

Kitsilano is my Neighbourhood

(By Barb Picton: *6m Vancouver 2017 World Championship, Volunteer Coordinator*)

Welcome to Kitsilano, the neighbourhood lying east of RVYC and bounded by Alma Street to the west, Burrard Street to the east, English Bay to the north and 16th Avenue to the south. Known colloquially as "Kits", the neighbourhood was named after the Squamish Khatsahlano family by the Canadian Pacific Railway (CPR) who were given the land by the province in the mid 1880's. The CPR changed the name from Greer's Beach in advance of developing the area for residential use.

A Little History

In the 1800's the land east of Kits beach was home to the Squamish people (Sk̓w̓x̓wú7mesh in the Squamish language – the 7 denoting a guttural stop) and the Coast Salish village of Snauq was located on the shore of False Creek, slightly to the east of where the Museum-Planetarium Complex is now located. While the Squamish reserve lands have been surrendered to the BC and federal governments over time, there remains a small parcel of Indian reserve land at the foot of the Burrard Street Bridge.

Known today as Vanier Park, the original lands of the Squamish people are now the location of the [Museum of Vancouver](#), focussing on the natural and cultural history of the Vancouver region, the [H.R. MacMillan Space Centre](#), an astronomy museum, planetarium and observatory, and the Vancouver Maritime Museum, home of the famous St. Roch, the first ship to circumnavigate North America. Once the tallest pole in the world stands outside this museum. It was carved by Mungo Martin, a renowned First Nations carver, and is a replica of the one given to Queen Elizabeth II in 1967.

One of the area's first non-native settlers, Sam Greer, built his farmhouse and lived on "Greer's Beach" from 1882 until 1890. Despite a land title claim dated 1884, filed with the provincial government, he lost his land in a bitter dispute with the Canadian Pacific Railway who had been given most of the land east of Trafalgar Street. While Greer was defending his title, he shot and wounded the deputy sheriff who came to evict him – such were the days! By the 1890's the Native settlement was surrounded by important land owners and the BC government decided they would buy the Kitsilano Reserve Lands, whether they were for sale or not. And in 1913, they pushed through the agreement, without the federal government, and the band moved across Burrard inlet to North Vancouver.



Greer's Beach, now known as Kitsilano Beach, circa 1908. Vancouver City Archives

Despite earlier logging, at the turn of the 1900's this area was still a dense, wild-life-filled forest, but change was noticeable as saw-mills, canneries and other industries were being developed by the early settlers. It is recorded that a salmon canning factory at the foot of Macdonald Street was once unable to cope with the "hundreds of thousands of salmon". Workers drawn to these industries, were buying land and building Craftsman-style houses in Kitsilano during the 1910 to 1912 boom period. Displaying decorative brackets, exposed rafter ends and low-pitched gable roofs, many can still be found today in the area of Macdonald, Stephens, 5th and 6th Avenues. The B.C. Electric Railway's streetcar line along 4th Avenue to Alma, and the Burrard Bridge built in 1932, all served to in the growth of Kitsilano but the spread to the south took until the late 1940s.

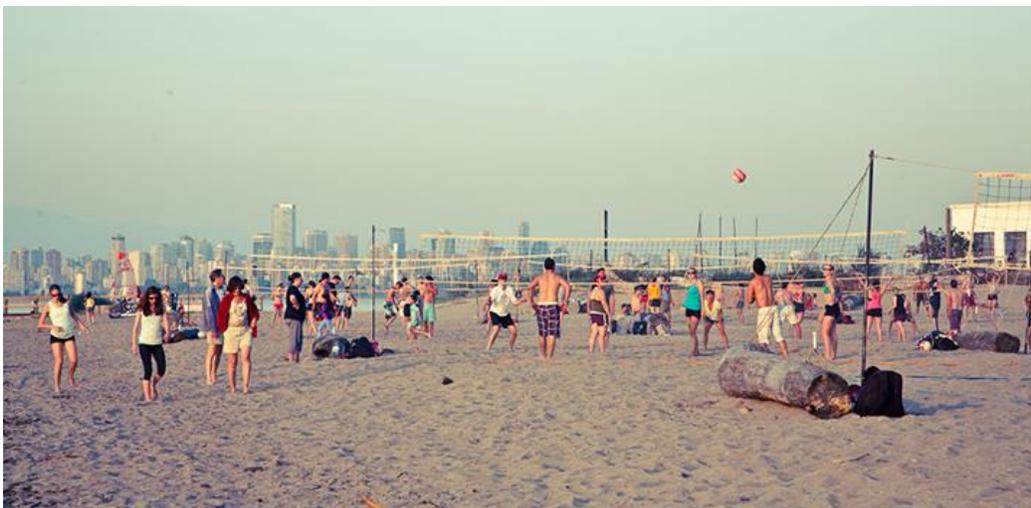
Royal Vancouver Yacht Club was founded in 1903, located at a site in Coal Harbour. As the membership increased the push was on to find a new location and while in 1924 the 3811, Point Grey Road site was secured, many thought it too far away from the center of things. The current club house was built in 1927.

During World War II, most of the old estates and many single-family homes along the slope above Kitsilano Beach were converted into rooming houses. By the 1960s the area had become an inexpensive neighbourhood to live in and was popular with university students and young people. Kits became known as one of the two hotbeds of the hippie culture in the city, the other being Gastown. While once drawing comparisons to San Francisco's Haight-Ashbury, over time the area has become gentrified with its proximity to downtown, parks, beaches and Granville Island making it great place to live.

One reminder of the 1960s is the **Naam Cafe** at 2724 W 4th Avenue (at Macdonald), open 24/7, serving vegetarian, vegan, and natural foods, The restaurant's yam fries with miso gravy have inspired many a late-night stop after a night out on the town. The area is also known for having the first of certain kinds of restaurants, such as the California-style **Topanga Café**, 2904 W 4th. Three of the first neighbourhood pub licenses in Vancouver are still located on 4th Avenue - **Jerry's Cove** near Alma, **Darby D. Dawes** at MacDonal, and **Bimini's** at Maple. Jerry's Cove was the original name for the local area now known as Jericho. RVYC has it's Jericho Home Port (the Coal Harbour Station is located in Stanley Park) and west of the club is Jericho Beach leading to Spanish Banks west of the community Jericho Sailing Center.

Kitsilano Today

Today, Kits residents love their easy access to the outdoor activities available to them including hanging out on one of the "top 10 best city beaches in the world" as named by international travel magazines.



Kits Beach today – enjoy the tournaments or join in a pick-up game. (Source: [Vancouver Tourism](#))

Home to the largest outdoor pool in Vancouver and Canada's longest, **Kits Pool** (137 metres / 150 yards) is almost three times the length of an Olympic pool. It is Vancouver's only heated salt water pool and you'll find it by the water between Yew and Balsam Streets, complete with "The View" of English Bay and the north shore mountains.

Kitsilano is the birth place of **lululemon athletica**, known for its yoga clothing). The store on West 4th at Arbutus is opposite the original upstairs location – now, The Attic, a hair salon. Along the same stretch you'll find a number of outdoor clothing stores (including **Patagonia**, **Arc'teryx** and **Fjall Raven**) suiting up our skiers, hikers and backcountry campers, bike stores, fitness/yoga studios, both high and lower end fashion boutiques, shoe shops, cafes, and specialty food and beer/wine stores.

Food on 4th

In the 2017 *Vancouver Magazine Restaurant Awards* Kitsilano has the lion's share of accolades.

Closest to RVYC, **La Quercia**, 3689 West 4th Ave (at Alma) won Bronze for **Best Italian** – classified as "rustic and refined".

Au Comptoir, 2278 West 4th Ave won Bronze for **Best French and Best Brunch**. (*Fable*, a little further east also is a great place to visit)

Thai Gold winner **Maenam**, 1938 West 4th Ave, is the place to go for Chef Ang's tasting menu for the full experience of the magical tastes of Thai food. Right next door is **Fable**, Trevor Bird's very popular 'farm to table' restaurant. Trevor was a contestant and finalist at **Top Chef Canada**, Season 2.

And, while not in this award's list, some personal favourites - **Best Ice Cream** - **Rain or Shine** between Maple and Cypress Streets, **Greek** - **Maria's Taverna** and **casual family** - **Burgoo**, both close to Vine Street.

But it is not only 4th Avenue

West Broadway (the name given to West 9th Ave) also has shopping, bars and restaurants a plenty. As an area where many of Vancouver's Greek immigrants originally settled you will find Mediterranean restaurants and delis. A fabulous Japanese-fusion place is **Suika**.

Awarded **Best Bakery** was the local favourite, **Thomas Haas**, 2539 West Broadway. Try the double baked almond croissants and spectacular hand crafted chocolates.

Also a winner for **Thai** food – Bronze went to **Montri's**, 2585 West Broadway.

And on Kit's southern border, **Zest Sushi**, 2775 West 16th Ave, won **Best Japanese**, described as having a classic Tokyo vibe.

Down by the water, along the foot of Yew Street at Cornwall and across from Kits Pool, are lots of casual, neighbourhood bars and restaurants. **Kibune**, 1508 Yew Street, opened in 1982 and continues to be loved for top of the line, authentic **Japanese Sushi**.