

Sesquicentennial quilt featured at church event

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Quilter Gayle Larmond is seen with her creation O Canada-True North Strong and Free that will be featured at the Westmount Church quilt sale and event on September 10. SUBMITTED PHOTO

Celebrations for Canada's 150th birthday are getting a head start at Westmount Church on Sept. 10 with an event that features a one-of-a-kind quilt. Called O Canada: True North Strong and Free, the quilt is the work of Gayle Larmond of Eugenia, Ont.

When Larmond began to think about creating a quilt that reflects what Canada means to her, she was drawn to a fabric that pictures Arctic animals in their natural habitat all posing so that their strength and power clearly shine.

"I thought about our National Anthem which school children sang every morning and my favourite line "the true north strong and free," said Larmond.

The quilt was designed with a limited number of blending fabrics with birch trees forming a frame.

"At the top, imagine trees fallen from the ice storm and at the bottom, imagine trees reflected in a cold mountain river."

She explained that the two border fabrics resemble granite, just like the Canadian Shield. And then there is the quilting design that further illustrates the Canadian wilderness.

Owls, moose, bears, pine and bare bone trees show up well on the warm flannel backing.

Quilting, whether hand done or by machine, has enjoyed a resurgence of late. According to Larmond getting back to doing handcrafts is part of a natural balancing to our high-tech society.

"So much work is done on electronics these days," said Larmond. "We need to be doing something creative with our hands."

Over time, quilting was always done by groups and again there is a resurgence in such whether it is group of hand quilters such as at Westmount Church or in guilds whose members use the long arm sewing machine.

"It's an opportunity to share their talent with family and friends," explained Larmond who mentioned that many quilts are made as gifts.

Not only do friends and family benefit but also the community.

Larmond observed that some quilts are made and donated to the cancer ward at the Royal Victoria Hospital.

"When people come in for their chemotherapy treatment and get cold, they are offered the use of a comforter from the quilt cupboard at the hospital."

Quilting and other types of handcrafts have also become a way for people to share their gifts and talents during their retirement years.

"Many retirees now have the time and money to try new things and quilting is one of them," noted Larmond.

It was decided by the organizing committee at the church that the O Canada quilt will be available for purchase through a silent auction with a reserve bid in place.

"We want to be sure the quilt is available all day for everyone to have a chance to see it." noted Linda Jordan organizer of the event.

There will be something of interest to everyone at the sale with over 50 quilts, cushions, and other sewn items available during the 9 a.m. to 3 p.m. event. Admission and parking are free. Only cash and cheques will be accepted for purchases.

As with any event that features quilts, Jordan reminds members of the public that quilts are works of art.

"Therefore, there will be no food or drink allowed in the auditorium or anywhere else a quilt might be displayed," she said.

For Larmond, quilting has become a way of life and when she is not out hiking on trails with her dog Dora the Explorer, she is likely to be found in her sewing room. Her quilts are featured in a number of area shows for sale.

"When you give a gift of a quilt, it is a gift of love and warmth," said Larmond.