

Vancouver Island Greek community celebrates 200 years of modern Greece

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YIANNIS LAPIDAKIS
Greek Community Society

The Victoria and Vancouver Island Greek Community Society is inviting Vancouver Islanders to join them in celebrating the 200th anniversary of Greek independence.

March 25, 2021 marks 200 years since the Greeks staged a revolution against the Ottoman Empire, which resulted in the establishment of independent state of Greece.

“We are celebrating 200 years since the revolution and honouring the heroes that sacrificed themselves for freedom. Moreover, we are celebrating 200 years of modern history,” Greek Community board member Yiannis Lapidakis says.

“Many changes have taken place and many things have happened, good and bad. This is a great opportunity to reflect on how we started and where we are right now.”

In lieu of a large in-person celebration, the Greek Community Society is opting to promote an awareness campaign around Greece’s modern history and the organization itself. Events and campaigns are also being organized by other Greek Communities in B.C. and all over the world.

In addition to the celebrations on Vancouver Island, Vancouver will have 56 flag stations raising the Greek flag on March 25 and car parades in some locations across Vancouver and the Lower Mainland.

“It’s a significant anniversary for us and we want to tell all British Columbians about it,” Lapidakis says.

“In the last year, the Greek community has suspended most of its activities and its members and friends have been disconnected. This is an opportunity for us to reconnect and assure our friends we are still active, although we might not have seen each



Bourtzi castle in historic Nafplio, initial capital of Independent Greece. PHOTOGRAPHY Yiannis Lapidakis

other for long. It is our way to celebrate together, not in the same site but in spirit for our national day. We also want to reach out to people here on the Island as a community within the greater community of Vancouver Island. This is a noteworthy anniversary, deserving celebration and it would be great if more people knew about it and took the opportunity to learn more about our modern history and our revolution for independence.”

The municipalities of Victoria, Langford, Esquimalt and Colwood will all mark the anniversary of independence with a proclamation for March 25. In addition, the Greek flag will be raised at the Legislative building as well as by municipal buildings for Campbell River, Saanich, Ladysmith and Nanaimo.

The campaign’s tagline “We’re all Greek at Heart,” refers to Greek influence on Western society. During Classical, pre-Classical and Hellenistic periods there were huge innovations in philosophy, mathematics, astronomy

and medicine. Arts and drama were important aspects of Greek culture; modern drama and literature both draw from concepts established in Ancient Greece. From democracy to the alphabet, all our lives have been powerfully influenced by Greek culture.

“We have contributed immensely to the development of humanity during our great past, our ancient history, and we are still around,” Lapidakis says.

“Western Civilization has rooted from Greece.”

The Victoria and Vancouver Island Greek Community Society was established in 1974 with the mission of preserving Greek culture amongst people of Greek heritage on Vancouver Island and promoting it to the greater community. The Greek Community has a strong and dedicated membership that carries out many events and activities; one of those events is the Greek Fest, which contributes a portion of its proceeds to charities. The community has its own site in Saanich, with a big church, a

heritage museum and a hall, which is used for its own programs and for rentals.

For Lapidakis, the community offers a connection from his new home to his motherland. “Its importance for me as an immigrant, is that the society anchors me to Canada. I don’t have my homeland, but I have a part of it close to me. It gives me an opportunity to be engaged,” he says.

“Victoria is a great place and Canada is a great country and truly multicultural. It is amazing that ethnic groups are encouraged to promote and celebrate their culture.”

To learn more about the 200th anniversary of Greek Independence, visit www.greece200.ca

The Victoria and Vancouver Island Greek Community Society is a non-profit organization founded in 1974 and is focused on preserving and promoting the Hellenic culture, Language, History and Orthodox faith on Vancouver Island.