

Artists provide an early look at Roosman mural restoration project



By Michael Riley

Local Journalism Initiative Reporter

A mural by local artist Arne Roosman, which depicts the history of Bancroft and area since the arrival of the settlers is being updated this summer with Roosman's blessing. According to Gayle Crosmaz, marketing and communications representative with A Place for the Arts Social, the owner of the building Burke Chamberlin asked APFTA to facilitate the update of Roosman's mural that adorns the west side of the building as parts of it were disintegrating. Bancroft This Week takes a look at four artists who contributed their skills to the restoration on July 11, 12 and 30; Liz Raymond, Storm Capstick, Linda Symon and her grandson Finnan McCabe and Chris Houston. While they're going fast, prospective artists can still choose any available spots on the mural to paint by contacting Crosmaz at her email social.apfta@gmail.com or calling her at 705-559-5951.

Coe Hill based Roosman is a lithographer, designer of books, stage sets and murals, illustrator and painter, who has been a renowned and award-winning freelance artist for over 25 years. His mural, unveiled back in 2014, is set to be updated by APFTA at the behest of building owner Burke Chamberlin, with Roosman's blessing during the summer of 2025. It is prominently displayed on the west side of the Whitfield building at 23 Bridge Street heading into downtown Bancroft

The proposed redesign will overlay two giant dragonflies and a firefly as a basis for the collage design, according to Crosmaz. She told Bancroft This Week a couple of months ago they'd invited Algonquin First Nations artists to create representations of Algonquin teachings in art form, from their Wawatesi (firefly in the Algonquin language) Cultural Discovery Project along the

river's edge. She said that the giant firefly in the middle of the mural will be reserved for their teachings and First Nations' history.

Crosmaz said they'll be keeping some sections of the original mural as the background as they're still in good shape, as they develop segments of the design with the new art. During the months of July and August, various artists who signed up through the spring will be coming in to paint their respective sections of the mural inside APFTA.

One of these artists is Raymond, who is also the owner of the Muse Gallery and Café, located next door to APFTA. She said that Crosmaz asked her to participate so she agreed.

"I heard about her project and she asked if I wanted to be part of it and I said definitely. I'm all about local art so it goes along with the rest of my world and it's great to bring all these people together as a community and bring the mural back to life, alive and vibrant. Yeah, I think it's great," she says.

Raymond says she was inspired by the Northern lights for her section of the mural, and it took her about three hours to complete.

"I just thought as a leaf we'd do something like green Northern Lights and the inspiration of the trees and forest here. I often paint this kind of scene and I thought it would look good in a leaf. Very cool project and they all look great. It's nice to have it restored and new at the same time. It's going to look great," she says.

Symon was in on July 12 with her grandson McCabe, and she says they have a cottage up here in Bancroft and they love art.

"We wanted to do something for the community because we're up here every summer and we want to come driving through Bancroft in 10 years and say that's what we did," she says.

Symon says they got involved because it's a community project and brings the community together and allows people to be part of it. She says that she and her grandson are painting a school of fish.

"They're each going to have eyes and we'll put scales on each one. So, a school of fish swimming through water. We fish all summer when we're up here. What's really cool is that we decided on this as a design but the other day I was standing on our dock and I saw a school of fish swim by and I thought woah," she says.

Capstick is an artist and the owner and creative director of IT STIX Signs and Graphics Inc. and she painted a tribute to Mother Nature and the energy she carries on July 11.

"I wanted it to reflect feminine strength, connection, and the wild beautiful chaos of nature. There's a lot of symbolism woven into it-vibrant colours, sacred shapes, flowing lines, and it all came together in about three hours, although the inspiration has been building in me for a long time," she says.

Capstick says that when she first heard about the mural restoration project, she knew she wanted to be a part of it.

"As a local artist and the owner of It Stix Signs & Graphics Inc., I'm always looking for ways to contribute creatively to our community. This felt like the perfect opportunity to do something meaningful with my hands and heart outside the usual day-to-day of running a business.

Being part of this project has been such a rewarding experience. It's not just about restoring a mural-it's about honouring the creative spirit that runs through this town. I feel incredibly lucky to live and work in a place that values community and expression, and I'm proud to represent both as a local artist and small business owner. I can't wait to see how it all comes together," she says.

Houston is the co-founder of the Canadian Peace Museum and is a part-time contributor to The Bancroft Times and Bancroft This Week. He tells The Bancroft Times that he was delighted to hear that APFTA was seeking volunteer artists for the mural. "I signed

up to paint a panel on July 30th. I decided to paint a picture of the community garden at the North Hastings Community Trust. The garden was designed by the renowned Algonquin artist Sherry Crawford, also known as White Bear Standing. I thought it would be a nice way to acknowledge the importance of food security and the efforts of all the people who work to improve food security in our community," he says.

Crosmaz told Bancroft This Week on July 17 that previous week they had Barbara Allport, Kathy Haycock and Gayle Crosmaz from A Place for the Arts, as well as Abby Fry, Jackie Share, Venessa Sorrell, and Beverly Lewis, complete their sections. "These coming weeks we have Manuela Schmidlechner, Lynne Vegter, David Kay, John Christie from A Place for the Arts as well as father daughter team Bill & Katie Kafka coming in to paint in July. Barbra Allport, Liz Raymond and her daughter are coming back to paint an additional section. We still have a few spots left for July. So far, we have the Algonquin artist Robin Tinney's sketches to apply to the firefly. The remaining mural panels that will be ready to paint in August has several artists confirm, but we have room for additional volunteer artists to confirm their participation," she says.

Crosmaz says she loves the diversity of everyone's artwork, love of nature and the child within is being portrayed over and over again.

"I also love that business owners are taking the time to come together and support this community by painting on our mural. I am having such a great time organizing this mural project, it allows me direct daily contact with the artists and art lovers in the community. The first word that comes out of everyone's mouth when they first see the mural's progress say, "WOW!" Drop by the gallery often and watch as the beauty and love of community unfolds over the summer," she says. "We will remount the mural the end of August with an unveiling ceremony and presentation, date and time to be announced."