



Célébrons nos communautés inclusives

Celebrating inclusive communities



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Local athletes make a splash in Antagonish

Read about two local athletes who won big in Antagonish, and the 50th anniversary of Special Olympics in our feature on page 3.

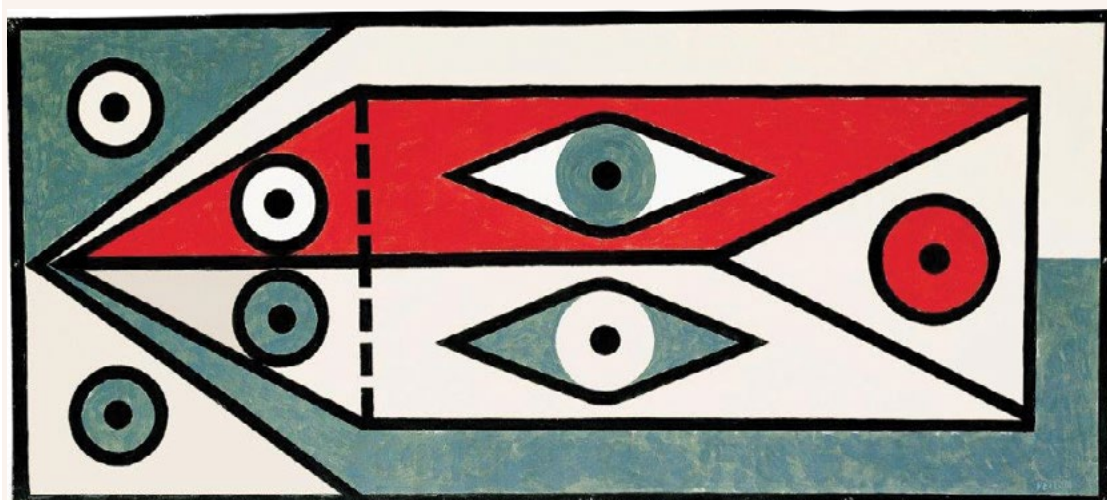
Andrew Raymond Perez and Jessica Ipekian-Levitt at the Special Olympics Canada games in Antagonish, Nova Scotia. (Photo, Monique Levitt)





Tactile prototypes at MMFA enhance visual perception for blind and visually impaired visitors

By Elaine Cohen



The tactile prototypes of Alfred Pellán's painting titled *Banner of the exposition "Prisme d'Yeux,"* are on exhibit at the Montreal Museum of Fine Arts enhances the experience for visually impaired visitors. (Photo, MMFA)

When Patricia Bérubé attained her master's in art history at the Université de Montréal in June, she achieved more than the stature and knowledge that accompanies a graduate degree. In conjunction with her master's project, Bérubé conceived and designed an awesome tool that enables the blind and visually impaired community to connect with colour in paintings through touch. The innovative initiative involved Quebec artist Alfred Pellán's 1948 work *Banner of the exposition "Prisme d'Yeux."*

Bérubé developed two different tactile prototypes that render the shapes and colours in the oil painting by Pellán (1906-1988). She singled out this painting because the artist used simple, clearly delineated shapes. In 2016, she presented her concept to the Montreal Museum of Fine Arts (MMFA) and now her tactile prototypes are on exhibit and accessible to blind and vision impaired visitors.

The MMFA has been scheduling guided tours adapted to blind and visually impaired visitors since 2015. The museum's dedicated teams strive to be inclusive and adapt

to visitors' special needs, explained MMFA Director of Education and Wellness Thomas Bastien. He considers Bérubé's research especially relevant because it provides a unique solution for people living with a visual impairment.

"I appreciate the museum's sincerity in drawing attention to my tactile prototypes by placing them underneath Pellán's actual art work," said Bérubé, who recently moved to Gatineau, Quebec, so she could be close to Carleton University in Ottawa, where she is pursuing her Ph.D. She intends to continue her mission to remove barriers and improve quality of life for the visually impaired.

Bérubé's training in 3D animation and medical illustration has proven invaluable. After graduating from high school in Rigaud, Quebec, she attended CEGEP in Chicoutimi, Quebec, and subsequently earned an undergraduate degree at Université du Québec à Montréal (UQAM). She also furthered her studies in Paris. Her inspiration for enhancing life for people with special needs blossomed throughout the years she worked in

the field of 3D medical illustration at the CAE Healthcare division.

Regarding her recent success with the relief prototypes, Bérubé credits her collaboration with Robert Gagnon and his printshop facilities. "He suggested how to go about it and cast the mould in 3D. The silicone was removed from the mould and that's what we kept," Bérubé pointed out. She is pleased with the silicone prototypes because they are easy to clean; visitors can touch them without having to wear gloves as a buffer.

The first prototype recreates the contours and artwork's geometric shapes – squares, diamonds, circles, triangles – in relief so that the configuration can be felt and understood by fingertips. The second prototype translates the artwork's colour palette into a variety of textures that makes it possible to identify and comprehend the positioning of four colours. The latter are white, black, red and grey. A Braille legend offers further explanation.

Bérubé assessed the selected textures and functionality of the prototypes by conferring with a group of 13 people with different degrees of visual impairment. "Some had lost their sight later on in life," she pointed out. Regardless of vision problem, they were able to differentiate colours through tactile means. Jean-Daniel Aubin, an enthusiastic participant, praised the opportunity. Speaking on behalf of the group, he said participants were able to forget their blindness and perceive the work in their own way.

The MMFA's free adapted guided tours for blind and visually impaired visitors can be arranged. By using a multi-sensorial ap-

proach and detailed oral descriptions, museum guides set the stage for visitors to construct mental images of the works and enjoy the experience.

Visitors are advised to reserve at least one week in advance by phoning (514) 285-2000.



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Special Olympics celebrates 50 years of making inclusion for all a reality

By Wendy Singer

Celebrating 50 years!



The Special Olympics Québec Team at the 2018 Canada games in Antigonish, Nova Scotia. (Photo, Special Olympics Québec)

Special Olympics is celebrating 50 years of sport and inclusion! This organization is known worldwide for empowering its more than 4.5 million athletes with the strength, determination, and confidence to be challenged by competitive sport, and at the same time, gain the courage to stare down any hurdle and respond: “Challenge Accepted.”

Celebrations across the globe began in July, and have been inspiring people all over the world to see the beauty, dignity, and talent that each individual possesses. Dr. Frank Hayden founded the Special Olympics movement in 1968. “Dr. Hayden is an outstanding Canadian citizen and a dedicated scientist from Ontario. He has been an incredible leader in developing this unique organization,” shares Daniel Granger, president of Special Olympics Québec.

You may have been lucky enough to partake in some of the celebrations this summer. To mark Global Day of Inclusion on July 21, Tim Hortons featured a free festival in their stores throughout Canada. Anyone who visited a Timmies location on July 21 and bought a Special Olympics donut created by an athlete, automatically supported over

45,000 Canadian athletes living with intellectual disabilities across the country. In addition, iconic monuments and landmarks world-wide, from Toronto’s CN Tower to the Montreal Olympic Stadium tower and the London Eye in the U.K., lit up red as part of a global demonstration of inclusion.

Other events will take place throughout the year. For example, from July to December 2018, the Alberta Sports Hall of Fame & Museum will have a Special Olympics 50th display that celebrates the milestones of the movement in Alberta. Check the Special Olympics Canada website to consult their schedule of events.

Special Olympics Canada Games 2018

For over 35 years, special Olympics Québec has been enriching the lives of children and adults with intellectual disabilities in all regions of Québec. This summer, approximately 1,000 Canadian athletes, including a team of 85 participants from the province of Québec, competed in the Special Olympics Canada Summer Games in Antigonish, Nova Scotia. While there for the competi-

Local athletes make splash in Antigonish

Two of our local Special Olympians had a great time competing at the games this summer. Here’s how they did!

Côte Saint-Luc resident Jessica Ipekian-Levitt had the swim of her life! The 29-year-old came home with four medals: two gold and two bronze. Jessica was recently featured as Athlete of the Week in the *Suburban Newspaper!* She told the *Suburban*: “Going to the games was very exciting and a great experience. I feel very proud of myself.”

Laval resident Andrew Raymond Perez, also 29, swam his best times ever and came back with one gold medal, two silvers, one bronze, two fourth place, and one sixth place medal. Andrew’s mother Cathy Vlahos Perez is impressed with the Special Olympics organization, stating: “The movement has come a long way. It has taken its place on centre stage and in the process, has shown that this population



Andrew Raymond Perez shows his medal collection at the Special Olympics Canada games in Antigonish, Nova Scotia. (Photo, Cathy Vlahos Perez)

can and will continue to prove themselves worthy. Challenge Accepted!”

These two strong athletes are also talented actors. You can see them on stage with I Can Dream Theatre this November!



Special Olympian enjoys a special creation at Tim Hortons on Global Day of Inclusion. (Photo, Special Olympics Québec)

Congratulations to all of the local athletes who gave it their all, accepting every challenge that came their way. Athletes competed in nine disciplines including athletics, softball, basketball, golf, rhythmic gymnastics, boccia, powerlifting, swimming, and soccer.

Granger was proud of the Québec delegation for sharing the importance of these games. “The more our athletes experience, the more chances they have to be included in our society, to find jobs, and to gain independence,” said Granger. “It is a great experience even if they don’t qualify for the world games. It is a unique opportunity for our athletes to interact and grow.”

tion and the excitement of the games, participants were also vying for their spot on the Canadian team for the World Special Olympics games in March 2019 in Abu Dhabi, the United Arab Emirates.

For information about Special Olympics Québec, visit <http://www.olympiquesspeciauxQuebec.ca/en/index.sn>





We ♥ Dogs!

By *Wendy Singer*



Poppey (Photo, Melanie Haydon)

Dogs are not just fun companions, they provide us with unconditional love and support in a way that no human can.

Krista Leitham, Québec regional manager for Autism Speaks Canada (ASC), felt it was high time that Montrealers recognize the important role that dogs play in providing therapy to all, and especially families living with autism. According to ASC, dogs are valued members of a family living with autism, helping improve social interaction, increase attention and cooperation, decrease anxiety and provide support for independence skills.

In partnership with the City of Côte Saint-Luc (CSL), the Autism Speaks Canada Dog Walk will take place on Sunday, October 21, from 9:30 a.m. to 11:30 a.m. at Pierre Elliott Trudeau Park in CSL. Leitham, along with many partners that have jumped on board, have a fun-filled agenda planned that will have all dogs wagging their tails, and their humans smiling. That being said, everyone is welcome, with or without a dog!

Some highlights of the event include: Meeting dog care specialists and local community organizations who care for and service dogs, such as veterinarians from local veterinary clinics, doggie spas and groomers, dog walkers and trainers. Learn about kennels, fostering and adopting, pet therapists, retail suppliers, pet photographers and portrait artists, plus local dog owners associations.

What would a dog-centered event be without a walk? You and your dog will have the chance to partake in a celebratory one kilometer dog walk to close the event.

Anyone can register prior to the event, with or without a dog! Walk-in registrations and donations on event day are welcome too! The registration fee per team is \$30, and includes:

- One free Autism Speaks Canada tuber gift for your dog
- One free family or team photo with your dog
- Free access to fun contests to win a gift
- One free fundraising reward ticket to win prize draws
- Meet dog care specialists and local community organizations
- Light refreshments

Is your dog ready to compete?

Once you have registered, you can choose your category and start preparing for these awesome contests:

Online Facebook dog photo contest

The public is invited to email a photo of their dog with a short caption about how their dog is loved and an important part of their family. A collection of photos will be posted for online public voting and the winner will be announced at the event. 🐾



Dog Kirta and friend. (Photo, John Branton)

Or perhaps your canine is up for another challenge? Other contests include:

- Doggie look-a-like
- Best dog trick
- Best dressed dog
- Best dog strut on the dog walk
- Best Halloween dog costume

While this is a day for the dogs, ASC will be raising funds for autism-related community initiatives. Teams will receive fundraising reward tickets. The more funds you raise, the more chances you will have to win prize draws on event day!

Let's celebrate and honour man's best friend and the amazing work that dogs do!

Register today at www.autismspeaks.ca/dogwalk.

For information, contact Krista Leitham at kristaleitham@autismspeaks.ca or (438) 990-5697.



**Enregistrez aujourd'hui à autismspeaks.ca/promenadedechiens
Register today at autismspeaks.ca/dogwalk**



O Noir: An eye-opening dinner experience

By *Glenn J. Nashen*



I had heard of O Noir for several years and each time I came up with an excuse why I didn't want to eat in the dark. This time was different. I agreed to go, and what an eye-opening experience it was.

You would never know by walking by on the pedestrian-only Prince Arthur Street in Montreal's Plateau area that O Noir is really a lights-out place on the inside. What brothers Alejandro and Ian Martinez Ortiz and their mom Oralia have cooking inside is what really sets them apart from the rest.

Upstairs we go to one of the two blackened dining rooms where we are introduced to our server, Sophie. Like all the servers at O Noir, Sophie is legally blind (she has just 15 percent of her vision). With my hands on her shoulders, my wife's hand on mine, and our daughter's on hers, we form a 'conga line' and shuffle slowly and cautiously into the pitch black room. Sophie puts my hand to the back of my chair and I slide into my seat while my hands gingerly feel the table-top and its contents: cutlery, napkin, oops, that's my wife doing the same on her side. Wall to my right. Empty place setting to my left. Sound of dinner guests behind me. I've got my bearings. I quickly tuck the cloth napkin into my shirt and an extra one over my lap, perhaps anticipating the inevitable clumsiness.

Sophie taps my left shoulder for me to reach for my water glass. A small sip. My

first spill! My napkin prepping helped. Fifty-to-60-year-olds tend to be the messiest in the dark while kids usually adapt more easily. "How often do spills occur," I ask Ian. "Every night!" he chuckles in response.

We hear the door open and instantly smell the wonderful aromas. While our eyes see nothing, our sense of smell has already reached a new high, only minutes into the dark, picking up the sweet scents of sesame oil and cumin. We're already teeming with excitement about what lies ahead.

Sophie announces that she has placed our plates before us and we reach for the cutlery to attempt to eat a normal dinner. But there is nothing normal about this evening. We touch the edge of the plates to delineate the 'playing field'. I scoop, Judy dabs, Nicole uses her fingers!

The kitchen takes care to cut up the food into bite-sized pieces unless it's soft enough for the guest to cut with a fork. We never used the butter knives on our table.

I begin to savour my dish. The smell and the weight upon the fork are all factors registering before it hits my mouth. All of a sudden, it passes my lips and the taste instantly explodes.

"Inside the room, we are the handicapped ones and they, (the servers) become our eyes. Once they start working here most of our waiters never go," Ian says.



The blind community is relatively small and a lot of them know each other. After hours, many will come and hang out here, the blind and sighted, all together. They can have the O Noir experience in any restaurant but only here do they have a sense of community.

"We believe that each of us has a mission, a path before us in life. They (the visually-impaired) have opened our eyes," Ian emphasizes.

They have found a winning formula in O Noir. The experience was tremendous. We confronted our inhibitions. We challenged our senses. And we learned about the lives of caring and insightful people like Sophie and Ian, Alejandro and their mom. The food is delicious (although we're still not sure about the presentation).

I guess they're right: It's better in the dark!

O Noir is located on 124 Rue Prince Arthur East. For information, visit <https://www.facebook.com/OnoirRestaurantMontreal/>, call (514) 937-9727 or email info@onoir.com.



O Noir owner Ian with server Sophie. (Photo, Glenn J. Nashen)

For the full version of this article, google Nashen Notes O Noir: <https://www.facebook.com/nashennotes/>

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The EMSB Database of Special Needs Resources has over 500 listings

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Anything is possible when you're UNSTOPPABLE!

*Compiled by Wendy Singer
With files from Care in Action,
March of Dimes Canada Newsletter, 2017*



*Unstoppable Tracy Schmitt will speak in Montreal on November 16, 2018.
(Photo, Brenda Spielman)*

Put Unstoppable Tracy Schmitt in front of an audience, and watch her go. She has a million tales to tell, and has been gracing audiences with them for over 30 years. There's her stint as captain of a 100-foot tall ship in the Eastern Atlantic, the day she won the Rick Hansen Award for her work as an inclusive teacher in Africa, Jamaica, and Mexico, and her cameo in Robo Cop.

This motivational speaker from Toronto believes that anything is possible. She is the best-selling author of *Unstoppable You*, a

decorated athlete, winner of multiple awards, honoured humanitarian, corporate consultant, and consultant for people living with disabilities, and more.

It's easy to forget that Unstoppable Tracy is a four-way amputee.

Montrealers will have the opportunity to meet Unstoppable Tracy in Montreal on Friday, November 16, 2018 at the March of Dimes Canada's (MODC) Opening Doors for Accessibility seminar at Ruby Foo's Hotel, where she will share her tales, and her message of hope and action, all while challenging us to keep up with her unstoppable pace.

Unstoppable Tracy was born without lower limbs, and has always been unstoppable. On her first day of school, she missed recess because she was helping her new friends put on their shoes. When she was 19, she helped MODC plan a trip for four people with physical disabilities to Nepal and went along to climb mountains in the Himalayas without her prosthetic legs. Unstoppable Tracy has even won a bronze medal in downhill skiing!

"Everybody needs to take risks to grow," Unstoppable Tracy told MODC. "Recreation is that place where you figure it out so you can move your life forward, where you can get out, get your strength up, and get social circles started, so you can be independent in daily living."

Unstoppable Tracy is always ready to move forward. Though she learned to drive at 16, like most Canadians, she couldn't afford

the \$60,000 that she was told it would cost to modify a vehicle for her unique needs. When she was old enough, MODC helped her through its Home and Vehicle Modification Program. "When other people say no, MODC has always had a creative solution," shared Unstoppable Tracy.

Unstoppable Tracy not only benefited from MODC programs, she worked as the Director of the Summer Holiday Program, supervising 65 staff members, and also worked in their Recreation Department, helping to plan accessible excursions and vacations.

Unstoppable Tracy is truly an inspiration. "Doing these activities with MODC gave me the skills and confidence to go on into the employment world and be a valuable contributor to society. And now I'm giving back by working with people with disabilities. Because MODC had my back, now I've gone on to have everyone else's back."

To learn more about Unstoppable Tracy, visit www.marchofdimes.ca/ or www.unstoppabletracy.com. Reserve your spot for Opening Doors for Accessibility at mstewart@marchofdimes.ca.



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Inspirations is celebrating 10 years!



sponded. You had stories and resources to share, and wanted to collaborate to better the lives of families caring for children and adults with special needs.

Ten years later, *Inspirations* continues to respond to the community's needs. We are proud to be Montreal's only special needs media outlet, publishing two 40-page editions (sometimes longer!) and two online editions yearly (sometimes three!), collaborating with a long list of and organizations in both the English and French-speaking communities.

Inspirations began as a 12-page bi-yearly publication that celebrated the accomplishments of children with special needs at the English Montreal School Board. A simple database of special needs resources accompanied our publications. When we began expanding our database, the community re-

A non-profit that promotes inclusion and accessibility, *Inspirations* has thrived thanks to the support of the English Montreal School Board, and our advertisers and sponsors from community, corporate, and government organizations. We look forward to celebrating our 10th anniversary with you!

Club ALink: Building partnerships for inclusion with new director and programs

Club ALink welcomes Sid Milech as their new director

Sid Milech is an educator and formerly director of the Y Country Camp. He has recently come on board as ALink's volunteer director of activities and synagogue outreach. The ALink team is thrilled to be working with him. With Milech on board, ALink has created some exciting new programs.

Skills building / Pilot cooking program

ALink parents know how important it is to teach and reteach skills needed for daily living. Thanks to a grant from Federation CJA, ALink is piloting a program at the ADATH synagogue to teach young adults cooking and social skills called Cooking for Kiddush (also available for any activity that the synagogue sponsors). Designed for young adults with neurodiverse challenges, the course will

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be supervised by a seasoned special needs teacher (who's also a great cook). The group will prepare foods that will be served at synagogue functions. Volunteers are needed, so if cooking is your thing, you are welcome to sign up!

ALink's goal with Cooking for Kiddush is to develop a model program that can be

expanded to other institutions throughout the city and that can ultimately develop into a social enterprise for young adults (such as a small catering business).

The program will take place on Sundays from 10:00 a.m. to 1:00 p.m. from October 14 to December 17, 2018, at the ADATH, 223 Harrow Crescent in Hampstead, Quebec. The cost is \$100 (and free for volunteers). Space is limited.

Small group fitness training and other programs

Milech is working on developing a small group fitness training program and a basketball program along with the Sylvan Adams YM-YWA. He is also developing a buddy/mentor program with other Montreal organizations.

For more information or to register for any of these activities, or if you'd like to suggest other activities, contact Sid at sid.milech@gmail.com.





Walk with friends 4Friendship

By *Racheli Edelkopf*

Friendship Circle is holding its 10th annual Walk4Friendship at the Old Port on October 14th! The 2k walk or 5k run attracts hundreds of community members to come together and support friendship and inclusion for young people with special needs and raise important funds for the Friendship Circle.

The exciting family-friendly walk is followed by a celebration with complimentary food and drink, interactive games, face painting, tattoos, caricature artists, virtual reality, axe throwing, and more.

As well, La Grande Roue and MTL Zipline have generously partnered with the Friendship Circle this year and will be offering free rides on the ferris wheel and free ziplining to all participants who fundraise \$100 and over!

There's no charge for participating in the walk as long as you pre-register at www.Walk4Friendship.ca

Friendship Circle creates friendship in the lives of individuals with special needs through pairing them one on one with teen and young adult volunteers to enjoy a wide range of social and recreational activities focusing on abilities and forming inclusive friendships. This year, the theme, Pure Friendship, highlights these wonderful friends.

Friendship Circle plans to surpass last year's fundraising goal of \$500,000 and is expecting over 1,000 participants this year. Be sure you are one of them!

Donate, or walk, or better yet, do both!

Visit www.Walk4Friendship.ca to get started.

Racheli Edelkopf is the Family Support and Program Developer at Friendship Circle.



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Bruce Henbest, coordinator of Interpretation at Upper Canada Village, and Fay Schipper at Upper Canada Village.

Accessible days of old at Upper Canada Village

By Fay Schipper

made into flour at the flour mill. The flour is used for making bread at the bakery which is served in the village's restaurants and sold in the gift shop. The working farms, mills, and trade shops all contribute to making a sustainable community of the 1860s.

You don't need a time machine to be transported to the 19th century. Upper Canada Village (UCV), which is part of the Parks of the St. Lawrence and located in Morrisburg, Ontario, does just that. This heritage park depicts life in a rural Canadian setting during the 1860s. Featured at the site are 35 historical buildings, including several working farms, mills (woolen, flour, grist, and saw) and trades buildings (blacksmith, tinsmith, cabinetmaker, bakery, and cheese-maker). Farming is demonstrated through the growing, harvesting or processing of heritage vegetables and livestock.

At UCV, the staff are super friendly. You don't think you are speaking to a stranger but rather to a neighbour. They welcome questions and are very knowledgeable. We were greeted by Bruce Henbest, coordinator of Interpretation at UCV, who was kind enough to give us an in-depth tour of the village.

The sights, sounds and smells reinforce the rural life of this era; people dressed in clothing of the period, the sounds of music coming from the playing of spoons, and smells, like that of walking through a pigsty. Livestock such as horses pulling coaches or wagons, oxen pulling plows, and sheep singing a chorus of bah, bah, bah, only add to this rural lifestyle. The cows are each given a name and if a visitor is at the right place at the right time, can try his/her hand at milking one of them.

UCV is a living historical museum. The oxen plough the wheat fields. The wheat is

Accessibility is a big word and it means many things to many different people. Finding a tourist attraction that meets someone's needs can be a difficult task. UCV without a doubt should be awarded the trophy of "Accessible Inclusiveness!" They have given a great deal of thought to accessibility, and have taken steps to make people with special needs feel that they are part of the community.

The grounds are of a hard gravel and in some places, have wooden sidewalks (paved roads didn't exist in the 1860s). If you are unable to walk at UCV, they have manual All Terrain wheelchairs. These are available at the Discovery Centre and can be used for free. All doors (excluding historical buildings) can be opened electronically.

Access varies from building to building. Ramps are located either in front of the building or on the side. When exiting a building with a ramp in the front, the wheelchair user must go SLOW so as not to go rolling down the stairs. Second floors in some buildings are not accessible. You can ask the costumed staff person to show you pictures of the upstairs rooms on their iPads.

UCV sometimes holds special activities/events on the weekends. On these occasions, they will have an ASL interpreter for people who are hearing impaired.

The site maps of the Village are of a durable, glossy finish and can't be easily destroyed. They are available in many languages as well as in Braille. There are also maps which high-



Staff in period costume at Upper Canada Village. (Photo, Upper Canada Village)

light areas and buildings in the Village with unusual noises, smells, and locations of quiet areas. These maps may be useful for visitors with autism or sensory processing difficulties. It is recommended for those who are sensitive to loud noises, to bring their own noise cancelling equipment.

In the summer, early Sunday mornings have been designated as "Sensory Friendly" because the village is quieter. Sensory accommodations include schedule and itinerary suggestions, quiet spaces, hands-on opportunities and appropriate interactions with Vil-



A horse-drawn carriage at Upper Canada Village. (Photo, Upper Canada Village)



Manual All Terrain wheelchairs are available at Upper Canada Village.

lage staff. Staff have received training from Autism Ontario.

When buying your tickets, you may want to request a coloured wristband for those with autism. This will help alert the village staff that they ought to provide an enriching experience to the wristband visitor. They will offer the visitor objects to touch and hold to have a fun and enjoyable experience. The staff are happy to offer this tactile experience to visitors with impaired vision and others with special needs.

Recommendations:

1. Visit the website www.uppercanadavillage.com for additional important information.
2. Wear closed comfortable shoes, as there are known to be livestock droppings.
3. Know before you go what kind of tickets to purchase. They have train, boat and wagon rides. The train ride can accommodate one wheelchair at a time.

A magical journey of traveling back in time to the 1860s to experience a living historical museum awaits you at Upper Canada Village.

Fay Schipper is Inspirations' volunteer database consultant and accessibility reporter.

✍️



Netflix Review

By Ishini Fernando

A Boy Called Po

The journey of a father and son

Josh Asher's 2016 movie *A Boy Called Po* tells the tale of how David Wilson, a newly widowed engineer and father, and his autistic son Patrick, also called Po, come to meet each other halfway. Throughout the movie, David, played by Christopher Gorham, a single father, is seen to struggle with the pressure to perform in his work as well as to parent his regressing son. In addition to dealing with his grief over losing his wife, and between having to unexpectedly visit the school whenever his son gets hurt and having to meet deadlines and expectations at work, he feels exhausted and overwhelmed. He is in charge of a project that could potentially revolutionize the way people fly, but his team and boss are getting increasingly impatient with him.

As for Po, who is played by Julian Feder, he is often seen drifting into his mind, which is

depicted as a sort of dreamland where he is often sought after for advice and acknowledged for his intelligence. Po is shown to be a very smart sixth grader who understands complex math for his age and reads about the stock market every day. However, he can be a handful for his father who is raising him all on his own now. Po needs a great deal of attention as he sometimes wanders off or gets himself into dangerous situations. Po also deals with bullying at school, which unfortunately goes undetected by teachers and the school's authorities for a long time, leading to the wrong conclusion that Po simply gets himself hurt often because of his autism.

Meanwhile, father David is struggling to connect with and understand Po. His ability to care for his son is called into question by the school and social workers, which takes a toll on him, feeding into his insecurities as a fa-

ther. David eventually regains his faith in himself and the unbreakable bond he has with his son.

Although some of the language used in the movie can be technical, *A Boy Called Po* overall presents the perfect balance between touching and educational. The effort and intention to be informative can be seen in scenes where certain therapies are explained in detail, or in scenes where Po's reactions and everyday behaviour are depicted. David and Po's story also gives viewers an idea of the challenges and pressures a parent with a child with autism may encounter when trying



Po (Julian Feder) and his father David Wilson (Christopher Gorham) in *A Boy Called Po* on Netflix.

to make the best decisions for their family. For anyone who is not familiar with autism spectrum disorder (ASD), this movie can be an enlightening and moving watch.

A Boy Called Po can be watched on Netflix.



BEING RACHEL

recognized at the

Respect Human Rights Film Festival

Summit School's documentary, *BEING RACHEL*, is about the challenges faced by youth with developmental disabilities as they struggle to mount a play about their lives. It was selected to be screened at the 2018 Belfast Respect Human Rights Film Festival in Northern Ireland, which took place this summer. Just being selected was an honour for the film's producer, Jesse Heffring, who is also a media teacher and coordinator of the Summit School Performing Arts program.

This film festival showcases a range of films that promote a wider understanding of human rights subjects. Films are submitted

from around the world on topics that include mental health, LGBT rights, environmental concerns, and austerity and disability issues, to name a few.

BEING RACHEL was appreciated by the Belfast Respect Human Rights Film Festival judging panel for its strong message of the challenges and hopes of students with disabilities. "It was truly a magical moment when the organizers announced that Summit School had won in the category of Best Feature Documentary film," shared Heffring. Congratulations to the cast and crew for this important film.

Seán Murray, director of the Belfast Respect Human Rights Film Festival with Jesse Heffring, producer of the documentary BEING RACHEL, at the Belfast Respect Human Rights Festival. (Photo, Ciara Scullion).

Summit School Performing Arts will remount another of their spectacular productions, Letter To My Disability, on Thursday, October 18 at Lauren Hill Academy. For information or to buy tickets, visit <https://goo.gl/a81hDR>. For information about Summit School's performing arts, or to screen BEING RACHEL, visit <https://www.summitperformingarts.com/being-rachel>.





TRAVEL

By Daniel Smajovits

Three perfect days in Cape Town



Cape Town from Table Mountain.

If ever there was a city that truly had something for everyone, it's Cape Town. Rich in history, culture and nature, the city once known as the long sought after landmark for traders sailing around the horn of Africa is now the beacon of hope for modern South Africa.

First time visitors to Cape Town should opt to stay in the **Victoria & Alfred Waterfront** (www.waterfront.co.za). With hundreds of shops, dozens of hotels and many world-class restaurants, the area has developed into a premiere tourist destination. After a long flight, it is the perfect place to begin your South African holiday.

Regardless of the time you have in Cape Town, your first full day should be spent on **Table Mountain**. If you have the ability to hike up one of the hundreds of trails, you will trek past some of the most unique flora and fauna in the world. Those who cannot hike up have the option of a five-minute, 360-degree cable car ride to the mountain's peak. Once at the top of Table Mountain, the trails are completely accessible, allowing everyone to experience the country's most famous natural landmark. It should be noted that Cape Town's weather is notoriously unpredictable; it is recommended to visit www.tablemountain.net to ensure the cable car is in operation that day before leaving your hotel.

Following a morning on Table Mountain, spend your afternoon by participating in a **Free Walking Tour**. Multiple tours per day take guests on various walks throughout the city, exploring its history, neighborhoods and bustling food scene. If mobility is an issue, the streets of Cape Town are wheelchair friendly. While the tours are free, guides do accept gratuities. For information, visit www.nielsentours.co.za.

Upon your return from the walking tour, spend a few minutes at the adjacent **Greenmarket Square**. The market and its dozens of colourful stalls is the best place in the city to find handcrafted souvenirs.

Since you spent your morning on top of Table Mountain, finish the day off with dinner at **The Pot Luck Club** (thepotluckclub.co.za). Pot Luck Club is not only one of the city's best restaurants, it also offers an unsurpassed view of the mountain. Located in The Old Biscuit Mill, the restaurant is the brainchild of celebrity chef Luke Dale Roberts. With a casual menu and dishes made for sharing, Chef Roberts focuses on the five flavour profiles: salty, sour, bitter, sweet and umami. The menu changes often and highlights both local and foreign tastes. Reservations are necessary.

On your second day in the Mother City, spend your morning exploring the beautiful winer-



Boulders Beach.

ies that make up the Cape Winelands. With a wine-making tradition dating back more than 300 years, some of the world's most prestigious wines are produced on the outskirts of Cape Town. If your itinerary has room for only one winery, we suggest **Beau Constantia**. In addition to stellar wines, the winery is known for its panoramic views over False Bay as well as the Stellenbosch and Helderberg mountain ranges. To make a reservation, visit www.beauconstantia.com.

After you've sampled your wine and enjoyed a meal at the winery, take a drive to **Boulders Beach**, about an hour south of Cape Town. The protected beach is home to one of Africa's largest colonies of penguins and tourists have the opportunity to view them from a wheelchair-friendly platform or dive right to the ocean at Foxy Beach and swim with the adorable locals.

Once you've dried off, make your way back to the Victoria & Alfred Waterfront for dinner at **Karibu Restaurant**. Executive Chef and South African native Jamie Rowntree takes incredible pride in his traditional local food, ensuring that tourists feel as if they're sitting down for a meal in his own home. Read more about Karibu on page 13 of this edition.

If adventure is on your mind, your third day in Cape Town should be spent with the **White Shark Diving Company**, swimming with Great White sharks in Gansbaai. Based two hours west of the city, the White Shark Diving Company specializes in daily shark diving tours, bringing tourists up close and personal with the ferocious predators. As the population of sharks in the area has declined from 2,000 to roughly 500, the

company is focused on conservation and social responsibility initiatives as well as tourism. For the thrill of a lifetime, visit www.sharkcagediving.co.za.

For those who prefer their sharks on television, spend your final day in Cape Town visiting two local landmarks: Robben Island and Bo Kaap.

While **Robben Island** has an incredible history as a former leper colony and military base, it is best known as the island where Nelson Mandela was imprisoned for 18 years. The island is a 30-minute ferry trip from the Victoria & Alfred Waterfront and tours last roughly three and a half hours. Guests are shown around the prison by a political ex-prisoner who served time on the island, ensuring that visitors leave with a very real picture of the very recent struggle for democracy in South Africa. Tickets should be bought in advance by visiting www.robben-island.org.za.

Once you're back on land, take a walk through the vibrant **Bo Kaap** neighbourhood. Known for its brightly coloured homes and cobble stoned streets, the district was once home to Malasian slaves and is now the heart of the city's Muslim community. The Bo Kaap museum is located in the neighbourhood's oldest house and highlights the many contributions the residents made to Cape Town.

After spending the day in or around the water, enjoy your last meal in Cape Town by sampling some of the incredible fish and shellfish the area has to offer at Codfather, which you can read about on page 13 of this edition.

... continued on page 13



TRAVEL

By Daniel Smajovits

Codfather: Fresh from the sea

*Codfather shellfish.*

From eating sashimi at the Tsukiji Fish Market in Tokyo to indulging in lobster off the Nova Scotian coast and sampling the freshest of ceviche in Peru, I thought I tasted some of the best seafood the world has to offer. That was all before my visit to Cape Town's Codfather restaurant.

Located in the unassuming suburb of Camps Bay, a short 15-minute drive from central Cape Town and only steps away from the beach, Codfather's concept is unique: no menu, just a display case of fresh fish and shellfish. Complementing the fish is a sushi counter, with rolls and sashimi that rival some of the best spots in Japan.

The night we visited Codfather, there were 15 different types of fish and seafood available, the majority of which were freshly caught only hours earlier, with the rest flown in from around the world. Each offering is meticulously explained and once a selection is made, it is weighed and priced. Guests can then add or remove, depending on one's budget and hunger.


Keeping in mind that we wanted to try the sushi counter as well, we asked our waitress to portion out a mixed platter of fish and shellfish to ensure that we did not over-

order. Fresh local vegetables and four unique sauces accompanied our grilled calamari, scallops, langoustines, yellowtail, butterfish and kingklip. In one bite it became quite clear why Codfather is one of the most popular restaurants in Cape Town, a favourite amongst locals and tourists alike.

Although Codfather might not offer a menu for its mains, an extensive wine and beer list is available with choices for all budgets. As the Cape region is world-renowned for its wines, their list prominently highlights a number of local options, allowing diners to sample some incredible wines, produced only minutes away.

Despite barely finishing our incredible meal, we decided to indulge further by trying the homemade Malva Pudding for dessert. A South African specialty, the pudding is served warm, alongside ice cream, and has a spongy consistency with an apricot and orange flavour. The unique dessert is a must-try for all diners.

Codfather has been owned and operated by the Shaked family since its inception in 1998. While the meal itself makes up the foundation of the restaurant's success, a large part is owed to the family's attention to detail and overall stellar customer experience, which all guests experience first-hand.

After an incredible meal, the Shaked family saves the last surprise for the end. While receiving the check usually deflates the evening for most, the family has found a way to make guests leave the restaurant with a smile as full as their stomachs. Codfather adds to each bill, and then matches, a R10 (\$1.00) donation to the James House, a local shelter for children. Overall, the Shaked family has committed to feeding 330 malnourished, hungry and vulnerable local children one meal per day, six days a week. Should guests choose not to participate, they will be refunded without question, but nearly all appreciate the effort of the restaurant to give back to the community. We certainly did. To make a reservation, visit www.codfather.co.za. 

Karibu Restaurant: Traditionally South African

On a recent trip to South Africa, we were poised to have at least one traditional meal that would allow us to sample the staples that fill a South African table on a nightly basis. Karibu Restaurant was just that and so much more.

Located in Cape Town's Victoria & Alfred Waterfront with a spectacular view of the harbor as well as Table Mountain, Karibu specializes in South African dining with the awards to prove it. Executive Chef Jamie Rowntree takes incredible pride in his food, ensuring that tourists feel as if they're having a meal in their own home.

Karibu, which means welcome in Swahili, is exactly the feeling that the restaurant exudes from start to finish. With an incredibly cheerful and helpful staff, guests are given an explanation of local dishes and flavours as well as a crash course in pronunciation – so when ordering bobotie, potjiekos, snoek, putu, chakalaka and koeksisters, the only thing being butchered during your visit will be the meat.

Perhaps the star of the show at Karibu is the braai, a traditional South African barbeque where meat, especially game, is cooked over open coals. Unlike North American barbeques, where the meats are slathered in sauce, most braais serve the meat as-is, ensuring the true flavour comes through. On the menu during our visit were springbok, ostrich, kudu and impala, in addition to many traditional options.

Accompanying the main course is a selection of local specialties; we chose the classic putu and chakalaka, a couscous like starch and a spicy tomato, onion and vegetable relish. In keeping with the braai theme, we also tried


*A delectable meal at Karibu Restaurant.*

the roosterkoek, a fluffy bread that is baked over open coals, allowing for a crispy shell and a decadent, moist interior. Despite hailing from Montreal, which is home to the world's best baked goods in the bagel, Karibu's roosterkoek gives our bagel a run for its money.

Should you choose to be either more adventurous or cautious, the menu features the classic bobotie, minced beef, raisins with an egg-based topping to a selection of bredies or casserole-type dishes, such as the classic Cape Malay Beef Curry or a Waterblommetjie Bredie, an indigenous aquatic plant from the Cape slow-cooked alongside lamb. Also available is poultry, seafood and shellfish, all with local flavours infused.

Complementing every meal is an award-winning selection of wines from around the world as well as the Cape region.

On the dessert menu are western classics, along with the two traditional South African specialties: Malva pudding, an apricot sponge cake and Koeksisters, deep fried, sweet and sticky dough twists.

After an incredible meal at Karibu, it's clear why the restaurant won the 2016 World Luxury Restaurant Award for best South African cuisine on the continent and topped that by being named the best South African restaurant in the world in 2017. Visit www.kariburestaurant.co.za to reserve your table before you visit. 



TRAVEL

By Alexandra Cohen

What's new in New York City? *The Band's Visit*, The Algonquin and The Lambs Club



The Algonquin.

NEW YORK - There are many reasons to travel to New York City, but one most unique to the city's soul is the extensive list of amazing Broadway musicals found at the heart of Times Square. Let me recommend, in particular, the 10-time Tony Award winning Best Musical, *The Band's Visit* (www.thebandsvisitmusical.com).

Playing at the Ethel Barrymore Theatre (243 West 47th Street), the production recently welcomed award-winning Israeli actor Sasson Gabay to the company in his Broadway debut. He is reprising the character he created in the 2007 film on which the musical is based.

Following the Tony Awards on June 10, 2018, *The Band's Visit* is now tied as the third most Tony Award-winning show in history and

is one of only three shows in Broadway history to have won the "Big Six" awards (Best Musical, Best Actor - Tony Shalhoub, Best Actress - Katrina Lenk, Direction, Book, and Score). Thus far, due to popular demand, the show has been extended through June 2019, with the potential to extend even more.

The Band's Visit opened on November 9. As the musical begins, a series of well-intentioned mistakes land an Egyptian Police Band in a sleepy and remote village in the middle of the Israeli desert, which its inhabitants label as boring and bland. One of the central characters, Dina (played with great magnetism by Lenk), describes the mood of her town best in the opening number, as "looking out into the distance even though you know the view is never going to change."

With no bus until morning and no hotel in sight, the band are taken in by the locals for one night that will in some way or another, change all of their lives. *The Band's Visit* celebrates the deeply human ways in which music, longing and laughter can connect us all.

Although I must say that I expected this show to be quite serious in nature, I was pleasantly surprised by the simultaneous comic undertones. One such moment was when although the Alexandria Ceremonial Police Orchestra are meant to perform at the Arabic cultural center in Petah Tikvah, Israel, a member of the band with poor English skills accidentally sends them to the similarly pronounced destination of Bet Hatikvah "with a B", eliciting many laughs from the audience.

Yes, quite often it is the creative and witty lyrics that allow for laughter, including a particular line of song in which the words awful and falafel were used in a rhyme. However, as the connections between the Israeli locals and Egyptian visitors are forged, the story becomes unexpectedly moving. Although they are different, as shown in certain moments by the characters speaking their respective languages rather than English, they are also in many ways the same, and if that is not a universal message that this world needs, then I do not know what is.

The North American Tour of *The Band's Visit* will launch in Providence, Rhode Island, in June 2019. Exact dates and additional cities will be announced at a later date.

A scene from *The Band's Visit*. (Photo, Matthew Murphy)

Seating is accessible to all parts of the Orchestra without steps. Wheelchair seating is located in the Orchestra only. Handrails are available at the end of every stepped row in the Mezzanine. There is one unisex wheelchair accessible restroom located on the main floor with no steps. The theatre does not have any elevators or escalators. The Barrymore Theatre provides at least 10 infrared assistive listening devices for every performance at the theatre. Beginning four weeks after a show's official opening night performance, at least 10 audio description devices are available for every performance at the theatre. In addition, there is unlimited access to downloadable audio description software for personal mobile devices, available beginning four weeks after a show's official opening night performance, which provides an automated detailed account of the visuals of the production, free of charge, for blind or partially sighted patrons. The theatre also offers hand-held devices and software that provide captioning for Deaf and Hard-of-Hearing patrons, available beginning four weeks after a show's official opening night performance. Additional devices can be available with at least 24 hours' notice by contacting Shubert Audience Services at (212) 944-3700 or audienceservices@shubertorg.com. There is also a representative at the Shubert Audience Services kiosk at every performance to assist any patron with the audio description devices, software, or captioning devices.

WHERE TO STAY: I absolutely love the historic Algonquin Hotel (www.algonquin.com). There was simply no other option when I booked this trip many months ago. Located in the heart of Midtown Manhattan, this jewel of historic New York hotels commands 44th

Street near 6th Avenue, just a short walk of a block and a half away from Times Square. The Algonquin first opened its doors in 1902. Today, it is part of the Marriott chain's Autograph Collection, an evolving ensemble of strikingly independent hotels. Each of the 181 rooms and 25 suites features a comfortable well-lit work desk, as well as complimentary Wi-Fi.

When you enter the hotel, you come face-to-face with the casual Lobby Lounge, along with The Round Table Restaurant. Just to the left is the hotel's trendy bar, aptly named The Blue Bar. As a cat lover, I was of course excited to see Hamlet VIII, the two-year-old orange cat who calls The Algonquin his home. According to hotel executive assistant Alice De Almeida, he was originally a feral cat found in Long Island and brought to the Bide-a-wee shelter (the oldest shelter in the Big Apple), where the Algonquin then adopted him as their own. He came to the hotel in July 2017 after their former cat, Matilda III, retired. "He is so friendly and loveable that people who never liked cats love him," Alice says proudly. "He has great purrsonality!"

The Algonquin, its bar and restaurant, have easy access for wheelchairs from the street. There is valet parking. The hotel has six ADA rooms and one ADA suite. There are two elevators. The staff is very helpful and friendly.

WHERE TO DINE: Over the past year, I have been fortunate to experience the extraordinary cuisine of master chef Geoffrey Zakarian at two of his restaurants: Georgie at the Montage Beverly Hills, and Point Royal at the Diplomat Resort in Hollywood, Florida. When looking for a place to dine near Times

... continued on page 15



Continued from page 14, **What's new in New York City? The Band's Visit, The Algonquin and The Lambs Club**

Square, I was pleasantly surprised to find another one of his restaurants, The Lambs Club, only a block away from our hotel.

Located at 132 West 44th Street, The Lambs Club offers Zakarian's modern approach to American cuisine with distinct ingredients, highly seasonal menus, and a signature approach to hospitality.

Zakarian and his talented culinary team marry their passion for food with their classical training to deliver exceptional dining experiences, whether it is a casual burger in The Bar or the sought-after Delmonico steak in the main dining room. A team of skilled chefs put forth daily breakfast, lunch, and dinner, offering guests dishes composed with the most seasonal and highest quality ingredients. Wine Director A.J. Ojeda-Pons oversees a wine list that has secured Wine Spectator's coveted "Two Glasses" distinction in their Restaurant Awards, where the restaurant is highlighted as one of the na-

tion's best. The World of Fine Wine quickly followed suit, presenting the restaurant with "Two Stars" in their World's Best Wine List. On the cocktail list, guests will find both classic and innovative cocktails, created with fresh ingredients and house-made infusions - a true revival of the craft of cocktail.

Inside The Lambs Club, guests are transported from the hustle and bustle of Broadway to the welcoming oasis of the restaurant's many one-of-a-kind spaces. The distinguished history that connects the landmark building to the Great White Way is prominently displayed in the main dining room, which boasts an enormous 18th century fireplace, a gift from Architect Stanford White.

We very much enjoyed our meal at the 90-seat restaurant. From a house-smoked pastrami sandwich for lunch and a Creekstone 28-day, dry-aged Delmonico steak at supper, the menus here touch all bases. Situated just a block from Times Square, the Lambs Club

provides the perfect setting for a pre- or post-theater bite, or even just an escape from the hustle and bustle.

For reservations call (212) 997-5262 or email reservations@thelambsclub.com. The restaurant is wheelchair accessible. ♻️



The Lambs Club dining room.



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TRAVEL

By Mike Cohen

The Pan Pacific Vancouver exudes luxury



The beautiful pool area at the Pan Pacific.

VANCOUVER - While in Vancouver recently we had the pleasure to spend an entire day and evening at the spectacular Pan Pacific Vancouver (<https://www.panpacificvancouver.com>), located at Canada Place. If picturesque views and an urban getaway are what you are after, then the Pan Pacific Vancouver luxury hotel does indeed offer stunning vistas and is close to the city's best attractions.

A spectacular 23-storey, 503-room, deluxe property, the hotel debuted on Vancouver's downtown waterfront on January 8, 1986. This world-renowned property combines the warmth of Canadian hospitality with contemporary North American service excellence to provide a superlative experience for guests and visitors. Since its completion, the hotel has attracted royalty, visiting heads of state, and entertainment luminaries than any other hotel or resort property in Western Canada.

It was a beautiful summer day when we visited, so what better spot to stay than poolside at the sundeck. We thoroughly enjoyed the lovely outdoor facility, featuring a heated salt-water swimming pool and a hot tub. There is also an indoor sauna for total relaxation. The panoramic views of the city harbor and coastal mountains were impec-

cable. There is a ramp for wheelchairs at the entrance to the pool deck.

During high season you can order drinks and food poolside; at other times there is a telephone for you to call in orders. Pool attendant, Steve started us off with some drinks and provided us with a nice lunch menu. While I opted for a delicious grilled chicken sandwich and a small salad, the three other members of our party selected the house crafted Angus beef burger served on a sesame brioche bun. They also ordered small salads.

Located on the eighth floor, the poolside is so beautifully structured. We had plenty of room to spread out on the nice lounge chairs while a table with an umbrella provided us with the necessary shade and a spot to enjoy our lunch. The water temperature was ideal and we appreciated the assortment of noodles which enabled us to glide relaxingly in the pool.

I was fortunate to meet Stephen Peters, the distinguished and dynamic general manager. He was pleased to inform me that the hotel was 100 percent occupied at this time. We hope to come back and stay on the property when there is room somewhere down the line. I was very appreciative when Peters accepted my request for a personal tour. It was clear from the get go that he is a hands on GM.

There are more than 400 people on staff here. He clearly knew everyone who passed by us, from housekeepers to bellmen.

In 2017, this hotel concluded a massive renovation program for all of its rooms. Thirteen guest rooms are designed for the comfort and accessibility of special needs travelers. All public areas at the hotel, including meeting venues, restaurants and Canada Place common areas, are wheelchair accessible. As for wheelchair accessible rooms, they feature extra wide hallways, a peephole at the sitting level, sliding closet doors with bars, railings in the bathtub and beside the toilet, the sink counter is lower with no sink stopper, you can request items such as raised toilet seats, bath seats and health club passes for roll in shower usage from housekeeping. Hearing Impaired Rooms are equipped with strobe lights.

DINING AT OCEANS 999

We enjoyed a wonderful dining experience at one of the hotel restaurants called Oceans 999. Boasting amazing mountain and harbour views, the restaurant serves up a delightful selection of Pacific Northwest cuisine prepared using fresh local ingredients. Savour an array of exquisite Italian dishes ranging from succulent fresh fish to hearty pastas on Saturday nights, or an impressive range of the chef's favourites, including dim sum,

savoury carved roasts and delectable desserts on Sunday nights. Our party of five was expertly guided by our server Harry. We started off with some drinks and shared some appetizers: the shrimp gyoza (sustainable shrimp and chive dumplings with sriracha aioli and ponzu dipping sauce) and a tempura prawn dynamite roll (oceanwise prawns, wasabi mayonnaise, Japanese chili sauce, mango and cucumber). There are nice salads and soups of the day. We tried a variety of main courses: the fish of the day, a halibut served on a bed of couscous and some rice on the side; the butter chicken, with steamed onion and cumin scented basmati rice with crispy grilled poppadum; the tenderloin steak; lamb chops; and some fish and chips. The atmosphere was superb, with options to sit inside or on the terrace. A musician played nice music in the background. This is another way to experience this gorgeous property, especially if you are not staying here. The menu is on their website.

For more information about the hotel call toll free-free from Canada at 1 (800) 663-1515 and from the USA at 1 (800) 937-1515 or email reservations@panpacificvancouver.com.





TRAVEL

By Mike Cohen

Accessibility is built into former Olympic and Paralympic Games host city Whistler

*The Peak 2 Peak Gondola.*

WHISTLER, B.C. - My family and I recently made our second visit to Whistler, B.C. (www.tourismwhistler.com), less than a two-hour drive from Vancouver and one of the host cities for the 2010 Winter Olympics.

Accessibility is built into the Whistler Village with its pedestrian-only streets, paved access to the Valley Trail and close proximity to transportation. Whistler's bus system includes accessibility features such as space for wheelchairs and easy access buses. Wheelchair accessible taxis are available on request from Whistler Resort Cabs at 1 (604) 938-1515. Meanwhile, wheelchair rentals are available from the Shoppers Drugmart (1 (604) 905-5666) and the Marketplace Rexall (1 (604) 932-2303).

Whistler Adaptive provides programming, equipment and coaching for 18 different para-sport disciplines. The program has become a leader in adaptive sports, not only in the province of B.C., but also in the country. It also provides support for people with disabilities wishing to participate in various recreational activities, including extreme activities like zip lining. Given that some of the recreational activities will require some modification or extra assistance, it is recommended that you book early to avoid disappointment.

Whistler Mountain is wheelchair accessible with gondola service to the top of Whistler Mountain during winter and summer months. The Peak 2 Peak Gondola is available for sightseeing tours only.

Whistler Sport Legacies is responsible for three of Whistler's 2010 Winter Games Venues: the Whistler Sliding Centre, Whistler Olympic Park, and the Whistler Athletes' Centre. These facilities were used during the Paralympic Games and have accessibility features. Whistler Olympic Park is a particularly great destination for the entire family for all levels of ability and provides designated parking, accessible trails and an accessible lodge with accessible bathrooms.

The 4,000 square-metre inclusive playground provides play opportunities for children of all abilities or parents with disabilities to allow side-by-side play with friends, families and caregivers. Located on the perimeter of Whistler Olympic Plaza, the playground has become a gathering place for community and visitors alike.

There is a comprehensive website for visitors with disabilities at www.whistlerforthe-disabled.com. Wheelchair accessible taxis are available from Whistler Resort Cabs. Call 1 (604) 938-1515 to book.

There is no better experience than the Peak 2 Peak Gondola. You first take the Whistler Express Gondola from the Village, which takes 25 minutes. You'll arrive at the Roundhouse, a lodge where you can have lunch or a snack, and take in the spectacular view of the mountains on the opposite side of the valley. We took advantage of that opportunity. The view as I enjoyed my Miso soup was nothing short of spectacular.

Our next move would have been to hop on the Peak 2 Peak Gondola for a thrilling 11-minute ride over to Blackcomb Mountain. Unfortunately for us, there was some maintenance work the day we visited and the Peak 2 Peak was closed.

Besides the Peak 2 Peak Gondola, which still holds the Guinness World Record for longest and highest lift, The Peak Cloudraker Suspension Skybridge is the latest attraction and it was part of our 360 package. It is 130 metres long and goes from Whistler Peak to the West Ridge, which crosses the Whistler Bowl. Upon completion it will have a viewing platform on the West Ridge side. Yes, the bridge does sway a bit, but we all felt very secure. We even saw someone navigating it in a wheelchair.

The Peak 2 Peak is wheelchair accessible in

the summer while a sled is used in the winter to transport those in need to the Blackcomb Lodge.

WHERE TO STAY: We were so pleased to spend some time at The Hilton Whistler (www.hiltonwhistler.com). Our family thoroughly enjoyed a day at the outdoor pool area, which has plenty of very comfortable lounge chairs and umbrella coverage. The water was the perfect temperature and the pool itself a nice size. There are two Jacuzzis, one outside and the other in the fitness center. You can also soothe your sore muscles in the sauna. The pool area is completely wheelchair accessible, with a level walkway from the elevators and lobby to the deck.

We were provided with a menu of items we could conveniently order right from our chairs. The hotel is ideally located in the heart of Whistler Village. Their spacious and newly renovated guest rooms are designed with mountain style elegance and incorporate many natural elements into its design, including indigenous art from the Sea-to-Sky corridor. Many of the rooms offer jetted soaker tubs and fully equipped kitchens with full-size fridges, microwaves, and stove tops. Sales and Marketing Director Allison Brown was kind enough to give me a tour of the

... continued on page 18



Continued from page 17, **Accessibility is built into former Olympic and Paralympic Games host city Whistler**



The wheelchair accessible entry to the Village.

property, noting that when it debuted in 1982 it was the first large hotel to open in Whistler.

THE ULTIMATE ESCAPE ROOM: Escape Whistler (<http://escapewhistler.com>) was a lot of fun. There are four escape rooms to try: Pirate ship, Pinball Machine, Buried Cabin or Rabbit Hole. Each room is very different in terms of game, difficulty and style! If you are an escape room veteran, you could be confident to try any of the rooms straight off the bat. There are two wheelchair accessible rooms to choose from - The Buried Cabin and The Pinball Machine. The cost is \$30 plus GST per player. Children, four and under, are free. There are two to six players allowed per room. Kids, 12 and under, must be accompanied by a parent or guardian (19 years or older).

They are open seven days a week. For information, call 1 (604) 962-1117.

DINING OUT: We were very excited to return to the Brewhouse Restaurant (<http://www.markjamesgroup.com/brewhouse.html>). This is one of the busiest spots in the Whistler Village all year round. With a separate restaurant, bar and mezzanine, the Whistler Brewhouse is capable of accommodating groups large and small. The pub has a cozy two-sided fireplace and lots of TVs, making it the perfect place to watch the game when you're tired from playing all day. The restaurant is warm and family friendly with a great kids' menu and a huge patio for Whistler's long, hot summers. The cuisine is an inspired and appetizing mix of barbeque and rotisserie classics, with excep-

tional pizza and pasta options. These flavours are complemented by their range of handcrafted ales and lagers, brewed onsite. There are even four kinds of poutine. Our server, Julie was from Sherbrooke, Quebec, and has been there for seven years. Try the huge bowl of matzo ball soup, the Szechuan chicken lettuce wraps and the tempura tuna maki roll, a brick oven pizza or the beef sliders. The terrace and the main level are wheelchair accessible.

One of our favorite and more unique spots we recalled from our last visit to Whistler was the Mongolie Grill (www.mongoliegrill.com). This is the ultimate "fun" dining experience with fresh and tasty ingredients grilled to perfection in front of your eyes! I love the creative aspect to this place, where you go about choosing your own stir-fry combination! Select your favourite ingredients and flavour with your chosen sauce combinations. Your meal will be weighed by the chefs then theatrically grilled to perfection. There is an elevator that can bring clients up to their second level dining room. The terrace is accessible as well.

Hy's Steakhouse & Cocktail Bar (www.hyssteakhouse.com) is always a special dining experience and their Whistler location is no exception. Every ingredient is chosen to highlight the top quality of perfectly grilled steaks and the freshest fish and seafood. A wide range of classic and modern appetizers and accompaniments make choosing difficult, but satisfaction guaranteed. With a hungry four-year-old in our party, we ordered some delicious bread cheese toast to fill his empty

tummy. The adults liked it as well. For appetizers, we shared the Ahi tuna and a nice Caesar salad while our little man requested and received a bowl of kid's macaroni and cheese. For the main courses, two of us selected the eight-ounce filet mignon. It was perfectly grilled and cut like butter. The 20-ounce bone in rib was more than enough for two others to share while the remaining order consisted of prawns



The Hilton Whistler at dusk.

and scallops. While we were all quite full, the six of us happily split a piece of chocolate bourbon cake. The restaurant is wheelchair accessible.

If you are looking for the best sushi in Whistler, consider Harajuku Izakaya (<https://www.harajuku.ca>). We were extremely delighted with the selection. Harajuku has a very origi-

nal menu. For starters we recommend the tuna avocado yukke, the popcorn calamari, the brie cheese, and the black cod. We opted for three kinds of assorted sashimi (Albacore tuna, Sockeye salmon and Yellowtail). Next came avocado oshi sushi, salmon avocado poke, crispy tuna roll and Rock n' Roll. The restaurant is wheelchair accessible. Reservations are recommended. Call 1 (604) 962-7222. 🍴

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