

NEWS

Gardner inspired by Group of Seven

By Chris Abbott, Postmedia Network
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Ingersoll artist Danielle Gardner opened her home/gallery on the weekend for the 10th annual Oxford Studio Tour. (Chris Abbott/Tillsonburg News)

Former Glendale High School teacher Danielle Gardner is not just an artist.

"I believe in art education," said Gardner, who was stop No. 9 on the 10th Annual Oxford Studio Tour, May 6-7, which featured 18 locations across the county. "It's not just doing the art piece, it's also doing the education."

Now a high school art teacher in Ingersoll, Gardner said anyone who wants to learn, who has the passion to learn, can learn art.

"I'm one of the people who wants to help people learn. When I post my art online, I post all the steps on how I make it so that people will know how it's done. I don't want it to be a big mystery. I want them to understand the process."

Inspired by the Group of Seven, Gardner's home was filled with landscape paintings focusing on Killarney Provincial Park, near Sudbury, often called the 'crown jewel' of Ontario's Park system.

"Growing up I went to a cottage in Gravenhurst and learned to paint on the boathouse. I'd sit there and paint the rocks and the trees, I was always doing art. I went through every art course I possibly could.

"The Group of Seven, their legacy is to protect wildlife and to protect these Canadian spaces," said Gardner, noting 2017 is the 100th anniversary of Tom Thomson's death, who influenced the Group of Seven. "A.Y. Jackson protected the (Killarney) park. It was logged, and A.Y. Jackson petitioned the Government of Canada to protect the park as a wildlife preserve.

"My legacy that I want to leave is to have these 'windows' in people's houses that they can enjoy. It will move them into the outdoors."

Gardner helped start the Artist in Residence program at Killarney, and she was the first artist since the Group of Seven to be the park's official Artist in Residence.

"I do that every summer, it's volunteer work. I teach kids who are seven, and kids-at-heart who are 70, in the same group. There are no boundaries. They understand each other, they understand the techniques, and they understand that there is a process to it. They take home an appreciation and understanding of where we live and how we survive as human beings."

Gardner had a busy year creating new art, and plans to continue at the same pace.

"I just keep doing more and more from my travels. Each of these paintings, I've experienced. I do 'en plein air' as well, which means you're in the open air and you're painting what you see. You're a slave to what's going on in that moment in time. No matter what weather it is, or what the conditions are, you have to paint from start to finish in that spot."

When it's time to retire, Gardner said she will be retiring to a property near Killarney. She will continue with both passions - making art, and teaching art.

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