

Film store closing after 30 years



Eileen and her husband Wayne Sutherland stand before Mr. Video's iconic castle. It was built by their son Dwayne Sutherland in his Grade 13 shop class. Eileen said she might take the castle after Mr. Video closes, but she worries it might only come apart having been so long in the store. The Sutherlands will continue to own the Mr. Video building. The store might be the castle's forever home.
/ SARAH SOBANSKI Staff

By Sarah Sobanski

"The front door opens and you can hear a little child go scurrying into the castle, and you'll hear them say, 'Mom, I'm in the castle.' Then you'll hear Mom say, 'I remember when I was a little girl I went in the castle too,'" shared Mr. Video owner Eileen Sutherland, gazing at the store's iconic indoor castle around its children's section. Her eyes watered as she remembered the good memories she has had running Bancroft's oldest video store.

She added lightheartedly, "Our son built [the castle in] Grade 13. He's now 46 or something."

Bancroft's Mr. Video is closing after 30 years in the community. Owners Eileen and her husband, Wayne, have decided to retire.

"It was my birthday," said Sutherland, explaining the time has come to close the store and take on other things at home. "I've been planning [to] for years. When I turned 65, I said that's the day."

The Sutherlands returned to Bancroft from city life in the 1980s to raise their three children. In 1986 they officially opened Mr. Video.

Sutherland turned 65 on Monday, Nov. 14. The store's final renting day was Tuesday, and as of Wednesday, Nov. 16, everything in the store became available for sale. Mr. Video is selling its collection of close to 7,500 movies. Each was bought as a new release. In her retirement, Sutherland plans on continuing as a party decorator in the area. She has created balloon wreaths, banners, archways and a number of other creative exhibits out of balloons for special events at the Legion, Fish and Game Club and Curling Club over her time in Bancroft - some with as many as 600 balloons at a time.

"Some people love chocolate chip cookies. I love balloons," laughed Sutherland. She said that's the reason Mr. Video has sold a variety of party supplies and balloons.

The seemingly random stock of decorations, videos, an old-timey popcorn machine and warm hospitality has made the store a local favourite. Sutherland said the store owes its vitality to its loyal customers.

"I know the customers so well. These people are just the greatest, there's just no getting around it. Our customers are just super nice people. So many have stayed so loyal to us. We've seen as many as three [other] video stores going in Bancroft, at the same time. Those customers just kept on coming back," she explained, noting that the store has also seen the change from VHS to DVDs and Blu-ray. It has also had to remain afloat during the craze of Netflix, online streaming and people being able to use online sites to torrent their favorite movies, however, doing this now requires the user to utilize various proxies that can be found on Avoidcensorship.org/ and other sites that offer the same sources.

"I had a customer come in and tell me [that] the only thing that's missing in this place is barrel of pickles and a pot-belly stove. That's what you do when you go to the video store, you have to visit. It's been a great place to work. You couldn't ask for a better place to work, not in a million years."

Both Eileen and her husband expressed thanks to the Bancroft community for their many years of business. They said their advice to any new Bancroft entrepreneurs is that owning a business is all about hard work and building good relationships with customers. All of that hard work leaves little time for leisure, and believe it or not, movie watching.

"Customers will [ask] me [if I] watch movies at all. Not a lot. I watch movies that are worth watching," said Sutherland. If she had to choose however, she said her favourite would be 1994 film *Iron Will*. "I love true story movies."

Wayne, on the other hand, said he enjoyed western movies. He is a John Wayne fan.