

Blackstein graduates know their way home

By ANTHONY DIXON

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Master canoeist Fred Blackstein has once more been urged out of the wilderness to offer his popular survival course, this time in aid of Algonquin College's new Pembroke campus "Renaissance Square."

The course will consist of four sessions of three hours each, taking place on Tuesday evenings throughout October.

Mr. Blackstein said this particular offering of his course is a bit longer, allowing him to offer more detail, and go into more depth. Therefore, the program is not just of interest to newcomers. "For anyone who has taken the course before, they will find this useful as a refresher, as it has been updated and there's more detail," Mr. Blackstein said.

The curriculum features the knowledge Mr. Blackstein has amassed over decades of tramping and paddling through the wilderness as well as in talking with people like lumberman, fire rangers, and search and rescue technicians. He put it this way, "This is not in the book. It is what works, learned from professionals in those fields."

Over the years, Mr. Blackstein has taught more than 1,000 people, including police officers, paramedics, search and rescue (SAR) teams, and the author of this story, all aspects of wilderness survival. A keen outdoorsman, he is the leader of Renfrew County's civilian SAR team. He is an OPP certified SAR instructor and has received commendations for SAR activities from both the Commissioner of the OPP and the Base Commander of CFB Petawawa.

Through the course Mr. Blackstein will help students learn to navigate in wilderness areas with map and compass, as well as understanding the use of global positioning systems (GPS). In addition, he will teach navigating by the sun or stars in an emergency situation. Other topics in the program include starting a fire in inclement weather, treating hypothermia, water purification, setting up an emergency shelter, dealing with bad weather, and understanding black bear behaviour.



As the honorary chairman of the college's capital campaign, and the former area representative on the college's board of governors, he said assisting the capital campaign through his wilderness expertise was a good match.



"I'm not too modest to say I have received many calls for the course to be run again. As honorary chair of the capital campaign, I felt this was a good fit, particularly as Algonquin has outdoor programs like forestry, outdoor adventure, and outdoor adventure naturalist.

"Ideally we want to help the capital project out while giving people a chance to get outside and enjoy the beauty of Renfrew County while giving them the skills set to do that safely," he said. Mr. Blackstein said he will tailor the course to fit the interests of those that sign up including snowshoe and cross-country skiers, canoeists and kayakers, snowmobilers, ATV riders, hikers, or back country people who want to trip in Temagami, or Algonquin. He will be assisted in delivering the program by former student Larry Graham as well as people from Algonquin College.

The course fee is a minimum \$100 donation to the Algonquin College Foundation for the capital campaign. Tax receipts for the full amount will be issued. To register, call 613-735-4700 ext. 2735. Space is limited and currently, the course is half full. Mr. Blackstein said if there is sufficient demand, the course may be offered a second time.

The classroom portions of the course will take place at Algonquin College in Pembroke. A final decision on where the out- door portion of the course will take place has yet to be made, however, it is expected to be at the Pembroke waterfront. The course dates are October 5, 12, 19 and 26. It begins at 6:30 p.m. and concludes at 9:30 p.m.

For his SAR efforts and other volunteer activities, Mr. Blackstein was recently awarded Canada's highest honour when he was inducted as a Member of the Order of Canada.

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