

HISTORY OF THE OSOYOOS INTERNATIONAL CURLING CLUB

Local legend has it that curling was first played in Osoyoos on the frozen Lake Osoyoos by Dougall Burpee who had his own set of rocks. Burpee & his friends would curl on the lake or one of the local frozen ponds whenever the weather was cold enough to form ice. Dick Topping from nearby Oliver also had his own set of rocks curling on an outdoor rink in his back yard.

It wasn't until the early 1950's when a group headed by Topping, the club's first president, spearheaded a drive to build an indoor curling club in Oliver. The new rink was to be the first curling club in the South Okanagan. Unable to raise the funds in Oliver, Topping sought out the assistance of interested curlers from Osoyoos, Midway, Rock Creek & Oroville, Washington hence the name International Curling Club. Osoyoos residents Chuck Emery, Pat Fraser & friends came on board to raise funding through the sale of \$100 memberships & \$50 bank notes to construct the new curling club on the lakefront in Osoyoos. On March 17, 1954 the International Curling Club opened their doors to the public with pioneer curler Dougall Burpee throwing the very first rock at the grand opening. Curling took off from there. Members drove from as far away as Midway & Keremeos to play league games during the week & weekend Bonspiels attracted up to 100 teams curling around the clock in the four sheet rink.

Recognizing the need for a more modern facility in the early 1970's, the board of directors led by Lyle Dawson, Bud Fraser, Howard Engel & Doug Weeks, a Washington USA resident, raised funds to build a brand new curling rink. They secured funding through member-backed bank notes, a government grant & some very popular car raffles. In 1975 the new club was built next door to the new arena. This location allowed the club to share the cost of ice making with the arena reducing the normally huge operating & capital expenditures the old club had. Another advantage to this arrangement was the ability to maintain ice during the summer months. While the arena was being used for hockey schools during the summer the curling club decided to hold a bonspiel. In 1978 the Osoyoos Mid-Summer Mixed Bonspiel was born & has been a very popular event ever since. In the summer of 1979 Norm Propp brought the Four Foot Curling Camp to Osoyoos. Junior curlers from Japan, Korea & all over North America have attended this event. Recently Curl BC has held technical courses on ice making, coaching & the business of curling between our summer events.

Today the current board & volunteer members are striving to continue with the spirit of curling that our pioneer curlers brought to this community so many years ago. Challenges now & in the future will be faced by the club, however curling will always remain strong in Osoyoos. That is the legacy of the club's history. Even to this day the best rocks at the International Curling Club are the blue granite stones old Dick Topping curled with in his back yard over fifty years ago.