

Artist documents a quickly melting Arctic in paint



By Nate Smelle

Artist Linda Lang sure has been busy. In the past year she has opened Bancroft's first painting lounge and gallery space Brush with the North, organized a multi-artist show at the Hastings Highlands Centre in Maynooth and was a guest speaker at the International Climate Change Conference in Toronto. In spite of her packed schedule she has still managed to find the time to put together her latest collection of paintings entitled *Glaciers Gone Bye*. An experienced Arctic traveler Lang has witnessed firsthand the devastation that climate change is causing to the ecology and culture in Canada as far north. During her opening remarks she recounted one such experience in 2007 when revisiting Auittuq National Park in Nunavut that opened her eyes to the terrible reality unfolding in this fragile ecosystem. Lang explained that in Inuktitut the word Auittuq means the land that never melts. "In 2004 there is a photograph of me outside in this park in my survival suit because it was actually cold, with the glaciers and sitting there painting. When I went back in 2007 all of a sudden the snow had drastically melted and the tops of the mountains were no longer white where there were glaciers." Finding the changes that she had noticed to this ancient landscape in only short three years far too extreme to believe, she asked some of the scientists aboard the vessel she was traveling on if these fluctuations were normal. What they told her shocked, horrified and inspired her. They told her that snow and ice that had been there for hundreds of years had completely melted in only five years. "The land that never melts is melting, so as a mom I owe it to the next generation to try and tell the stories," she said. "Back then in 2007 nobody wanted to hear about climate change. They still don't but now people know climate change is real." At first she said there were a lot of people who wanted to argue against the idea of man-made climate change. Rather than taking part in the argument herself she chose to share her observations through her art. "It was really emotional to experience that and emotional to paint it, and too emotional to then argue it," said Lang. "What I started doing was saying OK I'm going to share my stories and share my experiences then you can decide. I'm showing you what it was like in 2004. I am showing you what it was like in 2007. You do with that what you want to do with it, but I have to answer to my children and grandchildren and you answer to your children and grandchildren." Lang's exhibit *Glaciers Gone Bye* is sponsored by Dr. Rawal, Dr. Guthrie and Dr. Melissa Fransky. It is on display at the art gallery of Bancroft now until Feb. 28. The artist will also be hosting painting workshop at the art gallery of Bancroft on Sunday, Feb. 22.