

Bancroft says goodbye to sustainable building class



By Nate Smelle

Community members from Bancroft and beyond gathered out front of the newly constructed straw bale canteen in Riverside Park on Friday, Aug. 22 to say farewell and thank you to the 18 Sir Sandford Fleming College (SSFC) students who worked on the project since they broke ground last April. Representatives from all of the project's partners came out to show their support and gratitude to the students for their contribution to the community, including the Mayor of Bancroft Bernice Jenkins along with her fellow council members Deputy Mayor Wayne Wiggins and Councillor Peter Whitehead.

Jenkins said she heard nothing but praise from the community regarding the students' presence in town, and noted that she did not receive a single complaint since the project began. Referring to the students she said, "They moved in, they took interest in the town and they aren't even tax payers."

Jenkins also recognized how well the community worked together to make the Riverside project a success.

"Our own public works crew took this on as an interest to themselves," said Jenkins.

"From the various volunteers who have been involved from the beginning, to the partnership with the town and all of council, the management and management staff; everybody had an interest and they were all working towards one goal. When you pick it up and work towards a goal as a group you can accomplish anything."

When Jenkins had finished speaking the three members of council presented each of the students with gifts of thanks for their service to the community.

Although the majority of the project is complete, "There is still some spit and polish to be done," said Fleming College training officer Ted Brandon.

"We have had terrific support on this project, and the town of Bancroft has been such a wonderful host. Council has been amazing, and the public works and building department have all been there for us to make sure this happened on time, on budget and on schedule."

Two of the main community partners taking the lead on this project are the North Hastings Youth in Action (NHYA) and Bancroft Community Transit (BCT). The executive director of BCT, Gwen Coish, and project coordinator Jane Mayberry, expressed their sincere thanks for the students' contribution, choking back tears as they said their goodbyes to the students. Following their farewell,

Mayberry and Coish presented the students with more tokens of appreciation.

The new canteen is situated along the York River in Riverside Park near the skate park. Serving up food and renting out recreational equipment, the location is expected to act as a hub of activity in the park, and should be especially attractive to tourists and local youth looking for something fun to do in town. To increase the project's overall level of sustainability Mayberry said they are considering expanding partnerships within the community to add healthy locally grown, organic food to the menu at the canteen.

Also in attendance to show his appreciation for the students' accomplishment was the president of SSFC, Dr. Tony Tilly. Remarking on how well the class jived with the community he told the students they should be very proud of the work they had done. He said that usually when people speak of leaving a legacy behind they are in the latter part of their lives. In this case, however, this crew of young adults have left behind something very special.

?The idea of a legacy is usually something associated with someone later on in life,? Tilly said.

?For you [the students] to build something where you can come here and talk about it, show people pictures of it and say, I did that, I was part of that with my fellow classmates, and we left a legacy.?

The new building now becomes a link in a chain of sustainable buildings constructed by the Fleming class over the years throughout central Ontario. Bancroft now joins neighbouring communities like Madoc, Haliburton and Minden that already have green buildings thanks to the program and its ever-changing crew of student builders.

Fleming College instructor Pat Marcotte thanked the students for their hard work, and all of the partners from the community who came together to bring the new sustainable building to the downtown. The students have come a long way, he said.

?I think back to the first day on site when we were making saw horses and how apprehensive a lot of you were using the power tools,? Marcotte said.

?I'm sure a lot of you were thinking...I have to make a building? Now look what you have done. You've built something that is going to be here for generations, and generations, and it's going to improve the community so much.?

The building is sectioned into two main areas with one portion set aside for BCT to run an equipment rental business and the other intended for youth to operate a canteen business. The perimeter walls of the structure are mainly constructed of straw bales. With walls as thick as a straw bale, the building is extremely well insulated. Straw bale walls have an R-value of 50 (more than two times the value required by the building code).

Some of the walls were ordered as pre-fabricated wall panels by a company Nature Built. The pre-assembled walls arrive nearly ready for finishing details and were set in place with a crane and the guiding hands of crew members.

The other sections of wall making up the perimeter of the building were stacked like building blocks by the students. To add strength and stability to these sections of wall, the students would stuff folded handfuls of straw in between any gaps existing between the bales. The walls were then stitched together and covered with an earth-lime plaster.

The crew also experimented with using locally sourced and recycled materials while at the same time incorporating energy efficient designs. Mayberry said the students each had the chance to creatively leave their mark on the building through one of their class assignments. The interior wall dividing up the main space is a combination of some of these student projects. Marcotte explained that part of this wall is made of stacked cordwood that came from a standing dead elm tree the students cut down nearby the building site in Riverside Park.

The other half of the wall is constructed of an interwoven mesh of pliable tree branches known as wattle and daub. The wall is plastered on one side and clad in drywall on the other with an interactive art piece inset into the wall as a window between the two

main spaces.

?There are no nails holding it all together,? said Marcotte in regards to the wattle and daub wall, ?it's just the pressure.?

?It's unbelievable how strong it is,? said Mayberry.

Without the proper exposure to harness solar power as electricity the building is still able to utilize the sun to heat its domestic hot water. It also uses the sun's natural light through solar tube lighting installed in the ceiling. Mayberry said that once the finishing details are completed the Riverside project partners plan to host an official ribbon cutting.

For more information on how the Riverside project follow progress reports on social media at www.facebook.com/pages/Riverside-Park-Project/238479756357585.