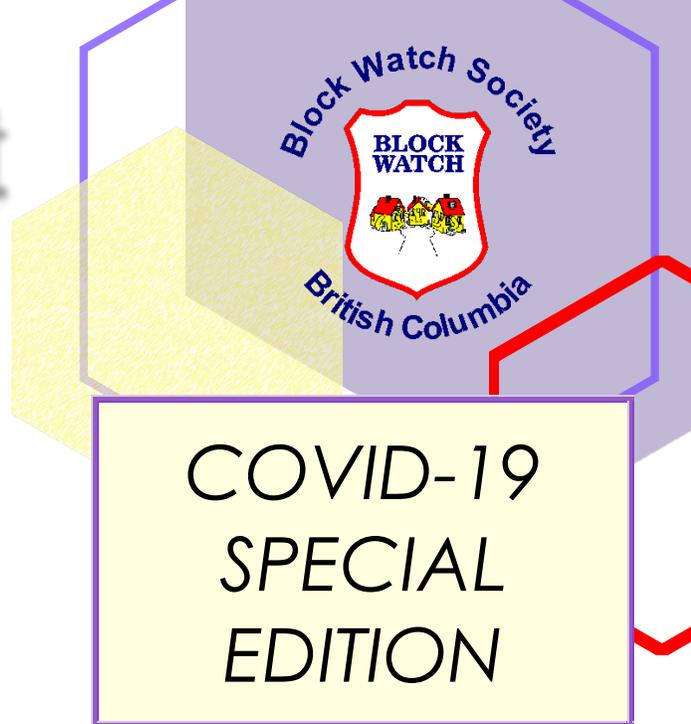


Block Watch Beat

Summer 2020

A Newsletter for Block Watch Groups



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Block Watch Builds Community Resilience

Dawn Dickinson, Burnaby RCMP

Not too long ago in Burnaby we heard from the adult son of a long time Captain who had recently died. The son had called to tell program staff how much his father's involvement in the program had meant to him. His dad had asked him to contact the Unit to tell us that Block Watch had been the nexus for many of his long-time friendships and neighbourhood support in his later years, which he deeply appreciated.

Staff working in Block Watch programs get to hear from Captains all the time. During these conversations, folks will often tell us snippets about some of the benefits they have received from being a part of the program. We hear about the neighbourhood clean-ups, offers of snow shovelling assistance and block BBQs.

These meaningful individual experiences are part of a larger resilience building that happens in Block Watch neighbourhoods.

Block Watch increases communication and social cohesion between neighbours. Block Watch asks folks to look out for one another. Block Watch builds a better sense of connection to the places where we live.

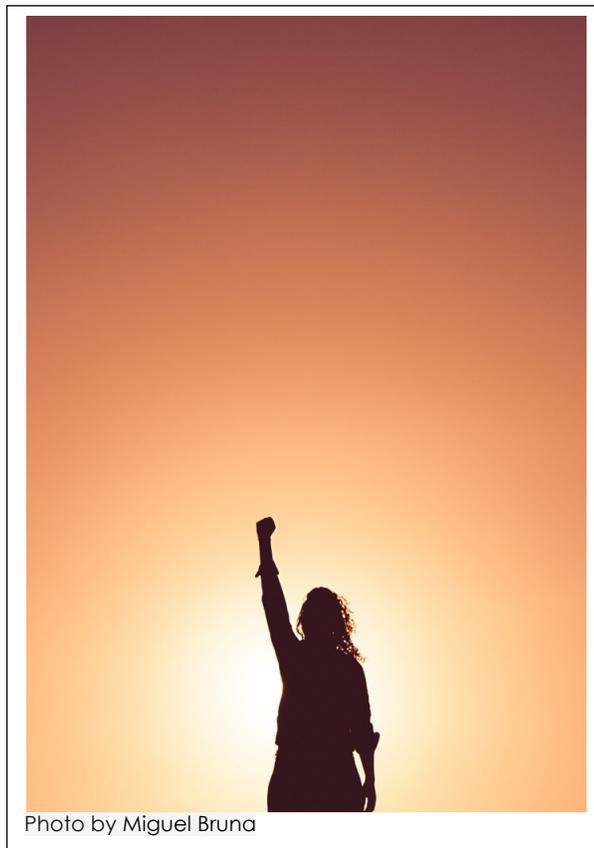


Photo by Miguel Bruna

Community resilience is the ability to weather disturbance and still function. (www.resilience.org) Resilient communities will fare better in the face of shared challenges such as natural disasters, crime trends or even to some extent the current COVID-19 pandemic. Offering to pick-up groceries or reaching out to support a senior neighbour in need is a meaningful act. Looking out for one another, supporting neighbours and remaining connected in the face of adversity – these are Block Watch ideals and they build community resilience.

Block Watch & Physical Distancing

Mike Moyer, Regional District of North Okanagan

This has been an unprecedented time. We have not previously seen a pandemic in our lifetime, and it has come with a host of emotions and reactions. We have been told that the most important thing we can do personally is to wash our hands, keep our physical distance, and stay home when possible. We are now seeing that physical distance is one of several measures which have helped to flatten the curve and slow the spread of COVID-19 in BC.

So, the proof is in the pudding. While replacing our familiar habits with unfamiliar ones has begun to work, it has come with some fear, uncertainty, anxiety and a sense of helplessness. In times like these, it is essential to focus on what we can control, and it is empowering to know that doing these things is helping others.

- Work from home if possible
- Cancel typical group gatherings until further notice
- Keep in touch with Block Watch members by email, social media & phone calls
- Remind your members to follow creditable sources like the BCCDC (bccdc.ca)
- Try a new way to communicate such as: WhatsApp, video chat, etc.)
- Offer to shop safely for neighbours who might need the help*

***NOTE:** If you would like to be part of the coordinated response to help neighbours in need, please contact **BC211**. For example, you can sign up to help seniors at

www.bc211.ca/safe-seniors-strong-communities/



What does this mean for Block Watch groups?

According to our health organizations, this means changes to our usual way we operate to minimize close contact, including avoiding crowded places and non-essential gatherings. Limiting usual greetings such as handshakes, and keeping your physical distance to at least 2 arm lengths (or 2 metres) from others. This goes against our operating principles of bringing people together and helping them to get to know their neighbours. To help you stay on track, read these tips on the left to stay connected while physical distancing measures are in place.

How long will this last?

It is unclear how long we will have to follow these strict practices, but planning is now underway to gradually soften restrictions. As we've seen, the COVID-19 situation evolves daily, and health experts are doing their best to get ahead of it.

Let's continue to do our part and support our health experts by following their directions and limiting our physical contact.

The Critical Role of Neighbours in Stopping Domestic Violence

Celine Lee
Block Watch Society of BC

The United Nations chief Antonio Guterres tweeted, "Many women under lockdown for COVID-19 face violence where they should be safest: in their own homes."

All levels of government across Canada have asked Canadians to stay home in order to prevent the spread of COVID-19, but not every home is safe. Research has shown incidences of domestic

violence increase whenever families spend more time together, and across Canada, preliminary reports show that rates of gender-based violence and domestic violence have

increased 20 to 30 percent since the pandemic's onset.

Domestic violence and abuse can happen to anyone; it does not discriminate. Although women are more often victimized, men also experience abuse - especially verbal and emotional.

Research has demonstrated that isolation, economic uncertainty, crowded or precarious housing, and social disorder and disruption are all risk factors for intimate partner violence, domestic abuse, elder and child abuse, and sexual violence. Trauma, substance abuse and stress brought on by the pandemic, and aggravated by the order to stay home, have created an environment for an increase in domestic violence.

Due to the measures put in place to prevent the spread of COVID-19, reaching out for medical, mental health, police, or community-based supports has become more difficult for those who experience violence and abuse. For example, calling a crisis line may be more difficult for women if they are isolated at home with the abuser. Likewise, seeing a specialized counsellor for mental health support or attending court to access a protection order are made impossible due to closures and other restrictions.

What can you do?

Sometimes the signs that abuse or violence is happening in your neighbourhood can be obvious – for example, you may hear arguments, violent noises, and sounds of distress coming from a home. Everyone can play a role in stopping this kind of violence and abuse.

If you suspect that a neighbour is experiencing abuse or violence, here are some options to safely intervene and stop the cycle of violence, even while maintaining physical distancing.

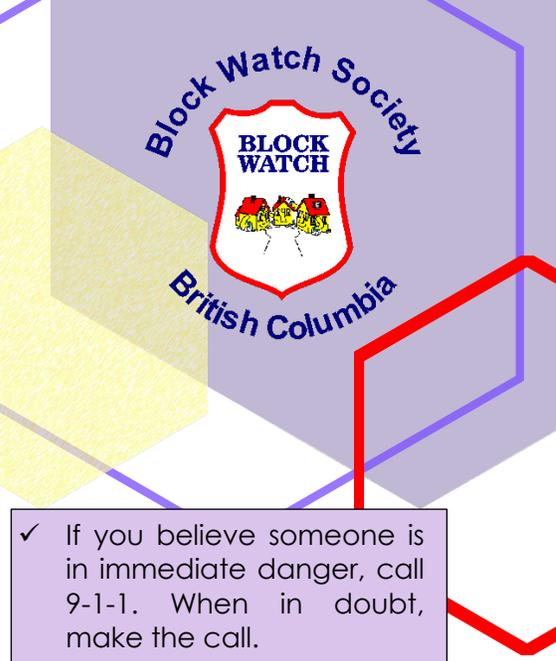
✓ Do not confront the abuser about their behaviour.

✓ Check on those around you. You can say 'hello' to them while out on a walk or invite them to reach out to you if they need anything.

✓ They may only be able to leave the house for short periods of time. You may only have brief interactions with the potential victim outside of their house. Discreetly and directly ask the person if they are safe or if they need help. Only try to start a conversation if they are alone.

✓ Make note of an altercation if you see or hear it happening. Offer your presence from a distance to observe and call for help if you believe someone is in immediate danger.

✓ Use your knowledge as a neighbour to know if it is safe to disrupt the altercation by calling out knocking on the door. *Never put yourself in harm's way*, but you may want to alert your neighbours (anonymously if possible) that someone is there and witnessing the altercation.



✓ If you believe someone is in immediate danger, call 9-1-1. When in doubt, make the call.

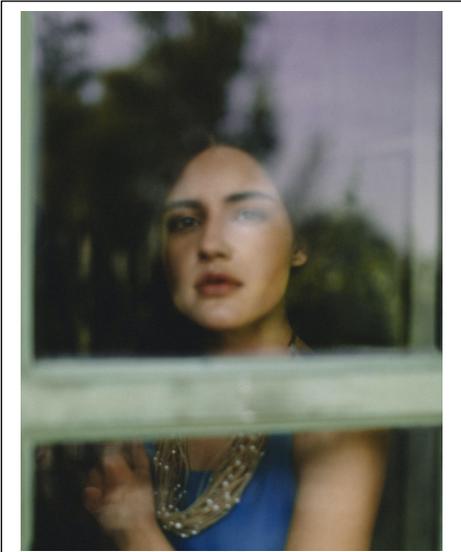


Photo by Pratik Gupta

Anti-violence support workers are still available across BC to provide emotional support, safety planning and help accessing other resources.

Check to see if your city has its own Victim Services Unit, or you can call **VictimLink BC**, a toll-free, confidential, multilingual telephone information and referral service for victims and survivors of sexual assault, domestic violence, child abuse and other crimes.

Available 24 hours a day, 7 days a week:

Call 1-800-563-0808

Email: VictimLinkBC@bc211.ca

How to Recognize a Thief During a Pandemic

Due to the Centre for Disease Control's COVID-19 guidelines, we will see more gloves and covered faces. Alone, a covered face and gloves are not reason to be suspicious and call the police. However, if you combine feeling concerned, with suspicious body language and someone using a mask as way to hide their face to commit a crime, watch a little longer to see what they are really up to. And, if it all adds up – call the police!

A person who is intent on committing a crime, or who is in 'crime mode,' has to change their body language. Suspicious body language includes dawdling, wandering, hovering, meandering, doubling back and not walking with purpose.



Property Crime Thief or Savvy COVID-19 Wear?
Photo by Leah Marlay

Ask Yourself:

What is their body language telling you? Are they shoulder checking to see who is watching them? Are they looking into people's homes, windows, yards or vehicles? Are they walking between houses or buildings? Are they trying car or home door handles? Are they hanging back at the entrance to your condo complex hoping you'll let them follow you in? Are they wearing what could

Leah Marlay
Vancouver Police
Department



be a disguise? Property crime thieves often wear hoodies, sunglasses and baseball hats to hide their faces from surveillance and dash cams.

Are you one of those people who never sees anything? You might see more if you **look more often**. Being aware is not meant to increase fear, but to increase your personal and your neighbourhood's safety. As a Block Watch member, we are all looking out for one another. Try to remember to pay conscious attention to what is happening around you whenever you are:

- ✓ out for a walk
- ✓ looking out a window
- ✓ driving in or out of your neighbourhood
- ✓ walking your dog
- ✓ doing yardwork
- ✓ going to and from your vehicle, etc.

When you are witnessing a suspicious person....

Covertly and safely get a description, location, direction of travel and, if possible, call the police while you are still watching them. If it is a crime in progress, call 9-1-1. Unless someone's personal safety is at risk and if you can avoid it, try not to alert the suspect that you're on to them so the police have a chance to get into position and make an arrest. If you are calling after the incident with a time lag, call your [local Non-Emergency](#) number. Look up the number now and add it to your cell phone in case you need it.

Testing car and home door handles is a crime. A thief has shown intent to commit a crime even if the door doesn't open. Call the police.

Working together, we can drive down crime and create safer neighbourhoods. If we call the police on thieves, they will avoid the neighbourhood. We've all heard the saying: *When you see something, say something* – and call the police as soon as you can.

ICBC Crash Tips, Updated for COVID-19

- If anyone is injured, call 911.
- Move the vehicles off the road if it is safe to do so. Avoid discussing who is at fault for the crash.
- Maintain at least two metres distance from those in other cars and witnesses, even as you collect their personal information (driver's name, driver's licence number, province/state and contact info as well as witness' name and contact info).
- Take photos of both cars, including any damage and licence plates. Record the year, make and model of cars involved.
- Avoid sharing a pen to write down information.
- After recording the other car's licence plate, consider exchanging phone numbers to call or text other information.

Christine Kirby
ICBC

- Many claims can be reported on-line.
- ICBC is here 24 hours a day, 7 days a week to help you with your claim. We can be reached at 604-520-8222 (Lower Mainland) or 1-800-910-4222 (elsewhere in B.C., Canada or the U.S.).
- If your car needs repairs, our collision and glass partners are here to help you. They are following provincial health guidelines and they'll sanitize your vehicle before and after the repairs.



SPOTLIGHT on a Coordinator:

Abbotsford PD's Kelly Pater

Regan Borisenko
Vernon RCMP



Kelly has had the pleasure of serving the community of Abbotsford (and former Matsqui Police - amalgamated in 1995) for the past 32 years! She has been in the position of their Community Policing Coordinator for the past 15 years

and loves the opportunity to have a variety of duties and Community Connections. Kelly has served on the Board of Directors for the Block Watch Society as a Director and Secretary for 6 years and assisted in the update of the Policy, bylaws and Participant Manual.

Her programs at Abbotsford PD include Volunteer Coordination, coordinating Summer Kids camps for inner city and high risk kids, supporting their Youth Police Academy as an instructor and Coordinator, as well as delivering Seniors Programming and special events. If you see Abby PD at an event, Kelly is usually behind the scenes organizing and reluctantly

sometimes right up front!

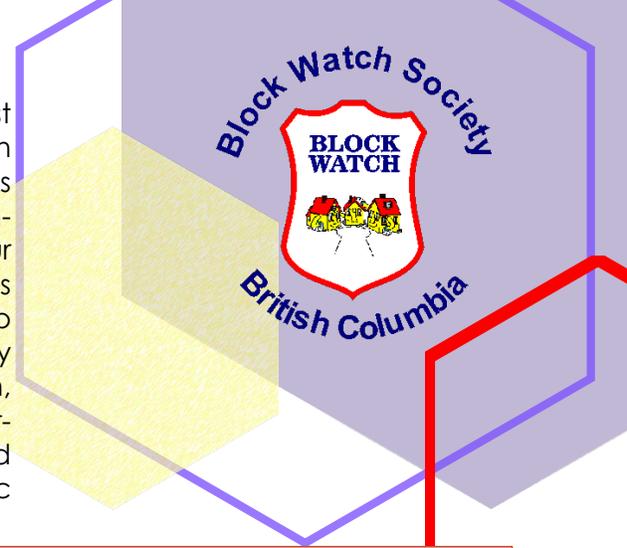
All that said, one of Kelly's favourite duties is coordinating the Abbotsford Block Watch Program. Kelly is in her element meeting people and supporting them. Some neighbourhoods are easy to manage, and they embrace the principles of Block Watch, Crime Prevention and Neighbourhood cohesiveness. Others can be a challenge and it's these that she loves taking on.

Challenges can include neighbour disputes, social disturbance with home-lessness in backyards, seeing an increase in property crime, and guiding participants through target-

hardening to reduce the problem. Also, she enjoys helping neighbourhoods think outside the box on how they can better solve an issue to reduce the occurrence of public mischief, youth gathering, and speeders in their neighbourhoods.

The Abbotsford program involves over 12,000 homes within 375 participating neighbourhoods. These neighbourhoods are a mix of single family homes, multi-family townhomes, and strata properties – and yes, they even get businesses and churches involved when they are embedded in a neighbourhood! Over the years the

Program has evolved from just being a crime prevention program - reporting suspicious activity, knowing your neighbour and marking your property – to one that has these groups taking leadership in their neighbourhoods by keeping their streets clean, being prepared for emergencies, to being a good neighbour during a pandemic like COVID-19.



“Abbotsford can show a definite decrease in property crime and calls for service in our Block Watch Neighbourhoods but more importantly these Block Watch Neighbourhoods are working together for a better neighbourhood and are the sustainable and recoverable neighbourhoods in times of need!”

– Kelly Pater, Abbotsford Community Policing Coordinator

Tips on Preventing Business Break & Enters

Roy Morgan
Regional District of Central Okanagan

- Remove all valuables from storefront displays.
- Remove all cash from cash registers. Leave open with the cash tray out and visibly empty.
- Ensure alarm systems are working and that all contact lists are up-to-date.
- Post on doors/windows that the premises are monitored by an alarm company and that no money is kept on site.
- If your premises is closed, keep a log of visits by owner or staff as this will assist police investigators if you do experience a break-in.
- Consider installing a surveillance/security system, that you can monitor remotely.
- Consider installing security film on windows / glass to help prevent easy entry.
- Keep some lighting on inside to help with video surveillance. Consider adding timers to lighting.
- Ensure all doors and windows are locked and secure.
- Ensure all exterior lighting is functioning and on — consider adding motion sensor lights.
- Remove anything on the exterior which could be used to gain entry to your premises (bricks, ladders, poles, construction materials etc.).
- Check on your business frequently and note any damage or potential tampering to windows and doors. Keep track of when you check (have a log), and go at different times of the day.
- If neighbouring businesses are deemed essential and have remained open, request that they be vigilant to the traffic and activity around your business.



Photo by Erik Mclean

Greetings from BC RCMP Headquarters!

We know that COVID-19 has made this an extremely difficult time for communities and neighbourhoods. Luckily, this is the type of situation where strong Block Watch groups can really have an impact. Block Watch groups inherently know the strengths and vulnerabilities of their member households. By capitalizing on those strengths and supporting the vulnerabilities, we will all come through this stronger than ever.

RCMP detachments across the province are continuing to provide core policing services and work hard to ensure community safety due to the impacts of COVID-19. Our detachments are continually assessing their service delivery and program options, and where necessary, reducing front counter services and enhancing their precautions, which of course extends to the RCMP frontline.

To help ensure police and public safety, callers can expect to answer additional questions whenever they contact 9-1-1 or their local police non-emergency lines. These questions are focused on whether anyone in the caller's residence, or at the scene of an incident have been diagnosed with COVID-19 or is exhibiting symptoms of the COVID-19 virus. It is important to note that a risk of potential exposure to COVID-19 will not stop our police officers from attending priority calls in your community. These questions allow our frontline officers to appropriately prepare for their attendance to the scene, allowing them

Jane Hanson
RCMP E-Division - Crime
Prevention Services

to take the necessary steps to keep themselves and others safe.

While our frontline workers continue the day-to-day job of policing, the rest of us are working hard, both in new socially distant office configurations and from our homes, to support that work. Some of this involves adapting

our programs and services to the current reality.

While we may have to rely on less traditional means of engaging with communities right now, you can be assured that we will continue to provide cutting edge community safety and crime prevention information. We can always be found on our Website (<http://bc.rcmp-grc.gc.ca>) and on [Facebook](#), [Twitter](#), and [Instagram](#).

Now more than ever, we value the work of all

Block Watch groups in BC. But, first and foremost, we want you to look after yourself. There is truth in the saying "you can't pour from an empty cup." Self-care is not selfish. By protecting yourself, you're better able to serve your families, your neighbours, and your community.

Thank you and be safe!



Chalk art: Nyla Bencherifa (12); Photo by Gabriel Pelletier

WEBSITE: As a member of the Block Watch Society of BC, all the materials you need to keep your groups engaged and informed are available online (<https://blockwatch.com/>). Local Block Watch Coordinators are given passwords with their membership to access resources on training, administration, etc. Coordinators are encouraged to ask for their password and add to this shared pool of resources. This way, we are more efficient and current. Block Watch participants, please stay connected and visit the website for the latest tips and information.

Notes from the President

Regan Borisenko, Vernon RCMP



Block Watch is a brand that creates Crime Prevention Groups involved in Community Safety throughout British Columbia.

For 27 years we have been in the service of the Province and our Block Watch Society members. Our mandate is to bring crime prevention and community safety education to BC municipalities and communities, and we are to be the only organized province-wide, Operational Crime Prevention Program in Canada.

It is clear that not only is this Program vital for activating the residents of our Province to be part of the solution to crime, but it also plays an important role in the evolution of a centralized Operational Crime Prevention Program that our government and police agencies alike can continue to utilize in combating crime across the province.

You will find that we have added profiles of all our Directors to your website so everyone can know more about those leading and shaping the future of the Society (<https://blockwatch.com/board-of-directors/>). Please check them out and, if you have any contact with them, offer thanks for the countless hours they have contributed to making this one of the best Crime Prevention Programs in Canada.

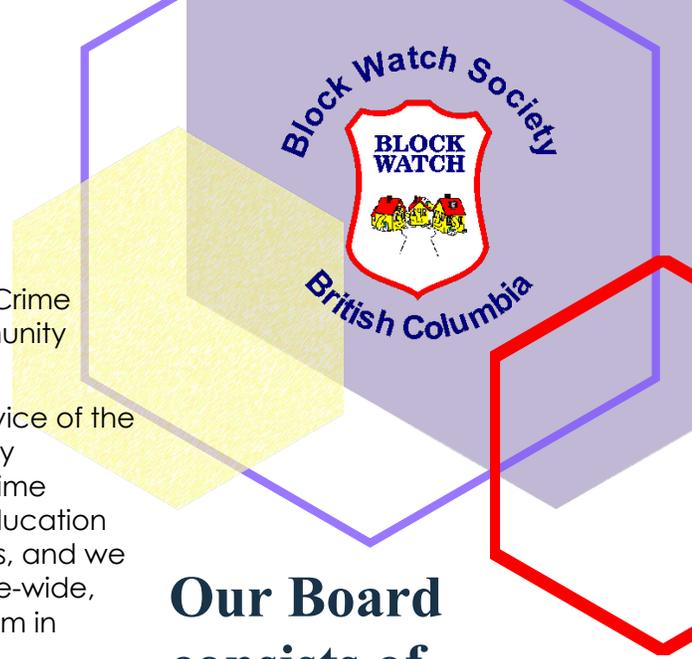
COVID-19 has affected all parts and aspects of our lives and another victim of this pandemic is the Community Grants for 2020. I understand that this will disappoint some of you and I ask your understanding and patience during this time of uncertainty. Our strength is in the community cohesiveness created when being part of a Block Watch Crime Prevention Group and the grant was a small opportunity to help people get together. Both the Province and the Society need to make sure you are all safe and will notify you when we can get together again as soon as possible.

May is Emergency Preparedness Month and in preparation for any flooding or fires that may come our way please check out the following websites:

<https://www.getprepared.gc.ca/cnt/rsrscs/pblctns/yprprdnssgd/index-en.aspx>

<https://www.ready.gov/kit>

Be safe - be prepared!



Our Board consists of...

POLICE AGENCY DIRECTORS:

Regan Borisenko – City of Vernon
Dawn Dickinson – Burnaby RCMP
Kimberly Kelley – Victoria PD
Leah Marlay – Vancouver PD
Roy Morgan – Regional District of Central Okanagan
Mike Moyer – Regional District of North Okanagan
Gabriel Pelletier – Surrey RCMP

CORPORATE & ASSOCIATE DIRECTORS:

Jane Hanson – E Division RCMP
Christine Kirby - ICBC

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OTHER WAYS TO CONNECT

YouTube: [Block Watch of BC](https://www.youtube.com/Block%20Watch%20of%20BC)

Twitter: [@bcblockwatch](https://twitter.com/bcblockwatch)

Facebook: [@bcblockwatch](https://www.facebook.com/bcblockwatch)

We acknowledge the support of the Province of British Columbia.

The Block Watch Society of BC Newsletter is a collective effort of volunteer Directors and Society staff. This edition was edited by Gabriel Pelletier. If you see any errors, please notify blockwatch@blockwatch.com