



Issue Eleven **THE** Fall 2022  
**SKELETON PRESS**

THE **WATER**  
**ISSUE**

# The Matter of Water

BY JANE KIRBY



When I was a student, I worked for the Ontario Ministry of the Environment for two summers in a water colourimetry lab. I was hired to help with the busy summer season, when more samples of ground water, fresh water, and drinking water were sent to the lab for testing. This was in the years following the Walkerton water crisis of 2000 — where *E. coli* contaminated the town's water supply after heavy rainfall, causing two thousand people to get sick and six to die — so water labs were well-funded, and those working in the field had no doubt their jobs were important.

Outside of these two four-month stints, though, I have given little thought to the vast networks of pipes and people involved in managing our water and our waste. There's nothing sexy about sewage, and I, like most people, am mostly content to let other people worry about it — at least until the basement floods, the sewer backs up, or my favorite swimming spot is declared off limits. Of course, my ability to stay ignorant is an enormous privilege — according to the Council of Canadians, seventy-three percent of First Nations' water systems are at high or medium risk of contamination, and there are thirty-four long-term drinking water advisories on reserves. For unhoused people living in our community, the ability to access adequate sanitation and hygiene facilities is limited. And for non-human community members — especially those who live in the river — toxic run off, sewage overflows, and other pollution can be deadly.

We need to understand these issues in order to advocate for something better. This issue's focus on water systems includes useful — and mostly reassuring — overviews of our city's water and sewage management. This edition of *The Skeleton Press* also includes reports on waste released by developments, the problems with salt on roads, the mysterious ancient river that runs underground through the neighbourhood, and the ethical implications of the wastewater surveillance we've become reliant on in the COVID-19 era. These articles all provide important perspectives on details that are often out of sight and out of mind, but that are involved in many of the issues — from environmental protection to housing to climate change — that will be at the front of our minds as we head into municipal elections this fall. I hope you find them as enlightening as I did.

## LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

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

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K7L 4V8

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*The Skeleton Press* invites pitches for articles of relevance to the neighbourhood and welcomes both new and experienced writers. To pitch, send a short (max 150 word) statement of what you'd like to write about and a writing sample if you have one available. Most articles are limited to 800 words. We pay \$0.30 a word (\$240 per 800 word article). The theme for the next issue is "neighbourhood fashion."

We also welcome new illustrators. If interested in being on our roster, please send us an expression of interest and samples of your work. We pay market rates for illustrations.

Send pitches and expressions of interest to: [skeletonpresseditor@gmail.com](mailto:skeletonpresseditor@gmail.com).

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## MANDATE

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

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## CONTRIBUTORS

350 Kingston, Kate Archibald-Cross, Shelley Arnott, Erin Ball, Chantal Bennett, Al Bergeron, Danielle Boyd, Joe Brites, Meredith Dault, Sadiqa de Meijer, Grace Dixon, Colton Fox, Jill Glatt, Lars Hagberg, Carl Hanna, Sticky Henderson, Mike Hipson, Rob Howard, Helen Humphreys, Mo Horner, Christine Jamieson, JAWK, Just Recovery Kingston, Jennifer Kehoe, Anne Kershaw, Joel Kimmel, Kemi King, Nico Koenig, Clarke Mackey, Kamryn Marsh, Stuart Miller-Davis, Jeremy Milloy, Mutual Aid Katarokwi-Kingston Unhoused Solidarity Group, Benjamin Nelson, Carolyn Prouse, Chantal Rousseau, Haley Sarfeld, Lawrence Scanlan, Stella Sheriff, Laura Segura Serrano, Louise Slobodian, Jamie Swift, Taylor Tye, Carl Wiens, Linda Williams

## STAFF

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**COPY EDITORS**

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# Water, Water Everywhere



We are a brief stop on water's eternal journey to the sea

STORY BY **LAURA SEGURA SERRANO**

**How amazing it would be if water could tell us its travel stories. Imagine the water in Lake Ontario telling swimmers about its 200-year-long trip from Lake Superior; it would be wonderful. The mechanism of water traveling is called the water cycle, and the voyage water takes around the Earth's system is not an easy one. Here I want to tell you a shorter story, about the path water takes when it falls in the form of rain in our neighbourhood.**

Every time a big rainfall starts, I stop whatever I'm doing to watch the scene. When I'm home here in the McBurney Park area, I stand at our big front window (we call it the TV) and watch how the water flows downhill, picking up random items that have been lying in its path. Depending on the intensity of the rain (plus other factors), I'll hear the sump pump trying to keep the underground water "controlled" to protect the basement from flooding. Luckily, most of the time, the water outside disappears before my eyes almost immediately after the storm (although my basement is a different story). The two main processes involved in this disappearance are "infiltration," or water going into the ground, and "runoff," the water that doesn't infiltrate but goes into the sewer system.

How does this work? Why are basements or streets sometimes flooded? And where does this floodwater go afterwards?

Let's talk about infiltration first. Infiltration plays a role in raising the level of the water table, which is the level below the ground's surface that is saturated with water. Infiltration depends partly on the composition of the soil, its coverage, and how much water the soil is holding at the moment of the storm: if the rate at which the water table raises is faster than the rate at which the sump pump ex-

tracts the water, the pump won't save my basement from flooding. Also, my basement is unfinished, so even if it doesn't rain, the basement gets wet when the water table raises high enough for some water to ascend through the pores of the soil.

Now, the runoff part. Some basements can also flood during or after a storm due to a reverse flow from the sewer system, which is called "a sewage backup." I won't describe how that looks (you can imagine it), but sewage backup occurs because in some areas of the neighbourhood the sanitation sewer (which transports raw sewage) and the storm sewer (which transports the runoff) are combined. Kingston is one of forty-four municipalities in Ontario still deploying these combined systems, the construction of which has been prohibited by the province since 1985.

The combined systems for this area transport the sewage-runoff mix to the Ravensview Wastewater Treatment Facility on the other side of the Causeway. These systems are undesirable because there are times when the infrastructure can't handle periods of heavy rain, resulting in overflows into basements and also into Lake Ontario through sewer overflow points installed along the city... yuckers. If you are planning to take a swim in the lake after a storm, you could do worse than to access a real-time map provided by Utilities Kingston to check when a sewer overflow has occurred at a specific location. It's best to wait at least forty-eight hours after the last overflow.

Two good things: first, the Ravensview Facility can process wastewater in six hours, after which the clean water is sent to the St. Lawrence River to make its way to the Atlantic. Second good thing, the city is moving forward to get rid of the combined systems.

If the sanitation and storm systems are separated, the storm sewer collects the runoff throughout the city, and the water drains by gravity into the nearest water body; in our case it would be either the Cataraqui River or Lake Ontario. From there, the water sets out on its path to the Atlantic Ocean via the St. Lawrence River.

For any sewer system, if the collection points and/or the pipes are clogged, the water won't disappear after a rain. That happened in October 2021, when a portion of Patrick

Street flooded. In addition, sometimes the system may not be big enough to drain water from a massive storm — a so-called "extreme event," which normally happens every fifty to 100 years. With climate change, however, extreme events occur more frequently and are harder to predict.

All this being said, here are a couple of important facts to keep in mind. One: some stuff that is left in the water's path to the sewer is going to contribute to clogging it. Two: if it is small enough it will travel through the pipes into the Cataraqui, from there into the lake, from the lake into the St. Lawrence, and eventually reach the Atlantic Ocean, a trip that now takes an estimated seven and a half years.

Nonetheless, as members of this awesome neighbourhood, we can all contribute to reducing the risk of floods and minimize pollution.

## Six easy things we can all do to help:

1. Place garbage in a proper garbage can; translation: do not throw garbage on the ground.
2. Cover your recycling bins to keep your recycled items from flying away.
3. Flush body wastes and toilet paper.
4. If you smoke, do not throw cigarette butts on the ground; instead use a container.
5. In fall, clean up leaves that are likely to end up in the sewer.
6. If you feel motivated enough, pick up random garbage you see on the ground. I know, it's upsetting to think how it ended up there but it could be a great workout.



**LAURA SEGURA SERRANO** has been part of the Skeleton Park neighbourhood since 2014. She has been working on water-related topics, such as flood modeling, river morphology, and hydrology, since 2003.

A pipe opens up into the river in Douglas Fluhrer Park. **PHOTO CREDIT:** Laura Segura Serrano



PHOTO CREDIT: iStock

# NOTES FROM THE UNDERGROUND

The existential challenge of managing Kingston's sewage and clean water **STORY BY ANNE KERSHAW**

**Just for fun, here is what some neighbourhood kids said when asked, 'What happens to the stuff that you flush down the toilet?'**

**LIAM, AGE EIGHT: "It goes to the ocean."**

**ZARA, AGE TEN: "It goes into the sewer and maybe then to some big hole where they just keep it until they dump it somewhere else."**

**LILLIAN, AGE SEVEN: "It gets clogged and then after it's fixed, it goes to the factory and then to the sea."**

How underground sewers and water systems work is a mystery to many of us at any age. Even the most astute among us can be mystified by the way in which municipal utilities both manage wastewater, including sewage, and ensure safe water for drinking and recreational activities — in Kingston for more than 130,000 residents.

Chris Omelon is a Queen's assistant professor in geography and planning studies who researches how bacteria, algae and fungi interact in both land and water environments. He is also a resident of the McBurney Park community and aware of many residents' concerns about the water quality of the river, and their passionate commitment to cleaning up the Inner Harbour.

Residents have too often seen the disagreeable evidence of sewer system overflows, including inorganic matter such as condoms, tampon applicators and other plastics, that litter the shorelines of our waterways. Also concerning is when organic matter in sewage reaches open waters and creates high nutrient levels that destabilize aquatic vegetation and produce detrimental algae blooms. Pathogens in the waste can harm both aquatic life and humans.

This speaks directly to residents' desire to protect the river and its ecosystems, and to ensure that beaches stay open and safe.

Omelon wanted to find out more for himself about the operations of the City's water and wastewater system. After taking a virtual tour of Kingston's massive underground infrastructure, guided by utilities engineer Mike Fischer, he was impressed by the complexity of the system and reassured by Utilities Kingston's proactive management approach.

"The way that things move underground and where and how they move is amazing," says Omelon. "I had no idea how incredibly complex the system is. It really did help me understand and appreciate how Utilities Kingston manages the systems, how careful they are, and how rarely there is a sewer overflow into local bodies of water."

Utilities Kingston is strongly focused on protecting surrounding bodies of water, says Heather Roberts, Director of Water and Wastewater Services. "We want as much as possible to keep 100 percent of the sanitary sewage in

pipes with no overflows,” she says. “That is how we can positively impact water quality.” One of the myths we try hard to dispel, says Roberts, is that overflows are “a choice” where we are saying “open the floodgates.”

“They are not a choice,” she says. “Staff at Utilities Kingston have little to no control over where and when overflows occur during wet weather. There are no control valves under the staff’s operation that can completely stop an overflow or prevent it — without causing flooding or damage to private properties.”

The sewage system involves an elaborate network of below-surface pipes that collect sanitary waste (flushed from toilets and drains) that is then transported through gravity and pumping stations to one of two main wastewater treatment plants: West Kingston drains to the Cataraqui Bay Wastewater Treatment Plant, and sewage from Central Kingston is pumped under the Great Cataraqui River where it joins with sewage from East Kingston and drains to the Ravensview Wastewater Treatment Plant.

An unfortunate reality is that in some of the older parts of Kingston, including the McBurney Park area, many households and businesses still operate under a century-old system of “combined pipes” that collect sewage and stormwater in the same pipe. (Post-war construction often used concrete pipes, which are highly resilient and comprise close to half the sewers in the area). Since 1990, a higher quality PVC pipe has been installed in about twenty percent of north-end houses. Infrastructure in Kingston’s west end is more current, since much of it has been built since 1950. The east end is newer still.

Faced with some of the oldest infrastructure in the province, Kingston has been aggressive over the past twenty years in modernizing the system. Now, under an accelerated plan supported by the City, Utilities Kingston is gradually replacing old, combined sewers with a two-pipe system that separates the movement of sanitary sewage (flushed from toilets) and storm water sewage (caused by rainfall and melting snow).

Utilities Kingston has set a target of twenty years for the elimination of combined sewers. Work on sewer separation continues in central Kingston, including in the McBurney Park area. Overflows are a remnant of a system that was built as far back as the 1950s, when the main concern was protecting basements from floods, not protecting the environment. Overflows will decrease in duration, frequency, and volume as the City and Utilities Kingston work to replace the troublesome combined sewers, which, according to Mike Fischer, have already been reduced by about fifty percent.

Since the 1990s, Utilities Kingston has also been working to upgrade the aged, combined storm and sewer system in some places with overflow tanks to increase system capacity during wet weather and reduce the amount of wastewater flowing to a body of water. Overflow outlets have also been created to prevent basement backups.

The system is actually designed to overflow in periods of wet weather to avoid exceeding system capacity and ensure sewage gets through to the wastewater treatment plant. “When the system’s full, it’s full,” says Roberts. The upgrades, along with Utilities Kingston’s early adoption of a CSO (combined sewer overflow) monitoring program, have made the city a leader in reducing combined sewer overflows, as well as notifying residents when and where overflows have occurred. “We are currently able to monitor almost all overflow locations compared to fifteen years ago,” says Fischer, “when we were monitoring or estimating the likelihood of overflow at about half of our overflow locations at best.” Residents themselves can help decrease overflows by reducing heavy water use during rainfalls and ensuring their homes’ downspouts and sump pumps are not connected to the sanitary sewer system.

## Water quality is ensured through daily and weekly testing — with water treatment operators collecting 15,000 chemical and microbiological samples per year.

Meeting established targets for updating the system depends on budgetary decisions and alignment of priorities and work schedules by the City of Kingston and Utilities Kingston. Despite careful, long-term planning, schedules and set goals can be thrown off when unexpected developments require urgent attention.

“We do our best to ensure that water and sewer infrastructure renewal projects and road renewal projects are coordinated to maximize cost efficiencies and minimize inconvenience to residents as much as possible,” says Roberts.

Utilities Kingston currently has a large construction project on Front Road (between Sand Bay Lane and Aberdeen Park). This multi-phased project will direct sewage westward from the Portsmouth Pump Station (located in Aberdeen Park) to the Cataraqui Bay Wastewater Treatment Plant, rather than eastward, where it must be pumped twice more and flow through the combined sewer area, contributing to overflows.

The City of Kingston also has a prominent storm-sewer project underway that runs along King Street East and includes an outlet into Anglin Bay. This work contributes to overall efforts to ease pressure on the system.

“From source water protection to potable water at the tap, protecting tap water involves a multi-utility, multi-barrier approach,” says Roberts. While wastewater is flowing out of homes and businesses, water from the lake that we need to drink and bathe in — and for basic survival — is moving through a whole other system consisting of two treatment plants, eight towers and reservoirs, five booster stations, 5,469 water valves, and close to 600 kilometres of underground pipes, leading to the taps of households, businesses, schools, hospitals, etc. Managing and operating this system requires applying principles of physics, such as gravity and compression, as well as expert chemical intervention to disinfect and prepare water for consumption.

This is accomplished through advanced digitized monitoring, including a customized, in-house-developed computerized system. Utilities Kingston ensures water levels and pressure are maintained throughout the system and can project how much clean water the city’s population will require at any given time, including for firefighting. It’s critical to ensure that capacity matches need, says Roberts. “We manage the water distribution in such a way that water is kept moving and water quality is protected.”

Water quality is ensured through daily and weekly testing — with water treatment operators collecting 15,000 chemical and microbiological samples per year — and multiple layers of government accountability, both internal and external.

Wastewater treatment allows for the return of natural-resource-quality water back into Lake Ontario, Kingston’s local drinking water source. It should be noted, however, that some chemicals are resistant to wastewater treatment, including some fertilizers, pharmaceuticals, and other toxins flushed down toilets. Individuals can do their part to keep our rivers and lakes clean by returning unused medicines to the drug store; keeping their lawns and gardens free of fertilizers, pesticides, and herbicides; using only toxin-free cleaning and hygienic products; and following government guidelines when disposing toxins.

Guy Severin, who worked for thirty years in Water and Wastewater System Operations for the City and Utilities Kingston, says the job is all about meeting residents’ needs, managing the energy costs of pushing water and sewage through the system and keeping the lake clean. “With climate change,” he says, “this is becoming more important than ever when we want to limit what goes into the lake water.” He believes the municipality, which owns the water and wastewater infrastructure maintained by Utilities Kingston, has been forward thinking and proactive. “They have done a great job of putting money where it needed to go. We have one of the best sewage systems in Ontario.”

Chris Omelon agrees. He says the more informed he becomes about Kingston’s system, the more confidence he gains. “We just need to better understand what’s going on rather than make assumptions. Information is powerful.”

### For some perspective

**Being able to have access to clean water for drinking, bathing, cleaning dishes, watering gardens and even washing our cars whenever we want and with few limits is beyond the imaginations of many around the world.**

- One in three people in the world don’t have access to safe drinking water (U.N.) and two out of five people do not have a basic hand-washing facility with soap and water (U.N.)
- 673 million people still practice open defecation (U.N.) Almost two billion people depend on health care facilities without basic water services (WHO/UNICEF 2020)
- Over half of the global population, or 4.2 billion people, lack safely managed sanitation services (WHO/UNICEF)
- 297,000 children under five die every year from diarrheal diseases due to poor sanitation, poor hygiene, or unsafe drinking water (WHO/UNICEF)
- Eighty percent of wastewater flows back into the ecosystem without being treated or reused (UNESCO)



**ANNE KERSHAW** is an author, reporter and editor who worked for the Kingston Whig-Standard during the paper’s heyday and later at Queen’s as Director of Communications and Public Affairs. She has won numerous national journalism awards.

# Ghost River in the Swamp Ward

STORY BY STICKY HENDERSON

IN THE TWENTY YEARS WE'VE LIVED IN OUR OLD HOUSE, I'VE KEPT COMING UP AGAINST A TANTALIZING MYSTERY: WHERE IS THE RIVER?

- SKOT CALDWELL

**When I harken back to my early days in the Fruit Belt, there's one thing I do not miss: the battle with water in the basement. We moved here in 2002 and had our first rude awakening in the spring thaw of 2003. Water seeped through the basement walls and came up through the floor. From then on, we kept everything on skids and out of harm's way.**

Friendship Park (a stone's throw from Skeleton Park) sits in a valley. To get there, you travel by either Carlisle Street or Chestnut Street, both of which slope downhill to where they meet at a ninety-degree angle. My house sits at the lowest point, where the water pools. With a heavy rainfall, a small lake forms where those two streets meet and water can rise quite high, covering the sidewalks.

I've heard whispers of an underground river around here. Evidence suggesting that it flows directly under my house can be seen in the growth rate of trees I've planted. It's been nothing short of astronomical, noticeably surpassing the growth of other trees a mere stone's throw away. In 2009, a maple sapling was planted, its very tip level with the eaves of our bungalow. Today it towers over the house. In 2010, my neighbour and I each bought a dappled willow. The trees were small enough to fit — along with the two of us — in a Toyota Corolla. Her tree died the following year. Mine is a giant. It provides abundant shade as you stroll underneath its dappled leaves.

I'm told there's a map hanging in City Hall that depicts a river flowing through this area. Consultation with Skot Caldwell on Markland Street revealed that what is now the school between John and Markland Streets was once the site of an old tannery.

Skot writes: "In the twenty years we've lived in our old house, I've kept coming up against a tantalizing mystery: where is the river? There have been clues: our neighbour gets a foot of water in her basement when it rains, and we get about half that. Where does that water come from? The site of the Mulberry School, I'd heard, was once a tannery...but tanneries were always located on water, as it was central to the process. Why would they have put it there? Then, when the old limestone sewers were replaced on our street, there were two more clues. First, an archaeology team appeared at either end of the street, and when I asked them what they thought they might

find, they said, 'We're looking for a river. Old maps show one but it's not clear precisely where it was.' They said it was visible in the rock profile. A week later, a digger at the end of our driveway ruptured a structure six feet down, a wooden crib, presumably from the tannery, and a deluge of water poured out of it. Construction halted for several days while the archaeologists scrambled about. In the meantime, the water rose to refill the remains of the crib. Where was the water coming from? A short time later it was all filled back in — the crib, and river, re-buried."

So if you live in the "Swamp Ward," there's a good chance your basement floods. But don't lose hope. There is a way to effectively waterproof. I guarantee you'll never have a wet basement again. It will be a dream come true. The question is, do you have the stomach for it?

Here's the gist. Assuming your basement has a rectangular concrete floor, measure twelve inches out from the wall and draw lines on the concrete parallel to each wall. Get a skill saw with a stone cutting blade. Cut along those lines as deeply as you can all the way across. Next, rent a jackhammer. Hammer out a trench, removing rubble as you go by carrying it out in buckets. When all the concrete is gone, you dig trenches about three feet deep.

Ok. I'm going to stop there. I assume by now you've come to the wise conclusion that there's no way you are putting yourself through all that. I don't blame you. I lived through it. It was awful, and I wasn't even the one doing the work!

It is loud, messy, back-breaking labour. It drags on for months as you go through the stages of laying porous pipe, affixing plastic wainscoting, filling the trenches in with gravel, and finally re-cementing your floor so it looks like nothing ever happened.

For the one percent of readers who are thinking, "Yes! I wanna do that!" you'll find plenty of material online to guide you. I wish you the best of luck. And the next time it rains, you'll be worry free.



**STICKY HENDERSON** has been living in Kingston since 1998. She is a local musician, yoga teacher, and crafts enthusiast.

# What Lies Beneath

Can we control the data gleaned from wastewater surveillance?

STORY BY **CAROLYN PROUSE**

ILLUSTRATION BY **CHRISTINE JAMIESON**

**O**ur current understanding of the COVID-19 pandemic relies on a vast reservoir of data circulating beneath our feet: our sewage. We know that we are in a third Omicron wave because the ubiquitous wastewater curves tell us so. These curves have come to hold a vital place in many of our lives, shaping the kinds of decisions we make, such as when to meet outdoors or wear a mask.

The wastewater curves are part of a larger Ontario Wastewater Surveillance Initiative established at the beginning of the pandemic. Kingston's node in this network is a partnership involving Queen's University, Loyalist Township, and Utilities Kingston. The provincial network has recently received a cash infusion of \$24.7 million: wastewater surveillance is here to stay, at least for the near-term.

But what might we want to consider when public health relies so intimately on the surveillance of our bodily data?

## HOW IT WORKS

As we shed fibre and toxins from our bodies, we also shed little bits of DNA and RNA — genetic material — from the viruses and bacteria that live inside us. Wastewater surveillance (WWS; also called wastewater-based epidemiology or wastewater monitoring) involves taking samples of underground wastewater to assess how much of that microbial DNA/RNA is present in our community.

Samples in the Kingston region are taken from three primary wastewater treatment plants: Cataraqui Bay Wastewater Treatment Plant (Kingston West), Ravensview Wastewater Treatment Facility (Kingston Central & East), and Amherstview Sewage Plant (Amherstview and Odessa), covering about sixty percent of the local population. According to Queen's scientist Stephen Brown, samples are also being collected at Queen's residences, regional prisons, and, soon, long-term care facilities.

Wastewater sampling has become a public-health darling for a number of reasons. It offers a close-to-real-time way of tracking COVID, picking up markers of SARS-CoV-2 (the virus that causes COVID) before people show symptoms, and from people who may remain asymptomatic. WWS also provides a snapshot of viral circulation at the population level, and is therefore much less expensive than individual clinical testing. Our poop now tells us if we're in a wave, or not.

## OUR POOP NOW TELLS US IF WE'RE IN A COVID WAVE, OR NOT

But there are drawbacks to this technology. Although WWS has been around for some time, it is relatively new for tracking SARS-CoV-2, and there is still much to figure out, such as how vaccination, prior infection, age, and variant type affect wastewater signals. Civil liberties associations are also concerned with the potential to identify groups of people when sample sizes are small; and some are wary that particular communities could be stigmatized and over-policed through WWS.

## SURVEILLANCE AND PUBLIC HEALTH

Public health has always been intertwined with disease surveillance. David Lyon, a Skeleton Park resident and a world authority on surveillance studies, explains that surveillance technologies are not inherently bad; what matters is the ends to which they are put. In his book, *Pandemic Surveillance*, Lyon details how surveillance is a tool of social sorting, and it tends to be racialized and lower-income people who bear the brunt of the effects of surveillance.

In our academic work, Rafi Arefin and I have been investigating the social aspects of biosurveillance. Of WWS's history, Arefin warns “we need to learn from previous cases to avoid entrenching inequality. For example, in 1946, wastewater surveillance was used to locate the carrier of typhoid in England; privacy concerns were ignored to protect the beach town's tourist economy. Moreover, some of the tool's basic methods were refined in carceral settings, such as the sewage sampling of a girls' juvenile prison in Connecticut in 1962.”

Arefin argues that surveillance can become dangerous when it touches down in emergency settings, “where deep consideration and debate are sometimes suspended in the name of urgency.”

We have already seen wastewater testing used as a technique to control populations made precarious through COVID-19. In Singapore, employers have closely monitored the wastewater of migrant labourer dormitories to enforce quarantine. Meanwhile, in England and the US, prisons have continued to be sites for testing and refining WWS methodologies.

## THE CASE IN CANADA

Canada is one of the few countries that has put ethical guidelines in place for the collection and use of wastewater data. The country's framework establishes four principles:

- Common good: sharing the benefits of public health across the population
- Equity: mitigating the unequal burden of surveillance while ensuring everyone is counted
- Respect for persons: balancing people's civil liberties with the needs of the population
- Good governance: prioritizing transparency and accountability in public health decisions

Many of the microbiologists, engineers, and utilities staff collecting wastewater data are committed to these principles. But as we find ourselves in the seventh wave of a global pandemic, now is a good time to assess whether these principles are being upheld by the province.

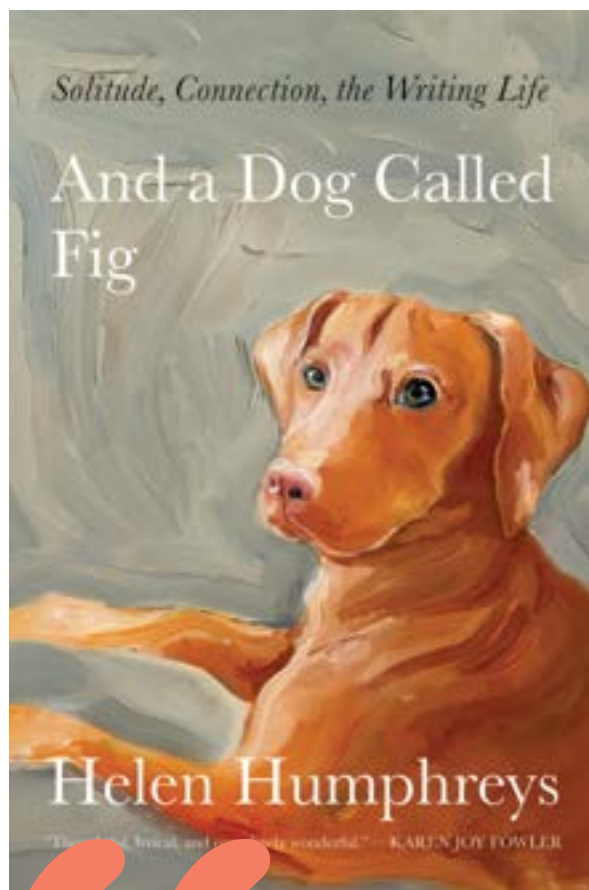
For instance, is the collection of wastewater data being used to improve health outcomes in the population? It's hard to answer in the affirmative when the Conservative government's actions have almost no correlation with the curve. In fact, wastewater surveillance is arguably displacing other kinds of care and welfare, such as clinical testing, healthcare investments, and accessible COVID therapeutics.

Moreover, WWS is a roving technology, perpetually looking for new applications, such as tracking opioid usage and obesity markers. As scientists move towards other applications of WWS, it is worth asking: How can people and communities control the use of their own data to prevent stigmatization and over-policing? When areas of high concentration of disease (i.e. ‘hotspots’) are identified, how can we make sure that the root causes of high disease prevalence (such as inadequate housing) are being addressed? And how do we ensure that wastewater surveillance doesn't displace public healthcare and a broader ethic of care, such as mask-wearing?

Wastewater surveillance can indeed be an important tool in a just public health system. But, if it's to be oriented towards human flourishing, as Lyon encourages, the “common good” must be a life where we care for and protect one another.

**CAROLYN PROUSE** is a Skeleton Park resident, dog lover, sport enthusiast, and geographer. In her academic life, she is working on a project with Dr. Rafi Arefin about the social, economic, and political implications of surveilling bodily tissues for disease.





“  
 THE PUPPY DOESN'T  
 SEEM TO BE RELATED  
 TO ANYTHING I  
 KNOW OF AS “DOG,”  
 BUT IS INSTEAD A  
 WILD, UNKNOWABLE  
 DEMON.”

# Beginnings

BY HELEN HUMPHREYS

**Into my writer's isolation will come a dog, to sit beside my chair or to lie on the couch while I work, to force me outside for a walk, and suddenly, although still lonely, this writer will have a companion.**

I'm ten years older than when I brought home my last dog, Charlotte, and I hope I have it in me to be there for one more vizsla.

Like my grandmother and my father, I have become attached to one specific breed and cannot imagine living with a different type of dog. I have spent twenty-two... years with vizslas. This will be my third one. I love their joyful, exuberant energy and the close attachment they seek with their humans.

I have forgotten much about living with a puppy, but I do have a dim recollection that it is all-consuming, and that a quiet, contemplative writing life is almost impossible to balance with the chaotic energy of a young dog. So, I am thinking that while my life is upended by the puppy, it might be a good opportunity to write about that experience — to think about my writing life in relation to the dogs I have lived with...What does a dog bring to the writing life? My writing life has mostly included dogs, but I have never spent time thinking about what this has meant to my creative journey.

While working on a novel would be difficult with a young dog around, because it requires so much time and attention, surely I should be able to keep a journal with some hastily scratched entries, written in the moments when the puppy is napping or playing?

When I purchased a puppy before, I usually knew which one I was getting, as the breeder picked the puppy out for me based on my temperament and the temperament of the baby dog...Each puppy in these previous litters was wearing a little nylon cord collar in a particular colour so they could be easily identified...Charlotte was “green.”

...But the new breeder doesn't like the collars, says they just get caught on things, so he hasn't marked the puppies. Also, he maintains that you can't really tell anything about the dogs when they are seven weeks old...I can see his point, and admire his confidence in his breeding program, but it does lend a certain randomness to what seems a significant decision, and I feel unsettled by his attitude. I worry that I might get the wrong dog...

Just as picking a title for a book is either easy — in that it occurs right away, sometimes before the book has even been started — or impossible — meaning that no title seems right, ever — so it is for the naming of a dog...

This time, I want a name that isn't a human name...but is a piece of nature. I have tried and discarded various trees — Ash, Maple, Rowan, Larch. For a while, I was thinking of Cricket, and then Clover, but both names are hard to yell, feel too much of a mouthful for the...times I will be trying to call the dog away from rolling...in the guts of a dead fish, or eating fresh, steaming piles of horseshit, or swimming out into the middle of the lake after ducks.

In the end, I'm not the one who thinks of the name. My stepdaughter...texts that she wants the dog to be born on her birthday...and proclaims that it should be called Fig.

I like the name for its clarity and for how easy it is to say emphatically, and also for the possibility of using it in different ways — Figgy, Figlet... So, “Fig” seems good, right. Also, the vizsla, with its dark red fur somewhat resembles the colour of a ripe Calimyrna fig.

A close friend and I drive north with a blanket and a small crate...On the ride home, it seems that we have chosen well... I sit in the back... with the puppy, who dozes on my lap or lies in her crate with the door open, snoozing. She seems perfect and I am thankful, but I soon discover she was probably just stunned from the change in environment. Once home, she turns into a clawing, biting machine and draws significant blood from me three times in the first twenty-four hours...

I sleep on the couch with Fig the first night, because I don't want my neighbours to suffer the screams of the puppy captive in her “safe space” (crate). Whenever she wakes, I take her outside and we stand in the icy yard — me waiting for Fig to pee or poo, and her shocked by the sudden cold and not knowing why I have brought her outdoors to freeze.

She is unbelievably small — the size of a hiking boot and barely ten pounds — and I almost step on her a dozen times because she is constantly underfoot in her confusion at being separated from her mother and siblings...

I am not feeling confident in my decision to get a puppy. What was I thinking? ...in one of the many sleepless moments of the night, I...felt that I had made a terrible mistake and...wasn't up to the task of having a puppy. I am almost sixty. What if I...don't have the energy to keep up with the physical demands of a young dog? How had I not remembered how...sharp and dangerous those puppy teeth are?

...I can't tell much about who Fig is in the first twenty-four hours. Her hackles rise at the sound of a crow in the yard. She hides from the postman's knock at the door, and is afraid of a visiting dog. She crawls up onto my shoulders to escape what she fears, and her claws rake my face and neck. Blood drips down from three different punctures on my nose, cheek, and neck...The puppy doesn't seem to be related to anything I know of as “dog,” but is instead a wild, unknowable demon.

Join Helen at Kingston WritersFest with *And a Dog Called Fig*, co-presented by *The Skeleton Press*, on Thursday, September 29, 3:30 pm. With author Sarah Tsiang she'll talk about the joys and trials of writing — from the inspiration in solitude, to the self-doubt that isolation brings, and why beloved canine companions make ideal writing partners.



**HELEN HUMPHREYS**

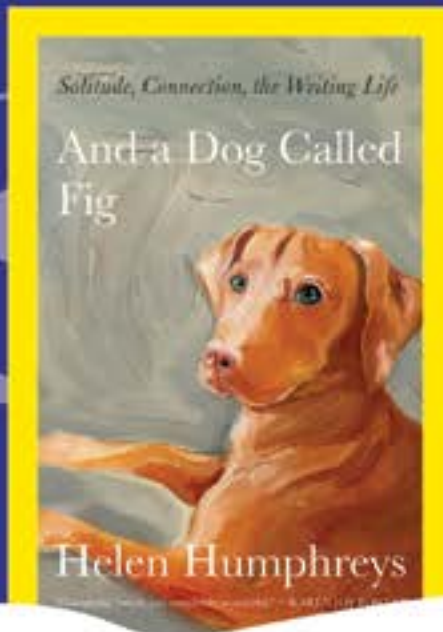
the award-winning author of twenty-one books. This is an edited excerpt from her most recent book, *And a Dog Called Fig*, published by HarperCollins Canada.



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## 9. DOGS AND THE WRITING LIFE

Helen Humphreys

Thursday, September 29

3:30 - 4:30 pm

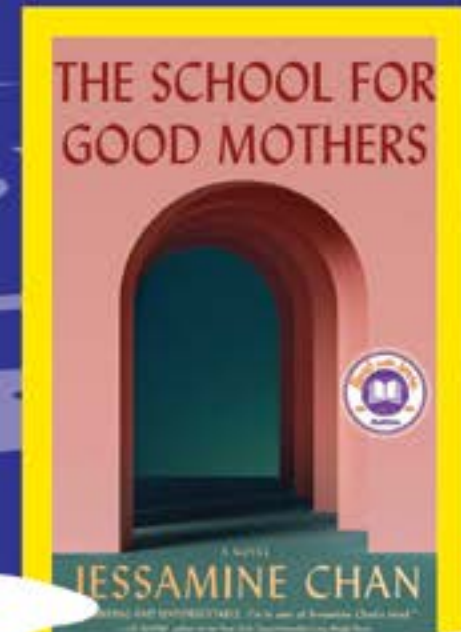


## 15. MOTHER TONGUE: IDENTITIES IN VERSE

Nancy Jo Cullen,  
Gillian Sze & more!

Friday, September 30

4:00 - 5:30 pm



## 20. IN A PERFECT WORLD

Jessamine Chan

Saturday, October 1

11:00 am - 12:00 pm

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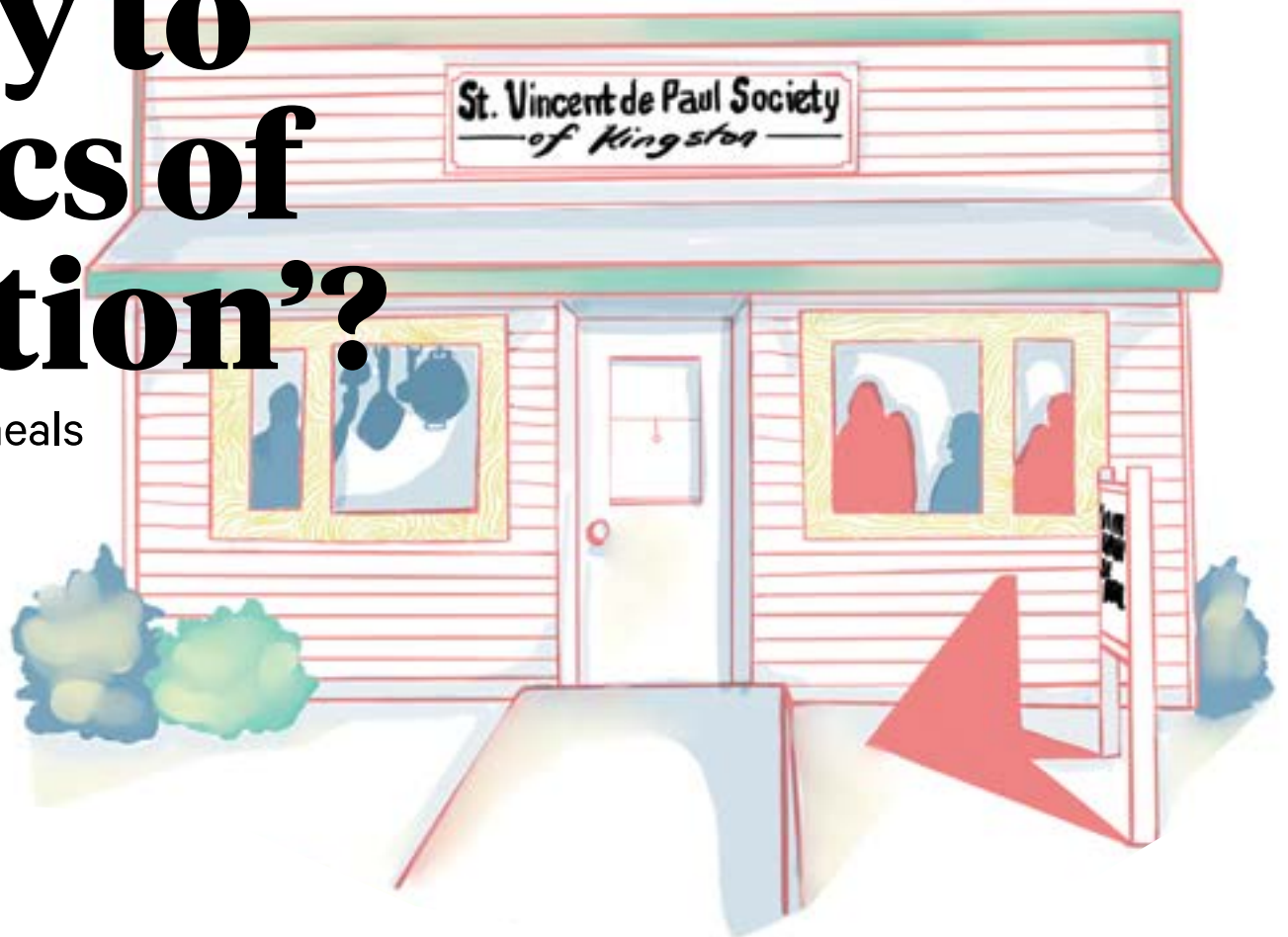


# Will ‘Vinnie’s’ get the new space it needs? Or fall prey to ‘the politics of gentrification’?

The charity served five thousand meals in May — the most in its history

STORY BY JAMIE SWIFT

ILLUSTRATIONS BY GRACE DIXON



**T**wo ramshackle Stephen Street buildings have housed Kingston’s oldest free-meal program since 1969. The St. Vincent de Paul Society (SVDP, or “Vinnie’s,” as it’s known on the street) offers a food bank (aka a “pantry”), a furniture and clothing “wearhouse,” and a bustling dining area. According to a study conducted in 2017 by the Smith School of Business at Queen’s, the SVDP is also the only Kingston community service where clothing, household supplies, and furniture are all offered free of charge.

But today, Vinnie’s teeters precariously. “The Society faces an uncertain future,” concluded the consultants. “Its resources are stretched to meet current needs.”

The research, it’s important to note, added that demand for the Society’s services would continue to grow, and gave critical context. The Mike Harris government’s social assistance cuts of 1995 have been relentlessly eroding social assistance incomes. (No subsequent government has come even close to restoring welfare incomes.) The steady rise of unstable, part-time low-wage jobs has been putting poor people at increased risk. Moreover, “gentrification is pushing poverty north.”

Aside from steadily increasing need for its services, there have also been intangible signs that the cramped Stephen Street operation is no place to be. The smell of death sometimes gags early-morning staff and guests. Despite efforts to seal the main building, rats somehow get into the walls. Some can’t get out.

By the time the St. Vincent de Paul board received the Queen’s report in 2017, they were convinced that the time had come to relocate. With its North End a catchment area, it was essential to find a property within walking distance of the current location on Stephen Street, near Cowdy Street. “Our forecasts suggested growth in demand for all of the Society’s services,” the consultants told the Board. “Particularly, [the] Meal Program demand may double in ten years to 300 patrons seeking a meal plate in a day. This is being driven by the shifting economies and gentrification.”

If only.

Actual demand skyrocketed in lockstep with the COVID pandemic. Vinnie’s served 17,832 meals in 2019. By 2021 demand had just about doubled to 35,338. This past May SVDP served 4,980 meals, the most in its forty-three-year history. That’s 237 every day, up from an average of 78 per day in 2019.

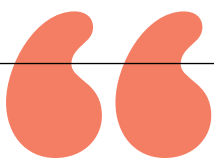
The Plague, of course, has affected everyone. But it’s been an ailment of inequality, disproportionately ravaging poor neighbourhoods. We’ve all tried to weather the storm, but some have big boats with food, housing and income while others struggle in leaky little vessels still being battered by the pandemic storm.

Just before COVID hit, the Sisters of Providence — instrumental in founding the agency — came up with a major donation to SVDP. Vinnie’s subsequently withdrew from the United Way because of that group’s restrictions on fundraising during its own campaign period. Vinnie’s went on to raise another million dollars.

“Some of the money came from a couple of big drops,” said SVDP Executive Director Judy Fyfe. “But we had a lot of ten-dollar donations. “For me, that’s a litmus test of where we are in the community.” Pasta Genova on Wellington Street has a big jar by the cash register. It always seems full of bills and coins for Vinnie’s.

“The intangible goodwill out there is huge,” added SVDP secretary-treasurer David McConomy. The accounting prof understands the value of that asset.

Another SVDP asset is the social glue it offers to the surrounding neighbourhood. People struggling with deprivation, negative parenting and early childhood experiences as well as mental health issues feel an acute need for social support and connection. People require help with healing and with recovering from addiction and mental health problems. Uncertainty about paying for food and shelter generates acute social anxiety, which is chronic among people living insecure lives, and struggling with poverty. Vinnie’s can’t cure chronic — and acute — social ills. But it does offer a place to gather. That helps.



**Are we a neighbourhood that is welcoming to all people, that provides space and support to marginalized people who lack power? Or is it just for middle class people and landlords?**

- SAYYIDA JAFFER



“Social isolation is very tough on everybody,” said Judy Fyfe. Her ten years at Vinnie’s, together with previous work for the Salvation Army, have given her an appreciation of just how profoundly poverty fractures lives. This all became that much more acute with the Plague.

A few months before The Plague began making it clear just how great was the need for a new facility, SVDP managed to purchase a big chunk of property from Loblaw’s. The supermarket colossus property once housed Bennett’s grocery store, later a No Frills. The long vacant land at Bagot and Charles streets, several hundred metres from the tumble-down facility on Stephen, seemed ideal.

An architect and planner were hired. It took time, but SVDP eventually had a design for a spacious new place. The virus slowed things down, but in 2021 the charity had received the go-ahead from Kingston’s Planning Committee and City Council.

Both votes were unanimous, a rarity in proposals for large-scale downtown developments. Think of the protracted and costly conflicts over the condo on the Capitol cinema site and Homestead’s controversial proposal to build two towers at Queen and King streets.



Judy Fyfe was aware that there is a thirty-day period in which people opposed to a Council planning decision could object by filing an appeal to the Ontario Land Tribunal (OLT). That provincial body had replaced the old Ontario Municipal Board and the Local Planning and Appeal Tribunal. Hours before the appeal period would have expired, Fyfe heard that a tax lawyer and a landlord were appealing the City decision to the OLT. What followed sheds light on the politics of gentrification and the local infrastructure of care.

At a July, 2021 Planning Committee meeting, Lindsey Foster had said that she and her husband have a “mom and pop shop” that offers “affordable” rentals. Their properties include units adjacent to the proposed SVDP building. Ms. Foster focused her presentation on the state of the neighborhood since the Plague began. “The living conditions for residents in the North Kings Town district are no longer reasonable for anyone,” she continued, citing incidents of “theft, vandalism, trespassing, public disturbances, threats, violence, hostile confrontations (that are) through the roof.”

“It is unsafe to walk the streets of this neighborhood at night alone,” said Foster. “The St Vincent de Paul plan to relocate at Bagot and Charles will exasperate [sic] an already fragile level of safety in this residential area that has been beaten down during the past year and a half.”

Ms. Foster warned that SVDP would need to turn away people with “severe and un-medicated mental health and drug addiction issues. They will lash out at anyone and anything nearby.” This would lead to “an exodus” of property owners and tenants. For this appellant, poor City planning was partly at fault. She also cited, quite legitimately, long delays in finalizing the North Kings Town secondary plan.

The planning process continued last March, with a meeting to decide on whether or not the Planning Committee would approve the SVDP plan. By this time, opponents had figured out that it would be politic to support Vinnie’s mission but remain highly critical of the Bagot & Charles plan. Committee chair Robert Kiley was quick to shut down those who spoke disparagingly of “these people” — meaning SVDP clients. The need for a four-way stop at Bagot and Charles received considerable scrutiny.

Bagot Street resident John Wright criticized the design as “suburban...a bungalow-like building.” And, he asked, how does using the land for SVDP services fit into Kingston’s gnawing housing crisis? (Although the struggling agency isn’t in the housing business, it says it is open to using other parts of its parcel of land for residential use.)

Mr. Wright also weighed in by criticizing the word “gentrifying.” He preferred “revitalizing.”

The implication? The neighbourhood has somehow always been in need of revitalization. Yet the Swamp Ward and Inner Harbour History Project has already explained that, after Europeans arrived, the industrial Inner Harbour area “was where workers and their families lived, went to school, went to church, shopped, and played.”

Sayyida Jaffer’s house shares the same block with the SVDP property. The controversy raises crucial questions for the long-time neighbourhood resident. “Are we a neighbourhood that is welcoming to all people, that provides space and support to marginalized people who lack power? Or is it just for middle class people and landlords?” Ms. Jaffer has been vocal in her support of having the SVDP move in right around the corner. “It’s a real-world choice,” she added. “We’ve got a chance to support people living on low incomes who are already living in our neighbourhood. We need to do more for people who are struggling, so welcoming Vinnie’s to our block is a small step. Let’s build connection and understanding.”

At the end of the Planning Committee meeting, suburban Councilor Wayne Hill set the tone for a political response that has been completely supportive of Vinnie’s. He spoke of being a SVDP neighbor for eighteen years as an administrator at nearby Regiopolis Notre Dame high school and a school board employee directly across Stephen Street from Vinnie’s. He said that traffic issues associated with SVDP were negligible. Moreover, Regi students had been volunteering at SVDP for years. “In all that time our kids really benefitted from the experience of having that facility in the community. Never, never once was there a problem reported to me.”

It remains unclear how the OLT will rule on the SVDP proposal. Perhaps the two sides can come to an agreement. Ms. Foster says that SVDP refuses to talk with the appellants. Ms. Fyfe disagrees.

The issues, however, seem clear enough.

“It makes me sad that while we are working so hard to keep pace with the needs of this neighbourhood, others are working hard to stop us,” said Ms. Fyfe.

She produced a wrinkled, yellow sticky note. Sister Pauline Lally used it as a note-to-self when she outlined to the SVDP Board the hefty financial commitment by the Sisters of Providence. Ms. Fyfe had kept for posterity that sticky note with its generous donation spelled out.

“I hold it,” she said, “because it reminds me not to give up hope.”



**JAMIE SWIFT** is the author, most recently, of *The Case for Basic Income: Freedom, Security, Justice* (written with Elaine Power). He worked for the Sisters of Providence for fifteen years doing social justice advocacy.

# The Nemo Hypothesis

STORY BY DANIELLE BOYD

ILLUSTRATION BY CHANTAL BENNETT

## “All drains lead to the ocean”

— FINDING NEMO

**“It’s not possible.” Jamie swore with all the seriousness of a twelve-year-old.**

“Of course it is,” Shaylah countered, waving her shiny new toy—an orange Nemo—in front of Jamie’s face, taunting him. “Everything’s connected. Especially through water.”

She stopped suddenly next to a drain in the street. Jamie followed her gaze down the hole. A low rumble of water rushed beneath them, likely from all the rain they’d had the night before.

“I’ll prove it.” She dangled her toy over the metal grate. “Nemo will end up in the river.”

Jamie sighed. “And how will we know that?”

“Good point.” She hugged the fish to her chest.

“It doesn’t matter anyway, let’s swim!”

Jamie sprinted down the hill. The swimming hole at the bottom of Cataraqui Street was perfect for the unseasonably hot September Saturday. After a week of rain, he’d been certain summer was really over. He’d stopped daydreaming of days in the park and canoe trips with dad. But today was a reminder of all that was good in the world.

Until he saw the caution tape.

“What’s this?” Shaylah flicked the yellow plastic.

“It’s wrong, is what it is.” Jamie ducked under the tape with authority. Shaylah was new to his class, but they’d become fast friends. They’d bonded at that first recess over their favourite movie (*The Incredibles*). Sometimes Shaylah could be such a Violet.

“Coming?” Jamie grinned from the other side of the caution tape.

“I don’t think we’re supposed to,” Shaylah hesitated. Her eyes darted around, but other than a dog walker, they were alone.

“I dare you.”

Shaylah straightened. All hesitation evaporated in the heat. She ducked under the caution tape and led the way to the riverbank. The water was murky brown, and a few candy bar wrappers had gathered where the waves lapped rhythmically against the limestone. The friends grinned at each other, ran full speed into the river, and spent the afternoon cooling off.

“Where’s Shaylah?” Jamie asked Ms. Ruth Monday morning. His friend’s seat was unexpectedly vacant.

“She’s sick today,” Ms. Ruth explained.

Jamie frowned. Shaylah didn’t get sick. She’d boasted about it when they’d watched *Finding Nemo* together. What was keeping her at home? Was this because of the caution tape? He hadn’t gotten sick. So it couldn’t have been his fault. Right? Jamie sank lower in his chair.

Shaylah didn’t come to school for three days. He called every day, and every day she didn’t answer. Jamie’s guilt gnawed deeper. Maybe he shouldn’t have dared her.

Finally, on a rainy Thursday, Jamie walked into the classroom and there was Shaylah. Her hair in its usual braided pigtails, and she was doodling. Jamie ran to take his place next to her.



“You missed so many days!” he said, sliding into his hard plastic chair. “What happened?”

Shaylah tapped her mechanical pencil against the pages of her notebook. “I don’t want to talk about it.”

Jamie frowned. Class hadn’t started yet. Why wouldn’t she talk to him? They always talked. In fact, last week Ms. Ruth had shushed them at least a hundred times. Especially during math.

Was Shaylah mad at him for getting her sick? He tried to search her face for a clue, but she was hunched over her notebook. Nervously, he spun a pencil around his hand. They may have been new friends, but bonding over movies ran deep. He wasn’t giving up.

“But Shay—”

“It was the water, ok?” she snapped. “It infected me and it was...” She visibly shuddered. “So gross.”

Jamie’s eyes widened. He imagined the grossest infection possible. Puss oozing from under the skin, nasty wounds red and purple and angry, the stench of rotten eggs. He made a face and leaned away from her.

“I’m not contagious.” Shaylah picked up her pencil and continued her doodle. It was a fish with stripes and flowing fins, just like Nemo. Her plastic replica was propped on the desk beside her. The white paint was fading to orange. “Ma said it was the E. coli in the water where we swam. That it had come from the storm and sewage drains. Anyway, I’m never swimming there again.”

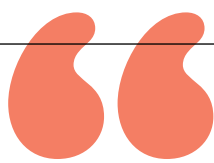
Jamie didn’t like that. Their swimming spot was the best. They had so much fun there. Where else were they supposed to cool off in the extreme fall heat? He refused to think of the splash pad across from his house; his sister hung out there, and he couldn’t be seen hanging out with her. He tapped his pencil. He’d convince Shaylah. He knew he would.

Shaylah held her orange Nemo tightly to her chest. A soft light pulsed inside. Jamie grinned. He was pretty proud of the GPS fish they’d fashioned out of Shaylah’s toy and his dog’s tracker. With his phone, they’d be able to follow the fish on its path under the city.

“Time to let Nemo settle this once and for all.” Jamie said, arms folded across his chest. “If I win, swimming tomorrow.”

Shaylah shuddered but nodded. “And if I win, I get your Halloween candy.”

Jamie didn’t like the idea of that, but they’d already shook on it, so there was no going back now.



**SHAYLAH HELD HER ORANGE NEMO TIGHTLY TO HER CHEST. A SOFT LIGHT PULSED INSIDE. JAMIE GRINNED. HE WAS PRETTY PROUD OF THE GPS FISH THEY'D FASHIONED OUT OF SHAYLAH'S TOY AND HIS DOG'S TRACKER. WITH HIS PHONE, THEY'D BE ABLE TO FOLLOW THE FISH ON ITS PATH UNDER THE CITY.**

Murky water bubbled up through the manhole cover, smelling of decay and outhouse. Jamie gagged, plugging his nose. They stood in the pouring rain, soaked to the bone, staring at the steel. His mind was drowning with images of clowns, oversized rats, and other monsters that lived below their feet. Didn't most horror movies start this way?

Shaylah was grinning. "It's like I've already won."

"Have not," Jamie shook his head. "Just because it smells, doesn't mean it goes to the river."

"It smells exactly like the swimming hole the day I got sick." She crossed her arms over her yellow raincoat, looking much too smug for Jamie's liking.

"The river is over a kilometer away. Nope." He caught Shaylah biting her lip. "Unless, you're admitting defeat because you don't want to part with Nemo?"

He gestured to her tight grip on the toy. She practically stamped her foot in protest.

"Let's do this!"

Shaylah pocketed Nemo and they did their best to shift the manhole cover. Jamie used everything his scrawny five-foot frame had to offer.

The cover shifted maybe an inch.

"This isn't going to work," Jamie groaned. The rain was cold and his teeth were chattering loudly.

"We just need to move it another couple inches," Shaylah said, somehow still cheerful. "Come on, on the count of three. One... two... three!"

With loud grunts they opened a sliver of space between the cover and the hole beneath. Water bubbled out and over into the street. Jamie stumbled back a step, wrinkling his nose.

"One more time!" Shaylah called over the rain.

With a final gasp, they shifted the cover another precious inch. More water rushed out, bringing a slew of rubbish with it — coke cans, chip bags, fast food wrappers, even a dog collar. Some junk got trapped in the small gap. Jamie and Shaylah fished it all out, stuffing the trash in their pockets to throw away later.

"Are you ready?" Shaylah held up their Nemo.

"I was born ready." Jamie grinned. This win was his.

Shaylah forced Nemo into the manhole and the two used all their strength to move the cover back in place. Then they raced up the steps to Jamie's house, stripped off their wet coats, and opened the app on Jamie's phone.

But the red dot didn't move.

Jamie woke on the living room couch to his phone beeping. The Saturday morning sun shone in the window. When he saw his phone screen, he fell off the couch and landed on Shaylah.

"Ow!" She pushed him off.

"Nemo's on the move!" Jamie cried, running for the door.

The rain from the night before steamed in the morning warmth. The fall sun hid behind the morning fog. Water still pooled in the low areas of the road, turning fallen leaves into brown mush. Despite the sun, a bitter breeze funneled down the street. Shaylah and Jamie had wrapped themselves in jackets to keep warm.

They followed the blinking red dot on Jamie's phone screen, heads bowed over the device.

"I can't believe it's working," Shaylah whispered. Her steps stuttered. "Did it stop moving?"

Mirroring the tracker, Jamie and Shaylah paused, looking up.

"Oh no," Jamie frowned, taking in the sign for Catarauqui Street. "I guess I owe you my Halloween candy."

"Told you so," Shaylah sighed. There was no triumph in her voice.

When they made it to the swimming hole the smell of sewer was overwhelming. A thick layer of garbage had gathered along the river bank and they had to rely on the tracker to find Nemo.

It was a bittersweet victory. Shaylah never did take Jamie's Halloween Kit Kats. Instead, they biked around the neighborhood with canisters of spray paint. With the help of their friends, they tagged each and every manhole, sewer grate, and splashpad drain with an orange fish and four simple words: *The River Starts Here*.

## While Shaylah and Jamie live in a fictional version of Inner Harbour, there are some truths to their story:

- There's an average of eight sewer overflows a year — Utilities Kingston
- The last overflow was recorded on March 6, 2022 — Utilities Kingston
- Every year, at least eleven million tons of plastic enter our seas — [cleanseas.org](https://www.cleanseas.org)
- Eighty percent of sea pollution comes from rivers — [cleanseas.org](https://www.cleanseas.org)



**DANIELLE BOYD** is a born Kingstonian new to the Skeleton Park neighbourhood. A marketer by day and creative writer by night, she enjoys telling hopeful stories about strong-willed characters with big hearts and bigger dreams.

# Radio Drama as the World Burns

STORY BY CLARKE MACKEY

Jackson Watt-Bowers (Oliver), Clarke Mackey (director), and Stephanie Fung (Leah). PHOTO CREDIT: Matthew Ing.



**Four babies are born in 2001, the same year that two planes crash into the World Trade Centre in New York and change the world. In 2018, the four are teenagers attending Grade 12 at Kingston Collegiate & Vocational Institute. Inspired by a fifteen-year-old girl in Sweden, Greta Thunberg, they start organizing climate strikes and marches. In the years that follow, these four individuals struggle to survive the climate apocalypse. By 2038, things reach a serious impasse. Our characters are forced to make hard choices.**

This is the premise of a six-part radio drama, *The Makers and Shakers Society*, broadcast on CFRC 101.9 and podcast this fall. Creating this project raised fascinating questions about media and politics in 2022.

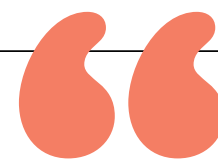
Bengali novelist Amitav Ghosh, in *The Great Derangement: Climate Change and the Unthinkable*, makes the observation that climate change, despite being the great existential crisis of our time, is conspicuously absent from most contemporary fictional works — movies, television, and novels. There is a small literary sub-genre, cli-fi (climate fiction), but otherwise climate change is a theme only in occasional documentaries. The larger field of apocalyptic and post-apocalyptic fiction, such as *Mad*

*Max*, nearly always avoids addressing climate change directly, instead attributing the fall of civilization to comets, pandemics, aliens, or zombies.

As a filmmaker, I considered how one could tackle the difficult questions about climate change in a fictional work. The idea of creating a cinematic simulation of the climate apocalypse was out of the question. Turning climate breakdown into a spectacle for audience enjoyment seemed counter-productive. And making movies in the Anthropocene is never innocent. No media is carbon-neutral. Cinema, in particular, is highly carbon-intensive — in the production phase, of course, but also during consumption. Despite what streaming services such as Netflix might say, emissions from everyday video streaming are substantial and that's unlikely to change soon.

Originally, I considered a solo theatre piece in which a storyteller travels back from the 2070s to speak to those living in the present. He tells stories about the unraveling of the world as politicians and populations refused to acknowledge or address the crisis. Some remnants of this idea remain in the final work, but in the end I took the project in a different direction.

In the late 1960s and early 1970s, while learning to be a film editor, I spent weeks in windowless rooms editing and mixing soundtracks for television and movies. I studied the art of Foley — synchronizing sound effects such as footsteps and movement directly to the actions on the screen. It was fascinating. My passion for sound never subsided. In retrospect, I probably spent too much time on sound with my production students at Queen's University. Later, when the podcasts *This American Life* and *Radio Lab* appeared on NPR, I was captivated.



**Climate change, despite being the great existential crisis of our time, is conspicuously absent from most contemporary fictional works - movies, television, and novels.**



With the emergence of podcast culture, it was inevitable that people would resurrect the lost art of radio drama. In the last decade there have been dozens of genre-bending experiments, most notably *Homecoming* — so successful it was turned into a television series. Evoking the future entirely through sound seemed to me the ideal approach for *The Makers and Shakers Society*.

Episode one starts with an aging narrator, called The Professor, who returns from the future to tell stories to present-day listeners. There's a sub-plot in which a climate-friendly government gets elected in Canada and struggles to survive amid a powerful backlash. More than thirty actors bring these stories to life.

Finding a cast of mostly young voice actors in Kingston during a pandemic turned out to be difficult. We were committed to building a company that included many BIPOC and LGBTQ+ performers. That meant reaching out beyond the normal casting call. Many people helped with this, notably Lib Spry, a veteran theatre maker who lives in the Skeleton Park neighbourhood. There were countless Zoom auditions during the fall. Once the cast was set, we spent a weekend doing a read-through. Then, just when everything was in place, there was another COVID lockdown, which forced us to postpone recording for two months.

Finally, in March, we entered the sound studio in the Department of Film and Media at Queen's to begin work. Despite the tough subject matter, and with COVID protocols still in place, many of the actors remarked on how much fun it was doing theatre again after such a long hiatus. We want audiences to be engaged and entertained by the storytelling and production values, but we also hope that *The Makers and Shakers Society* will provide listeners with some fresh ways to think about the crisis we all face.

*The Makers and Shakers Society* is now playing on CFRC radio Thursday nights at 7:00 pm. Episodes are also available through most podcast apps and on the show's website. For more information, check out: [makersandshakers.ca](http://makersandshakers.ca)



**CLARKE MACKEY** released his first feature film in 1971. In the decades following, he produced many films and television shows. Clarke is also an Emeritus Professor in the Department of Film and Media at Queen's University. He wrote and directed *The Makers and Shakers Society*.

# Calliope on Fire

STORY BY MEREDITH DAULT

The Bosch Parade in the Netherlands PHOTO CREDIT: Ben Nienhuis



In 2016, Tricia Knowles and Josh Lyon met on a downtown patio to discuss collaborating on a creative project. Knowles had recently seen a video of a remote-controlled skeleton mermaid floating down a river in The Netherlands as part of the Bosch Parade — begun in 2016, inspired by the Dutch artist Hieronymus Bosch, and held every two years on the Dommel River — and she was buzzing with ideas for making something similar happen here. “I was like, dude, we have to do something like this in Kingston,” she recalls with a laugh. Coincidentally, Lyon had seen a similar video from the floating parade and had been just as sparked by the surreal spectacle.

The Calliope Collective, founded soon after, drew on the talents of artists in the community with a goal of bringing larger-than-life artistic projects to Kingston. When Knowles, Calliope’s Artistic Director, joked about marking winter solstice by using giant puppets to tell the pagan legend of the Holly and Oak Kings battling for supremacy at the change of the season, “Everyone looked at me at the same time and said ‘OK.’”

While those solstice events quickly became popular in the community, Knowles didn’t want to lose sight of the group’s inspiration — the magic of that floating Bosch parade. “We didn’t want to do the same thing each year,” she adds. “We wanted to bring fresh, exciting spectacle to the community every year.”

The pandemic shifted Calliope’s focus, forcing the group to turn inwards to use the time to concentrate on smaller projects and to conduct research. The solstice performances had enabled the group to begin their exploration of our relationships to the land and the changing seasons. Turning their emphasis back to the water, they began experiments for a floating parade, *Hydra* — a series of installations and other interdisciplinary water-inspired projects. One such was *Community: Afloat*, which saw members of the collective work with the community and in schools on a project inspired by the question “What is your connection to water?” and turn the responses into canvas flags mounted on a float.

In May 2022, building on what they had learned, Calliope staged *Water on Fire* at Molly Brant Point in Doug Fluhrer Park. The thirty-minute performance, which had fire spinners and dancers from NorthFIRE Circus perform on a barge in the Cataraqui River, served as another opportunity for the Calliope team to experiment. Knowles, for example, had to figure out everything, from where to rent a barge to ensuring the performers could access it safely.

All the while, Knowles was in conversation with the organizers of the Bosch parade, whom she first contacted in 2020 with questions about how they staged their event. “They were really mentoring us through best practices, for not only how to display art on water, and different ways to make it float, but also for figuring out propulsion,” she explains. Finally, the Dutch team invited the Calliope team to

travel to the medieval city of ‘s-Hertogenbosch, also known as Den Bosch, to learn by doing. “They said come and be part of the parade and learn first-hand, instead of us talking at you,” she says.

Knowles and Lyon made the trip in June 2022 to participate in a mentorship-style residency. Immersing themselves in the magic of the Bosch parade, Knowles worked for a month with the business manager, artistic director, the production management team, and some of the artists. Lyon spent ten days working with the production crew, learning how to build elaborate floats on-site and navigate them down the city’s canals, and about the challenges of creating art on water, such as dealing with wind. At one point, both Knowles and Lyon even had the opportunity to perform aboard one of the floats.

“It was cool to see a lot of things we had started doing were similar to what they were doing,” Knowles says, noting the Bosch parade sees artists building their floats around an annual theme — “temptation” in 2022. “It was amazing,” she adds. “There were so many weird and wonderful creations.”

Back in Kingston, Knowles and Lyon have set their sights on Calliope’s next project, a re-staging of *Hydra* or *Fire on Water* in 2023 or 2024, informed by everything they have learned — from what works well to what issues can derail a water parade. “You have to take so many factors into account that I don’t know we would have considered before we went,” she says. “There is no way we could have learned as much we did in the couple of weeks of tech runs.”

Also changed is Knowles’ consideration of how to build a narrative for an audience, focusing less on outcome and more on process. “I want the artwork to tell the story instead of telling a story and having artists create pieces for it,” she explains, “and those pieces need to dictate what the final story will be. For me, it has changed how I view putting an event together.”

For Knowles, participating in the Bosch parade was also a dream come true after years of being inspired by its spectacle at a distance. “I watched every single run of the parade,” she says happily. “And every time I saw it, I was moved.”



**MEREDITH DAULT** is a writer, dancer, and stilt walker. Her new puppy, Frida, has quickly adjusted to stopping frequently while on walks because of her owner’s tendency to chat with people.

# Two Speeds, Side by Side

STORY BY SADIQA DE MEIJER

PHOTOS BY LARS HAGBERG



## The Local Cosmos

There are endless ways to map a neighbourhood. We could draw maps of ours with particular attention to geology, weather, buildings and other structures, absences, economies, languages, residents and their interactions, animal life, hydro-pole posters, or corner stores, to name some possibilities.

One map that I have pictured in my mind lately makes a two-fold distinction: there is paved and unpaved ground. I am curious as to what we do with the unpaved ground — or, more broadly, with any small surfaces of earth, even when they rest on pavement, a balcony, or indoors. This new *Skeleton Press* column exists on the assumption that you, dear reader, might wonder too. For each edition, I will profile a local garden, and particularly those that can give us a deeper sense of ourselves as a neighbourhood. I am very pleased to start with the lovingly tended container garden at 184 Montreal Street. And if you have suggestions on where I should rummage next, please let *The Skeleton Press* know.



**Like many gardens, the one in front of 184 Montreal Street did not start with the first markers of its outdoor presence. Earlier, there were seeds huddled on a shelf under grow lamps in the upstairs apartment, where Beijia (Theresa) Ge lives with her husband and their two young children. The family moved there in February, looking for a brighter space with outdoor use after living in a Victoria Street basement.**

As the seedlings grew, they were separated, and the strongest ones transplanted into individual containers; then came the choreography of young plants appearing on the concrete steps in the mornings for exposure to the weather and being brought inside during the still-cold nights. This stage proved treacherous as the gravel yard was so bright — with sunlight both pouring down directly and casting off the white siding — that one full day in the heat killed some of the plants. The backyard, on the other hand, had been too shaded for them. A new round of seeds was started upstairs.

This garden is housed in containers of portable planter bags made of felt. Most are white and low to the ground, while two taller black ones hold long raspberry canes. The strawberry plants have been protected with roofs of netting, held up by stakes with empty, inverted water bottles on top. These two plants are important because Theresa makes gorgeous cheesecakes and uses the berries as decoration.

The soil in other containers is strewn with broken eggshells, which keeps away snails and slugs. There are chives, cilantro, and tomato plants. There is a tiny plant growing in a child's toy bucket, covered in netting. A small sprig of rosemary that was bought at the grocery store has taken root in a plastic planter among a long row of green onions.

Theresa remembers the garden her grandparents kept, but that was in a different climate on the southern coast of China, where winter temperatures might only drop to 10°C. The family had to move to another part of the country when that area was flooded for a dam project.

To begin her current garden, Theresa gathered advice from various places: phone calls with her mother and grandmother, a give and take of knowledge and resources on a local gardening-themed wechat group — and then there is the greenly-gifted friend who also helps out as a nanny. Lily's contributions include homemade fertilizers containing food scraps, sugar, and yeast, with particular constituents such as shrimp or eggshells chosen to encourage root, leaf, or fruit growth. She has brought over transplants from her own garden, as well as taken some white strawberries that Theresa purchased, removing and drying their seeds, and growing new seedlings. She gave Theresa two goji berry plants; in China their fruit and leaves are said to promote a long life. Appropriately, there is a planter that contains lily-of-the-valley, as well as forget-me-nots.

Theresa's impetus to begin this project was her children; she wanted them to appreciate eating fruits and vegetables by watching the growing process from start to end and taking part in the harvesting. This spring, her three-year-old has particularly liked to spend time with his father looking for worms under the containers. But a surprising and pleasing element for Theresa has been the number of strangers who stop to ask about the garden. The answers might differ every few days; this is an evolving and makeshift little world created where there were only stones. Its presence, adjacent to what is often a busy road, means that every day, two speeds live side by side: one hurried and mechanical and insular, the other slow and cyclical and in steady relation to everything else.



**SADIQA DE MEIJER** is a neighbourhood writer with cardamom sprouts on her window sill.





# Playgrounds of the Neighbourhood

The parks and playgrounds of Skeleton Park and beyond, as reviewed by a local expert

STORY BY **STELLA SHERIFF**

**I feel lucky to live in a neighbourhood where I can walk or bike to many different playgrounds, and each one is unique. These are some of my favourites!**

## **Skeleton Park**

I have spent a lot of my childhood in Skeleton Park and have always loved it. Skeleton Park is in the heart of our neighbourhood, has many beautiful old trees, and there is always a breeze to cool you down in the summer.

### **Things I like:**

- It is close to my home.
- After school there are always lots of kids of all ages at the playground.
- I like the spiderweb; it is super fun to play and climb in. I especially like sitting at the top.
- The trees bring a lot of shade and lots of wildlife, like the merlin falcons.
- There are always people you know coming and going.
- It is also home to SPAF! and the Halloween parade.

### **Things I don't like:**

- The new playground equipment, because they have taken away all the fun stuff like monkey bars and the fire pole.
- It's hard to play grounders on the new equipment because it is so much smaller.
- My friend and I were on the new teeter totter last fall and it fell over!
- The construction for the new splash pad is taking FOREVER!!!

## **Friendship Park**

I used to go to Friendship Park every day during COVID, but I don't go there as much these days. It is a small park tucked away on Carlisle Street and it has a great play structure.

### **Things I like:**

- The play structure! I like that it has many different levels and the sign language board is really fun to decode.
- The swing set is perfect for swinging and climbing.
- It has a small paved loop that is really fun to bike, scooter or skateboard around.

### **Things I don't like:**

- It is quite small.
- There aren't as many people there as in Skeleton Park.

## **Memorial Centre**

The Memorial Centre playground is a really awesome playground with a lot of unique designs. I like stopping there when we go to the Sunday market.

### **Things I like:**

- I love the spinning spider web. I love climbing the outside of it when it is spinning and also trying to stand up in the middle of it without falling over.
- The big round swings are really fun. You can fit lots of kids on them at once.
- This playground has things that are fun for kids of all ages.
- You can cool off in the splash pad in the summer.

### **Things I don't like:**

- There is not a lot of shade over the playground.
- I wish there was a sand pit.

I love living in this neighbourhood and our parks and playgrounds are a very important part of it!



My name is **STELLA SHERIFF**, I am 11 years old and have lived in the Skeleton Park neighbourhood with my parents and sister all my life.

# In memory of Barbara-ba Sarah Hooper

A Mentor, an Advocate, an Elder

BY JENNIFER KEHOE



Photo courtesy of Alec Barken.

## How does one even begin to describe the magnitude of who and what Barbara-ba Sarah Hooper was to this Katarokwi (Kingston) community?

For those of you who are wondering why there is an extra “ba” in her name, I am following my teachings as an Algonquin woman. For 365 days after her passing, if I speak or type her name, I add the “ba” so that as she continues her travels to the Spirit World her journey will remain uninterrupted, and she will not be called back.

When I was initially asked to write this article, my first thought was to reach out to Barbara-ba’s son and ask him if he would like to do this in honour of his mum. His response was just as if Barbara-ba was speaking to me through him: “I would love to see you write this article.” Being ever observant of her Anglican upbringing, she carried the gift of agape love — the Christian teaching of loving and lifting up those around her when they needed it. She embodied this, and was a woman so full of humility, compassion, love, and peace.

She could be easily described by the many accolades she received while she lived here in Kingston: She was one of the founding members of the Katarokwi Grandmothers Council, an Elder in Residence for Queen’s University, a recipient of Queen Elizabeth’s Diamond Jubilee medal and the President of the Residents’ Council at the Helen Henderson long-term care home. Rather, I would like to share who she was as a person.

## Barbara-ba was the heartbeat of this community.

Her ability to communicate through words was significantly impacted after suffering a stroke. Remarkably though, she was able to speak to a Circle gathering without uttering a single word, a gift that everyone blessed to be in her presence got to not only witness but feel. She lived her life in the way everyone should, grounded and rooted in respect for all her relations: the two-legged, the four-legged, the crawlers, the swimmers, the winged, and everything that grows on Mother Earth.

She wore so many hats that to acknowledge them all would take a book, not an article. She was a Christian woman of Cree, European, and African ancestry; a musician and singer; a daughter, wife, protective mother, loving grandmother, big sister, auntie, mentor, friend, and Elder; a community member and a vocal advocate for Indigenous rights.

A truly trailblazing, inspiring woman, she touched the lives of so many, whether she was guiding Indigenous students who were attending Queen’s University to see themselves in the light she saw them in, or sitting with federal inmates lost in the system and helping them see their worth. Her amazing grace made these meaningful relationships develop so organically that she wasn’t just another visitor to these institutions, but rather someone who could always be relied on for encouraging words, stern reminders of responsibilities, or celebrations of milestones without any form of judgement. That is what it means to be an Elder, though she refused to hold that title. That is who she was to me and those around her. She preferred Grandmother/Kokum.

She was a gifted storyteller who would quite often take her Facebook friends on a journey with her. Even in her later years, living in long-term care and using a wheelchair, with limited ability to verbally communicate, she could type. In the words she would string together one could feel the gratitude she had for all her blessings. She would often reflect on the beauty that surrounded her.

Barbara-ba was committed to ensuring that all people live in harmony with themselves and each other. Pre-COVID she invited people into her home to create space for her Indigenous community and family to come and share teachings, culture, dance and food with her fellow residents and caregivers at Helen Henderson. She would host seasonal gatherings to offer teachings to further educate those around her about the importance of maintaining balance, inner peace, and our collective connection to Mother Earth. The gatherings were so full of intentional acts of love and kindness that they provided healing to those open to receiving them.

I write this article in the midst of strawberry season, therefore I feel it appropriate to share the significance of the strawberry. When cut in half the strawberry is the shape of a heart, and the seeds on the outside represent the community. Barbara-ba was the heartbeat of this community through her wisdom and her never-failing devotion to ensuring that anyone she interacted with left her better than when they arrived. Her desire to have unity and peace was evident in everything she engaged in. Her presence in the physical realm will be greatly missed.

*Elder Barbara-ba Hooper completed her Earth Walk on June 6th, 2022.*

*May she fly high on the wings of eternity.*

*October 30th, 1943 – June 6th, 2022*

*Niw\_Hk\_M\_Kanak (all my relations in Cree)*

**JENNIFER KEHOE** is an Indigenous community member who attempts to foster and develop meaningful relationships between the Indigenous and non-Indigenous communities to bring us all to a better understanding of each other. She does an incredible amount of heart work to address the issue of food insecurity for our most vulnerable and marginalized populations.



Rohullah with his wife and son, Emi and Salman.

# In memory of Rohullah Fayizi

BY KAMRYN MARSH, MIKE HIPSON  
and LOUISE SLOBODIAN

“He would tell us that what he needed when he arrived was someone like him - someone who came alone to this country and had to figure it all out.”

**Vibrant and beloved twenty-five-year-old youth leader Rohullah Fayizi died on June 9, 2022, through the Medical Assistance in Dying (MAID) program. It was a shock to many who knew him, as he was private about this process. He left a powerful legacy locally and internationally. Rohullah is survived by his immediate family in Turkey and his wife and son, Emi and Salman, in Indonesia.**

Rohullah was born with hemophilia and did not receive proper treatment during his upbringing in Afghanistan, which caused lifelong complications, including excruciating daily pain and uncontrollable bleeding. While he received significant medical support in Canada, irreversible damage had already been done. This past winter he was granted the option to access MAID because of his debilitating pain.

Rohullah's passing is a loss for the immigrant- and refugee-serving agencies KEYS and ISKA, and for the community at large. Rohullah came to Canada alone as a government-sponsored refugee four years ago. KEYS now welcomes 220 government-assisted refugees annually, and Rohullah was one of the first to arrive by himself, without family, and was articulate about this experience.

At KEYS, Rohullah co-founded the New Horizons youth group — a weekly social event that helps isolated refugee and immigrant youth feel at home in Kingston.

Rohullah told us about how “back home” young people would get together to hang out, do homework, eat snacks, and have fun. In advocating for this group, he would tell us that what he needed when he arrived was someone like him — someone who came alone to this country and had to figure it all out. He would say that he needed someone who could help with school, healthcare, finding a job, learning about the culture, and making friends. He would say that he did not have this person, but that he could be that person for others. His vision has guided New Horizons since its founding in 2019.

During the pandemic, Rohullah suggested we visit youth to deliver care packages and mental health resources and to check in and see how they were doing. “If we send them messages, they won't answer. But they can't ignore us if we knock on their door,” he would joke. Rohullah's visits meant a lot for many of the youth who were so isolated at this time.

Rohullah eagerly welcomed newcomers. He would ask about their story, find their common experiences, and ask about what they wanted from their new life in Kingston. He would proudly share pictures of his wife and son. He was a natural helper and he helped many newcomer youth navigate the healthcare system, acquire high-school credits, register for college, find employment and housing, and self-advocate in the immigration system. Rohullah set an example for success. He completed the first year of the Social Services Worker Program at St. Lawrence College and secured employment at KEYS in various jobs, landing in the part-time role of Refugee Resettlement Case Manager at KEYS in 2021.

Rohullah was deeply sensitive, compassionate, and caring, but he could also hurt people. He was open and inviting, but also incredibly private. He often hid his anger, pain, shame, trauma, and mistakes. Rohullah was brilliant and intelligent, but he also made choices that would make you say, “What were you thinking?” Regardless, he was easy to love.

Rohullah hid his daily pain and struggle with hemophilia, so his death was a shock. He wanted to keep things light and fun. In retrospect, we think he must not have wanted people to know how much he was suffering. It was only after his death, in piecing together actions and reactions, that his friends started to understand how deep and constant his pain must have been. For instance, we now know that he bought a car and a Segway scooter to reduce his time on his feet. He scooted into meetings with so much style that we never guessed the underlying reason for it.

Rohullah had another deep source of sorrow beyond his physical pain. Throughout his time in Kingston, Rohullah tried to bring his wife and son here. The Canadian government repeatedly denied Rohullah's family reunification applications. Rohullah was open about the devastating consequences of this process. He would tell us, “Canada is so concerned with the mental health of immigrants.

But you should tell the government. We don't need counselling or medication. We need our families. If you want to do something about newcomer mental health, let us bring our families here.”

Rohullah's family was never able to join him in Canada. When Rohullah arrived in Canada in an extreme health crisis, customs agents asked Rohullah if he had any dependents. He was a beginner in English (his fourth and worst language) at the time, but was not provided with an interpreter; he answered no. As a result, for four years, no matter what he did, no matter how hard he tried to explain, this technicality meant he was denied the right to bring his wife and son here. This was cruel and unusual punishment for Rohullah. One misunderstanding cost him everything.

We are still learning about Rohullah's legacy. He had many friends and touched many lives, and we will be learning of his acts of heroism for years to come. He left us with New Horizons, which will continue to touch the lives of youth who haven't even arrived yet.

As his colleague Zainab put it, “Rohullah created this family for us so that we were not so alone. Now that he is gone, we have this circle, this family to mourn his passing. It is really full-circle.” As Madeleine, Rohullah's manager from KEYS, reminds us, “may his memory be a blessing.”

If you would like to volunteer with refugees in our community, or donate to Rohullah's wife and son who reside in Indonesia, or other refugees facing barriers in Kingston, or to The Islamic Society of Kingston (ISK), who donated land and paid the costs for Rohullah's burial, please contact [insight@keys.ca](mailto:insight@keys.ca) for more information.

**KAMRYN MARSH** (they/them) has worked at KEYS with Mike Hipson as a Coordinator of Youth Mentoring Programs for more than six years. In their free time, Kamryn enjoys swimming, yoga, singing, and multi-day hikes.

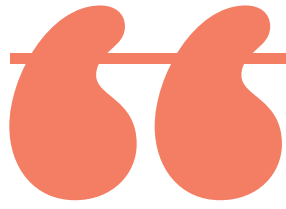
**MIKE HIPSON** (he/him) is the other Youth Mentorship Coordinator at KEYS, and spends his free time with his family, following birds, crocheting, and trying to find balance in uncertainty.

**LOUISE SLOBODIAN** (she/her) is a Refugee Resettlement Case Manager at KEYS and acted as Rohullah's next of kin. Louise finds joy in reading, swimming, and making very bad puns.



# Municipal Election Toolkit

STORY BY JUST RECOVERY KINGSTON



WE HAVE CREATED A TOOLKIT FOR YOU, THE LOCAL PERSON, WHO MIGHT BE WONDERING HOW A LOCAL ELECTION COULD MATTER.

**On October 24, people in Kingston will vote for City Council and for Mayor — or at least some people will. In Canada, municipal elections have the lowest participation of any elections. This is unfortunate because residents have far more power to enact change locally than at provincial or federal levels, where elections are often heavily influenced by corporate media and well-funded lobbyists. At the local level, fewer people can make a big difference. We can put forward our vision for the city we need, we can talk to other people to build support for our ideas, and we can win.**

Just Recovery Kingston began in 2020 during the first summer of the COVID-19 pandemic. We are a group of local citizens committed to making Kingston a place where we take care of the land, air, water, and each other. We want the city's recovery from the COVID-19 pandemic to be one that doesn't return us to the status quo, but one that continues to make Kingston a better place to live. Over the past two years, we have worked to expand funding and support for community gardens, to improve local public transit, to encourage a more diverse group of candidates for City Council, and to increase input from local people in the city budget.

This year, we have created a toolkit for you, the local person, who might be wondering how a local election could matter. The toolkit includes information on why local elections are important, policies Kingston should adopt for a just recovery, and questions you can ask those running for City Council. We want you to read these questions and policies, talk about them, share them, and most importantly, ask all who want your vote what they think about them.

Below is a condensed version of the toolkit. For more information on each of the actions mentioned, you can download the full version at [tinyurl.com/JRKtoolkit](https://tinyurl.com/JRKtoolkit), or contact [justrecoverykingston@gmail.com](mailto:justrecoverykingston@gmail.com).

## VOTING IN KINGSTON

The first step to voting in Kingston is registering to vote! Before September 1, you can do this at [voterlookup.ca/home.aspx](https://voterlookup.ca/home.aspx). After September 1, you can register at <https://www.cityofkingston.ca/city-hall/elections>. Make sure you know who is running in your district before you go to the polls. A full list and contact information is available at [cityofkingston.ca/city-hall/elections/candidates/list](https://cityofkingston.ca/city-hall/elections/candidates/list). Not sure what district you're in? Visit [cityofkingston.ca/city-hall/city-council/district-map](https://cityofkingston.ca/city-hall/city-council/district-map) to find out.

Most candidates will have information on their platforms available online or published through local media outlets. This is a good first step in learning about their various platform points and positions. However, some candidates may leave out information on important topics related to a just recovery, such as climate change, housing, public transit, and food security. Even for those that do mention these issues, it is often helpful to learn more about a candidate's position and how it aligns with your own. The best way to do this is to contact them directly! This allows you to dig a bit deeper and find out how the candidate truly feels about each topic. Included in the toolkit is a list of questions you can consider asking each candidate to get conversations started on a Just Recovery.

## CLIMATE CHANGE

In Canada, approximately fifty percent of carbon emissions come from our municipalities. In addition, many of the early dangers of climate change, such as flooding, extreme heat, and harsh freeze-thaw cycles, will impact us first at the municipal level. The City of Kingston has declared a climate emergency and begun some climate initiatives. The councillors we elect now will be critical in ensuring that these initiatives, and others, continue.

Examples of actions the City of Kingston should take include funding bike infrastructure, such as better bike lanes, safe lock-up sites, and a bike-share program; developing a municipally-owned green energy facility; expanding home retrofitting for energy efficiency; investing in urban forests and biodiversity; and ensuring that all future climate policies are rooted in a science-based approach.

**When talking to council candidates, consider asking the following questions:**

- What climate considerations would you take into account when deciding which development projects to move forward?
- How do you think our neighbourhood could become a safer and better place for low-carbon transportation?
- How can Council make it easier for me to retrofit my home, whether I rent or own?
- What do you know about Kingston's Climate Leadership Plan? How will you ensure that it is implemented in line with scientific recommendations (such as the IPCC report) — and actually helps us face the climate crisis?
- What does a climate-resilient city look like to you? How can we ensure that as our city grows what we build is climate-resilient and conserves nature?

## HOUSING

Rent-geared-to-income (RGI) housing is municipally managed in Kingston, and there is a long waitlist that does not appear to be getting any shorter. We have also seen an increase in "renovictions" — the practice by landlords of using the pretext of needed renovations to evict tenants from their units and subsequently raise rents. This further reduces affordable housing options. Both RGI and renovictions can be addressed through municipal action.

Housing actions that the City of Kingston should take include better support for those who are unhoused, including more single-resident occupancy units; better supports for affordable housing, such as through the identification of potential sites for units; a building acquisition program to help non-profit housing providers purchase existing buildings; developing an eviction database to track these types of evictions in Kingston; and developing a rental licensing and registration program.

**When talking to potential candidates, consider asking the following questions:**

- What do you think the City can do to support people who are unhoused while they are waiting for affordable and appropriate housing?
- What locations in your district do you think could be a potential site for mixed-income affordable housing?
- How could Kingston increase the percent of development charges that are allocated for affordable housing?
- What do you think the city can do to ensure that rental homes are safe and clean?
- Given that we have a housing shortage, do you think a rental registry and licensing system would help ensure we don't lose units because of neglect?

**TRANSIT**

Public transit is municipally owned. A reliable public transit system is one that reduces greenhouse gas emissions from private vehicles, reduces road congestion, and makes the city more accessible to all. To improve public transit in Kingston, the City should consider a community hiring program, fare-free transit, and a pilot bus service to Little Cataraqui Creek.

**When talking to potential candidates, consider asking the following questions:**

- Why do you think personal transport such as automobiles and taxis are preferred over public transit?
- What do you think about the choice between electric cars and public transit?
- What do you think of the transit subsidies being provided to sectors of the city population such as students, low-income residents, and seniors?
- How do you think transit costs should be covered?
- Do you think the operation of our public transit should be transferred to the private sector; what place do you see for the private sector in our public transit?
- What plan do you have to reduce car traffic, whether electric or not?
- Will you advocate for free transit as a measure to address the Climate Emergency?

**FOOD SECURITY**

Food security is about more than just food availability and supply; it is about economic and physical access to food. This means that municipal policies governing housing affordability are closely tied to food security. The relatively small municipal scale is ideal

for supporting citizens seeking more control over their food systems. By connecting issues such as land use, climate, housing, income, and transportation, municipalities can support policies that push beyond piecemeal food charity responses to address the underlying inequities and barriers to food access.

Examples of actions the City of Kingston could take to improve food security include developing a food security strategy; building community gardens, especially those tied to public housing initiatives; and supporting a basic income guarantee.

**When talking to potential candidates, consider asking the following questions:**

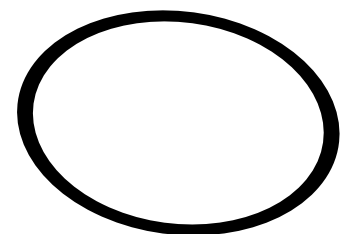
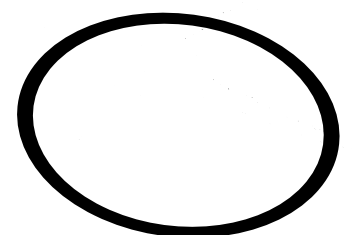
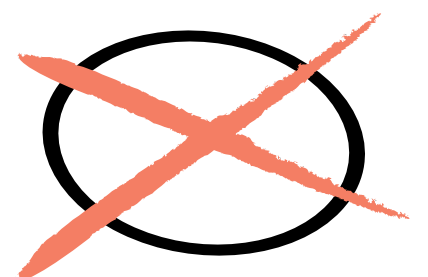
- Why do you think food security is important to the city of Kingston?
- What do you think about the role of local food systems in promoting healthy communities?
- What is your vision for a food-secure community?
- How can we ensure Kingstonians have access to local food?

**Do you like the sound of a Kingston where all people have access to green space, a safe place to live, and healthy, local food? Do you want to learn more about the work that Just Recovery Kingston is doing to make this happen? Reach us at [justrecoverykingston@gmail.com](mailto:justrecoverykingston@gmail.com) with any of your questions or to learn how you can get involved. We're always looking for more people passionate about making Kingston a better place for everyone to live.**

**DOWNLOAD THE JUST RECOVERY KINGSTON TOOLKIT:**



**JUST RECOVERY KINGSTON** was formed during COVID to “build back better” at the local level. Their aim is to advocate for a post-COVID recovery that puts people and the environment first.





# An Update on the Future of Providence Manor

CEO Laurie French envisions a user-centred community hub for the potential Providence Commons

STORY BY LINDA WILLIAMS

ILLUSTRATION BY CARL WIENS



**There may be a significant change in the use of Providence Manor over the next few years, if the tradition of the Sisters of Providence carries on in a new way. A unique opportunity is arising for the creation of a centre to help meet social and housing needs for members of the Skeleton Park community and beyond.**

Providence Manor, located at 275 Sydenham Street, was opened in 1861 by the Sisters of Providence of St. Vincent de Paul. The Sisters fed, housed, and empowered people who were poor, orphaned, or elderly. Throughout the following 161 years the Sisters' work evolved to reflect changing societal needs. Currently the campus in-



**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.

cludes 243 long-term care beds plus a chapel, commercial kitchen, nursing clinic rooms, recreational space, and the original Foundation house and residence. This facility is slated to close when residents are relocated to the yet-to-be-constructed new long-term care home as part of Providence Village Inc. on the grounds of the current Sisters of Providence Motherhouse at 1200 Princess Street.

In 2019, a group of visionary citizens presented a proposal to the Sisters to encourage them to extend their mission when Providence Manor closes. As described in previous *Skeleton Press* articles on Providence Manor, the North Kingston Affordable Housing Working Group proposed a multi-generational project that included rent-g geared-to-income/affordable housing and market rental accommodation appealing to people of differing ages and circumstances, plus social service programs.

Since then, the Sisters have been exploring the feasibility of the Providence Commons concept. According to Laurie French, who was recently hired as President and CEO, Providence Village Inc. and Administrator (Motherhouse Operations), "this separate property aligns with the core values of the Sisters of Providence and those of the Providence Village Inc., who will host the new long-term care facility," and with the City's intention to promote a sustainable, healthy, vibrant, and livable community. Ms. French's position includes responsibility for assisting the Sisters to determine the feasibility of the re-development of Providence Manor for affordable housing and other social purposes, by the date of completion of the new Providence Village. Selective results of a feasibility study are expected to be released as part of the presentation to City Council in the coming months.

Ms. French supports this creative dream as well as a collaborative process for the redevelopment project, if it is deemed feasible, and she understands the need for good communication, community engagement, and partnerships. She describes the goal for housing as having "a range of affordability at all levels, including market rent, and possibly assisted-living units." She envisions a user-centered community hub for the potential Providence Commons, as described in the 2015 Strategic Framework and Action Plan commissioned by then Premier Kathleen Wynne for the Community Hubs Framework Advisory Group.

Currently, community hubs are supported through the Federal Community, Culture and Recreation Stream of the Investing in Canada Infrastructure Program and the Ontario Ministry of Infrastructure. In the community hub model, groups who provide services co-locate and leverage their often slim resources to increase their capacity to deliver programs. The experience of the person using the centre is forefront. Through co-location, communication between service providers can be improved to optimize client coverage and better understand the social context of the individuals using the programs. A single reception area can coordinate appointments for all services, reducing client and program costs and practical obstacles posed by multiple visits. Long-term planning is required, so that the right services can move at the right time, in relation to existing leases, funding agreements or granting cycles.

According to Ms. French, project feasibility depends on many things beyond the completion of Providence Village. Architectural considerations and assessment of the integrity and adaptability of the buildings on the Providence Manor site, support by the City for the concept and process, substantial financial investment, and "significant community engagement and genuine partnerships are essential." Private or public partners who are willing to own, develop and manage units or re-locate offices and share resources are required. Although the Sisters of Providence would have no further involvement, Providence Commons would need the support of an administrative structure including Providence Village Inc., which is owned by the Catholic Congregational Legacy Charity and governed by the Catholic Health Sponsors of Ontario.

The timelines for this project remain uncertain. COVID-19 slowed the feasibility study analysis and report, potential community partners may have experienced a change in their circumstances, and cost estimates for construction are greatly affected by inflation rates that are even higher than those for consumer goods. Labour and supply-chain disruptions have slowed the construction of Providence Village buildings. Although Providence Commons may ultimately look quite different than originally conceived, a strong will to move forward persists.

Laurie French suggests help for this project can come in different forms. There are models of similar successful projects to offer encouragement and provide lessons, such as The Mount Community Centre in Peterborough. Neighbours can stay informed as the website providencevillage.ca is updated. In time, there will be an appeal to the community for ideas and partnerships not yet considered.

This project will have a significant impact on the Skeleton Park community. It could give more Kingston citizens a life-changing chance to live in dignity, with access to desirable mixed demographic housing and social opportunities. Take every invitation to contribute!

# Firing up the KILN

A story of Indigenous language revitalization in Kataro'kwi

STORY BY TAYLOR TYE

**T**he Kingston Indigenous Languages Nest (KILN) has been teaching and sharing languages since 2014 in an effort to revitalise and preserve Indigenous languages local to Kataro'kwi (the Kingston region). What started as an Anishinaabemowin (Ojibwe) language learning group around Elder Maureen Buchanan's kitchen table has expanded over the past decade. KILN now provides Kanyen'kehá (Mohawk) language programming and offers outdoor excursions and classes for both Indigenous and settler community members.

The journey of KILN and those behind its success inspired the short film *Onhwéntsya táhnon Onkwawén:na / Aki miinawaa Gdi-nowendaaganag* (Land and Language), filmed by Josh Lyon and Shelby Lisk, and featured as part of the Skeleton Park Arts Festival this past summer. The documentary-style film pairs interviews with directors, teachers, and members of KILN with footage of their language learning in action on the land.

"It's important to know that about seventy percent of Indigenous folks in Canada live off reserve," said KILN member and language teacher Dr. Lindsay Morcom in an interview. "The majority of us are non-status, mixed heritage people living off reserve. [This poses] a tremendous risk factor for language loss."

**To have a space that is dedicated to Indigenous language reminds the wider community that we're here and that we matter.**

In 2016, Statistics Canada reported that about forty Indigenous languages in Canada have approximately 500 speakers or fewer. Of 1.67 million people who reported an Indigenous identity, only about fifteen per cent reported that they could have a conversation in an Indigenous language. The immense decrease in spoken Indigenous language is largely attributed to the horrific cultural genocide enacted by forced attendance in the Indian Residential School system put in place by the Canadian government for more than a century. The resilience, strength, and determination of Indigenous Peoples is responsible for the preservation of many Indigenous traditions and languages to the extent that they exist today.

Morcom explained that KILN plays a critical role in language and culture revitalization within the urban-Indigenous community of Kataro'kwi. "We have responsibilities to our language, and we have responsibilities to our communities to keep [language and culture] going, even if we don't live on reserve [...] and KILN is a place where we can do that."

In an interview, filmmaker Josh Lyon explained that during the process of filming *Onhwéntsya táhnon Onkwawén:na / Aki miinawaa Gdi-nowendaaganag* he recognized the beauty, vulnerability, and value found in the "cultural renaissance" happening within the group.

"Language learning is incredibly vulnerable [...] I know even speaking French makes me so nervous," admitted Lyon. "It's hard enough [to learn a new language], let alone when language has been stolen from you. And that's tied in with all sorts of other abuses and colonial ways of being superimposed on the struggle to learn a language. That's just such an emotional load for people."

He explained that the process of recording the film was more about relationship-building than the final product.

"There was a lot of trust-building in the process," said Lyon. "To me, that's the most important thing; even if a film didn't get made at the end of it, that good relationships were made throughout the process. This meant I often didn't shoot the footage that I needed because it felt

more important to be present with the camera off than capturing great moments where people knew who I was and what I was doing there."

The film was created at the height of the COVID-19 pandemic, and as such, the majority of the filming was done outdoors while KILN was adapting to public health recommendations. It was during these times that the group realised just how intrinsically connected are land and language, and how naturally learning about the two flows together.

And yet members of KILN still dreamt about having a permanent space to call their own. "We had been using the ITEP lounge [at Queen's University]," said Morcom. "That was really generous [...], but it wasn't ours, since we had to take everything down and return the space to how it was."

During filming, Lyon explained that there was a moment at Rotary Park where Deb St. Armand described a vision she had of a "house in the middle of a garden [...] this sort of natural space where people could go and work, learn to grow and connect with the land and one another."

Not long after, the organisation was given a subsidy by the City of Kingston to expand their operations and capacity with the full-time use of a building. On May 31, 2022, KILN opened the doors to their location at 601 Montreal Street, a beautiful limestone building that KILN is able to call home.

The presence of a permanent, operational building for KILN is a needed assertion of Indigeneity in Kataro'kwi. "Kingston has so much connection to colonial history, and it's very easy to forget that Kingston is situated on top of Indigenous land and that the land is still Indigenous land," said Morcom. "To have a space that is dedicated to Indigenous language reminds the wider community that we're here and that we matter."



**TAYLOR TYE** is a Kingstonian with roots in these soils dating back more than eight generations. She is a freshman journalist with *The Kingstonist*, a beadwork artist and owner of Jackpine Designs, and a lover of these lands.



ONHWÉNTSYA TÁHNON  
ONKWAWÉN:NA  
/ AKI MIINAWAA  
GDI-NOWENDAAGANAG  
(LAND AND LANGUAGE)

A FILM BY JOSH LYON AND SHELBY LISK  
IN COLLABORATION WITH KINGSTON INDIGENOUS LANGUAGES NEST  
FEATURING MUSIC BY: CRIS DERIKSON, MELODY MCKIVER

# Water You Waiting For?



PUZZLE BY HALEY SARFELD

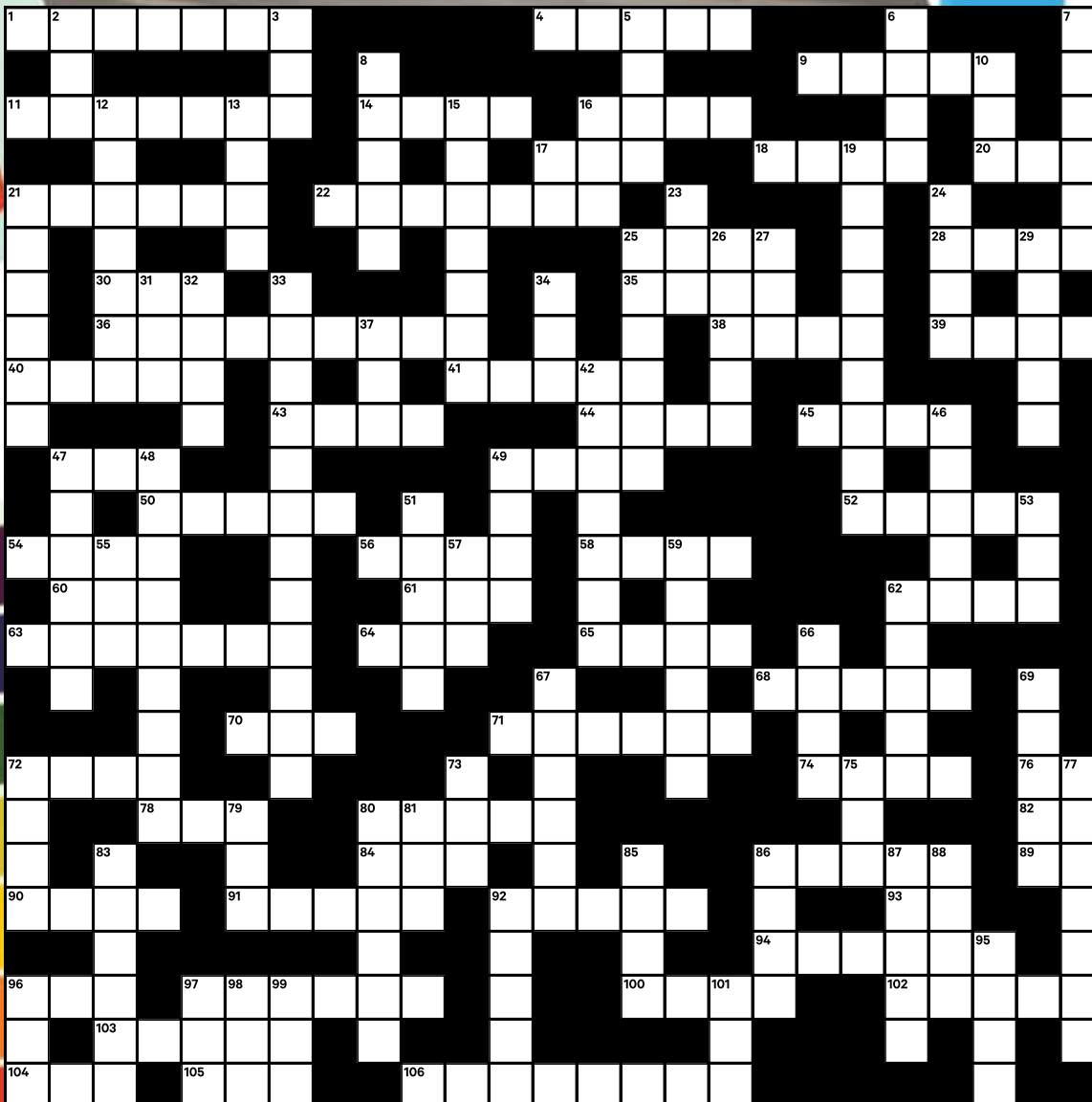
ILLUSTRATION BY JILL GLATT

**ACROSS**

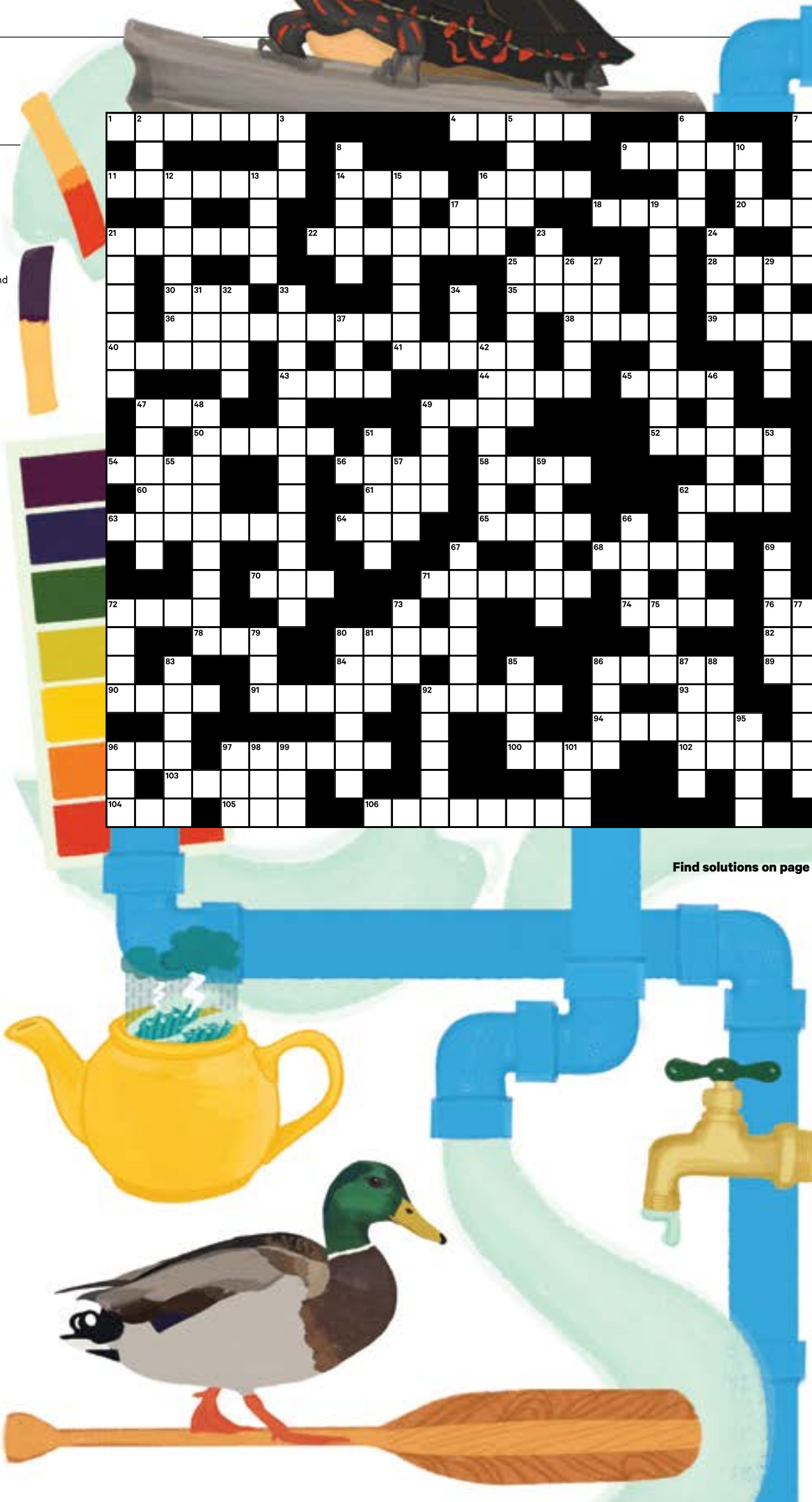
- 1 The \_\_\_\_ Girls sang "It's Raining Men"
- 4 A bowl for washing
- 9 When there's unwanted water in the basement
- 11 Up to date
- 14 To soften as it gets warmer
- 16 It's like \_\_\_\_ on your wedding day
- 17 If your tap water is undrinkable, you may have to get water from a bottle or a Tetra \_\_\_\_
- 18 Water with high mineral content
- 20 French word for "sea"
- 21 Those who go in headfirst
- 22 When it hasn't rained in a long time
- 25 A pit or hollow in which liquid collects
- 28 Make sure to dry off your skates or else they'll \_\_\_\_
- 30 Kayaking and canoeing strengthen your \_\_\_\_s
- 35 True or false: Almost all of Kingston's drinking water comes from Lake Ontario
- 36 To disappear into thin air
- 38 Not going anywhere; \_\_\_\_ in the water
- 39 We'll \_\_\_\_ our money to buy them a gift
- 40 Piranhas and sharks are more likely to be \_\_\_\_ by humans than the other way around
- 41 \_\_\_\_ and repeat
- 43 Profound
- 44 Misty, foggy
- 45 To think carefully; to \_\_\_\_er
- 47 The front of a boat
- 49 Soil that holds moisture but also has good drainage
- 50 1990 song by Duran Duran, "All \_\_\_\_ the Water"
- 52 A shallow depression
- 54 Goodbye, evaporated water; you will be \_\_\_\_
- 56 Everything but the kitchen \_\_\_\_
- 58 Is there a bathroom nearby? I gotta take a \_\_\_\_
- 60 Did you hear about the dishonest pirate who walked the plank? Now they \_\_\_\_ at the bottom of the ocean
- 61 Author of the poem "To The River"
- 62 Sport played on horses or in water (but not both!)
- 63 River connecting Lake Huron and Lake Erie; means "strait" in French
- 64 Tiny gulp
- 65 Nickname of the pilot in *Firefly*
- 68 High-heeled shoes
- 70 To move up and down
- 71 To change something's course
- 72 Water \_\_\_\_ scandal
- 74 Old-fashioned word for leggings
- 76 \_\_\_\_ must be something in the water
- 78 Morning water droplets
- 80 Ice cream and root beer
- 82 "Caught any fish yet?" "\_\_\_\_, you'll scare them away!"
- 84 To soften flax or hemp by soaking it in water
- 86 Moves smoothly
- 89 Veux-\_\_\_\_ un verre d'eau?
- 90 Aqua, turquoise, cyan, \_\_\_\_
- 91 Thicker than water
- 92 Water, water everywhere, nor any drop to \_\_\_\_
- 93 \_\_\_\_ first glance, I thought that manatee was a mermaid
- 94 From the Greek "to make rotten;" a type of drainage system
- 96 You'll need this to row your boat
- 97 Get your mind out of the \_\_\_\_!
- 100 Road that goes west out of Kingston
- 102 To wear away gradually
- 103 Aw, the rain \_\_\_\_d my chalk drawings!
- 104 Shock me like an electric \_\_\_\_
- 105 Great Big band from out east
- 106 How Kate Bush is getting up that hill

**DOWN**

- 2 Rid \_\_\_\_ Heights
- 3 If overwatered, your roots might \_\_\_\_
- 5 You might do this to seeds before planting or to beans before cooking
- 6 Your argument is weak; it doesn't \_\_\_\_ water
- 7 "Do you think they'll like my selfie?" "Yeah, it's a total \_\_\_\_ trap."
- 8 Bye bye, boys! Have fun \_\_\_\_ing the castle!
- 10 A barrier that keeps water from flowing; sounds like a frustrated utterance
- 12 A very small stream
- 13 If you don't hold your breath, you'll get water in your \_\_\_\_
- 15 An underground layer of water-bearing permeable rock
- 16 Sewer-dwelling animal
- 17 Measure of acidity or alkalinity
- 19 \_\_\_\_ keep falling on my head
- 21 To bring down the mood
- 23 Beaver \_\_\_\_ is naturally oily and waterproof
- 24 Style, swag
- 25 How most people access TV and movies nowadays
- 26 \_\_\_\_ Waters, father of modern Chicago blues
- 27 If there's no alternative, you might drink this to survive
- 29 The setting of Itsy Bitsy's Sisyphian task
- 31 \_\_\_\_ maris stella (Latin for "Hail, star of the sea"), a medieval hymn to Mary
- 32 A septic system requires one of these
- 33 When water appears on a cold surface
- 34 A low and marshy or frequently flooded area of land
- 37 In the Middle Ages, this was usually safer to drink than water
- 42 Lady Gaga and Bradley Cooper's 2018 duet
- 46 Corrosive chemical product that some households use to declog pipes
- 47 Heated to remove bacteria
- 48 The Dan School's music theatre festival
- 49 Ontario folk rock band the Great \_\_\_\_ Swimmers
- 51 Organic compound not soluble in water
- 53 Water conservation is \_\_\_\_-friendly
- 55 1967 song by Otis Redding, (\_\_\_\_tin' On) The Dock of the Bay
- 57 Acronym for the area north of our main downtown street
- 59 To take it all in
- 62 Oh Danny Boy, they're calling
- 66 To give effusive praise
- 67 Did I say that aloud? Sorry, I have no \_\_\_\_
- 69 Some people have a strong dislike of this soggy word
- 72 Solid materials that are removed from treated water
- 73 "Did you get in trouble?" "Yeah, I'm in \_\_\_\_ water."
- 75 *Star Trek* character who regenerates in liquid form
- 77 Rumour has it this only happens when it's raining
- 79 Membrane between toes that helps with swimming
- 80 Most of the water on Mars is in this state
- 81 A horse can be \_\_\_\_ to water, but he can't be made to drink
- 83 Not the best choice of vehicle for going over the Niagara Falls, but it's been done
- 85 Another word for faucet handle
- 86 To seek compliments
- 87 Think these clues are too silly? \_\_\_\_ you gonna do about it?
- 88 A slight movement
- 92 To go to a watery grave
- 95 You can still go swimming in the fall, but it'll be \_\_\_\_
- 96 French name for the waterfowl you might see at Doug Fluhrer Park
- 97 Low-density state of matter
- 98 WUE stands for Water \_\_\_\_ Efficiency
- 99 Thrown in the Boston Harbor in 1773
- 101 Theodore Too, the friendly \_\_\_\_ boat, visited Kingston recently



Find solutions on page 2





# “It’s just you and the clock”



Brackenbury siblings find calm in running

STORY BY **STUART MILLER-DAVIS**

Claire Brackenbury runs through Skeleton Park. Photo courtesy of Alec Barken.



**Miles Brackenbury had a large smile on his face as his sister, Claire, answered what drew her to becoming a runner. “I think for me running is not an easy sport, but I always find it calming, and it gives me time to think,” Claire said. “I like how it’s a team sport but also an individual one.”**

Miles’s answer to a similar question was almost identical. “I think it’s awesome that we said the same thing,” Miles said.

The Brackenbury siblings live on Redan Street and grew up running in the parks and on the roads of downtown Kingston. On a hot morning in late June, Miles sat down for an interview at a picnic table in Skeleton Park. Claire joined later, as she was preparing for her graduation from Kingston Secondary School (KSS). Both were wearing T-shirts from races they’ve competed in.

“At the end of the day it’s just you and the clock, but at the same time in certain events there’s a team component where you’re trying to compete with your team-mates for the lowest score,” said Miles of his sport.

“I find my runs have a double meaning. It’s not just exercise and training. It’s a break in the day and a moment with your thoughts, or with a friend.”

Miles graduated from Kingston Collegiate & Vocational Institute (KCVI) in 2018 and then joined the Queen’s Gaels cross country and track teams. The younger Claire joined Miles on the high-school team during his last year, and they will be team-mates again in university.

Some of Miles’s favourite memories of the KCVI Blues are from when he joined the team in Grade 9. He fondly remembers training and being mentored by Cameron Linscott, a Grade 12 runner at the school who won the provincial championships in 2014.

Marc Carrière is the head coach of cross country and track at KSS and previously KCVI. He coached both Brackenbury siblings for all four years of high school. “We had that culture of winning that really helped Miles in his Grade 9 year,” Carrière said in a phone interview.

“He went on to do it again,” Miles said of Linscott, who won the provincial gold in 2015. “He was very willing to share his exercises and training. It was cool having someone to look up to.”

The first week of school, the team would host training camp at Sandbanks Provincial Park in Prince Edward County. Miles said it reaffirmed his love for the sport and the people involved in it. They camped overnight, had team building exercises, and raced

on the sand and water. Carrière said it was also the beginning of an eight-year tradition of cookies from parents Rae and Tom Brackenbury. Every race there’d be a tin of cookies for the whole team to share, whether you were in the race or not.

Claire said her favourite memory came at this year’s provincial championships in Lakefield, Ontario. “We had such a big team, from grades nine to twelve,” she said. “Our senior team was able to pull off the win, and that was very exciting. Because of COVID and everything, it was fun to be able to compete.”

Carrière said Miles was the nicest kid he ever coached and probably one of the best runners.

“He’s such a team guy and always positive,” the KSS Phys Ed teacher said. “I don’t know that I’ll ever come across another kid the same again.” He said Miles would finish a race and stand at the end, congratulating all the participants. This meant every coach in eastern Ontario knew him.

Mark Bomba, head coach of the Gaels, said that while on a recruiting visit to the Ontario championships this year, a coach told him that one of his runners was just like Miles. Bomba said it was funny to see a coach at a different school remember an athlete who had graduated three years ago.

Claire and Miles have the benefit of running in the city and its public spaces without being questioned. Miles mentioned he read an article by a runner of colour who got stopped while running. “It’s actually quite a privilege to be able to run through a city without any concern of anyone labelling you, profiling you, racializing you in a way that threatens your health and well-being,” Miles said.

Miles noted the sport is getting more diverse at the elite level. For years, Olympic podiums were dominated by Europeans. Now, more countries from across the world are medalling. “That’s a really good thing, but there’s some people that get fixated on that dominance. I think it’s important to celebrate that is not what the sport is about. Not creating a battle over national or racial lines but celebrating the sport of running.” Carrière said having encouraging team-mates helps to break down some of the barriers to participation in the sport. “The biggest thing for removing those barriers is having people such as Claire and Miles on your team.”



**STUART MILLER-DAVIS** is a sports journalism student in the postgraduate program at Centennial College in Toronto. He grew up playing street hockey on Markland Street. In high school, Stuart was part of a band called Metamorphic with his brother, Riley, and friend Sam Shore. They played a set at the Skeleton Park Arts Festival in 2013.

# A “Green Conversation” with King’s Town District’s Candidates for City Council

STORY BY 350 KINGSTON



**Keith Bilow**



**Randy Casford**



**Alexandria Liu**

**ALEXANDRIA LIU**, who announced her candidacy after these interviews were conducted, is a mother, partner, and student with a passion for uplifting folks within our community. See more about her platform and the collective she is running with at [tenantsunite.ca/peoplesplatformforkingston](https://tenantsunite.ca/peoplesplatformforkingston).



**Gregory Ridge**

**In light of the upcoming City Council elections, 350 Kingston spoke with King’s Town district candidates, Keith Bilow, Randy Casford, and Gregory Ridge, about three of Kingston’s more pressing environmental issues. To help Skeleton Park’s residents make an informed voting decision, we have shared their responses below.**

**1.** We have a conflict within Kingston between development and deforestation. Recently, at least twenty sites have been identified where there are past or proposed clearcuts. This is exemplified by Jay Patry’s tannery lands proposal to destroy 1,800 trees, along with wildlife habitat, the natural shoreline, and a provincially significant wetland. Will you support the No Clearcuts Kingston petition to restrict development to the Rideau Street side of the property in order to preserve trees and biodiversity on the remaining 120 metres from the water’s edge?

**KEITH BILOW:** Removing 1,800 trees is ill-advised and I am not at all happy that such action might be taken.

**RANDY CASFORD:** The City of Kingston has only so much waterfront. The decision of what we do with it needs to be taken with care and caution to make the right decision on how it is utilized that best serves all of Kingston. We all know this area is extremely contaminated and will cost millions of dollars to clean up. I am not convinced the Patry proposal is the right solution. At first, I thought cleaning up the contamination was a good enough reason but am not sure anymore. I am not an expert but have been told that disturbing the 400,000 tonnes of contamination could make it worse. How will the 400,000 tonnes of contamination be dealt with after it is taken away, and will cleaning it have any effect on Kingston? Moreover, could the area safely be turned into a waterfront destination for all of Kingston to use — where we could save as much of nature as possible while keeping the area for all Kingstonians to enjoy?

**GREGORY RIDGE:** Yes, I support efforts made to preserve our biodiversity and wetlands. My only concern here is the acknowledgement that we do need to increase the stock of affordable housing and a complete moratorium on clearcutting trees may delay sorely needed development on this matter. This will be dependent on what lots of land are available and what the City’s plan is for development.

**2.** The Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) has warned that we have to cut our greenhouse gas emissions in half by 2030. To achieve this, we should stop building “natural” gas infrastructure for new developments. Will you support 350 Kingston’s proposal that Utilities Kingston stop building gas infrastructure? And would you further support wider promotion

of heat pumps in new and existing buildings as well as the local generation of green energy through a City-owned solar farm?

**KEITH BILOW:** I am not informed enough to completely answer this question, but a solar farm owned by the City has my support.

**RANDY CASFORD:** I would support heat pumps if proven we have the qualified people to install and fix the heat-pump systems. The quickest way is not always the right way.

**GREGORY RIDGE:** Yes, I generally support 350 Kingston’s proposal that Utilities Kingston stop building gas infrastructure. I have some reservations about this proposal but only around whether or not that would delay the development of additional affordable housing, as we have a severe shortage of stock, with people waiting on the Social Housing Registry for up to ten years. To your second point, I support the promotion of heat pumps and the use of green energy. If feasible, the generation of green energy through a City-owned solar farm would be excellent and a way to show commitment to their motion around a climate emergency.

**3.** Recently, the University of Waterloo warned that Kingston will be one of fifteen deadly heat zones in Canada as the climate crisis gets worse. Studies have shown that trees can reduce temperatures in city centres by up to eight to ten degrees Celsius. Would you support a moratorium on tree cutting — except in emergencies — to protect our tree canopy until the revised tree bylaw is completed? Would you also support the improved, more scientific maintenance of our urban forest and the hiring of more trained arborists?

**KEITH BILOW:** As I look out from where I live, I see the canopy of trees and do support the hiring of trained arborists. As a matter of fact, in Cataraqui Cemetery we have the largest trees of certain types in Ontario. Saving as many in the city is needed as the climate changes.

**RANDY CASFORD:** To just cut trees down is reckless and not protecting our earth. When you look at new subdivisions, you see everything cut down and cleared up. You really don’t see any trees saved. My question would be, why can a planned subdivision not protect some of the trees and give residents some shade and feel of nature?

**GREGORY RIDGE:** I have grave concerns about the canopy coverage of Kingston and King’s Town and am interested in this proposal. Yes, I wholeheartedly support the scientific maintenance of our urban forests and the hiring of additional experts to maintain them. I support a moratorium on tree cutting on municipal property, in open spaces, and environmental protection areas until the revised tree bylaw is completed.

All welcome to the **KING’S TOWN DISTRICT #11 ALL CANDIDATES MEETING** Wednesday, October 12, 7-8:30 pm, Central Public School, 237 Sydenham Street  
Sponsored by the McBurney Park Neighbourhood Association

**350 KINGSTON** is an environmental group that fights climate change by advocacy, personal actions, and education.

# Kingston's Portuguese Shared Their Culture

STORY BY JOE BRITES

ILLUSTRATION BY JOEL KIMMEL

**T**oronto has its Little Portugal district, Montreal its Portuguese enclave around the Parc du Portugal. From the 1960s to the late 1980s, Kingston also had a neighbourhood the Portuguese could call their own. Many Kingstonians of Portuguese ancestry — more than eighty percent with roots in the Azores — can trace their local beginnings to the McBurney Park neighbourhood. Although not the neighbourhood's first immigrant enclave, the Portuguese were a dominant presence for a time.

Central to the community was Joana's Grocery (now The Store Famous), owned by Joana and Anibal Pereira, where there were reminders of Portugal — including fresh goat cheese made by a Portuguese farmer in Odessa and chourico sausage made in the store's basement by Joana. The store also played an important role as a community hub for those new to Canada.

The Pereiras' younger daughter, Leonilde Almeida, says her sister Elena worked alongside her parents, but also helped newcomers. She would translate English correspondence, file people's taxes, or act as a translator during medical appointments.

Community members might come seeking job leads, and local business owners understood the store's social role. "A lot of the restaurant owners got to know my Dad because they would come there as customers when we had the fish market. They would come in looking for Portuguese ladies to work in their kitchens. My Dad helped a lot of people get jobs," says Almeida, adding, "They were good years there...You learn a lot about humanity when people are that close to you and they spend time with you, and need help. Things I learned in the store I wouldn't have learned anywhere else... You have to learn not to get upset with people who are angry. You have to let it go. I learned that at a young age in the store. If people are having a bad day, they are not happy about something, or something goes wrong for them...you have to realize it's not you they are angry at, it's something else."

Leonilde's husband, Arnaldo Almeida, says sometimes newcomers appeared at Joana's holding only a suitcase and a Joana's business card that someone gave them back home. As the stream of arrivals needing help increased, and a few upstairs rooms no longer met the demand of those seeking temporary shelter, the Pereiras converted part of the store basement into four bedrooms.

As the community grew, new businesses opened. Three Portuguese corner stores came and went nearby; Leonilde started a hair salon beside Joana's. A carpentry shop opened on Montreal Street, home-based basement barbershops appeared on Cherry and Elm Streets; further afield, a Portuguese bakery opened.

In late September an aroma, described as beautiful by former Plum Street resident Ed Krystic, permeated the neighbourhood air. The harbinger of autumn was the smell of the Portuguese crushing grapes and fermenting wine in their basements and garages. "You knew someone was doing their life's work," says Krystic.

It was also the season of smoking homemade chourico. Says Krystic, "They would give us some of their smoked meats. They had the chimney right there. What I also miss about the neighbourhood is a bit of that camaraderie and a bit of the old-time family atmosphere. And they [the Portuguese] were a large part of that. They shared their culture with us. And some of us started learning Portuguese."

Some newcomers planned to end their Canadian venture once enough money had been saved to establish a better life back home, but few returned. Of those few, some came back to Canada having discovered the Portugal they left was not the one they now found.



Ellice Street resident Herman Medeiros says his father considered returning to Portugal but the country's mandatory military service and its African colonial wars weighed on his mind. "He didn't want any of his kids conscripted. We lost one young fellow who was sixteen. My Dad had told his father, 'He should get his [Canadian] citizenship before he goes back to visit. Otherwise they'll grab him right out of the airport.' They grabbed him, conscripted him. He went to Africa after a year and was killed. He went to school with us. He lived near Montreal and Raglan Road."

Teacher Sister Constance recruited Medeiros in Grade 4 to help teach English to newly-arrived Portuguese students at St. Patrick's School. He would translate concepts needing more detailed explanations into Portuguese. The nun thanked him with private tutoring that accelerated his own English grammar. "My Dad was such an eager learner for English I had to retain...everything I learned at school. I would come home and conduct an English lesson."

Until the Portuguese church opened on Division Street (1980), the community's religious life centred on Providence Manor's Chapel. There were regular masses, first communions, and candlelit processions marking religious festivals. The processions wound through neighbouring streets, with a statue carried overhead, while Portuguese priest Father Antonio Pires recited prayers over a PA for hundreds of parishioners to repeat. Early on, Anglophone neighbours stood at their doors watching in amazement this unfamiliar Old World Catholic tradition.

By 1984, *The Whig-Standard* reported Kingston's Portuguese population was between 7,000 and 8,000. By that point, families were re-settling in other neighbourhoods. Those here today are a remnant, yet there are clues to the past. A handful of front façades still display a ceramic tile depicting a Catholic saint. Others show traces of Mediterranean colours used to paint over brick. Attached to garages, chimneys for smoking chorico are visible, appearing to have fallen into disuse, their life's work now behind them.



**JOE BRITES** has lived in the McBurney Park neighbourhood for the past eighteen years. He is a second-generation Canadian, born to Portuguese parents who immigrated to Canada in the late 1950s.

# Consumption and Treatment Services Receives Transformative Change Award

A love letter to the people we serve

STORY BY KATE ARCHIBALD-CROSS

CTS staff on-site PHOTO CREDIT: KCHC



**K**ingston's Consumption and Treatment Services (CTS) was honoured last spring by the Alliance for Healthier Communities (the Alliance) with a Transformative Change Award, in recognition of their tireless and compassionate work to support people who use drugs in the Kingston community.

Since 2018, CTS has been providing supervised consumption supports, overdose prevention services, harm reduction supplies and education, and access to primary care and addiction treatment options and counseling. Their staff members connect with many people for support each month, with approximately 150 people engaging in the program monthly over the course of 1,200 monthly visits.

The Alliance's Transformative Change Award is presented to three recipients each year, and recognizes "individuals, teams and organizations for extraordinary contributions to improving the health and wellbeing of people and communities across the province," according to the Alliance's website.

"The CTS is really deserving of this recognition, and I'm thrilled for our team," says Kingston Community Health Centres (KCHC) CEO Mike Bell, "because they are literally saving lives. This team is among the most selfless and committed group I've ever seen." Bell continues, "In addition to the impact the program is having with clients, I'm also proud and thankful for the partnerships with other agencies that we have developed and deepened along this journey."

Meghan O'Leary, KCHC's Director of Clinical Services adds: "The CTS team is incredibly passionate and dedicated to the program and the clients they serve. They are saving lives and making an impact every single day while also establishing a strong foundation to expand and further wrap around programs and supports, working alongside partners to serve people who use substances."

The essential services that are provided at CTS are often misunderstood. In order to shed some light on the day-to-day experiences of both staff and clients, KCHC produced a short documentary to coincide with the announcement of the Transformative Change Award. Working with Matt LeMay of Indigenous Geographic, the film highlights the people and programs at CTS.

O'Leary says that sharing this documentary widely will help introduce key concepts of harm reduction, safe consumption, and wraparound care to help foster caring, compassion, and respect. "Access to safe consumption services," she says, "is key in saving lives and connecting people to needed care and support services. Supervision is provided by paramedics and overdose prevention support workers to prevent and intervene in an overdose, as well as connection to primary care, Hepatitis C testing/treatment and addiction counselling and treatment."

The services offered at CTS are so necessary, in fact, that as of July 2022 they have moved from an eight-hour to a twelve-hour model to allow them to provide more life-saving, essential services for people that need them most. According to Justine McIsaac, Coordinator of CTS, "People deserve safety and a place of community, and we want to always provide that to the best of our ability."

According to the Alliance's website, the "Transformative Change Awards celebrate leaders, innovators, collaborators and health champions who have been working at the forefront of transformative change for health equity."

CTS certainly seems to fit these criteria to a tee, says O'Leary, so "to have the work we do acknowledged and championed by our peers in the community health sector is incredibly meaningful, and we were honoured to be included in a group of nominees made up of real change-makers in the province."

McIsaac says "This award, honestly, is a love letter to the people we serve. Our team provides a variety of different services, and we are proud to have created a space that is for the people who need it, and is all about them. That is the most important part."

CTS operates from 9 a.m. to 9 p.m. out of the Integrated Care Hub at 661 Montreal Street. If you'd like to know more about who they are and what they do, please visit [kchc.ca/barrack-street/cts/](https://kchc.ca/barrack-street/cts/)



**KATE ARCHIBALD-CROSS** is Communications Lead at Kingston Community Health Centres. She has lived in Kingston for most of her life, and is passionate about creating opportunities for dialogue, collaboration, community-building, and change (also, much to her surprise, dogs and running).

**People deserve safety and a place of community, and we want to always provide that to the best of our ability.**

# Fractured, *by Susan Mockler*

REVIEW BY ERIN BALL

It was a delight to read this compelling work by Disabled peer, Susan Mockler. The style kept me engaged and enraged with its reminders of how society is not set up for Disabled people — and not just in physical ways. Mockler did a great job expressing and exploring the internalized ableism that those who acquire Disability (and others) often experience. It can be difficult to process so many things we have been taught about Disability that are wrong, and we tend to hold so much ableism within ourselves and towards ourselves. Ableism: discrimination against Disabled people. This can be through stereotypes, actions, language, structures, and systems.

In addition to internalized ableism, Mockler shares her experience of being in public as a non-Disabled person and as a Disabled person, and how people often have completely different (and often heartbreaking) reactions and attitudes to both.

Disabled people are often thought of as public property and receive uninvited, non-consensual — and sometimes violent — touch, questions, and reactions from others. Total strangers frequently feel entitled to know what happened to us, and they often infantilize us, pity us, fear us, or put us on a pedestal. This is because, in general, people have been taught incorrectly about Disability or have little to no information at all about it.

Disabled people are typically just trying to live in a mostly inaccessible world and stereotypes only serve to make things more complicated. Stella Young, in her TED Talk, *I'm Not Your Inspiration, Thank You Very Much*, discusses Inspiration Porn and how often there is a perception that Disabled people are inspiring for simply existing. This perpetuates the myth that Disability is bad, and it creates a hierarchy between people, implying Disability is something to be avoided. Such thinking suggests that Disabled people are to be commended for simply managing to live, and is something for non-Disabled people to use as a reminder of how “good” life is without Disability. I challenge this thinking, as does Mockler.

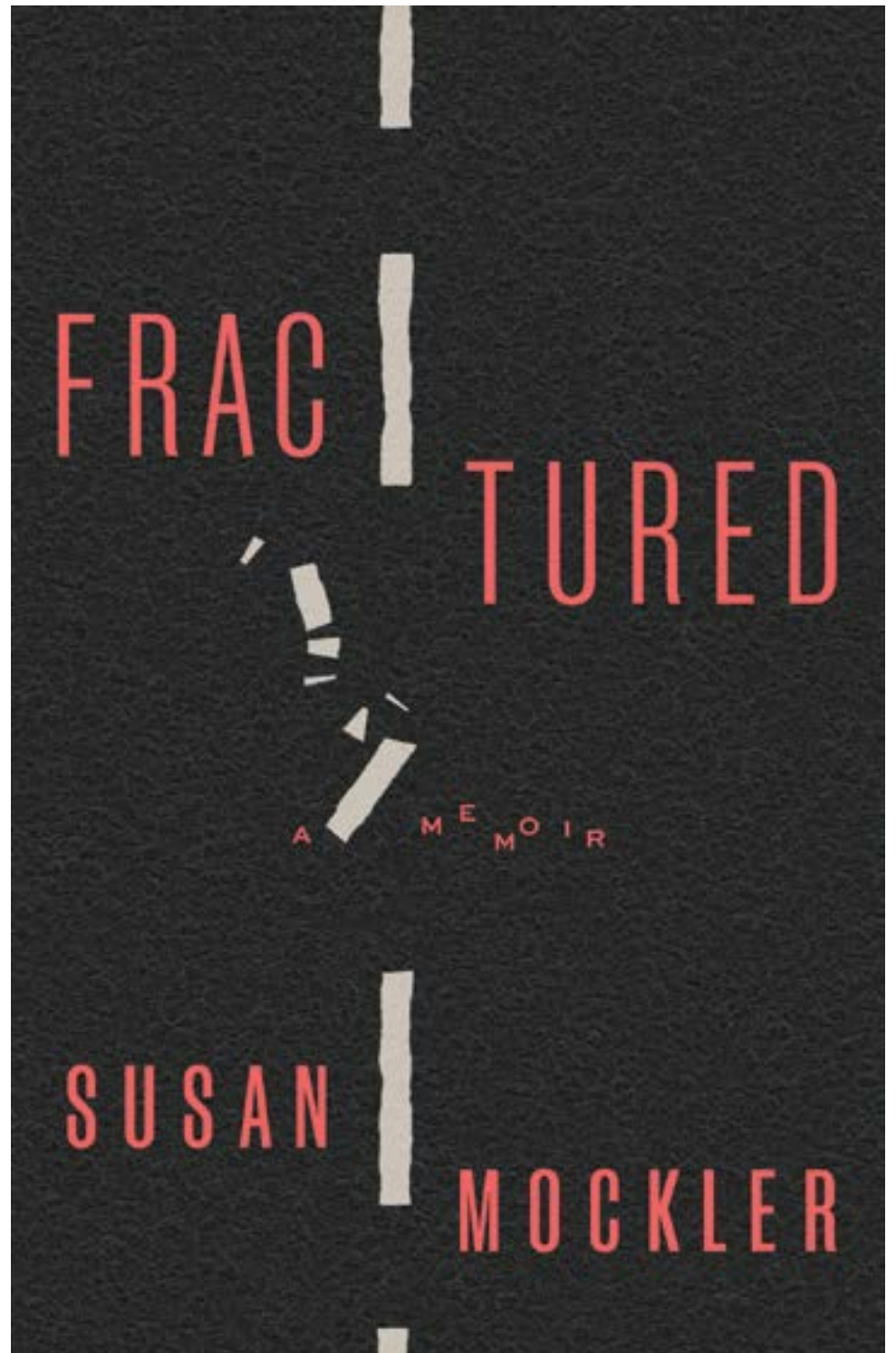
I appreciate *Fractured* for normalizing Disability, sharing lived experience, and guiding readers through the process of uncovering internalized and external ableism. I would have liked a larger section on what Mockler has learned over her twenty-five years as a Disabled person. I hope there will be a follow-up book with more of this wisdom. I loved the discussion towards the end of the book where the author realized how she tried to mask Disability and how the pressure can be overwhelming to “seem normal.”

I did find the book a bit hard to read at times without a content warning. Much of the book was reflections on traumatic times in the hospital. However, I also realize the author did not have a content warning for what happened in her life, so I do understand the choice.

I would suggest to Susan Mockler that perhaps there is some exploring to do around why she creates a distinction between people who were intoxicated or “took risks” (or according to her “brought it on themselves”), and people who had something happen out of nowhere. I think this is an unnecessary judgement that creates a harmful separation, and I believe it ultimately does not matter how we got where we are. It matters that we stick together and work to change negative stereotypes...or not, because that's totally fine too.



**ERIN BALL** (she/her) is a local Disabled artist, facilitator, accessibility consultant, and writer. She is passionate about Disability Justice and equity.



This gem from Mockler about interdependence really struck a chord with me: “Independence didn’t necessarily mean doing something completely on your own. Just like this woman, I needed assistance to do things and be out in the world. I still wanted to do as much as possible myself, but receiving help didn’t diminish or devalue me or anyone else who needed it.”

I think it’s important to encourage more Disabled folks to put their stories and words out into the world. Read *Fractured*, but prepare yourself for a journey through trauma and hospitalization, ending with brilliance that comes from lived experience. I recommend this book to anyone wanting deeper understanding about how we can shift to make the world a better place.

# Taking It to the Streets

At Central Public School, parents, teachers, and students are encouraging us to rethink who streets are for, and how we use them.

STORY BY **NICO KOENIG**  
PHOTO BY **AL BERGERON**

**Thirty minutes before the school bell rang, dozens of kids ran into the street screaming at the top of their lungs. “We own the street!” they chanted. Parents and passers-by smiled, casually curious about what was going on, as they strolled along an open road. It was Tuesday morning on Sydenham Street, and it was Central Public School’s first School Street.**

In lay terms, School Streets are timed traffic restrictions: a street near a school is closed to vehicles in thirty-minute intervals at pick-up and drop-off times. It’s an idea that is long overdue. Before cars, city streets were shared by users of all sorts — horses, trams, and kids alike. Nowadays, cars dominate street use in terms of legal entitlements, funding, and actual allocated space. But people-oriented takeovers are forming. Everything from open street festivals to full pedestrianization (as was done on Napier Street in Kingston) signals a growing demand to reorient streets to the needs of communities.

This is where School Streets come in. Following initiatives from the London (U.K.) boroughs of Hackney and Camden in 2017, as well as from Winnipeg in 2020, Kingston hosted the second year-long School Street in Canada — and the first in Ontario — at Winston Churchill Public School in 2020. The expansion of the program to Central Public School along Sydenham Street between Ordnance and Colborne is receiving rave reviews.

“Kids really like it, and it’s really fun to run on the street and have no cars”, says Jane, eight years old, and a Central Public School student. A fun street is indeed part of a larger vision for School Streets. The Kingston Coalition for Active Transportation (KCAT), which led the initiative with Winston Churchill and were instrumental in getting it off the ground at Central, lists improved safety, lower stress, increase in active transportation and physical activity, and social connection between caregivers among the benefits of the projects. There may also be public health benefits associated with the project. Clearing school streets of traffic can reduce the potential for long-term chronic illness associated with air pollution and noise.



**SCHOOL STREETS MAY BE A SMALL STEP TOWARDS CREATING A NEW AND MORE ACCESSIBLE PUBLIC SPACE, ESPECIALLY FOR CHILDREN WHO OTHERWISE DO NOT HAVE A SAY IN HOW THEIR STREETS ARE USED.**






Canadian Institutes of Health Research  
Instituts de recherche en santé du Canada

# STUDY PARTICIPANTS NEEDED

## ABOUT THIS STUDY

As you may have heard, a School Street is being planned for Central Public School, starting in September 2022. Subject to City approval, the School Street will be implemented through a partnership between a group of Central Public School parents and the Kingston Coalition for Active Transportation (KCAT). The program will involve closing Sydenham Street adjacent to Central Public School for 20-30 minute periods at the beginning and end of the school day, to enable children to come and go safely from the school while promoting active school travel.

Researchers at Queen's University plan to evaluate the implementation and impacts of this School Street program. Your household has received this letter because it is located within the catchment area for Central Public School. **If you have a child aged 6-12 years old in your household, and he/she/they will be attending Central Public School in the fall, then we want to hear from you!**

## SCHOOL STREET IN SESSION

MON TO FRI 8:40-9:10AM AND 3:20-3:50PM



WATCH FOR PEOPLE ON ROAD!

## AUTHORIZED VEHICLES ONLY

Send Feedback to [schoolstreetygk@gmail.com](mailto:schoolstreetygk@gmail.com) & check out our website [www.LTPFKingston.com](http://www.LTPFKingston.com)

## PARTICIPATION DETAILS

We are seeking participation from eligible parents/caregivers and children in an **online survey**. The parent component of the survey takes approximately 15 minutes to complete, and the child component takes approximately 5-8 minutes to complete.

We wish to capture this information at **two points in time**:

- 1) June 2022 (prior to the School Street launch);
- 2) May/June 2023 (at the end of the School Street program).

To participate in the study, please contact Dr Patricia Collins at [patricia.collins@queensu.ca](mailto:patricia.collins@queensu.ca).

The importance of seeing streets as public space is clear even to young people. As Stella, age eleven, pointed out, “after COVID, we just had to stay in one spot, and this gives us more space.” Indeed, contrary to the City’s early pandemic closures of public spaces, public health professionals across the world encouraged people to meet outside safely as much as possible. School Streets, in this way, may be a small step towards creating a new and more accessible public space, especially for children who otherwise do not have a say in how their streets are used.

School Streets can also be seen as prioritizing the needs of parents who can walk their kids to school, instead of favouring those who need a car to drive to work. Stella again responds to this critique: “From the car’s perspective, I think it should be fine because the street’s only closed for about half an hour, and they can easily go around.” In fact, one of the big surprises of Central’s first School Street was the decrease in overall traffic near Sydenham Street. Residents and visitors to Providence Manor, instead of driving by Central School to get to Queen Street, simply chose a different route, effectively reducing traffic for the parents who did drive. An unintended outcome of the School Street is that it may be making drop-off routes easier for car-dependent families. Nonetheless, ensuring that all school programs do not adversely affect those who require vehicles for economic or mobility reasons is an essential measure to review as the program continues.

Still, one street closure does not necessarily equal a safe passage for children, caregivers, and teachers. For that, we will require a rebalance of the entire street network and begin to favour the needs of those who are absent — specifically public-transit dependent residents, people with disabilities, senior residents, and importantly, children and youth. In fact, the Central Public School Advisory Council sees School Streets as work-

ing in tandem with other initiatives that tip the scale back towards people-oriented transportation, such as school buses equipped to transport bikes, or a pedestrianized street network surrounding Skeleton Park. Ultimately, it is up to all of us to rethink who streets are for and how we use them.

The School Street will be back at Central Public School starting in September and will run every school day, rain, shine, or snow, throughout the rest of the year. To do this, the Advisory Council is asking for additional parent or local resident volunteers to set up and take down road barricades each day. These volunteer “bearriers” (shoutout to the Central Bears!) might also design other placemaking initiatives, and envision the long-term change that is needed for the safer, accessible, and social streets we all want.

Please message [SchoolStreetygk@gmail.com](mailto:SchoolStreetygk@gmail.com) to ask to be involved!



**NICO KOENIG** is a member of the Kingston Coalition for Active Transportation, a proud School Street Bearrier, and he will soon complete his Masters of Urban and Regional Planning at Queen’s University. @nicokoenig



# Who is Jawk?

STORY AND PHOTOS BY JAWK

I was asked by *The Skeleton Press* to write an article about my artwork for the September issue. Ever the procrastinator, I find myself on the eve of the deadline wondering what exactly to say .... let it flow Jawk, let it flow ... it sounds serious, official, and most of all: arty. So, I'll start like this: Jawk's been an artist all his life.

The name, Jawk? His friends in Boston call him Jacques because he's Canadian and speaks French. Apparently, the phonetic spelling helps people pronounce it correctly. Jawk calls himself the "*Gentleman Tagueur*," an allusion to Arsène Lupin, the "*Gentleman Cambrioleur*" of Maurice Leblanc's novels and the lead character in the popular Netflix series *Lupin*, played by the incomparable Omar Sy.

Jawk's intentions are to entertain, to provoke, and to encourage reflection. He admires Billie Holiday, Norman Rockwell, Louise Bourgeois, and Banksy. Jawk is a people person and avid cyclist; people and movement are usually the subject of his art. Jawk enjoys the suffering that comes with both mental and physical exertion, and being a street artist allows Jawk to create and to suffer in these ways. Suffering keeps Jawk alive.

Jawk has been a stencil artist for a long time. He studied painting in Montreal and Boston and learned from mentor artists in both cities. Jawk taught visual arts in the Boston Public Schools where he learned as much or more from his students as they learned from him. He found that Bostonians of all backgrounds were interested in his stories about Canada: the country's climate, diverse histories, the renowned politesse, tolerance, and — interestingly— Canada's bilingualism. In short, Jawk's time in Boston was formative. In 2008, Jawk became a father and changed his studio practice from traditional painting to stencil work. This enabled him to work in shorter sessions, whilst remaining very productive artistically.

After the Boston Marathon bombing of 2013, Jawk and his family returned to Canada, where he started teaching and working in the local arts scene. From the Rideau Heights to the Tett Centre, Jawk has worked alongside many of the city's renowned musicians, poets, and visual artists. He is proud to have skated with the late Steven Heighton on the notorious Journeymen hockey team.





**JAWK** is an artist who lives and works in Kingston. He loves people, movement, colour and cities. Some of his work can be seen @jawkthepaint on Instagram, and around town.



**JAWK'S INTENTIONS ARE TO ENTERTAIN, TO PROVOKE, AND TO ENCOURAGE REFLECTION.**



The pandemic inspired Jawk to take his art out of the confines of his studio and into the open. In March of 2020, when the world locked down, Jawk felt an immense concern for the young people he was teaching at the time. That youth were being kept indoors, out of parks, and isolated from each other was deeply disturbing to him. It seemed like madness to Jawk: the Alfred E. Neuman stencil emerged, an homage to the MAD satire magazine cover boy, famous for uttering the maxim “What, me worry?” Jawk installed MAD paintings in local parks and on businesses that were mandated to close. These earnest moves were attempts to elicit smiles and also to question the draconian measures rapidly adopted across society. Through social media, Jawk encouraged people to get out of the house and have fun finding his work.

Jawk continues his painting and installation, usually by bike wherever and whenever he travels. He acknowledges that some of his work may not reflect the ideas of the community at large, and he’s OK with this. He feels that the juice is worth the squeeze; that if his

work generates a dialogue about important issues, then he is doing his job as an artist. He’s always been willing to discuss his work with people who take the time to ask.

Jawk installs his art in places where street art is typically found: urban landscape objects, abandoned buildings, temporary cladding. He also installs in places you don’t often see street art: sewer conduits, construction sites, rural bike paths, atop garbage piles, on abandoned cars in forests. He likes the challenge of heights, and he usually acquires permission before installing or painting. Jawk has a few collaborators who help with his work internationally. France, Italy, England, Ireland, Russia, Japan, Mexico, and the United States all have Jawk originals on display. He is mindful of the temporary nature of everything, and thus has adopted a “finders keepers” attitude towards his removable artwork.

Says Jawk: “The thief of my work experiences a thrill in taking it away. It’s reciprocity ... because the thrill is similar to the one that I experienced whilst installing it.”



# SAYING 'NO' TO NORTH-END CONDOS

The tide has turned against the Patry proposal.  
So why does the waterfront development remain on the table?

STORY BY **LAWRENCE SCANLAN**

ILLUSTRATION BY **CHANTAL ROUSSEAU**

**The proposal to build waterfront condominiums on a thirty-seven-acre parcel in the city's north end offends so many people in so many ways. Let me count the ways.**

The City's own Official Plan and the province's Official Plan both prohibit development on wetlands linked to or on the Great Lakes. Transport Canada, Parks Canada and the Cataraqui Region Conservation Authority have all expressed concerns about the bid, and especially what it would mean for the shoreline.

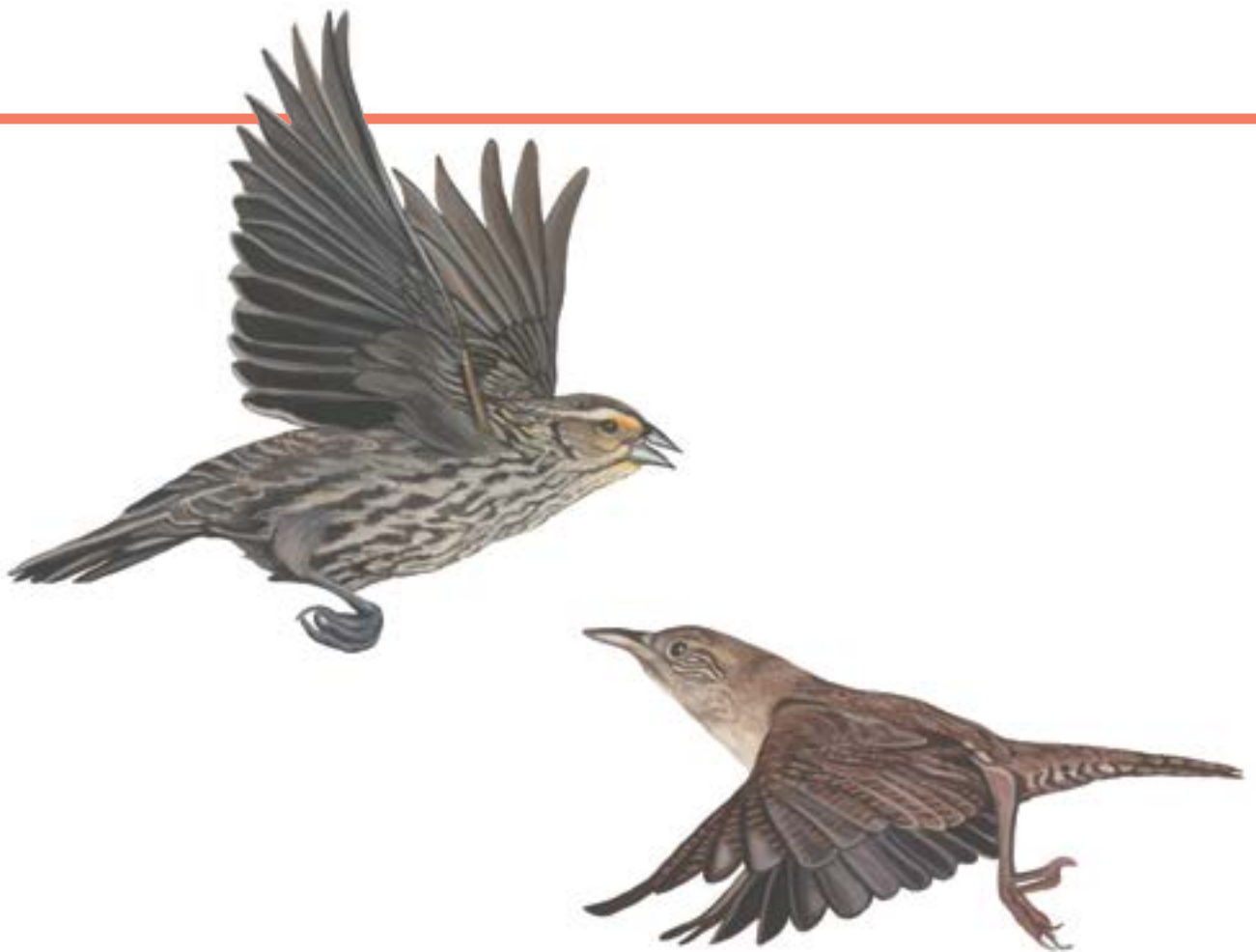
The Suzuki Foundation, a retired Queen's biologist and a Belleville city councillor have all weighed in — against. As have hundreds of Kingstonians who bombarded councillors with letters before the deciding vote.

In early August, the City's Planning Committee nixed the proposal by a six to four vote. And on September 6, City Council voted by an eight to five margin to reject the plan.

A deep-pocketed developer, Jay Patry Enterprises Inc., with vocal allies in Mayor Bryan Patterson and the City's Planning Department, lost to a dogged bunch of activists, No Clearcuts Kingston. David had slain Goliath in an apparent victory for grassroots activism.

"Democracy," proclaimed Kathleen O'Hara, of No Clearcuts, "is alive and well in Kingston."

And yet the plan to build on the former Davis Tannery site is far from dead, while democracy is looking a little unsteady on its feet. The developer has vowed to appeal to the Ontario Land Tribunal. And if that fails, the next step could well be a Minister's Zoning Order (MZO). In other words, the Conservative government of Doug Ford would weigh in here, as it has elsewhere. The MZO would allow the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing to make the final decision — behind closed doors and with no right of appeal. The Ford government — the same one that just passed "strong mayor" legislation — has been using MZOs at an alarming and unprecedented rate, so much so that the Auditor-General criticized their overuse in its 2021 report.



I huddled over coffee with Heather Jamieson, an environmental geochemist, to mull over this contentious project on land and wetland that lie just south of Belle Park and face the southern point of the Rideau Canal. The canal here empties into the Cataraqui River, its waters and shoreline once used as a dumping ground by a lead smelter and a leather tannery — the latter for a century and into the 1970s. *Brownfield* is the modern tag for a site so tainted.

Think chromium, which can be both toxic and carcinogenic, at up to 110,000 parts per million (the Ministry of the Environment’s “safe” standard is no more than 160 ppm). Lead, zinc, arsenic, PCBs, mercury. It’s all here. The developer has offered to clean up the site and build upon it, but what many in the city are asking is this: Is it wise and even necessary, finally, to address this still-present pollution, or is the greater risk in disturbing the quagmire?

Heather Jamieson is a much heralded Queen’s professor, a geologist by training who studies “legacy sites” — abandoned mines that pose environmental risks long after the digging ceases. To the key question — is it better to treat the polluted soil and silt (Patry’s staff have outlined plans to cap, treat, or haul away some 400,000 tons), or better to leave it be? — Professor Jamieson is only certain about the uncertainty of it all.

“There is no easy answer,” she says. “It depends on the environmental risk. Is the hazard in the chromium, or contaminant X, or Y, or Z? What is the nature of the exposure? Is it by breathing it in, or getting it on your skin, or by eating it? Who is actually exposed? Humans, animals, or the entire community?”

Professor Jamieson cautioned before meeting me that while “I have some relevant expertise, there are lots of aspects that are beyond my particular knowledge. I am really glad there are people objecting and asking hard questions. Perhaps I could help frame some of those pesky questions that people keep asking, as they should.”

*Pesky questions.* The phrase stuck with me. Professor Jamieson has been teaching for twenty-six years while probing the meandering habits, say, of arsenic in mine waste. Later, while reading my notes from our one-hour chat, I was struck by this story’s many fragments: history, the class divide, the enduring nature of certain pollutants, the enduring nature of nature itself, the desperate need for shelter (especially for our low-income citizens, for whom the Patry proposal offers almost nothing), the gathering clouds of climate change.

Heather Jamieson used many terms requiring explanation, and it occurred to me that their definitions might enable a deeper understanding of one of the great mysteries of the tannery lands and wetlands: How can a place so foul sustain so much life?

To begin, perhaps we should just listen.

Matt Rogalsky is an associate professor in the Dan School of Drama and Music at Queen’s. He is also a sound artist, and on May 26 he recorded nine minutes and thirty-two seconds in the life of what some call the Orchard Street Marsh (the tannery site was formerly an orchard). I could hear in his recording bullfrogs, leopard frogs and a multitude of birds. But which ones?

To find out, I played on my computer Rogalsky’s “sonic record” while simultaneously using my cell phone to run an app called Merlin (available free from Cornell University). The app identifies individual birdcalls and even displays generic images of that species as each bird sings. Merlin’s matches included the following: red-winged blackbird,

yellow warbler, house wren, warbling vireo, least bittern and swamp sparrow, as well as grackle, robin, crow and Canada goose. Rogalsky used three different microphones to pull in sound. The result is, well, symphonic.

Which brings me to the first term that warrants a definition.

*Eco-system services* — the benefits that accrue to humankind from green spaces. Much accounting goes into a development proposal: How many units? How high are the towers? This one would see built some 1,700 residential and commercial units in buildings up to eight storeys high, with the developer responsible for the environmental cleanup (at an ever-escalating cost, last pegged at \$70 million) in exchange for a decade-long break on property taxes and other concessions. The 1,800 trees on the property, including a 200-year-old oak, would all come down. Those are the salient numbers. Not often considered in the decision-making are the intangibles, or what Heather Jamieson and others call “eco-system services.” Some sources put the annual value of the world’s “natural capital” at \$33 trillion, but others question assigning any number, so critical is nature to human survival.

*In situ remediation.* This refers to treating the waste on site. Says Jamieson, “There are technologies to do this, but will they work for everything, and forever? Carting off the contaminated material is sometimes attractive. You put it in a managed waste landfill. As for capping the soil, you have to ask: can groundwater still pick it up and carry it?”

Those opposed to the development, such as the No Clearcuts Kingston group, point out that an underground stream runs through the site. “It flows from the west, through the wetland, to the Cataraqui River,” says Bob MacInnes. (For the record, he is a friend of mine.) “The most contaminated parts of the site,” he adds, “are in the wetlands where many creatures reside and where no people roam, hunt or fish. Consequently, the wetland poses a very low risk to humans. Should the wetland be filled, the risks increase.”

MacInnes’s fellow activist, Kathleen O’Hara, worries that to replace all those trees with asphalt, brick, concrete and glass is to swap a cooling, carbon-storing urban forest for a heat island. This when climate-change experts are forecasting unprecedented summer heat in Kingston. “We’ll need our trees,” O’Hara says.

*Biological communities.* The phrase refers to the living components of an eco-system, which in this case includes rabbits, deer, turtles, frogs, birds, and, prior to eviction, beavers and homeless people.

In 2013, the MacNaughton Hermsen Britton Clarkson planning firm wrote a report on the tannery lands in which the consultants cited the City’s own planning documents that cap the number of residential units on the site at fifty units per hectare (750 units in total), with “bonusing” provisions that could permit 62.5 units per hectare. Last summer the developer upped his numbers from the original 1,500 units to 1,700 units — more than twice what the official plan allows.

Clearly, the City wants tax revenue from the development, and the site cleaned up. James Bar, manager of development approvals for the City and a former senior planner for the municipal government, concedes that there are opposing interests at play here, but he also sees the benefits of going ahead. “This development,” he says, “would remediate and revitalize a contaminated and under-utilized waterfront area.”

Vicki Schmolka is a former city councillor who follows local politics closely. “The public pushback on this proposal,” she observed, “is different, and it’s significant. Cutting all those trees does not sit well. How do you square clearcutting the site with the City’s motion declaring a climate emergency? The developer is proposing a main-street feel with buildings right to the lot lines on a waterfront property. No wonder residents are supporting councillors who are rejecting this proposal.”

Professor Jamieson’s peskiest of pesky questions is perhaps this one: “Precisely what remediation is going to be done for \$70 million?” She, too, laments the loss of all those trees. The lanky poplars, the wide willows, the tall cottonwoods, the spreading elms and stands of ash, and, of course, that mighty oak. “Are there alternatives?” asks Jamieson. “Could the tannery lands be made accessible — as a park?”

What an extraordinary thought. Bob MacInnes wonders if elevated walkways could make hiking under the trees and along the marsh both safe and appealing. “The City,” he says, “has the opportunity here to create a contiguous bio-corridor along the Rideau River, from Doug Fluhrer Park to the locks at Kingston Mills. The tannery development proposal is the face of greed and we should oppose it at every opportunity.”

Given all it has endured (all those paupers’ graves in Skeleton Park, all that dumping of toxic waste in the “poor” part of town), the north end deserves a hug — a big green one.

Will the fate of this land and this swamp surprise us? Will the outcome reflect “sustainable Kingston,” or that other Kingston, where money talks and money rules? As Bob MacInnes notes, “The developer has so many tricks up his sleeve, and so much money. He tries to wear everyone out.” And yet time may not be on his side, but the other side. The longer this matter remains in the public eye, the louder and more strident will the opposition grow.

Nature, meanwhile, has its own uncanny and surprising ways of enduring. Professor Jamieson told me about tailings ponds in Nova Scotia that were both laced with arsenic and home to stunning pitcher plants. In her book, *Islands of Abandonment: Nature Rebounding in the Post-Human Landscape*, award-winning Scottish writer Cal Flyn travels to some of the most damaged sites in the world and finds nature busy rebounding. “When a place has been altered beyond recognition and all hope seems lost,” she writes, “it might still hold the potential for life of another kind.”



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

# Stopping Encampment Evictions

Building solidarity with  
neighbours who are unhoused

STORY BY MUTUAL AID KATAROKWI-KINGSTON  
UNHOUSED SOLIDARITY GROUP

We live in a city that prioritizes civility and the aesthetics of tidiness over justice and public health. After a broad public response demanded the halt of encampment evictions in early May 2022, a special meeting of council on May 12 resolved “that the current plans for eviction of those camping in public spaces be postponed until there is a clear alternative, to find a more permanent and safe housing option for these campers.” The next special meeting, on June 29, ignored this resolution, having been seemingly swayed by residents who fear and hate people who live in tents in parks near them. City Council chose to resume evictions without permanent or safe options. By mid-July there were evictions in half a dozen locations across the city.

Encampments are not housing, and it is frustrating to have to advocate for them. Encampments are the result of federal, provincial, and municipal policy failure. While there are few housing alternatives, there are more than 1,200 families on the rent-geared-to-income housing list and the waitlist is years long. Many more people are precariously housed, face renovictions, and endure substandard conditions. Current housing options, such as shelters, do not meet the needs of many unhoused people. Shelters may be unsafe or unwelcoming environments or have unreasonable rules. If shelters have unused beds, that is an indictment of the shelters, not the decision-making abilities of people who are unhoused.

Based on human rights and public health grounds, the United Nations, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, and Public Health Ontario have all produced guidelines against encampment evictions. Evictions exacerbate COVID-19 because alternatives make it harder to physically distance. Evictions make it difficult for service providers and for those who need services to find each other. Evictions also cause continual displacement and ignore the relative safety, autonomy, and community found in such encampments.

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This is especially true of the encampment beside the Integrated Care Hub (ICH). Staff at the ICH have reversed more than 600 overdoses since opening in November of 2020. In April alone, the drug poisoning crisis saw seven people in Kingston die in a two-week period. By not moving forward with decriminalization and safe supply programs — programs that are recognized as reducing harm and death — the City is ignoring this crisis. By moving forward with planned evictions, the City is knowingly increasing the risk of our neighbours’ deaths. These are decisions being made by City staff and councillors in our community who have been made aware of the dangerous implications of the policies they develop, approve, and leave others to enforce.

Solidarity must mean shouldering some of the burden of struggle. It can come in different ways from different people, depending on our social position and abilities. An individual who is precariously housed with children to support and care for has a different position and abilities than someone with a secure home, job, and support network. If we each act according to our abilities we can meet each other’s needs.

The City must change its priorities and policies. This must include defunding the police and redistributing that funding to build new social housing and repair what exists, implement tenant protections, and provide support services that respect people’s autonomy. We need to work individually and collectively to minimize the harm and violence that City staff and Council have chosen to enact. Individually, we can choose to inflict no harm (by not calling police or bylaw on tents in the community) and to actively support people with kindness and necessities such as water, batteries, or tarps. We can intervene when people who are unhoused are encountering bylaw enforcement, police, or harassment from neighbours. Collectively, we can share strategies and resources and actively resist harassment and evictions.

We believe that we can create a just community that treats people with dignity and respect, and meets all our needs, and that we are most successful in this work collectively. Our solidarity work as Mutual Aid Katarokwi-Kingston includes direct support to people who are unhoused, community mobilization, and capacity building. This work has included letter-writing campaigns, delegations to City Council, direct actions, and training/workshops. Through this work, we aim to bring people together to stop evictions and to envision how to become a community where housing for all is a reality.

The City has responded to public pressure and action in defense of people who are unhoused. But business and propertied interests in Kingston have also demanded that City Council act against people who are poor, all the while criminalizing them under “nuisance” and “obstruction” laws. Our ability to defend people who are poor and unhoused will depend on the connections we make, the relationships and networks we build, and the collective power we are able to exhibit in the face of these continued and evolving injustices.

Please contact Mutual Aid Katarokwi-Kingston at [mutualaidkatarokwi@gmail.com](mailto:mutualaidkatarokwi@gmail.com) or 613-777-2664 to become involved in unhoused solidarity and eviction defense.

**MUTUAL AID KATAROKWI-KINGSTON UNHOUSED SOLIDARITY GROUP** has been operating since the beginning of the pandemic in 2020. Our goal is to work and stand in solidarity with people who are unhoused. This has meant direct support by providing supplies, working against evictions, and working for decriminalization and a safe supply program to address the drug poisoning crisis.



# Connecting Through Song

Danielle Hope Edwards on music, teaching, and the art of expression

STORY BY **ROB HOWARD**

**The midday sun shone between the leaves of the trees in McBurney Park and onto the festival-goers lounging on blankets and lawn chairs as Danielle Hope Edwards took to the main stage.**

A palpable energy invigorated the downtown Kingston neighbourhood, still charged from the previous day's Pride Parade and festivities. The weather had been clear, bright, and warm all weekend, but Sunday, June 19 held special significance. In addition to being day two of the Skeleton Park Arts Festival and Father's Day, it was Juneteenth — a celebration of the emancipation of enslaved African peoples. Though Danielle was booked to perform, she saw a unique opportunity to engage when she arrived on the stage.

"I had to bring the two careers together, the music and the teaching career," Danielle said with a chuckle from a bench in the park. "I asked the audience who knows what [Juneteenth] is and who doesn't, because I find a lot of people—mainly in Canada—don't because it's more of an American thing ... but it's still a North American thing."

It's that desire to share and connect that brought Danielle to Kingston in the first place. Having grown up in Prince Edward County, Danielle arrived in the city to study Concurrent Education at Queen's University. Danielle is working towards a career as an elementary school teacher, but hopes to bring more to the classroom than just curriculum.

"My desire for teaching is more about being a teacher that is able to be there for students and for their well-being and their educational needs, because that's also a big part of where my heart is," says Danielle. "I think of youth a lot of the time, or I think of myself when I was that age, because one quote that keeps me going is, 'Be the person that you needed when you were a kid.' So I try to set that example in my life."

Mental wellness advocacy is another of Danielle's passions, and, like most people over the course of the pandemic, she felt the effects of isolation on her own mental health. One of the ways she expressed and worked through those struggles was through her music and poetry.

Music has been a significant part of Danielle's life since she was six years old. She began making her own songs at a young age with her musical family, and now draws inspiration from the many soul, gospel, and R&B singer-songwriters she loves. The music and style of artists such as Alicia Keys, Jacob Collier, and Ella Fitzgerald all inform Danielle's music. You can hear their influence on her single, "Love Stands," a track she released in 2020 in response to the murder of George Floyd.

"A lot of the times [when] the lyrics flow are a time when I'm reflecting on something I'm going through, or something I want to say, but it's not quite coming through in words," Danielle explains.

"Love Stands" encapsulates so much of what makes Danielle's music special. It's a solo piano ballad, simple in its arrangement and leaving room for her voice and lyrics to take the spotlight. With familiar phrasing, enhanced by the strength of Danielle's voice, "Love Stands" is a poignant and timely message of perseverance, positivity, and compassion in the face of overwhelming hardship. It's universal in scale, but at the same



Danielle Hope Edwards

**Ultimately, I just want to put the message out there that you're never alone, and there are people who genuinely care for you and love you.**

time the lyrics — suffused with her spirituality and perspective and driven by a wholehearted compassion — come from a deeply personal place.

"I grew up being really unable to open up about my mental health, and so when I would struggle with it, there wasn't always an outlet I could have. But music was one of those outlets," Danielle explains. "I also want to use [music] to maybe help others who might be going through the same... Ultimately, I just want to put the message out there that you're never alone, and there are people who genuinely care for you and love you. And some of them you might not even know yet, but you're still worthy. You're still loved, and your life is worth living. It's not a mistake."

Though her studies come first, Danielle's musical journey continues as well. Alongside teaching practicums, she has written and recorded a number of songs in recent months, and she has plans to release an EP (Extended Play record) before the end of the year. Those two passions are deeply connected for Danielle, and her journey is just beginning.

"My music is very personal to me and a great desire inside my heart, and then teaching and working with youth is also very personal to me and a great desire in my heart. So I think, at this stage I'm still working out if they will intertwine more or less, but I'm excited to see where it will go."



**ROB HOWARD** co-founded Kingston Live in 2018 to help forge a destiny for Kingston as Canada's First Capital of Music.

# A Bridge Too Far?

The Third Crossing and other developments may be polluting the Cataraqui River

STORY BY **JEREMY MILLOY**  
AND **CARL HANNA**



Styrofoam gathers at the base of the under-construction Third Crossing. **PHOTO CREDIT:** Carl Hanna

“

I'VE FOUND THREE DEAD BEAVER, THREE DEAD MUSKRATS, TWO PAINTED TURTLES, A SWAN, AN OTTER, AND THOUSANDS OF FISH. HOW MANY OF THESE DEATHS WERE PREVENTABLE?

This is a pivotal moment for the Cataraqui River and the Inner Harbour. Projects currently being built and decisions currently being made — including the Third Crossing, federal dredging of the riverbed, and the potentially ecologically disastrous tannery lands development — will shape the future of the river and the lives of all creatures living with it for generations to come.

That's why it's important that we pay attention to the river and how these changes affect her. Attention is the first step towards protection and care. River First YGK is a group of local people determined to care for the river throughout these changes and beyond. Carl Hanna, a River First YGK member, has done amazing work monitoring and responding to pollution in the river and along the shoreline arising from Third-Crossing construction. He inspires me to remember that environmentalism isn't something we do “out there” — but something we can do by attending to the air above us, the earth beneath us, and the water that gives us life. Here is his story, in his words:

“I am a retired, disabled building contractor of forty years in the Kingston area. I also give sanctuary to abused or otherwise neglected horses, and I house and care for a feral cat colony. I consider myself an environmentalist and a Canadian with respect for our people, animals and all aspects of the environment and natural world. I am an active co-parent to my grandchildren and have spent a large part of my life helping to nurture and protect the civic and environmental needs of my community. I am homeless, disabled and survive as best as my current abilities will allow.

“I started walking our pup along the shores of the Cataraqui River a few years ago. As winter runoff was happening in 2020, I noticed a large amount of Styrofoam in the melt. My first thought was that recycling was getting away from the apartments on the hill above. I had been doing a cleanup of garbage on shore and in the water twice a year already, so I went ahead and cleaned up the shoreline and water's edge of the winter's accumulated mess. I thought I had captured it all, but within days I saw the Styrofoam was spreading still. This was not recycling. When I saw a boat with a couple of workers struggling in the overgrown weeds and water lilies with a pool dip net, I realized the Styrofoam was coming from the construction site. The Third Crossing team had used Styrofoam floats to place turbidity curtains around the bridge construction, and muskrats ate away at the Styrofoam, releasing it to the waters and shore.

“The volume of Styrofoam grew exponentially from there. It was evident that this mess wasn't being attended to with the urgency and professionalism needed to con-

trol it. I still had hopes that the people responsible would act responsibly. I emailed the city and received a stock response — basically, we know about this problem and have it under continuous management. Unfortunately, the words didn't match what was evident. I documented the following year of inaction and ineffective results. I used social media when other attempts to make contact failed. On social media, the City showed little concern for the true extent and spread of this toxic release, and I felt their progress reports actually contradicted their actions.

“My two most serious concerns are obviously the unchecked release of Styrofoam into the water and on the shoreline, and the impact on river wildlife. I've done a count of dead wildlife I have tracked in the area: I've found three dead beaver, three dead muskrats, two painted turtles, a swan, an otter, and thousands of fish. How many of these deaths were preventable? Are we sharing space ethically with these creatures?

“I have contacted the City of Kingston with little success so far, but staff members have told me about their heartfelt concern for these issues. Members of the Third Crossing team have committed to sharing with me how extensively they plan to clean this up, and how we will know when the cleanup is complete. I have also asked them to ascertain the extent of the damage and spread of their Styrofoam release.

“It is my belief that we need to act responsibly for the sake of our environment, even if it's not politically correct or profitable. If we are not responsible for our actions, our environment suffers. This catastrophe shouldn't have happened and was completely avoidable. The unfortunate decision to leave it has now allowed it to become a toxic spill that professional and prompt action could have avoided. My suggestions to you for protecting our water: if nothing else write city councillors and staff, write your MP and MPP. I know that's the usual answer, but sometimes the message gets through. This is also an election year.

“And if you see garbage in the water, pick it out and put it where it belongs.”

**JEREMY MILLOY** (he/him) is the coordinator of River First YGK, a group dedicated to caring for the Cataraqui River. He can often be found walking his wiener dog, Tucker, around the Skeleton Park neighbourhood.

**CARL HANNA** has a wonder for this world and a respect for everything in it. That's enough to keep him busy.

# Use Less Salt

High levels of chloride from road salt are threatening Ontario's aquatic ecosystems

STORY BY **SHELLEY ARNOTT**

ILLUSTRATION BY **BENJAMIN NELSON**

**S**alt plays a critical role in our everyday lives. We use salt to flavour and preserve foods; it also saves lives and prevents injury because it lowers the freezing point of water and keeps paved surfaces free of ice. Every year, Canadians apply approximately seven million tonnes of de-icing salts, usually in the form of sodium chloride (NaCl), to roads, parking lots, and sidewalks, reducing vehicle accidents by as much as eighty percent.

Despite these benefits, salt has a darker side. When consumed in excess it poses health risks, particularly for people with hypertension. When applied in excess to the environment, it poses risks for terrestrial plants and organisms living in lakes and streams. The salt that we apply to paved surfaces works only when it is dissolved in water, either in a pre-mixed brine solution or when ice melts under friction from tires. The dissolved salt lowers the freezing point of water by interfering with the formation of ice crystals. In the spring and after rainstorms, salt moves with water as it runs off roads into storm sewers or percolates through soil, and eventually makes its way into ground water, streams, and lakes. Much of the road salt applied in Kingston ends up in the Cataraqui River, Little Cataraqui Creek, and Lake Ontario, directly through the storm water network. In the area around Skeleton Park, sanitary sewage and storm water are collected in the same pipe and are processed at a water treatment plant before re-entering waterways. Unfortunately, chloride is not removed with water treatment. Some of the road salt seeps through the soil, where it is retained and then slowly and continuously enters waterways.

We monitor salinity caused by de-icers by measuring the concentration of chloride, which is chlorine with an extra electron, because it is a component of many salts (e.g., NaCl, CaCl<sub>2</sub>, MgCl<sub>2</sub>). In Ontario, eighty percent of lakes contain chloride concentrations below five milligrams per litre of water (mg/L), indicating minimal impact of de-icing salts. However, in urban areas and regions in southern Ontario with dense networks of roads, lakes and streams can have concentrations as high as 1,000 mg/L, a level that has been steadily increasing since we first began using de-icing salts in the 1940s. Although there is a paucity of multi-decadal records for chloride concentration in lakes, the Ontario Ministry of Environment, Conservation and Parks has about fifty years of data for Lake Simcoe, where the chloride concentration has steadily increased from somewhere around ten mg/L in 1970 to more than sixty mg/L in recent years. For comparison, the chloride concentration in Lake Ontario, offshore from Kingston, is currently twenty-three mg/L, while in the Cataraqui River, which flows into Lake Ontario, the chloride concentration is five mg/L.

In excess amounts, salt is toxic to organisms. In recognition of this, Canada has developed water quality guidelines to protect drinking water and aquatic life. Health Canada has set an aesthetic objective for chloride of less than 250 mg/L for drinking water, which is the concentration at which water starts to taste salty and can impact distribution systems through corrosion. Fortunately, the chloride concentration of drinking water throughout Canada is typically under ten mg/L. Kingston drinking water comes from Lake Ontario where the chloride concentration is well below the aesthetic objective. The water quality guideline for the protection of aquatic life, however, at less than 120 mg/L, is lower than the drinking water objective because physiological functioning of many organisms, especially invertebrates, is more sensitive to relatively small amounts of chloride.

Considering the relatively low concentrations of chloride in lakes and streams throughout much of Ontario, including in the Kingston region, aquatic life in most lakes should be protected by our federal guidelines. However, recent research has revealed that water fleas, small organisms that graze on algae, can have lower birth rates and higher mortality at chloride concentrations as low as five to forty mg/L. A survey of recreational lakes in Ontario revealed that almost twenty percent of these lakes have chloride concentrations within this range, suggesting that many lakes may already be impacted by elevated chloride concentration. A study conducted across four countries (Canada, U.S.A., Spain, and Sweden) found that the number of grazers decreased by as much as fifty percent at the Canadian Water Quality Guideline of 120 mg/L. Coincidentally, the loss of grazers resulted in increased algae abundance at most sites.

There are two critical issues to consider about road salt use. One is that chloride concentrations in lakes and streams will continue to rise if we continue using salt on roads and paved surfaces. The second is that aquatic organisms, which are instrumental in providing freshwater ecosystem services on which we rely (e.g., drinking water, recreation,



**If we continue using large amounts of salt each winter, the benefits we derive from freshwater ecosystems may be in peril.**

fishing), are sensitive to chloride at concentrations well below current guidelines. If we continue using large amounts of salt each winter, the benefits we derive from freshwater ecosystems may be in peril. We need effective strategies to deal with ice and snow that don't involve dumping massive amounts of salt onto roads, parking lots, and sidewalks. Using salt brines rather than rock salt can reduce the amount of salt needed for de-icing, but this alone will not stop the rising chloride levels in lakes and streams. We need innovative solutions that allow us to both reduce the risk of injury and prevent the loss of biodiversity and valued freshwater ecosystem services.



**SHELLEY ARNOTT** is a professor in the Department of Biology at Queen's University. She uses field and laboratory experiments, as well as lake surveys, to understand the impact of environmental change on aquatic organisms. Most of her research and recreational activities occur on lakes in Muskoka and the region around Kingston.



# The Kids Are Alright

SPAF 2022 a lesson in family and childlike joy

STORY BY **KEMI KING AND MO HORNER**

**Unsurprisingly, the kids were the real source of the fun at the 2022 Skeleton Park Arts Festival (SPAF). The kids volunteered to move chairs and tables. The kids were the first eager congregants of the early morning sets. The kids started every dance party. The kids smiled when we slipped them candies from our fanny packs. For fun, the kids — in the shade behind the stage — learned their names in American Sign Language. The kids wore their 2016 SPAF shirts like dresses and danced without their shoes, embodying the kind of vibrant un-preciousness that SPAF embraces.**

As first-time emcees, the kids modeled what we needed to be: A warm pair of voices on the mic. Turns out it's easy to be fun when you're having fun and feeling like family.

In hosting SPAF, we learned that in order to be family, you have to act like family. You have to prioritize care and understanding above showtimes and scripts. You have to share snacks and offer up your bed. You have to take the time to bake the bread and make the coffee. You need to smile at each other on the street even after disagreements around the dinner table. This is not to say that we didn't make mistakes.

How do we move forward when we've wronged our families? It's never a copy/paste situation. SPAF has a long way to go in working against gentrification and in making everyone welcome. For the McBurney Park Neighborhood, and for SPAF as an extension, to function like a little family and a real community, we must find better ways to support everyone that is here.

Turns out, kids are excellent at making folks feel welcome.

Let's be clear, we know we're not actually a family. We know that these kids and their families have rich inner and outer lives that don't include us. But there is something special in the fact that year after year, this festival



**The youth were always around the main stage. No matter what was playing, the youth could be found dancing, laughing, and rolling around.**

SPAF 2022

returns to the same park. Every June the trees get to watch their neighbourhood kids grow alongside them. When I introduced Claya Way Brackenbury (AKA Piner) and her band to the stage, I looked out at a bunch of elementary school kids beaming with pride. I read Claya's bio, in which she says that one of her inspirations is her childhood neighbourhood, Skeleton Park. I couldn't help but imagine Claya ten years ago, watching another generation of musicians. I couldn't help but look out into the crowd of dancing kids and imagining who'd grace this stage in ten years. I couldn't help but be touched by the cyclical and generational magic that a yearly neighbourhood festival witnesses.

SHAD is a Juno Award-winning rapper, a documentary host, and has been short listed for the Polaris Prize. He is also fantastic with children. With SHAD being one of our headliner acts, I did not get the chance to speak with him before his workshop and had no idea as to how genuine and kind he is. When SHAD arrived, we were still waiting for many of the participants to show up — they had gotten caught up in the excitement of the festival. SHAD sat at the back of the church, waiting for things to get underway when the kids started to notice him. The youth gathered around him, informally starting the workshop by asking for pictures and who knows what. As we switched gears into the actual workshop the kids became a little more shy, but SHAD was able to keep the energy going, encouraging questions and joking alongside the youth. The kids loved speaking with SHAD, and at the end we got even more pictures along with a group photo. Later in the day I found out that one of the kids and his friend acted as SHAD's chaperones for the rest of the day. The kids showed SHAD around, and when I was unable to locate our headline per-

former, I could just chat with the youth's mother to get a message relayed.

Throughout even just the few days of the festival, we felt such a connection to the folks and faces that kept popping up. On Thursday night, at the dance event, these four kids came up to me to compliment my mushroom hat. I decided then that they were my favourites. I know as teachers or organizers you're not meant to have favourites — but the truth, in family, is that you do. I'm positive these kids don't think of me as anything other than being the hat lady with the candies, but seeing some of them weeks later brought joy to me. I feel like that rich aunt who only comes by every few years to give you all the things (candies) you want.

The youth were always around the main stage. No matter what was playing, the youth could be found dancing, laughing, and rolling around. Their energy was contagious, bringing the adults childlike joy, dancing barefoot, repeating moves only kids would think of, and, in some cases, even rolling in the dirt. There is genuine bliss in being around people you love. There is also genuine bliss in being around strangers. SPAF 2022 transported us back to playing outside, back to being a neighbourhood kid.

The kids are alright, and maybe we could be, too.

**MO HORNER** is a PhD student, artist, and silly girl based in Katarokwi-Kingston. She's long admired Kemi's tenacity and vision as an artist, and was honoured to co-emcee and spill the tea with her.

**KEMI KING** is an Art-loving Aries and Black radical femme, based in treaty 14 and 22. Her favorite Taurus is Mo Horner (important to note that Kemi's brother is also a Taurus).