

## BACK TO SCHOOL - 1958

January of 1958 was an exciting time when the new “ultra-modern” Texada Elementary-Senior High School opened for classes. The 80 Grade 8-12 students had been crammed into the 3-classroom Blubber Bay Elementary School during construction. The \$340,000 facility was built on the site of the pre-1900 opera house (hospital).

The “official” school opening on April 18, 1958 was a notable affair attended by the Minister of Education, Leslie Peterson. School Board Chairman Fred Mowbray acted as emcee and Texada’s

representative, Jim Brennan, spoke. He said that the new school would provide a large base for future expansion as the island population grew.



Reverend Stringer led the dedication, the Powell River High School band

played, the Texada Girls’ Choir sang and tea was served in the “auditorium” by the three elementary PTA’s.

The school boasted modern Science and Home Economics labs, a complete Industrial Arts shop and an oversize gymnasium (rumoured to be built on Texada in error when the blueprints were mixed up in Victoria).

The students soon published a school newspaper (*The Islander*) which gives us a glimpse into the important school issues of 1958. Editorials championed doing more homework (!) in order to match the Russians (echoes of the Cold War). Junior students were cautioned to “be smart, don’t let the ignorant senior students influence you” to take up smoking.

In fashion news “saucy ponytails” tied with bright ribbons were popular. The Max Cameron basketball and volleyball teams played at the school for the first time ever. The choir won a trophy at the Powell River Music Festival. School colours were chosen (red, blue, white) and a carwash raised money for uniforms. “The mumps” made the rounds and “no one was strapped in Grades 9 or 10 this term!”.

The last school dance featured a wishing well surrounded by flowers. However it was reported that “there were about 3 girls to every boy”.

At the opening ceremony principal Lambert said, “...a school is not only a building ... it has a soul... the esprit de corps of the student body”. Though the school has been challenged by the loss of young families, after almost 60 years the “heart of the community” still beats.