

Penticton Centre of Excellence

As the New Year approaches and the Old Year passes one can't help but reflect on the passing of time. Each individual and each family, each community, each province has had unique experiences. What has been accomplished? What was left undone to be completed later? We do not have the time, knowledge nor space to examine each situation, nor each municipality across Canada.

Having been a resident of Penticton for the past 41 years, it is easy to reflect on past successes. The present site of Cherry Lane Mall at one time was a cherry orchard. Yorkton Avenue west of Skaha Lake Road was a successful market gardening area. New and renovated hotels and motels such as the Lakeside Hotel, Sandman Inn, Ramada Inn, and Days Inn have added to the city. The old Incola Hotel with its warm greeting on Okanagan Lake is gone as is the pasture and orchard land around Princess Margaret Secondary School.

Penticton has been blessed with some of the best and newest schools in the province. Provincial governments have been kind to us providing funds for Kettle Valley Middle School, Skaha Lake Middle School, a new Princess Margaret Secondary School, a new Penticton Secondary School and in Summerland, Summerland Middle School. The financial deals involved tearing down structures that had serviced us well for a number of years. Deals with the government were negotiated and funds secured to replace the old and not to "patch up" the old and also build new. As a consequence O'Connell Elementary School with its gym were demolished as was also Penticton Secondary School. Princess Margaret's gymnasium was turned into an all purpose room.



WALTER
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Our Canada

It was a thrill for me personally to see Penticton Secondary School students enter their new building in September. The people who made it all possible are to be commended. I was honoured to be part of and member of the team that stood firm and brought the plan to fruition. Penticton Secondary School has been instrumental in helping develop the culture of Penticton. It is time to move on. The students of the 21st century deserve the new school and the new culture that it brings.

There is a glorious opportunity for the community to work together in a win-win situation by developing a cultural center at the Shatford Building. There is a business plan in place to restore the stage with an auditorium with classrooms, etc. The Shatford Centre would become an "Arts and Entrepreneurial Skills Development and Employment Centre". It would be the home to heritage arts and culture and the Penticton Museum and Archives.

Another much anticipated project taking place in Penticton is the "Centre of Excellence in Sustainable Building Technologies and Renewable Energy Conservation". The Centre for Excellence at Okanagan College, Penticton Campus will provide 8,500 square meters of additional space and pro-

vide 10 new innovative programs unique to the province and bring approximately 827 - 900 students. One of the major goals for the Centre as stated by the College is "to be recognized by both potential students and the construction industry as the foremost Centre of Excellence for green and sustainable construction."

Despite the opinions of some the South Okanagan Events Centre is an outstanding success. This is yet another "World Class" facility. The events that are brought to Penticton are first-class. It is among the best venues of this type in Canada, and is a comfortable wonderful place to be. Every "seat in the house" is a good one. It is a delight to see that people north and south of Penticton come to enjoy the entertainment. To top things off the personnel are efficient and courteous and make every effort to satisfy the "customer". It has been interesting to observe our local politicians who at times support the enterprise and at other times criticize the SOEC depending on how they perceive public opinion. It's time for Penticton to embrace this "World Class" facility.

Check out the above named facilities and plans for the future and become a part of their continued success. I am sure other communities in Canada have a lot to be proud of and be thankful for.

I am proud of my city, Penticton, as it continues to be a "Centre of Excellence". I'm sure you are too. I'm sure Canadians are proud of their communities.

How much more Canadian can you get? Eh?!

Walter Huebert is a retired History teacher and school board trustee. His teaching career spanned 40 years — 35 in Penticton. His history column runs every second Tuesday.