

Not-for-profits learning to adapt

April 14, 2020 By Chris Drost

While not-for-profits in the region work within financial limitations every day, the current situation with COVID-19 is causing much additional pressure on organizations that carry out important roles in the community, especially those that have infrastructure to look after or have rent and utilities to pay. The Bancroft Times reached out to a selection of non-profits to learn more about how they are adapting to what have become almost daily changes in regulations and protocols.

North Hastings Community Fish Hatchery According to the fish hatchery's chair Kevin Vance "We've changed procedures and spread out the tasks at the hatchery to allow volunteers to be able to complete the necessary day-to-day activities and still maintain physical distance. It hasn't been anything particularly difficult, but the changes make a difference in how many people physically interact with each other. The biggest effect so far for the NHCFH is having to cancel participation in the Quinte Sportsman Show and their annual Open House on Easter weekend. Thoughts are beginning to turn to the annual Pig Roast and Fish Fry Dinner and Auction, the main fundraiser for the hatchery, which is currently scheduled for July. In the interim, Vance says, "We are conducting regular board business so far by email and telephone, so all is good."

Art Gallery of Bancroft President of the Art Gallery of Bancroft Hugh Monteith says the AGB quickly moved to postpone the current and upcoming shows and close the doors to the gallery to protect both the volunteers and the public. The shows planned for April and May have been rescheduled to 2021 and a decision on the June show will be made soon. "It is challenging for us as the AGB to continue paying rent and utilities without the opportunity to sell artwork from the gallery and other items in the Gallery Shop," says Monteith. They will be reaching out to previous members to renew their memberships to try and keep a revenue stream coming in. While they wait for things to unfold, the AGB is taking the time to conduct an online survey for members and stakeholders that will form the basis of a new strategic plan for moving forward.

Bancroft Community Transit Operations manager Gwen Coish says that BCT is operating public transit but at reduced capacity. They have removed rows of seating in their vehicle so they can take up to three passengers at a time, or two plus groceries. "We have implemented increased cleaning protocols between customers. Everything is sanitized between customers," says Coish. Medical transit for dialysis and chemotherapy patients and for urgent appointments that cannot wait, are still being provided in Bancroft and Belleville with trips to Kingston and Ottawa. BCT has a dedicated vehicle for dialysis and chemotherapy patients and "extreme sanitation procedures" are carried out. Coish says that most elective surgeries have been cancelled and so there are reduced numbers of trips. Some BCT drivers have requested not to drive at this time. For those who are still working, Coish says they do not want them to burn out. A press release is expected soon from United Way informing the public about a new free shopping delivery service for seniors living in the north part of Hastings County who are in self-isolation at home. BCT will use staff and volunteers for this service. Details will be coming out soon. There will be a dedicated phone line for the service "613-334-2385 and Pauline will take the calls. While it is for seniors age 55 and up, it is intended only for those who are without family or friend support to pick up groceries. BCT continues to work with North Hastings Community Cupboard to provide deliveries to their clients on Tuesdays and with Care North Hastings in delivering Meals on Wheels. The Wattle and Daub Café is still offering take out meals and bread and baked goods. The funds raised are being used to offset the costs of providing free delivery for the other programs. "We have been working with local restaurants and other businesses in order not to duplicate what they are making. We don't want to compete with them. We want them to stay afloat," explains Coish.

Bancroft Area Stewardship Council Early spring is traditionally a busy time for BASC and its volunteers as it means the culmination of a winter of selling tree and shrub seedlings and the packaging of orders and distribution to the customers. "This year the process will have to be very well thought out to ensure physical distancing for our volunteers as orders are assembled and for our customers on pick-up day," says chair Ian Hendry. While the group had planned to use the services of students in the NERDS program at the high school to help package orders, this cannot happen this year. Instead, the plan is for a small group of volunteers, under the five-person maximum, to assemble the orders using a process that meets the physical distancing requirements. "The nursery where the stock is grown is providing contact free drive-thru pick-up and that is what we will be doing for our customers on May 9," says Hendry. Additionally, BASC is disappointed at having to postpone the inaugural Environmental Summit planned at the Algonquin Visitor Centre on April 4 and having to cancel the Wonders of Wetlands Day for this year.

Anishinaabe Baptiste There have been no meetings of the Anishinaabe Baptiste since the COVID-19 outbreak and Dora Yateman believes this will be the case for the foreseeable future. Some work has started on the layout of their annual calendar and unfortunately, it appears, at least at this time, that the birch bark canoe build planned for this summer may be cancelled.

Stewards of Bancroft Eagles Nest Park The Stewards have halted their meetings but work will be continuing on the trails through the Hastings Destination Trails

Ontario Trillium Foundation project. This will include creating an accessible trail to the Hawkwatch with a ramp being added up to the viewing platform to make it barrier free for all to enjoy. A new vault type washroom is also in the works as part of this initiative. Plans to plant tree seedlings provided through BASC and the Lion's Club, using the NERDS from the high school, will proceed without the students but will have to be accomplished using other volunteers working within the physical distancing requirements. The annual spring work bee will also have to be rescheduled to the fall.