

# **President's Report**

## **Victoria Regional Pickleball Association 2026**

At last year's AGM we passed a resolution to amalgamate with the Saanich Peninsula Pickleball Association, and the results of that vote informed much of what we did early in 2025 and, in fact, throughout the year. Brian Harrigan joined the Board to ensure that the issues important to the former SPPA members were kept front and centre, and I believe that we succeeded in this. As late in the year as December I attended an open house and spoke to the Mayor of North Saanich and other officials to support the many pickleball players who showed up to voice our concerns and desires. New courts opened up for booking in Central Saanich at the multi-sport facility in Central Saanich; four new, dedicated pickleball courts are scheduled to open in Centennial Park in early summer 2026.

Brian, it turns out, brought much more to the table. His background helped us, along with long-time VRPA member Malcolm Macaulay, get to the heart of District of Saanich's new requirement that groups who book at Pearkes to purchase insurance. There are two key issues to this requirement: first, the District seems to be shifting costs onto players; and second, the terms of the contracts could shift responsibility for losses onto the permit holder (either VRPA or a private facilitator) and not Saanich even if it was the actions of Saanich that caused the loss. VRPA obtains its insurance through Pickleball Canada at no extra cost to the association or to players, but the potential liability shift that Saanich proposes is problematic. Our contracts with UVIC, for example, contain no such language. We continue to work with Saanich in an attempt at a resolution.

We are building on our recent success with the Berwick Women's tournament to offer more programs at UVIC. This has proven to be a bit of a struggle as we try to determine what offerings make sense to our members there. Our understanding is that the First Metropolitan Church site will cease to be available to us as of summer 2026, so working with UVIC is one alternative option. We're also working with the City of Victoria to offer advice on how they might best structure court bookings at the new Topaz Park facility. If you have ideas about what might work well there, please pass them along.

The Activating Youth Pickleball program led by Connie McCann was a tremendous success in the spring of 2025. Over 1800 elementary students took part in the program, which culminated with a Slamboree in May with students from the schools competing in teams against the other schools. This program continues in 2026 and will almost certainly be even more successful. Thanks to the legion of VRPA members who make this program possible!

Programs that the VRPA runs for its members (instructional and non-instructional) consumed much of our time and money. Our offerings in early Fall did not enrol well for a variety of reasons, including the excellent weather we had in September and early October. The programs team (Denise Wheeldon, Anne Tremblay, Heather Fawkes, and Liam McTavish) created a survey that hundreds of members filled out. We used the results to build out our Winter/Spring programs, which have enrolled more fully. Demand for our higher level classes (4.0+) continues to exceed capacity by a large margin. Our pilot project to select people for those classes has been successful, but we continue to refine it to try to find a way to balance the needs of the entire class with everyone who wants to participate.

The three tournaments we ran this year were even more successful than the previous year in pretty much every way. The tournament directors (Leah Gordon and Krista Josselyn) and their teams make these tournaments possible from the pickleball side of things. The sponsorship team (Tessa Graham, Vicki Walker, Becca Stuve, Julie Leung, and Barb Collombin) and event coordinators (Cathy Wong, Nicola Reddington, Kari Frazer, and Virginia Jacklin) worked hard to find sponsors for the prizes and food that ensure that the players have a great experience (including pizza at the Christmas tournament!). Communications about the Christmas tournament and other things pickleball come from James Nielsen, who also runs the Vancouver Island Pickleball (VIP) website and publishes the VIP newsletter.

As the VRPA grows, we're considering how best to support the work we do (Damaris Brix, does much of this behind the scenes). One idea we're working with is a plan to hire an Executive Director to oversee operations and ensure that we have a central point of contact for day-to-day operations. With the rapid changes in the pickleball landscape (new indoor facilities at the Victoria Pickleball Centre and potentially others; new outdoor facilities) and many new tournaments being offered in the region, we need to re-consider the role the VRPA plays to support

pickleball: public and private facilities, instructional and non-instructional play, support for coaching and referee development, support for youth and 20-40 year old demographics. I expect that we may need to formally think this through in 2026 and will be seeking input from you, our members, when we do.

Respectfully submitted,

Roger Graves, President