
BELLEVUE



League Founded: 1920

First President: Frank Herron

Bellevue got its start as Virginia Park Community League in the years after WW I. The community was centred around coal digs on the banks of the North Saskatchewan. Inhabitants cleared off a section of the river for family skating and enthusiastic hockey games. During the early 1930's, Virginia Park leased land near the west end of Highlands golf course. With the collapse of production and exchange however, the coal mines were closed and the miners and their families moved away.

Those people who lived above the river valley, in Bellevue proper, tried to re-establish a community league in 1934. Organizational meetings were held and a neighbourhood survey was carried out but residents seemed more inclined to remain associated with neighbouring Highlands Community League.

Hence, it was not until 1940 that an independent league was formed in Bellevue and then by a circuitous route. The year before, citizens concerned about the lack of local skating facilities had formed the Bellevue Skating Club and erected a rink. The trustees of this group were Reg Bullock, James Hudson, Jack Welsh and Warren Churchill.

With a rink in place, it was only a matter of time before people, especially kids, began to identify with Bellevue. A meeting was held to form a community league and it elected Carmin Howard to the president's post. The city leased land to Bellevue Community League on the south side of 112th Avenue at 72nd Street. Jack Welsh donated an old building for a clubhouse. This clubhouse served the community until 1954 when it was in turn donated to the Students Union of Concordia College.

During the 1940's and 1950's, Bellevue met for social and business activities at locations such as Virginia Park School and Concordia College. However, Bellevue wanted assets of its own.

Starting in the middle of the 1940's, Bellevue began discussions with Cromdale Community League, which was in the same position. An arrangement to build common facilities was finalized in 1946. The location was to be across the street from Bellevue's original property, on the southeast corner of Borden Park where buffalo from Elk Island Park had been penned.

In a few years, however, Cromdale had changed its mind about amalgamation. Bellevue set about to realize the goal of a community centre on its own - and in this endeavour, the league's women played a leading role. They carried out a busy schedule of fund-raisers: rummage sales at the Queens Hotel, flea markets and concession stands.

In 1954, Bellevue completed the first stage of its community centre at 7308-112th Avenue. It was built largely through volunteer labour and featured a concession, changing and meeting rooms. The price tag was \$22,000.

The second stage envisioned a large auditorium which would be expensive, so Bellevue held a flurry of fund-raisers. One of particular note - an Eight-Car Bingo - was staged at the Edmonton Gardens in 1956. Several lucky Edmontonians drove away from the Gardens in new 1957 models, hot off the assembly lines of eastern factories.

After 18 months of concentrated work and \$110,000 in expenditures, the second stage of Bellevue's community centre was opened on October 5, 1960. Alderman Fred Mitchell was on hand for the occasion, as was Mayor Hawrelak, who presented lifetime memberships to those who had "... devoted a large amount of time and energy in the past years to develop the league." (1) Recipients that evening were W. Yurchuk, J. Hartt, M. Saidman, J. Illerbrun and W. Quilley. Since that time, Bellevue has carried out a number of renovations to its property. An extensive renovation took place from 1977 to 1981.

With the question of facility development out of the way, Bellevue turned its attention to civic issues. In the late 1970's, the league's civics committee became a going concern. Public meetings were held about the proposed widening of 112th Avenue; others dealt with problems associated with the Capilano Freeway and the development of Commonwealth Stadium. Bellevue also began to participate in citizens' groups such as the Borden Park Residents Association which focuses on developments at Northlands.

PAST PRESIDENTS: Frank Herron, Carmin Howard, William Quilley, C.H. Dunn, Hal Yerxa, E.C. Wentworth, A.H. Bullock, Orval Allen, Derrick Cox, Thomas Armstrong, Murray Saidman, William Yurchuk, Henry Waterhouse, Peter Beach, Stewart Young, Jack Hartt, Jack Whetstone, Gordon Viske, Leslie Grant, Judy Nuthack, John Flower.

NOTES

1. *Edmonton Journal*, October 5, 1960.