

Tyendinaga and Tweed seek money for trail

By Jennifer Bowman

Tweed and the Township of Tyendinaga are hoping they'll be cheered into some funding for a trail that would connect their recreational centres.

The two communities applied for funding through the Molson Coors Community Project for a 42-kilometre trail that would link the Township of Tyendinaga to Tweed. The project is competing against 64 other

communities across Canada for the funding, most of them with urban populations.

They need 225 cheers to qualify for the funding with a goal of reaching 1,000. After that the 20 funding recipients will be chosen by certain criteria, which includes the number of cheers they receive.

The multi-use trail could be used for anything from biking and cross-country skiing to horseback riding and the use of all terrain vehicles. It would link the Township of

Tyendinaga with the rest of the trails in the Eastern Ontario Trails Alliance.

Rick Phillips, reeve of Tyendinaga Township, said they've been talking about a trail for at least five years.

"The importance of this trail for the Township of Tyendinaga is to give our residents another opportunity to get out and exercise," said Phillips.

The Township of Tyendinaga doesn't have any trails, he added.

Joey Walsh, economic development officer for Tweed, said the trail would give Tweed direct access through trails to Hwy. 401.

The two communities are partnering with the Eastern Ontario Trails Alliance to develop the trail. They applied for \$50,000 in funding.

At this point, much of the expense is the signage, said Walsh.

All the trails are there and it's all public property, he said. The money will go into

safety signage, some gravel, culverts in different places, and general upkeep.

How much they can do depends on how much they receive.

There won't be any taxpayer's money involved, said Walsh.

Eventually, they'd like to add routes through Marlbank and Lonsdale, he said.

To support the project, go to www.our-communitycheer.com before the end of February.



Topher Seguin

Speed skating — In the Ontario cup, #4 Junior female race on Jan. 28 at the Yardman Arena, Sarah Shires from Kingston (from left), Serena Shukla and Taylor White from Cambridge and Katie Quesnelle from Oakville compete in the two-day event.

Hastings County to promote itself as wellness spot

By Jennifer Bowman

Hastings County is hoping it will become known as the next Sedona, Arizona.

Sedona is a well-known tourist destination, attracting four million tourists each year. It has many wellness businesses and is known for the red sandstone rocks, as well as its recreation, resort, and art centres. Some call it a spiritual Mecca.

One of the ways Hastings County plans to achieve this goal is by marketing the county as a wellness destination.

The county, the second largest in Ontario, already has many wellness businesses such as chiropractors, hypnotherapists, Reiki masters, and retreats, as well as those who sell organic products and beeswax candles.

Andrew Redden, economic developer of Hastings County, said they are hoping to create a network for these businesses to connect.

"It will help with tourism," he said. "Then once it's known as a destination, new businesses may come in which will create new jobs. The goal is to put money in people's pockets and make it a destination people want to come to."

"We keep talking about Hastings being the next Sedona, Arizona, and nobody else is doing this," he said.

Janice Chrysler, a certified hypnotist and chair of the Wellness Destination committee, said Hastings County is the first wellness destination on this scale in Ontario.

Chrysler said there are similar associations in B.C. and the Yukon that are very strong, but it's the first project of its kind in this area.

"A lot of other counties and things in the province are watching to see how ours works. We're kind of setting the standard here."

Chrysler said she was spending much of her time trying to find places to hold seminars and retreats. In fact, that's the reason she agreed to chair the committee.

"When you're a sole proprietor, you wear many hats, and you don't want your whole time being taken up just trying to find all these things. You want to actually be helping people," she said.

Chrysler said the alternative health community is already a very helpful community that easily refers clients to each other. Building a connection as a wellness destination will make it much easier.

They are currently receiving funding from Hastings County, but Chrysler said they plan to become their own association so government cuts won't affect them as directly.

The planning has been going on for over a year. Chrysler said there are lots of services in the county, and now the time is right to bring them together.

"It's like everybody's been sitting there waiting for someone to make that move," she said.

The planning is just in its starting stages. They've just had their first meeting and still need three members to complete their committee, but those involved are enthusiastic.

"If Sedona can do it, so can we. We have rocks and water and trees too," Chrysler said.

Mohawks teach nearly lost language to adults and children

By Trish Allison

"In the 1930s..." started Nathan Brinklow, "...is when it shifted and my great grandparents didn't let their children speak Mohawk, so my grandmother, her parents, could and she never did," he said, speaking about the near extinction of the Mohawk language.

Brinklow is a second-year student in the Adult Mohawk Immersion program offered by the Tyendinaga community — a program established to save a language.

He believes the program and its mandate — to rebuild and revitalize the Mohawk language — holds great importance to the community and the people who hope to re-establish its significance.

"We can't claim to be a distinct people if we can't speak our language," he said.

"It strengthens the Mohawk identity in the community and having people around that can speak again, 'cause it's been like 50 years or more since you could hear Mohawk being spoken on the street."

Residents of the Tyendinaga Mohawk Territory have been working for more than 10 years, learning, teaching and trying to rebuild the language. Their first step was establishing the Language Circle in the late '90s.

"If we hadn't done anything, like if the committee hadn't taken a stronger interest in the language, (it) would have been gone because in 1995 the last fluent speaker in Tyendinaga passed away," said Dorothy Lazore, a Mohawk language teacher at Quinte Mohawk and original member of the circle.

The immersion program was the brainchild of the circle and it was in 2004 when

they introduced the adult class.

"It's important because it's who we are. We need to establish our identity and I think it makes us stronger, gives us a stronger spirit," said Lazore.

Along with the adult class, the immersion program offers the Nest program, which caters to children ages two to four (first introduced in 2005) and the Primary Immersion program that teaches children ages five to 10 (currently in its first year).

"The language was at a critical point 10 years ago, hence the reason for the Language Circle being established by community members," said Callie Hill, co-ordinator for the Mohawk Immersion program.

"We've really grown as an organization in terms of speakers in the community with the programming that we've offered. There are probably at least 50 people of varying levels of fluency and functionality," said Hill.

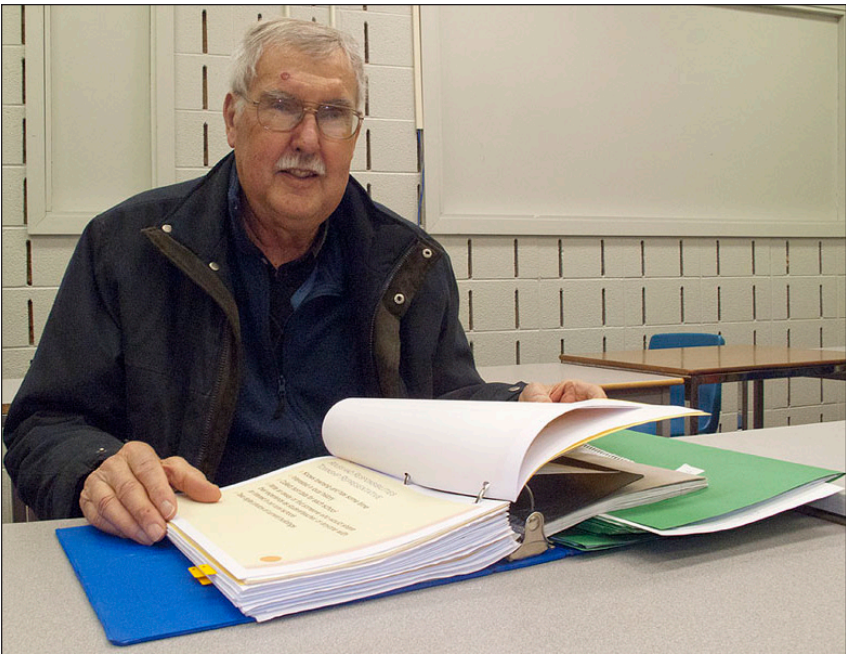
Hill believes an important part in the revitalization is educating younger people and children in the language.

"That's when they're just starting to form their words, form their thoughts and what not. And really that's the only way we're going to build Mohawk up to be their first language," she said.

"That's why it's important to get the young babies and the kids into it."

Hill said the program's goal hasn't exactly been followed to plan, but it is still on the right track.

Over the last 20 years, it's estimated the community has regained at least 100 speakers, only a small portion of the roughly 2,100 residents.



Jennifer Bowman

John Sager flips through his research and the beginnings of his manuscript for his first book which will document every rural schoolhouse in Hastings County.

Book about rural schools result of volunteer efforts

By Jennifer Bowman

An understaffed event at the Heritage Museum in Stirling had an unexpected outcome: a book.

John Sager, a retired certified management accountant, was filling in at the schoolhouse exhibit at the Agribition Tour in October. The tour at the museum is offered to Grade 4 students at local schools so they can learn about agriculture and where their food comes from.

"Originally all I was supposed to have done was ring the bell to change the stations as they moved along," said Sager.

He volunteered to fill in at the schoolhouse until more volunteers came. No one showed up, so three days and 23 presentations later, he was a semi-expert on what life was like in the schoolhouse in the 1920s.

The script for tour visitors kept changing as he went.

"When I was finished, I said, 'Well, we really do need to have a script so that next year someone can do this,' he said.

While writing the script, he talked to retired teachers so he could find out what their salary was and what the programs were like.

Those phone calls led him to a 95-year-old woman in Madoc who used to teach at one of the schools in Madoc Township. She showed him a book she had written using desktop publishing with the help of her grandson and granddaughter.

"I said, well, if she can do that, why can't we do something? There's no book to my

knowledge that has all of the history of Hastings County schools recorded in one book," he said.

His plan is to document stories from every rural schoolhouse in Hastings County, about 200 of them. He's doing a lot of research, but he said he's not writing much for it. Instead, he's asking permission from authors who have published historical works of the area to use segments or their work.

He's also collecting anecdotes from people who attended or taught at the schools.

One woman he talked to went to one of the rural schools in 1915, and then taught from the late 1920s till the 1960s. She is now 103. Another anecdote told of a woman who took her teacher's exam with the superintendent while he was plowing his field.

"The purpose is to document for my grandkids what school was like. And hopefully the people that buy the book will want to pass this on to their grandchildren as well," Sager said.

It's been an educational journey, even for Sager, who went to a rural school.

He said he found there were several schools with windows only on the left side of the school. He thinks the reason was to encourage students to write with their right hand. Many of the schoolhouses had only natural light, and light coming in from the left wouldn't cast a shadow if a student wrote with their right hand.

He's hoping to have the book finished so that it can be launched on Grandparent's Day in September at the Hastings County Museum of Agricultural Heritage.

Tourists can travel safely, but cautiously, says teacher

By Steph Crosier

After recent events in the travel industry, there are mixed opinions about whether it is safe to travel.

The Costa Concordia cruise ship ran aground on Jan. 13. Sheila Nabb of Calgary was beaten in an elevator at a five star resort. At the same resort, Scott Giddy of Fergus, Ont., was viciously beaten last spring. Finally, some vacationers travelling home from Cuba came home with nausea and diarrhea.

Even with these recent dangers Janet Leavey, co-ordinator of the business administration program, teacher, and travel agent, says it is big wide world and people should continue to travel. Leavey says that banditos, robbers, and drug lords influence a lot of the violence in Mexico.

"The safer areas of Mexico would be the ones to focus on," said Leavey. "That would be on the advice of a travel agent and also the Canadian government."

On the Canadian foreign affairs website there are travel reports and warnings.

Danger ratings include exercise normal security precautions, exercise high degree of caution, avoid non-essential travel, and avoid all travel. According to the website, travellers to Mexico need to exercise a high degree of caution.

The website also recommended people avoid all non-essential travel to the Mexico-United States border. Leavey said that the Canadian government is going to do more if the countries being visited are too dangerous.

"I think that the Canadian government is going to take a firmer stand on maybe putting a 'stop sale' on destinations where there has been so much corruption," said Leavey.

Maureen Webster of Woburn, MA, started the website mexicovacationawareness.com after her son was killed in Mexico.

"He arrived on January 6th and was dead on January 7th," said Webster.

Webster has travelled to Washington D.C. several times to meet with congressmen and senators who have now introduced a bill to the Senate.

"The International Travel Bill of Rights Act would require any online tour operator or travel seller to inform their consumer prior to them purchasing their trip," said Webster. "They would be informed (of) any state department travel warnings or alerts to the country."

The bill would also require any online hotel websites to inform their consumers about safety features such as lifeguards who know CPR, defibrillators on site, and the presence of reliable security personnel.

If a person were to travel south for a beach vacation, Leavey suggests the Dominican Republic or Cuba.

Cruises, said Leavey, will not suffer as much as people may think.

"In regards to the cruise ships, I see big things happening in the future," said Leavey. "What I see happening is people who have always cruised will continue to cruise, but there will be a lot of discounts offered to motivate people to buy again."

Leavey said the cruise industry would only be hurt by first-time buyers.