



Van-Fraser News

VAN - FRASER HERITAGE CLUB

VOLUNTEERS AID THOMAS FANS

Once again volunteers from the Van-Fraser Heritage Club were on hand at the Annual Day Out With Thomas the Tank Engine at the West Coast Railway Museum in Squamish. This popular event features a short ride on Thomas, a meeting with Sir Topham Hatt, Controller of the Railway, and a story telling session.

Also during his visit children are able to write a letter to Thomas or any of his friends with the assistance of our volunteers. A volunteer helps them address the envelope then sort it into the proper slot on the Thomas Sortation Case



Heritage Club Volunteers (left to right) Peter, Donna, Anna and Frank helping Thomas the Tank Engine fans write letters to their favourite characters on the Island of Sodor.

Van-Fraser Executive Member Rene Brissette organizes the event and was on hand May 20-22, 27 and 28 to set up the Thomas Letter Writing Room and make sure all the material is ready for the children. This year 17 Van-Fraser volunteers helped 1474 children write letters to Thomas and Friends and ensure that each child received a response.

This event provides a heartwarming experience for all the volunteers who experience the excitement of the children and receive the thanks from parents who express their appreciation for the effort in making this day special for their family. Volunteers report some touching incidents from the day. One little four year old boy entered the park, froze in tracks with wide open eyes, exclaiming to his mother, "Oh mummy it's him, it's really Thomas-I love Thomas!" Donna tells the story of one "talkative 5 year old", who, after finishing his letter, asked he could help out. He confidently leaped into a chair and started handing out paper, crayons and pencils to the newly arriving children. When he was ready to leave he asked if Thomas could hurry his letter back to him so he could take it to school and show his class. Peter recalls one little girl who felt sorry for the engines who didn't have as many letters as Thomas and checked out the sortation case before writing her letter. (Continued on Page 2)

INSIDE THIS ISSUE:

Spring Luncheon Thomas Volunteers	2
Railway Mail Car Maintenance	3
Fitness Centre Management Monday Night Pub Group	4
Spring Bus Trip Planning: 2018	5
Dates to Remember	6
Membership Requirements Medoc Insurance	7
Travel Opportunities	8

SPRING LUNCHEON A NOISY AFFAIR

Conversation and laughter were at a high level at the River Rock Casino Buffet on July 20th as over 90 Van-Fraser members and family gathered for our Summer Luncheon.

It was good to see members from all over the Lower Mainland and especially, Jedd Derry who made the trip all the way from Mexico.

The Buffet was delicious with a huge selection of hot and cold items and selection of exotic desserts.

So many positive comments were made about the location and the food. It was obvious people enjoyed mingling and seeing colleagues they hadn't seen for some time and most lingered long after catching up on all the news.



Van-Fraser members enjoying good food and fellowship.

Following lunch, many went down the beautiful circular escalator to the casino to try their luck while others meandered over to the close by Factory Outlet Mall to look for bargains. Thanks to Eric Rossicci for donating one of his beautiful wild life photos (Eagle) for our draw and congrats to the lucky winner Daniel Berry.

A great day and a nice start to the summer

THOMAS VOLUNTEERS

This year, over 10,000 people visited the park during the 5 days. We streamlined the letter writing process making it easier for the kids to write their letters and had a better flow in the room, avoiding congestion. Van-Fraser was happy to be a big part of the event both with the Thomas Letter Writing Activity for the children and showing our restored Railway Mail Car and museum that provides so much interest to the visitors. It also afforded enormous visibility for Canada Post and the Heritage Club.



Thomas pulls along side the Railway Mail Car.

Thanks to Rene and all of the volunteers who provided so much happiness for the kids and to Jeremy who is always on site to assist.

RAILWAY MAIL CAR GETS SPRING CLEANUP

For three days in May twelve Van-Fraser members worked on the Heritage Club Railway Mail Car Exhibit at the West Coast Railway Museum in Squamish.

Twice a year members travel to Squamish to maintain and improve the Railway Mail Car and Museum that the club restored in 2000.

The exterior was washed and the paint received a "touch up". The interior was completely cleaned, exhibits were cleaned and polished, and three new display cases with new antique items were added to our exhibits. Lighting was improved and several members prepared new photos for display and created placards describing the man items on display.

It was a busy time and the Car was ready in time for the Thomas the Tank Engine event later May(see Page 1/2). The exhibits were



Anna and Jeremy was and paint the Catch Pole that was used to catch a bag of mail



Carol and Betty replacing the mail after the cases have be washed and cleaned.

bright and shiny and ready for the thousand of visitors who will visit the Railway Mail Car, tour our exhibits during the summer and see how mail was handled and transported "back in the day", We regularly receive compliments from the public about the quality and content of the exhibit.

Maintaining the Railway Mail Car and exhibits is an ongoing project and more projects and improvements are planned. Volunteers are needed for the Fall Work Party. If you're interested in helping maintain this piece of Postal History, call the office and volunteer.

WELLNESS CENTRE MANAGEMENT

One of the many projects that we have with Canada Post is the management of the employee Wellness Center, a well equipped facility on the second floor of the PPC with a view of the YVR runway. It was an initiative started by employees in the Vancouver plant and totally self funded by them, supported by VMPP management with spaces and utilities.

After a few years in operation, the Heritage Club was asked to administer the program for them. Stan Wong, with the help of other members volunteers to operate the Center. He registers employees, takes fees, makes sure they have medical clearance from their doctor and that they attend an orientation session before using the equipment. Stan also arranges for the equipment to be carefully monitored and serviced, ensuring safety and for new pieces to be added based on wellness Center members feedback. Also, he assigns lockers to members and checks that shower facilities are up to standard. Recently, new weight bearing equipment, new TV and more wallboard and mirrors have been installed to enhance space utilization.

The Center is well used by employees, seven days a week on all three shifts.

In return for this service, the Club receives a donation each month which goes to the club's charity. Last year's recipient was Children's Hospital.



Stan Wong, Fitness Centre Manager.

MONDAY NIGHT PUB GROUP



The Buck and Ear Pub in Steveston continues to be the Monday night meeting place for Van-Fraser members in Richmond area.

Each Monday, people drop in for a Happy Hour drink (wine, beer and spirits \$4.00) and appies, or a meal. It's a fun time for all and we encourage any members in the Richmond area or those visiting Richmond to pop by on a Monday between 5-7 pm.

During the winter, the group can be found inside and when the weather gets better, on the back patio. Recently, Mel and Bev Wilde joined the group while they were visiting the Lower Mainland from Kelowna.

Monday night Pub Group enjoying a pleasant social evening.

SPRING BUS TRIP: 2018 PLANNING

Our Spring Bus Trip is always popular and members and family quickly fill the bus once booking is available.

We have been organizing bus trips for our members for over fifteen years. In the early days, we had a 9 day bus trip to Las Vegas and a 5 day bus to Wendover. Both trips were always popular but after five years we discontinued the Wendover trip replacing it with the Black Friday Tulalip Bus Trip, The Black Friday Trip along with our Vegas bus continue to be highlights and sells out every time.



Spring Bus Trips: always popular with Van-Fraser Members.

Based on suggestions from members, we expanded the Las Vegas bus to a 12-14 day trip visiting national parks and historic sites. Over the past five years, we have visited Yellowstone National Park where we saw active geysers spouting, buffalo giving birth in the wild, bears with their cubs and Old Faithful, itself. We've visited other parks including Bryce, Zion, Grand Canyon, Arches, Monument Valley, Mesa Verde, Canyonlands, Death Valley, Crater Lake, Mount Charleston, Red Rock Canyon, Valley of Fire, San Francisco, San Diego, Kelowna winery and Banff. . With each trip, comments like "how can it get any better?" are prevalent and challenge us to find even more magical places while still keeping the costs low!

Members are already asking about our 2018 Spring Bus trip and we are actively researching potential itineraries based on feedback from previous groups. We build the trip around 3-4 days in Las Vegas which continues to be popular with gamblers and non gamblers, then research places members have suggested and plot out the mileage per day, keeping the trip to 14 or less days. Once we have a good itinerary and sketched out towns to stay at night, keeping driving to a reasonable pace each day and always aiming to be in our hotel by 5 pm, we give the itinerary to First Express, the wholesaler company, who charter our bus for the required days and find and reserve hotels in the towns we have prescribed. With their bulk buying power, they are able to get much better rates than we could. Over the years they have helped us put together amazing packages with incredibly low rates. When we are happy with the hotels and overall price that they offer, we contract with them for the package (and we always request our favourite driver, Ian)

Presently, we are looking at the Mount Rushmore area and other parks in North Dakota as well as another possible trip along the Oregon coast and over to Vegas, and beyond to the New Mexico area, western places like Albuquerque and Santa Fe, Taos and up to Moab for some scenic driving as we circle our way home. We have checked Yosemite several times, but because of weather conditions, they cannot guarantee access until later May which gets into much higher accommodation costs. We are cognizant of the Canadian dollar but we still find we can get acceptable rates in the USA and lower than those for a comparable itinerary in Canada. As always, the rates in the casino hotels are considerably lower and help subsidize the higher hotel rates in the national parks and cities.

So stay tuned! Keep your April 2018 Calendar open! As soon as our 2018 Bus Trip Itinerary is finalized we will send out the information.

MARK YOUR CALENDAR!

September 9-14/17: Annual 5 Day U-Drive to Yakima. Drive your own vehicle at your own pace to Yakima (about a 5 hour drive). Stay with the group at the Howard Johnson, enjoy golf each day at nearby courses (if you play), shop, sight see, and relax by the pool. Happy Hours, BBQs by the pool and more! Contact the Heritage Club to register and to reserve a room at the Hotel. Heritage Club Office: 604 482-4311.



September 15/17: Annual Gala Banquet at the Continental Seafood Restaurant in Richmond. Doors open at 5:30 pm. Plan to book a table for ten for your colleagues, family and friends or purchase individual tickets. Registration Form accompanies this newsletter.

September 21-23/17: First ever Bus Trip to Portland, Oregon. Duty free shopping, sightseeing, or just relaxing at the Monarch Hotel. Price per person for double occupancy - \$290.00 CAD Includes bus transportation, 2 nights hotel, breakfast each day, taxes and gratuities. **SPACE AVAILABLE NOW!**

November 10/17: Honouring Our Own Ceremony at the PPC in Richmond. Join us for a brief service with employees and Heritage Club members to remember Posties who were lost during the World Wars. Light lunch provided.

November 14/17: Orientation for Santa's Elves at the PPC in Richmond. An overview of this year's Santa Letter Writing Program and introduction to all the material. This session is for both new and experienced elves. Light lunch provided.

November 19/17: Annual Bus Trip to Tulalip, Washington. Shopping and lots of fun! This year an additional day has been added for a 3 night stay at the beautiful Tulalip Resort. Price is \$299.00 pp and includes bus trip, 3 nights hotel, some meals, taxes and driver tips. *Note: Trip is currently sold out with 56 members/family but we are taking names for standby.*

November 27/17 to January 10/17: Santa Letter Writing Program. Daily—7 Days a Week in Santa's Workshop at the PPC and satellite workshops around the Lower Mainland. Please mark your calendars to help out as many days as possible, especially during the peak period of December 10th to 29th. New Elves needed! Call the office to volunteer!

December 8/17: Christmas With Santa Luncheon at the Green Acres Golf Club, Richmond. All members, family and friends welcome. Registration Form and more information in next newsletter.

December 28/17: Annual Planning Meeting for Heritage Club Executive.

If you have any questions please contact the Heritage Club Office at 604 482-4311.



ACTIVE MEMBERSHIP REQUIREMENTS

Recently, Van-Fraser did a mail out to all those members who had not renewed their membership for 2017. We were pleased for the great response to the mailing and received many registration forms and payment of dues.

We review each registration form noting the areas of interest that each member checks from our activity list and we prepare distribution lists for each activity. This enables us to send advance notices to people as soon as an activity is organized so they don't have to wait for the next newsletter. Examples are travel announcements, including our bus trips and cruises; last minute travel deals; luncheons; work parties at the Railway Mail Car, etc.



We often receive phone calls from some members asking "What is an active member?" These calls are often a result of talking to representatives at Medoc who inquire if you are an active member of The Heritage Club?

"Active membership" means you have renewed your membership for the current year and paid your dues for the current year. This is most important to take advantage of the Heritage Club benefits such as Johnson Insurance products including MEDOC. To qualify and for your insurance to be in effect, you must be an active member.

Active membership also provides you with our six newsletters a year full of information about our club, participation in all our activities, access to information and support from the HC office and much more.

If you haven't yet returned your form and paid dues, there is still time. Please send in asap. Many thanks to the over 900 members who have renewed and paid 2017 dues.

MEDOC TRAVEL INSURANCE

For all those members who have the Johnson, MEDOC travel insurance, you will be receiving your renewed policy in the mail. The existing policies expire on August 31/17 and will automatically be renewed for the year September 2017 to August 2018.

When you receive your documents, make sure you check them and if any information has changed you advise them. For those who purchased additional coverage for a trip over forty days last year, you need to contact them to remove that coverage for the coming year. If you have planned a trip over forty days, be sure to contact them to purchase the additional coverage for the new term.

If you have the standard base plan, you do not need to complete the health questionnaire that is included with your package. All others need to complete the form.

To contact Johnson, MEDOC with changes, you can email: travelinsurance@johnson.ca or phone: [1-866-606-3362](tel:1-866-606-3362) or fax: [1-855-454-1337](tel:1-855-454-1337)

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Van-Fraser Heritage Club
Unit 160 - 5940 Ferguson Road
Richmond BC V7B 0B1
email
vanfrasernews@gmail.com
Phone
604 482-4311

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TRAVEL OPPORTUNITIES CANADA POST HERITAGE CLUBS MEMBERS AND FAMILIES

August/September, 2017, Alaska cruises, Vancouver return. Most Alaska cruises are selling out but we will monitor for any last minute specials and send email alerts to the Travel Club.

August 29, 2017, 12day BritishIsles, Southampton return, Caribbean Princess. Visit Southampton, Guernsey, Dublin, Belfast, Orkney Islands, Invergordon, Edinburgh, Le Havre (Paris). Inside cabins begin at \$1754.00 Cad pp plus taxes \$249.00. Airfare extra.

September 9-14, 2017, Washington State U- Drive trip, 5 nights. Drive your own car and meet the group in Yakima for sightseeing, golf, shopping, BBQs and dinners together. Travel at your own pace.

September 21-23, 2017 3 day bus trip to Portland, Oregon for tax free shopping, sightseeing and relaxing. This is a new trip based on numerous requests from members in their 2017 Registration Check List. Call the Heritage Club office for a registration form. \$290.00 CAD per pp. Seats Available!

September 26, 2017 5 day repositioning cruise Vancouver to San Diego on the Amsterdam. Visit Victoria and San Francisco and fly home from San Diego after free time in southern California. Inside cabins from \$454.00 Cad pp plus taxes \$311.00. Air extra.

October 1, 2017 30 day cruise San Diego to Hong Kong, on the Amsterdam visiting Dutch Harbour, 5 cities in Japan, 2 ports in South Korea, overnight in Shanghai and Hong Kong. Insides starting at \$7642.00 including taxes. Air extra.

October 1, 2017 80 day Grand Voyage from San Diego return on the Amsterdam. Visit Dutch Harbour, 5 cities in Japan, South Korea, Beijing, Shanghai, Hong Kong, Vietnam, Singapore, Indonesia, Darwin, Cairns, Sydney, Australia, New Zealand, Fiji, Samoa and Honolulu. Call the Heritage Club Office for detailed itinerary and prices. This cruise can also be done in 53 days from San Diego to Sydney Australia.

October 8, 2017 10 day Pacific Coast cruise, on the Star Princess, Vancouver return, visiting Santa Barbara, Catalina Island, Los Angeles and overnight in San Francisco. Inside cabins start at \$1429.00 CAD pp plus taxes \$253.00 pp.

October 8, 2017 14 days Fall Foliage cruise on the Celebrity Summit ,from New York return. Visit New York, Boston, Bar Harbour, Portland, Quebec City for 2 days, Charlottetown, Sydney, Halifax. Inside cabins start at \$1504.00 plus tax CAD per person .

November 4, 2017 7 days Mexican Riviera Cruise, on the Carnival Miracle, Los Angeles return, visiting Cabo San Lucas (2 days), Puerto Vallarta and 3 fun at sea days. Inside cabins \$789.00 plus \$140.00 taxes Cad pp. Ocean view \$857.00 plus taxes, Balcony \$910.00 plus taxes pp. November 19-22, 2017 3 nights (4 days) bus trip to Tulalip Resort and Casino. (Waitlist)

April 18, 2018 19 day Panama Canal, repositioning cruise on the Eurodam. Fort Lauderdale to Vancouver. Visit Cartagena, Panama Canal, Costa Rica, Nicaragua, Guatemala, Huatalco, Mexico, Puerto Chiapas, Manzanillo, Puerto Vallarta, San Francisco. Inside cabins starting \$2079.00 plus taxes\$656.00 CAD pp.

REMINDER: Be sure you have out of country travel insurance for any trip you book and that it is active before any cancellation penalty fees are in effect for your trip. For those with MEDOC, ensure you have renewed your Heritage Club Membership for 2017 and paid your dues to be covered. Contact the Heritage Club office for info on MEDOC and for more information on any trips.

Van Fraser Heritage Club 604 482-4311 or email: fwdanells@hotmail.com