

Community bonfire at old Coe Hill mine site



Community friends and neighbours and Wollaston Heritage supporters gathered at the old Coe Hill iron mine site behind the museum building for a bonfire on March 19. JIM EADIE Special to This Week

By Jim Eadie

It was a cold but beautiful sunny evening in Coe Hill on March 19, but the bonfire kept warm everyone who dropped into the Wollaston Heritage community 'Get-Together Bonfire' during the evening.

Currently the heritage group is clearing the brush from the old Coe Hill iron mine site behind the museum property in the hamlet. Someone apparently decided, instead of just burning the brush, 'let's have a bonfire and invite the community for a meet and greet.' More than 50 people attended at some point during the evening, enjoying a wiener roast, hot chocolate and homemade cookies. For the most part people sat on the logs in the newly cleared area, and visited around the fire.

Wollaston Heritage has an ambitious plan to re-build the old mine site, along with a new building to display old timbering, farming and mining equipment from the township's previous century. Currently there is a museum already operational and open during the summer months.

'We will be changing displays regularly in the museum,' said Edith McCaw. The museum is also selling publications published by Wollaston Heritage, which are a major source of income for the group. 'We are always looking for people to help out at the museum too,' said McCaw.

This summer, the group hopes to erect the headframe for the mine. This is a large structure that supports the lifting equipment bringing ore to the surface. 'We have had eight 60-foot pines donated to us for this,' said Dan McCaw. 'They have been donated by Freymond Lumber in Bancroft. We have to go and peel the logs, and they will deliver them here to us!'

According to McCaw, the head frame will require large cement corners, with a rock wall built between the corners. 'It will be a big job,' he said. 'But it will be a big step forward.'

Wollaston Heritage has accumulated a large collection of old mining equipment for their project, including headframe winches, small rail and ore cars, and other drilling equipment.

They also plan a 'stick building' according to McCaw. This is also known as a stackwall construction technique. Cedar logs have already been donated which McCaw also hopes to cut to size this summer.

Further information about the activities of Wollaston Heritage or the museum can be obtained by calling Edith McCaw at 613-337-5705.