

Books that talk in living libraries

By Kathy Richan

I am told we have 50 public libraries in Estrie and 12 others that are private. In January 2011, a Living Library will be added to the list. This Living Library is organized by Literacy in Action and the Community Art Lab of the Foreman Art Gallery of Bishop's University.

A Living Library works exactly like a public library - readers borrow a book. The difference is, books in the Living Library are human beings: living books, with whom the reader can have a conversation.

The first step in creating a Living Library is the recruitment of living books. The 'call' for participants is taking place right now. "Anyone can be a book, we all have something to share," say the organizers, "All you have to do is chose a skill or a hobby you have, or an experience to share. Whatever you chose becomes your book cover."

People are calling in and the shelves

are filling up with a wide range of topics. For instance, one participant has signed up to show others how to 'sharpen a chainsaw', another to share her experience of 'coming to this country as an immigrant'.

Normally, we share these kinds of life experiences and day-to-day know-how with our neighbours, friends and family members. That's why this living library is called Neighbour to Neighbour. "The interests and skills of each community member reflect our identity as a region. This is a wonderful opportunity for the community to share and celebrate their different knowledge sets" says Yael Filipovic, curator of the Community Art Lab of the Foreman Art Gallery.

The Living Library is a two-fold experience: the living book keeps alive the ancient oral tradition of transferring knowledge and information, while the borrower of the book learns from collected community wisdom. Both develop communication skills, make new ac-

quaintances and engage in a social activity. It's truly a wonderful world that encourages books to talk and libraries to be alive with chatter, and hey, with no library fees, cards, stamping, or late charges!

Register yourself to be a book by calling Yael or Sevan at 819-822-9600 extension 2279 before December 17. After Christmas, in January, books will be called to take part in a Living Library event(s). At the events, borrowers will be able to reserve books for 20-40 minutes at a time. Look for more news about Neighbour to Neighbour: Living Libraries in January.

The Neighbour to Neighbour: Living Libraries is a project of the Community Art Lab of the Foreman Art Gallery and Literacy in Action. Visit this special project space from January 5-20, 2011 at the Foreman Art Gallery to find out more about the vast amount of knowledge that exists within our community.