

FROM THE LIBRARY TO THE ARTSPOST



ALEISHA HENDRY PHOTO

Summer Reading Club kids went beyond the Fort St. John Public Library on Aug. 10 to pay a visit to the ArtsPost and take part in some artistic activities, including pottery, drawing and sewing emoji keychains.

AUG 18, 2016



FORT ST. JOHN ARTS

APRIL 6, 2017

www.fsjarts.org 250-787-2781 info@fsjarts.org

Celebrating 50 years of the Arts Council in 2017

Locally Written About The Road

The history of the Alaska Highway and the Arts have a long-standing relationship. Countless books have been written about the Highway. Paintings have been created of Highway scenes. Plays have been staged about the Highway and its lure of adventure. In this 75th year of the Building of the Alaska Highway, theatre will once again bring 1942 alive with Stage North's *Alcan Craze of '42*. This locally written play by Deborah Butler portrays the fear and amazement of the homesteaders and natives as thousands of US soldiers and huge machinery barreled through the bush to build 1500 miles of road in 8 months.

As Stage North Theatre Society celebrates its 40th this year, local thespians recall the 40th Anniversary Alaska Highway Celebrations in 1982. Just 5 years old at that time, Stage North formed a touring group and took the home-grown production, *The Big Highway Musical*, on the road. Stage North was established by the drama department of the Northern Lights College (NLC). Drama instructor Brian Paisley pulled together the volunteers of the long-standing, community group of the Workshop Players and aspiring drama students at NLC in 1977. Paisley initiated historic research for locally produced plays. *Raft Baby*, *That Dam Show*, *Cat's Eyes* and *Big Highway* were written and produced in the early days of Stage North.

The name, Stage North, was given to the renovated building of a 1942 army barracks relocated to the NLC campus where the Seniors Hall now stands. The building was just big enough for a small stage and about 125 chairs in a raked seating arrangement. When the college moved to the new campus North of town, Stage North, in name, classes and shows, moved as well but left the theatre build-

ing behind.

Shortly after *The Big Highway*, Brian Paisley moved to Edmonton, Alberta, where he became the founder of the Edmonton Fringe Festival. Northern Lights College continued with the Drama Department and Stage North through the 80's with Fred Galloway as the theatre instructor. Stage North became a community theatre society when NLC disbanded the drama department due to lack of full-time academic students in the theatre program.

Stage North has flourished in the past 40 years and has staged over 300 productions. Training in acting, directing and technical aspects of theatre remain the focus of the nearly 100 members. Local theatre enthusiasts can look forward to more theatre training with professional BC Director Michael Armstrong. Michael will direct local actors and production crew in *The Alcan Craze of '42* holding rehearsals in August and September. Stage North is open to everyone with or without theatre training. Open auditions for the show *The Alcan Craze* are April 21 and 22. An audition time can be booked by calling the North Peace Cultural Centre 250-785-1992.

In 2017, the Fort St. John Community Arts Council celebrates 50 years of Arts, Culture and Heritage development. Each month, historic milestones in the arts will be featured in this newspaper column. Comments and additional material are welcome.

Sue Popesku spopesku@shaw.ca



FORT ST. JOHN, BRITISH COLUMBIA

CANADA 150 MOSAIC

Keep the Train Going... Attach the Next Community Here see www.canada150mosaic.com

TRAIN CARD

extra postage may apply

FORT ST. JOHN, BRITISH COLUMBIA



The residents of Fort St. John have painted a tile that represents what they love about Fort St. John, or, different unique and iconic images from around the community. These tiles have made up this larger train car image that is a part of a National Legacy project that will be seen across the Country. This project is to celebrate Canada's 150 Birthday in 2017 and our Mural also celebrate the 75 anniversary of the Alaska Highway in 2017. This project has been made possible in part by the government of Canada. Ce projet a été rendu possible en partie grâce au gouvernement du Canada.

TO:



Mural created by the community of Fort St. John and Mural Mosaic in celebration of Canada's 150th see more at www.canada150mosaic.com

Fort St. John Community



ARTS
COUNCIL

“Shaping Today, Inspiring Tomorrow”

ARTS & CULTURE FUNDAMENTAL NOT FRIVOLOUS

LORI BONERTZ

Too often it seems that arts and culture are considered frills – decorative and nice to have but something that can be trimmed if necessary. The reality is that arts and culture play a vital role in a community's economy and in the enhancement of the quality of life of its citizens.

A number of people are directly employed in the arts in Fort St John and the local arts venues provide employment opportunities for many others. Moreover, the arts create valuable spin-off for businesses such as restaurants, hotels, photographers, etc. The arts also generate tourism dollars. It is estimated that for every tax dollar the government invests in arts and culture, the return is at least \$1.36 in general revenue and possibly as high as \$5.00 to \$8.00 when spin-off business is included in the calculation. Check out Stop BC Arts Cuts on the internet for an eloquent explanation of why investment in the arts makes economic sense.

Arts and culture help retain individuals in a community. When people move to Fort St John for work, it is often their 'play' that keeps them in the city. The availability of a range of arts for entertainment and self-fulfilment enriches individuals' down time, giving them a chance to unwind and de-stress. It also connects them to others in the community, providing a sense of belonging. At the last Film Society movie, I spoke with a truck driver who had rearranged his

schedule specifically so that he could attend the movie. He had recently relocated to Fort St John and remarked that he and his wife were pleased to find that the arts and sports programs available for their children were more affordable and accessible here than in Kamloops.

Exposure to the arts is valuable for children from the earliest stages of development. It appears that participation in music lessons, in or out of school, and attending concerts has a beneficial effect on achievement in math and reading skills. Students gain confidence and self-efficacy from drama, dance or artistic expression. We are fortunate in Fort St John to have an excellent band program provided in the school district, many talented music teachers, a community and youth choir, a variety of dance studios and dramatic productions and an annual performing arts festival. The school programs are particularly important since not all students have the opportunity to participate in extra-curricular art and culture activities.

Our arts and culture help define us as a community and give us a sense of pride. Arts and culture in Fort St John encompass an amazing range of experiences. There are opportunities for all ages to appreciate the arts and participate personally. Our city is becoming known for its music scene, our theatre groups regularly win awards at Mainstage, and our local ice carvers continue to hone their skills. I know of several students who are pursuing careers in the arts having developed their passion while growing up in Fort St. John. As local elections for City Council and School District 60 approach, I hope you will ask the candidates how they plan to sustain and grow the arts and promote local culture within our community.

Want to find out more about the
Fort St. John Community Arts Council
or get involved? www.fsjarts.org

