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SUBMITTED PHOTO

Heritage captured in coin

Metis artist Nathalie Bertin
tells the story
of the northern lights
through coin design/**Page 8**



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ALL-NEW 2014 MDX

Trust fund opened to aid family of drowned boy

BY TERESA LATCHFORD
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You can help support the family of the boy who drowned in a Newmarket pool.

Poplar Banks Public School held an open house earlier this week as a tribute to Robert Robinson, the 10-year-old boy who was found dead in a pool on Woodfern Way following a pool party.

"He was a well-loved boy and very jovial," Robert's former kindergarten teacher Christine Steeper said.

The open house brought together school administration, school board representatives including York Region District School Board education director Ken Thurston, members of the community, students and the Robinson family to pay their respects to a friend.

The open house was held from 11 a.m. to 1 p.m. and saw 200 to 300 people pass through the doors, Ms Steeper added.

► Poplar Banks Public School staff opened a trust fund for the Robinson family. Donations can be made at TD Canada Trust branch 3076, 18154 Yonge St. in East Gwillimbury, account 6111129.

There were condolence books for visitors to sign which will be later given to the family as well as two large boards with Robert's photograph on them, one for the children and another for the adults to sign and leave messages.

"It was all very touching," she said.

Had the incident occurred during the school year, councillors and social workers would have been on hand at the school to help students deal with the grief.

Those workers were on site and

offering their services during the open house.

The principal of the school determines when the tragic response unit is called into the school and if staff and students are having a difficult time dealing with the death in September, the principal may decide to call in the team, according to York Region District School Board student services superintendent Steven Reid.

"I would suggest parents watch for behavioural changes and seek help if needed for their children," he replied when asked what parents can do to support their children through the grieving process.

A quick Internet search will help parents find books for children dealing with grief and a number of organizations in York Region offer support for children who are dealing with a loss.

Look for opportunities to have a discussion and be open and honest with your child, he added.

Silver coin reflects Metis story of northern lights

BY TERESA LATCHFORD
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Nathalie Bertin's legacy lives in a silver coin.

The Newmarket artist was asked by the Royal Canadian Mint to design a fine silver hologram coin that reflected the story of the northern lights.

Being of Metis heritage, she chose to depict the Odawa legend about a cultural hero known as Nanahboozho, who would often shape-shift into the Great Hare.

While the Algonquin people share many stories about the northern lights, this one believes that after creating Turtle Island, Nanahboozho travelled north for a rest and built great bonfires and the colours reflected in the sky were meant to remind his people he was thinking of them.

"Canada has such a rich history that many Canadians don't know about," Ms Bertin said. "I hope this coin brings some of that history to them or at least sparks their interest to find out more."

She admits it is a little surreal

► For more information on the artist, visit nathaliebertin.com or for more information on the coin, visit mint.ca/store/coin

to have her art on the silver coin. Never in one million years would she have believed anyone who told the former graphic artist her art would attract the attention of the Royal Canadian Mint.

"I think my husband said it best, I now have a legacy even if it lives in someone's sock drawer," she laughed.

After years of working as a graphic designer, Ms Bertin decided to indulge in her passion for art and began sharing her works publicly in 2009. She mainly works with acrylic paint, but has worked with beading, leather and fur.

Her work blends her French and Algonquin heritage and in 2010 she was selected as an artist ambassador for the G20 Summit in Toronto. Her most recent works are inspired by traditional storytelling and folk tales.

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