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On the cover: A Helijet Sikorsky S76 ferries passengers to a fishing resort in Haida Gwaii. Heath Moffatt photo

Santa's Sweet Sled

HELIJET GIVES ST. NICHOLAS A LIFT TO BC HOSPITALS



Santa Claus hitches a ride on Helijet to BC Hospitals with the help of company President and CEO Daniel Sitnam (far right), Helijet elf Gizelle Manese (centre left) and BC Emergency Health Services critical care paramedic and part-time reindeer Robert Wand. Helijet photo

DECEMBER IS A stressful time of year here at the North Pole. As one might imagine, the logistics required to organize global deliveries in a 24-hour period can be a tad overwhelming for Mrs. Claus and I. As such, we appreciate the regular offer of assistance each year from Helijet and BC Emergency Health Services (BCEHS) in helping me make an early visit to those boys and girls most in need of Christmas cheer over the holidays.

Every year Helijet lends me the use of one of their sweet Sikorsky sleds to visit sick children in five BC Hospitals. Tricked out with the latest in enhanced vision systems, their S76C+ air ambulance allows me to make my rounds, even on a foggy Christmas eve. (Rudolph is prone to jealousy when he hears of Helijet's all-weather capabilities.)

This is the 10th year Helijet has generously offered to ferry me to BC Hospitals, and this year I'll be visiting three in the Lower Mainland — BC Children's Hospital, Royal Columbian Hospital and Surrey Memorial Hospital — as well as two on Vancouver Island — Victoria General Hospital and Nanaimo Regional General Hospital.

Normally I like to fly solo, but many hands make light work and so I welcome the assistance of Helijet's crews and BCEHS paramedics in delivering Christmas presents and cheer to sick kids.

Flying a helicopter around all day is an expensive exercise, and so I asked Helijet President and CEO Daniel Sitnam how the company can afford to be so generous with one of its aircraft. I thought he might still be angling for that 1972 Evil Knievel motorcycle set, but lil' Danny's answer was wonderfully selfless:

"All year long, our dedicated staff work closely with BCEHS paramedics to provide 24/7 helicopter service for hundreds of critically ill patients across B.C. Many of our patients are children, so all of us at Helijet are happy to help make the Christmas season special for these courageous kids and their parents. And besides, we want to let Santa's reindeer rest up for their big run on Christmas Eve."

Indeed, bringing cheer to sick children in hospital over the holidays has more to do with the spirit of the season than any gift can express. **H**

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ROYAL ROADS REACHES NEW HEIGHTS

On October 13, 2015, Royal Roads University unveiled a 25-foot totem pole named “S’ael”, a Sencoten word for harmony. Harvested on site, carved on site and raised on site, the totem pole was commissioned and donated by the university’s Chancellor and Board of Governors Chair Wayne Strandlund, and carved by local Tsawout artist Tom LaFortune, assisted by Howard LaFortune Jr.

The unveiling of the totem pole is one of several events over the past year commemorating Royal Roads’ 75 years of changing lives celebrations — 55 years as a military college and 20 years as a public applied research university.

“Our 75 years of changing lives is a good time to memorialize with a symbol to remind us of our history as well as the qualities of respect, leadership and community,” said Strandlund.

Originally founded as a military college, Royal Roads University became a public degree-granting university in 1995. | royalroads.ca

SILENT PRAISE

On October 20, 2015, the BC Aviation Council (BCAC) presented the Silver Wings Environmental Award to Helijet President and CEO Daniel Sitnam (pictured below at right) in recognition of the company’s “consistent and responsible noise management practices, and remaining proactive in enhancement and protection of the environment through proactive route planning.”

Specifically, the award recognizes Helijet’s long-standing practice of flying high, and over water, to reduce the effect of helicopter noise on communities it overflies.

“When we first developed our flight routes we looked at areas where we would have the least impact in terms of noise,” says Sitnam. “We met with a number of government ministers, and consulted with the people who live below our routes on the Gulf Islands and coastal shorelines. Through our efforts people realized we really were trying hard to mitigate the effect of helicopter noise on communities.

“Flying higher, and out over the water, adds extra minutes on every flight, costing the company well over \$250,000 a year. It’s a significant expense, but we’re happy to do it because it pays dividends in other ways. Certainly, it would be more cost-effective to fly a bee-line at low altitude between Victoria, Vancouver and Nanaimo, but that would be inconsiderate of the people living below.”

Sitnam credited the award to the efforts of Helijet’s operations and engineering teams who work tirelessly behind the scenes to minimize noise pollution.

| bcaviationcouncil.org





CLOTHING DESIGNED FOR FUN

Leka is not your typical Victoria clothing and design store. Indeed, Leka means “to play” in Swedish and, true to that, every item in the store — from baby hats to underwear to evening dresses — is designed for women of all ages to have fun in. To that end, each piece is designed and created in their on-site design studio using impossibly soft fabrics that drape beautifully, feel amazing and fit perfectly.

“I love color, shape, texture and design,” says owner Aase Lium. “But I also love play, fun, soulfulness and sophistication! My vision for Leka has been to create a space to offer things which are both beautiful and practical.” | lekadesign.com

NUFACE FOR A NEW YEAR

The Fairmont Empress Hotel’s Willow Stream Spa introduces Nuface — the very latest in skin care technology. Known as the 5-minute facelift, Nuface offers professional results at home with natural and non-invasive microcurrent technology to improve facial contour, skin tone, and wrinkle reduction, giving your skin a more radiant and youthful appearance.

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NEW MENU & NEW CHEFS

The O Bistro at the Oswego Hotel in James Bay recently introduced a new menu under the guidance of local Consulting Chef Marty Lopez and new O Bistro Chef, Thomas Wilde. The aim of the new menu is to offer the James Bay and Downtown Victoria neighborhoods a range of classic French Bistro offerings.

“This is a no-nonsense menu that features hearty, earthy flavours from top ingredients, adding a distinct local and seasonal component to classic bistro fare,” says Chef Lopez. “It’s honest and comfortable, without the affectation of fine dining.”

Complimenting the new menu, O Bistro Sommelier Vanessa Pennington has rejigged the beverage program to place greater focus on local microbreweries, Canadian distilleries, and an all-new wine list featuring some of the best *terroir* from around the world. | oswegovictoria.com



Chris Randle photo

PuSh YOURSELF

Avant-garde performances take centre stage in Vancouver during the PuSh International Performing Arts Festival, January 19 to February 7, with some 150 events showcasing local, national and international artists enacting a range of radical theatre, dance, music, multimedia and hybrid performances that will challenge both mind and spirit, if not the conventional understanding of art.

| pushfestival.ca

TRANSFORMATIVE DANCE

Fresh from an exciting world tour, Les Ballets Jazz de Montréal comes to Victoria’s Royal Theatre on February 26 and 27 with an exciting triple bill performance that transforms understanding of the world around us into something beautiful, raw and visceral. | dancevictoria.com





DISTINCTIVE DESIGN

Victoria-based Jeweller Idar Bergseth has gained international

recognition in recent years with a series of awards and noteworthy shows. Notably, he was a recipient of the Carter Wosk Awards for Achievement in Design, winning the Creative Achievement Award for Applied Art and Design in 2013, and more recently five of his jewellery pieces were put on display at the grand reopening of Canada House in London, England, earlier this year. | idar.com

CARRY ON AND KEEP CALM

Relive a little of the glamorous days of travel with these Carry On Cocktail Kits. Complete with a recipe card, bar spoon, half ounce jigger, small batch ginger or craft tonic syrup, and a real linen coaster, these wee tins have everything you need to mix up two cocktails from your seat back tray. Well, almost: you'll need to buy the booze on board. Choose from gin & tonic, old fashioned or Moscow mule. Whether shaken or stirred is entirely up to you. | flight001.com



FINE SPIRITS

Enjoy a wee dram of whisky, or two, at the 11th Annual Victoria Whisky Festival being held at the Hotel Grand Pacific, January 14 to 17. Arguably the premier whisky festival in western Canada, this event plays host to an array of local, national and international distilleries, many of which have reshaped the industry in recent years. | whiskyfestival.com



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**BRENDAN McCORMICK, HELIJET'S CHIEF
PILOT, ROTARY-WING**



Heath Moffatt photo

BRENDAN McCORMICK, Helijet's Chief Pilot, Rotary-Wing, says the only thing he can ever remember wanting to be was a helicopter pilot.

"I recall telling my Grade 4 teacher that's what I was going to be when I grew up," says the soft-spoken McCormick. "I'm sure every kid means it when they say that, but following your dreams demands a lot."

McCormick's path to the cockpit wasn't direct, or easy. Upon finishing high school in 1984 he was faced with two obstacles: first, he couldn't afford the high cost of pilot training; and second, he was under the misconception that pilots were required to have 20/20 vision.

As such, he enrolled in the Aircraft Maintenance Engineer (AME) program at the Pacific Vocational Institute at the tender age of 17. The following year he got his first job working in Fort Nelson with Okanagan Helicopters where he soon began noticing more than a few bespectacled pilots. (He quickly learned that pilots need only have 20/20 *corrected* vision.)

Still, the high cost of flight training remained a barrier. After a few years working in northern B.C. McCormick returned to Vancouver and stepped out of aviation for a time. For a while he tried his hand as a fabricator at Shaughnessy Hospital, making mechanical devices and artificial limbs for, among others, Rick Hansen and Steve Fonyo. Tapping into an innate talent for sales, he also worked for a spell in Vancouver's perennially hot real estate market, eventually earning enough to afford commercial pilot training. All the while, he never lost his passion for helicopters, but by 1997 the prospect of starting a new career seemed daunting.

"Flying was always on my mind," says McCormick. "I talked about it all the time. Eventually my wife, Desiree, said, 'Why aren't you a pilot? Just do it, already!' Two weeks later, I did. And she's stuck by me through it all ever since."

After obtaining his commercial licence McCormick landed his first job in northern Alberta flying light helicopters in the gaspatch. He accumulated experience there for a year before accepting

HELIJET FLEET

For information on aircraft specifications and capabilities, visit helijet.com/charter.



Spending time with his daughter, Chloe, prompted Brendan McCormick to return to Helijet where he finds both professional satisfaction and time for family.

a job with Helijet in 1999 doing traffic watch and charter flights before moving onto the Sikorsky S76 — the mainstay of the company's scheduled operations and air ambulance service.

Experienced pilots are nomads by nature and in 2002 McCormick left Helijet to fly for the Calgary Police Service where he eventually served as Chief Pilot. Following that he took a job flying in the Alberta oilpatch, followed by a stint with CHC Helicopters' operations in Thailand.

But when McCormick's daughter, Chloe, arrived in 2008 he decided it was time to find work closer to home, and so he rejoined Helijet as a S76 captain that same year. In 2011 he was tapped for the position of Chief Pilot, Rotary Wing.

As a manager, McCormick oversees every pilot working for Helijet, making him responsible for all aspects of their hiring, training, standards and proficiency. Moreover, he is tasked with ensuring Transport Canada's ever-evolving regulations are adhered to, and integrated into the company's flight operations. At the same time, he liaises with other senior managers in the company, including Helijet's Chief Engineer and the Director of Maintenance.

McCormick says his experience as an AME serves him well in this regard: "I never regret having that training; it was providential. As a pilot it gives



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Chief Pilot Brendan McCormick (right) conducts simulator training with one of HeliJet's S76 captains. Heath Moffatt photo

me a valuable technical background, but it also helps me relate to the AMEs. That makes for a great working relationship that keeps the partnership going at the management level.

McCormick's myriad life experiences come in handy managing pilots, too.


"Supervising 50 to 60 pilots requires strength of personality," he says. "My experiences in life — both in and out of aviation — have really helped me understand that working with people means working with human nature."

Accordingly, McCormick is careful to recruit pilots who possess both natural ability and the capacity to work well with others, often in fluid and sometimes stressful environments. Indeed, the nature of the flying HeliJet does requires exceptional hands-and-feet abilities combined with professionalism, be it on a scheduled commuter flight between Vancouver and Victoria, or an air ambulance scene call on the Coquihalla Highway.



“Pilots have to keep focused on the task at hand, especially in high pressure situations,” says McCormick. “Your only job in those moments is to fly, and that’s what you do.”

McCormick expects a lot from the aircrew he oversees, but he also appreciates that Helijet’s pilots all make personal sacrifices: “A pilot’s schedule is not his or her own, and that can be hard on families. The job demands so much time, but it’s also the most rewarding job I could ever imagine.

“I’m fortunate that I have a supportive wife, but I’m also grateful to work for a company that allows me the flexibility to do something I love with a great team of people, and still spend time at home.” He adds, “Most of the pilots I work with are just like me; they’re doing what they want to do. If I can help them realize their lifestyle, well, that ultimately translates into a better experience for our passengers every time they fly with us.” 



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Will Power

WHAT YOU NEED TO KNOW BEFORE DYING IN B.C.



“IN THIS WORLD nothing can be said to be certain, except death and taxes.” So said Benjamin Franklin in 1789, and not much has changed since.

But while taxation and demise are unavoidable, much can be done to make the best of both situations with the help of a sharp accountant and a knowledgeable lawyer.

Importantly, the latter have new rules to play by since the B.C. Government passed the Wills, Estates and Successions Act (WESA) on March 31, 2014. Indeed, the new act fundamentally changes an archaic area of private law that was long overdue for reform.

Generally speaking, the WESA streamlines and modernizes the byzantine world of estate planning for British Columbians, providing greater certainty for the last wishes of individuals, and simplifying matters for those charged with distributing an estate. The new act does not invalidate wills written before it came into effect, but it does affect the wills of all B.C. residents, regardless of when or where they were written. It also affects those who die without a will.

Judges and lawyers are still wrapping their heads around implications stemming from changes in the act, but there is little question the WESA has significantly changed the province’s estate laws. As such, British Columbians would do well to talk to a lawyer and familiarize themselves with the following before shuffling off this mortal coil:

TILL DEATH DO US PART

Under the previous regime, an individual’s will was automatically revoked upon marriage. Unfortunately, many people did not realize their will was invalidated when they got married. If they subsequently died without having their will revised it was quite possible their last wishes might not be carried out as they intended.

Efforts to respect the last wishes of the individual are a cornerstone of the new act, and a



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welcome improvement to the province's governing laws, but this marked change also has potential to cause confusion.

"Many people may still be under the misconception that a marriage invalidates a will," says Betty Wu, litigation counsel at Vancouver-based business litigation firm Hakemi & Ridgedale LLP. "That was the case before March 31, 2014, but prenuptial wills are valid under the new act."

DEFINITION OF "SPOUSE"

A notable change in the WESA is the inclusion of common law spouses in the definition of "spouse". Foremost, people who meet the definition — that is individuals who are legally married, or who have co-habitated more than two years in a marriage-like relationship — can claim to be provided for. But unlike the Family Law Act (FLA) enacted in 2013, the WESA does not deem couples who have children together to be spouses, though the surviving spouse may claim against the estate under the FLA.

The WESA also makes the process easier for a person to transfer title of the spousal home to their surviving spouse.

LAST WISHES

Individuals have the right to decide what their last wishes are, and how they should be carried out. A will-maker also has the right to change his or her mind on such things.

That might seem self-evident, but prior to the WESA errors or ambiguities in a will had the potential to cause difficulties, if not render it invalid, and there was little the courts could do to rescue a will, even if the deceased's intentions appeared to be clear. The new act aims to fix that.

"The major change with the WESA is greater discretion for the court to make perfect what is imperfect in a will," says Wu. "It's a curative provision: the court now has the ability to consider a variety of documents to determine the testamentary intention of the will-maker. There's room for interpretation now, too; the court has greater ability to rectify errors or confusion in a will."

GIFT GIVING

Few things have more potential to generate strife than a will declaring who gets what. The only thing that can possibly generate more conflict is a will that does not indicate who gets what.

"The absence of small details in a will can be problematic, pitting family against each other," says Wu. "Disputes are not always about money. Sometimes conflicts arise that are rooted in emotion and misunderstanding. If you have a necklace you want to give to your sister you might as well spell that out in your will."

Gift giving isn't limited to family heirlooms, though. In fact, a wide range of specific gifts — and presumptions regarding those gifts — are affected under the WESA, including gifts of property, land and money bequeathed to family, friends, former spouses and creditors.

The specifics are too many to list, but suffice it to say that gifts of any kind in a will should be reviewed with a lawyer specializing in estate law.

EXECUTORS BEWARE

Some might consider it an honour to be named executor in the will of a friend or family member. But the reality for many is that distributing a person's estate can be a thankless task, sometimes fraught with conflict if individuals object to how the executor is distributing the estate of the deceased.

"Being an executor is a lot of work," says Wu. "Dealing with beneficiaries, and people with claims, can sometimes be a real headache." What is more, she notes, "If an executor does not administer a will properly they can be removed, and in some cases incur personal liability where their conduct is deemed dishonest or grossly negligent."

"Fortunately, WESA makes life a bit easier for executors, and the threshold for personal liability is high. The rules are much clearer now."

Even so, Wu says there is much to be said for hiring a professional executor to distribute your estate, thus sparing family and friends any more grief than necessary.

ALL IN THE FAMILY

Everyone should have a will, yet many do not. In fact, 56 per cent of Canadians do not have a will. The result is that more than half of all British Columbians will die intestate (i.e. no will), leaving it up to the court system to figure out how to distribute their estate.

Under the WESA intestacy rules have changed dramatically. The biggest change is in the spousal share. Specifically, a surviving spouse automatically gets all household furnishings and the first \$300,000 of assets, with the balance of assets split

50/50 between the spouse and children. However, it is worth noting that spouses who are not the biological parent to children of the deceased (i.e. blended family situations), are limited to \$150,000 and 50 per cent of the remainder of the estate.

Separated spouses are less fortunate. He or she will no longer be entitled to anything if their former spouse dies without a will.

Children and parents of the deceased fare much better. That's because the WESA clarifies the process of inheritance, clearly outlining the order in which to look for heirs to a person's estate. Where the deceased has no spouse or children the concept of parentilic distribution kicks in.

"That's where the court starts climbing the family tree," says Wu. "They will look for heirs by tracing lineal descendants: first they go back to the parents and branch down looking for descendants; then they branch out from the parents looking for siblings; finally they branch up looking for grandparents and great grandparents, but only as far as the fourth degree.


"Once heirs are located, the estate is then distributed in pro-rated shares. If there is no one who qualifies the estate then passes to the government."

REVIEW & REFLECT

Circumstances change over time. For that reason it is worth periodically reviewing your will with a lawyer, especially when there is any significant life event, such as a marriage, a separation, a divorce, the birth of a child, or a death in the family. Or perhaps relationships have changed and you want to revise your last wishes to reflect that.

"As a will-maker you have the right to change your mind," says Wu. "We're all human, and so we want to safeguard how our possessions are distributed."

The WESA makes that easier in many respects, but the deceased still have responsibilities after they cross the River Styx. Particularly so where children and spouses are involved.

Whatever the case may be, individuals with or without a will owe it to themselves, if not family and loved ones, to sit down with a lawyer to ensure their last wishes will be carried out in accordance with the multitude of recent changes in B.C.'s estate laws. 

The information provided in this article is not legal advice, and should not be relied upon for making legal decisions.

Odlum Brown Model Portfolio: A Proven Track Record*



*Compound annual returns are from inception December 15, 1994 to July 15, 2015. The Odlum Brown Model Portfolio was established by the Research Department in December 1994, with a hypothetical investment of \$250,000. Trades are made using the closing price on the day a change is announced. These are gross figures before fees. Past performance is not indicative of future performance.

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NANAIMO NOW

A hard-working
harbour city in
transition

Story by Danielle Pope

Photos courtesy of Tourism

Nanaimo/Cinnabar Vista Productions

THE CITY OF NANAIMO has suffered its share of Nanaimo bar jokes over the years due to an abundance of local watering holes. But the “Harbour City”, or “Hub, Tub and Pub City” as it is affectionately known, has witnessed significant change, attracting new business, new visitors and new residents. The result is a city in transition with much to offer.

The Snunéymuxw, a Coast Salish people, first inhabited the Nanaimo area some 3,500 years ago. The Spanish were the first Europeans to explore the region in the 16th century, but it was the arrival of the British explorers Captain James Cook, followed by Captain George Vancouver, in the latter part of the 18th century that saw England lay claim to the area.



Clockwise from top left: Tourism has spiked with an increase in cruise ship visits; the waterfront is always busy in “The Harbour City”; and the downtown core has been revived with many elegantly restored heritage buildings.

A Husdon’s Bay Company trading post was established in the early 19th century to exploit forestry, fish and furs, but it was the discovery of coal in 1849 that attracted most European settlers to the area. For the next 75 years coal remained central to the Nanaimo economy.

As oil displaced coal as a fuel source, Nanaimo’s mines closed one by one in the first part of the 20th century, but the local pulp-and-paper mill, and the city’s location as a rail and shipping hub, spared it the fate of other mining communities.

Blue collar to the core, Nanaimo developed a reputation for being a rough-and-tumble mill town in the last century. But that stereotype is largely out of date as the local economy and demographics have morphed.

Forestry products remain an important facet of the local economy, but Nanaimo has discovered important new resources in knowledge-based industries, as well as transportation and tourism. Specifically, there is increased activity in the tech sector, education, aquaculture, First Nations businesses, port activity and cruise ship traffic.

Overseeing the busy Vancouver Island Convention Centre in Nanaimo gives General Manager Denise Tacon a unique perspective on what’s happening in the city:

“It’s like being at 30,000 feet, looking down on all these things that are happening here,” says Tacon. “There’s been a surge of growth in recent years as the city attracts new businesses and the talented and creative people associated with them.



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"The city's core has a very different pulse these days. It has shifted in a dynamic and positive way with new buildings complimenting older heritage structures. The downtown is quite polished and charming — it's elegant without being pretentious." She adds, "Nanaimo has proven itself and is now being taken seriously by those who come here."

Nowhere is this more apparent than in the city's booming tech sector. Amrit Manhas, Economic Development Officer for the Nanaimo Economic Development Corporation, says the city has seen significant growth in several fields, particularly in scientific, technical, software, programming, information and communication services.

"Nanaimo's economy has diversified over time, and that is what makes us a resilient community," says Manhas.

With diverse opportunities comes a diverse population. Despite the Canada-wide declining birth rate, Nanaimo has seen positive migration for over a decade. In fact, Census Canada listed Nanaimo as the fifth fastest-growing, mid-sized urban centre in B.C., with a population increase of 7.8 per cent from 2001 to 2006, and another 6.5 per cent increase from 2006 to 2011.

"People choose to move here for so many reasons," says Manhas. "We have affordable new duplexes and condos in the downtown core, the lowest lease rate for businesses, and competitive tax rates. Vancouver Island University has also brought an infusion of opportunities, talent and growth to the area. And of course, Vancouver is only a short flight away."

It is for these reasons that Helijet introduced regular scheduled weekday air service between Vancouver and Nanaimo in the spring of 2015.

"Nanaimo has grown, and is still growing," says Rick Hill, Vice President, Commercial and Business Programs, Helijet. "We got a very positive response from the business community when we started weekday flights, and we've seen a steady climb in passenger loads every month since. Business travellers really appreciate our ability to fly at night and in difficult winter weather when float planes stay tied up at the dock."

Hill notes that it's not just business professionals who appreciate the level of service Helijet provides: "We're seeing more and more travellers from Nanaimo going over to Vancouver for pleasure. A lot of people are discovering that Vancouver shop-

MARITIME SHIPPING IS THE ENGINE DRIVING THE WATERFRONT ECONOMY

weighing the possibility of introducing weekend service in 2016.

While air service to the “Harbour City” improves, maritime shipping is the engine driving the waterfront economy.

“Nanaimo means ‘Gathering Place’ in the Hul’q’umi’num dialect of the local Snuneymuxw First Nation, and the city’s harbour has a long history as a centre of trade and commerce,” says Bernie Dumas, President and CEO of the Nanaimo Port Authority. “Through the late 19th and 20th Century the export of coal and lumber from Nanaimo played a critical role in the evolution of B.C., establishing the province’s network of trade with the rest of the world. That tradition continues to this day through various terminals, connecting

ping, sporting events, theatres and cultural events are only an 18-minute flight away.”

Hill says Helijet is always looking for areas to expand service and, working closely with the Nanaimo Port Authority, the company is

Vancouver Island to regional and global markets for consumer goods.”

The numbers speak volumes. An October 2014 Economic Impact Study notes Nanaimo’s port activities stimulate some 6,400 jobs and \$350 million in wages per year, with economic impacts totalling \$1.24 billion. In fact, in 2013 the Nanaimo Port Authority joined the ranks of the Top 50 North American Ports by TEU’s (Twenty Foot Equivalents – Container Units). Based on the BC Marine Employers Association, labour and wages generated per TEU is expected to grow from \$2.58 million in 2013 to \$9 million by 2020.

Nanaimo is also set to play a major role in Canada’s maritime trade with Asia on account of the Short-Sea Shipping Initiative with the Federal Government — part of the Asia Pacific Corridor Program to create a competitive method of linking Vancouver Island to international container traffic.

The Port of Nanaimo is also home to one of the most innovative passenger terminals in North America. Thanks to a \$24-million investment, more than 35,000 cruise visitors have been welcomed to the city and mid-island since 2011.



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"The biggest change I've seen in the last 20 years is the view — looking out over the harbour and seeing cruise ships docked here, with all the people they bring," says Elverna Edwards-Mailloux, Director of Sales and Marketing at the Coast Bastion Hotel. "There's a buzz in the air, and things blossom from that."

Edwards-Mailloux says geography has much to do with the increase in tourism: "We really are in the perfect spot. Nanaimo is the hub for many transport links and always will be the main entry point for the Island."

Being a transportation hub means the natural beauty of the area can sometimes be overlooked, so the city is working hard to highlight what Nanaimo offers visitors:

"Perceptions are changing, and Nanaimo is gaining recognition for the special place it is," says Lesley Anderson, Executive Director of Destination Management with Tourism Nanaimo. "Social media has really helped us, because we are bringing in a new, photography-based generation that is promoting the beauty of the area."

An active social media presence, complete with awe-inspiring photography, has played a role in increasing the number of tourists scoping out the area on cross-country trips and stay-cations, alike. As a result, the city has seen increased visitation from areas all over the world, with the biggest increase in visitors coming from fellow Canadians who accounted for nearly 40 per cent of all visitors in 2014.

Some visitors decide to stay. James Young, General Manager of the Inn on Long Lake, moved to Nanaimo with his wife 18 years ago, trading bone-chilling Alberta winters for the milder climate of Vancouver Island. He has seen much change in the city over the past two decades.

"When we first got here the city seemed closed; it had a small-town feel, both politically and economically," says Young. "It's a work in progress, but the city has come a long way since, especially with economic opportunities."

Working in the hospitality industry, Young has seen firsthand how tourists no longer bypass Nanaimo on their way to somewhere else. More than ever, people are planning trips to the city and its surroundings. He notes last summer was the Inn's most successful yet, with some European visitors booking up to a year in advance.



For many young families, Nanaimo offers the promise of an affordable seaside lifestyle.


Another significant trend in the last decade has been the influx of young families and retirees flocking to Nanaimo in search of an affordable lifestyle by the sea.

“We’re seeing a huge demographic shift of young couples buying their first home, or retirees looking to live near the ocean,” says Ryan Wenner, Director and COO of the Wenner Group of Companies, a family-run business dedicated to home and business technology. “People moving to Nanaimo want a change of lifestyle and bigger properties at a price they can afford. They want their kids, or grandkids, to grow up with space

outdoors and when you consider we have this amazing coastline, where you can boat, kayak and hike year-round, that’s a pretty easy sell to someone coming from, say, Calgary.”

Having grown up in Nanaimo, like his father and grandfather before him, Wenner has witnessed a major shift in the community. He notes the way in which pockets of the city have almost healed themselves — from once troubled streets to gentrified neighbourhoods. What is more, construction of contemporary West Coast homes is on the rise, selling at a fraction of the cost of Vancouver’s multi-million dollar homes.

“It’s so affordable that some will actually live here and commute to Vancouver daily, because it’s that easy,” says Wenner. He adds, “Many young professionals are seeing Nanaimo grow into a place they can call home for the long run. Of course we have parts that are rough around the edges, like any community, but forward-thinking people are helping the city realize its potential.

“You only have to explore Nanaimo to discover what you love about it. There really is something for everyone. And as more people come, the more opportunities will follow.” 



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FROM THE GROUND UP

A passenger's perspective
on Helijet's flight operations

Story by Sue Dunham

Photos by Heath Moffatt



THE WEATHER TONIGHT is typical for this time of year in the Pacific Northwest: It's cold, dark and raining sideways, with gusts of wind threatening to carry away my umbrella during the short walk from the Victoria Heliport passenger terminal to a waiting Helijet Sikorsky S76. It's a relief to reach the protective warmth of the helicopter cabin where I can commiserate with my

fellow passengers about life on the "Wet Coast". After a quick passenger briefing, the captain and first officer go through their start-up checklist and the high pitch whine of the helicopter's twin Rolls-Royce turbine engines wind to life, propelling the rotor blades about faster and faster until they reach operating speed. Sitting where I am, next to a window





Helicopter pilots generally do their initial flight training on light helicopters, such as this Robinson R44, piloted here by Chinook Helicopters flight instructor Clayton Reid.

behind the aircraft captain, I can see the instrument panel lit up like a Christmas tree. So many dials. So many buttons. Who knows what they all mean?

Well, the pilots, I presume.

After completing all checks, the captain taxis the helicopter out onto the helipad and then lifts the helicopter into a shallow hover. The aircraft hangs there briefly, then rises up and forward as the rotors begin clawing into the sky. We climb up and away, banking gently to the left around the Ogden Point Breakwater on our way to Vancouver. The lights of Victoria sweep beneath us on the left side, but are soon lost to sight as we ascend into the overcast sky.

For the next 35 minutes we rumble along in the cozy comfort of the helicopter before descending down out of the gloom to be greeted by the brilliant Vancouver nightscape. Passing over Stanley Park I see the distinctive silhouette of Canada Place's sails come into view. Our S76 glides past them in a gentle arc towards the Downtown Vancouver Heliport, before touching down gently on the floating helipad.

As soon as the helicopter is secure, the first officer steps out beneath the spinning rotors and

assists the passengers as they disembark and safely make their way to the passenger terminal.

I can't help but marvel at what I've just experienced. I've just levitated and flown in a chair through the sky — at night and in miserable weather — from one city to another in less than 40 minutes! Yet my fellow passengers seem rather nonchalant. Perhaps that's because many make the flight so often that it has become mundane.

Yet there is something extraordinary to the routine. Helijet operates nearly 40 scheduled flights a day in the winter months, and they do so in most types of weather, day and night, when other operators are required to stay put on the ground, or on the water as the case may be.

Certainly, Helijet's pilots make flying a helicopter look easy, if not effortless. But is it?

To answer that question, I decided to go on a familiarization flight with Clayton Reid, flight instructor and co-owner of Abbotsford-based Chinook Helicopters, the largest helicopter flight training school in Canada.

More than a few Helijet pilots have done their ab initio training with Chinook Helicopters over the years, and their instructors are adept at handling newbies like me who might be unfamiliar with rotary-wing flight.

Reid walks me through Chinook's expansive hangar facility, out onto the ramp where a candy-red and white Robinson R44 helicopter is parked on the ramp. After a quick walk-around he helps me strap in and begins explaining the basic start-up procedures.

Reid engages the starter, and after an initial shuddering cough the helicopter's engine rumbles to life and settles into a steady purr. He continues through a series of checks then contacts Abbotsford air traffic control, requesting permission to depart on a local training flight.

Once that permission is granted Reid coordinates a series of control inputs and lifts the helicopter into a hover before dipping the nose and accelerating forwards and upwards. The farms of the Fraser Valley below grow steadily smaller as we climb to 2,000 feet, and a few minutes later we are out of the Abbotsford Airport Control Zone. As soon as we are well clear of other aircraft traffic Reid begins talking me through the various control inputs.

First he has me place my hands on the cyclic, which is essentially a helicopter's steering wheel.

(In a fixed-wing airplane this would be called the control wheel, or joystick.) The cyclic controls the angle of the rotor blades: tilt the cyclic forward and the helicopter moves forward; pull back and the helicopter moves backwards; tilt it side to side and the helicopter slides sideways as commanded.

Seems pretty straightforward. But Reid adds a note of caution before letting me try: "It's very sensitive. You don't need to move it a lot; just think about what you want to do and that'll be about all the input you'll need."

He isn't kidding. No sooner do I take control than I'm bobbing and weaving, overcorrecting for every input. Reid chuckles reassuringly and has me try again. On the second attempt I heed his advice and merely think about the direction I want to go in, using little more than muscle movements in my hand to steer the helicopter in the direction I want to go.

Next he shows me how the collective works. This control is the lever bar situated on the left side of the pilot's seat.

"The collective changes the pitch of the blades, increasing or decreasing lift," explains Reid. "Pull



All of Helijet's pilots undergo recurrent simulator training on an annual basis.

up on it and you'll go up; push down on it and you'll go down."

Simple enough. I try my hand at it, adhering to the principle that inputs should be gentle and not exaggerated, and the small helicopter responds just as expected.

That done, Reid shows me how the twist grip on the collective lever controls the throttle, maintaining power to the engine to keep the rotor blades turning at the operating speed necessary to generate lift.

So far, so good.

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Helijet's pilots regularly alternate between air ambulance service and scheduled operations. Pictured from left to right are First Officer Pat Quail, Capt. Paul Muir, First Officer Phil Sevensma, and Capt. Geoff Burkholder

Finally, Reid explains the operation of the anti-torque pedals on the floor by my feet. I make the common mistake of referring to them as “rudder pedals”, which they are not. Unlike an airplane, there is no such thing as a “rudder” on a helicopter. Rather, the pedals on a helicopter control the nose direction of the helicopter, left or right, by changing the angle of the blades on the tail rotor; apply pressure on the left pedal and the helicopter turns to the left; apply pressure to the right pedal and... you get the idea.

Ever so gently I step on the pedals, one at a time, and the aircraft pivots left and right as it should.

Just as I start thinking I'm getting the hang of the various controls, I'm faced with the challenge of trying to combine them together into smooth co-ordinated actions.

After a series of ham-fisted attempts, I slowly start figuring out how to make the helicopter go in the general direction I intend. It ain't pretty, but I am managing to fly the helicopter more or less in the direction I want to go, and Reid has yet to take control and save me from myself.

Feeling confident, I ask Reid if I can try my hand at hovering — the ultimate cool factor of helicopters.

Reid demurs somewhat. He notes that Chinook's instructors generally wait until students have five or six hours of flight training under their belt before introducing them to hovering. Nevertheless, he finds a nearby open field where he gives a quick demonstration, and then hands over the controls, watching me like a hawk.

I quickly discover that hovering a helicopter and flying one are two different things.

Thanks to Newton's third law of motion, which dictates that for every action there is always an equal and opposite reaction, I soon find myself struggling to keep the helicopter in one place. First it starts inching forward and so I pull back on the cyclic to check the movement, but I've over-corrected, causing the helicopter to start sliding backwards. Rapidly. Instinctively, I push forward to stop and find myself rocketing forward. I pull up on the collective to gain a bit of height, but that causes the nose to yaw. In under 10 seconds the helicopter has gone from a stable platform to mechanical bull.

Reid has seen this many times before. He lets me go as long as he considers safe, then places his experienced hands on the controls, relieving me of responsibility and embarrassment at the same time.

“It's a bit like standing on a greased beach-ball your first time,” he says as we fly our way back to Abbotsford Airport. “It get's easier with practice and proficiency.”

Reid says most students attend ground school and undergo around 50 to 60 hours of flight training before they are ready to take their private pilot flight test. Those pursuing their commercial licence spend even more time in ground school, and must accumulate a minimum of 100 hours of flight time before doing a flight test with a Transport Canada examiner.

As any experienced pilot will tell you, a commercial pilot's licence is only a ticket to learn.

Most helicopter pilots struggle to find work at first due to their relative lack of experience. The lucky and determined few who do find employment generally end up flying light helicopters in Northern Canada for a year or two before they have sufficient hours to apply for jobs with established helicopter companies, such as Helijet.

Pilots applying for first officer positions at Helijet must have a commercial helicopter pilot's licence, be certified for Instrument Flight Rules (IFR) operations, and have around 1,000 hours of total flight time. Direct entry captains require the same, but need on average between 8,000 and 10,000 hours experience. (It is worth noting that the average commercial helicopter pilot logs somewhere between 300 and 600 hours a year.) Regardless of

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experience, all new-hires go through a rigorous selection process, which considers many factors.

"We look for pilots who are both dedicated professionals and team players," says Brendan McCormick, Chief Pilot, Rotary-Wing, Helijet. "We operate in a challenging environment where the nature of the weather, the terrain and air traffic are always changing. As such, pilots need to be able to adapt and work as part of a team, communicating with other pilots, dispatchers, engineers and air traffic controllers, among others. And they need to keep smiling while they're doing it."

Once hired, all pilots go through six weeks of training on the aircraft and the company's operations. This involves around 110 hours of classroom time, followed by a week of simulator training, and another 10 to 20 hours of actual flight training before doing a flight test with one of Helijet's three check pilots. That done, a new pilot will then spend another two weeks doing line indoctrination with one of the company's seven designated training pilots. Once their line check is complete they join the regular roster of pilots.

But training never stops in aviation, not for a moment. Every Helijet pilot undergoes annual recurrent training, spending a week being grilled and tested in a full-motion flight simulator.


What is more, every "routine" flight is an opportunity to learn and captains regularly review the knowledge of their first officers on aircraft systems and operating procedures, among other things.


Helijet also invests a great deal of time and energy into Crew Resource Management (CRM).

"CRM is the most important thing for us," says McCormick. "It's how we assess ourselves and train to respond as a team. There's no room for free-styling in the cockpit."

CRM is particularly important considering Helijet is one of the few helicopter operators doing multi-crew, multi-engine IFR operations.

"Having a second set of eyes in the cockpit is safer, but it also provides for a second opinion when it comes to decision making," observes McCormick. "We don't take anything for granted; having a second crew member leaves less to chance."

"The result of all this training and attention to flight safety is seamless service for our customers. If it seems 'routine', well, so much the better." 



“For the things we have to learn before we can do them, we learn by doing them.”

~ Aristotle

Beyond the Classroom

Experiential education opportunities enhance student learning

Story By Garth Eichel

LEARNING BY DOING is nothing new. The earliest hunter-gatherer societies knew it, as did the ancient Greek philosophers who traipsed the streets of Athens, observing and arguing with one another in their search for knowledge.

But over time education became formalized, confining students within four classroom walls where they were expected to listen, learn and commit to memory.

That education model is still with us out of necessity, but it can be quite dull.

“It’s not okay for students to be bored in class,” says Becky Anderson, Director of Leadership

Development and Experiential Learning at St. Michaels University School (SMUS) in Victoria.

“The centuries old model of education is outdated. We’re turning the tables, using the time we have with students more effectively to give them a rigorous academic foundation that is balanced with hands-on experience that gives meaning to what they’re learning in the classroom.” She adds, “Experiential learning is not the ‘new thing’ in education. Rather, it’s the ‘old way’ of teaching where students learn side-by-side with teachers.”

There is more to experiential education than going on field trips and school vacations with

“ Learning by doing is a more rounded education; it views the world not as separate subjects... but as an interconnected whole.”

— Bob Snowden, Head of School, SMUS

faculty, though. More than ever, teachers and schools are focused on exciting and engaging students with a range of learning experiences at the global, national and local level with the aim of helping them better understand and apply their academic studies in school and in life.

DO, REFLECT, APPLY

Central to the concept of experiential education is Kolb's four-stage experiential learning model, as developed by the American education theorist Dr. David Kolb. Kolb's model emphasizes “learning through reflection on doing”, which, simply put, requires the learner be actively engaged in an experience, reflect on what they learned, and then apply it.

“The essential thing is to connect what students learn through experience and integrate it into their academic studies,” observes Bob Snowden, Head of School, SMUS. “The real strength to experiential education is that it reaches right inside a student to help them figure out who they are. The lessons are very emphatic and personal.”

He adds, “learning by doing is a more rounded education; it views the world not as separate subjects — math, English, history, science... — but as an interconnected whole. We're trying to make connections between what students are learning and real life.”

SMUS was one of the first schools in Canada to join the Independent Schools Experiential Education Network (ISEEN), and since then it has formally integrated experiential learning opportunities into the school's curriculum. Specifically, SMUS debuted a new Grade 10 program in 2015 with a significantly different timetable, allowing five weeks to be devoted to hands-on experiences tied to students' classroom studies. One such experience is a week-long forensics lab developed by SMUS's earth sciences, biology and chemistry teachers that asks students to apply their sciences learning to simulated crime scenes.

OUTDOOR EDUCATION

There are few better teachers than Mother Nature, but embracing her lessons requires more than a walk in the woods. To truly learn in the outdoors a student has to be immersed in the natural world and face personal challenges. In keeping with that, a number of schools have integrated outdoor education programs into their curricula.

Collingwood School in West Vancouver is one of several that makes outdoor education a requirement for students in Grades 7, 8 and 9. Students head out with certified Outdoor Education faculty and trained guides on multi-day wilderness excursions to Provincial Parks including EC Manning, Cheakamus Lake, and Stein Valley, the Gulf Islands, and Whistler Olympic Park. In these outdoor classrooms, students learn valuable life skills, teamwork, basic avalanche training, winter travel skills, and respect for the natural environment.

“Some students are trepidatious before heading out,” says Janis Clark, Director of Enrolment at Collingwood School. “Some have never been removed from their daily comforts and routines, both at home and school. Getting them outdoors teaches them self-reliance, but it also reveals to them more about who they are, fostering a newfound self-confidence in what they're capable of.”

“Outdoor education promotes self-discovery, requiring students to be independent and also work as part of a team.” Clark adds, “It helps their self-esteem, too. When they return to school they are smelly, wet and tired, but they're also filled with a great sense of accomplishment. They absolutely love it, and the shared experience develops connections and friendships that carry on back in the classroom.”

Glenlyon Norfolk School in Victoria takes advantage of its proximity to the Pacific to educate students about ocean studies with a self-styled Marine Adventure Program.

“We have the unique opportunity to get kids onto the ocean in situations that are safe, controlled, but quite authentic,” says Dr. Glenn Zederayko, Head of School, Glenlyon Norfolk School. “Experiential learning in a marine environment is so effective. It engages students in such a way that the amount they learn is far greater.”

Chloe Freeman, a 15-year-old Grade 11 student at Glenlyon Norfolk, was so inspired by the

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school's marine program that she opted to do an open water scuba diving course as her Middle Years Personal Project.

"Ever since I was little I wanted to be a marine biologist," says Freeman. "I wanted a hands-on understanding that I could apply in science class and scuba diving provided that."

Besides seeing marine life up close and personal, Freeman notes that learning to dive taught her about tides and ocean currents and algae blooms, as well as human physiology, among other things. Just as important, she gained a new appreciation of herself:

"As my Middle Years Personal Project, I had to journal and write a reflection paper about the experience. In the process I gained a deeper appreciation for what I was learning in school, but I also learned what it meant to exercise initiative, push personal boundaries, and realize what I'm capable of."

LEARN GLOBALLY, ACT LOCALLY

Kinesthetic learning can also be experienced at the global, national and local level.

Like many independent schools, Glenlyon Norfolk sends students abroad on international trips with the aim of broadening their horizons.

Through its participation in the Round Square Leadership exchange program, the school sent Jeremy Liu and several of his classmates to Bali in 2015 where they participated in activities and seminars focused on the environment and sustainability, with a particular focus on the collection and removal of plastics. Afterwards, Liu travelled to Singapore to attend a Round Square conference in Singapore where he met with students from other Round Square schools around the world.

"I learned a lot about environmental issues, but I also came away with a better understanding of other cultures and how to communicate with others who don't speak the same language," says Liu. "People are different, and what matters to me may not matter as much to someone from Bali, and *vice versa*."

Picking up plastic on a beach in Bali might strike some as tokenism, and certainly it would be if it ended there, but Liu and his classmates were expected to reflect on the experience, and apply what they learned upon their return. The end result was that Liu penned a reflective essay on his experience, and went on to participate in a student campaign aimed at persuading Victoria City Council to ban the use of plastic bags by local businesses.



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“Going to Bali and Singapore was a different type of education,” observes Liu. “I learned how to voice my opinions and make a difference here at home.” He adds, “I’m from China and I know how bad pollution is there. I want to go back someday and bring my understanding to a leadership role on environmental issues.”

TO SERVE AND PARTICIPATE

Life is harder for some than others. That is not lost on private schools, most of which are keenly aware how privileged their students are. As such, service is a key component in experiential education at many independent schools.

“We do our students a disservice if we don’t provide them with a holistic appreciation for the world outside the school, and how they can participate and contribute to the betterment of that world,” says Collingwood’s Janis Clark.

“We want our students to understand how fortunate they are — to realize few people elsewhere will ever have the same opportunities as them. We expect and encourage our students to share their time, energy and skills with others.

“Community service is a requirement for all Collingwood School students. We are in one of the

wealthiest communities in Canada, right next to one of the poorest — Vancouver’s Downtown East Side. We provide several opportunities for our students to get involved in that community and do meaningful service. Collingwood’s active and ongoing outreach programs include after-school tutoring and mentoring programs, the provision and delivery of food and everyday necessities through our Backpack Buddies program, seasonal soup kitchens, and food hampers.” She adds, “We want our students to be engaged in meaningful lives during their Collingwood years and for the rest of their lives, long after they graduate.”

Likewise, St. Margaret’s School in Victoria is an all-girls school where service has been embedded since its founding in 1908. In keeping with that, students regularly volunteer their time and energy to several local and international non-profits, and have become ongoing partners with Victoria Women In Need (WIN) Community Cooperative.

Uma Bhattacharya, a Grade 9 student at St. Margaret’s School in Victoria, participated in the WIN initiative and gained a firsthand appreciation for the challenges facing less fortunate women, and the difference young women can make when they band together to help individuals.



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"It really brings the school together," says Bhattacharya. "It makes you realize how something so simple can have such a huge impact on someone's life."

"Not everything is going to be ribbons and rainbows in life. Experiential education replicates what life is all about, and doing service helps you learn there are real problems needing real solutions, and that individuals can make a difference."


Likewise, women helping women is a natural fit at Queen Margaret's School in Duncan, B.C., another Vancouver Island school focused on educating girls.

"Service is not a feminist agenda," says Alison O'Marra-Armstrong, Vice Principal of Curriculum and Instruction. "It's about the capacity to contribute, showing young girls what they're capable of when they work towards a common cause."

"Service skills are not limited to one gender, but when girls focus on each other — helping and encouraging one another — they realize there are no limits for young women." She adds, "Students are often amazed at how gratifying service can be — that it can feel so good to help others."

In doing service students learn as much about themselves as the society they belong to, developing appreciation for the value of citizenship and personal responsibility.

Certainly, academics will always come first in any school's curriculum, but as attitudes evolve it seems clear that education through experience has an increasingly important role to play in graduating well-rounded students who can make a difference in the workforce and society.

"Education is not about memorizing the right answer; it's about meaningful understanding, and learning how to change things," says Dr. Zederayko. "I come to work everyday because I believe students are going to make positive contributions after they graduate. The value of experiential learning is that it gives students the necessary understanding and motivation to do more — to transfer authentic experiences into the classroom, and into their adult lives." To that, Dr. Zederayko adds, "I often ask students, 'show me what you've learned'. Next I ask, 'how do you apply this?'. But the most important question is, 'now what are you going to do with this knowledge to make a difference?'" 



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7 Whistler Winter Thrills

EXTRAORDINARY NEW OUTDOOR EXPERIENCES TO TRY IN WHISTLER THIS WINTER

ATTITUDES TOWARDS WINTER change as people grow up. As children, we delight in snowball fights, building snowmen and tobogganing like mad in sub-zero temperatures. It's easy to forget that kind of fun after a few adult winters spent plugging in the car and shovelling the driveway. For many grown ups, the only enjoyment winter offers is the occasional weekend of skiing or snowboarding, but even that can get old after a while.

Fortunately, a new business in Whistler, Headline Mountain Holidays, is set to change the way people play in the snow. The following seven winter experiences are sure to let adults reconnect with their inner kid this winter:

SNOWMOBILING





ICE CAVING

BACKCOUNTRY SNOWMOBILING

Snowmobiles are nothing new to Whistler, but few operators are equipped to operate in the high alpine, or up on the ice cap. Headline Mountain Holidays is the exception, operating state-of-the-art backcountry snowmobiles with long tracks that are designed to travel through deep snow with ease. Moreover, the company supplies guests with top-of-the-line gear and personal protection equipment.

With four tours to choose from — two trail tours and two heli-tours — guests can access some of the most secluded riding areas in B.C. under the guidance of avalanche-certified guides with extensive local knowledge.

Access to the ice cap also makes for a longer riding season with snow pack conditions generally allowing for daily tours from mid-December through to late July. In spring, wildlife sightings of grizzly bear, wolverines, cougars are not uncommon.

ICE CAVING

There are glaciers, and then there are ice caps. The former is essentially a frozen river flowing downhill; the latter is like a deep frozen lake lying over top of the mountains, unconstrained by topography. Both tend to shift and move in summer when temperatures rise, but in the dead of winter ice caps become stable formations.

A number of awe-inspiring ice caves dot the Pemberton Ice Cap near Whistler and Headline Mountain Holidays' professional guides spend several weeks each year scouting the most spectacular and stable ones to visit, accessible by either helicopter or snowmobile.

"Every one is incredibly different," says Doug Washer, President and CEO, Headline Mountain Holidays. "Each forms differently, creating an array of unique features. The formations, the colour, and the light inside each are simply amazing. It's like an arctic experience — there's always something surprising and exciting to see."



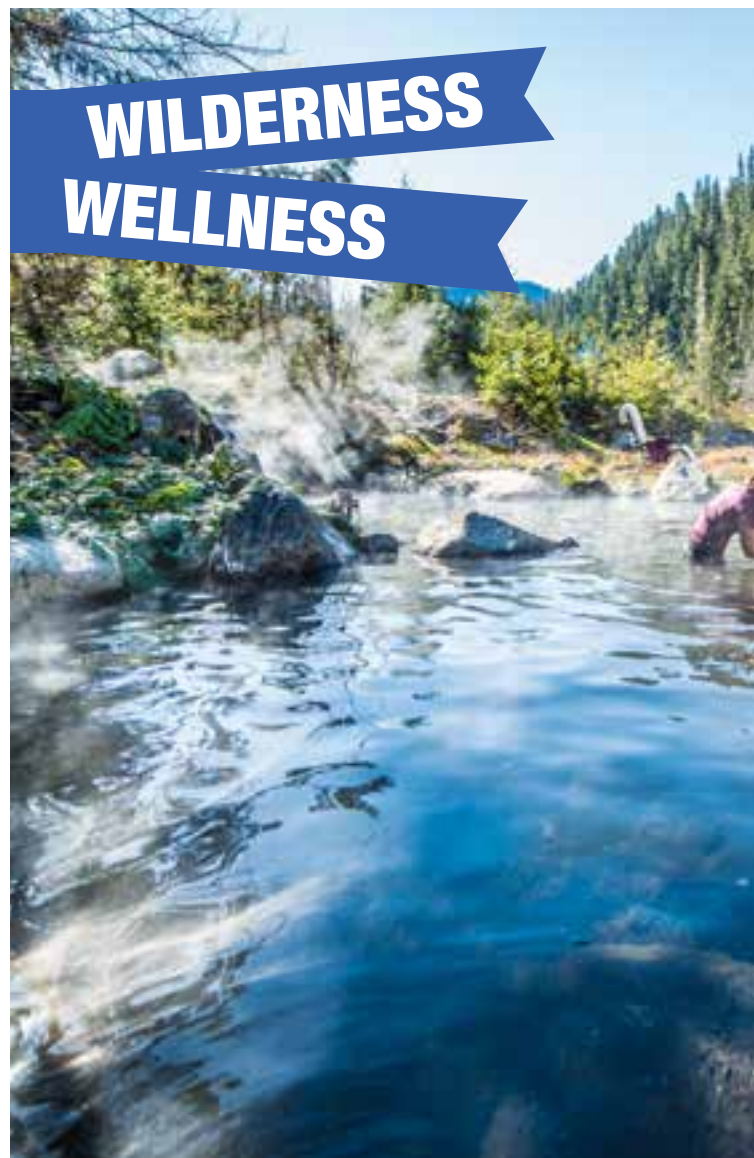
SNOWBIKE

SNOWBIKE

Bizarre as it may appear, snowbiking is revolutionizing the snowsport industry with a brand-new way of exploring the mountains on a grand scale.

“It turns snow-covered terrain into a sand-dune experience,” says Washer. “And it’s easier than it looks. It doesn’t require riding experience or special ability. In many respects, it’s easier than snowmobiling.”

Developed using modified KTM Motorcycles, snowbikes incorporate one ski aligned with a track, making for a versatile vehicle that is easy to explore on, particularly in soft powder conditions that can challenge even the most experienced snowmobile riders.



WILDERNESS WELLNESS

WILDERNESS WELLNESS

Warm up in style with a wilderness Spa experience like no other.

Located on the backside of the Pemberton Ice Cap are a series of natural hot springs that are accessible only by helicopter, or an arduous multi-day snowmobile ride.

Those opting to arrive at the hot springs by helicopter are treated to a breath-taking flightseeing tour from Whistler that overflies the ice cap, offering unparalleled views of glaciers, waterfalls and the high alpine country of the Coast Mountain Range.

Once at the secluded hot springs guests can enjoy a casual soak in the geothermal pools, or take it a step farther and indulge in a full spa



experience with treatments performed by massage therapists. Moreover, a chef-prepared meal can be arranged to complete a one-of-a-kind experience.

A network of improved trails also allows guests to explore the local area and visit other nearby hot springs.

“Winter is our favourite time to do wellness tours to the hot springs,” says Washer. “It’s great to walk around the pools in your flip flops when there is snow all around. And the location is so secluded there is little to no chance of encountering other people.”

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Ballet BC's Rachel Meyer. Photo: © Michael Szobosan

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ICE CASTLES

Each winter Headline Mountain Holidays gets requests to design and build ice castles for special events, parties and unique experiences. Through creative design and lighting, these ice castles offer one-of-a-kind entertainment venues, complete with everything from music and dining facilities to hot tubs and fireworks.

"I don't know what it is about ice, but it is simply fascinating," says Washer. "Doing something creative with it just gives you permission to be a kid again."



GLACIER GOLF

Golfers and non-golfers alike will enjoy the novel experience of glacier sled golf where snowmobiles are pressed into service as all-terrain golf carts, transporting guests and their clubs about the ice cap. There they can practice whacking golf balls to their hearts' content before scooting out and retrieving them with the assistance of geo-location devices. Afterwards, pro-turf golf mats are laid out on the toe of the ice cap so aspiring aces can hit the longest drives of their lives.

"The hang time is like nothing you'll ever see on a fairway," chuckles Washer. "It's a completely unique experience; you can't help being giddy when you see your ball go sailing farther than ever before."

And what becomes of those balls?

"We're mindful of the environment and so we use snowmobiles to recover them," says Washer. "But if we miss any, the balls are made of cornstarch and are completely bio-degradable. Still, we don't want to leave any balls behind — they're expensive!"

SNOW HOTEL

SNOW HOTEL

Those wanting to extend their experience on the ice cap can spend a night in a snow hotel, taking part in snowshoeing, night sky interpretations and First Nations story telling, among other things.

Though they might appear chilly, the snow hotel quinzees are warm and cozy, furnished with all the

winter glamping amenities necessary for a comfortable night sleep, including pre-warmed beds.

Author's note: Headline Mountain Holidays adventure tours can be experienced individually, or combined as part of a custom luxury adventure. For information visit headlinemountainholidays.com



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**BLUE CRAB SEAFOOD HOUSE
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EVEN SAVVY FOODIES might Even savvy foodies might be surprised to learn there is such a thing as a “true” and a “false” crab. True crabs, known as brachyurans, have short abdomens and five sets of legs, while false crabs, or anomurans, have long abdomens and just four sets of legs. True or false, they’re equally delicious.

Blue Crab Seafood House, located in the Coast Harbourside Hotel & Marina in Victoria, specializes in both kinds of crab, and there are variations aplenty during Crab Fest, an annual promotion running until January 7. In keeping with this festival the restaurant is showcasing many of the dishes that put Blue Crab on the map as a premier seafood restaurant, such as their renowned classic crab cakes, but also a range of specials, including crab dip, crab bisque, Crab Louie salad, southern fried crab and the Louisiana crab boil — a full crab served Cajun-style with andouille sausage, potatoes and corn.

Notwithstanding the name, Blue Crab Seafood House serves much more than just crustaceans. The restaurant also serves mouthwatering steaks, grilled salmon, and even pan-seared sturgeon. It’s also popular with vegetarians who go for the wild mushroom soup, roasted vegetables and croissant pudding. And it’s certainly a good spot for after-work cocktails.

On this night my partner, Tyler, and I arrive hungry and ready to dig into some seafood. Gazing around the restaurant I notice soft candle light flickering in unison with the twinkling lights of Victoria’s Inner Harbour. Wine glasses clink and gentle chatter drifts through the room as we take our seats. Sneaking glances at other tables I see bouquets of crab legs, platters of calamari, trays of shrimp and plates of mussels emitting aromas of butter, garlic, and delectable seafood. I catch Tyler’s eye and we exchange smiles; it’s the perfect scene for hungry seafood foodies.

We order a couple libations to whet our whistles while we pore over the menu, eventually settling on a round of appetizers: a sample of snow crab along with crab dip, chips and homemade salsa. Next

comes a small set of plump scallops wrapped in thick, tender strips of bacon that are cut, smoked and treated in-house.

Executive Chef Geoffrey Tintinger recently joined the Blue Crab and has since put his own stamp on the menu. Hailing from South Africa, Tintinger has held executive chef positions at several five-star resorts in Africa and the Indian Ocean. He immigrated to Canada in 2002, and most recently worked in Halifax where he honed his craft with the East Coast's preferred shellfish.


"The big emphasis in the Atlantic Ocean is lobster, of course, and sometimes we regarded that as your everyday meal," says Tintinger. "Here on the Pacific we are fortunate to have a bounty of local crabs. There really is so much we can do with them."

Sticking with the Crab Fest theme, I order the West Coast's most popular and succulent shellfish, Dungeness crab, served with drawn butter, seasonal veggies and crab risotto. The creature on my plate is a sight to behold. The satisfying crack of the gleaming red shell makes my mouth salivate. I crush and twist at the claws, forking the delicate

pink-and-white meat out, before dipping each morsel into a cup of warm, yellow butter. Each bite is a tiny taste of seafood heaven.

Tyler opts for something even more substantial — the popular "Surf & Turf", which pairs a AAA tenderloin with a succulent lobster tail, served alongside roasted baby potatoes topped with béarnaise. It's hard not to marvel at the spread before us; we compare tastes and toast a cheers or two between bites. A beautiful way, we both agree, to spend an evening together.

We finish our meal sharing my all-time favourite sweet — *crème brûlée*. While it may look like a simple dish, this treat is no easy feat to master. Chef Tintinger garnishes his take on the dessert with floral cream and grapes on the side. (Points for beauty.) But the proof is in the pudding, so to speak, and with the first satisfying crack of caramel I scoop out a dollop of custard-like *crème* that melts on the tongue.

After dessert we linger a while longer at our table, holding hands and taking in the view. With a satisfied sigh, I suggest to Tyler that we've perhaps just enjoyed a "true" Blue Crab experience. 



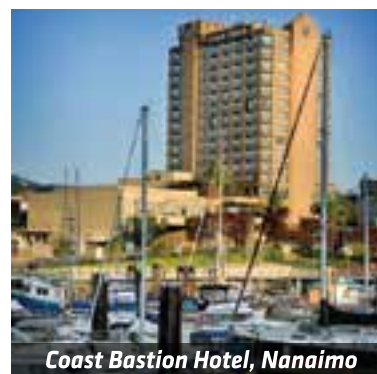
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