Arts & Entertainment

Full re-opening planned for Friends United Cent

By **Strait Area Reporter** - May 28, 2021

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KEMPT ROAD: As they plan to re-open fully to the public, those at a local facility are staying busy with a number of projects.

Canadian Pioneer Estates Ltd. founder/president Rolf Bouman, one of the managers of the Friends United Centre in Kempt Road, told The Reporter they are planning to open to the public in three to six months, during which time they will address accessibility and other issues.

Among the visitors and users of the facility were 30 Mi'kmaq grandmothers who held a drumming session more than a month ago. Bouman said they spoke about the importance of their culture which they articulated into words that were left on large sheets of paper to inspire others.

"They spoke much about the important role of females, of the mother in Mi'kmaq communities," he recalled.

One of the 43 artists involved with the facility, British Columbia carver Gerry Sheena has finished two totem poles, and is working on a third to be situated in the lobby of the centre. He created other totem poles already on display in other parts of the centre.

"It love it here," Sheena said. "It's spacious, it's quiet. (Bouman) set this whole place up here for me to work and you can just walk to the centre for more inspiration, and drive around anywhere on the island here. It's beautiful."

Bouman had two 500-year-old red cedar logs (about 80 feet in length) shipped 6,000 kilometres from British Columbia for the project.

"I learned for the first time, how expensive two trees in shipping can be, because the bill, it was amazing. I could've bought a nice big car for that," he remarked. "It was important to get those here."

Sheena said the logs were cut into seven, 10-foot-long sections which were used to make a table, blocks to create masks, and the rest for totem poles which he hopes to finish by the summer, before he has to return to the west coast.

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