

Alton Mill presents a festival of flames, food and fine art

Warm up to winter and bring the whole family for a blizzard of fun, at the sixth annual Fire and Ice festival Jan. 24 and 25 at the Alton Mill Arts Centre.

It's time to rediscover Canadian winter traditions and enjoy spectacular ice carvings, a snow playground, skating on the millpond rink, and a spellbinding fire sculpture. Try snowshoeing with experts from Caledon Hills Cycling, learn to build an igloo, or watch ice carvers Jim Menken and Winston Uytendogaart create a crystal sculpture garden in the Annex Courtyard. Potter Ann Randeraad will demonstrate a raku firing in her outdoor kiln, while blacksmith Ray Schindler will create ironworks in the forge.

Indoors, mill studio artists will be conducting workshops and demos to warm body and soul.

Check out Give it a Whirl at The Hive's encaustic workshop (Studio 201, both days at 1 and 3 pm, \$15 per person for supplies), or make a mark and create Words of Fire in Studio 206, where artist CJ Shelton will be building a collective word "mandala," a circular design made up entirely of written words. Bridget Wilson (Studio 208) will host a fused glass workshop (pre-registration required at bw@artglass-design.com) and Paul Morin will help budding artists create abstract canvases with his interactive spin art sessions.

Chill out and warm up with hot drinks and treats from Shaw's Creek Café, try a maple syrup snow pop from Love's Sweetness Maple Syrup, or enjoy a beer and a bite hot off the Millpond barbecue.

Saturday only, experience a Canadian tradition - outdoor pond hockey. Cheer on the teams competing in the Millpond Hockey Classic beginning at 9 a.m. Junior, women's and men's games are scheduled on two historic ponds - the Alton Mill and the Millcroft Inn and Spa. Opening ceremonies will take place at 11:30 a.m., with MP David Tilson, MPP Sylvia Jones, Mayor Allan Thompson, and Councillors Barb Shaughnessy and Doug Beffort in attendance, along with celebrity referee and Hockey Hall of Famer Ray Scapinello. Free skating gets under way at 3:45 p.m. Saturday and will continue Sunday from noon to 5 p.m. Also Sunday, a bona fide curling rink will be open, with "rock stars" at the ready to demonstrate their technique and assist novice curlers.

Things will really heat up Saturday evening at dusk when Brian Oates ignites a brand new fire sculpture.

This year's creation will feature a circular ice lodge and symbolic tree of life.

After the burn, hockey fans can head indoors to the Hot Stove Lounge Pub Night, or the Ice Cube Lounge for a night of music and art videos (from 6:30 p.m.) Both venues will feature casual food and cash bar. Tickets are available online at www.altonmill.ca or at the door.