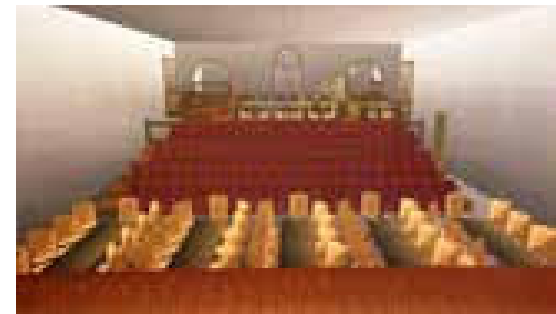




Some "Friends of the Royal" pausing for a photo op before going back to building the dream; Right: Artist's rendition of the Royal Theatre upon completion



THE ROYAL THEATRE

Breathing New Life into an Old Dream

Thousand Islands Community Development Corporation (\$15,000 grant) totalling about \$148,000, as well as a \$63,000 grant from The ADC. Other donations have come in from the general public and a "go fund me" page, as well as other sources such as a 25th anniversary reunion performance by the original Montreal cast of Les Misérables.

"We're working towards a live performance base," said McCarthy. "We've got some inspirational sketches created by Kevin, featuring an upper lounge that will also serve as a small lounge for the community with it

Courtesy of the “Friends of the Royal”, the old Delaney Bowl in Gananoque (75 King St E.) is undergoing a massive retrofit project. All group members are involved in the arts in some way, and all can see the vision – a dream of a full season of music and theatre at the Delaney, now the Royal Theatre, starting in May, 2017.

Perhaps the best kept secret in the world of Canadian performing arts, the theatre is taking shape and coming alive.

“It’s going to be awesome, especially right on the main drag,” said musician Aaron Ray of Joyride. “It’s going to be really good for everyone in Gananoque, whether it’s traditional live theatre or simply a stage for rent for anyone to use. Right now there’s no market for it, but that’s only because they don’t know it’s here. Once people find it, it will totally take off.”

Built in 1930 by the Delaney family, it opened as a cinema in 1937 after struggles with the Great Depression. It ran successfully until 1960 when it was sold to become a bowling alley. As the conversions were made for that project, many of the trappings from the old theatre simply disappeared.

Times and interests keep changing, and it was sold once again to Kevin John Saylor and his partner, Frayne McCarthy, in 2013. Saylor is a Mohawk from the Kahnawake reservation near Montreal with a strong background in the arts. He founded and spent nearly 20 years as the artistic director of the Turtle Island Theatre Company. McCarthy volunteered at the company for 17 years.

After being locked out of their theatre in the fall of 2012 by the local band, they were crushed but not defeated. Instead, they went out to find another place where they could build their dream, and the Delaney was the perfect place to bring the Royal Theatre to life.

“Kevin has made up the most amazing drawings,” said McCarthy. “They are our inspiration and our guide – what it will all look like when the work is finished.”

Perhaps most astounding of all is that they are doing all of this with almost no money to work with. They have received funding from the foundation Indian Agricultural Program of Ontario (\$70,000 loan), the federal Aboriginal Business Canada, and the

piano lounge area on its own with its own stage. From the lounge, you’ll be able to look down onto the main stage.

“We are open. Starting May, we’ve got acts booked on this new stage.”

About 13 different performing groups are expected to come in throughout the summer producing plays, musicals and concerts.

“There’s so much in the works, believe it or not,” said McCarthy. “We really hope you come to the Royal many, many times this summer. This is the theatre you as a community are making happen.” LH

Editor’s Note: You can check out the progress and summer bookings on The Royal Theatre Facebook page @ <https://www.facebook.com/RoyalTheatreThousandIslands/> or visit their website @ www.royaltheatre.ca for information about the Royal Theatre. Call 613-382-5000 at the box office for ticket information.