

Partnering to preserve local history

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Working together to preserve a history - (L to R) Malcolm Soles, assistant curator at the Museum, Lisa Smith, manager at the RCL, Colleen Palumbo, curator at the Museum, Ryan Watmough, project committee executive and Sarah Booher, assistant curator at the RCL.

Photo by Carrie White

On the brink of their 80th anniversary, the Royal Canadian Legion Branch #122 in Golden is taking steps to ensure that they can continue to honour Canada's veterans and serve local members and the community for another 80 years.

The Royal Canadian Legion (RCL) is undertaking an 80th Anniversary Revitalization Project to revitalize the facilities, membership, executive and staff of Branch #122 so that

they can continue to perform valuable community service. Golden's Branch was officially recognized on May 28, 1931, then a Canadian Legion of the British Empire Services League.

The project, which will span a three years, is currently in the middle of Phase 1, which is financially supported by CBT's Community Initiatives and Affected Areas Program.

The excitement generated with first phase, which includes upgrades to the facility, has led to a partnership with the Golden and District Historical Society (GDHS) to preserve local military history and artifacts. The project committee enlisted the help of Museum Curator Colleen Palumbo and summer students Malcolm Soles, assistant curator at the Golden Museum and Sarah Booher, assistant curator for the RCL.

"Malcolm [Soles] and Sarah [Booher] have been working hard using approved archival methods, assigning, cataloguing and archiving historical artifacts and memorabilia for the Legion and the community," says Palumbo. "That includes their Charter, photos and the Bill of Rights. Presently the Legion has no fire proof vault and this is a way for us to record and preserve the history here."

Palumbo says that the GDHS offered to help because they realized this was a good opportunity to catalogue the items in the facility and work in partnership with an important organization in Golden's history.

Ryan Watmough, member of the Legion's Executive Committee, says that the entire Executive Committee is part of this special project.

"As are all 290 members of the RCL Branch #122."

He explains that part of the Revitalization Project involves proper display of the Legion's artifacts.

"We'll be making recommendations for best practices of storage and display," says Palumbo. "This partnership between the Legion and the GDHS could be a multi-year project where we will continue working together to ensure all of Golden's veterans are recognized."

Palumbo says that Booher is working on a grant through Young Canada Works in Heritage program and Soles, who has worked for the museum for a few years, has a real interest in military history and is very familiar with military research. He is employed through the Canada Summer Jobs program.

"Young Canada Works funds 80 per cent of Sarah's [Booher] wages and while she may not have a lot of experience in this particular area (Golden and the RCL), her three years of anthropology studies give her more experience in this field than any student I've had previously," explains Palumbo. "Malcolm [Soles] has been employed at the museum previously and his expertise helped to teach Sarah [Booher] the process of cataloguing the items. He will be the one to clear a database for the RCL and he and Sarah will input all of the information they have gathered."

The GDHS will wrap up their part in Phase one of the Revitalization Project at the end of August. Golden Photography has generously donated their time to help with scanning some of the larger items in the RCL.

"All of the information will be put into the museum database and the artifacts will stay at the Legion," says Palumbo. "The RCL will also be provided with digital copies of all the catalogued memorabilia."

Watmough says this project presents a real opportunity for all of Golden to understand the military history of its residents.

“We hope this will spur veterans or their descendants to look through their attics, basements and closets for any artifacts, and make sure that this Canadian and local history will be preserved for generations to come. The Golden Museum and Royal Canadian Legion can provide guidance on their proper display and preservation.”

Watmough says he is looking forward to seeing the historic memorabilia displayed and described properly. The artifacts are currently displayed throughout the RCL and there will be discussion in the future of how to properly display it all for members and the public.

“Ultimately, with the Revitalization Project, we want to remain relevant and available to the community,” he says. “We are very open to input from the community on future phases to ensure that we can continue to honour Canada’s veterans, as well as serve our members and the community for another 80 years.”

If you would like to learn more about this project or see it in action, drop by the Legion or the Museum, both on 11th Avenue South. All levels of membership are available at the Legion and they encourage anyone interested to join this historic organization.

http://www.bclocalnews.com/kootenay_rockies/thegoldenstar/community/98874864.html