

NE WEEKLY OCT 27/04

BE AN ANGEL, LIGHT A LIGHT



Contributed photo

The Fort St. John Country Quilters have patched together colorful table runners and wall hangings to help raise funds for the Fort St. John Hospital. On November 1, the Hospital Foundation will auction the handiwork at the launch of the 8th Annual “Be an Angel, Light a Light” campaign.

NE Weekly Nov 3/04



Shaun Thomas photo

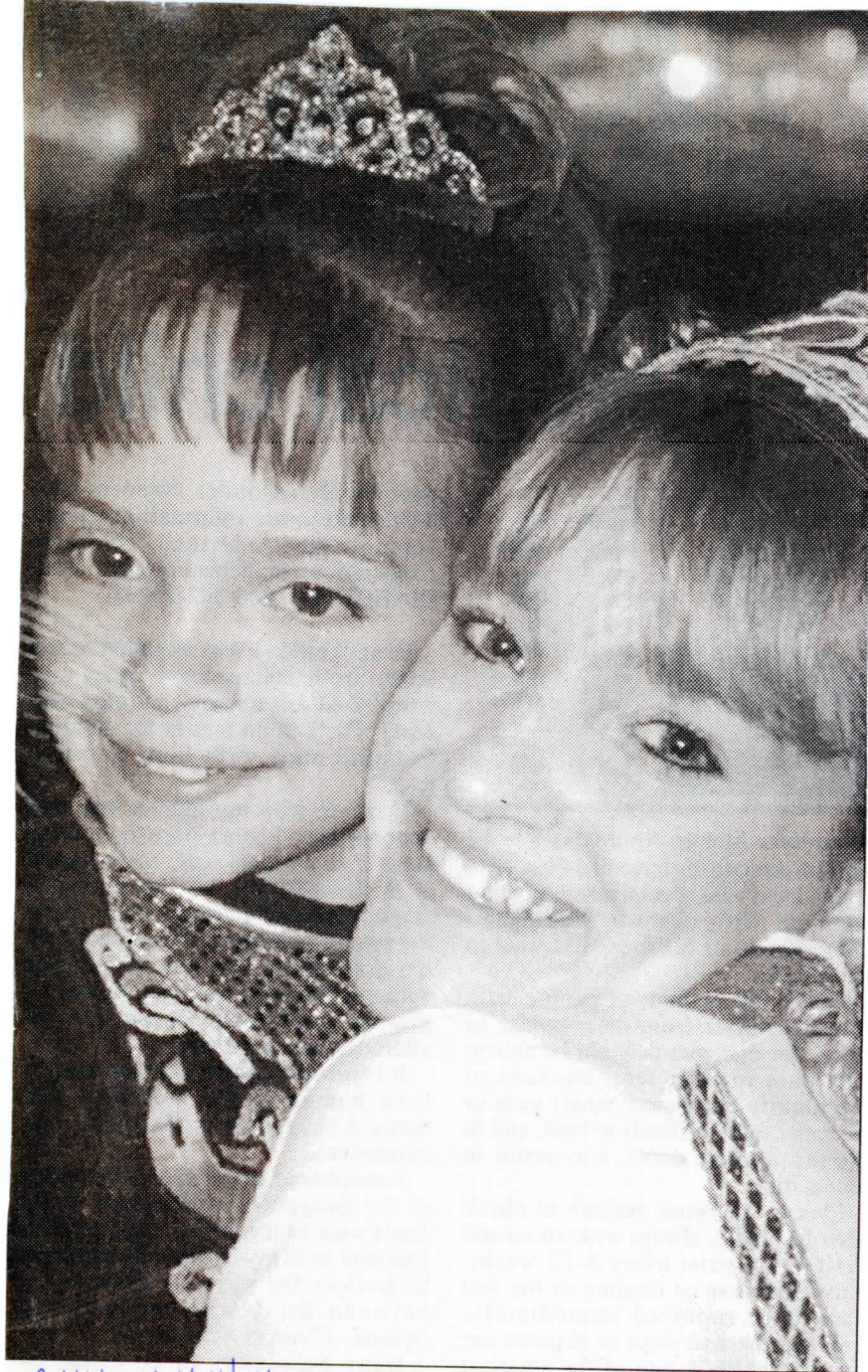
Fort St. John councillor Julie Vander Linden checks out the newly painted Finch area water tower during a tour council took on October 25.

NE NEWS JULY 13/04



photo courtesy Fort St. John Arts Council

A beautiful depiction of the Peace River painted on a flowerpot by local artist Mike Kroeher, part of the city's Communities In Bloom initiative.



AHN NOV 4/04

photo courtesy Fort St. John Arts Council

Morgan Gee and Alicia Clemen are two members of the Watt School of Irish Dance who are anticipating the upcoming world qualifying competition in Edmonton on Nov 5-7.



photo courtesy Fort St. John Arts Council

Tammy Danshin, of the North Peace Economic Development Commission, and members of the arts community had an opportunity to meet and take part in open dialogue with Gord Goodman and Ian Tait from 2010 LegaciesNOW while the two were visiting Fort St. John last earlier this month.

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Media in art or art of media?

Aristotle once said, "One swallow does not make a summer," so I'm hoping one snowstorm does not make a winter.

Aristotle was a philosopher and naturalist famous for classifying forms of any kind. Classification is a system for categorizing things with similar traits to a common group. It enables us to manage large numbers of things — such as animals, plants, ideas, information — and

attribute similarities to better understand them. It is a term most commonly associated with zoology and botany but is used in the arts as well. The many arts disciplines are categorized into the visual, music, performing, textile, literature, and media arts. The latter encompasses artistic expression through the means of film, audio and digital technologies such as computer animation.

To think of media as an art form is somewhat of a paradox. We generally consider the word media to pertain to sources that informs us about news and stories that affect our lives (ie television, newspapers and radio.). Only the facts should sum up the handling of stories by media. But media as an art form alludes to a malleable medium that is ripe for artistic license of expression — stories

that are vulnerable to alteration, subjective interpretation, and elaboration. News, both local and international in nature, should be unalterable by the time it hits our living rooms via newspaper, television or radio. The truth to a story would be lost, otherwise, if reporters suddenly decided to be unduly influential or flamboyant and create fantastical elaborations of actual events to make the event more persuasive and entertaining.

The reality of news media, however, is that it cannot live up to its own ideal — that of acting as an impartial bystander delivering the story in its entirety devoid of bias or misinterpretation. Given the time restraints and pressure news media face to deliver daily stories, you can't remove bias and provide the multiplicity of point of view that is necessary to understanding a story in every context of its meaning.

Cubism journalism — looking at a thing from multiple points of view simultaneously — isn't possible. That is where art lends itself. Artists are freely able to take a story, analyze it and interpret it in order to give people a better understanding of the story or issue. Art is all about saying something. The arts

don't hide purpose or bias, instead they celebrates individual point of view. An outward bias and slant actually invites other people to introduce their own point view to really understand an issue or story, ultimately diminishing the individual bias.

As a film or media, artist, Michael Moore attempts through his documentaries to go beyond CNN coverage and interpret current issues from his individual bias. He uses film as a platform to express his point of view. You see footage beyond the news media which is heavily one sided that hopefully lends itself to open-minded discussion.

But still, why give an art discipline the umbrella term of media? The definition of mass media is the various means of communication that reach large numbers of people. Film is a mass art form that is linked to popular culture and able to reach large numbers of people. While the purpose of blockbuster films tends to be more for entertainment value with the bottom line in mind, independent film is a highly effective medium for providing opportunities for viewers to engage in broad reflection and dialogue on culture and society.

Art is supposed to evoke a reaction and generate discussion. Quoting Aristotle again, "The aim of art is to represent not the outward appearance of things, but their inward significance."

I believe that is what the media arts is really all about.

Laurie Petrucci



STATE OF THE ARTS

Mural taking shape

By Chandra Wong

FORT ST. JOHN - Over the past five weeks, a colourful addition to the Energetic City has been emerging on its water tower.

A spectacular mural depicting the four seasons over a 24-hour day is being painted on the tower under the direction of Dawson Creek artist Shelley Mowat.

"It's a creative use of funding," said Mowat. "The city needed to repaint the tower anyways and the money they would have spent they're using on this project."

In a joint project between the city and the Fort St. John Arts Council, Mowat was commissioned to design and paint the mural on the tower. The project also involves a mentorship program where four young aspiring artists are helping Mowat complete the mural.

"It's not just skills and art that they learn about but also integrity and work ethic," said Mowat. "There are a lot of talented artists in the area but they don't get asked to work because they're difficult to work with."

As well as coming from a family of teachers, Mowat has over 24 years of experience working with young people. She has worked as an educator for gifted students and is currently the artistic director for the music theater program for School District 59.

Young artists Clay Backus, Christie Burres,



Artist Shelley Mowat instructs university student Gaby Odowichuk.

Josh Kirschner and Gaby Odowichuk have been working with Mowat to sketch in the design and paint the mural.

Burres will be attending the Kootenay School of the Arts this September and said that she has learned a lot from taking part in the project.

"I'll be leaving for school soon and it's really sad that I have to leave," said Burres.

A series of Greek columns around the tower give the impression of looking out into a nature scene of the Northeast as well as connecting with the 2004 Athens Summer Olympics. A compass needle pointing north is planned for the roof of the tower.

Mowat hopes the mural will be completed by mid-September.



Sarah Young photo

Fort St. John artist Sonya Butts is one of the artists ready to paint the city's water tower with an Olympic-themed mural.

City OK's water tower mural

SARAH YOUNG
ALASKA HIGHWAY NEWS

The Finch neighbourhood water tower is about to get a fresh coat of paint, and it's not the standard industrial white that Fort St. John residents have grown accustomed to.

City council approved a Fort St. John Arts Council request last week to use the funds already set aside for painting the city's water tower to festoon the structure with a colourful mural.

"This is something that touches the community as a whole so I'm very excited," said arts council representative Laurie Petrucci.

The water tower at 106 Avenue and 106 Street is painted every five years and about \$30,000 had already been set aside in the city's budget for this year's fresh coat.

But the arts council suggested going with something a bit more creative and proposed a mural that reflects large, open sky designs and an Olympic spirit.

The design features a morning, day, evening and night sky in quadrants that coincide with the view one would see while facing the tower from different directions.

The east view of the tower shows a calm lake in the early morning hours, the south view is a bright, colourful portrait of the afternoon and setting sun, the west view depicts the glow of the setting sun while the night-time north view shows off the brilliance of the Northern Lights.

A compass will be painted on the large dome on top of the tower, further reflecting the directional theme of the mural.

"We thought about what's special about Fort St. John," said Petrucci, "and it's the wide open skies."

Greek columns will separate the four quadrants, giving depth to the wall and, with the 2004 Summer Games being held in Greece this summer, Petrucci said the columns add an Olympic spirit to the theme.

The project, budgeted at just over \$31,000, will start in the last week of July and should be completed at the end of August.

The arts council will hire Dawson Creek mural painter Shelley Mowat to oversee the project that also includes a student mentoring aspect. Mowat has over 20 years experience in mural painting and mentoring budding artists.

College students from Dawson Creek and students from Fort St. John hoping to make a career out of art will participate in the project and gain valuable experience, according to Petrucci.

"We'll not only be making the water tower a landmark but also teaching young people to do large mural painting that will continue to beautify the city."

Mayor Steve Thorlaxson suggested the arts council do a survey of the neighbourhood to ensure everyone in the area is behind the project, but Coun. Peter Vandergutten thought otherwise.

"I think it's a fantastic idea and I don't think you'll find a person in Fort St. John who does not like it," he said during the Open Strategic Planning and Finance Committee meeting Monday afternoon. "It would look a heck of a lot better than how it is now."

The rest of council was also enthusiastic about the project.

"I love the compass idea," said Coun. Jim Eglinski, a licensed pilot.

City manager John Locher, who lives in the area, also expressed his approval.

"As one of the affected property owners, I fully support the project."

Community

Arts and Culture Week: Our legacy, our future

CONTRIBUTED

The Fort St. John Community Arts Council joins with community and regional arts councils, schools and arts and culture organizations all throughout BC to celebrate the fifth annual BC Arts and Culture Week, April 25th to May 1st, 2004. Arts and Culture Week is an initiative of the British Columbia Arts Council, coordinated by the Assembly of BC Arts Councils and Art Start in Schools.

It focuses on the important social and economic contribution of arts and cultural activity to our communities and to the province as a whole.

The Fort St. John Community Arts Council is planning to mark Arts and Culture Week with the launching of their new website: fsjarts@org.

The Fort St. John Community Arts Council is an umbrella organization that acts to serve the needs of the local artistic community. The Arts Council currently represents 22 arts

organizations that include hundreds of participants and audiences of cultural activities in the North Peace. The many roles of the Arts Council include fostering the development of new initiatives, offering financial support and encouraging the promotion and awareness of the vast art community in and around Fort St. John.

The member groups of the Arts Council are very active and visible in the community and the quality and level of participation in the many art programs is outstanding.

Other activities taking place throughout BC during Arts and Culture Week range from special performances, awards ceremonies, concerts, exhibitions and demonstrations to festivals, art shows, open houses and volunteer recognition events.

Arts and culture awaken our perceptions, convey new ways of understanding and enrich the quality of our lives. Schools with strong arts programs cite improved attendance and

student motivation, renewed community participation, increased graduation rates and higher scores on standardized tests. Communities that make arts and culture a priority discover economic benefits as well. Economist John Kenneth Galbraith has noted that, "Those communities that are richest in their artistic tradition are also those that are the most progressive in their economic performance and most resilient and secure in their economic structure."

BC Arts and Culture Week is sponsored by the Province of British Columbia through the British Columbia Arts Council, and by British Columbia and Yukon Community Newspapers Association and CBC Television and Radio.

All British Columbians are invited to join in the celebration by taking part in local Arts and Culture Week events. To learn about the events taking place in this community and school district visit www.bcartsweek.ca.

Peace Idol rocks! 12 singers advance to finals

AHN - SARAH YOUNG

One by one, 23 Peace Idol semifinalists took to the stage Friday night tosing their hearts out and ultimately face the three-judge firing squad in front of a sold-out crowd at the North Peace Cultural Centre.

It couldn't have been easy, but those brave souls descended the stairs, took the microphone in their hands and managed to get the audience clapping, hooting and hollering — and even offering a couple of standing ovations.

"It was one of the most entertaining four hours I've ever sat through," said Peace Idol judge Craig Brooks. "The talent was just incredible."

"I thought we had some great performances," agreed judge Amy Cooper. "It was really hard to make those decisions."

Judge Randy Gee also felt the pressure of having to break a few hearts. "There were so many awesome singers...it was my absolute least favourite part when we had to cut those 11 people."

But in the end, only 12 could go on to the Peace Idol finals on April 10 and compete for their chance at a trip to Vancouver and a guaranteed audition in front of the Canadian Idol television judges. And those winners are: Tamara Arbeau, Jade Brooks, Amanda Fell, Kristie Harris and Melissa Wolford from Fort St. John; Lindsay Pratt from Taylor; Tyrone Laboucan and Kara Wiebe from Dawson Creek; Candice Guillet from Chetwynd; Sabrina Bernard from Arras; Alicia Ritchot from Grande Prairie, Alta. and Brad Rempel from LaCrete, Alta.

Guillet may be treasuring her slot in the finals a little more than the others because, when the big night came, she was nursing a serious case of strep throat.

"I've been taking echinacea, vitamin C, Buckley's, just about everything," she laughed after the show.

During the break while the judges deliberated, Guillet's father, Ernie, said his daughter had sung at about 70 per cent her usual level.

"I've seen her do a lot better," he said with more than a hint of pride. Guillet said she hasn't been on stage for some time and that it felt good to be singing in front of an audience again. But the best part of the process, she said, has been the people she's met.

"I've made some new friends that I'll definitely stay in touch with. Everybody's been so encouraging of each other, it's been awesome."

As for the finals, Guillet is just hoping she won't still be sick and, when that happens, "I'll give 'er, that's for sure," she said with a grin.

Local contestant Tamara Arbeau received an enthusiastic response from the judges, who were the first up out of their seats when she finished singing She's Got You.

"It's hard to improve on a Patsy Cline song, and you did," said Gee.

"You had the overall best performance of the evening, you had your own version of the song and it really touched me," added Brooks.

There was no shortage of proud family and friends in the theatre, and Arbeau's were certainly no exception. "I thought she was the best," said her father, Dan. When asked where Arbeau gets her talent from, her mother, Diana, blushed but would only say, "I just coach her."

Dawson Creek resident Tyrone Laboucan also received an enthusiastic response to his performance from the judges and the audience.

Singing Keith Urban's Somebody Like You, Laboucan had the crowd laughing and clapping and the judges bowing to him when he singled out judge Amy Cooper as he sang the chorus, "I wanna love somebody like you."

"This is Fort St. John's Clay Aiken right here," exclaimed Brooks.

Cooper was amazed with Laboucan's transformation. "At his first audition he stood and stared at the floor, and he was up there dancing and having a great time. It just shows how much he wants it."

Laboucan and his 11 counterparts are nervously awaiting the finals this Saturday and, as they prepare, Brooks had a couple pieces of advice.

"Use the stage," he emphasized. "In entertainment, you can't play hard to get. If you're not confident, pretend to be. Pick an idol...everybody starts by emulating somebody else and then branching off."

Brooks added that he certainly doesn't envy the celebrity judges — Ken Kirschner, Brenda Booth and Darcy Deutsch — who'll be choosing a winner come the sold-out finals on April 10.

"It's going to be a very, very tough competition."

MAR 2004

City wins WinterLights

MICHAEL PURVIS
ALASKA HIGHWAY NEWS

Coun. Peter Vandergugten was on his way back from Winnipeg on Monday with a little hardware and a lot of pride after the Energetic City won its population category the national WinterLights Celebrations Awards on Saturday.

"It's like winning the Academy Awards," said Vandergugten, who was reached Monday morning while waiting to board a plane back to Fort St. John with the trophy safely packed in his baggage.

Fort St. John beat out fellow B.C. communities Cranbrook and White Rock as well as Yellowknife, NWT in the 15,001 to 40,000 population category.

Last year the Energetic City was edged by Cranbrook, whose light display won over WinterLights judges.

This year saw Fort St. John and the Fort St. John Arts Council put the aurora borealis in the spotlight with the aptly named Festival of Northern Lights.

"This year we took them by quite a margin," Vandergugten said.

This is the third year the winter version of the popular Communities in Bloom competition has been held and Fort St. John has taken part each year.

A long list of events in Fort St. John included dogsled races, the Santa Parade and the Fort St. John Arts Council's ice carving event with artist Peter Vogelaar.

Vandergugten said the WinterLights win caps a winter in which the city has received a lot of national exposure for its booming economy.

He said it's a good example of how the city is growing.

"If you look at Fort St. John today and 10 years ago, it's like day and night," Vandergugten said.

As part of Saturday's awards the Fort St. John Community Christmas Hamper Society was highlighted for their efforts as each community had an outstanding program or feature recognized.

"We had a really good season, the community pulled through for us 100 per cent," said hamper society chair Naomi Pomeroy.

What looked like an impossible task at the beginning of the season turned into a success with an "outpouring" of community help, she said, as the society gave out a total of about 330 hampers. That's down from the year before, which saw the society give out about 400 hampers.

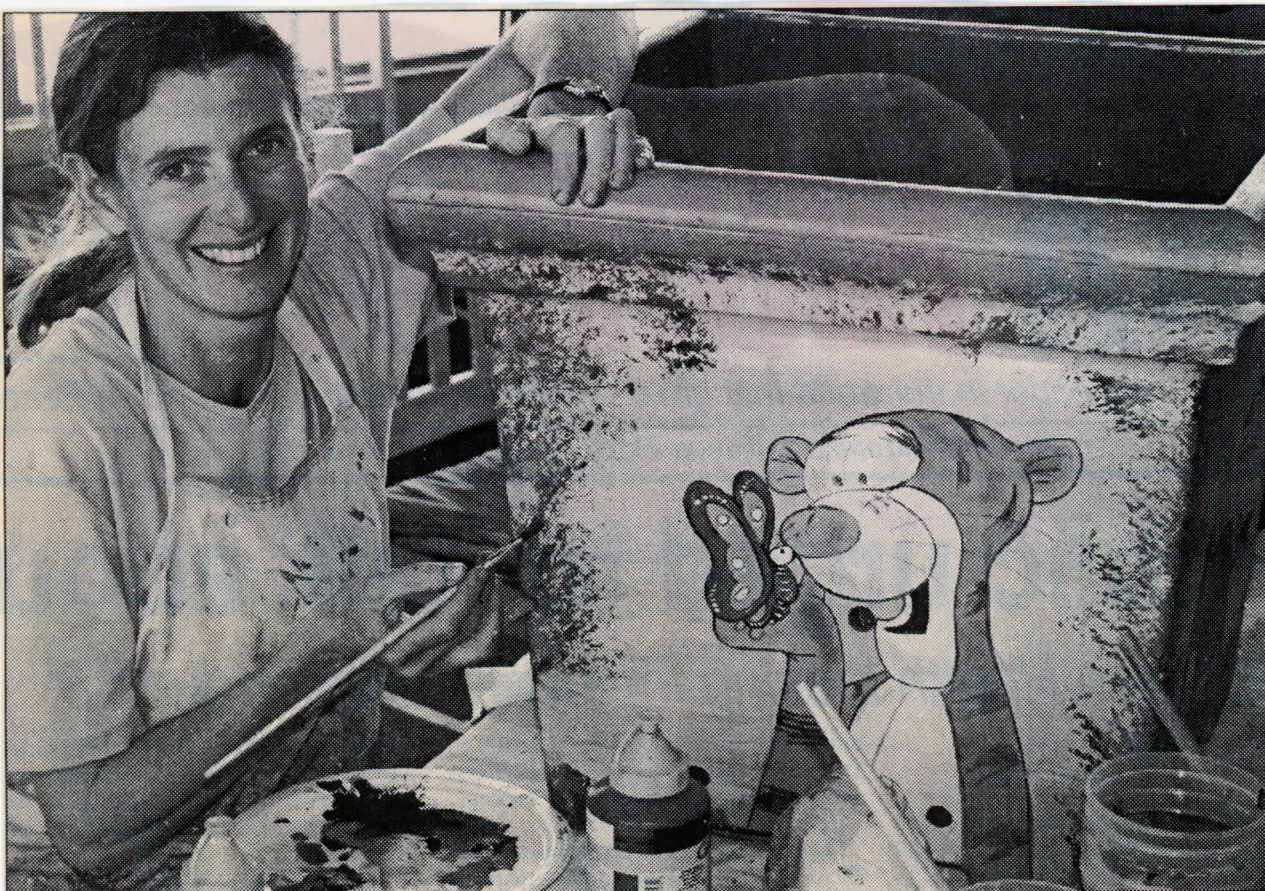
"I think we're all very lucky to live in such a generous and giving community," Pomeroy added.

It's like winning the Academy Awards.

-Coun. Peter Vandergugten



MAY 2004



Michael Heintzman photo

TOUCH-UP MAY 28/04 AHN

Eliza Stanford, a volunteer with the Ecole Central Elementary School organizing committee, touches up a flowerpot that the Fort St. John Community Arts Council will auction off Saturday at Centennial Park. Community planting will kick things off at 10 a.m. with the flowerpot auction at 1 p.m. A bicycle safety rodeo will be held for youngsters by the Fort St. John RCMP Auxiliary and the Blizzard Bicycle Club at 11 a.m. in front of the North Peace Leisure pool along with an ICBC child car safety seat course and tai chi demonstration.



Bruce Lantz photos

Auctioneer Brian Baldry was centre stage during the annual Flower Pot Auction in Fort St. John's Centennial Park May 29. Hundreds of dollars were raised as viewers bid on the handpainted flower pots, soon to be decorating city streets.