

Ground-breaking ceremony held for North Hastings Inspiration Place



By Mike Riley

Local Journalism Initiative Reporter

The official ground-breaking ceremony for North Hastings Inspiration Place was held at the site of the new build on Oct. 15 at 11 a.m. A host of dignitaries from all levels of government and from the community were present to celebrate this momentous occasion and to say a few words, including NHPL CEO and head librarian Kim McMunn and Cheryl Easton, NHIP's capital campaign chair.

A large group of dignitaries and the community at large came together on Oct. 15 at 11 a.m. to celebrate the official ground-breaking at NHIP's new build site. The new build is expected to be completed late in 2023, and will be open to all residents of Bancroft, other municipalities in North Hastings and beyond, providing services and programming to these communities.

The new library floorplan will double to nearly 5,000 square feet from the old library's useable space and will feature areas like a learning common, an early readers' space, the makers' space, accessible washrooms, kitchen space and a WIFI patio zone which will allow patrons to use their devices on the patio while enjoying a beverage and the nice weather. The library will be on one floor while the 30 condo housing units will be on the top floors. The library and the condos will have their own separate parking areas.

NHIP has already gotten \$1.375 million from the federal and provincial governments, leaving \$500,000 to be raised, which they are currently doing. For more information on the NHIP, go to www.northhastingslibrary.ca, or contact Brittany Tomasini, the project support coordinator, at btomasini@bancroft.ca or at 613-332-3331, ext. 210.

Michael Brooks was there at the ground-breaking ceremony on Oct. 15. He is part of the NHIP fundraising committee and says everyone is so excited about the new build.

?It's something we've been waiting for a long time. The community really needs it and I truly believe it will spur other development. It's fantastic. There's a lot of commitment here as you can see. It's going to happen,? he says.

Jane Graham is one of the board trustees from Faraday Township and she says she is totally jazzed.

?I was a public health nurse for 10 years and a mental health practitioner and I also taught nursing, so this whole notion of community development, this whole thing is steeped in capacity building for the whole community. It's lovely. And collaboration and partnership too. Because the whole building's going to be more than the library. The aesthetic of the design is wonderful,? she

says.

While Graham lived in Toronto for many years, she grew up in a small town, and while there are drawbacks to the latter, she does prefer it.

"The business of having a sense of what's going on and feeling palpably the excitement is lovely," she says.

To begin the ceremony, First Nations Elder and past library board chair Noreen Tinney from the Kijicho Manito Madaouskarini Algonquin First Nation, performed a smudging ceremony. Next, the emcee David Giles, who is a member of the board of trustees for the library and on the capital campaign committee, read the land acknowledgement, introduced himself, and welcomed all the dignitaries and community members to the event.

Bancroft Mayor Paul Jenkins was the first to speak, saying that the NHIP was part of a much bigger project of building the downtown revitalization.

"This is a lot more than a library, it's a community hub project. The foundation of this project is the library and three floors of badly needed housing," he says.

Jenkins said the town had prepared a Strategic Economic Development Plan with the help of consultant Malcolm Hunt called "Making our Future," and said it was all part of revitalizing the whole downtown of Bancroft.

"There's no building yet, but a lot of work is going on to make it happen, like detailed designs, work on the main street to facilitate the new build like drainage to accommodate the storm drains and the promenade that will lead to the new library," he says.

Hastings County Warden Rick Phillips was introduced by Jenkins, and before he spoke, was presented with a painting of Eagles Nest done by local artist Barbara Allport, for all his years of service as warden.

Phillips told the crowd that the NHIP was another example of people working together with the library and housing combination, the thought that goes into it and the contributions from all levels of government, including the Town of Bancroft and surrounding municipalities.

"It's just amazing what you can do if we all put our heads together. Housing is a big challenge since I've been on county council and before that and will be a challenge for many years to come. If we all work together, we can make it happen," he says.

Greg Maxwell, speaking on behalf of MP Shelby Kramp-Neumann, who could not attend, said a few words next, saying NHIP was a benefit to the entire community. He said it was a product of working together with all levels of government and the private sector, and this collaborative effort was necessary to bring projects of this magnitude to fruition.

"Congratulations to everyone involved for making this happen and hopefully Shelby will be here for the grand opening," he says.

MPP Ric Bresee also said a few words, saying NHIP said a lot about community and cooperation, and that the new build was a great example of both.

"I'm really looking forward to the moment we can come back and open the doors to this facility. That'll be a wonderful moment. It's about community. This is a unique solution for this community, supported by the entire community and that's how we address all the problems that are facing us today. We need solutions within the community, by the community. So again, a great example of a project well done," he says.

Limerick Mayor Carl Stefanski said it was amazing the countless hours put in by so many to move the library from a cramped building to a new state of the art facility. He said it would be an inviting place of learning, relaxation, solitude and safety.

'Inspiration Place as the name implies, will be an inspiration for people to come to Bancroft, bring their money into the area and make it a more noticeable destination on the map,' he says.

Graham said she was thrilled to be there to speak on behalf of Faraday, its council and its residents.

'This is an amazing opportunity for us as a community and this landmark event is the beginning of wonderful things to come. We're doing a lot of community capacity building as a result of determination, partnership and a lot of hard work. We are really blessed and best wished to everyone involved in this project and congratulations to us all,' she says.

Other dignitaries there that day included Faraday Councillor Bill Green, Limerick Councillor Ingo Weise, Andy Spry of Springdale Development, the developer for the new build's housing units, and many others.

Giles remarked that the people they had heard from that day reflected the fact that this was a massively combined effort.

'All levels of government have been involved and we're so grateful for that. It's made an impossible dream a reality and we had enormous support from the communities that we serve here at the library,' he says.

McMunn spoke next, introducing the library board, noting that October was Canadian Public Library Month, thanked all the stakeholders and Warden Phillips for their hard work and support. She also congratulated staff member Shirley McRandall on over 20 years of service, with board chair Brian Hickey presenting McRandall with flowers in recognition of this milestone. She explained the reasoning of having this ground breaking ceremony that day, ahead of the upcoming municipal election.

'I wanted to make sure that we could get as many people as we could with our shovels and our pictures and give them thanks for the hard work. We really started hard on this in 2018. There's been a lot of hours put into this project over the last three or four years and I wanted those people to have that moment. I really appreciate everyone who have put the hours behind this, too many to catch everybody,' she says.

Easton spoke last, and remarked on the intermittent rainfall that had gone on throughout the event, saying that for anything to grow, you need a little sunshine and a little rain. Consequently, she saw the precipitation as a good sign.

'Something amazing is going to grow out of this ground pretty quickly and we're all part of that. I saw a quote that was just perfect for this day; 'all good things start with a dream, that dream takes a while to build, and that dream becomes a vision, and that vision becomes a plan, and that plan becomes a reality.'

And we today are going to implement that reality. And how exciting to be part of that,' she says.

To finish off the event, Easton, McMunn and all of the other dignitaries grabbed a coloured shovel and hard hat and symbolically 'broke ground' at the site, signifying that the new build would soon begin.

Easton told Bancroft This Week on Oct. 17 that she thought it had been a wonderful event.

'I am so thankful that representatives from all levels of government were able to be present. Their presence brings legitimacy to the project and confirms to our community that we are building a library. The capital campaign committee has spent almost a year tirelessly raising awareness in the community of what is coming to our wonderful town,' she says. 'Now we will aggressively increase our efforts to raise the funds necessary [\$500,000] to fulfill our obligations to the project.'