

100 Years in Canada

Stony Plain Kinsmen Celebrate “Community”

2020 marks 100 years of the all-Canadian service organization Kinsmen & Kinette Clubs of Canada (KIN Canada). To kick off the centennial, the local club was recognized by The City of Spruce Grove in February. The Stony Plain Council and Parkland County each honoured Kin by having the 100 Year Anniversary Flag being flown at the town offices. “The restrictions around public events have since created some challenges to host our planned celebratory activities, however, this milestone is important to The Kinsmen Club of Stony Plain to acknowledge” says Ron Matiejewski, President. “We are pleased to invite citizens, donors, recipients, sponsors, and former Kin to become involved in ‘virtually’ celebrating this milestone of service, volunteerism, and community support”.

The Kinsmen of Stony Plain are proud of their grounding in the history of the community. When developing their own logo, they incorporated a local story about the Sheriff Umbach chaining the wheels of the National CNR locomotive and not allowing it to move west until they paid outstanding taxes to our town. You can learn more if you visit the monument outside the Multi-Cultural Centre.

From the historical aspect, in 1920, returning army veteran Hal Rogers, missed the comraderie he had shared with fellow Canadians and gathered some acquaintances to form what has now become KIN Canada. With the goal of fellowship through service to the community, clubs spread across the nation and have provided personal development and deep friendships for the members and strengthened every community where a club formed.

The first notable national project was “Milk for Britain” which developed when British children were suffering from lack of nutritional food during WW2. Kinsmen and Kinettes across Canada raised an astonishing amount of \$3Million (equivalent to \$42M today) to produce and send 50 Million quarts of milk across the ocean.

In 1964 our National service focus on raising funds to develop a cure or control for Cystic Fibrosis (CF) began. With walks, raffles, mountain climbs, and local fundraising events, the total contribution to this cause has now surpassed \$50Million. While a total cure has not been found, new treatments mean families can now expect a child diagnosed with CF to live well into adulthood, rather than the life expectancy of 4 years old when we joined this fight.

In the 70’s Kin partnered to lead the national goal of more physically fit citizens by creating “Partici-Parks” as part of the ParticipACTION challenge across Canada. A ParticiPark was built in Spruce Grove and is now part of the Heritage Park system and in Stony Plain an activity trail was built along Whispering Waters. In the 80’s Kin was involved with Rick Hansen’s Canada-wide “Man in Motion” tour and the 90’s saw support for events like “Hay West” where eastern Canadians donated hay to drought stricken western beef producers and the Guinness World Record “BBQ Canada” raised funds for BC residents hit by wildfires and demonstrated the safety of Canadian beef at a time Mad Cow had added to the drought’s impact on local farmers.

Our own hometowns, however, are where the impact of our Kinsmen and Kinette Clubs are felt most directly. In the Parkland County area, there was formerly a Kinsmen Club in Spruce Grove whose remaining members joined with the Stony Plain group in 2014. During their tenure in Spruce Grove, their sponsorship included

building a minor ball diamond, hardwood floor at the Tri-Leisure, and building Horizon Stage. Women are also provided an opportunity to support their community within Kinette Clubs. Stony Plain benefitted from a club here for many years and the Kinette Club in Spruce Grove was chartered in 1973 and has supported a variety of events over the years including UNICEF, CF, and teddy bears for the fire trucks and ambulances. For over 45 years, after the nuns asked the club to take over the project in 1974, the club remains strongly focussed on delivering the large Christmas Hamper project for over 600 families facing difficult times in their area.

With the motto of "Serving the Community's Greatest Need", the 27 local members of the Kinsmen Club of Stony Plain have worked tirelessly since 1979 to strengthen and support our citizens. The projects and donations are endless, however, the most well-known one is perhaps the annual Christmas Hampers. Chairman of the project Ed Berney says "Initiated by local business owners and then managed by the Kinette Club of Stony Plain, this project has become an enormous Kinsmen undertaking which would be impossible without the support of the countless businesses, individuals, and other service organizations which share their generosity of time and treasure. They allowed us to make the holiday season a happier one for 629 families in 2019. It is estimated that well over \$2Million has been contributed to families in need through this project since its inception."

Over the years Kinsmen have been involved with the local trade fair, organizing it until the Chamber took over that role. They constructed a boardwalk through the park in Forest Green, provided various pieces of equipment to the old hospital and provided the RCMP with specialized equipment and bicycles and when they had a bike patrol. Hosting a Santa Parade was a lot of fun and feasible when the town was smaller as the route wound through the whole community passing out candies to all the children.

For many years the Kinsmen hosted a 'Beer-Fest' in what is now Glen Hall Arena. Members of the club at that time reminisce that they loaded shopping carts with beer and drove to tables where they opened the purchases for their guests. Another local event was the 'Bull Bust' from 1996 which has now evolved to the Rodeo, Exhibition, and Beer Garden in conjunction with Farmers Days

Hosting these large scale fundraisers, as well as a variety of events, from Bingos, casinos, hosting the RCMP Musical Ride, and renting equipment, as well as theme dances, raffles, skate-a-thons, and barbeques, to name just a few, allows the Kinsmen to support local needs, including sports teams and bursaries. Larger donations continue to benefit citizens, like upgrades to the equipment in the Pavilion concession and providing all the Pavilion tables, chairs and dividers that are utilized for a myriad of community events. At the exhibition grounds, the chutes, corrals, announcer's booth, and the arena, bleachers, and fencing were donated by the Club. An estimation of the value of those donations far exceeds \$1Million.

Five years ago, the Kinsmen committed to creating a Legacy Project and invested \$100,000 into creating the Kinsmen Interpretive Centre at the Stony Plain & Parkland Pioneer Museum as well as developing an expansion for the Food Bank.

In addition to monetary donations, you will see Kinsmen, usually recognizable in their bright red shirts, actively volunteering at countless events in our area from supporting the Halloween Spooktacular, to giving away hotdogs at the Christmas Tree Light up, or keeping the bonfires going at the New Year's Eve family celebration.

Celebrating 100 years of Canada's only all-Canadian service club in Stony Plain, the local Kinsmen are planning a 4 week 'virtual' community engagement which highlights and raises awareness of the organization as well as some of their donations and projects. Importantly, there will be a focus on the business contributions and

partnerships as well as the generosity and volunteer spirit of local citizens, which have enabled these successes. Beginning in mid-August more information will be shared through The Stony Plain Kinsmen Facebook page and their website on how local citizens can learn more about Kinsmen, patronize or learn more about the critical local business partners, consider their own role in volunteering and contributing to the community and the final week will ask citizens to offer their feedback in helping identify what they consider to be the "Community's Greatest Needs" going forward.

Kinsmen are strong and vibrant in Stony Plain and area and with your support and involvement, they look forward to many more years of strengthening our community to make it a terrific place to work, live, volunteer, raise our families, and retire.

Learn more about how you can take part in the awareness initiative at:

www.stonyplainkinsmen.ca

Stony Plain Kinsmen on Facebook & Instagram

Twitter @StonyKinsmen

Contact: Roger Hebblethwaite
780-972-2988
Roger Hebblethwaite@gmail.com