

Gemboree presentations inform and delight attendees



By Mike Riley

Local Journalism Initiative Reporter

The Rockhound Gemboree had a very successful 2023, with record numbers of people coming from near and far to enjoy 'Canada's Largest Gem and Mineral Show' from Aug. 3 to 6. Part of the 58th annual Gemboree events were some informative presentations for attendees to learn more about Bancroft, its geology and geology in general. One of these was on Bancroft's Eagles Nest Park on Aug. 4, 'one of Bancroft's biggest gems.'

Bancroft This Week attended a presentation on Aug. 4 all about Eagles Nest Park, 'one of Bancroft's biggest gems.' This park is open from early to mid-May to after Thanksgiving most years and during that time is open 24 hours, seven days a week. Other presentations throughout the Gemboree included Tania Ivaniouchkina, a fellow of the Canadian Gemmological Association (Beyond the Lustrous Tale of Pearls), educator John Etches (Geology of Ontario's Canoe Routes), Chris Fouts (Bancroft-the Mineral Capital of Canada), geologist Laura Mancini and geologist Mateo Dorado-Troughton (Geological History of Southern Ontario), gemmologist Karen Fox (the Colours and Habits of Quartz), David Joyce, mineral collector and dealer (Cobalt, Ontario-the Silver Mining Mecca), educator Leora Berman (the ABC's of the Land Between), geologist and educator Dr. Phil McCausland (Tagish Lake Meteorite Fall and Investigation, the 2021 Golden B.C. Meteorite Fall, Nov. 19, 2022: Great Fireball over Southern Ontario)

The Aug. 4 presentation on Eagles Nest Park in Bancroft was given by Bancroft Councillor Val Miles and Dora Yateman, chair of the Stewards of Bancroft Eagles Nest Park. Miles said that the SBENP guide the town through to look after Eagles Nest Park, improve, change, and maintain it, and that she acts as the liaison between them. Owned and maintained by the Town of Bancroft, the SBENP, a not-for-profit organization works in tandem with them to develop new educational and recreational programs in the park. They are currently pursuing new opportunities for trail expansion in the park on to Crown Lands with the Ministry of Northern Development, Mines, Natural Resources and Forestry, have put in donation boxes at the park this year and hope to successfully record usage data for the park this year as well.

The SBENP was formed from the Canada 150 project, funded by the federal government. This successful initiative resulted in an interpretive trail that highlights early Indigenous presence in the area, specifically the Algonquin people, early European settlement, the geology and the flora and fauna in the park.

A more recent project conveyed by Miles and Yateman, under Hastings Destination Trails Inc. and with the assistance of a successful Ontario Trillium Grant application, enabled improvements to be made to make the park fully accessible, with new accessible trails, washrooms, wayfaring signs and maps. Miles said that now everyone can experience the glorious views over town as a result of that investment in the park.

‘It’s really benefitted the park and the usage has been amazing,’ she says.

Yateman explains why they call Eagles Nest Park ‘the greatest little gem.’

‘If you’re up there, it takes your breath away and it’s free. Drive up there, there’s lots of space to park. Make sure anybody you know gets a chance to get up there,’ she says.

Yateman explained that Eagles Nest Park was sacred to the Algonquin people, and that various archaeological finds and oral traditions of the local Algonquin community attest to this. There are many informative signs along the Hawk Watch and Christie Trails where visitors can learn more about this Algonquin history on these lands.

Miles and Yateman referred everyone to the Eagles Nest Park website at www.eaglesnestpark.com, or its Facebook page (www.facebook.com/bancrofteaglesnestpark) for more information on all the features that this beautiful space has to offer.

Miles said it’s tied in with economic development and more.

‘It’s tied in with tourism, it’s tied in with the County [Hastings County], it’s tied in in a variety of places. If you want information on the Eagles Nest Park, it’s easy to find,’ she says.

Miles said they were always looking for volunteers, both for the spring and fall cleaning bees and to replenish the volunteers who have retired or could no longer volunteer with the group.

‘If you know anyone interested in volunteering with Eagles Nest, we’d really appreciate it, the town would appreciate it, and the park would love it,’ she says.

Yateman agreed that they could always use new board members.

‘New blood brings new ideas, new thoughts. We’re open to that for sure. We’re really excited to have people reach out and share their knowledge. It’s really important for sure,’ she says.

One audience member had a question about Chemaushgon Road and whether that was related to the Algonquin name for the York River, and Yateman replied that it was. Called ‘Shawashkong’ (crooked to the treetops in Algonquin), the Algonquin historically lived and thrived on these lands on the Shawashkong watershed, and the naming of the road, Chemaushgon, was done to honour that history.

Another query from the audience had to do with why the park was called Eagles Nest. As Yateman replied, and according to the Eagles Nest Park website, back in 1883, a family fought off an eagle who was trying to attack and carry off their child, and while successful, locals also set out to empty the eagle’s nest of its eggs, and the eagles never returned. According to the site, while there are no nests in the park today, eagle sightings are reported from Hawk Watch platform from time to time.

With no more questions from the audience, Miles and Yateman thanked everyone for coming by, and brought their presentation to a close.

Yateman told Bancroft This Week on Aug. 7 that she thought the presentation went well and that she and Miles were comfortable speaking to the audience as a twosome and promoting the park trails, the history and the nature events being offered.

?We enjoyed answering questions from the audience and promoted our website and Facebook to encourage feedback on their visit to the park,? she says. ?It was a rewarding experience and we are very please to have the opportunity to express our gratitude to the town staff for all that they do and for the town partnering with the Stewards of Eagles Nest Park to maintain and promote of one Bancroft's biggest gems.?