

Block Watch Beat

Fall 2020

A Newsletter for Block Watch Groups

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Support for BIPOC Equality

Gabriel Pelletier, Surrey RCMP

It goes without saying, but it must be said because silence is not the ally of historically marginalized peoples. For this reason, the Block Watch Society of BC wishes to issue the accompanying statement in solidarity with Black, Indigenous & People of Colour (BIPOC), and a movement that seeks racial equality before the law and in our communities.

We issue this statement in our capacity as a not-for-profit organization that sets the standard for local crime prevention across BC. Though we do not control the levers of power, if you stop to think about it, the collective fears and openness of our communities are indeed the most powerful determinant in whether our communities will mend or break on race and ethnic lines. Therefore, we wish to lay out this initial but firm policy statement against racism and listen to your feedback as we move forward.

We fully support the rights, inclusion, dignity and reconciliation of racialized minorities. Block Watch is about empowering all members of a community so they have equal access to police service.

Please tell us your neighbourhood experiences of being a Black, Indigenous or person of colour (or an ally), and how you have used Block Watch to improve relationships. In order to achieve BIPOC equality in Block Watch, we are exploring ways to involve Block Watch groups to help us adapt to these important issues.

The Block Watch Society's Statement on Black, Indigenous & People of Colour

"Block Watch is a program dedicated to improving the safety, cohesion and resilience of residents in a participating localized neighbourhood. Block Watch has always been about education, awareness and joining neighbourhoods with police in an inclusive way, to the benefit of all. We do not, at any time, promote or condone the exclusion of any person based on race, colour, ancestry, place of origin, religion, marital status, family status, physical or mental disability, sex, sexual orientation, gender identity, gender expression, age or political belief (BC Human Rights Code, www.ccdi.ca). We at the Block Watch Society of BC are reviewing our operations including policies, training materials, and communications, to increase accessibility to all BIPOC members of our communities throughout BC."



Every year, police officers and municipal staff from Community Policing units participate in the Pulling Together Canoe Journey hosted by Indigenous nations. It is one of many steps that are being taken to build bridges.

Photo: Cst. Jessy Mercier

Community Policing: Eyes and Ears, and Local Caring

Dawn Dickinson
Burnaby RCMP



No one knows your neighbourhood better than you!

The people that live, work, and have fun in your community have the most insight into your area. This super-local perspective is key to the goals of community policing. This approach to public safety builds on the relationship between community and police, increasing communication and training to better work together.

Block Watch is one of the many programs used by police departments across BC as part of Community Policing. Other examples are local police advisory committees, volunteer patrol programs, or Community Policing offices in some cities like Vancouver for example.

These local Vancouver Community Police offices are operated by volunteer members of the community, allowing them to address the issues they see in their own backyard.

The police departments use this local insight, in turn, to respond to community need. This can result in additional police patrols or enforcement projects. A common example is the police department sending traffic officers to set up around school zones to reduce dangerous driving trends identified by local residents.

In Block Watch, we often say that the community is the "eyes and ears" of police. More than this, Community

Policing also needs us to work together. We enthusiastically thank all our dedicated, caring members of the community who already work with us. Through caring about your local community and working with police, we achieve better safety wherever you are.

For more opportunities to engage in community policing, please contact your local police department.

Distracted Driving

Cristine Kirby
ICBC

Even if you're not using your phone, you may still be distracted. Any diversion of your attention away from the safe operation of your vehicle, like chatting with passengers, eating or drinking, or adjusting radio or vehicle settings, can contribute to distracted and inattentive driving. We all play a part in making our roads safe – when you're behind the wheel, focus on the road.



Tips for safe cellphone use

No call, text or email is so important it's worth risking your life or the lives of others. Let calls go to voicemail and ignore your text messages while driving.

Turn it to silent and keep it out of reach and out of sight or turn on airplane mode to avoid the temptation to check your phone.

Assign a designated texter. Ask your passengers to make or receive calls and texts for you.

Pull over to make or receive a call when it's safe to do so. For longer journeys, look for [signs at highway rest areas](#), some of which now provide free Wi-Fi.



Use the 'Do Not Disturb While Driving' feature on iOS devices, 'In-Traffic Reply' on Samsung phones, or download a similar app to help you avoid using your phone while driving.



Learn the rules of the road

Don't use your cellphone at a red light. The law applies whenever you're in control of the vehicle, whether stopped at a red light or in bumper-to-bumper traffic.

Keep your hands off. Hands-free means a Bluetooth, wired headset or speakerphone that can be operated with one touch or voice commands. Make sure to secure the cellphone to the vehicle or attach it on your body before driving.

If you have a Learner's (L) or Novice (N) licence, you aren't allowed to use any electronic device behind the wheel, for any purpose, even in hands-free mode.

Make sure you understand the law on how to [use electronic devices while driving](#) (RoadSafetyBC)

Mail Fraud Protection

Leah Marlay
Vancouver Police
Department



If your mail has been stolen, consider taking the following precautions to prevent *Identity Theft*:

To prevent mail theft:

install a slot in your door for mail if you have an outside mailbox

remove all mail as soon as possible from common lobby mailboxes if you live in an apartment or condo

challenge people you don't know in the lobby and don't let unauthorized people into the building

keep track of billing cycles and if your bank and credit card financial statements or phone bills don't arrive, contact the issuer and consider picking up financial statements from your bank. Your mail could have been stolen or someone may have even had your mail re-directed

consider getting online statements

from any agencies that offer them, such as banks, BC Hydro, phone companies, etc.

if you change your address, submit a change of address card to Canada Post and notify any agency which sends you billing information

do an annual credit check. Review the website to find the free option

What to do if you are victim of identity theft

- report it to your local police
- contact the bank and close any account you know or believe has been tampered with
- contact the [Canadian Anti-Fraud Centre](#) at 1-888-495-8501
- have fraud alerts placed on your credit reports and apply for a free annual credit report check:

[Equifax](#) 1-800-465-7166; and

[TransUnion](#) 1-877-525-3823

Signs you may be a victim of identity theft

- you receive statements of accounts you didn't open or debits on your accounts you can't explain
- you fail to receive bills or other mail
- receive credit cards you didn't apply for
- you are denied credit for no apparent reason
- getting calls or letters from debt collectors or businesses asking for payment on purchases you never made

Are You a Good Neighbour?

Regan Borisenko
City of Vernon

While training a new Crime Prevention Group in a Block Watch presentation it reminded me that you can pick your friends, but you can't pick your neighbours. If you are lucky, you have good neighbours. This group was a classic example of people on the same page with the same goals. Neighbours can play an important role in our crime prevention groups and our lives, and remember, you are a neighbour too. I'd like to remind everyone about the importance of being a "Good Neighbour."

In the following article, written by Julie A. Johnson (originally for [PairedLife.com](#)) I found she summed up the sentiment of being a good neighbour very accurately.

A good neighbour is friendly and considerate. Though good neighbours may live close, they

respect your space and privacy. Good neighbours' wave at you, may stop to pet your dog and chat, and buy lemonade from your children. Good neighbours take time to talk and smile. They reach out to connect to you.

Good neighbours' actions support community. A good neighbour looks

out for others. This idea is illustrated in communities throughout the City who have developed Crime Prevention Groups. To deter crime and violence Block Watches, comprised of people who are good neighbours, have developed. Their goal is to keep watch on each other's homes so, if a burglar is prowling about, or suspicious people are casing out someone's home, a watchful neighbour calls the proper authorities to investigate the situation.

Knowing the people who live around you provides a strengthened sense of pride in your home and neighbourhood. Coming home just feels nicer. Perhaps sometimes we should focus on our similarities, and not our differences.

While you may not be able to change the



Photo by Nina Strehl on Unsplash

neighbourhood in which you live, you can change the experience you have in your own neighbourhood by getting more involved with those around you and taking pride in the area in which you live. The following are some ideas and resources that can help you to feel more at home in your neighbourhood:

Get Out More

If you live in a generally safe area, I highly recommend taking a morning or evening walk. It's a great stress reliever that also allows you to get to know many of your neighbours, get an understanding of who lives where, and feel more at home in your surroundings.

Smile

It's simple enough, but if you're not in the habit of smiling and giving a friendly hello to the people you

encounter in your neighbourhood, it's a good habit to start. While not everyone will return the friendliness immediately, it's a quick way to get to know people and build relationships, even if you've lived close for years and haven't really said much to one another.

Talk to Your Elders

The more veteran members of the neighbourhood often have the inside scoop on the neighbourhood. You may be surprised at how much you can learn if you stop to take the time to talk to the sweet old lady at the end of the block.

Host a Block Party

If you already know several of your neighbours in a superficially friendly way, you may want to get to know them better and meet the rest by

throwing a block party. They're surprisingly fun and easy.

Ask yourself, "Am I a good neighbour?" Remember you get what you give. Try to be a good neighbour.

Roy Morgan
Regional District of Central
Okanagan

Garage Door Security

Most garage doors are a weak point in your home security plan. This can make them a target for break and enters into the garage or the rest of the home.

Reasons for garage break and enters

- Garages are often not alarmed (added cost)
- Garages are often detached or insulated from the house so the homeowner/neighbour may not

hear the sounds of a break and enter.

- Garages are often used to store valuables such as power equipment, and sporting goods

Prevention tips

- If you are going away for an extended period, unplug your overhead garage door opener, preventing something called a "phantom open". This could happen during an electrical storm or power surge. (Maybe you have experienced coming home and finding your door open and not knowing why !?)
 - Many home break-ins originate from your vehicle, so make sure you don't leave your garage door remote inside it. A great solution is to buy a "key-chain" remote opener that you can take with you.
 - Make sure to secure your door emergency release located on the track of the overhead door opener. Some

designs find the red handle and rope too close to the garage door. Securing this with zip ties or removing the handle will prevent intruders from gaining access from the outside of the door and still allow release in an emergency.

- If you have a clear window above your overhead garage door, make sure you purchase frosted security film to apply on the inside of the window. This will prevent a potential thief from checking out the contents inside your garage.
- If you have an external keypad device, change the code every so often. This will provide more consistent wear on all your keypad numbers, making it harder for the would-be thief to guess your code.
- And remember with this nice weather don't leave your overhead garage door open and the garage unattended. This presents an opportunity for a passing would-be thief.
- Always keep the door between the garage door and the rest of the house locked. This should restrict any loss to the garage if a break-in is successful.



Photo by [Nathan Dumlaog](#) on [Unsplash](#)

SPOTLIGHT on a Coordinator:

Port Alberni's Dave Cusson

Kimberly Kelley, Victoria PD

Dave Cusson is the new Community Policing Manager for the City of Port Alberni. While Dave has held the role for the past six months, he is no stranger to policing or keeping communities safe. Dave brings nearly 35-years of public service expertise to Port Alberni Block Watch. He first served as a member of the RCMP for 33 years before retiring in 2017. He then transitioned into a civilian role with the City of Nanaimo as their Community Policing Coordinator for three years. Dave then took on the newly created Community Policing Manager role in Port Alberni.



His true passion is working with the community he serves and promoting safety. Over the course of his career with the RCMP, Dave worked in a number of different roles including General Duty, Municipal Traffic, Plain Clothes, Community Policing, Drug Awareness and a variety of instructor roles, both locally and provincially. He has found all these experiences

rewarding, and truly enjoys working with both adults and youth in his community.



Port Alberni currently has ten registered Block Watch groups and his goal is to build the program to generate more community engagement. When asked about his highlight of Port Alberni, Dave considers himself fortunate enough to have served as a Police officer in Port Alberni for 22 years and will now be able to finish his working career here as



a civilian in this awesome community!

Congratulations on your new appointment Dave!

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 Crime Prevention Groups have multiplied in every Municipality this year, even with COVID-19!

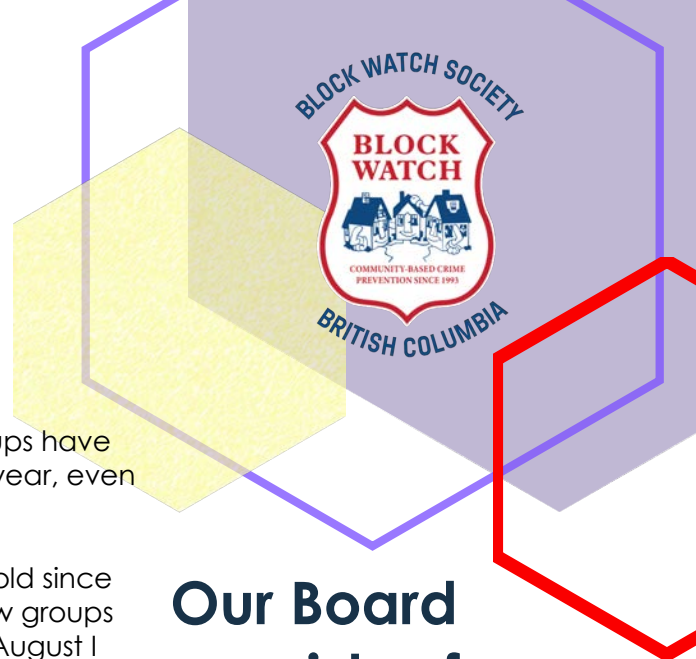
I realize that training has been on hold since mid-March which has put many new groups waiting in line to become registered. Even as I write this in August I realize things may have changed by the time you read this message and we may be getting back to something resembling normal. I hope.

Block Watch Crime Prevention Groups are part of the cement that binds and creates close knit neighbourhoods. This is one of the best Crime Prevention Programs in Canada that leads towards a healthy City environment and is recognized world-wide.

Your active participation is key in creating awareness of your surroundings and what is happening in your neighbourhood. The next step is to allow the Police to take action so the incident isn't repeated.

Our Coordinators, who deliver the Program, are specialists in Crime Prevention and are here to serve you in many ways. This is not just a "give birth and say... go forth and flourish" Program. We are here to answer any and all of your Crime Prevention questions and guide you to the solutions you need. Whether it has to do with current crime trends, frauds, cons and scams or how to target harden your residence. In turn we ask that you keep us in the loop about crime in your neighbourhood. Invite us to your Block Parties and keep in touch.

As the year gets closer to the end I'm hoping that the Block Watch Society will be bringing you new and exciting visual and printed material to share with your groups and your Municipalities. The Directors of the Block Watch Society are dedicated to providing the best possible training to all our Coordinators and in turn insuring you have the most up to date information and direct support.



Our Board consists of...

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Regan Borisenko – City of Vernon
Dawn Dickinson – Burnaby RCMP
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Cst. Stephanie Cullingworth – VPD
Roy Morgan – Regional District of Central Okanagan
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Gabriel Pelletier – Surrey RCMP

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OTHER WAYS TO CONNECT

YouTube: [Block Watch of BC](https://www.youtube.com/blockwatchofbc)
Twitter: [@bcbblockwatch](https://twitter.com/bcbblockwatch)
Facebook: [@bcbblockwatch](https://www.facebook.com/bcbblockwatch)

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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