITALIAN IN FLORENCE, ITALY

#### A Once-in-a-Lifetime Adventure

*by Elsie Chandler*

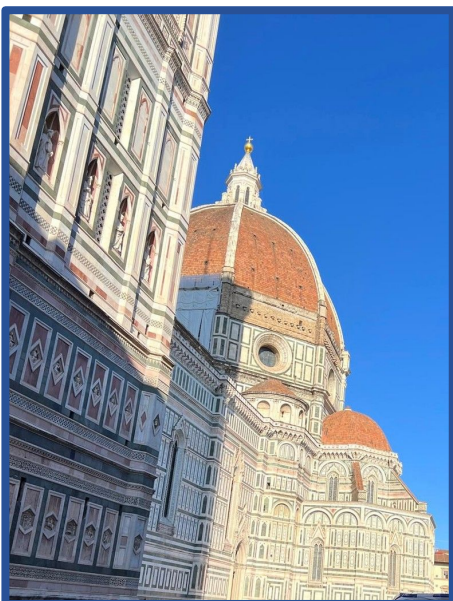
---

This past summer, I took a memorable trip to Florence, Italy, where I spent four weeks studying Italian. As a member of the Leonardo Da Vinci Centre in Victoria, I've taken several language courses there over the past five or six years. This year, with their encouragement and assistance, I travelled to Florence to attend the Leonardo Da Vinci School of Language. Despite the shared name, the Centre here in Victoria and the school in Florence are completely independent— but both share a passion for Italian culture and learning.

For my stay, I rented a small apartment in Florence's historic centre, just a ten-minute walk from the school. Florence is wonderfully walkable, which meant I didn't have to worry about buses, taxis, or navigating unfamiliar roads. My location made it easy not only to get to class each day but also to explore the city's many treasures.



I arrived on a Friday evening after a long route from Victoria—via Calgary, Rome, and finally Florence. Saturday was devoted to settling in: finding the school, the grocery store, a reliable pizzeria, and—most importantly—the best nearby gelato. (I quickly learned there is good gelato and then there is fantastic gelato.) On Sunday morning, I joined a one-day introductory tour of the city, which covered the major highlights: the Duomo, Michelangelo's David, and many of Florence's most iconic views.



Classes began Monday morning. We met from 9:00 to 12:15, five days a week, and the afternoons were filled with optional cultural activities—small group tours, films, wine-and-cheese gatherings, and more. The school was warm and welcoming, and my classmates came from all over the world. We were all learning together, and although the instructor spoke only Italian, having a bit of background from Victoria helped immensely. The school offers several levels, and while the homework kept me on my toes, the whole experience was both challenging and deeply rewarding.

.....cont'd



Outside of class, Florence was my classroom as well. It's impossible to walk more than a block without encountering something historic or breathtaking. I spent many hours wandering through neighbourhoods recommended by guidebooks and locals alike. I also signed up for a few special experiences, including an art-and-wine class, a pizza and gelato-making workshop, and a leisurely river-rafting trip down the Arno—more of a sunset float than a white-water adventure, but a beautiful way to see the city from a new angle.

On my second weekend, I joined a tour to Pisa and Lucca. Both cities were charming, full of history, and set among some of the loveliest countryside I've ever seen. I met several fellow Canadians on that trip, and we later enjoyed a wonderful dinner back in Florence at a Michelin-starred pizzeria, Cucina Torcicoda, followed (of course) by gelato at the famous Vivoli.



Throughout my stay—in class, on tours, or simply exploring on my own—I met friendly, fascinating people. And yes, my Italian improved significantly. I'm far from fluent, but I can understand much more than before and can make myself understood surprisingly well. Learning a language, I've discovered, is a journey that continues long after the classroom time ends.

.....cont'd



After my month in Florence, I met my daughter in Rome and we travelled south together to visit our Italian relatives. It was wonderful to continue practising my new language skills with family.

This trip was an exciting and unforgettable adventure. Learning a new language in your sixties and travelling alone to do it can feel daunting—but based on my experience, I encourage anyone who gets the chance to take it. It's never too late to learn something new or to say "yes" to a little adventure.





## PAVLOVA - from the kitchen of Lynda Hoel

Pavlova is a delightful dessert that originated in the early twentieth century and is beloved in both Australia and New Zealand, with each country claiming its creation. Named after the famous Russian ballerina Anna Pavlova, this sweet treat features a crisp meringue shell with a soft, marshmallow-like centre, topped with a generous layer of whipped cream and an assortment of fresh fruits such as kiwifruit, strawberries, and passionfruit. The contrast between the crunchy exterior and the light, fluffy interior makes Pavlova a favourite for special occasions and gatherings, especially during the summer months and on Christmas Day.



### INGREDIENTS

#### Base

- 4 Egg Whites
- 3 tablespoons Cold Water
- 1 cup Berry Sugar
- 1 teaspoon White Vinegar
- 1 teaspoon Vanilla Essence
- 3 teaspoons Cornstarch

#### Topping

- 500 ml Whipping Cream
- 4 Tbsp Icing Sugar
- 1 tsp Vanilla Extract
- Fruit(s) of choice  
kiwifruit, berries, preserves, or...

See Next Page for Preparation Steps  
and Lynda's **Important Tips** for Pavlova success!



## PAVLOVA recipe cont'd.....

### **PREPARATION STEPS** (with tips from Lynda)

1. Preheat oven to 300°F (150°C).
2. Beat egg whites until stiff.  
*Do not over whip the egg whites, beat only until they have stiff peaks when you lift the beater.*
3. Add the cold water and beat again.
4. Add berry sugar very gradually while still beating.
5. Slow the beater down and add vinegar, vanilla and cornstarch.
6. Place mixture on a greased baking tray lined with baking paper.  
*It should be centred on the tray and piled high like a cake.  
Don't worry, it will spread during the baking process.*
7. Bake at 150C (300F) for 45 minutes, then turn off your oven, and leave to cool in the oven.  
**Important:** *Do not open the oven door until the pavlova has cooled in the oven. I leave mine in overnight to dry it out.*
8. Once cool, carefully remove your pavlova from the baking paper to your favourite serving plate.  
*If you have some cracks in the top never fear, the whipping cream and fruit will help you out and it will taste delicious.*
9. Prepare your toppings & put aside.
10. Whip the whipping cream, adding the icing sugar & vanilla.
11. Top the pavlova with the whipped cream, then the fruit.
12. To serve cut into pie shape slices like you would a cake. Enjoy!



# AUNT EDIE'S PASTRY

★ from the kitchen of Helen Myers

I've never met Aunt Edie, but I feel I know her, as I often refer to her magical pastry recipe. This pastry recipe goes against all the pastry rules you have ever known, it comes together quickly, is delicious, and will get those mince tarts made in no time!

- 1 cup shortening
- ½ cup boiling water
- 2 ¼ cups flour
- 2 tsp. baking powder
- pinch salt



Merry Christmas

- ☐ Mix shortening and boiling water together until creamy (if it seems to be taking too long, pop it in the microwave for a short time)
- ☐ Mix flour, baking powder and salt together and stir into the shortening mixture with a wooden spoon.
- ☐ Stir until the flour is completely mixed in and form into a ball.

The dough will be quite smooth, wrap in Saran and store in the fridge for at least a half hour, to let the pastry cool down and firm up.



*Were you aware of this little hidden gem at 2637 Sunderland Rd, in Langford? It's where we've been holding most of our Branch meetings. Who knew?!*





# CHRISTMAS SALAD

★ from the kitchen of Helen Myers

This is a refreshing addition to a rich, and often heavy meal

## Salad

- 7 cups mixed greens...  
*or however much you want to use, who measures lettuce?*
- 1 ¼ cups orange segments
- ½ cup pomegranate seeds  
*or you can substitute dried cranberries*
- ½ cup crumbled feta cheese
- ½ cup chopped candied pecans  
*You can make your own, or buy them...guess which I do?*

## Dressing

- 1/3 cup olive oil
  - 1 Tbsp. honey
  - 2 tsp. Dijon mustard
  - 2 Tbsp. apple cider vinegar
  - 1 Tbsp. minced Shallot
  - salt and pepper to taste
- or... there is a Pure brand salad dressing,  
with pomegranate, that works very well*

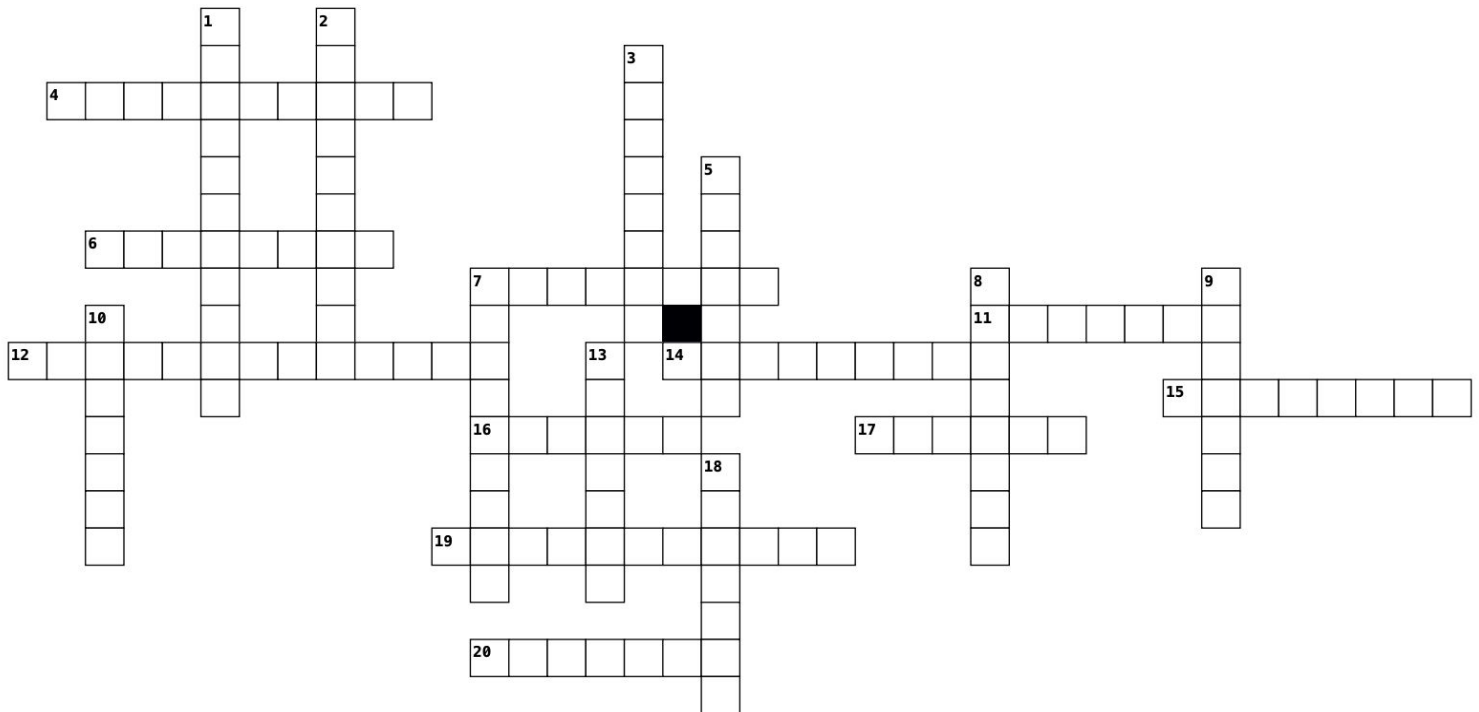


Mix it all together, add the dressing, serve immediately. To prepare in advance, mix the greens and fruit. Prepare the dressing...or open the bottle.

Add the feta and pecans and dressing just before serving.



# TEST YOUR KNOWLEDGE OF CANADIAN CITIES CROSSWORD



## Across

- 4.** Home of the Château Frontenac
- 6.** ON's port known for steel
- 7.** BC's capital, our home
- 11.** Capital of Nunavut
- 12.** PEI's capital
- 14.** SK'S largest city
- 15.** Name originates from Mt. Royal
- 16.** Canada's capital
- 17.** Named for Queen Victoria
- 19.** NWT's capital
- 20.** Home of MLB's Blue Jays

## Down

- 1.** New Brunswick's capital
- 2.** Klondike gold rush place
- 3.** In AB, on N. Sask. River
- 5.** Atlantic Canada's largest city
- 7.** Largest west coast port
- 8.** It's heart is "The Forks"
- 9.** Canada's most eastern city
- 10.** Home of the Stampede
- 13.** MB's second largest city
- 18.** Near NB's Magnetic Hill



Answers on Next Page





## CROSSWORD ANSWERS



Al  
Lynda  
Tammy  
Colleen  
Valeska  
Sharon  
Dale  
Helen

## BCGREA Branch 2700 - Western Communities

## Website

<https://bcgrea.ca/branches/western-communities-branch-2700>

## Facebook Group

<https://www.facebook.com/groups/896339241725276>



**BCGREA Provincial** website - <https://bcgre.ca>