

SUGARING TIME AGAIN MILL RIVER PROVINCIAL PARK

Cold nights, warm days not all that familiar right now, but soon (Hopefully!) they will be. "Still sounds like winter" you say. Yes, but it's inching towards spring and the smell of boiling sap will soon be in the air.

The Mill River Provincial Park Sugar Shack will soon be in operation guided by LeRoy Arsenault, Mill River Maple Syrup Program Coordinator. The interest generated by this activity is growing rapidly each year. Once considered a way of generating some new activity during a traditionally slow time in the Park, it is now becoming a main stay of the Parks operations.

Modern and traditional methods of sap gathering are utilized in the operation. Fifty-five trees are hooked up to the vacuum unit which brings the sap directly into the Sugar Shack. The remaining fifty trees utilized in the stand have the familiar buckets hanging from them. Both methods are utilized for demonstration purposes.

Mr. Arsenault is an energetic student of the art of Maple Syrup Production. He visited other operations on the Island and has had numerous discussions with persons involved in the industry. "The percentage of sugar in the Mill River sap averages about 2.5 percent", he points out with meticulous accuracy.

A lot of sap has to be gathered before you're ready to boil. The Mill River ratio is about 40 to 1 which means it takes 40 gallons of sap to get one gallon of syrup.

A trip to the Mill River Sugar Shack is rewarding in itself but is further enhanced by the opportunity to sample some of the products. LeRoy always has some syrup on hand to sample and as a special treat he has Maple Sugar Candy. The end product determines boiling temperatures which varies from 104 degrees celsius for syrup to 118 degrees celsius for the candy.

The operation is all quite fascinating as it can be seen in the faces of the many school children that visit. It's not unusual to have two or three classes per day visit the shack. Special days are planned during the sugaring season to allow families to experience the age old tradition. Added features for these days include sleigh rides, Maple Syrup and Ice Cream and an old favorite sugar on snow.

Why not experience Mill River Provincial Park, we are open all year round with unique and fun activities for everyone. Don't be the one that misses LeRoy's famous Maple Sugar Candy. Call the Park office at 859-2448 for more details on planned events.