

Bancroft has green Christmas



The skatepark, ready for skate-boarders, not snowboarders. Tony Pearson Special to This Week

By Tony Pearson

Winter finally arrived in our area, but it was a week late. Unlike in the movies, no Bing Crosby rendition of White Christmas could coax the white stuff from the skies before Dec. 25. So Bancroft had a green holiday, along with most of eastern Canada. Environment Canada estimated that more than 80 per cent of Canadians were without snow on Dec. 24 and 25, whereas normally 50 centimetres have fallen by now.

In Toronto, the outdoor skating rink at the town hall melted to slush. At Blue Mountain ski resort, the ski hills were closed, but the zip line and the climbing wall were open. In Ottawa, there were golf courses open. In southern Ontario, tulips were spotted. At nearby Sir Sam's ski hill, a live camera focused on the main run showed a May scene: a few remaining patches of snow, and in the foreground, an abandoned groomer and two snowmobiles on grass. The only thing moving in the whole picture was a lone fly walking back and forth across the camera lens.

Here in Bancroft, the York River was flowing freely, with not a hint of ice. On Christmas Eve, several people were walking around in T-shirts and shorts. You could take your board to the skatepark and shred away. But you couldn't take your sled to the water tower hill by the arena. It wasn't just the trees that were ever-green; it was the grass.

The only snow in town was what was cleaned off the arena ice; Frosty never had a chance to make an appearance.

The cause is a super ?El Niño?, a warm water current in the Eastern Pacific ocean. One meteorologist called it a ?Godzilla? El Niño. Normally this effect raises water temperatures by half a degree; this year, it's up by over three degrees.

Of course, once Christmas was over, winter came roaring in, with a major drop in temperature and a coating of freezing rain, followed by snow. So there will be a use for all those Christmas presents of scarves and snowsuits. Later on, skis and snowboards will be taken out.

On the other hand, people will look back at 2015 and ask how often you could replace turkey with barbecue in December. One Twitter user said that if the mild weather truly was caused by global warming, he was going to gather up all the Styrofoam he could find and burn it in a bonfire to delay winter as long as possible.