

Filmmakers bringing Dark Sunrise to Bancroft



By Jim Eadie

Hilary Phillips and her husband Greg Gibbons are not exactly new to North Hastings, having owned a cottage on North Baptiste Lake since 1984. Both have had their painting and sculpting work featured in past years at the Art Gallery of Bancroft to rave reviews.

Phillips and Gibbons, who live in Toronto, have been involved in the film industry for 25 years, mainly in the field of animation, and have produced several short films.

Their current project is a feature film entitled, *Dark Sunrise*, which they are planning to shoot in the Bancroft area in the early summer. The film is already past the proof of concept stage and a script is nearly finalized. The next step, recruiting actors was a no-brainer according to Phillips.

"We knew a lot of people here - there are some really wonderful artists tucked in the woods up here," she said.

It turns out that the couple has been attending theatre productions in Bancroft for a few years, and was pretty familiar with the high level of talent they have seen in Bancroft.

A call for auditions was made through the Bancroft This Week, and potential actors were given sections of script with some information about the film to prepare a video, which was submitted for consideration. From those submissions, ten applicants were invited to audition in person at the Bancroft Bed and Breakfast on April 18. Following auditions, Phillips and Gibbons were obviously very happy.

"We had an excellent response," said Phillips. "We are extremely happy with what we have seen. We will be letting people know in a week or so what our decisions are."

Phillips noted that there might even yet be script tweaking to play into the strong points of successful actors. Now, a "Kickstarter Campaign" will take place to help raise some money for the project through social media. This is a common method employed by small independent filmmakers to financially move their projects ahead. Costs to the filmmaker include camerapersons, crew, lodging, food and financial compensations. Modern computer technology has brought high quality production and postproduction of digital video within the grasp of small film companies. Low budget films usually mean low financial compensation for support actors, but that did not seem to deter any of the potential participants.

"This is a wonderful opportunity for me," said Sharon Ings. "This was on my bucket list of things to do when I retired." She noted the transition from stage to film - where stage production requires reaching the back of the hall with your character, compared to working to a camera in film.

"This is a fantastic opportunity for our community," said Patricia Whitlaw. "There is so much talent here."

In addition to the cultural injection, the production will bring revenue to the host community.

The story of Dark Sunrise is of course being kept a secret, but observations of the auditions reveal it will be a humorous look at the problems at a rural tourist lodge, mice or other vermin in the rafters, relationship complexities, and big role played by the messages from crows.

?This has been a phenomenal experience for us,? said Phillips.

Further information about this project can be obtained at: www.darksunrisefilms.com.