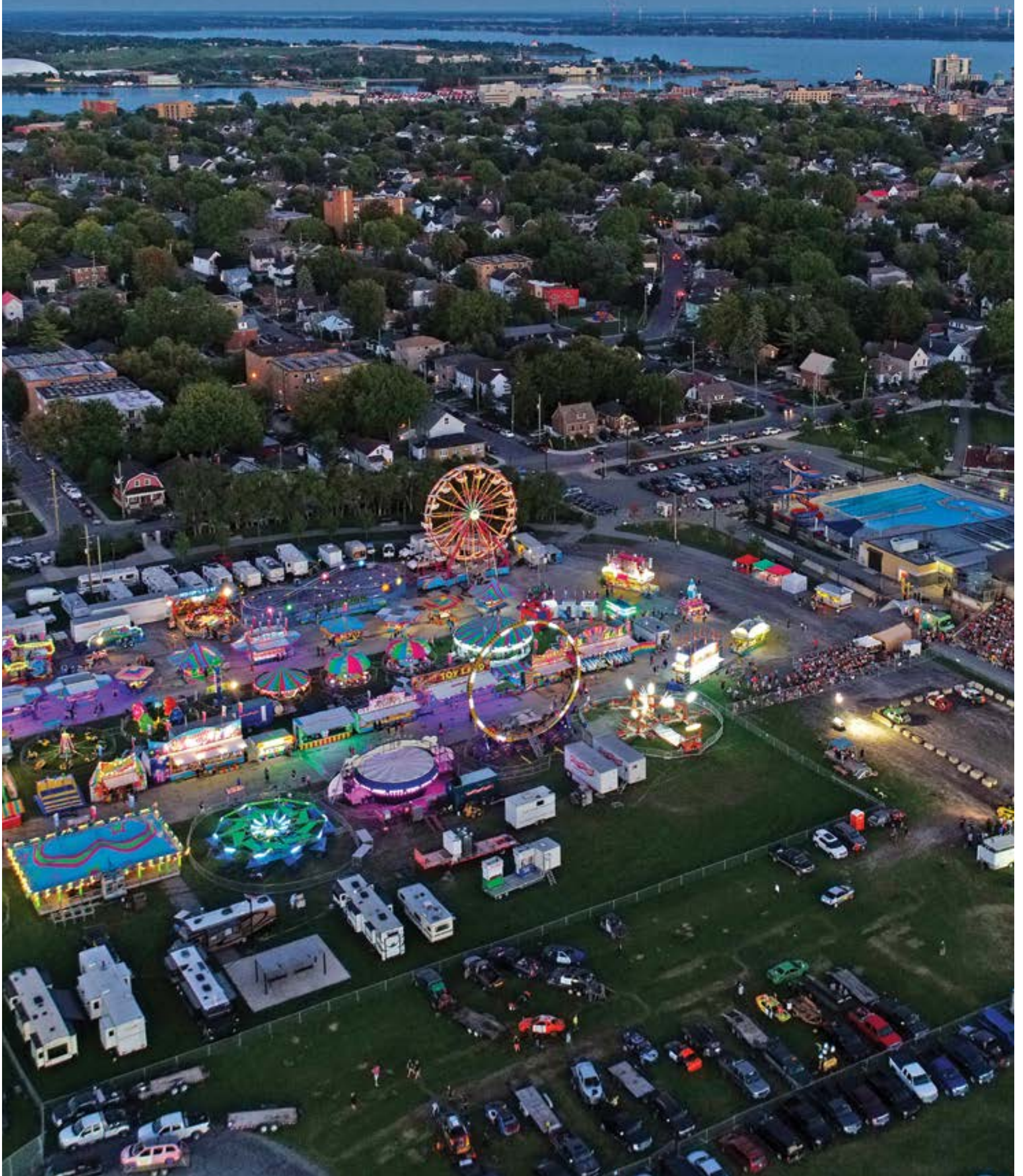


Issue Seven **THE** Fall 2021  
**SKELETON**  
**PRESS**





# When We Meet Again



We are optimistic that by the time you hold this issue of *The Skeleton Press* in your hands, we will be able to meet in person — and in community — again. More than a year and a half of isolation and lockdown measures have made many of us more likely to value face-to-face interactions — and the spaces where those interactions take place.

This issue of your neighbourhood newspaper celebrates the spaces where we have gathered in the past, and where we hope to gather in the future. Art venues, heritage buildings, and community centres have all been central to bringing the neighbourhood together, and we eagerly await the opportunity to return to them.

Yet as we emerge from isolation, we want to remember that these spaces remain far from perfect. Our river, which houses toxic sediment from years past, needs healing and renewal. Our public parks, which feature monuments to histories of violence and displacement, need reimagining. Many of the places where we gather are still tainted by legacies of gentrification, homophobia, colonialism, and environmental destruction. We don't want to go back to the ways things were; as we emerge from the pandemic, we want instead to build better and more inclusive spaces.

Fortunately, here we also have legacies: legacies of communities coming together to fight for our spaces, and legacies of a neighbourhood grounded in justice and belonging. We've seen people rally to save heritage buildings and carve out space for LGBTQ communities. We've seen youth build skateparks, and communities come together to plant Little Forests. This summer, Indigenous community members successfully fought for the removal of the Sir John A. statue in City Park. Other community members are coming together to advance a thoughtful, community-driven approach to addressing toxicity in the river, and to advocate for social services for those in need.

As we come together again, let's recall and celebrate the fact that we live in a vibrant place with such a history of community. But let's reflect, too, on the role of change, transition, and renewal in keeping this community strong, so that we might build it stronger.

We can't wait to see you!

## CORRECTIONS from Issue 6 (Spring 2021)

Anne Kershaw's name was omitted from the list of copy editors.

An article by Erin Ball and Georgina Riel used a misleading and problematic headline. The headline does not represent the views of Erin or Georgina and was not written by them, despite being presented as if it were in Erin's voice. It also presents a problematic perspective on Disability that does not reflect the social model of Disability, which holds that people are disabled by society, not by any physical condition. Also, credit for an accompanying photo taken by Bon Evans was omitted and a subsequent social media post about the article did not acknowledge the contribution to the article by Georgina Riel.

An article titled "Fact: Feminists Aren't Just Funny, They're Hysterical" was inaccurately attributed as a solo writing piece, rather than one written by a collective—the Hysterics Collective has explained that writing together was at the core of the process for developing this work.

*The Skeleton Press* apologizes for all errors and omissions.

## 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

**VIEW OR DOWNLOAD PAST ISSUES AT:**  
skeletonparkartsfest.ca/the-skeleton-press

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*The Skeleton Press*  
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Kingston, Ontario  
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**COVER PHOTOGRAPH:** Courtesy of Kingston Fall Fair  
**ILLUSTRATED ICONS:** Pierre Collet-Derby

## 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.), Next Church (89 Colborne St.), BSE Skateboard Shop (225 Princess St.), and Free Little Libraries in the Skeleton Park neighbourhood

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# Together in Ceremony

Action to remember residential school survivors and to remove statue an important step in working for reconciliation

STORY BY REVOLUTION OF THE HEART  
PHOTOGRAPHY BY JOSH LYON

**During the first half of June, people passing City Park could observe the John A. Macdonald statue cloaked in a red cloth. Adorning the base of the statue were a Revolution of the Heart banner, a Mohawk warrior flag, children's shoes, and a gorgeous orange fabric with the words "Every Child Matters." For eleven days, a sacred fire burned brightly and opened a spiritual doorway that connected us to our ancestors.**

The Indigenous-led action, supported by settler-allies, was in response to the unearthing of the bodies of children at the sites of former residential schools, and in recognition of the central role of John A. Macdonald in setting up these institutions and other forms of colonial violence against Indigenous Peoples. We intended to advocate for the removal of the statue, raise public consciousness of the genocide that took place in our homelands, and bring together the local community.

Around the clock, firekeepers took turns maintaining the sacred fire, surrounded by a circle of cedar leaves and logs of wood. Anyone who needed to, or chose to, offered tobacco, sage, and cedar as medicines to the fire, as prayers and reflections. The sound of drumming and singing voices could often be heard in the park as Indigenous and non-Indigenous people held space for the community. Folks willing to engage with other community members interested in the ceremonial action and other events sat at the information tent and answered questions. Local supporters generously offered food and coffee to the firekeepers and others. The lives of those who never came home from residential schools were mourned, remembered, and honoured during the Revolution of the Heart: A Ceremonial Action.

On the morning of Friday, June 18th, a large crowd gathered as we cheered on municipal workers who removed the statue from its pedestal, loaded it up and drove it to storage. We remained onsite until Sunday evening, when we participated in a letting-go ceremony conducted by Indigenous community members equipped with the teachings. The firekeepers — instructed and led by one of the core organizers of the Revolution of the Heart Ceremonial Action — laid the sacred fire to rest in ceremony.

Not everyone who came to the site was kind and supportive. We had aggressive people scream in our faces, shouting racial and obscene slurs at firekeepers. Someone hostile to the cause threatened to come back to the site with a gun. During the opening day of the ceremony, commencing the lighting of the sacred fire, a "cultural liaison" police officer dressed in plain clothes paraded around with his gun. He was later asked not to return to the Indigenous ceremonial site in the public park with a deadly weapon.



Nevertheless, we stayed steadfast in our principled stance, and support from the community outweighed instances of intimidation and attempts to invoke fear. As organizers, we became aware of the necessity of doing work to support the unlearning of racism and misinformation circulating around the John A. Macdonald statue and Indigenous and state history. Throughout the ceremonial action, we held teach-ins, a talking circle, and a potluck, and provided other opportunities for learning and community engagement to help mitigate some of the issues that arose.

The statue being removed and put into storage are small steps in acknowledging the harm created by John A. Macdonald and his instrumental role in creating the residential school system. We do not want the statue moved to the cemetery where it will be continually celebrated by the historical society,

making a mockery of the pain and genocide of Indigenous peoples. Respecting the words and wishes of the local Indigenous Katarokwi community and the traditional leadership and chiefs of nearby Indigenous communities such as Tyendinaga and Alderville First Nation is crucial in demonstrating a genuine intention to be in an anti-racist and reconciliatory relationship with Indigenous peoples.

As organizers of the Revolution of the Heart Ceremonial Action, we want to see the statue appropriately placed in a museum or Bellevue House with a more honest rendering of history, colonization, and genocide. From our perspective, the City of Kingston and the broader community could continue to move in the right direction by focusing on installing a public memorial to the survivors of residential schools as well as to those who never made it home.

There is an obvious need for a permanent outdoor Indigenous gathering space and a cultural centre within the Katarokwi-Kingston area. When the Katarokwi Friendship Centre closed, this left a gigantic gap that has not been yet addressed. Efforts towards revitalizing Indigenous space in Katarokwi-Kingston also require non-Indigenous people to get behind supporting these goals and calls to action. We encourage the Katarokwi-Kingston community to attend local Indigenous events and connect with their Indigenous neighbours to listen and learn. Folks should also seek out Indigenous voices and make a conscious and intentional effort to engage and respond to the requests of Indigenous peoples who have essential knowledge to offer and who know the pathway towards a more just, equitable and vibrant Katarokwi-Kingston community.

**REVOLUTION OF THE HEART** is a collective of Indigenous and settler-allies of conscience who live in Katarokwi-Kingston.





# Queer Spaces, Queer Places

A gay and lesbian history of Kingston

STORY BY MARNEY MCDIARMID

**In the late 1990s, hardly anything was written about queer lives in smaller Canadian cities and towns. It was as if we didn't even exist. As a young university student, I set out to change this by compiling an oral history of gays and lesbians in Kingston. I scoured old newspapers in the archives, put up countless posters advertising my research, and painstakingly sought out people to interview. Participants weren't easy to come by. People were concerned about confidentiality, many had moved away, and others simply did not believe that the stuff of their lives constituted history. "You know I was never involved in politics," they would confess, "and I certainly never did anything famous!"**

I ended up interviewing forty people, some of whom opted for the use of their full names and others who did not feel safe being identified. The following snapshots apply a queer eye to the city of Kingston. The stories illuminate various ways people built community and advocated for a society in which they were accepted and understood. This year it was at the kitchen table, not a pride parade, that my ten-year-old and I talked about why Pride month is important to our family. The conversation reminds me once again of the importance of history, and how easily certain stories can disappear from our collective past.

## For more stories

like these check out [www.stoneskingston.ca](http://www.stoneskingston.ca) where the Queen's University Archives has compiled social histories of Katarokwi/Kingston.



**MARNEY MCDIARMID** is a ceramic artist who has lived in the Skeleton Park neighbourhood for over 20 years. She is one of the founders of the reelout queer film + video festival and has always had a strong interest in creative ways of getting research out of the academy and into the streets.



### CITY HALL

In 1985 there was a gay "Kiss-In" on the steps of City Hall. More than 400 people lined up across the street to watch.

### BOTTERELL HALL

"I came to Queen's in 1969 and headed right over to the medical library to look up homosexuality. I found out that the American Psychiatric Association considered it to be a mental illness.... I did a lot of research which was actually pretty discouraging.... It was all very mental illness focused in those days." — Maureen Fraser

### THE QUEEN'S HOMOPHILE ASSOCIATION

"I was helping on the phone line, went to every single event, and I was getting sex . . . a social butterfly, I did develop that role, I really came into my own at QHA, I became very much the co-hostess." — Harvey Brownstone

When the QHA was formed in 1973, Queen's was one of the last universities to have a gay student organization. Over time members organized weekly socials, operated a help line, advocated for queer rights on campus, and even organized a few talks in a local high school. For many, involvement in the QHA played an essential role in their journey toward self-acceptance.

In 1976, the QHA hosted a national conference that revealed how queer politics in a smaller town differed from those in larger cities: The QHA was heavily criticized by other groups for planning sessions that included gay men and lesbians together instead of in separate spaces.

### CITY PARK

"Growing up in Kingston I'd hear about it, so I just went over one night and realized there were a lot of men driving around and walking around...if you were there after midnight, chances were, you were gay. You'd go say 'hello' to someone...and then you could get invited to parties, get into a social scene." — Trevor

## QHA NEWS

VOL. 1 NO. 1 FREE



UNDERSTANDING GAY MEN AND WOMEN

A MONTHLY PUBLICATION OF QUEEN'S HOMOPHILE ASSOCIATION

"Pervert Park" has a long history of being the place for gay men to have sex, to socialize, and to find a path into Kingston's gay subculture. Although many narrators limited their use of the park for fear of police harassment, gay bashing, or risk of being seen, its central location, economic accessibility, and anonymity made it accessible to a diverse group of men.

Before an outbreak of Dutch Elm disease in the mid-1970s, the park was like a forest, covered with trees and massive bushes. When the city cleared the dead trees, they also cut back the bushes. This change to the geography of the park resulted in the relocation of cruising to down near the water. Some believe that the City made these physical changes not only because of the trees, but also to send an explicit anti-gay message.



### LASALLE CAUSEWAY

"When I came here in 1962 there were 6,500 men at the military base. The city was loaded with men, just packed. There were a lot of gays in the military. Oh, one of the great hobbies was to get in your car, and say, because the bars closed at midnight or twelve thirty, and most of the guys had to be back by 12, [you'd] get in your car and drive that La Salle Causeway. They were short of money, naturally — in the military they weren't paid too well — and they were always walking up the hill so you'd stop and offer a lift and they'd get back a lot later than they should have. It was a real cruise strip in those days, from the S&R along there, across the La Salle Causeway, and up the hill. Oh, a lot of gays, a lot of gays were in the military." — Earl

### THE KINGS (NOW THE TOUCAN)

In March 1977, The Kings kicked two men out of the bar for dancing with each other, sparking protest. The owner of the bar commented in The Whig: "I've seen girls dance together frequently, but it doesn't conjure up in my mind that they might be funny. But two men doing a dance where each partner holds each other was offensive to me and to everyone in the place. I don't have anything against these people, I feel sorry for them. But I'm a businessman, not a sociologist."

### BALL PARK IN CITY PARK

Softball and women's sports were a vital way for women to find each other. "I don't think the het [heterosexual] women on the team knew we were lesbians, or if they did, they certainly didn't want to talk about it. I don't think we were out to those other women [straight players] but I don't think we cared what they thought. We felt like we were the best players on the team, and they were lucky to have us." — Maureen Fraser

### THE WOMEN'S CENTRE, CORNER OF CLERGY AND QUEEN STREETS

"In the early stages there were only two of us who actually considered ourselves as lesbians, all the rest were straight feminists. But our goal at that time wasn't so much towards a lesbian organization, at that time it was towards getting the women's centre established and it was also going to be a place for lesbians as well. We did have a lot of discussion about it. Some women were uncomfortable with it, some women were curious. Some women wanted to find out more about it. . . . there was lots of energy, lots of youth and energy and there was dedication, maybe even fanaticism, cause we all knew we were right. We all knew we had to be feminists and if we wanted to be lesbians too that was fine." — Pat



# It was as if we didn't even exist.

VG VICTORIA and GREY TRUST 8 1/2% / 8 3/4% 5 yr. G.I.C.'s

**The Whig-Standard**

KINGSTON, ONTARIO, MONDAY, MARCH 14, 1977

**GREENWOOD** — CAR AND TRUCK RENTALS 181 DALTON ST. TEL: 344-1111

PAGE 29

## 30 pickets call for same-sex dancing Lounge orders homosexual males off the dance floor



PROTESTERS PICKET THE KING'S LOUNGE ON PRINCESS STREET OVER BAN ON SAME-SEX DANCE PARTNERS

By ANN LUBITS  
Staff Writer

About 30 members of the Queen's Homophile Association (QHA) picketed the King's Lounge on Princess street Saturday, protesting a policy disallowing same-sex dancing between two males.

An incident on March 3 was the focus of the protest. Don Schneider, a member of the QHA and a male friend were dancing together when asked by manager Richard Mitchell to leave the premises.

At the same time, two women dancing together nearby, were allowed to continue, reflecting what Mr. Schneider calls "discrimination against two men on the basis of sex."

"The implication was clear that it is OK for women to dance together — that they would only dance because there were no men to dance with and to announce the fact they were available," said Mr. Schneider.

"We did not simply go from the incident to picket, but tried to talk to him (Mr. Mitchell). I spoke to him on the phone a couple of times — he said he would apply the rule to women as well."

Ron Mitchell, owner of The King's Lounge and the Queen's Hotel, said the policy will remain the same, regardless of Saturday's protest. In addition, he said, he would no longer serve members of the QHA "if I am able to recognize them."

"I know that my daughter will dance with other girls — there's nothing abnormal about that — I don't think she's queer. I've seen girls dance together frequently, but it doesn't conjure up in my mind that they might be funny," he said.

"But two men doing a dance where each partner holds each other was offensive to me and to everyone in the place. I don't have anything against these people, I feel sorry for them. But I'm a businessman, not a sociologist."

Mr. Mitchell said that when Mr. Schneider and his partner got up to dance, "everyone else left the floor" — which is why he asked them to leave. That was denied by Mr. Schneider, who said at least three male-only couples had been dancing for about two hours, when they were asked to leave. He said the couples were dancing apart to very full music.

"His rationale was that it wasn't good for business. I asked him how many complaints he'd had that particular evening and 'too many' was his answer. I asked him what 'too many' was, and he said 'we would be enough,'" said Mr. Schneider.

He said that behind Mr. Mitchell's arguments was "a pretty strong anti-gay bias on his part." The Queen's Homophile Association may file a complaint with the Human Rights Code as another form of protest, he added. In the meantime, they would boycott the establishment and hope everyone in sympathy for the cause would do the same.

"We want to make it clear that we're not out looking for a reaction, not trying to manufacture an event. The story that the King's Lounge simply happened — we were there for the same reason anyone else would go there, to have a look at the place and see what it was like."

"We don't know exactly what the rules are at other places, but we're not going around to try to manufacture something."

**Professor:  
6 shots fired  
at Kennedy**

**Humane society offers \$500  
Horse-killer reward \$1,000**



A provincial government official Sunday added \$100 to a reward offered for information which would lead to

and at a nearby farm. The dead animal was the son of a horse judged grand

champion at a Toronto show. Provincial police continue their investigation.



# Remembering The Artel



STORY BY JAN ALLEN

**The Artel initiative was conjured when Gjen Snider (now Jennifer Snider Cruise) and Matt Abramsky forged a partnership between Modern Fuel Artist-Run Centre (MFARC) and Keystone Property Management. With the help of a tight-knit group of artists, musicians, and filmmakers, they crafted a new collective, struck the lease agreement, signed on tenants, and launched within an astonishing six-month timeframe. This artist-accommodation venue, tucked in a spacious stone duplex at 205 Sydenham Street, opened its doors in 2006 with rooms for six artists. Through the following decade, the ground-floor spaces were home to a mind-bogglingly diverse program.**

The history of this space is lively and contested, peppered with improbably great moments and points of coming together in brilliant artistic flowering, fluid collaborations, and generous access. Here, healthy hermeticism mingled with community-building, generative cross-disciplinary aesthetics, and, it must be said, moments of convulsive conflict. Eventually, when an ever-shortening cycle of reinvention eroded basic functions from housekeeping to administration, The Artel fell victim to its own success. Filmmaker and one-time resident Alexandra Berceanu has captured aspects of this arc in her mesmerizing 2017 documentary featuring interviews with many of the key players intercut with archival video (see the link below).

One of the goals of The Artel was to encourage young artists to remain in Kingston by offering affordable accommodation and accessible presentation space with the understanding that this would generate a scene; a critical mass of grassroots activity would be an engine of creative life.

Today, as the building is listed for sale as a “Carriage Trade Luxury property,” it’s a good moment to ponder the ways in which the physical and social space of The Artel enabled fresh modes of creation/presentation, forged opportunities, and empowered artists. For many, disappointment over its 2017 closure is now softened by recognition of its sheer improbability: its ten-year lifespan was a huge achievement, a testament to the vision of its founders and the appetite of the community to nurture a collective space dedicated to experimentation.

To research this piece, I chased down a baker’s dozen of former residents, collective members, and presenters willing to share their recollections. While participation at The Artel was multi-generational, ranging from high school students through seniors, many of the program drivers were in their twenties at the time; the energy, idealism, generosity, and unruly character of The Artel reflects this demographic’s capacity and worldview. For them, the story of The Artel is deeply personal, a part of their own coming-of-age story.

With high-risk creative programs at the heart of The Artel, an anything-might-happen buzz permeated the space. I miss the surprise that unfolded around every visit: the place invited you to reset your aesthetic register. The richness of the programs is evident even in the fragmentary documentation on The Artel website and Flickr account (see links flagged below). Events repeatedly mentioned in interviews include Wendy Huot’s Cameo Cinema series (2007-2011), Artel Concert series, Bruce Kauffman’s poetry@theartel open-mic readings (2009-2015), dance parties, twenty-four-hour comic making, Pasta Artist Please dinners, Workscited performances (2006-2007), collage parties, Tone Deaf, Mouthy performances with Vince Perez and Laura Kelly, the Jenn Grant concert (2007), the Princess Towers Notions exhibition (2012), P.S. I Love You concerts, media-artist John Porter’s performance, and numerous solo and group exhibitions. Bands arising from this milieu include False Face, Try Harder, Old Haunt, Sleuth Bears, Hand, Dorothea Paas, and Graham Beverly.

One certainty: The Artel is much missed. Another: its traces continue to course through nodes of the city’s cultural milieu, percolating in the networks of creators in the Skeleton Park neighbourhood and beyond. To best convey the spirit of this decade-long experiment in artistic community and perhaps to spark further conversation, I end with words shared by a handful of the instigators.



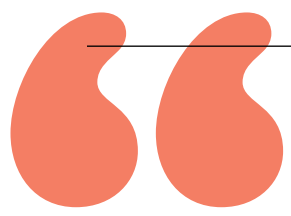
## **Jennifer Snider Cruise (COLLECTIVE MEMBER 2006-2008):**

In November 2005 I was Program Director of MFARC and was approached by Keystone Property Management, specifically the president’s son Matt Abramsky, about whether I would have any interest in temporary use of one or more of Keystone’s vacant listings for artistic purposes. I recall Matt had just returned from a trip to Soho in New York and had learned of the impact that arts communities could have on property development (gentrification of course but, be that as it may...) he was motivated and interested in experimenting with that in Kingston.

## **Benjamin Nelson (COLLECTIVE MEMBER 2006-2008):**

I was in charge of designing the original logo and my grandfather and I built the hanging ‘motel’ signage that once adorned the front of the building. But I mostly made event posters and handbills! ...[T]he most memorable event I was involved in was a concert poster exhibition titled “Printed in Blood” (2007)... [Then there was] the opportunity to have bands I was in at the time present our music to a wider audience and make great connections with not only other artists and musicians from Kingston, but also touring bands from out of town. This would provide the opportunity to tour outside of Kingston for the first time in my life...The Artel started to become a renowned and very popular DIY venue in Kingston, something this city didn’t have at the time and definitely suffers from missing one currently. The greatest aspect of Mark [Streeter] bringing these exciting bands to town is that a lot of people that attended these shows ended up starting their own bands, eventually opening for the touring bands passing through town.





A CRITICAL  
MASS OF GRASS-  
ROOTS ACTIVITY...  
AN ENGINE OF  
CREATIVE LIFE







**Rebecca Soudant (RESIDENT 2006-2009):**

Artists, I believe, have to be careful where they live and who they spend all of their time with. There are many people that do not appreciate artists and many places that are quite void of artwork by local and current artists. The Artel is one special place where I felt appreciated, at home, and fulfilled. The Artel made possible all the connections (other artists, musicians, and galleries) that are necessary to an artist. I could not have lived in a better place as it revived my artistic spirit...To be surrounded by creative people is the most important thing we can do for ourselves and for others. The Artel, to me, was like the butterfly effect — the short time it was operating was enough to last me a lifetime of creative possibilities.

**Jessica Rovito (RESIDENT 2006):**

It was so beautiful to be part of this beginning. It was continually changing, and you were among friends in a make-it-work ethos. The Artel was made possible by a collection of the right people at the right time. The potential for tension around residents' sense of ownership was eased by the inclusivity of artist residents like Rebecca Soudant, Irina Skvortsova, and Lisa Visser....It was such a rare thing: someone gave young people the key and said, "try things out" and "see if it works."

**Michael Davidge (RESIDENT 2006-2008):**

One of my favourite memories of those first few months was the night that The Artel Collective and members of the Backyard SexBand went caroling at Christmas and stood on the spiral staircase in the S&R Department store with Ben Nelson leading us in a rendition of "Last Christmas" by Wham!... One of the most successful moments of Modern Fuel/Artel synergy occurred when we were able to organize a month-long residency for the artist Jess MacCormack at The Artel. They created a video ("We become our own wolves" [2007]) out of workshops they led that month with women at the Isabel MacNeil House (prison)... Living at The Artel required a high level of openness and acceptance to what went on there. There was very little boundary between private and public space, and it was a bit like there was a house party every night of the week....[T]he importance of The Artel was really less about the individual artists who presented there than the diversity of the artists who were able to present there because of how accessible it was to the community.





**Vincent Perez (COLLECTIVE MEMBER 2006):**

The event/programming that was most memorable to me is the Canadian poster art exhibition series I organized with Benjamin Nelson. It featured screen-printed poster art by Seripop (Montreal), Michael Comeau (Toronto) and Benjamin Nelson (Kingston). The exhibits were paired with performances by the poster artists' musical projects — AIDS Wolf and Sax Laden come to mind. These were the first exhibits that occurred in the space and the scrappy medium suited the lo-fi presentation — did we use bull clips to hang the work? Tape? The bodies of work on display were at once art and documents of art-making — gig posters. They were colourful, sexy, confusing, hilarious.... Above all, The Artel gave us relative ownership of a space. That matters immensely. It became an incubator for any number of young art careers, and I believe it kept artists here who would have otherwise quickly moved on.

**Irina Skvortsova**

**(RESIDENT 2006-2007 AND COLLECTIVE MEMBER ON AND OFF TO 2009):**

Because The Artel looked like a conventional old house it made it easier for people to enter it and encounter and confront artistic ideas inside it...A third show Rebecca [Soudant] put together featured her bringing in wheelbarrows full of sand and dumping the sand in the living room. The artist really took advantage of the space to create an immersive interactive experience... I also want to mention a dance event we had with an Ottawa band Woodhands. The openers were a local band Magic Jordan. It was summer and the place was totally jam packed full of people...I think collective operations of an art venue can be empowering to emerging artists and art supporters, because your voice matters, and people rely on you to get things done. The Artel allowed many people to try running an arts venue, with all the joy and the bumps that come along the way. I hope we have another Artel pop up in Kingston again. We need that kind of organic and bubbling artistic presence.

**Neven Lochhead**

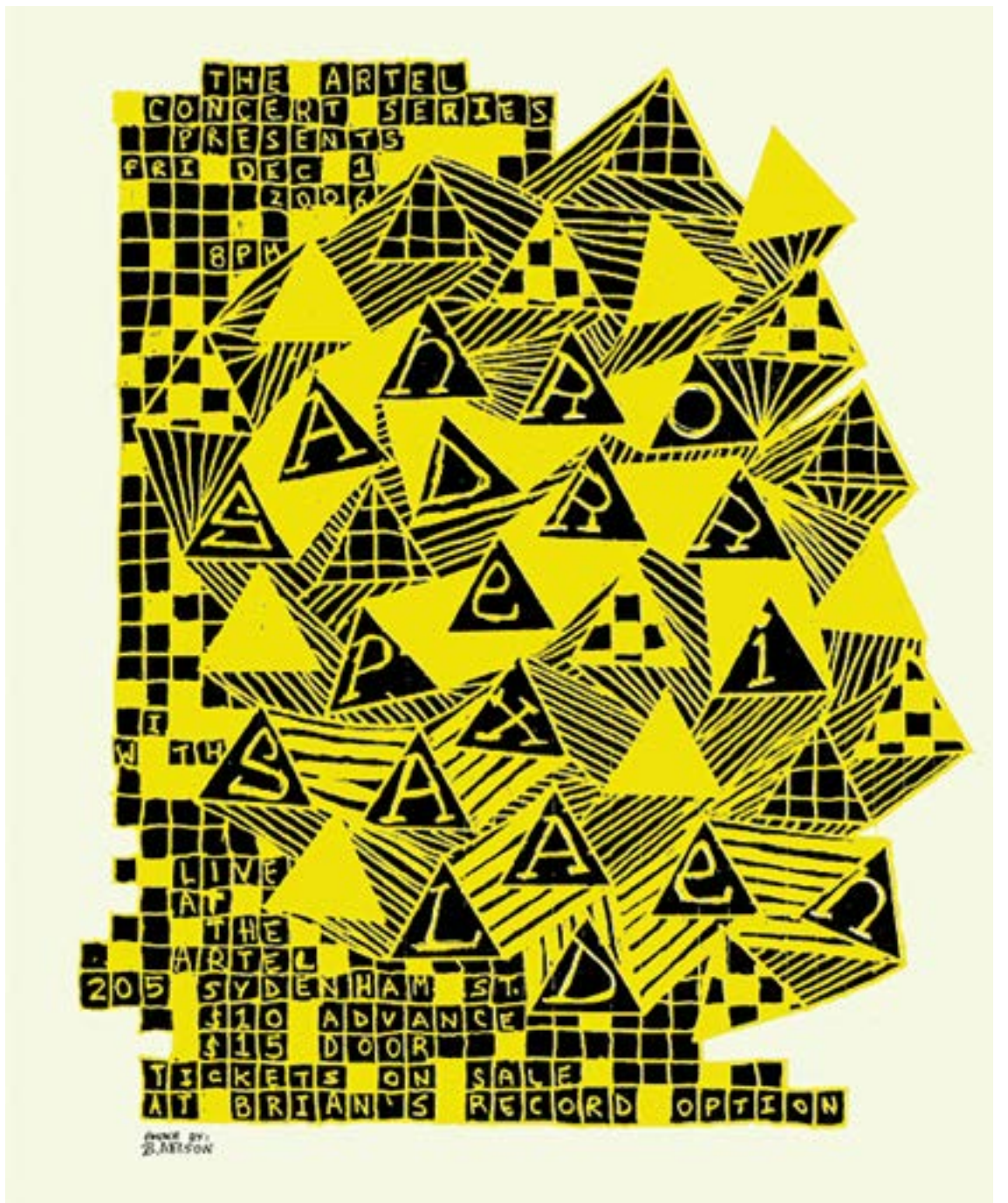
**(COLLECTIVE MEMBER AND RESIDENT 2012-2013):**

I even held the openly mocked president position for about a year... The Modern Fuel-sponsored John Porter film screening and projector dance involved throwing the image around the room to create a magical illusory effect of the projection cutting through the wall. ... being huddled in that space with about fifteen people felt absolutely packed...[there was something] about the sufficiency of this small scale to sustaining experimentalism: as an aspiring artist, I got so pumped up about that. It was permission-granting...I wonder now if we got too fervent in our pursuits. There was a risk of creating opacity, of closure, despite our desire for porosity and generosity. I'm most struck that it [The Artel] existed at all... now I think about the incredible work of the people at Modern Fuel who dreamed up this utopian vision and saw the project through ... That spirit and ambition has stayed with me and is something to measure my own work against. It shows what's possible with a certain spirit of invention and commitment. That's the spirit I'd like to remember most.

**SOURCES AND RESOURCES:**

Alexandra Berceanu's *The Artel*: <https://youtu.be/oa2END2ZpCc>  
The Artel website: [www.the-artel.ca](http://www.the-artel.ca)  
Image bank: <https://www.flickr.com/photos/the-artel/> and [www.flickr.com/photos/the-artel/albums/](http://www.flickr.com/photos/the-artel/albums/)  
"Artel Sessions Vol 1": <https://otoacoustic.bandcamp.com/album/artel-sessions-vol-1>

**THE AUTHOR THANKS:** Alexandra Berceanu, Michael Davidge, Bruce Kauffman, Sunny Kerr, Neven Lochhead, Jeremy Mulder, Benjamin Nelson, Vincent Perez, Matt Rogalsky, Jessica Rovito, Jennifer Snider Cruise, Irina Skvortsova and Rebecca Soudant.



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



# All the Sea's a Stage

The infamous theatre company that raised its sails in Kingston

STORY BY JANE KIRBY

"Building a ship was the original dream," says Adriana "Nans" Kelder, one-half of the duo behind the Caravan Stage Company, undoubtedly one of the country's most unusual theatre companies. "Paul said, let's go out West and get a ship and sail around the world."

More than thirty years later, when the Caravan, led by Nans and her partner (in life, crime, and theatre) Paul Kirby, ended up in Kingston's Inner Harbour, this dream finally became a reality.

The story of the Caravan goes something like this: Fleeing Montreal after facing charges for their involvement in the underground newspaper *Logos* in 1968, Nans and Paul headed to B.C. with the dream of starting a theatre company. After toying with the idea of doing theatre on boats and buses, the pair eventually settled on a set of horse-drawn wagons, and the Caravan Stage Company set off from Victoria in 1970.

The company eventually acquired a piece of land in Armstrong, B.C. Paul had no interest in "real estate" theatre or land ownership, and the company split up in 1987. Half the troupe remained in Armstrong (forming what is now the Caravan Farm Theatre), while Nans and Paul took the nomadic Caravan Stage Company on a tour of the Gulf Islands (on the B.C. coast) by ferry, reigniting their love of ships. Then they headed East.

They ended up on Wolfe Island, where they spent several winters and staged *The Coming*. In a controversial style characteristic of the Caravan, the show was seven hours long and essentially held the audience (which had been bussed in from the ferry terminal) hostage on the rural island property.

It was during this time that Nans and Paul met local sailmaker and Inner Harbour resident Andy Soper, whom they had approached about repairing one of their performance tents. "Their enthusiasm was infectious," says Soper. "They were wildly exotic, pragmatic but completely unrestrained. They could do anything."

Enchanted by Paul and Nans, Soper was delighted when they mentioned they were thinking of getting a ship. Having worked on barges in England, Soper suggested a Thames-river barge and whittled them a model. This style of boat has a flat bottom designed for shallow water and rigging that can be lowered to go under bridges, making it ideal for traveling the waterways of North America and Europe.

Soper then introduced the pair to Bruce Muir, former manager of the Kingston Marina, and Jonathan Watson, a Gananoque-based ship surveyor. Paul and Nans nicknamed them "the three amigos," and credit them, along with B.C.-based shipbuilder John Dearden, as integral to making the ship a reality.

Although the sale of their horses and many of their wagons provided some initial cash, the company still lacked the hundreds of thousands of dollars needed for the build. Muir provided the company with space in the Kingston Marina, and Paul and Nans started phoning companies asking for donations of materials. As materials came in, work proceeded slowly over the course of four years, with the company and the build-crew housed in shipping containers and trailers.

Soper describes the atmosphere in the shipyard during the build as "always good and hearty. There would be impromptu theatre happening, they'd be workshopping something, there was music, there was always a campfire."

Paul and Nans are emphatic about the support they received from the Kingston community during this time, noting that they received donations of everything from gloves to fridges from local businesses. Michael Davies, former owner and publisher of *The Whig-Standard* (and once an ocean sailor) was a major benefactor, and local arts administrator Ted Worth continued to do the company's books long after it left Kingston.

But the company was not without its controversy, including one issue that would plague the Caravan for many years. Early on, the build raised the ire of Jim Salt, a local representative of Transport Canada, who felt the ship and its operations should meet the requirements of a commercial vessel rather than a pleasure ship. This was a problem for the company, which hoped cast members could double as crew members. The conflict was temporarily resolved after it was the subject of an episode on CBC-TV's *The Fifth Estate*. (The issue resurfaced when the Caravan attempted to return to Canada for shows in Kingston in 2014 and 2015. They finally made it across the border, on the West Coast, in 2017.)

The boat, named the *Amara Zee*, which Nans defines as "the heart of the sea goddess and the love of the sea," launched in 1996. "We had a huge party," says Paul. "It was very dramatic, moving the boat. The sky was spinning and cloudy . . . As soon as the boat hit the water, the sun came out, and musicians [members of the Kingston Symphony] climbed up the gangway and played Handel's Water Music."

By 1997, the build was complete, and the *Amara Zee* was the stage for two shows: an afternoon show called *The River*, and a stage adaptation of Farley Mowat's *A Whale for the Killing*. The Caravan then set off for Montreal.

Since leaving Kingston, the *Amara Zee* has served as the stage for shows across Europe, the U.S., and the Pacific Northwest, and is now docked in Richmond, B.C. Paul and Nans are currently preparing for the company's final show under their leadership, a show they hope will open in 2022.

"Looking back over my years of work, this was one of the highlights," says Soper. "This was a dream come true. There was a constant level of excitement. They were tearing their hair out half the time, but they did it with great relish and dedication. It was definitely one of the more colourful things to happen in this neighbourhood."



**JANE KIRBY** is a circus artist, writer, and editor. She lived on and crewed the *Amara Zee* in 2017, when she toured with the Caravan as an aerialist. She is unrelated to Paul Kirby, but enjoys sharing his surname.



IT WAS VERY DRAMATIC,  
MOVING THE BOAT. THE SKY  
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PHOTO CREDIT: Courtesy of the Caravan Stage Company





# Reading, Writing, and Rallying 'round Books

STORY BY MERILYN SIMONDS

A soft chorus rose from the lineup outside the ballroom, billowing to a hubbub as the crowd entered, people beckoning across the room, hailing each other, clustering on the seats, bending their heads together. Aren't you...? How have you been? Have you read...?

When Kingston WritersFest was reborn as part of a national network of literary festivals, I thought we were creating an exciting literary event for Kingston. By the second year, I realized I was wrong. We had opened a space for a community to grow.

I made a habit of watching every event, slipping into the back, not for the entire hour, since several events were running at once, but for as long as I could stay. I wanted to see what was happening on stage, check that the conversation was stimulating and provocative, inspiring, fun, but my attention turned inevitably to the audience, to the nodding heads and puzzled frowns, to the hands scribbling notes, the shoulders leaned together.

All this came back to me last summer on my first day in a restaurant after more than a year. I was sitting on the new patio at the River Mill, revelling in the pool of voices around me, laughter, exclamations, barely whispered confidences. This is what I had been missing. I had Zoomed with friends and family and colleagues all through the pandemic; I didn't lack for personal contact. What was absent was the flocking of random humans: strangers, acquaintances, faces familiar and new. This was community — a whole greater than its parts.

At the table next to me, a woman was saying, "Books are my life," and I thought, "Yes, me too."

Kingston WritersFest grew out of one such moment of blind certainty. In 2009, my publishing friend Jan Walter and I were meeting with the women who'd been running a small festival at the library — Deanna MacDonald from Kingston Frontenac Public Library, Martha Rudden from Kingston Literacy & Skills, and Kelly Wheaton of Indigo Books & Music. I'd suggested the meeting to offer my help, but they began by admitting they were burnt out, they had full-time jobs and just couldn't do the festival any more. I looked at Jan and said, "Shall we?" She nodded. The trio happily handed us the festival's name, we gathered a roundtable of energetic book-lovers from the community, and together shaped a festival in the mould of the best in the country.

Our tagline was "a readers' and writers' festival." I had been to dozens of festivals by then, sat on countless stages, which had forged in me a conviction that the best literary events were not performance so much as a shared moment when the writers of books and the readers of books experience the essential nature of literature — that imaginative charge leaping from individual to individual, generation to generation, back as far as there have been humans with stories to tell.

The community of Kingston WritersFest has endured for a dozen years and shows no sign of dissipating. From my hands, the directorship went to Barbara Bell and now to Aara Macauley, who was among the festival's first supporters when she ran the marvelously quirky Get Funky Boutique.



Authors Madeleine Thien (top left) and Elizabeth Hay (centre) discuss their novels with avid readers at the signings that follow every event. Below, from left, Deborah Ellis, Jamie Swift, Karen Connelly, and Steven Heighton talk books onstage with moderator Lawrence Scanlan. **PHOTO CREDIT:** Bernard Clark

With the adaptability of every true community, WritersFest shifted in response to the pandemic to become a virtual event in 2020.

"Through our programming and partnerships with the Kingston Frontenac Public Library, OnePage (onepagelit.ca), and Word on the Street Toronto, we were able to ensure that our incredible audience still got their literary fix, and our authors got the attention their work deserved," says Macauley.

On the upside, the pandemic opened up a world of authors. "We hosted Torbjørn Ekelund from his home in Norway, and Emily St. John Mandel chatted from her home in New York with Bill Richardson, who was in Vancouver." And the festival featured Louise Penny in the sole Canadian "stop" of her 2020 book tour.

This fall, WritersFest continues as a virtual festival with thirty-five events onscreen from September 21 to 26, including local authors Steven Heighton, Jason Heroux, Susan Olding, Kirsteen MacLeod, Abena Beloved Green, and Helen Humphreys — as well as national luminaries such as Guy Vanderhaeghe, Amber Dawn, Thomas King, Eden Robinson, Mark Anthony Jarman, Camilla Gibb, David Macfarlane, and André Picard.

However they gather — in front of private screens or rubbing shoulders in a ballroom — Kingston's readers and writers continue to build a community for the love of books.

**MERILYN SIMONDS** is a local author and Founding Artistic Director of Kingston WritersFest. Her new book, *Woman, Watching: Louise de Kiriline Lawrence and the Songbirds of Pimisi Bay*, will be published in May, 2022.

**'The community of Kingston WritersFest has endured for a dozen years and shows no sign of dissipating.'**





# A Lesson in Balance

The birth of Skeleton Park Creations

STORY BY ERIN JONES

**Since moving back to Kingston, Skeleton Park artist Taylor Bailey-Hopkins has channelled her energy into creating. But it hasn't been an easy journey.**

Born and raised in Ajax, Ontario, Bailey-Hopkins first fell in love with Kingston when she attended Queen's University. After graduating, she moved to Ottawa to study public relations at Algonquin College, and once she completed that program, she began working for a tech firm in the capital. Then, feeling the need for a change, she and her boyfriend were drawn back to the allure of small-city living. The two loved the Skeleton Park area and looked forward to making the most of Kingston's thriving art scene.

"We wanted to come back," says Bailey-Hopkins, "because it's really hard to make friends in Ottawa. And we both really liked Kingston."

Then the pandemic hit, and everything changed.

Soon after moving into the Skeleton Park neighbourhood and starting a new job at Queen's, the provincial lockdowns and public health measures put a halt to everything. Bailey-Hopkins found herself working from home, feeling isolated and struggling with her mental health.

"I feel a little shorted," she says. "We had all these plans and they haven't been able to happen. I've been diagnosed with depression and anxiety since university. Not seeing my friends, not being able to dance, not having any of that social life, it's just been hard."

Needing an outlet to distract herself, Bailey-Hopkins decided to try her hand at making polymer clay earrings. Utilizing her marketing background, she created an Instagram account, and Skeleton Park Creations was born.

"Making earrings is kind of therapeutic," Bailey-Hopkins says. "It was something to put some energy into. I was, like, if this first batch doesn't go well, it's okay, not my calling." Although she never considered herself to be artistic – "Looking back," she laughs, "my first batch was so bad" – working with new materials, choosing colour palettes, and creating designs with polymer clay have opened up a whole new world for her. "I thought to be into art you had to be able to paint or draw, so I stayed away from it for a really long time. The earrings kind of took me by surprise. After I started them, I learned that art is so much more than just painting."

Following the vigil for George Floyd at Skeleton Park, in June 2020, Kingston blogger Tianna Edwards, of Keep up with Kingston, created a Black-owned-business directory to amplify Black voices and entrepreneurship in the community. Bailey-Hopkins, who had just started selling her earrings, says being featured in the directory helped grow her business and make connections in the community.



PHOTO CREDIT: Courtesy of Skeleton Park Creations

“

**You can't really grow if you don't put yourself in uncomfortable situations**

"Tianna has been super helpful," says Bailey-Hopkins. "I've met so many people in general from that list. I don't think I would have gotten this far without that initial support. It's instilled a principle that I need to continue to amplify other people's voices when I can."

With growth come challenges and setbacks. By the end of the year, Bailey-Hopkins was feeling burnt out. Working three other jobs, while trying to keep up with the demand of Skeleton Park Creations, has been a lesson in balance.

"You can't really grow if you don't put yourself in uncomfortable situations. But other times, I think it's equally important to know when enough is enough," she says. "I didn't think I'd put so much pressure on myself to create. As soon as you cross the line where you feel like you're only making things so that other people will buy them, you feel like you're not doing it for yourself anymore."

Not "focusing on the numbers" and creating with new materials such as metals and stamps, Bailey-Hopkins is learning to let go of doubt and create for joy. Skeleton Park Creations earrings are now sold online and at the Montreal Street Collective; an Etsy store is also planned for the near future.

"As long as I'm happy with what I put out in the world, and the other person is happy too, that's success to me," she says. "Even if I make six of one style, and only one person buys it, that's okay. You don't have to sell out something to know that it's been appreciated."

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.



# Dylan Lodge

Planted at the Heart of the musical crossroads

STORY BY CLARA WAY BRACKENBURY

**In a world filled with distractions, and in an industry often powered by ego, it can be difficult to stay present and true to the heart of music. Rarely, you will stumble across an individual who has the fortitude to sit in the present moment, in the here and now, comfortable in the artistic paths of others, planted at the crossroads of it all. Dylan Lodge is one of those individuals who can traverse the muddy waters of music and remain at its very centre.**

Dylan is a local musician, audio engineer, and producer in the Skeleton Park and larger Kingston community. He has played in many different bands, and has had a hand in various musical projects, such as The Rhythm Haints, Musgrave Ritual, Hinterwood, Talk of the Street, The Placeholders, Jo Jo Worthington, Piner, and most recently, Stucco. He has recorded artists such as The Glorious Sons, The Huaraches, Ken Yates, Kathleen Edwards, and The Blue Stones.

I first met Dylan when I was eight years old. He and my older brother were close friends and they played together in many different bands for close to a decade. I fondly remember attending their shows, where I would spend the night dancing with cousins and neighbours. My developing musical ear became tuned to what was then the aesthetics of their musical affections — where blues met punk, and teenage angst spewed a heavy rock tone — in locations around the city, from backyards, to church halls and city parks, to school gymnasiums and even the occasional bar.

Dylan was a quiet presence on stage, but never understated in the leadership and musicianship he displayed. He didn't seem to aspire to the classic role of the guitar-slinging dude, mostly because he was too dedicated a band member. For Dylan, the show was always about his musical team, and the craft of the songs and music they were creating.

When I was sixteen years old, I had written some songs and had a strong desire to record them. Dylan, a recent graduate of the Music Industry Arts Program at Fanshawe College, was apprenticing at North of Princess Recording Studio. I emailed him, and before I knew it, I was laying down the tracks of my first song. Not yet warmed up, my morning voice cracked; my inexperience and vulnerability were laid bare. However, Dylan's calming presence in the recording process was good medicine. I was soon able to find my voice both figuratively and literally. Dylan, an artist himself, embraced and respected the musical decisions that I made, treating me as an equal. He instinctively knew which parts needed tweaking but always consulted me on my own artistic vision. He brought tenderness to my raw songs, and his guitar/bass sang along with me. Little did I know that Dylan was soon to become a more integral part of my music as a bandmate. He played a crucial role, adding depth and atmosphere to my music while at the same time supporting my artistic expression. Once again, Dylan was at the heart of it.

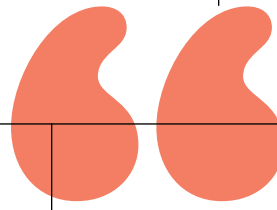
Aaron Holmberg, technical director at the Isabel Bader Centre, audio producer for Full Frequency Studios, and previously house engineer at The Tragically Hip's Bathhouse Studio, has seen Dylan working as a production assistant in recording studios as well as in live-performance environments. He notes, "Dylan has a calm, confident but humble personality in the studio." Holmberg emphasizes that "his combination of talent and personality have given him the tools to succeed and navigate the sometimes high-stress and competitive environment that is the professional music industry. You crack a bottle of 'Dylan' and you're like, 'Holy shit, this guy is really good!'"

Zane Whitfield, owner of North of Princess Recording Studio, has worked with Dylan recording various musical artists hailing from Kingston and beyond. Dylan has been Zane's "right hand man" for five to six years now. Whitfield says that "everyone who comes into the studio falls in love with Dylan. He's just kinda that quiet guy that knows the right thing to say at the right time. He's good at knowing when to speak up and most people listen when he does. He is always game for going the extra mile and going after something."

Recently Dylan has been working on a dream pop musical project called Stucco with Grace Dixon. Dylan explains that "Grace and I have a lot of really similar tastes in music, so it's always very exhilarating." Stucco has recently released an EP called *Nostalgia* and a single called "Sensitive." Stay tuned for more Stucco!

I asked Dylan how he stays so present in a rapidly changing and pressure-based industry. He replied, "I like to pursue the more creative side of music. If you're finding enjoyment and creative fulfillment in what you're doing, you're probably in the right place." As the music scene changes, as artists come and go, as new songs and creative endeavours come to light, one thing is certain: Dylan Lodge's unpretentious manner and deep respect of artistic expression means he will stay "in the right place," an integral part of Kingston's musical community, at the heart of it!

Listen to and buy "Sensitive" as a digital track at: [stucco2.bandcamp.com](http://stucco2.bandcamp.com)



I LIKE TO PURSUE THE MORE CREATIVE SIDE OF MUSIC. IF YOU'RE FINDING ENJOYMENT AND CREATIVE FULFILLMENT IN WHAT YOU'RE DOING, YOU'RE PROBABLY IN THE RIGHT PLACE.



**CLARA WAY BRACKENBURY** was born and raised in the lovely environs of Skeleton Park. She is a singer-songwriter and the front woman of her musical endeavor, Piner. Currently, she is based in Nova Scotia where she spends her time writing songs, organic farming, and studying Nursing.



# Is Ours the Fairest of the Fall Fairs?

STORY BY PATRICK KENNEDY

With the coronavirus having officially cancelled the Kingston Fall Fair for a second straight year (the midway came to town for the 2021 long weekend), perhaps now is a good time to reflect on the fair's recent history – but certainly not its entire past, because this annual autumn mix of farm life and family fun was already up and running thirty-seven years before Confederation.

For the past seventy-one years, the fair has been a much-anticipated event for residents of the greater Skeleton Park neighbourhood. “As a little kid I often fell asleep listening to the sounds of the fair that drifted out over the neighbourhood,” remembered 72-year-old Henry Corcoran who grew up in the shadow of the fairgrounds. “You got excited just listening to those sounds. The fair has always been a big event in this town.”

Pine Street resident Shelli Campeau, a married mother of two teenage sons, recalled: “We could hear the loudspeakers and the (demolition) derby from our house. When our boys were little, there was a level of excitement every September, although this past September was eerily strange with the fair absent.”

High on the list of Campeau family highlights was the time the two sons, Ben and Nic, with help from their “Noona,” submitted two huge zucchinis in an agricultural produce competition. “When we arrived at the fair to see all the entries, the boys saw a blue ribbon attached to their submission,” the mother recalled. “They’d won first prize, a whopping six bucks! We’d buy a family pass and try out every ride. Then we’d treat ourselves to cotton candy and walk home after a fun-filled day.”

The Kingston Fall Fair would have turned 191 this year, even though the next fair — hopefully in 2022 — will celebrate the 190th anniversary. Either way, that’s quite a run, albeit one interrupted from time to time. Such longevity makes our fair an elder among the 212 fairs held each year in Ontario prior to the pandemic.

Our fair dates back to 1830, when it was known as the “Midland Central Fair.” The four-day festival, minus the midway and cotton candy, was held on a sprawling tract of government land that ran along Bath Road from present-day Palace Road and out past Portsmouth Avenue. The government of the day, eager to promote and showcase agricultural techniques and productivity in Upper Canada, kicked in financial support and the use of the land for plowing matches, horse racing, culinary contests, and such. There was even a “team-building exercise” without the latter-day frills: the tug-of-war. Prizes were awarded for the finest fields of crops, best bushels of wheat, oats, barley, peas, potatoes, and to the farmer with the top harvest from a single acre. Competitions for homegrown produce included butter, cheese, maple sugar, even wine.

Following a near decade-long hiatus in the 1880s, then Prime Minister and local MP John A. Macdonald in 1889 opened a provincial fair at the aforementioned exhibition grounds on Bath Road. It wasn’t until 1950 that the brand-spanking new Memorial Centre became the local fair’s permanent home.

Evan Wells, eighty-four, has been a regular fair patron for more than sixty-five years, including the last fifty events at which he has supplied the sound equipment. For years Wells was also the official starter for the three days of harness racing on the track behind the Memorial Centre.



PHOTO CREDIT: Courtesy of Kingston Fall Fair

“The fair is special because it shows city folk the importance of rural life,” said Wells, the son of a Morton blacksmith.

For enterprising youngsters who lived nearby the Memorial Centre, the fair’s arrival signalled a way to pick up a few extra dollars. “Once the fair ended, you’d try to get a job tearing down the midway and carrying stuff to the trucks,” recalled John Patrick, who grew up on Adelaide Street and has run the fair’s popular Country Singing Showdown for the past twenty-three years. “If you got \$5, it was a big deal.”

In the days before casinos and umpteen lotteries, the fair was also where one could legally gamble — be it on Crown and Anchor (a dice game), nightly games of Bingo, by playing ring toss or by shooting toy ducks with a faulty sighted-in pellet gun.

The fair meant a mini-surge in commerce for several blacksmiths who operated in the Skeleton Park environs. The Corcoran brothers, Henry and John, Earl Sweetman, and horsemen such as Ed Bret kept busy shoeing, repairing wheels, and training their horses.

“My grandfather went to fairs all over Ontario,” Henry Corcoran noted of his namesake, “and he always said the Kingston Fair was hard to beat.”

The fair is organized and operated by the Kingston and District Agricultural Society (KDAS), which was formed in 1925. During a time when most agricultural boards are experiencing lost revenue due to COVID-19, KDAS is taking the high road and spending money on this year’s virtual Showcase.

The society is springing for prizes, boosting prize money, and buying gift cards from sponsors in appreciation for past support.

“We’re in a pretty envious position here compared to other fair boards,” said seasoned KDAS member and six-year president Yvonne Compton, a lifelong fair patron whose father drove horses at the old Memorial Centre racetrack. “We don’t own the land,” she said. “We have an agreement with the city that gives us exclusive rights to the land for one week a year. We’re in the black with no expenses, so we decided this is a good year to give back to our supporters and say thanks.”

Translation: Increased prize money for the top three finishers in an array of contests. Normally, World’s Finest Shows, the midway operator, donates two bikes to young winners of the fair’s annual colouring contest. But with the midway sitting unused in a warehouse in southwestern Ontario, KDAS stepped up to donate four bikes, two boy’s and two girl’s. “We also went to our sponsors and bought gift cards, which we’ll use as prizes. It’s our little way of saying we appreciate their support.”



**PATRICK KENNEDY** was born and raised on Charles Street. He is a two-time Ontario Newspaper Award recipient and retired in 2017 following a 30-year career at the Kingston Whig-Standard. His freelance column appears every second Saturday in the Whig-Standard.



# Art in the Park and Beyond

Next Door 2021 Saw Artists Engaging with Neighbours

STORY BY JOCELYN PURDIE

*Next Door* is an annual public art exhibition displayed throughout the Skeleton Park neighbourhood. The inaugural exhibition in 2020 featured work by artists working through the first year of COVID-19 pandemic restrictions. Nineteen artists from the neighbourhood were invited to create work on front porches, in gardens, in driveways, on windows, and in Skeleton Park. The project celebrated the work of artists working in this particular place and time.

*Next Door 2021*, curated by Nicole Daniels, featured the work of twenty-six artists in sixteen installations, and included everything from painting and sculpture to performance art and augmented reality. This year the project spoke to a more expansive notion of community, and included artists across Katarokwi/Kingston while activating community partners throughout and beyond the Skeleton Park neighbourhood.

*Next Door 2021* featured artwork by Jane Kirby and Erin Ball; Clelia Scala; Jane Derby; Chaka Chikodzi; Kemi King; GHY Cheung; Simon Andrew; Abolition City; Onagottay; Sadiqa de Meijer; Hayden Maynard; Ying Lee and Kate Yüksel; Nicholas Crombach; Amelia Glancy and Benjamin Nelson; John Wright; and Jenn Norton, Matt Rogalsky, Laura Murray, and Dorit Naaman.

The pandemic provided the framework in which the artworks exist, but not all the artists focused on the pandemic. Instead, COVID-19 hovered in the background as artists explored the meaning of community in its broadest sense. In her book, *How to Do Nothing: Resisting the Attention Economy*, Jenny O'Dell provides a thoughtful narrative on taking time out from our technology-driven lives to emphasize the value of face-to-face connections with all aspects of our communities. These connections are grounded in space and time and can bring our awareness to the places and histories that provide context for what we do. In building a 'sense of place' we must learn how to care, observe, and give attention to what is going on around us.

The artists in *Next Door 2021* reflected on how we, individually or collectively, understand and build a sense of place and community through attention to history, injustice, identity, race, personal relationships, and nature. What was notable this year was the range of media presented. The works included several performance pieces as well as artists working with community partners to present their works in a schoolyard, a long-term care facility garden, a storefront window, and a vacant lot. One piece drew on materials from the archive of the former Prison for Women; another worked with the river as a collaborator of sorts.

Nature played a major role for many of us as the pandemic lingered. Green spaces provided an oasis where we could focus our attention on these spaces and the value of the flora and fauna that inhabit them. For some, nature provided a place of reflection and meditation; for others, a call to action. Clelia Scala's mixed media work *Micro-Macro* focused on oft-overlooked forms of plant, fungi, and animal life that are part of a tree's ecosystem. Playing with scale, she created a tableau of oversized mushrooms and reed-like plant forms on the ground and swaths of oversized spiders scaled on the tree's trunk. Presented in the yard of an elementary school, this fairy tale-like installation belies the complex and symbiotic relationships that sustain our environment.

Chaka Chikodzi, a Zimbabwean-Canadian sculptor, used ancient volcanic rock from Zimbabwe to create his installation *Stone City Sculpture Garden*. Mounted on plinths and placed amongst flowers and shrubs, these sculptures — with their rough-edged outer surfaces and hollowed-out swirly centres polished to a smooth, glossy surface — conveyed the geological history of a particular place and a snapshot of nature's lasting impact on our world. In this location, in this place, these sculptures are also a meditation on the brief cycle of human life.

Nicholas Crombach's *Every slated lot has a previous story* was installed inside the fenced-off area of a yet-to-be-developed lot on Bagot Street. The installation brought attention to urban growth and the challenges of maintaining heritage character and a "sense of place" in an evolving city. The installation consisted of dense clusters of broken plate-glass that protruded from a mound of rubble. The pieces of plate glass are in pairs, with dried, pressed flowers sandwiched between them. In a neighbourhood where gentrification and development are a concern for many, this piece is a reminder of the historical layering of the Swamp Ward neighbourhood and, by extension,

Kingston's urban environment as a whole. In late June, Nicholas Crombach's piece was vandalized. Blue paint was splashed on the work, and text with anti-gentrification slogans appeared on the rubble and on the developer's sign on the fence surrounding the lot. In an interview with the *Kingstonist*, Crombach indicated that he saw the "uninvited act" as providing a "new level of emotional and legitimate tension to the work."

GHY Cheung's sustained actions in *Tying every strand of grass not yet a knot*, took place in McBurney Park periodically over the course of the near summer-long exhibition. The act of bending, folding, and pulling each blade of grass in the park was motivated by the artist's "counter-monumental mood." As the artist stated, this action is one that is "easily undone, endlessly repeated, and never complete." Cheung's simple gestures are quiet moments for reflection despite the enormity of the task proposed and bring attention to the park and the histories that encourage collective engagement with this site. As we remove monuments to Sir. John A. Macdonald and call commemorative naming into question, this piece reminds us of the urgency to build a community of care, understanding, and respect for all.

Jennifer Norton, Matt Rogalsky, Laura Murray and Dorit Naaman partnered with the Ka'tarohkwi\* river to present *Swimming Upstream*, an interactive augmented-reality experience. Set against the backdrop of the river in the Inner Harbour, this auditory and visual experience is a tableau vivant of sorts, featuring fish that were once abundant but still thrive in the river despite human interaction. *Swimming Upstream* reflects on the history of this area as a place where the Mississauga people fished the waters and lived in a symbiotic, respectful relationship with the river and its inhabitants.

Kemi King's *Waterworks* was a solo performance that took place on the front lawn of her home. She explored what it meant to be a Black queer woman in this particular place and time. Passersby saw a child's wading pool on the lawn, with various objects (a child's plastic truck, a small, turquoise polka-dot bucket, a glass jar) placed in a circle. The stage was set for us: a woman enters the scene and stands next to the pool wearing a two-piece bikini, a long black wig, sunglasses, and a wide-brimmed hat. King's spirited monologue was a glimpse into her world. At times playful and at other times heart-wrenching, the performance saw the artist delving into preconceived notions and stereotypes and how they are used by marginalized people to navigate the social world. The piece spoke to the challenges facing people trying to carve out community amidst the challenges of being different.

Abolition City, a collective of artists and abolitionists, created a bridge between the Skeleton Park neighbourhood and prison communities through the multi-media installation *Neighbouring Tightwire*. The installation was inspired by *Tightwire*, a publication created by prisoners in Kingston's Prison for Women (P4W). From 1973 to 1995, the publication allowed these women to express messages of survival and empowerment. Located at a neighbourhood home, the piece included a large screen with a collage of drawings by *Tightwire* contributors on the porch; a projection of poetry and prose at night; and, near the sidewalk, a small letterbox filled with educational resources on prisons and an invitation for people to leave letters, poems, stories, or tokens for our prison neighbours.

All the artworks in *Next Door 2021* were engaging and thoughtful, and a reminder of the value of face-to-face encounters in real-time that keep us sharing, caring, and acting out.

\*This spelling is based on Laura Murray's research into Indigenous place names. [swampwardhistory.com/katarokwi-the-original-swamp-ward](http://swampwardhistory.com/katarokwi-the-original-swamp-ward)



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



# Inside the Outside Art Show

Documenting the joy that comes with creativity

STORY AND PHOTOGRAPHY BY SULEIMY RIOS AGUILAR

KEEP AN  
EYE OUT FOR  
NEXT DOOR  
IN 2022!

Last year presented difficult moments for many of us, and artists were no exception. Last summer, I was asked to be part of documenting the Next Door 2021 series of art exhibitions around the Skeleton Park neighbourhood. As a young photographer and supporter of artists, it meant a chance for me to showcase their hard work during recent months. The exhibition features various pieces outdoors — from parks to houses, and even art in front of the water at Doug Fluhrer Park.

As someone who loves art, I couldn't miss this opportunity, especially because art helped me keep my sanity during the pandemic. I believe everybody is born sensitive to art. While some people develop art skills, others, such as me, are more suited to appreciating what other artists create.

When I talked with some artists, they shared with me that they lacked motivation and creativity at the beginning of the pandemic. However, making art allowed them to bring their spark to life. During the opening of the event, I couldn't be happier being outside, finally seeing artists doing what they love, and watching people enjoying the satisfaction that arts give.

My photo essay features the work you would have found outdoors around the Skeleton Park Neighbourhood this past July and August. One of the advantages of art outdoors is that every day is a different experience. If you visit Nicholas Crombach's installation at Bagot and Dufferin streets, the perspective is different in the morning than it is in the evening. On a sunny day you can see the bright glass and the sunlight passing through the flowers pressed on the different levels of glass. If you are walking around Sydenham Street, you will be surprised by what you can find if you look at the trees. Clelia Scala's piece, located at Central Public School, seems at first to blend in with nature, but then it can startle someone as it jumps out from the peaceful setting.

Some pictures are in black and white, especially those focusing on people's expressions and emotions. I considered this format thanks to my mentor, Chris Miner, who shared with me inspiration from different photographers — especially film photography in black and white. I do hope you didn't miss the opportunity to visit the different art installations around the neighbourhood. Clearly, the joy was out there.



#### SULEIMY RIOS AGUILAR

is a photographer from Merida, Mexico. She loves to photograph musicians and is excited to see her work printed for the first time in Canada.



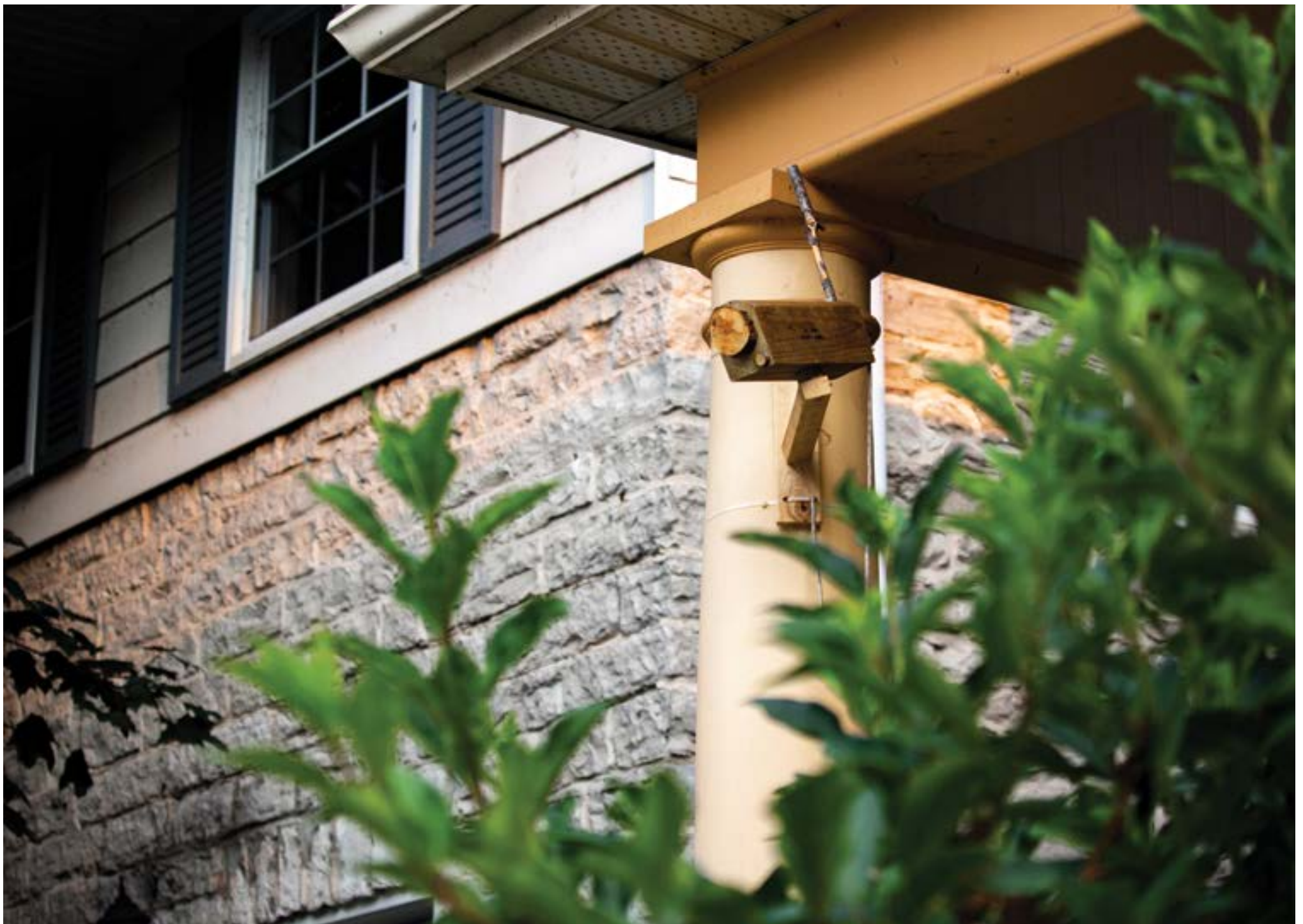
#### TOP TO BOTTOM:

Nicholas Crombach, *Every slated lot has a previous story*;  
Hayden Maynard, *The Urban Environment*





**CLOCKWISE FROM TOP LEFT:**  
Chaka Chikodzi, *Stone City Sculpture Garden*;  
Nicholas Crombach, *Every slated lot has a previous story*; Simon Andrew, *City of the Surveilled Project*

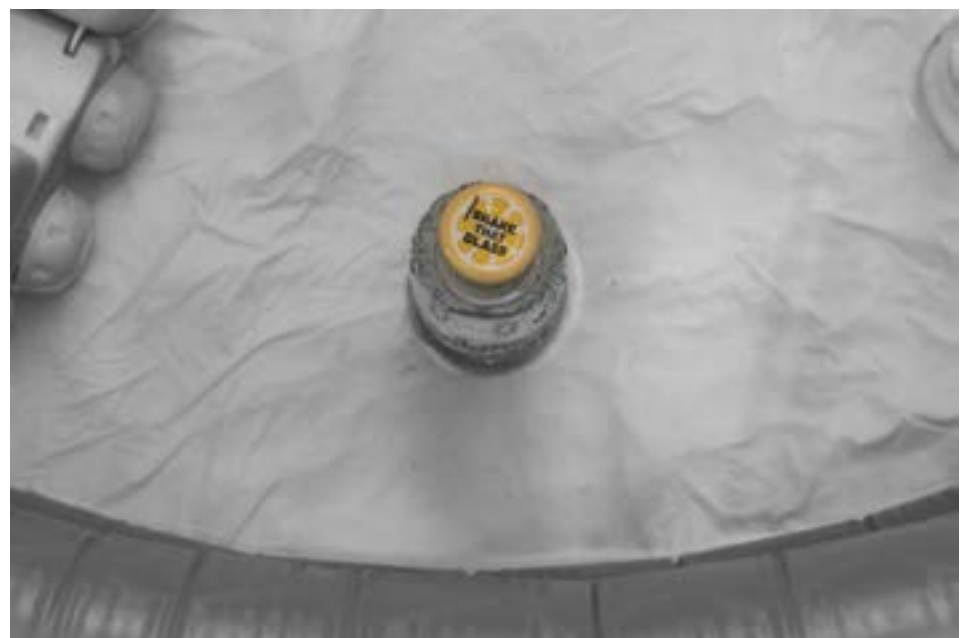






**CLOCKWISE FROM TOP LEFT:**  
Spencer Evans and The Goat Steppers; Clelia Scala,  
*Micro-Macro*; John Wright, *Our Oldest Neighbours*





**CLOCKWISE FROM TOP LEFT:**  
Jane Derby, *Ghost Tree*; Jane Kirby + Erin Ball, *Friends and Flights*; Kemi King, *Waterworks*; Clelia Scala, *Micro-Macro*





# Little Forests, Big Ideas

Forest initiatives bring together communities and offer environmental benefits

STORY BY MELANIE DUGAN

PHOTOGRAPHY BY JOSH LYON

It's a bright, sunny Sunday morning in mid-June with a slight breeze taking the edge off the heat and keeping the insects at bay. A couple of dozen people are at work in a field dotted with daisies, vetch, and clover, off Highway 15 east of Kingston.

They are laying down cardboard, hay, woodchips, and compost; transferring wheelbarrows full of soil; mowing pathways and swards in the knee-high grass. Children, adults, people of all shapes, sizes, and colours work steadily. A low murmur of conversation is broken now and then by a shouted question or comment.

Maureen Buchanan, a member of the Anishinaabe community, stands beside me and explains the scene, pausing every now and then to respond to a query or make a suggestion.

The land we're standing on is owned by the United Church of Canada, but the church is repatriating it to a non-profit Indigenous organization. Maureen tells me that as an urban community, Kingston's Indigenous population doesn't hold any land of its own. The transfer will rectify that.

This is significant because many see humans' relationship to the land and all fellow-travellers on it — animals, birds, fish, insects, plants, and fungi — as central to the Indigenous worldview. Working together to build connection with the non-human community helps build connection in the human community; learning to respect the differences in the non-human community helps people better understand the diversity in the human community. Beyond that, Indigenous spirituality generally recognizes that humans do not own the web of life but are enmeshed in and dependent on it. Our well-being depends on the land's well-being, so it is our responsibility to be conscientious stewards.

An Indigenous Food Sovereignty Garden of local species is already flourishing here, and includes strawberries, mint, and comfrey, as well as the three sisters — corn, beans, and squash. Today, Maureen is spearheading the creation of a Little Forest.

Little Forests are the brainchild of Japanese botanist Akira Miyawaki, who champions the reintroduction

of indigenous plants into damaged ecosystems. The aim of the Little Forests movement is to recreate indigenous forests using local species, a process that produces a rich pioneer forest in twenty years (compared to the two hundred or more years it would normally take if nature were left to its own devices).

The procedure involves careful preparation of the site, which includes amending the soil with organic matter and identifying and collecting local native species. The native seeds are carefully germinated and then planted randomly and densely in a space as small as one hundred square metres (about the size of a tennis court), to mimic the variety in a natural forest. The result is an area that acts as a carbon sink, drawing carbon out of the environment. Little Forests have also been shown to regulate temperatures, improve air quality, buffer noise, increase biodiversity and local genetic diversity, and improve people's mental, physical, and spiritual health.

In southern Ontario, Maureen points out, roughly eighty percent of indigenous species have been displaced or eradicated in areas to make room for human-centered activities, including agriculture, urban development, and transportation. Planting intensive Little Forests will help rebalance the environment and mitigate the effects of climate change.

A few days later, Josh Cowan and I get together in a local park to discuss the Little Forests initiative he is organizing in downtown Kingston. Josh, who describes himself as a person "who has the honour of sitting with the Indigenous Health Council for Kingston Community Health Centres," met Maureen when they were both working in Napanee. He comes from a background of public policy, non-profit, and social justice work. When Maureen began the Little Forest initiative on Highway 15, Josh was interested with how the underlying Indigenous philosophy meshed with other ideas he was exploring. An initial interest in artificial intelligence lead him to explore complexity and chaos theory, which led him to emergence theory, a theory that suggests that a system composed of simple components can have an effect greater than the sum of its parts. From this he came to understand that "everything is connected," a concept reflected in the

Indigenous knowledge "that humans don't stand outside nature." Instead, Josh says, "humans are nature. There's no separation."

This prompted Josh to explore the idea of creating a Little Forest in Kingston. "They are great for the environment," he says, noting that climate change models suggest that unless the situation changes, Kingston will experience tornadoes, drought, and torrential downpours in the future. But according to Josh, healthy soil of the kind found in a Little Forest can absorb water better than degraded soil and can store moisture during a drought. The forest itself can act as an air conditioner, cooling the surrounding area.

Those are specific benefits, but Josh sees longer-term, more profound advantages to creating a Little Forest. "My hope is we can come together as a community, identify a space, and work together to heal the earth. In healing the earth, we work towards healing society.... Only recently has environmental work been allied with social justice work — it should have been all along."

Half a dozen people have already signed on to the project. Their first challenge is to find land in downtown Kingston on which to grow the Little Forest, which will join the existing Little Forests currently coming along on Wolfe Island, at Lakeside, on Lyon Street, and on Highway 15.

"Everything about a Little Forest is the opposite of what we're encouraged to do in a capitalist society," Josh points out. "In building a Little Forest we take responsibility for the land so we can't profit from it — no one can. It's a big step in making ourselves and our community healthier."



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



# “Water Is Life”

Questions Persist about Proposal  
to Dredge Inner Harbour

STORY BY JEREMY MILLOY



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**In April, City staff proposed to council that the City work with the federal government on dredging the inner harbour. This initiative surprised many people, including me, someone who works full-time on environmental matters for the Sisters of Providence. But the proposal has been a long time coming.**

You likely already know that the inner harbour of the Cataraqui River is a beautiful place that supports many different forms of life: turtles, fish, birds, people. You probably know, too, that the river bears the toxic legacy of generations of colonial capitalism. For decades, the inner harbour was Kingston's industrial waterfront. Businesses such as the Davis Tannery treated it like a garbage disposal. They dumped toxic effluent into the water. Beneath the placid surface of the inner harbour lies sediment contaminated with high levels of mercury, chromium, PCBs, and other pollutants. The federal government has listed the inner harbour as a "high priority for action" site on its *Federal Contaminated Sites Action Plan*.

"My son is rooted here, in Kingston, and has grown up on the banks of the river. He knows we do not swim there because the water is not clean," says Lindsey Pilon, mother, educator, and Indigenous community member. "I wonder and worry if he has yet sensed the weight of the toxic inheritances which his generation has been gifted."

How to address this toxic legacy has been debated and discussed for decades. During the 1990s, private citizens worked with the Ministry of the Environment to prosecute the City of Kingston for pollution at Belle Park. The case eventually went to the Supreme Court of Canada, which refused to hear the City's appeal in January 2005. The City founded the Kingston Environmental Advocacy Forum to address contamination in the inner harbour.

Meanwhile, the Inner Harbour neighbourhood has evolved from an industrial waterfront into the diverse area we know today, where people live, study wildlife, fish, and walk their dogs. People paddle boats, and MetalCraft Marine Inc. builds them. Belle Park, one of the most important areas for local Indigenous people, borders the site targeted for remediation. Before the inner harbour of today or yesterday, Indigenous people were meeting on these lands and waters, stewarding and protecting them, for many centuries.

Because the river and harbour mean so much to so many, the City's proposal was met with widespread concern about the possibility of dredging. What did it mean? Would it be safe? Would human health and wildlife be jeopardized? Councillors heard these concerns and voted to delay working with the federal government until we had more information.

Since then, I have been working with a group called River First YGK. Our group is trying to bring the questions of the community together, to make sure they are answered, and to ensure that, whatever happens, the long-term health of the river and all who depend on it is protected. We at River First do not have a stated position for or against any remediation option at this time.

We don't know what Transport Canada has planned for remediating the inner harbour. At council, staff presented an initial plan complete with suggested areas for dredging and revetment (building structures

to protect the shoreline from the force of the water) and an estimated price tag of \$71 million. However, we have since learned that these maps and figures were premature. Transport Canada has pushed back the work on this project for at least a year.

Biologist Tamsin Laing and RMC professor emeritus Ken Reimer strongly believe that remediation can be done safely and effectively. Both worked as part of the RMC Environmental Sciences Group that produced a 2014 report, which, in Laing's words, "showed that the sediment contaminants posed unacceptable risks to human and ecological health in some areas of the harbour, particularly along the western shoreline and area south of Belle Park, and that management actions were needed to address these risks."

Reimer and Laing fear that concerns raised at the April 6 council meeting detract from what they believe is necessary work. Environmental dredging, according to Laing, is a "standard remediation technique that has been used for clean up at hundreds of aquatic contaminated sites throughout North America." Based on a decade of study, the pair believe that parts of the river cannot heal themselves, and remediation is required for the areas of highest contamination.

Speaking to people who have worked on river remediation projects in other parts of Canada, I learned that these projects are incredibly site-specific. Whether dredging, revetment, and natural remediation are appropriate, and how they should be done, all depend on the specific ecosystem and its needs. Fortunately, in the Inner Harbour, we have many people who engage with the river and know it from different perspectives.

Visitors to the shoreline have likely seen biologist Lesley Rudy at work on the turtle-nesting project she has been involved with since 2016. She sees the river as "as a really unique habitat that supports lots of wildlife despite its urban location and history of industry."

While Rudy sees opportunities for improved ecosystem health with remediation, she is concerned about possible impacts on turtle basking and nesting sites, and about disruptions to the turtles' food sources. Revetment of the shoreline is a particular concern, as shoreline areas are crucial to supporting the turtles' nesting. While Rudy is confident Transport Canada will mitigate this damage as much as possible, she wonders how much damage to turtle habitats will be unavoidable. She worries about people, too. "The risks include closure of businesses and perhaps limits on activities like park use and boating while work is ongoing," she says.

Bruce Bursey, a retired civil servant who regularly uses the river to kayak, has been trying to get Transport Canada to answer some of these key questions. A veteran of many federal processes, he wonders what type of impact assessment the project will receive, and whether the increased flood and storm risks brought by climate change will be properly considered. He wants to know what will happen to the soil removed in the remediation process, and what will happen to the land that remains.

"Are there plans to sell or transfer ownership of the water lots once they have been remediated?" he asks. "How has future development on land along the shore (such as the Tannery property) been factored into the analysis?"

The involvement of the proposed Patry condominium development on the former Tannery lands is a consideration that remains murky. One of the most important things any remediation project needs to get right is source control. Put simply, if there are

still toxins leaching into the water from contaminated soil, there is no point in doing a remediation. The Patry development will be heavily incentivized by the City through tax write-offs and abatements because of the developer's promise to remediate the toxic brownfields on which his building will stand. Will this be done in coordination with the remediation of the river itself?

As environmental advocate Vicki Schmolka puts it, "It would be fantastic if the river could be revived into a healthier water system. I think, though, this may have much more to do with what is happening on land than what has been left in the riverbed. I would like to see the cleanup address the ongoing risks to the river, otherwise we're not really fixing anything."

Laura Murray knows the inner harbour's history as well as anyone. A professor of English and Cultural Studies at Queen's University, Murray trained in oral history to begin the *Swamp Ward and Inner Harbour History Project* and has studied the Indigenous, working-class, environmental, and industrial histories of the area. She notes that, "Belle Island has a centuries-old documented archaeological history of Indigenous presence. Islands were key to Indigenous people because water was key: for fishing, for transportation, and because water is life."

While aware of the river's toxicity, Murray asks whether we might repeat the mistakes of the past in trying to address them. As she points out, "Colonialism and capitalism have put a lot of poison into this continent. Are we going to turn to the same industrial processes and modes of decision-making in an attempt to remove poison as we used to create those toxifying industries?"

Pilon echoes these concerns, asking "How would the dredging process support Kingston's treaty requirements with the Indigenous people of this territory? Does this choice reflect Indigenous values, knowledge, and governance or support an Indigenous way of life on these lands?"

Murray cautions us to be careful of the concept of "cleaning up the river." A mistaken belief that problems can be simply eradicated often inflicts future harms on others, she says. "Cleaning up is usually just moving dirt somewhere you don't care about. It also, as we know now from studies of allergies, antibiotics, etc., can screw up our immune system. What amount of toxins can we — and perhaps even should we — accept? We put them there, after all."

There are no easy answers to this issue, an issue as winding, complex, and fundamental as the river itself. In the months and years to come, it's important to keep in mind that our community depends on the river, and the river's health will depend on the community's ability to protect it.

"An inviolate relationship exists between Mother Earth and Humanity. We are both seventy percent water. Humans conceived — protected — in womb water arrive to honor the waters. Water is life," says Indigenous community member Laurel Claus Johnson. "The sanctity of this unceded waterway is prime for a discussion. Gathering collaborative spirit to have Katarokwi elevate this river to Humanhood is worthwhile. Becoming the fourth community in the world to do so would have Katarokwi join an awakened world."

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**JEREMY MILLOY** is Lead, Integrity of Creation and Climate Change with the Sisters of Providence of St. Vincent de Paul. He is also a member of River First YGK. To get involved in caring for the river during this process and beyond, email [riverfirstygk@gmail.com](mailto:riverfirstygk@gmail.com).



# “North of Princess, South of Princess”

Saying goodbye to the old Vinnie’s — and the old north end

STORY BY LAWRENCE SCANLAN

When I moved from western Canada to Kingston in 1980, Uncle Bob set me straight. The lanky machinist had lived in an aluminum-clad bungalow on Markland Street before decamping to the suburban-brick digs of Reddendale. There is “north of Princess,” and there is “south of Princess” — the latter, he opined, was the preferred address. (I have since lived on both sides of the Great Divide and once proposed a magazine to explore Kingston’s deeply etched class lines and geographical boundaries. I wanted to call it Division Street.)

Today, those lines are blurred. Sydenham Ward in the south remains limestone-grand, but the humble north end is changing. Around Skeleton Park, in the Swamp Ward and Inner Harbour, I see stylish rebuilds and new-builds, solar panels on rooftops, art on porches, and lavish gardens — all declaring pride of place and typically the work of owners with disposable income, not those fearing foreclosure by a bank or eviction by a landlord. Still, this mixed neighbourhood features owners and renters next to subsidized housing, young families, and seniors — and therein lies the magic, the vitality.

In the past, the relocation of Vinnie’s — the St. Vincent de Paul Society Loretta Hospitality Centre at 85 Stephen St., which offers food and clothing to Kingston’s marginalized — would have generated little notice. The proposed venue is just seven hundred metres from the rickety old one, and still in the north end. COVID-19 hammered the dispossessed, and Vinnie’s saw a dramatic forty-nine-per cent increase in requests for meals from 2019 to 2020. Time to move.

Vinnie’s was launched by the Sisters of Providence of St. Vincent de Paul, a religious order founded in Kingston in 1861 “to serve and empower the vulnerable.” The Sisters have now come to the rescue, with funds that enabled a land purchase at 395 Bagot Street (site of the former Bennett’s grocery). There would be challenges, not least the raising of \$3.5 million to construct and furnish the new “dream” facility.

Sister Loretta McAndrews, who started Vinnie’s some fifty years ago, was driven by a practical impulse. Where there is hunger, provide food. Where there is cold, offer warmth. If clothes are lacking, collect them. And if anyone feels the pain of isolation, create welcoming spaces.

If only it were that simple. In a July 8 meeting, the planning committee that began overseeing the move considered a few dozen letters of support, but almost as many opposed. There were questions about zoning, foot traffic, truck traffic, noise and security. Would the new locale and its clientele depress property values? This was a question seldom asked in the old neighbourhood. Feed the hungry, by all means, detractors were saying — just not near me.

Judy Fyfe, Vinnie’s long-time executive director, called the online meeting “a hard night.” Supporters (like me) write their cheerleading letters and stay home, while the naysayers come armed with loud and lawyerly points. Some valid, conceded Fyfe (a few clients are, on occasion, “disruptive” though most handled the pandemic “with grace”); other fears, she said, are based on assumptions. One objector decried the “opiate-drug-addicted criminals” who frequent Vinnie’s. And while the missives in support were typically short and struck general notes of inclusivity (“YIMBY,” enthused one: Yes In My Back Yard), those opposed wrote long letters rooted in the particular.

One letter in support stood out. Annie Clifford, a lawyer in the neighbourhood, described a time in her life when she was “very low-income.” She went to Vinnie’s for clothing and never forgot the kindness she was shown. Vinnie’s, Clifford wrote, “is exactly the kind of place where someone who’s fallen on hard times is given a tender hand up.”

I asked Judy Fyfe if neighbours at the current Vinnie’s location ever complain; apparently not, ever. There is no doubt, she said, that the north end is shifting. Landlords have scooped up the last of Kingston’s cheap real estate and now they’re protecting their investments. Privilege versus poverty.

A decision about the move is months away. Meanwhile, consider this. Vinnie’s is not a “soup kitchen.” Someone dining there is not an “undesirable.” And “gentrification” is not a bad thing if it means drafty old houses become energy-efficient. The language around the Vinnie’s move ranges from the naïve to the

For more information about the St. Vincent de Paul Society of Kingston and to donate or volunteer, visit: [svdpk Kingston.com](http://svdpk Kingston.com)



PHOTO CREDIT: All photos courtesy of St. Vincent de Paul Society of Kingston

hysterical. Many are weighing in, but the voices of the poor themselves are, as always, muted. The question arises: are the poor — some damaged by chronic poverty — ever welcome, anywhere?

I recently watched an old movie about the Nez Percé chief, Hin-mah-too-yah-lat-kekt, or Chief Joseph. *I Will Fight No More Forever* offers a sympathetic portrayal of the wily, elusive chief and his band in 1877, as they were hounded by cavalry through the American northwest. What came to mind (mine, anyway) were the Belle Park evictions and the petitions against The Hub shelter: the broken promises felt the same, as did the hurried expulsion of the homeless in tents — all overseen by uniformed officers with guns.

“The earth,” observed Chief Joseph, “is the mother of all people, and all people should have equal rights upon it . . . I believe much trouble would be saved if we opened our hearts more.”

Indeed. We can do a lot more for those who have so little. At the very least, we can accept them as neighbours.



**LAWRENCE SCANLAN** is the author of 24 books, including *A Year of Living Generously: Dispatches from the Front Lines of Philanthropy*. He’s researching a book on income inequality.





**...the kind of place  
where someone who's  
fallen on hard times is  
given a tender hand up**





# A Neighbour's Perspective on the New Adelaide Street Mission

STORY BY THOM FAIRLEY

ILLUSTRATION BY FLORIANA EHNINGER-CUERVO

I would like to preface this piece with an acknowledgement of the discomfort and sense of conflict I feel in writing it. I sit here on ancestral territory of Anishinabek and Haudenosaunee peoples in the wake of recent revelations that implicate both the Government of Canada and Anglican and Catholic Churches in atrocities committed against Indigenous families and children through the residential “school” system. I feel a degree of trepidation when it comes to religious outreach models, as I have difficulty shaking the idea that there is a colonial undercurrent to such endeavours, in terms of growing a church community out of a sense of debt for services provided.

That said, I have also lived in this neighbourhood for most of my adult life, and in that time I have observed persistent and developing gaps in social services that are desperately needed by some members of our community. While I welcome opportunities to improve the lives of members of the community, I remain somewhat skeptical of the ways in which that aid has traditionally been provided.

I had the opportunity to review the preliminary recommendation report for the proposed Adelaide Street Mission, to be located at the corner of Cowdy and Adelaide streets. The Mission is being established in the Inner Harbour neighbourhood by the local Anglican Diocese. Taylor Lynch, the Mission's Community Engagement Coordinator, undertook extensive consultations with community service providers, citizen organizations, and individual community members to find gaps in existing social services that Mission-provided activities might fill. The results of these consultations are broad in scope and include many suggestions from those involved. Underserved populations identified in the report include, but are not limited to: women fleeing physical or sexual violence; victims of human trafficking; people experiencing homelessness; people struggling with mental health and/or substance abuse; and formerly incarcerated persons. These groups have diverse needs, and the Mission has yet to narrow its focus in terms of what resources can be accessed and what agencies can be partnered with to most effectively provide services to these populations. The three most pressing issues identified in the report are the lack of affordable housing, the prevalence of mental illness and addiction, and food insecurity.

The Mission has prioritized mental health and addiction resources as the area that it may be able to most effectively assist with. The report acknowledges that the church currently lacks the resources, expertise, and personnel required for effective interventions, and a path to partnership with existing community agencies and mental health supports is required. The Mission's goal is to help fill gaps in service provision rather than duplicate services already available. Service providers acknowledged

the good work being done at the existing Integrated Care Hub run by the City, but pointed out the need for a variety of support-delivery models for those wrestling with substance abuse. There is no “one size fits all” model of care for such a complex issue.

The report suggests that Mission programming, like that of the Hub, could be organized around themes of practical supports and community building. Practical supports could assist members of the target populations by helping individuals gain access to food, shelter, and other necessities. Community building is the next logical step in assisting those newly housed, or recently released from prison, in order to gain a sense of belonging. Loneliness and isolation often act as barriers to true wellbeing and successful integration into new communities and circumstances. The effectiveness of peer-led and peer-supported initiatives is noted in the report.

The report also identifies after-school care for children and affordable leisure activities for adults and seniors as needs that could be addressed by the Mission. These activities are practical community builders that could have a significant impact in the neighbourhood, particularly as COVID restrictions are lifted and people seek a greater sense of place within the community.

The preliminary recommendation report for the Mission Centre is very ambitious in scope, as consultation-based documents tend to be. It is reflective of the fact that we live in a diverse area of the community with an equally diverse spectrum of needs. The

report specifically notes that the neighbourhood itself is at times plagued by polarized points of view that can create barriers for provision of services to members of our community in need of them. There will be folks who will deride the Mission for creating space for people whom they deem “undesirable.” There will be others who reject the Mission concept outright for its connection to the church.

My hope is that the Mission will sift through its laundry list of possibilities and prioritize partnering with agencies and service providers in a way that will allow it to serve as a truly safe space offering service, care, and comfort to those who need it. There is also great potential for the centre to build community by acting as a gathering place for folks in the area to come together outside of the social, political, and economic silos we so often find ourselves in. If this can be accomplished, it would surely be a welcome addition to the neighbourhood.



**THOM FAIRLEY** is a neighbourhood dad with too many sneakers. He has grand ambitions of one day having a seat on city council and hosting the SPAF! main stage.





# Five Big Ideas for the Future of Queen Street



STORY BY NICO KOENIG

ILLUSTRATION BY HAYDEN MAYNARD



**Queen Street doesn't get much love these days. Although long considered ripe for revitalization, it was recently designated one of the Top Ten Worst Roads in Ontario by the Canadian Automobile Association. Despite being double the width of Princess Street, Queen gets far less car traffic. Queen, it seems, is for cars aiming for the causeway and not much else.**



A member of the Kingston Coalition for Active Transportation, **NICO KOENIG** is about to undertake his Masters of Urban and Regional Planning at Queen's University.

Queen Street could be so much more. As public space, it could better reflect the diversity of interests and needs of those who use it. I propose we change it. In fact, the plans are already underway! The recently approved nine-storey condo at 223 Princess Street comes with a modest community benefit: \$61 thousand to finance a study on how to improve Queen Street. The study should start with recognizing the street's strengths: it is surrounded by invigorated residents who are ready for a change; it is a wide and underused space with historically significant architecture at its sides; and it offers a fantastic view of the water and of Royal Military College.

With these attributes in mind, here are five big ideas to pave the way for a new Queen Street.

## 1. A Downtown Arboretum

Okay, I'm going to dream big. No cars on Queen Street! There, I said it. But what would replace the cars and the space they take up? Let's plant 200 trees and turn Queen Street into an arboretum. Trees help cool the city in the heat, improve our air quality, regulate water flow, and just by being near trees, we all feel better. Forward thinking cities know this. Paris, for example, has committed to transforming their renowned eight-lane Champs-Élysées into an "extraordinary garden" full of tree-lined pathways for pedestrians.

## 2. A Pathway for People

We may not be able to get rid of cars entirely, but Queen is wide enough to support a dedicated roadway for cars and separate pathways for pedestrians and cyclists. More than a plastic post, a substantial separation would create a highly desirable route for those who prefer to walk or ride their way around the city. This kind of separation, often described as Complete Streets, is now a common practice in most Canadian cities. Even car-heavy routes are getting a makeover. Montreal is dramatically reducing lanes on rue Sainte-Catherine, a major corridor, and adding meeting space, gardens, and art installations to promote and protect pedestrian traffic. A real Kingston innovation would be a walled pathway to create a genuine sense of safety and human scale that we all desire.

## 3. Start a Land Trust

Turn Queen Street into a land trust for the people who value it most. Community land trusts are legal entities by which groups of people and organizations take ownership of a land or property. Land trusts often seek to preserve natural environments or farmland. However, land trusts that serve urban interests are growing. For example, The Parkdale Land Trust in Toronto, with a mission to counter displacement by condo development, purchased thirty-six apartment units to ensure that affordable housing remained accessible to its residents. A Queen Street Land Trust, with a mission to support social inclusion, could be owned, managed, and activated collectively by the City of Kingston alongside local residents, non-profit organizations, and local businesses — all with an equal say.

## 4. A Street with a View

Kingston has a beautiful skyline, but unless you're up on Fort Henry hill, on a boat, or in a private tower, you won't be seeing much of it. Kingston doesn't have a publicly accessible vista in the downtown area. The exception could be the top of Queen at Sydenham Street, which has the potential for a stellar view of the city and the river. The demand is strong, even in cities with hills. Halifax, for example, redesigned their public library in response to the outcry for a public view. I can imagine a two-storey ramp, and, at the top, simply a place that lets us sit and enjoy the sky all year round.

## 5. A Pop-Up's Paradise

Queen Street could be a testing ground for new ideas. Throw down a dozen shipping containers and make it a pop-up space for local entrepreneurs and Queen's students. How about pop-up, on-street dining for new chefs from St. Lawrence College? It could be an evolving space, trusted by different groups or initiatives that reflect a collective need. For example, although not a panacea to the housing crisis, building temporary tiny homes with educational displays and events about housing solutions would certainly make a statement for what is needed in this city.

## Got A Better Idea?

The Queen Street study will be submitted to council by the beginning of summer of 2022. Let's get ahead of this plan and present a collective proposal grounded in the real concerns and interests of its residents. Find out more about how you can get involved with redesigning Queen Street at [MeetOnQueen.org](http://MeetOnQueen.org)

A better street is possible!





# A Clean Sweep for the Bailey Broom

Restoration of heritage building a breath of fresh air for community

STORY BY ALEX ROWSE-THOMPSON

ILLUSTRATION BY JOHN WRIGHT

As you pass the corner at Rideau and Cataraqi streets, you can't help but notice the one-storey red-brick industrial building, locally known as the Bailey Broom Factory. As I write this, in June 2021, the former broom factory's restoration and rehabilitation are nearing completion. Parts of the building have been rebuilt according to their original design, while other parts have been renovated with new materials and a modern aesthetic to accommodate new uses.

Everyone who walks by is excited and impressed by the transformation of this building and what it means for this part of the city. For all intents and purposes, this is a relatively humble industrial brick building; it is no Distillery District. But in the context of the surrounding post-industrial landscape and the vast potential for this area's revitalization, the adaptive reuse of this modest building has much more to offer than what might be readily apparent.

The industrial red-brick warehouse running east-west along Cataraqi Street was constructed in 1894 by the Imperial Oil Company. In 1903, the Bailey Broom Company purchased the property, and, by 1904-1905, commissioned well-known local architect W. Newlands & Sons to design an office addition on the corner of Cataraqi and Rideau streets. The concrete warehouse running north-south along Rideau Street (recently demolished as part of the rehabilitation due to structural instability) was constructed sometime between 1904 and 1911.

The Bailey Broom Company was a partnership among Samuel R. Bailey, William J. Lee, and John

M. Hughes. For Samuel Bailey, broom making was a family business, and his father William Bailey and Uncle Benjamin Bailey had been making brooms since the 1850s. At the height of its operations, the company employed forty workers and produced 1,680 brooms daily.

The Bailey Broom Company was in operation until 1923, when the business closed and the property was sold to a subsidiary of Imperial Oil, the Queen City Oil Company. They sold the property in 1959 to Quintal & England, a roofing supplies company. That firm ceased operations in 1994 and the property has been unused since.

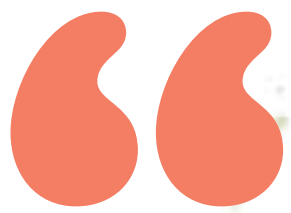
The Bailey Broom Factory forms part of a larger cultural heritage landscape that is broadly characterized by its post-industrial landscape and setting on the river, and by its proximity to downtown. This area is in flux and awaiting the completion of the North King's Town Secondary Plan, which will provide locally tailored development policies to guide growth and change. Nonetheless, there is an optimistic outlook for this area rooted in the successes of the former National Grocer building across the street, the Woolen Mill a few hundred feet away, and the ongoing rehabilitation of the former Imperial Oil warehouse at the south end of Doug Fluhrer Park. However, as this area continues to transform, there will inevitably be disparity in how the resulting economic and social benefits are distributed. We can hope that the neighbourhood and City anticipate these potential inequities, will work to address them, and will ensure that existing and new public spaces are accessible and welcoming to all.

The community has a love for this area and a faith in its future, a fact evident in community engagement with local planning issues such as the Wellington Street extension, the environmental issues along the shoreline, and the dedication to saving the Bailey Broom Factory in 2014.

When, in April of that year, Council passed a motion authorizing City staff to purchase the almost six-acre property owned by Rosen Energy Group Inc. to accommodate the since-cancelled Wellington Street extension, a condition of the sale included the removal of the Bailey Broom Factory prior to the transfer of ownership. Local community members became aware of the planned demolition and in the early morning of June 19th, about twenty people showed up to express their concern. Following a local outcry, Council re-negotiated the sale to exclude the demolition condition. The resolution made by Council was that, following completion of the sale, a heritage assessment would be carried out and the part of the property containing the factory would be severed with the intent of sale by the end of 2016.

I'm sure the Bailey Broom Company and its employees would find it nearly impossible to imagine that the local community would rally to save their modest factory building more than one hundred years after it was built. It might be even more unthinkable for them that a Toronto-based architecture firm, RAW Design (RAW), would share in the community's belief of the potential benefits of a small adaptive reuse project and purchase the property in 2016. But this is exactly what happened.





**Some of the most exciting architecture occurs when old meets new. When in the hands of a talented designer, the inherent obstacles or limitations of converting historic buildings often lead to exciting and creative solutions.**

When RAW purchased the Bailey Broom factory in September 2016 for one dollar, it was, according to lead architect Jon Jeronimus, “a perfect storm.” The size of the building, its location, the fact that no one else wanted to buy it, and that its conversion would allow RAW to explore new and interesting facets of architecture, meant the opportunity was “too good to pass up.”

The project has been underway for almost six years and the team at RAW has faced many challenges along the way, not least of which is the ground contamination resulting from the historic use of the factory by oil companies. Do not let the one dollar purchase price of the property fool you. Such a project requires significant financial investment, and RAW plans to build a row of residential townhouses to the north of the site along Rideau Street to help balance the books. The conservation and adaptive reuse of old buildings takes courage, vision, and patience, and RAW’s purchase of the Bailey Broom Factory was a declaration of faith in the community.

Some of the most exciting architecture occurs when old meets new. When in the hands of a talented designer, the inherent obstacles or limitations of converting historic buildings often lead to exciting and creative solutions. Jon Jeronimus and the team at RAW, with the help of Lindsay Reid, heritage architect, have respectfully conserved the industrial heritage character and architecture of the Bailey Broom Factory, while adding an inspired new layer of design to the building’s architectural history. Along Rideau and Cataraqui streets, the red-brick warehouse and the Newlands & Sons office addition remain relatively unaltered. Brickwork has been re-pointed by Edgewater Stonemasons using historically appropriate techniques, original wooden sash windows on the office addition have been repaired by Ciaran Browne of Browne’s Carpentry and Joinery, wood detailing in the pediment has been repaired and repainted, and new period-appropriate windows have been inserted into original window openings on the warehouse. Small modifications to accommodate new uses in the factory building include the lengthening of two window openings on the east elevation to improve access from Cataraqui Street and the insertion of steel lintels over the window openings.

The east and north elevation required reconstruction — while the east elevation has been restored with replacement bricks as needed, the north elevation was completely rebuilt. Here, RAW seized the opportunity to inject an exciting, attractive, and compatible new layer of architecture into the building, recreating the original massing and form but cladding the structure with a modern zinc finish and large glazed openings that bring a wonderful quality of light into the building.

Along Rideau Street, the former concrete warehouse wing was in an active state of collapse and had to be removed in its entirety. Although that wing was not identified as a heritage attribute of the site, RAW designed a bicycle parking and waste and recycling storage area that delineates the former building’s footprint and reflects the original form of the concrete wing – an engaging, interpretive, and functional design solution. Add to the mix environmental and sustainability considerations such as a solar panel-ready roof, radiant in-floor heating, energy-recovery ventilators, daylight sensors, and well-insulated wall and roof assemblies, and the Bailey Broom Factory is the poster child of innovative and thoughtful adaptive reuse.

RAW aims to bring the community into this building, making it a local hub of sorts. RAW will house their Kingston office in the red-brick warehouse, alongside dedicated co-working space for future design-oriented tenants as soon as the post-pandemic world permits. A roughed-in café area awaits an entrepreneurial Kingstonian (do you know anyone who might be interested? Get in touch with Jon at [jj@rawdesign.ca](mailto:jj@rawdesign.ca)). Lastly, the Newlands & Sons addition on the corner of Rideau and Cataraqui has been designed as a private office space.

The story of saving the Bailey Broom Factory building began with the community, and the success of its rehabilitation will, in part, rest on the community. Local people recognized its value, had faith in its potential and spoke up. Small adaptive reuse projects, such as this one, can have immeasurable and exponential benefits for the surrounding neighbourhood and city. With RAW’s investment, creativity, and patience, I have no doubt that the Bailey Broom Factory will be a quietly successful building and a cornerstone at the gateway to a revitalized post-industrial area of the Inner Harbour neighbourhood.



**ALEX ROWSE-THOMPSON** has lived in and around the Skeleton Park neighbourhood since 2012. Two moves and three children later, her family is very excited to be living beside the park with their five chickens. She currently works as a heritage planner at the City of Kingston and has been indirectly involved in the heritage and planning applications for the Bailey Broom Factory. In her former role at ERA Architects, she developed the original Heritage Impact Assessment for RAW Design. The views set out in this article are strictly her own and do not reflect those of the City or ERA Architects.









# When Worlds Collide

STORY BY MARK SINNETT / ILLUSTRATION BY CARL WIENS

**I'm stating the obvious when I say that we all try to surround ourselves with whatever makes us happiest. We go to great lengths to control our surroundings. I like to keep a good bit of mid-century teak lying around, for instance, as well as a crumbly brick of old cheddar in the fridge, and some single malt scotch from Islay on a high shelf where the cats can't get at it. I make time to read the newspaper and talk to my kids. I have these things and that makes me a lucky guy. I admit my good fortune at the door.**

But I know damn well that while I choose between luxuries, others hunt down necessities like we're already in mid-Apocalypse. For many living alongside us, the wish list is more modest. Food on the table would be nice. Any food. Maybe a lower-than-expected utility bill in the depths of another brutal winter. A cheap and easy solution to the question of why the car won't start. A car. A job. A bed.

Whatever our needs and wants may be, self-care begins at home. But I've been noticing in recent years that it doesn't stay there. Whenever possible, it moves out from the centre in seismic waves to include the whole neighbourhood. People reach out with their influence to satisfy their needs. This is largely how gentrification works. For some of us it means a rolling wave of enhancements – like artisanal pizza joints and flower shops. But for others it feels more like an earthquake.

Those of us with the resources to make ourselves comfortably mobile move into a neighbourhood because it's cheap and cool and convenient to both work and play. I don't think there's anything inherently wrong with that, as long as the newcomers don't fetishize the people who lived there long before they ar-

**GENTRIFICATION RESULTS IN TWO POPULATIONS RUBBING UP AGAINST EACH OTHER, LIKE A POORLY SEWN SEAM.**

rived. But when the buzz wears off, there are growing pains. The shiny new bikes we hang off our front railings like Christmas-tree ornaments start to disappear, along with the constant Amazon deliveries. And isn't that house we just bought (from our permanently scowling realtor; what's his problem, by the way?) going to take a dive in value if this continues?

Some of us bring our complaints to our social media feeds. We paint those who came before us as criminals, ne'er-do-wells who aren't welcome any more. We post lurid front-porch security footage that doesn't identify criminals so much as it does "suspects," a.k.a. people who don't look like us. We try to remake the neighbourhood in our own image.

One of the very best, and one of the unique, things about Skeleton Park is all the old commercial spaces that are being reborn. Corner stores and cafés are bringing the neighbourhood to life, making it friendlier, safer, and more vibrant. I love every one of them. But only half the local population can afford to shop in these new hipster storefronts.

Gentrification results in two populations rubbing up against each other, like a poorly sewn seam. Sometimes the result is, quite literally, a street-fight. Which is predictable. The unspoken ambition (or the consequence) of some who move in, after all, is the displacement of those who came before.

I might be wrong, but it seems to me that we complain about the rising cost of real estate when we rent our accommodations around here, and secretly relish the mad market when we own our homes. (Although I earn my living by selling houses, I admit that I find the market in general really discouraging, and the lack of affordable housing to be a pressing crisis.) A further truth is that rising rents put pressure on tenants to move away, which is no damn good and also how we begin to fight with our neighbours. The centre cannot hold.

I've noticed, too, that we generally laud the imminent arrival of a new St. Vincent de Paul hub when we live where we won't be affected by it (west of Montreal Street?), because that way it's a no-brainer, altruism without personal risk. But when we live across the street from the new site, we organize against it. It's nothing personal, we insist, it's just that, Look here, the Official Plan doesn't allow it, see, and there are safety and security issues, and my god the traffic!

My point is that we act almost always in our own best interests. And that's not a surprise, really. Or a crime. It's what got us this far. But starting from that place can provoke a conservative reaction to change rather than an inclusive one, and we should at least recognize that. Otherwise we leave open the possibility of living in conflict not just with our neighbours, but with our own ideals.



**MARK SINNETT** has been in the Skeleton Park neighbourhood for most of the past forty years and now lives on Charles Street with his family. He's written a few books, most recently *The Carnivore*, which won the Toronto Book Award in 2010. He continues to write, mostly about houses, and works as a realtor.





# A Place to Skate

STORY BY MARK FAST-GRASS  
ILLUSTRATION BY ERIC WILLIAMS

There is an understanding and allyship among skateboarders. The courage it takes to try something new and the resilience to try again is respected and encouraged, whether in friends or strangers. This is because we all know how bad it hurts to fall but how good it feels to land. Also, since skateboarding is an individual sport, it can sometimes feel isolating. Spaces play a huge part in uniting its users and creating a sense of community. Skateboarding and other roller sports combine athleticism, creativity, and courage, and it is important to have a dynamic space that supports this. When that is achieved, a community is created. A silver lining of the pandemic has been a surge in skateboarding and other roller sports in Kingston.

When a space physically fails to meet the needs of skateboarders, it fails to facilitate that connection. Unfortunately, this is the case with many skateparks in Kingston. Though these spaces may be deemed accessible, they often don't meet the needs of the skate community because of design and construction issues. For the past decade, skateboarders in Kingston have had to be resilient to sustain the activity and to acquire a space that caters to their needs.

The designs of skateparks in Kingston attempt to address the requirements of roller skaters, bikers, scooter riders and skateboarders. In trying to satisfy the needs of all these different activities, they create a hodgepodge of obstacles that disappoint each roller sport. This is the case with the three most recent skateparks that have been constructed by the City of Kingston in partnership with the Community Response to Neighbourhood Concerns. The intention was good, but design issues have led to a lack of use.

I recently spoke with Jim Barnum, who designed the skateparks, to get some idea of what might have gone wrong. "We typically get tons of folks out to skatepark design workshops," he says, "where we take all of the input as to what people want in the park. The group in attendance is usually so large and so diverse, we get feedback that basically says, 'Give us a little bit of everything.' It's just too broad; there's no real direction." As a result, Kingston's skateparks attempt to cater to too many activities.

A large part of skateboarding is riding in urban areas and using creativity to interpret architecture in unique ways. Skateboarders are often met with resistance in these areas. Despite such setbacks, skateboarders and other rolling activities push on and find allyship through a shared goal of creating safe and exciting spaces to hone their skills and celebrate their sport. Many skaters have been using abandoned sites and turning urban places into environments to skate, play, and rekindle a sense of community.

For most of the past decade, a corner of the parking lot at the Memorial Centre was used as a D.I.Y. skatepark. Skateboarders admire this place because it has several basic obstacles that are conducive to

learning new tricks. To meet the needs of the COVID-19 Testing and Vaccine Centre, this skatepark has since moved from the parking lot to an old concrete foundation near the stables. The D.I.Y. nature of the park means it is not perfect, but it is one of the few places that we have been allowed the autonomy and agency to create a space that meets our needs. Through this and other spots around town, skaters have worked together, pouring concrete, building ramps, and cleaning up areas in the community.

Having a gathering place is vitally important for skateboarders to foster connection and skill development. Creating that place ourselves has been even more rewarding. Collaborating with other skaters, thinking of innovative ways to design, and discussing what people desire out of a space: all have fostered a larger connection between myself and my skateboarding peers. Despite a long struggle to have a space that suits our needs, skaters, motivated by their passion for the sport, are taking the initiative to make something for ourselves, and that feels regenerative and exciting.

The increase in roller sports has created a bigger demand for skateparks and other gathering places. The pandemic has highlighted the importance of community. With limits on the size of most social gatherings, people are finding ways to socialize through their hobbies. Community is very important for mental health and providing a sense of belonging, and that is especially true for skateboarders. Having people to share our experiences with and help us push ourselves tends to make the activity more fulfilling.

**MARK FAST-GRASS** grew up in Kingston and over the past decade has lived in multiple cities across Canada and experienced a variety of skateboard communities. Upon moving back to Kingston, he has been trying help grow the skateboard community here.





# Boxing and Belonging

Kingston Youth Boxing Club offers more than fitness and fights

STORY BY LAURA SEGURA SERRANO



**Writing about Kingston Youth Boxing Club is not an easy task. The Club is the result of more than thirty years of hard work by brothers Colin and Ken MacPhail, and there is enough information to put together a whole book dedicated to the history of the Club, detailing the lives of coaches and members, the philosophy of boxing, and the Club's role in the development of female boxing. Here I hope to show how important the Club is for many community members, to describe a normal training session, and to bring some happy memories to whomever has been missing their workouts since the beginning of last year.**

The Club's importance is as wide as the diversity of its members. The Club is the setting for profound stories about self-improvement, and stories about how the practice helped develop the courage to confront dangerous or stressful situations. My own story at the Club includes meeting the man who became my husband, doing the workout while pregnant, meeting my doula, and bringing our daughter to the Club the day after she was born.

There is a sense of belonging experienced by the members of the Club; it is like being part of a huge family. The welcoming feeling happens as soon as you walk through the door of the upper level of the Cook Brothers Youth Centre on Montreal Street. This family includes kids, teens, and adults who are not necessarily training to become high-level boxers. Some train for fitness, but others train for deeper reasons, including fighting loneliness or addictions, and keeping out of trouble (as Colin says). Of course, any member could aim to become a high-level boxer — the Kingston Youth Boxing Club is nationally accredited and home to Canadian champions — including Olympic silver medalist Mark Leduc.

No matter the motivation to train, everyone has a chance to go in the boxing ring to spar (practice box) with the professionals. While doing the workout, we are all hoping to be called to the ring. This happens in groups composed of about ten people. Usually, Colin is there with boxing pads, ready to take the hits. He is like a dad kindly telling you to train at your own pace, to give the best of yourself, and to not use any drugs. Sometimes, he will randomly ask if you

made your bed in the morning. Meanwhile, the rest of the group performs an intense workout consisting of cardio and strength exercises.

To completely convey training in the Club I need to describe the "sensory experience" of exercising. Loud music from an old amp plays during the hour-long session. The repertoire varies from the best classic rock songs to country, pop, or electronic music. The choice of music depends on the person leading the workout that day; the leader is an experienced Club member who volunteers about once a week to make us feel tired and pleased. The training area feels like being inside the first Rocky movies: The walls are decorated with old pictures and newspaper articles about the Club and with boxing-related information. The physical space includes a boxing ring, a section with sandbags, and a massive set of equipment, including weights, jump ropes, and dozens of pairs of smelly boxing gloves. Having all this available saves people the cost of buying equipment, allowing them to train even if they can't afford to buy basic gear. A big fan works hard to cool down the air. The area in front of the fan is so busy that everyone must be careful to not give or receive a punch— this is a good skill to have in boxing, anyway. The carpet's "sensory experience" won't be described here, but hopefully old and new members of the Club can check it out for themselves when the Club reopens in late summer.

Details and photograph were provided by Jack Chisamore, Karl Flecker, and Jesse Louise.

THERE IS A SENSE OF BELONGING EXPERIENCED BY THE MEMBERS OF THE CLUB; IT IS LIKE BEING PART OF A HUGE FAMILY.



**LAURA SEGURA SERRANO** has been part of the neighbourhood since 2014 and was a member of the Kingston Youth Boxing Club from 2014 to 2016.



# The Ponies, The Pandemic, and a Pause in Play

STORY BY KEN CUTHBERTSON



LIMESTONE CITY  
BASEBALL TEAMS HAVE  
CARRIED THE PONIES  
MONIKER FOR MORE  
THAN A CENTURY

PHOTO CREDIT: "Border League play at Megaffin Memorial Stadium". Courtesy of Bill Megaffin

**Baseball players know how to deal with a rain delay. But a pandemic delay? Not so much — especially one that washes out two entire seasons.**

That's why the management and players of the Kingston Ponies have found themselves in uncharted territory as they've struggled to deal with the COVID-19-related shutdowns. "It's been a real downer," says Doug Graham, team president and general manager. "The pandemic wiped out our 2020 season, and we've been forced to take this season off, too."

In case you don't know, the Ponies are the Kingston men's baseball team that plays home games in the cozy confines of the Montreal Street ballpark known as Megaffin Park.

Limestone City baseball teams have carried the Ponies moniker for more than a century. Most have been amateur squads that played in leagues made up of teams from eastern Ontario and upstate New York. One noteworthy exception was the Ponies team that competed for six memorable seasons (1946-1951) in the professional Class C Border League. It was the team's original owner, Kingston businessman Nelles Megaffin, who in the spring of 1946 built the Montreal Street ballpark that still bears his name and that this year is marking its seventy-fifth anniversary.

The current iteration of the Kingston Ponies was incorporated in 1992 under the name "Kingston Baseball Club Incorporated." Since 2008, the team has competed in the top tiers of the four-tier Ottawa-based National Capital Baseball League (NCBL) — reputed to be Canada's largest adult baseball league.

These days, the Ponies' home field, which began life as Megaffin Stadium — a real baseball park with a grandstand, bleacher seats, and light standards that towered twenty-five meters above the field — has been reduced to the status of a city park. However, the playing surface has never been in better shape. The infield is in game-ready condition, while the outfield grass is as lush and green as Yankee Stadium. All of this only serves to make two lost seasons of baseball that much more difficult to take for Ponies' player-coach Ross Graham.

Ross, the thirty-one-year-old son of team president and general manager Doug Graham, loves baseball. His résumé, which includes four years of scholarship-funded college ball south of the border, reflects the fact he's played the game at a high level ever since his days at LaSalle Secondary School.

"It's been tough. I haven't even been down to the ballpark this year. The public-health guidelines have kept the Ponies off the field," he says. "We wanted to play this season, but even if the league had been operating in Ottawa, we'd have

only been able to play road games. That wasn't something we felt we could do." If all goes as planned, Graham is confident that if the pandemic is finally tamed later this year the Ponies will saddle up next spring to get back into action.

In recent years, the team has been fortunate enough to have received generous sponsorship support that covers much of the team's \$20,000 annual operating costs. Both Grahams are hopeful those sponsorship dollars will resume. Father and son also have their fingers crossed they'll have luck finding community volunteers willing to help out with the myriad off-field chores that always need doing.

That said, after a two-year hiatus it promises to be a bigger and even more vital challenge to recruit enough talented players who are willing to commit the time, effort, and player fees to play in 2022.

Fortunately for the Ponies, the team is able to recruit graduates from the top-quality "rep teams" fielded by the Kingston Baseball Association and the Kingston Thunder Baseball Association, some of whom are talented enough to win athletic scholarships to play college ball in the U.S. And it helps that a half-dozen or so players from the Queen's varsity baseball team are usually keen to play for the Ponies. All of this has enabled Kingston to field strong teams that from 2012 to 2019 compiled a record of 122-56 while winning five regular-season league pennants (but, alas, no playoff championships, in large measure because each autumn the Ponies lose many of their players when colleges and universities reopen).

Many of the team's core group — Ross Graham among them — played this summer in the local men's house league. And come next April, if Ponies players can begin training for the 2022 NCBL season, Graham will be among them. However, a few things promise to be different for him.

Graham, who's now thirty-one, plans to "slow down." He anticipates surrendering his job as the Ponies' player-coach. "I'll just play next season," he says. "Like the rest of the guys on the team, I'm really looking forward to doing that."



**KEN CUTHBERTSON** grew up two blocks from Megaffin Park. In 1981 he was a co-founder of the Kingston men's baseball league and was a player-coach for fourteen seasons. As a pitcher, he had a pretty good curveball, but as they say, at bat "he had trouble with the curve." No matter, he's also the author of six books, the latest of which is *1945: The Year That Made Modern Canada* (HarperCollins Canada, 2020)



# Pizza Monster Moves to Montreal Street

STORY BY TIANNA EDWARDS  
PHOTOGRAPHY BY ADAM BIEHLER



“IT WAS ALL ABOUT MAKING BETTER PIZZA, AND THEN I HAD TO MAKE MORE PIZZA TO MAKE BETTER PIZZA, AND I CAN'T EAT ALL THAT PIZZA. SO, WE DECIDED TO SHARE...”



I was introduced to Pizza Monster on a perfect, pre-pandemic summer Sunday strolling through the Memorial Centre Farmers' Market. My appreciation started with the sweet, savoury aroma of dough, tomato sauce, cheese, and cured meat wafting through the air. The pizza craving hit me even before I turned the corner and laid eyes on Pizza Monster's stand. My love for Pizza Monster continued as I followed them to pop-ups at Daft Brewing throughout the summer.

Pizza Monster's pies check all the boxes: great crust, flavourful sauce, awesome toppings. Plus, these pizzas are undeniably aesthetically pleasing. And now, the pizzeria has found a more permanent location for its delicious creations with the opening of a storefront on Montreal Street at Raglan Road.

The shop is scheduled to open this year with pandemic protocols, which include slinging pies through the side window and serving on a pop-up patio. I had an opportunity to peek at the progress when I visited to chat with owner and maker, Adam Biehler. The team is getting acquainted with their new kitchen appliances, such as the massive oven at the back of the restaurant that can be seen from the front windows. Just like Pizza Monster's pizzas, the space is classic and eye-catching, with modern finishes. Fun fact about the design: half the space is filled floor to ceiling with 12,000 subway tiles that Adam and his team laid themselves.

Biehler's approach to the opening of the storefront is incredibly laid back and driven by his love of making pizzas and the desire to perfect his craft. His former career as a photographer and videographer for the Canadian Coast Guard took him all over the world, and now he's looking forward to resting and enjoying being in one place with his young family.

While many find themselves wanting to open a restaurant and look for a great idea to help them accomplish that goal, the great idea came first for Biehler. "It was all about making better pizza, and then I had to make more pizza to make better pizza, and I can't eat all that pizza. So, we decided to share," explains Biehler. A restaurant felt like a natural next step. He adds, "This is just a really fun project: a little design and construction and cooking. It's such a fun project that incorporates a bunch of skills that I have."

The question that naturally comes to mind is, why this location? Most of Kingston's popular food spots are downtown or in the west end and that's exactly why Biehler

feels Montreal and Raglan is the perfect home for Pizza Monster. He's proud to offer an alternative to the go-to locations in town. The goal is to feed the people who live in the community and create more opportunities for tourism — especially local tourism.

A challenge to choosing an older building, though, is the ability to provide inclusive accessibility. "One issue is the bathrooms," he says. "We needed to get everything grandfathered in. We couldn't change the floorplan at all. So, the bathrooms are inaccessible." Biehler consulted with people in the Disabled community on how to approach the situation. He notes the biggest takeaway from those consults has been transparent communication, so all guests know what to expect on arrival.

When Biehler addresses accessibility, he is talking about more than the restaurant's physical space. Biehler explains, "We will be doing grandma slices so that people can get a five-dollar slice. We do make the eighteen- to twenty-dollar pizzas with flowers on them. But I think there's a balance there that's our responsibility. We bought all these chairs double second-hand for five dollars a piece. [Here he rubs a table.] This is from a building in my backyard that got hit by a tree. We are just reusing everything and being super cheap, so we aren't that boujee\* a-hole that moved into the neighbourhood." (\*bourgeois)

While opening a restaurant during a global pandemic sounds like an overwhelming undertaking, Biehler feels there is a beneficial silver lining of not having to pivot on a pre-COVID system. Many business owners have reinvented themselves many times over since March 2020 to stay afloat. The pandemic is all Biehler and his team know, and they are planning accordingly.

While pizza will be the star menu item, Biehler aspires to include additional menu items, such as charred veggies, cannoli, and gelato, in the future, but emphasizes the importance of starting with the basics.



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# Neighbours

BY HELEN HUMPHREYS

ILLUSTRATIONS BY CHANTAL ROUSSEAU

For four years the same robin has been making her nest on the porches of the attached house where I live. She rotates between our places, not seeming to prefer one porch above another, and giving us all equal opportunity to duck beneath her territorial swoops as we enter or exit our front doors.

Our little row of houses has been a pretty good spot for the robin — which is why she probably comes back year after year — as her babies have never been snatched by predatory cats, and most of the fledglings seem to have survived that dangerous period between leaving the nest and becoming fully adult.

This year, because of the pandemic, I was able to observe more of the robin's occupancy than usual and perhaps, because of my increased involvement, that occupancy seemed particularly dramatic.

The robin initially built her nest on the porch beside mine, but before she could lay her eggs, the nest was taken over by mourning doves. They appeared out of nowhere, driving the robin away and then proceeding to add to her neat grass and mud nest with a haphazard arrangement of twigs that was precarious and structurally unsound. Nevertheless, eggs were laid and the mourning doves set about waiting for them to hatch.

One day, I heard a lot of squawking from the porch and went out to find a raven in the process of destroying the nest. The mourning doves retreated to the hydro wires and the raven tore the nest apart, smashing all the eggs. The doves left and did not return. Instead, the robin came back and built a nest on another of our porches, laying eggs and sitting on them while I gardened a few feet away from her most days, and she looked on, unbothered.

The eggs hatched and there were three chicks. The robin made forays to get food for her babies, and I would sometimes see her out back of the houses pecking for worms. After years of watching her, I could recognize her for herself and tell her apart from other robins. She was tall and thin and kind of straggly, with a few feathers out of place and distinctive ragged circles around her eyes.

Robins, if they survive their first year, typically live five or six years in the wild, although one banded robin was recorded as being just shy of fourteen years old.

The baby robins got bigger and stronger. My garden also grew and started to be of interest to squirrels. I often had to chase them away, especially first thing in the morning when they were out foraging.

One morning I had chased the same squirrel away twice, stamping out onto my porch to warn it off eating the rose buds, but it returned undeterred. The third time I went outside the robin flew down from her nest, driving the squirrel off my porch and then chasing it under a parked car. She even went under the car herself to make the point. The squirrel didn't return.

The robin was no fan of squirrels either, but her chasing off this particular squirrel was clearly related to my chasing off of the squirrel. I had tried twice and failed. She was going to show me how it was done. To get rid of a squirrel properly it was no good just to stamp after it for a few steps. You had to drive it right out into the street, scare its sorry ass under a parked car and then follow it there so it got the message.

Just as I recognized the robin, I realized that she also recognized me. She knew enough about me and my neighbours to know that we weren't a threat to her and her babies, that she could return here year after year and expect much of the same tolerance from us when she built her nest on our porches. She had judged us as suitably benign and could share territory with us, could be our neighbour.

Mostly, what is wild flees from us. Our view of animals is the white tail of the deer bounding through the forest, the bird lifting from the branch. So it felt a bit miraculous to have that interchange with the robin and I don't think I will soon forget it.

Two of the baby robins fledged while I was busy working indoors, but the third lingered in the nest for a whole additional day. She/he would come to the edge of the nest and look down, flutter their wings and preen, retreat and try again. They were nervous to go and yet staying alone there might have felt uneasy, too. Day turned to twilight. There was a storm, and just when it would have made sense to stay in the nest for a while longer because of the rain and winds, the fledgling flew off. All that waiting to be equal to the moment, and when that finally happened, there was no waiting at all.



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