



Chess champs Patrick Huang (12), Neil Doknjas (12), Joshua Doknjas (14), John Doknjas (17) and Jason Cao (16) spent the afternoon of June 10 in North Delta raising money for the Surrey Food Bank. (James Smith photo)

B.C. chess champs help raise funds for Surrey Food Bank

Players from Victoria and Surrey came to North Delta for the inaugural Full Cupboard Chess Festival.

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Five of the province's top young chess players were in North Delta over the weekend to help raise funds for the Surrey Food Bank.

The first ever Full Cupboard Chess Festival, held in partnership with Envision Financial and BC Chess (<http://wordpress.cvining.com/>)Workshops (<http://wordpress.cvining.com/>), got underway at the credit union's Sunshine Hills

branch on Saturday, June 10. For a minimum donation of \$5, participants could sit down for a one-on-one blitz game (five minute time limit) or take part in a “simul” where one of the chess champs would take on multiple players at once.

World Chess Federation (FIDE) master and three-time B.C. champion Jason Cao was joined by FIDE master and two-time B.C. junior champion John Doknjas, FIDE candidate master and U16 B.C. youth champion Joshua Doknjas, World Open U13 champion Patrick Huang, and U12 B.C. youth champion Neil Doknjas for an afternoon of chess for charity.

“The fundraiser’s like a new thing,” Cao said. “I think that it’s a really good idea because it helps others in need, and it also kind of introduces people to the game. Like, they’ll just be walking down the street and they’ll be like, ‘Oh, let’s play some chess,’ right?”

Watch as *North Delta Reporter* editor James Smith tries to beat three-time B.C. chess champion Jason Cao in a head-to-head blitz game of chess. (Story continues below.)

Posted by **North Delta Reporter**
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The 16-year-old travelled from Victoria for the event, as did 12-year-old Huang, to join Surrey’s Doknjas brothers in supporting [The Full Cupboard](https://www.envisionfinancial.ca/Personal/Community/FullCupboard/) (<https://www.envisionfinancial.ca/Personal/Community/FullCupboard/>), Envision Financial’s community program aimed at raising food, funds and awareness for local food banks.

“One thing about this is that it’s good to see the young people contribute to the community, as well as the community seeing the young people do this,” said event co-organizer Victoria Doknjas of BC Chess Workshops, adding she hopes to make the

festival an annual event.

“These are basically five buddies ... and this is a great opportunity to just come out and donate their time and also help the food bank.”

Although all five youth had played chess at community events before, the fundraising aspect was a new twist for most of them, and a new way for them to share the game they love.

“It was just really interesting, because every game is so different. It doesn’t become repetitive, if you know what I mean. Like, every time you play you get a different game and it’s just new possibilities,” Cao said.

“Something I like about it is it kind of reflects your personality. If you play really attacking it kind of shows you’re an aggressive person,” John Doknjas, 17, said. “If you’re more strategical it shows that you’re more [calm] and all that. It’s a good mind exercise.”

All that mental exercise has been good for each player’s personal growth, helping them develop ways of coping with both success and failure. For example, Neil Doknjas, 12, recently competed at the Reykjavik Open in Iceland, where he placed 124th out of 150 competitors.

“It was an interesting tournament. Some of the top chess players [in the world] played in there,” he said. “I was on the lower half of the whole tournament, so I learned from the games because I lost over half of them.”

“I used to lose and I used to get really sad and be like, ‘Oh, I have no chance at winning the tournament,’” Huang said, echoing his friend’s sentiments about learning to take losses in stride. “Like, at the U13 [World Open in Washington, D.C.] I lost, in the third round I lost, but in the end I actually won the tournament.”

Despite being rained out an hour before it was scheduled to finish, the event managed to raise over \$500, with all the proceeds going towards the Surrey Food Bank (<https://www.surreyfoodbank.org/>) — which also services North Delta.

Anyone wishing to donate can still do so by visiting [envisionfinancial.ca/thefullcupboard](https://www.envisionfinancial.ca/thefullcupboard) (<https://www.envisionfinancial.ca/Personal/Community/FullCupboard/>), where they can click on the “Donate Online” link and choose the Surrey/North Delta food bank.