



CITY OF ABBOTSFORD

REPORT – PARKS, RECREATION & CULTURE

REPORT NO: PRC 28 - 2006

Date: Sept. 22, 2006

File No: 7710-01

TO: Chair and Commission
FROM: Brenda Finlayson, Arts & Heritage Coordinator
SUBJECT: Abbotsford Community Heritage Register - Addition of Old South Poplar School

RECOMMENDATION(S):

1. THAT Report No. PRC 28-2006 dated Sept. 22, 2006 from the Arts & Heritage Coordinator regarding an addition to the Abbotsford Community Heritage Register be received:
2. THAT Council add the Old South Poplar School to the Abbotsford Community Heritage Register.

BACKGROUND:

The Abbotsford Community Heritage Register was established July 25, 2005. Four sites with heritage value were initially placed on the Register:

- Trethewey House, 2313 Ware St.
- Clayburn School, 4315 Wright Road
- Clayburn Church, 4280 Wright Road
- 1911 Sikh Temple, 33089 South Fraser Way, (National Historic Site Status), July 2002.

The first three sites, Trethewey House, Clayburn Church and Clayburn School, had previously been recognized and designated by the City of Abbotsford. The 1911 Sikh Temple was declared a National Historic Site in July 2002. These four sites formed the first Abbotsford Community Heritage Register. Additional sites that are recognized as having heritage character or heritage value will be placed on the Register in the future.

ANALYSIS:

There are many potential benefits for a site to be added to the Abbotsford Community Heritage Register. It can enhance the public's appreciation of the identity and character of the site and facilitate public access to heritage information. It allows local government to consider monitoring changes in properties through a licensing and permit application process for historic places listed on the Register. It provides eligibility for special provisions within the BC Building Code Heritage Building Supplement for heritage properties.

This does not constitute legal protection, and does not require compensation from the City in any form. However, inclusion on the Register can act as the basis of eligibility for senior government heritage incentives.

The Old South Poplar School has sufficient heritage value and heritage character to justify its conservation and inclusion in the Register. The Old South Poplar School was built in 1932 by H.C. Green who cleared the land and built the school for \$1,200. As an early school building, it has a rich history in the development of Abbotsford School District No. 34. On opening in January 1933, it functioned as a one-room school with 28 pupils. There was no running water, no roads leading to the school and the basement was used to store firewood. It was built to meet the needs of a growing community, mostly Mennonite, who had settled on the recently deforested land. The adjacent community was named Poplar – for the trees that were planted on the top of the hill- and is now called Clearbrook. By the end of 1933 there were 47 pupils and the older pupils were sent out to other schools with just grades one to four remaining at Old South Poplar School. The first new room opened in 1951. In 1953, due to a school accommodation crisis of serious proportions, a bylaw was passed to add another classroom to the school. In 2003, Old South Poplar celebrated its 70th anniversary with a tree-planting ceremony, presentations by the first principal, James Reid, photos and memorabilia of the members of the first class, along with songs and dances celebrating its history. It enjoyed a rich and long history as it grew along with the community.

Old South Poplar School is currently vacant and boarded up, but remains relatively intact. School District No. 34 has recognized its heritage value and will undertake an initiative to restore the early school building.

CONCLUSION:

The addition of Old South Poplar School to the Abbotsford Community Heritage Register is important as it provides formal recognition of the Old South Poplar School as having heritage value in the community.

Brenda Finlayson
Arts & Heritage Coordinator