

Creativity flourishing at the Art Gallery of Bancroft



The Art Gallery of Bancroft, located at 10 Flint Avenue, is a not-for-profit gallery administered by dedicated volunteers.

In 1978 a group of local people interested in the development of visual and performing arts in North Hastings met with a representative of the Ontario Arts Council. From that initial meeting an arts council and concert series was established and The Algonquin Arts Council was incorporated as an organization with the goal of bringing performing artists and visual arts presentations to the people of North Hastings and the counties of Renfrew, Haliburton and Nipissing, with the support of the Ontario Arts Council. The first visual arts presentation was in September of 1978. Entitled 'Visions' it showcased 50 artists.

In October of 1982 The Bancroft Railway Station Gallery, under the umbrella of the Algonquin Arts council had its official opening. The gallery continued in the old station until February of 2007 when the gallery moved to its current Flint Avenue location.

The AGB has been mounting 12 exhibitions per year celebrating the work of local and regional artists. These exhibitions include an annual juried show and the annual student exhibition, featuring artwork from four regional high schools, as well as home-schooled students. Opening receptions are held on the first Friday of every month at 7:30 p.m. and include snacks, wine and punch.

The Gallery Shop displays art and unique handcrafted items from the diverse local talent. Jewellery, pottery, stained glass, knitted and woven pieces, paintings, sculpture, woodcraft and photography are among the fine crafts represented.

The gallery is run entirely with funds it derives from show sponsorships, sales commissions, annual membership fees, and donations. These contributions help the AGB to continue working to expand programming and celebrate the importance of the arts in rural Ontario.

Monthly art workshops are held at the gallery, taught by exhibiting artists. Some of the classes offered this year are a watercolour workshop in May taught by renowned artist and instructor Shelley Beach. In June there will be a workshop titled *Painting Flowers* with Mary McLoughlin, who will also be exhibiting her large oil paintings of flowers in the gallery that month. In July, Algonquin artist Robin Tinney, will be teaching a soapstone carving workshop on three separate Sundays. Held under a tent outside in front of the gallery, this workshop will cover the basics of soapstone carving from start to finished product. These sessions will focus on manual carving techniques and will include cursory information on carving with power tools. Stone and basic tools required (files and chisels, and the various grades of wet sandpaper) will be provided. Tinney will be exhibiting his carvings in the December 2015 exhibition at the gallery.

In August, artist Sheila Davis will be holding a workshop called "Brush It Bold." Davis's challenge to the workshop students is: "Gain the confidence to lay down colour using brushwork full of vitality and strength. Develop your subject matter to get your point of interest across without losing spontaneity and freshness. Push yourself to think in the abstract while keeping recognizable form and shape." For more information on workshops, go to the AGB website: www.artgallerybancroft.ca.

The AGB is currently seeking submissions for the 2016 schedule. Artists are invited to email their resume, bio, artist's statement and up to 10 jpeg images to agb@nexicom.net by June 21. Please put "Submissions" in the subject line.

For the Wheels, Water and Wings event on July 10 through July 12, the gallery will have a samosa stand and a children's art workshop area for driftwood and T-shirt painting. The gallery also participates at the No Frills barbecue stand for one weekend in the summer.

There is a gallery Committee meeting for volunteers, which meets the third Monday of every month at 10 a.m. All are welcome. Each year the gallery expresses thanks to the many volunteers with an appreciation tea at the gallery. The volunteers are very special to the AGB, which could not function without their dedicated service.

Submitted by Leilah Ward