

How You Can Help

- ✓ **Make a Lasting Contribution** *Tax-deductible receipts will be issued for donations over \$10*
- ✓ **Become a Society Member** *The annual individual membership is \$10, families \$20, corporations, \$250 per year.*
- ✓ **Donate Artefacts or Memorabilia** *Should you have any historic items, pictures or written information related to the Prince of Wales Fairbridge Farm School or other things that could enhance the Cowichan Public School you can contact the Society secretary, Ron Smith at 250 746-7519 or by e-mail, rgwsmiths@hotmail.com*
- ✓ **Assisting the Society in other ways** *You may wish to assist us by volunteering your time when we have a project to be tackled, or by donating your in kind services from time to time. The Society also rents the chapel for weddings and other appropriate special events or the school house for small meetings. Funds raised go directly towards various projects.*

THE COWICHAN PUBLIC SCHOOL



Built 1885

RESTORATION PROJECT

For more information contact:

Fairbridge Chapel Heritage Society
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The Fairbridge Chapel Heritage Society

2018

History of the School

The one-room rural school, originally called the Cowichan Public School is the oldest wood framed building north of the Victoria area. Built in 1885 it is now almost 130 years old and remained in use as a school for only 11 years before being a residence for farm help first at Pemberlea and then the Fairbridge Farm School.

In 1977 the building was acquired by the Cowichan Valley Regional District (CVRD) and moved from its original location near Koksilah Road to its present site adjacent the Fairbridge Chapel. On May 27th, 1981 it was officially recognized as a heritage structure by the local and provincial governments.

Ten years later, with very little money being spent by the CVRD to maintain either buildings the Fairbridge Chapel Heritage Society began to look after the heritage site. Since 1988 almost all efforts have concentrated on the restoration of the chapel. While the school house has been used for a variety of functions, except for painting and putting a new roof on the building No other interior improvements have been undertaken until now.

Fairbridge Chapel Heritage Society

Formed in 1987 the Society has now been operating for 25 years. The mandate of the registered society, among other things, is to restore, preserve the historic site for public use, do on-going maintenance and upgrades as required. During the last quarter century the Society has raised approximately \$200,000 to make repairs and do other improvements to the chapel as well as the grounds. As one appreciates when visiting the heritage site the chapel is quite large, able to easily accommodate over 300 people and is in need of on-going maintenance. Likewise, because the site is still in continuous use, especially for weddings and other special events, patrons expect the landscaping to be maintained at a simple but high standard. Each spring residents of Fairbridge do a spring clean-up throughout the community including the heritage site which is greatly appreciated by the Board.

Here are a few of the projects undertaken by the society:

- stabilization of the chapel foundation
- re-roofing both chapel and school house in 1989 and 2007
- new wiring throughout the chapel
- repairs to the historic clock
- refurbishing the floors and ceiling in chapel
- installed in-ground irrigation system
- erected an information kiosk sign
- new chimney and other improvements to the furnace in the chapel

The School House Project

Like any building that has been around for over 125 years there is a need for continual maintenance and from time to time more extensive upgrading. The old school house is no different.

While some work was undertaken in 1982 to make the interior presentable, it is now time to do major changes so the building can be both a more accommodating facility for those who wish to rent the building as well as allow the society the opportunity to display many of the historic artefacts from the by-gone days when the Prince of Wales Fairbridge Farm School was operating. It would also be important to renovate the interior to give it a 1890's or early 1900's period appearance. There may be some modifications with more modern facilities in the washroom, which can remodel at a later date as well as the kitchen area. The present improvements will be made to the main room and doors.

With limited finances the society is proposing to do the improvements in stages. The first phase will include developing an overall interior design concept plan and cost estimate for various parts of the project. Because of the condition of the floor it is important to replace immediately with appropriate hardwood material that would give it an appearance of being 120 years old.

Restoration Plans & Updates

In 2011 the Board approved a general plan to improve the interior of the school house. This included the following:

- replace the present floor material
- replace the present wallboard in the main room with more suitable 'period' wainscoting and other material
- make the building more secure, fixing windows and replace the back door
- screening off the kitchen area to give the larger room a 'one room school feeling'
- acquire or make display cabinets for historic artefacts
- make suitable desks that can be used by both school children as well as adults at meetings
- plumb the building and make some storage shelves in small bathroom area
- change light fixtures in the main room

More detailed information on the above work will be outlined in this brochure as well as on a display board at the heritage site and the chapel web site . It will outline what has been undertaken, what is planned and the projected start date as well as before and after pictures of the restoration project.

Floor Replacement

Work began on this phase of the project in April, 2012. The following photos are of the interior of the school house before work began and as the volunteers began laying the new brushed Oak/Hazelnut hardwood



Interior prior to laying new floor, April 2012 and the new floor laid the next month. The first of a number of improvements planned for the historic building.

