

OAK BAY NEIGHBOURS

THE OAK BAY FIGURE SKATING CLUB



OAK BAY



FEBRUARY 2026

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Cover Photo by Trevor Ball



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Content Submission Deadlines

Content Due:	Edition Date:
November 25	January
December 25	February
January 25	March
February 25	April
March 25	May
April 25	June
May 25	July
June 25	August
July 25	September
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September 25	November
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Dear Residents,

Tell me it's February without telling me it's February. Here are three things that come to my mind: Valentine's Day, Family Day and the Lunar New Year.

The importance of Valentine's Day might be a point of contention for many. What that day represents will likely depend on your relationship status. So, I'll ignore it, except to remind you that many of our local businesses thrive on that one day in February. Romance aside, I encourage you to look at our Calendar page this month if you're seeking out fun Family Day weekend events to bring some much-needed together time amid our busy schedules.

After Oak Bay, I love Chinatown the most! And of course, this is THE place to celebrate Chinese New Year and the Year of the Horse. Those born under this zodiac are said to bear such traits as energy, independence, intelligence, warm-heartedness and a sense of adventure. For the Chinese, lunar new year celebrations traditionally last 15 days, and this year's parade in Chinatown falls on the 6th day. Take in the joyous sights and sounds, enjoy a dim sum meal and explore Fan Tan Alley, Victoria's narrowest street in Canada's oldest Chinatown.

Our cover feature this month is the Oak Bay Figure Skating Club which brought home many medals and high accolades recently. It is an inclusive and diverse community of skaters who meet at the Oak Bay Rec Centre rink, from children learning to skate to high-performing athletes and even adults rediscovering the joy of skating. Many thanks to Kirsten Conforti and her team for the opportunity to interview and photograph the Oak Bay skaters!

Writing the feature articles has been a wonderful way for me to meet and connect with members of the community, and from there, collaborate on projects! It was a real pleasure getting to know the members of the Oak Bay Heritage Foundation in our January issue. However, I felt that I barely scratched the surface of all the amazing educational work they do. So, I invited the Foundation to contribute to the Community page of *Oak Bay Neighbours*, that we may all benefit from their vast knowledge and in-depth research into topics close to home. I hope you enjoy their first article contribution about food – I know I did!

Happy Family Day, and for those who are far away from their families, I hope your community here in Oak Bay makes up for it by proxy!

We acknowledge with respect the Lekwungen-speaking peoples, on whose traditional territories we live and work, and the Songhees and Esquimalt nations, whose historical relationships with the land continue to this day.

Sincerely,

Audrey Wang



Audrey Wang

CONTENT COORDINATOR



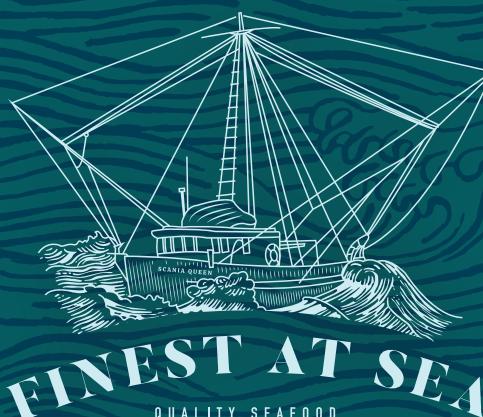
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Trevor Ball

CONTRIBUTING PHOTOGRAPHER



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Search Criteria

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Area is 'Oak Bay'

Sub Area is one of 'OB Estevan', 'OB Gonzales', 'OB Henderson', 'OB North Oak Bay', 'OB South Oak Bay', 'OB Uplands'

Results calculated from approximately 2,400 listings

Information given is from sources believed reliable but should not be relied upon without verification. Where shown, all measurements are approximate and subject to confirmation. Buyers must satisfy themselves as to the applicability of GST. All data is copyright either the Vancouver Island Real Estate Board or the Victoria Real Estate Board.

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Oak Bay Sold Price Ratio Compared to Months of Inventory



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By Robert Taylor, President, Oak Bay Heritage Foundation | Photos provided by the Oak Bay Heritage Foundation

Stir The Pot

The view of the Heritage Foundation is that Oak Bay stirs the pot and provides a living example of the social success of corner stores and restaurants.

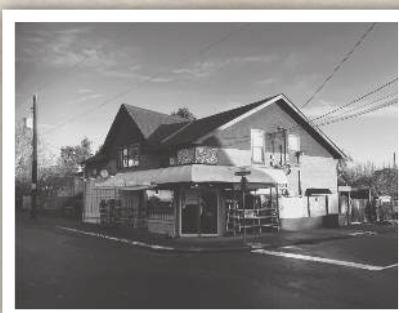


For thousands of years, the diet of Lekwungen-speaking people, living in the village of Sitchanalth, which is now known as Willows Beach, was balanced through the wide variety of local, seasonal, food sources. We think of salmon and camas immediately, but also whale and seal, and berries and other plants. In addition, the intertidal seafood included clams, other crustaceans, and eggs; and deer and elk were hunted.

In the settler community, Oak Bay's neighbourhood family restaurants and grocery stores have provided social cohesion, where neighbours, in the words of Noel Coward, "meet

coming out of shops". The restaurants and stores, with their familiar faces, provide a sense of belonging, and become heritage-valued nuclei, creating micro neighbourhoods. The restaurants are more than food providers; they become community meeting places.

The Oak Bay Grocery and Post Office opened in 1912, in the building that is now home to the **Oaks Restaurant**.



Willows Park Grocery opened circa 1912, located at the corner of Eastdowne Road and Dalhousie Street, continues serving the neighbourhood.

The Shoal Bay Tea Room served teas and ices to McNeill Bay campers, 1913 to the 1930s. The building permit describes a two-storey tea kiosk; over the next decade a dwelling was constructed attached to the kiosk. The marvellous part of this local history is that the tower-like kiosk is extant, hiding in plain sight on Beach Drive.



Casey's Market, at the corner of St. Patrick Street and Central Avenue, operated for approximately 80 years, closed recently. It was demolished, but Liv Café and Bistro continues the tradition.



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"Food brings us together, it links us to the land and to traditions, ties us to our families and ancestors, and connects cultures and communities"

~ Heritage BC's February Heritage Theme is 'Stir the Pot'

The Windsor Café is located in the 1932 mixed commercial and residential complex, overlooking Windsor Park, at the former street-car terminus.



The Ottavio Italian Bakery & Delicatessen, Oak Bay Avenue, is located in a former duplex, built in 1934.



The Demitasse Café & Garden Centre 1935 building permit listed a store and dwelling.



The Penny Farthing Pub and Restaurant occupies the former **Oak Bay Pharmacy**, built 1936.



The Kiwanis Club of Oak Bay established a small beach-food hut on Willows Beach in 1947. It was replaced by the current **Tea Room** building, which opened in May 1949.



The Golden Galleon Coffee Shop, 2239 Oak Bay Avenue, in the 1950s, offered a coffee bar, fish and chips, and a jukebox.

de'lish, on St Patrick Street, originally a house, nestles gently in the neighbourhood.



Oak Bay's heritage-valued restaurants and grocery stores provide a taste of local history and continue to gently *stir the pot* and support community cohesion through neighbours meeting neighbours *coming out of shops*. 

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THE OAK BAY FIGURE SKATING CLUB

For nearly five decades, the Oak Bay Figure Skating Club has been quietly weaving itself into the fabric of the community, carving graceful arcs on the ice at the Oak Bay Rec Centre and shaping generations of skaters along the way.

L-R: Chanelle Whitmell, Mikayla Kramer, Kirsten Conforti and Leonardo Maekawa



Founded 47 years ago, the non-profit Oak Bay Figure Skating Club (OBFSC) reflects the character of the community it calls home. It is welcoming, close-knit, and deeply supportive. Head coach Kirsten Conforti, now in her 13th season with the club, describes it as a space that offers high-quality programs for all ages and levels. In practice, that means everyone, from young first-time skaters to adults rediscovering the joy of the sport, and to competition athletes chasing podium finishes. Boys and girls skate side by side at every level, sharing ice time, and encouragement from passionate coaches. Alongside Kirsten on the coaching team are Leonardo Maekawa, the club's Development Coordinator, CanSkate Coordinator Chanelle Whitmell, and club coach Mikayla Kramer.

The club's relationship with the wider community is something Kirsten is eager to keep growing. Last June,

By Audrey Wang | Photos by Trevor Ball



OBFSC made a happy return to the Oak Bay Tea Party parade, participating for the first time in around a decade. For many residents, it served as a reminder that behind the rink doors is a vibrant, energetic group of local athletes and volunteers. Kirsten hopes to see more of those connections flourish, inviting the community to cheer from the stands, volunteer at events, or simply stop by to see local talent in action.



At the heart of the club's development pathway is Skate Canada's CanSkate program, often the first step in a lifelong relationship with skating. Designed with a fun, circuit-based format, CanSkate builds confidence and foundational skills in a supportive environment. Volunteering is the backbone of the CanSkate program throughout the country and at Oak Bay, this is no different. Older skaters – many of whom learned their first stops and turns in the same rink – return to help guide and mentor beginners. As a result, new skaters feel supported not just by coaches, but by their peers.

Training looks different depending on where skaters are on their journey. Beginners

(Continued on Page 10.)



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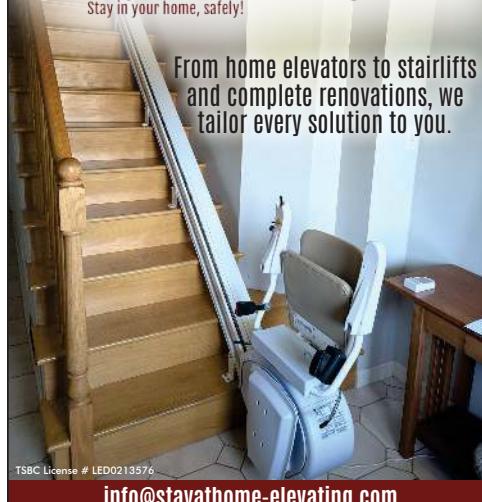
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mayskate twice a week, while competitive athletes can be on the ice six to ten times weekly. With ice available six days a week and programs spanning all ages, the club truly embraces Skate Canada's "skating for life" model. In recent years, this has meant expanded adult programming and a growing synchronized skating program, allowing skaters to find joy and challenge in whatever form suits them best.

Kirsten's own path in skating mirrors this lifelong approach. Originally from Northern British Columbia, she spent her teenage summers training in Victoria and



eventually made the city her home. Her connection to the Oak Bay Rec Centre began through learn-to-skate programs in her early twenties, and from there, her role within the skating community continued to grow.

In the photos here, 13-year-old Lucy Howland is pictured wearing a pink and red dress made by her aunt. As the Vancouver Island Region Juvenile U14 Champion, Lucy will represent the region at the BC Winter Games this month. Lucy trains six days a week, spending 2-3 hours each day in both on-ice and off-ice training. She also participates in a group plyometrics class to build speed, strength, and jumping ability for the ice. While the training is rigorous, Lucy tells us, "What I love about Oak Bay is that it feels like a close family. I love coming to skating everyday to see my friends."

Family plays a meaningful role in the Club. Kirsten's three children grew up at the rink, with the younger two volunteering with CanSkate and later pursuing coaching courses through Skate Canada. Luca, 17, is a CanSkate coach who helps at the Oak Bay rink whenever he can, while his older brother, Nico Conforti, 19, has the 2026 Provincial Junior Men's Champion title and is based on the Mainland coaching and pursuing his goals as a competitive figure skater in singles and pair competitions.

Kirsten is immensely proud of her sons and the skaters in the Club, saying "I want to pass on my love for this sport. It has taught me valuable life lessons and shaped me to be the person I am today. I hope all my students come away with great memories of their skating journey."

The coaching team at Oak Bay FSC are equally committed to development and care, fostering an environment where skill-building and character-building go hand in hand. Sportsmanship, camaraderie, and mutual respect are valued as highly as jumps and spins.

Those values were on full display at the Vancouver Island Interclub competition in November 2025, where Oak Bay FSC skaters brought home an impressive 19 medals and reclaimed the overall team trophy for the first time since 2018. During that competition, Kirsten learned that the medals were not the only rewarding takeaway. Strangers approached her throughout the weekend to compliment the club's sportsmanship, appreciating how Oak Bay skaters cheered for competitors from other clubs and lifted one another up. It was a moment that perfectly captured the club's spirit, bringing great pride to Kirsten and her team.

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Success has continued, with the Adult Synchronized Skating team earning gold at the 2025 Skate Canada BC/YT Adult and Synchro competition. This is their biggest win to date. These achievements speak to a club moving confidently forward, expanding opportunities while staying grounded in its values.

After so many seasons, Kirsten finds it impossible to choose a single favourite memory. Instead, she treasures the relationships she has created over the years. She is touched when past students return to visit, sharing memories and stories of their time on the ice.

Looking ahead, Kirsten's goals are simple: to continue growing the club, to bring the joy of skating to more people, and to see skaters of all ages thrive. Annual traditions like the December ice show, a spring club competition, and hopes for a skate-a-thon keep the calendar full and the community engaged.

If you would like to find out more about skating with the Oak Bay Figure Skating Club, visit their website www.oakbayfsc.ca.



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Move Over Groundhogs MEET VIOLET!

Vou've probably heard of Punxsutawney Phil or Wiarton Willie, the famous groundhogs who pop out every February 2 to forecast the weather. But here on Vancouver Island, we don't have groundhogs. So, who do we turn to? Meet Vancouver Island Violet, or just Violet to her friends.

Violet isn't a groundhog at all, she's a Vancouver Island marmot (*Marmota vancouverensis*), and our island's very own weather forecaster. There are 14 marmot species worldwide, and while all groundhogs are technically marmots, not all marmots are groundhogs.

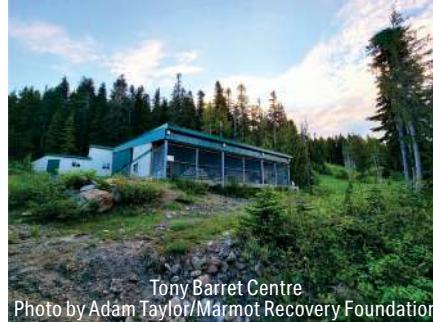
Vancouver Island marmots are critically endangered. In 2003, fewer than 30 remained in the wild, a devastating low. Thanks to

Shimmer (yearling)
Photo by Adam Taylor/Marmot Recovery Foundation

the Marmot Recovery Program's tireless work over the past two decades, that number has climbed to over 420 in 2025. It's remarkable progress, but there's still a long journey ahead to reach a sustainable population.

At the Tony Barrett Mount Washington Marmot Recovery Centre, 89 marmots currently call it home, with 40 scheduled for release next year. Violet is among the 48 in the breeding program, and she takes her job seriously. Last year, she and her mate Philip welcomed their first litter, potential future explorers ready to be released into the alpine wilds.

Unlike their groundhog relatives, who are mostly solitary and live at lower elevations where gardens and shrubs are easy pickings, marmots are highly social animals. They live in colonies in sub alpine meadows above 800 metres, keeping watch for predators in a rugged, often unforgiving environment. When summer finally



Tony Barrett Centre
Photo by Adam Taylor/Marmot Recovery Foundation



Violet!

Photo by Nick Thornton/Mount Washington Alpine Resort

arrives, they feast on anything green to store up energy, because soon enough, they'll be sleeping again.

When it comes to hibernation, groundhogs emerge after three-to-six months, making February 2nd their big debut. Violet? She prefers sleeping in. Vancouver Island marmots hibernate for almost seven months, leaving just five months to pack on enough

weight for the next long winter. When you're on that tight of schedule, you can't afford to be picky about your salad greens.

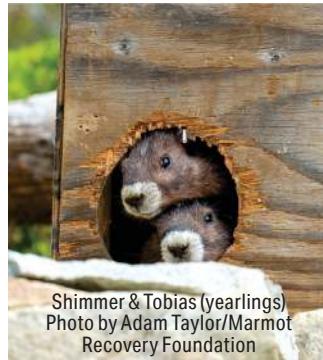
Every month, even during hibernation, the marmots are carefully weighed to monitor their health and survival. That's where Violet's "forecasting" role comes in. On February 2, while being weighed, she and her team use a unique Marmot Weather Prediction Tool where she's gained quite the reputation in the past few years for accurately predicting long winters here on the Island.

With her chocolate-coloured coat, white belly, and bright white nose, Violet represents both the charm and vulnerability of this at-risk species. While progress has been made, the journey toward a fully recovered population continues.

You can help Violet, her family, and her community. The Marmot Recovery Program offers opportunities to provide a financial gift, adopt a marmot, or contribute sightings. With over 30 mountains of potential habitat, hikers play a crucial role in monitoring these animals.

This Groundhog Day, let's celebrate Violet, proof that even the sleepiest marmot can make a big difference.

Thank you to Adam Taylor, Executive Director, for a fun and informative interview. To learn more or get involved with this important initiative, visit marmots.org.



Shimmer & Tobias (yearlings)
Photo by Adam Taylor/Marmot Recovery Foundation



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Time: 11am–3pm | **Cost:** FREE<https://youngatheart.blackpress.ca/greater-victoria-2026/>**Fri., February 6–Sat., February 7**
CCN/Aterballetto Mixed Program

@Royal Theatre

Italy's first National Choreographic Centre and leading contemporary dance company, CCN/Aterballetto, will make its Western Canada premiere with a mixed program that will feature Iratxe Ansa and Igor Bacovich's Rhapsody in Blue; Crystal Pite's melancholic Solo Echo, a meditation on love, loss, and acceptance; and Diego Tortelli's ecstatic and rebellious Glory Hall.

Time: 7:30pm | **Cost:** From \$34www.rmts.bc.ca**Fri., February 6–Sun., February 15**
Victoria Film Festival 2026

@The Vic Theatre

Since 1995, The Victoria Film Festival has presented the best Canadian and international feature, documentary, and short film in a ten-day celebration of cinema. Visit the website to check out what's screening.

Time: Varies | **Cost:** Varieswww.victoriafilmfestival.com**Sat., February 7**
The Rotary Club Bottle Drive

@Oak Bay High School, access off Cranmore Road

Bring your empty returnables to the Oak Bay High parking lot on the first Saturday of each month. This bottle drive is a joint fundraising venture by the Oak Bay Rotary Club and the Oak

Bay High School Interac Club, with all monies raised equally divided between the Threshold Housing Society and Transition Housing.

Time: 10am–1pm**Sat., February 7, 14, 21 & 28**
Moss Street Farmers Market

@1330 Fairfield Road

Shop local at the Moss Street Farmers Market! Every Saturday from November through April, drop by the winter market indoors at the Sir James Douglas school gymnasium and Garry Oak Room to find organic produce, handmade crafts, community education, and much more.

Time: 10am–1pm | **Cost:** FREEwww.mossstreetmarket.com**Fri., February 13–Sun., February 15**
Victoria at Dusk

@Various venues in Downtown Victoria This Family Day weekend, explore the free winter arts experience lighting up Downtown Victoria with art, performances and community connection. The self-guided walking route takes you on an illuminated journey that tells the story of Victoria. For all ages.

Time: 5–9pm | **Cost:** Freewww.victoriaatdusk.ca**Sun., February 15**
Family Sunday

@Art Gallery of Greater Victoria

It's the Family Day weekend! What's better than spending an afternoon creating art with your family at the AGGV's Family Sunday event (every third Sunday of the month from October to June). Check out their website to learn more!

Time: 2–4pm | **Cost:** Included with admission; admission is free for Children 5 and under, members, support workers and Indigenous peopleswww.aggv.ca**Sun., February 15**
Megadeth In Concert

@Save On Foods Memorial Centre

For metal fans, you don't want to miss Megadeth's farewell concert! Also featuring Anthrax and Exodus, concert-goers will be wowed by the energy of these veteran performers.

Time: 7:30pm | **Cost:** From \$89.50[https://sofmc.com/](http://www.sofmc.com/)**Wed., February 18–Tue., February 24**
Tosca by Puccini

@Royal Theatre

Pacific Opera Victoria presents Puccini's classic masterpiece, a gripping tale of love, lust, murder and political intrigue set to a richly romantic score.

Time: 7:30pm; 2:30pm on Sunday**Cost:** From \$35www.rmts.bc.ca**Fri., February 20–Sun., February 22**
Victoria Spring Home Show 2026

@Pearkes Community Centre, Fieldhouse

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Chinese New Year's Celebration

@Victoria's Chinatown

Ring in the Year of the Horse in Canada's oldest Chinatown! Event not confirmed at time of publishing. Please check website for updates.

Time: 12pm | **Cost:** FREEwww.tourismvictoria.com/see-do/festivals-events/chinese-new-year

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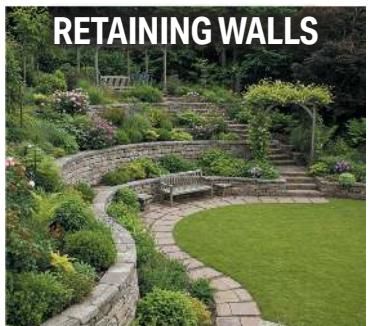
WEED TRIMMING



LAWN MOWING & MAINTENANCE



EDGING



RETAINING WALLS



PATHWAYS



PATIOS



FENCES



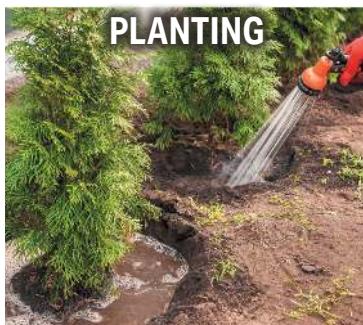
MULCHING



INVASIVE SPECIES REMOVAL



48 HR CLEAN UP FOR REAL ESTATE LISTING



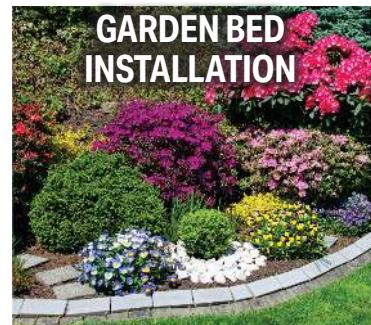
PLANTING



GARDEN & YARD MAINTENANCE



GREEN DISPOSAL



GARDEN BED INSTALLATION



Jola Landscaping restores your yard and garden to its ideal state of beauty. We're a fully insured Greater Victoria team known for meticulous hedge trimming, seasonal cleanups, yard maintenance, and hardscaping. We use primarily electric equipment for a quieter, cleaner service—and provide transparent pricing with a free property consult.

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JASON BINAB

PERSONAL REAL ESTATE CORPORATION

**#1 AGENT
IN OAK BAY SINCE 2016***

*BASED ON SALES REPORTED TO THE VREB MLS® SERVICE

JASON.BINAB@THEAGENCYRE.COM
250.589.2466 | JASONBINAB.COM



2600 QUEENSWOOD DRIVE | \$6,900,000
5 BD 7 BA | 6,131 SQ FT | 2.78 ACRE LOT



10493 ALLBAY ROAD | \$5,499,000
3 BD 5 BA | 5,438 SQ FT | 11,110 SQ FT LOT



3080 BEACHFRONT CRESCENT | \$5,000,000
5 BD 5 BA | 5,300 SQ FT | 2.68 ACRE LOT



2179 SPIRIT RIDGE DRIVE | \$2,599,000
4 BD 6 BA | 6,260 SQ FT | 13,500 SQ FT LOT



2287 NICKLAUS DRIVE | \$2,050,000
7 BD 5 BA | 4,597 SQ FT | 8,799 SQ FT LOT



1250 BEACH DRIVE | \$2,799,000
4 BD 3 BA | 3,169 SQ FT | 6,300 SQ FT LOT



3331 WOODBURN AVENUE | \$2,500,000
4 BD 3 BA | 3,367 SQ FT | 17,783 SQ FT LOT



2175 GRANITE STREET | \$2,940,000
3 BD 4 BA | 2,577 SQ FT | 6,500 SQ FT LOT



2194 CENTRAL AVENUE | \$2,299,800
5 BD 3 BA | 2,364 SQ FT | 6,850 SQ FT LOT



5276 PARKER AVENUE | \$1,899,000
4 BD 2 BA | 1,800 SQ FT | 13,600 SQ FT LOT



1697 YALE STREET | \$1,500,000
3 BD 2 BA | 1,266 SQ FT | 7,260 SQ FT LOT



517 VICTORIA AVENUE | \$800,000
1 BD 1 BA | 651 SQ FT | 3,330 SQ FT LOT

THEAGENCYRE.COM

101-960 YATES STREET, VICTORIA, BC V8V 3M3
AN INDEPENDENTLY OWNED AND OPERATED FRANCHISEE.