



A Guide to the Public Art on display at the deCoste Culture Hub



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Dawn MacNutt, *sculptor, artist and weaver.*

Title: “Muse” - Bronze Sculpture, Water Street patio

An eight-foot bronze sculpture, originally designed in woven and shaped willow that comes from the Little Harbour artist’s own property, is one of the first pieces of art



visitors see since it graces the Water Street patio upon entrance to the Culture Hub. “The moment they started talking about this my head stirred toward the concept of muse because they were combining a library and a theatre,” she says. “Seeing this multi-purpose building, what defines it for me is that it is a place to enjoy many facets of culture and the arts. Usually, when a call comes out you think it through and ask, how does my work relate to what they’re looking for. But in this case, it was an immediate gut reaction.” An unforgettable time of enjoying the beauty of nature at Merigomish’s Camp Geddie coupled with seeing ‘Winged Victory’ at the Louvre when the artist was in her early 20s influenced her artwork for the Culture Hub. Muse! is the outcome of these influences. “The title is subtle, but with the exclamation mark I wanted to identify with the verb ‘muse’ – the goddesses representing literature, poetry, music, theatre, and visual art. But there is also the verb ‘muse’ – a museum is a place where you muse. I thought about that in relation to the piece.” The performing arts theatre represents the artistic endeavours of the muses and the library portion is where musing would be done. The two combine in Muse!



Holly Carr, silk painter and performer.

Title: “Pictou Panorama” - Silk banner, Bulkhead over the Information Desk, Sunset Reading Room

This artist drew inspiration for the bulkhead painting from Pictou’s natural world. “I am creating whimsical imagery from the fields, forest and ocean, from sunrise to sunset. The natural world and its inhabitants are accessible to all who live in and visit Pictou.” The idea of creating a large-scale dramatic painting for the front entry was an exciting challenge that suits the artist’s multi-faceted career as a full-time artist. Her paintings are not only limited to gallery walls; she has created large-scale exhibits for museums and galleries and has painted silk banners up to 30 feet, that live with symphonies across Canada and the US. Her work has taken her to Hong Kong, Singapore and Peru and her third children’s book will be released this fall. The project that is most meaningful to her is her multi-media touring exhibit and app, Light in the Forest, which uses art to help destigmatize mental health for youth. “I love to take on new challenges and look forward to hanging my painting on the bulkhead at the new Culture Hub in Pictou.”

Karen LeBlanc, *textile artist and weaver.*

Title: “Primary Colours in the Hub” - Woven banners, Book Shelf End Panels, Sunset Reading Room

The ‘Sunset’ portion of the post and beam structure are alive with colour and texture that is installed on the ends of the library stacks, thanks to the three woven banners created by this artist. She drew her inspiration from another of her creations, a woven tapestry series of hangings for another public art project called ‘Primary Colours Weave the Future.’ “I love colours



and textures and the way people related to them.” The woven panels provide a colourful, vibrant landscape for library staff and visitors. LeBlanc, who has been weaving for more than 50 years, was excited about the opportunity to show her work. “As a fibre artist and weaver, I am limited to the types of calls for submissions that my work is suitable for.” Although she lives in New Brunswick, she has many family members living in Nova Scotia and loved the idea of creating artwork for the Pictou Culture Hub. “I am delighted to be part of such an amazing group of artists for this project.” Her work can be found at The Artisan District in Fredericton, NB, and at the Macdonald House – Art by Judith Brannen Gallery in Lawrencetown Beach, NS.

Doretta Groenendyk, *children's artist.*

Title: "Our Stories" - mural, Rainbow Room in the Children's Area

Creating a mural for the children's section of the library was tempting for this children's artist and she felt fortunate to answer the call for art submissions. During the COVID pandemic, she spent long nights illustrating the doors and walls of two local schools and saw how



artwork can enhance the atmosphere of places kids spend time in. "My work has a lot of whimsy; it is often narrative and can have an enchanted feeling. I've travelled a fair bit and also work in classrooms across the province so multiculturalism and inclusion are very important to me." The image for the Rainbow Room is an eight-foot mural of a playful scene of children riding birds that are flying high above the Pictou area. Each person is either reading, drawing, writing, playing an instrument or just connecting. "It will give a sense of wonder within the familiar. I'm hoping the colour will dance and that there will be little points of interest to smile at."

Katherine Knight, *photographer and documentary film director.*

Nick Rocha, *3D Visualizations.*

Title: “The Gooseboat of Merigomish” - Interactive 3D Gooseboat, Technology Area

Viewers will see a digital screen on the wall in the technology area. A strange boat – a century-old sneak boat from the collection of Maritime Museum of the Atlantic in Halifax – appears on the screen. What can this unique artifact tell us? A screen-based work on the Goose Boat is a first for the library. Picture this: A strange boat from another era drifts across the screen as the light changes and the water moves. You can



explore the boat or click on a URL which takes you to a website with interconnected stories related to the Goose Boat of Merigomish. Stories include: the boat, Brant Geese, Merigomish Harbour, the Migratory Bird Act Treaty, eelgrass then and now as well as social and cultural change. “This project is funded in part with assistance from the Social Sciences and Humanities Council of Canada.”

Katherine Knight is an associate professor of Visual Arts at York University in Toronto and an award-winning photographer known for evocative landscape-based photographic works with a strong narrative atmosphere. In 2000, Knight received the Duke and Duchess of York Prize from the Canada Council recognizing excellence in Photography.

Denise Lynch and Fenn Martin, *ceramics artists.*

Title: “Heart of the home – Clochaire” – Fireplace Area

A focal area of the culture hub is a ceramic fireplace (clochaire in Gaelic, which means stone builders) that was designed, fired and built by the two ceramic artists who have a history of collaboration. This ‘hearts of the home’ represents a homestead hearth of the early settlers of Pictou County who spent their seasons clearing, cultivating, planting and harvesting. “The fireplace was a refuge at the end of the work day for them and the hearth was a place for quiet reflection and boisterous storytelling while preparing and sharing meals.” This custom-shaped fireplace and surrounding area also boasts a connected stone bench seat. From the hub’s entry, the fireplace will look like a traditional rock-built hearth consisting of an



asymmetrical seating area and a twisting rock chimney. Echoing the 18th century traditional hearth, the sides of the fireplace extend to the floor which has a ceramic hearth pad that extends into the library seating area. This creates a contemplative area to sit alone or facilitate a small, cozy group. Closer inspection reveals that each “rock” surface contains unique hand-made textures. These formal repetitions in the ‘rocks’ weave a story of labour and landscape. Patterns and textures were rendered from actual wheat, rocks, trees, and ‘found’ metal. The Ship Hector Society crafted a custom mantle from hurricane Fiona reclaimed trees. “This will be a tangible connection to an important cultural artefact. Most significantly, this beam nestled in the hearth will provide library patrons a visual semblance of our community’s past material culture.”



Linda Johns, *artist, author and poet.*

**Titles: “Moment of Truth”, “Elemental Life”,
“Hush” – Book Shelf End Panels, Sunrise Reading Room**

As patrons enter the ‘Sunrise area’ on the lower level of the library, from the waterfront patio next to the towards Pictou Harbour, they see shelving panels that feature images of the natural world and include writing of an environmental and holistic theme regarding nature and humanity’s interaction with it. The artist calls them poem paintings. “I’ve done about



120 poem paintings and it’s just something I’ve developed myself that really moves me a lot.” She hopes her pieces will make people stop, look and think. “I was delighted to find out they were interested in my work because it’s a little controversial. They are words and paintings interwoven. So the words don’t explain the images and the images don’t illustrate the words, but they work equally together.” This artist is known for her powerful metaphorical paintings grounded in images from the natural world, its creatures, cycles and energies. Her prose writing has been largely based on nature notes and diary entries, with separate small editioned books devoted to her poetry, which is also inspired by her love and concern for the environment. “For the library I am creating three poem paintings and they will be reproduced by a special technique on metal and they will be on the ends of book cases so they’ll be indestructible.” The originals will be framed and used elsewhere.

Teresa MacKenzie, *artist and illustrator.*

Title: “Early Views of Water Street” – Wall Mural, Sunrise Reading Room

A watercolour streetscape of the north and south facades, from Coleraine Street to Market Street in Pictou, is provided by this artist. Compelled by historic architecture, this artist was inspired by Pictou’s built heritage. “The elaborate ornate Victorian homes, the solid stone and brick businesses to the vernacular structures. They all have a story to tell of the people who built them, lived in them and the centuries they have witnessed come and go. Pictou is fortunate to still have many historic buildings.” Her goal with the library art piece is to depict a whimsical streetscape compilation dating from late the Victorian to early Edwardian era, a booming time in Pictou’s history. “I’m hoping people will enjoy being able to identify some structures and filling in the blanks of what once stood in the vacant areas or new builds that we see today.” Having her art in the new Culture Hub is exciting for this artist. “It’s very special to me to be able to be a part of the building’s transformation. It is going to be a very wonderful place for our community with many new memories to be made.”



Benoît Paradis, painter, artist.

Title: “Pictou Colours” - Hanging banners, Sunrise Reading Room

Looking out towards the water, suspended from the rafters of the Sunrise Reading Room are hanging banners featuring well-known locations in Pictou Town and Pictou West by artist Benoît Paradis. He brings bold colours and stylized backgrounds together to feature places we all know and love. Originally from Montréal, QC, the artist moved to Pictou



in 2022 after retiring. “All the time I was working I took art and film animation classes part time, at night and on the weekends.” He grew up with a pencil in his hand as a medium of expression. Studies in mechanical design drawing, followed by a career in aerospace design, did not satisfy his artistic thirst. He tries to recreate the beauty of the world around him, giving it bold colours and expressions and creating what he refers to as, ‘whimsical’ skies. He is inspired by nature, beauty and life in general as he uses his love of colour to create vibrant works of art. For this art project, he created six colourful paintings that were then transferred onto banners to hang throughout the library.

Carolyn Ritchie Bedford, artist, sculptor, poet.

Title: “Keys” - Painting, Community Meeting Room

Carolyn Ritchie Bedford loves to talk about her art and tell the stories behind her work. A 50x50 painting by her hangs in the community meeting room and the piece portrays the writer’s creative process through art and poetry. Viewers are sure to spend plenty of time admiring it as they try to spot the hidden meanings and subtexts. Her inspiration for the work came from an



old Remington typewriter she acquired from an antiques shop that she knew she just had to have. “I fell in love with it and I said ‘I’m not leaving without the Remington!’” She began a portrait series featuring that typewriter and using a local woman as model. “The whole premise for the piece, it all comes from that typewriter.” The painting features a woman from the 1950s sitting at a typewriter amongst stacks and shelves of books. A discerning viewer will spot a fountain pen, a cup of coffee, a notebook – all accoutrements a writer from that era would have beside her as she works. “That was the idea that I wanted to get across: Come from the past. Decades ago, people became passionate and wrote with a pen or older typewriters and made stories, knowledge, and excitement, entertainment, and put them on the shelves. It’s not just now – it was also before, and it’s going to go on despite digital and AI. So I wanted to say that.”

Kiva-Marie Belt, *multidisciplinary artist, designer, horticulturalist.*

Title: “Pollinator Garden” – Harbour side entrance

Adjacent to the patio is a pollinator garden with a literary twist designed by this up-and-coming artist and horticulturalist. She was assisted in this project by Scotiabank Giller Prize Award winning author and poet Johanna Skibsrud and Pictou-Antigonish Regional Library’s Trecia Schell. “This project will be a wildlife-friendly garden with a



particular theme of ephemera and ephemerality. Ephemera refers to items that were originally meant to be used and then discarded, but later take on significance as collectors’ items or for their sentimental value. More broadly, ephemeral experiences are those which cannot last forever, so they must be enjoyed in the present moment.” In the pollinator garden are plants that bloom at different seasons, so it will be a different experience every time someone visits. Many of the plants are native wildflowers of Nova Scotia, most of which are at risk of extinction due to loss of habitat.

“These plants are living ephemera, things which society has discarded, but some choose to preserve because we believe in their importance.” There are also items like piggy banks and teacups in the garden, chosen for their whimsical nature and to recognise the emotional value of such objects. A wishing tree gives people a chance to tie strips of paper with their wishes onto the branches. The wishes may be carried away on the wind or as the paper naturally degrades, as a tangible representation of both the temporary nature of all things and the persistence of memory.

Thekla Altmann, poet and writer.

Title: “Hub” - Poetry, Jitney Trail Boardwalk

Stop and enjoy the scenery when you stroll along the boardwalk near the sea stairs where there are inspiring words to guide you, written by this poet and writer.

The interactive poem, etched into plaques that are attached to eight separate beams, tells a story as you walk forward or backwards, or you can enjoy each stanza individually. The artist was inspired by “that

amazing view across the bay and how emotive that is, how that little piece of Pictou connects not just the water to the land, but it connects to the ocean and the shores beyond, as well as to the whole of the continent. It is a big part of the fact that we’re just one big planet, we all belong together.”

Altmann is excited about poetry being accessible and interactive, and feels strongly about celebrating word art in and around the library, where it reflects the joy of creativity, culture, and coming together. She connects that art with what she created here.

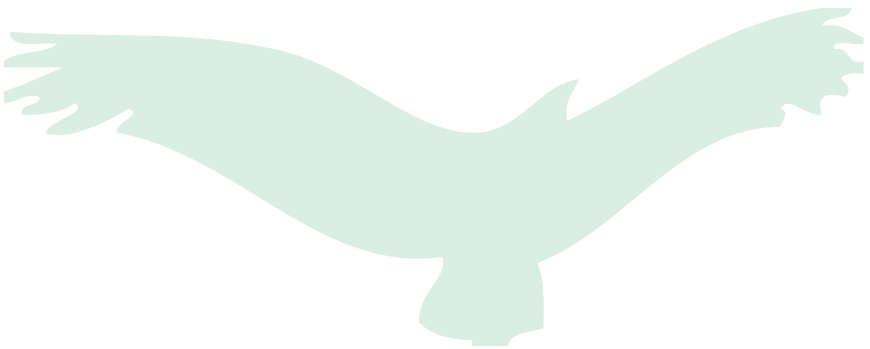
“It is a very special spot because it connects you to everything while rooting you in this one little place... I wanted to write something that roots you in this spot and branches you out in the world at the same time.”

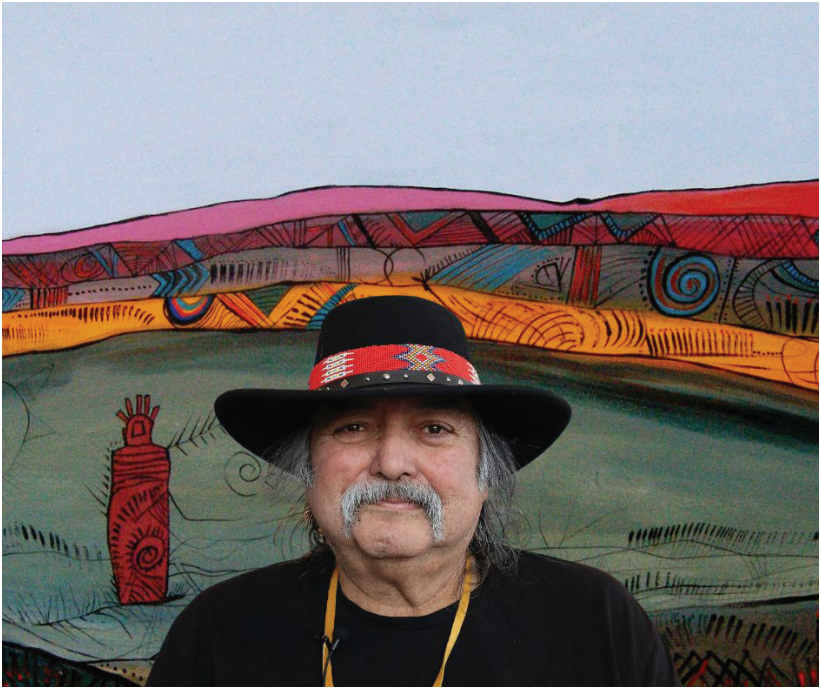


**Alan Syliboy, Mi'kmaq artist, musician,
author and illustrator.**

**Title: “Wolverine and Little Thunder on the Water”
– Steel Sculpture, Jitney Trail Boardwalk**

Alan Syliboy and Darren Martin created this major piece of contemporary art, a fusion of tradition and innovation, which is located outside the Culture Hub, next to the harbour and the Jitney Trail. This is a representation of Syliboy’s story of best friends Wolverine and Little Thunder (from his book) and will be life-sized figures of Wolverine and Little Thunder in a canoe using traditional fishing implements. Created from Corten steel that was cut by artisan Darren Martin, with various treatments to create a myriad of textures and intricate patterns and painted the bright, vibrant colours that are Syliboy’s signature style; this art piece is also illuminated. The characters are chasing a giant eel – 25 feet long. The piece can be viewed from the Hub, the waterfront, and the harbour. A short, animated film of the story are also provided so everyone in the Culture Hub can relate that story to book, film and public art. Syliboy has been creating his whole life. “I don’t ever recall a time when I wasn’t being creative – I was always drawing or making images since I was a child. I always made some kind of art.”







deCoste Culture Hub
99 Water Street, Pictou, Nova Scotia



Murray Family Public Library

PICTOU-ANTIGONISH REGIONAL LIBRARY

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