

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE - March 17, 2023 - VICTORIA, BC**

**Vancouver Island's Youngest Athletes Prepare for the 2023 BC Winter Games**

*West Coast Rhythmic Gymnastics Team to Represent Vancouver  
Island in Vernon's 2023 BC Winter Games*

West Coast Rhythmic Gymnastics Club (WCRG) is pleased to send a team of six young rhythmic gymnasts from across Greater Victoria to Vernon for five days from March 22 to 26, 2023 to represent Vancouver Island (Zone 6) at the first BC Winter Games since COVID. Rhythmic Gymnastics is the youngest sport in the Games with gymnasts ranging from age 9 to 12.

These gymnasts train between 8 and 13 hours a week with WCRG and attend local schools: Ecole Victor Brodeur, Torquay Elementary, Bayside Middle School, Spencer Middle School, Lighthouse Christian Academy, and Centre Lellum Middle School.

This team is coached by two young women: head coach for this games Rachel Fetherstonhaugh, a Spectrum High School

graduate and Assistant Coach, Julianna Loukko a Grade 12 student at Lambrick Park. WCRG gymnasts have medaled in two recent Winter Games (in 2018 four Bronze medals and in 2016 one Silver medal).

The Club is celebrating its 40<sup>th</sup> anniversary this year and was started by Barb Bishop as a not-for-profit rhythmic gymnastics club in 1983. West Coast Rhythmics has been a positive influence in the lives of thousands of recreational and competitive athletes on Vancouver Island bringing a lesser-known sport to the



Pictured Left to right: Vanessa Seelinger, Molly MacIver, Khloe Sneek, Daelyn Bunyan, Maya Costa, and Chelsea Ward



Victoria area and bringing sport into the lives of so many girls. The team trains out of Shoreline Community School and St. Margaret's School.

**Key Facts:**

- Rhythmic gymnasts are the youngest competitors at the games; it is predominantly a female sport;
- The format consists of individual and group competition;
- Individual competition consists of three events: free hands (no apparatus), a rolling apparatus such as ball or hoop and choice which could include clubs or ribbon. The group competition is either ball or hoop;
- Lori Fung, the first ever gold medalist in Rhythmic Gymnastics at the 1984 Olympics will be the Head Judge at the event.

**History:** This graceful form of gymnastics began as a means of movement and expression at the end of the 19th and early 20th century. As a sport, Rhythmic Gymnastics started in the former Soviet Union during the 1940's. It was recognized by the International Gymnastics Federation in 1961. World Championships have been conducted since 1963 (Budapest, Hungary). The first Olympic Games to feature rhythmic gymnastics was in 1984 in Los Angeles, USA, with Canadian and British Columbian, Lori Fung being the first gymnast in the history of RG to take an Olympic title (Los Angeles) when she won the gold.

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