

Quarter century on Whonnock Lake



By Maple Ridge News

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On July 16, 1988, Olive Leaf cut a red ribbon to officially open Whonnock Lake Centre in the presence of politicians and supporters and a crowd of cheering Whonnockians who had given their time, skills, and money to reach this goal.

It all began in 1980 with an issue about water. A test well drilled at 272nd Avenue had produced 100 gallons of water a minute, and the residents wanted the municipality to make that resource accessible for the community. A ratepayers meeting was called, and those present formed the Whonnock Society, with the purpose "to deal expressly with the needs and wishes of concerned individuals."

Its first president was the late Allan Springman. Whonnock did get its communal well, much needed road repairs, and, most important, gained the ear of mayor and council and co-operation.

Community life flourished. The active arms of the Whonnock Society were a number of volunteer committees. The social committee arranged community events such as the Easter Egg Hunt, Whonnock Days, and Christmas-tree burning, under the watchful eyes of the firemen of Fire Hall No. 2.

All these events took place in Whonnock Lake Park, but many felt that a community centre would enable an even wider variety of activities.

A hall committee quietly pursued that dream.

Incorporation was an essential step, and with it, because the registrar of companies rejected the name Whonnock Society, came the name change to Whonnock Community Association.

At a meeting in January 1983, council assigned a site at Whonnock Lake Park for the hall building and came to an agreement with the Whonnock Community Association that after the completion of the building ownership would be transferred to the municipality and leased back to the association for the nominal fee of one dollar per year.

It was now up to the Whonnock Community Association to produce the money to build the hall.

Phil Johnson started fundraising by organizing a raffle of a Thunderbird. The car was hauled to several shopping malls for display and small number of dedicated volunteers sold tickets. The net profit for the hall was \$11,000.

Other local fundraisers followed. The results were impressive, but not enough to even think of starting the project. Four years did pass until the groundbreaking ceremony.

The first major contribution came in 1986 from the provincial government through Austin Pelton, minister of the environment in Victoria.

It was also Whonnock's good fortune that Gerry St. Germain, MP for Mission-Port Moody and Minister of Transport, believed in the need of a community hall for Whonnock. The federal government grant he arranged was for labour. Mostly inexperienced and unemployed men worked under the skillful direction of Bud Popadiuk, building superintendent, to complete the building.

And so it came to be that on that sunny day in July 1988, Phil Johnson, then president of the Whonnock Community Association, could welcome a couple of hundred people to the official opening of Whonnock Lake Centre.

Last week, Johnson ended his 25 years of continuous service on the operations committee of the centre.

On July 1, the Whonnock Community Association ended its lease and turned over the management of Whonnock Lake Centre to the District of Maple Ridge

This was a hard decision to make. But the handful of volunteers, including Johnson, who for so many years have carried the responsibility for running what is in fact a commercial operation, are tired. Instead, the Whonnock Community Association wants to concentrate more on the community and on the fun events that have been the trademark of Whonnock.

Fortunately, the new agreement with the district allows the association continuing use of the centre for its meetings and special events.

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