

# Dragon Boating at VCKC

*(The objective of this document is to provide the background for VCKC's current situation vis a vis dragon boating. With this background, it is hoped that the VCKC Dragon Boat Program can continue to prosper and make a positive contribution to our community.)*

## INCEPTION

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Dragon boat racing was first introduced to Victoria as a demonstration sport during the 1994 Commonwealth Games. The Games arranged for the Vancouver dragon boat festival organizers to bring 6 Vancouver dragon boat teams (3 boats) to Victoria and held 250m races in Victoria's Inner Harbour. This became the first time that VCKC members had a chance to view dragon boating locally.

## CHRONOLOGY

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**1995** Victoria arranged for the Vancouver dragonboat festival organizers to organize DB races in the Inner Harbour. VCKC paddlers from the various paddling programs were eager to take part in these races. Under the leadership of Sheila Allen and Dave Hill, **Team Victoria Gorging Dragons** was formed at the VCKC, thus becoming the first DB team to be established in Victoria, and competed at the 1995 festival in Victoria. Sheila was the first VCKC DB coach and Dave Hill the first stern. Club members participating in a DB race in Vancouver in early July.

**1996** Vancouver festival personnel again organized the 1996 Victoria DB Festival.

Dave Hill, convinced of the bright future of dragon boating in Victoria and with VCKC being the only place available to dragon boat in Victoria, obtained VCKC executive approval for the purchase of dragon boat paddles (Barkley) for VCKC at a cost of \$912. Changes to the Club's policies were needed to address fund-raising by different sections of the Club.

Teams practiced in voyageur canoes, and later rented a dragon boat from the Lotus Club in Vancouver after the Vancouver festival in June. Dragon boating was new to the VCKC, and not represented on the executive at the time. Ed Lowe eventually filled that role.

1996 VCKC Teams included:

- Team Victoria Gorging Dragons, coached by Sheila Allen
- Island Breaststrokes, coached by Dave Hill
- HSBC Mystical Dragons, coached by Jack Louie
- A novice team was also coached by Dave Hill for three practices before participating in the Victoria races.

**1997** The Victoria Dragon Boat Society was formed to organize the 1997 Victoria DB Festival. Board members of the Society were mostly VCKC members with dragon boating expertise, and representatives of the Gorge Rowing Club (GRC) with racing expertise. Executive decided that VCKC would not be the focal point for all dragonboat training for the Dragonboat Festival due to resource limitations.

The VCKC AGM did not elect a dragon-boat program director, but Ed Lowe was identified as the dragonboat representative. The first formal meeting of the dragon boat program was scheduled for Thursday, Feb 13<sup>th</sup>.

1997 VCKC DB Teams included:

- Team Victoria Gorging Dragons, coached by Chuck Wood.
- Team HSBC, coached by Shawn.
- Island Breaststrokes, coached by Dave Hill
- Thunder Dragons, coached by Jack Louie
- Dragon Net, coached by Dave Hill

Dragon boating in Victoria at this time was only available at the VCKC. However, the high number of paddlers taking part in practices was having a serious impact on the VCKC and the surrounding neighbourhood. Neighbours complained of parked cars jamming their streets. VCKC executives expressed the following concerns about dragon boating activities at the VCKC, including the following:

1. DB paddlers were over-running the club facilities by sheer numbers, thus obstructing/intimidating/overwhelming other club program activities that may want to use the facilities at the same time.
2. The parking lot was being jammed by dragon boaters during practice, leaving little to no parking for other club members.
3. Neighbours complaining to the VCKC about the excess number of vehicles parked on their streets every night.
4. Noise and disruption to the local wildlife caused by the large number of people in a large boat such as a dragon boat.
5. Lack of VCKC identity to current teams.
6. Little contribution of dragon boaters to VCKC community activities.

After the Victoria DB festival, the Gorge Rowing Club (GRC) committed to the purchase of four dragon boats and the introduction of a DB program at GRC.

**1998** Jack Louie agreed to be the DB representative on the VCKC executive. The GRC placed orders for the purchase of 4 new dragon boats from Six-Sixteen Limited of Vancouver. GRC invited all DB teams training at the VCKC to relocate to the

GRC, as they would have dragon boats to train in, while the VCKC did not. Teams relocated to the GRC included the following:

- Team Victoria Gorging Dragons
- Team HSBC
- Island Breaststrokes

Most VCKC executive were not in favour of continuing a dragon boat program at the VCKC. Jack Louie persisted, and the VCKC executive agreed to a dragon boat program provided the following provisions were met:

1. All team names must have VCKC preceding the team name, particularly when registered in a festival
2. Team T-shirts/uniforms must have the VCKC logo or VCKC stated.
3. All paddlers must adhere to VCKC regulations such as proper use of PFDs, and must follow VCKC guidelines in the use of boats
4. There is to be no drumming on the VCKC clubhouse side of the Tillicum Bridge.
5. There is to be no disturbance to the local wildlife. If flocks of waterfowl are resting on the water, boats are to go around flocks rather than through the flocks.
6. Dragon boaters are not to park on Gorge Road due to complaints from adjacent homeowners. Also, the VCKC parking lot was initially off limits to dragon boaters, but that provision was later rescinded as it was deemed unfair to a particular group of VCKC members who should have as much right as any other member to use the parking lot.

Jack pledged to make the DB program more community-aware, be more active in VCKC activities, be considerate of other VCKC activities, and give back to the community.

By 1998, the Victoria DB Festival had become better known and attended. The Lotus Club decided to compete at the Victoria festival, hence their dragon boat was no longer available for rent. VCKC teams trained only in voyageur canoes that year. Some team sterns did not have an opportunity to practice sterning a dragon boat before the Victoria festival, hence veered off course during races.

The 1998 VCKC DB teams included:

- Thunder Dragons, coached by J Louie
- Lightning Dragons, coached by J Louie
- Dragon Bolt, coached by J Louie

**1999** Program Director: Jack Louie.

During the winter of 1998-99, Jack negotiated the purchase of a second-hand

dragon boat from the Vancouver DBF organizers for the VCKC, purchase price \$10,000 tax included. As approved by VCKC Executive, the VCKC DB program was required to fundraise 50%. A surcharge for program participants was not permitted under the VCKC constitution; hence, fundraising was done through boat rentals to the Victoria DBF, and the sale of dragon boat scales decorating the dragon boat. The required \$5,000 was raised in less than 2 years.

The Club's first dragonboat arrive on March 6<sup>th</sup>.

1999 VCKC DB teams included:

- Thunder Dragons, coached by Cam and Mavis Shankland
- Lightning, coached by Jack Louie
- Dragon Bolt, coached by Jack Louie
- Quest, coached by Al Niezen
- Victorious Secret (formed as a traveling team after the Victoria DBF), coached by Jack Louie.

VCKC teams competed in Kelowna at its first DB festival and in Vancouver.

**2000** Program Director: Cindy Wright

Several Gray Owl DB paddles were purchased.

2000 VCKC DB teams included:

- Thunder Dragons, coached by Cam and Mavis Shankland
- Quest, coached by Al Niezen
- Victorious Secret, coached by Jack Louie
- Spine Benders, coached by Jack Louie/Cindy Wright/Stephen Lee

VCKC teams competed for the first time in Portland, and in Vancouver and Kelowna.

**2001** Program Director: Cindy Wright

2001 VCKC DB teams included:

- Victorious Secret, coached by Jack Louie
- Thunder Dragons, coached by Cam and Mavis Shankland?
- Storm, coached by Cindy Wright
- Spine Benders, coached by Cindy Wright and Stephen Lee

VCKC teams competed in Vancouver, Portland, and San Francisco.

**2002** Program Director: Harold Nishikawara

The DB program basically ran itself. 2002 VCKC DB Teams included:

- Victorious Secret Silk, coached by Steve Romaine
- Victorious Secret Lace, coached by Stephen Lee
- Storm, coached by Cindy Wright
- Ageless Warriors, led by Harold Nishikawara

VCKC teams competed in Portland, Vancouver, and Kelowna.

**2003** Program Director: George McPhee

The DB program basically ran itself. 2003 VCKC DB teams included:

- Victorious Secret Silk, coached by Steve Romaine
- Victorious Secret Lace, coached by Stephen Lee
- Storm, coached by Cindy Wright
- Ageless Warriors, led by Harold Nishikawara

VCKC teams competed in Portland, Vancouver, Richmond, and Kelowna.

VCKC was represented at the Dragon North dragon boat training conference, Vancouver.

**2004** Program Director: Steve Romaine

2004 VCKC DB teams included:

- Victorious Secret Tsunami, coached by Steve Romaine
- Victorious Secret Caliente, coached by Stephen Lee
- Storm, coached by ....
- Heat Wave, coached by Lynda Zorn

VCKC teams competed in Portland, Vancouver, and Richmond.

Club sponsored members to take Dragon Boat Canada Level 1 Technical Training Course in order to qualify for coaching dragon boat teams.

**2005** Program Directors: Steve Romaine and James Bean

Romaine started the season, and implemented a medical disclosure form that participants were required to complete. Although recommended by the National Coaching Certification Program, this was highly unpopular by some individuals who did not wish to divulge any of their personal information. Steve left the VCKC DB program after some teams collapsed. James Bean replaced Steve in mid season.

2005 VCKC DB teams included:

- Vasuki Dragon, coached by Stephen Lee
- Resurrected Ageless Warriors, coached by Jack Louie
- Gung Ho, coached by Fraser Tweedy
- Komodo Dragons, coached by Judi Murakami

VCKC teams competed in Portland and Nanaimo.

Club sponsored members to take National Coaching Certification Program, Part A, for coaching dragon boat teams.

**2006** Program Director: James Bean

2006 VCKC DB teams included:

- Vasuki Dragons, coached by Stephen Lee
- Ageless Warriors, coached by Jack Louie
- Gung Ho, coached by Fraser Tweedy
- St'Keya, coached by ....
- Komodo Dragons, coached by Judi Murakami
- LocoMotion, coached by Stephen Lee

VCKC teams competed in Portland (Sellwood).

**2007** Program Directors: James Bean; Mike Fox

James Bean started the season, but left under a cloud. Mike Fox replaced James Bean midseason.

2007 VCKC DB teams included:

- Resurrected Victorious Secret, coached by Stephen Lee
- Ageless Warriors, coached by Jack Louie
- Gung Ho, coached by Fraser Tweedy
- St'Keya, coached by ...
- First Class, coached by Mike Fox
- Komodo Dragons, coached by Judi Murakami

**2008** Program Director: Mike Fox

A new dragon boat was purchased. Cost \$? fundraising requirements?

2008 VCKC DB teams included:

- Victorious Secret, coached by Stephen Lee
- Ageless Warriors, coached by Jack Louie
- Gung Ho, coached by Al Mouner
- St'Keya, coached by Sandr Nelson
- First Class, coached by Mike Fox
- Komodo Dragons, coached by Stephen Lee
- LocoMotion, coached by Stephen Lee

VCKC teams competed in Portland and Nanaimo.

**2009** Program Director: Mike Fox

2009 VCKC DB teams included:

- Victorious Secret, coached by Stephen Lee
- Ageless Warriors, coached by Barbara Abercrombie
- Gung Ho, coached by Al Mouner
- St'Keya, coached by Sandra Nelson
- First Class, coached by Mike Fox
- Komodo Dragons, coached by Stephen Lee

**2010** Program Director: Jack Louie

A Dragon Boat Committee was implemented to run the VCKC DB program. A tiered system of teams was introduced to reduce competition between teams for paddlers, and to provide a path for paddler development.

The ***Guts & Glory*** Races with Brian Clark as Race Director were introduced as a fundraiser. Four teams competed and there were demonstration races in 9m – (10 paddler) boats.

2010 VCKC DB teams included the following:

- Victorious Secret, led by Brian Massini
- First Class, coached by Mike Fox
- Grand Dragons, coached by Brian Clark
- Jack Pack, coached by Jack Louie
- Namakas, coached by Brittany Kohn
- Komodo Dragons

**2011** Program Director: Brian Clark

DB Program Policies were defined and approved by Executive. The Guts & Glory Event through the efforts of Brittany Kohn and team was highly successful and contributed significantly to VCKC's funding. A DB team competed in Vancouver, but two registered teams failed to form, and resulted in defaults of festival fees. The central control of team membership and funds failed, and developing stronger leadership within teams (to complement the coach) was indicated. The Novice team management disregarded club policy (requiring VCKC Treasurer & President intervention) but ended up with a strong team based on fun and camaraderie.

2011 VCKC DB teams included:

- Grand Dragons, coached by Brian Clark
- Lightning, coached by Jack Louie
- Namakas and Storm started but failed to form

- Blue Herons, coached by Brian Clark and Brittany Kohn
- Genesis, coached by Mile Petrovic and led by Jen Smith
- Komodo Dragons

VCKC teams competed in the Senior Games (Nelson), Vancouver, Nanaimo and Portland.

The ***Guts 'n Glory*** Event with Brittany Kohn as Event Director was expanded with a main focus on 200m races in the 9m boats. It had live entertainment, a local pub prepared food and nearly 200 competitors participated. It was a successful fundraiser, but had some growing pains.

**2012** Program Director: Mary Kirchner.

## **IMPORTANT DB AFFILIATIONS**

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### **STUMPTOWN PADDLERS**

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Portland's Stumptown Paddlers has consistently maintained a reciprocal billeting/hosting relationship with VCKC over some tough years both sides of the border.

The VCKC Thunder Dragons first hosted a Portland team, Paddle Sport USA, in 1997. This was not planned. The VCKC Thunder were initially scheduled to host a Portland team called the Dragon Slayers at the 1997 Victoria DBF led by "Bad Alvin". However, to the disappointment of the VCKC Thunder, only 6 members of the Dragon Slayers showed up for the festival. The VCKC team had been eager to host an entire team for a salmon BBQ at Jack's. The salmon had already been purchased and ready for the BBQ.

At the 1997 Victoria DBF site, team tent location and setup was a free-for-all, and the VCKC Thunder secured a desirable location on site. A late arriving team from Portland asked to squeeze in beside us. That team was Paddle Sport USA, led by Maureen and Gary Brown, and was without a local host team. The rest is history. The VCKC Thunder hosted all the members of the Dragon Slayers as well as the Paddle Sport USA team that year. In 1998, the Paddle Sport USA team took a new name, the Stumptown Paddlers. A VCKC team has hosted this team every year since 1997 at the Victoria DBF.

The Stumptown Paddlers have hosted and billeted a VCKC team in Portland every year since 2000. For the last few years, Stumptown has hosted and billeted a VCKC team twice a year, in June during the Rose festival, and in September during the Portland Dragon Boat Festival.

### **CANADA DAY**

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The July 1<sup>st</sup> rides for the public started in 1999 as part of the Saanich Gorge Day festival. The rides in our dragon boats have always been hugely popular, and certainly a very important event for the VCKC. Money raised through donations for the rides in voyageur canoes, outriggers and dragonboats goes to the BC Society for Crippled Children. This is where we put the old Barkley paddles purchased in 1996 to good use.



## **RIDES FOR KIDS WITH DIABETES**

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The annual boat ride for kids with diabetes was an event with voyageur canoes before the DB program existed. This event began in 1994. During its early years at the VCKC, about 20-30 members participated before our club purchased a dragon boat. When the VCKC got the dragon boat, the number of participants shot up to over 90 participants. This event, sadly, was halted due to liability insurance issues.

## **KOMODO DRAGONS**

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The Komodo Dragons are a team that was started as part of an outreach program by the Capital Mental Health team. They originally paddled out of the GO Rowing Centre but came over to VCKC as an associate member in 2005. They purchased PFDs for the club in ... They have been coached by Judi Murakami and Stephen Lee and are now self-coached by long-time members of the team including Lori Peters, Stu Gremke, and Robin ?.