

DATE OF MEETING JUNE 15, 2020
AUTHORED BY KATHY GONZALES, MANAGER, AQUATICS
SUBJECT WATER SAFETY EDUCATION TEAM

OVERVIEW

Purpose of Report

To provide an update on aquatic initiatives for summer 2020.

BACKGROUND

Nanaimo PRC Aquatic Staff would normally begin supervision of Westwood Lake on 2020-JUN-28. Due to COVID-19 closures, staff redeployment and recent changes in lifeguarding procedures, Staff will not be providing lifeguard supervision services for summer 2020.

With the closure of swimming pools and only unsupervised waterfronts available, concerns have been raised about community safety in and around the waterfront this summer. Typically, Aquatic Staff provide important water safety and drowning prevention messages throughout the year through swimming lessons, special events, media campaigns and the *Swim to Survive* program in partnership with the School District. The COVID-19 related closure of aquatic facilities has left a significant gap in water safety and drowning prevention education.

DISCUSSION

To counteract the lack of water safety messaging and supervised aquatic sites, Staff are planning two initiatives in our community. The first initiative is a Personal Floatation Device (PFD) loan program where PFDs will be provided at one, possibly two, swimming locations in Nanaimo. The primary site would be Westwood Lake where the City would normally post certified lifeguards for the summer. Due to challenges related to COVID-19, Westwood Lake will not have lifeguards but, PFDs will be available to provide a safe option (PFDs) for families who will use this location to cool down over the summer. Doug Perks, from Commercial Aquatics Supplies, has generously donated the PFDs for the first site.

The second initiative is the development of a Water Safety Education Team who will travel to waterfront locations around Nanaimo providing water safety and drowning prevention education. The Water Safety Education Team will consist of two full-time aquatic Staff working Thursday to Monday (10:00 am to 6:30 pm), for ten weeks beginning 2020-JUN-27, and finishing Labor Day weekend in September. The team will engage with the community and cater their information to the location where residents are accessing water (eg. risk of ocean swimming versus lake swimming).

The following chart identifies possible locations, lessons and partnerships the Water Safety Team will use to offer this program. Additionally, this opportunity allows Aquatic Staff to stay engaged with the community while plans to re-open indoor facilities are developed and prepared.

LOCATIONS	INITIATIVES & PROGRAMS	POSSIBLE PARTNERSHIPS
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Pipers Lagoon • Neck Point • Loudon Park • Westwood Lake • Departure Bay • Brannen Lake Beach • Blue Back Beach • Planta Park • Colliery Dam • Day Camps, Water Parks, Playgrounds 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Drowning Awareness • Family Swim to Survive • Rescue Demonstrations • Heat Emergencies • PFD Fittings • Safe Entries and Exits • Boat Safety • Non-Contact Rescues • Defenses and Releases • Community CPR Training • Sun Safety • Drowning Prevention • Self Rescue 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Canadian Cancer Association • Lifesaving Society • Red Cross • Royal Canadian Marine Search and Recue • Canoe and Kayak Club • Power and Sail Squadron • St. John Ambulance • DB Perks

Drowning prevention is that main objective for all lifeguards and the Water Safety Education Team initiative reduces barriers and allows for delivery of safety messaging despite facility closures.

SUMMARY POINTS

- 67% of drowning occur from May-September each year with the highest risk being children under 5 years of age and men aged 18-49 years.
- The goal of the Water Safety Education Team initiative is increase water safety education and decrease drownings at Nanaimo waterfronts for summer 2020.
- Drowning prevention is that main objective for all lifeguards and the Water Safety Education Team initiative reduces barriers and allows for delivery of safety messaging despite facility closures.

ATTACHMENTS

ATTACHMENT A: BC Drowning Report 2019

Submitted by:

Kathy Gonzales
Manager, Aquatics

Concurrence by:

Lynn Wark
Director of Recreation & Culture