



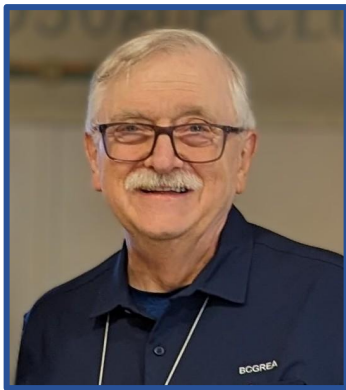
# Annual Newsletter

Western Communities  
Branch 2700

DECEMBER 2024

## STATE OF THE UNION

by  
*Al Coccola*



The branch has survived another year! Actually it has thrived. While other branches are averaging a 2% decrease in members, our numbers have grown by nearly 8%. Our Facebook Page is nearing 100 members, and our hiking group has found Sooke. We have tried a number of new things, including a ghost tour of the Ross Bay Cemetery, and an open house in Duncan with the Nanaimo Branch. Thank you to everyone for your help and support.

Special thanks to the members of our Planning Committee, a great group of people, intelligent, talented, and easy going.

Lynda Hoel Vice Chair  
Tammy Welch Treasurer  
Valeska Campbell Membership  
Sharon Stewart Facebook  
Colleen Coccola Secretary  
Dale Chandler Director at Large  
Helen Myers Director at Large  
Dorothy Ward Director at Large

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It is good to see our members step forward to help the Provincial body. Lynda is on the Bylaws and Constitution Committee, Sharon the Communications committee. I am a member of the Retention and Recruitment Committee and chair of the Merchandise Committee, while Tammy has taken on the position of 2<sup>nd</sup> Vice President and editor of The Pen. I think we all believe in the organization and the need to stay healthy, active and involved.

So what is next? Provincially the BCGREA has changed its year-end to December 31<sup>st</sup>. Therefore we will also change our branch year-end to December 31<sup>st</sup>. 2025 will be my last year as chair. In 2026 Lynda Hoel, our current Vice Chair, will start a two year term as chair of the branch, and someone else will step in as vice chair for two years. We are trying to set up a rotating chair every two years. New blood and fresh ideas.

Speaking of which we are always looking for more people to help out. Not major commitments but perhaps take on planning for a new event, or help out at the meetings. If you are willing then we will find something meaningful. Talk to someone on the Planning Committee if you have questions. Come and join us, and let's make 2025 an even better year!

Season's Greetings and Best for 2025 - ***Al Coccola***

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## ➤ **MEMBERSHIP - LET'S UPDATE!**



Have you retired your landline? Got a new phone number or Email address? What about your mailing address?

Let us know so that we can keep our Branch records accurate.



According to our BCGREA Central Database Administrator, our Western Communities Branch 2700 has the most complete Email address list with very few bounced back Emails. Yay! Let's keep this gold star standing in place!

You can send us your updates to

[Membership.branch2700@bcgre.ca](mailto:Membership.branch2700@bcgre.ca) or [bcgre.ca@telus.net](mailto:bcgre.ca@telus.net)

Or, you can easily sign into the Member portal at [bcgre.ca](http://bcgre.ca) and make your changes there. We appreciate you keeping us current!

## MEMBER INTROS



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.

### Meet JIM FISK



S

***LEADER,  
LEARNER,  
IT PIONEER***

Jim was raised in West-Central Saskatchewan until joining the Army. Military service involved postings in Saskatoon, Dundurn, Shilo, Winnipeg, Edmonton and Ottawa. Edmonton saw the completion of his university degree, the arrival of 3 children and having to spend months away from them & his wife, Sharon.

In Ottawa he was one of the early developers of the computer security policies and procedures for National Defence and the federal government. He left the service to initiate an information security program for the Department of Communications.

Escape from Ottawa became possible in 1979 with the position as the first Security Manager for the BC Systems Corporation. On Day 1, to his surprise, Jim discovered that he was responsible for the government-wide installation of RACF, a mainframe computer security system; at one time BC had the largest and most comprehensive implementation in the world.

The position involved policies, procedures and implementation of security for facilities, telecommunications, computer systems and business continuity planning. He was involved in the design and implementation of the "new" building at 4000 Seymour Pl. When BC Systems was closing down, Jim reached the magic age and retired in 1996 as Director, Security Services. Given the problems in today's IT environment, he is pleased to be retired.

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Since retirement, Sharon and Jim have made good use of their RV in Western Canada and winters in the Southwest U.S. They have done some cruising and spent time with family. While in Victoria, Jim has volunteered with several United Church congregations and committees. He obtained his Amateur Radio Operators license and served as the Amateur Radio representative to the CRD Emergency Planning Commission. Jim is an avid lifetime student, actively searching and studying, in later years becoming interested in natural and complementary health care.



Sharon and Jim have downsized from their Saanich home of 43 years to a condo in Langford. They are well on the way to achieving Jim's ambition of being paid by the Pension Corp for more years than he was by the public service.

## BCGREA MERCH



**Feather Flight Non-Weave Zipper Tote Bag**  
With Reverse Logo. Plus a Stylus top metal pen in royal blue with BCGREA and website in lettering.

**Size approximately 19" x 14 1/2" x 3".**  
**Cost \$10.00**

- 80GSM non-woven polypropylene
- Extra-large zippered tote bag
- Dual 26" carrying handles
- 3 exterior mesh pouches
- Recyclable & reusable

**Limited supply, available now for pickup in Langford. To order, please send an email to Al Coccola. Payment by e-transfer or cash at pickup. [Chair.branch2700@bcgre.ca](mailto:Chair.branch2700@bcgre.ca)**

# ➤ OUR HIKE TO SOOKE - by Dale Chandler

There were no banners or marching bands when we finished our walk to Sooke. But we all felt good about it anyway. We walked about 30 kilometers from View Royal to Sooke. We walked in wind, rain, and a bit of snow, quite a bit of sunshine, and enjoyed it all. Truth be told we did the walk in stages out from various points then back so we really walked more like 60 kilometers. We started last fall near the Six Mile Pub in View Royal and finished on the outskirts of Sooke on Nov 18.





The final leg was our tenth stage and was one of the prettiest. The day started with very little promise. There was some rain, dark clouds and a very cold wind. It felt like a winter walk. When we got near the half way point the sky cleared and there was beautiful sunshine. It was actually warm on Nov 18 on the part of the Goose in Sooke.

The Galloping Goose is a trail that runs from downtown Victoria out to Sooke and beyond. We decided to walk to Sooke in order to have a destination goal for our walks. Near Victoria the trail is paved and is an excellent commuter route for cyclists. As the trail gets further away from town it is gravel and exposes walkers to some truly beautiful scenery. In Metchosin it goes between beautiful fields, flocks of sheep and many wooded sections. It skirts Matheson Lake and then the trail goes along the shore of the Sooke Basin. Beautiful views everywhere.



The crew of walkers changed throughout the walk to Sooke. There were usually about 10-12 people involved. A number of our group participants lived for long periods of time in the Western Communities but had never walked many of the sections of the trail. The groups always split up to accommodate different speeds and the groups mingled quite often so there were lots of chances to get to know new people.

It was a great opportunity to get to know different BCGREA members outside the confines of a meeting or luncheon.

The participants I spoke to all had a good time and enjoyed the opportunity to meet people and to get out to some of the more isolated parts of the Galloping Goose with some company. The plan is to continue the walking group. We'll probably start to do a variety of the local hikes we are fortunate to have in our area. Some ideas have been proposed and we always aim to choose walks that are accessible to a variety of different levels.



At the end of our last stage, despite the absences of banners and marching bands, we all went for a celebratory lunch at the Stickleback restaurant. It felt good to celebrate our accomplishment and enjoy it in the company of people who had become friends in the process. We plan to keep on walking!



# A MESSAGE FROM “THE PEN”

by **Tammy Welch**



We are looking for the wisdom, wit and knowledge of our members that we can share in The Pen.

We have many opportunities for you to share what you are passionate about and be part of our Provincial Publication. Do you have an idea or article you'd like to share? Here's some suggestions:

- Do you like talking with people, writing about events, or are savvy with social media such as Facebook, Meetup, YouTube, etc. We are seeking volunteers.
- We have a number of members who are approaching their 100<sup>th</sup> birthday or over. We'd love to interview you.
- Do you have a special pet? Send us a picture of you and your pet with your names. You could be featured in the Pen.
- Do you have a favourite stop on a BC road trip?
- Do you have an interesting story of where you worked or someone famous you met?

We want your stories because they are how we connect, reconnect and remember. All ideas are welcome. We can help write them up also. Send me a note to: [thepen@bcgre.ca](mailto:thepen@bcgre.ca)

I'd love to hear from you.

**Tammy Welch** – 2<sup>nd</sup>VP/Editor of The Pen

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## OUR 2024 CHRISTMAS LUNCHEON





## ➤ GUEST SPEAKERS



This past year's list of guest speakers was even more eclectic than 2023. Our Planning Committee does a great job of soliciting guests that will be of interest not only to us seniors, but to everyone in general. Our meetings continue to be fun social events, while offering opportunities to learn about new things. Plus, the tea/coffee and plentiful goodies are always a hit!

Here's a summary....

★ **Feb: Mary-Anne Neal, author of "Under the Midnight Sun - Journey with the Sahtu Dene"**

- Mary-Anne gave a fascinating presentation of her experiences with the Dene people, an indigenous group of First Nations who live in Canada's northern boreal, subarctic, and Arctic regions. She has written an award winning book, "Under the Midnight Sun: Journey with the Sahtu Dene".

★ **Mar: Debra Swain, volunteer presenter for COSCO (Council of Senior Citizens Organization) - Healthy Eating for Seniors**

- A common sense presentation created by COSCO that reminded us about how much eating habits affect our health and well-being. Here's an interesting excerpt:

**Dining Out Tips:**

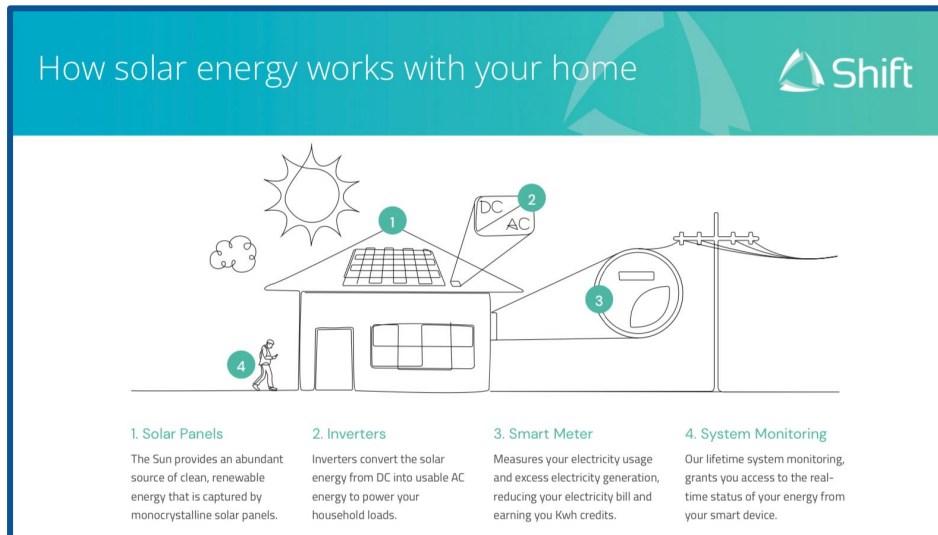
- Share a meal with a dining partner.
- Avoid buffets.
- Request a "to go" box.
- Skip the bread and deep-fried appetizer; choose a vegetable soup or salad with low-fat dressing.
- Order gravies, sauces and dressings on the side.
- Ask for substitutes: double veggies, instead of fries.
- Drink ice water with your meal.
- Share dessert.

★ **Apr: Regenerate BC - Climate Change Solutions**

- <https://regeneratebc.org/> - the representatives from this organization presented us with ideas on how to identify, support, and initiate climate change solutions in our homes. They also advised how to handle difficult conversations about the topic.

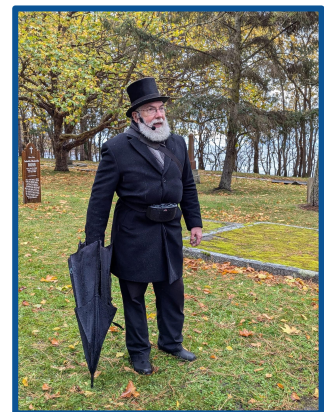
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- ★ **May: Chris Palliser, Shift Energy - "All About Solar Energy"**
  - Chris gave us a fun and informative presentations about solar energy. Although he represents Shift, he strongly recommended obtaining estimates from a few companies when considering installing a solar panel system.



- ★ **Sep: Daralyn Wei, Orderly Affairs - "Getting our Affairs in Order and Advance Care Planning"**
  - Daralyn represented her company "Orderly Affairs", providing information and resources for planning the future in the last chapter of life. She focussed on Advanced Care Planning and having those difficult, but important, conversations with loved ones.

- ★ **Oct: Ross Bay Cemetary Ghost Walk**
  - This outing brought "guest speaker" to a new level! Every October, Victoria's Old Cemeteries Society holds this event. Participants were split up in groups to move from station to station where speakers, & a few performers, described fascinating, historical stories about people buried there.



- ★ **Nov: Debra Swain, volunteer presenter for COSCO (Council of Senior Citizens Organization) - Memory and Aging**
  - Another presentation topic provided by COSCO, we learned about how memory changes with age, what are normal changes to expect, and what to look for if help is needed.

## COOKING IN ITALY

by Lynda Hoel



Italy ... food ... wine ... pizza ... pasta.

I was eager to learn the Italian way of making these foods! There is no better way than taking a cooking class with an Italian chef.

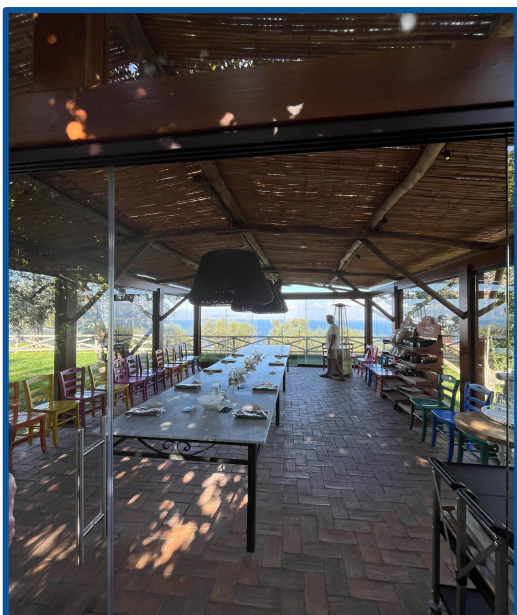
It was a beautiful sunny day in Sorrento, Italy as our ship tendered in the harbour and we made our way to shore to meet our new classmates for our cooking masterclass. As we drove along the narrow winding roads high in the Sorrento Hills, we arrived at the gates to our cooking school and WOW we couldn't believe what we were seeing, it was so beautiful it truly took our breath away.



As we made our way to the outdoor kitchen and classroom surrounded by glass walls, we looked over the Gulf of Naples directly to Mt Vesuvius. It really felt like we were in a movie set! Chef Anna and her sous chef Claudia were ready to do what they do so well while we were still in awe of this stunning location.

Back to reality we began our class with a glass of wine, introductions and an apron. Our first masterclass was pizza dough, made by hand with no extra tools. Then we moved onto pasta, the first being gnocchi which was fun to make, a class on ravioli and finally fettuccini. Our knife skills were getting very good by now! Lots of fun was had as we kneaded, floured and kneaded some more.

Then our reward, making individual Tiramisu's that we would enjoy with our family style lunch along with the pizzas and pasta we had made.



After a stroll through the gardens and olive grove we were treated to our lunch and what a feast that was!! Who can eat 2 different types of pizza plus gnocchi and fettuccine covered in a delicious pasta sauce and still have room for dessert? It seems the nine of us could ... wow what a day!

We left along the winding narrow roads high in the hills with our cookbook and apron feeling very well fed and a lot more knowledgeable about Italian cooking. Fantastico!



• Happy Holidays •



## FANTASY CHOCOLATE FUDGE

★ from the kitchen of Dorothy Ward

- 3 cups sugar
- 3/4 cup margarine
- 6 oz canned milk
- 1 package semi- sweet small Chippits
- 1 jar - 198 g marshmallow creme
- 1 tsp vanilla



1. Combine milk, sugar and margarine in a pot, bring to a boil over medium heat, boil for 5 minutes, stirring constantly.
2. Remove from heat, add Chippits, and stir until melted.
3. Add marshmallow creme and vanilla, stir until mixed.
4. Pour into a greased 9 by 13 pan.
5. Let cool in fridge, cut into squares.

For Maple Fudge, substitute chocolate Chippits with small white Chippits. Substitute teaspoon vanilla, with 1 tablespoon maple extract.



## BEST-EVER OATMEAL COOKIES

★ from the kitchen of Colleen Coccola

- |                                |                           |                           |
|--------------------------------|---------------------------|---------------------------|
| 1/2 cup butter, softened       | 3/4 cup all-purpose flour | 1 1/2 cups rolled oats    |
| 2/3 cup brown sugar,<br>packed | 1/2 tsp. baking soda      | 1/2 cup raisins           |
| 1 egg                          | 1/2 tsp. ground cinnamon  | 1/2 cup dried cranberries |
| 1/2 tsp. vanilla extract       | 1/4 tsp. salt             | 1/2 cup chocolate chips   |

Cream together the butter, brown sugar, egg and vanilla until smooth. In a separate bowl, whisk the flour, baking soda, cinnamon and salt together. Stir this into the butter/sugar mixture. Stir in the oats, raisins, cranberries and chocolate chips.

(For a thicker cookie, chill dough in fridge for 1/2 hour or so).

Scoop onto greased baking sheet; bake for 10-12 minutes at 350 degrees.

## DOROTHY'S BUTTERTARTS

★ from the kitchen of Sharon Stewart's old neighbour,  
Dorothy, where she met her husband & good times were had!

1/3 cup Butter  
1 cup Brown Sugar  
1 Egg (beaten)  
1 tsp. Vanilla  
1/2 cup Raisins  
1/2 cup Chopped Walnuts  
24-30 Small Tart Shells

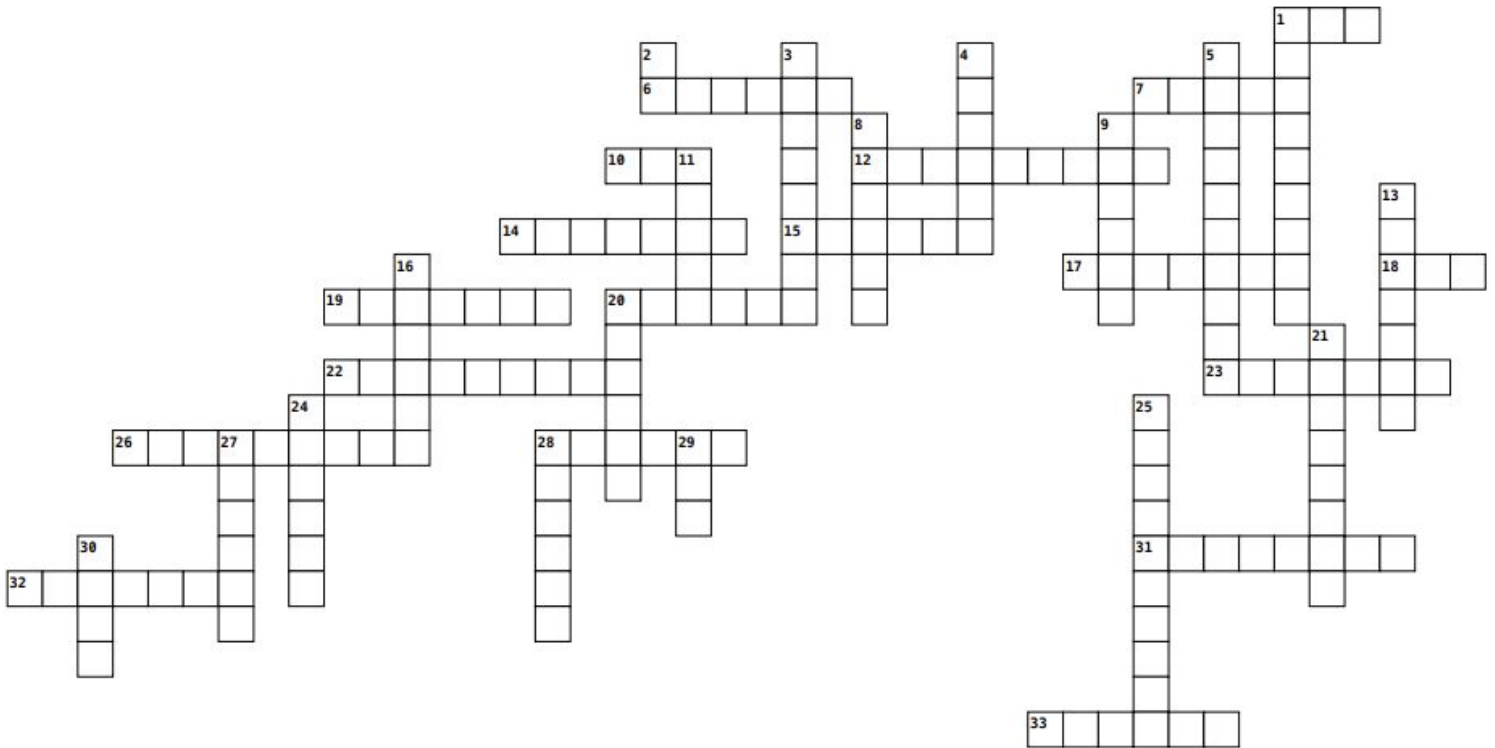
1. Set oven to 450°.
2. Cream butter and sugar in medium size mixing bowl. Stir in beaten egg and vanilla, then add raisins/currents and nuts\*.
3. Fill tart shells 2/3 full.
4. Bake at 450° for 5 minutes, then reduce heat to 350°, and bake for an additional 15 minutes or until browned.

### NOTE:

I like raisins and add more of them than nuts, but any combo of raisins/currents/nuts amounting to a cup according to taste or allergies is fine. I find using Tenderflake's frozen mini-tart shells are perfect for convenience and portion size. This makes 27-30 of those.



# BRANCH 2700 - WESTERN COMMUNITIES TRIVIA CROSSWORD



## Across

1. Busy Westshore road (abbr)
6. Albert Head and Esquimalt both have one
7. A galloping trail
10. Received at age 65
12. Town famous for murals and plays
14. It's municipal hall is on Wishart
15. BC's premier in 2022
17. Road between Metchosin and Happy Valley
18. BC's premier - Dec 2024
19. Bird on BCGREA logo
20. Name of BCGREA newsletter (2 words)
22. Means "place of stinking fish"
23. Find the Skywalk there
26. Lake near the Malahat
28. This beach isn't in France
31. City has 3 prominent lakes
32. Take a ferry from here (2 words)
33. Castle in Colwood

## Down

1. An outlook for the king? (2 words)
2. Branch 2700 president
3. Means "the warm land"
4. BC's famous fish
5. See a salmon run there
8. Our org's acronym
9. City of totems
11. Find Whiffen Spit here
13. Usual day of week for BCGREA meetings
16. Has an annual fair
20. Name of hill going up the Malahat
21. Road should be in Australia
24. One of highest railway trestles in the world
25. Stoney place near Shawnigan Lake (2 words)
27. Lagoon in Metchosin
28. Road up Triangle Mt.
29. Consists of 13 municipalities (abbr)
30. One of Langford's three main lakes

Answers on [Page 18](#)

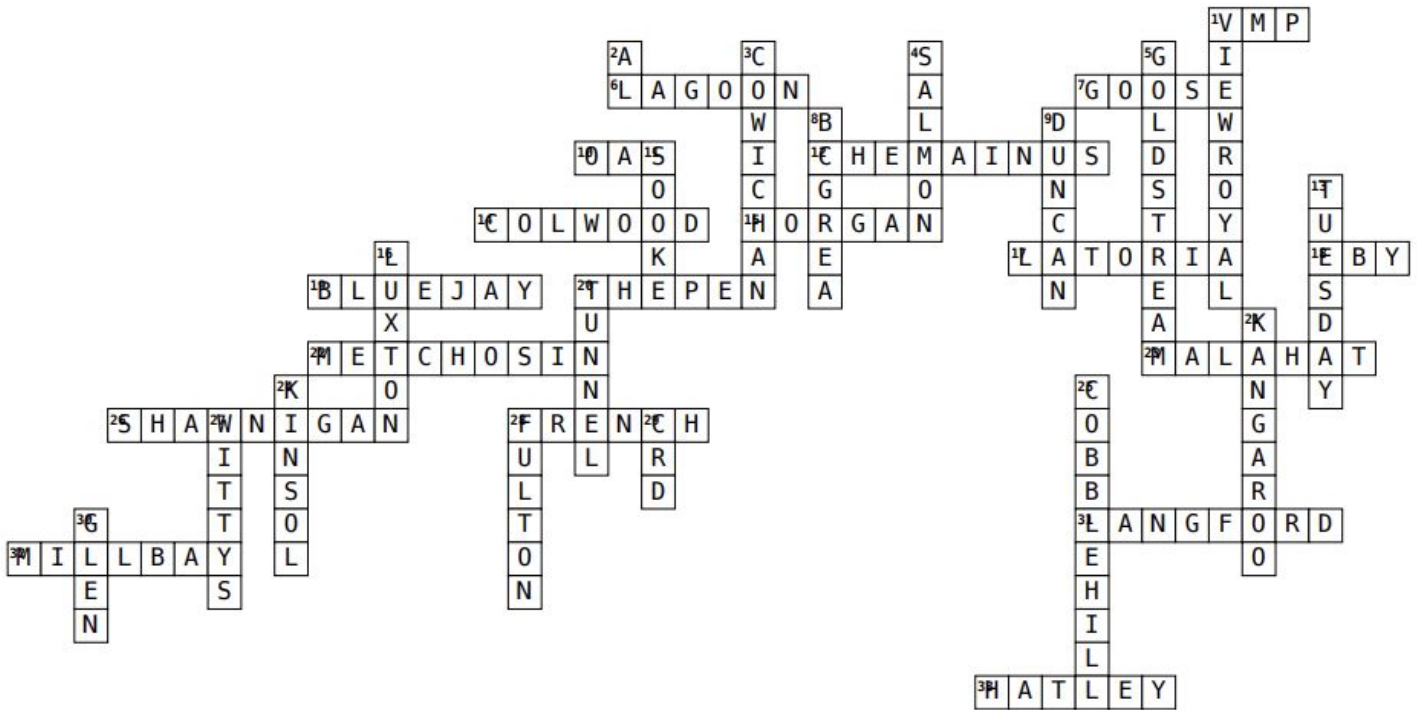
# CHRISTMAS TRIVIA

1. The first instrument on which the carol "Silent Night" was played was:
  - a. A harp
  - b. A pipe organ
  - c. A guitar
  - d. A kazoo
2. In Guatemala, Christmas Day is celebrated:
  - a. On January 6
  - b. On December 25
  - c. On October 31
  - d. Never
3. Electric Christmas tree lights were first used in:
  - a. 1492
  - b. 1895
  - c. 1944
  - d. 1976
4. Medieval English Christmas pantomimes did NOT include which character?
  - a. St. Nicholas
  - b. The Bold Slasher
  - c. Father Christmas
  - d. The Turkish Knight
5. The name of Scrooge's deceased business partner in Charles Dickens' A Christmas Carol was:
  - a. Bob Cratchit
  - b. Jerry Cornelius
  - c. Bill Sykes
  - d. Jacob Marley
6. In North America, children put stockings out at Christmas time. Their Dutch counterparts use:
  - a. Old hats
  - b. Beer mugs
  - c. Shoes
  - d. Stockings, just like everybody else!
7. The poinsettia, a traditional Christmas flower, originally grew in which country?
  - a. Canada
  - b. China
  - c. Mexico
  - d. Spain
8. Which name does NOT belong to one of Santa's reindeer?
  - a. Comet
  - b. Prancer
  - c. Blitzen
  - d. Klaxon



9. One notable medieval English Christmas celebration featured:
- A giant, 165-pound pie
  - Snowball fights between rival courtiers
  - A swimming race across the English Channel
  - Huge crackers that sometimes exploded fatally
10. In Australia, usual Boxing Day activities include:
- Building snowmen
  - Tobogganing
  - Wombat hunting
  - Surfing
11. A common Swedish Christmas decoration, the Julbukk, is usually made of what material?
- Candy
  - Straw
  - Uranium
  - Fir wood
12. The real St. Nicholas lived:
- At the North Pole
  - On the island of Malta
  - In Turkey
  - In Holland
13. In Armenia, the traditional Christmas Eve meal consists of:
- Fried fish, lettuce and spinach
  - Square meat pies
  - Broiled partridges with gooseberry sauce
  - Turkey and plum pudding
14. In Tchaikovsky's ballet The Nutcracker, the nutcracker's main enemy is:
- A girl called Clara
  - The King of the Mice
  - Dr. Almond
  - Drosselmeyer the magician
15. Boxing Day, December 26, is also the holy day of which saint?
- St. Eustace
  - St. Brigit
  - St. Nicholas
  - St. Stephen

# CROSSWORD ANSWERS



# TRIVIA QUIZ ANSWERS

- |      |       |       |
|------|-------|-------|
| 1. C | 6. C  | 11. B |
| 2. B | 7. C  | 12. C |
| 3. B | 8. D  | 13. A |
| 4. A | 9. A  | 14. B |
| 5. D | 10. D | 15. D |

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

**BCGREA Branch 2700 - Western Communities**

Website

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

Facebook Group

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