

Council approves commemorative cairn in Port Maitland | The Sachem and Glanbrook Gazette

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Submitted photo

An eight-foot high commemorative cairn has been digitally superimposed over an image of the Port Maitland East Park to give people an idea of what the finished project could look like.

By Jen Nevans

Members of the Port Maitland Historical Association (PMHA) are hoping to preserve four significant historical events and activities that make up Port Maitland's rich history.

"I'm very passionate about history in Dunnville and Port Maitland, so I think we need to start preserving it," said Sylvia Weaver, a member of PMHA.

Weaver is spearheading a project that would see a commemorative cairn constructed at Beckley Beach in Port Maitland East Park.

But she's not alone in coordinating the project. Weaver has been working with Haldimand County staff for the last two years to get the project on the ground.

"The work behind the scenes has been going on for several years," said Coun. Lorne Boyko at the Aug. 5 committee meeting.

Through the County's Community Partnership Program, council approved contributing \$10,400 to cover 35 per cent of the \$29,700 project.

The money would go towards the construction of a natural stone heritage cairn with four plaques to commemorate key parts of Port Maitland's history including the 200th anniversary of the Grand River Naval Depot next year, the 1842 construction of the Feeder Canal and Lock, the 100-plus year commercial fishing industry and the Grand River Naval Depot cemetery.

Aside from preserving Port Maitland and Dunnville's history and instilling a sense of pride in local heritage, Weaver believes the cairn will also do something else for the town.

"It could be a tourist attraction and it could help the economy too," she said. "I'm hoping that the community will assist us in this project."

Now that council has approved the project at the Aug. 12 meeting, PMHA's next challenge is fundraising.



“We’re going to start the fundraising as soon as possible because we need to collect all of the money before a shovel is put in the ground,” said Weaver, adding that they’re hoping to start excavating next spring and have the project finished that summer for the 200th anniversary of the Naval Depot.

The group has already secured about \$6,000 from the Jackman Foundation, PMHA, Beckley Beach Cottagers Corporation and the Dunnville Historical Society.

While the group also plans to make applications to the Ontario Trillium Foundation and the Legacy Foundation, until they hear back from those organizations, they’re still left to raise about \$13,000.

To help with the fundraising, PMHA will also be selling engraved granite paver stones that would be placed around the cairn. The cost of the stones will be determined in the coming months.

“I really want the community to take part in this because there’s a lot of families here today who’s ancestors are a part of the history of Port Maitland,” said Weaver.

The cairn, which will be located at the Port Maitland East Park, will be an eight-foot high pyramid made up of coloured stones found at the Naval Depot site at Beckley Beach.

Those interested in helping with the fundraising can contact Weaver at 905-774-4132 or PMHA president Bill Warnick at 905-549-6086.

“I’ll be glad to talk to anyone and tell them about the project if they’re interested in assisting us with the paver stones,” said Weaver.

A website detailing the project will also be launched in the coming months.

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