

Penticton Golf & Country Club celebrates 100 years

Enthusiastic golfers, available land, and a good water supply are the requirements for establishing and maintaining a golf course. Early Penticton golfers found they could supply these necessities in the early 1900's, and the course is now celebrating its 100th anniversary.

In 1913 Mr. G.R. Mason convened a meeting of interested golfers to discuss the creation of a golf course in Penticton. Encouragement came from the KVR and the CPR railways that saw the golf course as a major attraction to bring tourists to the City of Penticton. Land was secured in the Queen's Park area in 1913 and willing volunteers brought in sand from the beach, created flags and poles, and started play. Mr. and Mrs. T. M. Syer were early volunteers and proponents of the golf course, served as directors, and won many early competitions.

On April 19, 1922 a meeting was called to reorganize and form a complete golf club which could stage events and tournaments, as well as seek new land options. 50 players that year were expected to rise to 75 with the new club format and the increased interest from new players learning the game. Competitions were established for both male and female golfers, with no competitions on Sundays. Early leaders were T. Cunningham, A. MacDougal, W.H. Whyte, C.B. Gordon, J.R. Mitchell, A.J. Finch, and T.M. Syer.

A small clubhouse was purchased for the provision of refreshments, and in 1924 a three-gang mower was purchased. In 1924 the men competed for the Incola Hotel Cup, while the women competed for the trophy donated by Major Fraser. 14 women formed the Ladies Club with Mrs. Syer as president. Mr. F. Aikens served as the men's president

A move in 1926 to Munson Flats on the bench land south east of the City was funded by debentures and loan. A more scenic course with valley views and terrain changes was soon overcome by lack of water and difficulty in reaching the location. Land was then leased from the City in the current King's Park area for 20 years which allowed a 9 hole course to be built in 1935. The location changed slightly as the land use agreements changed.

In 1961 the PGCC course moved to the west and became the first 18 hole course in the Interior of BC. This location quickly became an attraction with a new clubhouse being constructed in 1962 which offered dining and lounge facilities to the public with views of the course. Changes in lease agreements have occurred until arrangements with the City allowed the construction of the course as we know it today, between the Okanagan River Channel and the former CPR line. The northern boundary is Highway 97 (Eckhart Avenue), making the in-town location a huge advantage for local golfers and guests using the facilities. The course layout is entirely on land leased from the City of Penticton.

The membership, at around 600, features leagues for regular social and competitive play: Men's Club, Ladies' Club, Senior Men's league, Wednesday Night Ladies, and the Junior club. The PGCC has remained fully open to the public with a membership which elects a Board of directors who oversee the operation of the club.

In 2008 a fully modern clubhouse was built and the order of play of the two nines was reversed, resulting in excellent views from the clubhouse and front row seats of the #1, #10, #14 tees as well as the finishing hole #18 green from the large patio area. This new facility continues to welcome the public to the Blue Heron Dining Room & Lounge featuring displays of work by local artists. The Golf Shop offers all the golfing needs for the membership and golfing public.

Drainage of the lowland near the river channel was improved with the agreement with the City of Penticton in the late 1980's to construct a pond and drainage creek system from the north eastern corner to the river channel. Connected to the City flood drainage, this system allows rapid drain off of storm water from the city to reach the channel and has provided interesting features to the course. Golf course architect Les Furber provided the redesign which included the ponds and waterways, adding challenges to the golfers and attracting many varieties of waterfowl and aquatic animals. The South Okanagan Naturalist Club has inventoried and provided signage of the birds present. This group has also advised on matters such as type and location of bird and bat nesting boxes and planting of native vegetation.

The advent of scorecards, handicaps, and tournaments moved the membership forward. The Emerald Tournament was later followed by competitions with other clubs in the valley and the Penticton Men's Open in 1959 and still continuing. Golfers come from all parts of the Pacific Northwest, bringing their families to enjoy the tourist attractions of the area. Club volunteers have long been involved in this event and have, with the participants, enjoyed the many social functions.

The PGCC has hosted many charitable tournaments, foremost being the men's 32nd Moog and Friends and the women's Penticton Tees Up for Cancer celebrating the 25th anniversary in August 2022. These two events have raised \$2,000,000.00 for the South Okanagan Medical Foundation, Moog & Friends Hospice House and many other South Okanagan charities.

The PGCC has maintained an active junior program with lessons being a part of the junior membership with many of our juniors going on to college scholarships, competitive play, and careers in the golf industry. The mentorship of Golf Professionals Bill Carse, Bob Kidd, Al Mackenzie, and current Executive Professional Guy Dow have started many assistant pros on their way to full club professionals and other industry jobs.

The PGCC has, from its earliest beginnings, brought to the City an attractive recreational facility, desirable green space, and an attraction for tourists to this area. As the City moves forward with its multi-decade plans for the Northern Gateway, the PGCC is pleased to participate in providing a welcoming first impression when entering the City of Penticton.

The course challenges golfers of all abilities, and draws many golfers from further north because of its early spring opening and late fall closure. The layout on the valley floor is especially appealing to those who wish to walk the course. Protection of riparian areas, the use of reclaimed water from the City's waste treatment plant, selective removal and replacement of trees, and constant improvements to tees and greens are ongoing considerations to course maintenance. As part of the club dedication to continually improve the experience a complete replacement of the irrigation system is scheduled for completion in the spring of 2022.

Observation of the club's 100th anniversary will include featured events for all sections of the club, displays, and a day for the present and past members as well as non-members to visit the club and enjoy its offerings on June 11th with the public being welcomed. The club will take part in a simultaneous golf event with the other clubs in Canada celebrating 100 years on June 16th.

Recreational facilities for locals and tourists were seen as necessary 100+ years ago as they continue to be today, where the championship 18 hole Penticton Golf and Country Club attracts residents and visitors from around the world.

Please visit our website at www.pentictongolf.ca

