

History of the Cochrane Pickleball Club:

Many years ago, a good friend from the Coast introduced the game of Pickleball to beginners as follows:

“There’s heroin…there’s cocaine…and then there’s pickleball…prepare to be completely and utterly addicted.”

Who among us hasn’t rolled up their sleeves and become totally obsessed?

In Cochrane our players roll their sleeves up a little higher and work a little harder to make our Club the best it can be.

Once known as the Cochrane Pickleball Posse the Spirit of the West lives on in the Cochrane Pickleball Club. Here’s our story:

A compelling narrative of passion, resilience, and community engagement that highlights the challenges and triumphs of establishing a dedicated pickleball presence in Cochrane.

Chapter One

By 2014, the number of Pickleball players in Cochrane had grown significantly. Spray Lakes Sawmill Centre (SLS Centre) offered

pickleball as one of its many programs. A monthly membership included pickleball daily, generating lots of interest, creating crowded courts, long wait times and ultimately inspiring the need for more organized play.

In 2015 Les Franke approached the administration of the SLS Centre. Rating sessions were held and ratings assigned, skill-based sessions were scheduled and skill rated tournaments were held. Guest seminars and lessons were planned and booked. The SLS Centre benefited financially and exclusively from the interest in pickleball.

The SLS Centre administrators met with Les and Nikki to ask them to form a Pickleball Club. As a Club the fees to play pickleball would have increased in line with other sports clubs using this facility. The fees were non-negotiable even though the proposed rates far exceeded what members, particularly Senior members, were paying for membership passes. The SLS Centre's request that we form a Club was declined not once but twice.

The gym and arenas filled with players and the wait times became intolerable. The idea of becoming a Club at the SLS Centre was no longer viable. We needed an alternate site to play.

Chapter Two: 2016-Persistence Amid Opposition

The Cochrane Outdoor Pickleball Club, though not incorporated at this time, had been in existence since 2016 and consisted of a group of enthusiasts which included anyone with a net, a ball and paddles looking for hard surfaces to play on. We called ourselves the Cochrane Pickleball Posse: the outlaws looking to play on our own terms. Michael and Suzanne Hawkes were already pursuing outdoor courts with the Town and asked Les and Nikki to join the cause. Together they approached the Town for permission to chalk lines on the Quigley Tennis Courts. The Town agreed.

The chalk lines were measured out carefully, but every time it rained, they had to be relined. We sought permission to tape off pickleball court lines on the tennis courts. The Town agreed. Sadly, it was not unusual for us to arrive at the courts in the morning and find our duct tape removed and discarded, or tins of old tuna

emptied on the courts; a message from those who opposed our sport.

Nonetheless, we persevered and approached the Town of Cochrane to see if we could paint lines on the Quigley Courts and share the facility with the tennis players. This request was approved. And so one day late in the afternoon, the Town's crew began to paint the lines and left their paint behind so that Michael, Suzanne, Les and Nikki could paint the courts themselves. The Town also approved of lines being painted at St. Timothy's school where Joanne Ferster and other members of the Posse painted lines with a stencil Joanne had purchased online.

We played the next season with these painted lines and although the surface of the Quigley tennis courts was damaged due to root growth, the popularity of the sport grew and pickleball players were not deterred by the less than ideal conditions.

Chapter Three: The Path to Dedicated Courts

In 2017, Joanne, suggested that we approach the Town to see if there was a possibility of constructing dedicated pickleball courts in the vacant space beside the tennis courts. We made two pitches to

the Town and Joanne made two presentations to the Town Council. In late August 2017 the Town agreed to match the funds we required to build six courts if we could secure \$125,000 from the CFEP small fund. The Cochrane Settlement Community Association of Cochrane supported our efforts and we applied for the grant under their incorporated name.

We were most fortunate and received both private donations and were awarded a cheque for \$125,000 on May 4, 2018 from the CFEP Small Grant Committee. Unfortunately, the six courts that were promised became four. Nonetheless, the court construction for four courts began in Mid August of 2018 and was completed before the end of the season.

Chapter Four: Club Formation and Growth

On September 10th, 2019 a first meeting of the Cochrane Outdoor Pickleball Club was held at the Bow Rivers Edge Campground. Les called the meeting to inform players that we were forming a Club incorporated under the Societies Act. The need for new courts was imminent. New players would soon crowd our four new courts. Incorporating as a Society would facilitate fundraising and allow us to apply for grants. Becoming a Society would solidify our identity in

Cochrane when working with other associations such as the Seniors 55+, Cochrane's schools and media, and facilitate working with the Town. As a Club we could assign functional duties, structured play (Round Robins, Ladders etc). As a Club we could organize teaching clinics geared to different levels of play. Play would be scheduled and structured, and recreational play would still be available. Fees would be kept as low as possible.

The response was in resounding support for the formation of such a Club. We called ourselves the Interim Board of Directors with Les as President, Joanne as VP, Nikki as Secretary, and Emile Cote as Treasurer.

Joanne, having already prepared the initial forms requisite for our incorporation under the Societies Act, finalized the remainder of the forms and our submission was soon after accepted. We became a Society.

Although the courts were initially shut down during the Covid Pandemic in 2020 we were able to negotiate terms of usage with the Town of Cochrane. "Cohort" play became a means of playing while seeing friends from a safe distance.

Chapter Five: Expansion Efforts and Greystone Partnership

The Interim Board continued to meet and persevered in the quest for new courts. Emile moved away and a new Board of Directors was elected.

The three of us became the **Court Acquisition Committee**. The ratio of members to courts was too high. Our hopes of maintaining a Club that could deliver all the services we promised was becoming increasingly difficult.

Strategic planning and research regarding fundraising continued until Joanne's presentations to the Town elicited a suggestion from the Town to meet the developers of the new Greystone Development.

A meeting was set between ourselves and the representatives from Greystone. It was an opportunity to persuade the developers that a Pickleball Facility was the most obvious choice for a new sports facility in Cochrane.

That day, the developers of Greystone proposed to build a 20-court outdoor pickleball facility in Greystone if we could match their initial \$1,000,000 investment in this facility.

With renewed hope, and a pledge for \$3,000 from the Cochrane Pickleball Club; Joanne completed the application for the CFEP Large Funding Grant.

A promise of matching funds from Greystone; letters of support from the Town of Cochrane and multiple local businesses solicited with the help of many members; and in person support from both the MLA for Cochrane and Airdrie, Peter Guthrie and Minister of Tourism and Sport, Joseph Schow, fulfilled and exceeded the requirements for the CFEP Large Funding Grant. By the end of 2023 CFEP announced that the Cochrane Pickleball Club was the recipient of a Grant in the amount of \$997,287.

Chapter Six: More Challenges

MOUs and Agreements in compliance with CFEP requirements were created and plans were made for the site. However, the court acquisition committee was blindsided by a new mandate from the Town of Cochrane: Sound attenuation fences for the entire 20 court project. They would not allow the project to proceed without satisfying this requirement. The cost of this sound attenuation fencing was exorbitant and well beyond our means.

At the following meeting, Entity One Inc, the developer of Greystone, volunteered to pay for all additional costs created by the requirement for sound attenuation. Without their generosity we would never have been able to proceed.

Finally, on June 5th, 2024 the Alberta Minister of Arts, Culture and Status of Women, Tanya Fir, from whom the cheque was awarded, and members of her staff arrived in Cochrane and the future site of the Greystone Pickleball Courts to present the cheque from CFEP to the Cochrane Pickleball Club. The initial ground breaking ensued.

Hoping for a completion date of mid September 2024, the temperatures dropped and stymied any hope for temperatures that were conducive to completing the final court surface. A new completion date was set for Spring of 2025.

Chapter Seven: From Court Acquisition to Court Compliance

The success of the Court Acquisition Committee in these projects was due to the generosity of the CFEP Small and Large Funding Committees, the Town of Cochrane and the Greystone Community.

The Court Acquisition Committee was renamed the **Court Compliance Committee** to ensure that the requirements of the

CFEP Large Funding Grant are fulfilled in regard to court usage and purpose; to ensure adherence to the terms of our License of Occupation with the Town of Cochrane; and to honour our pledge to facilitate the care and management of these courts while under the auspices of Greystone as a gesture of gratitude for the 20-court facility.

Chapter Eight: The Unsung Heroes of Our Story

The Cochrane Pickleball Club is extremely fortunate to have had so many dedicated volunteers and members over the years who have donated their time toward making our Club such a resounding success.

A wealth of knowledge, experience, and talent, whether teaching, rating, running round robins, ladders or tournaments, planning and hosting social events, cleaning the courts, working Board Positions, maintaining the Club website, or answering new member inquiries, posting found items on social media, our volunteers, each and every one of them over the years, have contributed toward establishing our club as a destination for pickleball enthusiasts, and

a thriving community for players of all skill levels and abilities like no other.

Thank you every one!

The legend continues.....