

Rooted in the community

By Miriam King

Hockey great Ron Ellis has a number of Bradford connections.

For several years, Ellis and his family lived in the area - and in 1977, he trained at the old Bradford arena for 3 months, in preparation for the World Championships after a 2-year retirement from the NHL.

He still has friends in the area, including the Holancin family. And Bill Marks, local historian and former postmaster, is a cousin, and has played on the Ellis Family hockey team.

All of which made "Rooted in the Community," the June 27 fundraiser for the Bradford West Gwillimbury & District Community Foundation, feel like a home-coming.

Ellis was guest speaker at the event, held at the new Bradford Public Library & Cultural Centre. He came to talk about the importance of community - and to share memories of what emcee Bob Evans termed one of two "seminal events" in Canadian history, the 1972 hockey series vs. Russia.

"Our series is being taught as part of Canada's history," Ellis told the packed room, noting that in 2000, "we were named 'Team of the Century'."

He spoke of the challenges of that 8-game series - especially the frustration and disappointment of fans, when the Canadians failed to sweep the first 4 games, which took place in Canada. In fact, the team won only 1 game, tied 1, and lost 2. "We got booted off the ice in Vancouver by the fans," Ellis remembered. "We left Vancouver a broken team, an unpopular team."

But it set the stage for a remarkable comeback - winning the last 3 games in Russia, with Paul Henderson's memorable goal in the final seconds of game 8 clinching the series. Henderson was supposed to be on the bench for the final minute of play, but stood up and yelled for Peter Mahovalich to come off the ice - then scored 10 seconds after getting the go-ahead to skate.

"We were really an "All-Star" team - thrown together. We didn't like each other very much. We had to become a team," said Ellis. They did, and by the end of the series,



NHL great Ron Ellis chats with Hazel Gillham and signs autographs, at Rooted in the Community reception, held June 27 at the new Bradford Library.

Soviet coach Anatoly Tarasov said, "We matched the Canadians in skill, we matched the Canadians in fitness, but we couldn't match the Canadians in heart."

The evening included a silent auction of artwork donated by the Holancin family and other local artists, and a live auction of a Brendan Shanahan hockey jersey, from the 1994 World Championship. The event raised an estimated \$4,055 for the Foundation.

The BWG & District Community Foundation was launched in 2007, with the goal of building endowment and other funds, to provide a long-term financial base for community initiatives. The Foundation provides an opportunity for donors to support a favourite charity, cause or organization in perpetuity - helping to build the community.