

Issue Six **THE** Spring 2021  
**SKELETON  
PRESS**



**HOLLY**

**Holly had two previous homes that didn't work out. In a lot of ways, she is more the dog I needed than the dog I might have picked. If I am a couch potato, she is an Olympian. Heading into the pandemic, I panicked about being lonely and stuck inside. But together, we walk about nine kilometres a day, mostly through the neighbourhood. A Blue Heeler, she is bred to herd cattle in the Australian Outback. My daily challenge is trying to create that level of interest for her on Kingston sidewalks.**

# Going to the Dogs



Mental health is a pertinent topic of discussion for the Skeleton Park neighbourhood and beyond, especially during these times of increased anxiety and social isolation. While the subject of mental health has recently joined a broader conversation about personal and communal well-being, the topic also presents opportunities to examine and reflect upon our own community more closely.

*The Skeleton Press* spring issue explores several related mental health stories – psychiatric distress from solitude, the high risk of death among the marginalized — that some readers may find stressful. However, our writers and artists also explore subjects we hope readers will find more comforting — the births of pandemic babies, the solace of music, the anticipation of a return to live performances.

And dogs.

Researchers from The University of Western Australia recently conducted the largest international study ever completed on the social benefits of pet ownership, and found that dogs are important both for well-being and for social connectedness.

“... sixty per cent of those surveyed who owned a dog knew their neighbours better ...”

According to their study, caring for a dog is “linked to increased perceptions of trust and stronger community networks.” The study suggests that “... in our technology-dominated lives, people can often feel disconnected from their local community, and this can impact negatively on mental health. Dogs are a natural antidote to this and can help strengthen the social fabric of our neighbourhoods.”

We hope that the neighbourhood dogs introduced within these pages help you feel more connected to your furry neighbours and to your neighbourhood.

## FESTIVAL ANNOUNCEMENT

As the Skeleton Park Arts Festival (SPAF) continues to offer free multi-arts programming aligned with public health recommendations, (eg. SPAF! AT HOME, Skeleton Park People Project, and *The Skeleton Press*), we would like to give our community the heads-up that the annual outdoor summer solstice celebration in Skeleton Park is simply not in the cards again this June.

However, SPAF is excited to once again present the Next Door neighbourhood public art exhibition (June 16–Aug 16 2021), in addition to ongoing pop-up public art and performances throughout our neighborhood streets, parks, and other public spaces whenever possible. Please keep an eye on our e-newsletter, our website ([skeletonparkartsfest.ca](http://skeletonparkartsfest.ca)) and our social media posts for developments in our ever-evolving community arts programming.

## 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.

**SEND EMAIL TO:**  
[info@skeletonparkarts.org](mailto:info@skeletonparkarts.org)

**AND TRADITIONAL MAIL TO:**  
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**VIEW OR DOWNLOAD PAST ISSUES AT:**  
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**If you would like to donate to the Skeleton Park Arts Festival to help keep this newspaper in print, please visit our donation page at [CanadaHelps.org](http://CanadaHelps.org)**

## 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.

## DISTRIBUTION SITES

Skeleton Park, Kingston Community House (99 York St.), The Elm Café (303 Montreal St.) Home Base Housing (540 Montreal St.), Novel Idea (156 Princess St.), Something Else Records (207 Wellington St.), Kingston Community Health Centre (263 Weller Ave.), Kingston Community Credit Union (18 Market St.), Daughters General Store (63 John St.) and Free Little Libraries throughout the Skeleton Park neighbourhood

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To sign the petition to Decriminalize Nature, go to [decriminalize nature.ca](http://decriminalize nature.ca).

# Plants, People, Places

Rethinking the war on drug users

STORY BY RON SHORE / ILLUSTRATION BY CARL WIENS

**I** dropped out of my philosophy degree at Queen’s soon after my mother died when I was twenty years old. I had done prisoner solidarity work in the community, so the Kingston AIDS Project hired me in 1991 to help start a needle-exchange program and work with local prisoners at risk of, or living with, AIDS (HIV had not even been identified then!).

The Keep Six! Needle Exchange became only the third needle-and-syringe program in Ontario, and the first in a mid-size Canadian city. The Keep Six! program would go on to become the Street Health Centre and our needle-exchange volumes outpaced those of many larger cities.

The AIDS movement taught us many things, including the fact that health is always political, that stigma kills, and that the medical and pharmaceutical industries themselves are biased. The movement also introduced into the mainstream the concept of harm reduction. Lessons from the HIV pandemic are under-utilized in our strategies to address the current COVID-19 global pandemic (why vaccination and prevention efforts are not prioritizing high-risk neighbourhoods and work settings, for example).

For more than two decades I worked at the intersections of drug use, stigma, marginalization and trauma. Within that crucible, disease and death are constant; people whose drug use has been criminalized live in an environment of constant, shifting, and imminent risk.

I learned quickly that health is not equally shared. If health is (as the Ottawa Charter for Health Promotion defines it) a resource for daily living, then some of us are simply provided more opportunity to live than others. Years in harm reduction taught me that our social and public policies (in particular our regime of drug prohibition) are risk factors for ill health and mortality.

Flash forward to 2021. Overdose deaths have hit record numbers during this current triple crisis of drug toxicity, COVID-19, and opioid overdose (not to mention homelessness, poverty, and stigma). The Dean of the Faculty of Health Sciences at Queen’s, the incomparable Dr. Jane Philpott, is on record as supporting

decriminalization of all drugs. And psychedelic drugs are going mainstream, forcing a review of Canada’s drug policy regime.

The City of Vancouver has effectively decriminalized all drugs within its jurisdiction by requesting of Health Minister Patty Hajdu a Schedule 56 exemption (from the Controlled Drugs and Substances Act). The government of British Columbia plans to do the same for the whole province.

In the wake of cannabis legalization in Canada, dozens of companies are selling magic mushrooms within a pseudo-legal and tolerated grey market. Psychedelics have been granted “breakthrough therapy” status, and clinical trials are underway in Canada to test the use of MDMA (3,4-Methylenedioxymethamphetamine) in the treatment of post-traumatic stress. Psilocybin, the active compound in magic mushrooms, is emerging as a novel and effective treatment for a range of mental health conditions, including end-of-life distress, depression, and substance use disorder.

The state of Oregon has legalized psychedelics, and the list of jurisdictions that have “decriminalized nature” is growing and now includes Oakland and Santa Cruz in California and Denver in Colorado. Can Kingston be next?

It should be, and you can help. The KFLA (Kingston, Frontenac and Lennox & Addington) Community Drug Strategy Advisory Committee recently passed a motion to endorse the decriminalization of drug users, instead asking that drug use and addiction be framed as a health (and not a moral or criminal) issue.

Like Vancouver, our fine city can request the same Schedule 56 exemption. The power for this lies with our mayor, city council, and our local medical officer of health. The more neighbourhoods and cities rise up to protect the health of their people, the quicker the War on Drug Users itself can come to an end.

Lost beneath the moral panic around “drugs” is the very real fact that drugs are plants (or come from plants, or mimic plant compounds), and that evidence of psychoactive drug use actually dates to at least Neanderthal times. We have co-evolved with psychoactive plants. We have just lost the rituals, sensibility and reverence of pre-industrial cultures, necessary factors that shape how we look at “drugs” and guide when and how we use them to benefit and not harm.

Think about the Eleusinian Mysteries, which for 2,000 years served as a secret psychedelic elixir to all members of society, including such luminaries as Plato, Aristotle and Pythagoras in an annual festival to honour Demeter (Goddess of the Harvest) and her daughter Persephone (Queen of the Underworld).

Cultures shape drug use by the values and beliefs we assign to these peculiar substances. For cultures that believe plants have spirit and identity, certain psychoactive plants are recognized as plant teachers, and their use is governed by ritual, ceremony, and respect.

In a hyper-disposable culture, these plants get exploited, their psychoactive molecules extracted and isolated. The great gift of the coca leaf — revered by Andean peoples and used when travelling or working at high elevation as a mild stimulant, not unlike coffee — becomes cocaine.

Drugs are neither good nor bad in themselves, but in how we relate to them and the meanings we assign.

Addiction has increased over the past century in proportional representation to our alienation from nature. Much of our drug use is self-medication, or self-regulation, or disconnection. In the face of mounting rates of anxiety and depression, psychedelics provide a new paradigm for healing this loss of place in the world, loss of community bonds, loss of human culture.

Drugs mediate our experience of life and remind us that we are embodied beings enmeshed with the world. We are a part of nature, not separate. Like the organisms bound together into the ecology of a bioregion, our fates are interdependent. The intertwining of mycelia (the network of fungal threads) and tree roots forms an underground intelligence by which information and nutrients are shared. An injury to one is truly an injury to all.

The health of a neighbourhood, like the health of any bioregion, is a story of connection and mutual interdependence. When we remember this, we can regain our place in the forest of life. We can welcome back into our circle those who have been marginalized, so their gifts can as well be shared. Your neighbourhood is a forest. Your neighbour is a tree with roots entwined with your own. Together, we live.



**RON SHORE** lives with his family among the trees of the Kingscourt neighbourhood.

# Dark Times, Divine Comfort



Local religious institutions can play a supporting role in our collective mental health

STORY BY DAWN CLARKE

ILLUSTRATION BY HAYDEN MAYNARD

Depressed and suicidal, Jane (not her real name) confided her state of mind, and the life-threatening danger it posed, to Sue Lyon, one of the leaders at the Next Church on Colborne Street. Lyon's solution was a huge commitment of time: through the pandemic summer of 2020, Jane gardened with Sue every day. According to Jane, "I would not have got through that if Sue had not been with me every single day."

Peer-reviewed studies of visual perception tell us that if we stand in front of a hill alone, our brain actually estimates the hill to be higher than if we have a friend standing beside us. When Sue invited Jane to her garden, Jane's hill became smaller.

Jane's mental health crisis is all too common these days. When the UK government created a Ministry of Loneliness in 2018, it was like an exclamation mark drawing attention to an emergency. Loneliness and isolation cause anxiety and depression. And the pandemic has greatly exacerbated these conditions, resulting in domestic violence, financial distress, and alcohol abuse. Demands on food banks have increased. Steve Lapp, another leader at the Next Church, says, "people are crashing."

How is Kingston handling this crisis? Help is coming from a surprising source — churches and other religious institutions. From within the staid old stone buildings, which many people associate with tradition and respectability, folks are rallying with heroic acts that are saving lives, saving sanity, and leaving some clergy exhausted.

Most religious leaders are not trained in formal counselling. Exceptions include Rev. Rebecca ("Beckett") Coppola, of the Unitarian Fellowship on Concession Street, and Rev. Dr. Don Misener, at Zion United Church on Pine Street. Coppola and Misener both provide counselling services, with referrals for psychiatric services when needed.

Religious institutions do offer a singularly important component of mental health support — "the ministry of presence." This support takes the form of programs for groups, and various forms of pastoral care — which often looks a lot like simple friendship.

Mental health is not a matter of "us and them," Lapp emphasizes. "We all have mental health problems from time to time and we all need support." Lapp runs a rag-tag theatre group that brings people together and brings them out of their shells. And theatre sessions include shared food.

In non-COVID times, getting people together over shared food and shared arts was a big part of how religious institutions helped and healed. Rev. Andrew Johnston says that many people attended regular free meals offered at St. Andrew's Presbyterian Church at the corner of Princess and Clergy streets. And in "The Mess," St. Andrew's offered a space where people could come to create art and share a mid-day meal.

Dr. Jagdeep Walia, President of Kingston Sikh Cultural Association Gurudwara on Hickson Avenue, describes weekly shared meals open to anyone who chose to come. Many who attended were students from India seeking a religious community like the one they belonged to at home.

Sitting down and sharing a meal may sound trivial, but it's a cornerstone of mental and spiritual well-being, and it's what religious institutions do well. Unfortunately, in all denominations, such communal meals have been curtailed or cancelled during the pandemic.

What the religious institutions are doing, instead, is systematically maintaining connection with people whose needs have been identified. Friar David Collins at St. John the Apostle Roman Catholic Church, on Patrick Street, says that clergy and lay people regularly telephone parishioners, and bring the Blessed Sacrament weekly to some people. Leaders at Zion United Church maintain weekly telephone contact with parishioners, and even do COVID-rules home visits when needed.

Mental health professionals agree that such companionship is vital to mental health. Trained counsellor and retired Presbyterian Minister Rev. Dr. Karen



**Sitting down and sharing a meal may sound trivial, but it's a cornerstone of mental and spiritual well-being, and it's what religious institutions do well.**

Bach emphasizes the importance of the relationship between minister and parishioner: "Clergy, who have a relationship with their parishioners and who have appropriate training, can address in one session what might take ten sessions with a therapist."

In non-pandemic times, religious gatherings included music and group singing or chanting, which is universally recognized as conducive to emotional well-being. Gen Kelsang Denpa, a Buddhist nun at the Kuluta Buddhist Centre on Wellington Street, explains that the centre now offers bi-weekly, on-line meditation sessions. One man there said that his doctor took him off the high blood-pressure meds he had been on for fifteen years after he took up a short daily regimen of meditation.

One unusual contribution to mental health is offered by St. Andrew's Presbyterian Church: the church intentionally recognizes the therapeutic value of the green space its property provides in the midst of the asphalt and concrete of Princess Street.

Shared meals, music, and creative activities can't be offered safely by religious institutions, but they still have much to offer: conversation, companionship, meditation, and green space — all antidotes to anxiety and depression in dark times.

## Contacts

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**DAWN CLARKE** is an ordained, and now retired, United Church minister.



# Fact: Feminists Aren't Just Funny, They're Hysterical

STORY BY THE HYSTERICS COLLECTIVE

**Y**ou may be familiar with the trope that feminists are humourless. Consider the joke: How many feminists does it take to screw in a light bulb? To which the feminist responds, “that’s not funny.” The Hysterics Collective, along with the hilarious comics we invite to perform, effectively counter this tired and unfunny narrative. Feminists are funny. In fact, we’re hysterical!

The Hysterics Collective is a not-for-profit feminist comedy collective based in Katarokwi/Kingston. We’re here to transform stages into inclusive spaces. We’re here to have fun. We’re here to laugh. And we’re here to assert an anti-oppressive presence within comedy. The collective is currently composed of four friends: Carina Magazzeni, Robin Alex McDonald, Lindsay Rodgers, and Rachel Williamson. We created the collective back in 2018, directly informed by Rodgers’ doctoral research in Cultural Studies at Queen’s University. Her dissertation, “Not A Joke: Women’s Work and Feminist Stand-Up Comedy” (2020), celebrates funny women, with a focus on live feminist stand-up comedy, the shared laughter it generates, and the cultural and political work it enacts. Her research included attending stand-up comedy shows produced and performed by women, and asking these performers about their craft. The shows she studied included those by Crimson Wave, Ebony Tide, Laugh Your Butts Off, SHADE, So Fresh N’ So Clean, and Yas Kween.

These shows were our first women-centric, live, stand-up comedy experiences, and they left powerful impressions on the four of us. The shows expanded our understanding of what comedy could be and cultivated in us a desire to produce our own shows. Since then, The Hysterics Collective has been nurtured by a shared passion for good comedy produced by and for those with “a tendency to cause trouble” within the mainstream comedic narrative.

Our shows aim to bring audience and performers together in a process of coming to know about one another, recognizing that, as Sara Ahmed writes in *Living a Feminist Life*, “the personal is structural,” or, what happens to me happens to you, too. Ahmed writes about humour as a feminist tool, and says that, “Feminist laughter can lighten our loads.” The ability to laugh together requires sharing a perspective. We feel affirmation and rejoice when we can laugh without restraint at a joke because it resonates with our experiences and our perspectives, especially when others often deny, marginalize, and reject these perspectives.

Generating laughter takes work — especially if you want it to raise feminist consciousness. While each member of The Hysterics Collective is uniquely hilarious, we tend to focus more on the production side of things. Our comedy shows are accessibly priced via a pay-what-you-can model; hosted and performed by emerging/up n’ coming comedians who are paid professional artist fees; informed by a practice and ethics of care, and having fun together; and introduced by an open mic session so that local blossoming comics can share the stage. Since forming the collective, we have produced three comedy shows at The Grad Club:

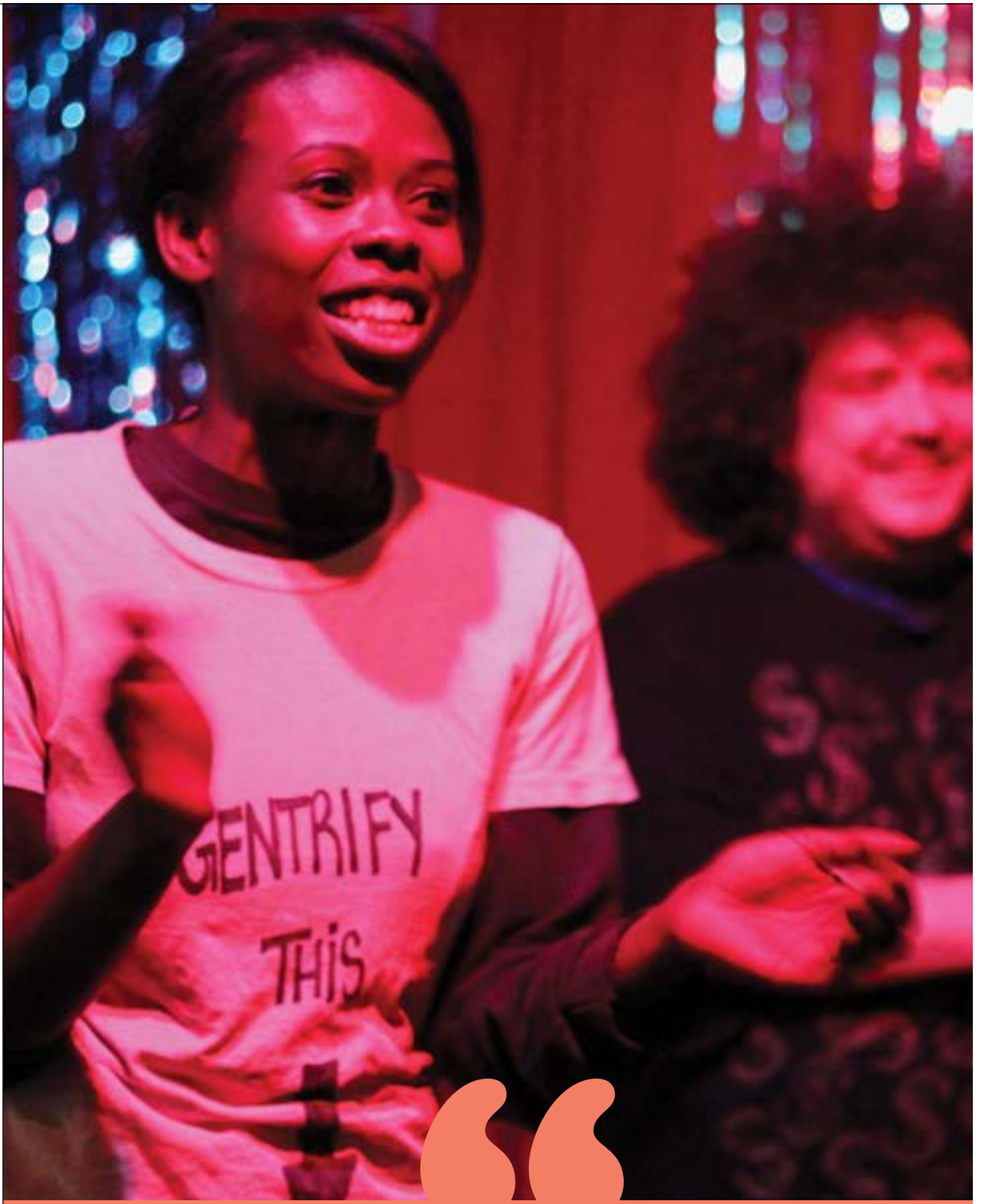


PHOTO CREDIT: Ella Gonzales

JUST A JOKE (2018) featuring Ashley Moffatt, Aba Amuquandoh, Ana-Marija Stojic and Definition of Knowledge; HOPES & DREAMS (2018) featuring Shirley Whalen, Carol Zoccoli, Coko & Daphney, and Courtney Gilmour; and LAUGH IT UP (2019) featuring Tranna Wintour, Nour Hadidi, Amy Bugg, Isabel Zaw-Tun, and Stephanie Pangowish. Support from the community has been tremendous and allowed these shows to flourish. We look forward to future days of rubbing shoulders and collectively cackling within the sweet embrace of The Grad Club.

During the pandemic, we have been unable to produce the types of live shows that we love and crave, and have been busy brainstorming alternative modes of comedy delivery. We’re looking forward to laughing out loud (and online) in an upcoming collaboration with Agnes Etherington Art Centre. Supported by their programming team, we plan to work with comedians to create a series of videos that riff off artworks within the art museum’s exhibitions and permanent collection. In virtual spaces and beyond, we look forward to continuing to connect, and to supporting funny folks and all those who want to laugh.

**Generating laughter takes work — especially if you want it to raise feminist consciousness.**

Laughter animates and empowers us; through laughter we can shake up stale norms and break free from stereotypes. As a laughing audience, we affirm the comedian and we connect to one another. We release tension in our bodies and our psyches. We want to bring as much of this to Katarokwi/Kingston as we can! Let’s get hysterical!

**THE HYSTERICS COLLECTIVE** operates within a non-hierarchical and community-based framework that connects and supports funny folks and all those who wanna laugh. Interested in connecting? You can email us at [thehystericscollective@gmail.com](mailto:thehystericscollective@gmail.com) or find us online at [www.facebook.com/thehystericscollective](http://www.facebook.com/thehystericscollective).

# On Reading *The Stray and the Strangers*

REVIEW BY JAMAL SAEED

*The Stray and the Strangers* can be easily read by children in grades three to six. It's also a wonderful read for parents, grandparents, uncles, aunts, anybody. Just ten thousand words, the book has a contemporary setting — a refugee camp on a Greek Island. As well, the book is based on actual events.

The stray dog is brown, so an old fisherman names her Kanella, the Greek word for cinnamon. Hers is the only name the reader becomes familiar with. This leaves the human characters to be referred to as “the old fisherman,” “the young ones,” “the strangers,” “the refugees,” “the helpers,” who are the friendly international volunteers, and the “townspeople,” whom Kanella sees as frightening giants. And then there is “the skinny boy,” representing the countless refugee children travelling the world alone. The boy and the cinnamon-colored dog with white paws become like family, even sleeping together in the food hut, the warm place.

Right from the first paragraph I felt transported into the book's atmosphere. Steven Heighton has the ability to poetically evoke a cinematic landscape for his characters to inhabit, making it seem like there is no other world outside the island where the story takes place.

I am a Middle Easterner, and *The Stray and the Strangers* reminds me of two things: the thousand-year-old stories known as *Kalila wa-Dimna*, by *Ibn al-Muqaffa*, in which animals stand in for the oppressed people at the time; and many Walt Disney movies where animals are anthropomorphized. In both of these animal-story styles, the animals do their own talking. Here, more realistically, the narrator shows the feelings and thoughts of Kanella — as if he were talking on her behalf. Sharing the emotions of the dog this way also reminds me of Basho, the Japanese poet whose poem about a flower shows that he became the flower, and the flower became him. That's how strongly the narrator is connected to Kanella.

This is a wonderful story promoting understanding, tolerance and humanitarianism. I highly recommend it.



**JAMAL SAEED** is a Syrian writer who, along with his family, escaped his country's ongoing conflict and emigrated to Canada in December 2016. Co-author of *Yara's Spring*, Annick Press, 2020, he has also signed a contract with ECW Press to publish his autobiography, *The Road from Damascus*. Jamal lives and works in Kingston.

# On Reading *Yara's Spring*

REVIEW BY STEVEN HEIGHTON

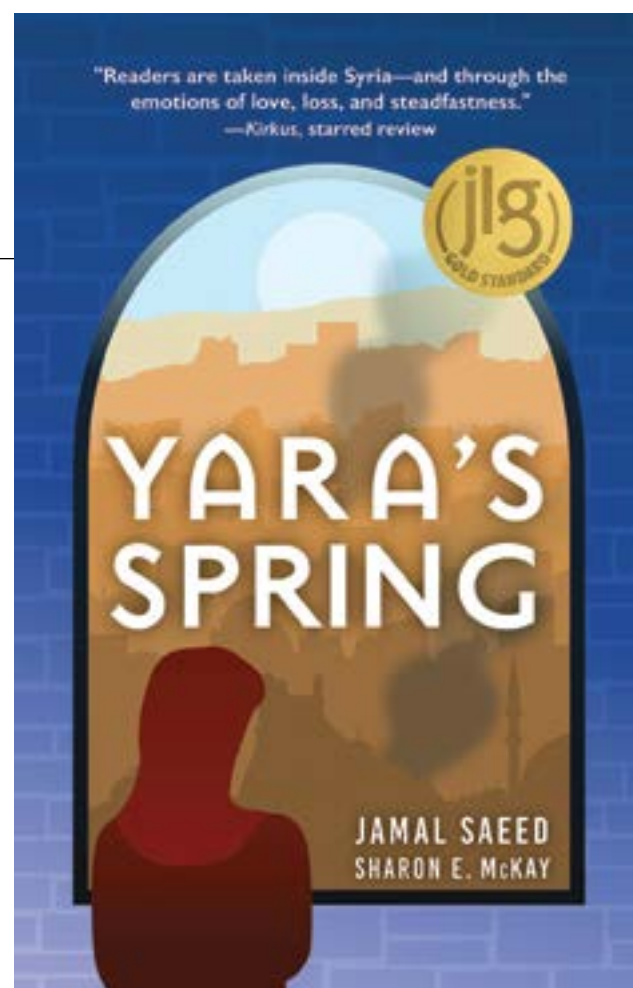
I expect that many children will be brave enough to read this remarkable book — it's rated for readers ten to fourteen — but I'm not sure how many adults will be. As I struggle to describe the book's effect on me, I find myself rummaging among overused, wholly inadequate adjectives such as “harrowing” and “devastating.”

The thing is, despite the book's status as “fiction” and its almost implausible intensity and terror, *Yara's Spring* is fundamentally true. Its hero and her shrinking family exemplify countless Syrian children and their families — people you could meet today in the vast refugee camps of Jordan, Lesbos, and elsewhere.

Some of those people, fortunately for us and for them, now live here in Canada. “Fortunately for them,” I write, but as authors Jamal Saeed and Sharon E. McKay remind us, the millions who've fled Syria left not because they wanted to leave but because they had no choice. President Bashar al-Assad — he of the nicely schooled manners and Great Dictator moustache — now presides over the ruins of a country that has lost more than a quarter of its population.

When the Arab Spring brings revolution to Syria, it upends the lives of Yara, an intelligent and affectionate girl on the edge of adolescence, and her family in Aleppo. After government forces obliterate her home in a bombing — “There was a flash of light, a whistling sound travelling on a wave, followed by an echo that rumbled like thunder” — Yara and the survivors, including her now-speechless younger brother, her best friend, and her friend's older brother, must flee. The rest of the book is a gripping, often heartbreaking account of their journey.

It's to the authors' credit that they chose not to soften their story or ever resort to euphemism. Not only can children — at least after a certain age — handle the harsh truths of other children's lives, they need to hear about them. So do adults, because the same human capacity for habituation that helps survivors to live and cope in refugee camps for years allows people like myself to get used to the comforts of their life and take them all for granted. How often do I remember to remember what I've seen, not just in the camps of Lesbos but on the streets of Kingston? Before you know it, you catch yourself complaining that your internet connection is slow. Meanwhile, millions of Yaras are sleeping in tents or shipping crates. This book is the sort we need to read constantly to keep us awake, engaged and human.



**STEVEN HEIGHTON's** most recent books include *Reaching Mithymna: Among the Volunteers & Refugees on Lesbos*, a finalist for the Writers' Trust Hilary Weston Prize, and, this month, *Selected Poems 1983-2020*. The poetry book is coming out in tandem with an album of original songs, *The Devil's Share* (Wolfe Island Records/CRS Europe).



# Music Across the Ages

New documentary aims to present the joy and necessity of sharing music between generations.

STORY BY ERIN JONES

For the past eleven years, Canta Arya School for Strings and Providence Manor have had a unique bond. A new documentary, *Resonance: Music Across the Ages*, highlights the relationships formed between residents and students and the importance of shared experiences through community and art.

Before the pandemic, Canta Arya would host twenty concerts a year at the long-term care home. It all started when a student had a loved one living at Providence Manor. The documentary had been in the works for a few years, before lockdowns and stay-at-home orders put a halt to in-person performances and music classes. During the pandemic, students at Canta Arya began sending cards and performing virtual one-on-one “micro-concerts” for the residents.

Filmed in the courtyard at Providence Manor, the documentary captures the first time the students were able to play for the residents since February 2020. What follows is a moving thirteen minutes of magic, friendship, and music therapy shared between generations.

“The energy was palpable,” says Providence Manor ambassador Krystal Mack. “These residents are like family and I don’t think that’s unique to the children. That really speaks to the depth of the relationship that was developed through the course of the time that the school has been coming to the home.”

Karen-Michele Kimmett, Canta Arya School for Strings artistic director and co-founder, says the negative impacts of COVID-19 on the mental health of students and residents were at the forefront of everyone’s mind when planning the documentary and socially distanced concerts. Playing music outside for their loved ones is the students’ way of brightening spirits, not just for the residents, but for themselves and health care workers, too.

“The appreciation for each other and appreciation of having this team of people that you’ve kind of grown up with, this is a very important part of mental health — that you’re not alone, and that you can create something that gives comfort and beauty not only to you yourself but to others,” says Kimmett.

Mack, echoing the same sentiment, describes how the bonds extend much further than the concerts. The performances and relationships, she says, provide a resident with Alzheimer’s or dementia the chance to share “who he or she is, in the context of a bigger place than the home.”

“Living in the shell of dementia is something that’s a challenge all the time,” she explains. “Music reaches people in very, very deep places. It’s a rich opportunity to reach in, to find the person that can still interact, that can still give expression to who he or she is.”

“The woman on the balcony clapping her hands and smiling and dancing, and the gentleman seated in his wheelchair and looking out the window into the courtyard — he was absolutely beaming. That’s not artificial. That is where this music is touching those people. It really exemplifies how

the music reaching a deeper place brings out that joy.”

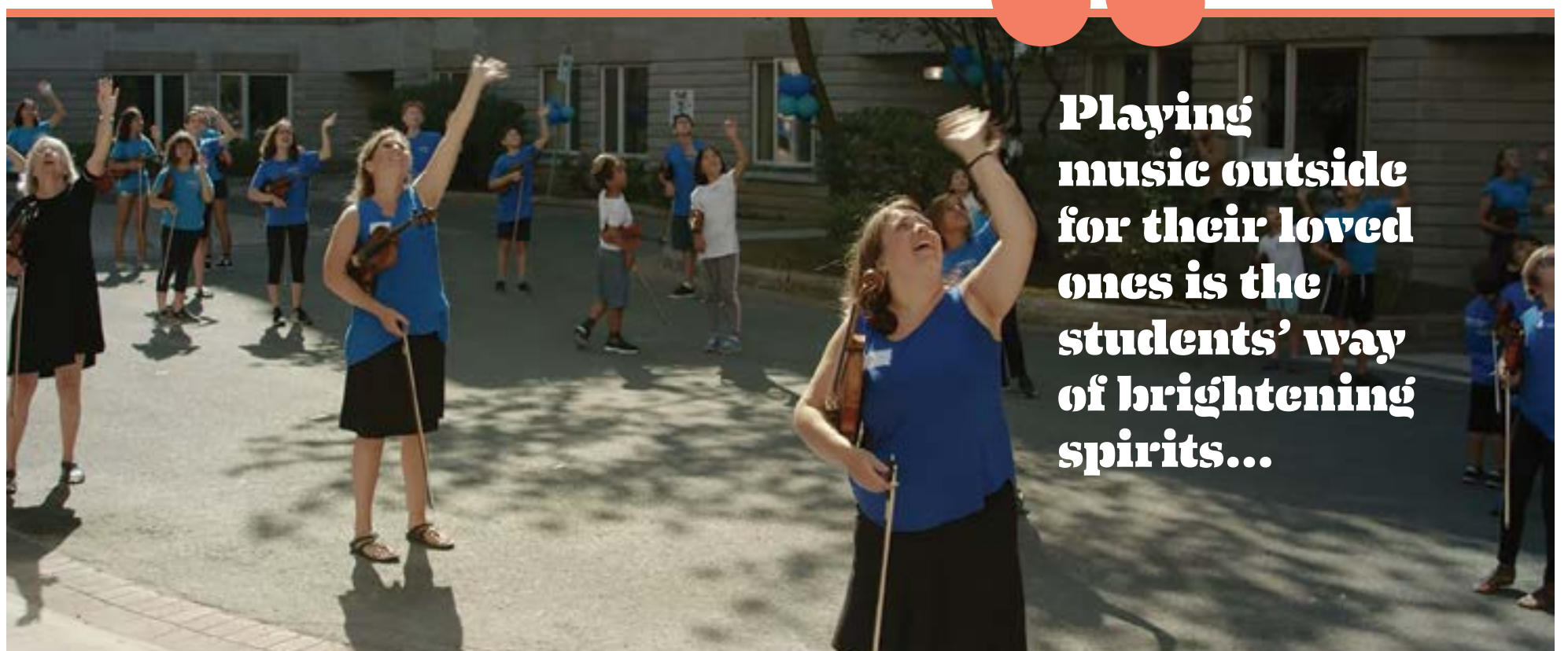
With the documentary out, both Mack and Kimmett hope it will inspire other arts organizations and long-term care homes to see the possibilities in the types of relationships that can be formed between generations.

“When we build long-term relationships, multi-generational in many ways, the residents give their wisdom, and the children in turn bring all the same things. [It’s] the joy of doing something together,” says Kimmett. “I hope the documentary inspires others to see that a partnership is a really beautiful way to build community.”

As the weather warms, Canta and Providence Manor are planning for more socially distanced outdoor concerts for the residents. Kimmett and her students are currently learning new fiddle and classical pieces for their next performance.

“They can’t wait,” says Kimmett. “They do miss it, they miss being able to play together. We’ve all learned so much from each other. We’ve all continued to be profoundly changed and enriched by the relationships we have with Providence. We’re very grateful for that.”

**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.



**Playing music outside for their loved ones is the students’ way of brightening spirits...**

# Skeleton Park in June

(2 July 2012)

BY JAN ALLEN

A fat current of air  
moves across the uneven grass,  
buffeted by stones.  
A small boy crouches in a red T-shirt.  
His thin brown arms are ready. He is  
intent, watching invading armies approach.  
He turns, rises  
and bolts to the tree,  
trunk gray and wrinkled,  
where a small girl is watching too.

Eriana climbs the shining slope of the slide,  
her turquoise dress fluttering, wind whipped.  
Crouching, she confronts a surprised child at the top.  
She stands and pivots.

A hunch of fist-like protrusions, an eruption  
of fleshy black knuckles, vestige of an extinguished tree.

The park has a circle in its heart  
and spoke paths that point to every part of town.  
At the end of one, a cannon stands ready to defend  
our long-sleeping dead.  
On the lip of the circle, lie two discarded socks,  
soiled, white and turned.

Skeleton Park is a pause in the cityscape  
where the ghosts of other seasons jostle for space.  
Where Ed's sloping park-view  
window glints, bronzed and mysterious.  
I picture him behind it, watching every day, shoving nickels in  
the jukebox, head bobbing between foamy sips of root beer.

A woman on her way home stops to talk about  
renovation plans, her arms full of parcels.

Did we forget the sky and the sound of  
motorcycles accelerating up Ordnance,  
and the boisterous purled  
flush of early summer flowers?

I pass through at night  
without wanting friends or acquaintances even, only my own steps  
falling in quick succession, legs scissoring  
through the moonlight,  
shoes soaked with dew, remembering the  
evening's conversations, how they careered and  
accelerated past reason,  
'til I arrive home, enter the  
sanctuary of the back garden, close the gate.  
The latch clicks behind me, the peeling cedar bench,  
the delirious quiver of summer leaves,  
the tang of cigarette smoke drifting over the fence.

We talked about the Quakers and  
their ways. We opened and  
closed doors in the conversation,  
placing our feet one after the other. Wondering  
about silence and the content  
of silence, its fullness, its  
demands: every silence a thirst and a pleasure  
after all.

Even in the ordinary now:  
the insect scratch of pen on paper,  
the low stifled throttle of swallowing.

If the heavens opened and a hand  
reached down and snatched the boy in a red  
T-shirt, would I be more  
surprised?

If Eriana flew from  
the top of the slide and  
cut a wide circle in the sky,  
crying out to the seagulls in their own language and  
casting her eyes upward,  
always upward, would  
I be surprised?

If Ed smashed the glass  
and turned up the volume, began to cast flowers  
into the park, calling out to the dead with tears  
streaming down his face,  
I would not be surprised.

Sometimes I yearn to grasp  
a velvety handful of warm leaves,  
and stuff them  
in my mouth to make  
a small green silence.



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



# Making a Splash in Skeleton Park

Much loved but aging wading pool replaced by a splash pad for all to enjoy

STORY BY MEREDITH DAULT

ILLUSTRATION BY GRACE MACDONALD

Tina-Marie Boudreau vividly remembers the summers that she and her siblings spent at the McBurney Park wading pool in the late 1960s and early 1970s. “We’d spend the whole day there,” she recalls warmly. Boudreau and her siblings, who grew up on Rideau Street, would be allowed to walk the handful of blocks to the park on their own. “Back then, kids wandered all over the city – not like today,” she laughs. Free to access and supervised by a lifeguard, the pool provided a haven for inner city kids looking to cool off on hot summer days. Years later, Boudreau, who now lives on Bagot Street, took her own children to splash in the pool. More recently, she has delighted in watching her granddaughter enjoying it, too.

But this spring marks the end of an era: The aging pool is being replaced by a splash pad. The project, which is slated to be finished by the fall of 2021, will also include updates to the playground and the addition of a steel drinking fountain. Using the pool’s existing footprint, the splash pad will replace its standing water with a flat, accessible surface animated by spraying nozzles, tipping buckets and other features. Unlike the existing pool, which is behind a fence, has a usage capacity, and requires a lifeguard, the splash pad will accommodate more children of varying ages and abilities.

...the [wading] pool provided a haven for inner city kids looking to cool off on hot summer days.

Neal Unsworth, Manager of Parks Development with the City of Kingston, describes splash pads as having superior “play value” to wading pools because of their accessibility to more people, and the fact that they do not need to be restrained by set operating hours or capacity restrictions. “They are just more appropriate to public parks,” he explains. “They really celebrate the joy of a public space because users don’t have to plan to use it.”

At the same time, he explains that splash pads have experienced a surge in popularity over the past two decades because they are easier to maintain than wading pools, which require chemicals. Splash pads use drinking water, making them far more reliable from a public safety standpoint. Today’s splash pad designs all factor in water conservation, including features that turn them off automatically, making them a better fit for environmentally mindful municipalities.

While the McBurney Park pool has delighted children for generations, Unsworth says that it has come to the end of its useful life. “It really doesn’t work anymore and requires a lot of maintenance,” he says, acknowledging that it was earmarked for removal a decade ago. “They have really been patching the pool together over the years.”

Because the park was built over a cemetery, the new project required an archaeological investigation of the site but has now been cleared for completion – thanks, in part, to building on top of the existing footprint. The splash pad and playground revitalization are anticipated to cost approximately \$550,000 and to last between twenty-five and forty years. Maybe even long enough for Beaudreau’s granddaughter to take her own children for a splash at the park one day ...



**MEREDITH DAULT** has lived in the Skeleton Park community since 2013. She and her dog, Maple, spend a lot of time walking very slowly through the neighbourhood.

For more information about the project, visit: [cityofkingston.ca/city-hall/projects-construction/mcburney-park](http://cityofkingston.ca/city-hall/projects-construction/mcburney-park)



## Remembering the McBurney Park wading pool

“My grandfather used to take us to the pool in the mid-1950s. It was a summer haven for us. I loved it there because I would pretend that I could swim, walking on my arms and stretching my body out behind me. One day, when I was about seven, I lifted my arms and realized that I was floating. I vividly remember that — it was so exciting. I also remember a time when they closed the pool because of the polio epidemic — we didn’t get to the park a lot that year.”

—MARILYN KENNEDY

“I paddled in the wading pool at Skeleton Park every summer from 1980 to 1983. Back then, I lived on Stephen Street, and later Quebec Street. In those days, it seems it was perfectly acceptable for six- and seven-year-old kids to walk alone to the park and I, like many of my young peers in the ‘hood, did that pretty much every day, each summer. The wading pool was a great meeting ground for me and my pals. We spent a lot of our time in the water tossing nerf balls and squirting water guns at each other, but it was also where we congregated to trade Wacky Packages cards and to eat candies like jujubes and spearmint leaves that we would buy in mixed-up candy bags at Pat’s Convenience for one dollar.”

—DINAH JANSEN

“We didn’t have central air conditioning, so wading pools were the ticket in the hot summers in the mid-2000s when my boys were little. We spent a lot of time at the McBurney Park pool — I would sit at the side and hold my youngest son, Dashiell, in the water when he was a baby, while my older son, Ronan, would splash around. The pool did have some shade from the trees, which made it a nice place to spend time. The boys would be little prunes by the time they were ready to get out of the pool!”

—JENNY CORLETT

# Time Lapse

BY LIZ HUNTLY

This is motherhood:

The laundry pile lurking like the boogeyman  
behind the bedroom door  
The living room strewn  
with books demanded to be read on repeat,  
train sets, sharp knobs of Lego.

Milk stains  
Fragments of interrupted conversations  
Interrupted sleep  
Interrupted dreams  
Unwashed breakfast dishes  
Dried crusts of forgotten Play-Doh  
Unpaid bills  
Something unidentifiable and sticky on the kitchen floor.

Amidst the glorious mess my two moon-faced sons,  
who have fallen like bright coins from my body  
and sprouted into worlds unknown.

—

I am beginning to forget where I am  
I have trouble remembering the day of the week, the year  
One leaks into the next without defining borders  
I have just turned 36 and am no longer certain  
that I'm youthful  
How do you recognize middle age,  
without first knowing the span of your life?

Here is what I know:  
my baby's ears are perfect coiled seashells  
and I can hear the ocean in his breath.  
When he breastfeeds  
his saliva is conversing with my hormones  
so that I produce the exact cocktail of nutrients  
that he, specifically, needs.  
I know that the earth has been spinning  
in space for billions of years  
and we are but a moment,  
in time measured by our own invention.  
We are the tiniest specks  
and none of this is significant.

And still the world is a wonder and we must go  
out each day into the crackling air  
and save it.

—

This is motherhood:

*Me-time*—A stolen moment  
in a gas station parking lot,  
eating a chocolate bar and listening to a crappy pop station  
my husband would never tolerate,  
my two sons blessedly asleep in the backseat.

*Family meals* — sawing my dinner  
into bite-sized chunks with my right hand and trying, unsuccessfully,  
to transfer it to my mouth without dropping it  
on the baby who is sucking life from my left breast.

I am no longer ashamed of these guests at the table:  
breast, nipple.  
These are simply the appendages of gene dispersal.  
No less utilitarian than the woody ridges of a pinecone,  
no more sensual than a dandelion.

*Secret pleasure* — the last waking moment,  
snuggled under a blanket the colour of the stormy sea,  
when the day has been bound up and thrown overboard,  
and I drift alone  
towards sleep.



**LIZ HUNTLY** is a yoga teacher, mother to two tiny humans, and writer. She is the owner of studio330 Holistic Yoga Centre at Queen and Barrie streets.

# Pandemic Babies

New and growing families find support during COVID-19

STORY BY REBECCA HALL

On Saturday, March 14th, 2020, I woke up before my partner, Nico, and our daughter, Hattie. I moved my heavy, restless body around our home on Colborne Street. I was eager to do something – anything – to prepare for the shock to come. No, not that shock, though the lockdown was just a few days away. I was 40 weeks pregnant, and, with the reality of COVID-19 creeping closer, I was eager to unload this particular weight. That afternoon, Fern was born. During our 24 hours at Kingston General Hospital, the rest of the world fell away, but as we drove home with tiny Fern swimming in her car seat, the sunny, quiet streets belied all we had missed.

In those early days, back when we measured the pandemic in days, we hunkered down like everyone else. While many people found their lives upended, in some ways the lockdown was an extension of the foggy, quiet newborn days I had expected. Days and nights blurred together, with much of both spent in bed with warm little bodies by my side. Cultures around the world build this kind of hibernation into their childbirth traditions. But staying home is not an isolated act. It's made possible by the loved ones who tend to all the work outside of the home: the neighbour who checks on your garden, the friend who brings groceries, and the auntie who takes the older kids to school.

When Hattie was born, I learned to say yes (yes! yes!) when people offered their help. I felt release when other people held her, when I could hold a cup of tea and watch her smile at their faces. When Fern was born, little was known about whether infants were susceptible to COVID-19, and this not-knowing intensified our isolation. Dalal Daoud, who gave birth to her daughter Sabrina a few months before the pandemic hit, said, "We were all home together and we became the only supports we had for one another. We gained more appreciation for that [family relationship]. But it was

**“While many people found their lives upended, in some ways the lockdown was an extension of the foggy, quiet newborn days I had expected.”**

definitely hard.” While we cancelled visits, friends and neighbours quickly found other ways to hold us. We began finding meals at our doorstep. Eating other people's cooking is always delightful, but these packages were more: missives of care, and reminders of the networks that lay dormant but were far from dead.

With the warm weather came new forms of connection. We walked. And walked and walked. And we played, mostly at Skeleton Park. There, we often ran into Dalal and her partner, Akif Hasni, with their daughters, Aya and baby Sabrina. Our toddlers were fast friends, but with daycares closed, we hadn't seen one another in months. Akif said, "I'm always reminded of all the time we spent at Skeleton Park: putting her [Sabrina] to sleep, and walking by. The park itself was a venue for creating community.”

Around the same time, Lisa Pasolli, who gave birth to her son Everett in February 2020, organized a

yoga class in Skeleton Park. She said, "For me, anyway, it felt like we were tapping into something that we all needed...We did so much more than yoga." The weekly class continued through the fall, and when the cooler weather made it difficult to sustain our poses, yoga was replaced by an informal playgroup that grew by the week. I later learned this was one of a few groups that had emerged in the neighbourhood. Other parents found community through places like the EarlyON centres and the Mulberry School, which both moved their programs online and outside.

The winter months brought increased isolation. Connections nurture, but do not negate, the challenges parents have felt during COVID. These challenges are distributed unevenly: Increased care demands have caused the most strain for BI-POC folks, frontline workers, low-income workers, those in precarious employment, and women. As Rebecca Rappeport, who gave birth to her son Solomon this past February, said, "[COVID] heightens whatever is going on in your life." It is an exceptional time that lays bare the ways in which everyday inequalities are made unexceptional. It is also an opportunity to imagine something better.

As another spring breaks, Fern crawls after the ducks at Doug Fluhrer Park. Sabrina is walking and Everett is testing out his tricycle. Tiny Solomon is getting to know his new home on Charles Street. Though we are tired – we are all so tired – there is a brightness in our eyes as we talk about what is to come. Lisa smiles, thinking back to our babies rolling on yoga mats last summer. She says, "Even though the babies were so little and didn't know what was going on, it still felt important to say, here are some other babies. These babies are going to be your community as you're growing up. So, get used to coming to the park.”



**REBECCA HALL** is a new-ish resident of the McBurney Park neighbourhood. She teaches in the Department of Global Development Studies at Queen's University.



# Robert ‘Tic’ Cummings: “Kind and wild and funny”

Untimely death is shamefully common on Kingston’s margins

STORY BY LAWRENCE SCANLAN

## The ears.

That’s what struck me first about Robert Cummings when I saw his photograph on January 8, under a “missing man” headline. I observed a thin fellow with unruly hair, a strong nose, and battered ears. Noting that he sometimes used a walker, Kingston police had detailed his age (51), height (5’11”), weight (141 pounds), eyes (blue) — and ears: “distinctive, cauliflower ears (a deformity caused by blunt trauma or injury).”

On February 24, the body of Robert Cummings was pulled from the Inner Harbour. Was he scouting for a bunk in a boat when he broke through the ice? The autopsy ruled “accidental drowning.”

On March 6, St. George’s Cathedral was packed (respecting COVID-19 limits) with people who had come to pay their respects. A live-stream video of the celebration of life (still posted at [www.stgeorgescathedral.ca](http://www.stgeorgescathedral.ca)) featured words from three clerics, former MPP Sophie Kiwala — who helped organize the event — and several friends. One, David Timan, who works at a drop-in centre for the homeless, had assembled video and still photographs to honor Robert Cummings.

We were thus able to see him in a fresh way. We saw him as “Robbie” — a boy lounging on a couch in his PJs with the family cat. As a little cowboy, posing proudly with Western hat, six-shooter, and furry white chaps. As a lanky baseball player, with trophy. As a Grade 9 student, in smart blazer and tie. At a kitchen table, looking pleased with his homemade birthday cake. We saw a handsome young man, with unremarkable ears.



We learned that he was adopted at three months, that he was a boy scout who loved summer camp, and scones, and, later, rock and roll (especially Led Zeppelin); and that he could build things with his hands. That he was generous and caring and appreciated any kindness, that he was “not broken, just bent.”

Sophie Kiwala talked about how Robert Cummings “enchanted so many” — including herself. Timan said that his humble friend “had a harsh life but was not a harsh character.” What bred-in-the-bone demons assailed him? What bridges were burned, what beatings were endured? I dare not presume to know and I cannot imagine. That this man loved and was loved, so much, seems remarkable. A kind of victory.

Justine McIsaac oversees the safe injection site at The Integrated Care Hub on Montreal Street, which offers nursing, beds, meals, and support for those without housing. She knew ‘Tic’ Cummings and said his quirky nature likely spawned the nickname. In the video tribute, she says, “It was a privilege to be a part of his life and to have him share his experiences with me. I also want to thank him for contributing to who I am as a person.”

When I interviewed McIsaac, she was at first reluctant to speak with me. “Skeleton Park is my neighbourhood,” she said, “but it’s become so gentrified. People have been pushed out.” People she has worked with for the past 12 years.

... he was generous and caring and appreciated any kindness, that he was “not broken, just bent.”

“What we’re trying to do at The Hub is build a community of kindness, but it’s been a struggle,” she said. As The Hub was being built (on the site of a former pest-control business), a petition opposed it.

“I do get burned out,” said McIsaac. “I try to avoid compassion fatigue. What has kept me in the work so long is the people we serve.” Here she got emotional before gathering herself. “I *am* one of those people...I believe so much in the people we serve. They are some of the most brilliant, most resourceful human beings I’ve ever met. Every day they encourage me. They believe in me. They show forgiveness to me when I am not at my best. I don’t believe they should carry this burden on their own.”

The “burden” could be prenatal or childhood trauma, extreme poverty, life on the street, addictions, or grief when close friends succumb to misadventure or fentanyl poisoning.

“We don’t talk about it enough,” said McIsaac. “But I’m hesitant to open up the floodgates for hate. How can some people think that way about someone else’s son or daughter? We have to humanize individuals. We treat dogs better. It’s illegal to leave a dog outside, but we do that with humans.”

She called Robert Cummings “one of the funniest people I’ve ever met. He could take a serious subject and get you laughing until your face hurt. He was kind and wild.”

The pandemic has especially punished those who live one meal, one bunk, at a time. “A community of kindness” requires engagement between separate worlds — the homeless and the housed. Volunteer at the places that serve the homeless. Talk to them, listen to them. “It will change your life,” says Justine McIsaac. Offer support — financial, moral, political — to the beleaguered organizations trying to help. And finally, pressure government to end this disaster. An occasional room at the Plaza Hotel is better than no room at all, but it falls far short of humane.



**LAWRENCE SCANLAN** is the author of 24 books, including *A Year of Living Generously: Dispatches from the Front Lines of Philanthropy*. He’s writing a series of Young Adult novels, all inspired by what he calls The Big Three issues: climate change, income inequality, and pandemics.

# Hounds in the 'Hood

Life lived along side our four-legged family members

STORY BY ANNE KERSHAW

The Proust Questionnaire asks, “If heaven exists, what would you like to hear God say when you arrive at the pearly gates?” My answer: “All your dogs are here to greet you.” And I would hope for a celestial reunion that included Jake, who was in my life only briefly but who never left my heart.

Jake lived a few doors down from me on Barrie Street. I would pass him as I walked back and forth to work. He'd be tied up with no shelter or water on the often hot pavement of a neighbour's driveway. When I approached him, he would cower and bare his teeth. After a few days of bringing him water he stopped snarling and greeted me with happy tail-wagging. At Jake's household, many people came and went but no one showed any interest in walking, petting, or playing with Jake. When the opportunity arose, I asked permission to take him to the park in the evenings.

Those familiar with McBurney (aka Skeleton) Park know that on many nights it serves as 'hood-central for neighbourhood dogs and their caretakers. Jake exuded joy at being allowed to mingle freely and play amongst the locals. When I returned him home each night, I wished I could do more to ease his loneliness. That opportunity arose one day as I watched Jake's human cohabiters pack a truck in preparation for an imminent move. Panicking at the idea of losing touch with Jake, I slipped into a no-forethought zone. “Would you like me to keep your dog?” I asked. They handed Jake over without a second thought or a pat goodbye.

Then reality set in. I needed to tell my partner that I had, unilaterally, added a new member to our household but I also had to figure out how to introduce a third dog to our tight family pack. I didn't plan to keep Jake full-time but had no idea who I might convince to adopt a middle-aged, somewhat scraggly, possibly traumatized dog.

Enter my animal-lover friend with an uncanny gift of persuasiveness. He was able to convince his neighbours, who had just lost their dog, that they were the answer to Jake's plight. Jake would now enjoy hundreds of meadowed acres on Abbey Dawn Road, with a meandering stream, horses to trot alongside, and new caregivers, who thought he was the loveliest and cleverest boy ever. They renamed him Joe after Canadian author Margaret Marshall Saunders' book, *Beautiful Joe*.

In his new life, Joe was in doggy Camelot. When I visited him a few weeks post-adoption, I barely recognized him: he had filled out, his fur was glossy and he trotted up to me – a pauper turned prince – with the sweetest look of entitled joy.

My partner's and my own dogs may not have experienced the same luxury of setting as Jake, but they all looked forward to ending their daily walks with some play time in McBurney Park. Our Irish Setter, Arwen, saw the park as a place to display her uncommonly graceful agility, her balletic leaps to seize high bouncing balls. Black lab Zihua (Zeewah) also loved to play but often defaulted to roaming amongst the picnic tables in search of dropped morsels. Our Dalmation Otis's love of the world and everyone in it showed itself one day when he suddenly bolted across the park and the

**Our Dalmation Otis's love of the world and everyone in it showed itself one day when he suddenly bolted across the park and the street, leapt into the backseat of a parked car and began vigorously licking the ears of the man in the driver's seat.**

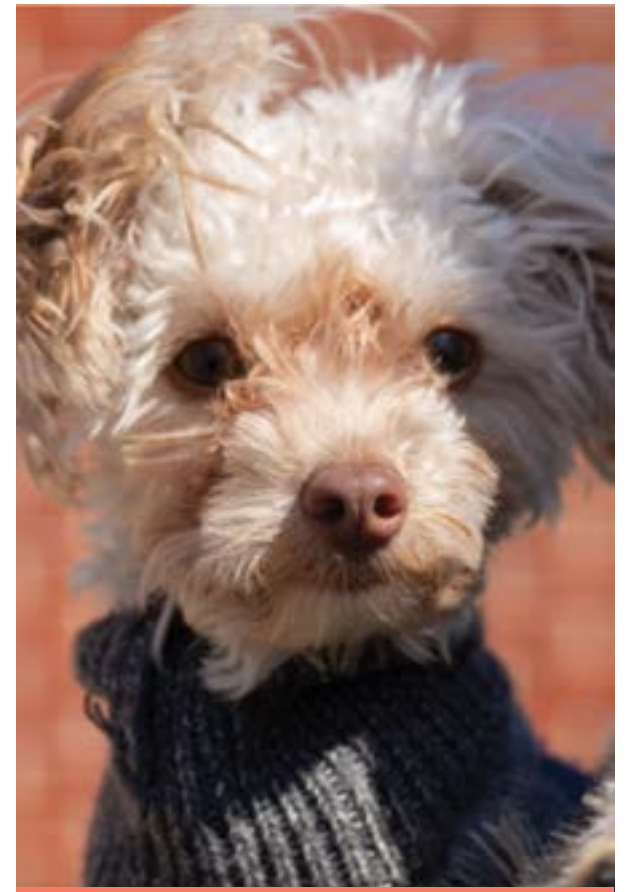
street, leapt into the backseat of a parked car and began vigorously licking the ears of the man in the driver's seat.

Our rescue dogs, sisters Jade and Dove (rottweiler/lab), were allowed in the park under only the strictest supervision. Too late, we learned of their limited social skills with other dogs. But I would sometimes end a long walk with them, one at a time, on a McBurney park bench, where both of us could enjoy some unmatched people and dog watching.

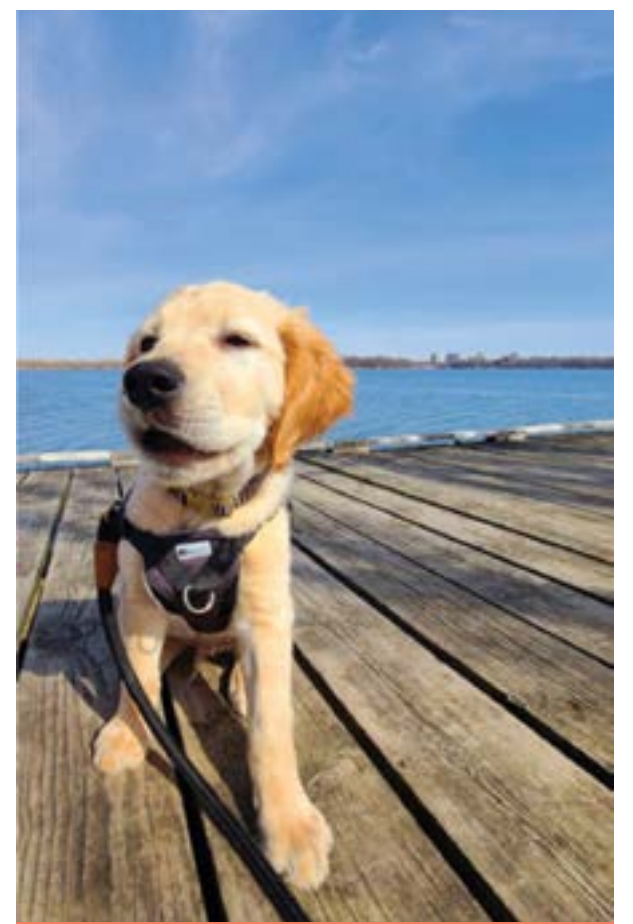
Losing a dog after years of exquisite companionship -- or even after a brief but fateful encounter -- can be deeply painful. Why not indulge visions of a heavenly reunion?



**ANNE KERSHAW**, now retired, writes and paints free of deadline pressure. She was a reporter and editor for the *Kingston Whig-Standard* during the paper's heyday and later worked as director of communications and public affairs at Queen's. She has recently also become a cat person.



**MARIUS**, full name Monsieur Marius Pontmercy after the character from *Les Mis*, is famous in the neighborhood. He only responds to commands in French. I trained him in my mother tongue, only to realize that he doesn't respond well to commands from non-French speakers, which I secretly love.



**BRUCE** is a newbie in the neighbourhood. Even as a puppy, he feels mighty confident and welcomed to the awesome neighbourhood. We visit Douglas Fluhrer Park daily to check on the ducks. Bruce's stubbornness and excitement has brought many smiles to our neighbourhood friends.



**SKYE**, part stately elegance and larger part goofy, thrives on compliments. Long walks through Skeleton Park to downtown and beyond with me and my partner, a professional musician, have provided purpose and a form of therapy in these COVID-times of few gigs.



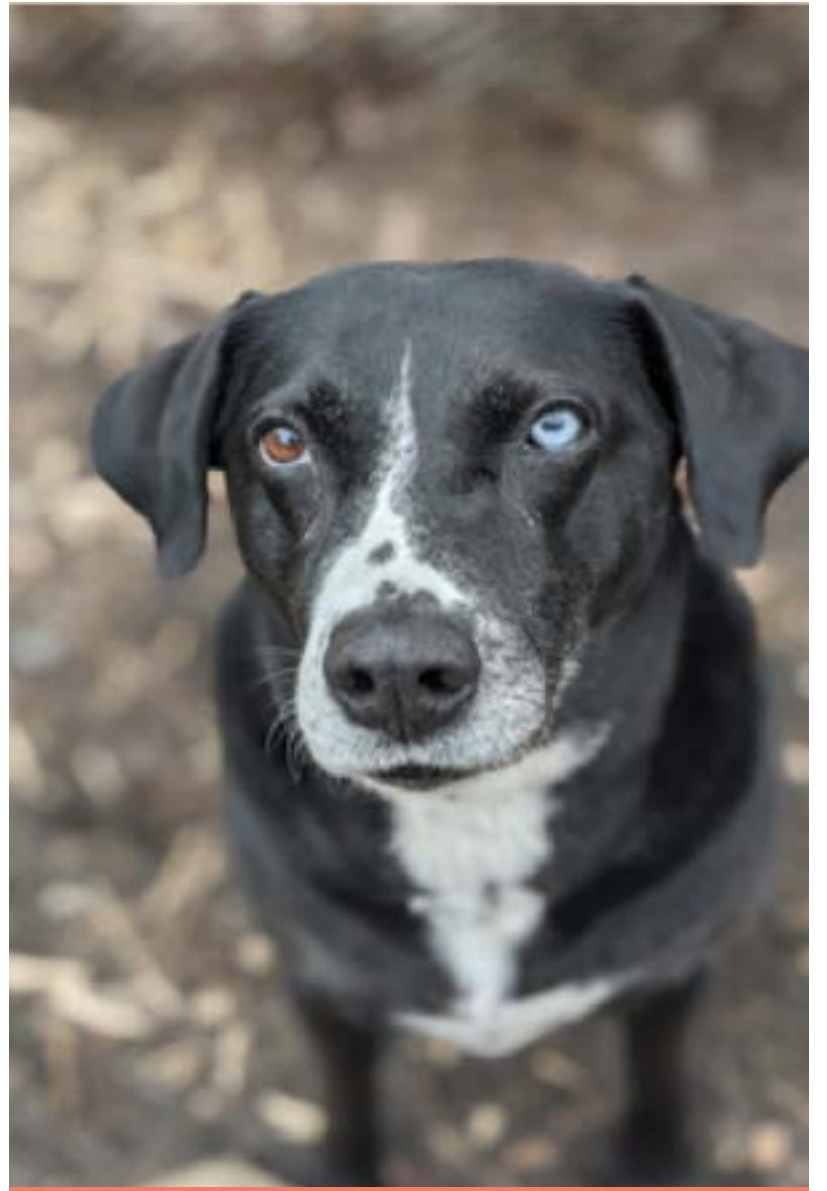
**BELLA** was surrendered by her elderly owners after being attacked by another dog. We knew the moment we met her that it was meant to be and are thankful we could give her another chance at a happy life. She soon starts one-on-one training to help her relate better to dogs and people in the neighbourhood.



We heard through friends about a Corgi in need of a forever home. **ALFIE** had two homes before us that couldn't give him the care he needed. We went to see him and took him for the night to see how things would go. We've never looked back. The same year, my partner and I moved into a new house, got engaged and married, all with our special pup by our side.



**JACK** the pug was once reunited with us through the Skeleton Park neighborhood page before we even realized he had escaped through an open gate. He has struggled recently with poor health and can be seen riding through the neighborhood in a baby carrier. **DAISY**, our Dominican Republic rescue dog, will take any opportunity to bolt through an open door or gate left open. She was once found by a stranger who cased the neighborhood by car looking to return her, with Daisy happily joyriding with her head out the window.



**DHARMA** was near death in Costa Rica when I vowed to bring her to Kingston. When she first saw snow, she was the happiest creature on earth. My video of her was featured on the Weather Channel. She is like a rock star in my mom's neighborhood in Costa Rica, because of her trips back and forth from Canada and how she has revived and become so attached to me.

## SARAH

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I am always amazed at how happy and compassionate people are around dogs. My neighbors often stop me when I have been on walks with Lily and Sara to ask about the girls. I've even had people pull up beside me in their cars to find out how they are doing. When we lost our dog Lily, people went out of their way to show their compassion and convey their best wishes. This is what it's like being a dog owner while living in such a great neighborhood.



## **FIONA**

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**Fiona is a gift to us. She is a big Newfoundland dog and came to Kingston on an airplane all the way from Winnipeg in December of 2019 as a little puppy. We call her Splooty Loo and she adores snow and water. If the water is frozen, she will break up the ice with her big paws. We adore our gentle giant! She is a good listener, a devoted family member, and a lovely addition to the neighbourhood.**





## JOSEPH

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Joseph makes me laugh all the time. In fact, I wake up laughing. I'll be asleep and gradually become aware that he's standing over me staring into my face. I try for plausible deniability and pretend I'm still asleep but eventually I just crack up. We've been constant companions since the onset of the pandemic. It brings to mind the movie *Cast Away*, when a stranded Tom Hanks bonds with a washed-ashore volleyball that he names Wilson. He has ongoing dialogue with Wilson and even risks his life to save him. Maybe Joseph is my Wilson. Insatiably affectionate, he lies on his back in my arms, wanting to be cuddled. A pretty good antidote to loneliness and isolation.



## LUCAS

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We weren't sure how well Lucas would adapt to Canadian winters, having been brought as a rescue dog from the Dominican Republic. But it turns out he loves pouncing and rolling in the snow. Missing a leg doesn't slow him down a bit. He goes with us or our friends on long walks around the city or on hikes in Frontenac Park. We couldn't have found a better ice breaker than Lucas when it comes to meeting and talking to people in our neighborhood. Everyone wants to know Lucas's story and he loves any attention from humans. He is just one more character in a neighborhood full of characters.





## **PEPPER**

We brought Pepper home from the Kingston Humane Society just prior to the pandemic and found her to be a wonderful addition to our family. I'm especially happy with how our two young children relate to her. My son and daughter, who have trouble expressing affection for one another, both openly demonstrate their love for Pepper with hugs and snuggles. It's great that they have another outlet besides their parents to show their feelings, especially during the pandemic. Pepper will happily come and sit with them quietly while they are reading their books. My daughter and Pepper have even come up with their own version of hide and seek. She throws his squeaky toy and then hides while Pepper runs to fetch it and then find her to return it.



## **RORI**

About 10 years ago we adopted our lively, playful, beautiful boxer × wolfhound Rori in Australia. Back home she loved eating fallen plums from the backyard, stealing the last sips of our lattes + sunning herself until she was panting in the 40 degree heat. The ocean would drive her crazy, barking at the waves that she feared would swallow her owners whole but rolling in the sand + lying between us on the hot sand seemed to make it worthwhile. With our big sea change came one for her too, trading her summer sun for snow + squirrels, but there was no way we could leave her behind. Her days now are filled with snuggling up with us on the couch, walking her latest family member through the neighbourhood + waiting for springtime so she can sun herself + crush our tomato plants. Our forever puppy with her forever people.

# How I Learned to Accept My Madness, My Disability, and My Fate

STORY BY ERIN BALL

POETRY BY GEORGINA RIEL

**CONTENT WARNING:** *intense subject matter involving getting lost and amputation.*

Earlier this year, I created the circus film, *2014* — a reflection on getting stuck in the woods that year. The film was sponsored by the Skeleton Park Arts Festival and presented in March as part of the Disability Collective's first digital cabaret, just before the seven-year anniversary of my getting lost. I asked Georgina Riel Waabishki Mukwa Kwe if she would write a poem about my experience, and that poem, in part, was integrated into the film.

The following account describes my experience as captured in the film and my reflections on everything that has happened since, and includes an excerpt from the poem by Georgina.

Six days in the woods. Time and memories are vague. What follows are my best guesses.

Day One: Friday night. I was upset that night and upset in general. I remember thinking I just wanted a break. I wanted to be in the woods to sit and clear my mind ... to figure out a better path for myself. I had not been planning to go for a hike and was not dressed for the winter conditions. I walked into the woods in a swampy area. It was snowing. I sat down on a tree stump for a while. My feet were wet. I wondered how I was going to change my situation in life. No answers came. I decided to go back to my car but when I tried to get up, my feet were numb, and I couldn't walk on them.

Day Two: Crawling through thick brush. Coyotes howling. Thoughts of my car being close by help fight off panic.

Day Three: Flashes of memories. More crawling. I cover my hands with my coat sleeves. Eating snow. The moment I realize I am lost. Screaming for help over and over. A clearing. The moon looking full at night. Loneliness. Desperation. Confusion. This couldn't be the end of it. Nothingness.

Day Four: No memories.

Day Five: No memories.

Day Six: No memories. I was later told I was found by a police dog just over one-and-a-half kilometers from my car. I was unconscious and my body temperature was nineteen degrees Celsius (thirty-seven is the norm). A helicopter ride while unconscious. I wake up days later. I undergo two surgeries: one that opens up my chest to re-warm my body, and one, a few months later, to remove my severely frostbitten lower legs. I spend eleven months in the hospital.

*The sight of the butterfly is why we stopped  
The extension of the wings has me captivated.  
I need to wander and keep moving from this place.*

*A path is where we travel to enjoy the view and be one without thoughts.*

*I feel empty.*

*A sense of paralysis washes over.*

*My thoughts have me in a different place.*

— From The Poem, "2014" by Georgina Riel

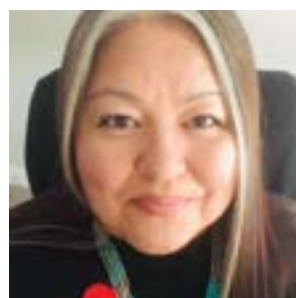
I was not prepared for Disability because I did not understand it. Using a wheelchair and prosthetic legs was not the end of the world or my career the way my social conditioning had told me it would be. Today, I would not change this experience for anything. I do not believe in overcoming Disability or Madness — I celebrate these aspects of myself.

Over the following eleven months, I learned that our hospital systems are not set up to support grieving. I needed to grieve. Today, I believe my time in hospital could have been very different. I believe this because I have learned from Mad Pride and Disability Justice advocates and activists that there are other options. Creating both care plans and self-assessment plans, and a safety network outside the systems currently in place are all starting points. Grief is complex. Stigma is also complex. Dignity, community, and empathy are needed to create a better way forward.

I identify as a Mad artist and celebrate Mad Pride because I believe, as many others before me have believed, that mental health differences are not inherently bad, and people are valuable, regardless of their situations. I think mental health differences can mean challenges and difficulties, but these are not the full or the only stories. Madness can also offer lessons, creativity, empathy, connection, and so much more.

I have learned, and continue to learn, about access. I do not believe in the concept of "fully accessible" because there are so many conflicting access needs. I am not sure we can simultaneously consider every possible need. We can create positive change and enhance experiences for people who are often left out by offering multiple points of entry.

*2014* offers several ways to experience the work. Although the film will not be for everyone, I hope that more people can interact with the piece owing to the inclusion of open audio description, American Sign Language interpretation, open captions, and a transcript. Stay tuned for future showings!



**ERIN BALL** identifies as a Mad (from the Mad Pride Movement) and Disabled circus artist based in Kingston/Katarokwi. She strives for representation, access, and inclusion in the arts.

**GEORGINA RIEL/WAABISHKI MUKWA KWE** is a member of the Batchewana First Nations of the Ojibway. She lived in Kingston for eighteen years with her family and moved to Kitchener in 2020. She is an Indigenous consultant and community engagement public artist and the author of the poem, "2014."

# The Show Must Go On — and It Does!

STORY BY MARK STOLLER



We were chatting, Carolyn and I, about what we miss most about normal times, what we'd do more of when normal times return.

"Live music," she said. "I miss live music the most."

The following week, when I'm speaking with Gary Rasberry, a local musician who happily embraces the role of "artist-as-designated-oddball," I remember Carolyn's answer and ask him about live performance.

"When the time is once again "right," there will be some very cool live performances, both for the performers and for audiences," he says. "The audience has everything to do with the shows. In my experience, as both a performer and as an audience member, there are no spectators. Both listener and performer must make themselves vulnerable. A performance, in this way, becomes a shared space of vulnerability."

I've been thinking about this vulnerability, and of those like Gary who go looking for it. If you're anything like me, you've likely devoted more energy in the past year to evading vulnerability as you wait out the return to normal. It's been lousy in more ways than I can count, but I've been okay. I'll be okay.

To be sure, there are differences in the kinds of vulnerability sought by artists and the precarious situation many have found themselves in. But Gary has, perhaps inadvertently, presented me with an uneasy question: does my "okay-ness" signify some disconnect between what I do — and how I live — and the world around me?

I thought about this further after chatting with Moira Demorest and Anthea Feaver. Both have released new music during COVID, and, like Gary, have spent time reflecting on their own creative process, their own ways of pursuing vulnerability, during the past year.

Anthea Feaver, who released her EP *Play It Back* earlier this year, puts it in a way I hadn't thought of before. What has been absent is live performance, but also collaboration with other artists. This collaboration is so essential to Anthea's work. "With COVID, you're kind of losing something," she says of the inability to work with other artists. "It's obviously necessary," she says of the restrictions, "but it's hard."

COVID-19 has disrupted the creative process and altered how new music is received. Most of *Play It Back* was recorded before the first lockdown of 2020 (the rest of the EP was completed during the pandemic), but music released over the past year carries the weight of being interpreted as a reflection on COVID. The decision to go forward with the recording came, in part, from a sense of responsibility to all those who worked on the album.

"The EP would not exist without the collaboration and the talent of so many other musicians," says Anthea.

This past year there have also been opportunities to reflect. Moira Demorest has had time to consider how she wants to move forward artistically.

"I had a really busy life putting on concerts that all came to a crashing halt," she says. "When COVID hit, it gave me time to pause, to ask: Am I really satisfied with all the tracks on this? ...Was I doing everything I wanted to be doing? I've always been



...music released over the past year carries the weight of being interpreted as a reflection on COVID.

working within music — but it really did allow me to focus a bit."

Her latest release, *This Is Me Being Nice*, was initially planned as a traditional album, but was released as an EP instead.

"I realized I can create music and manufacture music and market music however I want, and distribute it however I want. So I decided to release five of the songs in November."

Gary Rasberry is also going in a new direction. His new album, *Polishing Stone*, shifts from child audiences to adults — or, as he says, to parents of children. Gary's been quite open about his struggles with mental health, and the past year has given him an opportunity to reflect more broadly on his body of work.

His now regular long walks, new during COVID, have become his go-to times to write new lyrics, with the help of talk-to-text software. "If I get the seed for an idea," Gary says, "I just pull out my phone and speak it, then send myself a text, get home and send it to my email, and then I have a document with all these lyrics."

The process has been working for him. Still, finding the right words is never easy.

"I find that really difficult to be honest with you," Anthea says of songwriting. The melodies are there, she says, but finding the lyrics has been harder. "I feel like every time I try to write the words they're always the same. Like I don't have anything new or interesting to write about."

"I'm just trying to focus my brain on other things," Anthea says. She's learning the fiddle, and marking the passage of time by her progress.

Moira's music, too, has fewer words. "I'm writing more instrumental things at this point. I'm not quite sure where they're going," she laughs.

Carolyn and I miss live music. We miss the spectacle of performance and the community of the audience. But I also think that on some level we miss the fantasies that come with live performance, the feelings that maybe, in some different reality, we could be the ones on stage — that we're the vulnerable ones.

In many ways, we ask that the musicians and artists of our community do that work for us: we ask them to feel and to contemplate the disruptions of the past year, rather than avoid them, as I've tried to do. But I'm trying to think differently about that now; I'm trying to reimagine what it means to be the audience, so that I can embrace this role and play my part when live music is here again.



**Anthea Feaver *Play It Back*** January 2021  
Anthea's music can be found at [antheafeaver.bandcamp.com](http://antheafeaver.bandcamp.com) and can be streamed at Spotify and Apple Music (search for Anthea Feaver). CDs are available at the Elm Café.



**Moira Demorest *This Is Me Being Nice***  
November 2020  
Learn more about Moira at [moirademorest.com](http://moirademorest.com), or find her music on Spotify or Apple Music and on Instagram at [@moirademorest](https://www.instagram.com/moirademorest)



**Gary Rasberry *Polishing Stone*** April 2021  
*Polishing Stone* was released on April 21. You can find and purchase it — in both vinyl and CD versions — at [garyrasberry.com](http://garyrasberry.com), or a digital version at [garyrasberry1bandcamp.com](http://garyrasberry1bandcamp.com). *Polishing Stone* will also be available to stream on Spotify or from your favourite music provider.

MARK STOLLER is a Skeleton Park resident and occasional academic.



# Music Is Therapy

STORY BY CHRIS TRIMMER

**W**e all have mental health. Perhaps you are more keenly aware of this fact now that our collective anxiety has increased due to the COVID-19 pandemic. Maybe you are now more aware of your own mental health or the mental health of someone you care about. But it's always been there. Even if you've never seen a therapist or been given a diagnosis by a psychiatrist, your mental health has naturally ebbed and flowed throughout your life. This is perfectly normal. What's unusual for us all now is this: we're collectively experiencing a stressful and anxiety-provoking situation that has had a negative impact on our mental health (to varying degrees).

So, how can we all effectively confront and deal with our mental health right now? When we really need help there are the traditional sources such as community mental health services, medication, and talk therapy — we're even seeing the dawn of mental health apps. There are also the practices that we may not traditionally associate with mental health, but that are helpful nonetheless: getting a good night's sleep; connecting with people; exercising; and eating a balanced and nutrition-focused diet.

There's also music. It can calm us, bring us joy, or embrace our sorrow — but it can do so much more. It's one of those unique human activities we all share. Not a musician? I'm sure you are actually more musical than you think. Do you listen to music? Is it meaningful to you? Do you sing in the car or in the shower? Is there a song that evokes a cherished memory for you, a strong emotion, or are there lyrics that speak to your soul? Music is universal, and it has a common language we can all understand. I'm interested in how music can teach us about our mental health while simultaneously providing us a medium to feel better. For the past eight years I've explored how music can improve mental health on the front lines of community mental health services, in academic research, and now in private practice. Here are a few ways you can use music to bolster your mental health right now and improve your resiliency in these challenging times.

## **PRESCRIBE YOURSELF A SONG (OR, MUSIC AS A COPING TOOL)**

Do you have a favourite song? Or more than a few of them? Do you reach for one of them when the day has been stressful, or to distract yourself from a worrisome thought? Without knowing it, you've probably already been using music like it was medication.

Try to prescribe yourself a song today. How are you feeling? What are you dealing with? What song will help you right now? You know this song has worked for you in the past. Could it work again? Music can be a tool, like medication, to be used as needed or on a daily basis. Trust that you know what you need in this moment.

## **MAKE A PLAYLIST FOR A FRIEND (OR, MUSIC AS SOCIAL CONNECTION)**

We're apart due to COVID-19, but we're yearning to stay connected. Unfortunately, concerts are rare or are presently not an option. Music can still be an incredible way to connect. We have a world of music available to us via music streaming services (e.g., Spotify, Tidal, or Apple Music) that don't require physical contact to share.

Try recommending a song to friends. Share with them why you like it so much. It could be just one song, or even a playlist of four songs. Your list doesn't have to be extensive or complicated. It's not about impressing them with your musical taste. Instead, it's about the gesture of reaching out to say "I'm thinking of you, and I want to share this with you." We all need social contact.

## **REKINDLE YOUR RELATIONSHIP TO MUSIC (OR, MUSIC AS A MINDFULNESS PRACTICE)**

Music helps define us from a young age. So many of us were once passionate about the music that is meaningful to us. Often the music can fade from the foreground to the background, just like the awareness of our thoughts and their impact in our life. The benefits of mindfulness practice are well documented at this point, but often a traditional practice (typically involving the observation of one's breath and awareness of distracting thoughts) can be quite challenging. There is much to be gained by having a musical mindfulness practice.

**Music can effortlessly and effectively integrate into an individual's approach to wellness.**

Try listening to a song (preferably an instrumental song to start) and keep your focus on just one instrument for the duration of the song. What does it sound like? How does the sound move? What is the musician expressing? Be curious. Your mind will invariably wander to other instruments, other things in your environment, or thoughts of your grocery list. Just return to your instrument of choice. I like to suggest a Miles Davis song at the beginning; his trumpet is often very distinct in the music mix and quite expressive. Check in with how you're feeling before you start listening, as well as afterwards. Music is so often in the background for us these days — this practice will help bring it back into focus.

Music can effortlessly and effectively integrate into an individual's approach to wellness. However, music is not unique in this realm. Music is simply one of many mediums that can be used to help make mental health more understandable. We can do that by using an activity we already enjoy.



**CHRIS TRIMMER** lives on Patrick Street. Formerly a mental health crisis worker in Kingston, he has a PhD in neuroscience from Queen's University where he researched the role of music in mental health. More information on his work can be found at [musicistherapy.ca](http://musicistherapy.ca).

This is Buckaroo. The cat that has everybody talking. The cat who goes where he pleases and feels at home wherever he goes. Love him or hate him he's the neighbourhood's pet. A rebel with paws without a cause. He's the one and only BUCKAROO!



# BUCKAROO SONG

By John Rose  
Illustrated By Jon Claytor

This is singer-songwriter John Rose. He lives in Buckaroo's neighbourhood and sees him around. He knows about the cat's bad reputation and his super cuteness. Music is always on John's mind so it only makes sense that his run-ins with Buckaroo led to a song. He captured the cat's personality so well it's almost like he channelled his own inner BUCKAROO!



Good afternoon I see your door is open

Couldn't help but notice that it's warm inside

Oh excuse me is that a bowl of food

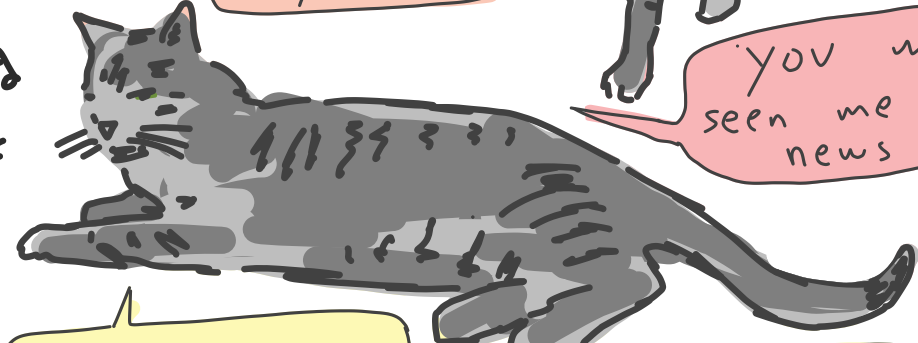
Wouldn't mind a taste, I hope I'm not intruding

Pardon me I don't mean to be rude

I'm just your neighbourhood feline passing through

I'll probably see you in a day or two

You may have seen me on the news



You may have heard online

By the way you can just call me BUCKAROO

That I'm a little rough around the edges

I don't cause no trouble

Come on it's snowing outside - open up and say hi



look I'm soft and cute

♥ Just call me Buckaroo ♥

To listen to John Rose's music go to [www.jwrose.com](http://www.jwrose.com)

To see more of Jon Claytor's drawings go to [jon-claytor-art](https://www.instagram.com/jon-claytor-art) on Instagram





# They Seek Him Here, They Seek Him There — They Seek Buckaroo Everywhere

STORY BY SAM BETTNEY

**He's a mysterious figure — you'll find him stalking the neighbourhood, sitting alone in the park, following you down the street when you least expect it — but he's no horror-movie super villain. In fact, he couldn't be further from one. His name is Buckaroo the cat, and he's mischievous, sassy, and especially controversial — as much as a cat can be.**

The story of Buckaroo began several years ago when locals David and Susanne adopted him. He often spent his days being friendly with the community and living a lazy life, but over time Buckaroo gained a sense of curiosity about people. He began to follow them on their daily commutes, exploring new territory and occasionally ending up far away from his usual spots. He could be seen on driveways, porch steps, by schools, and even in houses. Through his peculiar antics and regular adventures Buckaroo soon made a name for himself as the community cat.

“Originally I thought people were picking him up, and that’s how he would end up around the neighbourhood, but they’re not,” Susanne tells me. “He follows people — I think he’s been all the way down to city hall with somebody. He stands there with the person and they don’t know what to do. So then they either phone somebody or bring him to the Humane Society. I’m never sure why Buckaroo does it, but he does.”

Aside from just following people, Buckaroo likes to show himself into and around whatever house he can gain entrance to; but as with a vampire, your humble abode is only his if you let it be. “He definitely gives people the impression he is lost,” says Susanne. “He’ll come by your house and be begging, crying like a stray. He will seem desperate to come in and so, people will invite him.” She points out how the kindness of the community unintentionally causes her and David more than enough complications. “You have to be forceful at times not to let him in ... I want to tell people, ‘Just let him back out and he will find his way back home’ but I am actually not sure he will find his way home. It’s not clear to me if he is genuinely lost or just exploring.”

Despite Buckaroo’s bothersome habit, Susanne assures me that the majority of his experiences within the community have been positive. “From the beginning, he would go into the [McBurney] park daily, and he seemed to be like any other community cat. One such time he walked into the park and encountered a group of young boys playing. It was a rough kind of playing; somebody had a stick in his hand, and the boys were definitely getting rough with each other. Then the cat comes in, and they all start focusing on him; they get all quiet and gentle. He lies down and they gather around him, petting him as a group. After a few minutes he just wanders off, but it’s created a moment for these boys that was the complete opposite of what they had experienced earlier.”

**Aside from just following people, Buckaroo likes to show himself into and around whatever house he can gain entrance to; but as with a vampire, your humble abode is only his if you let it be.**



PHOTO CREDITS (LEFT TO RIGHT): Maggen Elizabeth, Neil Bettney

As Buckaroo persisted in visiting the people of the neighbourhood face to face, he became a recognizable figure to regular dog-walkers and locals. However, it wasn’t until his appearances on various Facebook groups that his identity as a travelling cat gained prominence. His first notable visit occurred several summers ago when the staff of Providence Manor invited him in, beginning a series of Buckaroo’s unofficial community visits. Shortly after, another person contacted David and Susanne, saying they, too, had found Buckaroo — asleep in their bedroom!

As the visits continued, confused locals continued posting on one Facebook group about a well-fed, green-eyed tabby once every few months. Still, it wasn’t until January of this year that these episodes started happening regularly. “I don’t think people have taken him in this much before,” Susanne says. “Usually, it’s about two to three times a year, but recently it’s been happening a lot.” It seems that Buckaroo has gotten into new habits after a long winter at home.

As his reputation spread, members of the group formed their own opinions about Buckaroo in the neighbourhood. Though most approved of the cat’s adventures, some believed he would be better off with a collar, and a few were against the idea of him roaming the streets altogether. However, Susanne explains that controlling a cat as free-spirited as Buckaroo can be difficult. “I believe we’ve tried four different collars, but they never work. The last one, it was not on even forty-eight hours before it was gone,” she clarifies. “I do agree with the people complaining that he doesn’t have a collar, but I’ve just tried so many times already. The funniest thing for me is that he’s so well-known, even without it.”

He is aptly named — Buckaroo is an Anglicized version of vaquero, Spanish for “cowboy,” and clearly he is some sort of one. And over the past four years his free spirit and adventurous lifestyle have made him an icon in the McBurney Park community. Though David and Susanne apologize for his shenanigans, he has undoubtedly brought his neighbours and other community members some comfort and entertainment during his cat-walk career.



**SAM BETTNEY** is a Grade 10 student at Loyalist Collegiate & Vocational Institute. He was raised in the Skeleton Park neighbourhood and has been writing since his teachers first told him to. He wishes he had a cat, but his mom is terribly allergic to them.

# Crossing the Street

CROSSWORD BY LEA WESTLAKE, MARY HUGGARD & HUW LLOYD-ELLIS

ILLUSTRATIONS BY SU SHEEDY



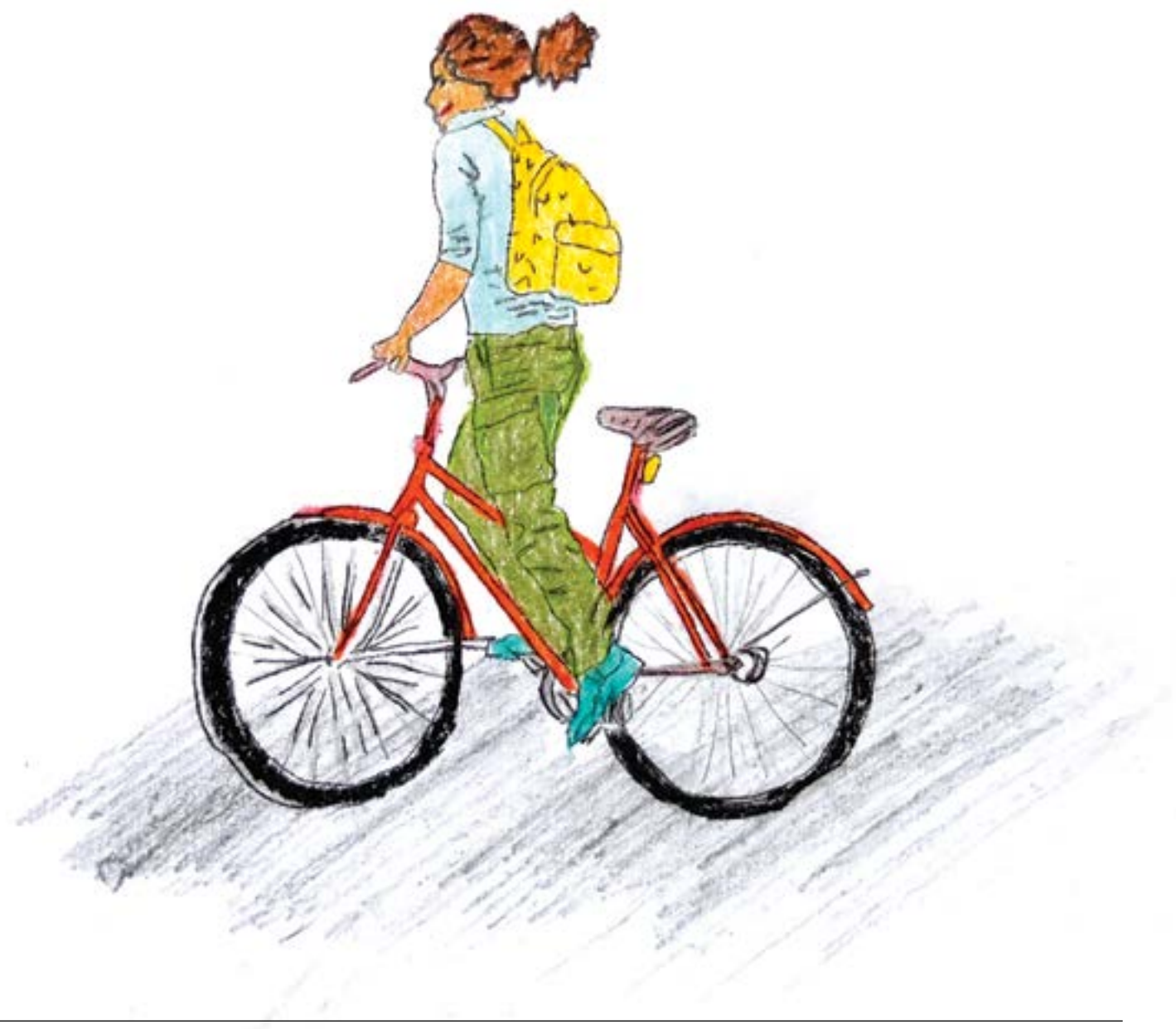
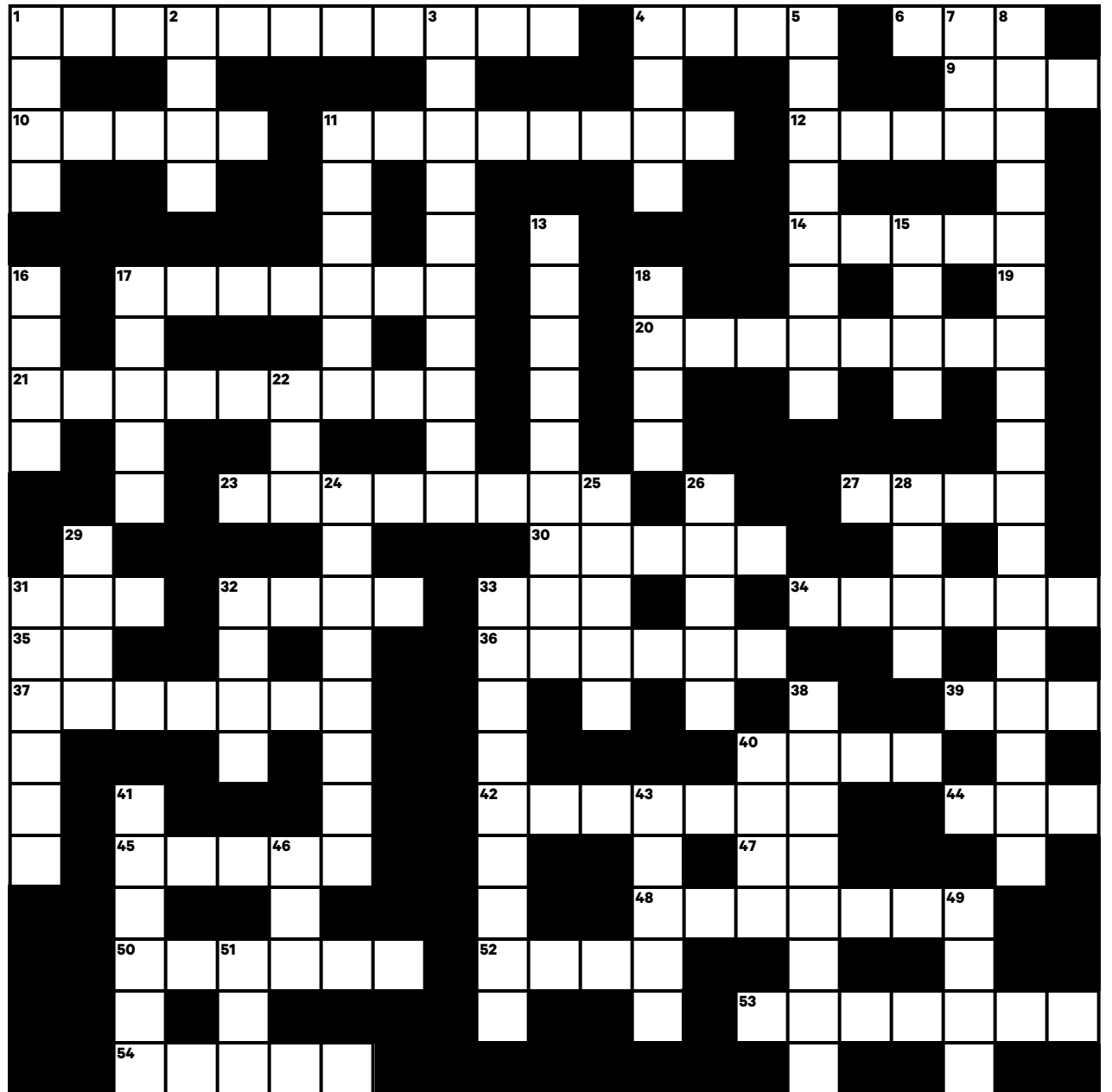
## The Streets Where We Live

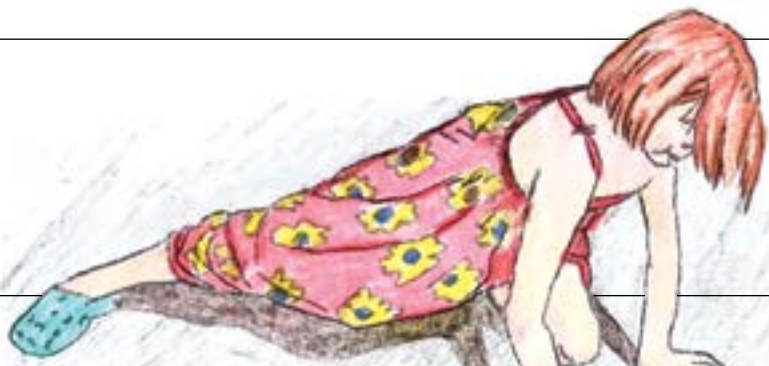
### ACROSS

- 1 A lane between Raglan and John (8,3)  
 4 Stuck in his thumb, pulled out a \_\_\_\_\_  
 6 OHIP on Place D'Armes used to be the wood and \_\_\_\_\_ market  
 9 "\_\_\_\_\_ is me!" The feeling of being lost in the Fruitbelt?  
 10 Former oil tanks on North were beside \_\_\_\_\_ tracks  
 11 Queen's first class was held on this street in 1842  
 12 Street to and from nowhere south of Belle Park  
 14 \_\_\_\_\_ stock lived on Ellice Street farmland  
 17 Collective name for Russell, Thomas, James, Charles, John, Patrick, Joseph, Fraser, Stephen, Stanley  
 20 Street named after British military weapons  
 21 Group of streets once known as The Orchard  
 23 Street that was 1812 Kingston's outer border  
 27 Patrick is \_\_\_\_\_ of Barrie  
 30 \_\_\_\_\_ Elizabeth  
 31 Dessert famous on Cherry?  
 32 What the city didn't do to the Wellington Street Extension  
 33 Ellice Street cows chew \_\_\_\_\_  
 34 Regiment or their building on Montreal  
 35 Yesteryear's Grove Street \_\_\_\_\_ today's Rideau Street  
 36 Molly Brant's house was near present-day \_\_\_\_\_ Street  
 37 Prince \_\_\_\_\_  
 39 Dutch \_\_\_\_\_ disease  
 40 \_\_\_\_\_ box races on Patrick  
 42 Street of St. Vincent de Paul  
 44 Dead \_\_\_\_\_ street  
 45 The Grad Club is on the corner of Barrie and \_\_\_\_\_  
 47 \_\_\_\_\_ EASE - phrase heard on Barrack in days gone by?  
 48 Street with a long hill  
 50 Name of street and town north of Toronto  
 52 Miller's \_\_\_\_\_ runs between Montreal and Bagot  
 53 Afternoon movie at Screening Room on Princess  
 54 Frontenac school street

### DOWN

- 1 \_\_\_\_\_ ways through the park  
 2 Principal street in Picardville  
 3 Street extension stopped by public protest  
 4 Coniferous tree street  
 5 Mulberry School street  
 7 \_\_\_\_\_ struck. The feeling of being found in the Fruitbelt?  
 8 Grand Old Duke of \_\_\_\_\_  
 11 Wild animal once seen on our streets  
 13 Street that is also the name of our river  
 15 Heard it through the grape \_\_\_\_\_  
 16 Dead-end street off the north end of Patrick  
 17 Street \_\_\_\_\_ collection occurs in October  
 18 Saint for which a neighbourhood church and street are named  
 19 Former name of Alma Street (8,4)  
 22 Cochrane's Convenience is found at \_\_\_\_\_ and Bagot  
 24 This street is also a mathematical operation  
 25 Before pavement, these streets were \_\_\_\_\_  
 26 Street that runs between Balaclava and Raglan  
 28 Street that forms the west border of the park  
 29 What Frank sold on Barrie with chips  
 31 One former name of Raglan Road  
 32 A hoppy ale found at Stone City on Princess  
 33 Safety feature on Ordnance  
 38 Street of long-time family-owned grocery store  
 40 A bench is a nice street \_\_\_\_\_  
 41 La Belle Street  
 43 News \_\_\_\_\_ produced on Catarauqui  
 46 Rowing necessity stored on Catarauqui?  
 49 \_\_\_\_\_ and Queen  
 51 \_\_\_\_\_ houses line many of our streets





## Hide and Go Street

Answers to the starred \* clues hide streets in the 'hood.

### ACROSS

- 1 Hot cross \_\_\_\_\_  
 5 Lying face up (\*3 - 6)  
 9 Beatles hair-do, \_\_\_\_\_ top  
 12 Q\_\_\_\_\_ - disproven far-right conspiracy theory  
 13 Boston number 4  
 14 Small walrus relative  
 15 Saddle up a mythical beast? (\*1 - 6)  
 18 You in Paris  
 19 \_\_\_\_\_ Rogers  
 20 Time period  
 22 Question the primate?  
 28 Where vaccines are produced  
 30 The letter between R and T  
 31 The weight of heat? (\*6 - 9)  
 33 The \_\_\_\_\_ man takes what you can't pay for  
 35 Question  
 36 Hard-working insects with nothing to do? (\*3 - 7)  
 37 \_\_\_\_\_ Chi  
 39 Country east of Ghana  
 41 Please play "Hotel California," please?  
 47 3.14  
 48 "\_\_\_\_\_ Como Va," Santana song  
 49 Choice of leafy greens? (\*5 - 11)  
 51 Short for street  
 53 Sacred sound and spiritual symbol  
 54 Works in emerg  
 56 Great coral masses of Australia? (\*1 - 6)  
 62 Hatha or hot  
 64 Evaluation of your tax return (abbr)  
 65 \_\_\_\_\_ of Brian  
 66 Brian \_\_\_\_\_ of Roxy Music  
 67 Seafaring Norseman (\*3 - 6)  
 68 Mixed-up dir.

- 14 Older than jnr  
 16 Study hard  
 17 Rod and \_\_\_\_\_  
 21 Expression of regret  
 23 Extrasensory perception  
 24 Yours truly on the phone  
 25 Hammer-wielding God's afternoon drink?  
 26 One of three subject pronouns  
 27 Side bag on a bike  
 29 How's your long neck?  
 32 Post structure on ship or boat  
 34 Newspaper tribute to a life (abbr)  
 38 City council's affirmative votes  
 40 What you say when served flaming Greek cheese  
 41 Farmyard colour? (\*1 - 5)  
 42 Key ingredient in gumbo  
 43 Zut \_\_\_\_\_ (singular?)  
 44 The astrological twin  
 45 \_\_\_\_\_ and behold  
 46 Below North Carolina (abbr)  
 50 Uncomfortable footwear  
 52 Unknown speaker or time (abbr)  
 55 Harry's best friend  
 57 The King of Marseille  
 58 Long period of time  
 59 \_\_\_\_\_ tag bunch  
 60 \_\_\_\_\_ stein  
 61 Stitch  
 63 Stop and \_\_\_\_\_



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66				67						68		

### ANSWER KEYS

Public art in the hood and beyond (Issue 5, Winter 2021)

ACROSS 3 Cardboard, 8 Poems, 10 And, 11 Penne, 12 Lit, 13 Cape, 15 Sit, 17 Four, 18 Lion, 19 Goat, 21 Font, 23 Skeleton, 25 Mask, 26 Sir, 28 Spoons, 30 Graffiti, 33 Fringe, 35 Maman, 36 Who, 37 Tetra, 38 OK, 40 Stilt, 42 Copper, 43 Blue  
 DOWN 1 Garden, 2 Ice, 3 Cannon, 4 Ann, 5 Balloons, 6 Arts, 7 Duct, 8 Puppets, 9 Shuffle, 11 Pollution, 14 Fry, 16 Time, 19 Go, 20 At, 22 David, 24 Barefoot, 27 Sing, 28 Solstice, 29 Oil, 31 Drag, 32 Dance, 34 Nest, 37 Totem, 39 Kick, 41 Elm

### The Streets Where We Live

ACROSS 1 Primrose Way, 4 Plum, 6 Hay, 9 Woe, 10 Train, 11 Colborne, 12 River, 14 Live, 17 Boy Town, 20 Ordnance, 21 Fruit Belt, 23 Sydenham, 27 East, 30 Queen, 31 Pie, 32 Pave, 33 Cud, 34 Armory, 35 Is, 36 Rideau, 37 Charles, 39 Elm, 40 Soap, 42 Stephen, 44 End, 45 Union, 47 At, 48 Patrick, 50 Barrie, 52 Lane, 53 Matinee, 54 Cowdy  
 DOWN 1 Path, 2 Main, 3 Wellington, 4 Pine, 5 Markland, 7 Awe, 8 York, 11 Coyote, 13 Catarqui, 15 Vine, 16 Duff, 17 Brush, 18 John, 19 Cemetery Lane, 22 Bay, 24 Division, 25 Muddy, 26 Redan, 28 Alma, 29 Fish, 31 Picard, 32 Pale, 33 Crosswalk, 38 Montreal, 40 Seat, 41 Quebec, 43 Paper, 46 Oar, 49 King, 51 Row

### Hide and Go Street

ACROSS 1 Buns, 5 Supine, 9 Mop, 12 Anon, 13 Orr, 14 Seal, 15 Ride A Unicorn, 18 Tu, 19 Mr, 20 Era, 22 Query The Ape, 28 Lab, 30 Es, 31 Thermal Mass, 33 Repo, 35 Ask, 36 Bored Ants, 37 Tai, 39 Togo, 41 Cry To Eagles, 47 Pi, 48 Oye, 49 Kale Orchard, 51 Str, 53 Om, 54 Dr, 56 Barrier Reefs, 62 Yoga, 64 Noa, 65 Life, 66 Eno, 67 Viking, 68 Snow  
 DOWN 1 Bar, 2 Unique Entry, 3 Nod, 4 Sneer, 5 Sou, 6 Urn, 7 Primer, 8 Neo, 9 Me, 10 Oat, 11 Plumbs, 14 Snr, 16 Cram, 17 Reel, 21 Alas, 23 Esp, 24 Yt, 25 Thor Tea, 26 He, 27 Pannier, 29 Ask Agria, 32 Mast, 34 Obit, 38 Ayes, 40 Opa, 41 Cow Dye, 42 Okra, 43 Alor, 44 Gemini, 45 Lo, 46 Sc, 50 Heels, 52 TBA, 55 Ron, 57 ROI, 58 Eon, 59 Rag, 60 Ein, 61 Sew, 63 Go

### EDUCATION

# At This School, Community Connection Is Central

Dawn Diamond reflects on her role as Central Public School's new principal

STORY BY DAWN DIAMOND

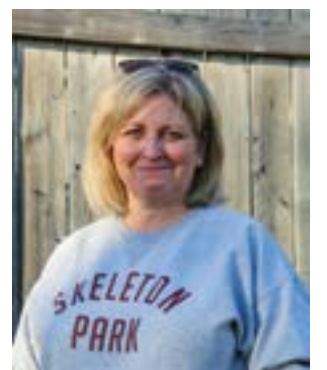
Nothing is more important than connection, as Dr. Jody Carrington, author of *Kids These Days*, reminds us. In our schools, connectedness happens when the folks in our building, young or not, have the sense that someone cares about them, that they have value, and that they belong. When we are locked down, locked in, or isolated, connection becomes an integral part of our mental health.

When I heard that my placement was going to be at Central Public School, I was beyond excited. Central has a reputation for fostering arts education from Kindergarten through Grade 8. It didn't take long for the staff to let me know that during a normal, COVID-free, year, the school is bustling with parents and community members who are helping in the classrooms and the gardens, and teaching workshops. The staff truly appreciate each other, collaborate, and create experiences that help students connect. I am walking into a living circuit board of connection, and it's exciting.

I come to Central with a passion for the arts and arts-integrated education. Performing music has always been my second job – I have played sax and reeds with big swing bands, small ensembles, and musical pit orchestras, and have sung backup with a '50s band. I enjoy performing solely for the connection it provides with the players and the audience.

Relationships are everything – they are what will get us through this pandemic. When we have a relationship, we have connection. When we have connection, it's easier to tackle hard things, and taking care of your mental health these days is a hard thing. I am looking forward to immersing myself in the Central community, ensuring that all our students feel like they belong, and making life-long connections. This is truly a wonderful place to be!

**DAWN DIAMOND**, the new principal of Central Public School, brings expertise in music and drama. Her musical family includes a saxophone player and vocalist (Dawn); a guitar player and audio producer (husband Al); and a clarinet player and vocalist (daughter Matie).





# Why We Oppose the Police

STORY BY DEFUND YGK



**Defund YGK\*** formed almost a year ago as a local platform to oppose the police. We aim to be a source of information and to embolden aspirations towards Kingston becoming a community that offers safety and justice for all residents. We at Defund YGK seek to challenge commonly held assumptions about the essential function of policing and, instead, to highlight the police's central role in maintaining and furthering the racist, violent status quo.

The police are fundamentally a settler colonial (anti-Indigenous) and anti-Black institution. The police also serve to protect the property rights of the ultra-rich, suppress labour movements, and enact violence against folks who are mentally ill, unhoused, engaging in sex work, and undocumented, as well as those seeking protection — while eating up a huge portion of our resources and accounting for a disproportionate share of municipally levied property taxes. We believe that our communities are capable of developing and implementing models of real safety and security for all of us, and that defunding and dismantling the police are essential steps towards that brighter, more just, and healthier future.

## THE HISTORICAL ROOTS OF POLICING: A CANADIAN PERSPECTIVE

Many historians and activists have been discussing the fact that American policing has its roots in 19th-century slave patrols. Canada has its own history of policing rooted in both settler colonialism and anti-Black racism.

The North-West Mounted Police, forerunner of the Royal Canadian Mounted Police (RCMP), was created in 1873 by the Canadian government and its infamous first prime minister, John A. Macdonald. One of their main purposes at the time was to support Western colonial expansion by displacing Indigenous people and restricting them to reserves. Genocide of Indigenous peoples through starvation and dispossession was legislated through a series of laws enforced primarily by what is now Canada's national police force. The laws included enforcing everything from the "pass systems," which criminalized the off-reserve movement of Indigenous people, to the infamous residential school system, in which police and other state officials kidnapped Indigenous children from their families and communities and sent them to abusive school-prisons.

Many people understand the core function of the police to be that of opposing crime. In her book, *Policing Black Lives: State Violence in Canada from Slavery*

**Why might our community support defunding the police? Simply put, we have a long history of unjust policing.**

*to the Present*, Robyn Maynard outlines the many ways that Canadian laws and practices have tied Blackness to criminality, laying bare the lie that criminality is a neutral concept. Maynard suggests that this connection in Canada predates the abolition of slavery (an aspect of Canadian history often purposefully ignored): "public associations between Blackness and crime can be traced back to runaway slave advertisements dating back to the seventeenth century, in which self-liberated Blacks were portrayed as thieves and criminals."

## WHAT LAWS GOVERN THE POLICE?

The Police Services Act 1990 is the current piece of legislation governing police services in Ontario (excluding the RCMP). This act will soon be replaced by the Comprehensive Ontario Police Services Act 2019, known as Bill 68, which the Ford government passed as part of omnibus legislation in 2019. Although COVID-19 has delayed implementation of this new act, it will soon govern policing in Ontario.

There are many issues with both the existing and the forthcoming legal frameworks for policing. These acts require municipalities to provide "adequate and effective policing." If the province deems that a municipality is not providing such policing, it can send in the Ontario Provincial Police (OPP) and charge the municipality for the costs. The province also requires municipalities to form a Police Services Board, which must propose a police budget to the municipality. If that community rejects the proposed budget, the board can appeal the decision to the quasi-judicial Ontario Civilian Police Commission (OCPC). Ontario municipalities have, at times, considered rejecting proposals for police budget increases. In these cases, the threat of going to the OCPC has motivated these municipalities to ultimately approve the requested increases.

Some surveys have shown that many in Kingston support defunding the police and re-investing funds towards essential services, such as housing and mental health supports. The current legislative framework actively impedes City Council's ability to do that. However, this fact should not stop us from demanding the defunding, disarming, and dismantling of the police. Furthermore, we must work not only locally but also with others across the province and beyond to demand provincial action in repealing existing legislation.

### WHAT ABOUT KINGSTON?

Why might our community support defunding the police? Simply put, we have a long history of unjust policing.

The association of Blackness with criminality by both the Kingston police and the broader community was never more evident than in two incidents involving local Black youth in the early 2000s. In the first incident, a local woman, who was in the witness protection program after having been the victim of a terrible assault for which her perpetrator was incarcerated, called 911 after seeing Black youth in a car near her apartment. Her only reason to think one of the youths might be the man who had once attacked her was his Blackness. As she said of her call to police: "You know, I'm sure there's not a lot of black people running around in Mercedes' in Kingston ... who dress like, like the hip-hop style, driving a \$60,000 car." The police quickly arrived on the scene with multiple cruisers, dogs, and officers with guns raised. Local news reported that these young people were crying and pleading with police "as they were forced from their father's Mercedes by gunpoint and made to kneel on the pavement." Only a few months later, one of these same young people was walking home with another Kingston youth when both were stopped, held at gunpoint, and searched by Kingston Police officers. The youths had done nothing wrong and were eventually released without charges. The officer faced a disciplinary charge (later dropped) for unnecessary or unlawful arrest.

Following these high-profile incidents of racist policing and the family's public appeals for justice, the Kingston Police conducted a self-study of racial profiling. For a year, Kingston Police reported details of each person they stopped, including their race, ethnicity, and the reason for pulling them over. The data collected was turned into a report released in 2005 that concluded that police in Kingston were 3.7 times more likely to stop a Black person than a white person, and 1.4 times more likely to stop an Indigenous person than a white person. Lysandra Marshall, who wrote her PhD dissertation on racial profiling, said it best: this data shows "that police stops have less to do with crime control models of criminal justice, and more to do with surveilling marginalized populations."

Little has changed in the past fifteen years when it comes to police surveillance and harassment. The pandemic has highlighted the over-policing of unhoused people. Police intimidation of unhoused folks who had created a temporary community for themselves in the Belle Park parking lot during the summer

of 2020 did nothing to promote the safety of the Kingston community. Armed police enforced the eviction of the encampment on September 1, 2020, while threatening to arrest community volunteers who had come to aid the campers in moving their belongings before the deadline. The resources used to send in teams of officers should have been diverted into real help and housing support. Emergency shelters and low-income housing options remain shamefully inadequate in our community while police continue to harass and displace unhoused people.

Based on recent public presentations, it is clear that Police Chief Antje McNeely is acutely aware of the poor reputation of the police locally and within the broader global movement opposing the police, and she seems keen to improve its image. Recently, we have learned that the Police intend to implement equity, diversity and inclusion training for officers, that there is a strong push to purchase costly body-cams, and that a communications overhaul is underway. Chief McNeely, whose 2020 salary was recently disclosed as a whopping \$256,415, is seeking to present a softer, "progressive" face to policing.

Here we must be very clear: reforms such as diversity training and body-cams in no way bring justice and safety to our community. In fact, these kinds of reforms actually serve to justify the diversion of more funds to the police at the expense of addressing real local needs.

This year, the Kingston Police were granted an operating budget of \$43,486,975 and an additional \$910,000 for capital expenses. A major portion of this budget will go to Kingston Police salaries, including at least 175 employees (177 in 2020) earning more than \$100,000 per year. According to the 2016 Census, the median employment income for a Kingstonian working full-time was \$53,176; the incomes of those who are unemployed, under-employed or unable to work are likely far lower.

Imagine a future in which the huge sums lining the pockets of the armed enforcers of the unjust status quo were used instead to address the needs of our community through housing, addiction and mental health services, cultural programming, and support for survivors of gender-based violence (which currently receives no municipal dollars). We must decriminalize poverty, Indigenous land reclamation, sex work, migration, and mental illness, and focus on addressing the real needs of our communities. This is how we can create real safety and security for all. At the heart of our vision is the hope for a brighter, more just future.

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**DEFUND YGK** is a group committed to advocating for defunding the police in #ydk and building a just, anti-racist, decolonial and healthy community. (\*YGK are the call letters for Kingston's airport.) Learn more about the movement to defund police: <https://www.choosingrealsafety.com/> or <https://defund.ca/>. Defund YGK is grateful for research support from PSAC Local 901, the union of graduate teaching assistants, teaching fellows, research assistants and postdoctoral scholars at Queen's University. Follow Defund YGK on social media. Instagram/Facebook/Twitter: @defundpoliceYGK.

PHOTO CREDIT: Akif Hasni

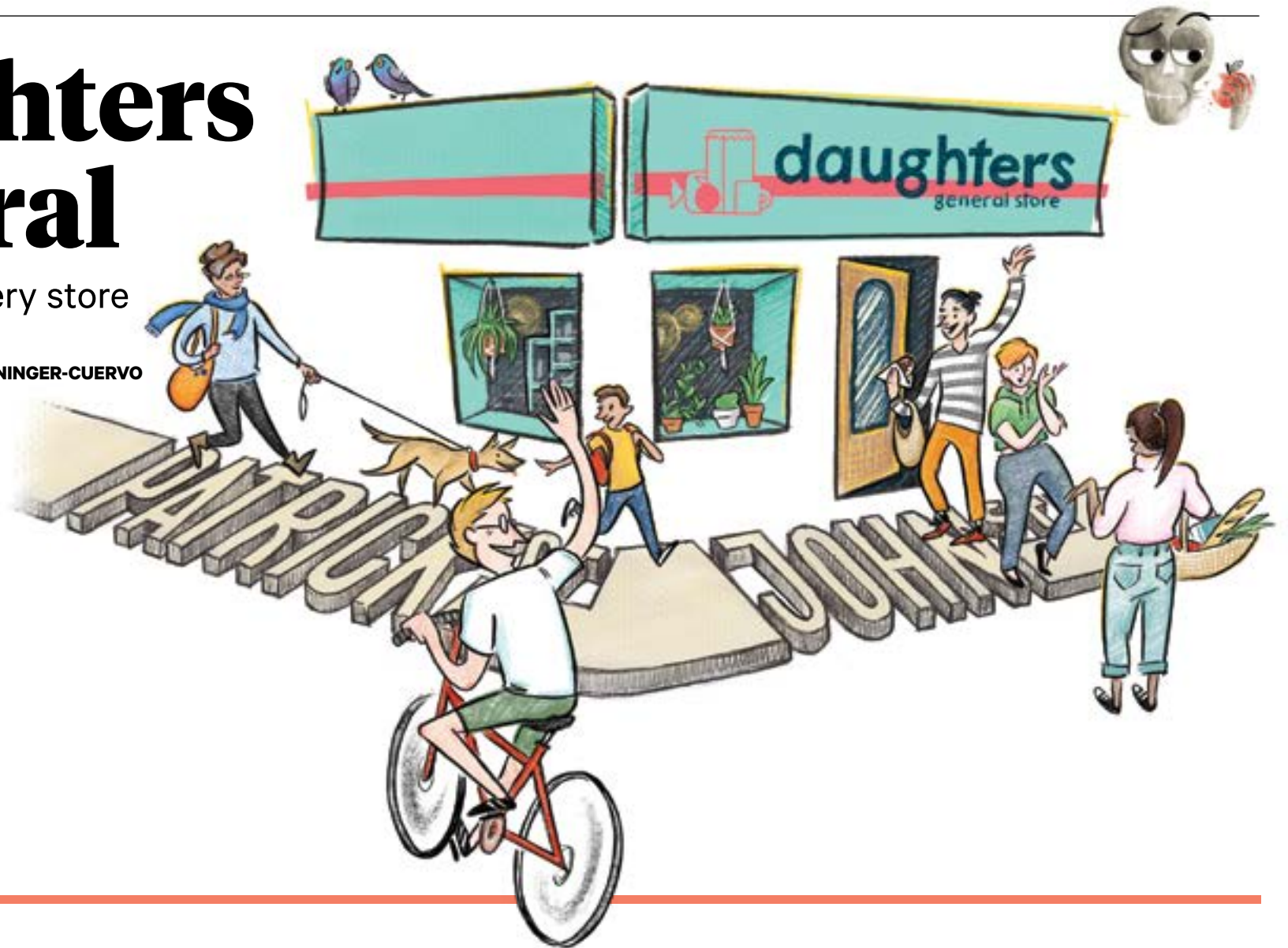


# Daughters General

More than a grocery store

STORY BY TIANNA EDWARDS

ILLUSTRATION BY FLORIANA EHNINGER-CUERVO



People have been craving outside human connection and Daughters General Store has checked that box, too.

## Fun Fact

The name Daughters General Store is inspired by a community bagel shop in New York City, **Russ & Daughters**, which opened in 1914. Norah and her partner Eric lived in New York for a few years and, as parents of two daughters, they liked Joel Russ's progressive spirit and how he embraced being the father of three daughters. In 2021, Russ & Daughters is being run by the fourth generation of the same family.

Kingstonians know that when you leave the house to run an errand, you are bound to run into a familiar face. The odds increase significantly when you live in or frequent the Skeleton Park and Inner Harbour neighbourhoods. Waves between parents hanging outside the school during pick up, a quick "How are ya?" walking through the park on the way downtown and, most recently, since October 2020, friendly nods while popping into Daughters General Store.

As I sit on the bench outside the shop interviewing owner Norah Petersen, I see not one, not two, not three, but four familiar faces walking by in the span of a half hour. One of them being the editor of this very publication, on his way to a post-school outdoor hang with his son. After the interview, when I get back into my car and check my phone, I have a text from a friend, "Are you at daughters rn lol?" ["Right now," "laughing out loud," for the less tech-savvy.]

Petersen and her husband, Eric, rented the retail space at the corner of John and Patrick streets with this village feel in mind. A local-convenience-store-hub, but elevated. "We talked," said Petersen, "about how it would be cool to have a grocery store in our neighbourhood and how those are quickly becoming extinct because real estate is so high. You see that a lot in Toronto; they are all turning into apartments." The early concept was simple. Petersen wanted a place for people in the community to stop in and pick up eggs or milk, so she started there.

"The first Sunday I was open people were running in for eggs and milk and it made me so happy because it was just like they woke up and were like, 'I want to make pancakes!' They were asking for maple syrup and I didn't have maple syrup and I thought, 'I've got to get maple syrup!' and the next weekend, people were like, 'Do you by any chance have maple syrup?' and I did, and I was so happy."

This immediate responsiveness to feedback is what has made Daughters General Store such a special place. This neighbourhood (and the city of Kingston generally) is made up of people who have come from all over with varying cravings. As a vegetarian, Petersen initially started stocking the shelves with foods she had been looking for in Kingston and couldn't find, and the stock list evolved from community feedback.

"I am just thrilled to have other people coming to the store and being as excited about these foods as I am. I didn't know there would be so many people who would like the

same things as me. And the gluten-free stuff: we had a bit of it and there was a niche market that seemed really enthusiastic about it, so we just got more because they asked for it," shared Petersen.

Tailoring to the needs of the community is particularly special as we continue to navigate the global pandemic while remaining within our region.

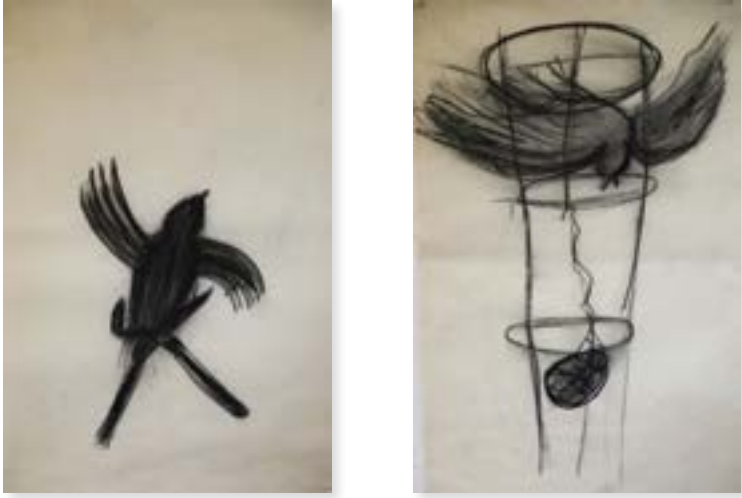
Petersen said, "Without really thinking about it, we were drawn to comfort foods and bringing in comfort foods and people have really responded to it. Finding Pizzeria Libretto [a Toronto restaurant chain] was huge and some people from Guelph were excited about the noodles [Crafty Ramen] because they couldn't go home for the noodles. We started off doing it unintentionally, but then we realized what we were doing, and now we are doing it intentionally."

Aside from making out-of-region items accessible, the shop does an amazing job at featuring many talented local makers, such as the Jean + Dean Baking Co. and their pastries, and NORTHSIDE espresso + kitchen, vegan goods from the caterer, Knifey Spoonery, bread from a local bakery, Wilton Wheat Kings, cut flowers from Butternut Creek. The list goes on and on.

People have been craving outside human connection and Daughters General Store has checked that box, too. "I feel really lucky to be in a space where I can see people during the day and I am not working from home," said Petersen. "And I can see it on a lot of people when they come in. They want a place to be other than their homes. And especially during heavier lockdowns, I noticed a lot of people that were definitely needing that. Needing to get out."



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



LEFT TO RIGHT: Untitled #1, Untitled #2, 2021, by Gabrielle Sims

*In memory of local artist*

## Gabrielle Sims

1951–2021

### A meeting

BY PETER SIMS

Dreams are what we have now.  
So, I meet you there, a meeting place  
like the old one from fifty years ago  
where I'd stand, beside the gnarled cedar  
at a small rise in the park, burning,  
waiting to see your bedroom light flick off,  
the preparations finished and the door  
to everything, everything about to open.

I made seventy, and you didn't, and this  
isn't the first dream since you were cremated,  
(how cold your skin in the chipboard box)  
and is cremated different or the same  
as incinerated (so much depends .....)  
and this isn't the first dream since  
you were burnt completely,  
not the first dream but the first day  
on which my charred fingers could pick up  
a pen and stumble into speech.

And in the dream we were guests  
at an art class for five year olds.  
I watched from a chair  
while you joined in on the floor,  
after I'd fetched that ragged plastic  
bag of charcoal and pastel stubs  
you keep in the car.  
When the class ended, I gathered  
them together into the same bag and,  
while you chatted with the instructor,  
added a pink eraser I thought  
I might need one day.

Where had all the children gone?  
I can't say, or won't say, or don't know.  
When we three left the school  
no parents waited there in cars.

We crossed the empty parking lot  
and reached our car, I opened the door  
for you and tossed the plastic bag  
into the cup holder. I could hear  
the instructor's voice behind me,  
quietly thanking you for coming,  
for helping "to move things along."

PETER SIMS was Gaby's loving and beloved partner for 49 years.

## NEXT DOOR

2021

A Skeleton Park  
Neighbourhood  
Art Project

**JUNE 16<sup>TH</sup> - AUGUST 16<sup>TH</sup>, 2021**

Skeleton Park Arts Festival is thrilled to announce the artists exhibiting in *Next Door 2021*. This year's exhibition will feature sculptures, paintings, performance art, and a wide array of other remarkable creations by local artists.

Abolition City

Simon Andrew

GHY Cheung

Chaka Chikodzi

Nicholas Crombach

Sadiqa de Meijer

Jane Derby

Amelia Glancy + Benjamin Nelson

Kemi King

Jane Kirby + Erin Ball

YS Lee + Kate Yüksel

Hayden Maynard

Dorit Naaman, Jenn Norton,  
Matt Rogalsky + Laura Murray

Onagottay

Clelia Scala

John Wright

For updates and more information about  
*Next Door 2021*, visit:

**[www.skeletonparkartsfest.ca/next-door-2021](http://www.skeletonparkartsfest.ca/next-door-2021)**



**SKELETON  
PARK ARTS  
FESTIVAL**

# Rain — a Meditation

BY HELEN HUMPHREYS

ILLUSTRATIONS BY CHANTAL ROUSSEAU

The first spring rain fell on our neighbourhood a few weeks ago. It was accompanied by the first thunderstorm and, lying in bed listening to the storm move across the sky, I was impressed by how loud it all was — the crack of thunder, the staccato of rain on the roof. After months of silently falling snow, I had forgotten how noisy precipitation could be.

Rain is often judged by its quantity — too little and there is a drought, too much and there might be a flood. It is pleasant to walk in a light mist and mostly unpleasant to be caught out in a downpour. (I was once in a rain so heavy that the TV meteorologist later called it “a river in the sky.”)

Much poetry has been written through the ages either welcoming the rain or wanting to escape from it. I especially like the anonymous 16th-century song in which the first two lines are: “Westron wyn-de, when wilt though blow,/The small *raine* down can raine.” The idea of the small *raine* is an appealing one. It sounds like just the right amount of rain, in human terms.

But I wonder how the rain feels to the earth on which it falls? What amount of rainfall feels right to a wood or a field or a tree? Can the flower bulbs feel the vibrations of a pounding downpour and does this make them send up their emissaries towards the surface any sooner?

Rain is personal. It's intimate. It touches our skin and runs through our hair. Perhaps it makes us feel less alone, as it's a particular kind of company. I remember visiting a dying friend once in hospital and the nurse attending her standing at the window watching the rain skitter down the glass. “I like the rain,” she said, “because it makes the world small again.”

The small *raine*.

Often, in spring, or in the heat of summer, I find a rainy day to be a welcome respite from the relentlessness of being outdoors. It feels, on those days, a relief to be forced to stay inside, and I think the work I do on a rainy day, or the food I cook, has a different flavour because of the falling rain.

The rhythm of rain on a roof has a musicality to it and has, in turn, inspired as much music as poetry. Chopin wrote the *Raindrop Prelude* from listening to the sound of rain, and Debussy composed a piece for solo piano, *Gardens in the Rain*, where the notes of the piano were meant to imitate the drops of rain falling on a spring garden.

Rain can mean different things to different cultures, but the experience of rain falling on human beings is a shared experience.

“I love all films that start with rain,” writes the poet Don Paterson<sup>1</sup> and it is not hard to know what he means. Rain creates a kind of intimacy, and a film that begins with rain allows the viewer to enter into that intimacy.

The climate crisis has intensified rainfall, and that river in the sky I experienced a few years ago is a regular occurrence in many regions of the world. Torrential rainfalls are much more common than they used to be, and here in Kingston it has become normal to have summer storms with unusually heavy rainfall, to see water coursing through the streets of this neighbourhood, or pooling on top of overflowing city drains. Rain is to be feared for the damage it can cause to life and property. Perhaps there is no other natural phenomenon that occupies such a range of extremes — from the Romantic spring shower to the flash flood that takes out an entire village.

There is no conclusion to be reached here, about rain or climate crisis or anything else. I have let the idea of rain move my thoughts in one direction and then another — the way actual rain moves down a window, sliding this way and that, never really going in a straight line, but connecting to itself nonetheless and making a path along which it can travel.

Words are not dissimilar to raindrops, falling on this sheet of paper as the rain falls to earth, and then simply coming to a stop.

<sup>1</sup> *Rain* by Don Paterson; Farrar, Straus and Giroux; New York; 2009



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

