

Pemberton Area Royal Canadian Legion 1946-1956

The Royal Canadian Legion came into being as a club to which members could go to visit and have contact with others with similar thoughts and feelings, and to help anyone in need. This was made possible by Poppy Fund collections, and this tradition has been carried on from 1946 until today.

After WW1 and WW2 all veterans were welcome to visit any branch of the Legion, just to make and meet friends, and to seek help if needed, financially or socially. It was a social club. There was little money available, and this wonderful group of young veterans starting a new organization did it on a shoe string, willingness to work, and pride. On \$1 per member, volunteer donations and lots of gumption a small hall was built in Pemberton.

Most of the veterans from WW1 and WW2 were young men and women from all walks of life. They gave us our freedom, and when I walk into a Legion hall I immediately feel a kinship with them, and on November 11th each year we renew this kinship with all the people who lost relatives and friends and we pay tribute to them on their special day, sharing a two-minute prayer with people all over the world.

In the late 1800's and early 1900's several pioneers settled in and around the Pemberton area. When World War 1 broke out many of them enlisted in the Army and were sent overseas to fight for their country and ours. Some came back, but others were not so fortunate.

Some Pemberton Legion dates and "happenings" that may be of interest:

Some of the WW1 veterans belonging to the British Empire Service League belonged to the Squamish branch, but travelling was almost impossible.

May 7, 1946: A meeting was held to set up a local branch of the Royal Canadian Legion for Pemberton and Mount Currie (Creekside), and a boxing match helped raise funds to get started.

At the meeting were F. Allot, N. Fraser, E. Gethan, W.R. Green, J. Landsborough, F.J. Ridley, L. Shore, G. Mahon, A. Matthews, A.R. Mawbey, H. McCulloch, A.M. Ridley, C. Thompson, R. Kay.

The Hall Committee agreed to rent the community hall for six months at \$2 a month. Members were asked to report on anyone in need of assistance. Tony Bikadi, whose son Teddy had lost a leg, was helped.

May 1946: The first Wellington Park Sports Day.

May 14th 1946: Decided that Don Miller will be charged only \$1 for the remainder of the year.

November 11th 1946: A Remembrance Day dance was held. Mr and Mrs Ed Wilson (piano and banjo) and Bert Lundgren and Bert Summerskill (accordions) supplied the music @ \$2.50 each.

1947: Tony Bikadi elected Sergeant-at-Arms.

July 1947: Sports Day great fun for all. Education courses were being supplied by Canadian Legion Education Services. A committee was trying to fund a cinematograph show, for which Tony Bikadi offered to lend \$150 to buy equipment. 1200 watts of AC power would be available from the hotel. Comrade Peter Williams was sent a card of congratulations on his forthcoming marriage. \$6 was sent to Tranquille Hospital, and \$10 to Shaughnessy Hospital. Ten entries were received for the Poppy Poster contest, and money was provided to the teachers for awards. This contest is still carried on today.

January 17th 1948: Loans were volunteered for upkeep of movie equipment and heating of the hall. Shows were planned for February, westerns and comics preferred. Rent of hall was \$7.50 plus \$1 for light. Movies were "Home in Oklahoma" and "Utah". UBC was asked to provide a film on the flood in Fraser Valley.

A letter was sent to Jamieson Powerline Construction Co. asking for a donation in return for facilities provided for their employees.

November 11th 1948: Supper to be held in the community hall (\$2 each), and a free dance. All veterans and members of the Pacific Coast Militia Rangers invited. Mr. Carr promised power for the movie, in return for which his children could attend the shows for free.

November 30th 1948: Mr. Mawbey resigned. Mr. Matthews, president of the Board of Trade, asked the Women's Institute for a donation to help fund the Cairn.

July 1949: The Board of Trade sponsored a barrel contest. Children's sports were followed by a movie and a dance later in the evening. Potato sacks for the Potato Race were provided by the Pemberton Co-op. Rope for the tug-of-war was provided by Mr. Crowston (PGE). Donations of \$5 were requested from tradesmen or businesses. WI to supply refreshments for the July 1st dance. Mr. Hector Harwood was to cook a hot meal for Remembrance Day dinner. Mr. W.R. Green donated \$5 for a bottle of scotch for thanks and welcome to Pemberton Militia Rangers and non-resident veterans.

Lumber was donated for hall benches by Spetch Lumber Co. St. Georges Anglican Church Woman used the hall for a rummage sale. WI asked for data for the forthcoming book "Pemberton – History of a Settlement".

1950: A very interesting Klondike Night was planned. The WI would provide the lunch and everyone was asked to dress appropriately for the occasion. The Legion donated \$5 to help with upkeep of the cemetery. The Legion rented their movie equipment to George Walker for a time.

October 13th 1950: The lot for the Legion Hall had been partially cleared by B.C. Electric, and the first sod was turned at 2 p.m. Members gave Comrade Landsborough a parting gift of a club bag.

July 1st 1950: A carnival, sports day, and dance was held. A piece of land at D'Arcy for a memorial park was requested.

A dinner for members and for members of the Pacific Coast Militia Rangers. Pacific Command broadcast a radio program at 7 o'clock every Sunday evening on CKWX Vancouver.

Plans were made for improving the land at Wellington Park with swings and teeter-totter. All members were asked to show up with tools.

June 17th 1951: A Sports Day was planned for Wellington Park. A letter was sent to the Minister of Lands asking whether a game reserve could be created at Tenquille Park, and also whether a map of the boundaries could be provided. A meeting studied landscaping and clearing of the Legion lots, and the hire of a bulldozer.

October 1951: Poppies were ordered and distributed to the schools in the area. E. Gethan visited the schools and gave a talk on Remembrance Day.

March 1952: Legion meetings were held in the District building. The Board of Trade asked the Legion to change the July 1st Sports Day to Labor Day, with sports for the children and a dance in the evening. W. Taillefer donated a portion of a building, to be moved by members of the Legion.

June 6th 1953: A letter from the Pemberton Valley Dyking District asking that a committee be formed to arrange a banquet to celebrate the conclusion of the drainage scheme in the valley.

July 30th 1953: The huts were auctioned off and the Legion obtained the cookhouse for \$50, to be moved by members. The hut to be set on 16 cedar blocks each 3 feet long and sunk 2 feet into the ground. Comrade Miller to supply blocks and deliver them to the lot.

July 31st 1953: Four stringers each 6" x 8" to be placed on the blocks. Stringers donated by Spetch and delivered by Dennicott. The wall to be covered with 8 squares of cedar shingles, L. Fowler to purchase. The roof to be covered with aluminum corrugated sheeting provided by comrade Spetch. Rolf Fougberg offered to paint the building. A bee was organized to work on the building, each man to bring a shovel. The building was 16ft by 20ft, with each side of the roof measuring 12 ft by 21 ft. Benches were borrowed from the building and comrade T.B.M. (Slim) Fougberg saw that they were returned. The Board of Trade to pay for a fence for the Cairn, and the Legion to coat it with new cement. For July 1st each member to be responsible for 3 loaves made up into sandwiches, and for cake to be used for refreshments at the dance.

September 1953: Balance of \$53 paid for cost of paint. New stove pipe to be purchased and bricks for the stove. Comrade Clark offered to do any inside work needed. Remembrance Day programs to be held as in previous years. Proceeds from the dance to be paid to the Hall Committee. The new Legion building was now ready for use.

Action was taken regarding the new but inadequate mail service. The branch to press for incorporating the use of a mail car and one mail clerk travelling between Squamish and Lillooet.

Firewood for the donated heater to be in place before November 11th.

The film "Lest we Forget" was shown.

Five organizations (Board of Trade, Women's Institute, Ball Club, Community Hall, Royal Canadian Legion) were asked to donate \$40 each for a set of trap drums for use at dances. Each member to bring refreshments for the November 11th dinner. Comrade Clark was thanked for the manufacture and gift of a presidential chair.

Several members responded to a request for materials or utensils for use in the building (Ronald Ronayne, Kel Harris, Max Menzel, Tony Bikadi, Roy Cowell, Bill Spetch, Len Fowler, Arthur Mawbey, Com. Totten, C. Thompson, T.B.M. Fougberg, A. Taillefer, Harvey Hamilton).

The new Zone Commander for Greater Vancouver was Comrade J.W. Lake of Branch #60. Key tags were sold at Legion branches for the benefit of B.C. Tuberculosis.

WI offered that their chairs be kept in the Legion if they could have free use of the building for their meetings. Each member donated a cup and saucer for coffee or tea served at meetings. Members to bring refreshments. Jack Taillefer to install an extension cable for electricity, to be paid for when money available.

Bill Spetch purchased a set of trap drums for \$149.

June 12th 1954: Zone Meeting to be held in Mt. Sheer, Britannia Beach.

July 28th 1954: WI wrote to Legion secretary asking for a meeting.

September 18th 1954: Squamish Branch Hall official opening.

December 8th 1954: Rolf Fougberg finished painting the building. A.W. Spetch was thanked for the donation of the trap drums.

After July 1st, a bingo game to be held with \$1 entry.

May 7th 1955: An entertainment program including bingo nights, with refreshments donated.

May 30th 1955: It was agreed to try a good program of social events to attract the attendance of members. Also arrangements to be made for transportation to meetings. A Sports Day to include a dance and a raffle.

June 1st 1955: At the July 1st dance, Mr. Evans would supply cribbage boards and cards.

1956: An Open House was suggested for the opening of the Legion Hall on 24th February 1956. A request for a donation was received from the Fall Fair committee. A discussion on a "Potato Queen" event, to be organized by the Community Committee.

Elsie Miller

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