

The Pocket 小區社區資訊

FREE

VOLUME 17

NOVEMBER 2013

At Home in Phin Park

By Marc van Beusekom

“Even May was cold, never mind winter!”

Pocket resident Boniface Tshibangu left Mbuji Mayi, the third largest city in Congo, twelve years ago as a refugee to escape the civil war that still rages on there. Though Congo is French-speaking, he decided to come to Toronto because he wanted to learn English and give his kids a chance to do the same. He had wanted to come to either Canada or England, because “they are safe and have a reputation of being hospitable,” he says. He ended up choosing Canada because he had met some Canadians in Congo through his work in the mining industry, and he’d liked them and what they said about Canada. Arriving in May, he recalls it being around 15 degrees Celsius or so at the time, but to someone used to the 30+ degree temperatures of Congo, that was *cold*.

Boniface’s first home in Toronto was a Salvation Army shelter. The staff there helped him find a place to stay, gave him first and last month’s rent for his next place, showed him around the city, and taught him a bit about how life operated here. He took English lessons and, though his background was in electronics, he worked as a labourer in a warehouse as it was the kind of work that was available. He applied to the Toronto Community Housing Corporation (TCHC) so he would be able to afford a place large enough to house the members of his family, whom he was planning to bring over.

He waited five years to get a spot with TCHC in Regent Park and then two more to bring his wife and six children over to Toronto. After three years in Regent Park, he and his family were offered a few choices of places to move to while the Regent Park redevelopment got underway. One of those places was at Phin Park, in the Pocket.

The TCHC Phin Park housing complex, consisting of a number of townhouses and one low-rise apartment building (34 units in all housing about 100 people), was built in the mid-1950s at the start of the great social housing boom that saw some 20,000 units being built annually across Canada during the 1950s and 60s. In Toronto, this building boom happened through various predecessors of TCHC, which today owns about 2,200 buildings, ranging from single-family homes to large multi-unit apartment building clusters scattered throughout various neighbourhoods.

In spite of the negative reputation that comes with some TCHC developments, and perhaps because it is small and borders on lovely Phin Park, the TCHC’s Phin Park



complex is a good place to live, says Boniface – a place where his family can find refuge from a difficult past, a place of relative quiet, and a staging ground for a better future. And though the buildings are institutional and have the unmistakable feel of being public housing, they give the impression of being solid, clean and reasonably well maintained.

Boniface came a couple of times to see the place and decided to take it based on the recommendation of a neighbour. He is happy with his decision. His family’s four-bedroom apartment is well maintained and Phin Park, being small in scale, is considerably quieter than Regent Park, as well as being safer – Boniface can only recall one incident where someone was assaulted (on the nearby path along Eastern Commerce and the track) in the three years he’s been there.

Though there is a community association for each TCHC neighbourhood, the one at Phin Park is dormant for the time being. According to Boniface, most people seem to keep to themselves.

Boniface, now in his early 50s, has just completed a college degree in electro-mechanical engineering (robotics). Speaking English fluently now, he is hoping to soon find work in his field – though he has found the job search somewhat frustrating. His eldest son has also just completed college and Boniface has two daughters at Ottawa University studying nursing – their bright futures facilitated by their determination, and by the home they found in the Pocket.

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Stay connected in the Pocket! See last page for details.

Pocket Profile: Paul Prior

By Jesse Frayne

Our Pocket resident Paul Prior is a biologist and ornithologist, working with the Toronto and Regional Conservation Authority (TRCA) to study species of birds and animals in their natural GTA habitat. In his fieldwork, Paul monitors the migratory patterns and living spaces of local beasts, and interprets their behaviour in response to nearby city life. TRCA (trca.on.ca) is one of 36 conservation authorities in Ontario, which monitor water quality and natural habitats along with running a variety of other environmental restoration, conservation, community development, and education programs.

Paul's job gets him out of the Pocket long before sunrise to observe birds and animals in the field, where he identifies bird species and observes what they are doing and where they are going. Paul says that over 300 species of birds have been reported within the GTA. A certain species of salamander that he monitors, the Red Back, is a "canary in the mine shaft" – an indicator species for the health of its natural home, the mature forest stands around the GTA. Since they are small and don't have the option of migration, if their forest is under stress, the Red Back are among the first to disappear. Paul uses this information to identify and try to mitigate the stressors.

He describes our Pocket as a way station for many migratory species, because it provides tree and shrub shelter and food to energize the birds after their arduous trip across Lake Ontario. We have a dense urban tree canopy that gives safety to these birds. Many of them do not nest here, which is just as well: Paul notes that we are burdened ecologically with the "matrix influence" of too many cats, squirrels, raccoons and other predators. But we provide an essential link in the chain to these birds' survival.

Paul's two sons Jack, 10, and Felix, 14, have accompanied



Paul Prior

him on some of his field missions and have seen dozens of indigenous flora and fauna species (even bear scat up as near as the West Gormley moraine!). Paul likes to get up north from time to time to the Arctic, where he leads birding groups for Adventure Canada and Eagle Eye Tours,

Credit: Jesse Frayne

with whom he has steamed through the famed North West Passage from Greenland to Coppermine. He has foraged for mushrooms in the many GTA woods he visits, but trusts only the giant puffballs, and harvests only if the fungus he finds is plentiful so as not to ruin the spore field.

Paul's job is all about observation: a gentle and quick person, his attention moves from time to time in our conversation to the grackles who are foraging the edges of Phin Park. He tells me the tale of how he watched an owl that rested in his neighbour's yard for two days, gathering strength for the rest of its journey.

With his wife Pascale Guillotte, Paul has lived in the Pocket since 2003. The family chooses not to own a car: they are environmentally conscious and comfortable. This neighbourhood has everything, says Paul, adding: "And Leslie Spit is 15 minutes away by bike!"

POCKET KIDS ARCHEOLOGY CONTEST

The winners of the Pocket archeology contest are **JADE AND NIOMI GOULTMAN** of Hunter Street. Jade and Niomi found two sidewalk stamps from the 1950s: one from 1952 on the east side of Jones in front of 505 Jones Avenue (east side, across the street from the school and north of the crosswalk – part of the walkway to the house) and the other from 1959 on the west side of Greenwood in front of house # 622. Other contestants discovered stamps from 1960 on Dawson, Earl Grey, and Condor.

Thanks to all who participated!

Jade & Niomi have won a \$25 iTunes gift card courtesy of *The Pocket* newsletter.

Editorial

Spirit of Place: Ten Years of the Pocket Newsletter

By Diana Goliss

One way to appreciate any community is through its stories. Every place has many; one just needs to know where to look. Ten years, 16 issues, and apparently a bit of wine later, this is what *The Pocket* newsletter has done, highlighting the community spirit that makes our area unique. And, every issue has been free to readers.

Like many great ideas, this started with a casual conversation between two members from the community – Carol Ramm and David Langille. In the autumn of 2002, both were at Joy Bistro, supporting the nomination of Jack Layton for leader of the national NDP. “We started talking and realized we were from the same neighbourhood,” says Ramm. “We both commented on the fact that the area was neat and we began wondering about a community newsletter.” With that simple remark, *The Pocket* newsletter was born.

Ten people attended the first newsletter meeting on March 12, 2003, in Carol’s home and brainstormed what topics the newsletter could cover. Ideas included community safety, Phin Park updates, local history, recipes, and selling a dining room set.

More importantly, this first discussion identified the ultimate purpose of the newsletter: supporting the strong caring nature of the community that already existed. “We all had a sense of community on our streets or in the park and wanted to broaden that. There was a lot of humour but also a sense of wanting to better our little piece of the world,” says Kim Barnes, one of the first newsletter committee members.

In that first year, under the strong leadership of Barbara Shaw, a former member of the Pocket, the group issued an impressive four issues. It took a lot of energy, organization and determination to do this. There was no money, so the team researched, wrote, edited, designed and delivered 1000 copies and Barb paid for the first issues to be printed (she was later reimbursed from ad revenue/donations). “She was definitely the heart and soul when we started,” comments Kim. “In that first year, she was our constant cheerleader, even when things didn’t follow schedule. She did a tremendous amount of work to keep everything moving.” In the end, it was worth it. Right away, readers gave lots of praise, contributed money and wanted to know when the

next issue was going to arrive.

Throughout the years, over 50 different contributors, one as young as eight, have volunteered to share information and stories in *The Pocket*. From dealing with bullies in the neighbourhood and the potential loss of the western part of Oakvale Green beside the TTC yards, to coming to terms with the tragic shooting of a young community activist on Blake Street, the newsletter has not shied away from talking about serious local urban issues. *The Pocket* also reported on success. In later issues, readers learned about money raised

for a shooting victim, how dialogue with the police and each other increased safety, and how Oakvale Green remained a park. We even read of the development of the Pocket’s community association.

Not all of the stories have been quite so serious – throughout each issue, readers also found news about past and upcoming events and initiatives; recipes, jokes, and environmental tips; and inspiring stories about people, pets, and buildings in the community. It is rather hard to capture everything in this short editorial; then again describing all the things our community does to make the Pocket a better place to live is hard to capture, particularly when this spirit keeps getting stronger.

Getting out a community newsletter takes a lot of time, coordination and understanding, particularly when you are the point person responsible for ensuring everything gets on track and stays there. A thank-you to the following committed and caring folks who saw the newsletter off the ground in its early years.

Pocket Publishers / Editors: leadership behind the scenes

Barbara Shaw

Our first chief from 2003–2004. She was largely responsible for getting the newsletter off the ground.

Nate Hendley

A professional writer, shared his knowledge and expertise and continued this job from 2004–2006.

Julia Morgan

Another professional writer, who has been editing and publishing *The Pocket* since mid-2006 (together with co-publishers Susan McMurray and Susan Paterson).



The very first issue of *The Pocket* newsletter, June 2003

Our Greatest Hits

The Pocket newsletter has published many great articles over the last decade, and some have been so popular or historically valuable that we on the editorial team now consider them “classics.”

Here are just a few of the gems from our history that you might want to revisit or discover anew:

Volume 2 Single Life in the Pocket by Nate Hendley – intrepid Pocket writer tries to meet women in Phin Park by taking his cat Oswald for a walk.

Volume 3 Thomas Ward, a Childhood by the Ravine by Marc van Beusekom – interview with a longtime resident, who describes playing as a child in the 1940s in the ravine that used to exist where Phin Park is now.

(Our Greatest Hits continues on page 6)



The Pocket

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Publishers: Susan McMurray, Julia Morgan, Susan Paterson
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Distribution Coordinator: Peter Wright

Distribution: Susan Fraser, Jessie Frayne, Diana Goliss, Susan McMurray, Susan Paterson, Satu Repo, Natalie Seguin, Kristin Taylor, Peter Wright, and other wonderful volunteers

Special thanks to: James O'Donnell of The Only Café, Kim McFadden, and a special thanks to Irene Vandertop.

Many thanks to all who have been involved and to all who read this newsletter. Donations, volunteers, and story ideas always welcome. To contact us, use mailboxes located at 1 Queen Victoria, 18 Boothroyd Avenue, 16 Dawson Avenue, or 34 Condor Avenue. Or email us at juliamorgan@sympatico.ca or call (416) 828-5538. For advertising or classified inquiries, please contact Susan McMurray at (416) 406-1684 or speaking@web.net

What's Been Happening in the Pocket

By Alan Lyons, Dave Michaels, Julia Morgan, Trish O'Reilly-Brennan, Susan Paterson, and Irene Vandertop



Credit: Jungle Ling

Neighbourhood Sculpture

Have you noticed the sculpture at Donlands on the south side of Danforth? It was commissioned by city councillor Paula Fletcher to add beauty to our area. Three artists submitted works for consideration, and the commission was awarded to Jungle Ling, a neighbourhood artist born in Taiwan. Installed in December 2012, the sculpture "Moving West" depicts a family (paddling father in the bow, a pregnant mother in the stern, and a child in the middle) in a canoe. Made of reclaimed welded steel, including rebars from torn-down buildings and angle irons from discarded bed frames found by the curb, Ling chose the canoe to remind us that our land was once covered by waterways, when the canoe was an essential mode of transportation. Ling suggests we do not lament the loss of those streams and wetlands, but remember and respect that "we are simply another layer built on top of many others." Another of Ling's sculptures is in John Chang Neighbourhood Park at Carlaw and Queen St. East. –SP

Pocket Safety Meeting

The Pocket Community Association (PCA) organized a community safety meeting with Officer Rob MacDonald from 55 Division in June. A group of Pocket residents, including PCA Chair Trish O'Reilly-Brennan and Safety Committee member Brian Cull, met Officer MacDonald in Phin Park to discuss local concerns and learn about various ways to improve community safety. Officer MacDonald emphasized the importance of reporting all problems –

including small ones (whether or not an arrest or restitution is expected). Reports of incidents help 55 Division to understand patterns of crime in the neighbourhood and to provide the appropriate response (for instance, increased patrols in certain areas or assigning officers to a specific type of problem). It can't be emphasized enough, he said: It is always worth reporting incidents to the police! –TO

Pocket Tree Project Update

After having lost more than two dozen large trees in recent years, our neighbourhood went positively tree crazy this summer.

Seventy-five trees were planted in June by volunteers participating in the Pocket Tree Project, an initiative of the Pocket Community Association. "We came together to re-green our streets, and the response from both the City of Toronto and neighbors has been really exciting," says Richard Brooks, a volunteer with the Tree Project.

The group organized volunteers to go door-to-door to sign up residents for a City of Toronto program that provides free front-yard trees. Volunteers also identified city-owned properties such as boulevards and the perimeters of schools for plantings. Among the varieties planted were tulip, catalpa, locust, maple, ironwood and oak.

The City of Toronto expedited the plantings, says Jeff Otto, a project volunteer and vice-chair of the Pocket Community Association. "It's amazing what can be done when neighbours and city officials work together." The City planted the free trees and provided mulch for them.

The Tree Project also signed up five homeowners to purchase larger caliper trees for front yards to add instant shade to the neighborhood. If the group can get another five or six households committed, they can schedule a spring 2014 planting, says volunteer and Pocket resident Richard Brooks.

If you would like a free tree for your front yard, go to thepocket.ca/treeproject and volunteers will expedite your request with the City. Also, the Danforth East Community Association has launched an Adopt-a-Tree program to care for City trees that need watering. The organization, even though its boundaries are beyond those of the Pocket, will link interested parties with a tree that needs watering in

What's Been Happening in the Pocket

(continued from page 4)

our area. They recommend trees be watered right up until the ground freezes, says the program's co-ordinator, Anne Howatt. For more information, email info@DanforthEastCommunityAssociation.com –DM



Face painting at Blake Street Fun Fair

Blake Street School Fun Fair

Many Pocket kids go to Blake St. School. The school's annual fun fair was held in early June this year and was a massive success despite some inclement weather. Activities included food vendors, bouncy castles, games, balloon animals, face painting, henna, a book sale, a raffle and a silent auction. Lots of brand new activities were added this year such as a karaoke booth and pony rides. It took a lot of hard work to organize and many Pocket parents were on the planning committee and many others volunteered and were integral to making this year's fair incredibly successful. With so many more Pocket kids and their parents joining the Blake St. School community each year, next year's event is sure to be even bigger and better! –AL

New Film Series Features Pocket Filmmakers

The Pocket is home to quite a few people who work in film (not to mention TV and other "screen-based media" too). How appropriate then that we now have our own film series featuring local filmmakers! The idea for the series came from resident David Langille, who had already been working as a grassroots film impresario, having run the Danforth chapter of the Cinemapolitica film series for several years and also produced his own documentary, *Poor No More*, in 2009. Langille knew several filmmakers in the

Pocket so he thought it would be a fun idea to support them right in the neighbourhood. He approached fellow residents Irene Vandertop and Kim McFadden and they formed a committee to get the series organized.

Kicking off in July, the first screening featured the documentary *Mozartballs*, telling the stories of several people who are inspired by the composer Mozart's life in various ways. It took place outdoors on a lovely evening in Phin Park in front of about 40 children and adults, and was followed afterwards by a Q&A with filmmaker Thomas Wallner. "We wanted something fun for a summer audience," says Langille, "and Irene's husband, Thomas, produced a light look at Mozart so she recommended it for the first film."

Wallner, a multi-award-winning producer, writer, director, and game designer, says he really enjoyed sharing his film with the community. "I actually love these kind of small personal screenings that lead to nice one-on-one conversations," he says. "Having neighbourhood screenings is a really good idea. I feel there is a vital link between community and culture and the sharing of ideas. I look forward to going to the other screenings and getting to know other filmmakers living in our neighbourhood."

Stay tuned for more events in the series to come. And if you have a film or a filmmaker to suggest, please email kimberleymcfadden@yahoo.ca. –JM

New Website for the Pocket!

This fall, the Pocket Community Association (PCA) launched a completely redesigned version of its website: www.thepocket.ca. In addition to featuring Pocket news, events and projects, the site also allows residents to register their PCA membership using PayPal. New sections are still being updated, such as the members-only archives and a skills exchange. The PCA aims to make thepocket.ca a must-visit destination to find out about everything happening in the Pocket, present and past.

The PCA would like to thank Richard Cote for programming the site and Sean Symes for facilitating its hosting. If you have questions, recommendations, or ideas for the new site, email communications@thepocket.ca –IV



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Our Greatest Hits cont'

(continued from page 3)

Volume 4 In Memory of Clayton Kempton Howard – tribute to a dedicated youth leader and head counsellor at Eastview Community Centre, who died tragically as a result of gun violence in 2003.

Volume 7 A Hidden Creek in the Pocket by Emma Manchester – all about Hastings Creek, which used to run through the area before it was buried...

Volume 8 Jones Avenue Cemetery Reveals City's Hidden History by Glenna Kennedy – the story behind the Jewish cemetery on the west side of Jones.

Volume 9 If These Walls Could Talk by Carol Ramm – one writer tells the story of how she researched her house's history, and explains how you can too.

Volume 10 Pocket Convenience by Jesse Frayne – profiling the owners of our 'hood's three convenience stores on Jones Avenue at that time.

Volume 11 The Pocket: A Profile by Susan McMurray – a statistical portrait of our neighbourhood, from Pocket-specific data obtained from StatsCan in 2008.

Volume 12 Editorial: Fresh Air and Friendship by Dave Michaels – how one couple met their neighbours – through gardening.

Volume 13 A Homemade Winter Holiday by Sally Armour Wotton – how to have a Jamaican weekend in the Pocket (in February).

Volume 14 Remembering "Uncle" Don Meyer by Judy Endacott – touching tribute to the very special Uncle Don, a man who became a Pocket institution.

Volume 15 Summer of the Fox by Marc van Beusekom – the definitive poem that captured all of our "foxy" action during the summer of 2011.

Volume 16 Editorial and Thomas Jennings, The Pocket's Victorian Brickmaker by Carol Ramm, Jesse Frayne, Julia Morgan, Satu Repo and Diane Smith – historical accounts of how our neighbourhood transformed from a rural area to its residential start more than 100 years ago.

Discover these great reads and more at www.thepocket.ca.

All past issues of our newsletter are now available there (look under the News tab). The Pocket newsletter would like to thank the Pocket Community Association for making this possible.

"I'm committed to working with you to make Ward 30 a safe, green, and thriving community"

Paula

Councillor
Paula Fletcher
TORONTO Ward 30 Toronto—Danforth
email: councillor_fletcher@toronto.ca
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CLASSIFIED

Fundraisers, marketers, and party organizers!

Feel like having fun, using your skills, and contributing to a good cause ... all at the same time?

Eastview Neighbourhood Community Centre on Blake St is seeking volunteers to join the Fundraising and Marketing Committee.

Please contact Cathy Henry at
cathyhenry@eastviewcentre.com or
416-392-1750 ext. 303, for more information.

If you want to know more about Eastview first, talk to Pocketeer Susan McMurray from 34 Condor Ave (email speaking@web.ca) – she's on the Eastview board.

UPCOMING EVENTS IN THE POCKET

Parent/Caregiver Drop-In

Wednesday and Thursday mornings during the school term from 8:30 to 11 a.m.

St. David's Anglican Church

Admission is free, and everyone is welcome. Toys and activities for toddlers and a healthy snack are provided. Caregivers must supervise their own children. Come join us for relaxation, socialization and a sanity break! For more information or to volunteer, contact Liisa at (416) 469-8206 or email liisarepo5@hotmail.com

PCA Nominations + Elections

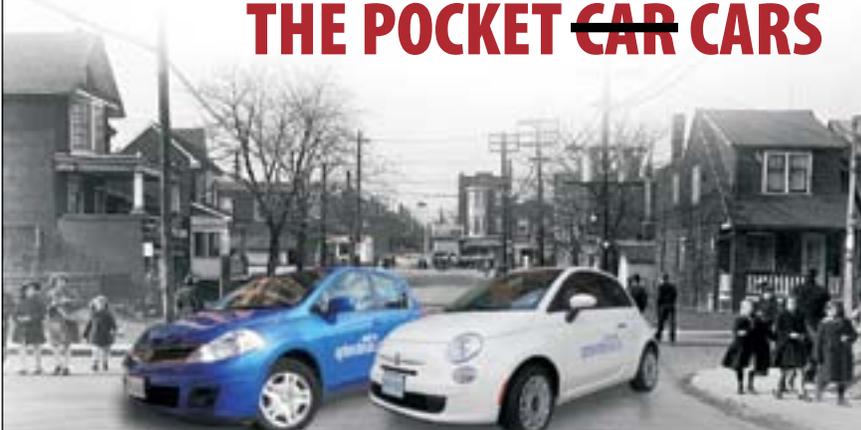
The Annual General Meeting (AGM) for the Pocket Community Association (PCA) will be held on January 30, 2014 at 7:30 p.m. at St. David's Anglican Church hall (downstairs), at 49 Donlands Avenue (across from the Donlands subway station).

Pocket Pub Night

7 to 9 p.m., Sunday, February 9
 The One in the Only Café, 966 Danforth Ave.
 Come meet your neighbours and enjoy a pint or a coffee. Hosted by *The Pocket* newsletter. No need for an RSVP, just come as you are!

They thought we'd be driving rocket cars. They were close.

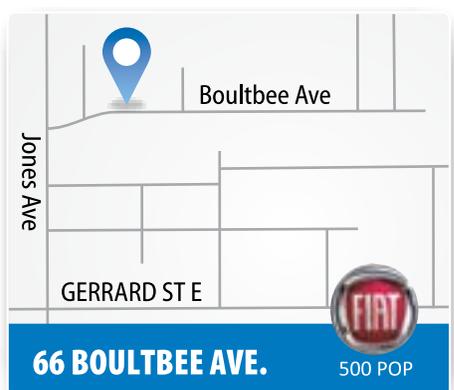
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In the Kitchen with Jesse

By Jesse Frayne

We're lucky to share plenty of ethnic diversity in the Pocket. In the kitchens of our neighbourhood, families are cooking Ethiopian berbere sauces for their dinner, or Greek souvlaki on their grills, or Pakistani bharta to go with their butter chicken. Here's a way to enjoy some Cantonese cooking:

Cantonese Beef Noodle

1 package (454 grams) of fresh Cantonese-style egg noodles
 2 to 4 tablespoons peanut oil
 750 g top sirloin steak, sliced across the grain in 2-centimetre-thick strips
 400 g fresh white mushrooms, sliced
 250 g fresh snow peas, trimmed (or frozen peas)
 10 fresh water chestnuts, peeled and sliced (or a small tin, drained)
 2 tablespoons cornstarch
 2 tablespoons hoisin sauce (or blackstrap molasses)
 2 tablespoons light soy sauce
 750 ml beef stock
 4 spring onions, trimmed and sliced lengthwise
 2 long red chilis, seeded and sliced (optional)
 Get your materials ready and handy, because this dish cooks fast.



Place the noodles in a large bowl and cover them with boiling water for 1 minute. Drain.

Add peanut oil to a wok or large frying pan over high heat and fry a batch of the noodles, like a big pancake, until they are lightly brown on both sides. Transfer the crisp noodles to a serving platter as you go, then start another pancake, until all the noodles are fried. Add more oil as you need.

In the same pan, sear the sliced beef, letting it brown quickly on all sides for about 3 minutes, flipping with a spatula. Transfer the juicy beef onto the noodles.

In the same pan, add the sliced mushrooms and sear quickly for a minute or two, until they start to brown. Flip them, and add the peas and water chestnut, stirring for another minute, until the peas are bright green.

In a bowl or a big cup, combine the cornstarch, hoisin sauce and soy sauce with the beef stock, and stir until dissolved. Pour this over the vegetables, and stir until it boils and thickens, about 1 minute.

Taste for salt; add more soy sauce if you like.

Pour this over the meat and noodles and garnish with the onions and chilis.

Three ways to stay connected in the Pocket

facebook

Join the Pocket's Facebook group (email jeffotto@sympatico.ca)



Subscribe to our Google group (email Jeff as above)



Visit the Pocket's website www.thepocket.ca

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 (416) 953-5484

**Conseil scolaire de district catholique
 Centre-Sud : Claude-Reno d'Aigle**
cdaigle1@cscdcs.edu.on.ca
 1 (888) 388-8559, poste 105

Local Police Number (non-emergency)
 (416) 808-2222

Local Schools:

Blake Street Junior Public School
 (416) 393-9415

Earl Grey Senior Public School
 (416) 393-9545

Eastern Commerce Collegiate Institute
 (416) 393-0232

Riverdale Collegiate Institute
 (416) 393-9820

Wilkinson Junior Public School
 (416) 393-9575