



GORGE TILlicum

GORGE TILlicum COMMUNITY ASSOCIATION

Neighbourhood NEWS



A NEW LANDMARK SPROUTS ON BURNSIDE ROAD: GTCA'S LATEST MURAL INSTALLATION

The GTCA is thrilled to announce the completion of our newest mural, now brightening up 50 Burnside Road West. This breathtaking piece, designed and painted by mural artist Elder, features a close-up of the Arbutus tree, a species native to this region and deeply significant to the W̱SÁNEĆ First Nations. Its warm hues and twisting forms bring a sense of life, strength, and resilience to the urban streetscape—a reminder of nature's quiet persistence amidst the bustle of city life.

Just a block away from the beloved Sunflower Girl mural by Paul Archer, installed in 2021, this new addition marks another milestone for community-driven public art in the Gorge Tillicum area. However, bringing Elder's mural to life was far from easy. The GTCA spent over two years navigating complex municipal processes and waiting for Saanich's mural policy to be finalized. During that time, two earlier mural projects—planned for Kosapsum Park and

Meadow Park—had to be abandoned due to policy hurdles.

In 2023, the GTCA shifted focus to a privately owned building on Burnside Road, securing the property owner's support in 2024. With a clear site finally in place, the team selected Elder, worked on design revisions, and assembled a budget. When Saanich's Mural Policy and Community Canvas Grant program finally launched in July 2025, GTCA quickly applied and was awarded a \$10,000 grant, covering half the mural's cost. The remaining funds came from the GTCA, generous community donors through GoFundMe, and the property owner.

Elder began painting in mid-August, putting in long, demanding days to complete the mural by early September. Reflecting on the project, Elder shared:

continued on pg. 4



We welcome comments — please let us know what you think of your newsletter!

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Published:

Spring (March/April)
Summer (June)
Fall/Winter (November)

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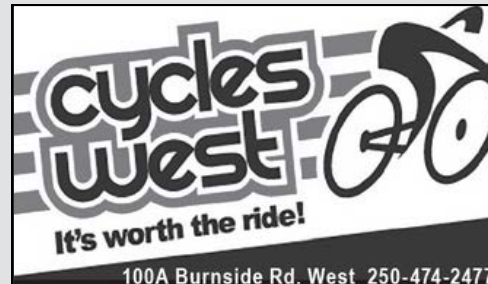


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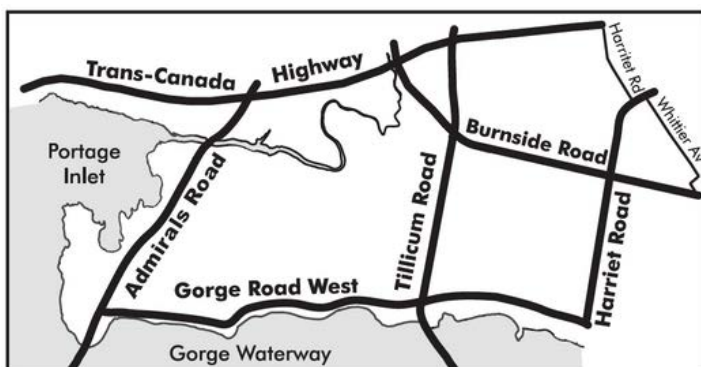
Paul Gerrard Phone: 382-5154 Fax: 382-5748

GORGE TILLICUM COMMUNITY ASSOCIATION

GTCA BOUNDARIES

The GTCA boundaries are the Gorge Waterway and Portage Inlet shorelines, the Trans-Canada highway to the north and Harriet/Burnside East/Whittier/Harriet to the east.

To learn more about Saanich Community Associations and view the boundaries, see <https://www.saanich.ca/EN/main/community/community-associations.html>



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GTCA UPDATE

Dear Community Members,

What a busy and exciting spring and summer it's been for the GTCA! This year we celebrated our 25th Anniversary with a very special Annual General Meeting at the Esquimalt Gorge Pavilion. It was wonderful to look back on everything we've accomplished and to celebrate the many volunteers who have made it all possible. (Be sure to check out the photos on page 5!)

Our 25th Anniversary Gorge Canada Day Picnic was another huge highlight — we had about 18,000 people join us for the fun! A big thank-you to our Picnic Chair, Brandon Devnich, and to the nearly 50 volunteers who made the day run so smoothly. Special thanks as well to Rob Wickson and Ray Farmer, who've been helping organize the picnic since the very first one in 1999!

We also want to give a heartfelt thank-you to our longtime sponsors. Many of them have been with us since the early days: Fairway Markets, Save-On-Foods, Canadian Tire View Royal, Coast Capital, 4 Mile Brewing, Top Shelf Bookkeeping, EY Properties Ltd., Tillicum Centre, the District of Saanich, and Heritage Canada. And of course, a big thanks to the Saanich Police for being out in full force this year and helping keep everyone safe.

Music in the Park in Rudd Park also had great attendance and was a wonderful evening of music and dancing.

Outside of community events, we've been continuing our work as an official Community

Association in Saanich, reviewing and sharing feedback on local development proposals. Things have been a lot quieter on that front lately because of the economy, but we're looking forward to seeing the Il Greco project at Gorge and Tillicum wrap up soon, along with Abstract's Brooke townhouse project at 630 Gorge Road West.

This past spring and summer, the GTCA actively participated in the full range of consultation sessions for the new planning process. The overall community participation was lower than hoped, but we felt it was vital to share our perspective and history.

We have submitted a letter outlining our feedback and priorities to Saanich Mayor and Council and Saanich Planning. You can read the letter on our website in the GTCA Documents section, or scan the QR code below.

The new plan is currently being drafted, with a draft expected early next year. We will continue to keep the community informed and encourage the community to provide feedback when given the opportunity.

We hope you join us at some of the events showcased on pages 6 & 7.

Wishing you all a peaceful holiday season and a happy, healthy year ahead!

Vera Wynn-Williams
President, GTCA

Scan to see the GTCA's detailed letter about the Tillicum Burnside Planning Process.



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“Murals can add beauty to urban landscapes, make people feel more comfortable in their communities, and create conversation around art and nature. I hope this mural can be an opportunity to give a sense of nature towering back over the landscape, where it once thrived.”

The artist also reflected on the physical and creative challenges of mural work:

“All murals are a challenge—from design revisions and months of planning to the physical demands of painting on a large scale in public. It’s mentally and physically exhausting, but also incredibly rewarding.”

Throughout the process, Elder found encouragement in unexpected moments:

“People walking by, waiting for the bus, or even stuck in traffic would stop to say thank you. One day I turned around to find an envelope that said, ‘Thanks for making my neighbourhood beautiful,’ with a small tip inside. Another time, someone left me a cigarette and a tiny bottle of banana liquor—it was a very human and touching experience.”

The GTCA is proud of this remarkable achievement and the strong community support that made it possible. Plans are already underway for another mural in 2026, continuing our mission to bring art, ecology, and community together in creative and meaningful ways.

-Vera Wynn-Williams



The artist taking a break while painting the mural.



The artist premixed all the colours so that the final product looked exactly like his rendering.

COWPER STREET RESIDENTS EXPLORE ROAD MURAL PROJECT



Photo: John Cameron

Painting Party at Falaise Crescent Road

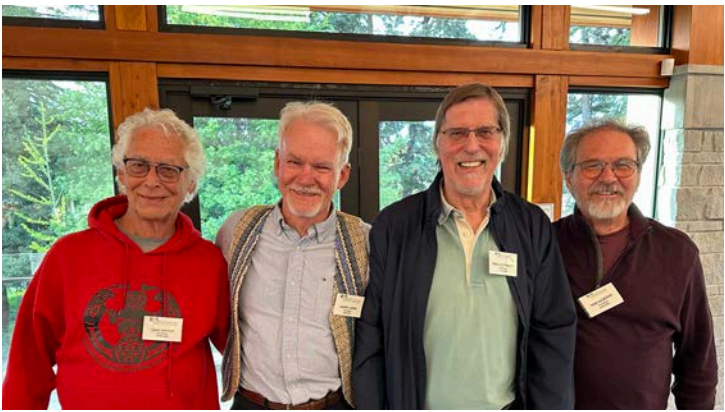
A small group of Cowper Street residents, concerned about speeding and pedestrian safety, are exploring the idea of installing road murals to help calm traffic and enhance the neighbourhood’s character.

Working with Councillor Phelps-Bondaroff, the group is excited about the creative possibilities. To the left is an example of a recent road mural on Falaise Crescent in Saanich.

If you’re interested in learning more or getting involved, please email info@gorgetillicum.ca, and we’ll connect you with the organizers.

AGM CELEBRATION - MAY 2025

FALL/WINTER 2025



Photos: Reb Stevenson



This popular, free event is back again!

To have your pumpkin be part of the parade we ask that you either bring your pumpkins down to Gorge Park parking lot between 3-5pm on Nov. 1st, or leave them at the end of your driveway and we'll try our best to pick them up.

Please note: there is limited parking at the Gorge Parking parking lot so we recommend walking or taking transit. Also, it is very dark in the park so we suggest that you bring a flashlight.





YOU'RE INVITED

Did you plant an edible garden this summer? How was your harvest? Are you interested in chatting with other gardeners about their successes and failures? Gorge Tillicum Urban Farmers (GTUF) is a local group whose members plan and participate in summer garden tours and hold an annual late winter Seed Swap. It is all in support of building community through gardens, food security and food sovereignty. Join us in an informal meet up to talk about and share what worked, what didn't and what's ahead for your 2026 garden. Bring your ideas, frustrations, innovations, hopes and fears as well as a shareable snack and meet your neighbours.

November 2, 2026

1:30-3:30

Bell Irving Room

Saanich Commonwealth Place

For further information on and to become a member of GTUF (its free!), check out growfood.wixsite.com/gtuf

-Olivia Anderson

CHRISTMAS MARKETS IN THE HOOD



Holiday Skate

The GTCA is planning a fun, family friendly event for Dec. 23, 2025. We are still working on the details - keep an eye on our website and facebook page.





CUES TO CARE - IDEAS ANYONE?

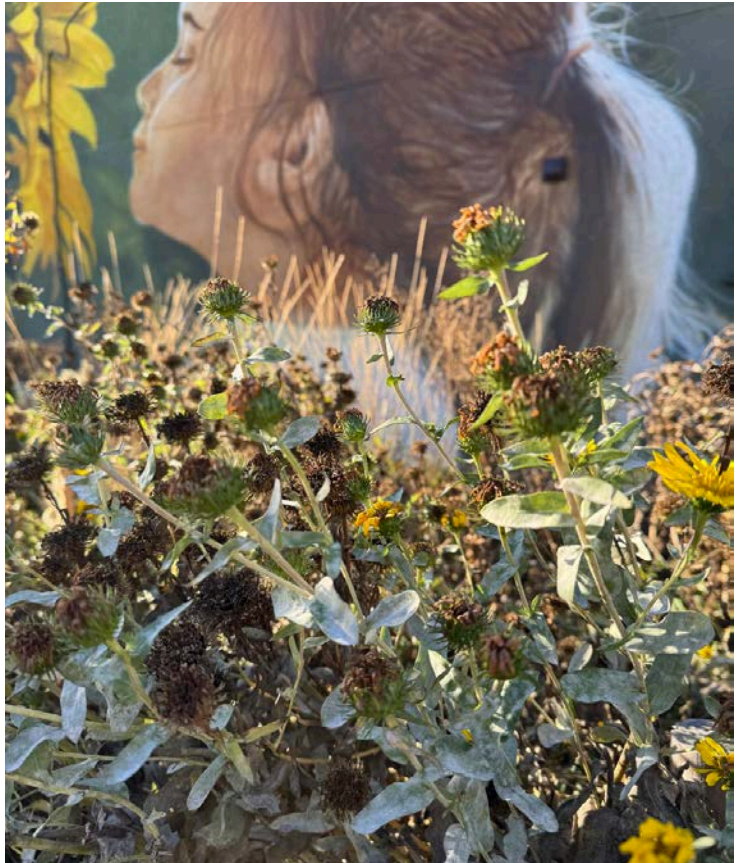
Standing in front of the native plant garden at Wascana and Burnside, I look at its winter presence and laugh at how care might be a little hard to see right now.

We're told to chop ornamental gardens back in the Fall and there's great satisfaction in taking control and putting our green spaces "to bed". A native plant garden, though, will always be disheveled in the fall and winter months and it's understandable that many will stop and see an uncared for space that needs to be taken in hand and tidied. But this brings to mind a friend who was exasperated by their living room's chaotic clutter until, with fresh eyes, they paused and saw the messy piles as evidence of a house full of life.

That reframing is how I hope folks see, or will come to see, the mural garden.

Yes it's untidy and chaotic in winter but the dried flower heads are food for birds, so we don't cut them off. The hollow stems are winter beds for native bees and other insects, so we don't cut them down. We'll tidy in April, once things wake up, sprout, and begin to move.

Messy is not the garden standard we've become used to, particularly in urban places. So I'm also learning that in a space with native plants it's



Pollinator garden at Wascana and Burnside Roads.

important to provide "cues to care", ie markers like signage, fences, wood chip edges, and stakes to hold up foliage, to indicate that attention is being paid.

Someone also suggested a small sign - short and worded like a good memorable bumper sticker - could be installed over winter, to remind people that the space is being left to rest.

What would a good winter sign be? Suggestions anyone? Let me know at laurkath@telus.net. And thank you to everyone who has stopped to chat and helped tend the Wascana Native Plant Garden!

-Laurie Jones



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A COMMUNITY DREAM REALIZED

The **Tillicum Green Infrastructure & Climate Resiliency Project**, a partnership between the District of Saanich and the Greater Victoria School District, is nearly complete—and it's already transforming the school grounds and surrounding streets. For years, Tillicum students, parents, and teachers dreamed of a greener, more vibrant learning environment, and that dream is now coming to life.

The project features multiple rain gardens, extensive tree and native plantings, and boulevard improvements along Albina Street, Maddock Avenue, and Orillia Street. Designed with input from Tillicum Elementary staff, the Indigenous Education Department, and the Elder's Advisory Council, it also provides students with hands-on learning about native plants and climate resilience.

It's incredible to see the formerly barren landscape evolve into a lush, inviting space. This transformation will not only beautify the property but also create a welcoming, educational, and sustainable environment for generations of students and the wider community to enjoy.



New landscaping at Tillicum Elementary - 3155 Albina St.

Thanks to all who lobbied for and contributed to this initiative!

FREE LITTLE LIBRARIES

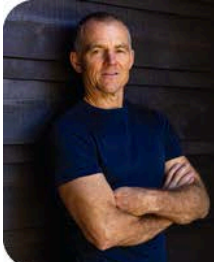


This past summer more little libraries popped up in the neighbourhood including this spectacular one at the corner of Harriet and Maddock.

To learn more about Free Little Libraries and to see a full map of all the locations in our neighbourhood and beyond check out <https://victoriaplacemaking.ca/little-free-libraries/>. The QR code to the right will take you directly to the library map.



If you have a library, contact Victoria Placemaking to be added to the map.



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Gorge Tillicum



Refugee Sponsorship Group

It's been over six years since the GTRSG formed to bring the family of a Somali man to Victoria. He arrived in 2011, attended university, became a citizen, and is thriving in Canada. But his family's situation remains desperate.

When our friend was five, civil war erupted in Somalia. His family fled as armed factions fought for power. Amid the chaos, his parents were separated, and his mother struggled alone with her young son. They eventually reached a UN refugee camp in northern Kenya, but lacking documents, were denied refugee status and survived by relying on the kindness of others. Years later, another family leaving for asylum gave them UNHCR identity papers, allowing access to food and shelter. Miraculously, the parents reunited and had two more children.

Today, the family cannot return to Somalia, where their land has been taken, and Kenya will not let them settle. Their only hope lies in resettlement to a third country.

That's where the Gorge Tillicum Refugee Sponsorship Group comes in. Our team has been working to bring this family to Victoria, though the process has faced delays. The borrowed

UNHCR documents complicated the case, and funds had to be raised to hire a lawyer to explain that these papers were taken out of necessity, not deceit.

After pandemic delays and years of bureaucracy, there is finally progress. The family—an elderly mother, her two children, and four grandchildren—is back in the resettlement queue, and Canadian authorities are close to granting approval. Sadly, the father passed away during the long wait. If all goes well, the family could arrive in Victoria in 2026. All but the mother have spent their entire lives in a refugee camp.

We're reaching out with two goals:

- **New members** – Some founding members have moved on, and we need volunteers to help with settlement and fundraising.
- **Fundraising** – Costs have risen sharply since 2018, and we must raise an additional \$25,000 to support the family during their first year—covering rent, food, and basic needs.

Your donation can help transform seven lives. Contributions can be made by cheque to the Intercultural Association of Victoria (ICA)—note group number CG085-18—or online through Charitable Impact - scan the QR Code to easily donate.

Donations are tax-deductible, and even \$10-\$20 monthly makes a difference.

To learn more or get involved, visit gtrsg.wordpress.com



-Laurie Jones & Phil Lancaster

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GRAFFITI – A REMINDER TO STAY VIGILANT! DON'T JUST WALK PAST IT—REPORT IT!



Lately, I've been in regular contact with the Saanich Bylaw Office about graffiti in our neighbourhood, and I'm happy to report they've been very responsive. One email resulted in all the graffiti being removed from Cuthbert Holmes Park within a week. Another email about the Telus boxes near my home on Obed Avenue led to all of them being cleaned within two weeks—this after I had previously contacted Telus directly three times over the course of a year with no result.

I'm currently gathering photos of graffiti on Canada Post boxes to send to Saanich as well. But there's more—bus shelters, benches, Hydro poles, and other public fixtures continue to be affected. I do my best to report right away what I see, but it's simply not possible for one person to stay on top of it all. This is something we all need to help with as part of caring for our community.

Please consider saving the following contact information in your phone and reporting graffiti asap when you see it. It only takes a moment—and it makes a real difference to the feel of our community.

Let's work together to keep our neighbourhood clean and welcoming!

-Sandra Szalipszki

Useful Contacts for Reporting Graffiti:

Saanich Public Works

☎ 250-475-5599

✉ publicworks@saanich.ca

Saanich Parks

☎ 250-475-5522

✉ parks@saanich.ca

Canada Post

☎ 1-866-607-6301

Telus

✉ graffiti@telus.com

You can also report vandalism in person at your local Telus store.

Pattison Outdoor (bus shelters with advertising)

☎ 250-413-3212

✉ L.Moffat@PattisonOutdoor.com

If you don't get a response, you can contact the **Saanich Bylaw Office**, and they will follow up with the appropriate organization.

✉ bylaw@saanich.ca

Help Keep our Parks Clean & Safe

- Dispose of garbage and dog waste in the receptacles
- Please report overflowing garbage cans or illegal dumping to Saanich Parks at parks@saanich.ca or 250-475-5522
- Report camping & campfires to the Saanich Police non-emergency line at (250) 475-4321





GORGETILlicUM

COMMUNITY ASSOCIATION

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Donation to Arts & Culture Fund: *Thank-you for any help towards events* + = \$ _____

Donation to GTCA: *Your extra support helps the GTCA operate. THANK YOU!* + = \$ _____

TOTAL PAYMENT ENCLOSED: = \$ _____

Membership is open to any resident or property owner who is 19 years old or older living at a fixed and officially recognized street address within the Gorge Tillicum neighbourhood and to businesses and other organizations operating at a fixed and officially recognized street address within the Association territory.

Membership is valid from the time of payment of membership fees to the end of the calendar year. In December of each year, those paying membership fees during December may designate them to be the fee for the upcoming calendar year and, in such cases, membership is valid from January 1st to December 31st of the following year.