

2023 Medal of Good Citizenship Recipients



Ruth Billmann: A compassionate force for animal welfare in the Kootenays

City: Cranbrook

In the heart of Kimberley and Cranbrook, Ruth Billmann stands as the driving force behind Meant 2B Loved Pet Rescue Society. As the founder, Billmann's commitment to rescuing, rehabilitating and rehoming domestic animals has transformed her into the indispensable heart and soul of the organization.

Since its inception in 2019, Billmann's dedication has shone brightly. Whether it's voluntarily caring for challenging cases such as Max, a hard-to-place hound, or spearheading trap, neuter and release (TNR) programs to control the feral cat population, her unwavering commitment extends beyond routine efforts. In 2023, she dedicated two weeks to rescuing and finding homes for 60 kittens.

When wildfires threatened the ʔaq'am community, Billmann swiftly organized an emergency animal shelter, prioritizing the safety of scared and disoriented dogs. These selfless actions underscore her resilience and determination to protect animals in need.

Balancing a full-time job, Billmann miraculously saves hundreds of animals annually, often surviving on minimal sleep. Her dedication doesn't stop at the big moments. She invests time in the little things, too, from ensuring fosters have what they need to visiting classrooms and participating in fundraisers.

Billmann's compassionate approach inspires countless individuals to join the demanding yet rewarding world of animal rescue. Despite rarely taking time for herself, Billmann's impact resonates throughout Kimberley, Cranbrook, Fernie, Jaffray, Wasa, Fairmont and Creston.

2023 Medal of Good Citizenship Recipients



Joyce Bueckert: A heartwarming force of volunteerism in 100 Mile House

City: 100 Mile House

In the close-knit community of 100 Mile House, Joyce Bueckert has dedicated 17 years to selflessly serving others as a volunteer. Her unwavering commitment shines through various avenues, notably as the treasurer at the local hospital auxiliary, where she spends countless hours in the store, providing comfort items, such as magazines and books to patients. Bueckert's efforts extend to fundraising where she manages ticket sales to procure essential equipment for the hospital.

At the Creekside Seniors' Centre, Bueckert is a steadfast presence, contributing more than 15 years as a member and a decade as the dedicated treasurer. Her careful bookkeeping keeps the society's finances balanced to the penny. Despite the challenges of finding volunteers, Bueckert exemplifies the "let's get this done" spirit, proving to be the backbone of the organization.

Bueckert extends her helping hand as a member of the local Legion Branch 260. Her compassionate nature knows no bounds, always ready to assist those in need with a smile on her face and love in her heart.

In the small town of 100 Mile House, Bueckert's big heart has found a permanent place, leaving an indelible mark through her many acts of kindness and dedicated service to the community.

2023 Medal of Good Citizenship Recipients



Tim Cormode: Igniting and transforming lives on south Vancouver Island
City: Victoria

Tim Cormode's journey began 24 years ago when he founded Power To Be. Fuelled by a love for the outdoors and a social-work background, Cormode envisioned the transformative power of nature for youth and families facing barriers. With one small government grant, his vision birthed an organization. Under Cormode's leadership, this organization, for the past 23 years, has reached more than 11,000 youth and families, offering adapted outdoor activities that empower people to surpass their potential.

Beyond his role as CEO, Cormode recognized the sometimes burdensome dynamics between social-impact organizations and philanthropy. This insight led to the creation of the Power To Give Foundation six years ago. The foundation's mission is to kindle visionary possibilities in the social-impact sector, fostering collaboration between philanthropists, change-makers and communities to embark on bold endeavours collectively. To date, Power To Give has led the deployment of \$60 million in philanthropic capital to various charitable organizations.

Cormode's impact extends to climbing Mt. Kilimanjaro and supporting Haiti relief, reflecting his commitment to both local and global needs. His contributions were recognized with a B.C. Community Award in 2015 and an induction into the Canadian Disability Hall of Fame in 2020.

Cormode's dedication to fostering collaboration is evident in how he leverages relationships and resources. He cultivated a culture at Power To Be that maximizes collaboration, leading to its position in the top 20% of charities for fundraising and revenue. Cormode's leadership also played a crucial role during the COVID-19 pandemic, where he redirected resources to support food-security charities.

Cormode contributes his time helping social entrepreneurs and philanthropists to be the best they can be. In the words of those who know him, Cormode isn't just a CEO, he's a generous team and community leader, always ready to extend his network and experiences to connect philanthropists with causes that truly matter.

2023 Medal of Good Citizenship Recipients

Brian DeBeck: An exemplary citizen and community builder in Vancouver

City: Vancouver

More than 30 years of Brian DeBeck's working life was spent as a union negotiator for Retail Wholesale Union (RWU) looking after the welfare of the membership across numerous bargaining units.

His commitment to supporting people went far beyond his responsibilities as the provincial representative for RWU. DeBeck has seamlessly woven himself into the fabric of art and culture in the Vancouver area where he has a multi-decade history of generously contributing to numerous organizations and initiatives. He follows family traditions of giving to community from his grandfather Ned DeBeck, his mother Betty who is based in Kamloops, and his wife's family, Warren and Ellen Tallman, and their many projects in support of the arts in Vancouver.

In the early 1970s while still a student at the University of British Columbia, DeBeck initiated the effort to buy a house that became the York Street Commune. Its members collectively began New Star Books, Georgia Straight Writing Supplement, The Mental Patient's Association, the West End Food Co-op, and other projects.

Since 1974, Karen Tallman and Brian DeBeck's home has been a haven for poets, visual artists, single mothers, refugees, recently arrived immigrants, Haida artists, the bereaved and the terminally ill. They have hosted numerous wakes and celebrations of life and organized fundraising events for the Western Front Artist Cooperative, Pivot Legal Society, Seva, YVR Art Foundation and others.

Beyond his artistic endeavours, DeBeck is a pillar of support for individuals facing life's toughest challenges. Whether offering counsel to ESL Vietnamese navigating city bureaucracy or being a steadfast companion through chemotherapy, DeBeck's generosity knows no bounds. He has fostered personal connections with the Haida community in Old Massett on Haida Gwaii through a 42-year friendship with five generations of the Davidson family, working primarily with Claude Davidson and his two sons Robert and Reg. DeBeck and Tallman were recognized by the Davidson family and given Haida names in a ceremony in 2010.

Now in his 70s, DeBeck's commitment to good citizenship remains unwavering. Despite retiring as provincial representative of his union, he continues to chair the union pension plan, providing invaluable advice and mentorship. Notably, he expands his community of care offering emotional and practical support to friends and neighbours facing illness and adversity.

2023 Medal of Good Citizenship Recipients



Vishad Deeplaul: A beacon of compassion and community spirit in Coquitlam

City: Coquitlam

In just five years since immigrating from South Africa to Coquitlam, Vishad Deeplaul has become a shining example of community engagement and selfless service. His never-say-no attitude and uplifting smile have left an indelible mark on the community, showcasing a true commitment to love where you live and serve where you live.

Deeplaul's extensive volunteering efforts highlight his dedication to various causes. As a board member of the People's Pantry Recovery Society, Deeplaul played a pivotal role in securing a no-cost location for the agency. He also worked closely with other non-profit organizations, such as Backpack Buddies and the Diwali Celebration Society, showcasing his investment to his community.

During the COVID-19 pandemic, Deeplaul supported the B.C. United Way providing vital support and resources to families in distress. His acts of kindness extended to preparing food for seniors and tending to a neighbour's garden, exemplifying his innate generosity.

Deeplaul co-founded Tri-Cities United, a community group aimed at combating isolation and fostering connections. There he orchestrates events, such as paint nights and chocolate-making to bring the community together.

Deeplaul's impact reaches beyond volunteerism. He creates bridges and fosters relationships to ensure access to resources for those in need. His consistent commitment to prioritizing others' needs in delivering emergency hampers or offering unwavering support sets him apart as a true community builder.

2023 Medal of Good Citizenship Recipients



Vivian Edwards: A selfless community pillar in the Cariboo

City: Ashcroft

Vivian Edwards, a dedicated and selfless volunteer, is a shining example of community service and good will. For decades, Edwards has actively participated in various local committees, demonstrating her unwavering dedication to the betterment of her community. Her positive outlook and tireless efforts have left a lasting impact on numerous organizations, including Hat Creek Ranch, Thompson View Manor Society, Ashcroft and District Lions Club, Ashcroft and Area Community Resources, Ashcroft and Area Christmas Hampers, Community Volunteer Income Tax Preparation, and the Health and Wellness Coalition.

Over the years, Edwards saw a connection between the need for older women, especially single women, to socialize and the struggles faced by local restaurants. She organized a weekly ladies' luncheon, providing a boost to both local businesses and the well-being of senior ladies who attended. This initiative, still active today, showcases Edwards' innovative approach to community support. In 2021, when Lytton faced a devastating fire, Edwards played a crucial role in supporting displaced families, organizing a substantial monetary donation and actively participating in a local support group.

Edwards is willing to lend a helping hand even in challenging circumstances. In the heat dome of 2021, when someone needed water, Edwards offered to transport them to a nearby area. She also provides transportation to people needing to go to Kamloops for hospital and specialist appointments, addressing a need in her rural community.

Edwards' commitment to the local Christmas Hamper program for the past decade further highlights her organizational skills and dedication to community welfare. In 2022, she played a pivotal role in preparing and delivering 172 food hampers.

Despite her numerous accomplishments, Edwards remains humble, not seeking recognition or applause. Her friends emphasize her diverse acts of service, from providing rides to those who can't drive, to offering expertise in accounting and tax preparation for low-income individuals. At the age of 81, Edwards' compassion for others and her desire to make her community the best place to live continue to define her character.

2023 Medal of Good Citizenship Recipients



Gail Elder: Maestro of community harmony in the West Kootenays

City: Winlaw

Gail Elder is a quiet, kind, industrious, generous British Columbian who exemplifies community service and good citizenship. For decades he has been active in community non-profit organizations and committees. He is a beloved retired school teacher, always there to lend a hand to his neighbours, and teaches interested people to grow, reap, store and cook healthy food on an organic farm. Most notably, he started the multi-generational Slocan Valley Community Band in 1981 that continues to impress audiences.

Since his retirement in 2003, Elder dedicates countless hours to encourage new members, secure instruments and manage funding for the band's performances. Elder's band practice time alone is 3,200 hours in one year without even mentioning the travel and organizing time.

His leadership extends to various community activities, including East & West Kootenay Community Band Festivals, where he often conducts and plays instruments.

Beyond the world of music, Elder, along with his partner Brenda, has hosted more than 400 Woofers from the Worldwide Opportunities on Organic Farms (WOOF) on their organic farm, sharing Canadian experiences in farming, cooking and more. His impact ripples through the organic farming community, beekeepers, local water protection and environmental activism, where he generously imparts his knowledge and abilities.

Elder's influence as a music teacher is profound, as evidenced by the outstanding musical preparedness and approach to learning exhibited by students under his direction. His magic touch is characterized by a gentle yet demanding and supportive teaching style. Elder's dedication goes beyond teaching. He actively participates as a performer in a wind quintet and a big band, contributing to the rich cultural tapestry of the West Kootenays.

As a leader of the Slocan Valley Community Band, Elder continues the tradition of community bands, providing opportunities for individuals of all ages and abilities to play music together. From seniors' centres to community celebrations, the band, under Elder's baton, weaves art into the community's fabric, fostering connections and joy through music. Through wind and rain and weather, band members look forward to what they call the "best night of the week": band night.

2023 Medal of Good Citizenship Recipients



Craig Evans: Leaving a legacy of community food security

City: Nanaimo

Craig Evans, a dedicated advocate for community food systems and local food security on Vancouver Island, spent more than 40 years shaping a legacy of sustainability and social impact. As the founder of the Nanaimo Community Gardens and Nanaimo Foodshare Society in 1987, Evans set the stage for enduring programs centred around growing and sharing locally grown, high-quality food. His commitment extended to spearheading initiatives, such as Seedy Sunday, ensuring a resource for non-GMO seeds, plant knowledge and education.

In 2019, Evans co-founded the Growing Opportunities Farm Community Cooperative, a hub for building food-growing skills with the support of a vast volunteer network. This co-operative yields hundreds of pounds of food every year, a significant portion of which is distributed to those in need in Nanaimo through various programs.

Evans' impact isn't confined to agriculture alone. He played a pivotal role in establishing the Vancouver Island University Farmers' Market, bringing fresh local produce directly to students. His engagement with the Downtown Nanaimo Farmers' Market and his role as market garden manager at Providence Farm, a therapeutic community supporting individuals with various challenges, showcased his commitment to diverse community needs.

Beyond farming, Evans' environmental advocacy included co-founding the Nanaimo Recycling Exchange and contributing to various other causes. His ability to motivate and lead diverse groups, particularly youth, was evident in roles, such as workforce trainer at Vancouver Island University and leadership with the Katimavik organization.

Even when Evans was facing a terminal illness, he continued to lay the groundwork for a sustainable future, ensuring a new generation can carry on the impactful programs he initiated. His selfless contributions have touched the lives of countless individuals, enriching communities and leaving an indelible mark on Vancouver Island.

Long-time farmer and food-security advocate, Craig Evans passed away in March 2023.

2023 Medal of Good Citizenship Recipients

Madison Fleischer: A dedicated philanthropist and community advocate in Vancouver

City: Surrey

Madison Fleischer is a force for positive change and volunteerism. From the tender age of four, Fleischer's heart was set on helping others and she has since become a beacon of inspiration through her remarkable philanthropic journey.

Beginning with the Heart and Stroke Foundation, Fleischer's passion for giving back has only intensified. As a 23-year-old Indigenous law student, she aspires to make a difference in the lives of residential school survivors, work in Indigenous law, and advocate for Indigenous youth facing legal challenges.

Fleischer's philanthropic endeavours are both local and global. Whether raising more than \$700 and assembling 100 care packages for the Atira Women's Resource Society or spearheading a viral campaign, "Slava Sweatshirts," to support her Ukrainian heritage, Fleischer consistently demonstrates a commitment to making a meaningful impact.

Her involvement with the Canadian Breast Cancer Society, where she raised \$3,300 and engaged political figures in supporting the cause, showcased her ability to mobilize support and raise awareness on significant issues, even while enrolled as a full-time student.

Beyond her charitable contributions, Fleischer has been a dedicated volunteer since 2016, mentoring Indigenous at-risk youth in the Downtown Eastside and accumulating more than 4,000 volunteer hours recognized by the Surrey Now-Leader. Her resilience is evident in her journey from a high-level athlete at the Volleyball Canada Centre of Excellence to overcoming health challenges during university.

Currently pursuing a degree in law with a specialization in Canadian law and practice, Fleischer serves as a director for Resource Works Canada organizing events about the United Nations Declaration on Indigenous Peoples (UNDRIP).

Fleischer's story is not just one of personal achievement but a testament to the power of compassion and dedication.

2023 Medal of Good Citizenship Recipients



Spring Hawes: A trailblazer for accessibility and inclusion in the Okanagan

City: Kelowna

Spring Hawes is an exceptional advocate whose remarkable 18-year journey embodies the spirit of good citizenship. With an unwavering commitment to creating positive change, Hawes has been a driving force in raising awareness advocating for inclusivity and working to dismantle ableism.

As a wheelchair user, Hawes' personal experiences fuel her passion for addressing the challenges faced by individuals with disabilities. Serving as the president of the Access in the Community for Equality Group from 2007 to 2014, she spearheaded efforts to enhance accessibility in the Columbia Valley. Her initiatives ranged from connecting people with essential services to providing adaptive equipment and conducting accessibility assessments.

Her past service as a local government councillor and board member for various organizations such as Accessible Okanagan, a non-profit organization run by and for people with disabilities, highlights Hawes' commitment to community service. Recently serving as a volunteer for Spinal Cord Injury B.C. in the Central Okanagan, she provided invaluable support to individuals with disabilities.

On the Interior Health board, Hawes champions equity, inclusion and accessibility in health care. Co-chairing the Provincial Accessibility Committee, she advises the government on implementing the Accessible British Columbia Act.

She has been, and continues to be, involved in numerous informal volunteer advocacy efforts to advance the equality of disabled people, both provincially and federally. She works to foster community in all of her endeavours.

Hawes is a compassionate and tireless advocate whose enduring commitment to accessibility and inclusion has left its mark.

2023 Medal of Good Citizenship Recipients



Brian Ironmonger: Leaving a legacy as a master saddlemaker and compassionate artisan

City: Elko

Brian Ironmonger, a renowned saddlemaker hailing from Elko, carved a unique legacy marked by resilience, creativity and unwavering compassion. Despite facing significant physical challenges, Ironmonger's journey is a testament to his determination to live life to the fullest.

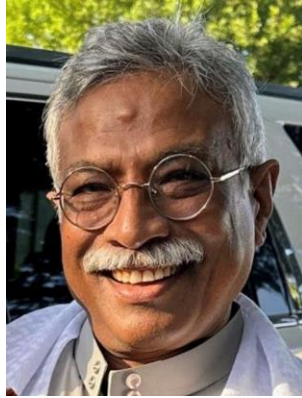
Following a life-altering accident in his youth that kept him in the hospital for years, Ironmonger shifted gears to become a world-renowned saddlemaker. His saddle shop, a testament to his exceptional craftsmanship, doubled as a haven for stories and laughter, showcasing his genuine cowboy spirit.

Ironmonger's altruism extended beyond the art of leatherworking. He dedicated his time and skill to create Ribbon of Hope Key Chains for cancer patients around the world. Thousands of these handmade tokens found their way into the hands of those facing the hardships of cancer, serving as symbols of hope, love and perseverance. The impact of his work reverberates worldwide, reminding individuals in their darkest moments that a stranger cares deeply.

Ironmonger's story is one of overcoming adversity, crafting masterpieces and spreading compassion. His contributions have left an indelible mark on countless lives, showcasing the transformative power of creativity, resilience and genuine acts of kindness.

Brian Ironmonger, a long time saddlemaker, passed away in December 2022.

2023 Medal of Good Citizenship Recipients



Mohammad Aminul Islam: Champion of mother languages and multiculturalism in Canada
City: Surrey

Mohammad Aminul Islam is a leader and president of the Mother Language Lovers of the World Society, B.C. and an esteemed member of the Arts Council of Surrey. In the diverse landscape of B.C., home to 172 mother languages, Aminul Islam stands as a figure in upholding, celebrating and integrating these languages into mainstream society, contributing significantly to the rich tapestry of the province.

Aminul Islam's groundbreaking initiative, the B.C. Model, is a revolutionary approach aimed at incorporating mother languages into school systems. Recognizing children as carriers of their mother tongue, he successfully implemented this model in the Surrey school district, providing approximately 70,000 students with the opportunity to embrace and share their cultural heritage through 172 different languages. The ripple effect of the B.C. Model has reached school districts beyond Surrey, aligning with UNESCO's Education 2030 Framework.

As a tribute to the diversity of mother languages, Aminul Islam's initiated Lingua Aqua, Canada's first Mother Language Monument, located in Surrey and fully funded by the city. Unveiled in 2009, this monument stands as a permanent reminder of the importance of linguistic diversity, including braille and sign languages.

To raise awareness about various mother tongues, Aminul Islam initiated the Mother Language Festival, Canada's largest celebration of its kind, annually commemorated since 2013. This cultural extravaganza, funded by a City of Surrey cultural grant, has become a testament to Aminul Islam's dedication to preserving and promoting linguistic diversity.

Aminul Islam played a pivotal role in the recognition of International Mother Language Day in Canada. His efforts, spanning several years and collaborations with MPs and senators, culminated in the passing of Bill S-214 on March 30, 2023. This landmark bill officially received Royal Assent on April 24, 2023, making Canada the first country globally to recognize Feb. 21 as International Mother Language Day.

2023 Medal of Good Citizenship Recipients



Talia Lorincz: A beacon of compassion and initiative for refugees in Vancouver

City: Vancouver

Talia Lorincz is a remarkable young woman whose compassion and initiative have made a profound impact on the lives of Ukrainian refugees in Metro Vancouver. At the age of 16, Lorincz initiated a free store for Ukrainian refugees, starting as a small project and swiftly transforming into a recognized haven for those in need.

In March 2022, with the intent of preparing welcome baskets for 15 Ukrainian families, Lorincz's project quickly evolved into a fully operational free store located in her basement. What sets Lorincz apart is not just her incredible work ethic but her forward-thinking approach and a heart that knows no bounds.

Talia's Free Store was an actual store, ensuring a shopping experience that preserves the dignity of those seeking assistance. No mere charity, it offered a genuine shopping experience with personalized appointments, creating a warm atmosphere where Ukrainian visitors could find not only necessities but also a sense of community.

Lorincz's dedication goes beyond the norm for a graduating senior. While most young adults plan a relaxing summer before university, Lorincz continued running the free store as a full-time job. Even from her dorm room, after leaving Vancouver, she continued co-ordinating this project, demonstrating a high level of commitment at such a young age.

Despite her impactful work, Lorincz remains humble, caring more about the heartfelt messages from grateful store visitors than official recognition. She insists The Free Store's success is the product of the community working together, contributing clothing to car pools for visitors to reach the store. The Free Store became a place for people to connect, share stories, practise English and receive advice on various aspects of life. Beyond just a distribution centre, the store turned into a community hub.

The Free Store served more than 600 people and is a reminder of the impact kindness and community collaboration can have on people's lives.

2023 Medal of Good Citizenship Recipients



Navjit Moore: A pillar of compassion and service in Burnaby

City: Burnaby

Navjit Moore stands as a remarkable figure, recognized for her commitment to community service and compassionate leadership. Since 2015, Moore has been a dedicated volunteer with the Crohn's and Colitis Canada Fraser Valley East (FVE) Chapter, assuming the role of president. Notably, she played a pivotal role in initiating and leading a new chapter in 2017, expanding its reach to offer vital support for patients, families and friends affected by Inflammatory Bowel Disease (IBD). Her monthly support meetings cover a spectrum of essential topics such as medications, nutrition, mental health and fertility.

Moore's educational background, including a bachelor of science, doctor of pharmacy and current pursuit of a medical degree, all from UBC, equips her with valuable insights into the health-care system. This knowledge, coupled with her empathetic nature, has attracted individuals to join the chapter committee, creating a supportive community.

Beyond her role with Crohn's and Colitis Canada, Moore has been an active community volunteer. Notably, she has provided emotional care and engaged residents at Burnaby's Fair Haven Homes on a weekly basis since 2012. As a Jump Rope Ambassador for the Heart and Stroke Foundation, she mentored youth aged 5-12 on healthy living and was part of a hard-working team that executed jump rope assemblies/events for thousands of B.C. elementary students. Moore has also been a wayfinder at Burnaby Hospital since 2013, demonstrating a commitment to assisting patients, visitors and staff in navigating the health-care environment.

Her leadership extends to the Gutsy Walk, where she served as chair since 2018, contributing to a cumulative fundraising effort of more than \$100,000 since 2015. Moore's exceptional commitment continued during the COVID-19 pandemic, where she handmade more than 300 personalized cards for Burnaby hospital patients and long-term-care residents. She also initiated a social media campaign, Stool Talk, aiming to eliminate the stigma around gut health.

Moore is not just a volunteer; she is an advocate for positive change. As a patient adviser, she participated in designing the layout of the new Burnaby hospital out-patient services. Her impact is evident in her role as a shift lead volunteer at Burnaby Hospital where she provides mentorship, coaching and support to fellow volunteers.

2023 Medal of Good Citizenship Recipients



Johannes Mulder: A community champion in times of crisis in the Upper Fraser Valley

City: Hope

In the face of nature's fury, Johannes Mulder emerged as a stalwart leader and community champion during the atmospheric river events of November 2021. In Laidlaw, isolated by landslides and flooding, Mulder leveraged his law-enforcement and military background to establish crucial communication links with emergency operations centres, ensuring a lifeline for his community.

Beyond being a voice in the storm, Mulder took proactive measures. Conducting wellness checks, providing aid to those stranded by flooding and preparing for potential evacuations. His foresight in creating a helicopter landing zone for medical emergencies highlighted a commitment that went above and beyond.

As the first deluge subsided, Mulder assessed damage, aided regional authorities and participated in recovery efforts, even while facing threats to his own residence.

The second atmospheric river event saw Mulder anticipating challenges and setting up an ad-hoc emergency operations centre for Laidlaw. Mobilizing a community through social media, he orchestrated a sandbagging campaign that safeguarded residences and vital infrastructure, preventing significant damage.

His commitment extended to co-ordinating with military support, strategically placing thousands of sandbags and actively engaging in the protection of neighbouring areas. Mulder's leadership prevented harm to residences, farms and critical roadways.

His post-crisis efforts, including billeting stranded travellers, connecting with emergency operations centres, and transporting surplus sandbags to the nearby town of Hope, underscored his tireless commitment to community well-being.

2023 Medal of Good Citizenship Recipients

David Reid: Leaving a legacy of connecting communities

City: Squamish

David Reid was more than a trail builder, he was a community weaver. Trails, the veins of connection, were his medium. Beyond being pathways for walking, hiking, running, skiing and biking, Reid recognized their profound role in uniting British Columbians. These trails were not just recreational, they were the meeting grounds after work, where stories were shared and connections deepened. They were the conduits to the province's breathtaking landscapes, linking people to nature and each other, echoing the ancient ways of movement and communication.

Reid's legacy unfolded over 15 years of voluntary dedication to trail building, crafting 18 exceptional mountain biking trails that form the core network in Squamish. Drawing more than one million trail enthusiasts annually, these trails contribute more than \$10 million to Squamish's economy. But Reid's vision extended beyond biking, he uniquely sought to unite diverse trail communities — hikers, runners and dirt bikers — under a shared vision of a world-class trail network.

In 2019, Reid assumed the role of trail crew manager and lead builder for the Squamish Off-Road Cycling Association (SORCA), transitioning from building trails to leading efforts for trail sustainability and inclusivity. Beyond constructing trails, Reid envisioned and secured approval for the Mikayla Martin Memorial Trail, a cornerstone accessible to diverse riders, emphasizing the need for trails to be accessible to all.

Recognizing the importance of stewardship, Reid redirected his focus to trail maintenance, expanding a small crew to dedicate 3,000-plus hours annually to uphold the excellence of the existing trail system. Reid advocated for sustainable practices, sharing insights on weather-resistant construction and became a role model in his field.

Dave Reid passed away in August 2022.

2023 Medal of Good Citizenship Recipients



Jim Sawada: A visionary builder of community harmony in Nelson

City: Nelson

Jim Sawada is a community champion whose legacy is woven into the vibrant tapestry of Nelson's cultural landscape. With a heartfelt dedication spanning more than five decades, Sawada has left an indelible mark on the city.

In 1987, Sawada's leadership played a pivotal role in building a sister-city relationship with Izu-shi, Japan. His enthusiasm, alongside his wife Emiko, propelled the Friendship Society into existence, laying the foundation for enduring cultural connections.

Sawada's vision truly blossomed in 2003 when he spearheaded the creation of the Cottonwood Falls Friendship Garden. Undeterred by a rocky landscape formed years earlier, Sawada rallied a team of professionals and volunteers. Through his leadership, funds were raised, and the garden, a symbol of Nelson's bond with its Japanese sister city, became a reality in 2005.

Over the next decade, Sawada, alongside dedicated volunteers, nurtured the garden into a blossoming sanctuary. As he approached 80, Sawada's concern for the garden's future was met with a community-wide response. His ability to inspire others ensured the garden's continuity, a testament to his enduring impact.

Now 90, Sawada remains an active force in the Friendship Garden. From weeding and pruning to constructing the Friendship Gate and contributing to a Japanese garden shed, Sawada is hands on.

His involvement in the Nelson Gyro Club for more than 50 years showcases his passion for community service. A humble and enthusiastic member, Sawada's construction background has been pivotal in realizing various community projects.

His cultural insight, labour and countless volunteer hours have transformed the Friendship Garden into a cherished community space. His commitment to reflection, aesthetic beauty and spiritual consolation, as noted by fellow citizens, makes Sawada a beacon of civic pride.

2023 Medal of Good Citizenship Recipients



Rhoda Taylor: A pillar of compassion and community service in Duncan
City: Duncan

Rhoda Taylor has dedicated more than 40 years to community service. Her impact on various organizations has significantly contributed to the betterment of the Cowichan Valley.

Serving as an executive board member of Volunteer Cowichan for nearly 30 years, Taylor played a pivotal role in connecting volunteers with organizations, strengthening the relationships between community-based agencies, and introducing the Living Wage to Cowichan.

As a founding member and the current chair of the board of directors of Literacy Now Cowichan, she champions lifelong learning, promoting literacy in reading, writing, math and technical skills for individuals of all ages, making education accessible to everyone.

More than 13 years ago, it became apparent there was an incredible gap in services to nourish people. In collaboration with others, Taylor assisted in rallying a diverse group of volunteers to provide meals to hungry individuals. Meals on the Ground provides approximately 550 barrier-free meals monthly.

As a passionate advocate for human rights, Taylor worked to strengthen the conversation about refugees immigrating to Cowichan. Taylor is active with the Cowichan Intercultural Society as a refugee sponsor, fundraising to personally aid in the settlement of multiple families.

Taylor's involvement with the Canadian Mental Health Association-Cowichan Valley Branch's Warmland House Shelter in 2010 demonstrates her unwavering commitment to addressing critical community needs.

Notably, Taylor's commitment to community well-being has been unwavering even in the face of personal challenges. While caring for her 100-year-old mother and terminally ill husband, Taylor continued to dedicate herself to the service of others. She instills the values of giving and serving in the younger generation. Her children and grandchildren actively participate in community service, a testament to her influence as a compassionate role model.

2023 Medal of Good Citizenship Recipients

Andrew Tom: A champion of unity and cultural preservation in the Wet'suwet'en Nation

City: Smithers

Residing in the heart of the Wet'suwet'en Nation Andrew Tom shows resilience, compassion and an unyielding commitment to community service. Tom, now one of the youngest chiefs in his nation, has dedicated more than 20 years to uplifting his community, advocating for justice and preserving Indigenous culture.

Tom wears many hats, serving on various agency boards. His extensive involvement includes being the president of the Wilp Si'satxw House of Purification Society, director for the Office of the Wet'suwet'en Society, band councillor for Witset First Nation and president of the Yikh Lhiw Dinle Housing Society. These roles highlight Tom's multifaceted contributions to social and economic development.

As the president of the Dze L K'ant Friendship Centre Society, Tom showcases his breadth of knowledge in social programming and civic duties. His leadership has led to transformative changes, introducing prevention programs for youth, hosting impactful events and securing substantial grants for community initiatives.

At the forefront of Tom's priorities is the well-being of his home community of Witset. From co-ordinating the food bank and patient travel services to serving as the communications co-ordinator and assistant band manager, his commitment is unwavering. Tom actively engages with the Nation, providing mentorship and fostering a sense of cultural pride.

As youth and victim justice worker and community wellness co-ordinator, he actively pursues the Truth and Reconciliation's Calls to Action related to justice.

He is a respected advocate for unity and harmony, bridging gaps and building connections between Wet'suwet'en and neighbouring nations. His tireless work has earned him the trust of Elders, who see him as a knowledge keeper and a champion for cultural preservation.

Tom's journey is a testament to the transformative power of one individual's dedication to community well-being.

2023 Medal of Good Citizenship Recipients



Ricky Tsang: A beacon of compassion and community leadership in Vancouver

City: Vancouver

Ricky Tsang, a dedicated community leader, has spent the last 14 years tirelessly contributing to the well-being of vulnerable populations. His commitment to enriching the lives of seniors and children with unique health-care needs has left an indelible mark on various organizations.

From 2007 until 2019, Tsang devoted Saturdays to volunteering at St. Vincent's Langara, fostering joy among elders through innovative programs such as coffeehouse and performative arts. His leadership role, mentoring new volunteers and amassing more than 800 hours of service, earned him the Providence Health Care Volunteer Resources scholarship in 2019.

Tsang's impact extends to the Canucks Autism Network, where his award-winning volunteerism enhanced the social, communication and physical skills of children with autism, contributing more than 400 hours.

His passion for children's health-care led him to the Children's Organ Transplant Society (COTS) and Starlight Canada. At COTS, Tsang's strategic initiatives doubled auction revenues to \$10,000 yearly, aiding transplant families. During COVID-19, he spearheaded online fundraising, providing personal protection equipment and virtual events for immunosuppressed children.

In his role on COTS' board of directors, Tsang advocates for increased funding and support, particularly in nutrition, highlighting his commitment to the holistic well-being of transplant children.

With Starlight, Tsang pioneered annual legacy programs for chronically ill children and crafted app-based scavenger hunts, offering joy and recreation, especially during the COVID-19 pandemic. His innovative approach continues to resonate, entering its third year of success.

Tsang's journey is characterized by selflessness, dedication and a relentless pursuit of bettering the lives of those he serves.

2023 Medal of Good Citizenship Recipients



Parminder Virk: A cultural ambassador and community builder in Saanich

City: Victoria

Parminder Virk stands as a force for positive change and community building, with an illustrious record of service spanning over a decade. As a devoted mother and mental-health career professional, Virk's role as co-ordinator for the Outreach Bridging program with Island Community Mental Health epitomizes her commitment to providing long-term support to those on the path to recovery.

Her commitment extends beyond her career through her role leading the Punjabi Cultural Community Association of Victoria, a non-profit organization focused on preserving the Punjabi culture in Canada while promoting diversity, bringing people together in Saanich, and helping those in need.

Annually, Virk leads the organization in preparing hundreds of free meals for the Victoria Rainbow Kitchen Society, Our Place Society and hot-lunch programs in schools. Virk also co-ordinated the organization to support other charitable organizations, including the Children's Health Foundation of Vancouver Island, WIN-Women in Need Community Cooperative, Victoria Hospitals Foundation-Cancer Care and the Esquimalt Syrian Refugee program.

In her role as a dedicated community programmer for Saanich Parks and Recreation, Virk has left a mark orchestrating multi-faith family festivals and co-ordinating celebrations such as Lohri, Vasaikhi, and Diwali events, and the Punjabi Mela.

Virk taught at the Sikh Temple for more than 20 years, teaching children how to read and write Punjabi, showcasing her dedication to preserving and sharing her rich cultural heritage. Virk also co-hosts a multicultural radio show featuring a variety of Punjabi traditional and modern songs.

In her role as vice-president of the India Canada Cultural Association (ICCA), Virk helped organize cultural events that celebrate Indian heritage.

In collaboration with the Inter-Cultural Association of Greater Victoria, Virk played a pivotal role in initiatives, such as the Inter-Faith Dialogue Project and the Inter-Faith Bridging project, fostering dialogue and understanding connections among diverse communities. A Victoria Multifaith Society staff member says: "Parminder is a true ambassador for the Sikh belief in the equality of humanity and selfless service to others."

Her tireless efforts, whether in leading the Punjabi Cultural Community Association of Victoria in giving back to the community, or promoting inclusion and diversity, exemplify her as a true community leader.