

Teams of breast cancer survivors are a common sight at the annual Save-On-Foods Dragon Boat Festival in Nanaimo this weekend.

NEWS BULLETIN FILE



Dragon boats head for deep water

ANNUAL FESTIVAL attracts 72 teams from across the province for three days of racing.

BY CHRIS BUSH
THE NEWS BULLETIN

Organizers have come up with a few changes for the 2013 Save-On-Foods Nanaimo Dragon Boat Festival.

The festival, which runs Friday through Sunday (July 4-7) and has become one of Nanaimo's premier summer events, is going out of its depth this year by moving the course into deeper water.

That's a good thing since 72 teams are coming out to compete this year, one of the biggest turnouts ever with more than half of the teams coming from off-island.

"One of the things

we've done is move the race course out into deeper water," said Heiko Behn, Nanaimo Dragon Boat Festival Society chairman. "Last year some of the boats that were close to the shore were actually pushing sand. You could walk faster than they were paddling. We thank the Port of Nanaimo for allowing us to do that because they're the ones who set up the course for us."

This year's opening ceremonies have been moved too, from Friday to Saturday to allow more people – especially the participating teams – to attend. Opening ceremonies and blessings will also be con-

ducted by Snuneymuxw First Nation.

"This year we're actually doing it right at low tide, which also helps a little bit and, more importantly, it's an opportunity for 1,800 passengers to see the First Nations blessing of the water, the boat and they actually will be doing a dotting of the eye ceremony at noon," Behn said.

To draw more people out, crafters who normally sell at the Nanaimo Downtown Farmers' Market have been invited to Maffeo Sutton Park to be part of the festivities.

The Parksville/Qualicum Shriners will also be cooking pancake breakfasts Saturday and Sunday and Holly Bright with the Crimson Coast Dance Society will bring to life the festival's theme for 2013,

'So you think you can dance.'

Snuneymuxw Dance Group will open festivities Thursday night with a celebration of First Nations dance.

Of course the driving force behind the dragon boat festival is the fight against breast cancer. Net proceeds from the festival support Nanaimo and District Hospital Foundation to improve the diagnostic and treatment process for breast cancer patients.

The Paddlers and Survivors Party – not open to the general public – happens Friday evening followed by the Candles of Courage ceremony at Swy-a-lana Lagoon.

"We mustn't forget the fact that all of the net proceeds from this got to Nanaimo Hospital Foundation and Nanaimo Hospice and we couldn't do it without all of our sponsors," Behn said.

Behn said the festival, which is also the qualifying event for 2013 Dragon Boat Nationals in Victoria, is expected to draw more than 10,000 people to Maffeo Sutton Park over the weekend.

Please visit www.nanaimodragonboat.com.

photos@nanaimobulletin.com

Book your Meeting
or Party with us!

We are fully Licensed.

FREE BANQUET ROOM
When Catered

Great selection
of Desserts

North
6671 Mary Ellen Drive
390-4064
North of
Woodgrove Mall



South
809 Island Highway
754-8171
Located inside the
Days Inn Harbourview Hotel

