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Ceremony recognizes heritage tree in Cheltenham

By Bill Rea

It can be seen some trees deserve heritage designation just by looking at them.

A black willow tree standing in the back yard of a Cheltenham property has met that standard.

The plaque designating the tree was unveiled last week at a special ceremony on site.

Designation of the tree had been recommended by Heritage Caledon last year.

The staff report to the committee stated property owner Kathy Reid had requested the cultural heritage value of the tree be assessed, and it was determined that it met the criteria for heritage designation.

The tree is notable for a number of reasons, including the fact it has four distinct trunks, and its broad canopy.

Heritage Caledon Chair Joanne Crease also said the tree is about 100-year-old and in excess of 65 feet tall.

The staff report said the tree ?continues to demonstrate vigour and vitality.?

Last week's ceremony included an appearance of the Four Colours Drum Circle, with Reid taking part.

She also said the tree has been part of the family for some 25 years.

?We've never celebrated and honoured the tree,? she observed, noting the tree would have faced a lot of diversity over the years. In that time, it has provided shade, helped preserve the local woodland, blocked winds and provided shelter from rain. Reid also pointed out trees are essential to local ecosystems, with the roots holding soils in place, and reducing runoff.

She also pointed to the positioning of this or any tree.

?Once it starts to grow, that's it,? she said. ?That's its place on the planet.?

As well, Reid pointed out the root system of one tree cooperates with those of nearby trees.

?They don't crowd each other out,? she remarked.

Reid also said the tree has been named Aksotha Kathu, a word in Oneida which means Grandmother Willow.

Steven WinterHawk of the Four Colours Drum Circle recited an Ojibway prayer as part of the ceremony.

?This tree is our relative,? he declared.

He also referred to the four trunks of the tree, drawing comparisons to the four directions in the Medicine Wheel Garden and the four colours they represent ? Yellow for inspiration, red for sharing, black for healing and white for dreaming. He added all colours of people are needed and the wait continues for all the other to come together.

He also spoke of the seven Grandfather Teachings; love, honesty, bravery, respect, humility, wisdom and truth.



Helen Mason, Joanne Crease of Heritage Caledon and Kathy Reid unveiled the plaque commemorating the tree on Reid's Cheltenham property.



Taking part with the Four Colours Drum Circle included Nicholas Scott, Cidalia, Steven WinterHawk and Kathy Reid.



This black willow is estimated to be at least 100 years old and about 65 feet tall.