



BEST of the 2010 kanagan

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PHOTOS BY LAURIE CARTER, KAREN SLIVAR, GLENNA TURNBULL





Penticton Farmer's Market

Best place to meet your neighbours and indulge your inner foodie

We've got a bunch of great farmers' markets in the Valley, but I really love this one because Pentictonites (Pentictonians?) go all out. This is the only market I can think of that takes over a main downtown thoroughfare and turns it into a lively street fair every Saturday morning from May 1 through October 31. It's right in the heart of the city, immediately handy to other great shopping (like my favourite book shop) and just a short stroll from the lakeshore. When you're visiting from other parts of the Valley you can make a whole day of it. This past summer, the market celebrated its 20th anniversary, a record of longevity that relies on strong local support built on a commitment to quality. Vendors have to "grow it, bake it or make it" to garner a spot in the line-up and get-

ting on board is no slam dunk. The roster is limited to just 60 stalls and newbies are kept on probation for a year before they can make the team. For market aficionados, this tight rein ensures a top-notch experience. My only complaint is the caloric catastrophe that befalls my alarmingly expanding waistline every time I visit. Sure, I could limit my activities to appreciative listening when the busker band of the week tunes up and coral my rampaging taste buds by sticking strictly to the perusal and purchase of tantalizingly colourful fresh strawberries or peaches, beets or corn, peas or carrots, apples or pears—whatever fresh fruit and veggies happen to be in season. Sure, I could show restraint and limit my additional purchases to organic salsas and locally produced mustards, but then I'd miss out on the fresh-baked treats. And that's just not going to happen. Details at pentictonfarmersmarket.org. —LC

PENTICTON FARMERS' MARKET, SINDI HAWKINS AND BIG WHITE TUBING PHOTOS BY LAURIE CARTER; BIG WHITE KID PIC COURTESY OF BIG WHITE SKI RESORT, BC, CANADA

Sindi Hawkins

Best role model for people who want to make a difference

I only met Sindi Hawkins once. It was a signature Okanagan day and I was helping with the *Okanagan Life* sponsorship table at the Sindi Hawkins & Friends Charity Golf Classic that she held every year in support of the BC Cancer Foundation. In spite of the fact that she was already engaged in a personal battle with the disease that eventually claimed her life, Sindi was a ball of energy—gracious, lively, cooperative. Of course I already knew of her, you'd have to have been living in a remote cave to miss hearing her name. During her tenure in the provincial legislature as MLA for Okanagan-West and Kelowna-Mission from 1996 to 2009, she was hardly low profile. But she was one of those rare creatures in politics, a person who could make you forget her party alliance and just see her good work. I'll remember her for her determination to beat cancer—not just on a personal level—but universally. I'm so glad the Southern Interior Cancer Centre will now be named for her. Sindi Hawkins is a truly worthy role model for young women and for the spirit of volunteerism in us all. —LC



Big White Happy Valley

Best ski-/board-free winter fun spot for kids of all ages

Face it—change can be a good thing. Admit that not all winter entertainment has to involve strapping one or more boards to your feet, chatting it up with like-minded riders in the lift line and carving graceful curves (or hilarious head plants) through champagne powder or glades of snow laden trees. OK, so that does sound pretty good. But sometimes you need to broaden your horizons, take a different fork in the trail. Just ask any kid who's powering around the course on a mini-Z snowmobile in Big White's Happy Valley. This family-centred area is an alternate universe of winter activities, tucked away just a short gondola ride below the central village. It's not meant to replace skiing and boarding at the resort, although I've noticed a fair number of grandparents and young moms and dads with tots in tow heading there straight from the parking lot. Happy Valley is a terrific add-on. When the little guys are finished with ski school—troop them down to the skating rink in Happy Valley. (You can join a pickup game of shinny while they do the ice shuffle.) When the teens start grumbling,



"I'm bored," ship them off for a screaming good time on Happy Valley's Mega Snow Coaster. When you're in the mood to downshift a couple of gears, climb aboard the two-Clydesdale open sleigh and glide through the forest to the tune of *Jingle Bells*. Happy Valley is the starting point for Big White's cross-country ski and snowshoe trails. Or if you want to explore farther and faster, climb on a snowmobile for a guided backcountry tour. Happy Valley is the best. —LC



Kelowna Actors Studio

Best troupe of multi-talented actors

I remember the first time I went to a dinner theatre when I was a teen living at the coast. That was the beginning of my love affair with theatre. Over the years I have had the opportunity to visit theatres in Toronto, Stratford, Vancouver and New York and I'm here to say that Kelowna Actors Studio is among some of the very best theatre I've seen. Who knew we had so much talent

in the Valley. Randy Leslie (artistic director) and Nathan Flavel (general manager) are the passion and talent behind this independent theatre company, which has grown from producing five shows its first year to eight shows this season. Great news for fans of Broadway shows. In addition, the studio also offers acting classes, for children (beginning at age seven) to adults. Whether you see yourself as the next Audrey Hepburn or just want to enjoy a new hobby, Kelowna Actors Studio is your ticket. The only dinner theatre in town, we were surprised more people didn't take advantage of the dinner option. The Green Room across the way (also owned by Randy and Nathan) caters the buffet and the meal typically includes bread, two salads, two vegetable dishes and at least one meat option. All theatre tickets include dessert—always a treat—served during the intermission. That's when

it's time to introduce yourself to fellow theatregoers at your table and talk about the show so far. From the very first performance we saw we were impressed with the caliber of the actors and the sets. Randy knocked our socks off with his booming voice during his performance in *Kiss of the Spider Woman*. The *Sweeney Todd* set was fantastical with its turning unit and barber chair complete with trapdoor. Among our favourites to date are *Kiss of the Spider Woman*, *On Broadway* and *Joseph and the Amazing Technicolour Dreamcoat*. Avid fans and season ticket holders, we don't miss a production and always look forward to arriving at the theatre and seeing what the set design crew has dreamed up. The performances are always well received and get a standing ovation from the audience. In its eighth season, the studio presents a variety of plays from the serious to the side splitting. I only wish we had discovered it sooner. —KS



Let's Dance Kelowna

Best couple's activity

I was surprised when my hubby insisted on signing us up for dance lessons. Isn't the wife supposed to be the one who makes this kind of decision? Not only did my hubby the keener sign us up, he also took us shopping to buy special ballroom dance shoes, and this from a man who hates shopping. New shoes in cute little drawstring bags, we set off for our first lesson. It was love at first step for both of us. Soon, we knew the basics for the rumba and swing. Confidence oozing, one evening we headed out to Let's Dance Kelowna to practice our rumba. We mistakenly thought it was rumba night, but soon learned the club plays music for many different styles. From our seats, we became mesmerized by the grace of all the couples dancing what we later dis-

covered were the quickstep, foxtrot, waltz, tango, cha-cha, West Coast swing and two-step. Not only was our repertoire limited to two styles, we were having trouble deciphering the music. Dejected, we sat and watched from the sidelines. Soon strangers were coming up to ask us why we weren't dancing. When they learned we only knew two dances they quickly rallied the DJ to play a few more tunes so we could join in the fun. Back at lessons we progressed through the basics and added more styles. Now when we go to club dances we're on our feet more than in our seats. Our ears are getting better and we see there are many different skill levels, but what they all have in common is a passion for dance. Thanks to Let's Dance Kelowna we have a place to go strut our stuff (every second Friday, at the German Canadian Club, Cary Road, Kelowna). —KS

KELOWNA ACTORS STUDIO PHOTOS BY GLENNA TURNBULL

LET'S DANCE KELOWNA PHOTOS BY KAREN SLIVAR



Nk'Mip Desert Cultural Centre

Best ecological and cultural experience rolled into one

Someone recently posed the question, "If you could take a visitor to only one place in the Okanagan, where would it be?" This is a really tough one and certainly depends on the visitor, but the Osoyoos Indian Band's Nk'Mip Desert Cultural Centre would always be in the running. I've been watching the evolution of this eco-cultural attraction since the sizzling summer afternoon in 2003 when my then long-distance romantic interest was visiting from Toronto. We pulled up in front of the visitor centre, a prefab temporary structure plunked down in the middle of a wide-open patch of antelope brush, and discovered that we were just in time for rattlesnake tail painting. This event did not prove to be some arcane First Nations right of passage but an important part of a very serious research project aimed at studying and protecting an endangered native species. The prefab is long gone,

replaced by an arresting creation of rammed earth and green roof designed to mirror the landscape (and wow visitors). The romantic interest (now the hubby) and I visit regularly. Rattlers still figure prominently. I've even seen one in the wild — curled all but invisibly, seeking shelter and solitude at the base of a scrubby bush. But you're more likely to make a sighting during a demonstration in the Living Lands display area or the Critter Corner rattler hotel. And much as I love/hate the rattlers, my favourite part of the Nk'Mip experience is learning about local First Nations culture. Each time we take the guided interpretive walk to the centre's recreated Okanagan village, I learn something new about their social structure and how these people made use of the gifts of this environment. Inside the centre, excellent exhibits illustrate more facets of the culture and the legend of Sen'klip (Coyote) is revealed in an intimate multi-sensory theatre. Nk'Mip's onsite gift shop is also one of the best places I know to shop for aboriginal crafts. —LC

NK'MIP PHOTOS BY LAURIE CARTER

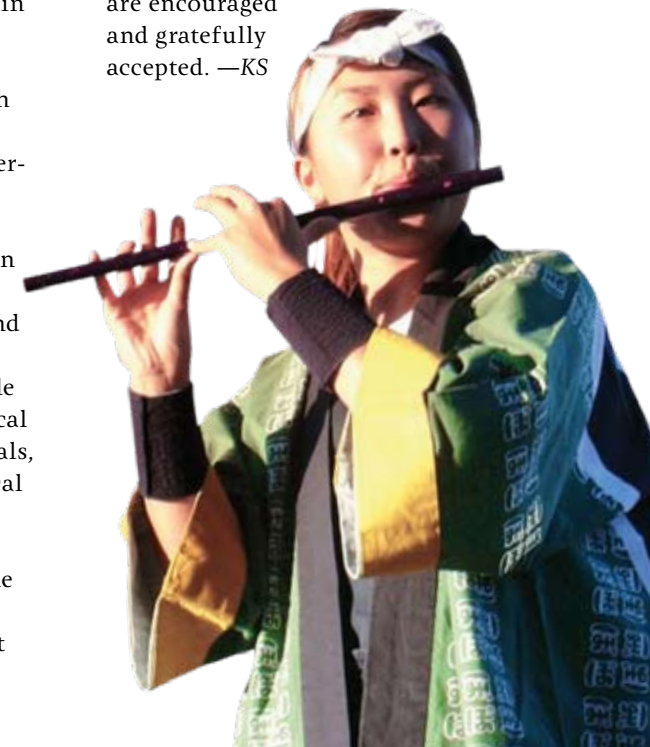


Parks Alive!, Kelowna

Best family-oriented entertainment

What's not to love about this series of events? Parks Alive! hosts free entertainment throughout the summer months (July and August) at many parks and public places in Kelowna. On a warm Friday evening in downtown at Kerry Park people in the know show up with lawn chairs, blankets and food, settling in for an evening of entertainment, which runs the gamut from music to dance to vocals. You'll know a crowd pleaser when you see it, the whole audience is on its feet dancing to the beat and watching the toddlers wriggling to the music is sure to put a smile on your face. Acts range from local artists to world-class professionals, performing in a variety of musical genres including rock, pop, jazz, reggae and blues. In late August on Wednesday nights pack up the kids and blankets and head over to the Island Stage in Waterfront Park for music and a movie. Best

deal in town. All the entertainment is family-friendly and suitable for people of all ages. Be sure to join in the fun next summer. For a calendar of events visit online at www.parksalive.com. Admission is free, however donations are encouraged and gratefully accepted. —KS



PHOTOS BY PARKS ALIVE! STAFF

Vernon Museum

Best keeper of neat historic stories and stuff of the North Okanagan

I was doing an article on heritage homes of the Okanagan and hot on the trail of info and historic photos, I contacted the Greater Vernon Museum and Archives. What a bonanza. The people couldn't have been more willing or helpful, and talk about a ton of great background. I spent one of my happiest days of research poring through the stacks of heritage photos they dug out for me. And since I was already in the building, how could I leave without strolling through the museum exhibits. From work I'd done on the Allan Brooks Nature Centre, I knew that the museum houses a collection of the renowned naturalist's watercolours and paintings. But I knew nothing about the founding of the British Columbia Dragoons, Vernon's very own regiment with a colourful history that could be traced as far back as 1884 and the area's first efforts to form a mounted (cavalry) militia unit. And you don't necessarily have to be a fan of military history to appreciate another story told at the museum. Movie buffs who have seen *The Devil's Brigade* (1968), about the Second World War gang of American misfits and the crack Canadian outfit that were melded into the first

Special Service Force (dubbed by the Germans, the Devil's Brigade) may be as astonished as I was to learn that one of those crack Canadians was Verninite Jack Furman. Check out his medals. Other permanent exhibits include the Ice Age prehistory of the valley, artifacts of the Interior Salish peoples, European settlement, the orchard industry, a 1930s-era kitchen, a depiction of Vernon's main street around 1900 and a natural history corner. Great little museum. —LC



Plastic Free Penticton

Best group of local activists working for social and environmental change

Plastic Free Penticton is a grassroots organization whose goal is to spread the word about the impact of disposable plastics on our environment and to provide tips on how to reduce consumption. "It's all about refusing to use plastics in the first place," says founder Jan Vozenilek. Do we really need plastic grass with our sushi? Volunteers Mia Harris and Tavis Wier spearheaded running a booth at the Penticton Farmers' Market

all summer to educate people about the effects of single use disposable plastic on our world. For example, those caps on plastic bottles that can't be recycled have turned up in the bellies of albatross chicks, their parents soar out over the polluted ocean collecting what looks to them like food and bring it back to their young. On this diet of human trash, every year thousands of albatross chicks die of starvation, toxicity and choking (see Jan's video at www.midwayjourney.com). By shining a light on plastics the movement has spurred on others. Student Emily Chartrand made it her mis-

sion to raise awareness about plastic abuse in her high school and to decrease overall usage by targeting plastic water bottles. Plastic Free Pen High was born. Its solution was simple, reusable metal water bottles. Plastic free doesn't mean using no plastic at all. Your computer, cell phone, television, bike helmet and a whole host of objects that make life better are made from plastic. But there are also a lot of unnecessary plastics junking the world up. Like single-use disposable packaging and containers that leak toxic chemicals into your food. To learn more visit www.plasticfreepenticton.com. —KS



TOP PHOTOS COURTESY OF GREATER VERNON MUSEUM & ARCHIVES
BIRD PHOTO IS OF AN ORIGINAL PAINTING BY ALLAN BROOKS (1929) FROM THE MUSEUM COLLECTION

A DAY LATE AND A DOLLAR SHORT PHOTO BY KEVIN TROWBRIDGE
PLASTIC FREE PENTICTON PHOTOS BY JAN VOZENILEK

A Day Late and A Dollar Short

Best bluegrass music makers with a super community spirit

With a name like A Day Late and a Dollar Short you know you're in for a good time. Since 2004 this band has been entertaining audiences with foot stomping bluegrass and raising money for local causes. Their three-part harmony vocals, guitar, bass, mandolin, dobro and stage humour keep the fans coming back for more. Through ticket and CD sales these six guys have raised over \$52,000 for community charities. Their "pay it forward" philosophy has benefited local Rotary clubs, arts and education facilities, a daycare centre and most especially, the BC Cancer Foundation. Bandleader Bob Bissillion established the Daryl Cochran Endowment Fund through the Central Okanagan Foundation in memory of his best friend who died of cancer. Several years later the band was personally touched when their banjo player Bob Grycaj succumbed to the disease. Up and down the Valley, Day Late plays to sell out crowds. Jack Kinakin (dobro), Gene Bretcher (banjo), Bob Bissillion (guitar and vocals), Vic Ukrainetz (mandolin and vocals), Darrell Corbel (guitar and vocals), Ron Hillcoff (bass and vocals). —KS

