

## LOCAL

# Colborne students learn the language of art

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Colborne Public School visited Colborne Art Gallery last Thursday afternoon with teacher Peter North. Gallery docent and artist member Wilhelmina Kennedy challenged students to regard art works as another form of language.

Photo by Mandy Martin

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Grade 8 students of Colborne Public School learned a new "language" last Thursday afternoon and it didn't require visiting another country or fund-raising for months. All it took was a walk to the Colborne Art Gallery.

"There is the language of speaking and of writing," Gallery docent Wilhelmina Kennedy explains to the attentive group.

"These things," she points to the paintings and sculptures, "are silent, but they also have a language. It's different than speaking or the written word, but it does have a language of its own."

Everyone's hooked. They are asked to select a painting that touched their senses - makes them happy, sad, stirs their emotions.

"That is most important: the sensing of the painting before

you analyze the subject matter."

The challenge issued to select a painting or sculpture that stirs a personal feeling, the young people disperse throughout the three rooms of the gallery.

"There were questions about these two works," Wilhelmina smiles, moving to two "minimalist" paintings.

The monochrome oblongs puzzled the young people.

"I pointed out the earth tones of the colour, and the texture of the work, the shape, and the thin border around one of the works," Wilhelmina notes.

"I noted that a vase nearby was of the same colour and yet, because it's a vase, we can use it for something, but he paint-

ing, with its colour isn't used for anything, so sometimes we have trouble understanding or appreciating it at first. Look at the colour, the texture in the brush strikes. What does the

colour say? What is the feeling? Sometimes there are no words for spiritual things, and these paintings are a little like that."

Asked

why no one picked a piece a sculpture to identify an emotional response, one young man explained, "Because I don't know how you do that, what it's made of."

"Most of the students have worked with paints or drawing," Wilhelmina notes. "So, I have volunteered to go to the

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—Wilhelmina Kennedy

school and lead a paper mache sculpting class on February 25th. That is something I really enjoy doing, working with the young people."

Her offer was quickly and enthusiastically accepted.

"This makes me so happy, to have this gallery used by people in the village," says Wilhelmina.

For a photo, the group quickly pointed to the Kemp Kieffer large canvass of "Ragged Rapids" for a backdrop. The kids had been taken with its realism, the technique of colour on colour and the visible brush strokes.

"They compared the work with Group of Seven paintings they are aware of," Wilhelmina Kennedy notes. "So you see, they already have knowledge."

Understanding a new, silent language was an eye-opener for the group.

"I'm just tickled pink," the elated gallery docent enthused at the end of the hour-long visit.