

Gallery gets funds

By Scott Crowson
Daily News staff

The Regional District has approved a grant of up to \$15,000 so the Peace Art Gallery Society can make their move to the new Arts Centre.

The society has already received \$15,000 from the federal Ministry of Communications for this undertaking, so the latest grant brings the total to \$30,000.

The group will use the money to design the physical layout of their new exhibition space — some 2,000 square feet worth — as well as determine the best financial and organizational structure for the growing institution.

“We intend to become the most northeastern gallery in B.C.,” says Merle Hendricks, chairperson of the

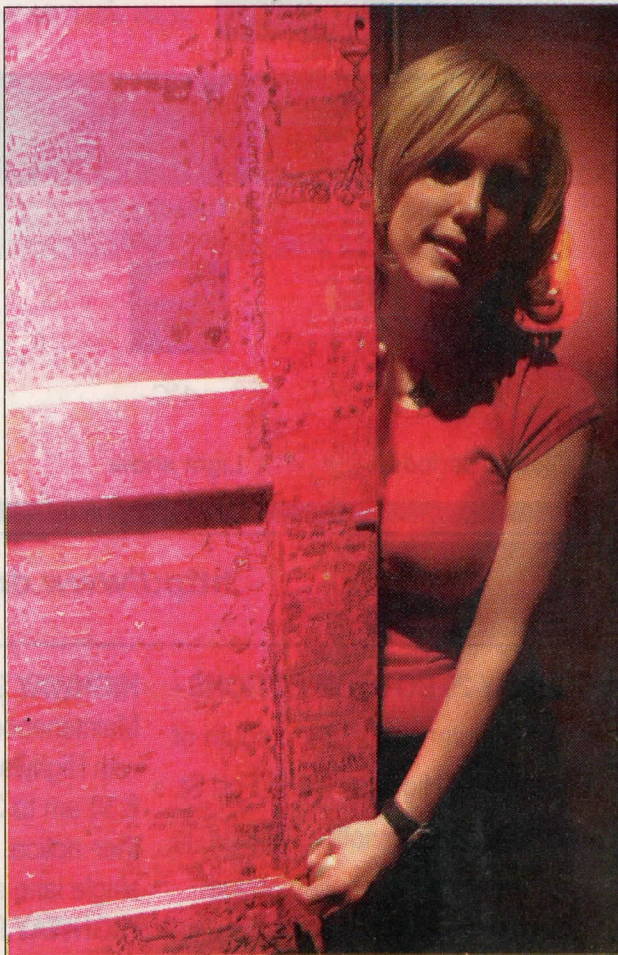
society’s board of directors. “We will encourage all the local artists to participate, from aboriginal people to seniors to children to whoever.”

The planning study will also allow the group to determine what sort of outside exhibits they will be able to bring in. The new exhibition space will be equipped with a humidifier and temperature control system, so this should make it possible to accommodate most any travelling exhibit.

Hendricks says the next step is to choose the consultants to conduct the study. The likely choice is a Vancouver group known as Cornerstone Planning.

Hendricks anticipates the project will be completed in late January or early February.

BEHIND THE PINK DOOR



Tessa Holloway/AHN

Holly Kirkpatrick peeks around a door plastered with excerpts from her journal in her art show "The Green Door to My Heart." The show opened Friday night at Peace Gallery North and runs until Mar. 28.

Cultural emotions on canvas

Garry Oker shares his spirit's dreams at Peace Gallery North

HIEDI IRVINE

ALASKA HIGHWAY NEWS

Garry Oker has played a variety of roles, including musician, fashion designer and most recently, an artist in his exhibition 'Spirit Dreamers' at Peace Gallery North.

Oker said the 30 pieces on display in his exhibit were almost all completed over the course of the last year, and explained how he went from illustrating fashion to illustrating a way of life he hopes more people will come to understand.

"The kind of painting I do is sort of fashion illustrations, design illustrations but I never really sat down to do some painting but the last few months it just exploded, came out," said Oker.

The show's opening proved to be successful for the artist, with various viewers who, through guest book comments, described his work as being 'authentic,' 'inspiring,' 'thought-driven', and most importantly, 'passionate'.

"I really like to get better cross-cultural understanding of the Dane_Zaa people and the rest of society to have a different perspective of indigenous people around here," said Oker.

Self-described as 'artistic by nature' Oker said his background does include some training as a fashion designer and has worked for



Hiedi Irvine/AHN

Artist Garry Oker looks at his painting, 'Identity Crisis,' on display until May 5 at Peace Gallery North.

companies like Le Chateau. He also ran a program in Dawson Creek for eight years for native design and cultural studies.

The show brings together a lot of Dane_Zaa ceremony. Off the walls, there is a tree placed in the center of the gallery and red, yellow and black material draped near the ceiling.

"If you look at the context of how we pull it together, it really is about ceremony and these colours really represents the four directions and the medicine wheel colours so that's really part of that whole idea of these colours and the tree of life and the centre, it's basically like a ceremony that's taking place within the context of spirit dreamers," said Oker.

After spending the last year creating the art and the last month helping put the exhibit together, he said he's going to let himself open up and let his creative spirit flow.

"I feel kind of empty right now. After working really hard to put this show together and now it's happening, it's like 'now what?' so I'm already looking for different projects - what's next?" he

said.

Three of the pieces on display not for sale were his Arctic Winter Games 2010 pieces, focusing on the 'hero's journey.'

The canvases showcase various Dane_Zaa traditional heroes, who previously only existed through storytelling.

Oker calls them the Masters of Ceremonies of the games and is collaborating with animators to bring the characters to life.

"I'm working with some animators out of Vancouver to create some of these characters I'm coming up with into more of a gaming concept of storytelling, teaching leadership and teaching virtues, so that's kind of where I'm moving towards because I'm really fascinated with the idea of these traditional stories that have so much knowledge and information to teach young people how to be a hero," he said.

Oker will co-direct and co-produce the opening and closing ceremonies of the games, and will continue to let his art inspire and help further people's understanding of the Dane_Zaa people.

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MAGICAL MARKET

Aleisha Hendry /AHN

Donna Rogers of Berry Delightful displays some of her chocolates, jams and jellies at the Magical Christmas Market at Peace Gallery North, which runs until Dec. 24.

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TimeCapsule



There was no Peace Gallery North in 1981 when Lesley Vogelaar presented her art show locally, so she had to paint the interior of the former People's Drug Mart before hanging pictures.

AHN file photo