

## A HISTORY OF THE SALISH SEA COASTAL ROWING CLUB (VANCOUVER)

*The Salish Sea Coastal Rowing Club (Vancouver)* was established in 2015 when flat water rowers at *Vancouver Rowing Club* who had discovered the delights of rowing SEAWORTHY sliding-seat rowboats at Jericho Sailing Centre joined with rowers in the rowing fleet of *Club Locarno* and rowers with their own privately-owned boats at Jericho Sailing Centre to form this first coastal rowing club on the west coast to be sanctioned by the *Fédération Internationale des Sociétés d'Aviron (FISA)*, *Rowing Canada Aviron*, and *Rowing British Columbia*.

*SSCRC* continues a long tradition of coastal rowing from the beach at Jericho Sailing Centre on the south shore of English Bay, 2 nautical miles west of the entrance to False Creek and 3 nm west of the Point Grey Bell Buoy at the entrance to Vancouver Harbour. As a group of keen open water or coastal rowers, we enjoy the 15-foot tidal range over the nearby (drying) sands of Spanish Bank, strong westerly winds on summer afternoons, foggy mornings in the fall, and idyllic winter rowing between the rains---all unique challenges and special pleasures to rowers of the *SSCRC* and our rugged, seaworthy, sliding-seat boats. The club owns 3 1Xs, 2 2Xs, and 1 4X+ (12 seats in all) and we also own a road trailer for the Quadruple with Coxswain. The club's Literace Carbon C2X deserves special mention. Purchased in June 2017, she was the first-place finisher in the Race Across the Juan de Fuca, 40 miles between Port Townsend and Victoria, first stage of the Any Boat, No Motor, No Support, R2AK (Race to Ketchikan, Alaska), rowed by the manufacturer of the boat and his BC retailer, and in 2018 she was the first-place finisher in Mixed Doubles in the World's Coastal Rowing Championships, rowed by a team representing the Netherlands.

The history of seafaring at Jericho goes back thousands of years---to the generations of people who built the shell middens above the beach. From 1920 to 1946 it was the site of a navy seaplane base with 3 hangars and launching ramps. One of these hangars is the large building we see today, but it was a derelict in 1969 when Pierre Elliot Trudeau gave the land---then part of a large army base---to the City of Vancouver. Developers were eager to 'develop' the site. But dinghy sailors and rowers who had been surreptitiously storing their boats in the old hangar petitioned the city to make the site a marine park. They were joined by a large number of citizens who shared their vision. Together they volunteered to fix up the old hangar and clean up the rock-littered beach and make a place for motor-free boating at no cost to the city. In 1974, the newly-formed Jericho Sailing Centre Association (JSCA) made a deal with the Vancouver Park Board for a one-year trial period. If JSCA's management of a new city park---a marine community centre for owners of non-motorized watercraft---were successful and self supporting, the arrangement would be renewable every five years. That's how it is, still today, and not a penny of tax-payers' money has been spent to build this maritime facility which is the envy of sailors, rowers, kayakers, sailboarders and stand-up paddlers all up and down the West Coast. Since 1988 the able manager of JSCA has been Mike Cotter, a strong supporter of the rowing community at Jericho.

The foundation for coastal rowing at Jericho Sailing Centre was laid by a commercial operation, "*The Joy of Rowing*," 1994-2000. Philippe & Gabrielle Drivet, new immigrants from Nimes, France, offered hourly boat rentals and yearly memberships. For \$350/year, members could use any of their boats any time: they had three or four MAAS Aeros (21'), one MAAS 24, five or six ALDEN 16s, two ALDEN 18s, and a pretty, wooden French row/sail 12-footer---all good boats to row when the sea looks like sheep, as Philippe would say. When Philippe & Gabrielle, who were dearly loved by fellow coastal rowers, quit business in 2000, most of the boats were sold to former members of *The Joy of Rowing* and some were sold to *Locarno Sailing Club* (now *Club Locarno*), then headed by Scott Low, a former school rower, establishing the beginnings of that major Jericho club's still-existing rowing fleet. In 2001, the expanded cadre of private rowers at Jericho Sailing Centre built storage racks for their new boats beside the tall Row Hut built by JSCA staff after plans drawn up by one of the private rowers. *SSCRC* makes use of the Row Hut today. We paint it every other year with our volunteer labour, which is standard practice at Jericho---volunteers often do the work and JSCA provides the funds.

Members of *Salish Sea Coastal Rowing Club (Vancouver)* are grateful to that whimsical god, Neptune, for our good fortune of being able year-round to enjoy the human gifts of the Jericho Sailing Centre and the natural gifts of its marine rowing patch and the opportunities we have there to introduce a wide audience to the unique physical & spiritual vistas & virtues of coastal rowing.

This information is based on my personal experiences at Jericho since 1974, valuable interviews with Mike Cotter, General Manager of Jericho Sailing Centre, and discussions with Paul Rowe, my long-time doubles partner.

---RICHARD ELDRIDGE COPLEY, August, 2019