

## THE HISTORY OF THE OKANAGAN CENTRE COMMUNITY HALL

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The Okanagan Centre Community Hall was originally intended to be All Saints Anglican Church. In 1910 construction, by volunteer labour under the supervision of Reverend Owen Bulkeley, began to build an Anglican Church on land at the end of Maddock road that was donated by Mr. James Gleed. Mr. Gleed also helped to draw up the plans for the building. IN October 1910, a cornerstone was laid by Bishop De Pencier. By 1912 the church was ready for flooring, and it was expected to be in use by that summer. Unfortunately, however, there were fewer parishioners in the area than before and the congregation was not growing as had been expected. In 1913 the Rural Dean made an application for a grant in order to complete the church, but the grant was never approved. James Gleed then constructed three stain glass windows that were made by putting coloured pieces of paper between sheets of glass. He donated the windows to the church and they were put in the west wall of the building. Around 1925, while the Gleeds were preparing for a Christmas party, a wind storm blew the windows through. Parts of the windows were later donated to the Winfield Anglican Church.

By the start of World War One the building had been severely damaged by storm. Many people were leaving the area to join the military, and the population of Okanagan Centre was declining because a new highway and railway offered alternate routes. Lack of money and lack of man power prevented the church from being completed and being consecrated. In 1923, permission was given to sell the building so it became the Okanagan Centre Community Hall.

James Gleed was the first President of the Hall Association, and served as the President for over twenty-five years. The other active members of the Hall Association at the time were: James Goldie, Northcote H. Caesar, Mrs. E. Hare, Cliff Fallow, Harry Van Ackeren, P.W. Pixton, Mrs. H. Macfarlane, Hugh Bernau, Mrs. Nellie Carter and C. Harrop. The hall was used for many activities such as: the Badminton Club which played its games in the hall, Women's Institute meetings, Christmas and Halloween parties for the children, community dances and plays put one by the

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community members. Mr. Gleed was always there to help set up for the different events. He even painted a cloth wall mural to be used as a back drop for plays that were performed in the hall. Mrs. Gleed was also very active in community events. She was a member of the Badminton Club, a member of the Women's Institute and she always made coffee for the various events going on at the hall. Mrs. Gleed also cleaned the hall which for the first few years meant carrying buckets of water up from the lake to the hall.

On November 15th 1945 the annual meeting of the Okanagan Centre Community Hall was held. It was at this meeting that James Gleed resigned from the Presidency after twenty-five years of service to the Hall Association and the community. Mr. James Goldie voiced the appreciation of all the members for Mr. Gleed's dedication and service, and on a motion by P.W. Pixton James Gleed was named honorary life President. At the meeting a new association was elected: Harry Van Ackeren became President, E.C. Nuyens took over as Vice-President, Hugh Bernau became the Secretary-Treasurer and Northcote H. Caesar was voted in as Auditor. The committee members were: Mrs. H. Macfarlane, Mrs. E. Hare, Cliff Fallow and C. Harrop.

The community hall is still used today and many improvements have been made to the building. As a Centennial project in 1971 the Hall Association built an addition to the hall, doubling its floor space. Bathroom facilities, a kitchen and a large dining area were also added. A full basement was put in and an oil furnace, which has since been converted to natural gas, became the source of heat. In the early 1980's a new roof was put on, the hall was painted and structural repairs were made by volunteer workers. The hall is now four times the size of the original building.

On June 9th 1985 a ceremony was held dedicating the Okanagan Centre Community Hall to James and Edith Gleed for all their years of hard work and dedication. A commemorative plaque was set in place of the church cornerstone that was laid by Bishop De Pencier in October 1910. The cornerstone was taken to St. Margaret's Anglican Church in Winfield and is now at Eva Seaton Hall. At the time of the Gleeds dedication ceremony Hugh McDonald was the Hall Association President and Vern Dean was the Treasurer and an association director. Seventy-five residents and former residents of Okanagan Centre were present to see

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Doris Phillips unveil the commemorative plaque. At the dedication, photo albums containing memorabilia of the hall and the Gleed family were on display. The cloth wall mural that James Gleed painted was also on display.

The Okanagan Centre Community Hall has served the community for over seventy-five years. In earlier days it was the home of the Badminton Club and all other community events. The hall even served as the gymnasium and auditorium for the students of Okanagan Centre School. In more recent years the hall has served as the site for pot luck dinners, St. Patrick's Day pub night with Mullingar and New Year's Eve parties. It has also been rented for numerous dances, weddings and anniversary parties. In the late 1980's, the hall board organized a summer youth program that involved forty local children and was run by two student employees. If the walls of Okanagan Centre Community Hall could talk they would tell many stories about the characters and events that have made Okanagan Centre and Lake Country a wonderful community to be a part of.

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