

Father of Port Credit Arena has been calling village home for almost 90 years

Area legend going into city's sports hall of fame

IAIN COLPITTS

icolpitts@mississauga.net

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You'd be hard pressed to find someone who's more proud to be from Port Credit than John Holland.

While he was born in Lorne Park, his family moved to Port Credit when he was one and he never left.

"I don't think there's too many (people my age) who were born here and are still here," said Holland, who will turn 90 in January.

"My sister was one year ahead of me, but she past away a few months ago. There were eight of us in the family."

It's not a far stretch to call Holland a legend within the village. As a councillor in the area, he was a leader in the formation of Port Credit Memorial Arena in 1959.

Not only is it a prime destination for children who play hockey, lacrosse or take part in figure skating, but it's grown into a social hub for the entire community.

For his efforts in getting the arena built as well as having it designated as a heritage site under the Ontario Heritage Act, Holland was inducted into the Mississauga Hall of Fame last night (June 8).

When asked about his desire to have the arena built, Holland's response is

quite simple.

"I got married quite young and had one boy, then two boys and then when it came time for skating, the only place you could skate was on the Credit River, which was very dangerous a lot of the time," he said.

"In fact, one youngster in the early years had fallen through and drowned there."

Joining Holland in this year's Mississauga Sports Hall of Fame class are nine-time Canadian taekwondo champion Shannon Condie and four longtime executives from Mississauga's AA hockey clubs: Gord Murphy (Mississauga Braves), Peter Johnson (Mississauga North Stars), Joe Schembri (Mississauga Terriers) and Lloyd Stockley (Mississauga Jets).

Opened in 1959, Port Credit Arena was constructed over two years and a cost of \$360,000. As chair of the arena committee, Holland cut the ribbon during the opening ceremonies and was joined by Toronto Maple Leafs legend Johnny Bower.

That's significant because they were both at the arena for its 50th anniversary as well. The arena has a distinct look with its barnlike design, complete with an arched roof that was inspired by a similar rink Holland saw during a trip to Buffalo.

In 2011, a \$10.2 million renovation was completed. A larger concession area with heated viewing and upgraded change rooms

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Bryon Johnson/Metroland

John Holland, founding member of the Port Credit Arena Board, led the push to have the arena built, opening in 1959. Prior to the arena, skating in Port Credit took place on the Credit River.

with showers were some of the refurbishments, but designers were still able to maintain the arena's historic feel.

A community room in

the arena is named after Holland and it's capable of hosting meetings and small social events.

When Holland was working at a General Mo-

tors dealership in Burlington, he'd often be asked why he didn't just move to Burlington. Most of the reason was because he was raising a family in Port

Credit and they were all ingrained in the community.

"I've gone on many trips and come back and Port Credit had everything," Holland said.