



Ellison Fire Department History



The Ellison Fire Department was established in 1979. Duff Booth, our area Regional District Representative, was one of Ellison Fire Department's founding members as well as very instrumental in getting the department up and running.

For many years we used Duff's 5 ton farm truck as our tender. A 1000 gallon steel tank was installed using old railway ties as a cradle. These ties were "custom" cut to shape with a chainsaw to fit the tank & were secured to the deck with straps fabricated from material from the old irrigation flumes that were once used in Ellison. It had a 17 hp Wisconsin irrigation pump plumbed in with an 8" dump. To this day it had the best pump and roll capability of any of our trucks. Many a grass fire was fought with firefighters standing on the deck slowly driving along.



Original 5 ton "farm" tender in background with International in foreground

Our first truck was a 1980 International with a 500 gallon tank & a 625 gpm pump, three seats in the front and room for four on the back, where we would stand attached with a safety strap and a firm grip. Many exciting rides occurred in those days as most of us preferred to be on the back then inside!!



New "custom made" tender

In 1976 a GMC 5 ton flat deck was purchased from Keith Reynolds as a permanent tender, as Duff's truck was not available at harvest time. A stainless steel tank was purchased from Turbo Mist Mfg. in Penticton and after many modifications and countless hours of labour by members of the hall it came into service in 1986.

In the early days of the department there was no minimum manning requirements so trucks rolled at times with as little as one firefighter on board. Hydrants would be hit; hose laid and anxious seconds would pass before more firefighters would show up.

The original call out system that was used was a fire phone. Ten of the more senior members' home phones would ring with a continuous ring, info of the emergency would be given then each of these 10 people would phone two more firefighters and so on down the line. All firefighters would be called by more than one person as to ensure no one was missed. Obviously this was before cell phones!!! The fire siren would then be activated by the first arriving member at the hall to alert anyone not near their phone.

In the mid 80's Frank Demarinis had an idea for a fund raiser at the hall and our "Pizza Night" was born, we are working on three decades now and literally 1000's of pizzas. Who would have thought? Our last delivery was made at 1:30 am to a satisfied customer!!!

There have been a couple of district families with two generations serving as members: the Rooy's, Hans and son Colin, the Melnichuk's, Mike and son Norm, and the Anderson's, Ross and son Cody. However, the Booth family has to be the "shining star" for community service through the fire department. As mentioned previously, Duff was instrumental in the formation of the department, with the lending of equipment and sharing of knowledge, he served his "home" well for many years.

Duff's son, Neil, was also one of the original members serving for 25 years in many positions from firefighter to assistant chief. Neil's son, Robert, was also a member for a time serving through the excitement of 2003's firestorm. And last, but far from least, Duff's daughter, Joan, was the first female member in Ellison paving the way for the future. Perhaps appropriately Ellison's new hall, built in 2000, sits beside the Ellison School on land donated in the early 1900's.



Pizza Night

