

Eagle's Nest trail development planned



A sketch of how new interpretive signage would look.

By Tony Pearson

The Bancroft Trails committee is getting ready to enhance the experience on its trail systems this summer. The group has entered into partnership with the town of Bancroft, the Algonquins of Ontario, the Stewardship Council, CESCO, and the Field Naturalists. A first step is the pursuit of a Canada 150 grant to assist with the work they have in mind for the Eagle's Nest.

The vision is to gradually build an elaborate interpretative trails system that will highlight the various stories that tell the history ? natural and human ? of the land where we live.

An integral part of enriching the trails experience will be new signage. This will allow people to learn about both the natural and cultural heritage of the region.

The first step is the Algonquin story ? the history of the First Nations in the area. The story of European settlement will also be told, as it developed along the Hastings Road. Down the road, there's discussion of setting up a memorial wall as well.

Side by side with the story of settlement is the story of the land itself: its geology, its flora and fauna, its gems and minerals. Hikers will learn about the one billion year tectonic development of the Eagle's Nest, and how this development created the mini eco-systems visible from the ridgeline.

The tales will be told through interpretive signage, as well as modern technology, like the QR codes on posts, which will direct the hiker to information on the various points of interest along the trail.

Although the immediate focus is on Bancroft town land around the Eagle's Nest, the hope is that eventually trails can extend onto crown land, so as to create a network stretching back to Clark Lake, and down to Snow Road.

In addition to the educational experience, the Committee believes the project, in promoting outdoor physical activity through hiking and cycling, will impart health benefits as well. It's all part of the ?Healthy Communities? movement.

Needless to say, the committee sees economic health resulting from their efforts as well, once tourists realize and can utilize the expanded and enhanced trail network.