



THE CAPITAL AND VANCOUVER ISLAND

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HMCS Max Bernays, an Arctic patrol ship, is slated to arrive at CFB Esquimalt on Monday. ROYAL CANADIAN NAVY

New era naval ship arriving at CFB Esquimalt

DARRON KLOSTER
Times Colonist

The first of a new era of ships for the Royal Canadian Navy is arriving on the West Coast next week.

HMCS Max Bernays left Halifax on March 11, made its way through the Panama Canal and is heading north from San Francisco for arrival at CFB Esquimalt on Monday about 10:30 a.m. The ship has a blended crew of about 70 from CFB Halifax and CFB Esquimalt.

Named after a hero of the Second World War, the Max Bernays is an Arctic and offshore patrol vessel designed to assert Canadian sovereignty in the Arctic's Northwest Passage and on the West Coast, and to support international operations.

Four of the new Harry DeWolf-class vessels were built at Irving Shipyards in Halifax and are operational while another two are under construction.

CFB Esquimalt will be home port for two of the vessels — the Max Bernays and the Robert Hampton Gray, currently being built in Halifax, said Sub-Lt. Simon Goncalves.

He said the DeWolf-class ships differ from the navy's frigates in look and capabilities. They are



Second World War hero Max Bernays was coxswain on HMCS Assiniboine during Battle of the Atlantic. ROYAL CANADIAN NAVY

each 103 metres long with a top speed of 31 km/h (17 knots), a range of 6,800 nautical miles and a crew of up to 85. The class has ice-breaking plating and special design features for operation in drastically different environments — from Arctic to tropical waters — and the ability to provide rapid mobility to navy and other Canadian Armed Forces personnel.

The navy said the class is able to conduct armed presence and surveillance operations, contribute to humanitarian assis-

tance, emergency response and disaster relief both domestically and internationally, and conduct search and rescue missions.

The enclosed forecastle — the foremost part of the upper deck — and cable deck protect fore-deck machinery and personnel work spaces from the Arctic environment. The stern is able to accommodate payloads such as shipping containers, underwater survey equipment or landing craft. The ship is equipped with a 20-tonne crane, providing self-load and unload capabilities.

It has a bay large enough to carry specialized vehicles such as pickup trucks, ATVs and snowmobiles, providing rapid mobility to transport personnel over land or ice.

Two 4.5-megawatt main propulsion engines power the ships, and bow thrusters provide increased maneuverability, allowing berthing without assistance from tugboats.

Retractable fin stabilizers can be deployed to reduce ship roll in open ocean operations, and can be retracted for operations in ice. Depending on mission requirements, the ships are able to accommodate aircraft ranging from small utility aircraft up to the CH-148 Cyclone maritime helicopter.

The class has a BAE 25mm Mk 38 machine gun system with gun targeting and surveillance system, as well as the M242 cannon.

HMCS Max Bernays was launched on Oct. 23, 2021, and a naming ceremony was held the following May.

Chief Petty Officer Max Bernays, a Vancouver native, served as the coxswain on HMCS Assiniboine during the Battle of the Atlantic.

On Aug. 6, 1942, during intense surface gun action against German submarine U-210, the Assiniboine manoeuvred in and out of fog attempting to ram and sink the enemy submarine. Both vessels were firing high-explosive shells at close range, resulting in a fire that engulfed the bridge and wheelhouse of Assiniboine. Surrounded by smoke and flames while steering the ship, Bernays ordered two junior sailors to get clear, leaving him alone at the helm and trapped by the blaze.

Surrounded by flames, he executed all the helm orders as Assiniboine manoeuvred for position against the U-boat, and did the work of the two telegraph men, dispatching more than 130 orders to the engine room. Several bullets and shells penetrated

the wheelhouse as the enemy concentrated their machine-gun and cannon fire on the bridge.

Eventually Assiniboine rammed and sank U-210 in what was considered to be an extremely hard-fought action, during which the Canadians suffered one fatality and 13 wounded.

On the German side, 38 of the 48 crew were rescued.

Bernays was awarded the Conspicuous Gallantry Medal for his courage and devotion to duty during the battle. He was one of only two members of the Royal Canadian Navy to receive the medal during the Second World War.

He survived and went on to serve in Korea. He died in 1974 at age 64. His medals are on display at CFB Esquimalt.

The six new Arctic and offshore patrol vessels have all been named after Canadian naval heroes.

The lead ship was named HMCS Harry DeWolf. The other ships in the class are named Margaret Brooke, William Hall, Frédéric Rolette and Robert Hampton Gray, who grew up in Trail and Nelson. He was a navy officer and pilot and the recipient of the Victoria Cross.

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Music programs, counsellors feel the pinch in Greater Victoria School District budget

JEFF BELL
Times Colonist

Music programs, elementary-school counsellors and learning-support teachers are among the areas where trustees have made cuts in the Greater Victoria School District's \$318-million budget.

Greater Victoria Teachers' Association president Iida Turcotte said the trustees had "a difficult task" in their efforts to produce a balanced budget as required by the province, since they were facing a \$6-million deficit in the 2024-25 budget.

She said funding from the provincial government isn't enough, with the district having to balance the budget while dealing with such factors as aging infrastructure and rising utility costs.

"It's very dire to know that the districts don't have enough money to run their schools properly," she said. "It's disappointing, but the government is not funding school districts appropriately."

Greater Victoria School Board chair Nicole Duncan said it is progressively more difficult for school districts to address "escalating inflation, rising cost pressures and aging infrastructure alongside the increasingly complex needs of our students without reducing essential services."

The province said operating funds for school districts has been steadily increasing since 2017, and the average funding is now \$13,000 per student for a total of almost \$8 billion, including special grants, in 2024-25, which represents a 50 per cent increase from 2016-17.

The Greater Victoria School District is receiving \$80 million more from the province than it did in 2016-17, the province said.

The district's overall 2024-25 budget serving about 20,000 students in 48 schools was balanced through a \$1.9-million surplus from the current year, along with cuts and adjustments of \$4.1 million.

Music-related budget measures include switching some

programs to a cheaper "hub" model that saves \$137,173 and sees the programs centralized at 14 schools rather than being spread around the district.

Turcotte said it means the reduction of a couple of teaching jobs "and it's going to be challenging to see which students are going to be able to make it to those music classes."

The need for students to travel to music class, likely before or after school, will be problematic for some families, Turcotte said.

Music programs previously weathered cuts in 2022, when budget pressures led to a 20 per cent decrease in music funding.

Some of the other cuts include one full-time counsellor position at the district level, along with a partial position at four elementary schools, and a full-time administrative position was cut.

Losing some learning-support teachers affects the amount of help for students dealing with such things as academic challenges or social-

emotional issues, Turcotte said.

She said it's "shameful" when counselling time and learning support get cut "when we know these are the supports most needed by our students."

Also in the budget is a permanent reduction of \$552,942 in the allocation of supplies to schools, a cut to the international education supply budget for a saving of \$15,184 and pausing the aviation program for a year.

Greater efficiencies in the distribution of technology to students saved \$600,644.

All of B.C.'s 60 school districts must have a balanced budget in place each year by June 30.

The Sooke School District is planning to have first reading of its 2024-25 budget on April 30, with passage possible on May 28.

In the Saanich School District, a public meeting to gather input on budget priorities will be held Wednesday at 7 p.m. at Bayside Middle School, followed by final approval of the budget on May 15.

Rescue team regroups after little orca thwarts capture

The Canadian Press

ZEBALLOS — A second attempt to rescue an orphaned killer whale calf stranded in a remote British Columbia lagoon is being planned after an initial effort to capture the young orca failed on Friday.

An administrator working with the Ehattesaht First Nation on the whale rescue attempt said the team is regrouping and planning its next effort to save the young orca, but said there is no date set for the next operation.

Rescuers said the orca evaded capture during Friday's initial attempt to corral her into the shallows of the lagoon with a net, place her in a sling and carry her to open waters.

Fisheries Department marine mammal co-ordinator Paul Cottrell said there was a huge effort to catch the calf but she's "very smart," and they have to rethink their strategies.

He said rescuers, including members of the Ehattesaht First Nation, Vancouver Aquarium staff and other experts, aren't giving up and remain optimistic. They note the calf is still in good health and swimming well.

The two-year-old whale has been alone in Little Esplanade Inlet, about 450 kilometres northwest of Victoria, for three weeks since its pregnant mother was beached at low tide and died on March 23.

The two whales entered the lagoon last month by swimming through a narrow and fast-moving channel connecting it to the ocean. Efforts to persuade the calf to swim back through the shallow channel proved futile.

Hiker stuck in mud up to his hips for hours on Juan de Fuca trail

Times Colonist

It's not unusual for hikers on the Juan de Fuca trail to sink up to their knees in mud, but a recent mud-related call was a first.

Juan de Fuca Search and Rescue was called after a hiker on the trail sank down to his hips in mud and couldn't get out for a couple of hours. The hiker was extricated by others on the trail who happened to pass by before members were able to

respond, said Victoria Clarke, co-ordinator and manager for the team.

Clarke said the incident is the first of its kind on the trail to her knowledge.

"It is a really muddy, muddy trail and it's not unusual to go knee deep in it, but to be actually physically stuck where you can't self-rescue, that's an unusual call," she said.

Search and rescue members have on occasion sunk to their thighs while carrying stretchers on the trail, but

they've always been able to get out fairly easily, said Clarke, who emphasized that the trail does not have quicksand.

"It's just really muddy and for some reason, that particular spot is really deep. And this poor fellow managed to find it," Clarke said.

B.C. Parks said in a statement issued on March 29 incident about a kilometre east of Chin Beach.

The provincial body and park operator cordoned off the

area and built a 130-metre trail reroute to bypass it.

The reroute also bypasses a nearby trail washout to prevent a similar situation occurring there, B.C. Parks said.

Hikers on the Juan de Fuca Marine Trail should be prepared for uneven ground and slippery conditions on muddy trails, wooden surfaces, boulders and rocky shorelines, it said.

Hikers can check the B.C. Parks website for updates on park information.

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