

# KEEPER OF THE FAITH

By Pauline Shesnicky  
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The things that I admire most about Lorraine ('Raine') Cull are her sunny disposition, enthusiasm, diplomacy and positive outlook. I know I am not alone in this admiration. She has become a voice for art and artists in Thunder Bay and, for me, she is the 'keeper of the faith'.

Lorraine understands the importance of culture to the growth of a city and the attraction of business and young professionals. She told me that, when she moved from Orillia about 23 years ago, she had to search for the art scene in Thunder Bay. She found it and says it has always been here, but today arts and cultural events are much more visible than they were all those years ago. Lorraine herself has been a factor in ensuring that the word gets out about art happenings. All over town, people know that she has a broad email distribution list and will forward information, that will in turn get forwarded - a pipeline to the public. If you have an art event or class/workshop, she is more than happy to get the word out for you.

Lorraine is an indefatigable volunteer for art causes in Thunder Bay and is responsible for bringing artists and artisans to the Wednesday evening "Summer in the Parks" program. Her spouse Kevin Kuluski and step-daughters Ashley & Kourtney are her usual volunteer team and also deserve some recognition here. A side benefit of this summer program is that it will pay for recycling containers in the BIA. Lorraine told me that she is often approached by young professionals who are appalled that there is no visible recycling in her area.

The addition of art to waterfront events is a small step in her dream of seeing a culturally vibrant development at the foot of Red River Road and along the shore. Lorraine was a long time volunteer member of the 'Steering Committee for Art at the Waterfront' and, together with artist Bruce Stonehouse, still carries that torch, although the committee itself is inactive. That committee originally was conceived by a group of concerned individuals with an interest in starting an "arts centre" in Thunder Bay so that artists and the community could interact to the benefit of both. The arts centre concept has fallen by the wayside (again), but Lorraine and her business partner Angie Jensen, owners of the Painted Turtle Art Shop, have been able to start and maintain classes in a variety of arts and crafts, available to all ages, as a kind of 'mini arts centre'.

Lorraine and Angie purchased the Painted Turtle four years ago from Ruth Tye McKenzie (one of Thunder Bay's most respected artists). They have maintained the integrity of Ruth's shop, supplying university students,



Lorraine Cull

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local artists, and artists in the far north with quality materials. In addition, they recognized the local need for more exhibition space and workshops. In response, they have grown the business to include a small gallery and, as mentioned, creative classes. Lorraine told me that there is a misconception that she promotes arts development because she owns an art supply store. In actual fact, she says, she owns an art supply store because she believes that the arts are an "essential catalyst for growth in a city". I'm not sure Richard Florida has said it more succinctly. Lorraine had worked for Ruth in the shop for 10 years by the time Ruth was ready to retire and wanted to just wind it down and close the doors. Lorraine could not stand to watch this valuable art supply outlet be lost, so she and Angie (who worked at the Framing Post) bought the shop and they work it together.

Working as a volunteer director on the Heart of the Harbour BIA, Lorraine was also responsible for the visual artists component of the first annual Harbour Arts Festival Street Fair in downtown Port Arthur August 17 & 18. This event gave 24 artists an opportunity to interact with the public. I hope you were able to attend.

Richard Florida, in his article "The Rise of the Creative Class" quotes a real estate developer on problems in North Carolina - "Ask anyone where downtown is and nobody can tell you. There's not much of a sense of place here". I've heard the same question asked by visitors to Thunder Bay. Lorraine Cull is an 'Everyday Hero', working to provide an answer to that question in our community.

*Everyday Heroes is a community initiative by Thunder Bay Ventures. Everywhere there are people living, working, playing and contributing to the fabric of our city. Nominate a hero - [heroes@thunderbayventures.com](mailto:heroes@thunderbayventures.com). Read about past heroes at [www.thunderbayventures.com](http://www.thunderbayventures.com)*