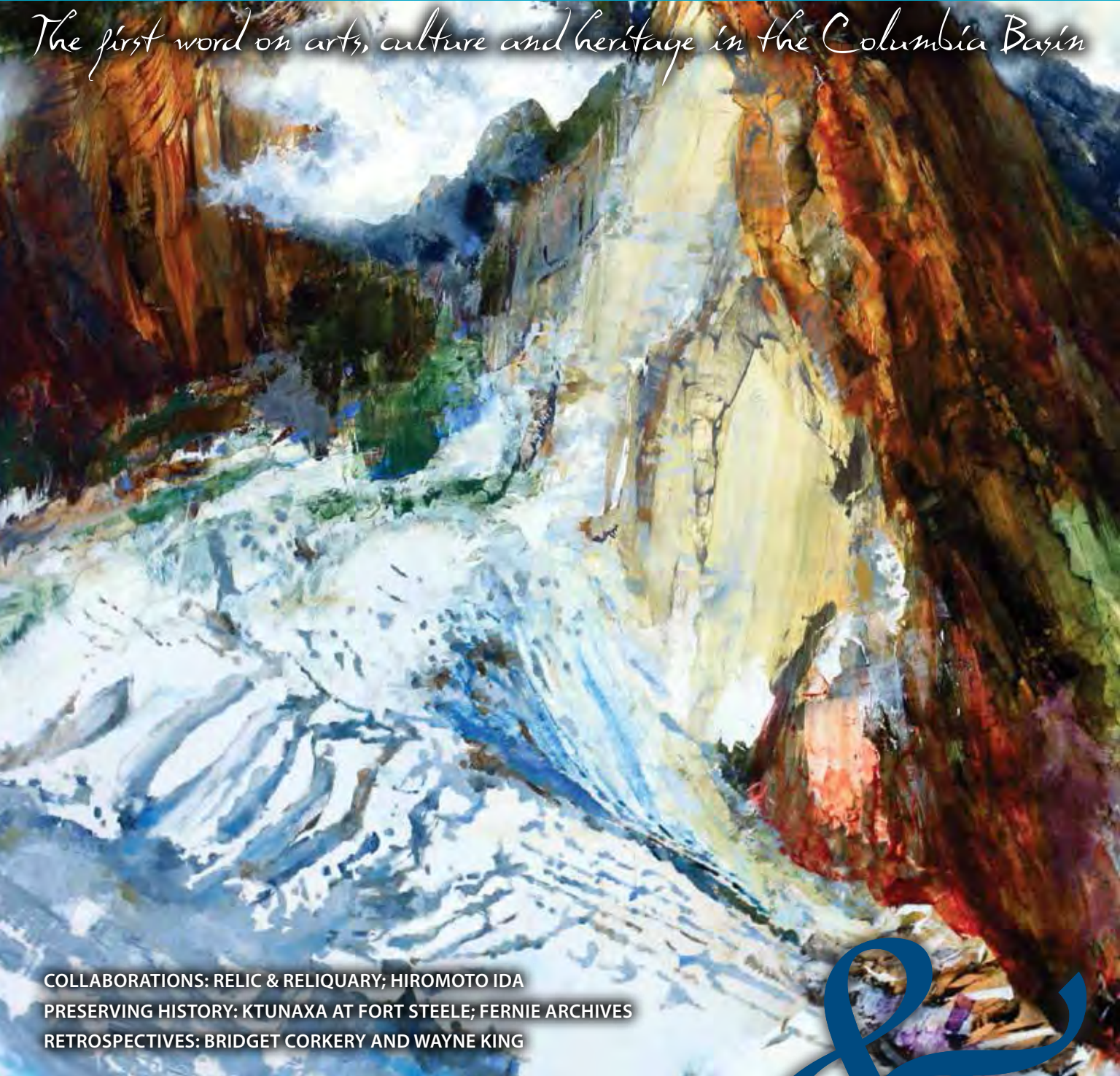


FALL/WINTER 2016-17

FREE

ARTICULATE

The first word on arts, culture and heritage in the Columbia Basin



COLLABORATIONS: RELIC & RELIQUARY; HIROMOTO IDA
PRESERVING HISTORY: KTUNAXA AT FORT STEELE; FERNIE ARCHIVES
RETROSPECTIVES: BRIDGET CORKERY AND WAYNE KING

ARTIST IN RESIDENCE: KENTREE SPEIRS
BOOKED! FERNIE WRITERS' SERIES
ON STAGE: YOUTH TALENT SLAM



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OF LIFE, DEATH AND CARROT CAKE



One of my friends in the Slocan Valley just celebrated her 70th birthday. Turning 70 sounds like you've rounded the last corner in the march of time, doesn't it? Yet there was the birthday girl, eating carrot cake and visiting as if it was just another party. That event reminded me yet again of how inexorable aging is (and how it's probably a good thing to eat lots of carrot cake while you still can).

Seriously, though, contemplating our own mortality is part of the business of being human, and we all face the realities of aging and death with varying degrees of complacency or trepidation. It's hard to grasp the whole thing, even if we've watched our parents and loved ones grow old, or experienced death close up. Will we have the grace (and good luck) to move gently into our own dying? Or will it be a prolonged and sad affair? What constitutes a good death and what will be preserved as our legacy?

This fall, Touchstones Nelson will exhibit retrospectives of the work of two beloved Nelson painters whose legacy is their amazing art, Bridget Corkery and Wayne King. As Ian Johnston writes, both Bridget and Wayne lived their art and life by focusing on the things that brought them joy and inspiration: their relationship with nature, their families and friends, and the small details of daily life. Their work is quirky, personal and genuine. The Touchstones shows will run consecutively from September to February 2017.

Early experiences and cultural traditions can shape the values that we embrace, or that we return to later in life. Hiromoto Ida grew up in a Tokyo household that included his grandparents, and as a boy he was part of the reality and the rituals surrounding his grandfather's death. His new production, *Birthday Present for Myself*, uses the stage as a forum for examining the issues of memory and mortality through the eyes of an old man as he prepares to die. The elements of music, movement and stage play that Hiro brings to the piece moved cast member Allison Girvan to ask, "Is it a concert? Is it a dance? Is it a drama?" The answer is: yes, all of the above. *Birthday Present for Myself* opens in Nelson and Golden in November.

On a more tangible level, in order to preserve the family, business and community histories of Fernie, director Ron Ulrich and the Fernie Museum have initiated the Cultural Memory Project, which will be housed in the new Fernie Community Archives Centre. The project will collect, organize and archive personal stories, documents and photographs from the early days of Fernie and make those materials accessible to researchers and genealogists in the future.

Did everyone make it to the Columbia Basin Culture Tour in August? I did the Slocan Valley portion of the tour and tried rather unsuccessfully to stay within the art-buying budget I had set for myself. I met and visited with so many talented artists and artisans over the course of the afternoon and I was uplifted and encouraged by their work. Hopefully you will meet up with some of them in these pages or on future Culture Tours.

Margaret

Margaret Tessman, editor

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on the cover:
Kentree Speirs
Changes. Oil on panel,
36 x 36 inches, 2016.

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FALL/WINTER 2016-17 ISSUE #30

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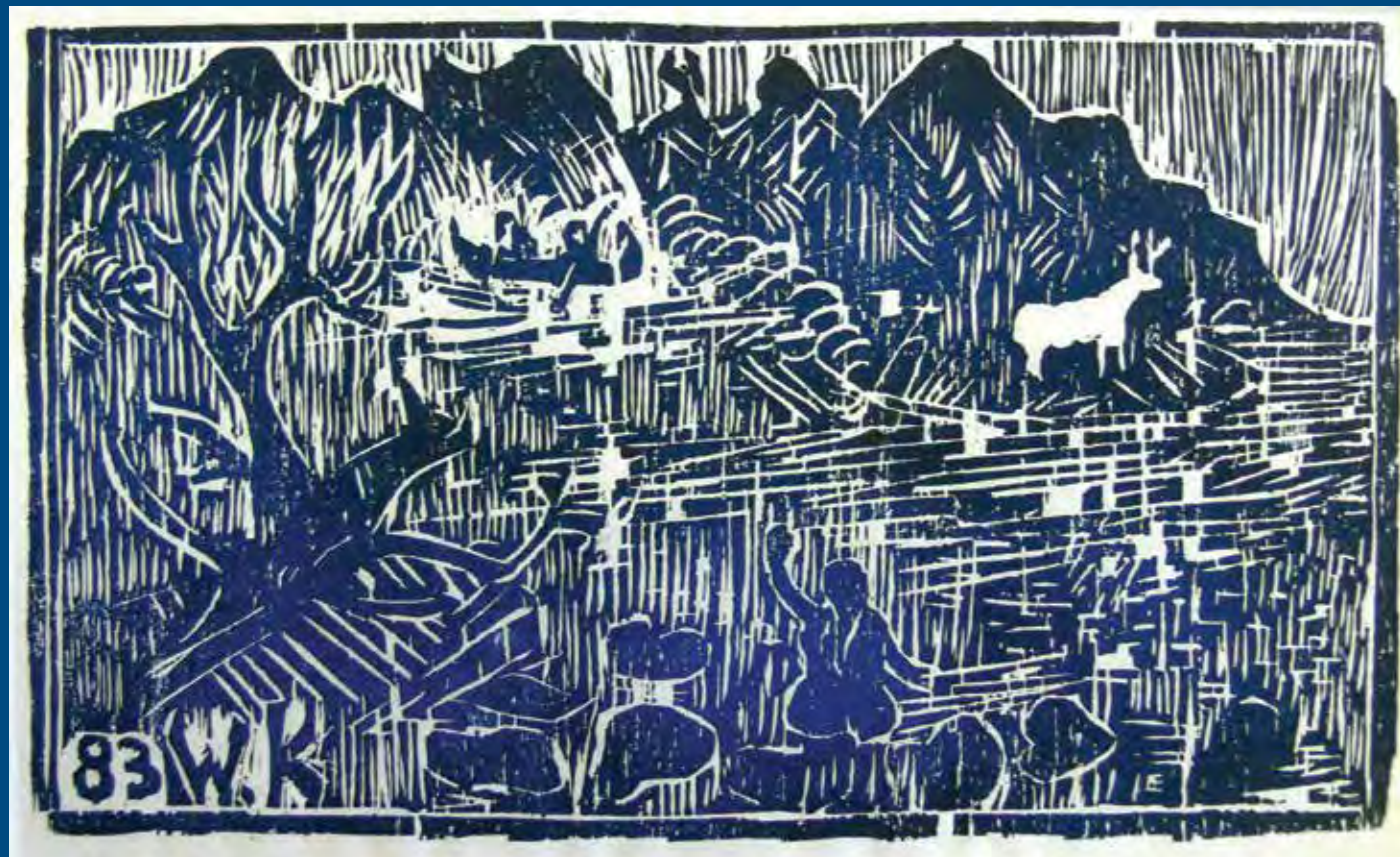
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BRIDGET CORKERY AND WAYNE KING RETROSPECTIVES



Wayne King, *Untitled*. Woodcut print, 1983.

Photos courtesy Touchstones Museum

by Ian Johnston

Bridget Corkery and Wayne King both followed a lifelong creative path that led them to spend their final years in Nelson. Corkery passed away in 2013 and King in 2015. Their work is the focus of two consecutive retrospective exhibitions this fall at Touchstones Nelson Museum of Art and History. Although we don't know for sure if King and Corkery knew each other, we can be pretty certain that their paths crossed. King was known to, and knew almost everyone in Nelson and Bridget was an active and avid member of the arts community.

Wayne King was a prolific painter of the outdoors, landscapes, flora and fauna and oft-times mythical creatures. His use of vibrant colour was one of the hallmarks of his work and if a piece didn't have enough colour a rainbow might be found. As subject matter for painting and as a place to be, it was well known in the community that King preferred the outdoors. In the process of researching this piece I heard time and again

how he wasn't interested in the details and minutia of life but rather speculation about our purpose here on the planet. There were a lot of people who "took care of" King's more earthly needs by way of collecting his work and keeping in touch even though he lived outside much of the time. Chris Kölmel, local jeweller, recalled his first encounter with King as being the reason he moved to Nelson 26 years ago. Kölmel was having dinner with friends on a Kootenay Lake wharf at a picnic table when King arrived in a canoe, hopped out, performed a saxophone solo followed by a happy dance, and departed from whence he came.

King was a larger-than-life character who lightened people's lives with his painting, philosophical meanderings and chess. A lot of people, especially younger ones, drew inspiration and guidance from his words and thoughts about life and art. One such person is a young artist named Aimée-Rose Tougas-Philibert. They met through a mutual friend and bonded over art. Although they only knew each other for a short time she credits him for his guidance as an artist and mentor.

"Certainly he helped me with saving a lot of my projects and taught me stuff I'll never forget." Tougas-Philibert asked King to be a model for her, but in the end she began the project during one of many visits to the hospital. When King died, Tougas-Philibert finished the sculpture using photographs to create his portrait. The work is a striking likeness of the artist that includes a sculpted homage in the form of a King-like landscape on the inside/back of the figure.

Arin Fay, Touchstones Nelson curator, will hang King's work salon style, with the walls covered in multiple works from multiple local collections. Fay also headed up to the Shambhala music festival this summer where apparently there is a shrine to the painter. She spent a few days working with festivalgoers on a couple of large King-inspired paintings. Central to the exhibition is Tougas-Philibert's bronze bust on a plinth made especially to bring the artist's head to its normal standing height. The show runs from November 19 to February 12 with the opening from 7 to 9 p.m. on November 18.

Some time ago Bridget Corkery's long-time friend and painting co-conspirator Boukje Elzinga promised to curate a show of Corkery's work. The retrospective exhibition at Touchstones that runs from September 17 to November 20 fulfills that promise. The two women often painted together and with Deborah Thompson, another local artist. Together with a group of former Kootenay School of the Arts instructors they co-founded the Nelson Fine Art Centre (Oxygen Art Centre). Corkery was also a founding member of the Red Head Gallery in Toronto in the early '90s.

Michael Grace, husband and father of her three children Neil, Gavin and Adam, was quick to point out that Corkery was not just a painter. In fact when one looks at the breadth of her work and artistic explorations it's easy to understand what he meant. Her explorations included fibre arts, printmaking, furniture design, collage, assemblage, drawing, painting and cera colla, just to name a few. In spite of all of life's distractions Corkery managed to always find time to make new work and explore new directions, as Grace confirms: "She wasn't happy unless she was making art or working in the garden. It was something she had to do every day."

Bridget was known to say, "Wherever I move, what's there becomes my focus." In Port Rowan, Ontario, where she last lived before coming to Nelson in 1995, she harvested hundreds of dead ladybugs, among other creatures, for her artwork. The abundance of creeping and crawling things that captured Corkery's imagination at her Ontario home became the subject of her 1994 exhibition "Aversions" at the Red Head Gallery in Toronto. "The current body of work came from watching my infant children react to the world around them. I have come to the conclusion that we are born with our fears, they are not learned. Snakes, insects and frogs, cold and slimy textures, certain noises, heights in the dark; we come into the world with all of these fears and more. The work evolved out of these ideas and started to creep and crawl into childhood mythologies."

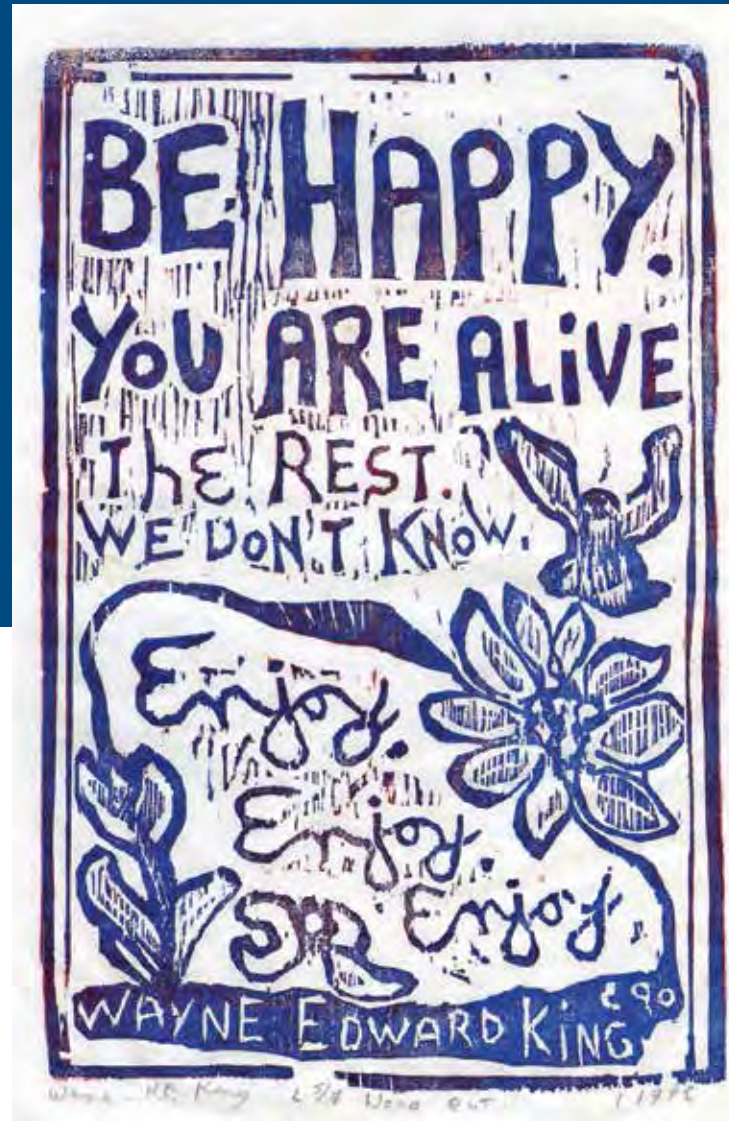
Drawn to create the awkward and absurd, earlier in her career Corkery made a chest of drawers that you couldn't actually close and a fan in a Plexiglas box so you could see the fan move but not feel the air. Grace reflects, "She felt that she was this vessel that could never get full because there was so much



Bridget Corkery, *Clocks-Time*. Cera colla on wood, 2010. Clock drawing is used as an early screening test for Alzheimer's and dementia. Bridget completed this piece as her mother was going through that process herself.

Bridget Corkery, *Dead Bird*. Cera colla on wood, 2012.



Wayne King, *Enchanted Morning*. Acrylic on panel, ca. 2001.Wayne King, *Be Happy*. Woodcut print, 1998.

pulling on her with family, art, work and the whole life thing.” After moving to the Kootenays she continued to produce work in her “frustration” series, which reflected that sentiment with spoons that you can’t really use and bowls that empty if you try to fill them. Some are drawn on massive pieces of paper; others made in wood and ceramic.

Keeping true to her mantra, Corkery created in Nelson several bodies of work that responded to both her immediate and her larger surroundings. “Budget Crockery,” shown at the Kootenay Gallery in 1999, comprised a series of de/re-constructed vessels and ceramic objects assembled with silicone. Another body of work was a series of large collaborative drawings made with her children. “My young children have added spontaneity to my work. I was in my studio and the children just started painting on my canvas, so I thought, well, I’ll just go with this ... It was also a time when there were lots of things falling over, crashing, splashing and breaking. I like the ‘happy accident’ in work and now I’ve put the ‘happy accident’ there on purpose.”

Some of Corkery’s last works created in the company of Thompson and Elzinga were shown in an exhibition at the Capitol Theatre in December of 2012. The group had been working with the cera colla technique or Italian wax paint that has long been a staple of Corkery’s palette as an artist. The subject of that work included dead mice and birds. Corkery had a fascination with death, kind of “funny and dark rather than sinister,” according to Elzinga. That comes through in a lot of her work, including the still lives of dead creatures that resided in the artist’s freezer. Opening on September 16, these works and others will be celebrated in “Bridget Corkery: Retrospective.”

touchstonesnelson.ca.

Bridget Corkery

Retrospective

Sept 17 - Nov 20

Curated by Boukje Elzinga

Thanks to:

Tsuneko Kokubo Toru Fujiwara

Regeneration

Aug 27 to Nov 13

Exhibit toured by:

Touchstones Nelson
Museum of Art and History
502 Vernon Street, Nelson, BC

KTUNAXA HISTORY AT FORT STEELE HERITAGE TOWN

by Jessica VanOostwaard

The Fort Steele Museum, located in the Wasa Hotel at Fort Steele Heritage Town, has always been a fascinating place to visit and to learn about the history of Fort Steele and the East Kootenay. From displays on 17th-century explorers to dioramas that illustrate life at Fort Steele in the 1880s, the museum educates 100,000 annual visitors.

One aspect that has been lacking from our displays is the history of the area prior to European settlement. The history of early Fort Steele has been closely tied with the local Ktunaxa bands and when the museum was reorganized in early 2016, a space for new exhibits and interpretive panels was created that would showcase the history of the Ktunaxa in the area. Fort Steele Heritage Town received a grant from the Columbia Kootenay Cultural Alliance for not just new interpretive panels, but also for a canvas tipi that the Fort Steele Education department will use for school programs starting in the spring of 2017.

The Curatorial and Education department heads met with representatives from the Ktunaxa Nation council in late 2015 about what the council would like to see regarding its history in Fort Steele. The new displays and panels are a result of this meeting and dialogue. We hope to continue an open dialogue with the members of the Ktunaxa Nation and collaborate with them on many future exhibits and projects. This August Ktunaxa elder Bea Stevens set up a tipi on the corner of Main Street and Riverside Avenue and gave demonstrations of the traditional methods of tanning animal hides. Future projects could include inviting members of the Ktunaxa Nation into the Heritage Town to showcase their traditional crafts and expand upon our knowledge of their culture.

The new displays in the museum include several artifacts from our collection such as a hide drum, historic beaded vests, a sturgeon-nose canoe (the traditional canoe of the Ktunaxa), an elk horn flesher, fishing harpoon and a reproduction scale model of a hide tipi. These artifacts are in addition to existing displays that include a ceremonial headdress, traditional clothing and beadwork. The new interpretive panels focus on the history of the Ktunaxa and their traditional territory, the Ktunaxa language, creation story and ways of life. Our hope for these new exhibits is for our visitors to garner a wider understanding of the history of Fort Steele and the East Kootenay.

In May 2017 the Ktunaxa Native Ways educational program will be made available to the approximately 300 regional youth who visit Fort Steele for education programs each year. The program aims to educate about the Ktunaxa by using hands-on activities, traditional stories and components of our history. The education



Ktunaxa elder Beatrice Stevens with her grandchildren in front of her canvas tipi at Fort Steele. Left to right: Zyzairia Stevens, Zaylyn Stevens, Beatrice Stevens.

Photo: Jessica VanOostwaard

program will focus on teaching youth about the importance of the Ktunaxa to the East Kootenay region and about the tumultuous relationship between settlers at Fort Steele and the Ktunaxa. The hands-on activities will include the telling of the creation story, tipi building, reed mat weaving, the telling of traditional Ktunaxa stories and the viewing of precious Ktunaxa artifacts. The program will take place in a 20-foot teepee built for Fort Steele by a Ktunaxa Nation member. Students will help erect a 6-foot tipi and learn about the value and cultural significance of the tipi to the Ktunaxa.

The program’s aim is to educate and inform students of the importance of the Ktunaxa and to make them aware of the hardships that native peoples have faced because of settlement. The program will be suitable for all ages, but will not shy away from some of the hard realities of the Ktunaxa-settler relationship, such as historic mistreatment, land appropriation and residential schools. We hope that teaching students about the importance of the Ktunaxa and making them aware of the historic hardships they have faced will leave them with a greater respect for the Ktunaxa Nation and their culture. We would like to thank the Ktunaxa Nation for their consultation in our education program and their support of the project.

The lack of diversity in the displayed history of Fort Steele is a problem that has been overlooked in the past, but with the changes we are trying to implement, we hope to communicate a more comprehensive and unbiased look at the history of our area. The town of Fort Steele may have begun with the gold rush of the 1860s but it is important to note the contributions of the people who came before the town’s founding, whether they are of European or Ktunaxa descent.

Jessica VanOostwaard is the curator of Fort Steele Heritage Town. fortsteele.ca.