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FOREST TO CENTRE TREATY RELATIONSHIP

PROJECT WILL SEE 70 TREES PLANTED AT JOE SAMS PARK

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Waterdown will soon be home to the Queen's Platinum Jubilee Treaty Forest, a collaborative project between the City of Hamilton, Mississaugas of the Credit First Nation, the Rotary Club of Waterdown, Waterdown Lions Club and students from Waterdown District High School.

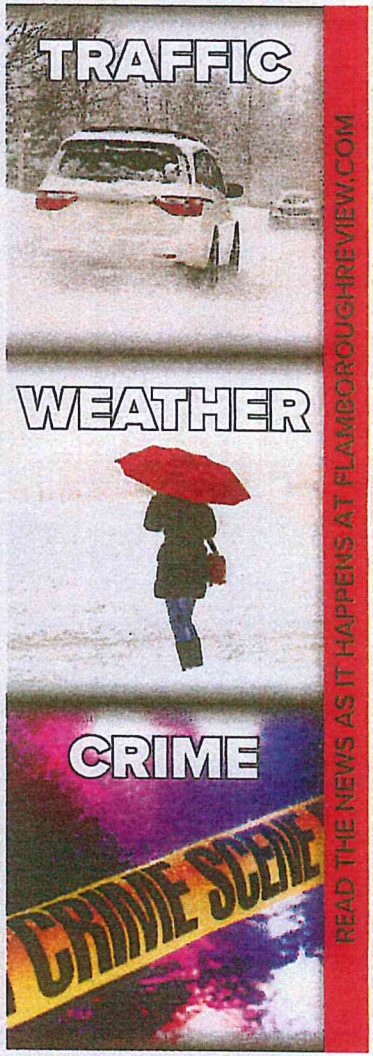
The forest, which will be located at Joe Sams Leisure Park, will honour Waterdown's relationship with its Treaty partner, the Mississaugas of the Credit First Nation, by centring the treaty relationship that exists in the area.

WDHS history teacher Nathan Tidridge, whose Grade 11 and 12 treaty studies students are taking part in the project, said Queen Elizabeth II's platinum jubilee is an opportunity to honour the treaties of the area and builds off previous collaborations, such

See STUDENT, page 6

Nathan Tidridge photo

A group of stakeholders, including Nathan Tidridge, Ward 15 Coun. Judi Partridge and Waterdown Rotarian Garry Flood survey the future site of the Queen's Platinum Jubilee Treaty Forest in Joe Sams Leisure Park in early March.



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NEWS

STUDENT INVOLVEMENT VITAL, SAYS LAFORME

Continued from page 3

as the Souharissen Natural Area and Canoe Garden in Waterdown.

"The legacy that will be left behind is a space that will help to educate people and remind them of their obligations as treaty partners," said Tidridge.

"The whole idea is to heal and restore the land."

The forest will include 70 trees, all species indigenous to the area, a permanent monument and signage explaining the treaty territory Flamborough is a part of. The forest will also have a permanent space for Indigenous people to perform ceremonies and use the space as they see fit.

While planting will take place this spring, a formal dedication event is slated for June 18.

Ward 15 Coun. Judi Partridge said Tidridge was the driving force behind the initiative, bringing forward the idea early in 2022. She loved the idea and the fact that the Mississaugas, and local students, are heavily involved.

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>
> – Nathan Tidridge

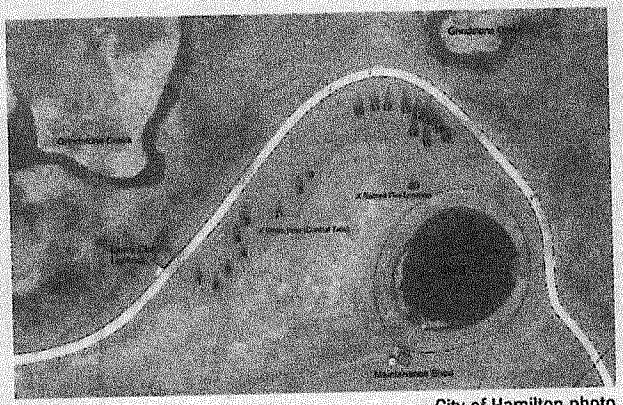
"I'm particularly humbled by and thrilled with the fact that the students are involved with the project," she said. "Not only from teaching students about the importance of Treaty, but the importance of the relationship that we need to have and need to grow and foster with our Indigenous brothers and sisters."

Student chair Marissa Iozzo said the project helps foster understanding.

"It's very important that we understand the relationships with the Indigenous people in the area," said the Grade 11 student.

Chief R. Stacey LaForme said the Mississaugas of the Credit have had a good relationship with Waterdown, particularly through Tidridge and WDHS.

"The combination of the work that's happening with the forest and the planting is really an educational thing for us," he said. "Trying to raise awareness of the history of the land, the treaties and how they unfolded."



City of Hamilton photo

A map shows the proposed location of the Queen's Platinum Jubilee Treaty Forest in Joe Sams Leisure Park.

In terms of the platinum jubilee aspect of the project, LaForme said it is maintaining the connection that the treaties were made with the Crown.

"It's a long-standing relationship," he said. "Yes, we're trying to bring awareness to the history and certainly England is a big part of that history, but you've got to remember we don't forget the fact that there's a lot of negative history that unfolded because of that relationship with the Crown."

He continued: "So I'm always respectful, always trying to educate people and build relationships, but I'm also very much aware that this is considered a very dark part of our history."

LaForme said student involvement in the project is vital.

"I love it when the youth are involved," he said. "Because, let's face it, it's not only the treaty history, the Indigenous history and reconciliation that are going to be left in their hands, but so is saving the planet.

"We're leaving our children and their children quite the task in front of them and it's never too early to start having those discussions."

STORY BEHIND THE STORY: After seeing posts on social media about a planned treaty forest at Joe Sams Park, the Review wanted to learn more about the project.