

**A Thread Through History:
The story of three schools and the Threads Guild building (PART TWO)
by Rita Moir, February 2022**

The third Perry's School (now Threads Guild) operated from 1937/38 until the 1970s, when some students moved over to Winlaw School. Like others in the area (such as the one in Vallican) the Perry's schoolhouse sat empty, until a whole new era began. That's when J.C. Bradford and like-minded women worked to gain status as a non-profit society in order to acquire the building in 1981. (J.C.'s story is detailed in Joel Russ's profile.) In a fine example of the community working together, the school district handed the buildings over to the RDCK, and with the work of local school rep Bob Cunningham, they became available to local community groups for \$1.



Sketch by Joe Neme of Los Angeles. "I gave him a picture of the building," says Julie Davis. "He put the windows on the wrong side but it looked better." The framed sketch hangs inside the entry to the Threads Guild main room.



School District #7 Board rep Bob Cunningham at the Threads Guild Grand Opening in 1981, with Guild member Sharon Pawliw. Photo from Threads Guild album.

The third Perry's schoolhouse – now the Threads Guild – required physical repairs immediately: new electrical service and heating system, painting and fixing broken windows, painting the interior, applying for a grant to replace the sawdust insulation with fibreglass. The work was endless, as the membership – much smaller then than now – also organized events: an open house and the first quilt raffle. The physical upkeep and costs were such that the Guild closed the building for the winters of 1985 and '86 to save heating costs, and reverted to meeting in members' homes, as they did before 1981. They needed a hot water heater and much else. Members' energy was so low that the challenge of having to raise \$800 annually was enough to consider dissolution of the society. But the group rallied, and over the years, with hard volunteer work, quilt raffles and more grants available, bank loans were paid off and the building grew more sturdy and welcoming. Rental income in the early 1990s, from the Amorphones Choir, yoga classes, watershed groups, massage and dance classes and mothers' groups, also helped.



Likely 1983, two years after the Threads Guild acquired the old Perry's School.

In 2001, the Guild used Arts Council and Columbia Basin Trust Funds to upgrade the water system; in 2003 they rebuilt the foundation with RDCK funds, in 2004 repaired drywall, used RDCK funds in 2006 to build a new sidewalk and gate, fixed the roof and septic the next year, painted the building in 2008, and went on to upgrade the electric and do many more repairs, such as extensive energy saving work with an RDCK grant, including new windows, lighting, insulation, and a new heat pump. They then built a covered wheelchair ramp and replaced the roof. In 2021 they built a much needed storage shed for the large bulk of materials gathered for classes and for the annual Yard and Yardage fundraiser. There is a sign and logo, designed by Lou Lynn and made by Lesley Mayfield and Peter Vogelaar, gracing the entry. In essence, over the past 35 years the Threads Guild has rebuilt and restored the existing building.

The amount of work is staggering.



The front porch and electrical meter box vandalized in 1995. Repairs included a new metal lock box over the meter.



The RDCK funded foundation repairs in 2003, with work done by Robert Macdonald and Colin Mackintosh.



The new storage shed for the annual Yard and Yardage donations opens up working space inside the building.

Photo credit Julie Davis

From 1908 to the present day, for almost 115 years, the storied Perry's school buildings have demanded massive community effort, and have been the scenes of both lightness and dark. The co-operation of all involved, from the membership to builders and users, to government representatives and funders, deserves deep respect, even reverence, as we contemplate our Slovan Valley history and our future.

In 2008, the Threads Guild painted the exterior of the building in heritage colours, with help from Bob Inwood and funds from Heritage BC.

Photo credit
Tim Garton



*Thanks for their tremendous help goes to historian Greg Nesteroff, Riley Stewart at Touchstones Museum Archives in Nelson, Threads Guild members Julie Davis, Val Mayes and Brenda Elder, and writer Joel Russ. All photos and clippings are thanks to the Touchstones Archives and Threads Guild photo albums unless otherwise noted. Photos are also included from *The Third Crop*, by Rita Moir (Sono Nis, 2011).*