

Artist invites you to the Library with a different kind of 'TED' talk



By Brock Weir

Quick - how many words can you think of that end in 'ted'?

For local artist Ona Kingdon, hopefully the possibilities are endless - and, so far, she has amassed a long list of 'ted' words to keep her going.

'Ted' - as in teddy bear - forms the centrepiece of her new exhibition, now on display at the Aurora Public Library. Teddy bears are very much the focus of her watercolour series which looks at the emotional attachments and memories that can be evoked from the classic toy, each emotion and memory ending with those three important letters.

'I started painting the Ted series about three years ago just to find a local way to fund the international exhibitions I do, but it took off internationally,' says Ms. Kingdon. 'They have been bought in the U.S., New Zealand, France, the U.K., and several in Canada as well. It completely took off and I think that is because everyone loves a teddy bear and has a connection to it in some way, whether they had one as a child or their children have one. Everyone can connect with the paintings in some way.'

When Ms. Kingdon starts a painting, she often finds it a struggle to find titles. The teddy bear came first, but when it came to crunch time to pin down a title for the first in the series when it was entered into an exhibition, inspiration struck and 'ted' was born.

'I think of the feelings and emotions tied up in it and then the painting sort of evolves from it,' she explains. 'I never start with a photo or an actual still life set up, or people. I start with the idea. After the first couple of paintings I did, people said I should do more and it got me thinking maybe I was onto a winner here and I just kept going. Now people say I will probably be doing 'teds' for the rest of my life!'

'If I think of a 'ted' word, I write it down. I have a long list of possible ted words I can use and then it just depends on the situation what I will do.'

The first in the 'ted' series is called 'SupportTED' and a passion for art has certainly supported Ms. Kingdon since she was a child. Her first memory, she says, dates from when she was 18 months old. Her mother, a drama teacher, often brought her along to theatrical performances, keeping her busy with a pen and paper. During a rehearsal in a Victorian English theatre, she let go of her pen and it rolled all the way down the incline of the orchestra. It caught their attention - and hers.

'I have always loved art and I love the ability to connect with people through the art,' she says. 'I always have my own thoughts as I am painting it, but I just love exhibitions and being that quiet mouse in the corner so I can sit and watch people come up to the paintings and tell their stories and tell each other how they connect with the work. I think that is what gives me the incentive to carry

on.

?To me when you go to some art and they'll say, 'that's a pretty picture.' They're not forming that connection and that is what I really enjoy in putting an exhibition together. People will tell me so much about when they saw the painting and how much it reminded them of this and that and the other. That is lovely. It's not just the physical exhibitions but the societal ones as well.?