

History of Flinton Recreation Club

Written by Janice Andrew - 2026

It was a sad day in the village of Flinton and the surrounding community when they found out that the hall was condemned. We could no longer use it for children's Christmas concerts, community dinners, wedding dances, and many more community events. It had been a gathering place for families and friends, fundraising dinners for churches, and poker hand trail rides. A few of the ladies made homemade donuts and cooked them at the hall for the snowmobile riders before they went out on the trails, which was a delicious smell to walk into at registration. The council chambers were also located upstairs in this building.

Even though it was sad to see it go, another chapter happened in the village: an idea for a new community building. There were many thoughts on what was needed. Peter Rooke and Larry Allen came up with an idea to build a skating rink to encourage kids to skate there instead of the river for safety reasons. Larry and Peter decided to go from house to house and talk to the people to get their thoughts and how they could go about building a rink. Both Peter and Larry were new to the community, and they didn't know how the people would react. Most people were in favour and agreed to help any way they could.

Claire Benn (Reeve), Carl Hasler (Clerk Treasurer) and council were very helpful in acquiring land to build the rink. They had support from local businesses, such as Freeburn's General Store, Land O'Lakes Builders and Supplies, and Davison's Garage Fuels. The three churches Anglican, Roman Catholic, and United gave their support, along with the Flinton Community Club.

It was decided they should form a club to proceed. The Flinton Recreation Club was formed in 1976. Bill and Verna Andrew gave the first \$100.00 to start the club. Larry Allen became the first President of the Club; Vice President was Vivian Lessard, Secretary was Edna Allen, and Treasurer was Magda LaHay.

Presidents to date: Larry Allen, Arthur Freeburn, Neil Reavie, Earl Beatty, Verna Andrew, Duane Thibault and present Joel Hasler.

Vice Presidents Vivian Lessard, Verna Andrew, Duane Thibault, Elaine Delyea, James Wood, present Terry Wood.

Secretaries Edna Allen, Verna Andrew, Lorna Lessard, Ronnie Thompson, Joan McLuckie, Carolyn Hasler, Nicole Robinson, and recording Secretary Kim Ryan Chambers.

Treasurers Magda LaHay, Reita Freeburn, Dorothy Pethick, Janice Andrew.

A representative from Wintario came to the home of Larry Allen on Hasler Street and discussed how they could go about getting a grant to build the rink. They went over a site plan, and she viewed progress already made on the rink build. They discussed funding and were told money was available for each hour of volunteered labour as long as there was submitted verification of work done and hours worked.

An aerial sketch for future projects was established and included:

1. Rink and Change room
2. Ball Diamond
3. Recreation Centre
4. Playground
5. Tennis Court

At this point, the lady from Wintario recommended that we submit the application as a phased project so that when we completed one project our application would remain open to apply for funds for the next project. The Township approved building the rink, and we applied for a \$5000.00 grant. The rink was built with the help of Gerald Lawlor from Deseronto, and Gylnn Warwick, who brought students from North Addington Education Centre down to help any way they could. Many from the community and surrounding communities volunteered their time and expertise to build the first rink.

By the time the grant was received, the rink was built. There was talk about what to do with the money. Arthur Freeburn stated, "If we return the grant, we will not receive another grant". It was decided to build a Change room and pump house with two bathrooms.

Linda Peeling (Hume) was a very active member with bingos, which originally was only held during summer months until it was suggested to hold them every week of the year.

The club started having a free chicken dinner to say “thank you” to all who volunteered. Linda said, “We are aggressive, imaginative; let’s have an auction at our dinner. Our first auction was started and continues to date. At the first auction, items were a plane ride by Glynn Warwick, won by Frank LaHay, house cleaning, gardening, dinner for two, cords of wood, and so much more. This continues today, but instead of a silent auction, we have an auctioneer. Neil Reavie was our auctioneer for many years until he could no longer do it. Bill Cox even acted as our auctioneer. For the last several years, we have been lucky to have a professional auctioneer, Brad Snider, who donates his time to come and help us have a successful event. We certainly appreciate having him come.

The Finton Recreation Club had been acting as an association and decided to become incorporated. Professional help was obtained from Marilyn Jackson to act as our lawyer.

On December 18, 1981, our lawyer sent a letter to the Ministry of Consumer and Commercial Relations asking them to search the name of Finton Recreation Club. A corporation date for Finton Recreation Club was granted on December 24, 1981, with a corporation number and a business number. Letters Patent were received dated January 21, 1982.

A Township Recreation Club was formed to start raising funds for a new recreation centre, and our club worked alongside them to get grants for many of the projects. From this working relationship, a larger rink, ball diamond and hall were built.

With the permission of council, members of the community started clearing land to build a ball diamond. After the land was cleared, they decided to build the new hall in that area. Members of the community then had to clear more land for the ball diamond.

The Township received a grant to build a new hall; our club was asked to raise \$100,000.00 over a 5-year period. It was raised in 1 year with donated labour and money, and so it was built.

Our Recreation Club raised money with fundraisers, etc. A duck race with 2-litre Pepsi bottles containing a ticket was held at Wagar’s bridge and sent down the

river with Ross Heron in a boat, making sure all stayed in line; ducks were also released and sent down the river. Bake sales, yard sales, walkathons, card parties and Bingos were part of our fundraising. We also held a ham and scalloped potato supper at Easter to help raise the money needed.

The new hall was built in 1983. The grand opening was celebrated November 19, 1983. The Recreation Club purchased many items for the new hall, and they were kept track of, and it was used in lieu of rent.

In 1986, a new rink, change room and canteen were built. The old change room was used for storage and held the pump for flooding the rink. The old rink was used for horseshoes and basketball. The Recreation club contributed \$30,000.00 to this project.

A new ball diamond with lights valued at \$35,000.00 was built. Many hands cleared the land and built it. We have heard many people comment on this ball diamond. They are so impressed that a small community can have such an impressive ball diamond. It truly is something to be proud of.

A playground was built, and also a picnic shelter was built beside the ball diamond.

The Recreation Club had purchased an Alpine groomer to groom snowmobile trails, all volunteer labour.

In 1986, a new PA system was purchased which everyone has use of. The club purchased a 14-horsepower snow blower and lawn mower to clean the rink and cut the grass. All the money for these things was raised from Bingos, suppers and dances.

In 2004, it was suggested we hold a Country Bluegrass Jamboree, and so it started. The first year we had about 70 or so trailers camping all weekend, with many walk-ins for the music. With the success of the first year, we continued to do it. There was a lot of work; Duane and Donna Thibault started at the end of one year to book bands for the next year. Soon it became a very busy time, and even though we enjoyed it, we were all ready for a rest at the end of the weekend. We were busy getting the site ready for trailers and parking trailers, at the gate for registration, getting the ball diamond ready for the event, setting up trailers for

the stage with curtains, coolers of water, and a sound system all set, and checking for any electrical issues. The canteen was a busy spot with many hands working shifts and making sure all supplies needed were available. Then on Sunday morning there was a breakfast of bacon, sausage, home fries, scrambled eggs, fruit salad, toast and jam; this started about 5:00 AM.

In 2014 we decided not to continue with the Jamboree; it was missed, but we were tired and getting older.

The Township was asked to apply for a grant to put a cover over the rink; the grant was successful. Provincial was to pay 1/3, Federal to pay 1/3 and Township to pay 1/3. The Township asked the club what they could contribute. In 2010, we gave the Township \$62,000.00, and they took out a loan to cover the other \$62,000.00, and we would pay them back over 10 years. In 2015, we had paid back the Township \$62,000.00 plus interest of \$13,068.00. The years holding the Jamboree paid for the rink cover; we also sold tickets on a 4-wheel bike to help raise money.

In 2015, the Rec club put new screens on the ends of the rink to stop the pucks. These cost \$2043.04.

Since TaskForce from Belleville, Ontario had put the cover on the rink, we asked them to put an extra side on the rink to help keep the ice from melting and make the skating season last longer at a cost of \$27332.79.

In 2019, some of the playground equipment was condemned; council was open to a joint project with the Club and our share was \$20,380.67 on top of volunteer labour. Hydro-One allowed for their local employees (Terry Wood, Matt Caird, and Matt Defosse) to use their equipment and help clear the land. Robbie Thibault helped spread the cedar mulch around the new playground structure.

In 2023, we purchased a new sound system for Bingo for \$5187.66.

In 2024, with the township's approval, we installed pickleball courts in the rink for all to enjoy. \$7385.03.

In 2025, we held our first cornhole tournament and then held game nights in the hall during winter months. We also purchased 4 new sets of cornhole games along with counters.

We continue to hold Bingo during summer months, closing for winter after our Christmas Bingo. Linda Peeling was at the start of Bingo; Carolyn Hasler was the organizer of our Bingo for many years. We could not have continued with this event if not for the many volunteers who gave their time. They are all appreciated.

The Flinton Recreation Club sponsors many events and groups.

Euchre games are held from September until June once a week. Verna Andrew and now Randy Andrew have organized this social evening for many years.

T-ball and baseball league, for which we ask a minimal registration fee, but we pay for the rest of the costs, uniforms, prizes, ball field upkeep, league and tournament fees, and umpires. This is led by Joel Hasler and many parents and friends helping our kids enjoy a friendly game.

For years, the club has sponsored Early Childhood years by paying their rent at the Flinton Hall and sponsoring Breakfast with Santa. We've continually supported the Mazinaw Lake Swim Committee and North Addington Education Centre sporting events.

During March Break, we hold a Kid's Bingo with prizes for our younger kids.

Each year, we hold a contest for Christmas light displays. A few volunteers drive around the village and surrounding area and judge who has the best display. They keep track of who wins each year so not the same ones win all the time.

On August 1, 2026, we are hosting the Flinton Festival to celebrate 50 years for Flinton Recreation Club and over 170 years for the village of Flinton. This is an admission-free event with many things for all to enjoy, a live band and many vendors displaying their handiwork. We are even offering a horse-drawn wagon tour of the village.

The Flinton Recreation Club has worked alongside the Council of Addington Highlands for many years to improve the quality of life in Flinton. This is our hometown, and we are proud to keep it a place where we can say, "I come from Flinton."

The Recreation Centre and the surrounding grounds have transformed and evolved throughout the years, and these continued improvements every year

keep making it more beautiful. We as a club will continue to work alongside our council to make sure this is a safe and friendly place to live for people of all ages.