

Issue Eight **THE** Late Fall 2021  
**SKELETON**  
**Press**

**MEET YOUR MAKERS**

The Fat Goose Craft Fair Returns:  
Shop from the best in local crafts including  
Commanda Collective's beautiful beadwork



# Emergency to Emergency



In 2021, we emerged from the worst of the COVID-19 pandemic but were forced to reckon with another global crisis. In August, The Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) issued a dire warning: human-caused climate change is not only happening, it is also “widespread, rapid, and intensifying.” Now predicted in the space of a few decades is warming of 1.5 degrees Celsius — what many scientists see as a critical threshold in terms of the likelihood of severe weather events, sea level rise, and serious impacts on human health and agriculture. While not news (we’ve known about human-caused climate change for many years), the urgent warning from a community of respected scientists about the accelerated pace and severity of climate change is frightening, nonetheless.

So, what do we do in the face of (another) impending global disaster?

Think local.

In 2022 we will return to the municipal ballot box, and this issue of *The Skeleton Press* focuses on exploring local solutions of relevance to municipal governments. While some local initiatives — including the push to defund the police and the move to a ranked-ballot municipal election system — have been limited in their effectiveness because of provincial policies, it would be a mistake to think that municipal politics don’t matter. Local initiatives can have concrete effects on people’s lives, while also contributing to bigger systemic change.

Take for example, the push for more accessible and fare-free public transportation. Improved public transportation networks make people less reliant on cars and encourage people to drive less, thereby reducing pollution and the greenhouse gas emissions that contribute to climate change. Because low-income people, individuals with disabilities, and women are more likely to rely on public transportation, better public transportation networks make life easier for these groups and help achieve equity objectives as well.

Municipal governments can offer solutions to everything from the housing crisis to the lack of funding for the arts, and we would do well to take advantage of this potential. And 2022 offers the opportunity for new people to get involved: incumbents in several districts are not running for re-election. If you want to run for the offices of Mayor, Council, or school board Trustee, nomination papers can be filed starting May 2, 2022. The deadline for nominations is August 19, and municipal elections take place October 24.

[cityofkingston.ca/city-hall/elections/candidates/key-dates](http://cityofkingston.ca/city-hall/elections/candidates/key-dates)

## 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

**AND TRADITIONAL MAIL TO:**  
*The Skeleton Press*  
PO BOX 222, Kingston Main  
Kingston, Ontario  
K7L 4V8

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

## MUNICIPAL CANDIDATES WEBINAR

**7-9pm, January 16, 2022 / Presented by *The Skeleton Press* and Just Recovery Kingston**  
Kingston faces major challenges: COVID, housing, drug poisoning, the climate crisis, and more. To meet these challenges, we need the best possible people to represent the diversity, creativity, and strength of our community as city councillors. Currently, council is 100% white and 75% male. In 2022, we need new energy and leadership to step forward and help our city meet the challenges of the moment.

What does it mean to be a city councillor? What does a councillor actually do? How do you run? How much does it cost? How can a councillor make a difference? Join us for a webinar with councillors and candidates past and present to help answer these questions and more. If you’ve ever wanted to learn more about municipal politics, you need to be there!

Visit [skeletonparkartsfest.ca](http://skeletonparkartsfest.ca) for registration information.

**COVER PHOTOGRAPH:** Commanda Collective (commandacollective.com)  
**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.), Go Green Baby (293 Division St.) and Free Little Libraries in the Skeleton Park neighbourhood

## CONTRIBUTORS

Yessica Rivera Belsham, Dr. Terri-Lynn Brennan, Simon Baron, Jon Claytor, Meredith Dault, Melanie Dugan, Floriana Ehninger-Cuervo, Ayla Fenton, Maya Fiske, Marc Garniss, Erin Jones, Just Recovery Kingston and 350 Kingston Members, Amy Kaufman, Anne Loughheed, Catherine Lukits, Josh Lyon, Ezra Lyon, Andrew Maclean, David Mcdonald, Jeremy Milloy, Anne Marie Mortensen, Tara Pelow, Georgina Riel/Waabishki Mukwa Kwe, Tanya Robinson, Chantal Rousseau, Matt Salton, Lawrence Scanlan, Ron Shore, Rob Spade, Mark Stoller, Jamie Swift, Taylor Tye, Nora Vandermeulen Kerr, Carl Wiens, Linda Williams, John Wright

## STAFF

**CO-EDITORS**  
Jane Kirby  
Greg Tilson  
**ART DIRECTOR**  
Vincent Perez  
**GRAPHIC DESIGNER**  
Tara Pelow

**COPY EDITORS**  
Jan Allen  
Ulrike Bender  
Wayne Grady  
Jane Kirby  
Jodie Lees  
Bob MacKenzie  
Lawrence Scanlan  
Mark Stoller

## Thank you to our supporters.



Annie Clifford Barrister & Solicitor,  
Stone City Brew Co.

## If you would like to donate

to the Skeleton Park Arts Festival to help keep this newspaper in print, please visit our donation page at [CanadaHelps.org](http://CanadaHelps.org)

# Meet Your Makers

The Fat Goose Craft Fair Returns

STORY BY ERIN JONES

Visit  
fatgoose  
craftfair.com  
to reserve  
tickets



↑ CLOCKWISE FROM TOP LEFT:

Stone Spindle Farm (stonespindlefarm.com)  
Goye artiste céramiste (goye.ca)  
Marney McDiarmid (marneymcdiarmid.ca)  
Julie Davidson Smith (juliedavidsonsmith.com)  
Noemiah (noemiah.com)  
Everlovin' Press (everlovinpress.com)  
Heidi Wallace-Patenaude (heidart.ca)  
Here and Now Jewelry  
(etsy.com/ca/shop/hereandnowshop)  
Photos courtesy of Fat Goose Craft Fair

## Planning an in-person event during a global pandemic feels a lot like riding a rollercoaster, says longtime Fat Goose Craft Fair collective member Brandy Wilkes.

Due to the COVID-19 lockdown measures and public health restrictions in place last year, the beloved craft fair was put on hold for the first time in its 12 years of operation. Completely volunteer run by a group of collective members, Fat Goose does not have the resources to pivot the craft fair online.

"It's a lot of up and down," says Wilkes. "The pandemic makes everything so up in the air. We're hopeful that we'll be able to run this year. We're just going to take it as it comes day by day. If it doesn't happen, then that's unfortunate, but we're gonna do the best that we can."

Even if they could make the move online, it would be a disservice to the makers, collective members, and attendees of the craft fair, says Wilkes.

Formed in 2009 by local friends and artists, Fat Goose collective members recognized a demand for more "interesting and accessible venues for local makers looking to showcase and market their work." Committed to the creation of opportunities for craftspeople, the fair quickly became a top draw for holiday season craft exhibitions in Kingston, pulling in more patrons and makers each year.

"It's so important for people to be able to go to these events in person and meet the makers. That's why we support these makers. We care about them and we care about their stories," says Wilkes.

Using a not-for-profit model, the fair is juried according to set criteria; work should be local, unique, and demonstrate a depth of process and high quality of finish. The selection can sometimes take collective members days to complete.

"We consider a lot when we're jurying," explains Wilkes. "We understand it's hard for people to go through, of course. It's a hard process for us, it's difficult to say no to people. Everybody really is so talented in their own way."

Wilkes, a jeweller, attended the inaugural Fat Goose Craft Fair in 2009. Wanting to help make a difference in the arts community, she joined the collective and hasn't looked back since. She says the friendships and bonds formed over the years are what keeps her coming back.

"I've been friends with them for a long time," she says of her fellow members. "[The fair] keeps those relationships active in my life. Life is busy; it's hard when you're an adult and you've got competing priorities. We really appreciate that this collective brings us together a few times a year. We always have a good year, and we're always happy at the end. It's hard to walk away if it's doing well, right?"

If all goes according to plan, this year's Fat Goose Craft Fair is set to take place on November 28 at Renaissance Event Venue at 285 Queen Street. The craft fair has teamed up with Skeleton Park Arts Fest and Next Church to offer a program of live music. The final act of the day, The Gertrudes, will be celebrating their album release. Wilkes and other collective members: Vince Perez (pressman), Marney McDiarmid (ceramist), Heidi Wallace (painter and graphic designer), and Helena Rakhuba (glass artist) will also be showing at the fair. Recognizing how difficult it has been for artists and makers these past two years, the collective has introduced an option to apply for a subsidized table to keep the event open and accessible to all.

Although the planning process has been full of uncertainties, Wilkes says all of the ups and downs will be worthwhile, even if there is a potential cancellation.

"I'm, like, gonna tear up even thinking of actually being at the event again," she says. "We're just always so full and happy and proud on the day when we open the doors and it's already lined up. I'm looking forward to that feeling again, and the community connections – seeing the people that I haven't seen in a few months."

**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.

# The Story of Quattrocchi's Specialty Foods.

Joe Quattrocchi is the owner of Quattrocchi's Specialty Foods but the story of the shop begins three generations ago.

It all begins in Sicily, Italy...

Joe's father, Phil, grew up in the family store in Perth, Ontario.

When WWII started he joined the airforce and because of his experience was put in charge of inventory.

Perth was small compared to Pittsburgh.

Rose missed the city so they made a move to Kingston, Ontario.

Joe's grandfather would load me up with fruits and vegetables from his garden.

Joe's grandparents moved to Canada in 1922.

After the war love brought him to Pittsburgh.

And they opened their own store. They were a great team.

They had their own truck. That's me! for deliveries.

And we would take the produce to town to sell.

Joe was just a baby.

They opened a small grocery store in Perth Ontario.

He married Rose, she was great with numbers and after success in Pittsburgh they moved to Perth to work in the family store.



Little Joe would go with his dad on buying trips.

I stayed in Sicily.

Little Joe learned to haggle for the best price at market trips to Toronto and Montreal.

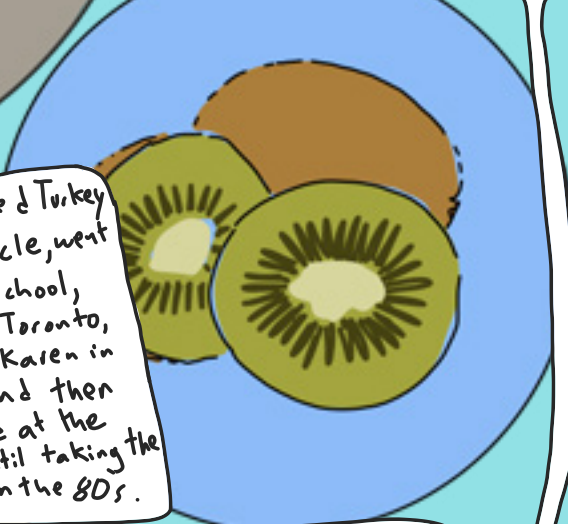


They were the first store to bring kiwis to Kingston and specialized in comfort food from all over. Joe says the secret of success is relationships.



Business grew thanks to Rose's skill with numbers and Phil's entrepreneurial spirit.

Joe explored Turkey by motorcycle, went to business school, worked in Toronto, married Karen in 1973 and then worked at the store until taking the reins in the 80s.



I'm delicious!



Joe and Karen have watched the store become a huge part of the community while raising their children, Michael, Anthony and Allison.

Joe's parents placed the business in his hands.

He's a good apple!



That's just a small part of the story of how Quattrocchi's Specialty Foods has become a beloved part of the Kingston community.

# Sustainable Projects Tackle Climate Crisis and Build Community



STORY BY JUST RECOVERY KINGSTON AND 350 KINGSTON MEMBERS



Kingstonians at City Park, as part of national 350 demonstrations on September 8 to raise awareness of the climate crisis

**In March 2019, the City of Kingston was the first community in Ontario to declare a climate emergency. But since then, we have seen too many projects that undermine any sustainable progress: the bridge over the railway line on John Counter Boulevard, the proposed cruise ship dock, the expansion of the airport, and, of course, the Third Crossing.**

Despite these official moves to promote CO<sup>2</sup>-emitting car and air traffic, many citizens are working hard to build a greener, healthier community – often in collaboration with the city.

For example, after Just Recovery Kingston held a strategic retreat in January, they decided on two main areas of work in 2021: community gardens and transit. The gardens team launched a letter-writing campaign calling on the city to increase funding available to new garden groups; to have the city, not gardeners, provide insurance for new gardens; and to remove the raised-bed requirement if the soil passes safety testing.

The transit team created a survey about public transit accessibility to help Kingston City Council find innovative ways to increase and promote free and green travel. They also pushed the federal government to increase municipal funding for these initiatives.

In addition, a sub-group of 350 Kingston climate activists is hoping that by October 2023, the mayor, several councillors, the head of Utilities Kingston, and 350 Kingston members will officially open Kingston's first municipally owned and operated solar farm. This project would create green jobs, reduce Kingston's carbon footprint, and demonstrate that the tagline "Canada's Most Sustainable City" is more than just a slogan.

Meanwhile, 350 Kingston is looking to municipal leaders to help motivate the purchase of electric vehicles (EVs). Kingston has installed forty-eight Level 2 and two Level 3 public chargers in municipal parking lots, but this infrastructure tends to primarily serve the city's visitors. Members of 350 Kingston believe that all municipal parking lots and street parking should be free for EVs to incentivize local purchases.

The group is calling on the City to make its own transition to electric mobility more visible by publishing a list of its fleet vehicles and their greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions, as well as their plans to convert to EVs. This could encourage Kingstonians to make the shift from "gas-guzzling" to electric in their own lives.

Climate activists are pleased that the City has developed a Home Energy Retrofit Program designed to help locals improve the energy efficiency of their homes. Grants and loans will help purchase heat-pump furnaces, solar thermal hot water systems, insulation and air sealing, high-efficiency doors and windows, and other energy-saving technologies.

It is important to note the co-benefits of these green projects. By connecting environmental goals to human well-being, they ultimately build up communities. For instance, one Queen's University program – the PhD-Community Initiative – links teams of graduate students with local green organizations. Partnerships such as these illustrate how environmental projects strengthen community relationships.

Even small projects, such as the community garden in Skeleton Park, can foster neighbourhood connections. Indeed, anyone who lives around the park may well know that even simple environmental undertakings, such as growing your own tomatoes, encourage conversations and deepen neighbourhood friendships.

The isolation of the COVID-19 crisis has left holes in the social and economic fabric of our city, while this summer's weather-related disasters brought to the fore the deeper destruction of the climate crisis. However, if the plethora of solar panels, vegetable patches, pollinator gardens, and bodies at local climate protests are anything to go by, there is a clear desire amongst Kingstonians to see even more city-supported sustainable changes that address environmental concerns and help rebuild our community.

Of course, the real, and necessary, goal of climate activists is to cut out fossil-fuel use altogether. As we move towards a municipal election, the City would do well to take note of Kingston's rich and varied environmental projects and invest more time, energy, and resources in them to ensure that Kingston is much greener, its communities stronger, and its future secure and sustainable.

**350 KINGSTON** represents citizens committed to taking action on climate change. They recognize climate disruption as a global crisis that is having a disproportionate effect on vulnerable communities around the world, and believe that local activism is one way they can make positive change. They are currently focusing on local government and participating in national and international campaigns. Visit [350Kingston.org](http://350Kingston.org).

# KPP at 20

Pyrotechnics, Punk, and Post-pandemic Performances

STORY BY MARC GARNISS ON BEHALF OF KPP CONCERTS

**S**ince 2001, KPP Concerts has been booking shows across Kingston, in venues of all shapes and sizes, and for genres ranging from ambient-noise rock, to punk, and pretty much everything in between.

I even remember a gig we booked for two performers at Clark Hall Pub (a.k.a. the Queen's engineering bar) in the mid-2000s. Expecting a band that resembled the standard college rock of the time, perhaps Arcade Fire-esque in sound and image, the engineers were taken aback as Human Marvels arrived for sound check. A two-piece industrial outfit, the "band" consisted of The Enigma and Katzen – the former with permanent horn implants and a full-body jigsaw-puzzle tattoo (yes, full-body, as we were all shown); the latter with implanted cat whiskers, various other cat parts, plus your standard head-to-toe cat-stripe tattoo. Not Arcade Fire in sound or image! Remember, this was early 2000s when bank tellers and hockey players didn't regularly sport full-sleeve tattoos. So, on this night, for the low, low price of \$5, one could witness fire breathing, sword swallowing, minor pyrotechnics, and miscellaneous entertainment, all set against the backdrop of not-so-good industrial metal. Post-show, we accepted their request to crash at our house and eat all our food (standard protocol for punk promoters at that time). That gig definitely softened the Queen's engineers to our subsequent show, which was a much more palatable death metal bill featuring Exhumed, F\*\*k the Facts, and Rammer. Ahh, we've missed live music, that's for sure!

Thinking back on those early days, I remember we also released a compilation disc (as in manually burned-at-home compact discs), which sold for a toonie or was free to all KPP members. The primary purpose of becoming a member was the dollar-off cover charge, making most shows only \$4 with the applied discount (and don't forget the free CD, too). I think the membership idea fizzled away shortly after our main venue, Club 477, closed its doors permanently, around the same time we ran out of discs. Years later, I heard that a KPP membership card was flashed at the K-Rock (errr... Leon's Centre) box office for the Motörhead show we were co-promoting. While the proud card carrier did not receive a dollar off the \$174 purchase, box office staff apparently heard a brief history of KPP, how one became a member, and that there was a free CD involved.

So, as we stumbled into our 20<sup>th</sup> anniversary year amidst a pandemic, with no live shows in sight, we reminisced about that original KPP compilation disc and how it brought so much joy and excitement to the bands that were included, and all the people who helped put it together. I remember giving a copy to Alexisonfire (the hardcore band featuring Dallas Green of City and Colour, for those who don't know his earlier work), who were just young at the time. When they came back to Kingston as a famous band, many years later, they mentioned the CD and how it had been in their regular rotation when blasting van tunes on tour. And every so often, I hear of someone who mentions the disc and how it helped them discover a new band that eventually played at Club 477, The Scherzo, Time to Laugh, or other defunct venues now part of the Kingston rock 'n' roll history books.

We're proud to present our second compilation (safely recorded during the pandemic) in celebration of our 20<sup>th</sup> anniversary year! *KPP AT 20* represents some of our favourite Kingston artists, recording engineers, and videographers, who came together over one weekend at one of our favourite venues. Even though folks were fully masked, and we sadly refrained from hugs and high-fives, we could still detect the smiles, joy, and excitement of getting back to making music. We hope you enjoy these ten tunes and can get out to support these local musicians as the live music world starts to reopen this fall and beyond!

See you at the shows!

For more information on KPP Concerts and upcoming shows and projects, visit [kppconcerts.com](http://kppconcerts.com) or follow us on social media @[@kppconcerts](https://www.instagram.com/kppconcerts)



KPP AT 20 album cover

## KPP AT 20 TRACKLIST

- 1 Alex Leggett "I Used to Pray"
- 2 The Gertrudes "Terpenes"
- 3 Stucco "Losing You"
- 4 The Wilderness "25"
- 5 the winter in canada "Overwrite"
- 6 Megan Hamilton "Don't Give Up on Me"
- 7 The Samson KnightS "Skeletons Inside"
- 8 Sian Alcorn "Feel Good"
- 9 KaKaow "Flip the Switch"
- 10 Futura Free "No Way to Know"

The digital album and live videos will be available this fall on your favourite streaming services.

Vinyl copies will be available this winter in downtown record shops, at any KPP show, or for order (visit [kppconcerts.com](http://kppconcerts.com) for information).

Recorded at The Spire by Aaron Holmberg with Noah Sullivan (Full Frequency Productions)

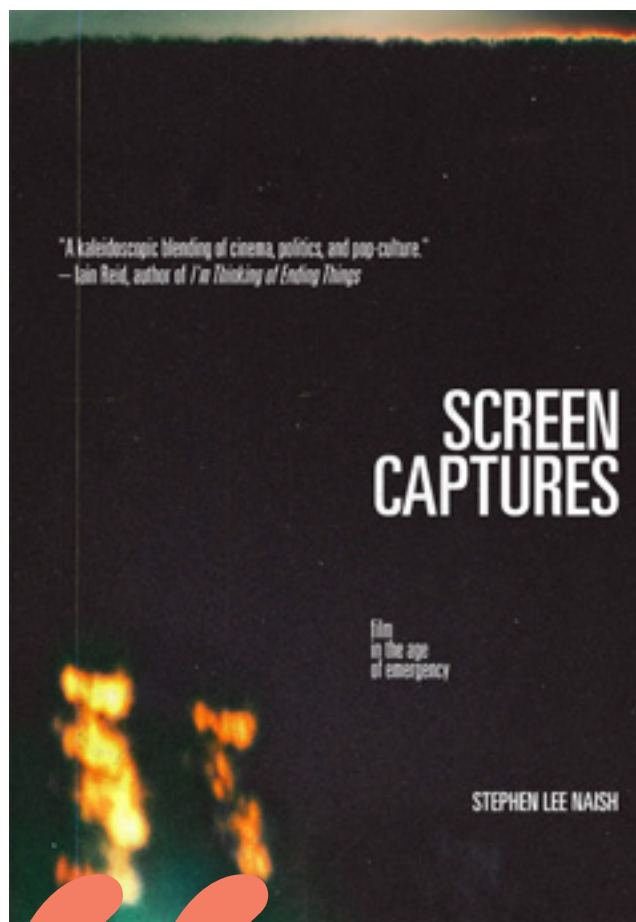
Mixed and mastered at The Pod by Aaron Holmberg (Full Frequency Productions)

VIDEOGRAPHERS: Brent Nurse (bnice), Steven Spencer

PHOTOGRAPHY: Virginia Maria Meeks



**KPP CONCERTS** is a concert promotion/production group based out of Kingston, Ontario. In recent years, KPP has booked such artists as Henry Rollins, Dinosaur Jr., Against Me!, Lights, The Beaches, Alexisonfire, Propagandhi, Grimes, Ria Mae, Frank Turner, Hollerado, Mother Mother, Arkells, and more!



# Screen Captures

Film In the Age of Emergency

REVIEW BY MELANIE DUGAN

In his most recent book, *Screen Captures*, Stephen Lee Naish writes, “Film says a great deal about who we are, where we come from, and what we can strive to be” — an ambitious statement, but Naish stakes out his position compellingly.

Although many of the essays collected here were published before the COVID-19 pandemic drastically altered our lives, there’s a prescience and urgency to Naish’s reading of film’s capacity to, as he quotes Wim Wenders in an opening epigram, “... reinforce the conception that things can be changed,” which speaks to our transformed world. By viewing society through Naish’s lens, we understand that things desperately need to be changed.

In the opening essay, “Shut Up, Capitalism,” Naish neatly dissects the conflicting forces at work in our late capitalist world through an analysis of what he terms “non-super superhero films,” including *Kick-Ass*, *Super*, *Superheroes*, and more (a useful watch list of the films discussed follows each essay) and notes, “in all these films there is a desire . . . to fight corruption and right societal wrongs that have been inflicted on the individual by the unseen forces of capitalism. This is interesting because it is so out of step with the normality of the real world and superhero movies in general.” Naish demonstrates that by subverting the superhero genre, film can be used to interrogate our assumptions of the world we inhabit, and can show us the way forward to a more egalitarian society. As he argues, “...we should look to film as an apparatus for change, a reflection of our society as it stands, and a pointer toward one we want.”

Naish is an eloquent fan, curious, deeply invested in the art of moviemaking, well-disposed towards it, but aware of its shortcomings and how it can be weaponized in the wrong hands. His writing is clear, incisive, and astute.

One must-read piece, “Post-Catastrophe Cinema,” seems to anticipate the seismic changes wrought by the pandemic, and at the same time elucidates the remarkable power of cinema. “How we rebuild or even prolong our existence will depend on the stories we recall and choose to pass down,” Naish observes, and goes on to quote philosopher Richard Kearney, “Every life is in search of a narrative.” Narrative, Kearney continues, is “as basic as eating. More so, in fact. For whilst food makes us live, stories are what make our lives worth living.”

However, to give the impression this book is focused solely on film as a means of exploring BIG issues is to do it a disservice. There’s a wonderful exploration of Nicolas Cage’s career because, honestly, what would a book on film be without an examination of the work of this most idiosyncratic actor? Naish notes in his essay, “it is still up to the reader and the viewer of Cage’s work to embrace the madness for what it is: an intensive artistic experiment in merging art and life.” And isn’t that what all creative endeavor can be, an experiment in combining what we call *real life* with the creative impulse, so that both are rendered richer and weirder in the process?

There’s also an analysis of the Star Wars universe that revealed, to this non-initiate at least, the scope and complexity of the series that might not be obvious in what looks at first glance like a series of mere sci-fi films. The book also includes an interesting deep dive into Dennis Hopper’s multivalent body of work, an intriguing look at social media as it exists at the intersection of our day-to-day lives and screens, and a poignant consideration of *American Reunion*, one of the sequels to *American Pie*.

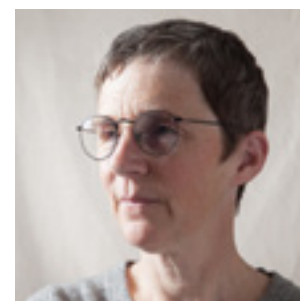
In the essay, “All-American Tragedy,” Naish shows how the four main *American Pie* films trace the arc of North American social history over the last several decades, from the fresh-faced optimism of the first film to the more jaundiced view of our current gig-economy state in the later movies. He writes, “The original film saw the seeds of this failure being sown . . . The trajectory [of the films] perfectly aligns with the generational betrayals felt by older millennials and the current Gen Z.”

It would be easy, in the era of COVID-19, to lapse into a certain cynicism, but Naish is having none of that. “If the pandemic has shown us anything, it is that humans are resilient and, in the worst of times, caring and decent to one another.”

As he points out, “film has always...been a form of education and an apparatus for personal and societal change and progression . . . It can guide us toward a world we want or away from a world we don’t.”

This is a timely, thought-provoking, and wide-ranging book. “I cannot think,” Naish writes, “of a better way to reinterpret our human purpose and our sense of renewed community than through film.” Having read *Screen Captures*, I am inclined to agree with him.

**STEPHEN LEE NAISH** is a public library worker, writer, and cultural critic. He is the author of several books on film, politics, music, and pop culture. He lives in Kingston and is a Central Public School parent.



**MELANIE DUGAN** is a Kingston writer whose first movie memory is *On the Waterfront*.

“NAISH IS AN ELOQUENT FAN, CURIOUS, DEEPLY INVESTED IN THE ART OF MOVIE MAKING, WELL-DISPOSED TOWARDS IT, BUT AWARE OF ITS SHORTCOMINGS AND HOW IT CAN BE WEAPONIZED IN THE WRONG HANDS.”

# ReelOut in Photos

STORY BY MATT SALTON

Thursday January 27, 2022 will mark the premiere of the 23rd annual ReelOut Queer Film Festival which will run for two weeks in Kingston. In 1999, Marney McDiarmid and a group of activists from OPIRG Kingston held a test screening in the back room of Kingston's gay bar, Robert's Club Vogue, at 477 Princess Street (now Trek Cycle) to determine if a city the size of Kingston could benefit from and reasonably sustain a queer film festival. Needless to say, ReelOut has indeed flourished over the years, showcasing hundreds of independent films from around the world, bringing single queer people together (who still celebrate their anniversaries with us), and throwing some incredible parties.



CLOCKWISE FROM TOP RIGHT: Flyer from the 1999 test screening. For our 20th anniversary we re-screened *A Kiss in the Snow*.

By 2003, the collective grew in size, filling living rooms like this one on Chestnut Street to preview submissions: Emily van der Meulen, Jim Verburg, Matt Salton, Carolyn Johanson, Tracey Taylor, Mike Stringer, Jessica Park, Cheryl Sunder, Megan Joslin, Karen Parsons, Hilton Bertalan and Arianna Pozzuoli.

During the first couple of years, the "ReelOut Collective" was only a handful of McBurney Park residents that screened all the submissions at each other's houses in the neighbourhood. Seen on Barrie Street in 2002: Marney McDiarmid, Emily van der Meulen, Carolyn Johanson, and Jim Verburg.





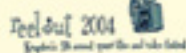


March 12th @ 7pm - \$10 - Etherington Hall, Queen's University

For the few lesbians not familiar with the Sarah Waters classic, *Tipping The Velvet* is the coming of age story of a humble oyster girl, Nan Astley, set in the streets and music halls of nineteenth century London. Little documentation exists of lesbian life during this period but Davies and director Geoff Sax, channeling Waters, reconstruct a dazzling, emotionally and sexually charged atmosphere that feels completely authentic.

Impressionistic and slightly surreal, *Tipping The Velvet* is a beautifully yet unconventionally photographed film. It makes judicious use of a quasi music-video editing style that captures the whimsical quality of Waters' "lesbo Victorian romp". The rehearsal shots of her act with Kitty that intercut Nan's first music hall performance scene, for example, lend a charm and intimacy to the women's growing romantic connection, and leave the viewer wanting more. Save your ticket stub for free entrance to reelout 5th Anniversary party at the Grad Club (Friday March 12 at 10pm) featuring live music food and more!

advance ticket sales:  
 march 1-9:  
 zap records  
 340 princess st.  
 547-9949 (cash only please)  
 classic video  
 40 clarence st.  
 542-3900  
 used book store  
 JDAUC, queen's university  
 533-2120

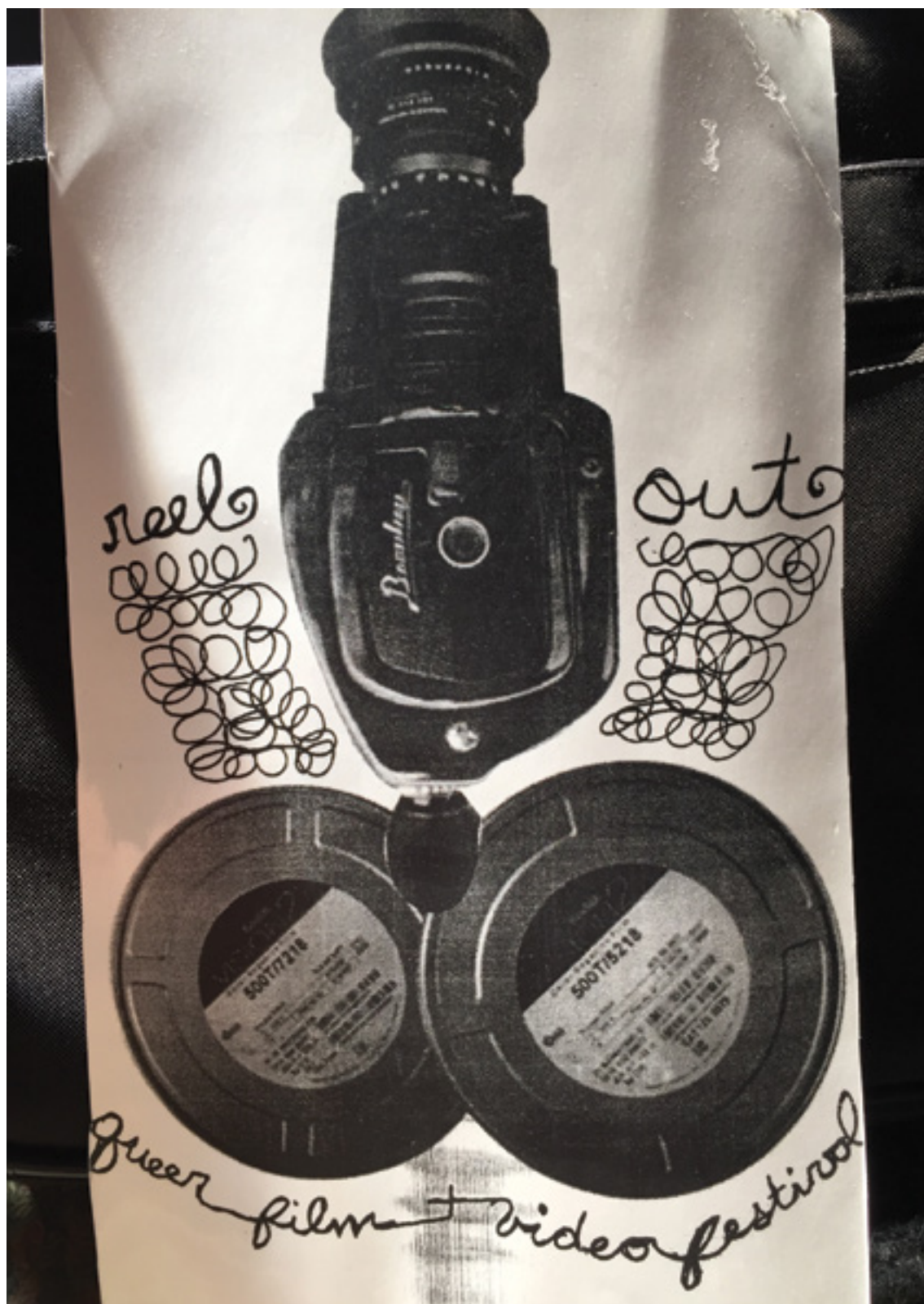


For more info: [www.reelout.com](http://www.reelout.com) or 533.3189



**TOP LEFT:**

*Tipping the Velvet* Poster: In 2004, our opening gala film presentation was moved from The Screening Room to a large lecture hall in Etherington Hall. The collective felt that *Tipping the Velvet*, a BBC produced bodice-ripper based on the best-selling novel would be extremely popular despite its 174 min running time. They were right, selling out the 475-seat auditorium. The urban legend, (that we still perpetuate) is that the proceeding gala party at The Grad Club was so overcrowded that to this day, they can't close the 2nd floor windows properly.



**CLOCKWISE FROM BOTTOM LEFT:**

ReelOut has always been lucky to have some incredible, local designers and photographers work on our materials like Benjamin Nelson, Cat London, Amanda Snider, and Vincent Perez.

The phallic film poster was done by Benjamin Nelson as was the horizontal VHS cover to our program guide.

Vincent Perez designed and Rachel Hazel photographed our queer homage to the Friday the 13th series for our 13th year that celebrated "camp".



**FROM TOP TO BOTTOM:**  
 ReelOut teamed up with various youth-serving community agencies under the leadership of Pytor Hodgson (now the CEO of Three Things Consulting, ReelOut's Presenting Sponsor) for the Y2K (Youth2Kingston Initiative). Together we organized a massive anti-bullying contingent that the Kingston Pride Committee tried to quell saying that "Pride wasn't trying to be political." We showed up anyway and dominated the parade and we've never been prouder of Kingston's youth.

One of ReelOut's strengths is the leadership of its exceptional board of directors seen here in 2016.



**CLOCKWISE FROM TOP LEFT:**

Our incredible volunteers who run the festival. Seen here in 2016 with Yano Paramaanantham, Sabrina Umuhire and Aksel Richard.

ReelOut and Kingston Pride teamed up with the Kingston Frontenacs in 2019 for the first-ever Kingston Frontenacs Pride Night. Seen here, Ruth Wood and Matt Salton with their own personalized rainbow hockey jerseys.

ReelOut staff and volunteers celebrated Kingston Pride in September 2021. Here we are leaving Skeleton Park feeling happy to be reunited after the pandemic.

ReelOut founder Marney McDiarmid brings her son to a family screening for kids of all ages.





# A River I Could Skate Away On

On the Pleasures of Open Ice

STORY AND PHOTOS BY DAVID MCDONALD

**I love going out on the ice in winter. Walking. Skating. Cross-country skiing. I've done it hundreds of times and covered hundreds of kilometres.**

I never take it for granted, though. Ice is a living thing. It can be three feet thick on a seemingly motionless body of water, but moving and breathing nonetheless. Anyone who has heard the crack of two ice plates moving against each other knows the thrill (and the panic) of wondering what lies beneath.

But with some basic knowledge and attentive ears and eyes, being on the ice can be as safe as walking on solid ground.

A great place to start is on the Cataraqui River's Inner Harbour. The water is relatively shallow, it is one of the first stretches of water to freeze, and it's not really affected by the river's currents or by swells from the big lake. As a result, it freezes solidly almost every year, making it one of the most reliable places in Kingston to enjoy the sensation of being on ice.

You may have seen people skating, skiing, and playing hockey on the Inner Harbour last winter. An impromptu skating path was created in early January, after which community members showed up in droves with shovels to keep the ice clear of snow for weeks. They also created a smattering of small and large hockey rinks. Dogs, strollers, shinny players, and skiers appeared out of nowhere.

The ice went all the way out to Belle Island, much of it black ice, the safest ice of all, though also the most unnerving and requiring experience to know when it's safe. Shipwrecks and frozen fish were visible below the surface, and the ice had a smoothness only a Cosmic Zamboni could have created.

I've tried for years to get the City to create skating options like this in Kingston, but officials recoil at the risk of liability, despite the fact that nearby locations such as Belleville, Portland and Ottawa have made skating on open water a major part of their winter activities.

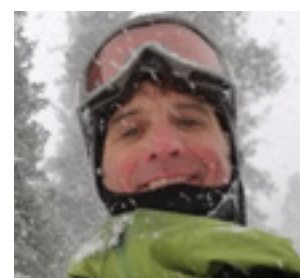
Last year's events seem to have warmed the City to the idea, however. We may even see an official skating area on the Flora Macdonald Basin this winter. We can still go rogue with 'wild' skating on our own, of course, but an actual Zamboni, and onsite safety personnel, may be a more reassuring introduction for some (not to mention the availability of hot chocolate and mulled wine nearby).

Maybe one day the City will even embrace skating on the BIG lake. As many readers may know, Lake Ontario can also freeze creating conditions perfect for skating (as well as skiing, ice boating, curling, and kiting). Such a freeze doesn't occur every year, and the risks are considerably higher because of currents and swells, but when it happens it's magic. I've skated and skied back and forth to Wolfe Island many times. One year I skated all the way to Gananaque with a friend (it took us just under two hours, in case you're wondering), and have skied there many times.

Whether official or unofficial, our options for winter fun are exponentially greater when we expand the urban fabric to include the water that surrounds us, making our waterfront more accessible for all. We can make this happen as individuals, but it's also important that we do it collectively as a community, and that the City embraces ice as part of our public domain.

Creating safe public spaces for skating on lakes and rivers is not rocket science. It just requires political will and resources. Perhaps a 'mass skate' this winter (like 'mass swims' of past summers) will help advance these possibilities.

“Community members showed up in droves with shovels to keep the ice clear of snow for weeks.”



**DAVID MCDONALD** is a long-time resident of the Skeleton Park neighbourhood and Coordinator of the Water Access Group.

PHOTO: Skaters on the Inner Harbour



# What's In a Name?

## Unpacking the Tangled and Macabre History of Skeleton Park

STORY BY LAWRENCE SCANLAN

Named after Skeleton Park: a craft brewery, a jewellery business, an arts festival (not to mention the publication you hold in your hands). The park's signature is all over a great deal of visual art, photography and poetry, and so many writers live close by the five-sided park that some call it Writers Block.

An award-winning short story by one such writer, Steven Heighton, ("The Dead Are More Visible"), is set in the park, along with two songs — one by The Tragically Hip, and the other by the indie rock band, Kasador. And, of course, this oddly named park has spawned innumerable myths. My thought was to consult those who know the park well and see what's verifiable.

The songs first. In The Hip tune, Gord Downie sings, "I wept for all them ghosts . . . over in Skeleton Park." He meant the labourers who toiled for starvation wages on the nearby Rideau Canal and who died in great numbers from malaria or work wounds. Kasador's Nick Babcock likewise sings of ghosts: "In the dark now it starts, this is why they call it Skeleton Park." As band member Cameron Wyatt explained to me, "The idea of writing a song from our hometown appealed to us, and we thought the darker history of Skeleton Park could set the scene for some compelling storytelling. With that in mind, we decided to create a fictional story involving a murderer committing his crimes in Skeleton Park." Both songs are called, simply, "Skeleton Park."

Asking why it's called Skeleton Park is a little like asking, "Who's buried in Grant's tomb?" The park is actually called McBurney Park but few call it that — not when the park is famously home to so many skeletons.

Steven Heighton's story imagines a rink attendant working in the park late one winter night. She has a powerful hose in her hands to make a fresh layer of ice and she uses that tool to defend herself against thugs — with eye-popping consequences. "The story," Heighton told me recently, "emerged out of a strange, vivid dream." But also from his knowing that the park was a 19th-century cemetery. Steve had heard that the number of dead there ranged as high as twenty-five thousand.

"I honestly don't recall where I heard that number," he told me, "But I heard it repeatedly. And when I did the math (in terms of space and time: i.e., size of the park and length of the period when many of Kingston's dead were buried there), the number seemed more or less right."

The park is four acres in size. And for much of the 19th century (1816 to 1863), this plot of land was precisely that — one big burial plot. No one has suggested that Indigenous People buried their dead here, but many others have over time. Soldiers. Brits, Irish, Scots. Catholics, Anglicans, Presbyterians. In the 1800s, the cemetery was known as The Garrison Burying Ground, then The Common Burying Ground, and, finally, The Upper Burial Ground, which is what archaeologist Sue Bazely tends to call it. Few know the



PHOTO: Courtesy of Queen's University Archives

dark history of the park better than she does, and I asked her about another number often cited with authority — that some ten thousand bodies were interred there.

"It's difficult to say," she told me. "We do know from archival research that bodies were stacked, one on top of the other. They would do this in times of crisis — cholera and typhus epidemics. But ten thousand? The population of Kingston at the time was not that big, and there were other cemeteries in use. I'd be skeptical of such high numbers."

I had always understood that when the cemetery was turned into a park in 1893, the tombstones were simply flattened. Here, I thought, was another example of how we treat the poor. Surely the graves of bishops and magistrates would not suffer the same fate. Turns out, it was — and was not — more complicated than that.

Sue Bazely said that during the thirty years after 1863, the grounds were sorely neglected. The remains of some deceased from more affluent families (including the father and son of John A. Macdonald) were relocated at the families' expense; the more numerous paupers, of course, had no such recourse. People allowed their cows and pigs to graze in the tall, unruly grasses of the cemetery, and grave stones were knocked over by vandals. Children used flat grave markers as bases in baseball games and deployed found human bones as bike decorations. A local baseball team formed, claiming the grounds as home field and calling themselves The Grave Yard Nine.

Neighbours declared the ruined cemetery a disgrace. *The British Whig* agreed, opining in 1890, "If it were on King street and not Ordnance street, it would not be tolerated for a day." An honest attempt was made by the City in 1893 to disinter Catholic graves — as per that church's request — but with disastrous results.

"It was a bad situation," says Bazely of the debacle. "The area was waterlogged and some of the bodies had not decomposed. Newspaper accounts describe a circus. People showed up to watch the exhumations. Kids watched!" After three weeks, when some 540 bodies had been disinterred, the contractor — bedevilled by the putrid labour, work crews repeatedly quitting, and the ever constant fear of disease — threw in the towel. "The area was graded," says Bazely, "and turned into a park."

This is when park mythology commences in earnest. Some coffins were found to be double- and triple-bunked while others turned up empty, fueling the belief that grave robbers had been supplying Queen's medical students, who at the time were ex-

pected to bring their own cadavers to anatomy class. "They did need cadavers," says Bazely, "but it's an urban myth that grave robbing was pervasive."

Laura Murray, a professor of history and cultural studies at Queen's University, lived for twelve years in a house that faces Skeleton Park. She gathered oral testimony from neighbours as part of what came to be known as *The Swamp Ward and Inner Harbour History Project*. She started by interviewing her neighbour, Claude Clement, a former City Councillor and then the oldest person living on the park. Professor Murray also organized (with her students and occasionally with neighbourhood author Jamie Swift) walking tours of the park and during one she heard someone say, apparently from personal experience, "That McBurney. He was a nasty man." The speaker was referring to James A. McBurney, a former principal of nearby Central Public School. In 1894, the park was officially named Frontenac Park, but that name never took hold, nor did McBurney Park when the place was rechristened in 1965. Skeleton Park it was and remains.

When one of her children was attending Central Public School, Laura Murray had a conversation with a Sudanese mother who also had children at the school. This woman had caught wind of that age-old controversy about bodies in the park (this time the issue was whether Alma Street should be narrowed to avoid cars driving over graves) and she was baffled by it. "Don't Christians believe that the soul goes to heaven?" she asked. Yes, came the answer. "Then why are they worried about these graves?" The Sudanese, it seems, do not suffer from graveyard anxiety. The lesson of Skeleton Park, perhaps, is an old one: some bodies, whether living or dead, matter more than others.

Still, the dead in the park are not forgotten by the living. "Those graves," says Professor Murray, "do matter to many of us. It's something we think about as we walk our dogs or play basketball or push our kids on the swings. And it isn't necessarily creepy or spooky but rather it provides a sense of humility and continuity between past lives and future lives. So I'd say that graves matter differently to different people."

"I'm glad the park is marked as a graveyard," she says finally. "And I'm glad it's a playground."



LAWRENCE SCANLAN is a well-known Kingston author. His best-selling books include *The Horse God Built* and *A Year of Living Generously*. He was also the ghost-writer of Monty Roberts' *The Man Who Listens to Horses*.

# How The West Was Won



## Tackling Truth with Music

STORY BY TANYA ROBINSON

It is a busy, late-summer evening as nana. and I walk together downtown, trying to find somewhere to sit and chat. Between our walk and our time on the street-front patio, nana. sees countless people he knows. He greets them all, and as each one passes, he tells me their names and how he knows them, and comments on what a great person each one is. You can tell he means it, that he really sees greatness in people. nana. is a positive person, but that does not mean he only sees the best in everything. He sees injustice and what's wrong in the world, and he wants to talk (and sing) about it.

nana. is a local musician and a Queen's student. He grew up in Ghana and lived in Toronto for four years before relocating to Kingston in 2017 to pursue a computer science degree. He started playing and writing music in high school, when he signed up for a guitar class because another class he wanted was full. Through his teens he played in a band, started composing and recording his own music, and taught himself piano, bass and mandolin. When he started at Queen's, nana. was not particularly focused on writing songs, although he did enroll in a couple of music classes. nana. quickly realized that making music was essential to his well-being; without music, things within him were feeling stuck and bottled up. Music was his catharsis, a way for emotions to flow through and for thoughts to be expressed.

Throughout the next few years, nana. continued to take music courses and to write and release songs. During this time, he was starting to feel the changes that often come in early adulthood, when many of us are first leaving home, meeting all kinds of new people, exploring in deeper ways who we are and who we want to be. Then COVID-19 hit, followed shortly by the murder of George Floyd, and nana. started writing the first draft of a song, then titled "He Who Holds Death in His Pouch" (a reference to Fela Kuti, an important Nigerian musician). This piece, originally intended as a single nine-minute track, had many influences — personal, political, and musical: Fela Kuti and Afrobeat music, personal awakening, and racial injustice. nana. ended up splitting this piece into three parts: "The Plea," "The Protest," and "The Pain." nana. describes it as a "three-part musical epic that attempts to reflect the suffering and plight of black people worldwide." This became an EP (an extended play recording), and was given the name *How The West Was Won*.

nana.'s songs are in narrative form, but the narratives are not always linear. "In the way that a movie might start with a flashback," he tells me, "everything might seem in different places, but the story is being told in the way it needs to be told." He likes writing long songs and is well suited for epic musical storytelling.

*How The West Was Won* was nana.'s first real foray into tackling truth with his music. Taking on serious concepts and issues was not easy though. "I was scared of what I was talking about," nana. says, "... scared of how true it was." He struggled with whether or not he should take this direction with his music. He wondered how people would respond, if it would alienate his audience. I was reminded of a Lauryn Hill quote: "Fantasy is what people want, but reality is what they need, and I just retired from the fantasy part." I shared this quote with nana., who said that Hill is another big influence for him. Facing reality is hard, but nana. is glad that he did. "I feel more free," he says. nana.'s next project will be even more conceptual; he hints at a multimedia show, working with lots of other artists, long narrative songs, live music with skateboarding, modelling, and art. He's hoping to begin showcasing this project next spring.

Other musicians, visual art, film, and social justice all play into what inspires him. Overall, "life in general, inspires," nana. says. To learn more about him and to hear what inspired *How The West Was Won*, and earlier works, head over to his website at [scarlett-ivy.com](http://scarlett-ivy.com).



**TANYA ROBINSON** is the co-owner of Something Else Records, the mother of two children under four, and a holistic nutritionist. She recently moved thirty minutes outside of Kingston where she is learning to ride the waves of country life. Tanya is happy to be in the winter edition of *The Skeleton Press* because she loves all things winter (well, maybe not all, but most).



### Three albums nana. wants to inspire you to listen to \_\_\_\_\_

"Atom Heart Mother" by Pink Floyd  
 "Titanic Rising" by Weyes Blood  
 "All My Heroes Are Cornballs" by JPEGMAFIA

### Three albums that nana.'s music inspires me to listen to \_\_\_\_\_

"MTV Unplugged" by Lauryn Hill  
 "Open & Close" by Fela Kuti & The Africa 70  
 "Mother Of My Children" by Black Belt Eagle Scout

# Día de los Muertos

## Celebrating Life

STORY AND PHOTOS BY YESSICA RIVERA BELSHAM



My name is Yessica – many call me Yessi, and my Náhuatl name is Ocelopacihuatl. The name Ocelopacihuatl was given to me by an Elder where my family is from — the tail end of Turtle Island, México. Ocelopacihuatl translates to “Woman of the Jaguar Medicine.” The jaguar has many layers of meaning and significance, but the element that comes forward as I write these words is awareness of how the jaguar is connected to darkness and lightness; night and day; death and life.

I am deeply grateful for my family, friends, my ancestors, and all the loved ones who have gone before me. I am grateful for every breath of life and never take my tomorrows for granted. Across my time here on this earth, I have experienced many life-changing events and some near-death ones. I have had close family members die; recently, several have died due to COVID-19. In my work in health care, I have witnessed many deaths and seen many struggling to survive. I have also been greatly affected by the discovery of the bodies of the many Indigenous children who never made it home from residential schools.

Remembering and feeling a connection with my ancestors and the loved ones that have gone before me is a daily practice for me. Some of my fondest memories in Kingston have been the Día de los Muertos — Kingston Community Celebration of Life events, held annually on November 1. Día de los Muertos translates from Spanish to Day of the Dead. I first hosted this celebration in Kingston back in 2015, with the support and help of many family members, friends, organizations, and community members. I continued hosting this event until last year, when it was cancelled due to COVID-19. I can only describe the events as beautifully woven braids made with family, friends, and community, with us all gathering in celebration and remembrance of loved ones that have died, while also celebrating life with wonderful music, dancing, food, altars, displays, and other artistic expressions.

Día de los Muertos is a tradition celebrated in a variety of ways across México, with practices varying depending on the region. Similar events also take place in several other countries.

Using skulls to honour the dead has been a tradition for more than six centuries, and over the years this practice has evolved to become what we now know as Día de los Muertos. Depending on the cultural practices of the individuals celebrating, the celebration may focus on the Indigenous roots of México. These celebrations include drumming, dancing, singing, and smudging with copal (a resin used as incense), and focus on connecting with the dead and setting an intention to honour them throughout the year. For others, the focus is on the Catholic

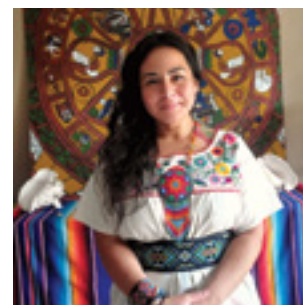


symbolism that started when the Spanish colonized parts of México. The Spanish moved Indigenous celebrations that were ongoing throughout the year to once-a-year celebrations on November 1 (All Saints Day) and November 2 (All Souls Day).

For many, Día de los Muertos is the woven mixture of both these histories, and the celebrations focus on celebrating both the loved ones who have gone before us and life in community. In México, many clean the grave sites of their loved ones on November 1st, and gather to sing, share stories, and bring offerings on November 2nd. For many it can be a time of great sorrow and grief and a celebration of their lives.

Día de los Muertos celebrations often include building altars (ofrendas) in homes with offerings to loved ones who have died. Ofrendas often include candles, photos of loved ones, items left behind, or items representing things they used to like. Many make pan de muerto (bread of the dead), tamales, and other traditional foods. Many also create extensive arrangements of bright yellow and orange Mexican marigolds, known as flores de muertos in Spanish and cempasúchil flowers in Náhuatl. Altars usually include symbols of the four elements of life, such as water and food for earth, candles for fire, and papel picado for wind. Papel picado is a brightly coloured folk-art banner made of tissue paper and featuring hand-chiseled designs. Skulls are often brightly coloured and decorated to highlight the vibrancy of life.

To me, the skulls, altars, and celebrations of life are about thinking about loved ones as well as thinking about and reflecting on my own mortality. Día de los Muertos makes me aware that my loved ones are still with me, in my heart, and on my mind — I remember them and feel them close by. When I take my last breath here on this earth, I will be there in the hearts of my loved ones and, somewhere, I will be drumming, singing, and dancing. Every time I drum and sing, I feel the heartbeat of the generations who came before us, the heartbeats of those now going through struggle, and the heartbeats of the generations ahead.

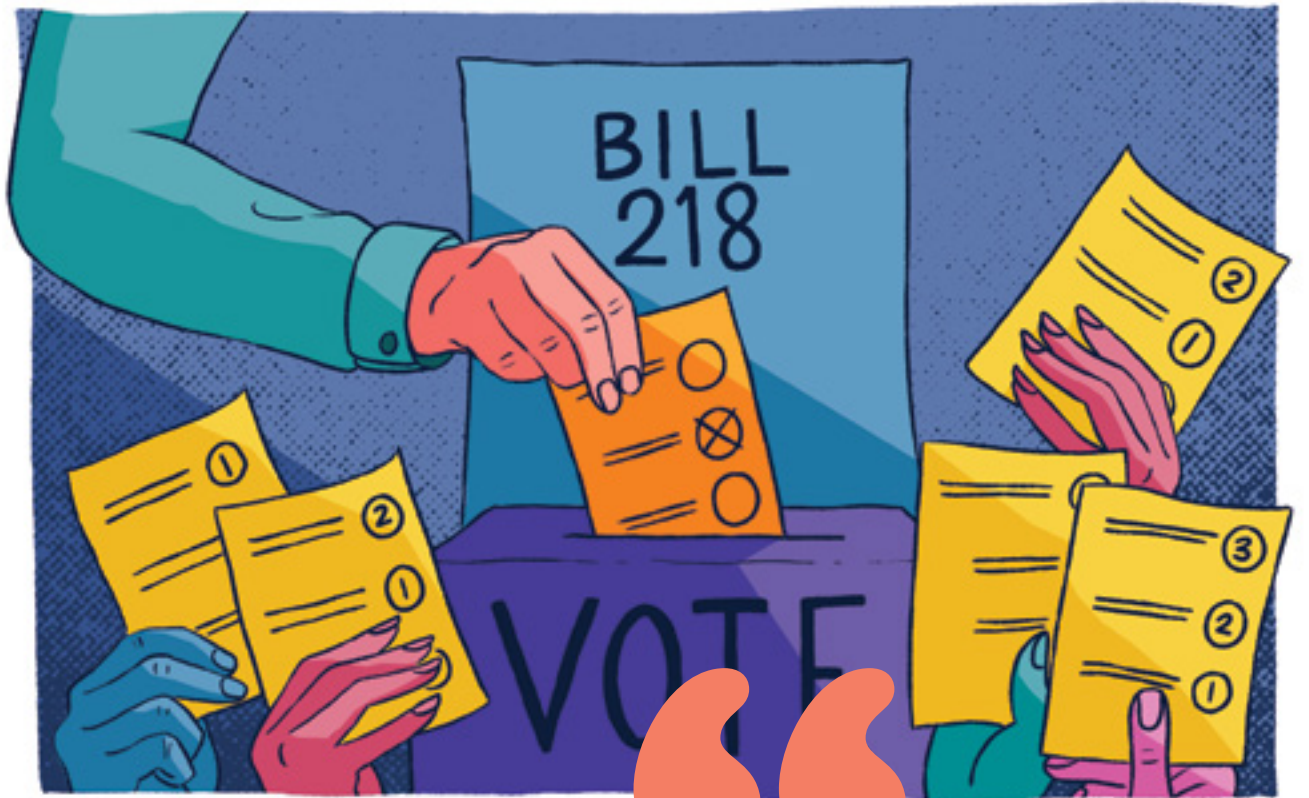


**YESSICA RIVERA BELSHAM** is the founder of Ollin.ca, and an Indigenous Interdisciplinary Artist from the tail of Turtle Island, México. Her love of life and her passion for world rhythms, colour, movement, and healing arts are combined as she celebrates visual arts, dancing, drumming, and singing in her daily life. Yessica offers workshops and events focused on equity, diversity, inclusion, and growth with various populations within México and Canada.

# The Fight for Ranked Ballots

Looking Ahead to Kingston's 2022 Municipal Election

BY SIMON BARON AND AMY KAUFMAN  
ILLUSTRATION BY TARA PELOW



In 2018, after countless conversations at kitchen tables, on doorsteps, in schools, community halls, parks, and parades, Kingstonians chose ranked ballots as their voting system for future municipal elections. In our current first-past-the-post system, you vote for only one candidate, and the candidate with the most votes wins, even if they have less than 50 percent of the votes. Ranked ballots allow you to rank the candidates, requiring the winner to get more than 50 percent of the votes – actual majority support – to win. We both spent a good part of 2018 campaigning with the yes side of Kingston's ranked ballot referendum, and were elated when, on October 18, 2018, Kingston voters evidently agreed – by a comfortable majority of 63 percent – that ranked ballots were a fairer, more effective electoral system.

The newly-elected City council respected Kingston's referendum decision and started laying the groundwork to implement ranked ballots for the 2022 election. They began on December 18, 2018, by directing City staff to prepare a report outlining the necessary steps for Kingston's move to ranked ballots. Kingston was on its way.

And yet, here we are, heading into yet another first-past-the-post municipal election in 2022. What happened?

Everything changed in October 2020, when Doug Ford's Progressive Conservative Party (PCP) introduced Bill 218. Tucked at the end of the legislation, which was ostensibly intended to protect long-term care facilities from lawsuits, was a section taking away municipalities' ability to choose ranked ballots for their own elections. Ironically, the man who chose to eliminate ranked ballots for municipalities owed his own position as premier to that very system. It was a ranked ballot that enabled Ford to win the leadership of the Ontario PCP. If the party had used a first-past-the-post ballot, Christine Elliott would have been elected with 36 percent of the vote over Ford's 32 percent. It took three ballots for Ford to get over half the votes to win the leadership. If you are not a fan of Ford, please don't let this result colour your view of ranked ballots. Ranked ballots are designed to ensure true majority support of the chosen candidate, so no one can be elected with less than 50-percent support. Ranked ballots work: the majority of Progressive Conservative voters wanted Ford as leader.

Bill 218's effects have been far-reaching. Like Kingston, Cambridge voters had also chosen ranked ballots in a 2018 referendum, and they, too, will now be blocked from moving forward. The bill will

stop planned ranked-ballot referendums in Barrie and Meaford. But it is worse for London, which had already successfully run their 2018 election using ranked ballots. Will they now have to return to first-past-the-post?

There was vigorous opposition to Bill 218, both locally and provincially. In Kingston, backed by a petition from Kingston residents, city councillor Robert Kiley brought a motion for the city to call on Steve Clark, Ontario's Minister of Municipal Affairs, to continue allowing municipalities to elect leaders using ranked ballots if they so chose. This motion passed 12-1.

The Association of Municipalities of Ontario likewise opposed the change, asserting that communities themselves needed to decide how to elect their representatives, and municipalities lined up to issue their own statements of opposition to Bill 218, from cities such as Burlington and Thunder Bay to rural townships such as Prince Edward County and Moonbeam. Even municipalities with no set plans for ranked ballots criticized the province for making a decision they believed should be made locally, to serve local needs.

At Queen's Park, Kingston and the Islands MPP Ian Arthur asked, "Why is the government using the pandemic to get rid of ranked ballots when voters in Kingston voted massively in favour of them?" MPPs from different parts of the province joined him in questioning the motives behind this surprise move.

However, the government wasn't interested in hearing from people. They allocated only one afternoon for public consultation on the entire bill, and denied 82 percent of requests to speak to the committee. In fact, only one delegation on ranked ballots was permitted – the Mayor of London. Despite intense public interest, the event took place in the one committee room at Queen's Park without cameras for public viewing. Liberal MPP Lucille Collard tried to set up her own livestream for the public. Bill 218 was then quickly passed, receiving Royal Assent on November 20, 2020.

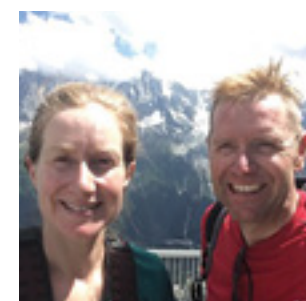
As discouraging as this recent history sounds, there is simply too much momentum for the passing of Bill 218 to be the end of ranked ballots in Kingston and Ontario. As ranked ballots, and electoral reform more generally, continue to grow in popularity, there is plenty of reason for hope. In the United States, Maine and Alaska have recently decided to use ranked ballots at the state level, and in 2020, four states used ranked ballots in their Democratic Party presidential primaries. Following a 2019 refer-

**Ranked ballots are designed to ensure true majority support of the chosen candidate...**

endum, New York City now uses ranked ballots to elect its mayor and council, one of more than twenty American cities using ranked ballots for their municipal elections.

As Ontario heads toward the next provincial election in 2022, there are options for the many Kingstonians who support ranked ballots at the municipal level. All three leaders of the main opposition parties – Andrea Horwath of the New Democratic Party (NDP), Steven Del Duca of the Liberal Party, and Mike Schreiner of the Green Party – have pledged to bring back the ranked ballot option for municipalities if their parties form the government. Two of our local candidates have already demonstrated their support. Along with the NDP's Ian Arthur, Liberal candidate Ted Hsu helped organize the Yes Kingston campaign during the municipal referendum. [At the time of writing, a Green Party candidate had not yet been identified.]

If there is a change in government following the 2022 provincial election, Kingston will once again be free to implement the will of its electorate and move to ranked ballots. There is even a silver lining to the Ford government's sudden ban in 2020: it publicized ranked ballots across the province and prompted new interest in their use. By 2026, Kingston may well be joined by even more municipalities in exploring, and implementing, ranked ballots.



**SIMON BARON AND AMY KAUFMAN** live in the McBurney Park neighbourhood and campaigned in 2018 with Yes Kingston during the referendum on ranked ballots.



# Feeding the City

## How Can We Move From Food Charity to Food Sovereignty?

STORY BY AYLA FENTON



Loving Spoonful works to connect people with good food in Kingston and area through its Fresh Food Access, Community Kitchens, and Urban Agriculture programs. To learn more about their work, visit [lovingspoonful.org](https://lovingspoonful.org).



**It should come as no surprise that the COVID-19 pandemic has deepened existing inequities in our society. In 2018, one in eight Canadian households experienced food insecurity. We do not have updated statistics for 2021, but we know anecdotally that food insecurity has increased since this crisis began.**

At Loving Spoonful, we redistribute food to dozens of partner agencies, including food banks, emergency meal providers, shelters, and other social service providers. Nearly all of our partners have seen a significant increase in demand for their food programs, and thankfully there has been a corresponding increase in emergency funding from the federal and municipal governments. These organizations are doing crucial work on the ground to meet the immediate needs of the most vulnerable, but what happens when the emergency funding dries up? Charitable food program coordinators will be the first to tell you that what they are offering are band-aid solutions.

In order to meaningfully address food insecurity, we need to recognize that it is a systemic issue, not an individual issue. At Loving Spoonful, we are moving toward the concept of “food sovereignty.” Food sovereignty is defined by *La Via Campesina*, the global social movement of peasants and small farmers (founded almost thirty years ago), as “the right of peoples to healthy and culturally appropriate food produced through ecologically sustainable methods, and their right to define their own food and agriculture systems.”

Decentralized, small-scale food production is one key component for building food sovereignty, and income security is another. Both are related to en-

suring that people have the resources required to “define their own food systems.” Black and Indigenous households are nearly three times as likely to experience food insecurity compared to white households in Canada. This fact is inextricably linked to histories of racism, genocide, and dispossession, specifically regarding access to land, traditional knowledge, capital, and income. Any attempt to solve food insecurity without addressing inequities in access to land and income is doomed to failure. This is why Loving Spoonful advocates for a Basic Income Guarantee and affordable housing, in addition to our food programming. It is also why we launched our Urban Agriculture program earlier this year.

Urban agriculture has certainly increased in popularity across North America in recent years. Since the pandemic began, we have seen an explosion of interest in community gardening and we have seen dozens of new-home vegetable gardens in the Skeleton Park neighbourhood alone. Some might dismiss urban agriculture as just another pandemic craze, like the sourdough-bread-baking trends from the early days of the pandemic, but it is much more than that.

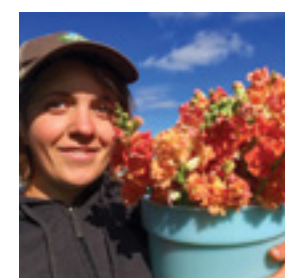
Producing food in cities is not a new idea – it has been around since humans have been living in cities! Over the past century in North America, agriculture has become intentionally excluded from cities as government policies increasingly regulated access to “public” lands and incentivized the industrialization and corporate consolidation of agriculture. Visit any major city outside of Europe and North America and you will find people growing food everywhere – along roadsides, under power lines and bridges, front yards, and anywhere else that soil can be cultivated. In contrast, most North American cities explicitly forbid food production on most public lands.

With our Urban Agriculture program, we are striving to increase access to land for food production within the city of Kingston. We are working within the

existing community gardens framework to expand the Kingston Community Gardens Network, with support from the City of Kingston. But community gardens are only one piece of the puzzle. We envision a future when all Kingston residents have the land, skills and resources to produce food for themselves and for their communities, should they wish to do so. A future when the vast resources invested in landscaping are redirected to “foodscaping” and public lands are actually used for public good. And when aspiring farmers can access land to grow food for their community and build the local economy.

Thankfully, the City of Kingston has identified the need to strengthen local food systems in their strategic plan. As we approach an election year, it is important that residents hold the City of Kingston to account and ask them to prioritize food sovereignty, not just food charity. We must also recognize that the systemic change we need does not just come from political “leaders.” It comes from grassroots movements. When community gardens were shut down by pandemic restrictions last spring, thousands of people across Ontario worked together to successfully advocate for their reopening. This summer, a Just Recovery Kingston campaign had dozens of people write letters to city councillors, asking for an increase in funding for community gardens and the City of Kingston has now announced new funding.

If we all start planting seeds, beautiful things will grow!



**AYLA FENTON** is a first-generation farmer and the Urban Agriculture Organizer with Loving Spoonful.

# I Want to Be a Good Ancestor

STORY BY GEORGINA RIEL/WAABISHKI MUKWA KWE

**The legacy of family and ancestors has helped build our living libraries. We share the stories of our old ways through the process of oral teachings as we sit with our parents, aunties, uncles, and grandparents. These teachings and stories help frame who we are as Anishnaabe People from nation to nation.**

I was chatting with my cousin Banakonda the other day about this article, our last family reunion, and the losses in our family since the reunion. Banakonda said, “I want to be a good ancestor.” I replied with, “That’s a good title for an article.” Banakonda asked, “Can you cite me?” I said, “Absolutely.” This is how the title of this article came to be.

My family has endured colonial cruelty, trauma, death, murder, and genocide since the time of settler contact because of our bodies and what we represent. The new colonial threat we are facing is that of pretendians, or race shifters. This is a different phenomenon, and it involves people who have no Native DNA or who are clinging to an old relative from the fifteenth or sixteenth century claiming to be from an Indigenous nation.

One of the most famous modern-day pretendians or race shifters is Grey Owl. Who was Grey Owl? Grey Owl was the alias of Archibald Stansfeld Belaney (born September 18, 1888 in Hastings, England; died April 13, 1938 in Prince Albert, SK). Grey Owl was a well-known conservationist and writer in the 1930s. Although born in England, he portrayed himself as the son of a Scottish man and Apache woman. Archibald riddled his life stories with lies. He gained access to Native ways of knowing and reaped the rewards globally, positioning himself to be influential and earning money from being a pretendian/race shifter.

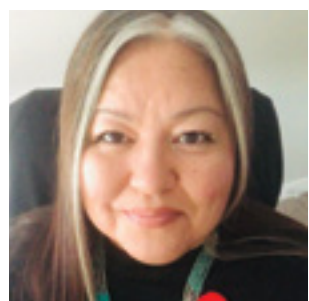
This brings me to “us” (meaning Native people who are not only Status, but also non-Status people who are two generations from being Status) and about us reading and seeing others occupying this space and position. Many are now claiming not only our identity but also our stories and using our historical and present-day trauma. High profile names in academia and in the TV and film industry, have engaged in this cultural theft.

Vic, an old relative and a land-based community member who is no longer with us, said to me one day, “Hey Georgina, remember when it wasn’t cool being an Indian?” Vic and I laughed the only way Ojibway people can. It was great bumping into him from time to time, mostly at the Frontenac Mall when having tea with other community members or during the Kingston National Indigenous Peoples Day, where I would see him walking and say on the mic, “Heeeeeey Victor, I seen your dad.” He would laugh, wave, and go about his business. We knew our ways. No matter where we live, as relatives and territory community members we claim each other.

Our birthright to our territory is in our DNA. Our feet are forever rooted on our territory even if we are not there all the time. As soon as my feet are back on my home territory, my land and the energy of my ancestors flows through my blood and body, making me grow taller. I can see the space and places upon which my footprint has been. I can say hello to community members, relatives, chiefs, and council members. They see me as I see them. They say my name as I say theirs. My community claims me as I claim them. This has been the way of my people for thousands of years. The markings of the Agawa Pictographs on Lake Superior’s rock walls are the markings of my ancestors. My grandfather was an Agawa and, along with my family, we would go and listen to the legends that helped fill our memory baskets to share with each generation.

To be someone who creates an existence based on knowledge spoken or written by others is not sustainable. You can only tell the same lies with consistency for a period of time. Someone eventually comes along and can hear the inconsistencies and starts to ask questions. You see them trying to be us but still never being us. The act of creating a fake identity wrapped in fantasy, fetishization, and toxicity towards Native people eventually is revealed and comes to an end. It’s not the role of the Native community to repair or clean up the mess created by people who pretend. My long hair is an extension towards Mother Earth, and these are not just words. This is the feeling each legitimate Native person has. Therefore, we grow our hair. Our teachings are in each strand. It is the strength that binds us all together. You can’t fake this connection.

I am Georgina Riel/Waabishki Mukwa Kwe, great-great-granddaughter of Chief Shingwauk and a member of the Batchewana First Nations of the Ojibways. I am accountable to myself, my people, my ancestors. Every non-Native person is accountable to ensure race shifters and pretendians no longer occupy spaces and positions intended for Indigenous peoples. This is how reciprocity works.



**GEORGINA RIEL/WAABISHKI MUKWA KWE** is a mother of two incredible sons and has had a wonderful partner for more than thirty years. She is the owner of RIEL Cultural Consulting, and is an Indigenous Affairs Consultant, Traditional Kwe/Woman, Educator, Artist and community builder.



“MOM AND SON” BY ROB SPADE

# Indigenous Identities What's the Fuss?

STORY BY DR. TERRI-LYNN BRENNAN



## **If I were to mention the names Joseph Boyden or Michelle Latimer, where would your first thoughts go? Would you reflect on the cultural impact of Boyden's writing or Latimer's films and TV contributions?**

Or would you think instead of the very public implosion of their professional and personal lives, because their Indigenous self-identifications were claimed fraudulent?

This is a complex question, and answering it requires an understanding of the history/story/legal realities of pre-colonial-settlement Indigenous nations' relationships through land/resource treaties, wampum, ceremony, and protocol; of how settler occupation moved across Turtle Island from 1400 to 1900; and then of the legislative roots of the Indian Act of 1876. Such a conversation can not be teased out in a single article.

But let me start with my informal answer for the contemporary and ongoing "pretendians" conversation: *The internal, lateral violence of Indigenous against Indigenous is a mirrored projection of racism and bigotry, learned and emulated as a result of colonial assimilation.* Put another way, it's easier to be an oppressor when the system encourages this distraction from what really matters.

Now don't get me wrong. Being recognized by First Nation, Métis Council or Inuit Community leaders is important, if not necessary. But to publicly call out Indigenous identities pushes Indigenous Peoples and Indigenous communities further away from healing and re-learning who they are as individual nations, kin and family. Even more problematic is that this issue does three things: it keeps First Nations, Métis and Inuit Peoples from defining their own modern families and land ties; it keeps them subjects defined by legislation passed 145 years ago; and, in turn, this dispute further keeps us fighting over the scraps as defined by white settlers, off the white settlers' table.

Other Indigenous voices may not agree, and I therefore remind the reader that this is my own response.

And who am I? Well, I've been a self-identifying Mohawk and British woman since I could talk, as there was no denying it in my home. Did I grow up on the rez? No, my family moved off the reserve three generations ago. Do I have a status card? No, my paternal great-grandmother was taken out of the community and adopted by a non-Indigenous childless couple, and when she married another native off reserve they continued to stay living outside the community. Is my story unique? Absolutely not; mine is a very common story for many Indigenous People across Canada. Does my community acknowledge me? Yes. Does that make me "Indigenous"? I'd like to think so, but to be honest, it's messy.

Messy because of the persistent chipping away of pride in being Indigenous that has continued across Turtle Island for more than 400 years. It's messy depending on where your kin come from, or from which clay you arose.

The evolution of settler occupation in Southern Ontario began in the 1400s. By the 1600s the St. Lawrence River and Great Lakes Basin were ripe for France and Britain to bring their "issues" across the Atlantic, where they continued to pick members for their respective fight clubs from the likes of my ancestors and various Anishinaabe neighbours. The infiltration and destruction of Indigenous kinship lines across what is now eastern Canada greatly affected the Haudenosaunee, as it had the Beothuk, the Mi'kmaq, Maliseet, Abenaki, and Huron before us.

The homelands of my Mohawk ancestors are in the Mohawk Valley in the Finger Lakes region of modern upper New York State. Mohawk displacement from that region came with the conclusion of the American Revolutionary War in 1783. Those who had sided with the British moved north of the St. Lawrence River system extending to the Great Lakes. These lands had been traversed and

periodically settled by the Haudenosaunee prior to the 1400s due to resource abundance. But after 1783, settlements cemented themselves around present-day Montreal, at Akwesasne/Cornwall, and Tyendinaga in the Bay of Quinte. Through a treaty, my people settled along the Grand River watershed from its headwaters in Dundalk to Lake Erie, more specifically near Brantford in what became known as Six Nations of the Grand River.

Is it any wonder, today, that our stories are messy? And if you were asked to sort out the mess, what might your response be? My response depends on another question: who's asking?

My Indigenous worldview is rooted in the Great Law of Peace, as is that of most individuals who identify as Haudenosaunee. We are known to the average non-Indigenous person as the Iroquois 5/6 Nations Confederacy, and the Great Law is a constitution that outlines who, why, and when Haudenosaunee should go about their daily lives. Historically, living outside the boundaries of the law was dealt with severely. Why? Because all the laws, principles and protocols tie every action to relationship: your relationship with all other living and non-animate things.

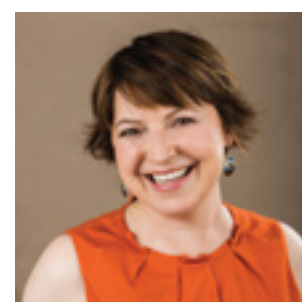
If we break a law, we understand that it is not only going to affect our lives, but the lives of others. We therefore need to be held responsible, accountable for a disruption that could prove fatal.

I was always taught, and I continue to learn from Elders and Clan Mothers alike, that it is most inappropriate to judge, shame, condemn or chastise publicly any community member, and especially if your clay or your family comes from outside the community you have been greeted into (i.e., if the Indigenous voices inciting violence in this region are anything but Haudenosaunee or southern Anishinaabe Nations).

The resiliency to survive that Indigenous communities hold onto today must maintain that all outsiders respect how individual communities manage their kinship affairs. Indigenous ways of being, doing, and knowing from the Haudenosaunee perspective are rooted in peace, strength, and a good mind, with individual responsibility committed to giving back to one's community.

Therefore, setting on fire a community that is not your own because of perceived injustices and frauds is very disrespectful to the stewards of the land who welcomed you. When these things happen, all I can do is hang my head and say, "Colonial assimilation is alive and well in the best of us."

What hope do we have to reclaim our ways if the messiness has erased our ability to live our laws?



**DR. TERRI-LYNN BRENNAN** is a proud kawehnóhkwes tsi kawè:note'er (Wolfe Islander) with her partner, ornithologist Mark Read and their Portuguese Water Dog, Higgs Boson.



# Ice Fishing with Stan

BY EZRA LYON, WITH MEREDITH DAULT  
PHOTOS BY JOSH LYON

**I'm pretty sure I first met Stan when I was walking with my family past his workshop at the corner of York and Raglan streets. He called us over and we went inside to have a look around. Then we chatted for about an hour or so. He showed us pictures of when he went fishing, of the beautiful sunsets and huge fish that he caught.**

Stan is retired now, but before that he was a carpenter. I think he mainly made doors, but I am not certain. When my fishing rod broke a while ago, he got me a new one at a flea market. One day, in February 2019, we met him and he started telling us stories about ice fishing. We said, "That would be fun!" and he said, "Hey, let's go ice fishing!"

The next morning we got in the car with our skates and drove down to Battery Park to meet Stan. It was me, my dad, Josh, my mom, Corky, my brother, Oscar, my sister, Molly, and my friend, August. We walked out on the ice pulling Stan's sled with all his gear in it. He had his fishing rods, tackle, and all his tools for ice fishing. He has one particular tool called an auger for drilling holes in the ice. It never starts with the first pull so Stan sprays it with stuff he calls 'cheat.' I think it's actually WD-40. The auger has a chainsaw motor, and it is so cool to watch.

I'm pretty sure the ice was about two and a half feet thick when we went out. We drilled some holes and then sat down to fish. The ice was like glass in all directions, so after about 10 minutes we went skating. We could skate forever until we hit pressure cracks. Stan told us not to go too close to them because the ice is weaker there.

We didn't catch anything. It would have been nice if we did because that would have been exciting. I've

never caught a fish ice fishing! Your toes get pretty cold because you aren't moving, but like Stan told us, the point isn't really to catch fish – it's really to go out with your friends and to chat and sit around. But if you do catch a fish, that's good.

I think Stan likes taking people ice fishing because he likes chatting with people and sharing his experiences. I know he loved fishing as a kid, and he doesn't have any grandkids that live around here. It's nice to have people in the neighbourhood like Stan who are older and have knowledge from a while ago, and stories that they can share with you. He has lived in this neighbourhood his entire life, though not always in the house he lives in now. People like Stan can really help you to get to know your neighbourhood and what happened around here.

“

**It's nice to have people in the neighbourhood like Stan who are older and have knowledge from a while ago.**



# Learning in Place

BY MARK STOLLER

ILLUSTRATION BY TAYLOR TYE

**“I walk in two worlds,” says Dale. “I have my Indigenous leg and my Western leg. I’m not going to walk everywhere in Kingston on my Indigenous side or I’d fall over, right?” He laughs a little. “You gotta use both legs.”**

Dale Bennett, a teacher with the Limestone District School Board, and Katelyn Doreen, an employee of the Métis Nation of Ontario, are instructors in the River program at the Katarokwi Learning Centre (KLC). Located at the corner of Cowdy and Adelaide streets, the KLC operates as an alternative learning site within the Limestone District School Board (LDSB).

The River program, which is available to self-identified Indigenous high school students in the LDSB, is one of several programs specifically aimed at re-engaging and supporting students in achieving their diploma. The high enrolment rate of Indigenous students at KLC (roughly one third of all students) reflects deeper issues of how Indigenous youth experience public education in Canada. Historically, schools have played a central role in separating Indigenous youth from their families, communities, and cultures. Education is integral to ongoing public discourse regarding reconciliation in Canada.

Many Indigenous educators are using the opportunity to rethink and reform the in-class experience. For Dale and Katelyn — both Mohawk from Tyendinaga — engagement with academic learning has meant reflecting upon their own experiences in the school system and the challenges they faced there. Both see many of their students in situations similar to those in which they grew up.

“A lot of our kids got lost in the mainstream schools and got divvied into standardized testing and standardized expectations,” Katelyn explains.

The issues faced by many youth typically go well beyond the classroom.

“When your needs aren’t being met on so many other levels, it’s really hard to be good at school. I know that firsthand,” says Dale. “Kids don’t get lost in the mix here. We know our kids; we see them all day long.”

Smaller class sizes (between eight and fifteen) and flexibility in attendance and curriculum help reshape the classroom as a place of trust and mutual learning between instructors and students.

“That’s the job: to make things relevant to people in front of you,” Dale says. “I understand how difficult that would be in a class of 20 to 30. Here, I have the ability to make learning relevant to them. I can adjust my expectations to get students of different levels to the same place.”

Past programming has included attending sweat lodges, camping, canoeing, beading, and drumming. All these programs have been assisted or led by local Elders and Knowledge Keepers. COVID-19 has restricted these kinds of activities, but Dale and Katelyn are hopeful for fishing trips in the spring. The work with Elders and Knowledge Keepers,



Katelyn explains, is integral to building trust and a sense of being valued within the students. Students, she says, learn better when they feel valued.

“It’s like a natural connection,” she says of visits from Elders and Knowledge Keepers. “When our Elders come in, it’s like a sense of peace. The students turn into different kids. They’re attentive, respectful. They take more risks.”

The program also allows students to learn from one another’s histories and cultures. The program currently includes Mohawk, Ojibwe, Cree, Algonquin, and Métis students, reflecting the diverse array of cultures in and around the Kingston area.

Learning from one another has also been part of Katelyn and Dale’s respective journeys back to the classroom. For Katelyn, herself a graduate of KLC, returning as an educational advisor has not only brought her full circle, but also strengthened her belief in the value of engaged learning.

“I’m having a better experience in this position than I did as a student because as a student I was in this mindset of having to get it done,” she says. “I remember at the time our teachers were really excited and encouraging, and now that I’m in this position I get to learn these things again.”

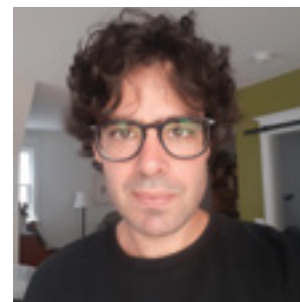
Dale has followed a similar path. His newfound role in the program comes after years working in and around education, but he has never experienced the degree of immersion that KLC provides.

“To be here is crazy!” he says. “This is the dream: teaching kids who had some level of thought in their head that ‘I can’t do this.’ I’m like, ‘Yes you can!’ We just need to make the curriculum relevant to the student and instill academic confidence, something they have not yet experienced in the school system.” Dale and Katelyn have come to deeply appreciate the value of this kind of learning, and have hopes that it will grow beyond Indigenous learning.

Says Dale, “There’s a long way to go in terms of people getting over the stigma of Indigenous education and where that fits in a traditional classroom, and where that sits with someone in their own process of reconciliation.”

**“When your needs aren’t being met on so many other levels, it’s really hard to be good at school. I know that firsthand.”**

The work, both Dale and Katelyn agree, is challenging but necessary. The process of reimagining education requires the kind of self-reflection needed to help students apply their lessons both in the classroom and beyond.



**MARK STOLLER**

Mark is a Skeleton Park resident, Web developer, and occasional academic.



# Pandemic Theatre and Beyond

Creativity In a Crisis

STORY BY ANNE MARIE MORTENSEN

**Since March 2020, audiences and performers have anticipated gathering with fellow humans to experience a well-told story. They look forward to “post-COVID-19 theatre,” and audience and producers alike have done their best to maintain interest in an already precarious art form.**

Theatre people are used to adapting to restrictions. They adjust budgets after funding shortfalls, roles to accommodate casting, and their expectations to create a new normal with each performance. This ability to adapt has been tested to the limit over the last two years, as their lifeline to creativity on stage – the audience – has been restricted.



**PHOTO:** Theatre Kingston's "We Speak" opens their 30th Anniversary Season (2021) pictured: Helen Bretzke and Tim Fort. Set Design Ryan Clement, Lighting Design Allan Day, Costume Design Kelly Dear, Directed by Rosemary Doyle. Photos provided by Anne Marie Mortensen.

Theatre Kingston's Rosemary Doyle has produced several plays, a play-writing workshop, and a Fringe Festival during the COVID-19 restrictions: "Making theatre during the pandemic has been an act of survival. There is no economic motive at this time. In truth, that can never be a theatre person's true motive, but at this time, a theatre piece's success is judged not by the size of audience but the quality of the audience's experience. So yes, in my estimation, we have put on hit shows during the pandemic. We have thrived. It's a different way of rating success, and perhaps a better way."

In recognition of the audience restrictions placed on performance spaces, the City of Kingston Arts & Culture Services amended the fees for renting their venues. This quick reaction, their eagerness to find safe ways to allow performances, and the added support in the form of artistic residencies have been a boost to many performing artists in Kingston.

By demonstrating flexibility throughout the pandemic, Kingston theatre artists have maintained some of their audience and have kept performances alive and well. However, the bottom line may continue to suffer from diminished ticket revenue due to smaller capacity houses and outdoor theatre, the latter being either pay-what-you-can or free for audiences. No matter how humble, theatre is rarely free to create, even in a park.

As Ned Dickens (writer/producer of SEVEN, City Park, August 2021) says, "We call the arts 'creative' because artists literally conjure the core content of their work out of thin air: it isn't 'extracted' from nature. Perhaps because art comes 'from nothing' there is a convenient fiction that art is, or should be, free. Our recent one-wing-and-half-a-prayer production of SEVEN in City Park was about as free as you can get, but it still cost something. And people who are already

**WITH SPACES HAVING BEEN LIMITED FOR SO LONG, THEATRE COMPANIES NEED THE FLEXIBILITY TO OPEN SAFELY TO LARGE AUDIENCES. PUBLIC PARKS CAN DO THAT.**

working hard on the understanding that there might be a small, same-for-everyone honorarium at the end can't be expected to buy their own duct tape, space blankets, or LED headlamps, let alone pay for the legally required insurance. You can make art from nothing, but you can't make it with nothing."

When COVID-19 restrictions began lifting last summer, there were a number of performances in local parks, including student-performed theatre in Skeleton Park, and professional and semi-professional shows in City Park. These shows were well-attended, and appreciated, by an appropriately distanced audience.

There is something special about outdoor theatre. Park audiences enjoy a commitment-free environment. They can roam in and out of the venue, without fear of being locked into something that they may not enjoy for the next two hours. This is an advantage that allows a broader range of people to attend theatre and get a taste of it.

City support for theatre in all parks would help to bring new audiences to theatre. This support includes waiving fees for the use of space, electricity hookup, and public washrooms. With spaces having been limited for so long, theatre companies need the flexibility to open safely to large audiences. Public parks can do that.

Likewise, the theatre-producing community is longing for a two-hundred seat venue that is not locked down to a single production company. They want an affordable space dedicated to theatre, with a larger capacity than the Baby Grand Theatre. They are currently having to adapt non-theatrical spaces and create temporary theatres for performances where audiences are in excess of fifty seats. Having a two-hundred-seat house during the COVID-19 pandemic would have allowed fifty ticket holders to attend, rather than the eighteen to thirty maximum for shows in the Baby Grand.

The public can help theatre to thrive in Kingston, not only by attending shows, but by talking to their councillors and recommending support for local performing arts, and artists, regardless of non-profit status. Councillors can provide support by advocating theatre in parks to other councillors – recommending that there should never be any charge to local producers for theatre in parks – and identifying both City-owned and other properties capable of accommodating a performance space with two hundred seats.

Theatre is essential storytelling that builds community, both within the theatre company and the audience. Post-COVID-19, theatre needs support more than it has ever needed it before.



**ANNE MARIE MORTENSEN** is a theatre practitioner and educator in Kingston. Through her theatre company, Bottle Tree Productions, she has produced/created hundreds of shows, since the company's inception in 2006. Anne Marie enjoys her work as an artist-educator with a very busy studio, serving actors from neophyte to pre-professional all year long. [bottletreeinc.com](http://bottletreeinc.com)

# The Best Laid Plans

The secondary plan for North King's Town is still on hold

STORY BY ANNE LOUGHEED

ILLUSTRATION BY FLORIANA EHNINGER-CUERVO

For many of us, the pandemic has renewed our appreciation of things that make a neighbourhood livable: green spaces, accessible trails, clustered services, connections to the waterfront.

These are some of the features that may be considered during a secondary planning process like the one currently on hold for North King's Town (NKT). As a reminder: a secondary plan is a blueprint for development, and City Council's decision to ask for a North King's Town Secondary Plan (NKTSP) was in part a response to community opposition to the proposed Wellington Street Extension (WSE). In 2015, long-time district councillor Rob Hutchison prepared a motion for Council that would remove the WSE from all policy documents, but a letter from developers threatening legal action thwarted that effort. A few months later, Council agreed to look at "alternative transportation solutions" to the WSE by means of a secondary plan for NKT, the area bounded by Division Street, John Counter Boulevard, the Cataraqui River, and the Central Business District.

[For more detail or a refresher on all this, see issue #3 of *The Skeleton Press* or visit [wellingtonx.wordpress.com](http://wellingtonx.wordpress.com)]

Past secondary plans in Kingston were typically undertaken for greenfields, to guide new subdivision development on lands having a single owner. In contrast, the NKTSP would steer growth and change in existing diverse neighbourhoods, established industrial areas, and adjacent brownfields.

The approach to public consultation during the first phase of the plan was also unconventional for Kingston. Sonya Bolton, senior planner and former NKTSP project manager (now working for the County of Frontenac) points to the example of the City's collaboration with Skeleton Park Arts Festival organizers to host a barbeque and concert at which residents could learn about the secondary planning process and give immediate feedback. Planners also staffed pop-up booths at other outdoor events, such as the Princess Street Promenade. These opportunities allowed people to engage in a relaxed and spontaneous way, and offered a chance to participate for those who might have been reluctant or unable to attend a weeknight information session. (The City has since developed a Public Engagement Framework.)

It's no surprise that City Hall's priorities changed when the pandemic hit, but the secondary plan was moved to the back burner even before that. Of the other large policies taking precedence, the update of the decade-old Williamsville Main Street Study (WMSS) in particular required an all-hands-on-deck approach from staff and consultants to meet the timeline of an interim control by-law. (If this sounds mysterious, consider that the WMSS was created to direct redevelopment along Princess St. between Division and Concession St./Bath Rd., and an interim control by-law is a tool that allows municipalities to pause development while land use policies for an area are reviewed.)



**City Hall's priorities changed when the pandemic hit, but the secondary plan was moved to the back burner even before that.**

Pandemic lockdowns meant reduced revenues for the city from transit, recreation, and culture. Both human and financial resources were strained and redirected. Council voted in autumn 2020 to defer work on the NKTSP until late 2021, but the ongoing pandemic forced another review of priorities this past spring. Currently the NKTSP is scheduled to resume in April 2022, with completion anticipated in 2023 — after we have elected a new council.

City planner Sukriti Agarwal will likely be part of the team to take over the secondary plan. She predicts that a major challenge to a re-start after the long break will be the necessary coordination among departments. A secondary plan comprises a land-use study, urban-design guidelines, a transportation master plan, a cultural-heritage component, a financial plan, and a servicing plan. To make these happen, several departments as well as Utilities Kingston need to work together. All departments have had pandemic-related changes to their routines, and will have other projects to finish.

Another possible setback for the re-start: turnover and reorganization within the City's Planning Services, including the departure of two key planners who worked on the NKTSP from the beginning.

The NKT transportation analysis, completed before the pause, did allow Council to nix the Wellington

Street Extension's southern section (which would have run through Doug Fluhrer Park) in May 2019. That outcome was hugely important and popular at the time, and has become even more so during the pandemic.

Five years ago, Councillors asked for an "exceptional, forward-thinking, livable, green, and innovative" blueprint for North King's Town. While that work has been interrupted, development applications (such as the one for the Davis Tannery site) continue to be reviewed using existing policies, and the City has a responsibility to adhere to provincial Planning Act timelines when making decisions about those applications. They're not on hold.

It's possible that North King's Town will see many changes before the secondary plan is completed.



**ANNE LOUGHEED** has lived in the Skeleton Park neighbourhood with her family since 2000. She sits on the North King's Town Secondary Plan community working group.

# Let Kingston Be Known for Compassion

Leave no community member behind



STORY BY RON SHORE / ILLUSTRATION BY CARL WIENS

W I E N S



**Through the global COVID-19 pandemic, we have all been exposed to a kind of precarity that many are unused to. As a state of persistent insecurity, vulnerability, and uncertainty, precarity is perhaps the hallmark of our times, and the unfortunate burden of our youth, given the deep challenges ahead related to climate crisis.**

The pandemic has forced sudden changes to our social norms, increased isolation, resulted in a palpable fear of death and disease, and led to the panicky spread of disinformation and anti-science rhetoric. New microscopic organisms have emerged to create global disruption, giving clear notice that humans, despite our desire to control, are simply not in charge of this planet. We ignore at our own peril our interconnectedness with other species and the incredible array of life in all its forms.

Yet precarity – insecurity, instability, lack of safety, fear of disease – is simply not a new experience for many of our neighbours. Perhaps by understanding the needs of the most vulnerable we can not only shape a more just, compassionate, and healthy community, but we can learn some important things about being human.

Kingston's Integrated Care Hub (ICH) – based primarily at 661 Montreal St. — recently commissioned a community-needs assessment documenting significant health disparities within our city. The ICH is a community of people who receive and provide support in caring for people who use substances and/or are homeless. "People in our community are dying from drug poisoning at alarming rates," the report reads. "This needs assessment is driven by the necessity to look deeply into the causes for this catastrophe."

The ICH provides a drop-in space, a food program, a rest zone, connections to community supports, harm reduction services, and Consumption and Treatment Services (CTS). The needs assessment was completed in order to guide the development of more effective strategies to prevent overdose and support people who use crystal methamphetamine and/or opioids.

## Homelessness, marginalization, widespread addiction, and psychological suffering are the human ruins of capitalism.

As I read through the report, these things really stood out:

1. In Ontario, there was a 38.2 percent increase in opioid-related deaths in the first fifteen weeks of the COVID-19 pandemic (695 deaths, with an average of forty-six deaths weekly) compared to the fifteen weeks immediately prior (503 deaths, with an average of thirty-four deaths weekly).
2. In December 2020, the ICH responded to and reversed seventy overdoses on its own property and in January 2021, the CTS responded to more overdoses than during all of 2018 and 2019 combined.
3. Average monthly rent in Kingston in 2020 was \$871 for a bachelor apartment and \$1,145 for a one-bedroom unit, yet income-support rates for Ontario Works and the Ontario Disability Support Program for a single person with no children provide \$733 and \$1,150 per month respectively, with \$390 and \$497 allotted for rent.
4. Of the 245 people who completed the program entry form at the ICH from October 31, 2020 to June 17, 2021, 207 people (84.5 percent) indicated that they did not currently have housing. Of those 207 people, 105 (42.9 percent) were not already counted as actively homeless by the city.
5. Ninety-three percent of participants who completed the survey had received multiple formal mental health diagnoses.
6. Ninety percent of males and ninety-one percent of females self-reported having experienced some form of significant head trauma, which for most involved multiple events.
7. On average, females had started to use substances at thirteen years of age, and males at fourteen.

8. On average, males indicated they knew of fifty people who had overdosed, females an average of fifty-seven. Think about that for a moment while considering fifty people familiar to you.

9. Males had lost an average of eighteen people close to them to death by overdose, females an average of twenty.

10. An average of ten males (and 2.8 females) had overdosed in the past year. Of these, fifty-three percent had been revived by friends, thirty-four percent by ICH staff, twenty-eight percent by CTS staff (believed to also be ICH staff), nineteen percent by emergency responders, nine percent by strangers, and only one person had been resuscitated in hospital.

11. Ninety percent of males had been incarcerated, of which fifty-seven percent indicated charges were drug-related and thirty-eight percent had been arrested for petty theft to support their habit. For females, seventy-three percent had been incarcerated and sixty-four percent indicated charges were drug-related.

12. Fifty-six percent of participants self-reported having had a learning disability, and another twenty-five percent had Attention Deficit Hyperactive Disorder (ADHD) that affected their performance in school.

13. The report identifies four populations needing special consideration locally: women under thirty, Indigenous Peoples, war veterans, and people with chronic pain and/or physical disabilities.

14. Staff have received death threats against the patrons of the ICH, and there are regular taunts from people driving by and shouting "junkie," "loser," "dirt bag," "crackhead," "garbage," "scum," and "get a job." The press often make homeless populations visible through reportage of negative encounters, reinforcing the status of the homeless as outsiders.

The report provides a range of recommendations, including the need for anti-stigma education and awareness, and the need to address moral injury — both among staff and among participants. Think of moral injury as a soul wound, a loss of trust in the world and the people in it.

Further, the report calls for a shift away from deficit-oriented service provision to community-based healing engagement, and the expansion of wellness services. Critically, the City of Kingston needs to revise, improve, and update its homelessness strategy post-COVID and in light of the twin crises of drug toxicity and drug overdoses.

Most pressing is the need to decriminalize drugs and the imperative to provide a safe supply to highly marginalized communities dependent on illicit methamphetamine and opioids. A clean, regulated, and prescribed supply of currently illicit drugs would not only save lives but dramatically improve health and wellness while offering new avenues into treatment and other health services. This city and its public health officials could, as I've previously written in *The Skeleton Press*, apply for a Schedule 56 exemption to the Controlled Drugs and Substances Act (1996), as the City of Vancouver has done, to enable localized decriminalization.

I understand the impact the ICH has on surrounding neighbours and I empathize. The city, along with the directors of the ICH-sponsoring agencies — Kingston Community Health Centres and HIV/AIDS Regional Services and their funders — need to step up and do a better job of supporting the managers, staff, and clients of the ICH. I'd like to see the leaders of those organizations be more active in calming the neighbourhood conflicts that have arisen, and in fighting for better care for these vulnerable communities. Queen's, with its rich resources, could lend the important planning, evaluation, and advocacy support.

The ICH exists because of the practical and moral failings of our current health and social support systems, and because of the lack of rational, evidence-informed drug policy at the national level. The facility itself is undersized and underfunded for the role it has been tasked with, and the ICH alone can never be expected to manage and repair these incredibly complex social problems. The moral injury and vicarious trauma affecting the staff are real. If you don't like the visibility of the ICH, then help us to address the underlying systems of oppression and marginalization that have created the problems in the first place.

Homelessness, marginalization, widespread addiction, and psychological suffering are the human ruins of capitalism. Perhaps by compassionate and wise activism to support those of our kin who are most vulnerable, we will learn what it takes to come together in new acts of world-making. The climate crises will ask far more of us than this.

**RON SHORE** helped start the Keep Six! Needle Exchange in Kingston in 1991, founded the Street Health Centre in 1995, and spent twenty-three years working in community and public health. He taught drug studies at Queen's University for fifteen years and is a part-time professor teaching psychedelics, politics and harm reduction at the University of Ottawa. Ron's doctoral research is focused on the therapeutic use of magic mushrooms. He lives with his family among the trees of the Kingscourt neighbourhood.

# Challenging the Apathy Myth

Engaging young voters in municipal elections

STORY BY ANDREW MACLEAN

PHOTOS BY JOSH LYON

By now we're all familiar with the common election refrain: young voters don't turn up. After each election cycle the media inundates us with discussions and op-eds lamenting young voters' apathy, presenting them as a generation indifferent towards civic engagement. However, research conducted by Abacus Data and Apathy is Boring — a non-profit focused on improving young voter turnout — shows that there has been a ten-point increase in interest in politics among young Canadians since 2019. This is encouraging news and should hopefully begin challenging the presumed apathy of young voters.

One area, however, where participation of young voters remains wanting is municipal politics.

To be fair, young voters are not the only ones skipping municipal elections. In 2018, only 41 percent of eligible Kingstonians cast their ballots. According to the Association of Municipalities of Ontario, which tracks municipal election data across the province, Kingston was just slightly above the 38 percent average voter turnout. Perhaps even more concerning were the 474 available positions (including one in Kingston) that went uncontested, and therefore acclaimed, in the last election cycle.

Municipal politics, despite their importance, are curiously overlooked. Decisions made by municipal governments arguably affect the lives of residents more directly than decisions made at any other level of government. Municipalities are responsible for large amounts of public infrastructure, for maintaining public transportation systems, for developing green spaces, and for organizing waste management. Local governments have the largest impact of any order of government on property values, while decisions concerning bylaws and zoning rendered at City Hall literally shape our neighbourhoods. Simply put, municipal politics matter.

The absence of young voters in municipal politics, then, is concerning for two reasons. First, young voters — those in the Gen Z and millennial cohorts — represent nearly forty percent of eligible voters across Canada. That's a sizeable group waiting to be engaged. Unfortunately, the apathy myth surrounding young voters means politicians routinely overlook them, suspecting they won't turn out on election day. This can foster a negative feedback loop discouraging future participation from young voters. The other reason for concern is that many of the issues that appeal to young voters — such as climate change, housing affordability, and racial justice — are issues where action can begin at a local level. If candidates are willing to alter their messaging and highlight such connections, then they're more likely to see youth support.

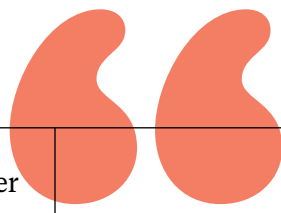
Reflecting on the state of youth engagement in local politics, City Councillor Robert Kiley is optimistic. Young Kingstonians, he says, have increasingly been making their presence felt at City Hall. In fact, he credits youth participation as essential in the City's adoption of its ambitious climate plan to be net-zero across the community by 2040. "I watched them with their strong presentations almost singlehandedly convince some Councillors who were on the fence, and from there they organized climate marches and rallies, and I think [they] really changed the channel about how our City perceived the climate emergency."

The climate issue demonstrates that when the interests of young people align with those of municipal politics, and when youth voters are supported by motivated allies in the community, they can be a serious force for change.

This is why programs and spaces that promote civic learning are vital for increasing youth participation. Programs such as Beyond the Classroom, which organizes events for elementary students to see firsthand how City Hall operates, or The Mayor's Innovation Challenge, which invites local students to devise and present innovative solutions to current policy issues around the city, are important spaces for connecting young residents with their local government. These programs empower youth by giving them the tools and confidence to navigate local politics, while also fostering networks between young people and local stakeholders who are willing to support their engagement.

In 2022 Kingstonians will head into another municipal election. Rather than resign ourselves once again to the apathy myth, we must collectively make efforts to better engage and include youth perspectives in local politics. Kiley's firsthand experience has kept him hopeful for the future. "Youth are not apathetic. They are actually incredibly engaged and passionate," he says. But he reiterates that youth engagement does require encouragement from politicians. "They simply need some support, but [also] the validation that they can — and should — channel that into electoral politics."

Far from apathetic, young voters just find it difficult at times to see themselves and their interests represented in municipal politics. Taking steps to foster those links will undoubtedly result in more sustained engagement and better overall turnout among young voters.



WHEN YOUTH VOTERS ARE SUPPORTED BY MOTIVATED ALLIES IN THE COMMUNITY, THEY CAN BE A SERIOUS FORCE FOR CHANGE.

TOP TO BOTTOM ROWS, LEFT TO RIGHT: Kasthuri Ravishanker and Rachel Su, Lewis Coon, Jaclyn Schneider, Hannah Lyon, Dylan Aide and Ethan Chilcott, Mia Sunner, Kira McPherson and Phoebe Croft, Amanda Hamilton, Aline Atallah



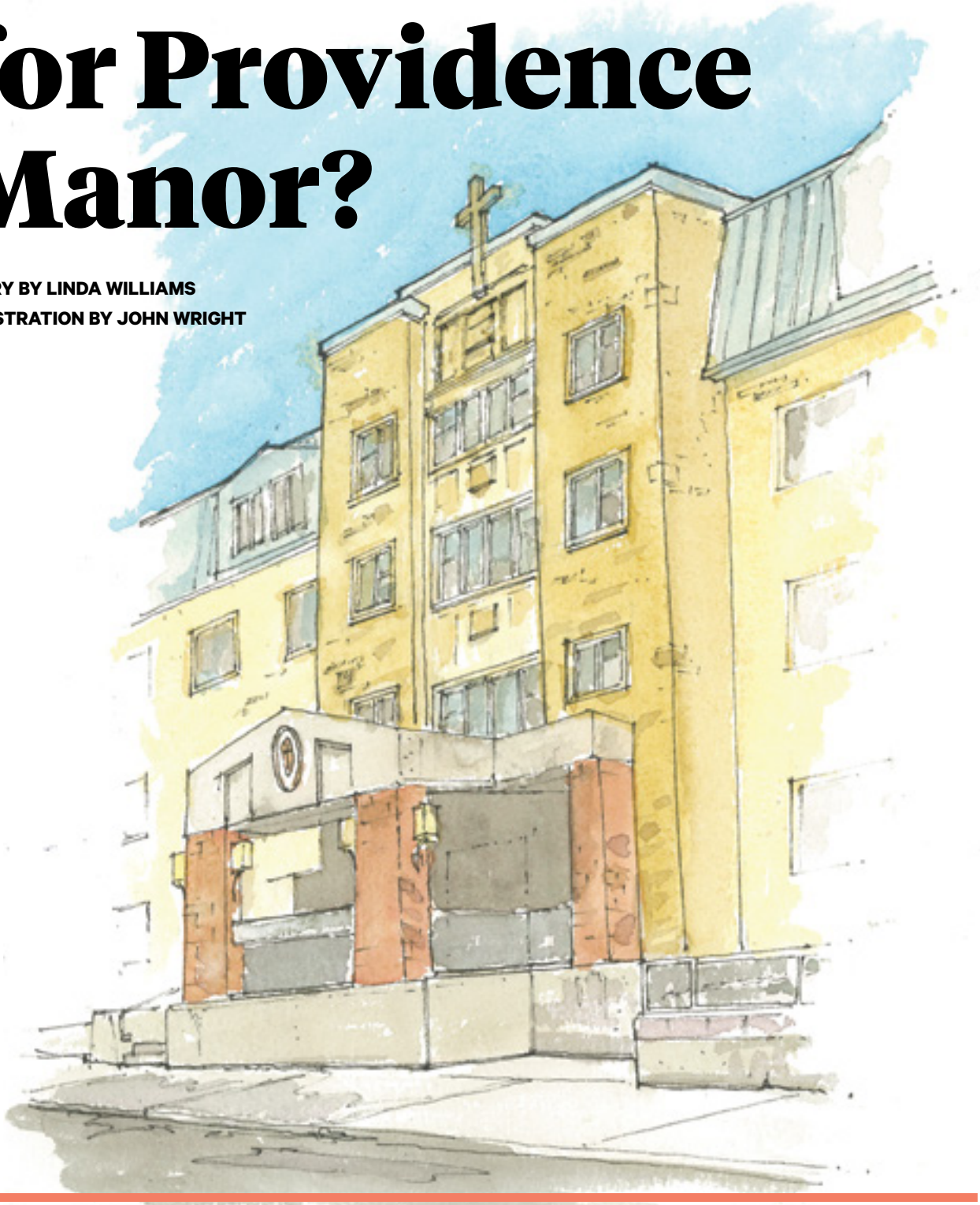
**ANDREW MACLEAN** is a doctoral student in the Department of Political Studies at Queen's University. He has long been interested in technology and civic engagement, and presently his research has turned to why the CRTC keeps his cell phone bill so high.



# What Does the Future Hold for Providence Manor?

STORY BY LINDA WILLIAMS

ILLUSTRATION BY JOHN WRIGHT



Since 1861, the Sisters of Providence of St. Vincent de Paul have owned and used the buildings of Providence Manor, at 275 Sydenham Street, to serve the needs of the vulnerable within our community. The 220,000-square-foot facility includes accommodation for 243 people, ground-floor dining, meeting and recreational rooms, a medical clinic, and a large commercial kitchen, plus a historic chapel and Sisters' residence.

Recent changes to the province's Long-Term Care regulations, however, have raised questions about the future of the site. Unable to meet the province's retrofitting standards, Providence Manor is slated to close within four years. When the new Providence Village at 1200 Princess Street opens by 2025, the residents will move there.

As members of the Sisters of Providence religious community grow older, they are less able to fulfill their Mission of compassionate service, advocacy, and networking. In October of 2019, the Sisters transferred all of their land and buildings to the Catholic Health Sponsors of Ontario and the Catholic Congregational Legacy Charity. The thinking was that the Providence Manor land and buildings would be sold.

In the fall of 2019, however, the Sisters were approached by the King's Town Affordable Housing Working Group (KTAHW Group), concerned citizens who saw the potential for Providence Manor to meet local social and housing needs. The KTAHW Group referred to the North King's Town secondary plan, a series of technical studies that support the City Plan to promote a sustainable, healthy, vibrant, and livable community. That plan, which was initiated in 2018, was paused in May 2021 until the spring of 2022, presumably due to COVID-19.

The proposal by the KTAHW Group prompted the Sisters to reconsider their initial plan to dispose of Providence Manor. Late in 2019, the Sisters and their partners hired Cahdco, an affordable housing and social purpose non-profit real estate development corporation, to identify the needs of vulnerable people in Kingston, determine the feasibility of repurposing Providence Manor, and engage community partners in housing and social programming to meet the identified needs.

In both its goal and process, the KTAHW Group's proposal represents a bold vision. Their goal is to help ensure Providence Manor "continues to inspire social change and justice in our city for years to come" by creating a diverse neighbourhood, particularly in

terms of density, social class and ethnicity, to reflect the composition of the Skeleton Park community. In order to avoid the stigma of a large low-income "ghetto," the proposed multi-generational project would include rent-geared-to-income/affordable housing and market rental accommodation appealing to people of differing ages and circumstances. Social service programs would also be offered from the site.

Taken as a whole, the proposal offers an innovative, socially inclusive and participatory process to create the final plan, including input from neighbours, prospective residents, the City, agencies currently providing social services, the Sisters of Providence or their partners, and others.

In August 2021, Dale Kenny, Planning Consultant to the Sisters of Providence and Interim President of Providence Village Inc., stated that the Cahdco study confirmed that the building was suitable to be converted to housing with supportive programs and some commercial space while maintaining the heritage aspects of the site. The study also revealed interest from the City and current social service providers, but commitments have not yet been made. Facilities were identified that could be converted to other purposes. For example, the commercial kitchen could be used by community food delivery services or a restaurant, the Chapel of Our Mother of Sorrows could be converted to a public chapel or library, and the medical clinic could be adapted.

The Cahdco study, which was completed in the spring of 2021, could be released to the public as early as the late fall of 2021 or shortly after. Release has been delayed until a new President of Providence Village Inc. is hired to assume responsibility for the project, and also in hopes that more concrete information is available regarding community partnerships.

There will be a number of significant challenges in repurposing Providence Manor to continue the mission of the Sisters of Providence. These include achieving the right mix of uses to avoid creating a monoculture of residents; preserving the heritage elements of the building; engaging several partners to provide financial, human, and program resources; creating an operating structure and sustainable operating funding model, and raising sufficient funds to maintain the best of what currently exists and cover the capital costs of renovation. These challenges will require the ongoing commitment of everyone to work together – the neighbourhood, city residents, City services, the Sisters' new property owners, developers, and community partners.

The creative initiative of the King's Town Affordable Housing Working Group and the willingness of the Sisters of Providence to extend their mission through a new use for Providence Manor generates exciting possibilities. Here is a unique opportunity for Kingston to demonstrate leadership. Next steps include releasing the Cahdco report by Providence Village Inc. and making redevelopment plans available for community input. Neighbourhood acceptance and support will be critical to successfully repurpose Providence Manor as a desirable mixed demographic housing and services complex.



**LINDA WILLIAMS** lives in the Skeleton Park neighbourhood, and previously worked at Providence Manor. She really enjoys meeting people from all walks of life in the Park, and hearing their stories.

# Both Feet on the Ground

Daniel Robertson-Styles' international dance career has Kingston roots

STORY BY CATHERINE LUKITS



**For ballet dancer Daniel Robertson-Styles, 21, Kingston has always held a special place in his life. “I’ve expanded out in the world,” he said during a recent visit to his hometown, “but this is still my community.”**

“Out in the world” is no exaggeration. After moving to Toronto at the age of 14 to attend Canada’s National Ballet School, Robertson-Styles pursued his ballet career in Germany, where he attended the John Cranko Schule in Stuttgart before joining the junior company of the prestigious Bayerisches Staatsballett in Munich. This September he became a new member of the Czech National Theatre’s ballet company in Brno, Czech Republic.

Despite living across an ocean (and during a global pandemic), Robertson-Styles has continued to find innovative ways to connect with the Kingston arts community. In 2020, he co-founded the Inner Harbour Collective (IHC), a multi-media arts collective comprising himself and four other young artists, all with Kingston roots. IHC was “created as a way for [us] to connect back with the community in Kingston, the community that gave us the initial foundation to begin creating in our various art forms,” Robertson-Styles explains. “It’s almost like a homecoming of the arts. We’re proud of achieving things out in the world, but we want to give back to and acknowledge Kingston.”

Over the past months, the group has organized several events close to Robertson-Styles’ heart. In June, they put on a virtual performance to raise money for the IHC’s newly established Claude Marc Forest Scholarship. Named in honour of Robertson-Styles’ former ballet teacher at Kingston’s 5678 Dance Studio, the scholarship will provide mentorship and financial support for boys in the Kingston area who would like to dance ballet. In August, Robertson-Styles and the IHC presented an evening, in collaboration with the Skeleton Park Arts Festival, which aimed to “bring the Kingston dance community together for a celebration of dance, as well as to brainstorm where dance in Kingston will go in the future.”

Co-presented with several Kingston-based arts organizations, the event featured in-person dance performances, a panel discussion about the role of dance in Kingston, a dance master class taught by Claude Marc Forest and featuring Robertson-Styles, and a film screening.

**WE’RE PROUD OF ACHIEVING THINGS OUT IN THE WORLD, BUT WE WANT TO GIVE BACK TO AND ACKNOWLEDGE KINGSTON.**

**PHOTO:** From the Anniversary Photo Series of the Bayerisches Junior Ballett München. Photo by Albe Hamiti. Permission generously granted by the BJBM.

Robertson-Styles credits Forest with helping him get to where he is today. As a boy, Robertson-Styles played soccer and hockey but didn’t feel that he had “found his place.” At age nine, he signed up for hip-hop lessons at 5678 Dance Studio. Two years later, he began ballet and was immediately inspired by the pure challenge of the art form. Forest, who danced professionally in Montreal and Paris, helped guide and mentor Robertson-Styles throughout his training in Kingston.

In such a time-limited career as ballet, early decisions and opportunities are essential, and Forest’s mentorship paid off; only three years later, Robertson-Styles had won an audition to study in Toronto.

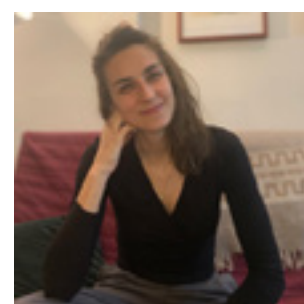
“I didn’t start as an artsy kid,” Robertson-Styles laughs, “but there was some sort of natural feeling [with ballet]. Everyone has a natural way of moving through life, and my natural movement seemed to match up with ballet.”

Even for someone with innate talent, ballet is notoriously demanding and requires relentless discipline and physical training. Last year in Munich, Robertson-Styles dislocated his shoulder while lifting his female dance partner over his head. The injury, he says, was a “turning point,” since it altered his daily gym workouts and expanded his focus from cardiovascular and leg training to increasing his upper body strength. During the pandemic, his ballet company continued rehearsing, even though live performances were cancelled. While Robertson-Styles missed the “adrenaline release” of performing for a live audience, he used the time to focus on himself and his personal goals, including his Kingston-based projects with IHC.

Although ballet is his primary career, Robertson-Styles enjoys having many projects on the go. “It’s almost essential!” he declares. His artistic interests include photography, which he “approaches almost mathematically.” He also performs as a DJ, something he began at school dances in Toronto and continued with exposure to techno music in Germany. “I got dragged into a brash German techno club one night, [and had] an overwhelming sense of freedom.” Unlike ballet, he says, with techno “you are so not in control in that situation.” He believes all his passions overlap in some way: “All artistic expressions are more connected than we think.”

Whether Kingstonians’ interests lie in classical ballet, techno club music, or other art forms, they should certainly expect to hear more from Robertson-Styles and the Inner Harbour Collective.

The Claude Marc Forest Scholarship is currently accepting applications. More information can be found on the IHC website: [ihcollective.com](http://ihcollective.com).



**CATHERINE LUKITS** was born and raised in Kingston where, twenty years ago, she was Daniel Robertson-Styles’ neighbour and babysitter. Since then she has worked as a professional cellist in orchestras in Germany and Canada, and has recently completed a Master of Arts in European and Russian Affairs at the University of Toronto’s Munk School of Global Affairs and Public Policy.



# Cartwheeling in Snow Pants

STORY BY NORA VANDERMEULEN KERR AND MAYA FISKE



PHOTO: Nora Vandermeulen Kerr

“People who don’t have a big yard can go to the hill and have a big space to run. It’s a place that brings our community together.”

**Cartwheeling in snow pants. Hay bales blocking the trees. Snowy jumps. Icy trails. People whooping with joy.**

All of these things come to mind when we think of the hill. Every year, more and more people come, and now there are more than ever.

During COVID-19 and home-based schooling, going out to the hill and seeing people in person was usually the highlight of the day.

Both in the summer and the winter, in all weather, living near the hill is great because of how many

things you can do there: sledding, dumping buckets of water to make frozen slides so you can go down them without having a sled. And in the spring and summer months, rolling down the hill, playing soccer, ultimate frisbee, soccer baseball in the field, and playing basketball or four square on the basketball court. People who don’t have a big yard can go to the hill and have a big space to run. It’s a place that brings our community together.

**Maya:** “I’ve met more than ten different people at the hill.”

**Nora:** “I like the hill when it is quiet, but it’s nice to see that so many people go there to have fun and enjoy the winter. Especially during COVID-19, people were trying to find ways to get out. Even though it does bring many people I know like neighbours and friends together, at one point it got to be too much and there were too many people going to the hill. It became hard to keep a distance. It just got too crowded to go sledding. It was dangerous to go up and down the hill because there were people going down at random moments without warning you.”

“When it started to get warmer and the snow started melting, fewer and fewer people came and it became a quieter and more peaceful place to be. With the snow melting, Maya and I would go out and splash in the puddles of slush and enjoy the rest of the winter.”

**Here’s what some of our neighbours who share a love of St. Patrick’s hill (behind the former St. Patrick’s School) have to say:**

**Simon:** “It’s a place where I have tons of good memories. Sledding every year since we moved here. Snowball fights, meeting new people, flying a drone. During the winter, we would usually end up at the hill.”

**Cléo:** “A lot of people go and build things like ramps and jumps and make it fun.”

**Pam:** “I love the hill, but sometimes it would be nice to have a playground there for the summer.”

**Neighbour from the street:** “The hill is a school property but it’s still a fun tobogganing hill.”

**Diana:** “It brings a lot of additional neighbours that you wouldn’t usually meet.”

**Sue:** “It’s a great place for dogs and we’re lucky to live near it.”

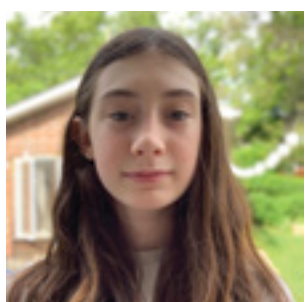
**Leon:** “It’s a great place to meet people while you’re tobogganing.”

**Anna:** “In the spring and summer, it is kind of a forgotten place. Usually there aren’t many people there, making it a great place for throwing a ball with your dog. In the warm months, it feels like an extension of our street.”

We enjoy going to the hill in all seasons. We hope to see you there this winter!



**MAYA FISKE** is nine years old, attends Rideau Public School, and does not want to say anything more about herself.



**NORA VANDERMEULEN KERR** enjoys cooking and baking and spending time with her two animals.

# Creative Industries Strategy

STORY BY MEREDITH DAULT

**By the time Liam Karry wrapped up his studies at Queen's more than a decade ago, he had already established a small theatre company, Single Thread, and had his heart set on staying in Kingston. "I got serious about trying to make a life in theatre, and I decided to try and build a career here... to make a living here." He admits that wasn't easy. "It took forever," he laughs. "I worked for free for a long time."**

Now the Artistic Producer of the Kingston Theatre Alliance which stages, among other things, the annual Kick and Push Festival, Karry admits he still doesn't completely make ends meet through his work in the arts. He spends a lot of time trying to drum up financial support for his projects. Much of Karry's time is spent convincing people outside the cultural sector about the value the arts bring the city. "I have told people, if you give us this amount of money, we can take it and multiply it by four. By investing in the arts, we are giving money to Kingston artists and facilities. We are buying stuff from Kingston vendors and contractors. We are bringing money into the city."

That is why Karry is delighted with the City of Kingston's recent decision to embrace a Creative Industries Strategy. The Strategy, which was announced alongside an inventory of the City's existing creative industries in April 2021, provides recommendations for how developing the arts sector can be supported to enhance economic opportunities. An initiative identified in City Council's Strategic Priorities for 2019-2022, the Strategy "lays the foundation for strategies, tactics and targeted activities that will create a sustainable and thriving ecosystem to support business growth, start-ups, investment attraction and opportunities in the community."

In short: the Creative Industries Strategy formally acknowledges that the arts have a role to play in the city's economic development and seeks to chart a course to develop the arts sectors through arts-friendly policies, skills training, and accelerator programs, among other initiatives. The Strategy's focus, however, has so far been only on film, theatre, and music.

"One of the things that the Strategy highlights is the fact that we have people in Kingston who are making a living from (the arts), and we want to make the city artist friendly," explains the Director of Arts and Culture Services with the City of Kingston, Colin Wiginton, who also helped develop its first Culture Plan in 2009. "So, one of the things that the Strategy highlights is that Kingston is well-positioned geographically. We can reach 14.5 million people in a three-hour radius. How do we make it clear that Kingston is a fantastic place to put down roots, but also to be innovative and still connected to those major centres?"

Ultimately, Wiginton explains that the Strategy is about "focusing in on support for the professionalization of the arts in Kingston," finding more ways for people to support themselves as they pursue their work in the arts.

That's something musician, concert-promoter, and educator Moira Demorest fully supports. Two decades ago she and her now-husband, Marc Garniss, founded KPP Concerts in a bid to stage more music shows in Kingston. Their goal was not only to



PHOTO: *Ways of Being*, a work-in-progress performance project from Clayton Lee and Michael Rubinfeld as performed at Kick and Push Festival 2021. Photo courtesy of Kick and Push Festival.

bring more artists through town, but also to provide more performance opportunities for local musicians. More than 1,000 concerts later, Demorest says she still sees most of Kingston's musicians having to supplement their incomes with teaching and other side gigs. "There are some professional musicians making a living, but it's few and far between," she explains.

Demorest likes the fact that the Strategy acknowledges something many have known for years: that staging concerts and investing in musicians is good for tourism and nets a financial return for the City. "It's incredibly gratifying to be acknowledged and to have the City take note of things that needed to be addressed and promoted in a positive way."

Colin Wiginton says the Strategy's goal is to ensure that artists at all stages of their careers will benefit. "We have a desire to have an ecology of creative industries in Kingston supporting that notion that rising tides float all boats," he says, explaining that the Strategy will support efforts to bring people together and build partnerships. Wiginton's department will work with the Kingston Economic Development Corporation and Tourism Kingston to promote the Strategy. The Strategy also has the support of the Kingston Film Office. Queen's University and St. Lawrence College have both signed on as partners. Cities such as Hamilton, London, and Calgary all have similar strategies.

"It's all reflective of the City taking a real interest in the creative sector, which is really exciting on a whole bunch of levels because it shows a continued and stronger support for the film sector," says Alex Jansen, Film Commissioner with the Kingston Film Office, noting that Kingston has seen "exponential growth" when it comes to film production in the city. He is excited about the possibility of involving more people in film production at all levels, training people to work on unionized film sets in Kingston, and generally helping more people to get their projects made and seen.

While Jansen acknowledges that some might be put off by the notion of embracing the arts purely for their economic impact, he sees that as a means to an end. "That's the language you need to be speaking when you are talking to granting agencies," he says. "That's really how we are able to get the larger support. Making the economic argument is the strongest way to do it."

Karry agrees. "There are so many passionate and intelligent people in Kingston," he says. "Anything that can get people to cooperate, to work collectively and to make progress for the sector is a good thing."



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



# Just Recovery

A Just Recovery for All, Not Just a Few

STORY BY JEREMY MILLOY / ILLUSTRATION BY CHANTAL ROUSSEAU

**In August 2020, more than fifty local people gathered over Zoom to imagine what a just recovery from the coronavirus pandemic might look like. We did not know what was to come, with COVID-19 or anything else, but we did know that without people working together, COVID-19 recovery plans would not work for the people, or the planet. Many of us recalled the government response to the 2008 economic crisis. Governments bailed out corporations, while ordinary people suffered. Inequality only got worse, and we wasted another decade of potential climate action.**

The people on that Zoom call formed Just Recovery Kingston (JRK): a group striving to imagine and work for a recovery that puts people and the planet first, focusing on our home community of Kingston. These are big goals, and obviously there will be a lot of steps to take to achieve them.

Our first step was to engage with the City's budget engagement process, to advocate for local people to have more say in how the City spends money. We are grateful the City responded positively to our suggestions. However, much more work is needed in this area. We now have a more open budget process, but not yet a participatory one.

In January 2021, JRK met again to plan our campaign focus for 2021. We hit upon two goals that advanced our principles, made material improvements in people's lives, and were winnable in the short term. These goals were to expand access to both community gardening and fare-free transit.

Harshavardhan, a JRK member, has really enjoyed working with the group: "We had a great platform that was extremely clear about its goals, and we built strong coalitions of folks who were already tangentially working towards similar issues."

JRK member Bruce describes his experience joining JRK after just moving to Kingston: "The JRK group welcomed me in, and we soon found ourselves mobilizing a working group around community gardens and access to food – a passion of mine. Being part of JRK, you see just how powerful community organizing and mobilizing around issues that matter to us, the residents, can be."

Bruce, and the other members of the JRK gardens working group, know that community gardening isn't just a fun hobby. It provides access to land and food in the heart of the city. It increases the resiliency of our local food supply, which is so important when we remember those empty shelves after COVID-19 first hit. It shifts our food source from planes and trucks, which pump CO<sup>2</sup> into the atmosphere, to somewhere local, while also building community.

Unfortunately, starting a community garden in Kingston has been difficult for many, especially those without time, extra cash, and the ability to navigate City bureaucracy. *The Skeleton Press* readers may remember Kate Thomas' piece a few issues ago that shared her experience setting up a garden at McBurney Park. Kate brought that knowledge to our gardens working group. The group decided on a letter-writing campaign to advance three demands of the City: double the amount of money available from the City to help start gardens; remove the





requirement that individual gardeners have to take out private insurance on garden sites; and eliminate the raised-bed requirements if a soil test passes for safety. It looks like we have already succeeded with the first two of the three demands in less than a year of organizing!

Furthermore, through the efforts of JRK, the City of Kingston has started opening doors to better support community gardens on City property and private lands. Kate reports that “In its first year, the Skeleton Park Sharing Garden Beds harvested enough food to share with Loving Spoonful and to offer to neighbours as they passed through the park. Kingston has the opportunity to take action now, to be a leader in demonstrating sustainable, accessible food sources through its community gardens and gleaning programs. We know we can, we are, and we will.” *Gleaning* is about gathering excess fresh food from farmers, markets, grocers, etc. and providing it to those in need.

JRK’s transit working group has also had a successful first year. The group created a transit survey to expose any barriers to ridership on Kingston Transit and Kingston Access Bus. The survey results suggested that the most underserved and high-need users of public transit were Kingstonians with limited mobility, which led JRK to put an emphasis on Kingston Access Buses in our improvement plans.

In October of this year, the group was part of a Green New Deal Communities day of action with the Council of Canadians for a just transition away from fossil fuels and towards federal investments in communities, including major increases in transit funding. The group also addressed Kingston City Council to advocate for free, green, union transit.

In addition to transit access, Harshavardhan argues that the critical priority is the housing market: “I’m extremely disappointed in Kingston’s approach towards homeless people, both in terms of the municipal government not creating more concrete measures towards housing these folks, but also in the casual ‘not in my backyard’ mentality displayed by individuals in town, which accelerated

a tense situation like the one in Belle Park last year.” There is also concern regarding the rate of increase in rent prices in Kingston. With many people ending their leases during the pandemic, landlords have had an opportunity to bypass rent control, pushing rent rates to scary levels.”

In 2022, Just Recovery Kingston looks back with gratitude and pride at how we continue to grow, bring people together, and make an impact for justice in our community. We recently drafted our first constitution, an important milestone. Looking ahead to the next municipal election, JRK will be working to make sure that the next council is one that is committed to taking care of Kingston’s land, air, water, and community members. This means decision-makers who are going to prioritize action on climate change, reconciliation, anti-racism, and discrimination.

JRK members know that the politics of growth, individual competition, and trickle-down economics have failed to respond to the challenges of our times, including the climate emergency, housing crisis, drug poisoning, and poverty. Our city needs representatives who are prepared to work with residents to find new solutions that include safety, security, and dignity for everyone, not just a few.

---

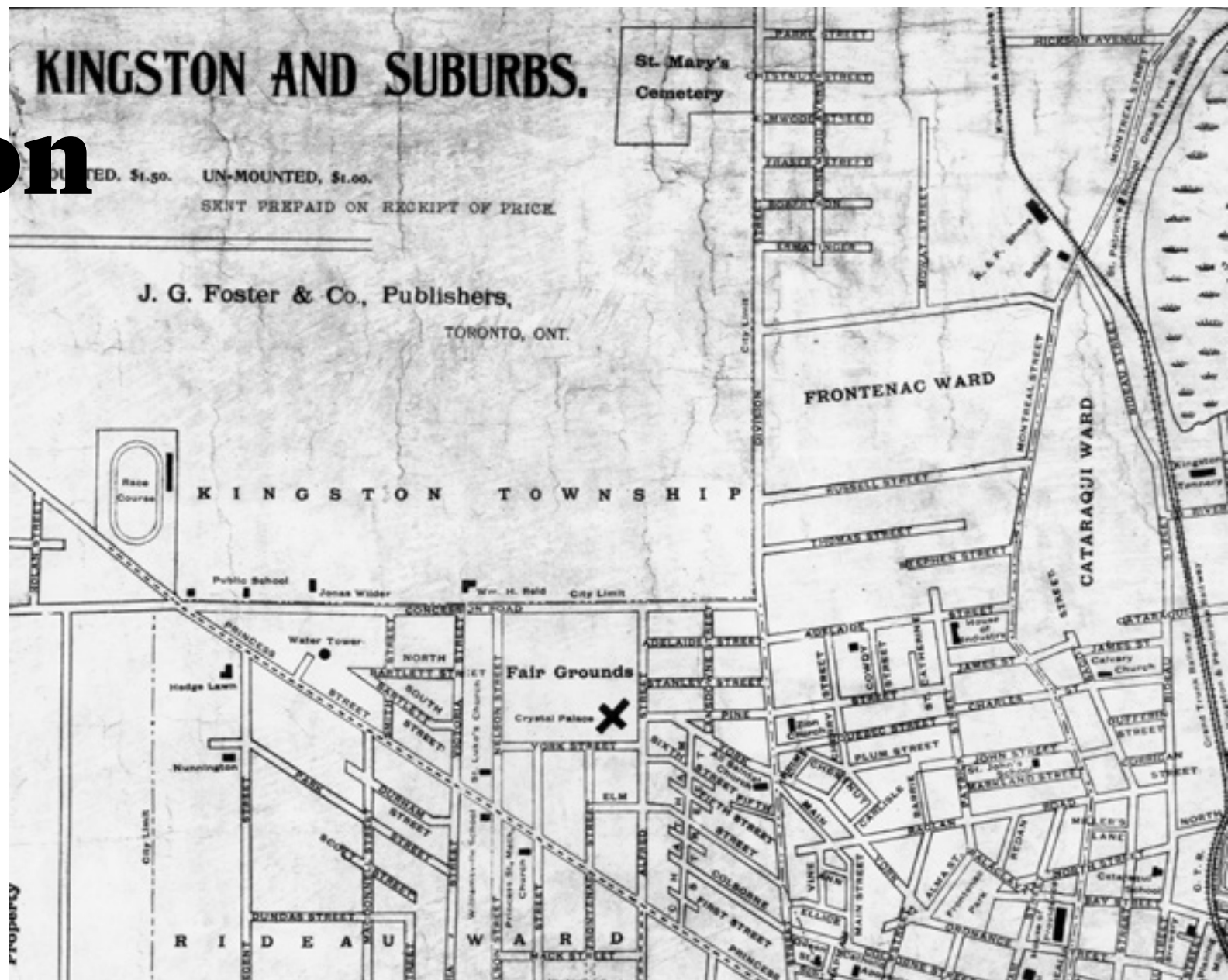
**JEREMY MILLOY** is the coordinator for Just Recovery Kingston.

**To get involved with JRK, email [justrecoverykingston@gmail.com](mailto:justrecoverykingston@gmail.com).  
Learn more at [justrecoverykingston.com](http://justrecoverykingston.com).**

# The Kingston Trio

Three big issues for the next municipal elections

STORY BY JAMIE SWIFT



“KINGSTON'S RIVERFRONT PROVIDES A MICROCOSM OF SOME CRUCIAL QUESTIONS FACING THE CITY AS WE HEAD INTO AN ELECTION YEAR.”

**One gloomy day early last winter, under a leaden sky, I was walking up the K&P Trail. I'd been taking these “plague walks” since the beginning of the pandemic. That day I was meandering in the direction of Belle Island's majestic oak forest and its wonderful views over a barely frozen Cataraqui River.**

Sure, these lockdown strolls are good for the body, but leisurely aimlessness is also a tonic for the soul. Not in a rush, I'd started noticing much more about my surroundings.

As I approached the turnoff to the island, I became aware of a mournful, wailing sound. A man in a fluorescent vest was leaning against the fence in the northeast corner of the new “care hub” that the city hastily put together after the police destroyed the Belle Park homeless encampment the previous summer. The moaning sound faded as I continued east.

When I returned about a half hour later, the fellow's keening hadn't stopped.

Later, when *The Skeleton Press* asked me to write about the issues facing Kingston as we enter 2022, a municipal election year, this plangent fellow came to mind.

Poverty has increased during the pandemic, exposing the savage inequalities that have long lingered hereabouts. Jobs have been lost as insecurity gnaws at working class people with precarious jobs but without affordable shelter.

And climate breakdown no longer threatens. It's upon us. Are there words left to describe what's happening? Catastrophe? Apocalypse?

My waterway walks offered me an education about the Cataraqui shoreline and its creatures. Duck families paddling about. Brazen geese. That lanky, patient heron. The famously basking turtles. Our desperate, unhoused neighbors camping in the woods or hanging about the Integrated Care Hub hard by the K&P Trail.

Plans are afoot to dredge the Cataraqui River bottom, which would stir up toxic mud, a legacy of Kingston's industrial past. The knock-on effects of such an effort are uncertain, despite conventionally confident engineering claims. City staff have recommended to Council that we go along with the federal government's dredging plan. The pushback from River First YGK and others has just begun.

The K&P Trail passes a valuable wetland, part of the area tainted by the long-gone Davis Tannery. The site is contaminated with mercury and other toxins. And now the shoreline ecosystem is where controversial developer Jay Patry intends to cash in on tens of millions of public dollars to build 1,500 housing units on the land where the tannery once employed North End workers.

Seven years ago, Council turned down a similar 1,500-unit Patry housing scheme on the same tannery lands. Back then, Mr. Patry singled out Councillor Rob Hutchison for opposing his plan, publicly denouncing the Kings Town representative; at the time, Councillor Bryan Paterson, now Mayor, supported the Patry plan.

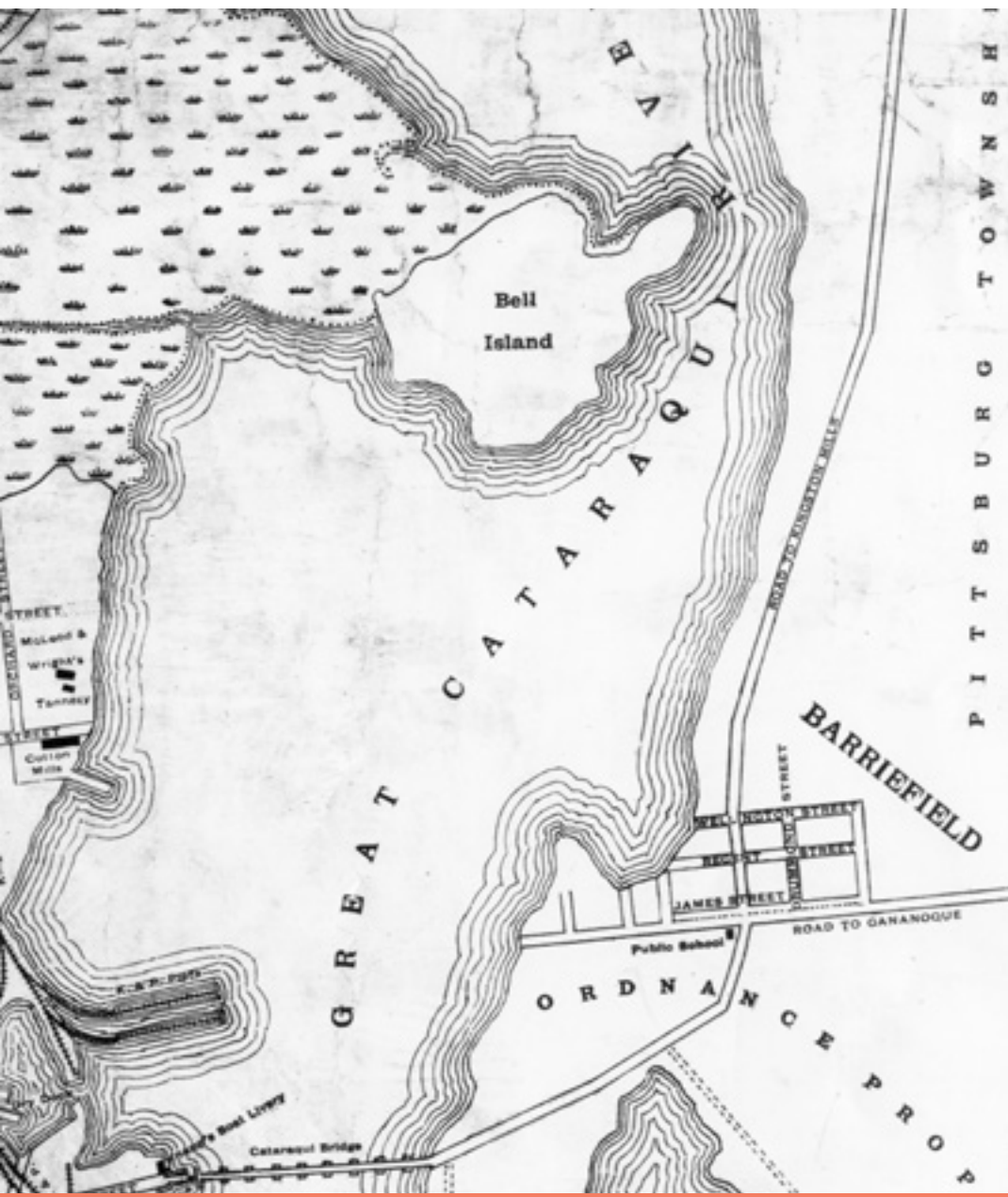
“The city is talking about foregoing the equivalent of \$45 million in development charges and taxes,” said outgoing Councillor Hutchison, describing today's proposal as “a bridge too far,” and the public subsidy as money that “we'll never, ever get back.”

Despite the madness of the massive housing crisis here and across Canada, the proposed tannery development has zero provision for affordability. Of course, if the public were to offer even more money to the developer, he might be persuaded to toss in a few units for low-income people.

Besides being a refuge for wildlife, Kingston's riverfront provides a microcosm of some crucial questions facing the city as we head into an election year.

“Environmental issues are clearly really, really important for the upcoming election for all of our futures,” said Inner Harbour activist Mary Farrar.

Mary knows as much about City-Hall politics as anyone, having for years operated Cogeco-TV cameras at city-council meetings, not to mention her advocacy work around



the Inner Harbour shoreline (for example, the successful turtle-protection effort), Doug Fluhrer Park protection/enhancement, and involvement with the successful citizen-led campaign against the Wellington Street Extension.

The environment will surely loom large for any Council that will be elected in 2022. According to outgoing Councillor Rob Kiley, a former Green Party activist, only three of the 54 municipal candidates who ran in 2018 highlighted climate breakdown on their websites. One can only hope that will change.

“We’re a watershed community. That’s why people live here. That’s why people have lived here since before European conquest,” explained Jeremy Milloy, an organizer with Just Recovery Kingston and River First YGK. “So how we treat the river and live with the river is going to determine whether we have a future living here.”

Indeed, a riverfront walk underlines the first rule of ecology: everything is connected to everything else. That’s true not just for bird and turtle habitat. It extends to how members of the human species treat one another. And that includes public policy.

Thinking green, we can take heart from the revival of public transit initiated by the Council elected in 2006. The hugely successful express buses have been a great leap forward. Statistics Canada reports that Kingston occupies the number-one spot among all mid-sized Canadian cities using active transportation and public transit. From 2011 to 2017, transit ridership jumped by seventy-three percent.

“For parts of the working class population, the changes in transit have transformed lives,” said Councillor Hutchison, mentioning in particular those living north of Stephen Street in the Kings Town district.

Just upriver from the tannery lands lies Belle Island, historically important to Huron-Wendat, Algonquin, Anishinaabe, and Haudenosaunee peoples. Indigenous travellers long ago recognized the importance of the waterways. Queen’s professor Mary-Louise Adams has studied this part of the watershed, how the confluence of rivers and lake made European settlement at Cataraqui “both possible and profitable.” She notes that “the relatively short history of colonial industrial urbanization at this place led to the displacement and marginalization of Indigenous People,” and has “transformed the landscape not quite beyond recognition, but certainly beyond health.”

Corrosive colonialism came into sharp relief in local politics in 2021. City Council abruptly recognized a massive shift in the political winds, voting to remove John A. Macdonald’s lofty statue from City Park. The revelations of the mass, unmarked graves of Indigenous children at the sites of the former residential schools initiated by Macdonald’s government could no longer be ignored.

Things are changing, albeit slowly. When the decision to remove Macdonald’s statue surfaced, councillors were deluged with angry messages. According to outgoing Councillor Kiley, “we easily had a thousand emails, vitriolically against removing him. I’ve never been more disappointed in my fellow Canadians. It was really genuinely awful.”

And yet, city billboards on the 401 have long featured the architect of the genocidal residential school program. Plans are afoot to change the signs, but how long will that take?

Another issue showing that Kingston remains partly mired in 1950s thinking is the “Third Crossing.” (I’ve long been calling it the Span to Sprawl.) The bridge under construction just upriver from Belle Island will cost some \$200 million, a third of which will come from the City. The bridge project enjoys considerable local support, especially from east-end commuters and property developers eager to build suburban housing across the river.

Here’s where environmental and social-justice issues intersect. Urbanists know that if you attempt to address traffic problems by building more roads, traffic will just fill those roads. The same with housing. If you believe that the solution to the housing crisis lies in stoking the private housing market by encouraging developers to build more units, then you’ll simply get more unaffordable units.

This is market failure. Trickle down doesn’t work, despite what the City’s flawed 2020 housing Task Force Report says. According to Kingston’s Social Planning Council, “the Task Force Report’s restricted private market focus failed to set out any overall framework for the full range of the rental housing needed for all in Kingston.”

The housing affordability mess is the result of magical thinking, the victims being low-income people.

“If we don’t invest in housing that is specifically for people who don’t have a lot of money, housing will be bought up by people with the most money,” said Jeremy Milloy, an historian who understands the effects of market fundamentalism since Ontario and Ottawa retreated from the affordable housing business in 1995.

“We have been asking the private market to do it for 25 years. The private market doesn’t do it. That’s fine. I don’t go to the dentist and expect her to make me a pizza. It’s not what she’s set up to do.”

Yes, affordable housing is very expensive. But the \$200 million we’re spending on the Third Crossing could buy a lot of it. Politics is about making choices.

Former Kingston Mayor Helen Cooper, an astute observer of matters municipal, has recently pointed out that Kingston did very well in weathering the pandemic. But city finances still took a major hit.

Noting that downloading starting around 1995, Ms. Cooper underlined what so many have been saying for so long: downloading from senior governments has forced cities to shoulder more responsibilities. But cities lack much in the way of taxation power. Property taxes, the mainstay of city finances, are “regressive.” Read, unfair. According to Cooper, “renters in multi-unit buildings pay proportionately more property tax than someone in a similar owner-occupied property. Renters in general have lower incomes.”

This seems fine with the Ford government, apparently content to shaft municipalities at every turn. The Ford government’s contempt for local democracy extends to local planning decisions, now ever more likely to be overridden by the authoritarian and promiscuous use of Ministerial Zoning Orders. The province also handcuffed cities by taking away their ability to bring in inclusionary zoning, one way of generating more affordable housing. The Ford government also spent \$231 million to tear up contracts for renewable energy, making its attitude to climate breakdown crystal clear.

A few months after the provincial election next June, we’ll go to the polls to elect a new City Council. East-side Councillor Ryan Boehme had been seriously flirting with running for the Progressive Conservatives in 2022, but has since demurred. Perhaps the prospect of carrying Doug Ford’s tainted flag into the fray gave him pause to reconsider.

So, to sum up: “What are the three major issues facing Council?” according to climate justice organizer Jeremy Milloy. “Climate, together with poverty and affordable housing.”

---

**JAMIE SWIFT** lives a short walk from Skeleton Park. He is the author of *Civil Society in Question* and co-author of *The Vimy Trap*, and, most recently, *The Case for Basic Income: Freedom, Security, Justice*.



## WITCH PROPHET

DECEMBER 31<sup>ST</sup>

**Join us on December 31<sup>st</sup> at Next Church (89 Colborne Street) for a matinee performance by Witch Prophet!**

Witch Prophet is an evolution of Ayo Leilani, a queer, Ethiopian/Eritrean singer-songwriter, and the Co-CEO of Heart Lake Records. She provides her fans with a soundscape of vocal layers, loops, raps, and harmonies on a bed of hip-hop, jazz, and soul-inspired beats. Think Erykah Badu meets Lauryn Hill meets Portishead. She finds depth and connection in creating music as a portal for self-growth and discovery, as she navigates and better understands her cultural and queer identity.

**Witch Prophet's performance will be complemented by a community engagement offering and local openers. The event will be family-friendly, pay what you can, and open to all. Stay tuned via SPAF socials, website, and newsletter for more updates!**

**Learn more about Witch Prophet at [witchprophet.com](http://witchprophet.com)**