

Artful ambassadors

By Nate Smelle

When I moved to L'Amable back in 2006 I remember being surprised by how many artists resided in the Bancroft area. Everywhere I looked I seemed to discover a great talent living nearby. Every time I would take the back roads to go to town I would notice a new sign leading to an artist's studio hidden away in the highlands that I had not noticed before. Glancing up at the bulletin board on my way into the supermarket each week I would notice a variety of posters for different music and theatre groups. Nearly eight years later and still as each week passes I am repeatedly astounded by the depth of talent dwelling in this community. When measuring the community's cultural capital this local crowd of creators needs to include more than just the artists who live here, it also needs to include the artists who frequently return here to share their creations and replenish their inspiration. Canadian jazz icon Jane Bunnett has said on numerous occasions how this area inspires her in a unique way. She reminds us of how special this community is to her every time she returns to share with us the evolution of her music. Over the weekend while watching Bunnett perform with Maqueque at the Arlington Hotel in Maynooth I realized that I had now seen her play on three separate occasions. Bringing a different band of world class musicians with her each time she comes to town to play, Bunnett can be seen as an ambassador to the area.

For the women in Maqueque, Bunnett helped put Maynooth on the map by bringing them here to play. Likewise she has helped to etch memories of this area in the minds of her fellow musicians Njacko Backo and the crew in the Heavyweights Brass Band. Reporting on the arts in this community has only affirmed to me how special this place is in the hearts of so many people. For Shelley Beach, the artist currently featured at the Art Gallery of Bancroft, it was the natural beauty of Baptiste Lake that instilled in her the appreciation of nature which shaped her as an artist.

Wisely Bancroft is starting to tap into this cultural resource more effectively by embracing public art. Arne Roosman's mural depicting the history of Bancroft from the painting's Bridge Street location by the new boardwalk on the York River is a fantastic example of how a single piece of art can redefine a public space. Waiting for the rest of the newsroom at Bancroft This Week to join me on the patio of the Bancroft Eatery and Brew Pub for our all-star sales manager Mike Rupnow's retirement from the newspaper industry party I could see a family of camera-clad tourists turn towards the painting and raise their lenses.