

Looking back



By Nate Smelle

LOOKING BACK ON 2014 the word that comes to mind is transition.

This past year, people in Bancroft, across Canada and around the world have felt the winds of change blowing on their backs, pushing them in new directions. Following what was for the most part a very friendly and non-confrontational municipal race in Bancroft, we saw popular incumbents unseated by eager new blood.

Now we head into the new year with a new Council and a new direction. This does not have to mean that we lose the momentum built over the past four years by our previous council. There are already many wheels in motion that will not stop unless our community and our new Council takes their foot off the gas pedal.

I think back to the public meetings I attended over the last 365 days and all of the ideas that were shared in hopes of improving our community. I think of the energy in the room during the first community improvement plan public meeting at club 580 in Bancroft, and how ready for change this community seemed to be. I think of how fast cottagers and homeowners around Benoir Lake mobilized to prevent a tank and military equipment testing site from invading their homes and cottages.

Going through the thousands of photos I've taken since this time last year I notice the faces of people who want to make things better in our community popping up again and again. Every one of these faces deserves to be honoured for their work, but not everyone is.

When I look at these photos I am blown away by how many inspiring people I have met in this short period of time, who devote their time to others.

Speaking with Bruce Cockburn about his passion for music art and peace beside bone Lake and Halliburton; and then with Dr. Vandana Shiva and Bill McKibben about the connections between poverty and the environmental crisis out front of Trump towers at the people's climate March in New York City were but a few of these rich encounters I experienced. Taking another look at the past year I recognize that the themes of music, art and peace are also vital elements in the health of our community.

Arne Roosman's mural along the boardwalk speaks loudly to people as they enter Bancroft that this is an artist's town. The quantity of high-quality art filling A Place for the Arts, Brush with the North and the Art Gallery of Bancroft emphasize this point every time a new exhibition opens.

Musically we are blessed with more talent than necessary. The Bancroft Village Playhouse, The Arlington and the Bancroft Eatery and Brew Pub help drive this point home as they facilitate our locally accessible acoustic opportunities.

The foundation of peace that our local culture is built upon can be found in the music and brushstrokes of the artists performing and exhibiting their art in these spaces.

It also resides in the energy of those who volunteer to enhance our health care and our overall quality of life. Without this fuel source the wheels of true progress would cease spinning.