

Sax, drums and rock 'n' roll



By Nate Smelle

For the third year in a row the Bancroft Business Improvement Area (BBIA) took the party to the streets with the Wheels, Water and Wings event. WHAT A WEEKEND!

Looking around at the standing room only streetscape it is amazing to see how many people come out of the woodwork to roam the main street when it is 'closed' for these types of events.

I can't help but think of the mantra from that classic Kevin Costner film Field of Dreams 'if you build it they will come.'

It gives me hope to see how fast the empty parking lot atmosphere usually occupying the centre of town disappears when we give it the opportunity.

With the sun shining and the sounds of sax, drums and rock 'n' roll filling the air one could have blinked and mistaken downtown Bancroft for a street party in Key West or Cayo Coco. Listening to the Northern Lights Steel Orchestra pound away on their percussion instruments on Saturday was for me the unofficial start of summer. Standing back from the crowd gathered around the tent set up for the orchestra in the parking lot beside Scotiabank it was interesting to see how people would be drawn in by the music.

People walking by seemed unable to resist the allure of the music. As if pulled towards the sound by a magnet individuals would shuffle slowly into the audience to catch a glimpse of the performers. It wasn't too long after that first glance that people would then start to sway to the music.

At one point I heard a swimsuit-clad gentlemen shout out 'I feel like I'm in the Caribbean.' It was then that I realized that I felt as if I was on vacation as well. How is this possible, I thought as I stood in the street I walk and/or drive on almost every day.

I remembered then what it was like to stand downtown before I moved here in 2006. Even then without the flashing lights of the midway rides or the music of Freddy Vette and the Flames, Bancroft gave me that feeling of being on vacation.

I believe this atmosphere of rest and relaxation is the secret to Bancroft's success. It is why I chose to move here.

Events like the WWW weekend, and the series of events that filled Bridge Street while the bridge was being repaired show us how our community can and will transform as Bancroft re-defines itself as a destination.

Seeing how well supported the WWW event is by the town council and staff there appears to be no shortage of political will to make Bancroft be all it can be. Now the task at hand is simply just getting it done. Initiatives like the Riverside Park project and the York River boardwalk and public art displays are all good examples of Bancroft taking action to live up to its potential as one of Ontario's top notch tourist destinations.