

# Local lover of native art publishes book

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Staff Reporter

Not even a hex from an Ojibwa medicine man could keep Beth Southcott from finishing her book on native art.

Southcott, a Sheridan Homelands resident and founding member of the Clarkson Art Group, has spent the past 10 years of her life visiting Ontario Cree and Ojibwa artists while researching her recently published book, *The Sound of The Drum: The Sacred Art of the Anishnabec*.

Southcott's research took her to several Ontario reservations where she

was overwhelmed by the enthusiastic reception she received from native artists.

"They would invite me to their home — and you never went away hungry," said Southcott. "They made you feel so welcome."

There was, however, one medicine man not totally enthralled with Southcott's presence in his village. As she was driving her car along the road, suddenly a blast of heat came from under the floorboard — and Southcott maintains the heat and all vents were turned off. She and her friend quickly moved out of the area, but were inform-

ed afterward by another native that they had indeed been hexed.

Southcott says it is this kind of adherence to ancient beliefs that makes native art so fascinating.

"It's unfortunate, but many of their beliefs were laughed at by missionaries, so the beliefs went underground and they managed to keep them alive," said Southcott.

Now, the 20th-century shamans are passing on the ancient teachings to young people who in turn use the symbols in their art. Southcott discovered that many of the symbols in native art

come from ancient birchbark scrolls, while other symbols are personal to the artist.

The long path to Southcott's published work began in 1975 when she was taking an art course at Erindale College.

She began doing her own research and after turning out a 33-page essay, was encouraged by her professor to follow up her work into a full-fledged book.

Southcott's 222-page book is selling of \$25, thanks to government grants and is available in all major bookstores.

Paul Bury. Rk.