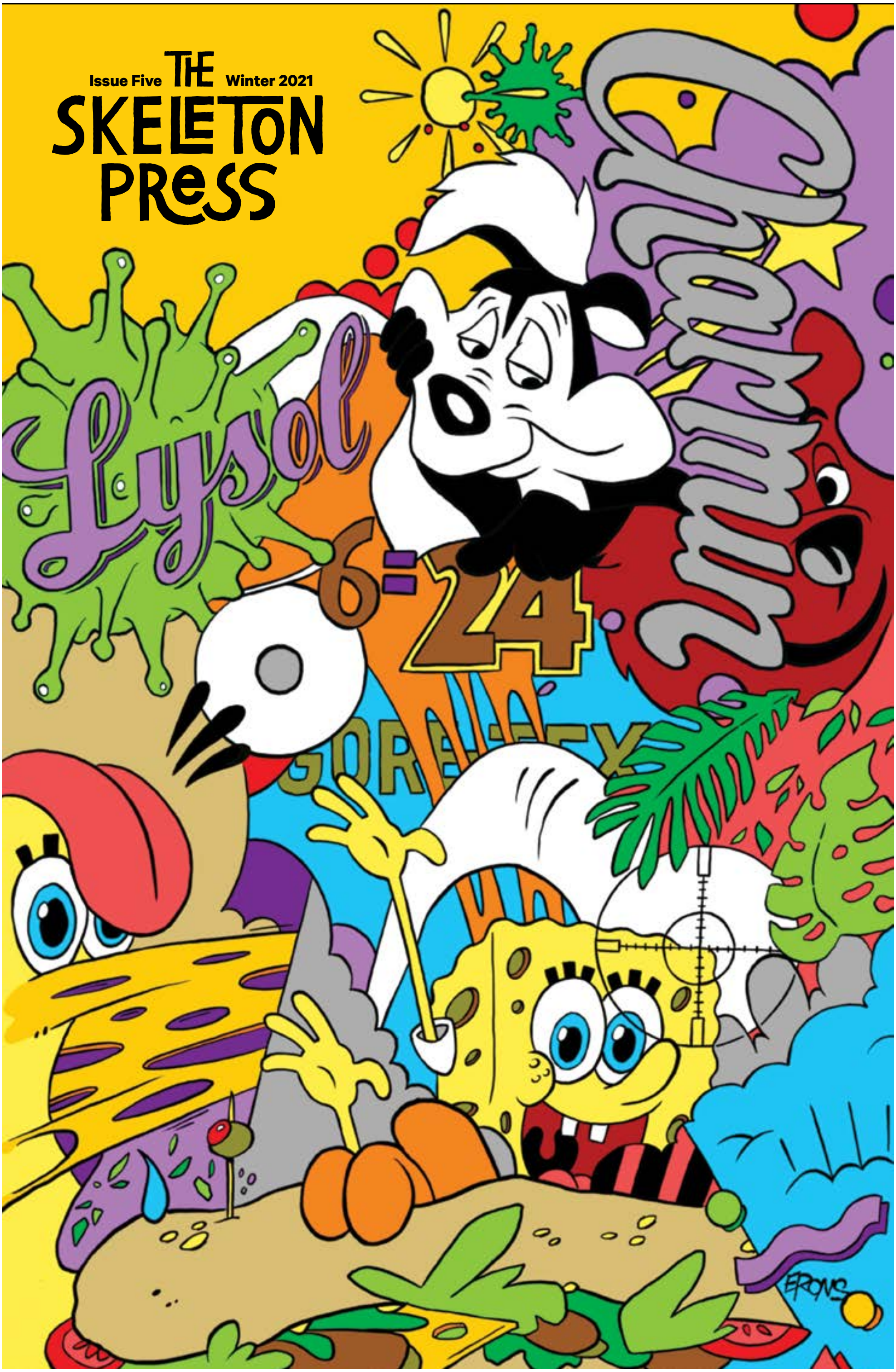
NEIGHBOURHOOD-FOCUSED, PULP-BASED JOURNALISM, FREE & SERVING MCBURNEY PARK & SURROUNDING AREA

Issue Five THE Winter 2021

SKELETON PRESS



Making art public

One of my favourite Kingston public art experiences took place almost ten years ago. I recall precariously climbing up an apartment building fire escape, a digital projector under one arm, tailing artist Christine Dewancker to help her project — *16 Messages for Kingston* — onto the façade of Princess Towers. One of several of Dewancker's "temporary textual interventions" across Kingston, it pushed the idea of the city-as-studio to to explore, as she says, the "often-invisible conditions that manifest in the built environment, [by] juxtaposing textual statements within a given space to create new, multi-faceted readings of the site."

"The projection piece onto Princess Towers included sixteen aphorisms, one for each story of the towers, and each one speaking to various (and sometimes contradictory) collective imaginings about life in the city. Through the projections, the building itself seemed to be speaking to the city, prompting pedestrians to consider for whom these messages were intended."

I remember wondering if what we were doing was even legal (despite having obtained permission from both the Princess Towers management and the landlord of the building from where we were projecting), let alone supported or endorsed by the City and surrounding neighbourhood. But I soon sensed growing audience appreciation from the lively crowd of residents, passing drivers, cyclists, and pedestrians below, who had all congregated at street level to view this daring art installation in such an unconventional public space.

The Skeleton Park neighbourhood has, of course, long been well versed with unconventional public art, but it's really been over the past ten to fifteen years that these projects have taken on a new and more visible role in shaping the community. In this edition of *The Skeleton Press*, we feature the work of local artists, documented by local writers, to reflect the range of experiences and stories of the people who live in and around the area. Porch jazz parades, giant puppets (see pg. 26), park and neighbourhood art exhibitions (see pgs. 12-16) are just a few examples of the public art described in these pages.

The growth in public art is not limited to this neighbourhood. A significant factor in the expansion of the public art scene has been the City's increasing support for, and endorsement of, public art. The City of Kingston now not only has a Public Art Master Plan ("to help make Kingston a more vibrant and artful city, while providing opportunities for artists and citizens alike"), it also has an official Public Art Office at City Hall. Some of the new initiatives affiliated with the City's Public Art Office include: establishing the Rideaucrest retaining wall adjacent to Douglas Fluhrer Park as a "legal wall" available for the use by the community to create street art and murals (see pg. 4); bringing public art to the newly revitalized Victoria Park in Kingston's Williamsville neighbourhood (pgs. 22-23); creating a waterfront wayfinding and promotion strategy (pg. 27) that features public art as a creative and informative way to help citizens navigate and the City promote Kingston's waterfront.

And finally, lo and behold, in the interest of "active and lively public places that make a city a vibrant place to live and visit," we find the City's Public Art Office is helping to establish the intersection of Princess and Division Streets (where Princess Towers is situated) as the site for the new "Hub Project" — a public engagement initiative intended to "connect neighbourhoods through art by making a series of creative improvements to this intersection."

The City's support for public art is timely and welcomed, especially as we trudge along through times of isolation in response to public health directives. But, of course, it is the work of local artists, both in this neighbourhood and around the city, that continues to pump vibrancy and creativity into our lives. In difficult times, we are grateful to them for keeping art in our day-to-day, and in our community. Huzzah for making art more public, and huzzah for the artists!

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

The Skeleton Press is interested in sharing more stories and would like to invite you to contribute by writing a letter to the editor.

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MANDATE

The Skeleton Press was initiated by the Skeleton Park Arts Festival to create a free print publication that captures the vibrancy and diversity of the neighbourhood. We are interested in how print media can communicate and build relationships differently than digital publishing, and in how the act of consuming and distributing the physical object can build community. We hope copies of *The Skeleton Press* will be passed from hand to hand, sparking conversation with neighbours over the fence or at the corner store, and strengthening our sense of place and each other.

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DEAD ON Collective

PROFILE BY JAN ALLEN

LEFT TO RIGHT:
Bree Rapapport, Mark Fast-Grass, Eric Williams and Kelsey Pearson

Any description of the DEAD ON Collective is bound to be provisional. In its continuous self-invention, the members are learning on the fly and within an ever-expanding network of affiliated artists. During my conversation with four members in November 2020, they also conveyed clarity, and a brisk collective will that knows what the collective is and is not.

And then there's the connection among members: Since DEAD ON's founding in 2017, mutual support for professional creative practice has been its beating heart. The shared studio is a generous high-ceilinged space in the National Grocers Building complex on Cataraqui Street near Kingston's Inner Harbour. As you approach, the DEAD ON vibe is established by a high-energy dance of graphics along the exterior wall. When I first visited a couple of years ago, the studio was roughly partitioned into member studios and a designated gallery area. But now, since pandemic pressures have reduced membership, the space has been reconfigured for more flexible use and to accommodate a half-pipe skateboard ramp. This somewhat surprising addition reflects the skater affiliation of members, and brings welcome activity, along with revenue through user fees. While the collective's connection to street culture isn't exclusive to that community, its aesthetic centre of gravity lies in graffiti writing, tattoo art, cartooning, ephemeral art, design, animation, and accessible art in prints and wearables, craft media and murals.

DEAD ON has four active members: Mark Fast-Grass, Kelsey Pearson, Bree Rapapport and Eric Williams, plus one non-participating "angel" member, Joe Pelow, a graphic designer and website developer. They are young emerging artists, all graduates of Karen Peperkorn's long-running Creative Arts Focus program at Kingston's QECVI. After completing post-secondary education, they returned to Kingston and joined forces in the can-do spirit of that program.

Eric Williams, DEAD ON's founder and operations director, is a graphic artist and maker of multiples and media works, with a passion for what he calls progressive art, that is, art that circulates outside the white-cube gallery scene, and that is not mainstream commercial but thrives through inventive forms of entrepreneurship. Williams's vision has been pivotal to DEAD ON: he has ushered the collective through transformations, with ideas shared and thrashed out, always mixing willingness to experiment with a healthy pragmatism. He works at Ironclad Graphics and sustains a strong network among graffiti writers.

Kelsey Pearson is immersed in her art practice full time as a remote-learning MFA student at Concordia University. The DEAD ON space allows her to work on her large-scale fibre art project and offers a stimulating context for making. In and outside the studio, Pearson is active in developing the city's quad skater community to make a safe and welcoming environment for new skaters.

Bree Rapapport is a painter and art educator who teaches at nearby Leahurst College. With the 12CAT Arts Collective, she also makes live projections for music performances. Rapapport is passionate about the value of DEAD ON's creative encouragement: she credits DEAD ON with pulling her through the precarious transition after art school, when loss of context threatened to bring her creative work to a standstill.

Mark Fast-Grass, the newest arrival in the studio, is a writer who treasures DEAD ON's environment for its power to energize his writing for the skater journal *King Skateboard Magazine*, bringing voice to LGBTQ presence in the sport. He values the space equally as an environment conducive to focused work, and as a gathering place where he can bounce ideas off others.

The artists are most enthusiastic about the collective's community-building activities. While their regular Drink and Draw gatherings and skill-sharing workshops have been curtailed by the pandemic, new initiatives are percolating. Most ambitious, in September DEAD ON hosted a Graffiti Jam with eight artists, a mix of Kingston and Toronto graffiti writers: the resulting gorgeous snare of graphics dominates the courtyard walls outside the studio. In fair weather, the studio's garage door opens to picnic tables, allowing distanced encounters for conversation or creation. The members are quick to acknowledge their accommodating landlord, Ric Barr, and supportive neighbouring tenants for making this possible. In another COVID-19-driven innovation, DEAD ON's online store represents work by members and affiliated artists. Commissions on sales of t-shirts, prints, and multiples help support the collective.

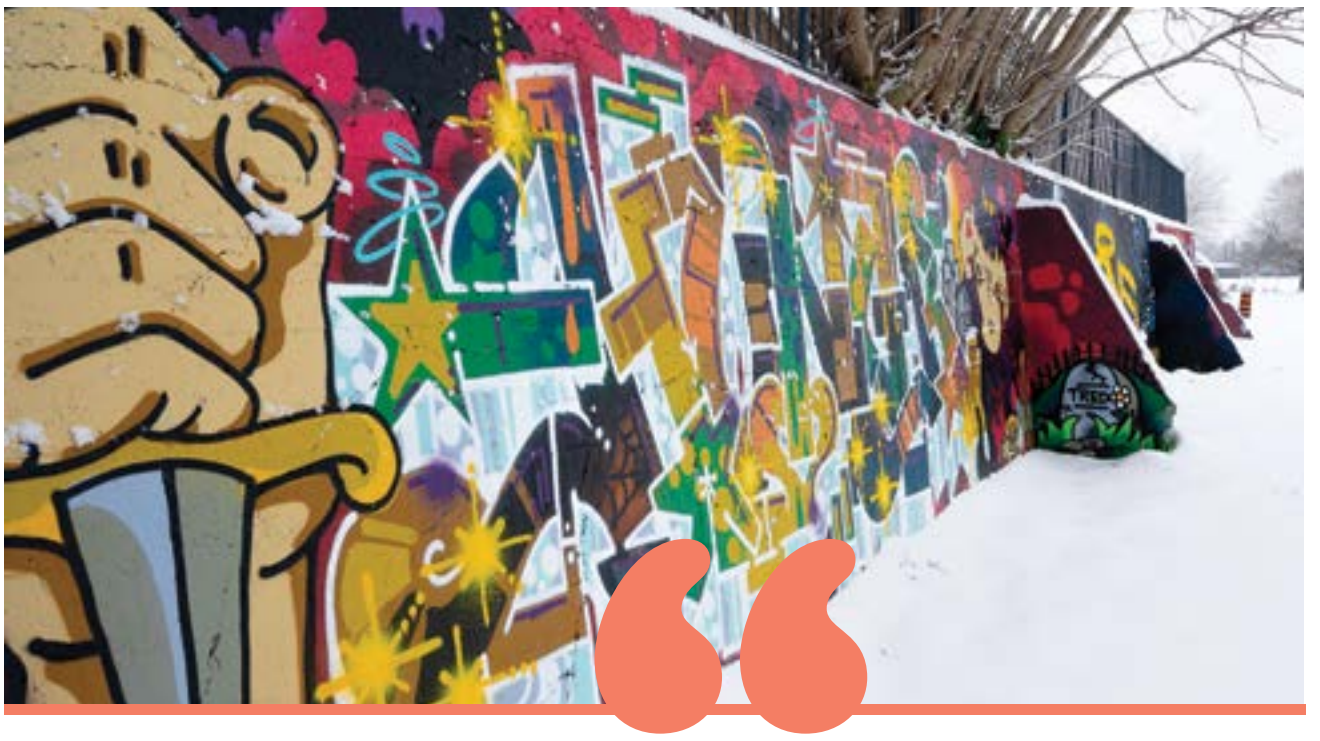
DEAD ON continues to dream big. Looking ahead, the half pipe might serve as a performance stage for 12CAT; the neighbouring collective lost its space last year. Additionally, the artists muse about introducing open-studio Sundays. They are also thinking more broadly about the uncertain future for gig-starved artists: Eric Williams is part of the grass roots and independent professionals (GRIP) group, formed last spring to advocate for desperately needed flexible funding. This initiative poses the timely question: how can the City help creatives thrive through the current pandemic and beyond?

Check out the activities of the DEAD ON Collective at deadon.ca. Even better, look for an exhibition of their work at Something Else Records until February 28.

JAN ALLEN is an artist, curator, writer, and arts advocate who has lived in the Skeleton Park neighbourhood since 2007.

How legal public art spaces enhance communities

STORY BY TIANNA EDWARDS AND EM HARMSEN
PHOTOS BY ADAM BIEHLER



Douglas Fluhrer Park, like many waterfront destinations in Kingston, is a place where visitors can enjoy a scenic walk with lush views of nature. The one thing that sets Douglas Fluhrer Park apart is its Street Art Wall — known as "the legal wall," which spans the length of the waterfront trail and features the work of Canadian artists. According to the City of Kingston: "A legal wall, otherwise known as 'free space', is an area where street art, graffiti art and murals are permitted and encouraged [...] sanctioned spaces that offer a unique public canvas to artists." This space allows up-and-coming artists to hone their skills and gives locals a glimpse into the artistic process, from the rough draft to the artist's final vision. On any given day, onlookers ranging from grandparents to toddlers and teenagers can participate in the art experience by watching these artists master their craft. When questioned about their best memories at the Kingston legal wall so far, a local artist (who wished to remain anonymous) responded: "It has to be all the memories and friendships that are made! Also, the diversity of people. It's so nice to see common interest bring everybody together."

Across Canada, from big cities to small communities, legal public art spaces have not only been embraced by municipalities, but also celebrated. One of the most well-known examples of this is the MURAL Festival in Montreal. Artists are brought in from across the globe and their work is exhibited all over the city on a massive scale — to be enjoyed for years to come. A different take on this is the small town of Chemainus on Vancouver Island, which is known for its impressive fifty-three murals brightening up the streets and paying homage to the history of the town. A yellow footprint path is painted on the sidewalks and streets, helping to guide visitors around the town to each art-covered wall.

"Celebrating local artists that specialize in painting murals and making street art is a great first step at putting your city on the map as a public art destination. It enhances tourism and fosters an appreciation for public art culture and these unique artists in the community," says an anonymous artist who has contributed to Kingston's legal wall.

Ottawa has three legal walls of various size located in different parts of the city. The yearly event, House of PainT, highlights muralists and graffiti artists and has created a venue for public art tours in Ottawa. "These types of events are great at attracting people from different cities, both participants and spectators," says an anonymous Kingston-based artist. From one end to the other, Toronto hosts a plethora of street art. Kensington Market is known for its vibrant murals and graffiti. Located on Queen Street West is Graffiti Alley, tucked behind buildings and running for several blocks. In 2019, Hamilton established its first legal graffiti wall in an effort to create harmony between graffiti artists and members of the community. The other aim was to provide opportunities for art in permitted spaces. Graffiti walls are important: they provide an outlet for artists and they offer an inclusive free space for viewers to consume art in all its stages of development.

Making art public and accessible can be viewed as an act of decolonization. Think about the historical stigma around graffiti and street art: the artists were often considered unapproachable, and consumers of traditional art might not have categorized graffiti or street art as genuine. Having these artworks displayed legally in parks and accessible to all enables this dialogue. At the wall, people can witness first-hand the skill and the artistry that go into a mural or street art piece. And the artist is visible; not cloaked in the darkness of night but engaged with inquisitive bystanders in the light of day.

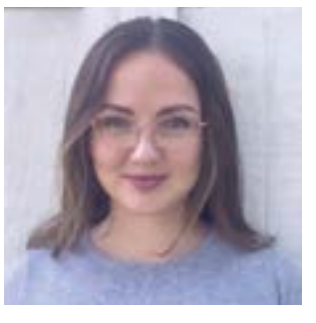
"It's great meeting other people with common interests. Artists, photographers and passersby like to see art being created and having a chance to speak with the artist," says a local artist who paints often at the wall and would also like to remain anonymous. When there is a safe public legal place to practice art, everyone wins. It's the most accessible art can get!

The Fluhrer Park Street Art Wall in Kingston is a step in the right direction for the City to continue to embrace public art while supporting Kingston's many talented muralists and street artists. A local artist, who has contributed many pieces to the legal wall, notes: "[legal walls] promote a positive way for artists to express themselves, grow and develop their skills. Art adds personality to anything it is created on. It helps to break up the monotony of concrete!" Having this type of art on our city walls will work towards growing Kingston as a destination that is known to be inclusive and embracing of arts and culture.

When there is a safe public legal place to practice art, everyone wins. It's the most accessible art can get!

Public art embraces an ephemeral quality that is often unnerving to society. The reality of creating art in public is that tomorrow, it may be covered up with something new. This is part of the allure and excitement of this artform, not knowing if your favourite piece will be there when you return. "The legal wall" embodies an important quality that we should all try to appreciate, and that is allowing something fresh to take up space. Change is good.

TIANNA EDWARDS is a Kingston young professional, Queen's master's student, and the creator of keepupwithkingston.com. She was born and raised in Kingston and now lives here with her husband and daughter.



EM HARMSEN is currently completing an MA at Queen's University. She has experience in design, art, technology, accessibility, and fashion. She feels a strong passion for connecting emerging artists with opportunities designed to help further their careers.

The Skeleton Park community gardens

For growing and for growth

STORY BY KATE THOMAS

Skeleton Park has almost everything a village common could provide: space for leisure and for play in the summer, a skating rink in the winter, trees for slack lines to be strung, and celebrations at the turning of each season. For many years, Julian Brown has tenderly cared for the flower beds that line the Ordnance Street side. Recently, meals have been served in that same area each day throughout the pandemic for those in need.

For me, a missing piece has been a central gathering point, something we as a community can create together and share through the seasons. The Skeleton Park Community Garden, I hope, will be that piece. If you are a regular reader of *The Skeleton Press*, you will recall Jane Kirby's article about community gardens, in which she quoted me as saying that we were hopeful that our application for community garden beds in Skeleton Park would be approved. Take a walk through the park today and you will see that we were hugely successful! The beds are not only built and filled with rich black earth, they hold nuggets of gold in the form of garlic and sun chokes planted by keen volunteers.

How did it all come together? A small group of neighbours formed to brainstorm where and how the beds might best fit in the park. Paperwork was filled in thanks to information listed on the Kingston Community Gardens website. Then we waited patiently for the application to make its way through the process. Thanks to the support of Ayla Fenton and Loving Spoonful, who act as the liaison between the City and communities interested in having gardens, we were able to finalize the details in time for a Hallowe'en build. Papers were signed, wood was ordered and soil was delivered. It wasn't quite that simple, but suffice to say, we did it!

Location was easy — lots of sun, relatively flat space, not in the way of play, on Ordnance Street behind the flower beds. Size and style? Regulations for City property require raised beds. We agree, both because we are located on a cemetery site and because we want folks with mobility issues to be able to reach into the soil. Four-foot-wide beds make it possible to reach the centre from either side. Sixteen feet in length gives us enough space to plant and interplant according to Victory Garden standards and to achieve and square-foot-intensive planting. We want to make sure there's lots of food in a small space. Four beds, because four is a nice number and looks good.

> **Watching people come from all sides of the park, with shovels over shoulders, pushing wheelbarrows, toting saws and drills, sporting smiles and energy, lifted my heart...**

On a beautiful, sunny Hallowe'en day, at least two dozen people gathered for physically-distanced instruction and construction. Watching people come from all sides of the park, with shovels over shoulders, pushing wheelbarrows, toting saws and drills, sporting smiles and energy, lifted my heart and brought tears to my eyes. It was a glorious day for a work bee, led by engineer Dave Hodgson and his team of Lea Westlake, Dave McDonald, Mark Stoller and Nico Koenig. Others drilled the hemlock and cedar boards in place and filled in the boxes, with gravel and soil organized by Jamie Swift. It was a wonderful sight to see everyone pitching in, and by mid-afternoon we stood looking at four sturdy, beautiful garden beds. Martine Bresson captured it all in photos, while Val Hamilton played an Irish flute to commemorate the build.

While many community gardens rent out plots so individuals or families can grow for themselves, we have decided Skeleton Park beds will be for everyone to work on together. We want everyone to be involved and take pride in our gardens. We see Skeleton Park Gardens as an exercise in educational, experimental and experiential learning and teaching. We intend to plant indigenous perennial vegetables to share with the community and to give to Loving Spoonful for their food distribution program. We plan to incorporate Three Sister's plantings: corn, squash and beans.

We hope to have lots of greens and things to share. We will learn together what grows best and what grows together. We will share in the planning, planting, weeding, harvesting and eating. To me, that is the meaning of sustainability: feeding the stomach, the heart and the soul of a community—together. A time to play and to be in the park, and a time to learn about making things grow and watching the miracle of seed turning to food right before our eyes. It doesn't get better than that.

If you are interested in helping with the planning, planting, maintaining and harvesting in our gardens, please email skeletonpark@gmail.com. We will get together early in the new year so we can order seeds and start seedlings indoors in time to plant in late May.

Some Reading:

- *101 Organic Gardening Hacks* by Shawna Coronado
- *No Waste Organic Gardening* by Shawna Coronado
- *Raised Bed Revolution* by Tara Nolan
- *The Victory Garden Kids' Book* by Marjorie Waters

For resources, check our local library, Novel Idea books or the Kingston Community Garden Network.

KATE THOMAS has lived around Skeleton Park for many years. She is currently the coordinator of the neighbourhood association and an avid gardener. She enjoys practising Tai Chi in the park.

PHOTO CREDIT: Martine Bresson

It's a wonderful place

To donate: screeningroom kingston.square.site

Kingstonians pull together to help The Screening Room survive the pandemic

STORY BY DAWN CLARKE

Spoiler Alert. There can be few scenes in film as touching as the closing scene of *It's a Wonderful Life*. George Bailey (Jimmy Stewart) is in despair and facing financial ruin. The good town of Bedford Falls is in danger of becoming Pottersville, a sleazy commercial strip run by a villain who will destroy everything good in the town. And then George Bailey's customers — his neighbours — rally and pitch in to give him the money that will rescue him from the brink of ruin. The love they give him is more important than the money. And their town is saved from becoming a sleazy soulless place. It's a classic scene of redemption in film.

Decades ago, I considered movies merely a guilty pleasure. Movies couldn't be considered art. Could the redemption scene in *It's a Wonderful Life* compare with the scenes of redemption in the novels of Jane Austen or George Eliot? Heresy.

Then, in the 1970s, I discovered film as a bona fide artistic and cultural activity. The National Film Theatre, with its earnest highbrow offerings, came to Kingston.

We didn't call them movies. They were "films." Once a month, we, the earnest audience, would file into the sterile auditorium in the basement of Ellis Hall at Queen's, to be edified. Nothing as enjoyable as popcorn could accompany highbrow films.

Fast forward through the decades that followed. The earnest and sterile National Film Theatre evolved into the Princess Court Theatre, above the current location of the Mekong Vietnamese restaurant. In subsequent years, various venues in Kingston housed alternate films, until finally the movement landed in The Screening Room. And Wendy Huot emerged to transform movie-going into an art form, and films into a form of pleasure.

Finally, the old question was answered: Yes, it was possible to discuss film and literature in the same breath. Film was an art. AND it was possible to have fun watching worthy films.

Wendy loves film. Her youthful dream had been to own her own theatre. And her purchase of The Screening Room in 2011 was a dream come true.

What Wendy Huot has done for the past nine years in the Screening Room has been fabulous, in the true sense of that word. Snobbery is not an issue; second-run blockbusters play alongside documentaries about housing injustice, corporate machinations, and the spirituality of mushrooms.

The theatres of The Screening Room were modelled, and named, after the beloved movie venues of Wendy's past.

And Kingston loved it. Popcorn. The lovingly created ambiance of old-fashioned cinema. Great films, with great variety, for a variety of tastes. It all came together at The Screening Room. The theatre was thriving and was financially successful.

Then the pandemic hit. Suddenly Wendy was losing over a thousand dollars a week. I don't know how close she came to feeling like Jimmy Stewart at his most despairing moment in *It's a Wonderful Life*. But it must have been a pretty rough time for Wendy.

She knew The Screening Room would thrive again in the future, if she could survive the pandemic. But that was a big "if."

The Screening Room was at risk. Wendy's dream was being smashed. And Kingston was at risk of losing its popular life-enhancing art-house cinema. Kingston was at risk of taking one wretched step toward becoming Pottersville — the sleazy commercial strip that exemplified the dark threat in *It's a Wonderful Life*.

The answer, of course, was a fund-raising campaign. Fund-raising can be a dreary activity, appealing to people's guilt and duty and sympathy. In contrast, and true to form, Wendy's fund-raising activities appealed to her customers' appetite for flair and irreverence. Instead of an earnest and formal bronze memorial wall with a list of benefactors, The Screening Room gave credit to benefactors in "the credits." Donors have been delighted at the prospect of seeing their names on the screen.

"... Wendy's fund-raising activities appealed to her customers' appetite for flair and irreverence.

One of the most popular fund-raising projects has been seat sponsorship. For $250, you can "buy" a seat at one of The Screening Room theatres. This project has inspired both heartfelt dedications and lighthearted gestures. One eccentric patron sponsored a seat with a Latin quotation from Horace, honoring a friend's dog.

And so, in a slowly unfolding scene every bit as touching and redemptive as the one in *It's a Wonderful Life*, Wendy's customers — her neighbours — rallied and brought money. More slowly than in the movie, but in a manner just as heart-warming. And the love they gave her was as important as the money.

After the pandemic is over, we have every reason to hope that Kingston will not have become Pottersville. Kingston will still be a city with a great art-house cinema at its heart.

You can help to keep the Screening Room afloat during the pandemic. Go to The Screening Room website and click on Friends of The Screening Room.

DAWN CLARKE buys books at Novel Idea, walks her mongrel dust-mop dog in Skeleton Park, and gets extra butter on her popcorn at The Screening Room.

Out of The Wilderness

The Kingston indie rock band scores big with new album

STORY BY BRIAN LIPSIN

I met Jonas Lewis-Anthony seven years ago when he first came to Kingston. If my memory is correct, he had long hair and he was holding a skateboard. He was very friendly, with a large smile combined with a British accent. And, like most newcomers with a musical bent, he wanted a job in a music store. Jonas was definitely intoxicated with music and I believe he tried his hand at playing various instruments. He was interested in finding people to jam with him and at the club on Brock Street, the Musiikki Café, he met the other musicians who would by 2015 form the band, The Wilderness.

When Jonas and others from the group first brought in posters to put up in the windows of my store on Princess Street to advertise their gigs, I initially, and wrongly, thought that this was Jonas's band. I was reminded of another time, when someone came into the store, someone who once owned a hobby shop in the town of Whistler, B.C. On one of their gigs out there, members of The Tragically Hip would come into his shop to buy board games. The proprietor apparently asked them, "Who is the band's leader?" One of them pointed to Gord Downie with a smirk and mumbled, "He *thinks* he is."

After listening to their new CD (*Until Tomorrow*) for the first time, it was obvious to me that leadership in The Wilderness is a misnomer. Each member of the group plays his chosen instrument(s) and each has a pivotal role in making up the final product — like a well-oiled machine. Jonas Lewis-Anthony seems more folk-oriented, sometimes playing his acoustic guitar combined with his storytelling. Nicholas Lennox's saxophone can be heard weaving throughout the album, with haunting solos giving the songs more soul and emotion, and making the lyrics more magical. The drums and percussion by Henry Lawrence and Liam Neale provide the important rhythm needed to move the songs forward, mixed with the sometimes forgotten bass of Karl Tombak, but without whom the songs would be unfinished.

The band features Sacha Lansky on lead guitar along with Jonas Lewis-Anthony to give the loud energy and solos required to fill a large area — like a bar, for instance. But on the recording I noticed that the loud guitar sound is lessened to make way for important lyrics coming from the lead singer, lyrics that are too important to be drowned out. Mind you, there are a few guitar solos — those on "You, the Ocean" stand out in my mind. There are also heavy guitars heard throughout some songs, such as "Citalopram Blues" and "If I Have to Die." The keyboard played by Liam Neal and the Hammond organ can also be heard at times.

The song that gave me goosebumps and a pit in my stomach was "Twenty-Five." I don't get such a reaction very often but the song's haunting and powerful lyrics, combined with the backup instrumentation, got me to stand up and take notice. If any song pivots this band to fame, it is this one. I also got the shivers from listening to "You, the Ocean" and "You Look So Good When You Cry." I guess my folk roots are evident in my choices.

By design I am not doing an analysis of every song. I personally find writing and reading such analysis pretty boring, to say the least. I remember when Kathleen Edwards came out with her first album, *Failure*. In one of the Ottawa papers there were two full pages analysing every song. That breakdown made Edwards out to be another Dylan. Well, the CD was good but it did not deserve as much attention as it got. Now no one remembers the recording. Likewise Jonathan Cott from *Rolling Stone* magazine attempted an in-depth analysis of every song on the Van Morrison masterpiece, Astral Weeks. Cott asked Van Morrison what was on his mind when he wrote the song, "Madame George." The musician responded, in effect, How the hell would I know?

Throughout the songs in *Until Tomorrow*, I picked up important themes — climate change, death, isolation, alienation, pandemic, nuclear holocaust, loss of innocence, love, hope, the dead-end job, travelling, sadness, guilt, regret, growing up, optimism and more.

I also picked up references to Kingston, such as the Gord Downie Pier, Princess and Rideau streets, and, in all their videos, images of places throughout the city and of Kingstonians themselves.

PHOTO CREDIT: Bobbi Shewchuk

Usually, when I first listen to a recording, I think I like it, and then, after a few more listens, I become bored with it — but definitely not with this one. This recording matures and grows. Listening to it is like tasting a fine wine or smoking a potent joint, and it keeps tasting better, and feeling better, and sounding better. I feel a lot of potential with this recording and I will keep an eye on this band. Any comparison with Bruce Springsteen or other icons is irrelevant. The Wilderness is more original than that. One can hear it in their latest, *Until Tomorrow*.

BRIAN LIPSIN is the owner, staff and manager, janitor, toilet cleaner and jack-of-all trades at Brian's Record Option. A local legend in his own mind, he has been writing stories on his Facebook page once a day since the pandemic began.

There grows the neighbourhood (whether we like it or not)

STORY BY MEREDITH DAULT
ILLUSTRATION BY BENJAMIN NELSON

I miss Seraphim. You could count on his quirky presence. He was regularly parked on a chair outside his crumbling bungalow on our out-of-the-way street. Though he did not speak much English, he would frequently wave, and flash a toothy grin, delighted, particularly in his later years, by the barefoot kids running up and down our block. He was, for a time, a fixture in our diverse neighbourhood. So when Seraphim moved on to better things a couple of years ago (word is he has a room with a view at Providence Care) and his tiny, decrepit house went up on the market, we braced ourselves.

The house, a small brick building on a double lot, was said to be one of the oldest on Main Street and the surrounding area. It had, however, seen better days. Though it sold quickly once it was listed, it remained empty for months. By late summer, however, it became clear that change — big change — was coming.

Not long after, another fact made itself apparent: the community was not going to get to have a say in that change. Seraphim's little house, with its modest footprint and ample green space, is gone now. What's going up in its place is a looming, two-and-a-half-story duplex. It is a structure that occupies twice the lot space of the original and is more than twice as tall. When completed it will ultimately house twelve nearly identically-sized bedrooms, six on each side, inevitably intended for student renters. Needless to say, my neighbours and I are dismayed.

This building will fundamentally change the nature of our special little street — and we have been absolutely powerless to weigh in on the process. Trust me, we have tried. Not that we got much of a heads up. It was not until the construction fences around the lot went up — quickly and quietly — that we knew a plan was in motion. One neighbour got the blueprints for the proposed building, described as a "single family dwelling with a secondary suite." Another continued to explore the heritage value of Seraphim's little house. Surely its age (built before 1875, we reckon) assured it some protection? How was it possible a twelve-bedroom dwelling could go up in place of a bungalow without any consultation with — or at least notification of — the neighbours?

Here's how: thanks to a change the provincial government made to the Planning Act in 2012, ostensibly to encourage density and affordable housing, municipalities are now required to allow "second units" — whether additions on existing buildings or coach house-style separate ones — for all types of dwellings. As Andrea Gummo, a project manager with the City of Kingston, put it in an email in October, "When the City worked on the required amendments to allow second units, the Ministry was clear there were to be no restrictions on the basis of the form of the dwelling (e.g., row, towns, singles, duplexes, etc.), or on the overall size or scale of the second unit." In other words, before 2012, municipalities such as ours had had some say in the matter, limiting additions, or "second units" to being smaller — say 40 per cent smaller — than the original dwelling. Ms. Gummo was clear that no municipality has yet been successful in challenging the current ruling, even if the proposed dwelling, like the one going up on Main Street, feels out of place in the neighbourhood.

Pursuing some kind of heritage designation for the Swamp Ward region would also help to ensure future builds are aligned with the existing built environment.

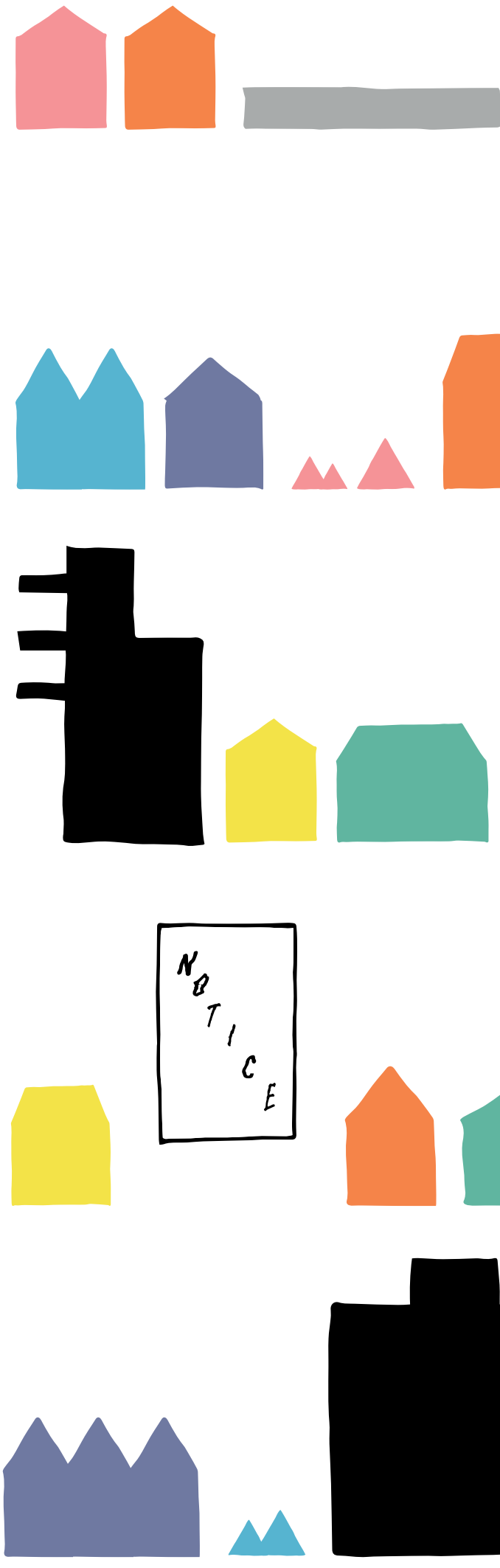
I know many of us feel irked by the build, simply because of the way it stinks of greed, a project funded by an investor in Toronto with no connection to our street or our community. To be clear, we have no objections to co-mingling with students (there are many delightful young people living on our street who join us for spontaneous dance parties and who host neighbourly open-air potlucks). We do, however, feel dismayed by watching a monster duplex go up that feels like it's being built to meet the needs of a specific kind of tenant (each side of the duplex boasts six 10-by-10-foot bedrooms, three on each floor, with a kitchen on the middle floor), when our neighbourhood really needs reasonably-priced apartments for singles, couples, and families. The solution here is not easy.

The city representatives with whom we have spoken have been sympathetic but have made it clear their hands are tied. The building meets all the zoning requirements and so has been able to proceed without delay. My neighbours and I have since wondered whether this build would have been so readily rubber-stamped if it had been proposed on the other side of Princess Street.

While the physical character of our block of Main Street has now been permanently altered, the zoning and land-use issues will continue to be a concern as developers find opportunities to profit in our downtown neighbourhoods. Ms. Gummo's advice is worth heeding: preserving the character of our community means getting involved with the Central Kingston Growth Strategy (currently in progress) and with the development of a new zoning bylaw, which is in the works for 2021. Pursuing some kind of heritage designation for the Swamp Ward region would also help to ensure future builds are aligned with the existing built environment.

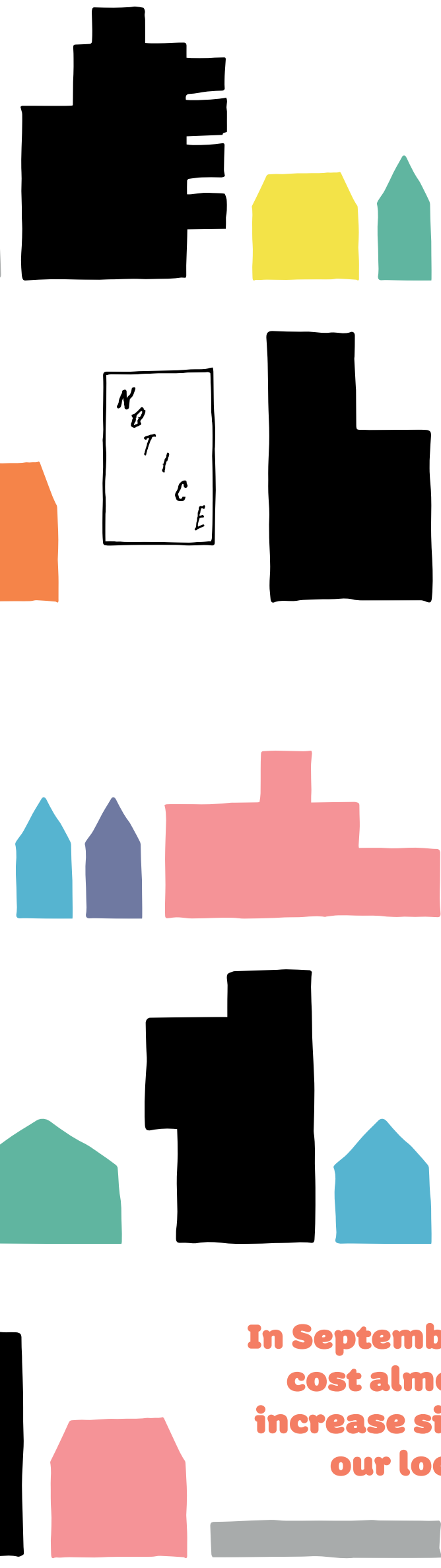
For now, we are planning to welcome Main Street's twelve new residents with an outdoor dance party and, if the pandemic allows, a neighbourly potluck. We will be sure to tell them stories about Seraphim.

MEREDITH DAULT has lived in a little house on Main Street since 2014.



Kingstonians have a right to housing — a place to call home

STORY BY PATRICIA STREICH,
THE SOCIAL PLANNING COUNCIL OF KINGSTON & DISTRICT



The two years before COVID-19 were promising ones for more affordable rental housing in Kingston.

The *National Housing Strategy* in November 2017 said that all Canadians had a right to housing they can afford with 30% of their incomes. It announced $40 billion in funding and that was increased to $55 billion in a later federal budget. Much of this funding was to preserve and expand community non-profit and co-operative housing — housing with lower rents than in the private market. As funding began in 2018, we advocated with our elected officials in hopes for some funds to help Kingston address its housing crisis.

The City of Kingston made affordable housing its top priority. In January 2019, the Mayor set up a special housing task force, engaging local housing developers to look for solutions. We at the Social Planning Council hosted a successful Community Housing Forum in May 2019, bringing together more than seventy people from community groups to discuss actions on urgent needs. We made submissions to the task force calling for supportive housing, expanded efforts to deal with homelessness, and affordable rents for all renters.

Meanwhile, private sector developments have been forging ahead in many parts of the City. We saw new high-rise, high-rent construction in the west end and east of the river. In town, developers were busy expanding student housing. We saw ever-growing numbers of new student rentals in Williamsville's "intensification corridor" along upper Princess Street. Neighbourhoods west of Queen's saw many new mid-rise student housing complexes built after demolishing small homes that had been rented to students. The area north of Princess has been pressured for more than ten years with conversions to student rentals and more recently with gentrification — a common market process around the core areas of cities. A new building on Portsmouth Avenue that was to house students at St. Lawrence College was built after several smaller houses catering to the student market were demolished. This trend towards increased student rentals is impacting many neighbourhoods.

Elsewhere, other neighbourhoods faced stress as older homes were demolished to make way for new, much more expensive homes. Kingston is known as a "hot market" — one of the most attractive places for investment in both single-family homes and multi-unit construction. In the west end near the lake, developers constructed very large (over 3,000 square-foot) homes selling for between one million and two million plus dollars. Many out of town buyers could afford the large downpayments to finance such a purchase. They bought and demolished older, smaller homes, driving out small households or families who needed an affordable place to rent or buy. Some Kingston families had to move out of the City, north of the 401, to find a home they could afford. In September 2020, the average home cost almost $500,000, nearly a 16% increase since last year, according to our local real estate association. Much of the development has been for people from out of town, not to increase housing for local residents.

In September 2020, the average home cost almost $500,000, nearly a 16% increase since last year, according to our local real estate association.

THE SOCIAL PLANNING COUNCIL OF KINGSTON & DISTRICT is a community non-profit that has spoken out about Kingston's housing issues and made repeated submissions to all levels of government calling for housing that all Kingston residents can afford.

Private market developments brought dramatic changes to the character of older areas — changes that were opposed by people living in these areas but residents seemed powerless to stem this tide. Clearing the way for new building often meant losing older, less expensive homes or rentals and, as some commentators noted, we were losing units faster than they were being replaced. The net decline in older, more affordable housing put more pressures on rents across the city, and rents kept rising.

When the COVID-19 crisis hit in March 2020, the Mayor's task force report had just been sent to City Council. The Social Planning Council had planned a community meeting in late March to discuss the report, but we worked on-line to review the forty-four task force recommendations. We sent our review to the Mayor and Council, requesting the opportunity to discuss our comments. As of the end of 2020, there has not been any chance to have a discussion.

A major part of the 2020 task force report dealt with development and planning regulations and the barriers those create for developers. Task force members were especially critical of the City planning department for what they called "delays" in planning approvals that added to development time and costs. Such criticism is hard to reconcile with all the redevelopments in the past few years in neighbourhoods where we live and work. None of this development has added affordable housing.

Cities need coherent plans for housing and development to achieve more mixed and balanced growth across the city. Without this, we risk eliminating what little older, affordable housing we have, in effect rezoning and densifying all affordable housing out of existence. How, then, will all Kingstonians have a right to housing they can afford?

Taking root in Skeleton Park

ROOTS AND WINGS is a community organization that is designed to make space for racialized girls in Kingston. Girls are encouraged to explore their diverse identities, and are provided with learning opportunities about social justice issues in a fun, engaging, and age-appropriate way. They will be encouraged to teach and share their unique skills with each other, as well as the larger community, through action on social justice issues.

STORY BY KRISTIN MORIAH

PHOTO CREDIT: Yasmine Djerbal

KRISTIN MORIAH: First things first. Can you tell me a bit about yourself?

YASMINE DJERBAL: I am an international student from Algeria. I came to Kingston about eight years ago to go to Queen's to do a master's in Gender Studies. I kind of fell in love with this city and with its people and decided to stay on to do my Ph.D. and continue working with my supervisor. My work generally looks at questions of citizenship and identity, and trends in Canada. But I also consider myself a social activist. I do a lot of organizing in the Kingston community.

KEMI KING: My name is Kemi. I am currently a theatre artist and a student at Queen's, with a major in Theatre and a minor in Gender Studies. I'm also part of Roots and Wings. I came to Queen's for my undergrad and it has been really good here in terms of the people that I've been able to meet. I run a theatre company named YIKES a Theatre Company. We do devised and immersive theatre work. We are focused on learning and art and the individual interests of our artists.

MORIAH: Can you tell me more about Roots and Wings?

DJERBAL: Roots and Wings was co-founded and also imagined by two moms, Lulemma and Michelle, who saw a documentary about the Radical Monarchs. This is a group in Oakland, California that created a space for young girls of colour to form a fierce sisterhood, celebrate their identities, and grow within their communities. Lulemma and Michelle felt inspired by their work and decided to create a similar organization in Kingston. Because I was friends with them, I joined in the imagining and the elaboration of this group.

Our youth actually came up with the name, Roots and Wings. It really spoke to them. It signalled that they were growing strong roots in our community and they were creating lifelong connections to people and organizations in Kingston to learn about social justice, identity, and culture. The name also emphasized the fact that they were being empowered to fly with their own wings, with confidence and with dignity and respect for themselves and others. Our biggest role was to educate, empower and engage these youth in social justice organizing — to explore their identities, to learn and teach about social justice, and also to connect with local activist communities in Kingston.

Right now, we have about twelve youths who work with us or who are part of the collective. Roots and Wings is open to all girls, and transgender and non-binary youths of colour in the Kingston area between the ages of 8 and 14.

MORIAH: So Kemi, how did you get involved in Roots and Wings?

KING: I got involved with Roots and Wings because of Yasmine. I was really interested in being able to engage with racialized youths in Kingston. I come from Brampton and as a racialized person there I was able to see my impact as a black queer femme. This was an opportunity to do the same thing for some kids who might need a little bit more mentoring. The GTA has a lot more racialized people that we do in Kingston. And I thought, if I'm here, I could have an impact on these kids. I would really love to be able to do that.

MORIAH: I'm wondering why working specifically with racialized tweens in Kingston is important to you and if you can tell me a bit about the challenges that they face here?

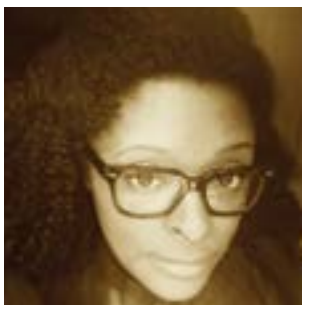
KING: Many of the challenges that can be named come from a single challenge — a lack of community. Community helps people find and understand themselves. It's always good to be in a space with people who look like you. And when you're that age you're already going through so much change and discomfort with your body. Curating community helps build your perception of self. At that age, it gets really emphasized that you're different. In finding community and building community within Roots and Wings you learn that, one, we're all different. And then, also, that there isn't a problem with being different, but within that difference there is also sameness. And then that there are similarities that you share with people who are also Black or Indigenous or who come from different places. It is good to have a community to build with and to help understand yourself.

DJERBAL: I think to us one thing that was really important was to give these youths tools to understand the world around them and to believe that they can be agents of change within it. And also to create mentorships, to create connections with adults that look like them and that they could look up to. One of the challenges in the Kingston education system, in general, is that there aren't a lot of teachers that are racialized, and therefore the kind of people that they can look up to within the educational system are homogeneous. We wanted to create a space for a community of people who looked like them but who also looked very different from them. People they could connect to, so these young people could imagine a world where they could be like them.

A few years ago, we had a wonderful workshop with a Toronto artist named Tau Lewis who came to Kingston. And during the workshop, she was talking about how when she was younger, in middle school, the visual artist Charmaine Lurch came to one of her classes. And it was the first time that she could imagine herself as an artist. To me, that encounter really symbolizes the kind of work that we want to learn to do through Roots and Wings, to encourage these kinds of possibilities for youth.

MORIAH: How can members of the Skeleton Park community contribute to Roots and Wings?

DJERBAL: Folks can email us if they want us to do workshops. Our funding is very limited. For us, it's really important to be able to pay the artists and the organizations that come. But we won't be able to give a lot. What we try to do is really symbolic and we would love to have more folks join us. We have a wonderful, wonderful mom, Melanie, who created a fundraiser for us at the beginning of the pandemic and who was sewing masks, selling them and donating the profits to Roots and Wings. Thank you, Melanie! Mostly, we try to do a lot with very little. And so, if folks want to donate, we'd be more than happy to receive your donations.



KRISTIN MORIAH lives and works in downtown Kingston. She is an Assistant Professor of English at Queen's University. Her research interests include sound studies and Black feminist performance, particularly the circulation of African American performance and its influence on the formation of national identity.

Avenue haiku, skating rink lyrics, and billboard ballads

STORY BY JASON HEROUX

I bumped against a poem at the corner of Clergy and Princess and was knocked to the ground. I stood up. I thanked it. "Nothing's the same any more," the poem told me. "Here in Kingston, even limestone forgets itself …" I hung around and got to know the poem better. I learned it was called "Mexican Sunsets" and was written by Bronwen Wallace, and you can find it on a plaque in front of St. Andrews Church as part of Project Bookmark Canada. It's an example of public poetry in Kingston, and it's not alone.

A few blocks away you'll find the Skeleton Park Arts Festival's (SPAF) annual poetry and literary installations on the park skating rink boards. The installation was launched in the winter of 2018, with Steven Heighton's "Night Skaters, Skeleton Park" the first poem posted on the boards. "Poets, if they're lucky, get used to seeing their words in print or on the screen," Heighton said. "But seeing them in a public space is a rare and remarkable experience. Really, we local poets should band together, rent a huge billboard near a slow-changing traffic light, and feature a different poem, or excerpt, every month. But I hear billboards are expensive. So the SPAF's initiative — using the City's public rink boards in a similar way — was a brilliant one. I was happy to contribute a short poem a couple years ago for the first such installation."

The following year an emerging poet named Olivia Ows was commissioned to write a poem in response to Heighton's piece. Her poem, "Sunrise on the Ice," was printed on the boards in November 2018. "Inspirational, overwhelming, memorable," is how Ows described the experience of seeing her poem printed across the boards. "I was a Grade 11 student at the time, with little writing experience, great enthusiasm, and absolutely no idea that I would ever have the chance to participate in such a project. Kingston's poetry installations not only bring the community together but also empower young people to share their voices," Ows said, adding how grateful and proud she was to be among those voices.

The project continued into the 2020 winter season with an iconic poem by Al Purdy called "The Hockey Players," and this year's installation features the words of Richard Wagamese. Reflecting on the overall spirit of the project, Heighton shared that "playing hockey with the local kids while skating past my own words on the boards was a strange, unique, and wonderful experience. It was just as delightful to skate past (or, at times, crash into) Olivia Ows's words the following winter, or Al Purdy's the one after. This year SPAF has chosen one of their (and my) favourite passages from the late Richard Wagamese's novel *Indian Horse*. And now I find myself checking the long-term forecasts, praying for an old-school Canadian winter, so that we get a couple months, not weeks, of time on the ice with his words."

Another celebrated example of public poetry in Kingston occurred in August 2019, when the City led a project titled "Ontario Street: A Vibrant Spaces Project." The event transformed Ontario Street in front of City Hall into a public space for art, heritage, and cultural programming. As Kingston's Poet Laureate, I selected poems from four emerging poets (Meg Freer, Jeannie Prinsen,

Sarah Emtage, and Zoe Coulter), which the City then installed in various sites — the rim of the Confederation Basin fountain, a walking trail railing in Battery Park, a downtown sidewalk, and a utility power pole. During the opening launch I guided a poetry path walk-about along Ontario Street, pointing out poems in unexpected places. I remember one tour member said, "I'm going to come back and read that one again." In that moment the whole city seemed like an open book everyone could reach for, flip through, enjoy.

In that moment the whole city seemed like an open book everyone could reach for, flip through, enjoy.

Building on its success with the "Vibrant Spaces Project," the City has now turned Kingston's Hub into a public art project involving artist-designed bike stands, a permanent sidewalk sculptural work, and (echoing Steven's Heighton's wish) a temporary, rotating billboard featuring public poetry installations created by local poets and writers.

"The Hub Project is focused on place-making through public art at the dynamic intersection of Princess and Division streets in downtown Kingston," said Danika Lochhead, Manager of Arts and Sector Development for the City's Cultural Services. She added that the inclusion of poetry as public art presents a great opportunity to reflect the ideas and experiences of the community and area. But why read about all this here, on the page? There are words out there in the world, nearby, waiting for you. Bump into them, get knocked down. Introduce yourself. Let's get to know them, and ourselves, a little better.

JASON HEROUX is the current Poet Laureate for the City of Kingston. His most recent poetry chapbook, *The Book of Blessings* (Puddles of Sky Press, 2019), was longlisted for the 2020 Nelson Ball Prize.

Art around the corner

KEEP AN EYE OUT FOR NEXT DOOR IN 2021!

When a festival, gallery, and pandemic collide

STORY BY MAGGIE WHITMORE

As shops began to close and the news about the virus became louder in our homes, fear materialized. Our once hustling and bustling neighbourhood seemed to empty in the blink of an eye. The imposing sense of doom sent us into our homes to hide from the world. However, this was a time when we needed our neighbours and community the most.

Though the pandemic continues to loom over our lives, we have found ways to adapt and grow, to comfort one another in times of need. *Next Door: A Skeleton Park Neighbourhood Art Project* was born out of love for the Inner Harbour and the greater Katarokwi/Kingston community. The project was set in motion by our need to express ourselves during one of the darkest and most confusing moments modern society has experienced. Next Door featured local and collaborating artists, including Chantal Rousseau, Kathleen Sellars, Francisco Corbett, Diane Black, Jocelyn Purdie, Dave Gordon, Erika Olson, Simon Andrew, Marney McDiarmid and Grace MacDonald, Kilombo, ck nosun, Don Maynard, Jan Allen and Cheryl Pagurek, Matt Rogalsky, Corcoran Peppley and Josh Lyon, and Maureen Sheridan. The artists presented new installations in eclectic locations ranging from their front porches or yards, neighbours' gardens, driveways, window fronts, or within Skeleton Park itself. Each artwork responded to the inherent human need to try to relate to one another, to not feel so alone. *Next Door*, in essence, was an act and extension of care, centered in community, co-presented by the Skeleton Park Arts Festival and the Union Gallery.

Many of us have turned to nature to find remnants of calm and peace in the world. Several artists featured in *Next Door* chose to bring nature directly into their work. Chantal Rousseau's installation *Frogspot* greeted visitors from above, with frogs and toads delicately painted on flags that flew and danced in the wind amongst the leaves of an old Russian olive tree. Upon seeing this, I couldn't help but wonder if *Frogspot* was a reflection of how our manufactured world must begin working with nature, and like the flags, allow the winds to move us as they may. *Flora & Fauna* by Marney McDiarmid and Grace MacDonald reflected on a similar sentiment, that of essential harmony between nature and humanity for the well-being of our ecosystems. The ongoing colonization of the natural world has forced our more-than-human relations to live according to our human needs—such is made evident by a small and curious raccoon drawn next to a trash bin. Glowing from a windowed porch, Jocelyn Purdie's sculptural installation, *Hybrid Forms*, follows an ecological line of questioning. Close observation is important here: one notices the mediums used to create the work — treated caul fat, fake fur, and hand-dyed wool. The anxieties and unease from this work derive from the lifeless hanging forms that force us to confront our relationship with the environment.

The "new" normal—what does that mean? What does normalcy indicate to any of us? Quarantine may have been a blessing to some extent, for it provided a pause in societal rhythms and amplify the voices of those who have been continuously oppressed. Normal just wasn't working anymore. *We Out Here*, an audio project created by Kilombo in collaboration with fellow Black, Indigenous, and People of Colour (BIPOC) community members, archived local stories of racism, hardship, and resiliency. As statues of Confederates were torn down in the United States, and more Canadians were saying, "Well, not in our country, we don't have racism here," *We Out Here* made evident that there is much work to be done here in Katarokwi/Kingston, and across Canada. Don Maynard's installation, *This is the way the world goes round*, explored similar sentiments of narrowing in on localized issues of global unrest. Spinning slowly and seemingly precariously above the sidewalk, the transparent globe in Maynard's mobile installation brought curious pause to those passing by. The entire world represented by an inflatable plastic globe from the Dollar Store continued to go round and round no matter the elements it faced, much like our current global climate of turmoil. The work can perhaps be understood as an optimist's take on life turned upside down: amidst chaos and pain, separation, and despair, we are experiencing a moment of global connection.

Each artist presented new installations in eclectic locations ranging from their front porches or yards, neighbours' gardens, driveways, window fronts, or within Skeleton Park itself.

Set on Kathleen Sellars' porch and watching over the neighbourhood was her sculptural artwork *COVID Head*, which reflected on how society coped with the 24-hour news cycle. The sculpture quickly became a hub for lonely night owls. Sellars spoke of people coming up onto her porch during the night just to sit with the sculpture. With his installation of *FORWORLD*, Francisco Corbett's paintings reflected the artist's energy, hyperactivity, and passion to create. As I viewed the oversized, unstretched canvases displayed behind the red-framed windows, it felt as if the chaos of these artworks perfectly embodied my own anxiety. Upon closer inspection of *FORWORLD*, I experienced a sense of calm as I understood the importance of each brushstroke.

Ever so briefly, *Next Door* changed the relationship between artists, the presentation of their artwork, and viewers. In a similar approach to the ways in which a performer can break the fourth wall, this outdoor art exhibition allowed artists and visitors to connect on a more personal level—with many artworks installed at the artists' own homes. A lasting impact of the project was that it created space for direct dialogue between neighbours during one of the most isolating moments in human history. Sometimes we forget that behind each closed door exists a whole other life that we know nothing about. Next Door brought with it the opportunity to build and extend relationships with our neighbours through the mediating power of art. As the individual rhythms of our daily lives begin to return, let us not forget that community is the driving force behind resiliency and that art is an essential part of our personal and communal well-being.

MAGGIE WHITMORE sits on the Board of Directors for the Union Gallery and has recently started her MA in Art History at Queen's University. As an aspiring curator, Maggie was thrilled when asked to take part in *Next Door*. It allowed her to combine her love for the neighbourhood with her passion for art.

NEXT DOOR 2021

Following the success of the Next Door 2020 exhibition, Skeleton Park Arts Festival will be hosting a second rendition of Next Door in summer 2021. This temporary public art exhibition will seek to engage and activate community partners throughout and beyond the Skeleton Park neighbourhood, bringing residents of Katarokwi/Kingston together in celebration of our YGK arts community.

Keep your eyes peeled for our forthcoming Call for Submissions if you are interested in proposing an installation for this year's exhibition. Announcements related to Next Door 2021 will be posted on our website, as well as shared via our social media accounts.

Next Door: A Skeleton Park Neighbourhood Art Project

PHOTOS AND TEXT BY CHRIS MINER

Like many of us, I contacted the outside world throughout April and May of 2020 primarily through small screens — computers, cameras, phones. They functioned as tiny portals and windows into the homes and hearts of others. It was a time of fear and worry, but also a time to try and be closer to those who matter most to me.

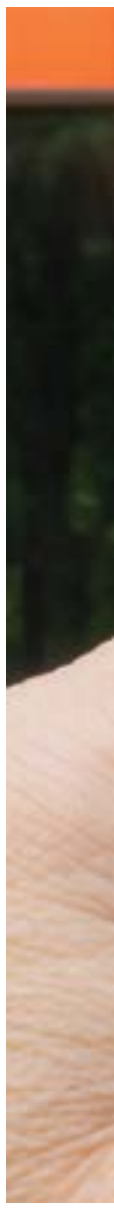
In June and July, I photo-documented *Next Door: A Skeleton Park Neighbourhood Art Project* to entice people to visit the sixteen installations in the north end of Kingston, and to allow the exhibition to be available to those who were unable to visit the artworks in person.

As is often the case, art was compelling me to know the world in a more interesting fashion. Art has functioned as solace, compulsion, and audacious way of knowing for as long as I can remember, but especially in hard times. Klee, Kandinsky, Miró, Moore, Vaughn-James in my teens, and now, in my sixties, nineteen local and collaborating artists, sharing work within a short distance of my home.

The photographs shown here reference artworks in the exhibition by Chantal Rousseau, Kathleen Sellars, Francisco Corbett, Diane Black, Jocelyn Purdie, Dave Gordon, Erika Olson, Simon Andrew, Marney McDiarmid + Grace MacDonald, Kilombo, ck nosun, Don Maynard, Jan Allen + Cheryl Pagurek, Matt Rogalsky, Corcoran Peppley+ Josh Lyon, and Maureen Sheridan. I used instant prints to comment on each installation. The moments captured in the background prints took place during June and July; the photos-of-photos were made throughout September and October 2020. The art remains both present and absent as I hold the prints at the sites of the installations they document.

Photographs can act as windows, memories, statements, and obstructions. For me, these *Next Door* photographs reference moments of engagement in a time of disengagement.

CLOCKWISE FROM BOTTOM LEFT:
Artwork by Diane Black, Chantal Rousseau, Kathleen Sellars, Francisco Corbett

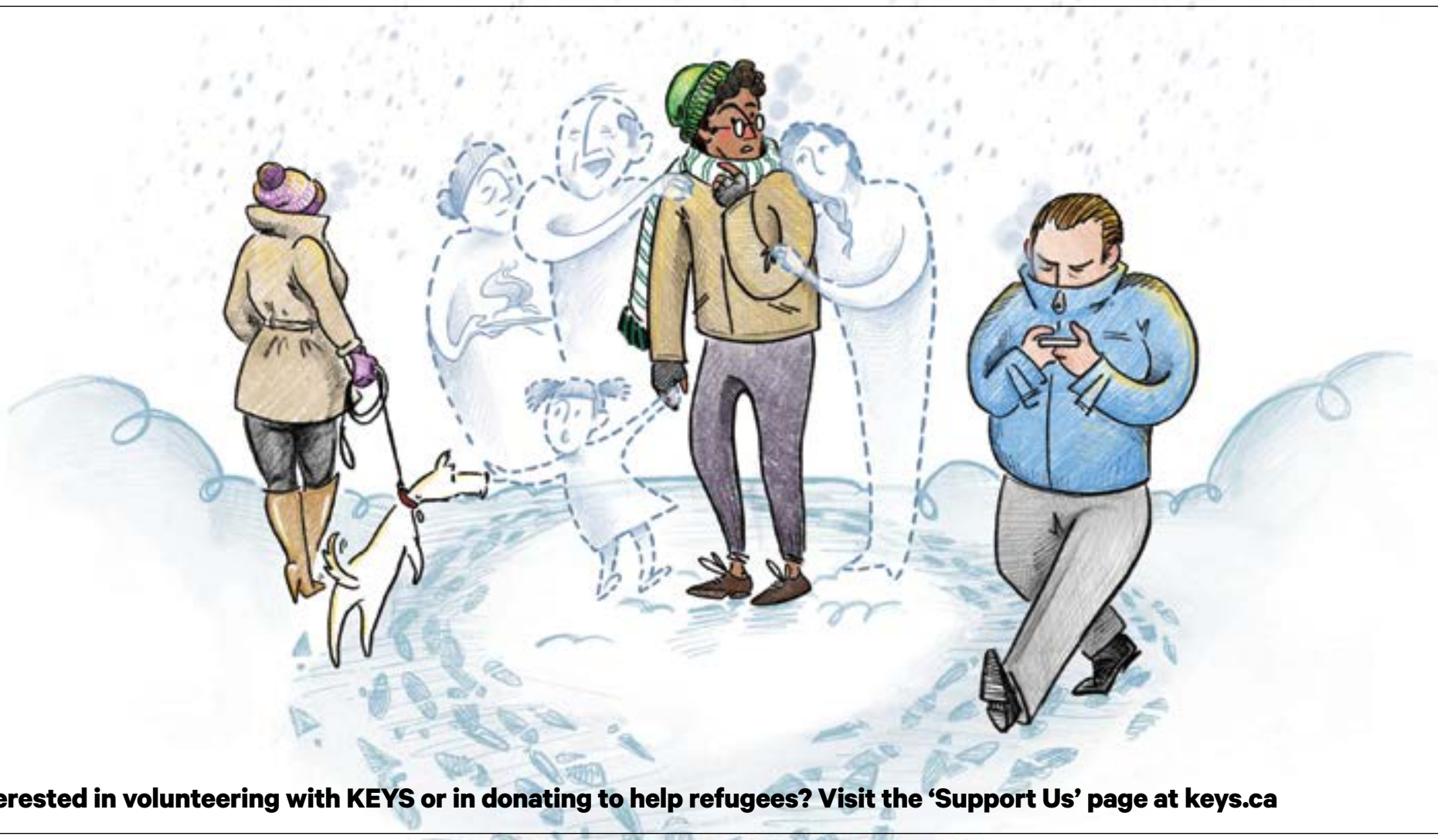


CLOCKWISE FROM TOP LEFT:
Artwork by Jocelyn Purdie, Erika Olson, Simon Andrew, Dave Gordon

CLOCKWISE FROM TOP LEFT:
Artwork by Marney McDiarmid and Grace MacDonald, Kilombo, ck nosun, Don Maynard

CLOCKWISE FROM TOP LEFT:
Artwork by Jan Allen and Cheryl Pagurek, Matt Rogalsky, Corcoran Peppley and Josh Lyon, Maureen Sheridan

CHRIS MINER has lived near Skeleton Park for more than 20 years. Sometimes he takes photographs.



Interested in volunteering with KEYS or in donating to help refugees? Visit the 'Support Us' page at keys.ca

New challenges, new connections

KEYS Job Centre helps newcomers amid COVID-19 and beyond

STORY BY JANE KIRBY
ILLUSTRATION BY FLORIANA EHNINGER-CUERVO

COVID-19 has been a lonely experience for many people. But for Rohullah Fayizi, a newcomer to Kingston from Afghanistan, the experience of isolation long precedes the pandemic.

"In Afghanistan, we have such big families, so many friends, you are never alone," Fayizi explains. "Isolation has been the hardest part about moving to Canada."

Fayizi came to Kingston two years ago as a government-assisted refugee and is now studying social services at St. Lawrence College. Since arriving, he has applied three times to bring his son and wife to Canada. His first two applications were rejected, and he is awaiting the results of the third.

"It is so hard," Fayizi says of the transition. "It is hard to find friends, to make connections, to get a job, to get into school. The language is a big barrier."

Fayizi works part-time with KEYS Job Centre, delivering care packages to youth who are unemployed or not enrolled in education or training. He is also active as a volunteer mentor and support person for other newcomers.

KEYS Job Centre, located in downtown Kingston on Sydenham Street, has provided crucial supports to migrants in the Kingston community for more than thirty-five years. Its programs for newcomers include employment training, English-language classes, and mentorship programs.

COVID-19 presents additional challenges for migrant communities. Those without access to a computer or who are uncomfortable working online often lack the kinds of services and supports needed for transitioning to a new community and lifestyle. For instance, those whose SIN number begins with 9 — indicating temporary immigration status — have been excluded from receiving the Canada Recovery Benefit, the government assistance program that replaced CERB.

The exclusion of newcomers with temporary status from accessing supports is not limited to the pandemic, however.

"We serve the whole community, but when it comes to people without permanent residency status we often do so off the side of our desk," says Madeleine Nerenberg, Manager of Newcomer Services at KEYS. She points out that KEYS' core funding typically does not cover services for those with temporary status. This group includes spouses of international students, students who have recently graduated, refugee claimants, and temporary foreign workers.

KEYS' services are also essential for making newcomers feel welcome here in Kingston. While many Kingston residents might like to think otherwise, our community is not always a welcoming place for newcomers.

"I still don't have any English-speaking Kingston friends who will talk to me like a normal person outside of their office hours," says Fayizi, who has experienced discriminatory attitudes at hospitals, offices, and schools. "It is the culture, I can't blame anyone. It is systemic."

This is one reason why KEYS is recruiting volunteers to act as support persons for newly arrived refugees, a particularly important role during COVID-19. KEYS continues to provide resettlement for small numbers of refugees, many of whom have been in limbo for long periods of time.

"In many cases people have been waiting years and years to go somewhere they can build their lives," says Nerenberg, pointing to the fact that many refugees spend years in countries where they cannot stay long term. "These are folks who were all set to travel, who, with COVID, had flights cancelled, and saw borders closed."

When they finally arrive, refugees have to isolate for two weeks. "And then, once the quarantine period ends, they need to move forward with all the other aspects of building a new life: finding a place to live, getting kids registered in school, starting language classes," says Nerenberg.

To help with this process, KEYS hopes to match refugees with small volunteer groups who can serve as friendly faces and help newcomers practice English and learn about the community. During COVID, volunteers might meet with their matches over Zoom or in person with physical distancing.

"Especially during COVID, as so many people are isolated, volunteering with our refugee program could be a great way to break that while also contributing to countering isolation that newcomers might be experiencing," says Nerenberg.

The volunteer program might also help volunteers learn to confront their own biases.

"We need to educate people on both ends," says Fayizi. "Newcomers need education to learn English and to learn about the culture; people who are living in Canada need to learn to be more welcoming to newcomers."

JANE KIRBY is a circus performer, movement educator, non-fiction writer, and author of the book, *Fired Up About Reproductive Rights*.

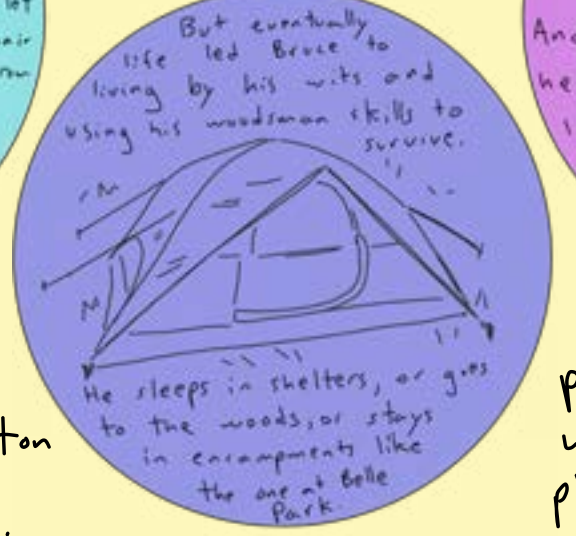
Comic by **JON CLAYTOR** / For additional **SKELETON PARK PEOPLE** chapters please visit: skeletonparkartsfest.ca/jon-claytor-skeleton-park-people-project/

Skeleton Park People

Stories of people living in the neighbourhood

Bruce Lefebvre describes himself as homeless but that doesn't seem like quite the right word as he seems very at home in the world.

He also describes himself as an honest woodsman who has travelled all over North America.



Bruce was living at a homeless encampment at Belle Park in Kingston Ontario when the city evicted the people staying there at the end of the summer.

Unlike Bruce many homeless people are also dealing with mental illness, physical disabilities or addiction. They deserve housing and services to meet their needs.

You can hire Bruce by calling (613) 242-2772

Jon Claytor (@jon_claytor_art on instagram) interviewed Bruce Lefebvre on zoom for this story.

Basic income is a simple plan to end poverty, so why is it so hard?

STORY BY LAWRENCE SCANLAN
ILLUSTRATION BY HAYDEN MAYNARD

"Food insecurity" is a mild phrase that downplays hunger — just one potential aspect of poverty, a widely tolerated form of trauma. The food insecure, argues Elaine Power, either lack funds for food or agonize about food, and that anxiety scorches physical and mental health. A professor in the School of Kinesiology and Health Studies at Queen's University, Power is collaborating on a book about Basic Income (BI) with Jamie Swift, a prolific author and a social justice advocate. Their book, *The Case for Basic Income: Freedom, Security, Justice*, will be published on May 3, 2021 by Between the Lines Publishing. Full disclosure: I have known Swift for decades; I have twice been a guest lecturer in Power's class, and I am instinctively drawn to the notion of a guaranteed income. So my challenge in writing this piece was to hold their feet to the fire as best I could.

Before chatting with Power and Swift via Zoom, I consulted a friend — John Stapleton, who was a policy analyst at Queen's Park for almost three decades. He's very smart and very much in the corner of the marginalized. He says that BI advocates' hearts are in the right place but he accuses them of "lazy thinking" and ignoring the complexity of unraveling the old, unfair welfare system. As he says, "Fair isn't simple and simple isn't fair." Oh, and universal BI (one of several options) would bankrupt the country. Ouch.

Basic Income would offer an individual Canadian about $22,000 a year, with a couple getting $31,000.

When I passed along Stapleton's essays on BI, Power reacted with fire. She's still hot. How many poor people are there in Canada? Estimates range from five to eight million, but no one knows precisely. All three of my sources underlined that measuring poverty is tricky business: 20 per cent of poor people are somehow not food insecure, and many people not considered poor are food insecure. Beyond doubt is that poverty punishes. In an unrelated project, Power is interviewing low-income Canadians ineligible for COVID-19-triggered state aid. "The interviews are devastating," she says. "Really, really hard." Like the unemployed woman in her early sixties living in a trailer in northern B.C. who spends whole days in bed. Or the 37-year-old out-of-work woman in rural Newfoundland with multiple disabilities who is relying on a food bank and who is pondering work as an escort — despite, or perhaps because of, childhood sexual abuse. Would BI end such misery?

Swift replies cautiously. Basic Income would offer an individual Canadian about $22,000 a year, with a couple getting $31,000. "It's not the be-all and end-all," Swift says. "It's just one thing in a tool kit. We still need subsidized housing, and universal childcare, and Pharmacare. Imagine a Swiss army knife." Elaine Power has her own metaphor. "Basic Income is the floor of a house. No one sits below, but a floor does not make a house. You still need furniture and walls and a roof."

The co-authors travelled to Peterborough, Lindsay, and Hamilton — where they interviewed individuals who had received BI in a pilot project that ran for two years, until the Ford government quashed it.

"There's all this mythology," says Power, the fretting that free money promotes couch-sitting and beer-drinking. "It's the opposite. People stopped smoking, they stopped drinking so much, they stopped self-medicating." Power cites "overwhelming evidence" from similar pilots — in Finland, Kenya, India — showing that stable incomes allow people to hope and plan for the future.

For seven years Power and Swift have toiled on the same committee — the Kingston Action Group for a Basic Income Guarantee. In our Zoom chat, Swift played the part of the wizened veteran who sees the BI campaign as "a long game." He playfully chided the somewhat younger, more impatient Power "who thinks BI is a 'no brainer' that would have been implemented years ago if public policy were based on evidence." Under COVID-19, many Canadians accustomed to a steady income now know about living on the edge. Swift calls it "the democratization of insecurity." On the other hand, he understands political realities: would a government introduce a costly BI scheme when the dividends (including lower health care costs) are generations down the line? As the conversation shifted to tax reform and billionaire tax cheats, Power's anger rose. She decried greed ("a pathology"), capitalism ("it rewards psychopaths"), and our lost democracy ("captured by Big Oil and social media"). To which Swift added, "There is no such thing as 'enough.' That's part of what plagues our society."

What lifts me is that the "incrementalist" (as Power and Swift branded Stapleton) and the "idealists" (as Stapleton branded Power and Swift) are now virtually on the same page. Stapleton has prescribed an income-based model; if you fall below a financial cutoff, you would get the aforementioned sums. If and when it comes, I hope sooner rather than later, that version of BI seems the most likely.

For more information on *The Case for Basic Income: Freedom, Security, Justice* by Jamie Swift and Elaine Power, visit btlbooks.com/book/the-case-for-basic-income.

LAWRENCE SCANLAN is the author of 24 books, including *A Year of Living Generously: Dispatches from the Front Lines of Philanthropy*.

Public art in the hood and beyond

How artful are you about the art we live with? Just the broad strokes? Or even the finest details?

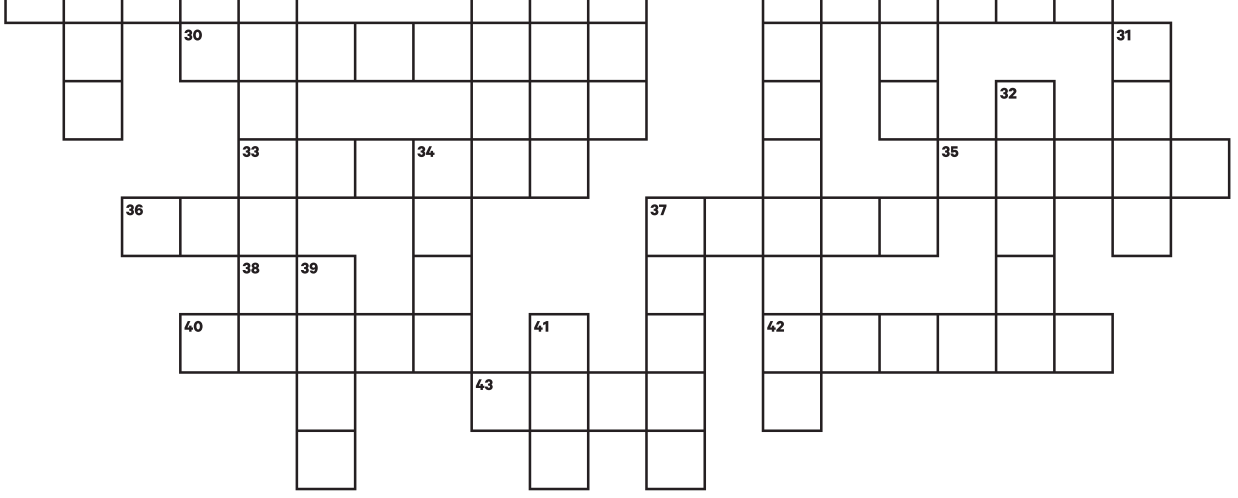
CROSSWORD BY SU SHEEDY AND LEA WESTLAKE
PHOTO BY ADAM BIEHLER

ACROSS

3 Boxtopia is made of _____
8 You can read them on the Skeleton Park rinks
10 DEAD ON Collective's Drink _____ Draw
11 Type of pasta used by kindergarten necklace artists
12 City Hall is _____ up to celebrate and commemorate
13 Often worn by superheroes or park Halloweeners
15 To enjoy public art, it is best to _____
17 Number of war memorial statues in City Park
18 The Gaskin _____ - an iron animal roaring in McDonald Park
19 Porch Jazz leaders Spencer Evans and the _____ steppers
21 Arial, Helvetica, Times, etc.
23 The Park where it all happens
25 Molly Brant is COVID-safe wearing her _____ in Douglas Fluhrer Park
26 Controversial Prime Minister _____ John A.
28 "Instrument" played on knee in many a park concert
30 Art form ON THE WALL in Douglas Fluhrer Park
33 Storefront _____ Festival
35 Title of giant spider outside National Art Gallery in Ottawa
36 _____ is Bruce Kaufman?
37 Title of 70's aluminum sculpture at Portsmouth Olympic Harbour
38 Response to "Let's have more public art"?
40 Lofty _____ walkers often seen in neighbourhood parades
42 Material of "Laundry" sculpture between Toucan and Black Dog Tavern
43 Colour of Shayne Dark's Pump House sticks in tree

DOWN

1 Manidoo Ogitigaan "The Spirit _____" coming soon to Lake Ontario Park
2 Froid'Art 300 pound blocks of _____
3 Park weapon once bombed in wool
4 Carol _____ Budd of the Kingston Indigenous Language Nest
5 What held up the screen in Friendship Park?
6 Skeleton Park _____ Festival
7 Kind of tape used by artist Mark Reinhart on public buildings
8 Giant _____ celebrate the shortest day of the year in Douglas Fluhrer Park
9 Shoreline _____ - an art walk promoting water access for all
11 Title of '70s sculpture spilling toxic waste on the waterfront
14 Sing-along with Georgette _____
16 '70s aluminum sculpture on the water rumoured to come together one day
19 _____ see public art!
20 SPAF _____ Home
22 Italian naked man statue
24 _____ Players - in the park with no shoes
27 Shout Sisters sometimes _____ in the park
28 Calliope Collective celebrates the winter _____
29 Paint medium of plein air artists
31 _____ Queen Story Time
32 Kingston Freestyle ____
34 Home to birds found on Raglan Street in NEXT DOOR
37 Belle Park _____ Pole
39 _____ and Push Festival
41 The _____ Café Coffeehouse



LAST ISSUE'S SOLUTIONS

ACROSS 2 Home, **6** Nature, **8** Hobby, **9** Two Metres, **11** Remote, **13** Twenty, **20** Vaccine, **21** Universal, **22** Bubbles, **26** Introspection, **27** Kieran, **28** Fauci, **29** Hand Washing, **30** Community
DOWN 1 Swab, **3** Masks, **4** Serology, **5** Border, **7** Scrubs, **10** Essential, **12** Toilet Paper, **14** Walking, **15** N95, **16** Isolation, **17** Meditations, **18** Quarantine, **19** Alcohol, **23** Gardening, **24** Sourdough, **25** Netflix, **29** Hope, **31** USA

Portals for community engagement

Skeleton Park residents plan to build a community gallery into their fence

STORY BY NICOLE DANIELS

Rendering of the potential design for the art fence / **CREDIT:** Neil Bettney

A variety of unique ideas have come to fruition in response to the loss of opportunities in the arts caused by the COVID-19 pandemic. I recently had the opportunity to interview Alex Rowse-Thompson and Sean Thompson, who have just moved their family into a house adjacent to Skeleton Park.

The couple decided to build a more substantial fence along their property line to provide some privacy for their children. Because they felt it was important to contribute to their community rather than block it out, Thompson and Rowse-Thompson came up with a creative project to satisfy the need both to build a fence *and* to develop connections to the community: they designed a fence with niches integrated into its structure, which will act as a community art gallery.

The fence itself will be made of wood, with display cases set back into the couple's yard. Each of these niches will vary in size, allowing for works spanning a wide range of media — from poetry to small-scale sculpture. Rather than creating a barrier, the couple seeks to create an invitation, an attraction, and a portal for community engagement.

"That's the kind of art that inspires me, probably because I'm an urban planner," Rowse-Thompson remarked. "I love when functional parts of our environment can be beautiful. That, to me, is the real win." The exhibits will be administered by the Skeleton Park Arts Festival (SPAF), which intends to take on the curatorial work for the community gallery. As this is an early stage in the planning process, Thompson, Rowse-Thompson, and the SPAF team are open to suggestions regarding this project from community members and other local organizations.

Image showing the positioning of the proposed fence in Skeleton Park / **CREDIT:** Neil Bettney

"We're happy to open it up to the community to take part or take over," Thompson explained, "It's a really broad space right now, and something is going to go in. We're not steadfast in any direction, we just want to help contribute."

The eldest of their little ones has already given his input on the matter. "We need our own block!" their son pronounced on behalf of his classmates at Central Public School. The family hopes to include a display box devoted to work from students at Central positioned low in the fence for easy access to its primary audience.

I asked the couple what enables them to take on a project like this. Their answer was twofold: first, their socioeconomic position, which allows them the headspace and ability to dream up and execute these ideas, and second, the support of their community. Knowing people who can help steer the project and take on some of the administrative work makes it possible and, more importantly, offers long-term sustainability. The couple suggested that the gallery would likely lose its momentum within a year if they tackled this project alone. They also want future owners of their home to keep the gallery going, which will be far more likely if the administrative work does not fall to the homeowners. "We'll write it into the deed," Sean suggests, laughing. "We know a good lawyer."

Rather than creating a barrier, the couple seeks to create an invitation, an attraction, and a portal for community engagement.

Of course, not everyone can build an art fence — or even own a house, for that matter — but that doesn't mean we can't contribute to beautifying our neighbourhoods, as exemplified this past summer by the #MyDoorYGK community art initiative. Lauren Anstey, for instance, answered the call to artists by hanging a series of handmade watercolour postcards from a tree and offering them up to passersby.

While we all have different networks, in a city like Kingston chances are everyone knows an artist or arts worker who can, at minimum, direct them to some contacts. Speaking as an arts worker in Katarokwi/Kingston, I can honestly say there are a variety of organizations and individuals who would be thrilled to hear about your wildest art dreams. Perhaps they can offer suggestions, guidance, or support; direct you to grant applications; or connect you with potential collaborators. If you have an ambitious project you'd like to get off the ground, reach out to your local arts organization! This openness has only been enhanced by the pandemic.

Our lives have been shaken up to the point where we're not only willing to take on new initiatives that would have felt risky or out of the ordinary in pre-pandemic life — we actually need to do these things. SPAF and the Union Gallery's Next Door temporary public art exhibition; SPAF-O-GRAMS; Cellar Door Project's To You pop-up performances; and The Wilderness's *If I Have to Die* music video are but a few of many anomalous and beautiful responses the YGK arts community has offered in the face of COVID-19 restrictions. We continue to see radically unique initiatives emerge in response to the obliteration of our norms, suggesting that if we try, we can help each other find new forms of happiness, connection, and community as creative ways of inhabiting this time of distance and isolation.

NICOLE DANIELS is the Gallery Assistant at the Union Gallery; additionally, she works with local artists providing marketing, administrative, and studio assistance. Daniels has previously worked as the Communications Assistant at the Kingston Arts Council, and volunteered with the Agnes Etherington Art Centre. She is an active member of the Kingston arts community and feels a strong passion for connecting emerging artists with opportunities designed to help further their careers.

Art in the park

Why Nicholas Crombach put the horse before the cart

STORY BY JOCELYN PURDIE

The public spaces of the urban neighbourhood — the streets, the sidewalks, the parks — form a network of connectivity in which the private sphere intertwines with the public sphere. Public spaces are places of face-to-face exchange where differences emerge and where civic identity is shaped.

Placing artwork in a public space allows both art and non-art audiences to connect with it. No surprise, then, that parks are key locations for public art. Spread throughout the city, parks provide spaces for residents to interact in a variety of ways. For example, Skeleton Park, in the Inner Harbour neighbourhood, is a vibrant hub for residents and visitors alike. To the west of Skeleton Park, in the Williamsville neighbourhood, Victoria Park functions in a similar way.

In 2014 city council approved the City of Kingston's *Public Art Master Plan*, thereby acknowledging the important role of innovative contemporary public art in communities across the city. Identified as sites for public art were those parks undergoing renewal and redevelopment. Nicholas Crombach's sculpture, *Horse and Cart*, was selected by a jury of peers and community members for Victoria Park, the newly revitalized park in the Williamsville neighbourhood. Crombach incorporates local history into the narrative of his piece by referring to the horse-and-buggy era in which Victoria Park was established.

Horse and Cart takes the form of an old-fashioned, wooden, children's horse tricycle. The static representation of the toy is offset by the realistic gesture of the horse — its head swinging to one side, its mouth open, and two of its legs high stepping. Produced at the scale of a life-size horse, the enlarged children's toy appears to be coming to life, transforming from an inanimate object into a trotting horse that is pulling a cart. This aspect of the piece mirrors the development of Victoria Park, once a plot of farmland that was granted to the city for the purpose of transforming it into a park for recreational activities.

The following interview with the artist reveals aspects of his process in the development of this artwork.

What motivates you to apply for certain public art projects over others? Why were you drawn to this one?

NC: I apply to public art projects that I feel fit my practice, meaning that I'm drawn to projects that call for themes and subjects that relate to, and would be an extension of, the work I am producing for exhibitions in galleries and project spaces. In the case of the Victoria Park Project, the call for proposals allowed for a lot of artistic freedom and I was able to develop a proposal for a work that's an extension of the visual language and practice I've developed. However, it was my connection to Kingston that initially drew me in. I grew up east of Kingston in Lansdowne. I attended secondary school in Kingston and then moved to Toronto to study at OCAD (Ontario College of Art & Design) University. In 2019 I moved to Kingston and I am thrilled by this opportunity to contribute artwork to the community!

How do you decide on materials? Are you drawn to certain materials more than to others, and how much do they inform your process?

NC: Material-wise, my practice is quite varied. In fact, I have strategically tried to dissociate myself from a particular material or style. I enjoy switching things up from one series of work to the next. I find myself using conventional and unconventional materials, and many factors come into play when I'm deciding

FROM TOP:
Model, *Horse and Cart*
Sample of antique rolling horse toy from 1920s used as reference
Site rendering, *Horse and Cart*

FROM TOP:
The artist with work in progress cast aluminum horse head
Work in progress sculpted clay horse head

which materials to use. For some works, the raw materials or objects that I use serve to conceptually layer the work and are crucial in guiding a viewer's interpretation of the work; for other pieces the materials may be chosen for more technical reasons. In many cases a sculpture's design plays a big part in material selection. In the case of outdoor artwork, other factors need to be considered when deciding on materials. The work must withstand the elements as well as people touching and interacting with it. Budget and maintenance also come into play.

How do you conceptualize and then build your project proposals?

NC: I like to visit the site and spend time observing the public's interactions with the setting and surrounding features. From there I find myself researching the history of the site and searching for any interesting facts as a starting point.

What research did you do for this project?

NC: "Horse and Cart" was developed through research into the history and heritage of Victoria Park and the Williamsville neighbourhood. I made fascinating discoveries at the Queen's Archives in their collection of vintage photographs, historic documents, newspaper clippings, and records from the City of Kingston committee reports. A visit to the the Maps & Air Photos Collection in the Stauffer Library at Queen's also provided insight into the park's development and use in the past. Additionally, I reached out to individuals in the community, including a local historian and the Williamsville Community Association, for information and inspiration.

Do all projects begin with a drawing? Do you ever start with a material or image to begin your process?

NC: Sometimes I create very simple drawings that act more as notes for me to remember an idea. However, I mostly resort to making maquettes (small models) to work out what I would like to propose. For example, "Horse and Cart" in its final form came about after the creation of three separate maquettes that I tweaked and adjusted as I moved from one maquette to the next.

In the case of "Horse and Cart," after developing a rough idea of what I wanted to create, I began thinking about which materials to use in the sculpture's production. I chose a combination of corten steel and stainless steel for the body and cart, while the horse's head is cast aluminum. The juxtaposition of the dark brown-orange of the corten steel and the silver-grey of the sandblasted stainless steel and cast aluminum adds a strong graphic quality to the work. With the natural colours of these metals I intend to reference the simple painted surfaces of the vintage childrens' toys that inspired this sculpture. These metals were selected as they weather well outdoors, are low maintenance and provide an attractive colouration without the application of paint, which would require touch-ups and recoating down the road.

PLEASE NOTE: Originally planned for fall of 2020, the installation of *Horse and Cart* has been delayed until spring of 2021 due to COVID.

NICHOLAS CROMBACH received the Elizabeth Greenshields Foundation Award (2016) and is the recipient of grants from the municipal, provincial and national levels. In 2017 Crombach presented his solo exhibition, *Behind Elegantly Carved Wooden Doors*, at Art Mûr, Montreal. His exhibition, *The End of the Chase*, was exhibited in London UK, Berlin and Montreal. In 2019 he collaborated with artist Nurielle Stern in the exhibition *Whale Fall*, presented at The Canadian Clay and Glass Gallery in Waterloo, ON. In 2012, he created, *Billy, Nanny, and the Kids*, a public art project in Burlington, Ontario. From 2016-2017 he participated in a residency at The Florence Trust (London, UK) and in 2022 will take part in a MASS MoCA residency in Massachusetts. Crombach is currently working in Kingston. He lives in Calvin Park but, one day, hopes to live in the Skeleton Park neighbourhood.

JOCELYN PURDIE is an artist, curator and former director of the Union Gallery. She has exhibited and curated exhibitions regularly in gallery and public spaces over the years has been curator of the Swamp Ward Window, an alternative located in the front porch of her home on Bagot Street since 2001. She has lived in the Skeleton Park neighbourhood (a.k.a the Swamp Ward) for over 30 years.

Public art + public water

STORY BY DAVID MCDONALD AND SU SHEEDY

Public art is political, whether it is intended to be or not. The same applies to public infrastructure. Everything from park benches to street lamps says something about our surroundings, if only by their sheer indifference. The same is true of public drinking fountains. They say a lot about what we think of water. In Kingston, it is not a pretty story. Our outdoor public drinking fountains are institutional chunks of concrete and metal with no sense of celebration. They are often dirty and in disrepair. More likely, they are entirely absent from our public spaces, having been removed as a cost-saving measure, or never having been built in the first place. They are the infrastructural equivalents of saying, "I don't care" about water in this city.

And yet Kingston is a Blue Community, one of a growing number of municipalities around the world committed to recognizing water as a human right, banning the sale of bottled water in municipal facilities, and promoting publicly-financed, publicly-owned, and publicly-operated water services. Outdoor public water fountains should celebrate this. They should applaud the fact that we have clean, ample, and accessible water services. We live on one of the greatest lakes in the world, and public drinking fountains can help remind us of the need to protect this beautiful resource from the twin threats of pollution and privatization, both of which are persistent dangers in Canada.

The first things we in Kingston need to do is to build more outdoor public drinking fountains and restore the ones we already have. But more important than this, we need to make our fountains celebratory, either through their actual design or by placing public art adjacent to them, thereby speaking to the significance of their public nature. Public art can also be used to highlight what we have achieved (e.g., a publicly accessible waterfront), to confront the mistakes of the past (e.g., sewage contamination), and to challenge ourselves to do better in the future (e.g., working towards reconciliation with First Nations communities who have used Lake Ontario for millennia).

Public art should be used to showcase the social, cultural, political, health, and recreational significance of public water. Cities as diverse as Pittsburgh and Paris have done exactly this, creating playful and inspiring public art to draw attention to — and to preserve — the public nature of their water services. We are trying to convince the City of Kingston to do the same. We have proposed McBurney Park as a starting point (in part because a new drinking fountain will be installed there next year, along with a splash pad), but we would like to see many more outdoor drinking fountains, all with different public-themed art, in different public locations around the City.

This proposal is motivated in part by our experience of using public art to promote public water in the past. In 2013 we organized an event called the Shoreline Shuffle during which hundreds of people walked, cycled, and paddled along the downtown shoreline, stopping along the way to examine 15 temporary word sculptures designed to highlight the need for a long-term plan for the city's waterfront. It worked, and Kingston now has an award-winning long-term waterfront strategy, with dozens of small and large-scale changes planned to improve public access to, and awareness of, our water. Outdoor drinking fountains need to be part of this ongoing effort to draw attention to public water in Kingston, reminding us of the importance of protecting water resources, and highlighting the diverse experiences that inform what we mean by "publicness." The fact that we all drink the water from Lake Ontario helps create this common bond.

DAVID MCDONALD is Coordinator of the Water Access Group in Kingston.

SU SHEEDY is a visual artist who supports public water access.

FROM TOP:
Proposed design for London, England by Zaha Hadid and Hopkins Architects
Fountain in Boucher Park on Clarence Street, 2020

Facing the Street

Marking multiple histories on the streets of Kingston

STORY BY MELANIE DUGAN
PHOTOS BY CHRIS MINER

"I like to be interested in the place where I live," says Laura Murray, Professor of English and Cultural Studies at Queen's University, "and I felt that was hard for me when I first moved here because Kingston doesn't pay enough attention to its multiple histories. It's monolithic about its history. Everywhere you go, what you see are statues to Macdonald and the military, and not much else. That's offensive, and it's boring." These are Laura's comments as she discusses the genesis of the Swamp Ward & Inner Harbour History Project, and one of its spinoff projects, *Facing the Street*. This photo exhibit ran June 5-30, 2018, and was co-curated by Murray and photographer Chris Miner, with Anne Lougheed serving as project manager.

Facing the Street comprises a series of early twentieth century (wartime) black-and-white-family photographs of more than a dozen individuals and buildings in the Swamp Ward. Selected images were mounted on placards and displayed outside the buildings that had been photographed. When viewers stood in front of the plaques, they were standing in the same location the photographer did when shooting the image, and the viewer was able to compare the location now with the way it appeared early in the last century. Additional photographs — significant in other ways but with no clear outdoor physical location — were displayed at the Elm Café at the corner of Montreal Street and Charles Street.

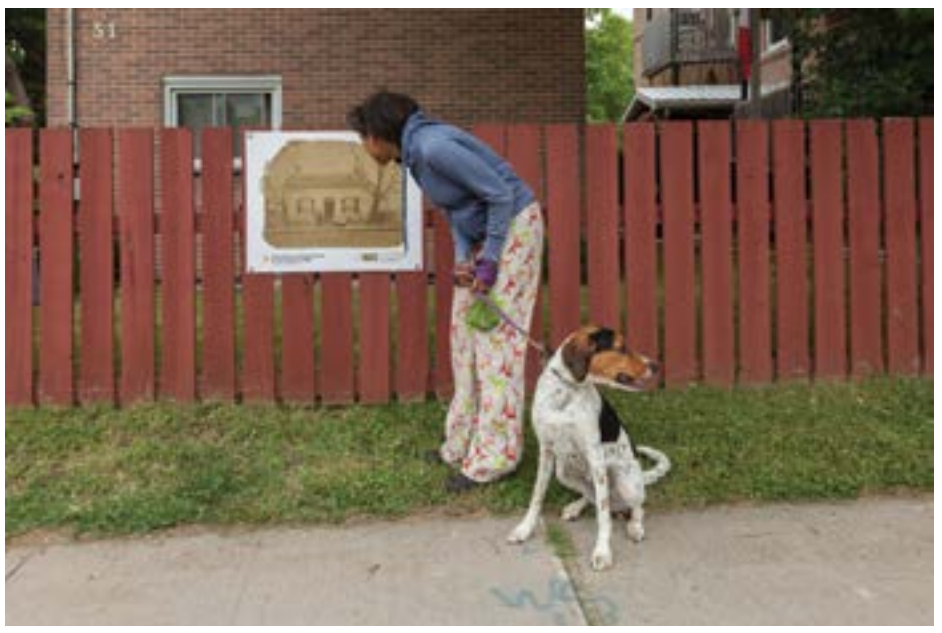
The Swamp Ward — another name for the (former) Cataraqui Ward, from Ka'tarohkwi, which means "marshy wet place" in the Huron language — is not on any map, but is loosely bounded by Stephen Street in the north, Queen Street in the south, Division to the west, and the Cataraqui River on the east.

"Kingston's history isn't simply nineteenth century," says Murray. "It's not just the history of the commercial elite or the military. I am about proving the twentieth century happened in Kingston. I am interested in who built the houses, who cleaned the houses, who looked after the children; for example, surely there were women involved in Kingston's history, but how often are they mentioned? In creating *Facing the Street* we were inspired by wanting to mark these other histories on the streets of Kingston."

The photographs, and the stories that accompanied them, draw a picture of a vibrant, diverse community of people, many of whom were employed by industries located in the Inner Harbour.

Funded in part by the City of Kingston Heritage Fund, Murray began in 2015 by collecting oral histories. "It started with the guy across the street," she says. And as she conducted interviews, people started showing her photographs.

The photographs, and the stories that accompanied them, draw a picture of a vibrant, diverse community of people, many of whom were employed by industries located in the Inner Harbour. They also give insight into individuals' experiences of historic events, such as the Second World War. With Miner generating high-quality scans and helping select the most interesting photos, and Lougheed getting permission from people who lived in the properties in the present day, Murray was able to stage encounters between people in the present and people in the past.



As Murray notes on the Stones Kingston website (www.stoneskingston.ca/about/), "Interaction between strangers, between generations, and between newcomers and 'old-timers' was a key goal of *Facing the Street*. We may not be friends with all our neighbours, but in recognizing each other at least enough to smile or say hello, we create community."

Murray notes, "The amazing thing was how excited people were about the project, especially some of the people who own the properties now." In one instance, while she and Lougheed were installing a plaque at Barrie and Colborne streets, two teenagers who came up to talk to them became somewhat dazed at the realization that some day they would be part of the neighbourhood's history, too.

Miner explains that he "deliberately scanned the photos to include the memory of their existence in the broken bits, as a narrative of the picture's life. I kept the blemishes intact, except for the ones on the subjects' faces." Murray wrote short poetic captions for each photo, hoping to provide just enough historical information to make people think.

Murray hopes to publish some of the photographs in the future, with excerpts from the interviews or other reflections. And Lougheed has proposed remounting the exhibit some other spring — since the material can't go out of date.

For now, the placards are safe in Murray's basement, and you can see quite a lot of the show at www.stoneskingston.ca/swamp-ward-snapshots/, along with detailed stories of ten families in the area. Our current era of social-distancing seems like an ideal time to revisit these images that give vivid glimpses of individuals who survived the world wars and the 1918 flu. The pictures remind us that we often live through difficult times, times that knit communities and individuals together and teach resilience. Perhaps, in another time ahead, there may be another *Facing the Street* project, by which time our experiences of COVID-19 will be part of this area's shared history.

MELANIE DUGAN is a writer who lives in Kingston. The author of four novels, she lived in Boston, Toronto, and London, England before settling in Kingston. She has an abiding interest in history.

Many faces, many worlds

An interview with local mask maker, puppet designer and artist Clelia Scala

STORY BY ERIN JONES

PHOTO CREDIT: Brian Yungblut Photography

Scala is inspired by artists who play with identity. She cites Frida Kahlo, Cindy Sherman, and Edward Gorey as some of her influences.

Clelia Scala has always been drawn to animating the inanimate.

"When I was a kid, I didn't speak at all in kindergarten until somebody gave me a puppet and then I started speaking through that. I spent a lot of time with my stuffed animals. They just had very rich lives. I became obsessed with the idea of transformation," says Scala.

Born in Toronto, Clelia moved to Kingston during her high school years. Scala is now a full-time artist specializing in mask and puppet design, collage and illustration, as well as installations. Her work, often surreal and whimsical in nature, has adorned theatre stages across North America. Chances are, you've stopped to admire one of her art installations in the windows of Minotaur on Princess.

When Scala isn't creating in her Skeleton Park studio, you can find her leading workshops in schools and teaching theatre, mask, and puppet design at the Dan School of Drama & Music at Queen's University. "I tend to have too much on the go," she says, chuckling.

Scala fell in love with the creative process while studying at the CMU College of Makeup Art & Design in Toronto. She says art saved her life.

"I was a very unhappy teenager. I had a lot of issues with depression," says Scala. "I remember when I was in makeup school, I was actually making a conscious decision, that I either had to give myself over to making art, or I could just dissolve into a life of sadness, which is what I had been used to for many years. Art took me into something else, it created an interest."

After graduation, Scala always "had her hand in art," but taking the leap from her salary job in publishing to becoming a full-time artist wasn't easy. "The first couple years were really challenging. By year three, I started making a meagre living."

Scala is inspired by artists who play with identity. She cites Frida Kahlo, Cindy Sherman, and Edward Gorey as some of her influences. Scala's mother was a children's librarian and her father was a writer and editor. She says she spent her childhood surrounded by books, and would often get lost in the illustrations.

"The best illustrators," she says, 'always have these little details that you find as a viewer. Some of the art that I enjoy most, it's when you can find these little details, these moments of wonder in them that feel very special."

The past few years have been career milestones for Scala. In the summer of 2018 she was the maker-in-residence at the Burlington Public Library, where she created an installation called "The Forest" — using books and other materials. In 2019, she won the Established Artist Award, given by the City of St. Catharines. 2020 turned everything upside down, the uncertainty of COVID-19 has pushed back most public art projects until the coming summer.

"Online life is so tough. My students all have puppet kits that we sent them. Some of them haven't really made stuff before and they're finding it very calming to take a break from staring at the computer and writing essays," says Scala.

"I have creative blocks all the time. I think [during the pandemic] our minds are moving at a different rate. I make a point of going for a run every day. I just keep making things and sketching. For me, that's the way I cope. It's just a very meditative, important thing for me."

Scala is still keeping busy, teaching and leading workshops virtually as well as working on commissioned puppetry pieces, and an installation for Hydra, a water parade project with Kingston's Calliope Collective. Working on collaborative, public art projects is one of her favourite things about being an artist.

"Art can be so exclusive. It takes money and time and you need to be exposed to it. What I love about public art is that people can experience it without having to go out of their way. You could happen upon these moments of beauty and wonder. Everybody should be able to have that experience, not just people whose parents, or who themselves know enough to take themselves to a gallery," says Scala.

ERIN JONES is a freelance writer and library worker. When she's not typing or reading, you can find her making things with yarn and watching terrible reality TV with her cat.

Waterfront wayfinding

An interview with Georgina Riel and Andy Berg

STORY BY MARK STOLLER

The kiosk at Lake Ontario Park with the image commemorating the Dish With One Spoon / **CREDIT:** Mark Stoller

Kingston's new waterfront wayfinding project features a series of six kiosks located along the Waterfront Trail between the Wolfe Island Ferry and Lake Ontario Park. Each kiosk includes artistic and narrative representations of Lake Ontario. The project, conceived by artists Georgina Riel (Ojibwe/Anishnaabe) and Andy Berg, features paintings by local Ojibwe artist, Onagottay Blanchard, and accompanying text in Anishinaabemowin, Mohawk, English and French. As artists, RIEL + BERG honoured the Truth and Reconciliation Commission's Action #83 (a call to action aimed at Indigenous artists) as they approached their project.

I spoke with Georgina and Andy about the project, their partnerships, and the challenges of Indigenizing Kingston's public spaces. I started by asking about the research that went into the project.

GEORGINA: We did a lot of historical research, not just from a settler or Indigenous perspective, but regarding the land, the water, the people who utilize those spaces and the ways they were accessed. And we had a lot of conversations back and forth, because we really wanted to give true representation and a true voice. You have to give those true words as part of the stories.

ANDY: As a settler, I have to figure out what I'm not aware of — that others like me might benefit from knowing. I'm an avid outdoor person, and as an outdoor person, you become very sensitized to the flora and fauna that are present in remnants. For this project I was asking, where are the current flora and fauna? And how we bring them back, into the hearts and minds of the people who are here now.

MARK: Georgina, you mentioned stories. How is storytelling a part of this project?

GEORGINA: This is a very contemporary form of storytelling because people are reading the text, versus hearing it firsthand from the individual. [As artists] we're adapting to the fact that we need to get the message out, because having had our culture and languages denied for so long — I don't like saying "lost culture" — this is part of that resilience and reclaiming. If you just go and you see [the painting of] a fish — that was never just a fish. This is us telling what a fish represents. It's not just something you take for granted, and I think part of the history here is that we've taken spaces for granted.

MARK: You are both artists, yet you chose to reach out to Onagottay for the artwork. What led to this decision?

GEORGINA: It just made sense for this project. He's a very traditional man — he lives according to his teachings. For Andy and I, there needed to be this community engagement of bringing other people in. And because he's a beautiful artist too.

ANDY: Our work together is not just about making art; it's about culture, and about asking how we can have a conversation that is also culturally based, while integrating visual art elements. Onagottay's cosmological perspective really resonated with this project. His art is so engaged with his deep traditional connections working on and with the land, and this connects our project to Original People of this land.

MARK: How has the TRC guided your work?

GEORGINA: When the TRC came about, people were really unaware of how to move forward. We wanted to emphasize that we can decolonize space as Indigenous people, but we can also Indigenize space. We really wanted to adhere to the TRC as a resource guide. We can't just say "let's follow the two-row wampum" or just toss words out but not follow through; Andy and I are committed to following those actions.

MARK: Is there a difference between decolonizing space and Indigenizing space?

GEORGINA: When we talk about decolonization, it ruffles a lot of people's feathers. It becomes a very uncomfortable conversation because, people who are not Indigenous, that's how they often want to take it. What they feel it's representing is change, and we're telling them to change the space that they're most comfortable in, that has granted them a sense of privilege from conception. And denying that — that birthright of theirs — people don't like that. They feel threatened. But nobody wants to have a conversation about how Indigenous people have practically been erased from the narrative. So the appearance of certain spaces doesn't reflect the history and legacy of modern-day Indigenous peoples, and that's extremely problematic. With the term "Indigenization," people find that a more receptive term to adhere to. They don't feel as threatened. All of a sudden people are willing to say, "Okay, let's go for it."

MARK: Can you talk about your work together within the context of an Indigenous-settler partnership?

ANDY: Because RIEL + BERG as an Indigenous and non-Indigenous partnership, has a focus on the TRC calls to action in our public-art-and-culture consulting work, there may be challenges with integrating TRC as a component of our content at the governmental or institutional level. Sometimes it is actively welcomed; other times it is not. In the latter case, we will use a subtle activist approach, for example, by embedding the intentionality of the TRC calls into the waterfront wayfinding process through our very specific selection of content. Yes, there is an "accessible read" to the Indigenous content on the kiosks, but there is an even deeper story, that we have linked to the TRC calls. In terms of the nature of our Indigenous-settler partnership, we are modelling that the TRC is a call to ALL Canadians and the public art follows from this. It is important for people to recognize that I really take cues from Georgina as our project lead. My role as a settler is to respectfully and deeply listen and learn from Georgina as a traditional knowledge keeper and this is the foundation that we build upon.

GEORGINA: I want to say, though, no one voice is more of a priority between Andy and me, no one voice speaks louder than the other. We follow the circle, and in the circle there is no hierarchy. It's part of the Western model that you must have a lead, and as an Ojibwe person, I'm often identified as the lead, but that doesn't mean that's how we work together.

MARK: What would you like to see with respect to Indigenous content in Kingston's public spaces?

GEORGINA: More! I would love to see not just inward facing Indigenizing, but also outward facing, buildings and architectural design that reflect the Indigenous nations in that space. In the proposal for the [Third Crossing], for instance, that should have been considered. Public art always has a place, but there's something more permanent that can be done through architecture.

ANDY: I think the Third Crossing could be a wonderful opportunity for that, and there would be space there. Because it is going to be accessible by bicycle and by foot, and there will be areas for people to sit and observe the river.

MARK: What would you like people to take away from the kiosks?

ANDY: Those kiosks are a beginning — a first step for those who may not have considered the content that we've presented. But there are many more steps to go. Hopefully it triggers curiosity and engagement.

GEORGINA: I would love to see this as a wonderful moment of relationship. When people take that stroll along the waterfront, I would really like them to slow down and think about that space, and to honour it. That's what we would like the wayfinding signs to represent, for visitors and for residents, and not just something that they quickly walk by.

MARK STOLLER is a new resident to Kingston and a researcher in Nunavut and the Northwest Territories. He also designs and builds websites.

Crow watch

STORY BY HELEN HUMPHREYS
ILLUSTRATIONS BY CHANTAL ROUSSEAU

I have been thinking about wild birds and our interactions with them. There are the birds in the trees and on the wires outside our houses, and the birds that come to our feeders. Some of us go out specifically to watch for birds, lingering with cameras and binoculars at the edge of the marsh or riverbank. Mostly in these encounters we are waiting for the birds to fly into our field of vision. We are waiting for the birds to come to us.

What would it be like the other way around?

I have decided to try and follow our neighbourhood crows and see what they do in a day. I have chosen crows because they are social birds and travel together, and it will be easier to track a flock — or "murder," since that is the term for a group of crows — than a single bird. Also, I have chosen crows because they are very observant birds and I like the idea of watching the watcher. Crows can recognize human faces and remember them. In the early 2000s the U.S. military were funding an initiative whereby they would use "spy" crows to find soldiers missing in action. They also wanted to use this network of crows to locate Osama bin Laden. They attempted to train the crows by wearing Osama bin Laden silicone masks, to get the birds to memorize that particular face.

My first crow-watching day it is raining and I can't find the crows. I do find three ravens sitting on a sign. They move from the sign to the metal bars on some playground equipment, and then onto the ground where they walk slowly across the grass, heads bent over, like a team of forensic investigators.

The next day I find some lone crows — one on a lamp standard, one in a tree, one on a roof. While I am watching the crow on the lamp standard (who does nothing but perch there for the better part of an hour), a small flock of black-throated green warblers flutters in the low bushes off to the side of my car, more like butterflies than birds. A red-tailed hawk glides slowly overhead, drifting with the air currents.

The first published field guide to the birds, released in 1899, was *Birds Through an Opera-Glass,* by Florence A. Merriam of Washington, D.C. As well as giving a general description of various North American birds, Florence Merriam also talked about specific birds of her acquaintance, a feature I have found in no subsequent field guide. It turns out she knew some very interesting crows. One liked to ride on a gardener's hat as he walked around his flowerbeds. Another tore the covers off novels that were left outdoors on a table and particularly disliked the colour yellow. Merriam is also the only naturalist I have encountered who mixes her senses, describing the cry of the crow as being "like the smell of the brown furrows in spring."[1]

In my further attempts at following the crows, I watch some individuals hopping about on a rooftop. Up near Kingscourt, I come upon a crow motherlode, with multiple trees loaded down with the birds. The crows are very vocal and they keep switching trees, with hundreds rising up out of one tree to roost in another that hundreds of other crows have just left. The restless cacophony of the birds is thrilling and, for a moment, when I am standing under one of the trees, it feels as though I am in the eye of the crow storm.

Later, on a walk through Lemoine Point, the agitation of several crows guides me to the presence of a barred owl high up in the branches of a pine tree. I also follow a group of birds — thinking they are crows — only to find out when I get close, that they are robins. In winter, robins will flock up, increasing their chance of finding food by traveling together, and switching from the worms and grubs they eat in the spring, to berries and fruits.

Often, while out looking for crows, I have found something else, and I realize that having a purpose has given me an excuse to drift around the neighbourhood and beyond, engaging with the bounty of bird life we have within our city. It has also made me more inclined not just to watch birds in the future, but sometimes to follow them, to see where they go and what they do — to extend my curiosity, and in doing so, expand my understanding of urban nature.

1 *Birds Through an Opera-Glass* by Florence A. Merriam; The Chautauqua Press; New York; 1899

HELEN HUMPHREYS is the award-winning author of 18 books. Her most recent is the novel, *Rabbit Foot Bill*, published by HarperCollins Canada.