



NARA Newsletter



President’s Message – Randy VE7FAA

NARA continues to move forward, and I am pleased to confirm plans to return to in-person general meetings which will take place in April, May, and June.

These three meetings will adopt a slightly different format; at each of these meetings coffee and doughnuts will be provided during the break for a nominal donation of \$2; very good value.

At each of these there will be a short general meeting, the break with coffee and doughnuts, and then a presentation. The meetings will take place at the air cadet building on Nanaimo Lakes Road, each on a Wednesday and each starting at 7 pm. Here is the plan including the dates:

April 9: Short general meeting, coffee break, and a presentation on the electrical codes applicable to radio amateurs.

May 14: Short general meeting, coffee break, and a presentation on contest operating.

June 11: Short general meeting, coffee break, and a presentation on VE7NA remote operation.

I am not going to call this an experiment, but if combining our general meetings with coffee and doughnuts and a presentation works for members, then NARA will consider continuing with the format. How these meetings will work out is very much up to you, our NARA members; the executive has set this up and I sincerely hope that we will get a good attendance.

On Sunday, Feb. 23, NARA had a display at the Nanaimo Science Expo at the Country Club Centre. Thanks to those who gave their time to staff the NARA amateur radio display and to NARA visitors for supporting the club.

NARA Coffee Klatches

Day	Frequency	Time	Location
Tuesday	Weekly	10:30 am	South end Smitty's: #50 10 the Street
Thursday	3rd Thursday of the month	7:00 pm	Tim Hortons: 2320 Northfield Road
Saturday	Weekly	9:00 am	North end Smitty's: 2980 North Island Hwy, the Rock City Centre

Island Events	Date	By
General Meeting	April 9 @ 7pm	NARA
Merville Swap Meet	April 27	Comox
General Meeting	May 14 @ 7pm	NARA
General Meeting	June 11 @7 pm	NARA
Field Day (ARRL)	June 28-29	NARA
Canada Day Contest	July 1	NARA
Nanaimo Bathtub Race	July	RNBS
NIARS Campout	August	NIARS
Bike Race	August	MIVA
Canada Winter Contest	December	NARA

Nanaimo Science Expo

The Nanaimo Science Expo is an opportunity for some of the younger NARA members to interact with teenagers, elementary school aged children, and others interested in science.

Since amateur radio is essentially a science-based hobby/service, it seems a perfect match for the Science Expo. NARA’s exhibit consisted mainly of radio equipment and antennas, including some dish antennas.

Once again, the Morse code demonstration was a big hit with the youngsters.

Thanks to Mason VE7PMD for leading NARA’s attendance and to Brandon VE7TZB, Kevin VE7KGV, Devan VE7LSE, Katherine VA7HN, Annika VA7NNI, and Greg VE7GGH for staffing the NARA display. Also, thanks to Gerry VE7BGP who led the CW activity and Chris VE7TOP for being there to provide assistance. Several NARA members also popped by to support the NARA team.

NARA Science Expo Continued



The NARA exhibit at the Nanaimo science Expo.



Morse Code was again a major attraction at the Expo.

Basic ISED Exams

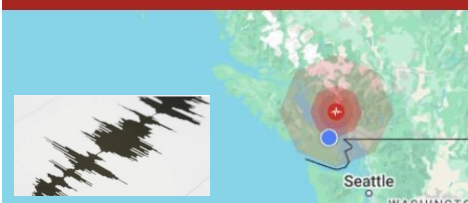


In late January, Innovation, Science and Economic Development Canada (ISED), the federal ministry which oversees amateur radio regulations, announced that a new exam bank for Basic certification would become operational on July 15, 2025. Exams prior to this date will use the existing exam question bank. Exams taken after July 15 will use questions from the new exam bank. The understanding is that the new exam bank is essentially the same as the old exam bank but with improvements to the wording on questions. NARA's online course and the fall 2025 course will use the new exam question bank after July 15.

Magnitude 4.8 felt in Nanaimo

Magnitude 4.8 earthquake

Affected countries: United States and Canada
27 km from Sechelt, BC · 1:26 p.m.



Many amateurs took to the airwaves following the earthquake near Sechelt on Feb. 21. A second quake off the coast of Vancouver island happened a few days later.

Temporary ITS link for VA7ITS

On the morning of Jan. 28, NARA's 70cm repeater VA7ITS (444.725 MHz) on Mt. Benson, part of the Island Trunk system, failed for reasons that remain unclear. The failure also took down the ITS link to Victoria.

Because the VA7ITS repeater site, at 1,023 metres above sea level, is not easily accessible plans were made to quickly set up a temporary link to restore ITS connectivity. At short notice NARA's executive secretary, Devan VE7LSE, asked David VA7DXX if a temporary repeater using the callsign VA7ITS could be set up at David's cabin on high ground just north of Ladysmith.

On Jan. 31, Devan and Gord VE7UY visited the cabin and set up a temporary link using a spare 70cm omni-directional antenna and a Yaesu repeater. In a surprise coincidence, David had a spare 70cm duplexer tuned to exactly the right frequency for VA7ITS.

As soon as the temporary VA7ITS station was put on the air the link between Nanaimo and Victoria was restored. The temporary VA7ITS repeater is running only 5 Watts, so the coverage area compared to the Mt. Benson site is diminished. Weather permitting, NARA is planning to visit the Mt Benson site as soon as possible to assess and fix the problem. In the interim, ITS users in the Nanaimo area can also use the 2m ITS repeater on 145.430 MHz. They may also be able to use the Mt. Brenton repeater, 146.680 or 442.600 MHz (all with a 141.3 Hz tone).



The VA7DXP portable Yaesu repeater was pressed into service to provide a temporary ITS link between Nanaimo and Victoria.

NARA's Website:

<https://ve7na.ca/>



How is DX – David VA7DXX



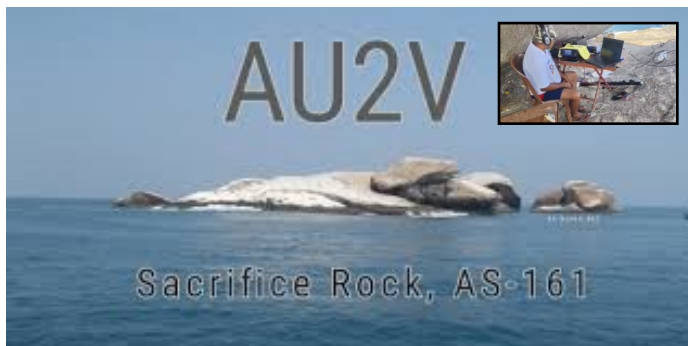
As readers will appreciate, 'How is DX' is my personal view of DXing on the amateur bands as seen from my station on Vancouver Island. 'How is DX' is not intended to be a comprehensive guide covering every aspect of DXing. So, on a personal note I am really excited to hear that the DXCC entity known as the 'Saint Peter & Saint Paul Archipelago' is to be activated later this year. The Peter and Paul Rocks — as they are often called — are located in the Atlantic Ocean at 0 degrees 55.2' N and 29 degrees 20.9' W, which is about 950 kilometres from the city of Natal, on the northeast tip of Brazil. The importance of this DXCC entity for me is that it is the *only* DXCC entity that I have left to work from Canada. If I manage to work this DXpedition, then I will have worked every single DXCC entity on the currently active list; hence my excitement.



The location of the uninhabited 'Saint Peter & Saint Paul Archipelago' owned by Brazil.

In early February I was especially keen to work a new island, the AU2V Dxpediton to Sacrifice Rock, a small uninhabited island — well rock — off the SW coast of India and IOTA AS-161. The Dxpediton would only be on the island for four days. On Day 1, Feb. 7, I managed to work them on 20m FT8 despite the fact that my beam was pointing west. Following the heavy snow and persistent temperatures below zero C, the bearing just below my beam had iced up and I could not turn the beam. I have noticed that sometimes signals from India are skewed and signals appear best from a more westerly heading, so seemingly I was lucky. On day 3, as temperatures rose to 2C, my beam became unstuck and I was able to turn it. At just after 4 pm on Day 3 AU2V appeared on 20m SSB, with their signal peaking up to S8 but on the long path. Even though I don't use

SSB that often, I did make a contact. On Day 4 at almost the same time, after 4 pm local, I heard and worked AU2V on 20m CW, again long path but with very weak signals. At the time, there was considerable auroral activity and I assume that the aurora over the south pole had caused attenuation on the long path.



This same Indian group seem to be a very keen band of IOTA operators (five of them) and led by Sarath VU2AS now plan to activate Amala Island, which is off India's West coast to the north of Mumbai, as AU2M (IOTA AS-169) from May 29 to June. 1.

V73WW (Majuro Atoll in the Marshall Islands), was activated by a very enthusiastic group of mostly young (in their 20's) European amateurs from



Germany, UK, Hungary, and Bosnia/Herzegovina, calling themselves 'the next generation.' Most of them are first class contest operators and they have done

tremendously well with their DXpedition, making over 100,000 contacts; a model trip to encourage all young operators to get into DXpeditions and DX operating. V73WW was very active during February with strong signals from 80m to 10m. I managed to work them on seven bands between 80 and 10m on CW.

I was also pleased to work VK9XU (Christmas Island) on five new bands. Prior to VK9XU, I had only worked Christmas Island on 20m CW and surprisingly on 40m SSB (I am not sure how that happened). This was also an active and well organized German/Australian DXpedition. I was also pleased to work long time friend, Dave G4BUO, who operated holiday style from Samoa as 5W0UO, and closer to home Burnie VE7IAD on 80m CW.

I did have a dabble in the ARRL DX CW contest over the weekend of Feb. 15-20. Conditions were terrible into Europe on 10, 15 and 20m at the times I operated. Europe is normally a good source of lots of quick contacts on these bands and although I did work many of the big Europe contest stations, that was about all. In this contest you cannot work any stations in mainland USA or Canada and so I struggled to make 610 contacts in some 15 hours of operating. There was above normal auroral activity during much of the contest and that did not help with many signals having auroral distortion on their notes. Even the Japanese stations were affected by the aurora. My best DX during the contest was FR8UA (Reunion Island) on 15m and 9N7AA (Napal) on 20m.

Quite a lot is going on DX-wise in March. We can expect DXpeditions from Montserrat (VP2MMN), Turks & Caicos (VP5), Cocos Keeling (VK9CU), Antigua & Barbuda (V26MN), Sint Martin (PJ7AA), St Martin (FS), Anderman Is. (VU4AX), Jamaica (6Y7EI), Grenada (J38XB), Micronesia (V6WG), Rodrigues Is. (3B9DJ), and Honduras (HR9).

The VU4AX DXpedition to the Anderman Islands, also IOTA AS-001, is a major effort by 12 operators from Belgium and the Netherlands. Dates are Mar. 10 – 20. The beam heading is 324 degrees true



(from Nanaimo) over a typically tricky path. If you are looking for this DXpedition, and I certainly will be, don't forget to look at the long path openings.



Another one to look out for during March is VK9CU from the Cocos Keeling Islands from Mar. 4 to Mar. 11. This is a long path from Nanaimo at over 13,750 kilometres but mostly over water, which makes it a good path.

In other DX news LA7GIA reports that on Feb. 1, 2026, his team will depart from Cape Town for Bouvet Island and will use the callsign 3Y0K. Also the 3Y0I DXpedition to Peter I Island in February 2027 is also making progress. This group of 19 operators plans to be on Peter I Island for three weeks. Peter I Island has much easier access and better terrain for DXpeditions than Bouvet.



Looking down on the South Pole showing the relative locations of Bouvet Island and Peter I Island. Both are uninhabited and are challenging locations for DXing.

Finally, there has been no further news of the aborted SV1GA/A operation from Mt. Athos in Greece in January. All that has been said is that, "While waiting for an answer from the local authorities that issued our permit, the SV1GA/A team decided to leave Mt. Athos." I made three contacts with SV1GA/A during the first few days of their operation. It seems that this operation will not count for DXCC credit. Fortunately I have worked Mt. Athos previously.

US Antenna legislation

US Senators Roger Wicker (R -Missouri) and Richard Blumenthal (D – Connecticut) have reintroduced legislation to assist amateur radio operators. The "Amateur Radio Emergency Preparedness Act," if made law will give amateur radio operators the right to install amateur radio antennas in service of their community. Many homeowner associations do not allow outdoor antennas on residential properties. Senator Blumenthal wrote: *"When disaster strikes, amateur radio operators provide vital, often life-saving information, which shouldn't be hindered by prohibitive rules or confusing approval processes. The Amateur Radio Emergency Preparedness Act eliminates obstacles for ham radio enthusiasts, allowing them to continue their communications and serve their communities in the face of emergencies."*

Remembering Carl Sagan

Professor Carl Sagan was not a radio amateur, but he was clearly aware of the Amateur Radio Service. He was a prolific writer and in the film adaptation of his best-selling novel *Contact* his main character, Ellie Arroway, as a young radio amateur early in the movie, used the phrase “I need a bigger antenna.” Don’t we all! Later in the story Dr. Arroway (now played in the movie by Jodie Foster), receives the first complex radio signal from an extraterrestrial civilization using the easily identified Very Large Array (VLA) radio telescope in New Mexico, though the VLA is not named in the movie.

Carl Sagan was Professor of Astronomy and Director of the Laboratory for Planetary Studies at Cornell University. He played a leading role in the Mariner, Viking and Voyager spacecraft expeditions, for which he received the NASA medals for Exceptional

Scientific Achievement. Dr. Sagan received the Pulitzer Prize and the highest awards of both the National Academy of Sciences and the National Science Foundation, and many other awards, for his contributions to science, literature, education, and the preservation of the environment. His book *Cosmos* (accompanying his Emmy and Peabody Award-winning television series of the same name) was the bestselling science book ever published in the English language. Good to know that such an eminent scientist had a good knowledge of amateur radio, and also interesting that even in a novel that a grounding in amateur radio can lead to a scientific career involving radio.

Garnet Currie VE7DXH – SK

The NARA Newsletter is sad to announce that long time club member Garnet Currie, VE7DXH, has become a Silent Key. According to his obituary, ‘Garnie’ passed away on Feb. 13 after a short stay in hospital. He died just a week before his 92nd birthday. Also noted in the obituary is that among his various interests and accomplishments, Garnie “was an amateur radio enthusiast, spending many hours communicating around the world.” He was also an RCAF veteran and worked in the electronics industry. A celebration of life has already been held.

New 6m Beacon in BC

6 metre enthusiasts in the Lower Mainland and on Vancouver Island will be delighted to hear that the Surrey radio club, Surrey Amateur Radio Communications, has just set up a new 6m beacon transmitter. It started transmissions on Feb. 13. The beacon, signing as VE7SAR/B, also sends its QTH of CN89oc, plus its power of 2 watts and horizontal polarization. The beacon is on 50.070 MHz and is using a horizontal omnidirectional antenna. The location is the Surrey club’s building at CN89oc which is almost due east from Nanaimo. The antenna is on a tripod at about 15 feet high, just above the roof of the club’s building.

The transmitter was designed, built and installed by Dino VE7NX, with assistance from Gord VE7XB. The beacon has been received well in the Nanaimo/Ladysmith area and will prove useful for checking equipment and beam headings.

Update: During the ARRL CW contest in February, RF from the 10m contest transmitter got into the beacon and the 2W power amplifier module failed. So the beacon is presently off the air. A Motorola PA module replacement is being installed, and the beacon should be back on the air in early March.



The new 6m beacon signing VE7SAR/B located at CN89oc.

New IARU Society in Libya

The International Amateur Radio Union (IARU) announced mid-February that the Libyan Communications Amateur Society (LCAS) is now an IARU member. LCAS is based in the Libyan capital of Tripoli and was founded on May 12, 2024, and at present has seven licensed amateur members.

RigExpert's Offices in Ukraine



On Feb. 12, the administrative offices of RigExpert in Kyiv, Ukraine, were destroyed by a Russian ballistic missile. Fortunately, the staff are safe. The production facilities were spared and production continues. RigExpert was founded by four Ukrainian radio amateurs in 2003 and manufactures antenna analyzers, interfaces and software.



RigExpert's offices in Kyiv destroyed by a Russian missile.

The Satellite Downlink: Upcoming Fram2Ham SSTV Experiment Bruce VE7PTN



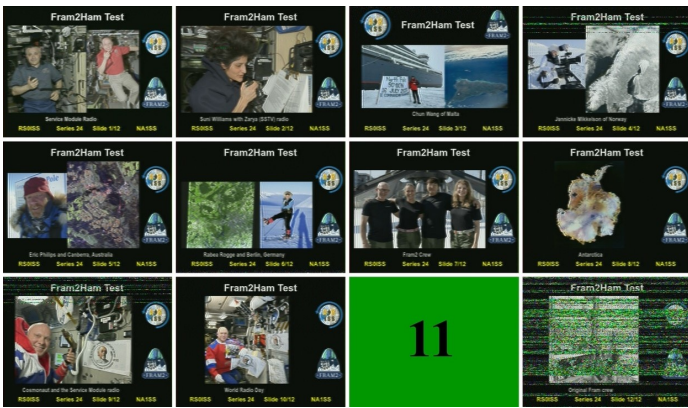
A ham radio first is planned for March 2025. The "Fram2" private astronaut mission will launch March 1 or later and will be the first to fly astronauts over the north and south poles (<https://f2.com>). The ham radio connection will be the "Fram2Ham" payload, an experimental amateur radio payload (<https://www.ariss.org/fram2.html>). It marks the first use of human spaceflight amateur radio in polar orbit and the first amateur radio transmissions from a SpaceX Dragon capsule. During the three-to-five-day mission, the Fram2Ham payload will transmit Slow Scan Television (SSTV) images of three polar regions. The images for each region will be divided into four "puzzle piece" images that will be mixed up and transmitted individually. There will be an official competition for high school and university students to collect and submit images and answer questions to win a prize. (The deadline for student teams to sign up was Feb. 28, so it's too late for new teams to get organized now.) However, anyone may participate by receiving images to complete their own puzzles

and submit images to receive a diploma. See the user guide link at the bottom of the Fram2Ham website (<https://fram2ham.com>) for more details.



The "Fram2" private astronaut mission logo. Image from the ARISS.org Fram2 webpage (<https://www.ariss.org/fram2.html>).

The Fram2Ham SSTV will be a little different from the typical International Space Station (ISS) SSTV. It will be transmitted on 70cm instead of 2m, this means more Doppler correction is required. It will use the Robot 36 SSTV mode (36-second duration) instead of the PD120 mode (two-minute duration) used by the ISS. The capsule's antenna orientation is expected to vary as it orbits. This means that the signal propagation may change for the receiving earth station, making reception challenging. To help prepare hams for this experiment, during Feb. 13 to 17, the ISS performed a Fram2Ham simulation SSTV event. During this successful event, SSTV transmissions were made on a frequency of 437.550 MHz with a lower 5-watt setting to simulate the weaker signal anticipated from Fram2Ham. I participated in the experiment, receiving 11 of the 12 images. I made a submission of a received image to the Amateur Radio on the International Space Station (ARISS) organization as proof of contact and again received a digital award diploma.



The best versions of each of the 11 SSTV images decoded by Bruce VE7PTN during the February ISS Fram2Ham simulation SSTV experiment.

In other news, my CW study is coming along slowly but surely. I am about halfway through the Koch Trainer software for Mac and receive lessons at 15 wpm with Farnsworth of 5 wpm. Now that I have 25 characters to pick from, I am finding it more challenging, but my reflexive decoding is improving each day. I continue to make progress toward my Con US Gridmaster award (satellite contact with each of the 488 grid squares in the continental US). My count is now 468; only 20 grids left to go!

That's all for this month. Next month I am planning to report on APRS via the ISS. 73.

Comox Ham Swap Meet

A reminder of the essential information for the Comox Ridge Swap Meet organized by the Comox Amateur Radio Club:

- + Sunday, April 27, 10am to 1pm
- + Merville Hall at 1245 Fenwick Rd off Hwy 19A
- + Door prizes and coffee and donuts available
- + For tables contact Brian VE7RD at

sells795@telus.net

Maple Ridge Swap Meet

For those on the mainland in early May, a reminder that the Maple Ridge Amateur Radio Club (MRARC) Spring Ham Radio Swap Meet takes place on May 4, starting at 9 am. Contact swapmeet@mrarc.ne if you intend to book a table at this event.

Happy Pi day on March 14 (3.14).

NARA Meetings for March via Google Meet

March 3: NARA Executive Meeting

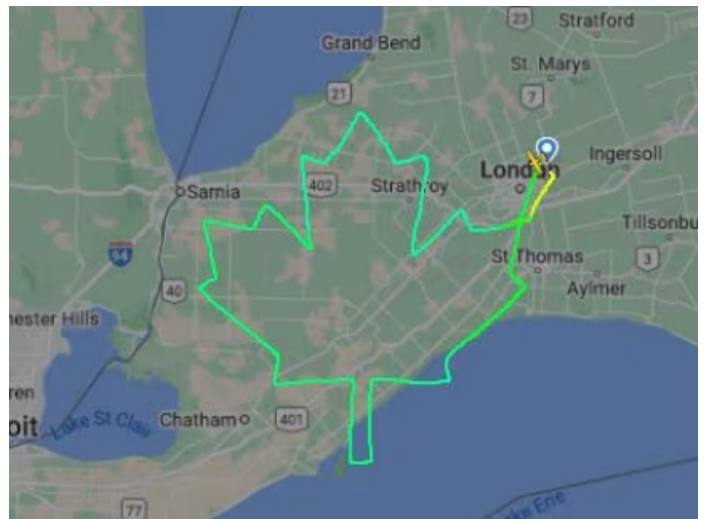
March 13: NARA General Meeting



Patriotic Pilot



In early February a Canadian pilot, Michael Jones, 70, took off from the airport in London, Ont., and programmed his GPS to fly a Maple Leaf pattern in his light aircraft. It took him two hours and 6 minutes to fly the pattern.



The perfect Maple Leaf flown by 70 year old Michael Jones.



For patriotic shoppers, note that there is an app which you can download to your phone called 'Shop Canadian.' The app allows you check the barcodes to see if the product is Canadian made.

VE7NA Club Station - Latest



Several NARA members are Beta testers for the Club's VE7NA remote station. As testing continues, If you want to join the group of remote station Beta testers or plan to use VE7NA remotely in the future, please email Mason VE7PMD at ve7pmd@gmail.com.

The volunteer group of NARA members producing this newsletter would like to thank all those that provided material for this month's issue.

The deadline for the April 2025 issue of the NARA Newsletter is noon on Friday March 28 with an intended publication date of March 31.

News items, comments or articles for publication should be mailed to:

news@ve7na.ca