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Bancroft gears up for Gemboree weekend

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By Nate Smelle

For more than five decades "rockhounds" and mineral collectors from around the world have been coming to Bancroft on the August long weekend for the annual Rockhound Gemboree.
Each year more than 100 vendors set up shop in Bancroft, bringing with them their collections of gems, crystals, rocks, fossils, minerals, jewelry, art and collectables.
Bancroft and District Chamber of Commerce's general manager Greg Webb is looking forward to another exciting Gemboree weekend. He said that one of the things that makes the event such a success year after year is the eclectic mix of vendors who come to town to display and sell artifacts from their collections.
?The Bancroft Rockhound Gemboree is the largest gem and mineral show in Canada,? Webb said.
?We have vendors that come from all over the world to show and sell their articles ? Russia, India, South America, Africa, U.S.A., Canada and more are represented. Something new every year.?
Now in its 55th year, Webb said the Gemboree is continuing to evolve, garnering more attention from the rockhound community worldwide. For example, he pointed out how Bancroft's Rockhound Gemboree was recently recognized by a panel of festivalgoers, peers and government officials as one of Ontario's Top 100 festivals and events. Acknowledging some of the highlights scheduled for 2018, Webb said there are plenty of reasons for the Rockhound Gemboree's lasting popularity. He said rockhounds visiting Bancroft to take part in this year's event can look forward to several exciting activities including, mineral collecting field trips, keynote speakers, demonstrations and workshops.
?Each vendor is unique, so you must see them all,? said Webb.
?We also have a gold panner to teach the kids how to pan for gold down at the Curling Club Venue. Karen Fox is our resident Gemmologist, and she will be able to tell you whether Granny's necklace is fake, or worth a fortune. In the arena Tony Steede from the ROM [Royal Ontario Museum] will be identifying rocks and minerals that you bring him.?
Giving rockhounds an extraordinary opportunity to browse through and purchase from a broad variety of one-of-a-kind mineral and gem collections, is not the only thing that makes the Gemboree one of Bancroft's most exciting weekends, explained Webb. Pointing to the economic boost that the Rockhound Gemboree provides local businesses each year, he said the event has become an important part of the community's economy over the years as well.
?Visitors to Bancroft over the Gemboree period, spend over $1 million, mostly on accommodation, food and events,? said Webb. ?Merchants hire extra staff, and some stay open longer hours. Income from this time helps merchants get through the slower winter months. The Gemboree shows people why we are the ?Mineral Capital of Canada' and it highlights the beauty that is just beneath our feet?
The 55th annual Rockhound Gemboree will take place from Thursday, Aug. 2 through Sunday, Aug. 5 at two venues ? the Bancroft Curling Club (63 Newkirk Blvd), and the North Hastings Community Centre (103 Newkirk Blvd). The four-day event will kick off with an opening ceremony to be held at the NHCC on Thursday at 9:30 a.m. Each day from Thursday through Saturday the BCC will open its doors to Rockhounds from 9:30 a.m. until 6 p.m.; and on Sunday from 9:30 a.m. until 5 p.m. The exhibition at the NHCC will be open Thursday to Saturday from 10 a.m. until 6 p.m.; and on Sunday from 10 a.m. until 5 p.m. Admission for adults 17 years old and older costs $10 for a day pass; $17 for a two-day pass; $24 for a three-day pass; and $32 for a four-day pass. The cost of entry for youth aged seven to 16 is $5 for a day pass; $8 for a two-day pass; $12 for a three-day pass; and $15 for a four-day pass. Wristbands will be available for purchase ATM machines near the entrances of both venues. For a full schedule of events visit: www.rockhoundgemboree.ca.