

Flames, food and fine art coming to Alton Mill

It will be a chance to rekindle a love of Canadian winter traditions and the great outdoors at the Alton Mill Arts Centre's ninth annual Fire & Ice Festival.

It will be Jan. 20 and 21 at the Mill.

In advance of the PyeongChang Olympics in February, Alton Mill invites families and visitors of all ages to rediscover the 'thrills and chills' of winter activities, sports and culture, including bonfires, authentic outdoor pond hockey, skating, curling and the return of a fan favourite for the younger set: the super snow slide.

Highlights of the 2018 festival will include an after-dusk fire sculpture Saturday evening in the Mill's outdoor Annex Courtyard, crafted in secret by Brian Oates, accompanied by a musical playlist created by local artist Paul Morin, and sponsored by Fireball Cinnamon Whisky.

Throughout the afternoon, both Saturday and Sunday, visitors are invited to watch magic unfold in real time as ice carvers Brian Oates, John McCartney, Chis von Innerebner, Winston Uytendobbogart, Jim Menken, Cam Menken, Fiona Legg and Monica Bishop transform blocks of ice into a garden of imaginative sculptures. Toronto-based contemporary artist Ryan Pechnick will bring the ice indoors with an evolving installation of ice and ink in the Pond Gallery. Stay warm, and cozy up to the bonfire on the rinkside Millpond Terrace, or watch as the Mill's ceramic artist Ann Randraad demonstrates raku firing in an outdoor kiln Saturday afternoon.

Arts Centre co-founder Jeremy Grant said that the festival is, at its core, a community event, where families and visitors can gather together and celebrate arts and culture through shared experiences.

The studios and galleries of the restored industrial arts complex are open from 10 a.m. to 5 p.m. throughout the festival. Visitors can plan to warm up inside, and wander through open studios and galleries or pre-register for a class or workshop with Mill studio artists.

Mark Grice will host an Open Studio Sunday in the Bridge Workshop where students will be guided through the process of painting an image of their choice, CJ Shelton will host a Words of Fire workshop, resulting in the creation of a group Mandala, and The Hive is offering exploratory Give it a Whirl! workshops for beginners interested in trying the ancient art of encaustic painting at 1 and 3 p.m. both days. Participants should contact instructors to register; full details including cost and times are available online at altonmill.ca

On the Mill's main floor, gallery shows will include, Synergy, a vibrant collection of collaborative works by regional artists in the Headwaters Arts Gallery, and Essential Reflections, mesmerizing photography-based works in the Noodle Gallery by Joanna Bell, Jessica Lin and Bryant Serre, with an opening reception Sunday from 1 to 4 p.m. Rare Threads, the Mill's fibre design and fashion market, will host a Nordic-inspired event with vodka sampling, Icelandic cake, and high-fashion outerwear designs by Therma K?ta and Canadian designer Linda Lundström, as well as fair-trade vendor TresBello. Gallery Gemma Jewellery invites festival goers aged 18 and older to guess the number of colourful crystals in a glass for their chance to win a gemstone.

Gourmandissimo Café will provide hot beverages and warm meals both indoors and out, for the festival weekend, outdoors on the grounds of the historic mill. The outdoor menu has everything from barbecue to Beaver Tails. Also on hand will be Love's Sweetness, serving their sticky sweet Maple Syrup snow pops. Additional beverages for visitors aged 19 years and older will be available on the upper level of the Mill, with a Toonie Tastings set-up in the Falls Gallery, featuring local producers Grand Spirits Distillery, Badlands Brewing Company, Heartwood Farm and Goodlot Farmstead Brewing Co. There will be a cash bar in the Pond Gallery.

What winter festival is complete without Pond Hockey?

Saturday, from 8 a.m. to 4 p.m., Maple Leaf alumnus Gary Leeman will join teams of all ages and abilities taking part in the ninth annual Alton Millpond Hockey Classic. A few tickets are still available for the Hot Stove Lounge (\$25 each, in-person at Gourmandissimo Café in the Alton Mill, or by contacting hockey@altonmill.ca), which will run from 6 to 11 p.m. and feature pub food, a cash bar, 50-50 prizes, a silent auction and the Toronto Maple Leafs playing the Ottawa Senators on the big-screen in the Millrace Room. Over the last eight years, sponsors and participants have raised more than \$70,000 towards the Alton Millpond Rehabilitation Project.

Participants and spectators alike are welcome to visit altonmillpondhockey.ca for more details.

This year marks the return of the Fire & Ice photo competition. Fine art photographers are encouraged to take their best snaps throughout the weekend and submit their digital photographs online no later than Feb. 4 at 4 p.m. under the categories: Fire Sculpture Burn, Pond Hockey, and General Festival (additional categories may be added at jurors' discretion). The grand prize

winner will receive a month of exhibition space in the Falls Gallery. Details are available on the Alton Mill website and Facebook page.

Admission to the Fire & Ice Festival is ?pay what you can,? with a suggested donation of \$10 per adult, \$5 per child, or \$25 per family. Free parking and a shuttle bus are offered from offsite parking lots. Activities are subject to change without notice, and weather conditions may affect outdoor programming.

The 2018 festival is sponsored by Fireball Cinnamon Whisky, Heartwood Farm & Cidery and Van Harten Surveying Inc. For more details, follow the Fire & Ice event page on Facebook, or visit altonmill.ca