

Bancroft backwoods go national in new colouring book



Ketha Newman stands outside of her family cabin in Monteaale. It's one of the many scenes featured in her new colouring book. / SARAH SOBANSKI Staff

By Sarah Sobanski

A new book is shedding light on the beautiful hidden landscapes of Bancroft and surrounding area.

Longtime watercolour artist Ketha Newman has published her first book with Doubleday Publishing. Her inspiration comes from the starkly different seasons witnessed from her family cabin off of Musclow-Greenview Road.

‘My most important influence was a watercolour painter named Elizabeth Berry who lives in Toronto. She’s a second cousin of my mother, so I’ve just always known her. She gave me watercolour lessons,’ said Newman. ‘I just really took off with that.’

The Canadian Backwoods Colouring Book comes just in time for Canada’s 150th birthday. It features quotes from 16 historic Canadian authors and 40 original drawings by the local artist. It will debut Newman’s 200-acre property in Monteaale nationwide.

‘The whole thing is just completely Canadian,’ said Newman. ‘It’s [available] all across Canada and it’s available for world release if anyone wants to buy it outside of Canada.’

Newman’s cabin has a lot of history. When she was a child, she and her family spent summers there. They lived back and forth from the city. She attended Maynooth Public School.

Newman and her husband moved to the cabin full time to invest in it and expand, instead of putting money into the high-priced real estate in the city. She graduated from a fine arts program at the University of Toronto where she specialized in art history.

‘I found at [university] that there was a real prejudice against watercolour as being a sort of weekend painter medium,’ Newman explained she pursued it anyways. ‘I think that perception is changing a bit now.’

The local artist suggested there has been a surge in interest for colouring books because they allow people to express themselves artistically without having to fear making a mistake.

‘I started doing drawings. I was never formally interested in drawing. I always thought I wasn’t very good at it ? I can’t draw but I can paint,’ Newman laughed at her old thinking process. ‘That’s the way people work with art, I think. They always have this negative little voice in their head that makes them think oh you can’t do that.’

She added, ‘That’s why colouring is so relaxing for people. Your voice can’t really [say] oh you suck at colouring. Even if it tries, it’s sort of well who cares, it’s just a colouring book. Choose colours you like and be creative that way. It allows you to go in that zone that is so wonderful when you’re being creative.’

For those who want inspiration to dive into their colouring however, Newman has posted tips and colour schemes on her website at www.kethanewman.com. There she’s posted pages from the book that she’s coloured.

The Canadian Backwoods Colouring Book is available at Ashlie’s Books in Bancroft and online. More of Newman’s work can be found at her gallery *Backwoods* in Barry’s Bay from mid June to mid July.

‘It can be therapeutic to make art,’ said Newman. ‘The popularity of meditation was increasing, and mindfulness. They’re always talking about mindfulness and being in the moment because it helps you deal with anxiety and just stress. They realized that colouring allows you to shut off and just focus on what you’re doing and feel good about it. You have a pretty picture that you’ve made that gives you that rush that you get from making art.’