

Issue Twelve **THE** Winter 2023
**SKELETON
PRESS**



**NEIGHBOURHOOD
FASHION**

Fashion Without Fear

BY ANNE KERSHAW & GREG TILSON



Anyone who still associates fashion with Paris runways, supermodels, and glossy magazines hasn't been paying attention.

In today's world, fashion is being implicated in some of the world's most intractable crises (environmental harm, slave labour and human rights). This includes the fight by the women of Iran, whose rallying cry "Women, Life, Freedom" encompasses the right to choose their own clothing without fear of reprisal.

At the same time, fashion is being appropriated and redefined by people who crave style, but on their own terms. They include the "thrifters" who can spot a couture treasure in a pile of cast-offs; the drag queens and kings whose ensembles signify a "radical joy and political defiance"; and high school students who continue to push the boundaries of acceptable dress for class.

Second only to the oil industry as the most polluting business in the world (it generates significant carbon emissions, consumes enormous amounts of water, and a lot of clothing ends up in the dump), the fashion industry needs a reckoning. Fast fashion, the profit driver of the industry over the past twenty years, raises a host of ethical issues, including its track record as one of the world's biggest consumers of earth's water supply.

This issue of *The Skeleton Press* turns the spotlight on the complex and fraught — but also sometimes joyful — world of fashion. We hope you will try it on for size.

P.S. Vincent Perez, art director for *The Skeleton Press*' past 10 issues, was awarded a prestigious design award by the Ontario Art Galleries Association in November for work he did to accompany the Agnes Etherington Art Centre's project, *With Opened Mouths*. And the new poet laureate for the City of Kingston is *Skeleton Press* columnist Sadiqa de Meijer. Congratulations to both.

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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LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

We are interested in your thoughts and opinions about stories that appear in *The Skeleton Press*, and we invite you to contribute by writing a letter to the editor.

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ATTENTION WRITERS & ILLUSTRATORS

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 music.

We also welcome new illustrators. If interested, please send us a letter of interest and samples of your work. We pay market rates for illustrations.

Send pitches and letters of interest to: skeletonpresseditor@gmail.com.

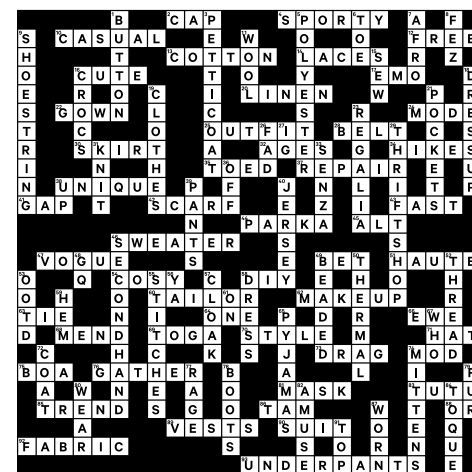
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A Nod to Local Tattoo Culture

Making their mark in Kingston

STORY BY AARA MACAULEY

When I moved to Kingston a little over two decades ago, the options for tattoo shops in the city were decidedly small. Since then, I've watched with delight as the number of artists and shops has expanded exponentially. And the demand has grown too, which has allowed artists to specialize and develop their own signature styles. As the taboo around having tattoos, especially visible, has diminished with time, more people have started to collect artwork on their bodies the same way they might for their home. Sometimes the work has profound meaning — whether cultural, spiritual, or personal. Other times, the impulse to get a tattoo is less profound — we do it for fun, to connect with friends, or simply because we love someone's style. I owe one of my sleeves, my knuckle, and thigh tattoos to several local artists, and for this article I had the pleasure of speaking with Austin Prentice, one of the artists at True North Tattoo, a shop that helped turn the tide for bringing in outside talent and inspiring local artists to make their mark on the Kingston scene.

Prentice is a queer, Indigenous artist who specializes in traditional tattoos influenced by the American traditional roots of the '60s and '70s. Picture clean, bold black outlines, two-dimensional illustrations, and bright, solid pigment. Sailor Jerry and Ed Hardy (pre-bedazzled T-shirt empire) are probably the most famous examples. Prentice adds a modern twist and an expanded colour palette. He also enjoys traditional tattooing with Japanese tattooing imagery.

I asked him about the local scene. "Kingston has a diverse tattoo culture," he says. "You can find world-class realism, very detail-orientated blackwork, great neo-traditional, high-level Japanese, and very great traditional tattooing. There is diversity in this city, and each shop has its own distinct style that really helps the consumer find a shop that fits."

Kingston is home to "a small community of high-level tattooers" which, he argues, "helped a lot of us really focus on what we would like to [do] and... to develop distinct drawing styles." This, in turn, has encouraged customers to "find the right artist that does that one style, instead of what a lot of other small towns have, which is someone who does everything. Specialization within tattooing helps the consumer know what to expect." Think shopping at a boutique versus a convenience store. Specialization has also helped to educate clients. It's a misconception, says Prentice, that tattooers should "do exactly what [clients] bring in line for line. A good tattoo isn't a copy of something you saw off Pinterest. We put a lot of time into developing a look to our work/art; if you like what you see in our portfolios, trust us with a concept and let us draw something for you."

This plays into Austin's favourite part of tattooing. "I love being able to build large-scale concepts over years with people and really help someone build a story within their tattoos," he says. "Helping clients get something that makes them feel good about themselves is all that matters to me."

Prentice credits many artists for turning him on to tattooing. For him, Tim Pausinger "is probably the biggest influence ... the way he tattoos is really inspiring, and I draw a lot of influence on how my work looks from him." Brandon Ing and Monki Diamond "taught me most of what I know about what goes into making a solid traditional tattoo and really influenced where my work went in the early stages of my career. I owe a lot to them." Locally, it's his colleagues at True North. True North's founder, Wayne Murrill, "has influenced me a ton over the close to four years I have worked for him, I have learned a lot just by looking at the way he draws things to complement the body so naturally." He credits Celeste Fournier for pushing him to try new things, and Joel Conroy's advice in tackling coverups and playing with colour palettes outside his usual style. "Dakota has really influenced how I tattoo black and grey and really focus on contrast" and "Tiffany Dere influenced colour choices and pushed me into becoming the tattooer I am today, and I'm thankful for that."

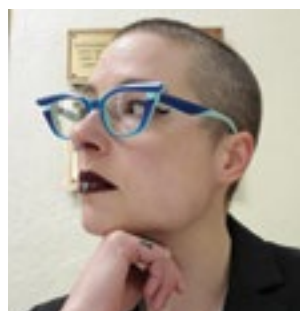
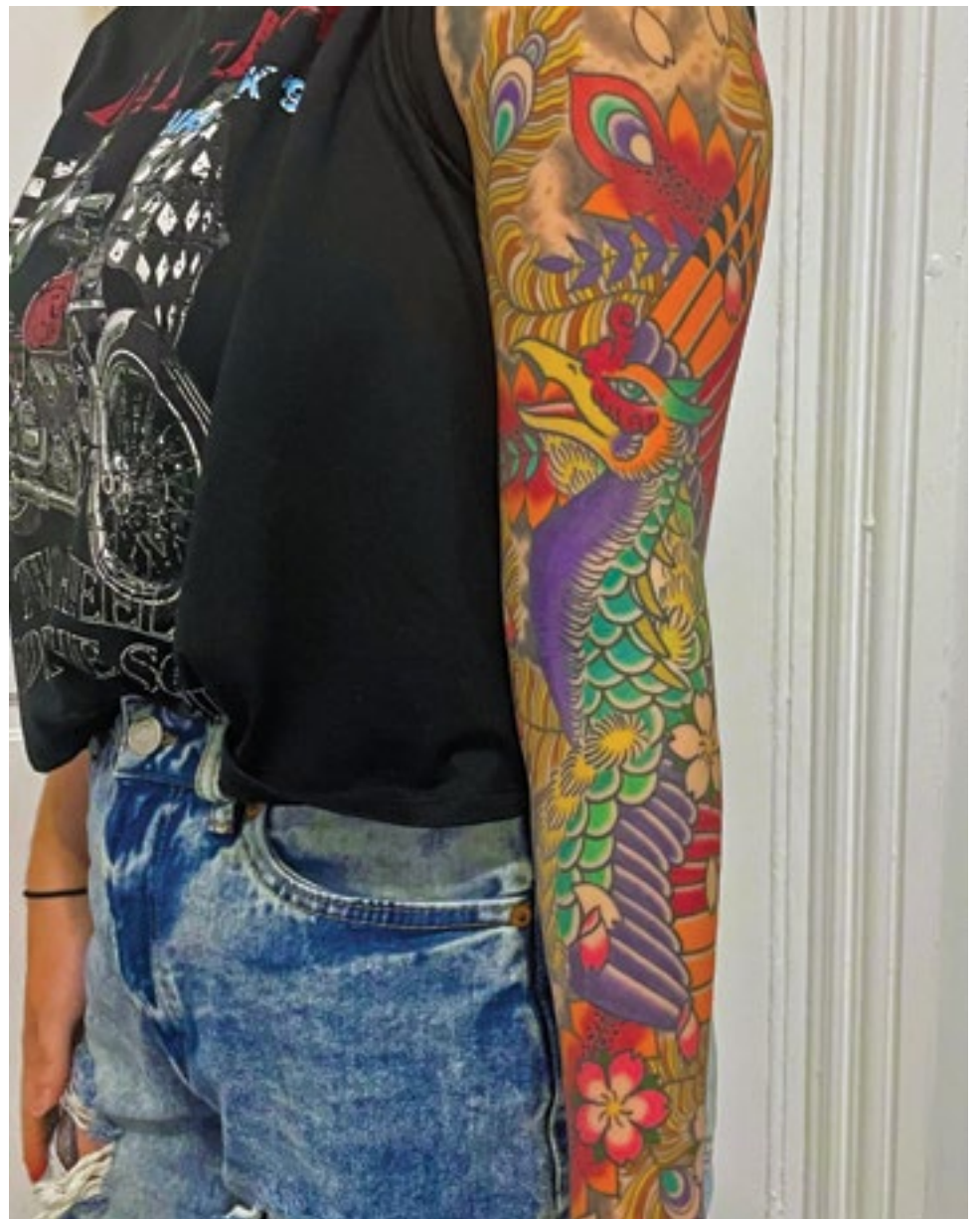
So, what advice does Prentice have for folks considering their first (or next) tattoo in Kingston? Ask yourself, "Does this person fit the drawing style I'd like?...If the answer is no, it's better to find someone who does fit" than "force someone into doing...art you want them to try and copy."

Finally, does Prentice have any plans for his next piece? Of course! "My boss is doing a large Japanese dragon on my torso. I'm excited. It's my last large spot on my body and I'm looking forward to it being filled."

You can find Prentice at True North Tattoo, in the Inner Harbour at 159 Queen Street.



AS THE TABOO AROUND HAVING TATTOOS...HAS DIMINISHED...MORE PEOPLE HAVE STARTED TO COLLECT ARTWORK ON THEIR BODIES THE SAME WAY THEY MIGHT FOR THEIR HOME.



AARA MACAULEY is the Artistic Director of Kingston WritersFest and has been involved in the fundraising, event planning, and promotion committees for various local cabaret, film, and arts festivals. She is a proud member of the LGBTQIA2S+ community and served as Chairperson on the Reelout Arts Project Board of Directors for eight years. She also chaired the Poet Laureate Working Group, and was a founding member of the steering committee for the Canadian Association of Literary Festivals. She currently sits on the City of Kingston Arts Advisory Committee and the Art in Public Places Working Group.

Five Big Ideas About Public Art

Stirring creativity and collaboration

STORY BY **ULRIKE BENDER**

On a glorious fall morning I find myself in Victoria Park walking toward Nicholas Crombach's *Horse and Cart*. The sun is just beaching the trees, glinting off the eye of the horse and casting light on the raised right leg. The scene reminds me that one of the pleasures of looking at art in public spaces is experiencing how the work changes throughout the seasons, or even throughout the day.

Aesthetics aside, public art serves a number of purposes. It allows us to experience art in the course of daily life; it makes us pay attention to our civic environment; it gives us an opportunity to pause and reflect; it humanizes the built environment; and it makes us proud of where we live. The best public art combines aesthetics with a message, whether humorous or serious, a reflection of social and political realities in that place at that moment.

What follows are five ways of considering public art in a different light.

PURPOSE: Inspiration for creation in another art field, such as dance, which when performed outside a traditional theatre space would reach entirely new audiences. To try out this idea I spoke to Ricky Beaulieu, artistic director of 5678 Dance Studio. He let me know that his dancers have in the past performed in outdoor architectural settings. "The space is still the most important thing," he says. The space must be conducive to movement. In order to respond to a particular piece of public art, Beaulieu would have to spend time with the piece and research the back story (here he was thinking of the two intriguing bronze figures at the corner of Division and Princess streets called *The Wilds of Kingston*), then originate a concept that could be developed and would determine the qualities of movement. Creation — a kind of play — could take place on the spot and then be taken into the studio to be refined before it reached the performance stage. Beaulieu sees the artistic result as a mix of theatre and dance, including music provided by a speaker from an iPhone with Bluetooth. A planned street closure would be ideal timing, given that these sculptures are located at a busy intersection.

"Have you seen the Pizza Monster mural at Raglan and Montreal?" he asks me. The entire south wall is covered by joyful, colourful, crazy characters, some with multiple eyes and tongues hanging out, eagerly focussed on a giant slice of pizza. The painting is by Aaron Forsyth and Eric Williams. Inspiration, perhaps, for a pop-up performance by a group of younger dancers for whom the subject would appeal?

MATERIALS: Ephemeral or time sensitive rather than long lasting. In June 2021, in Lake Ontario Park, the City of Kingston unveiled a living public art installation designed by Métis artist Terence Radford called *Manidoo Ogitigan*, translated as *Spirit Garden* from the Ojibwe language.

The historically significant project was conceived in collaboration with Alderville First Nation, which, in 1837, was relocated from its ancestral lands in Kingston to an area north of Cobourg — a land surrender following the influx of United Empire Loyalists after

PUBLIC ART MAKES US PAY ATTENTION TO OUR CIVIC ENVIRONMENT; IT GIVES US AN OPPORTUNITY TO PAUSE AND REFLECT.

the American Revolution. The garden includes permanent elements such as walkways and Wampum Belt references, but it also changes with the seasons as plants grow and die.

This past summer I experienced a work by Janice Brant, part of the *Three Sisters, Three Artists, One Fire* exhibition made in collaboration with artists Susan Wallis and Nina-Marie Lister. The installation, housed in Melt Gallery at Base31 in Prince Edward County, consisted of three approximately waist-high log mortars of staggered heights that had been made outdoors using fire and air. The accompanying video showed how, by blowing through long copper pipes on a small mound of coals, makers (and earlier Indigenous generations) encouraged a controlled fire to burn a deep depression in the cut end of the upturned logs. The resulting objects, along with long-handled wooden pestles, were both beautiful and utilitarian. Once leaving the gallery the objects will be donated to kitchens in Tyendinaga, where Brant lives. What if, I thought, the mortar logs and tree-branch pestles were placed in a wooded urban setting, to be discovered and then to gradually disintegrate and become part of the earth? And what if, over this period, a QR code on signage gave intrepid wanderers in the space a chance to view the video of the making, as well as the historical and cultural significance, of this organic public art piece?

LOCATION AND COMMUNITY INPUT:

Public art is collaborative. To some degree, every public art project is born of an interactive process involving artists, approval and funding agencies, and construction teams. Locating public art in a neighbourhood in which the art is created — with community input — fosters respect and ownership.

This past summer Martha's Table collaborated with community-rooted arts instructor Heather Poechman and Kingston School of Art (KSOA) on an interactive mural that focuses attention on the mission of the community restaurant: to address food insecurity in Kingston. KSOA students and restaurant patrons collaborated to produce a mural after Poechman offered a two-day mural-making workshop. Pedestrians who spy the mural on the east wall of the restaurant, away from the street, can position themselves for a photo-op in front of a pair of rainbow-coloured wings comprised of overlapping forks. The mural has also provided an appealing backdrop for photos of "angel" donors. Seen as a symbol of optimism, the mural has been well received by patrons, who feel the space now looks more inviting.

In the Skeleton Park neighbourhood, ceramic artist and public-art advocate Marney McDiarmid has been in discussions with the City of Kingston since 2019 about a street mural at an intersection in the area. Referencing guidelines for a similar project in Halifax (Halifax Neighbourhood Placemaking), McDiarmid and SPAF Artistic Director Greg Tilson embrace the possibility of combining placemaking with active transportation. The project has stalled, partly because the City of Kingston does not currently have guidelines that specify safety requirements for murals installed directly onto roads.

Perhaps more immediately doable is an idea McDiarmid put forth for a "light installation." By placing a simple light projection box (purchased or homemade) in front of houses in the neighbourhood, imagery designed by local artists, ideally with input from residents, can be projected for a period of time to enliven houses on winter nights.

AWARENESS: There are ways for a city to highlight its artistic riches.

A stroll along Kingston's waterfront will take us by several major works of art with historical significance: *The Gaskin Lion* commemorates former mayor John Gaskin and was donated to the City by his family in 1909; *Pollution*, two pipes disgoring sludge is a gift in 1973 from celebrated Quebec artist Yvon Cozic to mark the City's 300th anniversary; *Time*, 1973, by Kosso Eloul, is made of aluminium alloy developed at Alcan specifically for this project; and *Tetra*, made by Ted Bieler commemorates the 1976 Olympic sailing events. City of Kingston Public Art Coordinator Taylor Norris wants to raise awareness of these and other notable public art pieces. To this end, the City is collaborating with a community-based Art in Public Places Working Group to explore ideas about how to bring to life some of the older sculptures by re-contextualizing them through multi-media interventions such as projections. Perhaps this could reference, on a smaller scale, the work of Quebec artist Robert Lepage. In addition, the City of Kingston offers a self-guided Arts Walk (launched in 2020), an online map that encourages exploration and understanding of the public art pieces in the city.

In-person guided tours are another way to promote awareness. Just as docents lead tours of exhibitions at Agnes, so could knowledgeable guides create a vibrant but manageable itinerary through the streets and parks of Kingston. High school teachers always welcome the opportunity for experiential learning. An arts tour might pique their students' interests and encourage critical thinking. Primary and junior students, when given the chance, bring fresh perspectives to the physical world.

The City of Chicago offers highly successful architectural boat tours. Could the Confederation Tour Train serve a similar purpose, with stops along the way?

CLOCKWISE FROM TOP LEFT:

An “angel” donor poses in front of the mural made in collaboration with KSOA on the east wall of the community restaurant. **PHOTO CREDIT:** Courtesy of Martha’s Table

One of two bronzes called *The Wilds of Kingston*, by Brandon Vickard, which could provide inspiration for creation in another art medium. **PHOTO CREDIT:** Chris Miner

Community members making road art at an intersection in Halifax.

Log mortars by Janice Brant would gradually return to the earth if installed outside. **PHOTO CREDIT:** Levi Weir; courtesy of Melt Gallery



FUNDING: Municipalities with strapped budgets can find innovative ways to fund public art. Some Canadian cities require developers to include in their budgets the cost of materials, fabrication, transportation to the site, signage and maintenance of public art — a way for developers to give back after taking from an urban space. In Toronto, the mandate requires one per cent of gross construction costs of long-term infrastructure.

In Kingston, no such mandate exists, but developers are encouraged to use this budget formula to include public art in their plans. In addition, Section 37 of the Ontario Planning Act, called Community Benefits Charges, gives developers of private land the option to negotiate increased height and density in

return for community benefits that include public art. Public art thus becomes a bargaining tool. Could Kingston City Planning follow the cue of larger cities?

A few caveats: First, street art can veer toward becoming a tool for gentrification as developers commission murals and sculptures to enhance the appeal of their neighbourhoods while at the same time making accommodation unaffordable. Think tannery lands. Second, the success of this kind of public art project depends on ensuring a proper art commissioning process involving a jury and community engagement, steps that are not always adhered to by private developers. Third, artists who are called upon and would welcome work risk becoming complicit in a development they don’t support.

Ultimately, all parties involved in the conception and creation of public art must never lose sight of its purpose.

For more information about the installation by Janice Brant, visit www.meltstudiogallery.com/three-sisters-three-artists-one-fire



ULRIKE BENDER is a community docent at the Agnes Etherington Art Centre and a writer for the Kingston School of Art gallery web site. She spends a lot of time looking at art.

Introducing a New Community to the Skeleton Park Neighbourhood

Capoeira: “Martial art disguised as dance”

STORY BY **STUART MILLER-DAVIS**



When Jean Kwanda and his partner decided to make Kingston their home back in 2015, he knew he wanted to share his passion with the community, and he didn't want to waste any time.

His passion is Capoeira (kaa-puh-weh-ruh), a multi-disciplinary martial art developed by African and Indigenous peoples enslaved in what is now known as Brazil in the 1500s, and evolving ever since.

Kwanda established Axé Capoeira Kingston and became the head instructor, teaching classes out of Next

Church on Colborne Street. On their website Capoeira is described as “martial art disguised as dance,” but Kwanda calls it a “multi-disciplinary art form.”

“Whatever you need to get from it, Capoeira will give it to you,” he said. “There are musicians who join and gravitate towards [the musical] side of things. Then you have people who are athletic and like what it does for them as it pushes them to their limits. Then you have the people coming for self-defence, ‘I want to learn how to defend myself. I want to be strong and have discipline.’ So, you have all these individuals of different backgrounds who come for different reasons. It’s an art form that’s not just one thing.”



Kwanda began his journey into the art form in 2009 in Victoria, BC, training under Mestrando Testa, a renowned Capoeirista who has been invited to teach classes across North and South America, as well as in Europe. Kwanda also did some training with Marcos da Silva, better known worldwide as Mestre Barrão, the founder of Grupo Axé Capoeira, of which the Kingston chapter is a member

Kwanda rose through the ranks of the Capoeira belt system during twelve years of training in Victoria and began teaching beginner classes for both adolescents and adults. He also continued to perform in dance, solos, and music in Axé Capoeira events around the world.

Although he had support from Mestrando Testa in starting Axé Capoeira Kingston, Kwanda said it was a new challenge to be the main instructor and teach classes for every skill level. “When you teach, you always learn things about yourself; how much you know, how much you have to offer,” he said. “You get to know your community and what they like. Then you have to adjust your style of teaching. It’s a journey where you’re always learning,” Kwanda said about teaching classes. “It was a learning process in being a teacher and how I can get better. It’s important to have students who will challenge me mentally and ask questions that will make me expand on my knowledge. It makes me learn more, which means I can keep providing for my students.”

There are no requirements to join a Capoeira class. Kwanda said it’s helpful to have some previous experience in martial arts or other acrobatics to aid in picking things up more quickly, but it is not needed. One way to make coming in for the first time less daunting is to come with a family member or a friend so you can go through the challenges together.

“Come into it with joy,” he said. “It might look intimidating but you’re here to have a good time. Be open to learning. Don’t be discouraged, because it’s an art form like any other, and it takes some time. You don’t need to be hard on yourself because it’s about so much more than that. It’s about community.”

One element of the shared community is the Batizado, an event that celebrates students’ graduation from one belt to the next. The ceremony is also a celebration of Brazilian culture and music that everyone of all skill levels can enjoy.

Kwanda noted during the interview how many Brazilians he’s met since he made the Limestone City his home. According to 2021 census data, there are 220 people in private households in Kingston who identify as having an ethnic or cultural link to Brazil.

Regular classes are held on Tuesdays and Thursdays from five to six in the evening. Kwanda encourages everyone to give it a try because he believes there truly is something for everyone. For people looking to give it a try there’s the option of going for a free trial class. The rest of the pricing can be found on their website (www.axecapoeirakingston.com), with options for online classes, seasonal passes, and four-class passes. There is also pricing for children and students.

At the end of the day, Kwanda’s message is simple. “Come in. Have fun and train hard.”



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.

Mushroom Shops Are Coming: Are We Ready?

STORY BY **RON SHORE** / ILLUSTRATION BY **PATRICK BRANT**

For some time now, storefront shops retailing *Psilocybe* mushrooms, known popularly as magic mushrooms, have been opening in larger Canadian cities, most recently in Toronto and Ottawa.

We can also order psychedelic mushrooms from online retailers. I'm sure some of us have, possibly to try micro-dosing. It's only a matter of time before a *shroomacy* or mushroom café opens in Kingston. Are these the next weed stores, and what does all this mean?

Magic mushrooms have been ingested for thousands of years, are globally distributed, and may be at the source of early human religious experiences. Today, magic mushrooms are being held up as the next psychiatric therapy, a doorway into new ways of addressing mental and emotional health. Writers, coders, and creatives hail them for their creative and cognitive potencies; folk mycologists such as Paul Stamets have become cultural heroes; and podcasts proliferate on the science of psychedelics. After a half-century of the war on drugs, what is happening here?

Psychedelics are a category of psychoactive drugs with the tell-tale effects of acute alterations to perception, cognition, and mood. Traditionally, these were visionary experiences, plant medicines used to heal, to guide, and to bond. Indigenous peoples, such as the Mazatec of current Mexico, kept traditions of mushroom-healing alive despite centuries of violent persecution.

Classic psychedelics are those that have profound effects on the serotonin (mood stabilizing) system of the brain, and include psilocybin (magic mushrooms), ayahuasca (DMT) and peyote (mescaline). MDMA (ecstasy) is considered psychedelic and may hold promise for treating post-traumatic stress and complementing couples therapy. While not chemically related, cannabis at high doses also qualifies in some circles as a psychedelic. All these substances can create a time-limited altered state of consciousness.

Poor mental health is often characterized by rumination and repetitive thinking. Psilocybin has been found to reduce activity in regions of the brain responsible for those traits. Brain imaging shows changes to brain states can last up to a month.

While use of psychedelics is largely safe for most people and non-addictive, notable side effects include increases to heart rate and blood pressure, nausea, and headaches. The bigger risk is what clinicians call transient anxiety and distress. While patients in clinical trials taking psilocybin receive preparation counselling from experienced therapists, many people take psilocybin on their own in settings that may not be safe. The fabled bad trip does exist; people can panic or become erratic while under psilocybin. Consider this a warning: psychedelics can be an ordeal.

But the science is compelling. Psychedelics are powerful anti-inflammatories, and brain inflammation is associated with poorer mental health. Psilocybin clinical trials show some promising results in the treatment of depression, addiction, and migraine headaches, and in easing fear at end-of-life. Early research also indicates that psychedelics may help lessen the effects of chronic stress, reduce fear conditioning, and promote neuroplasticity, or new learning.

It's clear to me that psilocybin disrupts habit, loosening the grip of past conditioning and leading to lasting health improvements. Today in Canada, health-care providers can order psychedelics such as psilocybin through Health Canada's Special Access Program. Dozens of people with advanced illnesses in Canada have legally accessed psilocybin to help ease existential distress.

Micro-dosing refers to the use of very low doses of psychedelics, which produces no hallucinogenic effects and leaves people feeling more creative and connected, and less depressed. Micro-dosing can increase anxiety, however, especially if the dose is too high or the setting isn't right. Health-care providers advise against micro-dosing every day to avoid developing tolerance.

There is some evidence that psychedelics such as psilocybin improve communication between gut and brain and may improve gut health in general. Early research findings also indicate that psilocybin mushrooms, used safely, can help improve overall well-being and self-regulation of mood while increasing adaptability to life's challenges. A commonly reported after-effect of psilocybin is feeling more connected — to nature, to purpose, to other people and to one's own true self.



Are we ready for people to begin having experiences that don't conform to our traditional sense of reality? What of the after-effects? Do we know how to help people integrate these extraordinary experiences into their everyday lives? As people seek new forms of help for their mental health, will their health professionals take on the role of shaman? A culture based on competition, productivity, and consumerism doesn't devote much thought to making space for spiritual experience.

Psychedelics are not for everyone, especially anyone experiencing psychosis. The risk of negative experiences greatly increases if someone takes too much of the drug, combines psychedelics with other drugs, doesn't properly prepare for the effects, or uses them in an unsuitable setting. People are mentally and emotionally vulnerable while under the influence of psychedelics and require monitoring and guidance by a trusted, experienced person. Micro-dosing and using smaller doses are safer, but some people will still feel anxious or neurotic.

Knowing all this, how will we feel when Shroomz-R-Us opens down the street? How should we regulate psychedelics? Should they be available only through a doctor or more easily accessible through mushroom stores soon to populate city streets alongside cannabis shops? Oregon and Colorado now provide regulated access to supervised psilocybin healing centres while decriminalizing possession of natural medicines.

Today's widespread use of psychedelics suggests the war on this drug is dying. Is *mycophilia* (love of all things mushroom), so evident in today's mainstream culture, an archaic revival of sorts? Interest in psychedelics tends to increase during times of social change and uncertainty; whether we use them or not, they are part of larger cultural conversations related to social adaptability, an uncertain future, and the unknown.

Psychedelics create what has been termed an "exquisite sensitivity to context." Perhaps this is their true value: teaching us that we are all deeply entangled with each other and our environments. Does this portend true revolutionary potential, to not simply create a new kind of psychiatry but more profoundly to reconnect humans to their social and natural environments and to each other? In this period of real climate crisis, perhaps the plants and fungi are calling.

RON SHORE is a research scientist at Queen's University and founder of Kingston's Street Health Centre. His PhD is on the clinical application of psilocybin. He lives with his family among the trees of the Kingscourt neighbourhood.

Is there a doctor in the house? Yes, in fact. An exemplary one.

Jane Philpott on the Three 'P's: Patience, Proverbs, and Privilege

STORY BY LAWRENCE SCANLAN

Dr. Jane Philpott

PHOTO CREDIT: Courtesy of Dr. Jane Philpott



At the end of a telephone conversation with Dr. Jane Philpott, the dean of medicine at Queen's University, I uttered something I have never uttered in some fifty years as a writer interviewing subjects. "It has been," I said, "a privilege to speak with you." The compliment just came out, and perhaps Dr. Philpott was as taken aback to receive it as I was to deliver it. Not the usual, "Thanks for taking the time," or "I appreciate this," but a rather unprofessional yet spontaneous expression of admiration.

For some reason I thought of that line from the comic opera, "The Pirates of Penzance": "I am the very model of a modern major-general." It struck me that Dr. Philpott has been a model — model physician, model citizen, and even model politician.

Let's start there. You may remember that in 2019 Dr. Philpott — then the federal minister of health, the first MD to hold that position — resigned from cabinet, in virtual tandem with her friend and colleague, the former Minister of Justice/Attorney-General Jody Wilson-Raybould, over what the two saw as high-level political interference in the treatment of SNC-Lavalin, a Montreal-based engineering firm charged with bribery and fraud linked to its work in Libya. This long, nasty, complicated story (the word *scandal* rightly applies), saw female politicians speaking truth to power, and paying the price for it. Parliament's Ethics Commissioner, in a report released later that year, declared that Justin

Trudeau had improperly pressured the attorney-general. Kudos, then, to Dr. Philpott for taking a principled stand.

But she had earned kudos before that. She was seen as a calm admiral, leading big fleets through choppy waters. Early in her tenure as health minister (this was spring 2016), the parliamentary bureau chief of the *Toronto Sun* (a right-wing tabloid not known for praising Liberal politicians) gave Dr. Philpott an A+ rating for her work to date. "A real-life doctor before politics," the journalist wrote, "Philpott has been a quick master of a high-profile file and is flawlessly executing against her mandate letter from the PM. She's confident talking to Canadians about health policy issues. And she's handled controversial files such as legalizing marijuana and dealing with mental health crises on First Nations with pitch-perfect tone. An easy standout in Trudeau's cabinet."

I had questions for Dr. Philpott about chronic poverty and homelessness, the twin scourges of income inequality and greed, and at one point I asked her this: "Given your experience in politics, what confidence do you place in governments — of all levels — to fix these monumental woes?"

Dr. Philpott laughed out loud (which I thought was a perfectly understandable response), but then said the following: "I am, overall, an optimist. I worry a little about the state of our democracy. It's polarized and antagonistic, with people peddling in fear and blaming other people." That said, she added, "Governments have an enormous ability to solve these problems."

We talked about what medical professionals call "the social determinants of health." The phrase means, said Dr. Philpott, "that what makes people sick or well is not just about medicine and bioscience." Having a house, a job, an income, education — or not — impacts health outcomes and even life expectancy.

When I mentioned to Dr. Philpott that in the Skeleton Park neighbourhood a certain level of NIMBY-ism has arisen in the face of plans for a new headquarters for St. Vincent de Paul's hot meal/foodbank/used clothing program — amid unprecedented demand for its services and a homeless population between two- and four-hundred people — Dr. Philpott sounded impatient. "A city like Kingston," she said, "should be able to house two- to four-hundred people."

Dr. Philpott, who turned sixty-two not long after our talk, has two sons and two daughters. I wondered whether she would counsel her children, and especially her daughters, against a career in politics, given her history and given the abuse that female politicians, especially, endure. "I would never counsel my children against a career in politics," Dr. Philpott replied. "It's a fantastic opportunity. You can get an enormous amount of good done in a short period of time."

This drive to get "good done," to treat with compassion refugees and Indigenous people, has deep and only partly religious roots. When she was a young medical student, Dr. Philpott spent time working as a clinician in East Africa and Haiti. "I had my eyes opened to inequality," she said. "I was stunned by the realization that only a small part of the world lives as we do in the West. It's completely unfair. I can only live with myself if I use the tools I have to make the world more fair."

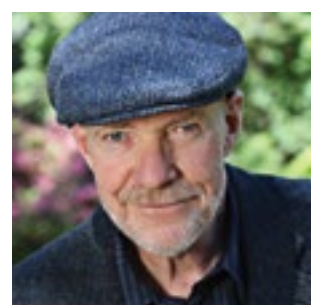
When I was in West Africa in 2008 researching a book, I spent a month in the Senegalese capital of Dakar. I had decided to spend twelve months volunteering with twelve charities and non-governmental agencies in Kingston, Toronto, Costa Rica, New Orleans, and Senegal. In Dakar, where I taught broadcast journalism at a women's radio station, the question often put to me by my Senegalese friends was this one: "Are you coming back?" Implicit was, "Or are you just like so many others from the West — dabblers and do-gooders who stay briefly, then go back home, without looking back."

Dr. Philpott is no dabbler. She worked in Africa for sixteen years. Between 2008 and 2014 she was a frequent visitor to Ethiopia, but before that (1989 to 1998) she lived in Niger where she worked as a family doctor and trained community health-care workers. While there, she experienced what she has called the worst day of her life. Her two-and-a-half-year-old daughter, Emily, contracted a severe bacterial infection and died in the Philpotts' car as they raced to the nearest hospital some two hours away.

In a TED Talk delivered in March of 2021, (https://www.ted.com/talks/jane_philpott_lessons_from_detours), Dr. Philpott recalled the moment. A long line of villagers, all of them quiet and reverential, came to console her during the period of mourning. "Be patient," they told her and her husband, Pep Philpott. "There is nothing but patience." Jane Philpott admitted that this advice confused her at first. "I think I came to realize that they were saying, 'Accept that life has pain.' Use that pain to make yourself stronger. All of these people had suffered more pain than I had."

Diarrhea, respiratory infections, measles, malaria and malnutrition can all be deadly to children in Niger. At the time of Emily's death, twenty-seven percent of babies in that country did not live to the age of five. That figure has improved remarkably since then, according to UNICEF; child mortality, though still high, is half what it was.

Patience still does not come easily to someone as driven and focussed as Jane Philpott. "I still struggle with being patient," she said. "I think over time I have come to understand that by *patience*, those villagers meant grace. It means not fighting when bad things happen, but turning those bad things into good. It's a very powerful notion."



LAWRENCE SCANLAN is the author of more than two dozen books, including *A Year of Living Generously: Dispatches from the Front Lines of Philanthropy*. From 1972 to 1976, he was a writer and editor with *Canadian Family Physician* magazine.

Dr. Jane Philpott (front row, second from right), working with Médecins Sans Frontières in Niger in 2005.



While in Niger, Dr. Philpott learned Hausa, the language spoken by most people in the country. Why, I asked her, would you learn a language that you would almost certainly never use again? As she responded, I understood what a dumb question I had asked. Many men in Niger speak French, which Dr. Philpott also speaks, but the women typically speak only Hausa. So, if she were to communicate with her female patients, she had to learn that language.

"There are a lot of proverbs in Hausa," she said. "I loved their sayings." Asked to name a few that have stuck with her, she listed these, speaking them, first in Hausa, then in English: "Wealth does not cause generosity, only the heart does." And, "The one who asks questions will never be wrong."

Dr. Philpott's proper title at Queen's University is Dean of the Faculty of Health Sciences and Director of the School of Medicine. She is the first woman to hold that position and is now more than two years into a five-year term.

Early in her new role Dr. Philpott and her colleagues in the School of Medicine, the School of Nursing and the School of Rehabilitation Therapy, spent a long time pondering what they might do differently in the next five years. What would be their focus, their philosophy? Out of those deliberations came a theme — what the dean calls "radical collaboration." The idea is that doctors, nurses, and occupational and physical therapists all work together, sharing knowledge, research, and wisdom.

Just two months into her new position, Dr. Philpott created an Office of Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion in the Faculty of Health Sciences, along with the Dean's Action Table, and she also launched a fund to promote those same three values. Ten new seats at the medical school have been set aside for Black and Indigenous med students, and another program sees Queen's doctors spending time in Cree communities on James Bay. Also in the works, said Dr. Philpott, is a new clinic in Kingston that Queen's will build to accommodate some ten thousand patients currently without a family doctor.

A day in the life of a dean of medicine is mostly meeting after meeting, with some teaching and infrequent contact with patients. But from her office at Queen's, Jane Philpott can see the lake and take sustenance from it. "I love the city," she said. "I love its beauty. The water is mesmerizing. I love all the patches of green space all over the city. People here have been incredibly warm. Kingston has everything a person could want."

She and her husband live in a village just west of the city, in a house that backs onto a conservation area. They take long walks there, at Lemoine Point and on the K&P (Kingston & Pembroke) Trail.

Africa still calls to her. One son is a computer programmer working in Uganda, where his African wife will soon, inshallah, ("God willing," as Muslims say) give birth to a baby, so a trip to East Africa looms.

I told Dr. Philpott that I had interviewed author/activist Maude Barlow at the Kingston WritersFest just weeks beforehand, and how she talked about hope. Maude is convinced that good people all over the world are doing commendable work on various social justice fronts, but we never hear about them. "I do share her hope and confidence," the doctor said. "Hope drives the world forward. There are people working hard to make the world more just."

Finally, we talked about privilege. It was the focus of Dr. Philpott's TED Talk, how those who are white, educated, and propertied must understand that only luck has put them on one side of the great divide. "The world will never be perfectly equitable," she said, "but all who are privileged should recognize that fact as a first step and then keep on adjusting social structures while never, ever, giving up."

Growing and eating well close to home in any season



STORY BY ANNE THÉRIAULT / ILLUSTRATIONS BY CHANTAL ROUSSEAU

A few years ago, when I lived in an apartment building, I decided to start a balcony garden. I'd never grown anything before, so the whole enterprise was a learning curve: sometimes thrilling, sometimes frustrating, and sometimes even heartbreaking. I wept over a batch of tomato seedlings killed by a sudden storm. Overall, it was a gratifying experience. I loved sitting out there on August evenings, surveying my lush little kingdom. When we bought a house near Skeleton Park in 2021, I was excited to have a yard, small but still many times bigger than the outdoor space I was used to. I planned an ambitious vegetable garden, and hotly anticipated all the delicious home-grown food in my future.

But in all my planning, I hadn't thought about all the neighbourhood animals that might also appreciate my garden — probably because few of those marauders can make it up to a third-floor balcony. The squirrels were brazen and, despite my best efforts, made off with most of what I managed to grow. It was disappointing, but I guess it was a lesson learned. Still, I managed pretty well when it came to my dream of eating (almost) home-grown foods, thanks to some generous (and apparently less squirrel-prone) friends and two farmers' markets within walking distance. But eating locally in Eastern Ontario during the summer and fall is one thing; doing it during the winter months is another. I pictured a lot of potatoes and squash, with the occasional bulb of garlic as a little treat.

Tibrata Gillies, the Community Kitchens manager at Loving Spoonful, who also happens to be a Red Seal chef, a former farmer, and a passionate advocate for the Kingston food scene, was quick to assure me that a local winter diet could be much more interesting than what I imagined. One of the first things she did was remind me that it doesn't have to be an all-or-nothing venture. Even just mixing a few locally grown foods into weekly meal-planning has a number of benefits.

"We've got this confluence of different factors that are limiting food supply now," says Gillies. "And if we want to try to build a more resilient local food system, one that values anybody who works in it, that values community members, that builds a stronger local economy, that uses eco-diverse growing methods, then we're creating environments that are more resilient when it comes to the extremes of weather."

Gillies offers me a laundry list of foods I can eat during the winter months that aren't squash and potatoes: beets, kohlrabi, turnips, rutabaga, sweet potatoes, kale, cabbage, parsnips, sunchokes, onions. She also reminds me that eating locally during the coldest, darkest part of the year doesn't just mean seasonal vegetables.



ANNE THÉRIAULT is a Kingston-based writer with bylines in *The Walrus*, *Chatelaine*, *Broadview Magazine* and more. She's a big fan of both skeletons and parks.



GARDENING WAS A LEARNING CURVE: SOMETIMES THRILLING, SOMETIMES FRUSTRATING, AND SOMETIMES EVEN HEARTBREAKING.

"This year, I canned some tomatoes, I made tomato sauce, I made fermented salsa, I dehydrated tomatoes," says Gillies. "I froze asparagus when it was in season. I froze all kinds of different greens ranging from dandelion to spinach to wild garlic leaves. And, you know, it's so much more fun to do things together with others than to do them by yourself. So, finding a way to do that kind of work with a group of friends, that makes the job so much easier! And it creates that connection, those kinds of conversations that people have over food. It's so rewarding."

Partnering up is another of Gillies' recommendations when it comes to dealing with inflation and rising food prices — namely, going in on bulk items with other people so that your individual costs stay down and your storage space isn't overwhelmed by, say, a five-kilogram bag of rice. She also suggests downloading apps that allow you to compare sale prices at nearby grocery stores and alert you to sales and discounts. Finally, she advises finding ways to make more expensive ingredients such as meat stretch further, like putting it in a soup or a stew or replacing it with beans, chickpeas or lentils.

One last valuable piece of advice she gives me is to build connections through asking questions. If I like the bread from a local bakery, I should ask them where they source their flour. If I enjoy the produce from a particular stand at a farmer's market, I should ask who they buy their eggs from. In the end, eating local foods isn't just about climate justice, or nutritional benefits, or catering to my palate; it's also about building a stronger community.

As for my little garden, next year I'm sticking to flowers. The neighbourhood squirrels will just have to go somewhere else.

Two Area Arts Groups Radically Trim Trash

How creative campaigns to reduce waste can lead to valuable community connections

STORY BY **GABY DEE** AND **BEN FINLEY**
ILLUSTRATION BY **COLTON FOX**

Skeleton Park Arts Festival

This past summer, the Skeleton Park Arts Festival (SPAF) celebrated a vibrant return after a two-year pandemic hiatus, welcoming forty-five hundred attendees.

Families congregated on blankets in front of the pavilion, people danced, children played, painted, and competed in games while music, art and a sense of community filled the air. It was an incredible weekend, highlighted by the Saturday Pride Parade.

Participants also contributed to SPAF's ambitious efforts to greatly minimize waste from an event capable of generating a lot of garbage.

The journey toward creating a waste-free event has required ingenuity and commitment. Students from Calvin Park Public School first took on the challenge of minimizing festival waste in 2006. They began by recruiting friends and neighbours to loan home recycling bins. But festival goers did not always comply with sorting guidelines.

The next year students and their supporters changed tactics. They removed garbage bins from the park and created a central depot with a sign: "Got Trash? Let us help you sort things out!" As the festival continued to grow and attract more people, the waste organizers decided to rent bins from the Kingston Area Recycling Centre (KARC).

Another breakthrough in 2018 was the introduction to the festival of the Off-Site Kingston Area Recycler (OSKAR) — a mobile diversion trailer with built-in bins for all recyclable waste streams (paper, plastics, metals, organics). For a small delivery and pick-up fee, festival organizers now had a vessel for all the recyclables discarded by thousands of festival goers each year.

Contamination is a serious recycling issue. If too high, recyclable material is diverted to landfill. Close to seventeen per cent of all Kingston recyclables go that route. Festival volunteers eliminate contamination.

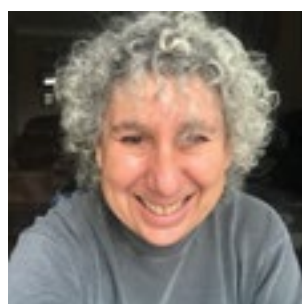
The current highly effective SPAF waste plan is multifaceted: to remove the element of choice for where waste can be deposited; to use volunteers to collect, sort, rinse, and deposit waste into either OSKAR or a trash bin; to advise food and drink vendors in advance to reduce packaging used to serve their products; to post prominent signage to inform festival participants about recycling efforts; and to have a KARC representative on hand to answer questions about waste diversion.

We've discovered the power of community building that happens through a common commitment and shared responsibility for a project. - GABY AND BEN



Once the festival fully implemented this system, the reduction in waste diverted to landfill was dramatic. In recent years, the event generated only one to two bags of non-recyclable garbage. This included dog waste, used diapers, unrecyclable art supplies, plastic cutlery, PLA plastic compostable cups and lids, condiment packets, and various other small items.

How to even improve on that track record is always up for discussion. One idea is to have festival volunteers assist attendees in sorting waste rather than doing it for them — to empower attendees and provide a teachable moment. Vendors can also be asked to provide more variety in food portion sizes so less food goes to waste. The purchase of reusable food service ware for use by food vendors is another possibility.



GABY DEE is a volunteer with Sustainable Kingston and the Skeleton Park Arts Festival.

Westben Centre for Connectivity & Creativity

Westben Centre for Connectivity & Creativity (near Campbellford), with its main venue of a gorgeous timber frame barn in a rolling meadow, has had an abiding connection to nature. Still, today's unfolding ecological crises have led us to rethink our responsibilities as a musical organization and festival.

We define sustainability — with cultural, community, environmental, and economic dimensions — as an intersectional, creative, and joyful approach to sustaining life on earth for generations to come.

Westben's involvement in sustainability initiatives has already changed our approaches to music-making. We hold more outdoor performances that improvise with the forests and surrounding ecosystems. This has led to birdsong compositions and other arts-based nature education moments that allow attendees to appreciate the living sound-makers that contribute so much to the music.

In addition to exploring ways the creative experience can enliven our connection to the natural surroundings, we've been looking at how to best care for the area, including by effectively managing waste.

In the spring of 2022, we publicized our interest in building a sustainability team, and attracted twenty community members representing a range of valuable experience, including communications, information technology, life-cycle assessment, choral music, bike advocacy, birding, and more.

Through the summer, we designed a simple waste station based on the requirements of Northumberland County. This included a blue box (for plastic bottles, tubs, jugs, aluminum, glass, and cartons etc.); a grey box (for paper, boxboard, and corrugated cardboard, etc.); compost; a smaller trash can; clear bins and trays for reusable glasses; and a bin for beer bottles. We added more overall signage and invited public suggestions and feedback.

People began taking more time to find the right place to deposit their waste, but the system wasn't perfect. Some folks with mobility challenges couldn't reach the bins. Also, the signage was too small for some to read. We also needed to decentralize the bin station to cover separate venues and find a more efficient way to wash items as there is no well on site.

A local high-school shop teacher recently asked Westben to provide a sustainability building project for students. We happily challenged the class to design a new waste system that meets certain criteria: that it be mobile and at an easy-to-access height; be easily identified by people through bigger signs; and be a source of education about the area's municipal waste system. We encouraged the students to bring all their creative energy to the project.



BEN FINLEY is the sustainability team lead at the Westben Centre for Connection & Creativity.

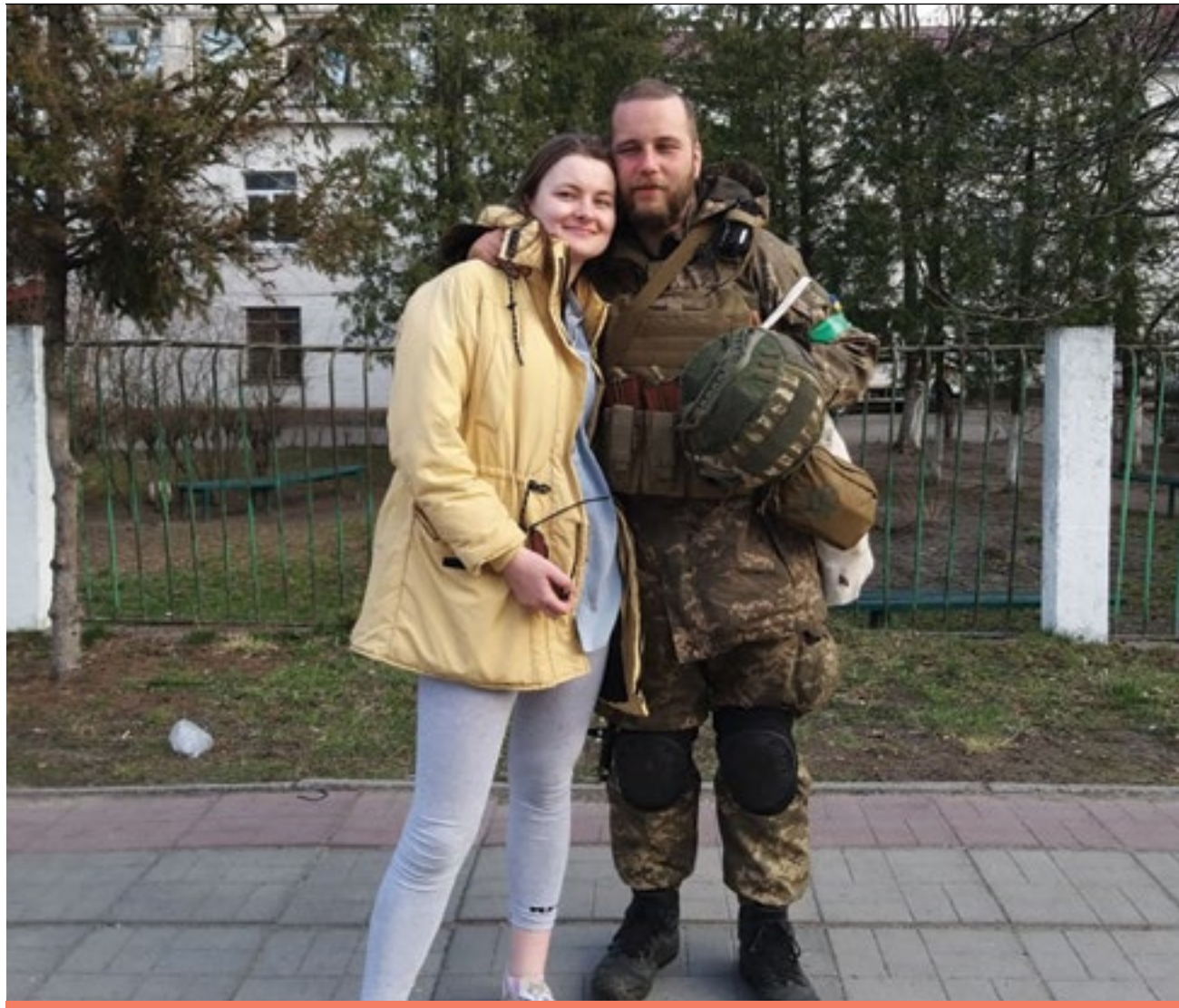
Ukrainian Families Find Safe Homes in Kingston

From the war to the West

Iryna and Ostap in Bucha, Ukraine

STORY BY IRYNA VIVCHAR

PHOTO CREDIT: Iryna Vivchar



“Okay, Google, tell me something about Kingston, Ontario.”

That was my web search on June 19, 2022. I was temporarily based in Warsaw after leaving my home in the suburbs of Kyiv. I had just finished a video call with two strangers from Canada. After meeting online, they confirmed I could stay at their place in Kingston until I found a job.

For the next few hours I pored over maps, discovering my new city. Here is Tim Hortons, here is the yacht club, and wow — the distances between things are so huge...

Have you ever had to make a decision to move to an unknown country and city on the basis of online maps, and with only one backpack?

I have, because the Russian army invaded my home.

If you talk to Ukrainian newcomers in Kingston, you may find that many of their stories are like mine — not only because they did not imagine having to flee their home country because of war, and did not expect to land in North America, but also because of how they were supported by Canadian families when they arrived.

Iryna Yaroslavka, thirty-seven, is among them. After fleeing the war, she and her family landed in a house on Patrick Street. “Our host family had a lot of space, and their...daughter always dreamed about a younger sister,” she told me. “We never discussed why they were doing this — they just wanted to help.”

Yaroslavka and her five- and seven-year-old daughters lived with their hosts for the first two months after arriving in Canada. A pharmacist from Kyiv, she now has her first job and her first apartment

near Skeleton Park. Her daughters enjoy school in Canada. “They would be happy to go on weekends,” Yaroslavka told me with a laugh. “I don’t know what the secret is — it didn’t work like that back home.”

One day, settled in her new place, she took the time to send a dedicated email to every person who had helped her with everything, from furniture, clothes, rent payments, and more. “I wrote ‘Thank you from all Yaroslavkas family. As my husband back in Kyiv is worrying about how we’re doing here, he is so thankful too.’”

She has not seen her husband since the first day of the invasion, when Yaroslavka left her apartment and never returned.

And this is where our stories differ. I did try to go back, briefly.

In April we first heard the term “Bucha” — it became a synonym for the Russian genocide in Ukraine. When Russian soldiers failed to take Ukraine’s capital they left hundreds of bodies of murdered civilians on streets and in mass graves in the Bucha district, a picturesque suburb about twenty kilometres from my home.

At the time I was in Warsaw. That was when I decided to go back to Kyiv hoping it would be safe.

When I fled Kyiv on the first day of the big war, February 24, 2022, my husband, who had never served in the army before, willingly joined the military to defend his home. We finally met in Bucha in April, for the first time since the war started. I didn’t know he was serving there, in the epicentre of the hostilities. I remember he kept repeating, “Everything is fine.” But later he would tell me how they found the bodies

of a murdered civilian man and a young boy in the basement of the building where he was staying. After spending a few weeks in the Kyiv suburbs, he went to the frontline to the east, and I made a decision to move far away, to the west. Kyiv was under constant missile attacks. Staying alone in our apartment, hiding in shelters, and waiting for winter did not look like a rational plan.

And that is when my Canadian chapter began: another day on the Ukrainian-Polish border, the application for a Canadian visa, my Google search, and my warm host family.

When my host picked me up in Toronto and we drove to Kingston, I was initially surprised by how much Ontario and central Ukraine seemed to have in common. We were on Highway 401 but we could have been travelling from Kyiv to Cherkasy, enjoying the same weather and the same landscape, but speaking a different language. The pictures from the maps were now alive, and it was unbelievable.

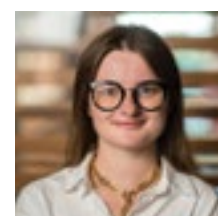
My hosts helped me with many practical things — documents, transportation, furniture, but there was one more important thing they gave me: confidence. They treated me as a family member, included me in their social life, and supported my career transition (“There is no need to take just any job, you will find a good one!”).

With their support, I can admit I am doing perfectly well in Kingston. However, the war in Ukraine is embedded in my every day, as a parallel virtual life. I start my mornings by checking the news, scrolling through the list of cities and communities bombed the night before. If I see a place where I have friends or relatives, I text them to ask if they are fine. Sometimes the war reminds me unexpectedly about the small things that make a life. In a message from my cleaning agency in Kyiv, for example (“We learned how to clean without electricity! Book now!”), or with the first displays of Christmas decorations (there will be no illuminations in Ukraine this year due to the electricity crisis caused by the war). Another day, I invited my host family for dinner at my apartment, and checked my favourite Ukrainian food blogger’s site for a fancy recipe. One of his last headlines was: “What to cook with humanitarian aid.” I ended up crying.

My husband is still stationed near the Russian border in Ukraine’s northeast. I have learned how to stop thinking about worst-case scenarios and to believe only in our happy future. I miss him every day and dream about the moment we will finally meet again.

The Russian invasion has separated many Ukrainian families. Yaroslavka’s daughters also miss their daddy and often ask their mother how he is, and how their grandparents are doing. “It’s hard. But when I watch the videos of Ukrainian kids singing songs in bomb shelters, I realize how happy and safe we are here,” she says. “Once their school teacher asked me — ‘So, the kids are fine. And how are you doing? Are you okay?’ And I realized, I’m fine, because people care about me, even in a moment like that.”

After a long pause, she adds, “Right now, Ukrainians are demonstrating their braveness, Canadians — their open hearts.”



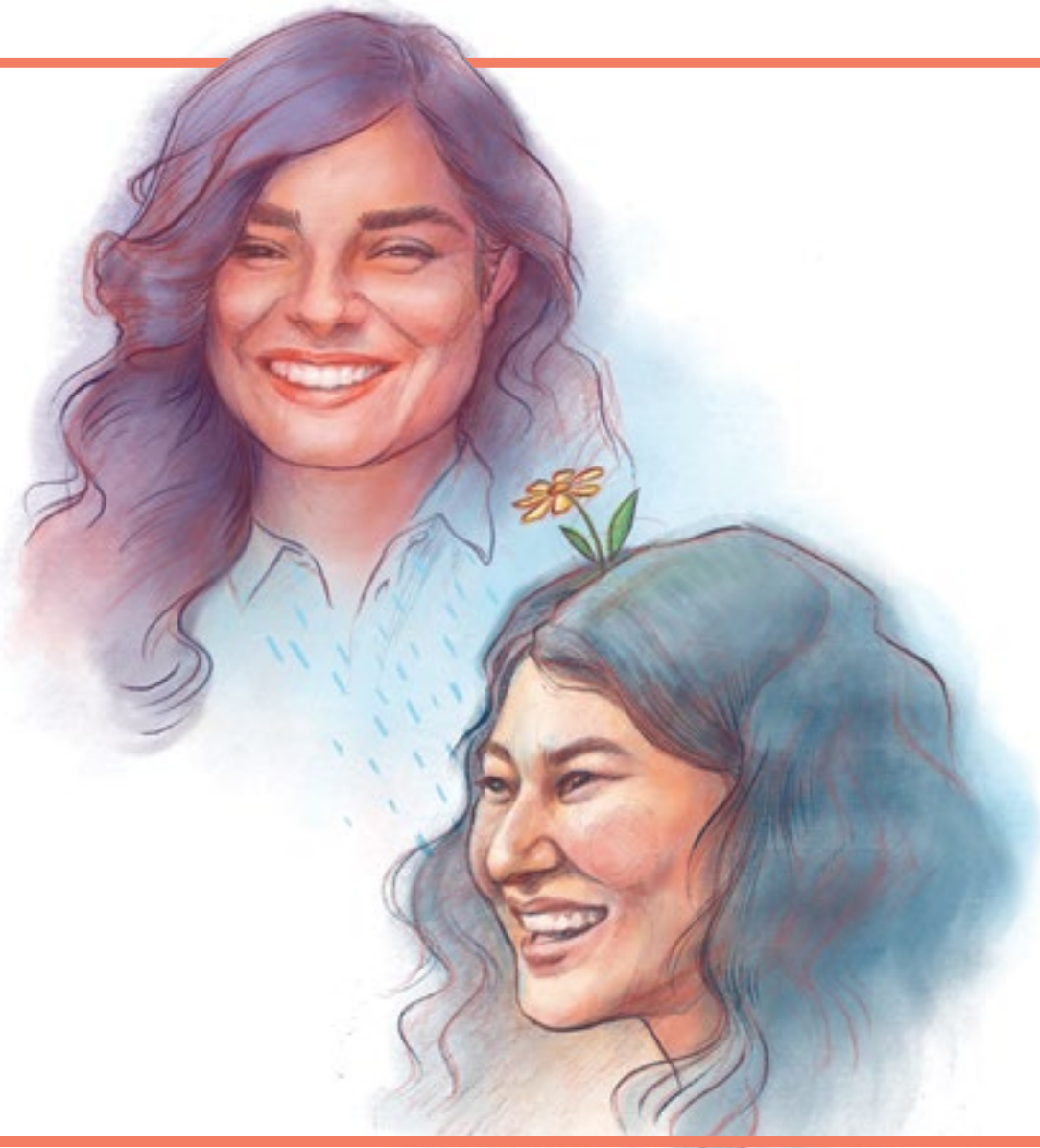
IRYNA VIVCHAR is a communications specialist and journalist from Kyiv, Ukraine. She moved to the Skeleton Park neighbourhood in July 2022 and now works at Queen’s University. She misses her dog Fenchel who is currently in Warsaw, but Iryna hopes to bring her to Canada this winter.

Watering Me with Kindness

From Mongolia to Skeleton Park: notes from a newcomer

STORY BY **AYBIKE YALCHIN** WITH **MIKE HIPSON**

ILLUSTRATION BY **FLORIANA EHNINGER-CUERVO**



Imagine.

What would you feel? What would you think? What expectations would you have if you had no other choice but to leave your home behind? New country, new people, new language, not knowing where or how to start. So many doubts. Will you be able to achieve something? Or will you hit rock bottom? Your life feels like a thriller: filled with so many strong, deep, and different emotions, a combination of excitement and frustration.

My name is Aybike and I'm from Mongolia. My family and I moved to Canada in 2021, and we have already made it through our first year! It was a tough journey for us. Our flight and arrival were not the best experience, but since we landed, I've always heard this voice in the back of my head saying, "Everything is going to be okay." In spite of my regular habit of letting frustration take over, I held onto those words.

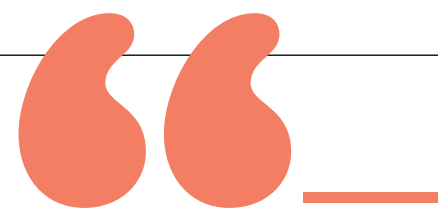
Days and months passed, and I began to adapt to Canada. I've never said the word "sorry" so many times in my life! It's a cliché, I know. But soon after I started working, I realized I was saying "sorry" so many times, I decided to count. Over twenty-five times in one day! The funny part is, I wasn't only apologizing for my own actions but for the other person's too! If, for example, someone bumped into me, I'd say "sorry," hoping my shoulders were as soft as a pillow. "Sorry" has become my go-to word. It saves me.

But seriously, I think what I like most about people here is the way they have approached us. Very sensitive, respectful, and warm. When I walk in the neighbourhood I usually keep a straight face, but people walking on the other side of the street give me a smile. And that just makes my day. A smile, a bundle of happiness. It's a nice manner Canadians have. My people are not very familiar with these things, so I am learning a lot here.

It's also inspiring to see how people here are into volunteering. They take it very seriously and I've seen some who are very genuine. We have a Canadian family volunteering to spend time with us. They are just amazing people! We recently had a barbecue together, and they gave us tomatoes from their garden. Such lovely people to spend time with. Honestly, they don't have to do it, but they do. Making time for others, being kind and sharing something together — it's a beautiful scene to witness.

I'm sure if you go to Mongolia, or anywhere, what makes the country more beautiful, memorable, or loveable is always the people you meet. And I was lucky to meet people here with beautiful souls. People who changed and shaped my views about Canada, and even myself.

I'm a teacher. It's not just a career; it's a part of me. It brings out the good in me when I reach out and help others. However, despite my degree and work experience, it has not been easy to get a job here. But I won't give up. My goal is to continue with my profession, to do what I am good at.



I was lucky to meet people here with beautiful souls. People who changed and shaped my views about Canada, and even myself.

Jill and I met through a mentoring program at KEYS, so she could help me work on that goal. Jill is a teacher as well, and a great one, and she has explained the Canadian school system to me as much as she can. She has guided me, shown me opportunities I can benefit from, and helped me to make connections. And that's not all. Jill is also my friend, someone to talk to, to explore Kingston with, show me around, and spend quality time with. I am sure she is very busy, but she is generous enough to make some time for me every week. With our busy schedules, it does not always go as planned, but once we meet up, I have fun. With anyone else, I'd usually take the role of the listener, but in my meetings with Jill, she takes that role and encourages me to be the speaker. She always comes up with great questions to make me talk, and I really enjoy having conversations with her. Jill's kindness and help mean a lot to me. She has really helped me pull myself together. When you water a plant, it blooms beautifully. And that is what Jill is doing, watering me with her kindness, devoting some time to guide me, helping me bloom.

And there are others, too. I got great advice from a kid the other day. He approached me and said, "Let me give you some advice; stay away from Karens. They are toxic."

I was like, "Okay. I'll keep that in mind."

To Jill, and everyone who has been kind, thank you so much. I hope each of you have people in your lives with beautiful souls to help you to bloom as well.

To learn more about how you can become a volunteer mentor, check out the InSight Youth Mentoring Program at KEYS. Email: insight@keys.ca. Call, text: 613-453-0107.

**It's alright, it's going to be alright.
We wouldn't appreciate the rainbow,
if not for rain
We wouldn't appreciate the light,
if not for darkness
We wouldn't appreciate the day,
if not for night
We wouldn't appreciate happiness,
if not for sadness
It's alright, It's going to be alright.**

—AY

AYBIKE YALCHIN graduated with a major in English Literature, and taught English Language Learners for more than three years in Mongolia before moving to Kingston. Currently, she works as a tutor, providing academic support to children and youth in three languages. In her free time, she likes to write and enjoy her coffee.

MIKE HIPSON is one of two youth mentoring program coordinators at KEYS. He spends his free time with his family, finding joy in everyday moments.

THOROUGHLY THRIFTY

A Beginner's
Guide to
Finding Your
Retro Roots

STORY AND PHOTOS BY **SAM BETTNEY**

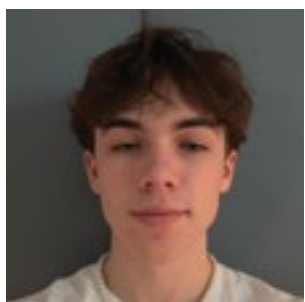
Have you ever fantasized about building a wardrobe of eye-catching niche pieces? If so, I welcome you to the world of thrifting — an obscure obsession of fashionistas and budgeteers alike, and one of the cheapest and most eco-friendly ways to maintain a stylish closet in the growing world of fast fashion and ever-changing trends.

Though the thrifting scene has a much larger presence in big cities, Kingston has no shortage of second-hand shops, vintage boutiques, and thrift emporiums. The Montreal Street Collective and YGK Thrift are two of my favourite downtown stores with a great selection of quality discount pieces, but there are many similar outlets across the city including Talize, The Salvation Army, and Value Village. Piles upon piles of cast-off clothes are carried by every thrifting location, where you just might find your next favourite cardigan or your most complimented pair of Levis. It's a world of hidden gems — one-of-a-kinds waiting to be discovered by you.

So, you've got the idea and a lazy Sunday stretches out before you. But how do you go about getting *truly* thrifty?

My Experience Thrifting

As a proud practitioner and advocate of the art of thrifting for several years, I continue to be surprised by the entertainment and value that can be found in sorting through someone's hand-me-downs. The thrill of hunting down a good thrift piece is greater than anything experienced from shopping in a traditional retail store. But thrifting is, in fact, an art. Getting good at it requires practice, skill, and a bit of luck. So, for all the wannabe thrifters out there, here are my tips and tricks, and some of the best pieces I have come across.



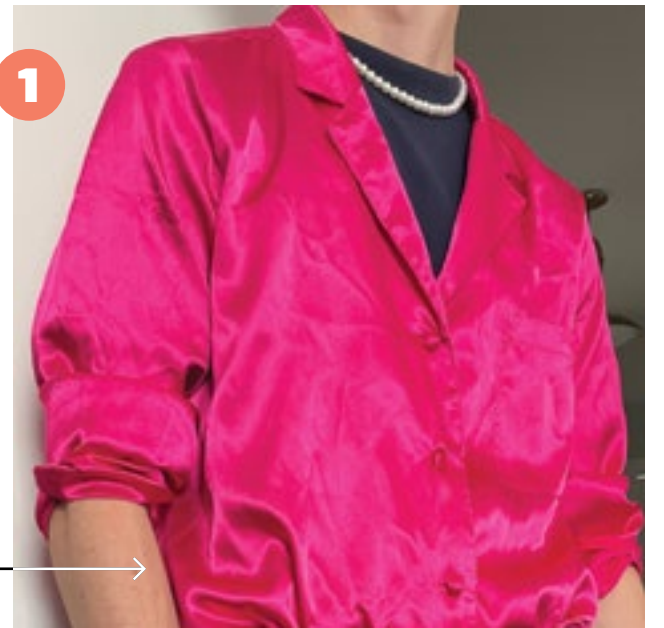
SAM BETTNEY is a grade 12 student at LCVI in Kingston. He was raised in the Skeleton Park Community and knows just enough about local fashion to receive the occasional compliment on his outfits. He is equally passionate about writing as he is about rummaging through second-hand clothes, and no, he doesn't think he's weird for that.

SET A GOAL 1

Flashy Pink Costume Shirt
\$9.99 | Montreal Street Collective

The most overwhelming part of thrifting is sorting through piles of randomly organized garments and strange nick-nacks. When you arrive at your local thrift shop, don't waste time inspecting every rack of clothes. Narrow your search to a section or a specific item you have in mind.

This costume piece found at the Montreal Street Collective matched my desired criteria perfectly. I wanted a flashy pink shirt so I could show up and show out this Halloween.



2 BE PATIENT

Dickies Pants
\$12.99 | Value Village

Recognize that this can be a time-consuming hobby. Be prepared to spend considerable time rooting through second-hand goods. Finding the best deals and most exciting pieces takes patience and creative thinking.

These Dickies pants were an absolute steal, but I only came upon them after searching through dozens and dozens of options in the generic "Men's Pants" section.



3 KNOW YOUR PRICES

**Givenchy Spring 2015
Floral Sweater \$18.99 | Talize**

As thrifting gains attraction in pop culture, stores are becoming more conscious about getting a good price for their items. This isn't necessarily a bad thing, but larger thrift stores often overcharge for items simply because of brand.

Know how much your favourite pieces are actually worth, especially if they're blatantly branded. It's more important to like the item than to like the brand.

This Givenchy sweater I found at Talize was marked as \$18.99. Through a simple Google search, I found it listed new on a few websites for upwards of several hundred dollars. Next question: was this item real or a knock-off? Irrelevant to me, because I understood the price derived from the brand and what caught my eye were the colourful stems and blooming flowers.



4 ELBOW GREASE

Converse 'Not a Chuck'
\$24.99 | Talize

The main issue with thrifting is the condition of clothes. Rips, stains, putrid smells. Don't automatically be put off by the flaws. It's almost always possible to patch ripped clothes, wash that funky smell away, or scrub that stain off. Accept the hard work that sometimes goes with crafting an outfit that is both kind to your eyes and kind to your wallet. These Converse found at less than half the retail price had seen their fair share of wear and tear. But with a generous scrub, they came out looking as good as new.



Hopefully, you found these tips from an experienced and devoted thrifter helpful. The next time you find yourself stuck in a mall surrounded by name-brand commercial outlets, think again. Save your money, your wardrobe, and your soul. Go thrifting.

“Come to a Drag Show, and Be a Part of the Change!”

Radical joy, political defiance, and ballroom culture

STORY BY LAURA CHAIGNON

TOP TO BOTTOM:
Mimi Osa PHOTO CREDIT: Bender Black
Rowena Whey PHOTO CREDIT: Anna Stafford

I don't pay much attention to the world of high-fashion clothing brands. I did feign an interest during my adolescence in Paris in an effort to fit in, but I've always considered the fashion industry to be a problematic one, built on elitism, waste, and sexism. The only time you'll see me cheer and clap at the sight of an elegant gown is at a drag show. To me, the joy of drag feels far away from what fashion means in the commercial, cis-normative world.

High fashion and perfectionism do exist in the queer community, but embedded in them are radical joy and political defiance that can be traced, in part, to Ballroom culture. Ballroom culture was born when Black, Latino, and trans people started organizing drag pageants in Harlem in the 1970s as a response to the racism and transphobia still pervading the queer scene at the time. You're probably already familiar with some aspects of it, since Ballroom culture has made a tangible contribution to both queer and mainstream culture — think *vogueing*, or saying things such as “throwing shade.”

In these underground, marginal spaces, participants reclaimed sovereignty by demonstrating the utmost elegance, and reveling in excellence through dance and beauty. High fashion is central to Ballroom, and performers sometimes choose to name their House (a Ballroom group that has a familial structure) after luxury clothing brands. Some of the most famous Ballroom houses are the House of Lanvin, the Gorgeous House of Gucci, and the Iconic International House of St. Laurent.

For this article, I spoke to four local drag queens to get a sense of the role fashion plays in their lives.

“[Drag] has taken so much inspiration from fashion, music, and art; I'm often inspired directly by drag performances,” says Rowena Whey, a glamorous cougar queen who has been making her own stage clothes for about three years. “The projects I'm really happy with are the ones that take me a long time. I'm currently working on a gown that is made out of chainmail and ribbons. It is so different from anything I've done before!”

When discussing her influences, Sherry Anne Hex, a vintage-loving queen, quotes the iconic Iris Apfel: “Fashion you can buy, but style you possess.”

“Everyone can buy a couture outfit to be made, but developing a sense of style takes time,” explains Hex. “We are such a consumer-driven culture that this kind of common sense has been a bit lost. My aesthetic is anything from the 1960s and back. My grandmother and my mom always dressed very



vintage. My mom taught me how to design, and go to thrift stores and vintage stores.”

Mimi Osa, a multifaceted diva Queen whose biggest inspiration is Mariah Carey, smiles as she describes to me one of her favourite pieces of clothing: a blue mesh dress with fabric woven through it. As I enter our video call, Mimi is stoning (applying rhinestones to a fabric). She is a self-taught designer who learned how to sew with tablecloths from the dollar store. She explains that, typically, she will buy an outfit and add some personal touches to it — such as stones. “It changes the outfit, makes it unique,” says Osa, running her hands over the dark fabric.

“We were a gaggle of queens, we would go shopping together as a group at Stage 2,” says Miss Tyffanie Morgan, reminiscing about her drag beginnings twenty-two years ago. Since then, Morgan, a legendary queen and local drag mom, has acquired a lot of different pieces. This allows her to bring back some forgotten outfits, and keep her audience on their toes. “Sometimes I get a sort of buzz to design a full look,” says Morgan, who designed a Willow Pill-inspired three-headed sunflower outfit for Napanee Pride. “A lot of hot glue went into it, and a lot of effort!”

Being a Queen isn't just about being gorgeous, though. Drag is also the art of live performance. The popularity of the TV show *RuPaul's Drag Race* has contributed to bringing drag into mainstream culture, but the queens I spoke to don't see it as representative of local drag performance. The TV show functions like a traditional beauty pageant, but Mimi Osa explains that while “standing there and looking pretty” works online, it doesn't translate to the real world.

“You still have to be able to move in [the outfit] and do your job. You can't wear the extravagant looks you see on *RuPaul* and perform on stage,” says Osa.

Sherry Anne Hex agrees: “A local drag performance is messy. It's not going to look as a lip sync does on [the show]. It won't have that polish!” That lack of polish is meaningful, alongside the radical idea that the embodiment of femininity can be put into conscious opposition with perfection.

Miss Tyffanie Morgan reminds me of the importance of what she calls “grittiness” and “realism,” noting, “When I started, the people I learned from had a shoestring budget. Some of them could barely buy their own makeup.”

When you see a drag performance in Kingston, it's not just about people looking pretty on stage, it's about remembering the power behind the Ballroom counterculture, remembering queer ancestry, and all that we owe it.

Rowena Whey captures its spirit perfectly: “There is nothing like the energy of a drag show. It's so freeing. You're seeing people performing gender, something that used to be so taboo. So, come to a drag show and be a part of the change! It's about deconstructing societal norms.”

(One final note. At the Canadian Brewer's Choice Awards held in Toronto in December, a Belgian-style white beer created by Kingston's own Spearhead Brewing Company took first place. “Queen of Wheat,” as the beer is named, was created with the help of Rowena Whey and the Canadian Centre for Gender and Sexual Diversity, with some of the proceeds going to the centre.)



LAURA CHAIGNON (she/her) is a queer white femme and arts worker living in the Skeleton Park neighbourhood. She enjoys bread baking, other people's babies, screaming at cucumber beetles, guessing strangers' astrological signs, and snuggling with her cat FL.



REDAN STREET STYLE

Introducing several noteworthy fashionistas from the block

STORY BY **TALIA ACKER**
PHOTOS BY **AL BERGERON**

Redan Street, a short one-block street that starts at Raglan Road and leads straight to the beating heart of Skeleton Park, has become one of the most eclectic and fashion-forward streets in our neighbourhood. Functioning as a veritable fashion artery, Redan Street is home, or a home away from home, to several noteworthy fashionistas.

KYOKO O. If you didn't know that Kyoko is an accomplished Taiko drummer — a style of drumming that looks a lot like a martial art — you would be forgiven for assuming she is a hippie-ninja. Kyoko brings a beautiful Japanese aesthetic to Redan Street. The raw-cotton fabrics she is wrapped in are well-suited for a lifestyle that involves taking flying leaps through the air.

JENN Z. Jenn, who has worked at Kingston's Street Health Centre for many years, stands at the intersection of fashion and function. Jenn's style doesn't change from day to day or year to year because she is a living relic of the 1990s Riot Grrl movement (the only cool thing to have happened in the '90s, in my opinion) and she dresses to save the world from itself.



DOUG Doug looks exactly the way a boomer dad should: jeans, sweat-shirts, windbreakers, and baseball caps are all major players in his sartorial arsenal. Doug's style echoes that of many men in my family, and I'm grateful for that. I rely on the guys of this generation to look hale and hearty in their casual wear well into their nineties.





LUCIA S.

Mademoiselle Lucia is the sole heiress of her stylish and cosmopolitan family. With pieces from Sierra Leone, Greece, New York or Newfoundland, Lucia's wardrobe never fails to be well-coordinated and very cute. She brings a sporty, joyful vibe on her frequent jaunts up Redan Street.



ZARA A.D. Zara's style might best be described as "where fashion meets fun." As her mom, I've seen her go from being a toddler who insisted on wearing a hat (any hat) for a full year, to becoming a ten-year old who embraces an arty, effortless chic. Zara works with what she has, be it a sudden and total lack of socks to an abundance of llama patterns.

Let's finish with a mother-daughter fashion tag-team-of-power:

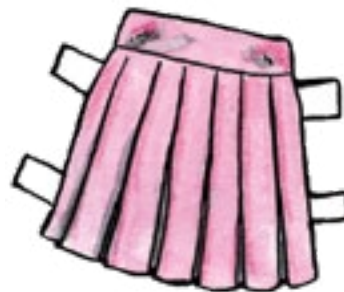
CHERIE B. Cherie brings a touch of South Island Kiwi flair to Redan Street. Cherie favours a lovely, soft, heathery colour palette. I think of her style as 21st-century Little House on the Prairie. She can make an off-white linen apron look good.

AMAIA T. Let's face it, Amaia's mom, Cherie, still plays a big role in her style choices and we all benefit from this situation. Amaia's dusty rose Peter Pan collar, tutu, and bonnets have raised the morale of Redan Street considerably.



TALIA ACKER has lived by Skeleton Park for seventeen years. She likes it more each year.

High-School Dress Codes To Get a Fashion-Forward Makeover



The great challenge: how to be consistent in rule-setting as styles push the boundaries of modesty and convention

STORY BY ANNE KERSHAW / ILLUSTRATIONS BY CHANTAL BENNETT

High-school fashion is entering a new era after years of pushback by students who say the rules are too restrictive, sexist, and transphobic.

Many school boards across the province are reviewing their dress code policies with an eye to bringing more consistency to how they are applied and respecting modern-day fashion choices of students. They are also acknowledging the ways that gender identity often intersects with fashion.

The Limestone District School Board and the Algonquin and Lakeshore Catholic District School Board are both currently rethinking dress-code/uniform policies in consultation with students, teachers, parents, and the community.

Controversy around high-school dress codes is nothing new, and today's parents and school administrators continue to be alarmed about fashion trends that seem to push the boundaries of modesty and convention. Crop tops. Bralettes. Bare shoulders. Hoodies. Hats. Ripped jeans. Boys in skirts. Sagging pants. Irreverent or profane T-shirts. Clothes that are too tight. Too short. Showing too much skin. Showing too much cleavage. All of these have caused debate over the past few years.

Tackling the debate over how students should dress for school isn't made any easier by the revealing and highly sexualized outfits of today's celebrities and other fashion trendsetters. Currently pervading social media feeds are Hollywood stars and influencers alike in ever more sheer, ever more cut-out couture. And then there are Florence Pugh's feminist-inspired 'free-the-nipple' campaign, gender-bending Timothée Chalamet on the red carpet in red backless jumpsuit, and Brad Pitt promoting "Bullet Train" in skirt.

Students, of course, understand the difference between red-carpet attire and everyday garb. But like fashionistas everywhere they want to feel like they are at the forefront of style.



Adding to the richness of the debate is the recent case of the Oakville high-school shop teacher being allowed by education officials to wear outlandishly huge prosthetic breasts with visible nipples while teaching students. Surely, dress-code policies for students and teachers should be consistent.

These days, students frame their resistance to dress codes in human-rights terms. Girls have called out uneven gender enforcement of dress codes as sexist and discriminatory. Non-binary and trans students are claiming the right to express identity through clothing choices. The use of this kind of language reflects how the issue has moved into the political and legal realm. Words from the past such as *suggestive*, *provocative*, or *inappropriate* have become minefields. School administrators now talk in terms of safety, equity, and respect.

The Limestone District School Board, one of many across the province that is revisiting student dress codes, is holding a consultation process this winter with students, teachers, parents, and the community.

"We want to ensure we are listening to all the voices in our employment and in the greater community. We all have a role to play in creating a safe, equitable and inclusive environment," says Limestone District School Board Superintendent Allison MacDonnell.

Until the board's revised policy is unveiled in the spring of 2023, interim guidelines are posted on its website. In these guidelines, the board acknowledges that dress codes have been enforced in ways "that disproportionately and negatively impact some students, including those who identify or present as female, those who are racialized, gender diverse, transgender, non-binary, students with disabilities, those who are socioeconomically marginalized and Indigenous, First Nation, Métis, and Inuit students."

Schools' efforts to uphold dress regulations often come into conflict with the objective of empowering girls and young women, according to Michelle Fields, supervisor at Kingston's Girls Inc. of Limestone, Algonquin, and Lakeshore. The non-profit agency, which provided service to 1,954 girls and young women across four counties in 2021-2022, delivers multiple programs designed to prepare girls for academic success and economic independence. This includes holding SmartStart workshops, in schools, aimed at building confidence and self-esteem.

In a recent session, when the girls had themselves identified dress codes as a topic for discussion, Fields witnessed the policy in action when one of her group participants was reprimanded by a teacher for allowing a bra strap to show. The thirteen-year-old student had removed her sweater because she was warm, showing a tank top underneath. On her way back from a washroom break, she was stopped by a teacher for an official infraction and escorted back to the seminar room.

"This kind of shaming shouldn't happen," says Fields. "Girls just want to be comfortable. They are not there to be criticized for their fashion choices."

There is growing recognition that dress-code policies are not being applied consistently. “It’s often a matter of what makes a particular teacher uncomfortable. What one teacher allows, another might not,” says Fields.

A longstanding concern of some parents and educators is that girls are put at risk of sexual assault when allowed to wear clothes seen by some as provocative or distracting. Fields and most feminists reject this thinking as not only unfounded but uncomfortably similar to rationale applied in countries that severely restrict female rights.

“Sexual assault is not about what a person is wearing. It’s about power,” she says. “Studies of sexual offenders have found that what a victim is wearing is not a significant factor.”

The Limestone District School Board’s interim guidelines, says Superintendent MacDonnell, are intended to “apply principles of anti-oppression, anti-racism, anti-colonialism, equity, inclusion, respect, and personal dignity, and must be applied in a fair and consistent way.” The guidelines note that educators should avoid shaming students or reinforcing gender and other stereotypes when handling dress-code issues.

“We worked really hard to limit any vagueness or problems of interpretation. This helps to increase consistency and remove bias,” says MacDonnell.

Details of the interim edict require the wearing of “opaque” clothing that “covers the groin, buttocks, and mid-chest (breast and nipple area)”. **Not allowed:** wearing underwear as outerwear (excluding sports bras); clothing that promotes drugs, alcohol or violence or includes discriminatory content, hate speech, violence, profanity, or pornography. **Allowed:** clothing that exposes “arms, shoulders, stomachs, midriff, neck lines, cleavage, legs, thighs, hips and underwear bands” and “any headwear or head covering that does not obscure the face including ball caps, head scarves, hoodies or toques etc.”

MacDonnell explains how thinking has changed in the case, for example, of hoodies. “There are sometimes reasons that a student may need [to wear a hood up]. A student may be struggling with a mental health situation or anxiety and take comfort in having a hood on.”

The Algonquin and Lakeshore Catholic District School Board (ALCDSB) is also reviewing its dress-code policy, a process instigated in the spring of 2020 when students became especially vocal about the need for change. The pandemic stalled the process.

At Kingston’s Regiopolis-Notre Dame High School and the board’s other four secondary schools, school uniforms assigned by gender have gone unchallenged for decades. Uniforms are intended to represent school identity and enhance equity amongst students in appearance, says Education Superintendent Carey Smith-Dewey.

The male fall and winter uniforms include “flat-front dress pants, a white dress shirt and a tie (sweater optional)”. The female fall and winter uniform includes “flat-front dress pants or a kilt (black tights mandatory) with a blouse (sweater optional).” Come spring, students are allowed the option of “a school-identified golf shirt and walking shorts.”

Common infractions under the current policy include “wearing non-uniform items such as athletic wear and non-black uniform appropriate footwear and accessories, such as baseball caps.”

The uniforms will stay but there is a recognition that modifications are in order.

“Our Catholic Learning Communities are turning to parents, students, and our stakeholders for what they are looking for in a uniform in terms of personal comfort, inclusivity, and financial accessibility,” says Smith-Dewey. “Such consultation will reflect substantial opportunities for student and parent input.”

Unlike the public board, which is emphasizing the need for consistency across schools, Smith-Dewey notes that the Catholic board is inviting its secondary schools “to share their own separate identities and nuances, which may direct the decision making for these communities.”



THE UPDATED POLICIES LIKELY WON'T PLEASE EVERYONE, AND BOUNDARY-PUSHING TEENS WILL NO DOUBT ALWAYS FIND A WAY TO SUBVERT THE RULES.

School policies must be consistent with Ontario’s Human Rights Code and the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms and in keeping with the board’s own Equity Plan, says Smith-Dewey. While Catholic doctrine rejects the idea that gender is distinct from biological sex, the board appears prepared to accommodate trans students: “The ALCDSB acknowledges the necessity for changes to the uniform and is committed to respecting and responding to all student voices, including those who identify as transgender and/or nonbinary.”



ANNE KERSHAW is a national award-winning journalist and author and former communications director at Queen’s University. Some decades ago, she was sent to the high-school principal’s office for wearing culottes when only skirts were allowed.

Students are being encouraged to express their needs when it comes to uniforms and the board acknowledges “the need to adapt the current options to reflect personal choice,” the superintendent says.

Once the new policies are rolled out, it will become apparent how well school boards have been able to reconcile the views of parents, students, and educators. The updated policies likely won’t please everyone, and boundary-pushing teens will no doubt always find a way to subvert the rules.



Can we Dress Digitally?

Fresh Perspectives on Sustainable Fashion

Helping the real world by turning to unreal clothing

STORY AND ART BY CLAIRE BOUVIER AND NIKI HODGSKISS

DIGITAL FASHION MIGHT SOUND VERY FUTURISTIC AND NICHE, BUT THE CONCEPT COULD BE A VERY EFFECTIVE WAY TO CURB FAST-FASHION CONSUMPTION.

In our time running The Loft Girls, a mobile clothing business with a focus on sustainable style, we pivoted often. Fashion, even on a small scale, is always evolving and we wanted to keep our community interested and excited about our offerings. We participated in different events, kept an inventory featuring second-hand finds from around the world, hosted markets with a variety of local artists and makers, put on an eco-runway show, and more.

When COVID hit, we switched gears by renting the mobile boutique to a production company for *Designed with Love*, a movie based on a fashion-truck business. We also put our shop online for a time. Almost seven years after starting the business, we continue to change as the world around us does too.

Fashion moves fast, and it moves faster than ever before thanks to social media. In the past, trends took years to trickle into the wardrobes of smaller communities. Now, trends from around the world are brought to us instantaneously. And only in the past few years have we been able to make a purchase with just a few clicks and expect it at our door the next day. All of this puts pressure on us to consume without even realizing it.

Fast fashion creates and fuels this mentality. Shein posts more than six thousand new items for sale daily, and other large retailers such as H&M and Zara put out weekly collections. The items have impossibly low price-points, which makes us feel less guilty about what we buy, even though the ethics behind where and how the items are produced are more than questionable.

The fashion industry has a large impact on climate change, water consumption, landfill waste, and water pollution. Fashion alone accounts for ten per cent of human carbon dioxide output. So, how can we keep up with fashion and represent our unique personal style while minimizing its impact on the planet?

If you're also interested in the future of fashion, you might want to investigate digital fashion. Digital garments are not tangible; they are purchased online and, using Artificial Intelligence (AI), are imposed onto your body. They look completely real and mimic the natural creases of clothing and movements of your body. These clothing items can look like virtually anything. They are not restricted to body size or gender, bringing some much appreciated inclusivity to the industry.

Another difference? Digital garments produce ninety-seven per cent less CO₂ and save approximately thirty-three hundred litres of water per garment. These digital outfits can be used on social media, dating apps, work video calls, NFTs (non-fungible tokens), and more. They could also be extremely useful for one-time events such as family photos taken by professional photographers. And what about the possibility of using a digital clothing item to determine if you actually want to purchase its real-life equivalent? You could style it, see how it works with different items already in your closet, and then decide whether it is a worthwhile investment.

We used DRESSX to create our own digital outfits. DRESSX (@dressx on Instagram) is a company that believes the number of garments produced now is more than we could ever need and encourages people not to shop less but to shop digital. The experience using our first Loft Girls meta closet has been an exciting new chapter for us as we explore fashion alternatives in content creation. Digitally designing gives us the opportunity to creatively deliver more styling tips without compromising our sustainable fashion practices. These pieces we digitally invested in also go to support meta fashion designers allowing us to directly connect with global creatives and audiences.

Digital fashion might sound very futuristic and niche, but the concept could be a very effective way to curb fast-fashion consumption: a perfect idea for someone who uses social media as a fashion-influencer to show off the look of the moment, or someone who loves to play around with personal style. Also, digital fashion can potentially satisfy the rush of instant gratification people get from purchasing that piece of inexpensive, trendy clothing that will arrive the very next day.

We can also continue to do our part in our own community by embracing second-hand shopping and supporting local businesses. Shops such as YGK Thrift and Montreal Street Collective feature a curated collection of thrifted items, and offer a great alternative for people who are overwhelmed by the volume and organization of clothing in larger thrift stores. We also love the idea of clothing swaps — trading or sharing a piece of clothing you no longer wear in exchange for something you will wear.

Fashion is about individual expression and there are so many ways to explore your personal style that don't include fast fashion or purchasing new items regularly. Could you see yourself investing in digital fashion? Powerhouses such as Balenciaga and Gucci are already designing within this space, and it's likely we will see more brands and influencers participating in it sooner rather than later. Personally, we are looking forward to seeing how the digital fashion community evolves into something more mainstream and practical, while we continue to do our best to make thoughtful, sustainable purchases in the real world.

CLAIRE BOUVIER AND NIKI HODGSKISS are the co-owners behind The Loft Girls, a Kingston-based company focusing on sustainable fashion.

DIGITAL FASHION



Take a Photo of Yourself

Be sure to get a well-lit photo of yourself — natural lighting is best and make sure to wear fitted clothing.



Choose Your Design

Choose a designer that speaks to your personalized style and pick a piece to complement your outfit.



Upload Photo

Once you have your photo of yourself, submit for a realistic 3D rendering of the clothing piece you have selected.



Post and Share!

Updating your profile picture or family photos? Post to show your new digital style!

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Of Fashion and Freedom

STORY BY SADAF AMINI

PHOTO CREDITS: Courtesy of Fereshteh

Along with all the restrictions on fundamental rights, the Iranian regime has for decades restricted or simply prohibited various cultural activities. Forcing the mandatory hijab and denying freedom of choice has, however, not stopped people from following their own passions and sense of fashion. The following is the narrative of an Iranian woman, Fereshteh, working in the field of fashion and dress design. Let's hope that eventually people will reclaim the freedom they once had.

—Sadaf Amini

My name is Fereshteh. I'm a seamstress and the mother of three girls, two of whom are enrolled at Queen's University. When I was eighteen and living in Iran, I began learning to tailor. Girls of my generation were expected to learn at least one art form, and I decided to learn tailoring once I received my high-school diploma.

The course of my life led me in such a way that I couldn't initially use my tailoring skills. I married, completed a psychology degree, and brought up my first child. We relocated in 1992 to Canada, where my husband pursued his PhD at the University of Toronto. I spent much of that time improving my English language skills and caring for my family. In 1997, when we returned to Iran, I decided to take up tailoring again, in addition to being a housewife. To improve my dressmaking skills, I enrolled along with a friend in a new dressmaking course in Tehran. We could not practice all we were learning on our own clothes. As a result, we started receiving orders and customers!

Though risky, each new order taught us a new skill. Working on those orders allowed us to practice further while still taking and passing the course. We became working partners. My friend would come to my place in the morning, and we would work until late. I continued working from home for three to four years, but as my business increased I rented a bigger space away from my home. I would make any style of clothing, but making evening and bridal dresses was my primary focus and passion. Dresses took a long time to make and required lots of attention to detail. I put in a lot of effort, working from early in the morning until around seven or eight in the evening, yet I never felt tired with what I was doing.

I find comfort in sewing and tailoring. When I enter my workroom, I forget about my emotions, whether they be sadness or anger, and disappear into my work. Making a dress for a bride or her family fills me with joy because it makes them feel valued and delighted on the most significant night of their lives. The comments and feedback I get from customers are much more valuable than the money I receive. I constantly strive to improve my work. Never have I produced the same dress twice! To tailor the outfit to its user, I typically come up with a fresh concept or alter a material. Knowing that their clothing is unique and has never been worn by anyone else gives the customer and me a great deal of satisfaction. In certain ways, our clothing reflects our personalities. When a customer asks me to recommend a style or a material, I take into account her character, appearance, and age.

Like many other occupations, sewing has its own long-term problems. Working long hours can harm neck, back, wrists, and eyesight. Seamstressing for an important occasion takes a lot of responsibility to complete outfits on time and

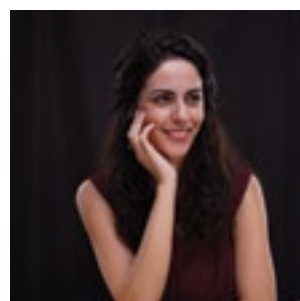


Making a dress for a bride or her family fills me with joy because it makes them feel valued and delighted on the most significant night of their lives.

without any errors. The expectations are so high: when a bride orders a dress to shine on the night of her long-awaited dream, there is no room for error. If the dress is not made properly, it endangers the future of the seamstress's work. Therefore, a tailor's work must be extraordinary to survive in the current competitive market of readily available online and imported clothing; otherwise, the availability of any form of clothing with affordable pricing will drive the tailor out of business. Because of this, seamstressing is less common than it formerly was.

In Iran, every culture and city has its own traditional clothing that is made with different materials, colours, and sewing techniques. Iranians give a lot of thought to how they look and what they wear. We take our time to choose the best clothing that fits our family's background, beliefs, and financial situation. I've observed that, in Canada, casual wear is more common than in Iran. There, picking one's dress takes more thought and time, especially for events such as weddings or celebrations. One of the wonderful things I've observed in Canada is that everyone is free to express themselves through their personal style in clothing. I firmly believe that no one should make others adhere to the same dress code or make everyone in a community look alike.

This summer, I visited Kingston for a few months to spend time with my daughters. I took classes in English and participated in the KEYS program. I also started working in a local tailor shop. The store's owner was thrilled with what I brought to the table in terms of knowledge and work experience and wanted me to stay here permanently, and should that be possible in days to come, I would happily say yes.



SADAF AMINI is an Iranian-Canadian musician and Santur player. She received her Master of Music Technology from the University of Toronto. She is currently based in Kingston, where she lives and works.

Local Ethical Fashion: An Interview with the Founder of Onderbroeks

Growing Kingston's design community INTERVIEW BY EM HARMSSEN

When I was asked to interview Tara Jeronimus, the founder of Onderbroeks, it was an easy yes! Since both of us are Kingston-based designers, we were already in contact and it made for a great afternoon of catching up with one of Kingston's gems.

EM HARMSSEN: Before we dig into more specific questions, can you introduce your brand story for anyone who hasn't heard of Onderbroeks?

TARA JERONIMUS: The Onderbroeks origin story goes back to 2014. I began using creativity as an outlet and selling one-off pieces through Instagram after experiencing debilitating bouts of anxiety that led to a career change. Being creative in this way made me excited and happy about life again, and I wanted to share this happiness with others. At the time I was predominantly making underwear and bralettes. One day my Opa (Grandfather) walked into my sewing area and exclaimed "Onderbroeks!", which means underwear in Dutch, and I decided, that's it, that's what I'm going to name my brand.

After running it as a side hustle for a few years, it started becoming profitable in a way that allowed me to transition into the business full-time. This is what led me to move to Kingston in 2019, because I knew that financially it would be more doable here rather than my space in Toronto. I was able to get a home and turn a section of it into the Onderbroeks studio and I haven't looked back.

EM: It's important for aspiring entrepreneurs to learn about how businesses start and that the journeys are often winding. Can you share some more about the ethos of the brand and your vision?

TARA: My design ethos is like yours, and it's encouraging to hear from you that you also take things slow with your design process. Robes have been the

BEING CREATIVE... MADE ME EXCITED AND HAPPY ABOUT LIFE AGAIN, AND I WANTED TO SHARE THIS HAPPINESS WITH OTHERS.

main product Onderbroeks offers because I really believe that having one strong product and developing a message through that product is all you really need. I do have plans to expand the collection and offer new styles but want to continue being thoughtful without rushing what comes next. Looking back I can see how going to Algonquin to study graphic design was totally meant to happen, because having those skills is such a huge asset to my company. Not to say there hasn't been a lot of trial and error, because there has. I don't have a fashion background, so learning the right vocabulary has been challenging but also rewarding. Overall, transparency is super important to me, because that's how I started...with a very honest, vulnerable story of how Onderbroeks came to be, and I want to keep that going strong.

EM: Having a background in graphic design, are you interested in maybe designing your own textiles at some point?

TARA: Completely. This is one of my dreams. Eventually I would love all the textiles to be my own designs or hire artists/designers like you to collaborate with on themed collections. We recently made a small collection of patchwork robes, which was super fun to create and got me extra excited about one day coming up with my own custom patterns.

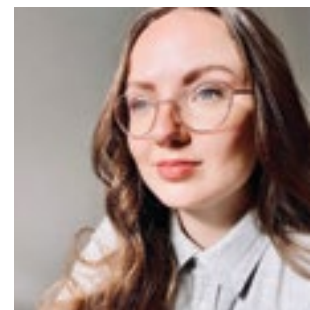
EM: I love this for you! The "Our Givings" section on your website highlights many different causes that Onderbroeks supports, from animal rescue to cancer awareness to giving in silence. What can you share on these initiatives?

TARA: I am a firm believer in giving; I think it's so important. This is something I've kept up through the years, whether it's by partnering with an organization or connecting privately with an individual going through a tough time. I've always been one to feel deeply and have empathy, so if I sense others going through something, it's on my heart to let them know someone is thinking of them. I know how much my product can comfort and uplift me, so it's super cool to be able to offer that to somebody else.

EM: I agree, it's great that you do this. Last question, what is your take on Kingston as a creative hub? How has your experience been starting up a business here?

TARA: Kingston has won me over. The creativity, the support, and the connections have really blown me away to be honest. Coming from Toronto, a city that is supposed to be like this — I just felt it more immediately here. There seems to be a genuine excitement towards new businesses and less competitiveness. Everyone roots for everyone, which I love.

If you are interested in learning more, you can find Onderbroeks online at onderbroeks.ca or on Instagram @onderbroeks.



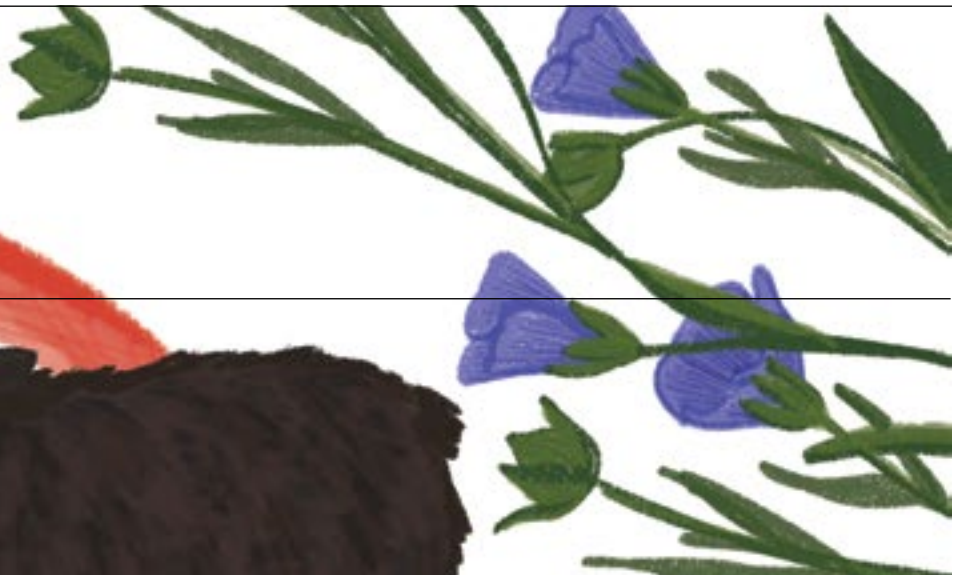
EM HARMSSEN is the founder of emske (emske.ca), a local design studio that offers an array of services and (soon) products: all designed with accessibility and inclusion in mind. Em is an active advocate for arts and culture in the city, and is grateful to be a part of Kingston's vibrant community of entrepreneurs and creatives.

PHOTOS CREDIT: Courtesy of Onderbroeks



Fashionable People

PUZZLE BY HALEY SARFELD
ILLUSTRATION BY JILL GLATT

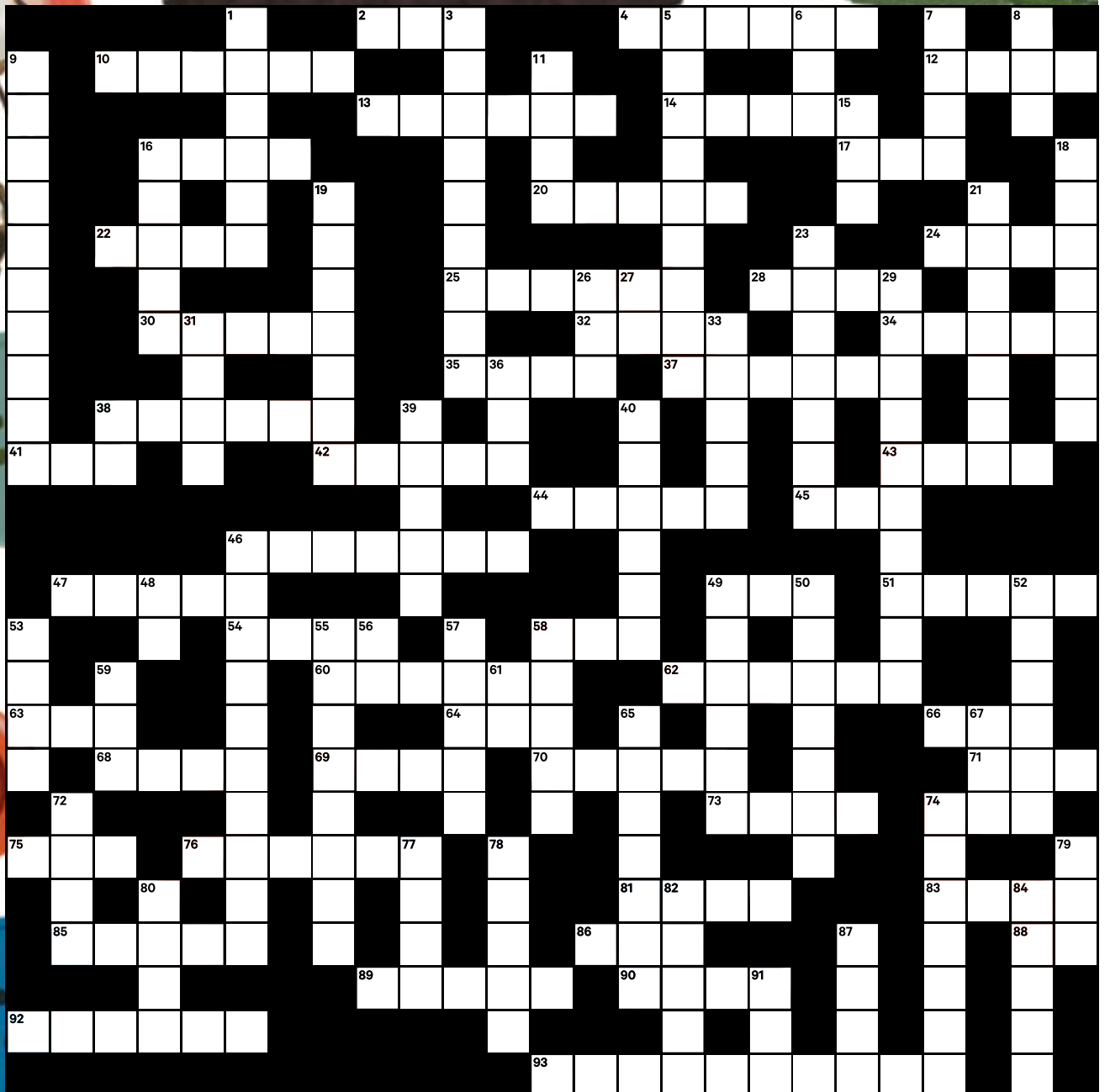


ACROSS

- 2 With 22 across, two items worn by graduates
4 Ginger, _____, Posh, Scary, and Baby
10 Relaxed and informal
12 The AKA Autonomous Social Centre runs a Really, Really _____ Market where you can share clothes and other items with your neighbours
13 Soft, fluffy fibre that grows in a boll
14 Boots and skates have these
16 Did you see the baby in the footie romper? So _____!
17 Style known for skinny jeans, black eyeliner, and straightened hair that falls in front of the face
20 Cloth woven from flax
22 With 2 across, two items worn by graduates
24 Apple pie served with ice cream: "à la _____"
25 A set of clothes or equipment
28 A powerful singing style
30 To avoid talking directly about something; to _____ the issue
32 "Where'd you get your dress?" "This old thing? I don't remember, I've had it for _____"
34 I want new boots for long walks in the woods, but thanks to price _____, I can't afford them
35 Steel-_____ footwear is an important safety measure on job sites
37 To couple back up?
38 One-of-a-kind tongue twister with "New York"
41 A space between teeth; also the name of a clothing chain
42 To eat quickly; to _____ down your food
43 _____ fashion items quickly end up in the landfill
44 A driveway is where you _____ car
45 Fashion that stands apart from the mainstream (abbreviated)
46 Stereotypical parental response to requests to turn up the heat: "Put on a _____!"
47 Fashion magazine and Madonna song
49 "Why are you wearing that ridiculous outfit?" "I lost a _____"
51 _____ couture
54 Comfy, snug (British spelling)
58 Self-directed fashion project in three letters
60 Tinker _____ Soldier Spy
62 _____ your mind already!
63 When there are two winners
64 A single-piece outfit; a _____-sie
66 "Nice wool coat." "Thank _____!"
68 "Are you still feeling sick?" "Nah, I'm on the _____"
69 Ancient Roman attire
70 Like it's going out of _____
71 Haters gonna hate; hatters gonna _____
73 A performance that plays with gender presentation and typically involves elaborate outfits
74 '60s subculture originating in London; clashed with rockers
75 Some may find this feathery scarf too constrictive
76 Pandemic restrictions limited the number of people who could do this together
81 Wear this if you're the Phantom of the Opera or if you don't want to share your germs
83 Multilayered ballet skirt
85 Popular on social media; _____-ing
86 The _____ o' shanter is a traditional Scottish bonnet
88 According to fashion traditionalists, you can wear polka dots _____ stripes, but never both!
89 Construction workers wear reflective _____
90 You want to dress in formal wear? _____ yourself!
92 That's a made-up story; it's _____-ated
93 Captain _____, briefs-wearing titular character of Dav Pilkey's children's books

DOWN

- 1 Frosty the Snowman's nose
3 An old-fashioned slip
5 1981 John Waters film shown at The Screening Room this summer; named after a synthetic fabric
6 Popular in the '70s and again in the '90s, they're like gloves for your feet: _____ socks
7 Big hairstyle often shaped with a wide-toothed comb
8 Flat-topped felt cap with a tassel
9 A very small budget
11 Baa baa black sheep, have you any _____?
15 Quick _____ on Barrie Street can alter your clothes
16 Holey shoes
18 Mr. _____, a Canadian television personality who played imagination games with his puppet friends from 1967 to 1996
19 Cash For _____, consignment store formerly located on Barrie Street near Colborne
21 What every dress ought to have
23 Special finery; from the Latin "royal privileges"
26 A short-lived fashion craze
27 App where billions of users share photos of their outfits (abbreviated)
29 2012 song by Macklemore & Ryan Lewis ft. Wanz (2 words)
31 Some would say we live in a tight-_____ community
33 Canadian lingerie retailer La _____
36 Ready-to-wear; _____ the rack
38 Using bits of old clothing to make something new is called _____-cycling
39 When a dog is too hot, he _____
40 Worn by a member or fan of a hockey team
46 The fastest hand on the clock (2 words)
48 Men's fashion magazine
49 Issue 8's cover photo featured two people wearing _____ earrings
50 Long Johns, a.k.a. _____ wear
52 A series of tweets
53 "Outfit of the day" abbreviation
55 That comedian had me in _____
56 Whadda _____ think of my outfit?
57 The wizard kid with glasses wears one of these to become invisible
58 _____ for success
59 _____ and haw
61 Can I try it _____?
65 Worn to bed
67 Tabloid headline: "_____ Wore It Best?"
72 A layer of paint
74 A trio of young felines make a tearful confession: "Oh mother dear, we sadly fear our _____ we have lost"
77 It's all the _____ these days!
78 These are made for walking
79 But not a real _____ coat, that's cruel
80 Question asked at 338 Princess Street: "What'll I _____?"
82 Groucho glasses can be worn for disguise or _____-ment
84 Warm hat typically worn in the winter
87 If your clothes are getting thin, they're well-_____
91 A sleeveless shirt; a tank _____



Find solutions on page 2

Consider the Coat

STORY BY JEFF MCGILTON

ILLUSTRATION BY EM HARMSSEN

As the soft and sudden snowfalls drift through the neighbourhood streets, with winter winds whipping and warning of what's to come, there's an annual truth that one either accepts with grace or reluctance: it's time to break out the winter coat.

In my hesitance to accept the seasonal shift, I think back to Robert Munsch's *Thomas' Snowsuit*, with the young Thomas refusing to put on his brown snowsuit, despite the insistence from his mother, teacher, and principal.

Growing up, I, too, had a matching brown snowsuit, which didn't earn any positive nicknames at school or on the ski hills (think brown and sticky). And while I can look back and smile at this, my younger self spent three winters in this coat before getting a new horizontal striped number that would last me throughout high school, followed by the navy-blue button-down that I still wear today.

Of all the articles of clothing in an Eastern Ontarian wardrobe, the coat is perhaps the one that gets the most annual wear. At some point during the sub-zero stretches we find ourselves in, coats are like a second skin that straddles the line between routine and essential. Over their repeated wearing and the longevity that they ideally keep, coats become a sort of calling card, recognizable in the same way you could know someone by their walk or posture.

In addition to personal recognition, coats can be signifiers of a great many things. They can project a sense of personality, age, worldliness, and status, and like most other commercialized things, are subject to the demands of popular fashion. An example of this is the annual migration of Canada Goose jackets, which travel from various closets across Kingston onto the downtown streets each winter season. Even being part of the flock is telling of a coat-wearer.

In his famous short story *The Overcoat*, author Nikolai Gogol tells the tale of Akaky Akakievich, a government clerk whose life changes after the purchase of an extravagant new coat. In awe of the new garment, his workplace throws a celebration, and their mood toward Akaky shifts dramatically from distaste to devotion. However, on his walk home from the event, Akaky is confronted by two ruffians who take his coat and leave him beaten in the snow. While a workplace celebration might be a little over the top, Gogol's story speaks to the arbitrary value placed on status pieces in society. What would Akaky's overcoat look like in Kingston today, and would it really change the way the wearer is perceived?

Consider your own winter garments. How does your coat represent you? Is it built for form, function, or a combination of both? Does it carry any personal significance? Does the bright red, fur-lined parka remind you of your first winter in Canada? Does



AT THE END OF THE DAY, THE COAT IS JUST A COAT, AND NOTHING WITHOUT THE PERSON WEARING IT.

the sewn-on patch or hot-chocolate stain evoke the ghosts of winters past? How does the tight, floor-length down coat instruct the wearer rather than the wearer instructing the coat?

A creative exploration of this concept was presented at last summer's Skeleton Park Arts Festival in a performance called *There's Something About Women in Coats*, choreographed by local artist and Kingston School of Dance Artistic Director Kay Kenney. Performed by Kenney alongside Charlotte Tessier and Jessica Irwin-Champagne, the piece was a collection of vignettes and movement sequences in which the team interacted with a wide range of jackets and coats. As performers donned or shed a layer, their postures and movements shifted in response. In some coats there was joy and freedom, in others, intense loss and longing.

In an email exchange, Kenney described these moments as "an exploration of who the woman is beneath the coat, who the coat makes her out to be." While this suggests the use of coats as a means of exploring identity, it does not signify the coat becoming an identity in and of itself. This was reflected in the performance during moments when the person

underneath the garment shone through (by laughs, winks, and cries), and we were reminded that at the end of the day, the coat is just a coat, and nothing without the person wearing it. This notion offers warmth in the face of Gogol's tale and reminds me that it is Thomas' friends calling from outside for him to come and play that finally convinces him to put on his snowsuit.

As the winter coats of Kingston continue to emerge, remember that, at the end of the day, it's what lies beneath the coat that counts. What's more, keep in mind that having a coat is a privilege that not everyone shares. If you find yourself with unused coats or winter gear, consider donating them to United Way KFL&A or St. Vincent de Paul Society of Kingston.



JEFF MCGILTON is a Skeleton Park neighbourhood resident with a passion for community art, bouldering, and local coffee shops. In the winter months, you can usually spot him in his navy-blue coat, a toque, and fingerless gloves.

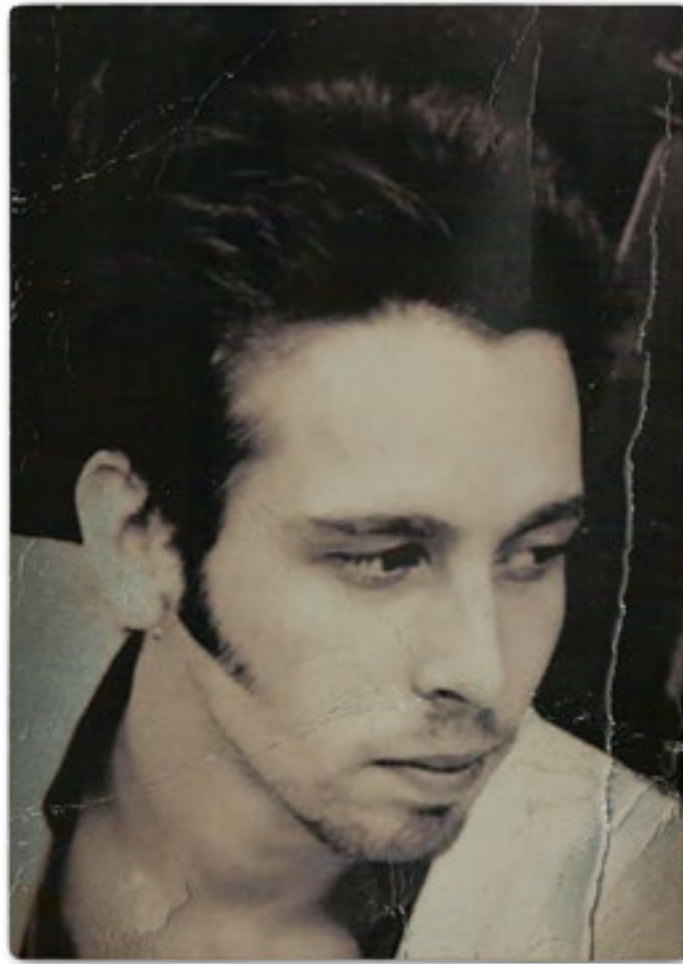
Michael

“Mo” Owen

1973–2022

Downtown Kingston icon, rebel punk, coffee slinger, best sideburns between King and Wellington, arcade aficionado, mentor of lost souls (and sometimes lost himself), patron saint of missing cats, loving father

BY HIS FRIENDS



Mo loved music. Many remember his mix CDs as his love language. Here, his friends have collected some of the songs that best remind us of him.

- 1 Ring of Fire by Social Distortion
- 2 I Don't Want to Get Over You by The Magnetic Fields
- 3 Punk Love by The Magnetic Fields
- 4 Papa Was a Rodeo by The Magnetic Fields
- 5 The Book of Love by The Magnetic Fields
- 6 All My Little Words by The Magnetic Fields
- 7 I'll Be Seeing You by Billie Holiday
- 8 Stormy Weather by Billie Holiday
- 9 Train in Vain (Stand by Me) by The Clash
- 10 Should I Stay or Should I Go by The Clash
- 11 London Calling by The Clash
- 12 Holidays in the Sun by Sex Pistols
- 13 Anarchy in the U.K. by Sex Pistols
- 14 Story of My Life by Social Distortion
- 15 I Fought the Law by Mike Ness
- 16 Blitzkrieg Bop by Ramones
- 17 Sheena is a Punk Rocker by Ramones
- 18 Rumble by Link Wray
- 19 Man in Black by Johnny Cash
- 20 I Walk the Line by Johnny Cash
- 21 Folsom Prison Blues by Johnny Cash
- 22 California Stars by Billy Bragg and Wilco
- 23 Holland, 1945 by Neutral Milk Hotel
- 24 Fade Into You by Mazzy Star
- 25 Whip It by DEVO
- 26 (I Can't Get No) Satisfaction by DEVO
- 27 Janie Jones by The Clash
- 28 November Rain by Guns N' Roses
- 29 American Girl by Tom Petty and the Heartbreakers
- 30 Fist City by Loretta Lynn
- 31 Handle with Care by Travelling Wilburys
- 32 Into My Arms by Nick Cave & The Bad Seeds
- 33 Red Right Hand by Nick Cave & The Bad Seeds
- 34 Blue Light by Mazzy Star
- 35 Hold On by Tom Waits
- 36 Dirty Old Town by The Pogues
- 37 Lodi Dodi (feat. Nancy Fletcher) by Snoop Dogg
- 38 Gin N Juice (feat. Dat Nigga Daz) by Snoop Dogg
- 39 Big Seven by Judge Dread
- 40 Forgot About Dre by Dr. Dre, Eminem
- 41 Get Real Paid by Beck
- 42 Evening Star by Robert Star, Brian Eno

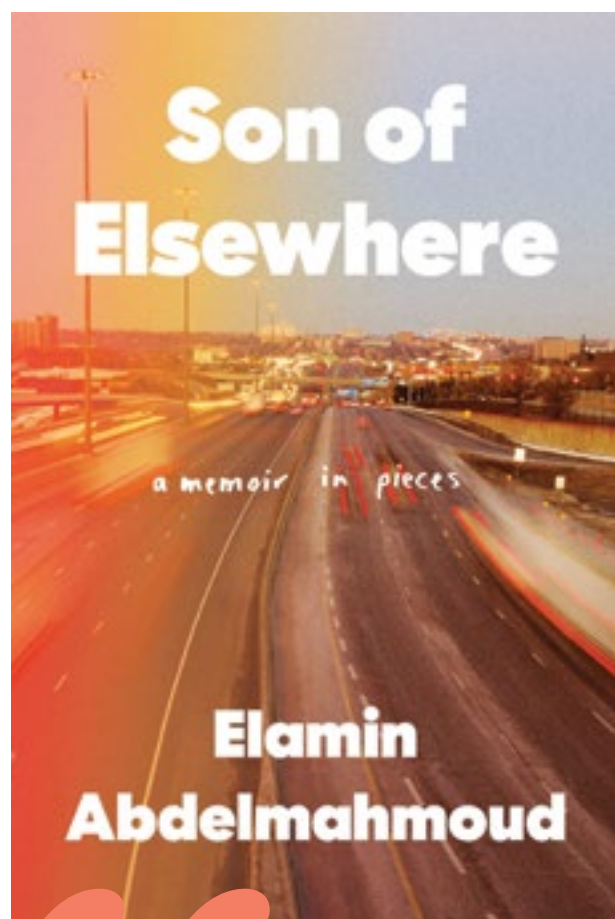


Listen to the playlist online by scanning this QR Code.



Laurel Claus-Johnson 1944–2022

Grandmother, teacher, learner, leader, listener, and friend to all living things



Son of Elsewhere: a nuanced memoir

One man's personal road map, a history lesson in white colonialism, and a source of comfort for Black immigrants to Canada

REVIEW BY **TIANNA EDWARDS**

Son of Elsewhere: A Memoir in Pieces. By Elamin Abdelmehmoud. McClelland & Stewart. 2022. 280pp. \$32.95 hardcover. ISBN: 9780771002229.



WHEN I SAY THIS BOOK IS FOR EVERYONE, I MEAN THAT. I ENJOYED ALL OF THE WAYS I COULD RELATE TO IT AS A BLACK WOMAN IN MY THIRTIES, BUT MY WHITE MOTHER-IN-LAW IN HER SEVENTIES ALSO ENJOYED IT.

“I became Black the way a person falls asleep: slowly at first, then all at once,” Elamin Abdelmehmoud writes in *Son of Elsewhere: A Memoir in Pieces*.

In his lively prose, Abdelmehmoud writes about learning what it means to be racialized after immigrating at a young age from Sudan to predominantly white Kingston. The book is a detailed road map to the person he's become today — a charismatic writer for many prominent publications as well as a podcaster for the CBC.

I enjoyed this memoir for the many layers of relatability mixed in with layers of learning. As a Black woman who grew up in Kingston, I could relate to his experience grasping for a sense of belonging and representation in a place where few people look like him. I also appreciated his mention of old Kingston landmarks such as the S&R building. However, he adds a nuance that I am not familiar with and that hasn't been told often enough in our community: his perspective as a Muslim from Sudan arriving with little English and little understanding of Black culture, the culture he'd be lumped into by his peers.

Through learning Abdelmehmoud's story, readers can expect a history lesson in how white colonialism impacted and separated the Sudanese people. The book is also a reflection on how toxic notions of white supremacy bleed into all cultures in different forms. I admired the way Abdelmehmoud connects the dots and relates the historical impact of colonialism in Sudan to the presence of colonialism in North America.

Abdelmehmoud's work is also a modern-day lesson in how Black folks need to dig deep to discover and unpack all of the ways we've subconsciously been taught to hate ourselves in order to gain the respect of white people. Abdelmehmoud details how he reached for anything that could help him relate to his peers: wrestling culture in the '90s, OC (“original content,” in social media parlance), and the vernacular of the local rock radio station.

To learn how Abdelmehmoud watched his community in Sudan fall victim to a ruthless attack by America while admitting his love affair with America is difficult to read. He also admits that he has a

romance with the Deep South of the United States, which I found baffling. But he humbly shares that he doesn't have it all figured out and continues to confront the person he's become. He's very vulnerable in these admissions.

Abdelmehmoud's vulnerability allows people who have been in his shoes to know exactly where he's coming from and to feel less shame about how they might have stretched themselves to fit in. He describes his experiences in such a clear and relatable way that those who do not share his upbringing can still easily empathize. He says, “I am still discovering the ways I learned to hate myself.”

When I say this book is for everyone, I mean that. I enjoyed all of the ways I could relate to it as a Black woman in my thirties, but my white mother-in-law in her seventies also enjoyed it.

Abdelmehmoud makes it clear that when he came to Canada he didn't have a diverse enough representation of Blackness to know where he fit in. He referred to Black pop culture as a guide (on what to avoid, in many cases). The way I see it, this memoir is a contribution to the solution he needed as a young person. New Black immigrants can reference this book for a piece of comfort, knowing they are not alone in their journey. His footprints reveal the path is rocky, and the self-work is never complete.



TIANNA EDWARDS is an Equity, Diversity, Inclusion Coordinator and part-time master's student at Queen's University (on mat leave until March 2023), and the creator/author of a blog, keepupwithkingston.com. She lives in Kingston with her husband and two daughters.



Aqua Nova — “a unique site-specific production that explores water’s capacity to unite, heal, and transform.”

STORY BY LIB SPRY



The Isabel Bader Centre for the Performing Arts has a lobby that feels like a fishbowl — one dominated by the view of Lake Ontario. What better place to create a multi-media event that intertwines film, music, and dance to celebrate water? In *Aqua Nova* — staged September 10 and 11 — visual artist Don Maynard, filmmaker Josh Lyon, choreographer and dancer Kay Kenney, and composer and musician Sadaf Amini together wove their talents into an immersive, intriguing, and delightful evening.

Walking down the steps to the Isabel’s lobby, we move into dimness. The two great glass walls at right angles to each other are hung with semi-opaque material, through which we can still see the lake. People of all ages choose a chair, or sit on the floor. Some stay on the steps. Some move around. We are drawn into the water on the walls, rolling, waving, rippling. Then large images of people moving in water, over water, under water engulf us. Music, played on the santur, an instrument few of us know, adds to the feeling of depth, of joy. Now three bodies move into the space, and move with, against, and within the images, with and without the music. The audience watches, totally absorbed and, as Josh says, “You could audibly hear them take breaths simultaneously at certain moments in the program.”

How did the collective make *Aqua Nova*?

DON: “I was sitting in the foyer one afternoon really enjoying the openness of the space and the large windows that look out on the lake when I noticed aircraft cables along the top of the windows. I thought if I were to design and create curtains for

the Isabel, I could turn the building itself into a giant projection screen that could be viewed from both inside and outside.”

JOSH: “Don had an idea to wrap the Isabel lobby in a screen, as it felt like a giant aquarium, and we wanted to explore together what that might feel like, to create a semi-transparent wrap-around screen that would re-frame the beautiful view of Lake Ontario and immerse folks in an experience of water and our relationship to it. We decided that if we were to try and work with people moving in water, we’d want to have an experienced creative choreographer as a key collaborator in the Aqua Nova Collective.”

KAY: “I created the live dance portion for *Aqua Nova*, which was a collaboration with Movement Market Collective. Performing as mermaids and goddesses in water — lakes, docks, marshes, pools, and more, the dancers shaped the work on and off screen. As part of the performance, Charlotte Tessier, Jessica Irwin, and myself performed a live dance piece titled *above, below & beside*, which was layered on top of the projection created and directed by Josh Lyon, and accompanied by Sadaf Amini, who also shifted space with the dancers in an original musical composition.

SADAF: “We made decisions about the form and sections we wanted to have in the project and started to work individually, then we gathered the results and made progress, and repeated this cycle until the final version was created.”

DON: “Fundamentally, the artists worked independently of each other, in part due to the restrictions of COVID-19. But I felt as artists we were



The Isabel Bader Centre: What better place to create a multi-media event that intertwines film, music, and dance to celebrate water? An immersive, intriguing, and delightful evening.

essentially on the same page aesthetically, and in terms of ideas, and were willing to try new things, and to experiment.”

JOSH: “We brainstormed possibilities for visual imagery we wanted to explore together in a number of different video shoots in, near, under, or on water. Each time we’d bring a slate of ideas, but also be moved by the possibilities of the space and adapt to the folks who showed up — to suit their strengths as we explored the different kinds of movements.”

KAY: “Toward the end of the process, we realized that elements had to be layered so they wouldn’t compete on stage. First came the film, then the music, and lastly the dance. Working with Sadaf and her music for the first time was a highlight of this process. Her sound and attention to detail made the work feel so complete.”

SADAF: “I loved the multidisciplinary collaboration and creating the artwork from scratch, as well as the production/contribution process, which was different from other projects I’d been involved with.”

JOSH: “It’s always amazing to find people from such different disciplines with whom you can have a porous collaboration, where roles become somewhat blurred as you share in the creative process — trusting the expertise of the other, while being able to push each other in directions you may not have imagined from your own background or experience.”

DON: “The audience loved it. There were kids in attendance, there were people from the arts community, people from all over Kingston, people of all ages and interests, and the response was uniformly positive. Kids liked it, old people liked it — everyone liked it.”



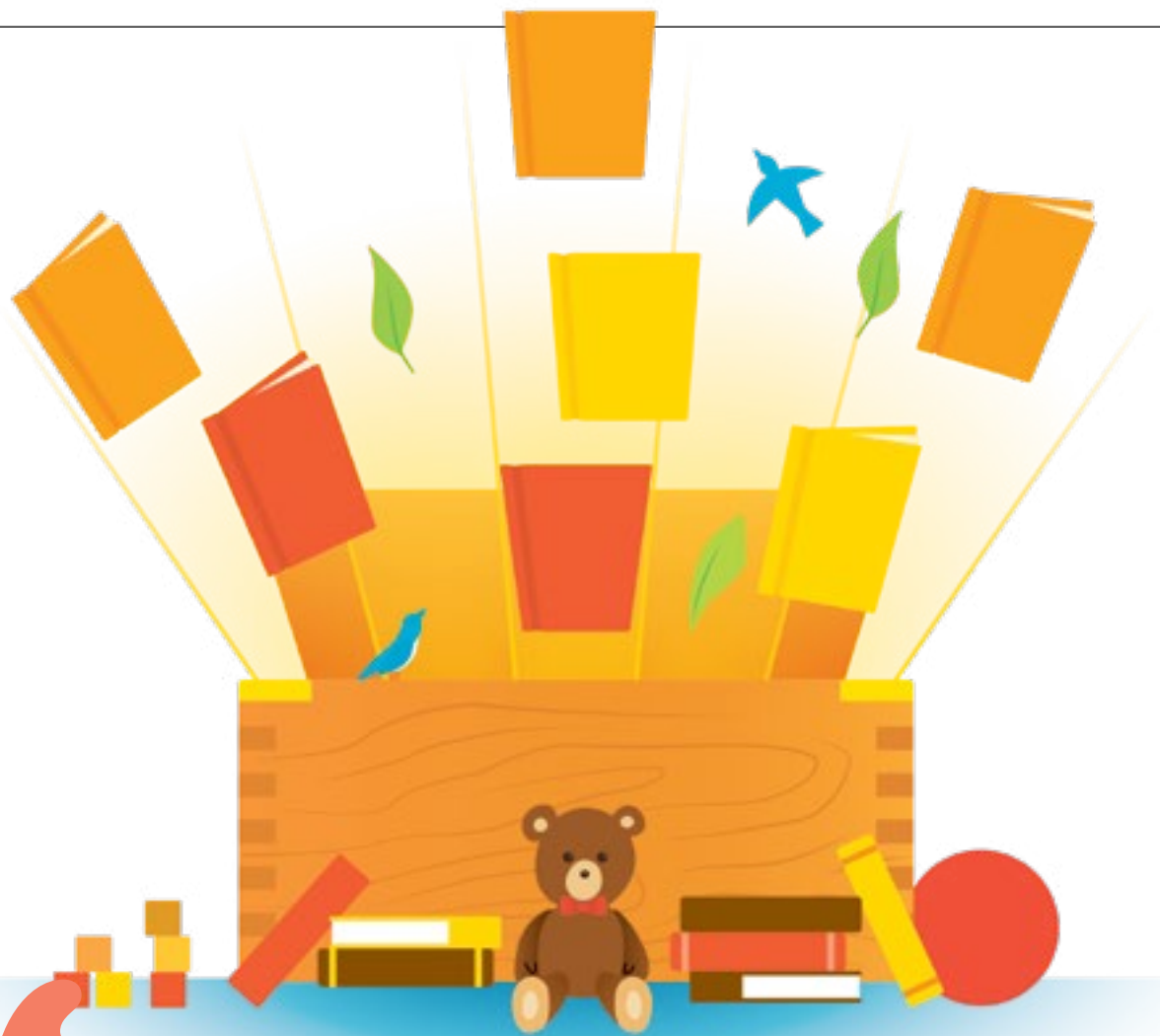
LIB SPRY has been a theatre maker for more than fifty years as a director, writer, producer, educator, performer, and translator. She is a specialist in non-traditional theatre forms: physical theatre, popular theatre, community arts, site-specific theatre, theatre for young audiences, and is a recognized teacher of Theatre of the Oppressed.

Creating a Literary Legacy of Love and Hope

“Nora’s Book Box”

STORY BY **JAMIE SWIFT**

ILLUSTRATION BY **TARA PELOW**



My grand-daughter Nora was born last November. Coming to grandparenthood late in life, I figured that it would be a good idea to give her something to remember me by. Who knows? By the time she’s old enough to remember me, I might no longer be around. A lasting legacy seemed to be in order.

So I asked Tim Soper, a skilled Kingston cabinet-maker, to craft something special, something elegant and useful.

Just before Nora’s birth, he arrived with a handsome cherry-wood box. When raised, the top remains open, posing no risk to tiny fingers. The box features dozens of delicate finger joints and polished brass fittings. I’d found a fellow who makes trophy plaques for bowling leagues, golf tournaments, and the like; Tim managed to inset an engraved plaque flush to the top of “Nora’s Book Box.”

I stuffed my grand-daughter’s gift with books. Board books and crinkly books for babies. Picture books that neither I nor Nora’s mother, Sonya, recalled from our childhoods. Books for junior readers and on to young-adult fiction. The scheme worked: by her first birthday this November Nora had become fascinated by books. Books were good for chewing and soon she was patient enough to stare at the illustrations while her parents read to her.

I’m hoping that Nora’s interest in books lasts. It’s apparently part of her genetic inheritance.

Her maternal great-great grandfather maintained a little library focused on the American Civil War while her paternal great-great grandfather was active in Montreal’s Mechanics Institute, later the Atwater Library. Her great-grandmother became the volunteer president of the Montreal Children’s Library. I’m always borrowing library books and have written a few books myself.

By the time Nora gets to be my age, the end of the twenty-first century will be in sight. I hope she’ll maintain the family legacy and our interest in books. Surely, she’ll have kept her book box. I can’t know if she’ll have children or grandchildren. The future seems so uncertain. Indeed, even today many of us are re-considering the once-unquestioned idea of having children at all.

I’m an elder . . . I’m in the position of sifting through a lifetime, and saying, ‘What have I learned that I can pass on?’ That’s my job.

– DAVID SUZUKI

We can’t predict how things will look by century’s end, but the signs are dire. Will Nora’s world resemble a dystopian, science-fiction apocalypse?

Birds fell from the sky during the latest heat wave in India. This year, floods destroyed four million acres of crops in Pakistan. The omens are clear here at home as well. British Columbia is ravaged by fire and flood. Record hurricanes rip apart the coasts of Newfoundland and PEI. Rapidly thawing northern permafrost is generating unimaginable levels of carbon dioxide and methane emissions, part of a terrifying carbon bomb.

United Nations Secretary-General António Guterres could not have been more blunt in October. “End our reliance on fossil fuels. Avoid a lock-in of new fossil fuel infrastructure. Invest massively in renewables before climate catastrophe closes in on us all.”

I worry that if today’s elders — people of a certain age, like me — don’t take action on climate breakdown while we still can, future generations will judge us harshly. I fear that many of our leaders will continue to repeat that the time has come for action while again kicking the planet-destroying problem down the road into the rapidly approaching future. Nora’s future.

As elders, we need to forget about the traditional notion of retirement. That’s simply about getting out of the labour market. True, some derive meaning from paid work. But, as Peggy Lee sang so famously when I was a university student in 1969, *Is That All There Is?*

Getting involved in urgent work that offers meaning and purpose strikes me as a damned good idea in treacherous times. There’s much to be done.

When he recently retired from the CBC’s “The Nature of Things,” David Suzuki, eighty-six, offered some worthy, self-aware advice about what he described as the most important part of his life: “I’m in a very privileged state. I’m an elder,” he said. “I have no vested interest in the status quo. I’m in the position of sifting through a lifetime, and saying, ‘What have I learned that I can pass on?’ That’s my job. I say to every elder, what have you learned from your life? Be an elder.”

Last fall, reconciling myself to a new identity, I plunged into my first-ever activity as an elder. I joined an Ontario group called Seniors for Climate Action Now, or SCAN! The outfit has doubled in size since I joined. I started by helping to compile a list of thirty-three of what SCAN! calls the Ontario government’s “climate crimes.”

Meanwhile, Nora and her mother Sonya have moved to Nova Scotia. For Christmas, I’ll find another book for the box. I just noticed one called *Old Enough to Save the Planet*.

I’m confident that Nora will still have her book box when she turns my age in 2092. I bet she’ll be reading to her own grandchildren. I’m less confident about the state of the planet that far down the road. But I hope that whenever she takes out a book, the box will be like Pandora’s box. One thing will always remain inside: hope.



Kingston writer **JAMIE SWIFT** showed his daughter Sonya how to ride a bicycle on the soft turf in Skeleton Park. He’s hoping that Nora Swift will become a keen cyclist.

One Woman's Gift to the Neighbourhood

STORY BY SADIQA DE MEIJER / PHOTOS BY MICHELE LEERING

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 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 column exists on the assumption that you, dear reader, might wonder too. For each edition of *The Skeleton Press*, I will profile a local garden, and particularly those that can give us a deeper sense of ourselves as a neighbourhood. In this second column, I am very pleased to consider the front garden at 126 Raglan Road. If you have suggestions on where I should rummage next, please let *The Skeleton Press* know.



Among the spots where Michele Leering finds inspiration for her gardening is a now antique BBC television show called *The Victorian Kitchen Garden*. It made me think of a place I was lucky enough to visit years ago called Heligan, in Cornwall, England. That Victorian estate had fallen into neglect until a restoration project began in 1990, and by the time I was there its gardens, all worked with hand tools, were robust and elaborate. Several of the gardens were inside high brick walls thick with ivy; these made the contained space slightly warmer, protecting it from wind and frost, and therefore extended the growing season within. It was not unheard of then for those walls to contain ovens, so that they could be heated during the early spring or late fall, allowing fruit trees to grow against them.

Michele might find those same techniques intriguing, and her gardening practices, like the Victorians', are based on organic methods, but a wall would be entirely against the spirit of her project. The front garden at 126 Raglan Road, a sustained wonder of blooms that seemed to emerge overnight from where there had been lawn and bushes, is meant to be visible. It is her gift to the neighbourhood. I know my own walking route started to veer towards her place, and many other pedestrians have felt the same magnetic effect. People pause and dwell on the sight and scent of hundreds of flowers, saturated with purples and yellows and pinks, and stirring with bees.

Michele gave particular thought to this gesture of a public garden in the context of the pandemic. If we look back two and a half years ago, when the coronavirus was less well understood and there were no vaccines available, the sudden changes to the way we moved around the neighbourhood were profound; we were walking around each other on the sidewalk, the playgrounds were closed with caution tape, and there was the tension of some people blaming particular racial groups for the outbreak. Under those circumstances, what a lovely impulse to make a public offering of beauty.



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



Each apartment, house, and small farm where Michele has lived over the decades has been a gardening site for her. She moved into her current home two years ago and obtained permission to begin her outdoor work there months earlier. Her approach to the process is intuitive, a listening to the land and soil in deciding what to plant, and when, and where. But the practice had a more literal application on first arrival — she kept hearing a low buzzing under the ground, and when she and helper John Kenney unearthed pine roots from the lawn, they turned out to hold a bumblebee nest.

As is true of many gardens, the connections made on this small plot of land are as complex as a root system. Many of the plants come with stories — there is love from Michele's old farm, bleeding heart in memory of a friend who died, and a soon-to-be-planted flower from neighbours whose name itself is narrative: kiss-me-over-the-garden-gate. The kitchen garden is at the back of the house, with rhubarb from the farm, tomatoes, and kale so massive and dark green that it looks like shrubs.

Michele, executive director of a community-based legal clinic, has recently been recognized with the Order of Canada for her extensive contributions to social justice. Alongside that work, gardening can bring release and renewal for her. She remembers pulling weeds while cursing the Mike Harris provincial government's slashing of social assistance rates. It is possible that the street's resident groundhog received some of the same response after decimating the beets and carrots. But in speaking of the garden, Michele more often uses terms such as reclaiming, reusing, propagating, and nurturing. The growing happens in a generative, optimistic spirit. These days, a "Basic Income Now" sign is on display among the flowers.

It was October when I dropped by to speak to Michele. The flowers at that moment were still varied, but the most vibrant and numerous were the dahlias. Michele has a special love for these plants, whose blooms can be the size of dinner plates. They originated in Mexico and Central America, where the tubers are used in cooking. In Victorian England, they symbolized a lasting bond of love. Michele has found that new colours are coming up — in some cases she or John have tied matching bit of yarn around the stem to remember the colour when the bloom dies off. The dahlia bulbs are in the attic until a warmer place for their overwintering is found. They have propagated readily, and Michele does not like to see them go to waste; if you would like a few to carry the spirit of this garden forward, you can contact her through *The Skeleton Press*.

Time to Rediscover a Community Treasure

The Kingston Community House for Self Reliance, at 99 York Street

STORY BY ELINOR RUSH

Do you ever wonder what the final legacy of the COVID epidemic will be? It seems like this pandemic will be with us for a long time. By now, we've all become adept at evaluating our comfort levels in community situations, staying at home more, using more social media, connecting on Zoom. I can think of some benefits to all these changes. What are the costs?

I've always made it a priority to be in the room. Any room. By *in the room* I mean this: being ready to interact in the moment, read and respond to subtle body language, acknowledge and celebrate the differing gifts we each bring with us. Also important to me: experiencing the unexpected, belonging, showing kindness. Seems to me that opportunities to experience these fundamental human needs have diminished or been lost in the past difficult months. I don't get them on my phone, and I don't get them on Zoom.

Since the creation of The Kingston Community House for Self Reliance (KCH) in 1983, its founders and community stewards have been advocating for just the kind of personal connection I'm talking about: a community enriched through interconnected relationships. The House is functional and welcoming, with meeting rooms, a full kitchen, and several studio and office spaces that have provided opportunities for community groups, not-for-profits, individuals, and clubs to gather, develop, and have fun.

With the onset of the pandemic, community members had to weigh the health benefits and human costs of either closing the KCH or keeping it open with

as safe an environment as possible. After consulting with KFL&A Public Health (the Kingston, Frontenac, Lennox, and Addington health unit) in March 2020, it was decided that the dangers of isolation and loss of community for some outweighed the dangers of COVID. In a time of community lockdown, the Kingston Community House, affectionately known by many as 99 York Street, was deemed an essential service. The House, which has a HEPA air filter system, introduced increased cleaning measures and provided optional masks and sanitizer.

The social harm associated with COVID-related isolation is being highlighted in recent reports about the effects of COVID on school-age children. At first, I thought it might be reckless to reopen our schools, and many agreed. But we have come to see how greatly children are affected by the loss of personal contact with teachers and other students as well as the change in routine. With COVID, the loss of social skills and the increase in mental health issues have been so dramatic that further closures could have dire and even irreparable consequences. The cost to recover lost ground in academic achievement, team-building skills, and physical fitness, along with the nurturing of compassion and empathy, is immeasurable. Adults are not monitored so closely, but I believe we are suffering in similar ways.

Given concerns about indoor community gatherings, use of the KCH has fallen over the past two years. Groups have moved on or moved online. Many have completely disbanded. But might it now be time for old friends to come home to 99 York Street and for everyone to meet the new neighbours?

Getting back into the shared-space groove will be challenging. We are out of the habit of close intermingling. Maybe we've become so accustomed to just watching our world go by that we resist living in it. We long for social connection but we hesitate.

We now live in a world where “smaller” — to reduce our environmental impact — is necessary, where housing shortages mean overcrowding or homelessness, and where the reduction of our energy use is imperative. It might be the perfect time to shine new light on a homey, shared community space where interested citizens can plan and execute a dramatic array of activities in a welcoming, inclusive environment.

The reduced use of the Kingston Community House since March 2020 has allowed for a period of evaluation and planning for the future. A community board, elected annually by the membership, is responsible for day-to-day operations but also for the future of the house. With the valuable, even essential, input of neighbours and friends, KCH is looking ahead to a bright future.

Currently, the most dramatic initiative at the Kingston Community House concerns planning for better space use and accessibility. This includes creating a new, more welcoming outdoor space for community use, a new entry that everyone can use, an accessible meeting room, and a new washroom to meet current building-code requirements.

My own history with the KCH is extensive and varied. My first visit was to attend a planning session for the first Women's Art Festival more than three decades ago. Over the years, the House has been the place where I have organized a cooking class for recently released inmates, received funding for a music project for youth, explored the car-share project, and joined a ukulele song circle.

These days I'm at the House for my meditation group, my writing group, and soon, I hope, my book group. There is no end of ideas for how the KCH can be a rich resource for the community. I would like to start a sewing group for kids. My future vision includes performance, play groups, storytelling, environmental activists, shared meals, youth, and music.

To help revitalize the KCH spirit, we could each think of a group activity we love, a useful or fun skill we could share, or a social get-together we've been missing. The KCH has space for all types of gatherings and learning.

I encourage you to drop by, maybe even join, the Kingston Community House for Self Reliance. A true neighbourhood gem, it provides a unique community facility to connect, to share, and to build a stable supportive neighbourhood. But mostly it's a place to have fun and a chance to meet your neighbours. If you also want to share your thoughts on future management of the House, that would be good, too. I hope to see you at 99 York Street.

ELINOR RUSH sits on the board of directors for the Kingston Community House. She has been a volunteer for more than fifty years in community organizations and has long been active in the Kingston music scene. She is a member of the Kingston Fibre Artists.

