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Jessica Churcher
Makeup artist

Jessica is a makeup artist, mother and passionate advocate for women confidently owning their space. With almost two decades in the beauty industry, her work has evolved into creating intentional photo shoots and print features designed to elevate real women, their stories, their presence and the impact they make. She is drawn to makeup that enhances and feels polished, natural and powerful. Jessica is based in Nanaimo and gratefully lives, works and creates on the traditional and unceded territory of the Snuneymuxw First Nation.



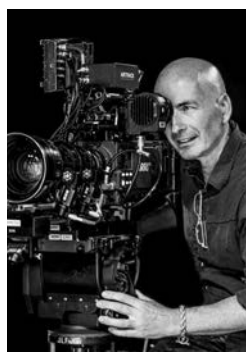
Jane Zatylny
Arts writer

The former editor of British Columbia Magazine, Jane is a communications specialist and the owner of Fernwood Fashionista, a vintage Etsy shop. She is also the voice behind @artsvanisle, an Instagram page dedicated to the arts on Vancouver Island.



Pam Dobbs
Photographer

Pam is a self-taught photographer who lives in Chemainus. She can often be found lying prone or twisted into small spaces on the forest floor capturing the spirit of nature. You may also find her braving the many abandoned buildings that exist around the island, showcasing the lost beauty in these once-inhabited structures, now filled with the art of graffiti. Pam finds wonderment in dappled light and brings attention to the small creations in nature that many don't notice. She also enjoys portraiture.



Alec Watson
Fashion photographer

Alec is an international campaign photographer and director of photography known for creating bold, story-driven imagery for global brands including Coca-Cola, Starbucks, Microsoft and Sexy Hair. He has photographed presidents, celebrities and cultural icons like Britney Spears, bringing a refined, cinematic approach to every frame. Grateful to live on beautiful Vancouver Island with his wife Sarah, Alec travels globally creating beauty and fashion imagery. He is also an educator and speaker who helps creatives and companies communicate through compelling visual storytelling.



Ashley Jeans
Fashion stylist

With more than 20 years of experience in the fashion industry, Ashley has built a career rooted in retail expertise and client relationships. Starting her career as a buyer in LA, she is now based in Nanaimo, BC, and is a stylist and owner of Guava Apparel. Ashley specializes in helping women find modern, effortless pieces that build confidence and reflect their personal style. She believes fashion should feel authentic and empowering, allowing women to show up comfortably and confidently in every area of their lives.

ON THE COVER

Photo by Alec Watson.

Sarah Gilks, wearing Herschel Hunter green raincoat, ROARK women's Henley top, ROARK women's cargo pants—all from Lucid in Nanaimo.

Styled by Ashely Jeans; hair and makeup by Jessica Churcher.

Fashion, Page 24



STYLE.TASTE.SPACE

CENTRAL VANCOUVER ISLAND
2026 SPRING ISSUE 01

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CONTENTS

FEATURES

16 WINDOW OF OPPORTUNITY

Family-first ethos
at Complete Windows
By Susan Lundy

20 HEART OF A TUSCAN HOME

A Cobble Hill kitchen
By Helen Siwak / Susan Lundy

24 A DAY IN THE LIFE

Fashion, Vancouver Island style
By Alec Watson / Ashley Jeans

28 THE ART OF NATURE

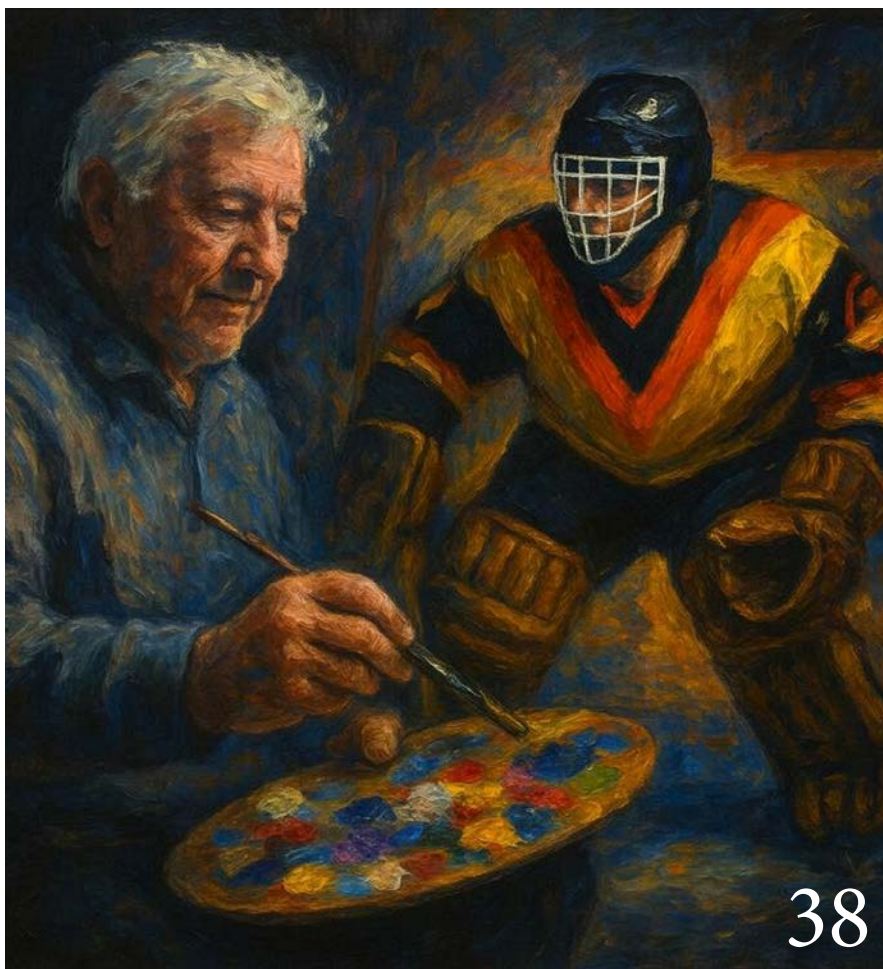
Potter and gallerist Sarah Wilson
By Jane Zatylny / Pam Dobbs

38 COLOUR OF HIS HEART

Richard Brodeur
By Susan Lundy / Cathleen
Lundgren

40 BOXES OF BLISS

Kinsu Chocolates
By Susan Lundy / Pam Dobbs



DEPARTMENTS

8 THE LIV LIST

Curated by LIV,
Inspired by Spring

10 LIV CHEFS

Chef Nate Catto,
Qualicum Beach Cafe

36 LIV PROFILE

Sarah Gilks

44 LIV GETAWAYS

NanOOSE Bay

48 LIV ADVENTURE

Ten Amazing Places

A Season to LIV

Spring at my house begins with a light “thunk.” And although I’ve lived in my Salt Spring home for decades, it’s somehow still a surprise every year when I hear the early morning clatter on my office window, where lightly reflective glass lures in a small flock of randy birds.

Upon seeing their reflection—“Look at that pretty bird!”—they bounce happily up and down the glass for a loud half hour or more. These early birds rise with the sun—arriving about 10 minutes earlier each morning—so eventually their cheery crash hits around 5 am. It’s preferable, though, to the woodpecker that for several mornings one year mistook the gutter right outside our bedroom window for a tree trunk.

For most of us, spring arrives with promise. There’s the assurance of

warmer weather and longer days, the lush renewal of the landscape as new growth buds and blooms, the scent of morning dew and the sound of birdsong. And with this sense of reawakening and energy comes a chance to recharge and reset.

For those of us at LIV magazine, this spring marks the birth of the inaugural edition of LIV Central Vancouver Island. Already a mainstay in Victoria, Vancouver and the Okanagan, LIV now finds a home in this region—from Mill Bay to Qualicum Beach and Salt Spring Island.

In this edition, you’ll find stories on lifestyles, businesses, art, fashion, local travel and home design—all in celebration of this beautiful place we call home.

It takes a team to create a magazine and many people helped bring this edition to life. First and foremost, thank you to our advertisers. You took a leap of faith to join us at the very beginning. Thanks also to our freelance contributors—please read their bios on page four. To my colleagues—Lily Chan, design; Bruce Cameron, sales; and Mario Gedicke, our publisher—you form the foundation on which this magazine will flourish.

And to the robin that just landed with a thunk on my office windowsill? Thanks for bringing the clattering promise of a new season.

Susan Lundy





Spring Reset

Small ways to recharge and renew

Spring has a way of tapping us on the shoulder with a reminder that says: you can begin again from here.

After months of winter routines—boots and heavy coats by the door—spring arrives with the opportunity to check in and consider what might need a reset. Recharging for spring doesn't require a retreat or a reinvention. In fact, the most lasting renewals tend to come from small, almost unremarkable shifts.

Start by lightening the physical load

Spring cleaning gets a bad rap, conjuring visions of weekends lost to scrubbing and vacuuming. But renewal can be less about elbow grease and more about editing. What no longer serves me? What feels heavy simply because it's been there too long?

Start small with one drawer or one shelf. Or one overstuffed corner that's become invisible through familiarity. Clearing physical space can help sharpen mental focus. It's not about minimalism or aesthetic perfection but about removing the visual noise that can drain your energy.

Reintroduce movement

After months of indoor living, the urge to “get back in shape” can feel urgent. But spring movement is less about goals than about reconnection.

Walking is often enough. A longer route or a different time of day. Phone off. The point isn't distance or pace, but the rhythm—the way movement clears mental clutter and re-establishes a sense of forward motion.

Add in gardening, stretching and wandering. The body remembers how to move when it's given space to do so, without being micromanaged by performance metrics.

Let light recalibrate your days

One of spring's gifts is returning light—earlier mornings and longer evenings. Instead of fighting winter's aftereffects with artificial fixes, let daylight do some of the work.

Morning light, in particular, helps reset internal clocks. Even a few minutes outdoors early in the day with coffee or tea can shift energy levels.

In the evenings, resist the urge to fill the extra light with more activities. Spring doesn't demand productivity. It invites lingering—outdoors or inside, maybe with a window cracked open enough to let fresh air circulate.

The idea that spring requires a dramatic reset can be a bit exhausting.

A more sustainable approach treats renewal as maintenance—tuning, adjusting, clearing residue left behind by winter's demands.

Refresh social energy thoughtfully

Spring social calendars tend to bloom all at once. Invitations resurface and plans start to stack up. While reconnection is part of renewal, so is discernment.

Notice which interactions leave you feeling happy and which exhaust you. Recharging doesn't mean withdrawing, but it does mean choosing quality over quantity. A long walk with one person can be more restorative than a week packed with meeting obligations.

It's also a good season to re-establish boundaries that slipped during winter hibernation.

Think of renewal as maintenance, not makeover

The idea that spring requires a dramatic reset can be a bit exhausting. A more sustainable approach treats renewal as maintenance—tuning, adjusting, clearing residue left behind by winter's demands.

When approached this way, spring becomes less about becoming someone new and more about returning to yourself—rested and recharged.

And often, that's enough. **LIV**

Curated by LIV

Inspired by Spring



Rings

(Left) Baroque natural sea pearl, custom set; (right) cultured freshwater pearl set in solid silver; comfort fit and design. Call for pricing. Impeccable, Duncan



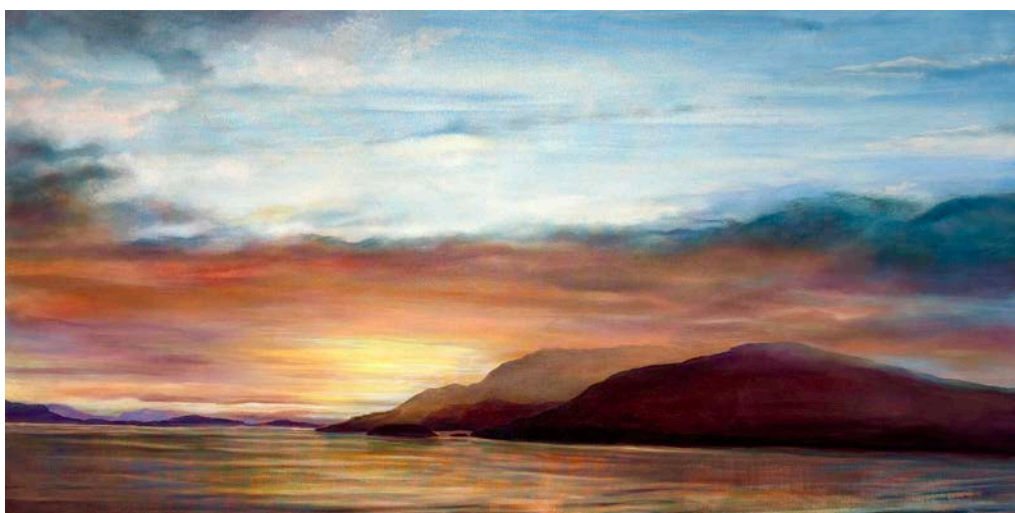
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"The Amenities of Cable Bay Trail"

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"Strait in Ember Glow"

30 x 60 acrylic on canvas by Jane Bronsch. \$5,600
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24 x 36 acrylic on canvas by Richard Brodeur.

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Ingredient-driven. Seasonal. Honest.

Chef aims for “refined but approachable” cuisine

PHOTOS BY PAM DOBBS



Chef Nate Catto, Qualicum Beach Café

- Born and raised in Sooke, British Columbia.
- Culinary training: Culinary Arts Program at Camosun College in Victoria, followed by apprenticeship and Red Seal certification. Most “real” education came from working in destination resorts, farm-to-table kitchens and alongside farmers, fishermen and producers across BC.
- Years cooking professionally: 20-plus years in professional kitchens, with over 15 years in executive leadership roles.

“Good food doesn’t have to be complicated. It just has to be made with care.”

Did you have an “aha” moment when you knew you wanted to be a chef?

I grew up around food and the outdoors in Sooke—fishing, foraging, being close to the land. I didn’t have one dramatic “aha” moment. It was more a realization that kitchens felt right to me. I really fell in love with food and the industry while working at the Delta Victoria in Lure Restaurant. It was a really cool team, and I fed off their passion. I love the energy, the pressure and the ability to create something that brings people together. Once I got into it professionally, I knew it was where I belonged.

How would you describe your cooking style or philosophy to someone sitting down at your table for the first time?

Ingredient-driven, seasonal and honest. I don’t try to over complicate things. I focus on great product, thoughtful technique and balance. If I can showcase a beautiful piece of fish or local produce in a way that feels refined but approachable, that’s success to me.

Is there a dish on your menu that best represents who you are as a chef right now? Why?

I’m super happy with our Feta saganaki dish. It features feta cheese from Little Qualicum Cheeseworks, flambéed tableside and served simply with bread and fig chutney. I also can’t get enough of this beautiful local lingcod and albacore tuna from our friends at Natural Gift Seafoods.

What three ingredients are always in your kitchen at work or at home?

Fish sauce, fresh herbs, hot chilies. Hard to narrow it to three ingredients!

What’s your go-to meal when you’re cooking just for yourself?

It’s certainly not glamorous—I make a toasted aged cheddar cheese sandwich with mayonnaise and a ton of black pepper. Or leftovers of whatever fantastic meals my wife has cooked up!

What is a good simple piece of advice for pairing wine and food?

Match weight with weight. Light dishes with lighter wines, richer dishes with fuller wines. And when in doubt, acidity is your friend: wines with good acidity make food taste brighter and more balanced.

What’s one small detail home cooks often overlook that makes a big difference?

Seasoning properly and seasoning at the right time. Taste as you go. Also, let your meat rest. Those two things alone elevate a dish dramatically.

What does a perfect day off look like for you, food included?

Being outside with my family—maybe at the beach or in the garden with something cooking over a fire—sharing some drinks, keeping it relaxed and unhurried. Good food doesn’t have to be complicated. It just has to be made with care.



West Coast Seafood Chowder

—from Chef Nate Catto, Qualicum Bay Café

Yield: 3.5 L

Ingredients:

250 g Carrots
 250 g Celery
 250 g Yellow onion
 250 g Potato
 10 g Garlic
 1 tsp Tarragon, dried
 0.5 tsp Dill, dry
 1-2 each Bay leaves
 125 ml Capers
 0.5 lbs Butter
 0.5 lbs Flour
 0.5 L Cream, heavy
 2 L Fish/seafood stock
 125 ml White wine
 1 tsp Tabasco
 Lemon, juice and zest (to taste)
 Available seafood

Method:

Cut carrots, celery, onion and potato to desired size. Finely mince garlic. Melt butter in a pot (at least 4 L in size) on medium heat and add chopped vegetables, dried herbs and capers. Sweat until onions turn translucent, then add flour all at once. Continue to cook on medium heat for at least 2-3 minutes, stirring constantly, to form a roux. Turn off the pot and set aside to cool.

Meanwhile, in a separate pot, combine seafood stock and white wine and bring to a boil. If you don't have access to seafood stock (it's easy to make if you have some fish bones or crab shells) you can either use water and a fish/seafood base, or clam nectar (available at most grocery stores) or some combination of these.

When the mirepoix and roux have cooled slightly (it doesn't need to cool all the way to room temperature, just not piping hot), and the stock is boiling, you can start to combine.

On medium heat, scoop one or two ladles at a time of hot stock onto the roux, stirring constantly to keep it smooth. If you add too much at once, you can "float" the roux and create lumps. Once all the stock is combined with the roux, continue stirring until it comes up to a boil. Add cream and reduce heat to low, stirring occasionally, until potatoes are cooked through. Adjust seasoning with salt, pepper, Tabasco and lemon juice.

If you used a seafood base, you can add more at this point in lieu of salt. In the restaurant, we make this soup ahead of time and cook the seafood garnish to order so it doesn't get overcooked and is as fresh as possible. You can use whatever seafood you have available. On our menu, we use Tofino lingcod, Salt Spring Island mussels, local manila clams, baby shrimp and smoked salmon. You can cook your seafood directly in the soup, or separately in a pan so you can show off your garnish on top! **LIV**

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Window of Opportunity

Family-first ethos guides business structure at Complete Windows

BY SUSAN LUNDY



A unique business structure at Complete Windows in Parksville reflects the lives of the people who own and run it.

Eric Johnson, a former football player, and Katy Johnson, once a synchronized swimmer, understand the rigours of sports parenting, and they have created a work structure that enables them to put their family first—while still running a successful business.

This means life doesn't stop when the business closes: it merely shifts from work to family. So, for example, when

Complete Windows shuts its doors on the weekend, Katy and Eric hit the road, travelling all over Vancouver Island and the Lower Mainland as they divvy up the tournaments, performances and practices of their three kids—aged eight, 10 and 13—who, between them, dance, sew and play hockey, lacrosse and softball.

“We wake up in the same bed, but we wind up in different cities pretty much every weekend,” the two chuckle, describing their kid- and sports-focused lives. “We have the same birthday in June, and for the last three years, on our birthday, we’ve been in separate cities.”



Windows by Parksville's
Complete Windows.

"We realize that our customers are also busy people, and so if they need to come in after hours or on a weekend, we are very much like, 'What do you need? We'll make that happen.'"



The Johnson family: (from left) Briggs, Prairie, Eric, Hayes and Katy.

Closing Complete Windows on weekends works because the Johnsons focus on flexibility, not fixed hours.

"We may not be open," Eric explains, "but we realize that our customers are also busy people, and so if they need to come in after hours or on a weekend, we're not stringent on 'these are our hours and this is when we operate.' We are very much like, 'What do you need? We'll make that happen.'"

The Johnsons extend this flexibility and family-first ethos to their staff, who are allowed to bring their kids to work if the need arises.

"We also allow pets—although we draw the line at birds," Eric jokes.

Their approach has created a wealth of staff loyalty. For example, one crew leader has been with the business for close to 20 years—and now his sons are also employees, working in his crew, alongside him.

Founded in 1992 by Eric's mother and stepfather, Complete Windows began as a family-run business serving the Vancouver Island market. Eric spent years living in Calgary after leaving BC at 16 to attend sports school. He later built a professional life as an entrepreneur in Alberta, and worked several years as a counsellor for adolescents. Although he spent summers on the island, he did not become directly involved in the family window business until his parents began eyeing retirement.

By this time, Eric and his future partner, Katy—who grew up in Calgary—had relocated independently to Vancouver Island. And despite having lived just two blocks apart for years in Calgary, they only met after the move.

"We dated for a little bit and then went on a vacation for three weeks together and didn't want to kill each other when we came back," Katy laughs. "So, we were like, this is going to work!"

As their personal paths aligned, their professional ideals merged, and they began mapping out the future of the business.

Eric's parents weren't in a financial position to just hand over the business, he says: "We needed to pay market value, which meant we had to create value first."

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This meant they needed to grow the company.

"We're really lucky we inherited some great staff," Eric recalls. "And it was kind of like heads down and bottoms up—we just started working hard to grow the business by asking the builders and the architects what they saw as gaps in the industry. And then we started to try to fill those gaps."

The biggest gap was in upper-end new construction, where the product offerings were just not there, Eric says: "A lot of people start their dream of building a high-end or even a more regular house by seeing something in a magazine or on TV—like *Million Dollar Listing*. And those high-end products were not readily available on the island. So, I literally got on a plane and started going to those manufacturers and getting exclusive rights for Vancouver Island."

The other gap in the local window scene was around installation services, so Complete Windows doubled down on installation quality. The company now works with four full-time, in-house installation crews, rather than relying exclusively on subcontractors. And it offers full project management services, taking window installation all the way from concept to completion.

The jobs range from small to surprisingly large: Eric says the business is currently doing a house where the installation is expected to take eight and a half months.

While new construction has become a big part of the business, retrofit work remains its core.

"That's what keeps the lights on. It's how Complete Windows started," Eric says, adding that while the retrofit market is less regulated and often inconsistent, "I like to build trust and be an open book about what the customer is getting."

To this end, Complete Windows has positioned itself as an education-first operation, emphasizing transparency over sales pressure. Clients are encouraged to look beyond the bottom line and understand what sits behind a quote—engineering reports, architectural details and energy data that explain why certain solutions make sense in a specific home.

This approach fits the business's family-focused structure and the understanding of how work and home life intersect. It serves as a framework for Eric and Katy, whether they are in the showroom or on the road with their kids. **LIV**



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Heart of a Tuscan-Style Home





This Cobble Hill kitchen is the emotional core of a spectacular David Coulson Design build

BY HELEN SIWAK AND SUSAN LUNDY

“The kitchen is the heart of everything,” says builder David Coulson. “You’ve heard that line enough times...but the kitchen is really important.”

It’s the spot where people naturally gather, often without planning—they talk, cook, entertain, even just pass through. It anchors the home, and for Coulson, who has a background in restaurant design and ownership, the kitchen is not just a functional space, but a reflection of how people live in their homes—and how those homes connect to their surroundings.

Kitchen as the emotional core

Those principles come into focus at Tuscany Villa, a David Coulson Design custom home, located in Cobble Hill and inspired by traditional Tuscan architecture.

“This house was based on my favourite design,” says Coulson. “It’s that U-shaped home with a central courtyard, and the arms kind of embracing the sunshine in the south. We see it all over Europe.”

Private wings for children and guests are separated from shared spaces, each with direct access to the outdoors—offering both connection and retreat. Organizing the house around a courtyard, with bedroom wings on either side, allowed Coulson to position the kitchen right in the heart of the structure, effectively becoming its emotional and functional core.

Designed for movement and connection

The kitchen runs horizontally along the courtyard. Cabinetry wraps the space on three sides, creating a long, efficient work zone that supports movement without cutting off circulation. And with a depth of about 18 feet, people can pass through it without stepping into the galley itself.

“The size is generous enough that you can linger and lounge and entertain,” says Coulson. “And weather permitting, the doors open, and everything just spills outside: your wine goes outside and your food goes outside, and then you’ve got that inside-outside connection.”



The homeowners are enthusiastic cooks, and the kitchen is designed to accommodate that. Stacked wall ovens, separate fridge and freezer zones, and generous work surfaces allow two people to work comfortably at once.

Just off the kitchen, an indoor nursery supports one of the homeowners' passions for vegetable gardening. Seedlings are started inside each spring and then moved outdoors—a small detail that reinforces the home's connection to food, land and seasons.

Materials, craft and evolution

Material choices throughout the kitchen emphasize durability and craftsmanship. Marble from Matrix Marble & Stone appears throughout, including a marble shelf in the kitchen, which Coulson added after completion.

The creamy, yellow-tinged-off-white cabinets imbue the warmth of the Tuscan sun, and a secondary grey-mint palette draws its influence from the painted shutters of Italy.

"When you look across the hills, you see Tuscan buildings and that beautiful green," Coulson says. "I think the palette, and the size of the room and then the vaulted ceiling, all make it special. And the box-beaming gives it even more of an old-world charm.

While the vaulted ceiling initially presented a challenge, Coulson's team resolved the issue by using a boxed-beam treatment that ultimately ties the kitchen to the coffered ceiling in the adjacent living room.

The kitchen exudes warmth and light, with the cabinet cream set against white walls, a soft-grey porcelain-tile backsplash and wood highlights that include the beams and a walnut L-shaped corner detail on the island. All cabinetry was crafted by Curtis Neufeld of Neufeld Woodworks.

"The walnut was a beautiful touch on the corner of the island," Coulson says. "It's just so tactile there in that spot. Curtis is a masterful cabinetmaker and furniture builder; he does all my work."

A design-build approach

Located in Duncan, David Coulson Design operates as a fully integrated design-build studio, managing projects from early concept through construction and interior detailing. Bringing all stages under one roof allows for continuity of vision, clearer communication and fewer compromises along the way.

"I'm still the big picture person here throughout the project," Coulson says, "but I let my team fly and I let them have their own autonomy on the project."

That approach has been shaped by a wide range of experience, including completion of numerous commercial, residential and restoration projects throughout Vancouver Island.

"The size is generous enough that you can linger and lounge and entertain...the doors open, and everything just spills outside: your wine goes outside and your food goes outside, and then you've got that inside-outside connection."



The kitchen as the constant

This top-to-bottom vision is evident at Tuscany Villa. It's a space designed to endure and support routine, creativity and connection.

"I just love that U-shape in the central court. You're growing, you're living, you're basking in the sun. You have privacy on the other side. It all sort of starts with a bottle of wine in one hand, and the rest of the evening just unrolls smoothly—and a home and a kitchen should evolve that way as well."

The kitchen is never just another room. It's the heart of the home.

davidcoulsondesign.com **LIV**

TUSCANY VILLA

Builder: David Coulson Design Ltd.

Finished: 2022

House size: 4,230 square feet + garage 785

Garage: 785 square feet

Building design: Cezar E. Cristea

Interior design: Donna Burdulea and Cezar E. Cristea

Project management: David Coulson and Donna Burdulea

Structural engineering: buepoint consulting ltd.

A Day in the Life: Vancouver Island Style

Move through an entire day with fashion that adapts. Find pieces that look sharp, work hard and transition seamlessly as you step through your day—strength training, meetings, a muddy dog walk or a short hike—without cycling through five different outfits. Focus on smart layering, versatility and clever choices that allow the day to flow. These pieces are iconic, practical and unmistakably Vancouver Island.

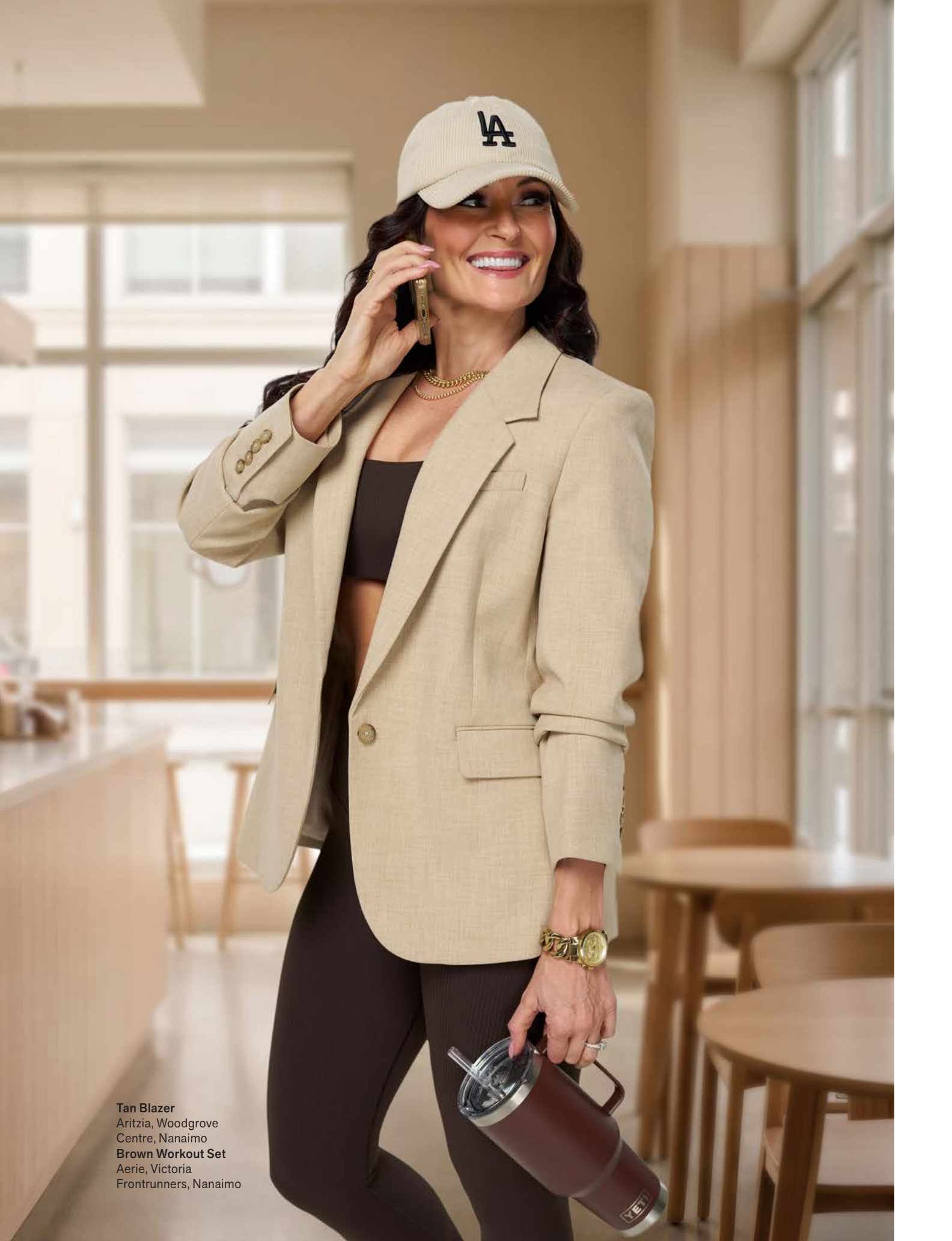


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Photography, Alec Watson; styling, Ashley Jeans;
hair and makeup, Jessica Churcher; model, Sarah Gilks.
Shot on location in and around Nanaimo and Lantzville.



"Lennon" Leopard Coat
from Wilde & Sparrow,
Parksville
Cream New Balance
Runners from JD Sports,
Woodgrove Centre,
Nanaimo



Tan Blazer
Aritzia, Woodgrove
Centre, Nanaimo
Brown Workout Set
Aerie, Victoria
Frontrunners, Nanaimo



Cozy Sweatsuit
from Aritzia, Woodgrove Centre,
Nanaimo

The Art of Nature

Potter and gallerist Sarah Wilson creates and sells work that is calming and connected to the natural world

BY JANE ZATYLNÝ



Potter Sarah Wilson has travelled a long distance in nine short years—literally and figuratively. The owner of Wilson & Co. Gallery & Studio in Ladysmith emigrated to Canada in 2018 from Ireland with the goal of working in marine conservation.

“With an undergraduate degree in zoology and a master’s in marine policy, this was the field I was pursuing,” she says.

While working full time for a Vancouver-based ocean conservation organization, Wilson decided to sign up for a pottery class.

“I was always pretty artsy as a kid and had always wanted to try working with clay,” she says. “I started taking classes after work for a creative outlet and was quickly bitten by the pottery bug.”

Soon, her career goal had changed from conservation work to ceramics.

“I almost quit after the first couple of sessions, but I checked my ego and kept at it until something clicked and I fell in love. That’s not to say it became easy—it certainly didn’t—but it became something I stubbornly wanted to stick with and get better at.”

A two-year apprenticeship with renowned potter Mary Fox, the first under the Mary Fox Pottery Legacy Project, would further cement her aspirations.

“The apprenticeship provided me with many benefits—not just the skill to produce work I was proud of, but also the confidence and road map I would need to make a living in the arts,” says Wilson.

"I love the thought of people using and enjoying my work and bringing joy to those small moments in life, like morning coffee or sharing a meal with friends."



By her second year of the apprenticeship, Wilson's personal style was emerging in her pottery.

"I knew I very much wanted to carry my love of nature through in my work," she says.

Wilson finished her apprenticeship in 2023 and graduated to selling her ceramics through her own studio and at artisan shows. Then, in the summer of 2024, a prime corner location became available on Ladysmith's First Avenue. With support from her mentor, Mary Fox, Wilson signed a lease and began renovating a former women's clothing boutique. She opened her gallery and studio in October 2024.

After its radical transformation, the space is ideally suited to its new purpose. Light streams into the gallery from a pair of oversized picture windows, casting long shadows on the hardwood floors and highlighting Wilson's carefully curated selection of paintings, photography, hand-blown glass, pottery, fabric art, sculptural metalwork, wooden items and jewellery.

When choosing work for her gallery, Wilson says she tends to go with what she likes, but the natural world is a common denominator, whether it's the prints of acclaimed photo-based artist David Ellingsen, the coastal-inspired silver jewellery of Caitlyn Chapman or the turned maple bowls of Corin Flood.

"I like work that is calming and connects us to the natural world," Wilson says.

Wilson's own sculptural and functional pieces are displayed along one wall and positioned throughout the gallery on plinths and windowsills. Glazed in earthy tones, including blues, greys, greens, browns and beiges, Wilson's work is characterized by simple forms and clean lines. Some items she has become known for are decorated with natural elements that reflect her West Coast environment, such as her octopus mugs and fern frond bowls and vases.

Each piece, whether it's a latte bowl or a coffee mug, feels balanced and comfortable to hold.

"I strive to make pots that are a pleasure to use and pleasing to the eye," Wilson explains. "I love the thought of people using and enjoying my work and bringing joy to those small moments in life, like morning coffee or sharing a meal with friends."

Wilson's pottery studio, where she produces her work, is located onsite behind the sales desk; here, too, is where she hosts regular hand-building workshops. She also hosts events in the gallery such as artist talks, vinyl listening parties and exhibitions.



**Sarah Wilson
at Wilson & Co.
Gallery & Studio.**

"I really enjoy the community-building aspect of the gallery," she says. "I like creating connections with the artists who I'm working with and my customers."

That connection recently brought two clients back for a second visit to Wilson's gallery from their stay at Yellow Point Lodge.

"The atmosphere here is hushed and magical," they said during a visit to the gallery. "It reminds us of being in an old-growth forest near Qualicum Beach."

"It makes me so happy when people come in and really get it," says Wilson. "In a world that is filled with such chaos right now, I love having a space that's grounding and reminds people that there's still beauty in the world."

Less than one decade after her move to Canada, Wilson seems to have found her purpose: promoting conservation in a different way, through art.

"I get to play in mud every day," she says. "I think that's the best part." **LIV**



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Colour of His Heart

The art of King Richard Brodeur at Ladysmith Art Gallery

BY CATHLEEN LUNDGREN AND SUSAN LUNDY



Legendary NHL goaltender and visual artist Richard Brodeur presents a curated collection of hockey-related works and Canadian landscapes, reflecting his journey from professional sport to creative expression: from *Crease to Canvas* runs April 24 to May 3 at the Ladysmith Art Gallery.

During his NHL career, painting served as a release from the pressures of elite competition—a practice he continues today.

“You are always searching...finding yourself,” says Brodeur, who is known to hockey fans as “King Richard.”

“When I learned to play goalie, I would look at other goalies. I adjusted the moves I saw to my size...and I carried this through to my painting and created my own style.”

That search for a distinct voice connects his years in net to his years at the easel.

“There are 10,000 artists in BC doing landscapes, but I do it in my style. My way of protecting the goal became ‘King’ Richard Brodeur and my style of painting has become recognizable as a ‘Brodeur.’ That is when you know you have found yourself.”

Brodeur began painting at 18 while playing junior hockey in Cornwall, Ontario.

"That is the gift of being an expressionist. I saw it in the colour of how I felt when I saw it. It was lonely, but it was beautiful."



He credits his start with a high school teacher who recognized his talent and mentored him. He kept his art private during his hockey career—even exhibiting under “Richard King”—until “the easel in the kitchen gave it away.”

Brodeur’s transition out of hockey was not simple.

“I had 13 concussions, which resulted in 30 years of health issues and mental health battles. I struggled with depression. I can honestly say that without my art, I’d be dead right now.”

For Brodeur, painting is both a creative practice and a barometer.

“Painting gives me purpose, and it shows me when the bad days are coming. I can see it in the colours of my paintings. A dark painting might be saying, ‘It’s time to go for a walk, Richard.’”

Brodeur didn’t thrive in the corporate world: “I’m a bit of a rebel...[But] nobody can tell an artist how to paint. I found my expression through my feelings, emotions, my trouble or my joy. I found the colour of my heart.”

Brodeur identifies as an Expressionist: his art expresses what he feels. In practice, this means colour is emotional rather than literal.

One landscape in the exhibition, “Standing Tall,” was inspired by a drive from Nanoose Bay to Fanny Bay, where Brodeur sketched a solitary tree on a small island and later painted it not as it appeared, but in red to reflect what he felt in the moment.

“That is the gift of being an Expressionist. I saw it in the colour of how I felt. It was lonely, but it was beautiful.”

Although his subject matter ranges from hockey scenes to landscapes and figurative work, Brodeur approaches each canvas prepared.

“I prepare like a storyteller. I have a friend who is a writer and when I asked her how she structures a book, I realized it is a lot like painting. Preparation is important, I get an idea and inspiration and sometimes I’ll take three days before I sketch it out on the canvas.”

He often works on multiple paintings at once.

“If I hit a lag in motivation, I switch and get inspired by the next one...As an artist—a true seven days a week artist—I get inspiration as soon as I get up in the morning and it can also wake me up at night. I put my soul in everything I do.”

Brodeur sees his life as defined by two professional pursuits. “I’ve had two passions in my life—outside of home and family—and I got to do both professionally. I am very fortunate.”

When hockey ended, art offered continuity and reinvention.

“After hockey, I found the colour of my heart in art, and I love my job.”

The exhibition includes two live painting sessions on April 25 and April 29, offering visitors the opportunity to observe Brodeur at work. Programming throughout the week will include youth hockey engagement, school tours, artist talks and community-focused events. Opening day on April 24 will feature a media preview, ribbon cutting and reception.

“This exhibition is about more than hockey or art,” says exhibition lead Cathleen Lundgren. “It’s about what happens during and after peak performance—how individuals recalibrate, find meaning and discover coping paths through creative practice.” **LIV**



Station Street

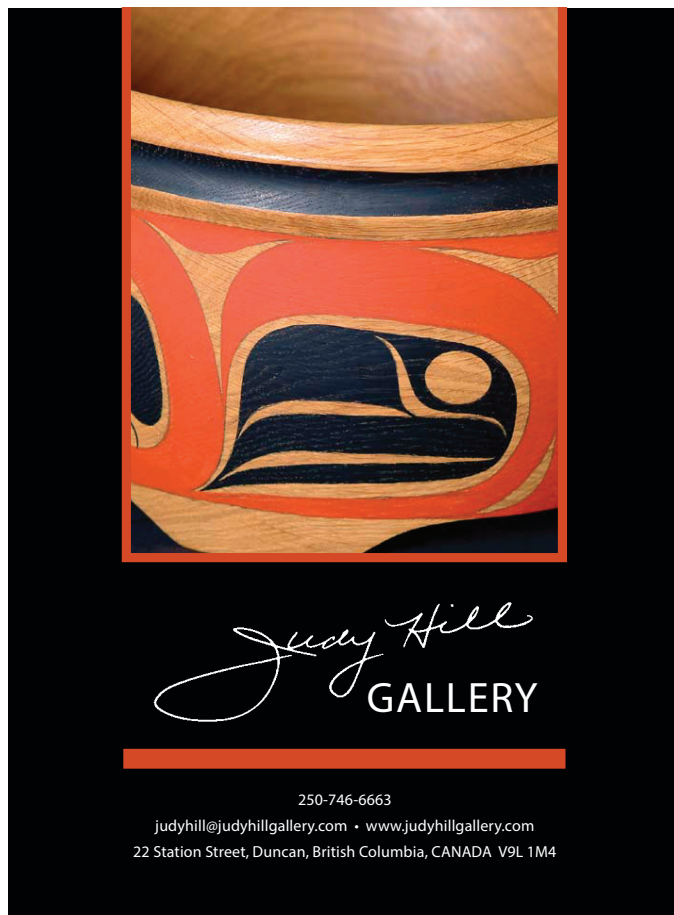
Where history and art meet retail heaven

Station Street may only run two short blocks between Duncan's Canada Avenue and Government Street, but it is tall in character. Walkable, layered with history and infused with public art, this east-west stretch feels like a small cultural corridor.

But Station Street also flourishes with shopping and service opportunities, featuring everything from children's clothing, vintage and quality consignment shops, flower retailers, a shoe store, gift and card shops, picture framing, coffee shops and restaurants. There is a collective space, Pilates studio, midwifery services and the Duncan Showroom for live music.

A street with stories

Among the area's totems is Raven Stealing the Sun—carved in 1990 by Don Smith for the City of Duncan collection. It traditionally stands at Canada Avenue and Station Street but is currently removed for maintenance. Further along, Wind





Eclectic Avenue

Contemporary + Vintage
132 Station St. Duncan BC

Spirit, carved in 1986 by Doug LaFortune, standing between Canada Avenue and Craig Street. Outside the Judy Hill Gallery stands Bringing Light to the World, carved in 1994 by Richard Krentz. Nearby, the Transition pole (1989, Doug Marston) is another part of Duncan's renowned outdoor totem collection.

The architecture tells its own story. The Cowichan Merchants Building (1912) once housed the largest department store on Vancouver Island, outside Victoria, and later became Eaton's. Other storefronts date to the early 1900s, including the 1909 building at 131 Station Street—once described as “the finest store in Duncan.”

Art on the walls, art on the street

Few streets in BC can claim a gallery framed by totem poles, but that's everyday life for the Judy Hill Gallery, which represents more than 100 Indigenous artists from across the Pacific Northwest.

Nearby, Station Street Gallery adds another dimension, showcasing original art, artisan pieces and creative works that reflect the Cowichan Valley's vibrant arts community.

Style with personality

Station Street's boutiques lean independent and uniquely curated. At Little Bird, shoppers find greeting cards, quality stationery, locally created art and high-



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Eye care, clearly

Independent spirit extends to professional services as well. Station Street Eyecare combines modern optometry with a carefully selected collection of eyewear.

Pause for coffee

Between shops, Serve Café offers a place to reset—whether it’s with a mid-morning coffee, a casual lunch or simply a window seat from which to watch the rhythm of the street unfold.

A walkable destination

Part of Station Street’s charm is how easily it connects. Canada Avenue and Government Street flow directly into it, making the area one of downtown Duncan’s most walkable hubs.

You can arrive with a specific errand in mind—flowers, glasses, a new outfit—and leave having discovered something entirely unexpected. **LIV**



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Strength, Mindset and Social Connection

Sarah Gilks is the founder of a global women's fitness and wellness community

Fifty-year-old Sarah Gilks is an entrepreneur and the founder and CEO of the internationally renowned women's health and fitness movement, Health Role Models (healthyrolemodels.com).

Where were you born, where did you grow up and how did you get to Lantzville?

I was born in Sechelt, BC, and moved to Lantzville with my family when I was five years old. My dad was a senior master (captain) with BC Ferries, and we moved with his work. In 2018, we moved back to Lantzville, where I currently live with my super-supportive husband, my daughter and our three dogs. I can't imagine living anywhere else.

You're known as the founder and CEO of Healthy Role Models, but what was your career path before that?

Before Healthy Role Models (HRM), I worked in a government job in vocational rehabilitation, assisting individuals who couldn't return to their employment due to injury to get retrained and gain new employment.

What is Healthy Role Models?

HRM is an online, supportive, global women's fitness and wellness community that turns healthy living into a lifestyle by focusing on strength training, mindset, social connection and real-life habits that last.

What is the philosophy behind it, and what inspired you to create it?

The philosophy behind HRM is that real, lasting health is built through strength training, mindset and supportive community—not extremes or quick fixes.

I created HRM during a season of my life when I had taken a leave from my government job to be at home with my two kids. I loved being a mom, but I really missed having healthy connections with other women who shared similar values—women who wanted to look after their health, grow as people and lead by example for their families and loved ones. I looked for that kind of community and couldn't find it. So, I decided to create it.

At its core, HRM is about progress over perfection, strength over shrinking, habits over hype and trends, and never doing health alone.

What is the 12-week journey, how does it work and when does the next one launch?

The 12-Week Journey inside HRM is a guided season of building strength, confidence and healthy habits from home (members can also do the workouts in a gym), with support every step of the way.

It combines structured, thoughtfully designed strength-based workouts that can be done with minimal equipment, expert guidance, simple, realistic nutrition (no extremes or perfection), mindset tools to help with consistency and confidence, and a powerful, connected online community of women doing it alongside you. Registration for the 2026 Spring Journey opens March 9.

What makes it different from other 12-week challenges?

Instead of “go hard for 12 weeks and burn out,” our program teaches women how to get stronger physically with exceptional form, feel better mentally, build habits that fit real life and stop starting over. We also have an incredibly powerful community of women, and so many meaningful friendships have been created throughout the Journeys.

This program is about more than physical strength—what other areas of people's lives does it touch?

I really believe that social connection is one of the most important pieces of our Journeys. It's a pillar of health. One of the longest studies on happiness and longevity from Harvard found that strong, healthy social connections were the number one predictor of long-term happiness, better physical health and living longer.

Our goal is for women to feel supported, seen and encouraged, and to be part of something bigger. Sometimes health journeys can feel like a “solo struggle,” but in our community, it feels like a shared lifestyle. There is a James Clear quote that I love because it aligns with HRM so beautifully: “Surround yourself with people who have the habits you want to have yourself. You'll rise together.”

How do you incorporate community into this program—and your life?

Our HRM community is in a private, supportive online space that feels safe, encouraging and connected. Women celebrate wins, talk through hard days, encourage each other when motivation dips and share life beyond workouts.



The best thing women can do to recharge and reset is to get clear on why their health truly matters to them. Not just “I want to lose weight” or “I want to fit into these jeans,” but deeper reasons like energy, confidence, family and quality of life.

Women in HRM live in different provinces across Canada and in different countries, and are at different stages of life, yet they build bonds so strong that many end up meeting in person and becoming lifelong friends.

How do you stay mentally and physically fit?

Well, I follow the HRM program, of course. It's so important to me that I lead by example and do the reps right alongside our community. My workouts are less than an hour each day (about 40 minutes). I do all the mindset exercises that we teach, make my best effort to get outside every day, and incorporate daily meditation and journaling.

“Standing Tall”



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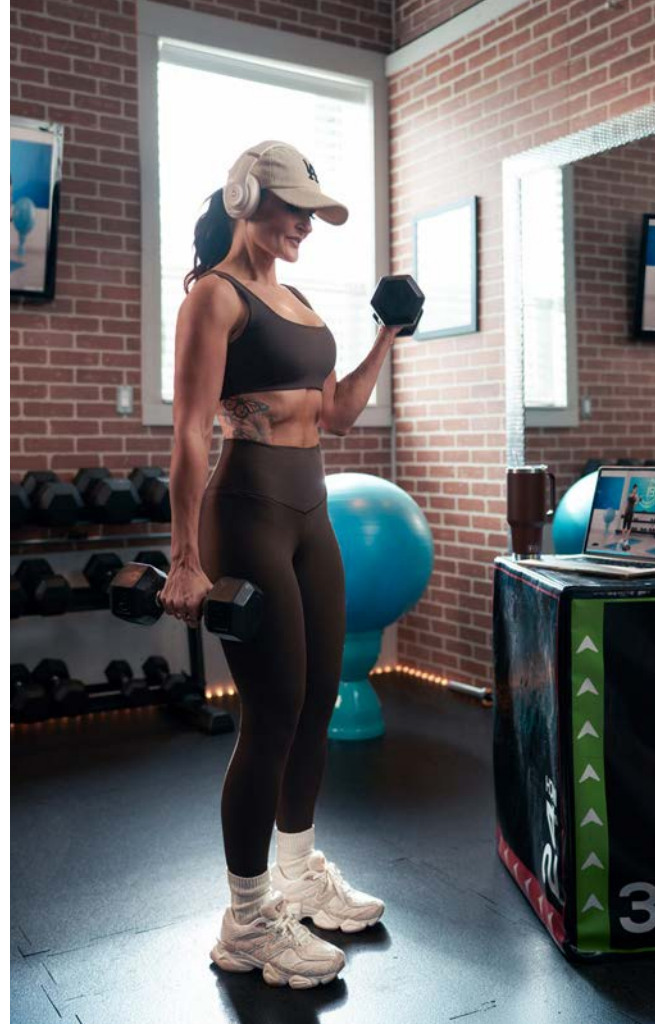
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Describe a day in your life.

Currently, I am going back to school so that I can work with individuals who are on an eating disorder recovery journey, so my days look a little different right now. Also, my youngest graduated from high school last June and my eldest has already moved out, so I'm almost an empty nester.

A typical day right now includes studying and schoolwork, filming for our upcoming Spring HRM Journey, Zoom or in-person business meetings, working out (of course), dog walks or hikes, and quality time with my loved ones.

What are your other hobbies or interests?

Exploring our beautiful island through hiking, kayaking and paddleboarding.

The theme of this edition of LIV is "recharge and reset." In addition to joining your 12-week challenge (of course!), what is the best thing women can do to recharge and renew their lives?

The best thing women can do to recharge and reset is to get clear on why their health truly matters to them. Not just "I want to lose weight" or "I want to fit into these jeans," but deeper reasons like energy, confidence, family and quality of life. When you are attached to your why, it stops feeling like a chore and becomes part of who you are. That identity shift from "trying to be healthy" to "I am someone who prioritizes my health" is what creates lasting change. **LIV**

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Boxes of Bliss

Kinsu Chocolates turns artisan confections into edible art

BY SUSAN LUNDY / PHOTOS BY PAM DOBBS



The journey to the land of sublime starts with a black box. Open it to reveal a collection of bite-sized, rainbow-hued mounds. Lift one to your mouth and bite into it. The explosion of flavour—apple pie, blackberry port, key lime cheesecake (to name a few)—transports you to a place of heavenly decadence.

These are Kinsu Chocolates—handmade in Nanaimo—and they are out of this world.

The creative forces behind these little bits of heaven are

Breanna and Yuji Maika, and their story begins in 2019, when they first got together and started making chocolates for each other.

“Those first batches of chocolates we made were rough, inaccurately tempered and limited in flavour,” Breanna recalls. “But they were made with love.”

Over the years of their relationship, the chocolates improved. They added colours to make them more beautiful and developed techniques to incorporate more intense flavours.

“Kintsugi is a very slow, intentional and precise practice. When we repair our broken pottery, we use traditional kintsugi methods by brushing resin and applying gold. The process of small batch chocolate is similar and takes time, tempering, crystallizing and hand-painting.”

They exchanged chocolates for Valentine’s Day and White Day (a Japanese holiday when men return Valentine’s Day gifts three-fold). One year, their tradition yielded 100 hand-crafted pieces—far more than they could eat. They shared them with friends and coworkers, whose enthusiasm gave them the confidence to start a business.

Breanna and Yuji spent two years selling their delectable wares at farmers markets before eventually opening their storefront in Nanaimo. The first chocolate flavour Breanna created—Lavender London Fog—remains on the menu.

And how did they choose the name Kinsu?

Even before they made chocolates, the two explain, they practiced the art form of Kintsugi —repairing broken pottery with gold.

“Kintsugi is a very slow, intentional and precise practice,” Breanna says. “When we repair our broken pottery, we use traditional kintsugi methods by brushing resin and applying gold. The process of small batch chocolate is similar and takes time, tempering, crystallizing and hand-painting.”

The name, Kinsu, derives itself from this but with a twist. “Kin” in Japanese means gold, and “suru” means “to do.”

“As such, our name, Kinsu Chocolates, means that we are making golden chocolates!” Yuji says.

“Kintsugi is all about beauty in imperfections,” Breanna adds. “No two of our bonbons are the same. Natural variation in cacao origin becomes character as opposed to being a flaw. We use single origin chocolates, which means that the cacao beans may...have natural variation over time. We like to use gold splatters to mimic fracture lines.”

Before diving into the world of chocolate-making, Breanna worked as a veterinary technician, while also testing COVID samples in a lab with her BSc (in terrestrial and aquatic ecosystems). Her background in chemistry and microbiology proved invaluable as her chocolate journey began. She’s also a life-long baker, preparing gourmet cakes and pastries for friends and family since she was a child.

Yuji, who has a BA in studio art and English, as well as an education degree, complements Breanna’s scientific sensibilities with his creative eye. He also has a background in woodworking, and this talent shines throughout their shop, which he designed and built.

Inside the store, the shelves are lined with bonbons that reflect an eclectic range of flavours—from crème brûlée to cherry, raspberry and pistachio—each conjuring the distinct flavour of its namesake. All chocolates are hand-painted with organic cocoa butter and crafted over a three-day process.



Breanna and Yuji Maika.

Breanna's favourite is the peanut butter pretzel, while Yuji's is the apple pie or pistachio.

"It's hard to choose one when they are like your children!" Breanna laughs.

The two start the process by working with local producers to secure the best ingredients they can.

"Seasonality can play a big role," Yuji explains, "as access to some ingredients are not available all year round. However, flavours are mainly developed through our own experimentation. We may have an idea or stumble upon an ingredient we think is fun. We will try it out with all our different chocolates to find the best flavour pairing and begin incorporating the ingredient into a chocolate....the combinations are endless, and we are only limited by what we can dream up!"

Customers can choose from assorted boxes in a variety of sizes or create their own custom selection.

"The biggest thing that makes us different is that everything is fresh, and it's made here on site by the two people behind the counter."

The two say their role in the community is to "bring happiness to all those we interact with and who enjoy our product."

"Good chocolates bring everyone together and uplift people in the darkest of times," says Yuji.

Outside of chocolate-making, the couple enjoys making meals, playing board games with friends, tending to their growing orchid



and spending time with Fuyu, their Samoyed. They also paddle board and scuba dive.

And do they still love eating their bonbons?

"Yes, of course, we still really appreciate chocolates—we never crave them, but when the opportunity arises with a damaged chocolate, we enjoy eating them every time!"

It's all part of the journey to the land of sublime that, for the rest of us, starts with a little black box.



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Fair winds & *amazing* places

Savouring the flavours of a Nanoose Bay getaway

BY SUSAN LUNDY



With the earthy, fruity taste of a rich Chianti on our tongues, we're sitting on a cushiony outdoor couch, watching a fire-table flame dance in the dimming light. Cards and a crib board sit untouched between us, and a conversation about our stunning weekend here in Nanoose Bay remains unspoken; instead, we are silenced, captivated by the drama of the darkening sky and the activity of the Fairwinds Marina below us.

Our accommodation is a beautiful, thoughtfully curated suite with a full kitchen, spacious sitting area and natural light flowing through floor-to-ceiling windows, all set in the lower level of Fairwinds Residences. But it's here, outside on this deck, that we've found our happy place, watching dogwalkers,

anglers and boaters traverse the dock, while otters play in the water below them. The only sound is the soft metallic clang of halyards bouncing against masts in the marina. It's mesmerizing.

This is my third time staying at Fairwinds Residences, which offers everything you need right at your doorstep, but it's also the perfect jumping-off spot to explore Vancouver Island's Oceanside region. Located between Nanaimo and Parksville, Nanoose Bay is an unexpected haven of rural farmland, parks, forested trails and the expansive Fairwinds development, which includes upscale homes, a sprawling golf course, two restaurants and a wellness centre.

During my first trip here, one of my adult daughters and I



embraced all the activities available to Fairwinds residents and guests, playing in the pool and games room at the wellness centre, hiking the area's unexpectedly large trail network and renting e-bikes to explore further afield. We're not golfers, but the lush green course beckoned. A few months later, I stayed with my other daughter. She had just announced her first pregnancy, so our time was punctuated by arm-in-arm walks along the oceanside pathway in Parksville, and shopping for maternity clothes and babywear in the town's charming commercial centre.

This trip, with my husband, is different again. We're delving into the culinary side of a Fairwinds stay, as well as exploring the Ten Amazing Places Project—a program that identifies

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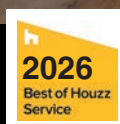
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10 ecologically and culturally significant spots in the Mount Arrowsmith Biosphere Region. (See related story.) Nanoose Bay sits at the northern end of this region, and all the “amazing places” are within a 30-minute drive.

During the past three days, we’ve witnessed rushing waterfalls at the Little Qualicum and Englishman rivers, walked a suspension bridge, basked in the beauty of historic Milner Gardens and strolled among tall trees at Heritage Forest and Cathedral Grove. Visiting these places has been a testament to the many, many things there are to do in this area.

And then there is the food. Located at street level in the Fairwinds Residences building is Nanoose Bay Café, where a waterfront restaurant and bar serves top-notch, Asian-influenced food prepared by Chef Todd Bright. There’s also a market and café, where you can grab coffee, bakery goods and even frozen meals for takeout.

Our dinner at Nanoose Bay Café includes a delicious tangy marinated bean curd salad with pickled shimeji mushrooms; my divine Surf and Surf entrée (seared albacore tuna, tiger prawns, broccoli and warm potato salad) and Bruce’s seafood-stuffed gnocchi dish. As we savour the flavours, we meet owner Eli Brennan—a true BC food-industry mover and shaker. The Nanoose Bay Café plus Fairwinds’ newly opened Greenview Tapahouse are the latest additions to Brennan’s restaurant collection, which includes Vancouver’s Water St. Café and 2nd Floor Gastown, the Qualicum Beach Café and Deez Bar & Grill.

Brennan’s Moments Hospitality Collective runs the Fairwinds accommodation and restaurants for Seacliff Properties, a Vancouver-based development and management company that owns several large-scale projects, including Fairwinds.



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Located between Nanaimo and Parksville, Nanoose Bay is an unexpected haven of rural farmland, parks, forested trails and the expansive Fairwinds development, which includes upscale homes, a sprawling golf course, two restaurants and a wellness centre.

Our final meal unfolds on the multi-level patio of Greenview Taphouse, where we sit facing the lush golf course, and watch a deer family graze on the greens. The fare here is more casual but equally delicious, specializing in Italian-style pizza, which Bruce devours, while I feast on a succulent salmon burger.

And so it is that we spend our last evening here on our peaceful, marina-facing patio, satiated and invigorated—but ultimately relaxed. We take another sip of our Chianti and toast the end of a spectacular trip. **LIV**



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Heritage Forest.

Photo by Susan Lundy

Where People & Nature Meet

The MABR's 10 Amazing Places and Brant Festival

At its core, the Mount Arrowsmith Biosphere Region (MABR) is about relationships—between people and place, conservation and community, learning and lived experience. Designated as a UNESCO biosphere reserve, the 1,200-square-kilometre region on central Vancouver Island serves as a working model for sustainable development, balancing environmental protection with social and economic well-being.

Rather than setting nature apart, the MABR connects people to nature through education, research partnerships and community-driven initiatives that support stewardship and local economies. Research partnerships through the MABR Research Institute, public speaker series, festivals and on-the-ground projects all contribute to a shared goal: creating a blueprint for a future where people and nature thrive together.

Two visible expressions of that philosophy are the Amazing Places Project and community celebrations such as the Brant Wildlife Festival.

The Amazing Places Project is a national initiative that uses outdoor discovery to link Canada's UNESCO biosphere reserves. On Vancouver Island, the local project—developed in collaboration with Parksville Qualicum Beach Tourism—encourages people to explore nearby landscapes through interpretive signage, online tools and invitations to play, wander and observe.

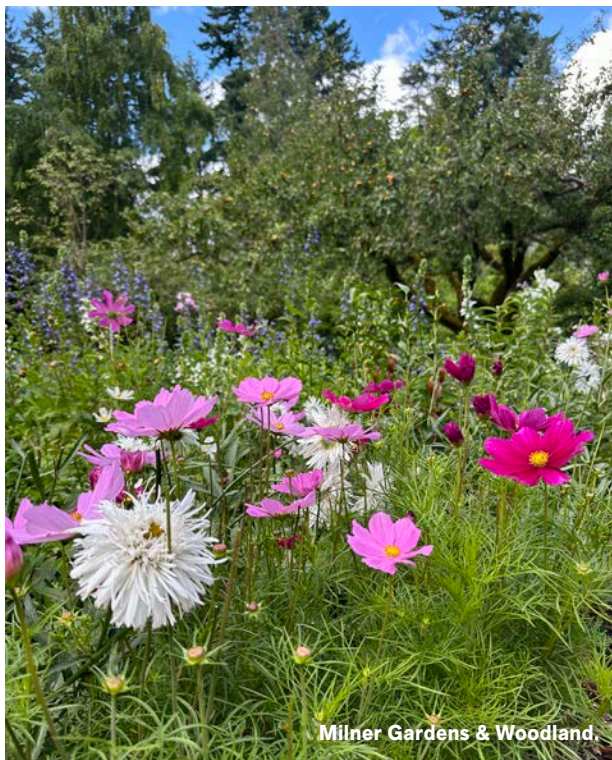
These Ten Amazing Places range from old-growth forests and rivers to shoreline parks and rare ecosystems:

Top Bridge marks the confluence of parks and conservation land along Englishman River, where trails cross a suspension bridge and wind through canyon terrain. **Heritage Forest**, near Qualicum Beach, preserves old-growth trees and a salmon-bearing stream within an urban setting, balancing easy access with ecological sensitivity.



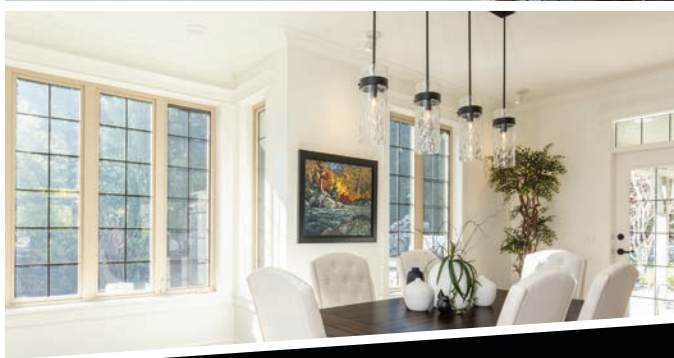
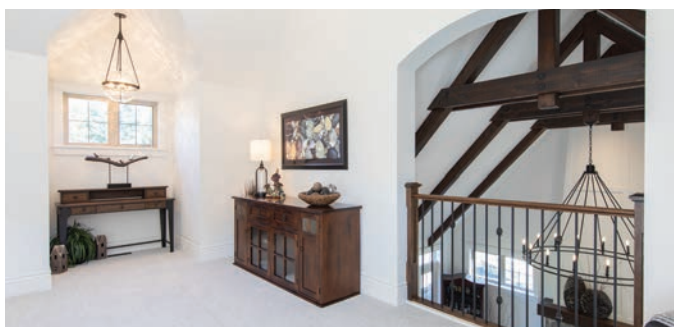
MacMillan Provincial Park—often called Cathedral Grove—draws visitors beneath towering Douglas firs more than 800 years old, while **Parksville Community Park** links shoreline paths with quiet observation of the intertidal zone along the Salish Sea. **Little Qualicum Falls Provincial Park** protects cascading waterfalls and forested river corridors, offering viewpoints and day-use access.

Milner Gardens & Woodland blends cultivated gardens with ancient forest, while **Englishman River Falls Provincial Park** features waterfalls, swimming holes and salmon runs framed by mixed forest. **Cameron Lake** provides cold, deep waters for swimming and paddling, along with habitat for otters and other wildlife.



STAY HERE | PLAY HERE | LIVE HERE



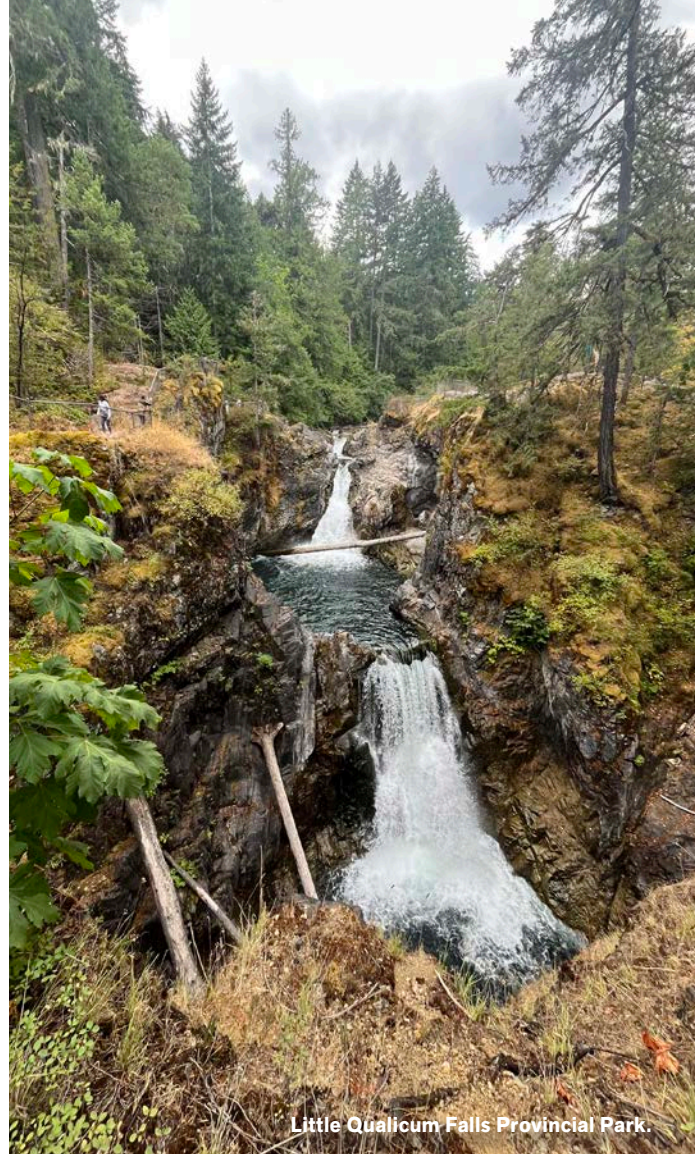


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Notch Hill rises above Nanoose Bay within a rare Garry oak ecosystem, offering sweeping views from the top. **Rathrevor Beach Provincial Park**, stretching nearly a kilometre at low tide and serves as a vital stopover for migrating birds.

That same spirit of connection comes to life each spring at the Brant Wildlife Festival, which celebrates its 35th anniversary in 2026.

The weekend-long, multi-location event welcomes more than 3,000 guests and is supported by over 150 volunteers hosting 30-plus activities across the region. Visitors gather to learn about conservation, explore local landscapes and witness the return of Pacific Black Brant geese to the Parksville Qualicum Beach Wildlife Management Area.

The festival remains the only event of its kind on Vancouver Island—an annual reminder that stewardship, education and community engagement are most powerful when experienced together, outdoors, where people and nature meet. **LIV**

The Ladies FOURSOME

by Norm Foster

Get ready to laugh and cry on the green with Norm Foster's uproarious comedy! Four friends tee off in a full round of golf the day after a friend's funeral - revealing long-kept secrets, hilarious confessions, and pining for love near and far



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