

GeoTour being developed in Highlands East

By Angelica Blenich The Geocaching committee of Highlands East want to create a GeoTour for the area and the municipality is on board. Representatives of the committee Joanne Vanier and Mary Barker made a delegation to council at their July 8 meeting, hoping to gain both approval and financial support. A subcommittee of the Algonquin Gateway Business Association, the geocaching group have already gained support from many organizations, including the Ontario Highlands Tourism Organization, which has verbally committed \$5,000 to the project and the Haliburton County Development Corporation, which has contributed \$3,000. The AGBA will be giving \$1,200 to the project, according to Barker. With an estimated initial cost of \$11,500 needed to create the tour, the committee is approximately \$2,300 short. The group is hoping the tour will bring not only economic development to Highlands East but will reinforce its reputation as the geocaching capital of Canada. According to the committee's report to council, there are only 37 tours worldwide, five of which are in Canada and only one in Ontario. Geocaching refers to an outdoor recreational activity that invites participants to find small boxes, also known as caches, around the world with a global positioning system. Once a cache is found the individual records their information into a logbook. By establishing a GeoTour, 100 geocaches will be hidden throughout the area, including Irondale, Gooderham, Tory Hill, Wilberforce, Harcourt, Highland Grove and Cardiff, according to the committee. Awards will be given to those who complete stages of the tour as well as the entire tour. "I find this project very appealing," said Councillor Joan Barton. Apart from the initial costs of creating the tour, there is a yearly renewal fee of \$2,000 U.S. If established the AGBA will be responsible for funding the yearly renewal fee, according to the committee. The Highlands East tour will be part of worldwide organization and be marketed through www.geocaching.com and social media. "I think we need to be as supportive as we can," said Deputy-reeve Suzanne Partridge. "It's a no-brainer," said Councillor Cec Ryall. The committee will be working on the tour this upcoming fall and hope to have it out by April 2015, said Barker. Council passed a resolution to approve the tour and give financial support in the amount of \$2,300.