



Article Photo - Left to right - Coquitlam Coun. Mae Reid, Premier Gordon Campbell, Coquitlam resident Arvind Gupta and Port Coquitlam Coun. Greg Moore at a summer BBQ at the home of Port Coquitlam Resident, Ravi Panwar

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Local treasures in our own backyard

The Good Life - By Barb Stegemann

July has been a bumper month for discovering treasures in our very own community. From residents who are putting our province on the world stage for being innovators in the business community, to our rich heritage and vibrant arts and cultural scene that is attracting visitors from all over, this region has so many local treasures to showcase.

And every now and again, it's good to take a look at your own community through the lens of a visitor, with a renewed sense of wonder at all the amazing people as well as the arts, heritage and culture we get to experience in our own backyard.

The 11th annual Coquitlam Classic Golf Tournament held last week at the Westwood Plateau Golf and Country Club raised funds to support local arts, heritage and cultural groups.

This tournament, chaired by Coun. Mae Reid and a committee of volunteers, raises funds for the Coquitlam Maillardville Heritage Trust Fund, which was established in 1993 to foster public interest in arts, culture and heritage in the City of Coquitlam.

You may have experienced events and activities put on by the recipients of the trust fund this month.

Place des Arts held its Fair in the Square, The Mackin Heritage Home & Toy Museum held its seventh annual Antique Road Show and next month, you can take in the F[^]te Acadienne at Place Maillardville.

The fourth event is the ever-popular Festival du Bois, which brings out everyone's personal joie de vivre every March.

The tournament dinner was emceed by Ted Ayerst of Wesbild and a big thanks went out to Coquitlam Centre, the title sponsor, as well as all the businesses that made this tournament possible.

Many of us realize how fortunate we are to be able to work and volunteer in our own region. We also live in a community where 70 per cent of our work force commutes to other cities in the Lower Mainland to work and contribute to the vibrant B.C. economy.

Summer block parties and barbecues are a fantastic way for us to connect with each other and get a broader sense of our place in this province and country by getting to know our neighbours. Many residents and their families gathered and got to know each other this past week at a summer barbecue held at Ravi Panwar's home. The barbecue also provided a chance for locals to meet with Premier Gordon Campbell.

Campbell spent the sunny afternoon taking the time to talk with Tri-Cities residents and their families about our region, and we got a great sense of the important contributions our community makes to the province.

When you experience our premier's enthusiasm for B.C. when he visits, it reminds us how fortunate we are to live in such a beautiful community and province with so many opportunities.

At the barbecue, I caught up with Coquitlam resident Arvind Gupta, who heads up MITACS, the largest NCE (Network Centre for Excellence) in Canada.

Prof. Gupta understands the importance of ensuring that the talent in our knowledge-based economy remains in B.C. and Canada.

"It's important to ensure that university graduate students in B.C. and Canada get the chance to stay and work in their home province and country," Gupta says.

"In my work, it's very satisfying to know that the students in our program are 33 per cent more likely to stay in B.C. and Canada when they finish their

studies because they found challenging work in Canadian companies, and the research they do to make companies more efficient is a cornerstone for a productive economy."

After the barbecue I headed over for the seventh annual Antique Road Show at the Mackin Heritage Home & Toy Museum.

I caught up with antique appraiser Al Bowen, who donated his time to appraise local artifacts.

As I arrived, I met up with Coquitlam resident Keith Kozak, who had an Edith Carr vase that was handed down by his great-grandfather.

Edith was Emily Carr's sister and taught porcelain painting at the turn of the century. Bowen appraised the vase as having significant historical value, not to mention monetary value, with the original signature of Edith Carr.

When I stepped out of the museum, I was amazed at the array of vintage vehicles outside. I got to sit on a 1943 Harley Davidson used by Canadian soldiers during the Second World War.

The heavy vehicle was used by RCMP officers and police who were deployed to keep order during the war.

My son and his friends were fascinated by the recorded history that played inside the vehicles.

The historical collection is preserved by members of the Western Command, who donate their time to ensure that Canadian veterans get VIP escorts at events such as Remembrance Day.

When the kids return to school in September, they will likely write a story on their summer adventures and all the people, places and things they learned about first-hand.

Discovering our own communities is an exercise that we can continue throughout our entire lifetimes.

And for those of us who enjoyed the outdoor music at the Blue Mountain Music Festival this past weekend, there will be a great deal of entertainment to discover starting Sept. 16 when the Red Robinson Theatre opens up on United Boulevard.

The world's largest collapsible theatre - it goes from a full theatre of 1,100 seats to a convention floor for trade shows and sit-down dinners in just eight minutes flat - will open its doors at the Boulevard Casino.

Big-name acts that will draw locals and visitors alike include Little Richard, Huey Lewis and the News, Roseanne Barr, Bachman Cummings, Andre Philippe Gagnon, James Brown and more.

It's not just big names that will light up Tri-Cities stages, however.

The Theatrix Youtheatre Society will perform Disney's Aladdin Junior, featuring a double cast of young people ages seven to 14 in a musical starring the fun and lively characters we've come to know from this Tales from the Arabian Nights-inspired work.

Familiar characters include Princess Jasmine, Aladdin, Jafar and, of course, the Genie.

Showtimes are 1 and 7 p.m. on July 27 through 29 at the Evergreen Cultural Centre, located at 1205 Pinetree Way in Coquitlam.

Tickets are available in person at the cultural centre's box office, or by calling 604-927-6555 or visiting www.evergreenculturalcentre.ca.

For more information about Theatrix and its upcoming performances of CATS (scheduled for August), call 604-939-6992 or visit the society's website at www.theatrixyouthatre.com.

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