

Injured woman rescued from ‘hazardous’ area at Potholes

Times Colonist

A 26-year-old woman who had suffered an ankle or leg injury was brought to safety up a steep incline at the Sooke Potholes on Monday night.

Sooke Fire Rescue was called about 5:30 p.m. and arrived to find the woman in the Sooke River at the base of the incline, where Fire Chief Kenn Mount said it is believed she had been jumping from rock to rock.

“Thankfully, it wasn’t a long fall because it was a dangerous, hazardous working area,” Mount said. “We had to end up taking down some fences and making a pathway to extricate the patient.”

There were two other people at the scene with her who assisted rescue crews, he said.

Mount said the site of the incident took some time to locate.

Three firefighters had to rap-pel down the embankment to

reach the woman, then make their way back up to get her to waiting B.C. Ambulance crews.

Juan de Fuca Search and Rescue was on backup “just in case we had a Plan B to do a swift-water extrication,” Mount said.

Sooke Fire Rescue had a number of vehicles there, and a vehicle from the Metchosin Fire Department also attended, he said.

Mount said he wasn’t on his way home until about 10:30 p.m.

“It turned into about a five- or six-hour venture with all the cleanup and prepping gear.”

Complicating matters was the fact that a couple of 911 calls from Sooke came in during the operation.

“So it was definitely a difficult day,” Mount said.

He said that after a record-low number of calls for the department in May, “we had a bit of spike to start June.”



Saanich police constables Chelsea Cofield and Curtis Craig check for speeding motorists near Marigold Elementary and Spectrum Community School on Tuesday. ADRIAN LAM, TIMES COLONIST

Campbell River youths face penalties after ‘stunting,’ police seize ATVs

Times Colonist

Two youths who were allegedly “stunting” on ATVs face penalties under the Motor Vehicle Act after being stopped by Campbell River RCMP.

Police said they were operating the ATVs in a dangerous manner Saturday on the beach, roads and parking area of McIvor Lake. The ATVs are off-road vehicles

and are not allowed to be driven in public areas, police said.

The youths, who were not wearing helmets, had their ATVs seized for seven days.

A May 29 ATV crash near Nanaimo claimed the life of a 33-year-old man who was riding with a group on a backcountry road.

Nanaimo RCMP said the death appeared to be accidental.

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Graduates of 2020

Commemorative Feature

Veronica Jones

I feel like I have been cheated by fate that our grad ceremonies had to be cancelled because of the pandemic. That said I will tell you that the last few years have been amazing. My friends are my friends forever and when we can get together again we will. And it will be like never before. Most people don't get to experience loss unless it is permanent. So in a weird way we are lucky.

Julie Collins

Congratulations, Julie, on your graduation from High School and making the Honour Roll for the third year in a row. Best of luck in all your future endeavors.

All our love Mom, Dad, Jimmy and Suzie.

Ken Shaw

You made us and your friends are so proud of you. The world awaits you and we wish you success in all future endeavours. A special thanks to so many wonderful teachers, Mr Smith, Ms James, Ms. Doe and Mr. Henry to name a few.

We are all so proud of you. Love Mom, Dad, your brother and sister.

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TIMES COLONIST

Classroom-online hybrid expected in fall: minister

JEFF BELL
Times Colonist

The new school year starting in September is likely to be a hybrid model combining classroom and online learning, says Education Minister Rob Fleming.

That would make it much like what students will be experiencing this month as they return to classes after an approximately six-week layoff. In-person classes were called off March 17 to help control the spread of COVID-19.

Fleming said at a Tuesday news conference that the hybrid model would be in place until a vaccine for COVID-19 is available and “the pandemic is officially over in this part of the world and around the globe.”

“We’ll make an official call as to how strong the restart of school is going to look like, come Labour Day, for the next school year.”

He said B.C. has to be ready for a “second wave” of COVID-19 later this year.

“We have to prepare to move forward as we have done this Monday, and move backward when we get into the fall and winter.”

The June session for schools is seen as a way to gauge what will be needed in September, Fleming said.

“We hope that the June restart is part of something that will help us have even a stronger start to school in September,” Fleming said. “We know that a lot of students have struggled at home solely based on remote online learning.

“I know teachers have done incredibly innovative things to make learning fun and engaging, but a lot of kids have missed in-class instruction.”

Students are being placed in smaller-than-usual groups for their return to allow for proper social distancing. Elementary schools, for example, are at 50 per cent or less of capacity, while middle and secondary schools are at 20 per cent.

Fleming said there is “no substitute” for a classroom setting.

The return to school is for one month only, with students in school on a part-time basis.

“It’s an option for parents,” Fleming said.

“We respect whatever choice they make, whether it’s to return their kids to school at this time or not.

“Teachers are supporting the other kids who don’t return through the continuation of remote, online learning.”

Parents who change their minds about their children stay-

ing home and now want to send them back can still contact their schools, he said.

The first day of classes Monday saw 60,000 students in B.C.’s 60 school districts attend, while similar numbers were expected Tuesday. That amounts to about one-third of the overall total, Fleming said.

About 90 per cent of teachers returned, he said, and they will continue to have online classes as well as in-school classes.

The highest number of returnees Monday was Grade 6 students at 48.3 per cent. Grade 12s were the lowest at 14.5 per cent.

Greater Victoria Teachers’ Association president Winona Waldron said she didn’t hear about any major concerns during the return to school Monday.

“I think it went well — otherwise my inbox would be full of emails,” she said.

But Waldron said there are some ongoing issues with the district in meeting the needs of teachers who are not returning due to health issues or lack of childcare.

In some cases, they have been told to take leave instead of being accommodated with the option of working from home, she said.

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Man accused of attempted murder of ex-girlfriend denied bail again

LOUISE DICKSON
Times Colonist

A Quebec man who fled to France two and a half years ago after being charged in Victoria with two counts of attempted murder has been denied bail for the second time in six weeks.

Sebastien Normandin, 49, will remain in custody at Vancouver Island Regional Correctional Centre until his trial by judge and jury in B.C. Supreme Court.

No trial date has been set. A two-day preliminary inquiry was to be held May 25 and 26, but is to be rescheduled because of the virus.

Normandin, 49, was initially arrested on Dec. 27, 2016, after he allegedly used his car to ram the parked car of his former girlfriend and her new boyfriend on Gillespie Place in Victoria’s Rockland neighbourhood.

Normandin is also charged with dangerous operation of a motor vehicle, criminal harassment and assault of his ex-girlfriend in 2014 and assault causing bodily harm to his ex-girlfriend in 2015.

In April, Normandin applied for bail in Victoria provincial court, but was denied. During the hearing, Crown prosecutor Jess Patterson and defence lawyer Jor-

dan Watt made their submissions by phone because of the COVID-19 crisis. The submissions and the decision by Judge Adrian Brooks cannot be reported because they are protected by a publication ban.

On Monday, Normandin applied for a bail review in B.C. Supreme Court and was again unsuccessful. There is a ban on the submissions and evidence made at the hearing, as well as Justice Robert Johnston’s reason for detaining Normandin.

After his initial arrest in December 2016, Normandin remained in custody until May 30, 2017. Judge Jennifer Barrett agreed to release him on \$5,000 bail with the condition that he fly to Montreal to live there.

Initially, Normandin was required to live at a specific address in Montreal and to report to police in person.

In mid-October 2017, a Montreal psychologist who was treating Normandin as part of his bail conditions notified the Saanich bail supervisor that Normandin had missed an appointment. The bail supervisor contacted Montreal police, who found Normandin had not signed in since Oct. 15.

Police obtained a still photograph of Normandin going

through customs at Pearson International Airport in Toronto on Oct. 21, 2017, as he boarded a flight to England.

He went to France the day he arrived in England.

Interpol began searching for him, posting his photograph and physical details online.

Normandin, who has a PhD in history from McGill University and is a former university instructor, remained active on Facebook and Twitter after he jumped bail. Victoria police found him by using tracking software and search warrants.

Normandin co-operated with the French authorities who arrested him in September 2018. Then local investigators began the lengthy process of working with Interpol, the Department of Justice and the RCMP to secure Normandin’s extradition back to Canada to stand trial.

The extradition process took 12 months and involved court proceedings in France and authorization from the French prime minister. Normandin was extradited to Canada on Oct. 18, 2019.

Three Victoria police detectives flew to Paris to arrest Normandin and escort him back to Canada.

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Fire breaks out in room at former Comfort Inn

Times Colonist

A fire at the former Comfort Inn and Suites Tuesday morning was confined to one fourth-floor room, but up to 20 units could need some form of water remediation, says Victoria Fire Department Deputy Chief Dan Atkinson.

The site also had a fire May 24 that didn’t spread beyond a single room.

The building at 3020 Blanshard St. offers accommodation to people

who were previously living in tents in Topaz Park or along a stretch of Pandora Avenue, a transition made possible after the provincial government bought the facility last month for \$18.5 million.

Residents are supported by Our Place Society and the Victoria Cool Aid Society.

Atkinson said the first 911 call was received about 8:20 a.m. and crews were able to put the fire out quickly. One occupant had been in the unit but got out safely.

“It was a room-and-contents fire and it did activate the sprinkler system,” he said. “The sprinkler system did a really good job of not allowing it to spread too radically.”

Remediation in the other rooms could range from pulling up the carpet and bringing in fans to working on drywall and paint.

He said there is bound to be a fair bit of damage, “being that it was on the fourth floor and water runs downhill.”