

Opinion

MUSKOKA MOSAIC

Introducing Linda Smith

BY PAULA BOON

Linda Smith thrives on variety, in both her art and her life.

At her Limberlost studio, Smith paints intricate images on desks, bird houses, side tables, Muskoka chairs, bread boxes, and more. "You can paint on anything," she says. "I have so many ideas. There are too many things to do and not enough time."

Smith also offers classes to people who want to learn the art of decorative painting. The sessions started in 1995 at her kitchen table and now take place several times a week in Smith's large studio, which was completed in 2001. She shares her expertise on Mondays at the Dorset Recreation Centre as well.

Occasionally she offers a workshop with a specific end product in mind, but usually her students choose what they feel like working on. "In all I teach 32 people. I love it," she says. "The people are amazing. They're not just students; they become friends. It's fun. Everyone comes and we have a great time."

Being part of the Artists of the Limberlost tour provides Smith with another opportunity to connect with others through her art. Now in its second year, the tour is a weekend-long event in mid-August where eight area artists open their studios to the public and invite guest artists to join them. She says, "It's such a diverse group, and it's perfect that we're all on one road. We had about 1,000 people last year." This year Smith's guests will be needle felting artist Sherry Peddie and water colourist Terry Gill.

Born and raised in Milton, Smith married her high school sweetheart, Fred. "He lived down the street from me, and we started going out when I was 16," she says. They married about five years later and had two children, a daughter and a son who are now in their early 20s.

The couple always enjoyed snowmobiling in Muskoka, and when Smith's husband lost his job in 1990, they decided to look at property around Huntsville. "The kids were five and three at the time, so it was the perfect time to move," Smith says. They bought land on Limberlost Road and moved there in 1991.

Around that same time, Smith's husband began to require dialysis because of a problem with a valve between his kidney and bladder. "It was good that he built a lot of my pieces," Smith says. "That kept him busy when he couldn't work."

For about twelve years, Fred had to travel to Huntsville hospital three days a week for dialysis. Finally, home dialysis became available through St. Michael's Hospital in Toronto, and the new procedure has made a big difference. "Now it takes four hours a night and he can do it on his own," Smith says. "It does tie you down a bit. We don't go anywhere on vacation. That's sometimes tough, but lots of people have it worse than us."



Many people around Dwight will also know Smith as a school bus driver. Since 1993, she has hit the roads twice a day from September to June to ferry her charges to school. Currently, her route takes her to St. Dominic's in Bracebridge, which means she has to be out of the house by 6:45 in the morning.

"The kids on my bus are really good. I have no complaints at all. They're excellent kids," she says. Split shifts don't bother Smith, who says her painting and classes fit in nicely between school bus runs. She has also worked at the LCBO for the past three years, part-time through the school year and full-time in the summer.

Smith says she has never regretted for a minute coming to Huntsville. "The people are friendly, and I like having an old downtown," she says. "We moved from Milton because it was losing that small-town feeling."

Looking out the window at the lush trees behind her house, she says, "This place is just so beautiful. You really don't need a vacation when you live here."

Thanks to Catherine O'Mara for suggesting that Linda Smith be profiled.

LETTERS

Thanks to all the wonderful volunteer playground installers

I just wanted to thank all of the amazing volunteers who gave up their weekend to help install the new playground at River Mill Park.

This project has been in the planning stages for a long time now and, when called upon, our community was there to lend a hand. We had a fabulous weekend to install the playground which was done solely by volunteers who were amazing. Even the rain could not slow them down.

It is a community like ours, who can come together when needed, that makes me feel proud to live here.

A special thank you to Mark Flynn and Brian Crozier, from Parks and Recreation, who have been working on this project for a long time. Finally there is an amazing playground that all our children can come and play at with their family and friends. What a great place River Mill Park is becoming! So many people have donated time, energy and money to ensure our children have a safe place to play and I think they should be proud of what they have given back to our community.

I just wanted to say thank you to: Cindy Boese, Suzanne Willett, Crystal Payne, Kevin Estey, Hayley Birkhimer, Lynda Cranney, Janice Markle, Karen and Larry Ross, Evan Collins, Sue and Tim Fawcett, Derek

Punchard and his two amazing boys, Tony Carera, Claude Doughty, Gunnar Christianson, Tina and Andre Boysen, John Boysen, Kelly Farnsworth, Roberta and Rob Alexander, Dan Campbell, Glenn and Marilyn Jarvis, Ken McDougall, Brian Halden, and Amanda and Mr. Watts. It was such a busy weekend. I hope I remembered everyone!

Also, a special thanks to Tim Hortons for supplying our morning coffee, Muskoka crane for lifting our 4,000 lb. climbing rocks, CRS Muskoka Rental for the bobcat and supplies, Preston Mechanical for supplying us with a delicious lunch that Homelife Muskoka cooked up on the grill, Home Depot for all the awesome donations and volunteers, Yogs for the much-appreciated ice cream break, Twins Pizza for supplying us with an unplanned dinner (as we ran later than planned), Gunnar Christianson of the Huntsville Akido Club for doing all the welding of our playground, and Mayor Doughty and Andre Boysen for their great bobcat tractor skills to spread the fibar around the equipment.

Thanks again, everyone! What a great playground for a great town!

Jennifer Campbell
Parents for Playgrounds

Making the case for a presumed consent organ donation system

MPPs Peter Kormos and Cheri DiNovo have recently brought the subject of organ donation to the forefront of the transplant issue. The fact that we have a dismal record in this province (and throughout Canada) for organ donation speaks volumes for the failure of signing one's licence or donor card as a method of making one's wishes to donate known.

Any one of us could suffer organ failure and require a life-saving organ transplant. It would seem that once we understand the value of organ donation, there would be a line-up to sign donor cards, but it hasn't worked that way. Even blood donors are in short supply despite the relative ease and the inarguable benefits of doing so which are communicated to us via endless educational campaigns.

I'm not sure what it is about us that causes us to embrace a worthy idea only after we or someone we love is afflicted, but that seems to be the way it works. I don't believe that we

lack compassion; maybe it's just a procrastination fault. If that is the case, a presumed consent system will allow heel-draggers to have their unspoken wishes met while those who truly object for any reason (which is their right) will be highly motivated to opt out. For the rest of us who recognize the bureaucratic flaws inherent in the current system, 'presumed consent' is hands down the most life-affirming, caring, cost-effective, efficacious (when paired with an effective opt-out registry) way to go.

As the Canadian Blood Services slogan says, "Blood...it's in you to give." The same holds true for organs. It's the right thing to do in light of the numbers of our fellow citizens who needlessly die each year while on a donor transplant list. I think most Ontarians would agree. Now we need our government to act swiftly on those feelings of solidarity.

Dale Peacock
Huntsville

The NDP has a better plan

Canadians are concerned about the environment. They know that climate change is the greatest challenge facing the global community in the 21st century. And they know that unless we take concrete action to deal with this crisis today our kids and grandkids will face an even more serious crisis. We don't have much time. We must put in place proven and effective mechanisms to reduce greenhouse gas emissions.

Jack Layton and the NDP have been fighting hard to get action on the environment. In the spring Canada took a huge step forward when the House of Commons passed Layton's Climate Change Accountability Act (C-377). This made Canada the first country in the world to adopt Kyoto-plus legislation with science-based targets to reduce greenhouse-gas emissions by 80 per cent (from 1990 levels) by 2050. This goal must be achieved if we are to avoid the dangerous two-degree increase in average global temperature that scientists warn us about. To get there, we need to have the right mechanisms in place to reduce pollution, and to ensure that greener consumer choices become more available and affordable.

Lately political parties have been busy promoting their plans for tackling climate change. The NDP welcomes the debate. We're glad to see the Conservatives and Liberals putting forward ideas, but unfortunately they both come up short.

Both the Harper and Dion plans give industry a continued unlimited licence to pollute. Under Mr. Harper's plan only the so-called 'intensity' of pollution is regulated, not the absolute quantity. The Dion plan puts a tax, but no restrictions, on the pollution emitted, allowing large profitable corporations to continue to pollute as much as they want.

Jack Layton and the NDP have a better way to tackle climate change and a better plan for reducing our carbon emissions.

Under the NDP's plan, pollution reductions would be legislated each year through a cap-and-trade system. This way Canada's greenhouse gas emission targets and our international obligations can finally be met. The NDP's plan will legislate an annual cap, lowered each year, on the amount of carbon the big polluters can emit. Such a plan, advocated by the United Nations, the European Union, Senator Obama, Governor Schwarzenegger, Ontario, Quebec, Manitoba and British Columbia, will help ensure that Canada reaches its pollution reduction targets in the short- and long-term.

Each and every day, individual Canadians take steps to reduce their carbon footprint. Everyone can, and must, play a role. But under the Harper and Dion plans, big polluters are left unchecked. While less than one-sixth of greenhouse gases come from individuals, over 50 per cent of all greenhouse gas emissions come from approximately 700 of Canada's most polluting companies. It's time they paid their fair share. Under the NDP's plan for the environment, subsidies to big oil that were started by the Liberals and continued under the Conservatives

will stop and big emitters will be forced to contribute to helping green solutions become more available and affordable.

Some of the companies that have benefited the most from Conservative and Liberal subsidies and tax breaks are the ones developing projects in the Alberta tar sands. Yet greenhouse gas emissions from tar sands production are three times those of conventional oil and gas production. The tar sands are on track to become Canada's largest single emitter of greenhouse gases. But the Harper plan supports unfettered tar sand development. And Stéphane Dion thinks we shouldn't even try to stop it. While he was environment minister he said that "there is no minister of the environment on Earth who can stop this (oil sands development) from going forward, because there is too much money in it." Jack Layton has the courage to stand up to the big polluters. Under the NDP's plan for the environment no new tar sands development would be approved until cumulative environmental, social and health impacts are assessed and plans are in place to mitigate their short- and long-term effects.

An effective plan to combat climate change must also have proactive measures to make it easier and more affordable for Canadians to choose green solutions. But the Harper plan fails to make any investment in green solutions and Dion's "revenue-neutral" plan has no new money for these investments. Under the NDP's plan, the billions of dollars in revenue generated from the big polluters would all be invested in initiatives such as public transit, home and building retrofit programs, a green car strategy and it would go towards making green consumer products - like energy-efficient furnaces and appliances - more affordable.

A key area of green investment is alternative energy. Canada could be a world leader in harnessing clean and renewable energy, but Conservative and Liberal governments have not prepared the move from the old energy economy to the new energy economy.

The NDP's better plan would invest in wind, solar, and tidal power, and it would take concrete action to build the east-west power grid, so that all Canadians can use the clean energy being produced in provinces like Manitoba and Quebec.

When it comes to the environment, Canadians are leading their politicians. They understand that there is an urgent need to put in place an effective plan to tackle climate change. That means putting in place mechanisms that have been proven to be effective in reducing greenhouse gas emissions. It also means investing in green solutions so that we can build a sustainable Canada for future generations. Jack Layton's plan does both of these things. It's a better way for Canada and it's a better plan for the environment.

Nathan Cullen,
NDP environmental critic,
Joanne Boulding,
NDP candidate Parry Sound - Muskoka



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