

NORTHERN THREADS

Issue 10 | September 2026



Photo Credit Merissa Mills

www.photomillphotography.ca

The First Thread... Reflections From The Editor

by Karrie O'Connor



There is something about the coming of fall in the North.

You can feel it before you can quite see it.

The mornings are just a little cooler. The evenings arrive a little sooner. The air carries that unmistakable hint that summer, as much as we may try to hold onto it, is beginning to loosen its grip.

And then comes Labour Day weekend — the unofficial last hurrah of summer.

Across Northern Ontario, it is a weekend filled with one last trip to the camp, one last swim, one last fire by the lake. There are coolers to empty, trailers to pack, boats to pull from the water and cottages to close up for another season. There is often a little reluctance in all of it.

Because we know what comes next.

September.

For many of us, September has always meant a return to routine. The back-to-school season seems to take on a life of its own in the North. Suddenly, the stores are filled with backpacks, sneakers, lunch containers, notebooks and pencils. Families make those familiar trips to the next largest city — sometimes a two-, three-, even five-hour drive — to find everything on the school list.

It becomes an adventure in itself.

There is excitement in the car. Maybe a stop for lunch. A little shopping for ourselves mixed in with the school supplies. And eventually, after what seems like an impossibly long day, the drive home with bags piled in the back and the realization that summer vacation is officially coming to an end.

For kids, September brings a whole different kind of anticipation.

Who will my teacher be?

Will I like them?

Who is going to be in my class?

Will my best friend be there?

And sometimes, the harder questions come quietly.

What if my friend moved away over the summer?

What if things have changed?

What if I don't know anyone?

The North is a place where people come and go. Families move for work, for school, for a new opportunity or simply because life takes them somewhere else. At the same time, new families arrive, bringing new stories, new traditions and new faces to our communities.

For a child standing at the door of a new classroom, that can feel enormous.

Yet somewhere between the nervousness and excitement, friendships begin.

A new kid becomes the kid you sit beside.

A stranger becomes the person you share your lunch with.

A new teacher becomes the one you remember years later.

And somehow, without realizing it, another thread is woven into the story of our lives.

That is what I love about September.

It is a season of beginnings disguised as endings.

Summer is ending, but something new is beginning.

The long, unstructured days of summer give way to schedules. Alarm clocks replace sleeping in. Hockey bags will soon find their way back into vehicles. Dance classes, music lessons, sports practices and community activities begin filling the calendar again.

The pace changes.

For those of us who have spent the summer camping, September can feel particularly significant. There is something bittersweet about driving home from the campground for the final time, knowing that the next visit may not be until spring.

The tent comes down.

The camp chairs are packed away.

The last marshmallow is toasted.

And the lake, which has been the backdrop to so many summer memories, becomes quieter.

But the North doesn't simply go from summer to fall overnight.

It gives us a little transition.

The leaves begin their transformation. The mornings become crisp. The heat of the afternoon isn't quite as relentless. You find yourself reaching for a sweater when you head outside in the evening.

And then one morning, you notice it.

That smell.

That unmistakable scent of autumn in the air.

Maybe there is a little colour beginning to appear in the trees. Maybe the mist hangs over the lake a little longer in the morning. Maybe you hear the crunch of the first fallen leaves beneath your feet.

You realize that fall has arrived.

There is something wonderfully familiar about this rhythm.

Every year, we do it again.

We say goodbye to summer.

We send children back to school.

We return to work, routines and busy calendars.

We watch our communities wake up after the slower pace of summer.

And yet, every September is different because we are different.

The child who nervously walks into a new classroom this year may discover a lifelong friendship.

The teenager starting a new school may find their confidence.

The parent making that long back-to-school shopping trip may realize just how quickly their little one is growing.

And the person driving home from camp may find themselves carrying a summer's worth of memories that will become stories told around the fire for years to come.

That is the beauty of living in the North.

Our lives are connected by these shared seasonal rhythms.

We know what it means to make the long drive for something we can't find in our own town. We know the excitement of a new school year. We know the feeling of packing up camp. We know the first cool evening of September and the last warm afternoon when we realize summer is almost gone.

These ordinary moments become threads.

And those threads connect us.

As I write this first reflection for our September issue of Northern Threads, I find myself thinking about exactly that.

A magazine is, in many ways, a collection of threads.

Every story is a thread.

Every person we meet is a thread.

Every community, business, artist, volunteer, student, parent, elder and neighbour adds something to the larger story of who we are in the North.

Some threads are bright and colourful.

Some are worn and weathered.

Some are barely visible until they are woven together with others.

But each one matters.

So as we head into another September, I invite you to slow down for a moment and notice the threads around you.

Notice the child walking nervously into school.
Notice the new family unpacking boxes next door.
Notice the business preparing for another busy season.

Notice the friend who came home after spending the summer away.

Notice the changing trees, the cooler mornings and the familiar rhythm returning to our communities.

And maybe, before we rush headfirst into fall, take one last look back at summer.

Hold onto the memories.

The campfires.

The road trips.

The lake.

The laughter.

The people.

Because summer may be ending, but the stories we made during it are only beginning to become part of who we are.

Welcome to September.

Welcome to a new season.

And welcome to the next thread.

BUILDING ON THREADS

PODCAST • SPEAKERS BUREAU • PUBLICATIONS

STORIES THAT INSPIRE. VOICES THAT EMPOWER. IMPACT THAT LASTS.

Two books. Two journeys.

One thread of hope.

Butterflies From Heaven

A heartfelt children's book that gently explores love, memory and the magic of butterflies from heaven.

WRITTEN BY KARRIE EMMS

Threads

WEAVING US THROUGH STRUGGLE AND STRENGTH

A raw and honest journey through life's hardest moments and the strength we discover along the way.

BY KARRIE EMMS

Perfect for gifting. Perfect for you. | SHOP NOW buildingonthreads.ca

Follow the journey @buildingonthreads

Painting the Land: Anong Beam and the Art of Making Colour From Place

by KARRIE O’CONNOR



There's a moment in every artist's life when the materials stop being tools and start feeling like home. For Anong Beam, that moment began in childhood, on Manitoulin Island, watching her parents grind stone into pigment.

Today, Beam is the founder of Beam Paints — a 100% Anishnaabe Kwe-owned company based in M'Chigeeng First Nation that makes professional-grade watercolours from the land itself. No plastic. No solvents. Just colour, harvested from northern earth.

"The paints my parents use are made differently," Anong said in a conversation with CBC Arts, reflecting on the moment she realized she wanted to follow a different path. As a child, she learned to gather local hematite and other earth pigments with her parents, celebrated artists Carl and Ann Beam. Those early lessons became the foundation of a business that would eventually make history.

Beam Paints is recognized as the world's first plastic-free, Indigenous-owned paint manufacturer. Its signature "paintstones" — handmade watercolour pans that look more like small river stones than tubes of pigment — are crafted from ingredients that read like a love letter to the North: Manitoulin maple sap, honey, and lightfast pigments sourced from local stone.

Each colour carries place in its name and in its body. The paints capture the greys of Lake Huron, the deep greens of island cedar, the warm ochres of northern soil. To paint with them is to hold a little piece of the landscape in your hand.

For Anong, the work is about more than beautiful paint. It's about healing a relationship with both art and land.

"This is where I want to be," she said. "Where I can be close to the land and my family and my community." The company employs local community members in production and distribution, weaving economic opportunity into the fabric of M'Chigeeng First Nation.

It's also a deliberate act of cultural resurgence. Traditional Anishinaabe knowledge informs everything — from the harvesting of pigments to the alchemy of turning sap, honey and stone

into colour. Ancient techniques meet modern standards: the paints are tested for lightfastness and performance, trusted by professional artists across the country and around the world.

"Everything is non-toxic," the company explains. "You can paint with your fingers, your brush, or your breath. The colours are saturated, luminous and completely safe."

The innovation hasn't gone unnoticed. Beam Paints has been featured by CBC Arts, profiled by FedNor as a northern success story, and celebrated by environmental organizations for proving that a premium creative product can be both Indigenous-led and completely plastic-free.

But ask Anong what matters most, and the an-

swer is probably simpler than the accolades suggest: showing that you can build something meaningful from where you come from.

Northern Ontario is full of entrepreneurs who dream bigger than their geography — but Beam Paints is different. It's a business that doesn't just happen to be from the North; it's made of the North. The water in its paints fell on Manitoulin. The pigments were gathered from its shores. The hands that mix them belong to its people.

In a world of mass-produced art supplies shipped from warehouses, Beam Paints offers something increasingly rare: a product with a true origin story. Every paintstone is a reminder that the most honest materials are the ones you gather yourself, and that the land we live on is not just scenery — it's a source of colour, culture and connection.

As Anong put it: "I want to make things that make people feel connected to the land."

Mission accomplished.

Bring a piece of Manitoulin home with you.

Beam Paints' handmade paintstones, watercolour pans and artist materials are available online at beampaints.com — with shipping across Canada and beyond.

Follow along with their creative process on Instagram @beampaints and on Facebook, and see how paint made from the land is inspiring artists everywhere.

Support Indigenous-owned northern creativity. Every colour has a story — and every purchase helps M'Chigeeng First Nation's story keep growing.

photomill photography

the ordinary, reframed.

Let's make something meaningful together.

Wedding | Events | Outdoor | Portraits

Couples • Families • Motherhood • Styled shoots

LGBTQ2S+ inclusive | Body-positive | Open to creative collaborations

Whether it's a styled shoot or a cozy in-home session, I'll guide you every step of the way to create something that feels like you.

www.photomillphotography.ca

WELCOME TO WELLNESS

A Monthly Health Feature

Sponsored by:



705-303-8787 www.mlhealthcare.ca info@mlhealthcare.ca



Your Feet Carry Your Independence—Are You Taking Care of Them?

By KARRIE O’CONNOR



Roxanne Laforest is an Advanced Footcare Nurse at Maple Leaf Home Healthcare Photo: Submitted

Many of us take foot care for granted, overlooking the very part of the body responsible for carrying our full weight every day. We casually say our feet are tired, decide we simply need to put them up, or jokingly ask our partner for a foot rub—usually with mixed results.

But what can proper foot care actually do for us? More importantly, what might we miss when we fail to look after our little piggies?

1. Changes in the feet can sometimes offer early clues about health conditions that have not yet been diagnosed. Tingling or numbness may be easy to dismiss after a long day, but the shape of our nails or persistent swelling could be signs of underlying health issues.

2. “The ankle bone’s connected to the knee bone, the knee bone’s connected to the...” Well, you get the picture.

Our feet absorb shock and carry our full weight with every step—an impressive job for something we often ignore until it starts complaining. Problems such as bunions, fallen arches, stiff joints, or persistent aches may not seem serious at first, but they can subtly change the way we walk without us even noticing.

That small adjustment can create a domino effect throughout the body, contributing to hip misalignment, lower-back discomfort, and chronic knee pain. In other words, when your feet are unhappy, they have a way of making sure the rest of your body hears about it.

3. We know our bodies are connected by an intricate communication system—much like an old-fashioned telephone operator’s switchboard, only with fewer tangled cords and no one saying, “Please hold.”

Our feet play an important role in that system. They contain thousands of nerve endings that constantly send information to the brain about pressure, movement, and the surface beneath us. This ongoing conversation helps us maintain our balance, adjust our steps, and avoid falls.

Poorly fitting shoes or improper insoles can interfere with the way our feet sense and respond to the ground. This can increase the risk of trips and falls, particularly for older adults. In other words, your shoes should support you—not secretly plot your downfall.

4. Think of yourself like one of your child’s or grandchild’s video-game characters: foot pain slowly drains your energy bar—and, much like that game’s repetitive music, it can wear on your last nerve.

When our feet hurt, even simple movements require more effort. Keeping them comfortable and pain-free reduces strain on the muscles and joints, making everyday activities easier and less exhausting. You may even have enough energy to put a little more distance between yourself and the grandchild who is home sick from school and has been calling your name every three minutes

5. We often think of foot care as a physical health issue, but our feet and mental health are more connected than we realize. Ongoing foot pain can limit mobility, reduce activity, and make it harder to participate in the things we enjoy. Over time, this can lead to isolation, increased stress, anxiety, and even depression.

But here’s the surprising part—mental health can affect foot health too. Amazing, isn’t it? Our bodies are constantly communicating, even when we wish they would stop sending us notifications!

Stress and anxiety can create muscle tension, change the way we walk, and contribute to foot discomfort. Taking care of your feet isn’t just about happy toes—it’s about supporting your overall well-being and helping you keep moving forward.

Take the Next Step Toward Healthier Feet

Your feet carry you through every step of life—so they deserve a little care and attention along the way. Whether you’re dealing with

ongoing discomfort, changes in your feet, or simply want to stay ahead of potential concerns, Maple Leaf Home Healthcare is here to help.

At Maple Leaf Home Healthcare our advanced foot care nurse offers in-home foot care appointments, providing personalized care designed to keep your feet healthy, comfortable, and supporting the active life you enjoy.

To book an appointment or learn more, call us at 705-303-8787 or email: info@mlhealthcare.ca.

We’d be happy to welcome you in and help you take the next step toward better foot health.

Nobody Eats Alone: The Community Tables of Thanksgiving

By KARRIE O’CONNOR



Thanksgiving in Northern Ontario looks different at every table. But in communities across the region, one tradition is growing: the tables that welcome everyone.

In church basements, community centres and legion halls, volunteers are already planning their turkey dinners — not for family, but for neighbours they may never have met. Seniors who would otherwise spend the holiday alone. Newcomers far from home. Families going through a hard year. Anyone, really, who needs a seat.

“It’s not about the turkey,” one organizer says. “It’s about the seat across from you.”

The meals are free, or nearly so. The potatoes are donated by local farms. The pies come from home kitchens. Volunteers give up their own holiday morning to peel, mash, carve and serve — often their whole families come along to help. Kids in aprons pass the gravy. Teenagers clear tables. Retired couples find themselves with a new group of friends by the time the coffee comes out.

For the people who come, the meal is more than food. It’s proof that they’re seen. That the community remembers them. That even in a hard season, they belong somewhere.

For the volunteers, it’s simpler than they expected. “You show up to help,” one says, “and you leave with more than you gave.”

This Thanksgiving, thousands of northerners will sit down at a community table. Nobody will ask where you’re from or why you came alone. They’ll just pull out a chair.

If you have a seat to spare this year — at your table, or at a community one — consider filling it with someone who needs it. Because the truest measure of a community isn’t how it feeds its own. It’s how it feeds everyone else.

Nobody should eat alone. Not on Thanksgiving. Not ever.

The Northern Chuckle
by GILLIAN HEBERT @Studio.Gillian
Artwork By Gillian Hebert

During the month of August, I had the chance to visit Prince Edward Island for a week-long vacation.

I made sure to do as many things as possible since we normally only get to visit in the winter. Needless to say, the Christmas holidays are not exactly the ideal time to visit the beaches!

As it turns out, all the touristy things are pretty amazing, and I highly recommend visiting the island if you ever get the chance to go during the summer.

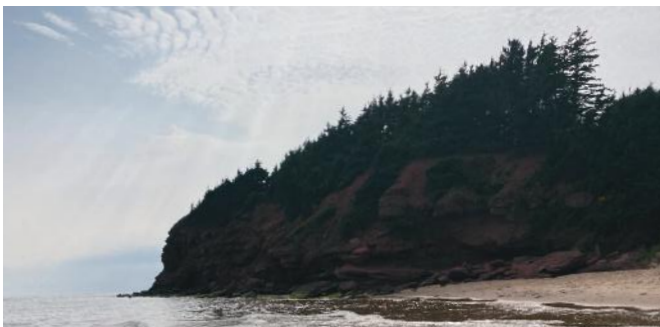
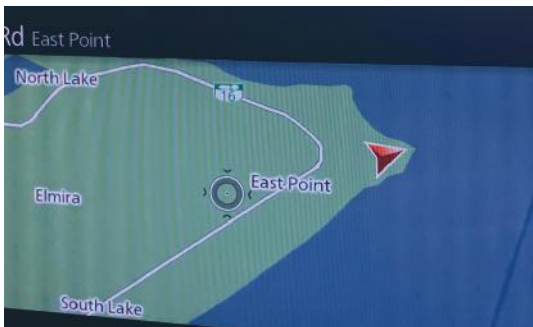
Contrary to the comic, I did in fact go fishing! I was able to catch some Atlantic Striped Bass. Unfortunately, the best time to catch them also happened to be the same time all the mosquitoes came out to feast. As new blood from off the island, my husband and I got chewed up real good by the mosquitoes.

After that, I spent more time exploring than fishing. The collection of rocks and shells I brought home is getting to be a bit much, but I use them in my crafts, so none of them will go to waste. They'll also be a constant reminder of how lovely my time on the island was.

Peep this photo of me catching "The Big One".



 @StudioGillian
 @studio.gillian



The Fall Ritual: What Hunting Camp Really Means
By KARRIE O'CONNOR

There's a week every fall when the trucks start appearing on northern highways, loaded with coolers, chainsaws, orange vests and dogs that can barely contain themselves. Head north on any back road in late September, and you'll see them: families heading to camp.

To outsiders, hunting camp can look like a simple thing — a cabin in the bush, a few days in the woods, a moose if luck holds. But to the people of Northern Ontario, it is something far richer. It is a ritual, a rite of

passage and a thread that binds generations together.

A Rite of Passage

For many northern families, the first trip to camp is a milestone as significant as a first day of school. There is the year you're finally old enough to carry a rifle instead of a lunchbox. The year you're trusted to start the fire. The year you sit in the stand alone for the first time, heart pounding, breath held, waiting.

"It's where boys and girls become hunters," one northern hunter put it simply — and more than that, it's where children become adults. Camp teaches patience in a world that offers little of it. It teaches respect: for the animal, for the land, for the tools in your hands. It teaches silence — the kind of deep, comfortable silence that only comes from sitting still in the woods for hours, listening.

The Passing of Knowledge

Hunting camp is a classroom without walls. Grandfathers show grandchildren how to read the land: where the moose

(Con't On Page 7)

The Day the World Changed...Remembering September 11, 2001

By KARRIE O'CONNOR



There are certain moments in history that become permanently etched into our collective memory. You can ask almost anyone, regardless of their age, race, where they call home, or what their lives looked like at the time, and there is a good chance they can tell you exactly where they were when they heard the news. September 11, 2001, is one of those moments. It is one of those rare points in time that seems to transcend geography, politics and generations. Twenty-five years later, we still remember where we were, who we were with, and what we were doing when the world changed.

I was a college student at Mohawk College in Hamilton when the planes hit the towers. I was sitting in class, surrounded by other students, when the unimaginable began unfolding. Like so many people that morning, I didn't initially understand the enormity of what was happening. The information came in pieces, and none of it seemed possible. But I knew one thing almost immediately: my children were in daycare. They were about 30 minutes away, and my first thought was simply that I needed to get to them. I needed to see them, hug them and make sure they were safe. In that moment, everything else seemed insignificant. I wasn't thinking about politics, governments or international affairs. I was a mother thinking about her children.

I remember walking into the college bar that day. There were hundreds of students in the room, but there was an almost eerie silence. You could hear a pin drop. Everyone was fixated on a computer screen, trying to make sense of the images and information appearing in front of us. There was no social media delivering updates every few seconds and no smartphones buzzing with notifications. We gathered around televisions and computer screens, watching history unfold in real time and trying to understand how something so enormous could possibly be happening.

At home, the experience felt even more surreal because our house was under the flight path for Hamilton General Airport, where many planes were landing. The sound and presence of aircraft had always been an ordinary part of life. That day, however, every plane carried a different meaning. The familiar became frightening. Somewhere amid the confusion and fear was the realization that the world I had

known that morning was gone, and that my children would grow up in a world that was fundamentally different from the one I had known.

That realization frightened me. I remember thinking about my children and wondering what kind of world they would inherit. Would they feel safe? Would they understand the freedom and innocence that had existed before that day? What would airports, travel and even everyday life look like for them? As a parent, it is difficult enough to protect your children from the ordinary challenges of life. Suddenly, the world seemed to have introduced an entirely new set of dangers that I couldn't protect them from.

And yet, when I think about September 11 today, I don't want my strongest memories to be defined only by fear. I don't want the po-

litical climate of the world today, or the political figures and controversies that surround us, to become the focus of how we remember that day. There is a place for history, for understanding and for examining the events that changed our world, but September 11 feels like something more sacred than another political story. It is a human story, and it is one that transcends so many of the divisions that dominate our conversations today.

Earlier this year, my wife and I went to see *Come From Away* at the Grand Theatre in London, Ontario. The musical tells the remarkable story of the thousands of airline passengers whose planes were diverted to Gander, Newfoundland and Labrador, following the attacks. What struck me most was how a story born from one of the darkest days in modern history could also be a story about extraordinary kindness. Strangers opened their homes to strangers. Communities opened their doors. Food was prepared, beds were made and people cared for one another without asking what country they came from, what religion they followed or what political beliefs they held. They simply saw people who needed help and helped them.

That is the part of September 11 I want to hold onto. I want to remember the people who ran toward the danger rather than away from it. I want to remember the firefighters, police officers, paramedics, first responders and ordinary people who put themselves at risk to help someone else. I want to remember the people aboard those planes who were faced with an unimaginable reality. I want to remember the people in a small Newfoundland community who suddenly found themselves responsible for thousands of strangers and responded with compassion. And I want to remember the rescue dogs who worked tirelessly through the rubble, searching for survivors and helping families find some measure of closure.

These are the stories that deserve to be remembered.

(Con't On Page 7)



STUDIO GILLIAN

GILLIAN HEBERT



GRAPHIC DESIGN SERVICES:

- SET UP FILES FOR PRINT
- DESIGN
- DIGITIZATION
- PHOTO RESTORATION

ILLUSTRATION SERVICES:

- CHILDRENS' BOOK ILLUSTRATION
- CHARACTER DESIGN
- FRIENDS/FAMILY & PET PORTRAITS

AVAILABLE EVENTS:

- LIVE CARICATURES

EXTRA SERVICES:

- PYROGRAPHY (WOODBURNING)
- HAND SCULPTED FIGURINES

REACH OUT FOR A FREE QUOTE!

FACEBOOK: STUDIO GILLIAN

INSTAGRAM: @STUDIO.GILLIAN

STUDIO.GILLIAN@GMAIL.COM

(Con't From Page 6)

Twenty-five years later, the world is complicated. We live in an era of division, anger, uncertainty and an almost constant stream of information. Every day brings another political controversy, another headline and another person telling us what we should think about the world. But September 11 exists beyond all of that. For those of us who lived through it, it is a shared memory that belongs to all of us. It belongs to the parent who desperately wanted to get home to their children. It belongs to the student staring silently at a computer screen. It belongs to the firefighter climbing the stairs. It belongs to the person who opened their home to a stranger. It belongs to the families who waited for loved ones who would never come home. It belongs to the passengers who suddenly found themselves stranded thousands of kilometres from where they had intended to be.

When I think back to that day, I still think about my children. I remember wanting to hug them and wanting to protect them. I remember the fear of knowing they would grow up in a world shaped by something they were too young to fully understand. But I also think about what grew from the rubble. I think about compassion, courage, community, sacrifice and love. Those things don't erase the tragedy. They don't make the loss less painful, and they certainly don't undo the lives that were taken or the families that were forever changed. But they remind us that even in the darkest circumstances, human beings have the ability to choose what comes next.

Perhaps that is one of the most important lessons September 11 left us. Adversity can change us, but it doesn't have to define us. Challenge can bring people together. Sadness can create space for compassion. Fear can be met with courage. And from unimaginable loss, acts of love can emerge that are remembered for generations.

So this September, I hope we remember the people. Not simply the towers, the planes or the devastation, but the people behind the stories. Remember the rescuers who ran toward danger. Remember the families who waited. Remember the people who opened their homes. Remember the people who searched, comforted, carried and cared for strangers. Remember the people of Gander who showed the world what hospitality and humanity could look like when the world was at its darkest. Remember the rescue dogs who worked tirelessly alongside their handlers.

And perhaps, most importantly, remember that September 11 does not belong to one political party, one country, one religion, one generation or one ideology. It belongs to the human experience. It is a reminder of what we can lose, but also of what we can become when faced with unimaginable circumstances.

Twenty-five years later, the world is still changing. But the choice of what we build from our experiences remains ours. From adversity, challenge and sadness, growth and love can emerge. Sometimes, even from the rubble, something beautiful can begin.

This September 11, let us remember the loss, honour the heroes, hold close the people we love and remember the threads of humanity that connected us when the world seemed to come apart.

Let's Remember those lost with love, peace and grace.

(Con't From Page 5)

will cross, how to tell a fresh track from an old one, which way the wind carries your scent. Fathers and mothers pass down the skills that no app can teach — how to dress a kill, how to pack it out, how to move through the bush without disturbing a single leaf.

The knowledge is old, older than any of the people in the camp. It was carried across oceans and through generations, adapted to the northern landscape, kept alive in the hands and habits of families who refused to let it die.

The Stories Around the Stove

But ask anyone who has ever been to camp what they remember most, and it likely won't be the hunt. It will be the evenings — the woodstove glowing, the coffee pot on, the stories unfolding.

There's the one about the buck that got away, told now with more laughter than regret. The one about the cousin who fell in the creek, the uncle who got lost for three hours, the year the camp nearly burned down and everyone worked through the night to save it. The stories grow taller with every telling, and that's exactly the point. They are how a family remembers itself.

A Connection to the Land

Hunting camp is also where northerners stay connected to the land in the most honest way there is. It's not a weekend of recreation — it's participation. To hunt is to be part of the cycle: to know where your food comes from, to respect the animal that gives its life, to understand that the bush provides but never promises.

There's a stewardship that comes with camp life. The trail gets cleared every year. The cabin gets patched. The lake gets left cleaner than it was found. Camp teaches that the land isn't a backdrop — it's a partner, and it deserves care.

The Thread That Binds

As the years pass, camps change. Some are sold when the family can no longer manage them. Some are passed down, the names of the dead still carved into the beams. But the ritual endures. The trucks still roll north every fall. The fires still burn. The stories still get told.

Because hunting camp was never really about the hunt. It's about the people you hunt with — the father who taught you patience, the grandfather whose stories you now tell, the child who sat beside you in the stand and will one day bring their own child to this same piece of bush.

Every fall, thousands of northerners head to camp. They go for the moose, sure. But they stay for something bigger: the feeling of standing in a line of family that stretches back generations, in a place that has never stopped feeling like home.

Every fall, the trucks head north. Every camp holds a story. And every story is a thread.

CALANDER OF EVENTS

VIVID art.culture.media

Downtown Sault Ste. Marie
Sept 17–20, 2026
Free arts fest: live music, visual art, film, markets, workshops.

Le French Fest

Memorial Park, Sudbury
Sept 26, 2026
Francophone music, food and culture.

Great Powassan & Area Pumpkin Tour

Oct 3, 2026
Self-guided fall tour through local farms, pumpkin patches and country routes.

Tamarack Festival

Timmins, Ontario
Sept 23–27
Five days of theatre, poetry, comedy, workshops, visual arts and an artisans market at venues across town.

Fall Harvest

Thunder Bay, Ontario
Oct 7–8, 2026
371 Strecker Road. Family-friendly harvest weekend.

Harvest Hay Day

Dryden, Ontario
Oct 3, 2026
Dryden Fall Fest. Classic fall family day: hay rides, harvest games, local vendors.

Bala Cranberry Festival

Bala, Ontario
Oct 16–18, 2026

Maker's Harvest Market

North Bay, Ontario Museum
Oct 17, 2026
North Bay Museum

Trinity United Church Apple Pie Project

Pie pick-up week of Oct 4, 2026
North Bay, Ontario
Community fundraiser — pies sold to help save Trinity Church

Terry Fox Run

Sept 20, 2026
Kapuskasing Golf Club, Kapuskasing, Ontario

54th Algoma Fall Festival

Oct 8–27, 2026
Sault Ste. Marie, Ontario
One of the North's biggest arts events, kicking off Oct 8.

This year's lineup includes Natalie MacMaster and Susan Aglukark, plus concerts, art exhibits and performances across the city. A headline-worthy cultural event with northern star power.

116 Kilometres for Sophie: The Swim That United a Town

By KARRIE O’CONNOR



Photo Credit: YourKenora.ca

There's a moment every parent knows: the moment you would do anything for your child. For Chad English of Kenora, that moment stretched across 116 kilometres of open water.

On July 26, 2026, Chad climbed out of Lake of the Woods at Coney Island after days of swimming — not for a record, not for glory, but for his daughter. “Chad's Big Swim — Powered By Sophie” had begun months earlier as a father's quiet promise and ended as a community-wide movement that raised nearly \$90,000 for the causes that helped his family through their hardest days.

Sophie English is 15 years old. Born prematurely and diagnosed with cerebral palsy, she grew up defying expectations — so much so that she's now a para-swimming record holder herself. It was Sophie who inspired the whole journey: her grit in the water, her refusal to be defined by a diagnosis, and the medical teams and community supports who stood beside her family along the way.

So Chad decided to give back to the people who helped his daughter thrive. His swim benefited five organizations: SickKids, Shriners Hospitals for Children, the Lake of the Woods District Hospital Foundation Hospice, the Kenora and Lake of the Woods Regional Community Foundation, and the Jen Schott Bursary. Hospitals, hospice, community foundations, and a scholarship supporting local students — the list reads like a map of everything a small northern town leans on.

The physical feat alone is staggering. Lake of the Woods is vast, moody and endlessly changeable — a body of water that demands respect from even the most seasoned swimmers. Chad trained for months, swimming through cold mornings and unpredictable weather, pacing himself across a route most people would never consider attempting. He described finding “peace in the chaos of the water,” a phrase that captures something deeper than endurance: a father turning worry into purpose, stroke by stroke.

There were long, lonely stretches where the shore seemed impossibly far away. There were days his body screamed to stop, days the

wind kicked up and the water turned grey and hostile. But Chad kept going, the way parents do — not because it was easy, but because it mattered. Every time fatigue threatened to win, he thought of Sophie. Every stroke had a reason.

The swim also demanded more than physical grit. Planning a crossing of Lake of the Woods means respecting its scale: the islands, the currents, the shifting weather that can turn calm water dangerous in minutes. Chad and his support team mapped the route carefully, coordinating boats, supplies and safety along the way. It was a logistical undertaking as much as an athletic one — a reminder that even the most personal missions require a village behind them.

But the swim was never a solo journey. As word spread, Kenora rallied. People donated from kitchen tables and workplaces, followed his progress from shore, and cheered from boats as he passed. The fundraiser grew from an ambitious goal into something the whole community felt ownership of — proof that in the North, when someone sets out to do something meaningful, they rarely do it alone.

Local businesses hung signs of encouragement. Friends and strangers alike tracked his position on maps, checking in through the day. The generosity wasn't just in dollars — it was in the boats that shadowed him, the volunteers who kept the support operation running, and the quiet pride of a town watching one of its own do something extraordinary.

The most powerful moment came at the end. As Chad neared Coney Island, Sophie slipped into the water beside him and swam the final stretch with her dad. A daughter who was told she might never walk — swimming alongside her father at the finish of a 116-kilometre crossing. It's the kind of image that stays with you.

For Sophie, the swim was more than a fundraiser. It was proof of what she's always believed: that her story isn't a limitation, it's a strength. That the challenges she faces every day have shaped her into someone who inspires an entire region. To see her father put his body through days of open water for her

— and then to join him in that water herself — was a statement neither of them needed words to make.

Nearly \$90,000 raised. Five organizations supported. A town brought together. But ask Chad what the swim was really about, and the answer is probably simpler than the numbers: showing his daughter — and everyone watching — that love shows up. That you don't measure a journey only in kilometres, but in the people who swim beside you and the ones you're swimming for.

The ripple effects will last well beyond the summer. SickKids and Shriners will put those dollars toward the kind of care that changed Sophie's life. The hospice foundation will support families facing their hardest goodbyes. The community foundation will help local groups keep doing quiet, essential work. And the Jen Schott Bursary will help a northern student chase a dream — the same way Sophie chases hers, one lap at a time.

In a world that often feels too big to change, Chad English proved that one person's determination — powered by a daughter's courage — can move an entire community. And that some of the strongest threads in Northern Ontario are the ones that hold us together when the water gets rough.

Every stroke had a reason. Every kilometre had a name: Sophie.

A Little Bit Of Fun: Jokes Of The Month

Q. What do you call an ant who fights crime?

A. A vigilANTE!

Q. How do you stop an astronaut’s baby from crying?

A. You rocket.

Q. Why can’t you ever trust atoms?

A. Because they make up everything.

Q. How do bees brush their hair?

A. With honeycombs!

Q. What is worse than raining cats and dogs?

A. Hailing taxis.

Q. What was a more useful invention than the first telephone?

A. The second telephone.

Spooktacular Strolls & Winter Wishes: How One Northern Network Turns Community Fun Into Compassionate Care

By KARRIE O’CONNOR



This fall, the Near North Palliative Care Network invites families, friends and local businesses to dress up, create art and show up for the people who need them most.

There's a thread that runs through every community, connecting the moments that matter most: the family walking through the mall in Halloween costumes, the young artist painting a winter scene at the kitchen table, the volunteer sitting quietly with someone who is saying goodbye. In Nipissing and East Parry Sound, that thread belongs to the Near North Palliative Care Network — and this season, it's being woven in candy-coloured and paint-bright colours.

A Halloween Walk With Heart

The 2026 Mall-O-Ween Strollathon is exactly what it sounds like: Halloween, but warmer, safer and sweeter. On October 30 from 4 to 6 PM, families are invited to Northgate Shopping Centre for a 5 km charity stroll through the mall — trick-or-treat stops, costumes, prizes and all.

“This is where I want to be,” said one organizer. “Where we can be close to the community.”

[pull quote] Every dollar raised helps provide free visiting palliative care, grief and bereavement support, and senior services in our community.

The event was designed for everyone. Costumes aren't mandatory — they just make it more fun. Candy comes from local sponsors. Prizes reward the best costumes and the most successful fundraisers. And the whole experience supports NNPCN's free visiting palliative care, grief and bereavement support, caregiver respite and seniors companionship programs.

Rally Your Ghouls: Fundraising Teams

The walk is also a challenge — and North-erners do love a friendly one. Businesses,

families and friend groups are invited to create their own fundraising teams: Pick your team name. Dress up and get creative. Challenge coworkers and fellow local businesses. Set your goal and see how much you can raise.

Prizes go to the best individual and team costumes, and to the teams that raise the most. Teams can form through the event's QR code, then take the challenge to social media — because nothing rallies a community like a little friendly competition for a good cause.

Sponsor the Fun

Every sponsorship — whether it's candy for the trick-or-treat stops or gift cards for prizes — ensures the event, and NNPCN's free services, stay accessible for everyone. To sponsor or ask questions, contact Lauralea Eldridge at laura@nnpcn.com or (705) 497-9239.

Winter Wishes: Where Young Artists Give Back

Before the Halloween candy is even gone, NNPCN is looking ahead to the holiday season with Winter Wishes, a new initiative that pairs youth creativity with community compassion.

Youth artists ages 7 to 18 were invited to create original winter-themed artwork in-

spired by the magic, joy and warmth of the season. Selected pieces will be professionally reproduced as limited-edition art prints and postcard sets — available for pre-order in November, just in time for holiday gifting.

“Winter Wishes is about bringing people together through creativity and giving young artists an opportunity to make a difference,” said Lauralea Eldridge. “Each piece represents the imagination of a young person in our community, and through this project, their creativity will help bring comfort and support to others.”

It's a fitting circle: young artists create, the community buys, and the funds help NNPCN keep providing free visiting hospice, caregiver respite, grief support, companionship and education throughout Nipissing and East Parry Sound.

Join the Waitlist

The Winter Wishes collection will be available for pre-order beginning in November. Follow NNPCN on Facebook and join the waitlist for early updates and sneak peeks of the young artists' work: [HERE](#)

Join the Winter Wishes waitlist

Families with young artists interested in participating can register their interest at www.nnpcn.com/youthart to reserve a spot and receive project updates.

A Network Built on Compassion

Behind both events is a simple mission: no one should face life's hardest moments alone. NNPCN provides free hospice palliative care, grief and bereavement support, caregiver support, companionship, connection, education and community programs across Nipissing and East Parry Sound — delivered by compassionate volunteers, supported by community partners and funded by generous neighbours.

So this season, whether you're strolling through the mall in a costume or hanging a young artist's print on your wall, you're doing more than having fun. You're helping ensure that every person in this community is supported with dignity, connection and care.

To sponsor the Mall-O-Ween Strollathon, join the Winter Wishes waitlist or learn more: laura@nnpcn.com · (705) 497-9239 · www.nnpcn.com





NORTHERN

threads

MAGAZINE

YOUR BUSINESS. YOUR STORY. YOUR NORTHERN AUDIENCE.

Northern Threads Magazine connects readers with Northern Ontario businesses, artists, creators, innovators, community leaders, youth and local stories.



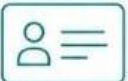


DIGITAL ADVERTISING RATE SHEET



CHOOSE A ONE-MONTH CAMPAIGN OR SAVE WITH THREE CONSECUTIVE MONTHS!

BUSINESS CARD



\$50

/MONTH

- ✓ Business-card-sized digital advertisement
- ✓ Placement in one monthly digital issue
- ✓ 1 social media promotional post
- ✓ Shared across Northern Threads' social platforms

3- MONTH BUNDLE

\$135

SAVE \$15

Three consecutive months of advertising.

QUARTER PAGE



\$125

/MONTH

- ✓ 1/4-page digital advertisement
- ✓ Placement in one monthly digital issue
- ✓ 2 social media promotional post
- ✓ Shared across Northern Threads' social platforms
- ✓ Professional graphic design
- ✓ Up to two reasonable graphic revisions

3- MONTH BUNDLE

\$325

SAVE \$50

Three consecutive months of advertising.

HALF PAGE



\$225

/MONTH

- ✓ 1/2-page digital advertisement
- ✓ Placement in one monthly digital issue
- ✓ 3 social media promotional post
- ✓ Shared across Northern Threads' social platforms
- ✓ 1 boosted social media post
- ✓ Up to \$25 in included boosted advertising
- ✓ Professional graphic design
- ✓ Up to two reasonable graphic revisions

3- MONTH BUNDLE

\$600

SAVE \$75

Three consecutive months of advertising.

FULL PAGE



\$275

/MONTH

- ✓ Full-page digital advertisement
- ✓ Premium placement in one monthly digital issue
- ✓ 5 social media promotional post
- ✓ Shared across Northern Threads' social platforms
- ✓ 2 boosted social media posts
- ✓ Up to \$40 in included boosted advertising
- ✓ Professional graphic design
- ✓ Up to two reasonable graphic revisions

3- MONTH BUNDLE

\$725

SAVE \$100

Three consecutive months of advertising.

PACKAGE COMPARISON 	 1-Month	 3-Months (Save)	 Social Posts	 Boosted Posts	 Professional Design	
	BUSINESS CARD	\$50	\$135 (Save \$15)	1	–	–
	QUARTER-PAGE	\$125	\$325 (Save \$50)	2	–	✓
	HALF-PAGE	\$225	\$600 (Save \$75)	3	1	✓
	FULL-PAGE	\$275	\$725 (Save \$100)	5	2	✓

★ Three-month bundles run for three consecutive monthly issues.



PROFESSIONAL GRAPHIC DESIGN

Included with Quarter Page, Half Page and Full Page packages. We design using the materials and brand information you provide.



WHAT YOU PROVIDE

High-resolution images, logo, brand colours, fonts, website, social handles, contact info, promotional messaging, offers and desired call-to-action.



SOCIAL MEDIA PROMOTION

We create engaging posts that highlight your business, promotions, events, products, services and more across our social platforms.



BOOSTED ADVERTISING

Included with Half Page and Full Page packages. Targeted boosting based on your goals and audience. Results are not guaranteed.

The Last Harvest: Three Generations on a Northern Family Farm

By KARRIE O'CONNOR



There's a particular quiet that settles over a northern farm in late September. The combines have stopped their slow circles. The potato diggers sit in the yard, dew beading on their metal. The fields lie open and dark, ready for their long winter sleep.

It's the time of year when everything a family has worked for all season comes down to the harvest — and for the Gaudet family of Valley Growers in Blezard Valley, just outside Sudbury, that moment carries the weight of five generations.

Farming in Northern Ontario has never been for the faint of heart. The growing season is short. The frost arrives early and leaves late. The soil is stubborn, and the weather keeps its own counsel. Yet for 150 years, the Gaudet family has done what northern farm families do: they plant anyway, they pray for rain at the right times, they rise before the sun, and they trust that the land will remember them.

Valley Growers is a fifth-generation potato farm, one of the last remaining family farms of its kind in the region. Through the decades, the farm has adapted — expanding into maple syrup production alongside the potato fields, finding new markets, welcoming a new generation back to the land. The fields still roll the way they always have, but the business beneath them has had to learn to bend like the willows along the creek.

It hasn't always been easy. Family farms across the North have faced the same pressures for decades: the rising cost of land and equipment, the uncertainty of markets, the long hours that never quite add up the way the books suggest they should. Many neighbours sold. Some fields that once grew potatoes now grow houses. But the Gaudets kept going — not out of stubbornness, though there is surely some of that in any farm family — but out of something deeper. A belief that this land, this life, was worth preserving for the next generation.

This fall, the harvest brings three generations together in the field. The eldest still remembers hauling potatoes by hand, the dust of the field in his lungs and the weight of the season on his back. He can tell you what a frost feels like when it means losing everything, and what a good year feels like when it means the whole family can breathe easy. The middle generation runs the day-to-day — the equipment, the markets, the endless calculations that keep a farm alive. They are the ones on the phone at 6 AM, the ones negotiating with buyers, the ones who carry the worry so the

older generation doesn't have to.

And the youngest, the fifth generation, is learning the rhythm: how to read the sky, how to listen to the land, how to work until your hands know the work without being told. They are the future of the farm — and the reason the past four generations did all of this in the first place.

There's something sacred about that passing of knowledge. It can't be taught from a textbook or downloaded from the internet. It lives in the muscles and the memory — in the way a grandparent's hands still know exactly how to size a potato, in the stories told over the harvest lunch, in the unspoken understanding that this ground has held this family for generations and will hold them still.

The farm is more than a business. It's a memory keeper. Every field has a story: the year the frost came early, the year the crop was

so good the whole family could breathe, the years that tested everything they had. The farmhouse walls hold photographs of grandparents who worked the same rows. The barn has held the same tools, the same hopes, the same prayers.

The harvest itself is a ritual older than any of them. The digging begins before dawn, when the air still holds the night's chill. The potatoes roll out of the earth, clean and pale, and the smell of fresh-turned soil hangs over the field like incense. There is lunch at noon, eaten standing up or perched on the tailgate, sandwiches passed between generations. There is the quiet satisfaction at the end of the day, when the bins are full and the family drives home in the dark, tired in a way that feels earned.

As the season turns, the Gaudets do what their ancestors did: they bring in the harvest, they thank the land, and they prepare for winter. The equipment gets cleaned and stored. The fields are left to rest. The family gathers for Thanksgiving with the year's work behind them, and the stories of the season — the close calls, the victories, the small moments that made it all worthwhile — are told and retold around the table.

They know the farm will look different for the next generation. Every farm must change or fade. But some things don't change. The potatoes will be dug. The syrup will be tapped in the spring. And when the youngest generation asks what it means to be a northern farmer, the answer will be the same as it's always been: you show up, you work hard, and you take care of the land that takes care of you.

This fall, when you sit down to a meal of northern potatoes, think of the families who grew them. Behind every harvest is a history. Behind every farm is a family that refused to give up on the land — or on each other.

Meaningful. Compassionate. Community.

STORIES OF HOPE & HEALING

A COMMUNITY PRESENTATION FOR HOSPICES, COMMUNITY GROUPS & MORE

Real Stories. Real Hope. Real Connection.

Through personal storytelling and lived experience, I explore what happens when our lives are changed by loss—and how we can learn to carry those stories forward with love, purpose and hope.

My nephew Nicholas died tragically in 2021. In the years since, I have written about our experience with loss, created community programs in his memory and learned that **healing doesn't mean forgetting** or leaving someone behind. It means finding a way to carry their story while continuing to live our own.

THIS PRESENTATION EXPLORES:

- What grief can really look and feel like
- Why everyone's experience of grief is different
- The importance of remembering and sharing someone's story
- How storytelling can help us feel less alone
- Finding connection during difficult seasons
- Turning experiences of loss into meaning and purpose
- How communities can walk alongside people who are grieving
- Learning to move forward without feeling that we are moving on from the person we lost

Books Available

Threads: Weaving Us Through Struggle and Strength and Butterflies From Heaven

Signed copies of **THREADS: Weaving Us Through Struggle and Strength and BUTTERFLIES FROM HEAVEN** are available for purchase.

Presented by
KARRIE O'CONNOR
Author. Storyteller. Advocate.
Aunt to Nicholas.
Believer in the power of stories to heal, connect and bring hope.

Offered at No Cost
I AM CURRENTLY OFFERING THESE COMMUNITY PRESENTATIONS AT NO SPEAKING FEE.
A free-will offering is welcome, with proceeds supporting community storytelling, youth programs and future community events.

Perfect for:

- Hospices & palliative care programs
- Grief & bereavement support groups
- Wellness & mental health programs
- Community organizations
- Caregiver & family groups
- Libraries, community centres & more

The presentation can be adapted to meet the unique needs of your organization and the people you serve.

“Healing doesn't mean the story ends. It means we learn to carry it with love, turning our pain into purpose so that others might feel a little less alone. That is how we continue the story.”

Let's work together

I would love the opportunity to speak with you about how this presentation could be a meaningful fit for your organization.

www.thestorycontinues.ca | www.buildingonthreads.ca | info@buildingonthreads.ca

THANK YOU FOR THE WORK YOU DO TO SUPPORT INDIVIDUALS AND FAMILIES THROUGH LIFE'S MOST DIFFICULT MOMENTS.

A Father’s Hands: 73 Years of Craft in Kapuskasing

By KARRIE O’CONNOR



In a small northern town, some businesses outlive everything around them. They survive recessions, fires, changing tastes and the slow drift of people moving away. And sometimes, they outlive the very hands that built them.

E. Plourde & Son Upholstering has been serving Kapuskasing since 1953 — 73 years of needles, thread, fabric and care. It began with Edgar Plourde, a craftsman who built a reputation one chair at a time. And for the last four decades, his son Dave has carried it forward.

Dave Plourde learned the trade the way northern tradesmen always have: beside his father, watching, listening, doing. He learned how to strip a chair down to its frame, how to rebuild it from the springs up, how to choose fabric that would outlast the fashions. He learned that upholstery isn't just about furniture — it's about the stories furniture carries. The armchair where a grandmother read bedtime stories. The couch that held a family through every Sunday afternoon. The chair that was

passed down, like the business itself, from one generation to the next.

“People bring us pieces that matter to them,” Dave has said of the work. “It’s not just a job. It’s trust.”

The shop’s reach has grown beyond living rooms. Over the decades, E. Plourde & Son expanded into automotive and marine upholstery — restoring the seats of classic cars, rebuilding boat cushions for cottagers, repairing the worn interiors of trucks that work the northern bush. Every job carried the same standard: do it right, or don’t do it at all. It’s a philosophy Edgar instilled, and one Dave still lives by.

Dave describes upholstery as a dying art — a trade fewer and fewer young people are learning. There’s no school for it, no shortcut to the thousands of hours it takes to understand fabric, foam, springs and frames. It is knowledge carried in the hands, passed from master to apprentice, usually father to son or daughter.

For 40 years, Dave has balanced the shop with another calling: public service. First elected to municipal council in 1994, he has spent decades serving Kapuskasing — and is now in his second term as mayor. In a town of about 8,000 people, the mayor isn’t a distant figure. He’s the man who reupholstered your dining room chairs. He’s the one who knows every street, every family, every story.

His father was more than a business partner. “My father was my friend and my mentor,” Dave has said — the kind of quiet tribute that says everything about the man and the trade he inherited. In 2018, Kapuskasing elected Dave as mayor, and he has since gone on to lead the Federation of Northern Ontario Municipalities, advocating for small northern towns across the province.

His own son has chosen a different path — a Crown Attorney, serving justice rather than furniture. The shop won’t pass to a third generation of Plourdes. But that doesn’t diminish what 73 years have meant. In a world of disposable everything, E. Plourde & Son has stood for something increasingly rare: quality, longevity and the belief that things worth keeping are worth repairing.

Kapuskasing has changed in 73 years. The town has grown, weathered storms, reinvented itself. But through it all, the little shop has kept stitching — a thread of continuity in a changing North.

Some day the shop will close. The chairs will find other hands. But the legacy won’t disappear, because legacy never lives in the fabric. It lives in the example: that you can spend a life doing honest work, taking care of people, and leave a town better than you found it.

That’s a craft no one can upholster away.



Page 10 The Northern Towns Wednesday, December 2, 1992

Gala Holiday Gifts
FOR ALL THE FOLKS AT HOME

CHILDREN'S FURNITURE
An ever-popular Christmas gift item

Folding Bridge Sets from \$15.70
Table and Chairs from \$8.95
CHROME AND WOOD ROCKERS from \$4.50

DECORATOR PILLOWS and HASSOCKS
A complete range of styles, colours and fabrics

PILLOWS from \$1.95
Hassocks from \$4.50

CANDLESTICK HOLDERS VASES - CENTREPIECES DECORATIVE ASTRAYS

DECORATIVE CANDLE BOWLS
We have a large stock of beautiful coloured candles for your Christmas table.

Occasional Chairs BY VOGEL
for reading, TV viewing or just plain relaxing

SWIVEL ROCKER from \$39.95
HOSTESS from \$18.50
RECLINER from \$79.00
Nylon fringe and leatherette covering

To Brighten Any Home

MIRRORS by HOBBS
All styles and sizes including full length from \$9.95
Paintings & Silk Screens from \$4.95
WALL PLAQUES from \$3.50
ebonized, wood, plaster, brass — wide variety

We have an enormous selection of beautiful lamps to brighten every room in the home. For a sure-to-please gift, choose one of these.

TABLE LAMPS from \$7.00
DIVIDER LAMPS from \$19.00
BOUDOIR LAMPS from \$4.95

FLOOR LAMPS from \$13.95
Gooseneck LAMPS from \$7.95
TV LAMPS from \$3.95

Gift LAMPS

PLOURDE'S FURNITURE LTD.
35 Riverside Kapuskasing Phone 335-473

The Sound of French in the North: Hearst’s Musical Heart-beat

By KARRIE O’CONNOR

Drive eight hours north of Toronto, past the granite of the Canadian Shield and the endless green of the boreal forest, and you’ll find a town that sounds different from almost anywhere else in Ontario. In Hearst, the language of the streets, the stores and the kitchens is French — and has been for generations.

people.
The stage at the Conseil des Arts de Hearst has hosted an ever-changing cast of hometown musicians: André Lanthier on drums, Roger Lanthier on guitar, Alain Filion at the piano, Luc Poulin and Germain Forgues and so



Hearst is one of the most francophone communities in the province, a place where the French language isn’t a heritage to be preserved in museums but a living, breathing daily reality. And at the heart of that cultural life is a tradition as warm as a kitchen stove: the Soirées Cabaret.

Since the 1970s, these musical evenings have brought Hearst together. Organized by André Lanthier and a circle of local musicians, the cabarets were built on a simple, stubborn idea: that local talent deserves a stage. That the singer who works at the mill all day can still move a room at night. That a community’s culture is strongest when it’s made by its own

many more. They are mill workers, teachers, retirees and shopkeepers — ordinary people with an extraordinary gift. They prepare their sets mostly on their own, coming together for only a few rehearsals before the curtain rises. And somehow, it always works. Talent, it turns out, doesn’t need much rehearsal when it’s rooted in love.

The evenings have become legend. Musicians from across the region gather to play the songs of home — the chansons francophones passed down through generations, the fiddle tunes of the North, the new songs written by young artists finding their own voice. Families come. Neighbours come. The Conseil des Arts

Le Conseil des Arts de Hearst

26-27 SEASON LAUNCH

July 10 | 4 p.m.

BAM!

BREAK.THE.BOX.



opens its doors, and for a few hours, the town sings.

Today, the cabarets are held every two years — not because the love has faded, but because the community is busy living its culture in a dozen other ways. There are new creative spaces opening downtown. There are celebrations of cultural diversity like the Soirée Mosaïque, where Hearst’s growing mix of traditions shares the stage. There are young people — artists, activists, musicians — carrying the language forward into a future their grandparents could only imagine. But the Soirées Cabaret remain the heartbeat. They are proof that a small northern town can hold onto its language and identity not by closing its doors, but by opening them — by filling a room with music and inviting everyone in.

In an era when small communities everywhere worry about disappearing, Hearst offers a different story. Its French isn’t fading; it’s thriving. Its culture isn’t static; it’s growing. And its music isn’t dying; it’s just waiting for the next cabaret, when the lights come up, the first chord rings out, and the town remembers exactly who it is.

La musique continue. The music goes on.



All Photos Belong to Conseil des Arts Hearst