

HOTTEST COLDEST

FESTIVAL
OF THE YEAR

Fire & Ice at Alton Mill

PHOTOGRAPHS BY MIKE DAVIS | WORDS BY GLORIA HILDEBRANDT

Alton Mill in Caledon hosted its 2023 Fire and Ice Festival on Saturday Jan. 28 and Sunday January 29, luring people to defy winter weather and enjoy the outdoor and indoor activities of pond hockey, ice skating, sledding, ice carving, a ticketed comedy show, a bluegrass performance, hot food and drink and celebrations of fire.



Alton Mill's 2023 Fire & Ice Festival drew people outdoors during the coldest month of the year to celebrate winter sports and art.

Kids' Superslide

► Safety first. Bales of hay define the track and provide cushioning for youngsters enjoying the slide.



Fire Performance

Stu Wilson spun fire among the spectators, mesmerizing them with rhythm, skills, tricks, moves and dance patterns. “I’ve been spinning

fire for about 22 years all over the world from South Africa to Taiwan,” he says. “People love seeing fire performers live and in person. It always adds incredible

energy to any event.”

“Safety is always the number one concern when deciding to spin fire,” Stu explains. “Knowing your limits and playing within

them is essential. Fuel safety is also paramount. For the most part, fire is only really dangerous when left to burn unattended.”

“Crowds typically tend to

Ice Carving



▲ Work of ice created by Cam Lindsey and some tools of the trade.



▲ Winston Uytendogaart stands behind his art. As well as being an ice carver, Winston is a poet whose written work was featured in the Winter 2021-222 issue of this magazine.



keep a safe distance from a fire spinner, but performers do need to be aware of their surroundings and inspect the performance area for potential hazards



before the show," he adds.

Stu offers fire performances for events, weddings, corporate functions and parties. He also teaches lessons in fire

performance, through his company Fire Tribe, which is based in Georgetown. Information is available at firetribe.ca. Stu was even one of the musicians for the Spirit

Bundle Burn and fire from his performance was going to be used to start the burn.

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Spirit Bundle Burn

A highly anticipated moment of the outdoor part of the festival was the burning of the sculpture designed and created by Paul Morin with the help of others. When asked questions about this, Paul suggested his video on his YouTube channel, which shows 20 minutes of initial sketches, materials gathered


and elements of the sculpture. This is the sixth burn that Paul has participated in, and the third one he has designed.

In the video Paul explains his creative process. "I wanted to incorporate as much sacred geometry as I could, so in using the Fibonacci curve there is an actual mathematical sequence to it so I thought if I don't show the physical snail

shell it might be kind of neat to utilize those numbers in some aspect and that's when I came up with a footprint of about a 60, 65 inches in diameter of a pentagon and basically building a strong double pentagon. That pentagon is found in cell structure, leaves and everywhere. Much like the Fibonacci

curve these are all sacred geometry, all mathematical numbers and formulas that are directly born from nature."

Spirit Bundle Burn

For the 2023 Fire and Ice Festival, artist Paul Morin has designed a fire sculpture incorporating sacred geometry, the blueprint of creation and the origin of form. This multi media installation will be a spectacular display of pyrotechnics as an art form. In addition there is a video and photography contest to capture the ultimate shot so submit your best capture. Use upload QR code 

Created with the help of:
 David Goode - gathering and assembly, Doris Treleven - welding,
 Brian Oates - wood milling, Craig Gutowski - flame colour
 and assembly, James Routledge - steel cutting
 Burn music by Paul Morin, Joe Steduto and Stu Wilson



▼ “There are 25 feet of cotton muslin wrapped all around the structure, giving five screens. What you’re going to see on that screen is flickering forms of all that construction giving you these really neat shapes. A hidden projector will be projecting to the front two surfaces.”



▼ “This construction is supporting upside down Cedar trees. The tops of the Cedar trees are all going to be drilled and I’m putting paraffin in there and some of these chemical colours. I’ll be inserting fire starter sticks in the holes I made. The wick goes all the way to the waxed top so the fire capsule is going to be eight feet high.”



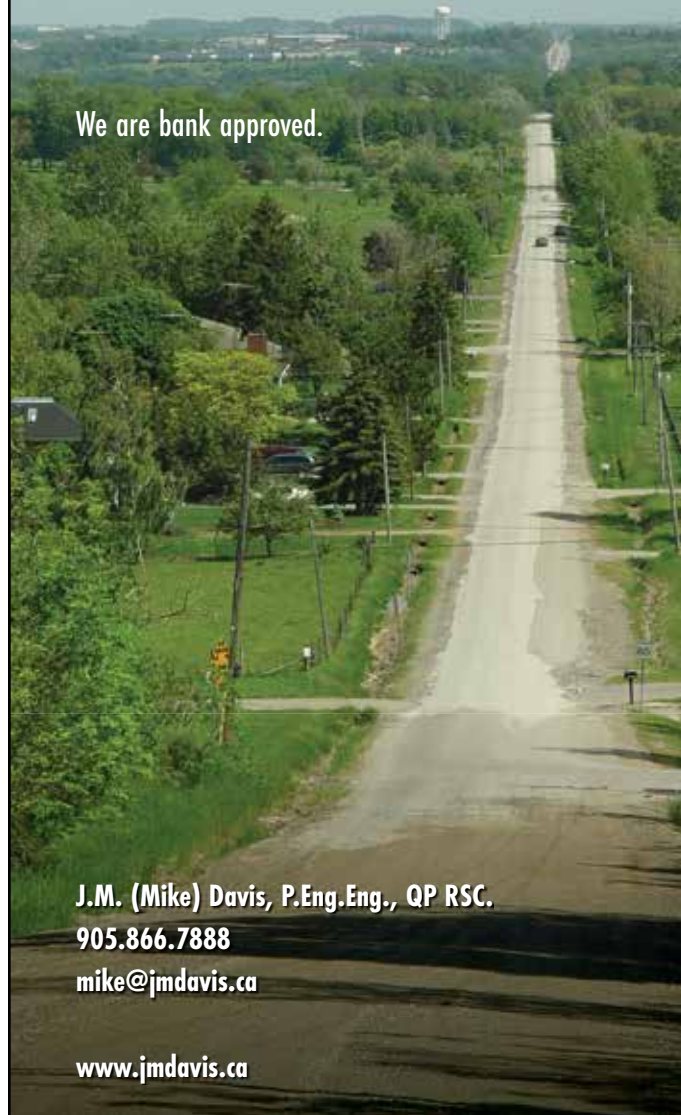
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“The smoke’s going to be moving and the light on is going to be moving so it could be really quite interesting. That’s my hope.”



“I’m making a basket four feet in diameter using Willow branches and Red Osier Dogwood. It’ll take hundreds and hundreds of saplings but essentially, it’ll be this columnal basket and the flame is inside.”

“The real art is what the people bring to it and take from it. All I’m doing is setting in motion the sequence of events that creates this moment of art. I want the fire to start from within, spread, then eventually go up.”



fire & ICE

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The Next Festival

“January 27 and 28, 2024 will be our 14th year hosting The Fire & Ice Winter Festival at the Alton Mill Arts Centre,” says Martin Kouprie, general manager for the centre. “It has become one of Headwaters Region’s most anticipated and enjoyable winter events, with over 2,500 people expected to attend throughout the weekend.”

Planned activities seem to be the same as last year, ice carving, artist studio tour and exhibitions, super snow slide, hot food & drink, arts & crafts, pond skating and shinny, hot stove lounge, fire sculpture, live music, and bar comedy night.

To track festival plans, watch altonmill.ca or Alton Mill on Facebook, or @altonmill on Instagram. **NEV**



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