



WATCH LAKE – NORTH GREEN LAKE

VOLUNTEER FIRE DEPARTMENT

5771 Green Lake North Road
70 Mile House, BC, V0K 2K1

www.wlmgfiredept.org



Winter/Spring Newsletter 2023

Board of Directors and Firefighter Officials (to contact please email your request via wlmgvfd@gmail.com)

Tom Manion, President

Lee Granberg, Insurance

Guy Aggiss, Director

Roy Allan, Past President

Bob Nathane, Website/Facebook

Laura Dewar, Secretary,
Membership

David Kneale, Treasurer

Alan Watrich, Fund-raising

Alan Boyd, Vehicle/Hall
Maintenance

Shawna Norton, Public Relations

Ron Thurston, Fire Fighter Liaison

Andy Polaniak, Fire Chief

Ed Fornelli, Deputy Fire Chief

President's Report

Welcome to 2023, the Year of the Rabbit for followers of the Chinese calendar.

Last year was full of projects. We have had great support of the VFD bottle drive which not only created additional income, but brought people together to create a stronger community.

Our fire fighters have increased in numbers due to our recruitment drive/Open House at Hall #1 last August. These additional fire fighters bring new blood to the group and give some of the older fire fighters a chance to step back. New recruits also means a need for new protective gear. This gear has a limited life span of 10 years, so we have set up a system to ensure our fire fighters will not use expired turn-out gear.

Over the last 4 years there were discussions about a having a dry hydrant installed on 83 Mile Road. In 2021, while supplying water to the Flat Lake Fire, our turn-around time was over 25 minutes. Now with the dry hydrants in place we are no more than 6 km away from any water source for our entire fire protection area. Director Alan Boyd jumped on this project and worked very quickly to get it completed. Thanks, Alan for your continuing support.

Another honourable mention goes to Bob White, for taking on the role of Acting Fire Chief for much of last year, and of course, to his other half, Dale Heggveit for backing him up.

Our membership drive was extremely successful with less than 50 out of over 500 properties unpaid. We strive to ensure all of our properties have fire protection in the neighbourhood.

Finally I wish all of the Watch Lake – North Green Lake residents a healthy and enjoyable 2023.

Tom Manion, President



Depicted is a past director's daughter receiving a VFD bursary to help her pursue her university degree. Although Sandy Wilson moved away, she still contributes to our VFD. She organizes our Christmas hamper program, collecting donated food, money and gifts and creating beautifully decorating hampers to provide up to 5 local families with Christmas cheer!

This is your Fire Department!

To all of our new neighbours, welcome to the Cariboo! You are living in the Watch Lake – North Green Lake VFD fire protection area. We are an *independent* fire department which means you don't pay for your fire protection through your annual rural taxes. We collect those fees (called "Fire Dues") directly from property owners. Given how much our tax assessments have increased this year, the fee we charge (\$200 per year for residential lots or \$100 for undeveloped lots) is looking very attractive. The rural property tax rates for fire protection in the Cariboo Regional District range from \$0.79 (Red Bluff area) to over \$4.00 (10 Mile) per \$1000 assessed value of your property. Even at 0.79 cents per \$1000, many property owners would be paying over \$500 per year!

We have two fire halls: the Shorty Horn Hall #1 on Pioneer Road and the Sonny Johnson Hall #2 on North Green Lake Road. The current number of firefighters is 37 (yes, that is correct - 37!). We have 1 Fire Chief (Andy Polaniuk), 1 Deputy Fire Chief (Ed Fornelli), and 3 officers at each hall who play key roles in safety, training and organization of the firefighters (e.g. having Attack Teams ready to deploy during a fire).

We also have a Board of Directors (as noted on Page 1) who provide oversight on yearly budgets, equipment maintenance/purchasing, fund-raising, insurance and maintaining a membership database.

VFD Highlights of the Last Year

Open House – July 30th, 2022

Ask any firefighter and they will likely say that the most important event of 2022 was the Open House/Recruitment Drive held on the August long weekend. It was an opportunity to showcase the variety of firefighting equipment we currently have with the goal of bringing in new firefighters and directors. It was very successful! **Seventeen** people expressed interest in becoming firefighters and two more were interested in joining the Board. It was also wonderful to meet and visit many of our neighbours and friends.

Open House at Hall #1,
July 2022



New Dry Hydrant Installation on 83 Mile Road

This project was completed last summer and will provide water for the 83 Mile area on both sides of Highway 97. As we all remember, that area saw intense wildfire activity in 2021, so this latest dry hydrant provides a sense of relief to all who live nearby. Did you know our area has 4 dry hydrants? Along with the 83 Mile system, there are hydrants at Access 14 and 21 on Green Lake and another near Kazoo Road, providing water to the far reaches of the Watch Lake area. Every property in our protection area now has a water source within 6 kilometers!



Bottles and Cans Bring in Much-needed Funding

With the help of our local neighbours and friends, Director Al Watrich has brought in over \$14,000 last year and nearly \$64,000 to the department over the last 10 years from recycled bottles and cans. Every Monday morning during the peak tourist season and every second Monday during the winter is bottle-sorting day at Hall #1. We are thankful for residents who help sort and also to everyone who thoughtfully puts their returnable bottles and cans in the recycling booth at the Watch Lake Dump. These funds will help to equip our new recruits and ensure they are trained properly.

Firefighter Appreciation Dinner

Our firefighters, directors and significant others were treated to a delicious dinner catered by BJ's Donuts February 25th at the Watch Lake Community Hall. It was a night of mixed emotions. Our more seasoned firefighters received their service awards, some of whom have been with the department for over 25 years. We also bid a very fond and emotional farewell to the VFD Auxiliary. After decades of hard work fund-raising for the fire department, our dedicated ladies decided to step down. The Auxiliary managed to keep our fire department afloat back in the earlier years before government grants existed. In later years, our department has been very successful with grants-in-aid and other funding to build a VFD of which we are extremely proud. Alas, it was time for our Auxiliary to relax and reflect on a job well done!

Turn-out Gear

According to WorkSafeBC regulations, all firefighter safety gear has an expiry date and it must be replaced when that deadline approaches. Safety gear includes turnout pants and jackets made of a two-layer fabric designed to repel heat and wick away any moisture that gets inside. We have been able to buy 5 new sets of turnout gear, thanks to Director Roy Allan's successful grant application. This means that all of our firefighters will be outfitted with non-expired gear and we will be able to continue to buy new gear each year as needed.

Firefighter Training

Since last autumn, our fire officers have been travelling to the South Green Lake VFD to undertake their Officer Training modules. Training and refresher training is also underway for all firefighters in SCBA (self-contained breathing apparatus) and engine familiarity. Coming this Spring: driver training, First Aid/CPR, traffic control, an annual wildfire refresher and gas/electrical safety. Of the 17 new recruits, sadly at least 4 had to step down due to illness, work and/or other issues. However, we still have an impressive roster of 37 in total.



Gisele Poliseo getting her Auxiliary appreciation award after many years of work – we can't thank the Auxiliary enough!



Firefighter practice, Summer, 2022

Meet the New Directors!

Many of our Directors have been on the Board for years. It is wonderful to have two new people join in order to give some of our long-standing members a break!

Shawna Norton moved to the Cariboo in 1995, originally to the 108 Mile Ranch. After spending so many of her summers enjoying Green Lake, she decided to move here in 2014 when a property came available. She works as Manager of the Williams Lake and District Credit Union, 100 Mile House Branch and is happy volunteering out in the community. She has been a volunteer with many organizations and now will be getting to know the WL-NGLVFD.

David Kneale is also a new Director. “We bought our property 17 years ago and built our cabin as a vacation home for the family before deciding to retire here. We bought here largely because we can horseback ride, ATV and snowmobile out our back gate. I am a registered Geoscientist with the Engineers and Geoscientists of BC as a Hydrogeologist and have worked in consulting engineering in mining, geotechnical engineering and hydrogeology for over 40 years. I am looking forward to serving on the Board and assisting a knowledgeable, well-run Board with my business experience.”

Web Site Update

Bob Nathane has been updating the website to include all sorts of videos; some are funny, some are informative and all of them are interesting! Here’s a sampling: “Fire Safety Education for Kids”, “Fire Academy Teaches CPR Through Disco”, and “Future Fire Technology. Is This the Future?” Please take a look for yourself. Click on the “Videos” tab on the main page to find them.

If you have photos you would like to place on the web site or on our Facebook page, please forward them to Bob at bob@bnathane.com.

Website address: <https://www.wlngfiredept.org/>



Getting measured for turnout gear

Membership

Our community has really grown! There used to be 439 properties, representing roughly 1,100 people 10 years ago. Today, we have 513 properties in our database, representing about 1,400 residents. That is a nearly a 20 % increase in the number of residents!

Stay safe everyone and enjoy your time on/in/near the lakes this year!



Our new fire engine decked out in Christmas lights for the Santa Claus parade in 100 Mile House (November, 2022)