

# perspectives

...on the Semiahmoo Peninsula



Carolers in Victorian garb sing holiday favourites as part of the annual Christmas on the Peninsula festivities.

File photo

Annual event returns with dozens of activities for all ages

## Christmas spirit returns to Peninsula

Alex Browne  
Arts Reporter

Christmas comes but once a year – but in White Rock it starts the last weekend of November.

Thanks to the original vision of Christmas on the Peninsula Society founder Liv Butow – who has always been inspired by memories of Christmases in her home village of Moss, south of Oslo, Norway – the European tradition of a special uptown launch of a month-long celebration is picking up momentum in the city.

This year's Christmas on the Peninsula event – the fifth – is on Saturday, Nov. 30 – and the festival now encompasses a wide-ranging group of volunteers and contributors.

"The festival has been growing each year – it has evolved into a

holiday tradition," said Joy Zhang, director of promotions and volunteers for the event.

"It recreates the classic European tradition with programs embracing the true spirit of Christmas, with organizers dressed in old-fashioned Victorian costumes."

Some favourite features of Christmas on the Peninsula are confirmed to return this year, she said.

First United Church's popular Breakfast in Bethlehem (8:45-11:30 a.m.) will get the day off to an early start, while roving carolers will once again be seen through the uptown area from Five Corners to the Miramar Village Plaza by the White Rock Community Centre.

There will be a Christmas Cafe and Charity Fair at Star of the Sea

Centre, The Living Room Thrift Store will feature a collection of

Nativity scenes, Small Ritual Coffee House will again provide the venue for 'Christmas Jazz and Crafts,' and Laura's Coffee on the Corner at Five Corners will feature Christmas-themed readings by this reporter from 1-3 p.m.

Mini-gingerbread-house-decorating workshops will be ongoing at White Rock Community Church, Christmas trees from around the world will be on display at World Serve Thrift Store, while Sweets and Talks For a Healthy Christmas will be at the Healthymart Wellness Centre.

Christmas movies will be screened at the Fellowship Baptist Church, while Coast

Capital Playhouse (home of the White Rock Players' Club) will host an open house with Christmas snacks.

As in previous years, many activities will be focused at the event's principal venue, White Rock Community Centre.

The indoor Christmas Market and concession will be open 10 a.m.-5 p.m.; arts and crafts activities will take place 11 a.m.-4 p.m.; the market's Main Stage will be present Christmas entertainment with a variety of local performers and music groups (10 a.m.-4 p.m.) and Christmas 4 Kids will have a host

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of songs, stories and games for the little ones, 1-3 p.m.

Outside at the Miramar Village Plaza, food and beverages, including hamburgers, hot cider and roasted chestnuts will be served 11 a.m.-4 p.m.; there will be a VIP holly-by-donation table featuring a "who's who" of community leaders (11 a.m.-4 p.m.), while Christmas Carols by various groups and other activities will take place throughout the day.

At 4 p.m., the mini parade featuring a Christmas band and donkey will lead the crowd around the blocks to the Christmas tree at the back of the centre, where Mayor Wayne Baldwin will conduct the Christmas lighting ceremony at 4:15 p.m. accompanied by the Stella Maris Choir, directed by Trudi Stammer.

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# 'Hundreds of hours' to organize

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The Salvation Army Jubilee Brass will play under the large tent at the plaza until 5:15 p.m., leading into Saron Mynhardt and White Rock Children's Choir's popular candlelight sing-along at nearby St. John's Presbyterian Church (5:15-6:15 p.m.)

Such a packed schedule calls for a year's-worth of preparation, Zhang notes.

"A seamless festival that comes across as effortless, on the day, takes hundreds and hundreds of hours of behind-the-scenes organizing effort," she said.

"Last year 50-60 community organizations participated and collaborated with the Christmas on the Peninsula Society... and more than 2,000 visitors came to show their support and enthusiasm towards the festival."

The vision of Butow and other members of the society is - one day - to transform all of White Rock and South Surrey into a Christmas village during the season, Zhang said.

"They envision glistening Christmas lights framing dwellings and hung on tree branches, Christmas displays in shop windows, festive garlands silhouetting store fronts, and the aroma of Christmas goodies

permeating the crisp air."

To take a step further, she said the festival will need more active involvement and a direct contribution from local businesses and churches, including a bigger and better parade, plus a co-ordinated program of store decoration from Marine Drive to uptown White Rock for the month of December.

Eventually, organizers would also like to see businesses follow suit throughout the Peninsula,

including Ocean Park, Crescent Beach and Grandview Corners, Zhang said.

"By then a quintessential Christmas wonderland that goes beyond the current Christmas on the Peninsula will be born," she added.

For more details on other participants on Nov. 30 and information on other upcoming events through December, visit [www.christmasonthepeninsula.com](http://www.christmasonthepeninsula.com)