

A learning Journey using poetry and art



By Bill Kilpatrick

On May 11 the North Hastings Community Trust, in partnership with ReDefine Arts, the Ontario Arts Council, North Hastings Community Integration Association, Tamarack Maggies, and Kijicho Manito Madaouskarini Algonquin First Nation, held the fifth of six community arts projects entitled "Remembering and Resistance: Weaving Words and Intertwining Ideas." This weaving and poetry workshop is phase two of the "Community Corridor of Inclusion and Resilience" art project that, according to the Community Corridor of Inclusion and Resilience information flyer, "is rooted deeply in relationship building" and is meant to "reflect the crucial need to recognize, remember and grieve colonial violence, and honour and resist through a collective community art project." The project will culminate in a community art piece that will be installed in September and serve as a memorial and a reminder of the "profound loss and instability" that has resulted from the COVID-19 pandemic, the ongoing impact of colonialism, and the need for social inclusion at all levels. Marlena Zuber, one of the lead organizers of the project, stated that "Community engaged art projects are most successful when they acknowledge what has happened, what is happening now and dreaming about the future" and how these art projects are an opportunity to talk about "what we are going to stand up for collectively." Zuber added that the project is a response to community needs, hurt, and grief that not only have their roots in colonial violence, but more recently the COVID-19 pandemic. Zuber went on to say that the workshop was also about resilience, care and compassion by nurturing and sustaining partnerships and relationships within the community and beyond. The workshop, that was attended by close to 30 community members, was led by local artist Eliza Plumley and Anna Camilleri the founding artistic co-director of ReDefine arts. The workshop was broken up into two parts. The first part, led by Camilleri, saw participants create "recipes for resistance" using poetry and the second part, led by Plumley, involved the creation of a textile wire heart sculpture by weaving words written on fabric

into the wire sculpture. Camilleri broke the participants up into small groups and has them answer the following questions: What do we need to feed what we want to grow? And, what do we need to sustain things that we want? Participants then wrote their answers on scraps of paper, mixed them up and then created, through poetry, their own recipes for resistance. Participants were then asked to share their creations with the group. Plumley then had the attendees write down some of the words that they had generated on the fabric that was available and then they were to weave those words into the wire sculpture. Zuber hopes that these art projects result in people going on a learning journey so that they have a better understanding of what is happening in our community and the world right now especially as it pertains to reconciliation, being an ally to Indigenous people and marginalized people, colonial violence, the opioid crisis and homelessness in Bancroft. Zuber ended with her own recipe for resistance and relationship building-- a plea for empathy within the Bancroft community stating that what we need right now as the community emerges from the COVID-19 pandemic is healing and the first step Zuber believes is kindness to one another.