

A BRIEF HISTORY OF PELLATT UNITED FIREFIGHTERS

In the fall of **1979** the then Provincial ministry of Northern Affairs announced they would provide a **pump package** to unorganized areas to aid in fire protection. The only stipulations were the community must provide a location for it to be housed, and have members of the community trained in its operation.

This announcement was brought to the attention of the membership of the **Laclu Community Club**, which has been active in our area for many years, at a meeting which was also attended by **MNA representative Ken Pride**. He also outlined a program by which people could purchase **smoke alarms** from the Ministry at a reason-able price.

As more people were moving to our area on a permanent basis and more using it as a summer get-away, it was decided by those present that we should apply for one of the pump packages, stating that we would ensure its safe-keeping and maintenance and the members of the community would take the necessary training in its operation.

In the spring of **1980** application was made, approved, and the **pump package** was **received in May 1981**. **Ian Tucker** accepted the position of our first **fire Chief** and **Jim Crowley Sr.** was **Deputy Chief**. Several members both men and women took the required training and practiced regularly. At this time a **telephone call list** was set up so that if a fire did occur whoever learned of it first had the names and telephone numbers of those who would respond.

As most of the men who lived in the area worked in the town of Kenora (12 Miles away), the women who were at home were often the first to respond when needed. It was soon realized that it would be much easier if the pump unit was kept on a **trailer**, so when it was needed it would be much easier to just hook-up and go. This was explained to our community members and in **the spring of 1981** our first **Fire Hall** was built by **Dan Drew, Alfred Adamson, and Gord Quinton**. who all volunteered their time and expertise. **Ian Tucker's** artistic sign was proudly hung over the door. It housed the trailer donated by Bennett's Marine.

In **1982**, the residents to the area north of Laclu, still in Pellatt township, applied for and **received a pump package**, also mounted on a trailer, housed on **Muriel Lake Road**, in a building on land donated by the **Lund** Family. Residents held bake sales to raise the funds to heat and maintain the unit. **Glen Iriam** was their first **Fire Chief**.

We still had a concern that several locations in our area were only water/ice accessible. This was mentioned to the **Laclu Campers Association** and in **1983**, this association donated a **boat** and Garnet Bennett supplied a motor. This too was housed at the Laclu hall.

We operated like this, serving a growing population approx. 2000, until **1984** when the MNA announced they could supply a "Real Fire truck", **A Rapid Attack Vehicle (RAV)** and turnout gear to areas such as ours provided we met certain criteria, namely provide a heated building for the truck, acquire a tanker truck to accompany the pumper, provide regular maintenance of the truck(s), and ensure adequate training to all team members. We had to agree to provide fire protection service to an area defined by the Ontario Fire Marshall's office.

A meeting was called between the Laclu and Muriel Lake residents and other interested citizens and it was decided that a proper fire hall should be built in a central location, if we could get Government Assistance for the funding to erect a building.

A brainstorming session was held at the home of **Ralph Webb** resulting in a Board of Directors being chosen, and **Pellatt United Firefighters Inc.** was formed, commonly known as P.U.F.F. A logo was designed by **Brian Quinton**, a nephew of firefighter **Gordon Quinton**. It is still in use today.

A piece of Crown property on the shore of **Sandy Lake** was identified as a suitable location and the Ministry of Natural Resources (MNR) granted a Land Use Permit for its use.

Application was made through MNA, in the name of P.U.F.F., for the **\$15000 grant** for fire hall construction of a building large enough to house both trucks with kitchen washrooms and a training area. A UIC section 38 grant provided some more dollars. A news letter was written up and delivered to almost every property owner and business in the area. Some major fund raising was done by the finance committee for the balance of almost **\$60000**. Construction began in the **summer of 1984** and continued through the year on a **60 x40 building**.

A better bunch of scroungers you'll not find. In **the fall of 1984**, before the hall was finished, **two surplus army 6x6 trucks**, a fire truck and a tanker, were located in Shilo Mb. and the price was right- two for one! A community minded citizen **Jim Rivington** put up the funds and six fire team members were dispatched to retrieve them. An unpleasant drive of 200 miles each way at -30 degrees and 45 MPH was rewarded with not only 2 trucks but enough spare parts and fire paraphernalia to last into the millennium. They served us well until retirement in **1990** and **1998**.

On December 20 1984, Christmas came early with the delivery of our own brand **new 1984 Rapid Attack Fire Truck** by the **Ontario Fire Marshall**. With its arrival began a crash training program. 25 firefighters under **Chief Ian Tucker** enrolled in a 40 hr. training course which continued **all winter and into spring 1985**. Completed in the spring training continues at once a week practices to this day.

Winter and **spring 1985** also saw our army trucks painted yellow to match the RAV. and construction of tables to furnish the hall, under a further UIC section 38

grant for labor and materials. As all this was taking place, an **auxiliary** was formed to aid the firefighters in other ways and to assist with further fund raising. One Member of the auxiliary sat on the board of directors to keep all informed of events. This format has since changed in that we no longer have a separate auxiliary but board members are assigned tasks in organizing events and draft willing helpers from the community as required. This system seems to work well.

The **Grand Opening** of the new **Pellatt Fire Hall** was held **May 19, 1985** with a **Pancake Breakfast**, put on by P.U.F.F. Inc. All fire equipment was readied and demonstrated to nearly 250 amazed attendees.

With this in mind it might be thought we could lay back and rest for a while, how-ever such was not the case. Our territory was expanded to cover four townships, Pellatt, Umbach, Gidley, and Pelican, an area of approximately 400 square miles. With the growing population of our territory, it became evident we should provide better protection for the Olson-Oldford road area, a rapidly growing section,

Again the financial wizards of the organization came up with a UIC assistance program, to enable us to erect a building to house our old **pumper #3**. The **J. Oldford Memorial Fire Hall** was erected on **land donated** for the purpose **by the Oldford family**, and the **Grand Opening** was held in **1986**.

Up until this time we had continued with a telephone call system for responders. A siren (part of our "loot" from the Army) was installed on the Main fire hall is audible for miles to alert those outside during an emergency call. In **1987**, a **pager response system** was put in place with **dispatch from Kenora**. This along with being part of the **Kenora Mutual Aid Association** greatly improved our efficiency.

In **1988 Bell Telephone Co.** through the **Kenora Lions Club** let us have a used **Chev. suburban**. An **Auto Extrication kit** was provided by the OFM, and this capability was added to our team. Another local business owned by **Roger & Val Metail** offered us their cube van in trade for our suburban, and **Rescue #4** was in place. By March most of our Fire-fighters were **certified First-Aid & CPR responders**.

In **1989** it became apparent that growing public interest and appetites required **expanded kitchen facilities** at the main hall and more space was required at the Old-ford road site, again a UIC works program filled the bill.

In **1990** we replaced our 6x6 army tanker with a **1974 Ford tanker** designed and built entirely by local suppliers and fire hall money.

In **1991** we acquired a **16' Lund boat**, motor and trailer, from a local camper.

Marcel Gaborieau. We also purchased a **generator set** to assist in night incidents.

Both of our fire halls were heated with wood. **Ralph Webb** was volunteered to oversee a schedule of **volunteer fire tenders**. Everyone did one week for the heating season. In **1992** we upgraded our heating to **outside wood heating systems**, with a corresponding decrease in our insurance. These gave exemplary service still fired by volunteers under Mr. Webb. Again all units were supplied and installed by local suppliers.

With our ever expanding population, and new areas being developed, it became apparent that an **addressing system** should be in place to assist responses to those areas. In **1993** this huge task was undertaken by **Ed Leonard**, one of our stalwart directors, along with a student hired through a UIC student works program.

Also in **1993**, our **Emergency First Responders (EFR) team** came on stream after rigorous training. Not all EFR members are firefighters, but are closely affiliated. They are paged out by the same paging system, and respond to all fire calls, just in case they are needed. **Rescue 94** is housed in our main fire hall, and has increased our capabilities, along with an increase in calls for service!

A new area wide vehicle identity number system made us **Pumper 91, Pumper 93, Tanker 92, and Rescue 94.**

By **February 1995**, thanks to many more hours spent by **Glenn Iriam**, our ex (retired) Fire Chief, and board member **Ed Leonard**, our **addressing system** was completed and in effect. It is used, today, by not only fire, police and ambulance personnel but by telephone, hydro and even the post office! It has proven itself on more than one occasion.

We were quickly out growing both fire halls, and in **April 1995** we applied for and received an **infrastructure grant** to cover our planned expansion and renovations. This work was again done using local contractors. A large **addition** (24x60) was constructed onto the main hall, enabling us to enlarge our kitchen facilities again, give the fire chief a desperately needed office and radio room, and new washrooms complete with showers. A deluge shower to cover hazardous contamination was also installed. A separate garage stall for **Rescue 94** and our **fire boat** allowed our crowded facility to spread out some. These renovations took **until 1996** to complete.

PUFF's portion of this funding came through the **sale of Lottery Calendars** with pictures of our own firefighters in action. Daily, monthly and special cash draws made these a definite success.

In **1996**, we had the opportunity to purchase a used **17' Zodiac** to replace our 16' aluminum boat. This proved to be a better choice for fire/rescue service. It was used almost immediately that summer in a serious boat accident at midnight on a

long week-end.

With bigger and better facilities come bigger and more strenuous responsibilities and more demands of our time and money. The **lottery calendar sales** were repeated in **1997** along with **Nevada tickets**. Our firefighters became involved with the **Muscular Dystrophy boot Drive** for the first time. It (naturally) was a huge success.

We instituted a provincially mandated **Fire Prevention Program** this year with excellent results. Our fire team visits schools in the area along with other fire departments during **Fire Prevention Week** to spread their safety messages and paid for one set of the **Learn not To Burn program** sets. An attempt is being made to visit every home and cottage in the area to insure they have a **working smoke detector** in place, and if not install one. This is all volunteer time and so the project is on-going.

By **May of 1998**, we learned that an area fire department was going to replace their fire truck, and negotiations ensued, resulting in our acquiring a **1977 Chevrolet front mount pumper truck, our new Pumper 93**, to replace our venerable 1956 army truck. This was paid for **PROUDLY** with fire department own painstakingly earned dollars.

During the **spring of 1999**, it was learned the local chapter of St John's Ambulance was replacing their mobile first-aid post. With local involved citizens working on our behalf, we were able to purchase their unit for minimum dollars. The **1981 Dodge Ambulance** became our **Rescue 94** and with a little work and ingenuity replaced our elderly cube van.

Throughout our short history we have had many leaders. We are fortunate we have always had a conscientious **Board of Directors** which is elected annually at a general meeting. Their diligence in handling the business and administrative side of an emergency service has allowed the firefighters to concentrate on the technical aspects of a volunteer service, "putting the wet stuff on the red stuff".

These people spend many hours of their own time **training** for various emergencies. Practices are held every week and they attend mutual-aid training sessions when ever possible. They send delegates to special meetings etc. as far as **Fire Con** Thunder Bay. Often their own vacation time is used to take part in these events.

Lastly, but by no means least, our **community citizens** who appreciate our services are always willing to help when asked, **and they are asked frequently !** We issue an **annual appeal for funds** as a newsletter asking for voluntary contributions. Much of our capital costs have been covered by Government Grants. The rest of our fund raising is done through many avenues.

Annual Pancake Breakfast for the community held on the May long week-end.

Operation of a **concession** at our annual **Summer Regatta**.

Bingo on July August long week-end with the Campers Association.

Barbecue at the fire hall on July August weekend

Garage Sales, (since been discontinued).

December **appreciation dinner** for and by the fire dept. membership.

Lottery Calendar Sales and Nevada Tickets

Various **raffle events** from cars and boats to ATV's and snowmobiles.

Annual invitational **Bass Tournament**.

A aluminum can **recycling depot**, we collect and take them in for scrap.

Christmas **Breakfast With Santa** for the children, and many other ideas that our people come up with.

Besides all of this, when ever the alarms sound, several of our women respond to the firehall. Some provide **baby-sitting services** for free to allow another firefighter to attend the emergency. Still others man the radio and provide "go-fer" services for things needed at the scene. Others put on the coffee and always manage to find food for the crew, **firefighters are a hungry lot**. The auxiliary started to keep **survival kits** for fire victims and this has been continued to today.

Some of our more senior members, reluctant to give up the chase, have formed a **loose association of reservists**. They are always ready to relieve firemen or step in to man pumps or drive trucks on a water shuttle. They are a capable resource as back-up personnel. One of our founding seniors, Mr. Garnet Bennett Sits, in 2000, as **chairman of NPAC, the Northern Protection Area Committee**, of the Ontario Fire Marshall's office.

We have met with varied response situations from auto accidents, bush fires, false alarms, to arson, EFR responses, house fires, fire deaths .and gas explosions and even a locomotive fire. All have been dealt with expertly and been a learning experience and contributed greatly to the expertise and efficiency of our firefighters. We are now (officially) able to call ourselves a **Fire Department**.

Curiously, we have always found an unsuspecting soul to fill the shoes of the **Fire Chief** whenever required. They serve with pride and competence and go above the call of duty. Each has left their own distinctive mark on the Department.

In our short 25 year history we have accumulated over **1/2 million dollars in assets**.

We have accumulated the following :--

* **Main Fire hall**, 1984 64 x 60 metal clad building. (plus additions)

- * **Oldford Fire hall**, 1986 40 x 32 metal clad building
- * **Car 90** 2010 2005 Ford 4x4 pick up
- Pumper 91 1984 1984 Ford pumper (OFM replaced)
- Pumper 91** 2000 2000 International pumper (OFM supplied)
- * Tanker 2 1984 1955 GMC 6x6 army (replaced)
- * **Tanker 92** 1990 1974 Ford 1000 gal. water tank truck (replaced)
- * Tanker 92 2004 1995 Ford 1500 gal water tanker
- * Pumper 3 1984 1956 GMC 6x6 army (replaced)
- * Pumper 93 1998 1978 Chev. Fire engine(replaced)
- * **Pumper 93** 2007 1988 Ford pumper
- * Rescue 4 1988 1972 Chev suburban(replaced)
- * Rescue 4 1988 1974 Chev van 1988 (replaced)
- * Rescue 94 1999 1981 Dodge Ambulance (replaced)
- * **Rescue 94** 2002 1998 Ford Ambulance
- * fireboat 1983 14 ft alum (replaced)
- * fireboat 1991 16 ft Alum (replaced)
- * **Fire/rescue boat** 1996 17' Zodiac boat & 25 hp motor
- Portable pumps** both 10hp, 18 hp and 20 hp types supplied by OFM
- Breathing apparatus** 4 sets plus spare bottles supplied by OFM
- * **Breathing apparatus** 4 sets plus spare bottles supplied by us. (replaced)
- 4 sets 1 hr plus spare bottles supplied Abitibi Paper
- EFR trauma kits** & related equipment (supplied by Dept. of Health
- Trauma Kits & related Equipment supplied by Walsten Air
- Turn-out gear** 20 sets of coats pants boots hard hats gloves
- * **Pagers** 20 member team is so equipped
- * **Radios** all units are radio equipped and several portable units.
- * **Generators and lighting** for night service.
- Auto extrication tools.** Basic kit supplied by OFM.
- * **2 power ice augers** and 2 **manual augers.**
- * **2 power saws.** 1 on each pumper
- * **PFD vests and water -ice rescue ropes** & throw bags. (on fire boat)
- * **Tool kits and medical kits** for each vehicle.
- Various equipment to augment all of the above pieces.
- Misc. other pieces of fire related equipment to numerous to list.
- * **denotes bought by PUFF.**

Through all of this we have become a **much closer knit community**. Prior to the formation of the fire teams, people tended to stay in their own little area and didn't know or socialize with other people. The fire halls changed all that. They have become a focal point and many friendships have been formed.

Fire history is complete to year 2000.