

Dance being held to support Camp Bongopix repairs Jan. 28



By Mike Riley

Local Journalism Initiative Reporter According to a media release sent out on Jan. 17 to Bancroft This Week, a couple of employees of Camp Bongopix in Whitney, Jessica Robertson and Ashley Cammelli, are organizing a dance, bake sale and benefit meal on Jan. 28 to help raise money to cover the repair costs to Camp Bongopix's tavern, the result of flooding from a broken radiator pipe on Dec. 27. Robertson and Cammelli, as well as Bongo, comment on this upcoming fundraiser.

Robertson says that she and Cammelli have been working at Camp Bongopix since June of 2022 and they both enjoyed the busy summer and fall months working the tavern, as locals and tourists got to experience the campfire, live music vibes and simple food and drinks. Robertson says that the tavern was temporarily closed during the months of November and December 2022 as things tend to slow down during that time in South Algonquin. Set to reopen after Christmas, Bongo and Andrea discovered a devastating flood on the premises on Dec. 27, which had spread to all three levels and required the building to be stripped of all flooring and much of the drywall had to be repaired and brought back to code for reopening. Unfortunately, this damage was not covered by their insurance company and Bongo and Andrea have had to cover these costs on their own.

"Our community in Whitney may be small but together we were able to put together a GoFundMe page and have planned a benefit dance to help raise money and support our friends as they rebuild a place in Whitney we have all come to know and love," she says.

The GoFundMe page mentioned by Robertson was started up by Whitney resident Alex Winstanley and as of Jan. 20, had raised \$20,233 of its \$100,000 goal. According to Robertson, Bongo and Andrea hope to have the Bongopix Tavern back up and running by late February.

Bongo tells Bancroft This Week that he and Andrea are humbled by the generosity of their employees donating their time to organize this fundraiser.

"Their thoughtfulness shows how tight-knit a team we are at Bongopix. Even though they aren't able to work for us right now due to our temporary closure, they still want to contribute. We have a special team here, it's a family. The feedback online about the dance has been exciting. Based on the amount of comments I'm sure we'll have a full house. Our employees have taken the lead on this initiative. Jessica and Ashley are doing all the planning and coordinating. Other generous community members have stepped up to offer all kinds of help and support. Special thanks to Rob [Bersan] from the Salt Cellars who is donating a sound system for the

dance,? he says.

Robertson says they've been planning the benefit dance, bake sale and benefit meal for a few weeks now and have a great crew of volunteers helping them ensure it is a safe and successful night. It will be on Jan. 28 from 7 p.m. to 1 a.m. She says they decided to rent St. Martin of Tours Church [at 41 Post Street, Whitney] because the size of the venue allows them to have a higher capacity of people. Family, friends and children are all welcome to the event and Robertson says they wanted to ensure they had space to accommodate all that love and support. Admission to the dance is \$10 for adults and \$5 for kids 12 years of age and under. Cash only please. Donations to the bake sale and benefit meal are also appreciated. All proceeds go towards the Bongopix Tavern repairs.

?Our feedback has been really positive so far. Many of our community members have reached out to offer up their help with regards to cooking, volunteering at the event itself and helping spread the word. It has been years since Whitney has had a large community-based event like this benefit dance, mainly due to COVID-19 restrictions, and we are excited to provide a night out with the added benefit of helping restore the beloved Bongopix Tavern,? she says. ?We very much appreciate you reaching out to us and hope to have a grand turnout to the event!?