

Spirit Of SCHUMACHER



A Community Newsletter to Connect the
Past, Present and Future

CELEBRATING 107 YEARS

MARCH 1, 1912 TO 2019

SCHUMACHER, ONTARIO

WILD WINTER WEATHER



It was quite the winter in Schumacher and area. According to the Mattagami Region Conservation Authority, by mid February there was 34 inches of snow on the ground. City crews were kept busy clearing streets and, for a time, the "table top cleaning" residents were used to was suspended. Frigid temperatures also caused havoc in December and January. School bus cancellations in the local area reached double digits.

As any Northerner knows, the best way to survive a long winter is to embrace it. The abundance of snow created excellent ski, snowmobile, and snowshoe conditions. It also resulted in an extended winter recreation season. As March slips into April, however, welcome signs of spring are slowly starting to appear.

Above: Schumacher's Brent Secord competed in the Trail Sport 600 event at the 2019 Eclipse Financial Pro Challenge on March 2nd and 3rd. The CSRA Snowcross Series event was held at the Timmins Snow Dump. (Photo by Alexander Smith.) Below: The Hydro line behind Schumacher doubles as a snowmobile access and snowshoe trail in the winter months. (Photo by Rene Dunkley.) There was still plenty of snow on the ground in late March, but signs of spring were also in the air. (Photo by Lisa Romanowski.)



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OLD, BUT STILL STANDING

The town of Schumacher has a rich history of culture and community. Over the years many buildings have perished altogether, yet others still stand proudly and are known far and wide. Among some of our most historic buildings are Schumacher Public School, the McIntyre Community Building, the Dwyer Block and the Croatian Hall. It is for the Croatian Hall (Hvratski Narodni Dom) that I am writing this narrative.

During the month of September 2018, the Croatian Hall Society of Schumacher celebrated the 86th Anniversary of the hall's existence. In the early 1900s, so many Croatian families settled in Schumacher that the town was nicknamed Mali Zagreb (Little Zagreb), a nod to the capital city of Croatia. Schumacher was also called Little Croatia. Desiring a gathering place where they could celebrate their cultural heritage, the Croatians banded together and purchased the Maple Leaf Theatre building in the early 1930s. The volunteer labour force of Croatians worked for many months remodeling, redecorating and transforming the building into the Croatian Hall as we know it today. The official opening of the Croatian Hall took place on Saturday, December 17, 1932 with 200 people in attendance. The entry fee for the social was \$2.00. According to the December 15, 1932 edition of *The Porcupine Advance*, many special guests were invited and music was to be provided by The Moonlight Serenaders (the Croatian tamburitzza orchestra) as well as Sullivan-Ormston and the Merrymakers.

From the very beginning, memorable events have taken place at the hall. Croatian wedding receptions typically had one complete dinner seating at 6 o'clock for 150-200 people and then another seating around midnight (there were no automatic dishwashers in those days). Then there were the famous wine dinners where part of the price of admission was a gallon of home-

made wine. During the evening, guests could sample all the wines in order to decide which was the best tasting. The "Polka King", Walter Ostenak of Kitchener, has graced the Croatian Hall stage on many occasions. Many a sports team hosted a Friday Night Stag at the hall to fill their coffers. On a more sombre note, a number of Schumacher residents of Croatian descent were "waked" at the hall prior to formal funeral services and burial.

The children of the day had opportunities to learn to play Croatian instruments including the tamburitzza and accordion. They also learned traditional Croatian dances and songs. The hall stage featured Croatian drama plays and concerts. The hall also hosted concerts that the children from Schumacher Public School presented to their parents. If you ask any old-timers from Schumacher, they will surely have stories and anecdotes about Croatian Hall events to share.

Although the hall was originally built to serve the needs of the Croatian community, town folk who were not of Croatian descent were welcome and willing participants in its various activities. Over the years, and even today, the membership of the Croatian Hall Society reflects a mixture of cultural backgrounds. Unfortunately, many of the cultural happenings have subsided during the past few decades, which is truly sad to see happen.

Despite the recent decline, the hall continues to be managed by a volunteer executive of seven people: Frank Sebalj (President), George Stefanic (Secretary/Treasurer), and Darlene Polowy, Kathy Vukobratich, Dennis Sebalj, Cathy Beard and Helen Resetar, each serving as Directors. The current membership stands at just under 100 people. It is interesting to note that several people who moved from Schumacher to distant places have retained their memberships over the years. We have members from British Columbia, Alberta, California, New York City and various cities throughout Ontario.



Although the Croatian Hall continues to function thanks to the small but dedicated executive that volunteers to do everything possible to keep the doors open, we do need to consider where we go from here. As everyone knows and experiences, the costs to run a building (taxes, heating, hydro, water and sewer, general maintenance) continue to rise. Our main sources of revenue come from hall rentals, dinners, and membership fees. So far we have been able to keep our heads above water, but how long this can continue is difficult to answer.

What the Croatian Hall needs is a great surge of new members. New members bring new life and energy to an organization. New members bring new ideas to continue promoting aspects of Croatian culture in our community. After all, can there be a living culture without a living body of interested and motivated people to promote it? Doubtful.

Though the Croatian culture is not as pronounced as it was once in our town, I truly believe that it would be a shame to see the Croatian Hall of Schumacher end up like some of our other cultural friends who have had to close up their halls due to a lack of members. The hall stands as a beacon and a reminder of the great cultural pride that was held by local Croatian people throughout most of the twentieth century.

It would be a dishonour to the early Croatian pioneers if we do not try to keep the hall open. Therefore, I invite all local Croatians, as well as friends of the Croatian community, to consider becoming Croatian Hall Society members. The annual fee is \$25 and your support will go a long way to preserving this special part of Schumacher.

George Stefanic
Secretary / Treasure
Croatian Hall Society



Above: In its heyday, entertainers young and old took to the stage at the Croatian Hall in Schumacher. A handwritten notation on this photo reads "MES. ZABAVA HRV. PROS. CLUBA PRIMORAC". (Photo courtesy of Dennis Sebalj.) Below: Croatian music teacher Joe Stimac and his students circa 1940. (Photo courtesy of Bill Stimac and Gloria Zagrodnik via Schumacher: Voices in the Goldfields.)



Above (from left): Dennis Sebalj celebrates the Croatian Hall's 86th anniversary with 50+ year Croatian Fraternal Union Lodge 930 members Emil Stefanic, Shirley Delaurant, Marianne Zelinka, Mary Herceg, Diane Delost, Helen Resetar, Walter Ostanek, and George Stefanic. (Photo courtesy of Darlene Polowy.)

SPS GLEE CLUB



Thanks to Nilma (Flora) Gazzola for submitting this photo of the 1947 Schumacher Public School Glee Club. One can only imagine the harmony that the collective voices of 107 young singers produced.

Nilma provided as many names as she could remember. If anyone one can add additional names to faces, please get in touch via Facebook (www.facebook.com/SpiritOfSchumacher), email (schumachergirl@gmail.com), or even snail mail (PO Box 13, Schumacher, ON, P0N 1G0). If you happen to have an explanation for the presence of an apparent flag of the United States on the far right of the photo, please do share - inquiring minds want to know!

1947 Schumacher Public School Glee Club

First Row (left to right): Elizabeth Douglas, Catherine Craig, Gail Russell, ?? Koshmerl, unknown (x4), Ida Cicci, Ann Delich, unknown (x5), Sally Burkholder. Second Row: Unknown (x2), Pam Hughes, Doreen Yankovich, Irene LeBrun, Mary Mattesich, unknown, Donna Bint, unknown, Mary Herak, Anne Rioux, Valerie Hicks, Stacia Wojtyto, unknown (x2), Shirley Hannigan, Gloria Yankovich, Vivian Videto. Third Row: Joy Miller, unknown (x2), Patsy Fournier, Zora Maletich, unknown, Katie Vancina, Diane Monaghan, unknown, Linda Urquhart, Emily Grenko, Nilma Flora, Rosie Pesun, Mary Pavlokovich, Rina Scodallero, Pat Thompson, unknown (x3), Betty Campbell. Fourth Row (Standing): Unknown (x7), Janet Malkin, Patsy Wong, Ellen O'Leary, unknown (x2), Eileen Lampkin, Shirley Sparks, Vera Grenko, unknown (x2), Midi Zgonc, unknown (x14), Mary Nelson. Fifth Row: Unknown, Faye Cousineau, Margaret McGee, Sandra Skene, Nan Cooper, unknown, Connie ??, Marina Bettiol, Sandra Tomney, Cora Fabro, Laura Cooper, unknown (x5), Ellen McMillan, Dorothy ??, Lenore Marshall, unknown.



HISTORICAL NOTES

SPS CENTENNIAL



According to current Schumacher Public School Principal Kelly Pearce, the staff and students will be celebrating the school's 100th anniversary on Friday, June 7th, 2019. (This date is tentative and dependent upon the state of construction of the new day-care space in the building.)

Although things are still in the planning stages, it is expected that students will be burying a time capsule to commemorate the occasion during an Open House event at the school. As more details are made available, they will be shared via our Facebook page (www.facebook.com/SpiritOfSchumacher).

SOS readers are invited to look through scrapbooks, photo albums and keepsake boxes for any SPS memorabilia. If you find any gems, please take a digital photo and share it with us by email at info@spiritofschumacher.ca. If possible, include relevant details (dates, people's names, etc.) along with your photos. We will share photos in upcoming issues of the SOS and other activities related to the centennial of Schumacher Public School.

Schumacher Public School was a four room school when it opened in 1918. According to The Porcupine Advance, as of October 8, 1924, there were 265 students enrolled at Schumacher Public School justifying a recently completed addition that doubled the number of classrooms from four to eight. A news brief in the October 28, 1926 edition mentions that construction on a twelve room schoolhouse in Schumacher was complete. A gym, stage and music room were added on in the early 1980s. (The photograph above of children playing outside the four room school appeared in the December 17, 1924 edition of The Porcupine Advance.)

PORCUPINE ADVANCE ONLINE



The Porcupine Advance, founded in 1912 by George Lake, was the first newspaper to serve the Porcupine Camp and surrounding area. The monumental task of digitizing the newspaper, spearheaded by Timmins Public Library staff, was recently completed.

The digital content is now searchable online at <http://news.ourontario.ca/timmins/search>. In addition to full-text searching, both an Articles index and a Birth/Marriage/Death announcement index exist to facilitate browsing. For assistance with using this resource, contact the Reference Desk at refdesk@timmins.ca or call 705-360-2623 x8532.

The inaugural issue of The Porcupine Advance (the area's first newspaper) hit the streets on Thursday, March 28, 1912. The weekly (and later twice weekly) newspaper was founded by George Lake. Publication continued through July 1950.



EDITORIAL

HOCKEY NEWS

I hope this edition of the SOS finds you well. With any luck, signs of spring are evident in your neck of the woods. Personally, I've had my fill of skiing, shovelling and snowshoeing for the time being. Fortunately upcoming events like the Schumacher Lions Club Sportsman Show, the Annual Home & Cottage Show, and the O'Gorman High School production of The Addams Family musical are sure signs that warmer weather is on the way.

It is no secret that times have changed and cultural and community institutions are struggling to survive. The Croatian Hall Executive is working hard to keep their doors open, but they need new members to breath new life into the organization. For more info contact George (705-264-2998), Darlene (705-235-4307) or Kathy (705-235-2302). The annual fee is only \$25 per person.

For those interested in local history, the digitized editions of The Porcupine Advance offer a treasure trove of information. Just searching "Schumacher Public School" led me down a rabbit hole that I happily followed for an entire afternoon. I know I will use this resource when preparing future issues.

Speaking of The Porcupine Advance, it should be noted that today, over a century after its founding, Porcupine Advance Printers continues to operate in Timmins with members of the Lake family on staff. We are fortunate to have both the company and the family as SACHA supporters.

Until next time,
Lisa Romanowski,
SOS Editor

The local Tri-Association Tier 2 (house league) season is all wrapped up. Schumacher Day Minor Hockey teams faced much success this season. The Novice A Division was won by the Schumacher Cubs over the Schumacher Daredevils. The Schumacher Lions were named the Atom A Champs, while the Schumacher Jets came up short in the Atom B Final. The Wicked Schumacher Bears were defeated in the Pee Wee A Championship, but the Schumacher Sharks won the B Division. The Schumacher Debastos Werewolves topped the Bantam A division. The Schumacher Sting came up short in the Midget A Championship as did the Schumacher Red Wings in the Midget B Final.



Above: The Schumacher Lions won the Tier 2 Atom A Division. (Photo from SDMH Facebook page.) Opposite Page: This photo of the McIntyre Headframe was taken by Mr. Carl MacKerth from the belfry at St. Alphonse church. It was featured as a contest winner in the September 12, 1938 edition of The Porcupine Advance.

SACHA BOARD

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SOS NEWSLETTER

The not-for-profit Schumacher Arts, Culture & Heritage Association publishes the SOS newsletter quarterly in Spring, Summer, Fall, and Winter.

The print edition is distributed to all Schumacher post boxes. For PDF versions email:
info@spiritofschumacher.ca

ADVERTISING

\$25/issue or \$90/year
An estimated 5000 people read each edition. Contact us for more information.

Good for a Giggle ...

Why was the Easter Bunny upset?
He was having a bad hare day!

Readers are invited to submit articles and photos celebrating Schumacher's past, present, or future for publication consideration. Please include the creator's full name and the full names of photo subjects.





UPCOMING EVENTS

Saturday, April 6th from 1 PM to 8 PM

TFEC Beerfest

McIntyre Curling Club, 85 McIntyre Road, Schumacher

Tickets: \$35 in Advance or \$40 at the Door

www.timminsfestivals.com

Saturday, April 13th & Sunday, April 14th from 10 AM

9th Annual TimminsCon

McIntyre Curling Club, 85 McIntyre Road, Schumacher
Comicon Kids Zone, Cosplay Corner, Artist Alley & more!

www.nothernontarioexpo.com

Friday, April 26th & Saturday, April 27th from 10 AM

Sportsman Show

Sponsored by the Schumacher Lions Club

McIntyre Community Building, Schumacher

Entry Fee \$5, Children 10 & Under Free with an Adult

Wednesday, May 1st through Saturday, May 4th at 7 PM

O'Gorman High School proudly presents

The Addams Family Musical

Sylvia Gravel Theatre, 150 George Avenue, Timmins
Get your tickets in advance at O'Gorman High School.

Saturday, May 4th from 10 AM to 4 PM

Handmade Spring Market

Presented by Northern Ontario Handmade

McIntyre Ballroom, 85 McIntyre Road, Schumacher

Free Admission!

Saturday, May 4th & Sunday, May 5th from 10 AM

30th Annual Home & Cottage Show

McIntyre Community Building, Schumacher



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 Thurston Stained Glass

* Additional Contribution
 + Deceased

Your annual support offsets SOS production costs and SACHA community endeavours.
 Thanks to Alexis Price for making a donation in memory of her mom, Lorraine Price.
 The continued generosity of all our supporters is truly appreciated.

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 Mail your completed form and cheque to **PO Box 13, Schumacher, Ontario, P0N 1G0.**

SACHA will recognize your generosity with acknowledgement in the SOS newsletter and on its website.
 A non-tax deductible receipt will be issued.