

Lang highlights ?drastic change? in the far north through the stroke of a paintbrush



By Brock Weir

2002 was meant to be a watershed year for Bancroft-based artist Linda Lang.

Passionate about Canada's far north, the King Township native was a studio assistant with Doris McCarthy when she had the opportunity to accompany her accomplished boss on an art tour of the Arctic, following an ice breaker.

For her, it was a ?once in a lifetime? trip? that has since turned into 12 return engagements!

Her love of the north began with childhood trips to the McMichael Gallery to see the famous works of Lawren Harris. It planted the seeds which, in adulthood, turned into the healthiest kind of ?addiction.?

?It was just beautiful and then I met the Inuit people,? she says. ?I was amazed at their survival techniques and I started exploring and learning about the land. In 2006, I got involved with the International Polar Year and in 2007 I really started seeing the changes of climate change.?

It is this change Ms. Lang reflects in her paintings, in her new exhibition: ?Journey to Hope ? A Decade of Arctic Expeditions.?

Over her many journeys, Ms. Lang fell in love with Auyuittuq National park, a preserve on Baffin Island. After several trips to the park to take in its beauty, she noticed drastic changes with each passing year. The word ?Auyuittuq? means ?land that never melts? and suddenly the park was not living up to its traditional Inuit moniker. Through her vibrant paintings reminiscent of Harris and the Group of Seven, Ms. Lang says she hopes to highlight the problems of climate change through a different medium than news stories, scientific journals, and impassioned political speeches.

?This is an area of Canada we know little about and it was really important to tell the stories of climate change and the stories of how our actions are affecting the Inuit people,? she says. ?I started telling these stories in my art. In as little as three years, I have seen entire mountains melt. Polar bears that used to go out onto the sea ice and hunt for seals are now climbing bird cliffs in search of food. I think our biggest misconception is our actions don't affect anybody else.

?To see that progression in a decade is a little extreme. Down here, things tend to change slowly that climate change doesn't seem real. I don't want to give people all the scientific information, but just share my experiences and they can decide how they feel about it and whether they feel strong enough that they are willing to change their lives.?

?Journey To Hope? opens this week at the Aurora Cultural Centre, running through March 15. Ms. Lang will hold an artists' reception on Saturday, February 15 from 1 ? 4 p.m. to explain her work, as well as workshops on Inuit stencil painting on March 11. For more information, visit www.auroraculturalcentre.ca.