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TENT PROJECT

John Notten's Tent Project, on display at the Grimsby Public Art Gallery, includes interactive installations like this tarp with mini-tents attached. With such symbolism attached to tents, Notten says something like this piece could be used in a march or protest. See story on Page 32.

Luke Edwards/Metroland

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Mr. Convenience site passes environmental hurdle

Samples come back clean; building permits could be issued in two to three months

LUKE EDWARDS
 ledwards@niagarathisweek.com
 A residential construction site that drew some controversy


when it was approved has now passed an environmental hurdle. The former Mr. Convenience store property on King Street at

the intersection with Ontario Street has been approved by Lincoln council for a 36-unit condo project. Councillors passed a report allowing the development 16

months ago, amid some opposition from residents mostly concerned with parking.


● See BUILDING , page 7

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Sorry No Rainchecks

Tent Project takes up residence at the Grimsby Public Art Gallery

John Notten's interactive exhibit highlights the many faces of the tent

LUKE EDWARDS

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Many happy memories flood to the forefront when someone mentions the word "tent" to John Notten.

Various outings as a Scout leader. Kids putting up a tent in the backyard for a summertime adventure, or even simply building their own tent/fort under the dining-room table. Or, the "most beautiful place in Ontario," a little campsite near Killarney that he frequents.

A high school teacher from Toronto, Notten's Tent Project features artwork related to, and using, tents. But as the lifelong artist embarked on this project two years ago, he did so with an understanding that the tent is much more than a place to sleep while on a family vacation.

"One side of the tent is that nostalgia feeling," he said. But,

that's only one side.

"It's one of the many faces of the tent."

Take, for instance, tent cities that develop on vacant land where homeless people take up residence. Or, how about the millions of refugees who are forced to live in tents after being driven out of their homes because of war, famine or poverty.

Then there's the symbol of the tent, perhaps illustrated no better than during the Occupy movement, where the tent was not only an essential for some protesters, but also a symbol.

"Tents can be a powerful symbol of change," Notten said.

Through August, those many different symbols derived from the tent will be on display as the Tent Project takes up residence at the Grimsby Public Art Gallery. A mixed-media and interactive display, it touches on what the tent means to different people.

"It's about a lot more than just the tent for recreational camping," said GPAG director-curator Rhona Wenger.

The high school art teacher said he approaches his teaching by giving students open-ended questions and letting them take it in whatever direction they choose. For the Tent Project, he turned that philosophy inward. With research and reflection, it quickly dawned on him how varied a tent experience can be.

He pointed to one story of a Syrian refugee family who came to Canada. They'd been forced to live in a tent at a refugee camp as they awaited their future. Once settled in Canada, where did the parents send their children to for a summer vacation?

Camping, of course. But this time they were all smiles as they peeked their heads out of their tents.

"The context has changed so dramatically," he said of the family.

Notten hopes to have something for everyone at the exhibition, including art installations



Luke Edwards/Metroland

John Notten's art exhibition, called the Tent Project, has come to the Grimsby Public Art Gallery. It explores the tent, a powerful symbol of everything from nostalgic summer nights to the height of the refugee crisis.

that cover a myriad of themes, as well as pieces that invite interaction, like a crank visitors can turn that creates a tent city on waves or a setup that compares tent structures to Gothic churches. It

may seem like a stretch, until you stop and look at it.

The art gallery is located at 18 Carnegie Lane. An opening reception is planned for Friday, June 15, from 7 to 9 p.m.



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