

## Painting lounge prepares for pre-Christmas opening



By Nate Smelle

After talking with a friend whose daughter is going to school in Boston about a paint lounge on campus where she and her friends get together for fun creative night out, local artist Linda Lang had the idea to bring such a place to Bancroft. Since this idea hatched, Lang said it has been expanding on it and watching it come to life as she readies herself for a pre-Christmas opening of the new art space in downtown Bancroft. Brush with the North will contain a fine art gallery featuring the works of a wide variety of local artists as well as artists from out of the area; a creative studio space fully equipped with art supplies and a lounge where coffee, tea and dessert is served.

“What we wanted to do is take the idea of social painting and highlight some of the things in the area that inspire us,” said Lang. “We want to be a destination where people will come here to see some of the highlights in the area. We also want to be a spot where local people can go to get out and have some fun with some of their friends and paint. We wanted to bring some of the outdoors inside. These things make you feel like you are up north.”

To do this Lang has been sourcing interesting pieces of locally harvested wood and stone, as well as antique timbers, tables and a 90 year-old bobsled that they plan to use as part of their counter for the paint bar. With the help of a group of hard-working and committed friends Lang said it is looking like she will be able to open up just in time for Christmas on Dec. 17. The space will be set up to accommodate up to 40 people at a time for private parties and social events.

“I think it will be good for youth,” she said.

“Youth are lost a lot of times in northern communities and don't have a lot of things to do. Up in the Arctic I saw that there were major issues with the youth. I really enjoyed working with the teens and the young people in the North, because they are very, very creative, and it gives them something to do and look forward to. I'm hoping that we can attract all ages.”

In Boston the combination of art sessions, music, snacks and beverages seems to really be catching on as a popular date night. Lang has worked with youth before of traveling and painting in the Canadian Arctic, and would love to see them take advantage of this unique social activity.

“Whether you're experienced in art or whether you have never done it before you can just come out and have fun,” she said.

“If you're free to take an art class this is perfect for you because the art sessions are going to be designed so that anybody can come away with a really successful piece of art.”

The art sessions and workshops offered will include all the materials necessary to finish the piece. A limited supply of art supplies will also be available for purchase.

Art has shown to help people connect on different levels. By experiencing art the artist and/or the observer is able to connect with the land and the people through art they are expressing or experiencing. Either way, the piece staring back at them is changing their lives whether they know it or not. For instance, the potential for social networking among artists regarding creative community building increases during the holiday season and throughout the winter as people tend to stay indoors talking and creating new ideas.

?It's a long cold winter if you're sitting by yourself you can get out and meet other people, so gives you that opportunity to not be alone,? said Lang.

?It gives you the opportunity to do something together with your family and friends when they come to visit, Also what it does is it de-stresses, so if you're feeling stressed it will make you feel better. It's all about recharging.?

Lang studied under Canadian artist Doris McArthy, who was a student of Arthur Lismer of the Group of Seven. In the spirit of the Group of Seven, Lang plans to help showcase the beauty of North Hastings host en plein air painting sessions at various locations throughout the area .

Putting her years of painting experience into action, Lang has been repurposing construction materials to construct the perfect easel for painting and creating art of all sorts. The well-thought out prototypes she has come up with are sturdy painting easels with built in trays for paints and other art supplies. The centre tray can be used as a table as well in case the artist using it prefers to paint, sculpt or create their art on a flat surface. There is even a place for the paint brushes.

Lang said she is looking forward to partnering with other local artists and art organizations to help build Bancroft and North Hastings as the true destination for the arts that it is. Local chocolaiter Shawn Sellers of Hastings Highlands has signed on to partner with this venture, and add a little deliciousness to the menu at the lounge. Lang believes the more we all work together the better off we will all be.

?We see it as an opportunity to complement each other and work together,? Lang said.

?I know the art gallery is very supportive of the idea that the more art there is in the area the more it becomes a destination. I am hoping that we can promote the art gallery and A place for the arts and they will promote us back. It's not a competition, it's that we complement each other and it becomes more of a destination.?

Brush with the North is located at 23 Bridge Street West in Bancroft's Theatre district.