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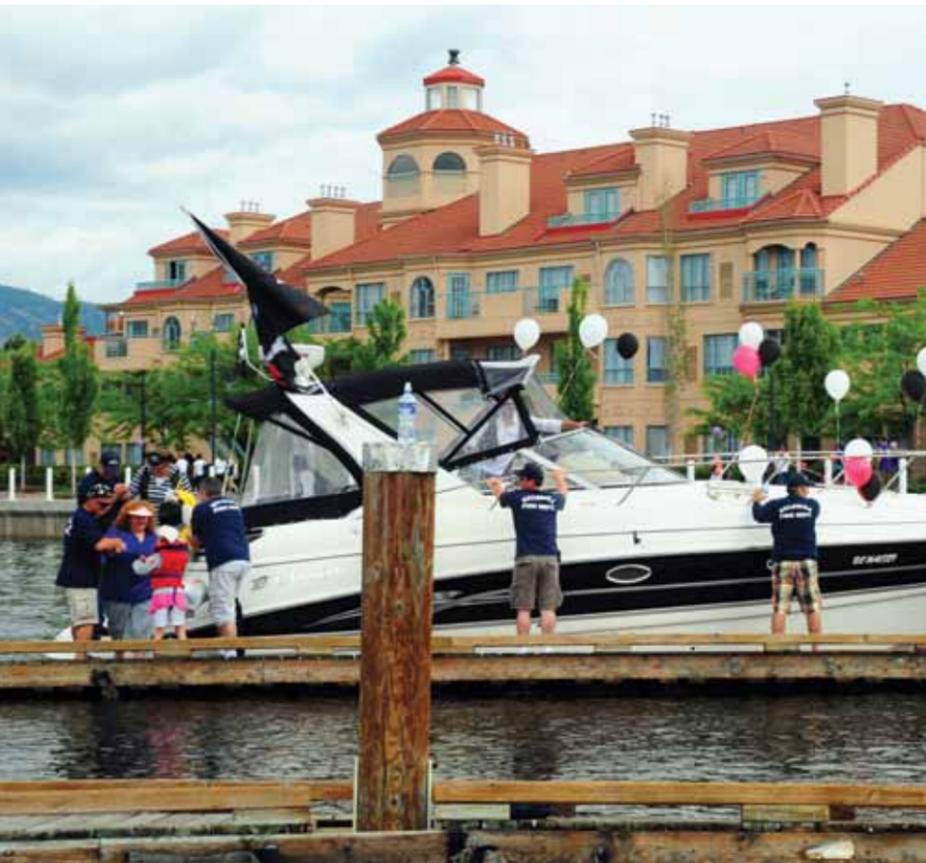
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Laurie Carter, Rick Cogbill and Karen Slivar

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# BEST of the KANAGAN

2011





### Variety's Boat for Hope

Best excuse for a volunteer to play dress up

Ahoy mateys. Variety's Boat for Hope is a chance for children with special needs along with their families and caregivers to spend a fun-filled day on Okanagan Lake. The event attracts families from all over the BC Interior to Kelowna. Some families drive a whole day to get here. That should tell you how unique an experience this is for some of these kids. Members of the Kelowna Yacht Club pull out all the stops for this event decorating the clubhouse and boats with the Jolly Roger and other pirate kit. Skippers volunteer their time and vessels for a pirate adventure on the high seas. They dress up as captains, mates and wenches wearing period hats, scarves, coats, vests, blouses, skirts and boots, brandishing swords, pistols, eye patches and tattoos. These guys and gals look like they just walked off the

movie set of *Pirates of the Caribbean*. Lending a hand, local firefighters use their muscles to help load the kids onto the waiting galleons. And so the hunt for treasure begins as one by one the vessels weigh anchor and head offshore to where a flotilla of pirate ships is anchored. What's a pirate adventure without a battle? Water cannon fire is exchanged and the pirates are forced to hand over bags filled with booty to the delight of the kids. Back on shore, smiling and wet, all the families are treated to a barbecue lunch and more fun. Volunteers from the Okanagan Boys and Girls Clubs offer face painting, treasure hunt and games. All the while members of the Central Okanagan Photographic Society are snapping shots of all the action. Boat for Hope is organized by a dedicated bunch of volunteers who look forward to welcoming returning families and greeting new ones. They do it for the children and families and are rewarded by smiles all around. —KS

PHOTOS ABOVE TOP BY JIM HARDING, LEFT BY KAREN SLIVAR  
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### Robo Bros

Best creative youth role models in the North Okanagan

Two Vernon brothers, Hudson (14) and Nelson (12) Schier, have been into robotics for four years now, ever since they saw a CHBC news story on the RoboCup challenge, held annually at Okanagan College. The competition introduces young people to the field of robotics and is an offshoot of RoboCup, an international organization dedicated to the advancement of intelligent robots. Under the tree at Christmas that year the boys found a robotics starter kit, Lego Mindstorms NXT, and the dynamic duo set out to build their first robot. Junior teams can compete in three categories: soccer, dance, and search and rescue. The brothers decided to start with dance. Hudson worked on programming the robot to move in sync with music. Nelson acted as the team's artistic director and was in charge of choreography and videography. The duo entered the world of competition under the name Robo Bros and took home first place at the Western Canada RoboCupJunior Games. From there they went on to represent Canada at the World RoboCupJunior Championships, held in Austria

that year. While there, they met like-minded youth with the same interest in robotics. Always happy to share their knowledge with others, this summer Hudson volunteered to help with the robotics summer camp at the Okanagan Science Centre. It's interesting to note that Nelson used greenscreen technology in video production two years before the local television news station used the technology. Over the last three years the brothers have taken home an impressive number of trophies. This summer the Schier family travelled to Istanbul, Turkey, where the boys competed in yet another World

RoboCupJunior Championship. Robo Bros came home with top place finishes for original performance, best programming and superteam performance, marking the first year a Canadian team has won. Back at home, Nelson has started programming for himself. The bros are now game to enter the soccer challenge. Remote controls are not allowed, the robots are programmed to locate and kick an infrared-transmitting ball. The brothers have been pitting their robots against each other for practice before the sixth annual Western Canada RoboCupJunior Games in December. —KS



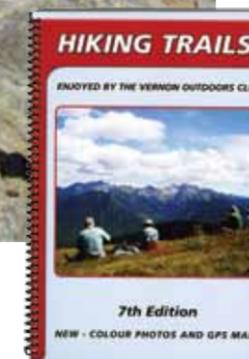
**Bumbershoot Children's Theatre**

Best troupe of multi-talented child stars with a "no stars" philosophy

Created just for young people, each year Kelowna's Bumbershoot Children's Theatre is filled with fun, laughter and excitement. Founder and artistic director Tracy Ross is the mastermind behind the non-profit organization, which is dedicated to introducing youth to the exciting world of theatre. Now in its fourth season, Bumbershoot has grown from offering four shows performed at a local elementary school to four mainstage productions, youth performances and theatre classes. The classes are open to youth

age 3 to 17 and cover all areas of theatre: stage, prop and costume. This year Anita McFarlane and Bonnie Gratz have come on board as teaching staff. Anita has taught theatre, yoga, circus and wizardry in New York. She now teaches the kids' power hour a mix of yoga, creative movement, theatre games and circus skills to children, age five to seven. Got a teen that fancies himself more a writer than a performer? Bonnie can help; she's a professional actor, director, playwright and educator who has been working in the arts scene for over 20 years. She'll be working with teens to hone their writing skills in the teen playwright's collective. At the end of the session, the

resulting work will be staged in front of family and friends. Over the years Bumbershoot's school residency program, designed to bring the theatre experience to schools, has expanded to cover the Vernon area. A team arrives with scenery, props, costumes and script; the only thing missing is the cast. What follows is auditions and rehearsals, and at the end of one week, two full-scale musical performances for family and friends. Shows are original adaptations of children's favourite stories and fairytales. The residency program is offered to students from kindergarten to Grade 7. Sing. Dance. Play. Bumbershoot offers young people a chance to shine, explore theatre and make new friends. Once again, Bumbershoot offers four mainstage productions to introduce young people to theatre. The first show in 2012 is *My Favourite Fairytales*. The Queen of Hearts has lost her tarts and needs to go back to her favourite fairytales to solve the mystery of their disappearance. This is an interactive performance, perfect for young children and families. The show runs January 19 to 29 at the Black Box Theatre (behind the Kelowna Community Theatre, entrance on east side of building). Maybe we'll see you at the theatre. —KS



**Vernon Outdoors Club**

Best group activity

I love this group. From April through October the Vernon Outdoors Club leads group hikes on Sundays. It's a great way to get to know the local trails. The club maintains a number of them, and always checks out the scheduled trail before the group hike. One time it involved clearing away 20 deadfalls with the help of a handsaw. It's not uncommon for 30 people to turn up for a hike, and something I appreciate while walking around in bear country. Carpooling to the trailhead is encouraged. Members range in age from early teens to 80 something, but the majority are retirees. If you imagine hiking with a group of golden oldies will be easy, think again. This group doesn't bat an eye at a 10-kilometre hike or a 1,000-metre elevation gain. I often find myself left behind eating their trail dust,

in awe of their hiking prowess. And they have 30 years on me! Lucky for me, nobody is ever left behind on the trail. There is always a leader and sweeper who are in contact with each other via walky-talky. Head counts are done after every stop. Best of all, lunch spots are chosen for maximum viewing pleasure. Shorts Creek Canyon Rim, Bluenose Mountain and Twin Lakes are among some of my favourite hikes. During the week the club also offers easier paced hikes and 40-kilometre bike rides. When the white stuff flies you'll find many members out and about cross-country skiing. Life here begins at 60. For those of you who would rather explore the hiking trails on your own the club has published a detailed guide to day hikes in and around the North Okanagan and Monashees. —KS

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FACING PAGE PHOTOS BY KAREN SLIVAR



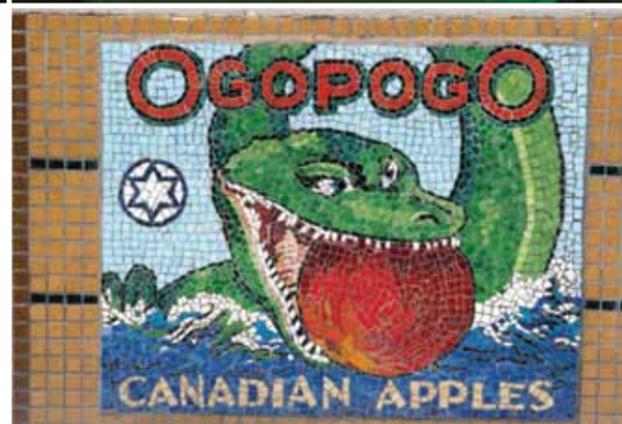
### BC Tree Fruits 75th

Best reminder to appreciate our local growers and the bounty they produce

Among my favourite memories are the seasonal cycles of the orchard where I spent many of my early years in Ontario. Crunching through the snow in late winter to help gather and burn the suckers my grandfather had pruned from the trees; the explosion of blossoms in spring; snacking on the first green apples, so hard I feared for my new front teeth, so tart they made my mouth pucker; and finally, the wonderful earthy scent of ripe apples at harvest. Whenever I catch that scent, my mind rushes to a very happy place. So imagine my joy when I moved to the Okanagan and found myself living once more in the midst of the rhythms of the orchard. Aboriginal peoples harvested tree fruits like crab apples long before Europeans settled here, Father Pandosy planted the first large-scale apple orchard in the Valley in 1862 and widespread orchard production blossomed from the 1890s. While

apples continued to be the main crop, orchardists have branched out to add cherries, peaches, apricots, nectarines, pears and plums to the mix. In 1936 growers banded together in a cooperative that now boasts a membership of some 800 families. As individuals they plant, tend and harvest and as a collective they pack, store, transport and market Okanagan produce globally. But we're the lucky ones—residents of the Okanagan—because we can enjoy the fruits of their labours at the peak of fresh perfection. From the first sign of cherries in June to the last of the apples in October, this bounty is laid before us at roadside stands, farmers' markets and retail outlets throughout the Valley. For us, tree fruit production is more than a source of nummy nutrition, think of how it influences the culture of our region. Consider the family memories from U-pick outings, passing fresh fruit to visitors in the back seat after a fruit stand stop on a scenic drive, and the influence on our public art. We owe so much to our tree fruit producers. Thank you. —LC

PHOTOS BY LAURIE CARTER



### Medical LEED

Best green construction

It's good to see what we can only hope is part of a sustainable trend in public building construction throughout the Okanagan. Kudos to Interior Health (IH) for its role in giving Kelowna its first LEED (Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design) Canada Gold certified building. "While Interior Health's goal is to improve the health and wellness of its residents," says IH board chair Norman Embree, "we understand the linkage between health and the environment. The Clinical Academic Campus is a good example of reducing our environmental impact while at the same time expanding facilities and services." The new campus at Kelowna General Hospital is home to the UBC Faculty of Medicine Southern Medical Program and UBC Rural Family Practice Residency Program. This 34,000 sq. ft. stand-alone facility includes a 180-seat lecture theatre, and specialized video-conferencing rooms and clinical skills areas for medical undergraduates and post-graduate residents, as well

as the Interior Health Dr. Clifford B. Henderson library. Many factors contributed to the gold certification, conferred by LEED a third-party program and internationally accepted benchmark for the design, construction and operation of high performance green buildings. The campus boasts a rainwater harvesting system, irrigation equipment and drought tolerant native plants. Among the building materials used, 47 per cent were regionally manu-

factured and extracted while nearly 29 per cent contain recycled content. During construction almost 84 per cent of construction, demolition and land-clearing waste was diverted from landfill. More than 81 per cent of the wood-based materials are products certified in accordance with Forest Stewardship Council principles. The building provides secure bike storage, reduced rate carpool parking and electric vehicle charging stations. Excellent. —LC



PHOTOS CONTRIBUTED

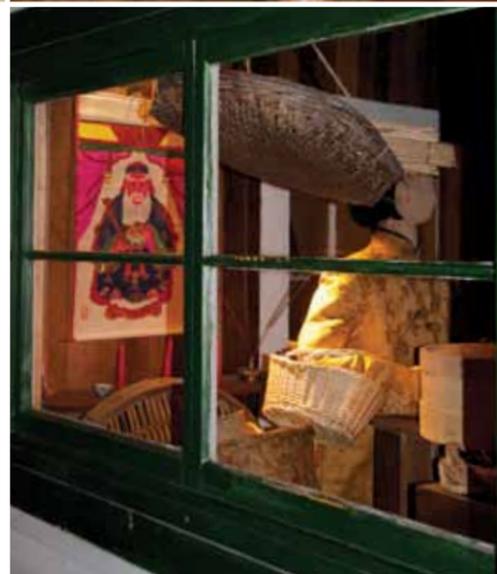
Kelowna Museums

Best keeper of neat historic stories and stuff for 75 years and counting

Winston Churchill said, "Those that fail to learn from history, are doomed to repeat it." For the last 75 years the Kelowna Museums have been doing a great job of preserving our heritage, so that we can learn and always remember. Divided into several sections at closely spaced locations in the Cultural District, the collections are displayed at the Okanagan Heritage Museum, the familiar building on Ellis Street, the Okanagan Military Museum, housed in the adjacent arena, and the BC Orchard Industry and Wine museums in the historic Laurel Packinghouse. Many of the exhibits at the Heritage Museum are more nostalgic than cautionary. Whoever had the bright idea of creating a basement filled with the detritus of generations as a way to display everything from push mowers (so old they're new again) to gramophones and snowshoes, was a genius. I enjoy glimpsing the lifestyle of the sternwheeler era, with its gracious lakeshore hotels, cricket matches and fishing regattas, the 1908 motor buggy is cool and I get a kick out of the 1920s panorama painting of Kelowna, created for the Gibson Catlett Real Estate Company — OK — maybe a lesson to learn there. The goods displayed in John McDougal's Trading Post serve to remind us of the devastating impact of European settlement on indigenous peoples and peeking through the green-trimmed window of the Wang family opens a view on a world many locals have no idea once existed here. Kelowna's mini Chinatown was mostly filled with men who came as miners then helped build the CPR. Later arrivals laid tracks for the Kettle Valley Railway and contributed to the orchard industry, building hundreds of miles of flumes and ditches, then working in the orchards. Passage of the Chinese Exclusion Act in



1923 halted immigration, preventing them from bringing their wives and leading to the eventual demise of the community. Lessons on immigration policy? At the Okanagan Military Museum, there are many reminders of the folly of mankind's quest for power. While exhibits celebrate the heroism, the proud history of local service people and the British Columbia Dragoons, and Canada's ongoing efforts to establish and maintain peace, the underlying message is fresh, relevant and urgent. The Kelowna Museums are well worth a visit and a pause for thought. —LC



PHOTOS BY LAURIE CARTER

Pacific Agri-Food Research Centre

Best hope for a world that needs all the food we can produce

While some Okanagan landmarks remain unchanged for decades, the Pacific Agri-Food Research Centre (PARC) in Summerland has done nothing but change. Situated on 320 hectares straddling Highway 97, the modern research facility sits high on a bench overlooking Okanagan Lake. The attached ornamental gardens and museum are open for public and private activities. Founded in 1914 as the Dominion Experimental Farm, PARC has gone through many transitions as it keeps abreast of the changing needs of those it works for — the growers and consumers of Canada. On Sept. 24, 2011, PARC held an open house to celebrate Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada's 125th birthday. Less than three years from its own millennium celebration, PARC is part of a national network of 19 research centres that look into everything from horticultural and field crop production to poultry and dairy cattle issues. Although farm animals were part of PARC's early history (remember the cows with windows in their stomachs?), today the focus is mainly horticulture and crop production. According to Benoit Girard, program director for the agricultural bio-

products innovation program, the centre is making a global impact, especially in the area of sweet cherries. "Eighty per cent of the new varieties of cherries being planted around the world at the moment originate from here in Summerland," he says. Due to its Okanagan location, the Summerland centre has devoted much of its research to tree fruit production and disease control, but in recent years an increased focus has been placed on wineries and grape production. That's not surprising, says Dan O'Gorman, a research biologist working at PARC. "The acreage of vines planted has doubled in the last 10 years and it's still going up." This increase in vineyards has brought its own set of issues in the form of grape and trunk diseases. "This is a problem that is found all around the world," says Dan, "but only in the last three or four years have we started seeing any of these diseases here in the Okanagan." One visitor to the open house was Dr. David McIntosh, the former head of plant pathology. Beginning his career in the cow barns and vegetable gardens in 1946, he retired as head of his department in 1978. In those days it was called the Summerland Research Station. What he noticed at the event was the number of original buildings that are no longer around, including staff residences, a boarding house for

single men, and research facilities like the entomology building down on Trout Creek Point. But he also remembers some of the significant accomplishments of the past, such as finding a solution to dieback in apple trees, a condition that devastated orchards in the 1920s and 1930s. The discovery that borax or boron was needed by the tree roots to overcome the problem earned Dr. H.R. McLarty worldwide recognition. PARC continues its leadership role while remaining one of the more permanent landmarks in the South Okanagan. —Rick Cogbill



PHOTOS BY RICK COGBILL