

Roosman mural to be updated during summer of 2025



By **Michael Riley**

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A mural by local artist Arne Roosman, which depicts the history of Bancroft and area since the arrival of the settlers is set to be updated with Roosman's blessing this coming summer. According to Gayle Crosmaz, marketing and communications representative with A Place for the Arts Social, the owner of the building Burke Chamberlin asked APFTA to facilitate this update of Roosman's mural that adorns the west side of the building. Crosmaz comments to Bancroft This Week on this initiative.

Coe Hill based Roosman is a lithographer, designer of books, stage sets and murals, illustrator and painter, who has been a renowned and award-winning freelance artist for over 25 years. His mural, unveiled back in 2014, is set to be updated by APFTA at the behest of building owner Burke Chamberlin, with Roosman's blessing during the summer of 2025. It is prominently displayed on the west side of the Whitfield building at 23 Bridge Street heading into downtown Bancroft.

Crosmaz told Bancroft This Week that the mural is disintegrating, so that's why it is being updated.

?A lot of it peeled off so it's in pretty rough shape,? she says.

Crosmaz said that Chamberlin approached Debbie Christie, the director of APFTA about restoring the mural and Christie approached Crosmaz as she used to be a mural painter and was able to organize the effort.

?I'm too old. I'm in my 70s so I can't climb scaffolding, but I do know how to organize a mural project. I decided we should make it a community mural project instead of just the artists in the gallery itself. So, invite all the artists in the community, including First Nations artists, to be part of this restoration. It also brings the Algonquin Nation and the settlers together, making it a reconciliation theme as well,? she says.

In a Jan. 5 media release, Crosmaz said APFTA is doing this restoration as a two-month summer event (July and August) in their Annex Gallery.

?We are calling all artists in the community to help repaint parts of the mural. As a public event, it will encourage more visitors to our little corner of Bancroft and promote the vast creativity of our extended artistic community. We will create a daily timeline when

artists are available to be in the gallery to paint their original design segment, she says.

Crosmaz says that they will also create an honour plaque to hang next to the mural listing all artists and sponsors by name. She says they invite all artists in Bancroft and the surrounding area to submit what they love about the natural history of the area, including precolonial history.

The proposed redesign will overlay two giant dragonflies and a firefly as a basis for the collage design, according to Crosmaz. She said they'll be keeping some sections of the original mural as the background as they develop segments of the design with the new art.

We have invited Algonquin First Nations artists to create representations of Algonquin teachings in art form, from their Wawatesi (firefly in the Algonquin language) Cultural Discovery Project along the river's edge. The giant firefly in the middle of the mural will be reserved for their teachings and First Nations' history. I've been talking with Algonquin artist Robin Tinney and he's going to help me get the word out to other Algonquin artists to come and be part of it. He's really up for this, she says.

During the month of March, Crosmaz reveals they'll have a numbered map showing the collage segments at the Annex Gallery. She suggests to prospective artists that they reserve their spot by choosing the location and size of their segment depending on their availability to participate. To contact Crosmaz, email social.apfta@gmail.com or call 705-559-5951.

For the restoration, we will bring inside half of the 11 (4' by 8') mural panels at a time, set up on easels to accommodate the creative process, she says.

Crosmaz told Bancroft This Week on Jan. 6 that what they're roughly planning when the mural is completed at the end of the summer is to do a big presentation and invite politicians, First Nations and Roosman to the unveiling.

And this whole thing is about bringing the community together, all the different artists and the families of the different artists coming together. We're creating this in-gallery event so that people can watch the restoration taking place under our roof, she says.

As to why they're doing the work inside, Crosmaz says that she's painted murals on west walls and the sun gets very hot after noon, making it very difficult to work.

And it can't be done wet because it's on signboard so it has to be totally dry so inside is the only way we can redo it. We'll take the panels down and bring them into the Annex gallery and they'll be set up on easels and then we'll make a program of artists; when they're available to come in and do their segment. So, it's an ongoing event for the entire summer, she says.

Crosmaz says that the parts of the mural that are crumbling represent the Industrial Age coming to Bancroft and now they're going to bring back the nature with the restoration.

So, it's a nice balance. Yes, there's the Industrial age and yes, there's damage but now we need to look at the nature and reincorporate that into people's awareness. It's all about balance. Life is about balance. Everything is about balance. And I'm a spiritual teacher so I teach about balance. I travel the world teaching spirituality, about balance, accepting each others' culture, religion and respecting each other, she says.

As for any last words she'd like to say about this mural restoration coming up this summer, Crosmaz had the following to say to Bancroft This Week.

It's going to be fun. I'm a fun person!?