

## NERDS tackle Baptiste Lake shoreline restoration



By Kaitlin Sylvester

The Bancroft and Area Stewardship Council, in conjunction with a group of dedicated North Hastings High School students spent May 1 on the shores of Baptiste Lake planting over two hundred native plants and shrubs to rehabilitate the lake shoreline. Led by BASC chair Ian Hendry, the group arrived at the lake in the early morning and spent the day enjoying the sunshine and warm weather. Central to this rehabilitation is the Northern Environmental Research and Development Studies students. Designed for Grade 11 and 12 students with a passion for the outdoors, this program offers a unique opportunity to engage in hands-on environmental research and conservation efforts. From data collection to scientific analysis, these students play an active role in monitoring and preserving the area's natural resources, gaining invaluable experience for future studies and careers in environmental science. Through a combination of education, conservation efforts, and community engagement, BASC aims to pave the way for a more ecologically balanced future. As a group of local environmental enthusiasts, these volunteer residents come together to protect and preserve their natural heritage, safeguarding the environment for future generations. The education and preservation of local shore ecosystems are paramount to safeguarding the delicate balance of the natural environment, according to Hendry. Shoreline degradation, whether by natural disasters, the effects of climate change, or human intervention, poses a significant threat to the health of these fragile ecosystems. Hendry said "we're trying to raise awareness of the shoreline ecosystems. It's really the last line of defense for the lake, but we have people clear cutting so they can have a nice lawn." Deforestation for aesthetic purposes undermines the integrity of shorelines, leaving them vulnerable to erosion and disrupting the ecological equilibrium. Recognizing the crucial role that shorelines play as the last line of defense for our lakes, BASC launched the Shoreline Project to raise awareness among local shoreline owners. In addition to these efforts, BASC is asking boat owners to be conscious of not transporting invasive species between lakes. By promoting responsible boating behavior through the mantra of "Clean, Drain, and Dry" your boat, BASC hopes boat owners can mitigate the spread of invasive species between lakes, safeguarding the ecological integrity of these vital ecosystems. "We've set up information booths at the 4 big lakes to educate fishermen and boaters on the importance of clean, drain and dry your boat," said Hendry, "we don't want to see any more transfer of invasive species between lakes." Information booths strategically located at the four major regional lakes, target fishermen and boaters alike acting as hubs for disseminating knowledge. Hendry points to the notorious Invasive Phragmites as one of the species, wreaking havoc on Ontario's biodiversity, wetlands, and beaches. The detrimental impacts of phragmites are abundant, ranging from the crowding out of native vegetation to the creation of subpar habitats for wildlife, including endangered species. Its rapid growth exacerbates water level decreases and heightens the risk of wildfires, posing threats to both agricultural lands and recreational activities. This aggressive plant is so invasive it almost seems like it belongs here Hendry acknowledged, the tall fluffy seed pods are ubiquitous to water and roadways throughout Ontario. The shoreline program has been a boon to the community for a number of years, elevating the education of local shoreline owners.

Instilling a sense of stewardship and responsibility, BASC hopes to preserve the integrity of Bancroft's shorelines and ensure the longevity of these invaluable ecosystems.