



Media Release

THE CORPORATION OF THE CITY OF VERNON
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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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VFRS celebrates 125 years of “Answering the Call”

From 11 a.m. to 2 p.m. on Saturday, May 7, Vernon Fire Rescue Services (VFRS) will be celebrating 125 years of service in a ceremony that includes unveiling the restored fire bell that was mounted in the original Vernon Fire Hall, antique fire truck display, family activities and opportunity to see inside Fire Hall #1. At 12 p.m., the Bell Restoration Project unveiling will feature VFRS Chief Keith Green, Vernon Mayor Akbal Mund, MLA Eric Foster, MP Mel Arnold, and speakers from the International Association of Fire Fighters (IAFF) and Vernon Volunteer Firefighters Association (VVFA).

Guests can also enjoy burgers provided by the Lion’s Club for a donation.

The unveiling of the restored fire bell is the culmination of months of planning and community collaboration, said Green.

“So many people and community minded businesses have contributed to this historical project,” said Green. “We are lucky to live in a community where people are so kind with both their time and resources to make events like this come to reality.”

The restored fire bell is mounted into a brickwork arch that is based on the original fire hall’s architecture. The restoration project included numerous financial and in-kind donations for a total value of approximately \$30,000.

Schedule of events

11 a.m. – 2 p.m.: VFRS open house and tours, Buy-a-Brick fundraiser \$10 each, Bouncy Castle and family activities; antique fire truck display (Firehall #1 and Vernon Museum & Archives); face painting at Vernon Museum & Archives

12 p.m.: Sea Cadets Band sing *Oh Canada* and *God Save the Queen*

12 p.m.: Bell Restoration Project Unveiling with speakers VFRS Chief Keith Green, Vernon Mayor, Vernon Monashee MLA Eric Foster, North Okanagan – Shuswap MP Mel Arnold, IAFF Executive, VVFA Executive (Ringing of the Bell Rt. Lt. Roy Sauer)

Special thanks go to the following community members, businesses and organizations for stepping forward to make the restoration of the fire bell possible:

- **Doug Buchholz** is a 25-year veteran with VVFA and the VFRS resident historian. Doug is passionate about the bell tower project and researched the entire history of the Vernon Fire Department dating back to 1891. Doug provided the project's memorial plaque.
- **Kyle Lysholm** (VVFA) researched and crafted the missing bell parts using wood and arranged to have the patterns cast in ductile iron at the Thompson Foundry by Keith Hayden in Surrey, B.C.
- **Nancy Wilde** from Wayside Press provided a conceptual sketch, giving the bell tower shape based on an old photo of the bay doors from the old station.
- Architectural insight was provided by **Jennifer Fossum** at MQN Architects.
- **Greg Wylie** at R & A Architecture provided engineer drawings.
- **John Heard** and **Matt Peet** from A1-Machine fabricated the bell's two gudgeons.
- **Scott Pshyk** of the Vernon Professional Fire Fighter's Association (VPFFA), **Paul Pshyk** (Retired VPFFA) and **Keith Schmidt** (VVFA) fabricated the 27.2-kilogram clapper at the family machine shop (Mid- Kam Installations)
- Department of National Defense provided the ceremonial bell clapper assist rope.
- **Marvin Rode** from Okanagan College created the wheel pattern utilizing a woodcutting CNC machine.
- **Dean McAreavy** (VVFA) from Dean's Excavating & City of Vernon staff accomplished the foundation excavation and site preparation.
- **Chadd Graham** (VVFA) constructed the wooden blocking & shoring that supported the bell during restoration, and provided construction supplies to the build site when required.
- **Zach Hutchinson** (VVFA) accomplished the underground foundation preparation work.
- **Keith Schmidt** (VVFA), **Gerald Fitt** (VVFA) and **Tobias Siedmann** (VVFA) constructed the new sidewalk.
- **Terry Gilmore** and **Grant Carnochan** (Ret. VPFFA) constructed the pre-fab concrete forms for the below-grade structural base.
- **Dan Pilon** from Farrer / REN CON Rental Equipment supplied all necessary construction tools/supplies, and the internal structural rebar for the concrete.

- **Booker Smith** and crew from M & K Ready Mix have been a generous and enthusiastic major sponsor for this project by providing the massive amount of concrete required for the core structure and newly created sidewalk.
- **Rick Ogasawara** from All Pro Tree & Landscape provided the excavating assistance for the new sidewalk.
- **Tim Hackman** and crew from Blue Jay Finishing laid the new sidewalk and provided the aggregate final finish.
- **Kyle and John Lysholm** constructed the wooden arch that temporarily supported the bricks and that was also used as a template for the steel lattice fabrication.
- Staff at OK Builders provided the bricks, mortar and masonry materials for the arch. They are also responsible for final placement of the bell onto the monument.
- **Cameron Lloyd** (CSL Masonry and crew) laid over 1,300 bricks. Cameron cut approximately 1,000 bricks to create the beautiful curved arch.
- The City of Vernon moved the bell to Station 2, and **John Slattery** of Canwest Propane moved it back to Station 1 after the restoration was completed.
- The **City of Vernon** provided site cleanup services of the leftover construction debris.
- **Colin Black** from Leko PreCast provided the polished concrete slab that the bell rests upon.
- **David Dutcher** and **Sean Jarvis** at Okanagan College fabricated the steel lattice above the bell.
- Brian's Heavy Equipment Painting (**Brian Kuchel**) sandblasted and painted the fabricated steel lattice to replicate the old window panes above the bay door in the old station.

Monetary donations were provided by:

Okanagan Restoration
 Watkin Motors
 Vernon Atrium Hotel & Conference Centre
 Alternative Funeral Services
 Vantage One Credit Union
 Vernon Volunteer Fire Fighter's Association
 Vernon Professional Fire Fighter's Association (Local 1517)
 Chowder & Marching Society (CMS)
 City of Vernon