

## First Impressions Community Exchange

Community Visited: **Bancroft**

Date of Visit: August 2015 (Saturday, 8<sup>th</sup> and Wednesday, 12<sup>th</sup>)

Visit Completed by: Deep River

#### **VISITING TEAM PROFILE**

<b>Name: Mary MacCafferty – Team Coordinator</b>	<b>Age: 50+</b>	<b>Gender: Female</b>
<b>Address: PO Box 1714, Deep River, ON K0J 1P0</b>		
<b>Professional background: Retired communications specialist and municipal councillor</b>		

<b>Name: Colleen Payer</b>	<b>Age: 50+</b>	<b>Gender: Female</b>
<b>Professional background: Retired real estate agent</b>		

<b>Name: Jade Nauman</b>	<b>Age: 26</b>	<b>Gender: Female</b>
<b>Professional background: PhD Student</b>		

<b>Name: Yvonne Stothers</b>	<b>Age: 40+</b>	<b>Gender: Female</b>
<b>Professional background: Home-based business owner</b>		

<b>Name: Mitch MacKay</b>	<b>Age: 30+</b>	<b>Gender: Male</b>
<b>Professional background: Communications specialist</b>		

<b>Name: Laureena MacKay</b>	<b>Age: 30+</b>	<b>Gender: Female</b>
<b>Professional background:</b>		

## **BEFORE YOU VISITED THE COMMUNITY**

**What was your impression of the community before your visit? What were you expecting to see? Please comment on what you knew about this community.**

One team member commented: I have been to Bancroft half a dozen times in the past, only for several hours each time and just along the main streets, I knew it as a busy area for cottagers during the summer months, I have no impression of it during the winter.

Other team members had passed through Bancroft but did not know much about it (stopping for a break at Tim Horton's on way to Toronto).

**Find information about the community you are about to visit.**

**How easy was it to get information by internet, mail and telephone about the community you visited?**

- In general, the internet presence was strong with lots of information. The photo gallery on the website is spectacular.
- Team members did their research ahead of time on the internet. They found the information was plentiful and informative.
- They found information online very quickly regarding Bancroft and surrounding areas. The Bancroft Town website, [www.bancroft.ca](http://www.bancroft.ca) was usually very informative and well developed. We did not search for information via mail. We found the information received via telephone to be contradictory and sometimes uninformative. One team member phoned the Municipal Staff twice regarding Recreational services provided by the Town and spoke to two different people. One staff member was very accommodating and recommended that I research the Chamber of Commerce as the Chamber was responsible for organizing community club information and municipal recreational services. A different staff member was unable to provide information or suggestions regarding where to access information for community events or recreational schedules.
- We did not find anything on networking groups such as Women in Business.

**Are you satisfied with the quality of information you received?**

- There was plenty of information for most visitors to the website.
- The only issue that caused difficulties was the map which was difficult to print large enough to be able to read.
- We found that in-person information (information at various locations, signage, or via conversation with residents) was stronger than online or over the phone. For communities in north eastern Ontario, having a strong online and/or telephone presence is beneficial for attracting potential visitors and businesses to the area.

**If you received information by mail, did the information arrive in a timely fashion?**

N/A. We cannot imagine anyone these days waiting for information to come in the post.

**Comment on the community's online materials and information.**

- Overall the website was very helpful and informative. The appearance was fresh and clear.
- There were two aspects of the website that were not functioning on the day several team members tried them; the 360 degree tour, and the "Bancroft It's a Great Place" video did not open.
- Under Marketing Materials the Bancroft General Booklet and Bancroft Investor Information took so long to load that viewers gave up after several minutes, and Retiring in Bancroft read "page not found".
- There were also problems with the Bancroft mobile app. It did not download on the days we tried.
- There was good information online on Housing and Health, Social and Emergency Services.
- The information available online regarding Municipal recreational services was difficult to find and uninformative. The Town's website suggests calling Recreational facilities to receive more information. A more detailed online resource for local recreational activities, venues, or facilities would be a huge benefit for new-comers, cottagers, and visitors alike. The lack of available information online for recreational services is an obstacle for potential new comers, visitors, and seasonal residents.
- The Town does have a wonderful page that details the amazing local venues, parks, and facilities that Bancroft offers. We would recommend taking advantage of the current Town's website and updating it to include information regarding activities run by the Town, or provide access (links, or an explanation) to local organizations (Chamber of Commerce and the BBIA) who organize activities and events.
- Consider using social media platforms to update residents, visitors, and cottagers regarding activities and events. Social media platforms and updated websites are a great way to target young professionals and young families who research activities online.
- Newcomers may not be aware that the Chamber of Commerce operates as the "Destination Marketing Organization" that actively takes on the role of organizing and facilitating local events and activities. Perhaps clearly outlining that information regarding community events, activities, clubs and organizations could be found in person at the Visitor's Centre would be helpful.
- The town may wish to consider assessing how newcomers and residents would find out about swimming lessons, skating lessons, hockey clubs, girls and boys clubs, teen programs, service clubs, etc and designate an online platform with this information.

## VISIT ATMOSPHERE

**Date of Exchange:** *Saturday, August 8 and Wednesday, August 12*

**Weather during visit:** *Sunny day – August 8. Cool, cloudy day August 12*

**Time spent in the community:** *1 day per visit (2 visiting teams)*

## FIRST IMPRESSIONS

**After taking a five-minute drive through the community without stopping, what was your first impression?**

The overall impression entering the town is very welcoming and open. There was a busy cheerful atmosphere at 10:30 am in a weekday. Business appeared to be booming already with lots of cars and people around.

We thought the community was vibrant with lots of people out shopping, walking, young families with strollers, seniors, people who seemed to be tourists. A positive atmosphere.

The impression while driving around was that people care for their property with well-kept properties and gardens.

## ENTERING THE COMMUNITY

**How favourable an impression of the community did the entrances provide?**

Nice signage gave a good impression. We viewed the entrances from 3 directions, the Welcome Sign was easy to see, tastefully done and consistent at all 3 entrances.

**Specific signage:**

- The Bancroft signs were attractive and unique. Signage to different points of interest all over town were clear and attractive also.
- The “50th” banners and those with historic photographs of key members of the community were attractive. (We were unable to find out what the 50th referred to during our visit.)
- The beautiful wooden BANCROFT sign was very attractive
- On entering town the two big stores, Canadian Tire and Foodland looked impressive.
- It looked like all of the storefronts were occupied – no empty storefronts.

**Other types of entrances such as airport, bus terminals, passenger rail and/or harbour:**

Airport entrance was clearly signed. We also noticed bus stops throughout the community and were impressed to learn that there is a bus service.

**Comments:**

Residents' gardens were well kept and colourful, streets were very clean and there appeared to be plenty of grocery stores and retail outlets as well as lots of different services visible from the main street.

**Rating of community entrances as a whole:**

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Needs	Urgent	Attention		Satisfactory					Excellent

**HOUSING AND RESIDENTIAL AREAS****Comment on the overall quality, affordability, and availability of housing in the community?**

This community has a good mix of housing from older style houses in the downtown core, typical of a town of this age and, as you fan out from the main street you will see the houses that have been built over the years. There is a good mix of sizes and ages of homes that would appeal to most home buyers.

**Mix of housing to suit a variety of income levels:**

We found houses as low in price as \$89,900 and going up to \$500,000 on lakes in the area. We think most buyers could find something that would appeal to them in their price range.

**What were the most appealing features of the housing in this community and why:**

For the most part the houses are well cared for.

**What were the least appealing features of housing in the community and why:**

Some of the older homes in and around the downtown core are a bit tired looking. However, homeowners who bought in this price range do not always have that extra cash to put into their homes once the mortgage is paid so this is to be expected in any community.

**Comment on the quality and availability of residential infrastructure (e.g. roads, sidewalks, lighting, public transportation, green space and indicators of environmentally conscious practices).**

In and around the downtown core the sidewalks and streets were in acceptable condition; once outside main street the street and sidewalks were in need of repair.

There is lovely greenspace right in the centre of town. Behind the shops and along the river is a new sidewalk being built. However there is so much poop, either dog or goose poop, that you would not step off the walkway and you would not want to take small children there.

There seems to be lots of parks and even a dog park.

The sidewalks and roads are in need of assessment. Bancroft clearly takes pride in their beautiful surroundings, demonstrated by clean and well maintained public spaces such as parks, centres, etc. However, many of the sidewalks and roads off the main street are in need of maintenance as they currently create accessibility concerns.

It was difficult to locate garbage and recycling bins in the downtown core.

**Overall rating of housing and residential areas, by type of housing and overall appeal:**

Quality Type of Housing (rate 1 – 10)	
Existing/Older Homes	8
Senior Citizen Housing	9
New Construction	?
Apartments/Rental Housing	8

Overall appeal of housing for (rate 1 – 10)	
Single young adults	?
Young families	8
Middle income	8
Senior citizen	7
Upscale/professional	?

## EDUCATION

NOTE: Schools were not easily assessed as the visits took place during summer when they were closed.

**Pre-school/Daycare:** Easy to find

**Primary/Elementary:** Easy to find

**High School or College/University:**

One store owner said that the high school had a bad reputation and that there were lots of visits from the police.

**Comments about education services in the community:**

One team member had the opportunity to quickly look into the Summer Program offered at York River Public School and received positive feedback from the students in the program and their parents.

**Availability and appearance of schools:**

Schools were attractive in appearance.

**Ease of locating the school(s):**

Easy to find

**Programs or services that stand out:**

Judging from the billboards round town there seem to be many activities going on but not many mentioned for kids.

**Comments:**

We did not locate the Loyalist College Campus.

There seems to be many art galleries and activities for artists but we could not find any children's programs tied into those art activities – art camp etc. We assumed that local people were aware of local services but the team did not find it easy to get this information as visitors.

## **HEALTH, SOCIAL AND EMERGENCY SERVICES**

### **Healthcare Facilities**

#### **Hospitals in the community:**

There is one hospital, North Hastings District Hospital, six-bed primary care, 24 hour emergency service, six-chair dialysis unit, CCAC, telemedicine, physio, x-ray, ultrasound, CCAC, Family Health Team.

#### **Physician and dentist offices and clinics:**

There are at least six doctors who are part of the Family Health Team and at least two more practising on their own. Three dentist offices are in the downtown core.

#### **Long-term care and nursing home facilities:**

110 bed Long Term Care facility, Hastings Centennial Manor attached to hospital.

#### **Other health services (e.g., chiropractor, physiotherapy, naturopath, massage):**

Three Chiropractors, one Optometrist and at least five Registered Massage Therapists.

#### **Ease of locating these facilities:**

They are all well situated for the townspeople.

#### **Residents (young and old) thoughts about the quality and availability of healthcare facility and services:**

Team members did not ask residents about health care. However, for a small town the team felt there was an excellent range of health care being provided.

### **Social and Support Services**

#### **Social services (e.g., day care, senior's centre, counselling):**

There is a Seniors Centre centrally located that provides seniors with similar interests a place to gather. There is also the Hastings Housing Resource Centre that provides assessment and counselling services to young adults who are experiencing social, emotional and family problems.

There is attractive geared-to-income housing along the river downtown.

#### **Types of not-for-profit organizations and clubs:**

We noticed a few around town including an addictions centre and a seniors club. There seems to be a very active Chamber of Commerce, the Bancroft Business Improvement Association and a Lions Club.



**Ease of locating these services/organizations:**

We found it very difficult to access a list of community clubs, organizations, or services. Town Hall staff directed one team member to the Chamber of Commerce/Visitors Centre. The Visitor's Centre was unable to provide any information on local services, organizations, or clubs, which was very surprising. We were unsure where a newcomer would find this information.

**Ease of locating these services/organizations:**

They seemed to be fairly easy to locate online. Clubs are listed online at the Bancroft Business Improvement Area website

**Comments:**

One of our recommendations would be to make information on social and support services more accessible to newcomers and seasonal residents. Creating a webpage or an information board where people can access community organizations is an essential service that residents greatly appreciate but newcomers and visitors may not know the route to go for this type of information (e.g. seniors researching the possibilities of retiring to Bancroft).

We noted that there was no maternity ward and that mothers had to travel 1 ½ hours to the nearest hospital, which is common for a community of this size (one team member was pregnant and noticed this!)

**Emergency Services****Adequacy of fire, ambulance and policing services:**

Fire: Fire services in Hastings Highlands are provided by volunteer firefighters who are managed by a full time Chief and a training officer.

Ambulance: Bancroft is one of five ambulance base locations in Hastings County. The Bancroft campus of Loyalist College offers a Paramedic Diploma Program

Police: Bancroft is policed by the OPP, with an office on Monk Street.

**Comments:** None



## DOWNTOWN

**Variety of shopping:** Very good variety of stores.

**Customer service:** Pleasant service in the stores. Friendly staff in most stores, who answered all our questions about the town and were enthusiastic about living in the town. Consistent information was offered in different locations.

**Window displays:** Most were attractive and colourful

**Signage:** Excellent downtown signage for the stores

**Variety and quality of merchandise:** Good variety, but common items such as linens, children's, ladies or men's clothing was not visible in quality similar to Walmart/Joe Fresh/Giant Tiger pricing.

**Quality and availability of parking:** Plentiful free parking downtown

**Quality (e.g., appearance, adequacy, etc.) of lighting:** N/A – visits only in the daytime

**Ease of locating the downtown area:** If you are not familiar with the town, you are not sure where the town centre is located when coming in the north as it is not well signed. But if you keep going you do find it easily.

**Potential for the downtown to play a greater role in tourism:**

Gift stores etc were good at giving information to visitors and the information was consistent in each store. Plenty of arts and gift stores for tourists but not much evidence of outdoors stores or information on camping etc unless you go to the Visitors Centre. For example, we saw people climbing the cliff but had no idea how you could go about that yourself.

**Desirability to live downtown:**

Right downtown might be a bit noisy and busy during the day, particularly in the summer.

**Rating of the overall impression of the downtown:**

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Needs Urgent Attention				Satisfactory				Excellent	

## BUSINESS AND INDUSTRY

### Retail

**Mix of retail shopping:** Good mix

**Overall appearance:** Colourful and well maintained

**Variety of shopping and merchandizing:** Good

**Customer service:** Friendly and helpful

**What goods do local residents appear to need to travel to surrounding communities to buy?**  
Not assessed

**Stores or services were missing that you would expect to find?**

Maybe more outdoor equipment though we are not sure that it would be a viable business for summer season only.

### Commercial and Professional Businesses

It was noted that both the pharmacy and grocery store had long opening hours

**Convenience of bank and ATM locations:** Not all assessed but there seemed to be some right downtown with good parking nearby

**Convenience of bank hours of service:** Not assessed

**Types of commercial businesses serving the local community (e.g., high-speed internet provider):**

- Internet café available near the Playhouse. Did not have the opportunity to research others.
- Also noted that there was office space available downtown for rent short-term for small businesses.

**Availability of other professional services (e.g., accounting, legal, etc.):**

The Chamber of Commerce said that you could use their space for meetings. We saw a few legal businesses downtown.

**Professional services that are missing:** Not assessed

### Industry

**Major industrial sectors in the community (e.g., manufacturing, construction, transportation):**

Not assessed on one-day visits

**Major employers in the community:** Not assessed on one-day visits

**Major types of manufacturing in the community:** Not assessed and not apparent on one-day visits

**Major types of primary industry in the community (e.g. agriculture, fishing, mining, etc):**

Traditionally lumber and mining but team were not able to locate easily what major industries exist today. More time in the community would have provided that opportunity.

**Noticeable dependence on any one type of industry:** Not assessed

**Industrial park or serviced land where industries could locate or expand:** Not assessed and not apparent on one-day visit

**Appearance/maintenance of industrial facilities:** - Not assessed

**Community's desirability as a location for industrial development:**

Not assessed. However, the website gives good information for a potential business owner to commence research of the community. The general manager of the Chamber of Commerce was also very helpful in answering questions about the community.

## LOCAL GOVERNMENT INFORMATION

### **Convenience of municipal office locations:**

- Poorly signed and difficult to find.
- The visiting team expected the municipal office to be the source of information on several aspects of the community such as, recreation, seniors/retiree information and economic development information. This may not be the norm in Bancroft. The team's experience in seeking information on some of these topics in the municipal office was not as helpful as expected. We made three separate visits to ask different questions to confirm this impression. For example:
  - The office was not helpful in providing information to start a business. They directed us to the By-Law Officer who was not in that day and his office door was locked. When we asked for contact information for the By-Law Officer we were given a name written on a piece of paper rather than a business card. The response was discouraging in terms of the information we could obtain. We suggest that staff at the municipal hall should direct inquiries for new business to the Chamber of Commerce. (We did find the office for the Chamber by chance on our own by walking around the Visitors Centre where we saw a sign.)
  - The workers at the municipal counter were obviously very busy and were reluctant to rise from their desks to approach the window to engage in a longer conversation other than answering a brief enquiry about services for seniors and public transport. We were given a phone number for the Seniors Club and a bus timetable. We had hoped to ask a couple of other questions to assess who to speak to in order to learn more (e.g. where seniors could live, accessibility, healthcare and volunteer opportunities) but it was obvious that the municipal office was not the place to start that conversation.
- We recommend that either municipal office staff or another key contact point in the community be provided with the tools to give information to visitors, new residents and tourists on community information such as business development, health services for new residents or seniors, and recreational opportunities (adult and children) for visitors or tourists.
- Recreation – We were looking for a pool or a near-by beach because it was summertime and neither of these were obvious. We did not see any ball fields from the downtown but they may have been situated in areas we did not visit.

### **Information such as Community Brochure/Guide, Business Directory, Community Profile:**

Some very colourful brochures available and a new map. One team member did wait for the download for the Brochure after the visit and learned about activities but we were unable to access the brochure prior to the visit.

**Availability of information on the website:** See comments above under "Before you visited the community".)

**Availability of contact information and location of the Business Improvement Association on the website:**

We were advised there was no office but we were given a hand-written note with a name and contact number at the municipal office.

**Ability to find adequate information to make informed retail, commercial and/or industrial:**

See comments above relating to Chamber of Commerce. We are not sure where this information resides and we had difficulty locating it on our visit.

**Public Infrastructure and Municipal Services**

**Public Transportation:**

Any community of this size that has a bus service is doing well even if the service is infrequent.

**Sidewalks, Streets, Drinking Fountains, Benches, etc.:**

- The flower displays all around town were beautiful.
- We particularly liked the BBIA benches.
- One business had two very prominent signs telling visitors that they could not use their bathrooms. This seemed aggressive and unnecessary and was the first thing we noticed about their business premises, particularly in their prime location. (We felt this negatively impacted the “welcome” that the community projects.)
- Sidewalks and road surfaces in the main street were excellent but as soon as we went off that core the quality of sidewalks and roads seemed to deteriorate in places.

**Landscaping, Trees:**

Not many trees for shade on the main street, but there was not much space for that in the original design of the town. Landscaping throughout the town was, nonetheless, very attractive. The shaded sitting area in the middle of main street is an attractive and welcome alternative.

**Public Restrooms, Pay Phones, Public Internet Access:**

- There were lots of public washrooms that were well signed. However the interiors of two washrooms we visited were not clean and there were no change tables for anyone with a baby. We saw one woman changing her baby on the trunk of her car at the park.
- Found one internet café (but did not have opportunity to research further)
- Public internet may have been available in the public library but the interior was compact and unwelcoming so we did not pursue that.

**Street Signage, Lighting:**

Well designed, consistent signage for points of interest.

**Conflicting land uses in the community (e.g., a residential subdivision next to a pulp mill):**

Not assessed

**Appropriate or inappropriate land-use (e.g., commercial, residential, green space, etc.):**  
Not assessed

**Traffic or pedestrian congestion:**

The streets were busy but traffic seemed to flow well with pedestrian-friendly crossing places where required. The river walk will be nice when it is completed.

**General accessibility of community facilities and infrastructure for individuals with disabilities:**  
We noticed access ramps in several entrances to coffee shops and public buildings

## **TOURISM, ENTERTAINMENT AND RECREATION**

**Strength of tourism sector:**

It certainly felt like a town that is well equipped to entertain tourists. The Tourism sector within Bancroft and surrounding communities is a driving force of the area. Thousands flock seasonally to Bancroft to take advantage of its beautiful natural surroundings which encourage outdoor exploration.

**Community slogan/brand:** Not assessed

**Well known attraction, event or festival:** Rockhound Gemboree! Winter Festival. Some members of our team were sorry we hadn't scheduled our visit for the Rock Hound festivities.

**Community events that could be expanded and/or developed to become tourist attractions:**  
The Rockhound Gemboree successfully celebrated their 52<sup>nd</sup> annual gem and mineral show. As Canada's Largest Gem and Mineral Show, this event is already a popular tourist attraction. However, we feel that this event could become even more popular with additional promotion and advertisement throughout the nearby Ottawa Valley.

**Attractions (natural or man-made) that could be developed to draw tourists:**  
Excellent use of the riverfront for parks and walks. One business was renting kayaks and canoes which was an attractive activity for tourists. These features were well maintained, with work going on to repair the end of the bridge while we were there.

**Underdeveloped attractions:** Rock climbing for visitors and tourists.

### **Services for Tourists**

**Visitor's Centre, Chamber of Commerce office, or other facility:**

- Visitor's Centre staff were helpful in providing maps (the website map is not easy to print) and the new map provided at the Visitor's Centre was different. They also had many brochures.
- We were provided with information about hotels and a variety of restaurants by friendly staff.

- Chamber of Commerce staff were very helpful also (see comments earlier in report).

**Tourism staff, facilities, location, signage, marketing material, maps, etc.:**

- The two museums were attractive and well located with many other activities for families close by, on the river and in the park.
- It was easy to find facilities once we had a decent map from the tourist information centre – also street signage was excellent.
- The facilities and resources, signage and materials were all very helpful and easily accessible

**Quality and availability of public restrooms:** Public restrooms were clearly marked and easily found with signs but were not clean and limited baby changing facilities.

**Quality and appearance of existing tourist attractions:**

The two museums were well maintained though in the smaller museum the attendant had no maps and was unable to provide much information on accommodation or restaurants. The tourists attractions such as the historical walks, museums, etc are well maintained and a highlight of the community.

**Tourism businesses (group tour operators, bus/rail tours, boat rentals etc.):** Boat rentals and water vehicles are available for rent.

**Restaurants and Accommodations**

**Eateries, restaurants, etc. that could cater to tourists:**

There seemed to be a good variety of restaurants available to choose from in different price ranges. The Bancroft Eatery and Brew Pub could cater to tourists; however two large signs outside the establishment stating that washrooms are only for customers could be viewed as a deterrent for anyone passing by.

**Facilities that can accommodate a conference and/or a large number of visitors:**

The Village Playhouse, the Bandshell, Senior's Centre, the Professional Centre, the Arena, the Curling Club, School Gym or Auditorium, etc.

**Recommended places to stay or eat:**

Visitors were directed to the two main hotels and a variety of different restaurants by Visitor Centre staff. The Bancroft Eatery and Brew Pub has an inviting country atmosphere with a good menu and craft beer.



## **PUBLIC INFRASTRUCTURE**

### **Public Recreation Facilities:**

The Community Centre (Arena), the Tennis Courts, Curling Rink, Water Vehicle Rentals, and opportunities to explore the outdoors (hiking, paddling, camping, etc), all accessible within the community, suggests that Bancroft is committed to providing residents, and visitors with a variety of fun activities. For a community of under 4,000 residents, Bancroft offers many activities with great venues and facilities. The recreation facilities are easily found (and well promoted) with great signage.

### **Parks:**

Bancroft's many parks are a strong highlight of the community! The Parks are well maintained, well planned, and located across the community making them accessible to locals and visitors alike. Parks are easily located with excellent signage. The addition of the leash-free dog park is a positive draw to residents and visitors alike, and was highly recommended by several summer residents (cottagers).

**Private Recreation Facilities:** Curves was the only one we noticed.

**Residents' thoughts regarding the availability of community events:** Not assessed

**Popular community events:** Not attended during our visits

### **Entertainment options:**

- Many art galleries to visit in town.
- The Playhouse was well located close to the art store and galleries.
- There appear to be a variety of events going on throughout the summer, based on all the notice boards around town.
- The Village Playhouse and their Summer Theatre Program is an incredible asset to the Bancroft Community! It is recommended to continue to promote the theatre to visitors, cottagers, and the nearby Ottawa Valley.
- The York River Bandshell is a great facility at which to produce outdoor concerts, performances, or events.

### **Residents thought regarding availability of entertainment options:**

Many tastes and interests covered and well marketed. Did not ask residents for their thoughts.

**Nightlife:** Not assessed

### **Recreation activities and facilities: kids playgrounds, curling, senior club**

Plenty of these facilities, readily available

**Rating of the overall suitability of facilities for each of the following groups:**

overall suitability (rate 1 – 10)	
Children (13 and under)	7
Families	7
Teens	Not known
Singles, young adults	Not known
Senior citizens	Not known
Newcomers	Not known

## CULTURE AND HERITAGE

**Availability and maintenance of heritage buildings:**

Train station nicely maintained. Some of the heritage homes downtown were well maintained.

**Number, appearance, and selection of religious buildings in the community:**

Many churches for a variety of denominations were observed in the community

**Outstanding architectural or design features of religious buildings:** None observed

## ENVIRONMENTAL SUSTAINABILITY

**Businesses and retail specializing in reused or organic merchandise:** Not assessed

**Advertisements, billboards and/or fliers advocating recycling, green energy or other “green” practices:** Not assessed

**Evidence of recycling (curb side recycling, recycling bins throughout the community, availability of reusable bags):** The team did not observe any recycling bins in the downtown core.

**Use of public transportation:** Observed a bus service and were given a timetable at the municipal office, on request. Did not see or travel on public transport.

**Evidence of using sources of alternative energy:** We saw one solar array for hot water on top of a building.

**Local attitudes about environmental sustainability and “green” practices:** Not assessed

**WELCOMING COMMUNITY** (NEWCOMERS ARE DEFINED AS INDIVIDUALS, FAMILIES AND IMMIGRANTS WHO COME TO LIVE AND/OR WORK IN THE COMMUNITY).

**Employment or job placement services:** Storefront in downtown, well signed.

**Translation services:** None observed

**Services or businesses operated by newcomers:** None observed

**Legal services:** Several downtown

**Ethnic diverse population downtown:** None observed

**Immigration services:** None observed

**Housing information:** Many real estate offices and lots of housing information online

**Community or youth centres:** Senior's club, Addiction centre noticed.

**WRAP-UP**

**Perception versus Impression**

**Was your perception prior to the visit accurate?**

You always get more from a personal visit but the impression prior to the visit was also positive.

**In what ways was the community different from what you expected?**

We were surprised to see all the free available parking downtown in behind the shops

**Did the information you collected prior to the visit accurately reflect what you observed/experienced? Why or why not?**

Yes the information online was very thorough and helped make the visit more enjoyable

**Community Residents**

**Were community residents knowledgeable about their community?**

Everyone we met was friendly, knowledgeable and helpful. They were all proud of Bancroft.

**Did they refer you to someone else who would help? If yes, who? Not required**

**In general, did residents you spoke with have a positive or negative attitude toward their community? Why? Did you sense community pride?**

We spoke with several residents on the streets who all loved the community. Many of them had retired there from the city and loved it - no intention of leaving. We encountered only positivity.

**Did residents identify any particular issues to be of major concern (e.g., safety)?** NO

### **Senses**

#### **Taste**

**Was there any specialty food item, bakery, restaurant or candy store that you will remember?**

No

#### **Smell**

**Is there a scent that characterizes the community?** No

#### **Sight**

**Was there a colourful or striking feature that made an impression on you?**

The flower gardens and baskets were a welcome sight. Businesses being run out of large century-old homes were beautifully cared for. The team loved the shady spot and the benches along main street.

#### **Sound**

**What sounds did you hear? Please comment on the level of noise in the community.**

It was busy but nothing negative that bothered us.

#### **Other**

**How would you describe the overall environmental health of the community (e.g., air quality, litter, noise pollution, etc.)?** Very Good

**What if anything, did you experience that had a strongly negative or positive impact on the way the community felt to you? Be specific.** None other than those already mentioned above.

### **About this Community**

**What is the most outstanding feature of this community?**

Lively main street, interesting shops, positive townspeople, well kept flower boxes downtown, tidy homes and gardens.

**What will you remember most about this community six months from now (positive or negative)?**

Nothing specific beyond the outstanding features mentioned in the last answer.

**What local restaurant, specialty shop or attraction would bring you back to this community in the near future?** Many of them.

**Would you consider this a suitable location for:**

**A young family?** Yes

**A retired person?** Yes

**Young, single adult?** For a holiday.

**A tourist?** Yes

**A new retail or service business?** Since tourism is seasonal, we could not recommend a viable service that could thrive through the winter.

**A new manufacturing business?** We are not sure that the location would be ideal for a business that needed to ship product.

**A new immigrant?**

The team saw no evidence of a new immigrant population. There are community programs available to support immigrants, however the visible lack of diversity within the Bancroft community may be off putting to some of them.

**Five positive things you observed about this community (we had to list more than 5!)**

The team found eight positive things that should be noted:

1. Excellent green space
2. Friendly people and strong community spirit
3. Busy downtown core
4. Well-kept homes
5. Good places to eat
6. Great signage
7. Lots of washrooms
8. Beautiful flower displays

**Potential opportunities available to the community:**

1. Town hall staff could be provided with more tools and resources to provide information about the community to newcomers and visitors, or another place could be identified to direct people to find this information where the information is stored, updated and readily provided.
2. Signage to municipal buildings could be improved, relative to other excellent signage in town.
3. Clear signage to nearest beach or water activities in the summer
4. Post more information on recreation activities for residents
5. Look at other communities and how they attract residents or tourists from minority groups, particularly with your close proximity to Toronto tourist market.

**Four biggest obstacles/challenges facing this community:**

1. Insufficient information at the municipal office for visitors and newcomers – confusion about where to get information e.g. about new business, recreation, seniors activities etc.
2. Poor signage to municipal office
3. No signage to nearest beach or water activities
4. Recreation information hard to find
5. Nothing evident in town to attract minorities

**Looking at tomorrow...**

**Which action would you recommend that this community take on right away (quick win)?**

Provide tools for town hall staff to inform people about many potential avenues of new growth e.g. new business wanting to assess the community, seniors looking for somewhere to retire, potential new residents wanting to learn about recreational programs.

**Look forward three years...**

**What would you like to see changed in this community? or remain the same?**

Keep working on the positive community atmosphere which is very warm.  
Evidence of continuous fund-raising for projects to improve the community is everywhere – this gives a very positive sense of community.

**Turn inward and reflect on your own community**

**What have you learned here that has changed your impression of your own community?**

We will make sure that our own town staff is well equipped to answer questions from the public on a variety of subjects.

**Has this experience given you any new ideas about what is needed in your own community?** Absolutely, especially your wonderful signage and availability of public washrooms.

**ONE idea that you would like to borrow for use in your own business/community and describe how you would start to implement it within the next 72 hours!**

We would like to beef up our welcome signs in the entrances to town and throughout our community

**Additional Comments:**

Thank you Bancroft! We were honoured to participate in the First Impressions Community Exchange in your beautiful community.

**Rating of overall experience as a volunteer visitor**

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Would not do it again				Satisfactory				Great fun! Lots of learning!	