

Eagles Nest trails initiative moving forward

By Nate Smelle

Members of the Bancroft Trails Committee provided council with an update on the Eagles Nest trail system they have been developing near the Hawk Watch overlooking Bancroft. The initiative is the result of a partnership between the Algonquins of Ontario, the Bancroft and Area Stewardship Council, CESCO, Bancroft Field Naturalists Club and the Town of Bancroft. Delivering the presentation to council on this day were committee members Steve Wilkins, Roger Kelly, Peter Whitehead and Chris Drost. As the lead partner on the project, Wilkins explained to council that the stewardship council is responsible for managing the \$67,000 the trails committee received through the Canada 150 grant. The aim of the project is to establish an interconnected network of trails throughout the Eagles Nest area that will eventually link to Clark Lake and Snow Road. Equally as important as these physical connections according to the committee, are how the trails will connect the community to its heritage. To ensure that funding continues coming in to maintain the trails, the committee intends to create a not-for-profit charitable organization.

Looking to expand the network and enhance it through educational signage, council approved the committee's request to install four informational kiosks.

Kelly said that two of the kiosks are to be located near the upper parking area with the intention of leading people to the Hawk Watch lookout. The third kiosk will be situated near the lower parking area and serve as a recognition board for the many donors and supporters of the project. The last kiosk, Kelly said is planned to be installed at the train station to help promote the Eagles Nest park and trails network as well as other attractions in and around Bancroft.

Councillor Bill Kilpatrick participated in the timber frame workshop led by Pat Marcotte to construct the kiosks. He said Bancroft should be very proud of the Eagles Nest project, because it is an important initiative for the community on many different levels.

?Not only is it an example of exemplary teamwork and co-operation but it celebrates the natural beauty of our area, including our many mineral deposits and history of forestry,? said Kilpatrick.

?Most importantly, in my opinion, by celebrating the common heritage between European and indigenous cultures the Eagles Nest project helps undo a predominantly Eurocentric history that has dominated discourse since the birth of Canada. I believe it is a small step in the direction of reconciliation that is desperately needed at this point in Canada's history.?

The committee has been working closely with the Algonquins to ensure that the history of the First Nations people who have inhabited this land since time immemorial is respected and reflected accurately in the interpretive signage. These signs will also include a historical account of early European settlement and the area's ecology and geology. The committee intends to have the kiosks installed by Sept. 30, when they plan to hold a grand opening ceremony.

The new logo for the Eagles Nest project was also unveiled to council at the meeting.

Whitehead said the logo had been reviewed and approved by the Algonquins, and asked for council's approval as well. Because the trail system is situated on town land, the committee also requested council's permission to seek additional funding to construct a public washroom near the trailhead in the park. To protect the park ecosystem and culturally sensitive areas from damage being done by ATV riders, they also asked for council to officially designate the trails as for use by hikers and non-motorized vehicle only.

Thanking the committee for its presentation, council unanimously approved the committee's requests allowing the project to move forward.