

Issue Fourteen

THE

Fall 2023

SKELETON
PRESS



NEIGHBOURHOOD
LOVE

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. Letters may be edited for clarity and space considerations.

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MANDATE

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

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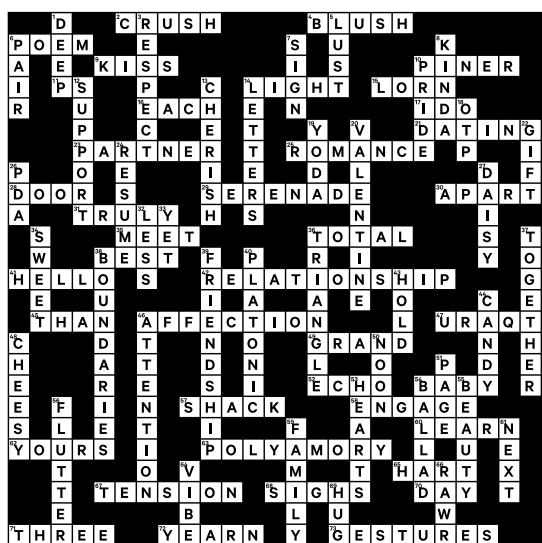
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THE HORROR OF HOMELESSNESS

Over the past five years, escalating housing prices have meant that the specter of homelessness is rarely far from our thoughts. To try to stave it off, at least until my landlord sells the house we've been living in on Barrie Street, I've taken a job at The Hub as a harm reduction worker. My time there has led me to a conclusion similar to that of the harm reduction worker in *Displacement City* regarding "the indifference to human life" (*Wanted and Wanting: A Place to Call One's Own, SP Spring 2023*). It's also meant I've grown weary when people commenting on the unhoused fail to adequately account for the role our justice and health care systems play in both facilitating and maintaining this "horror movie."* While I heartily agree that "housing is the key to addiction and mental health issues", the most urgent need of the unhoused right here and right now is a guaranteed safe supply. This can only be achieved by immediately ending the prohibition of all illicit narcotics, nation-wide. Failing that, it's not going to matter one iota to many of the people I serve whether we build a million houses for the terminally poor: they'll be dead or languishing in jail, long before the foundations are even dry.

—John Jantunen

*For this reason I've framed my latest novel, *Mason's Jar* — out from ECW Press on June 13th — as horror fiction (ecwpress.com/products/masons-jar)

HOLD THE APPLAUSE ON DRAG STORY HOUR

The stated intention behind drag story hour of 'building bridges between the queer community and the larger community' is praiseworthy. (*Drag Storytime Aims for Campy, Family-friendly Fun/Spring 2203*). However, many women find the mimicking of femaleness based on offensive gender stereotypes (exaggerated make-up, big hair, big breasts, catty demeanor) hard to take. By acting out their stereotypical notions of feminine characteristics, often in extremely unflattering and inaccurate ways, drag queens perpetuate imagery that continues to degrade women.

How does this offensive parody of women differ from black face, which we have all come to see as abhorrent? Drag supporters insist there is no comparison because the offence of black face lies in the uneven power dynamic between Blacks and Whites. But they appear reluctant to acknowledge the similar historic power imbalance between men and women.

My quarrel in no way extends to trans, queer, and non-binary individuals. It's encouraging to see more people embracing the idea of gender fluidity. Gender stereotyping and a gender binary mindset are destructive practices that constrain and wound all of us.

It's understood that the drag queen community is persecuted, and that performance styles vary widely. But everyone needs to find ways to express their identities without insulting others.

If better aligned with the ethos of the non-binary movement and more sensitive to the impact of hurtful stereotypes, drag could become part of a constructive force for freeing us from the gender constraints and shame of the past.

—Jane Derby

UNWHOLESOME BIRTHDAY VISIT

I was extremely disappointed to read in your Spring 2023 issue the article entitled "*Marichka and Mark Marczyk on Music, Family, and Resilience in Ukraine*". The framing of a birthday visit to a member of a far-right neo-Nazi-linked Ukrainian battalion "Karpatska Sich" as wholesome is concerning, as is the article's use of the right-wing dog whistle phrase "warriors of the cultural frontline." For a community newspaper dedicated to diversity, featuring such content is disappointing and disheartening.

—NJMT G

A CLASSIC CASE OF BEING OVERLOOKED

Your previous issue (Neighbourhood Music, Spring 2023) was interesting, but I came away disappointed there was no mention of classical music or traditional band music anywhere, Kingston has a vibrant classical music scene and two active community bands. I'm sure performers in either of these genres would welcome the chance to share their music. It doesn't necessarily have to be about formal concert halls. I performed many times at the bandshell at Murney Tower and in front of City Hall in the 70's. The KSO has been known to perform in the open air as well. There are also many small classical music ensembles in the city, even a bassoon quartet that performs many different styles of music, not just "serious" music! These active performers have been overlooked in your publication and by the current push from the City through the Broom Factory.

—Daniel McConnachie

Breaking News: Love is all around us!



BY ANNE KERSHAW & GREG TILSON

Love isn't exactly making headlines these days. Not easy to compete with the unrelenting onslaught of bad news about climate disaster, democracy in peril, and human rights trampling. Nonetheless, love in all its forms is ever constant and pervasive. And we believe it deserves to be noted.

Defying the traditional journalistic ethos about what constitutes news, we've devoted this Fall 2023 edition to the theme of love. And why not? For centuries, the idea of love has intrigued scientists, philosophers, and poets. The Ancient Greeks categorized love: Eros, Philia, Philautia, Storge, Mania etc. Today we talk in terms of sexual love, family love, friendship, love of nature, compassionate love, and obsessive love.

Self-love, another well-known variety, is recognized as fundamental to living a happy and constructive life. When taken to extremes, though, self-interest can eclipse community-mindedness and even become pathological. We've become all too familiar these days with the damage caused by malignant narcissism.

Scholars and scientists study the physiology and brain chemistry of love and countless poets have given unique expression to how love feels and what it means. This is a heavily trod area, but the quest continues to truly capture the contours and essence of love.

We decided to weigh in. Our stories depict love in myriad ways — as experienced by lovers, by family, or as humanitarian impulse or cosmic reverence. We found love in the devoted attention given to restoring a beloved violin, in neighbours turned lovers, in the lasting declarations of ink art, in love rituals sparked by public art, in the desire of the LGBTQ2S+ community for a safe place to meet and connect, and in the shared joy of a little boy learning to spell. We also look at how culture shapes the language of love and at the damage caused by ill-defined notions of love.

There is every reason to acknowledge and celebrate love. It's good for us, studies say. It helps us heal more quickly, lowers our blood pressure, reduces our physical pain, and extends our lives. It makes us feel happier and more fulfilled. It compels us to help one another, and to try to find ways to live together.

Help us put meat on the bones: Support *The Skeleton Press*

We love bringing *The Skeleton Press* to you every few months. But operating with a skeleton crew on a skeleton budget isn't always easy. Currently, funding comes through funds awarded to the Skeleton Park Arts Festival (SPAF) by several granting bodies. But the publication has no independent source of income and relies heavily on volunteers. This is becoming untenable to the point that we may not have a budget to publish the next winter issue. You can help by donating to SPAF, a charitable organization that can issue tax receipts. Scan the QR code to get started. You can also contribute by attending *The Skeleton Press'* November 25th fundraising concert (details on page 29) or by offering ideas and help in organizing other fundraising events.



canadahelps.org/en/charities/skeleton-park-arts-festival

ATTENTION WRITERS & ILLUSTRATORS

We invite pitches for articles related to the neighbourhood and welcome new and experienced writers. Send us your idea (max. 150 words). Most articles are maximum 800 words. We pay \$0.30 a word (\$240 per 800 words). We also welcome new illustrators and pay market rates.

Future themes are Neighbourhood Rest, interpreted imaginatively and broadly (e.g., sleep, healing, dreaming, labour issues, political unrest) and Neighbourhood Kids (what they're doing, thinking, experiencing). Send inquiries with samples of your work: skeletonpresseditor@gmail.com.

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Local Health Centre Frustrated by Lack of Police Accountability

Kingston Police fail to follow through with equity commitments

STORY BY **KATE ARCHIBALD-CROSS**
ILLUSTRATION BY **BENJAMIN NELSON**

“We collectively failed. I failed.”

Roger Romero, Project Lead of Kingston Speaks Inclusion (KSI), doesn't mince any words in talking about his disappointment with the outcome of this innovative project, launched in the summer of 2021.

A unique partnership between Kingston Community Health Centres (KCHC) and Kingston Police (KP), the project aimed to collect feedback from Kingston residents about how KP could integrate more equitable and inclusive practices and policies and build relationships in the community. The outcome was to be a final report presented to KP with detailed recommendations for change.

KP approached KCHC as an organization that was well-positioned to meet and work effectively with diverse populations who often don't connect with mainstream systems.

“KCHC was hesitant to be involved with this project,” says Romero, and it took serious conversations between members of KCHC and KP leadership to allay KCHC's reservations and to assure the team that this project and report would lead to meaningful change.

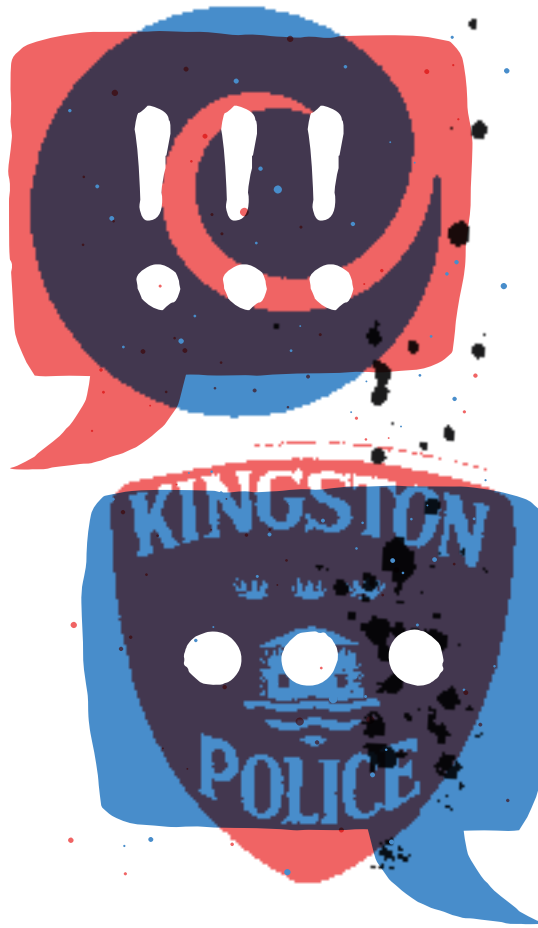
KCHC spent months consulting with community members and agencies to accumulate the data needed for informed and tangible recommendations.

“We had approximately 500 community members participate in the community consultations,” says Giselle Valarezo, researcher for KSI. “There was a diversity of responses from community members that ranged from positive to negative interactions with KP.”

Romero says this consultation process was not easy for anyone.

“I was a bit naïve about the amount of fear of reprisal that the community had in giving feedback to KP. Many people (including those in positions of power in organizations) were afraid to share their perspectives. Some stories were incredibly heartbreaking, and at times, almost unbelievable. But it was the truth because we kept hearing it over and over from a wide variety of people.”

Following the consultations, the research team spent hours analyzing the data and working on the final report for KP. Says Valarezo: “The overarching feedback from Kingston community members was the need for increased accountability and transparency by Kingston Police leadership regarding their integration of more equitable and inclusive practices into their services. Community members would



like to better understand what actions are being taken by Kingston Police leadership and how they can be held accountable for their actions, of lack of actions.”

The team submitted the final KSI report to KP as scheduled, in July 2022, with a plan for a joint public release of the report shortly thereafter. According to Romero, from this point on KP senior leadership repeatedly requested more time before the planned release of the report due to other policing commitments (Homecoming, Halloween, etc.). Romero says it never seemed like a good time to release the report from their end, and the retirement of Chief Antje McNeely (and the subsequent appointment of Acting Chief Scott Fraser) led to multiple further delays by KP.

Following multiple requests for action and ten months after submitting the final report to KP, “KCHC felt they owed it to the community to ensure the report was released and decided that they would release it without KP,” says Valarezo.

In April 2023, KCHC shared the report directly with all community members who had taken part in the consultation process and published it on their website. One week later, KP distributed a media release including the final report along with a statement expressing their commitment to Equity, Diversity, Inclusion, Indigenization, and Accessibility (EDIIA) work, and their commitment to implementing some of the recommendations in the report, including re-designing the role of EDI officer within KP.

The plan to re-design the EDI officer role came about after two KP officers exited that role over the course of this project, says Valarezo.

The KSI team is proud of the work they did on this project, but disappointed with the lack of accountability provided to date from Kingston Police.

According to Romero, “It's now been more than a year since we submitted the final report, and I have not received any communication from KP. I have no idea how to track their EDIIA work. I do know that the EDI officer role continues to be vacant.”

Valarezo outlines the opportunities provided to KP to plan, execute, and communicate their progress: “We provided a full work plan to address the recommendations. KP did not engage with this roadmap. We provided a full communication plan to ensure transparency and accountability. KP did not engage with this plan. At this time, the KCHC team has no understanding of how KP will move forward with the KSI report. The goal of collecting diverse feedback was met, but we are not sure if and how KP will use the feedback.”

Another key outcome from this project was to be the creation of a Kingston Police Community Inclusion Council to work closely with the Chief of Police and KP senior leadership. Kingston Police has provided no indication of when or if this council would be created.

In the end, says Romero, the goal of the project was not met, and those who will be most negatively impacted are those who took a chance and shared their stories in order to make a difference.

“I would like to apologize to the hundreds of people that participated. This result is not just. KP asked for something that they couldn't deliver and that is haunting. I would encourage the community to speak to the Police Services Board Chair, Mayor and City Councillors. In the end, tax dollars fund KP and we can advocate for change.”

* Kingston Police Acting Chief Scott Fraser and media personnel were offered the opportunity to be interviewed for this article. They did not provide comment.

kchc.ca/weller-avenue/ksi/

A total of 500 community members participated via focus groups and/or survey. The team engaged in a qualitative analysis of the data to identify key areas that require improvement:

- **Recruitment** — transparency regarding hiring practices and increased diverse representation
- **Professional Development/Training** — mandatory and enhanced EDIIA training
- **KPS Internal Culture** — need to acknowledge male-dominated culture, abuse of power, and negative perceptions of police
- **Community Interactions** — improve relationships with community members, specifically, vulnerable community members
- **Community Outreach** — increased transparency regarding outreach
- **Accountability, Transparency, and Improved Communication** — increased accountability for individual and systemic issues and improved communication with community members



KATE ARCHIBALD-CROSS (she/her) is Communications Lead at Kingston Community Health Centres and was part of the KSI team. She has lived in Kingston for most of her life, and is passionate about creating opportunities for dialogue, collaboration, community-building, and change.

Woodland Wealth

Weaving Indigenous wisdom with Western financial principles

STORY BY **TAYLOR FOX** / PHOTOGRAPHY BY **ALYSSA BARDY**

Carol Ann Budd of Woodland Wealth



**FINANCE IS
MORE THAN
NUMBERS,
IT'S A STORY,
A JOURNEY.**

A financial planning firm has emerged in Kingston not only as a beacon for financial stewardship, but also as a symbol of resilience, connection, and spiritual alignment. Carol Ann Budd, founder of Woodland Wealth, intertwines her Anishinaabe worldview with Western financial principles to create something transcendent, a movement that mirrors the very essence of the emerging Indigenous economy.

Budd's journey, like traditional beadwork, is a weaving of skill, ancestral wisdom, and foresight. Inspired by her cultural teachings, Budd recognized a void in the financial world. It needed a bridge between two realms of understanding: the wisdom of Indigenous Peoples and the technicality of modern finance. Her vision embraces the past to navigate the complexities of today's economic landscape.

Just as Indigenous artisans pull from the natural world to create designs, Budd crafts financial strategies that honor the individual's unique situation, heritage, and future aspirations. The services provided by Woodland Wealth include retirement planning, personal finance, and entrepreneurship financing, each uniquely tailored to reflect the client's values and needs.

"Finance is more than numbers," Budd explains, drawing a parallel to the meditative practice of crafting. "It's a story, a journey. And we're here to help people write that story, in a way that honors who they are and where they come from."

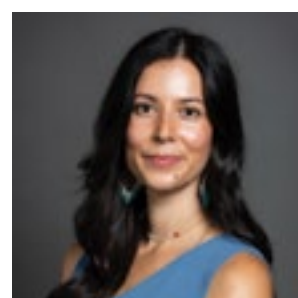
This integration of two worlds is not merely a token gesture: it's a practical, tangible expression of how Indigenous wisdom can guide and enhance modern financial decisions. It's a living example of the potential for a more compassionate and balanced financial system, where wealth is not just individual but communal, not just material but spiritual. Woodland Wealth is the embodiment of multiple paradigms and narratives woven together; so, too, are our own money stories. Each of us has a unique relationship with money, stemming from family norms, societal structures, and lived experiences. The process at Woodland Wealth involves understanding the client's money story and threading it with their aspirations, needs, and visions to create a unique personal wealth plan.

In the practice of financial planning and investment management, Budd finds parallels with the traditional practices of Indigenous communities, who have long understood the delicate balance of resources, responsibility, and respect for the land.

Woodland Wealth's vision, though steeped in Indigenous values and traditions, is not limited to the Indigenous community. It's a vision that speaks to a universal desire for wealth that's not just about financial gain but that instead enriches the entire human experience. The essence of Indigenous wisdom is rooted in a sense of interconnectedness, recognizing that the well-being of one is linked to the well-being of all. In this light, Woodland Wealth's services are not only for Indigenous clients but for anyone seeking a more holistic, ethical, and community-oriented approach to finance. Carol Ann Budd asserts, "Our doors are open to all who resonate with this way of being. The wisdom we share is a legacy not just for Indigenous Peoples but for everyone. It's about nurturing relationships, honoring the Earth, and ensuring that wealth and well-being are shared." The firm's approach offers a refreshing alternative in the financial world, transcending barriers and inviting a diverse clientele to partake in a journey that values prosperity in all its forms.

Budd's commitment extends beyond her firm. As co-chair of the Indigenous Council of Queen's University and the Kingston Indigenous Languages Nest, she continues to foster community ties and advocate for the preservation and celebration of Indigenous culture. Woodland Wealth invites all those curious about this unique approach to explore their services at www.woodlandwealth.ca.

In Budd's own words, "We're not just building wealth; we're building connections, understanding, and a legacy that transcends numbers. We're building a future grounded in the wisdom of our ancestors."



TAYLOR FOX is an Anishinaabe entrepreneur, bead weaver, trauma of money facilitator, and MBA candidate with the Simon Fraser University Indigenous Business Leadership Program.

Can a major thoroughfare accommodate cars *and* bikes?

The City is holding a public consultation about the Williamsville bike lanes on October 26, 6-8pm, at St. Lukes Church, 236 Nelson St.

Williamsville Transportation Study Proposes Removal of Princess Street Bike Lanes to a complex problem

STORY BY JANE KIRBY

Four years after the City of Kingston officially declared a “climate emergency,” a City transportation study is proposing the removal of bike lanes along Princess Street. The proposal is part of the Williamsville Transportation Study (WTS), which opened its public engagement process last spring. The plan proposes expanded sidewalks with trees and benches and queue-jump lanes for transit that would allow buses to jump ahead of vehicles at intersections. These would exist alongside a bi-directional roadway for the section of Princess Street running from Division Street to Bath Road.

The WTS also suggests removing existing bike lanes. They are identified as a cycling “spine” route in the City’s Active Transportation Master Plan (ATMP), with sections of Princess Street further west identified as “proposed spine routes.” These spine routes are intended to be the major routes connecting neighbourhoods across the city, encouraging people to commute across the city by bicycle rather than car.

The WTS proposed that Concession Streets and Brock and Johnson streets, along with neighbourhood bike routes, could be viable alternatives to Princess Street for cyclists. However, no road runs parallel to Princess Street, and any of the proposed options would present a significant detour for cyclists. Brock and Johnson have existing cycling lanes and are already considered part of the spine network. Concession Street currently lacks a bike lane but was identified as a “proposed spine route” under the ATMP — in other words, bike lanes on Concession were considered necessary *in addition* to the Princess Street bike lanes, not as an alternative to them.

Given the City’s stated commitments to tackling climate change and promoting active transportation, the decision to reduce cycling infrastructure leading to the city’s downtown core is confusing, at best.

HOW DID WE GET HERE?

The WTS is an outgrowth of the Williamsville Main Street Study, which was originally approved by City Council in 2012 to guide future development along Princess Street. On the direction of the City’s planning department, the Main Street Study did not originally consider cycling infrastructure, but advocacy from area residents and the Kingston Coalition for Active Transportation (KCAT) resulted in an additional study, one that recommended bike lanes. Despite opposition from those concerned about a reduction in parking spaces, the recommendation to implement bike lanes on Princess Street was adopted by council in 2013.

The resulting painted bike lanes snake around parking spots, in what KCAT president Roger Healey describes as a “compromise between on-street parking and bike lanes” and a “drunken sailor” approach. Though less than ideal, the lanes are a necessary improvement, giving cyclists a measure of safety on a busy roadway that forms a necessary link leading to downtown.

However, in 2020 the City introduced an update to the Williamsville Main Street Study. According to Healey, the “updates” might be better described as “rewrites,” introduced at the height of the COVID-19 pandemic, when opportunities for meaningful public engagement were limited.

Ian Semple, Director of Transport and Transit at the City of Kingston, says that the revisions to the plan were necessary in light of the way the neighbourhood had developed since 2012. Specifically, despite guidelines for development in the original plan that would allow for an expanded pedestrian realm and transit improvements, City Council allowed many major developments — such as Jay Patry’s Foundry building — to go forward without respecting specified setbacks.

The result is a limited public right-of-way space to be shared among pedestrians, cyclists, transit users and drivers, and a difficult situation for Semple’s department. As such, the revised study suggested that the long-term design of Princess Street may need to consider the removal of turning lanes for vehicles, the reduction or removal of parking spaces, and limiting “dedicated buffered cycling lanes along the corridor.”

WHAT WAS CONSIDERED

The Williamsville Transportation Study was built on these directives. Semple points to five scenarios, which included considering the implementation of bi-directional and one-way bike lanes, that were the basis of the study’s analysis. The scenarios suggest that no bike lanes are possible with expanded space for pedestrians and the addition of transit queue-jump lanes, even if parking spaces were removed.

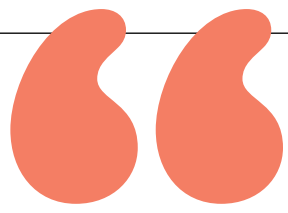
This conclusion, while presented convincingly, does not seem to have been particularly nuanced or imaginative, possibly because the study *started* from the foregone conclusion that bike lanes could be sacrificed. No consideration, for example, seems to have been given to whether narrower parts of the street could have narrower sidewalks or fewer queue-jump lanes, so that a bike lane could be kept along the entirety of the street. And although Semple suggested that vehicle turning lanes would also be removed to make space for transit queue jumps, a closer look at the plans indicate that turning lanes would also be added at some intersections. A new left-turn lane at Nelson Street, for example, would be added to compensate for the removal of a turning lane at Alfred Street.

We know sidewalks and bike lanes can coexist even on the narrowest sections of Princess Street, as they do already. Are there ways to beautify the sidewalk and improve the pedestrian experience that will still keep cyclists safe? Would the removal of one transit-queue jump lane have a significant impact on transit travel times?

The Williamsville Transportation Study suggests that “confident cyclists” may continue to use Princess Street, a statement that reads as “use at your own risk.” The sentiment is an affront to cyclists who bike without dedicated lanes not because they are confident or feel safe, but because they have no other option.

Semple suggests that even without bike lanes on Princess Street, the suggested improvements may leave cyclists feeling safer than they do currently. Although these items were not in the documents presented in the spring, Semple says the proposed plan includes details such as reduced speeds for motorists and bike boxes at intersections.

These features are definite improvements. However, the plan also suggests narrowing the roadway to 3.3 metres, limiting cyclists space to be in traffic safely.



The Williamsville Transportation Study suggests that ‘confident cyclists’ may continue to use Princess Street, a statement that reads as ‘use at your own risk’.

Referring to the road narrowing and the removal of parking spaces, Semple is quick to point out that, “It is not as if we are giving more space to cars. We are definitely removing the space available to vehicles.” But there seem to be limits to how much space for vehicles the City will recommend removing.

WHAT’S THE ALTERNATIVE?

Healey proposes that one option for the Williamsville stretch of Princess Street would be to make it one-way for vehicles, continuous with the downtown section, allowing more space for improvements that would benefit cyclists, pedestrians, and transit users.

Perhaps cars could even be eliminated altogether from that stretch of Princess Street. The proposal sounds radical. However, consider that the City of Montreal blocks major streets — one in every neighbourhood — to traffic during the summer, and urban life there appears to be thriving.

Semple says that shifting Princess Street to a one-way street, or one reserved for active and public transportation only, would be a major change that would have had to have been considered earlier in the process. He also says that eliminating vehicles on Princess Street would result in increased traffic on Concession Street and Brock and Johnson streets, which would be a concern for the surrounding neighbourhoods.

(Traffic north and south of Princess Street is a concern of the Williamsville Community Association, especially given the number of students travelling to Queen’s and to neighbourhood schools; however, they are not satisfied with the City’s current proposal either).

According to Semple, the study anticipated increases in future vehicle traffic, which is why transit queue-jump lanes are being recommended despite transit currently flowing smoothly through this stretch of Princess Street.

Healey sees it differently, arguing that reduced infrastructure for vehicles will result in less vehicle traffic overall, as people will choose different modes of transportation or reduce their number of trips. We need to significantly reduce the number of vehicle trips to address climate change.

A study in 2021 of 106 European cities found that cycling increased up to forty-eight per cent more in cities where cycling infrastructure was added versus those where infrastructure was not added.¹

What will happen to Kingston if we take cycling infrastructure away?

¹ <https://www.nytimes.com/2021/04/01/climate/bikes-climate-change.html>



JANE KIRBY is a writer, editor, and circus artist. She lives in the Williamsville neighbourhood and is an avid cyclist.

PHOTO CREDIT: iStock





Development Projects Coming Down the Pipe

But as always with housing, questions arise **STORY BY HARVEY SCHACHTER**



Architect's rendering of housing project at 9 North Street



HARVEY SCHACHTER is a Kingston freelance writer. A former editor of *The Kingston Whig-Standard*, he writes a regular column for *Kingston Life* magazine and twice weekly columns for *The Globe and Mail*, focused on management and the workplace. His most recent book is *When Harvey Didn't Meet Sheelagh: Emails on Leadership*, co-written with retired CEO Sheelagh Whittaker.

Housing. Housing. Housing.

That's the mantra at all three levels of government — federal, provincial and municipal. Close to home, two housing projects are nearing the starting gate — one at 9 North Street, adjacent to MetalCraft Marine, and the other at 5-7 Cataraqui Street, on the old Rosen Fuels lands. In the new year, another housing and commercial project is expected to be announced for 10 Cataraqui Street, adjacent to the Woolen Mill.

The first of those ventures would turn the old Queen City Oil Company warehouse into an eight-unit, two-storey apartment building with twelve bedrooms. This limestone building was designed by celebrated architect William Newlands in 1897, but had fallen into disrepair and was hit by fire. ABNA Investments, the real estate subsidiary of Doornekamp Group Ltd., bought the land when the city put out a request for proposals in 2014.

Doornekamp is known for its restoration work on historic buildings such as the Woolen Mill, S&R Department Store, the Jackson Press Building on Wellington Street near Brock Street, and Napanee's Gibbard Furniture Factory. "We see opportunity in projects others don't want to take on. We respect history and try to preserve it," says Zach Skolnick, manager of investment and developments.

As well as repairing and rebuilding the outer shell, a concrete building has been constructed inside to support the new apartments — heritage exterior, modern interior. Doornekamp has also been cleaning up the contaminated land since 2018. The units will be luxury style, aimed at young professionals, academics, and retirees. Its location in the inner harbour, close to Douglas R. Fluhrer Park and the K&P Trail, is expected to have appeal, as well as the proximity to downtown. "The city's downtown will expand beyond Queen and Brock," notes Skolnick.

Doornekamp will be assisted by the city's Brownfields program, under which developers pay the full cost of clean-up but can get some or all of that returned through reductions for up to ten years on property tax, reflecting the increased tax assessment the city receives. Paul MacLatchy, environmental director for the city, says the eligible remediation costs for this project were estimated at \$1.2 million, but because the redevelopment was modest (eight residential units), the anticipated annual tax uplift available for rebate is just \$12,000 or so per year. So Doornekamp will see some money back for remediation over the ten-year rebate period but not all of it.

The Brownfields program encouraged realtor Adam Koven to think that it might be financially feasible to redevelop his family's property at 5-7 Cataraqui Street, which once housed Rosen Fuels and its ice-delivery operation (and was the site of his first job). Its 75 or 76 townhouses, 2.5 storeys each, will have three bedrooms, a garage, front and back yard, and a basement unit that can be rented out or used by in-laws. Koven will customize each to the buyer's taste, and in some cases the basements might be left unfinished but they will be able to serve as a secondary suite down the road. He calls it "affordable luxury" because of the potential to get extra income from that basement.

Initially, fifteen of Koven's townhouses will be built on River Street, requiring it to be extended to Rideau Street. Later, the remaining units will be constructed, with an L-shaped road (maintained by the owners) that connects to Cataraqui Street. Koven recalls his father once offering to pay for a traffic light at the tricky corner of Cataraqui and Rideau Street. "No, Phil, it's not that simple," he says an official responded. Koven hopes some solution can be devised to handle traffic better. He sees the activities at the reinvigorated Broom Factory as being particularly appealing to residents and is hoping that land set aside for the southern

part of the Wellington Street extension — which City Council decided not to pursue — might turn into a nice walking and biking trail to downtown. There is no approved Brownfields program for the site, but MacLatchy expects the developer will be able to recover all remediation costs through future rebates.

The northern part of the Wellington Street extension is still being studied, beginning at the Montreal-Rideau-Railway intersection, extending northward towards the Elliott/John Counter Boulevard intersection, but the southern portion has been dropped. Laura Murray, one of the group of citizens who fought the expansion believes the developers of these properties will now benefit from their struggle: "We're helping them by increasing the value of their land." The developments will bring more people to Douglas Fluhrer Park, but she worries it could impact accessibility: "Ritzy apartments may make the park feel less accessible to other people."

Biologist Lesley Ruby fears the impact of construction on wildlife, notably the turtles in the area that she has studied: "The chip-away effect worries me. Each development may not be big, but altogether we are making it less likely to have wildlife in the area." Construction can be particularly challenging, and she pushed with others for fencing to keep turtles out at the Doornekamp project. Two high-rise proposals have been announced for Wellington Street near the OHIP building and that worries her more, since there are already issues with the safety of the turtles moving around the parking lot. "I know we need housing within the city. I get that. But this is prime habitat and turtles are at risk. We may not have them any more if the development keeps up," she says.

"Housing, housing, housing" has become a powerful slogan. But housing is never problem free, of course, so the community will be watching.

A Love Letter to the Missing Middle

In praise of the ‘fifteen-minute city’

STORY BY ANNE THÉRIAULT

ILLUSTRATION BY TARA PELOW



I’m a sucker for any dwelling that might be described as having “character,” and my old apartment building in Toronto was a doozy of an example. It was a four-storey walk-up built in 1927, and each unit boasted high ceilings, a full dining room, and a living room with a working fireplace. My apartment also had a wrought iron balcony and access to a fire escape, which effectively doubled as a second balcony. Sure, the kitchen was tiny and the appliances were at least fifty years old, but I was smitten, even in the days when my son was a baby and I had to haul him and his stroller up and down all those stairs.

In urban planning terms, the type of building I lived in is called medium-density housing, which, as its name suggests, falls in the middle of the spectrum between detached single family dwellings and high-rise apartment towers. It’s the type of housing that architect Daniel Parolek was referring to when he coined the term “missing middle” in 2010. He was describing a phenomenon often seen in North American cities, where the downtown core is filled with skyscrapers and the suburbs are a car-dependent sprawl. Toronto is a striking example of a city with a missing middle; the construction of apartment buildings was only permitted on “commercial streets” between 1912 and 1941 thanks to a city bylaw (apartments were seen as dens of vice, where unmarried men and women could mix without chaperones). By the time the bylaw was lifted, the medium-rise walk-up was out of fashion and the high-rise was in vogue.

One reason I fell in love with and chose to live in the Skeleton Park neighbourhood is because it’s full of great examples of medium-density housing. This type of housing isn’t limited to low-rise apartment buildings; it also includes duplexes, triplexes, townhouses and row houses. I love the look of buildings such as 57 Colborne Street, a low-rise apartment building where every unit seems to have its own nicely-sized balcony, or the brightly-

“
We need more townhouses, more low-rise buildings, more middle.

coloured row houses near the corner of Montreal and Ordnance. And of course, I love my own little 19th-century townhouse, full of quirks and — my favourite — character.

There are many upsides to medium-density housing. For one thing, it can provide housing at price points different from those of high-rise condos or detached houses. In North America, we tend to think of a house with a big yard as a prerequisite to having children, or even just a general marker of being a “real” adult. But for many families, that type of housing is financially impossible, and in a market where most modern condos and apartments are being built with single people (or maybe young couples) in mind, what’s a low-income family with kids to do?

Medium-density housing can also have positive environmental impacts. Because they’re housing more people on less land, “middle” units don’t engage in the same ecosystem destruction as new suburban developments. They’re also more energy efficient than detached houses, losing less heat due to having fewer outer walls.

My favourite thing about medium-density housing, though, is how it helps create walkable neighbourhoods without overshadowing nearby houses. Higher density in neighbourhoods typically means better proximity to things such as schools, restau-

rants, libraries, and so on — what urban planners refer to as the “fifteen-minute city,” meaning that you can get to most of the services you need by walking or biking for under fifteen minutes. That reduces the need for cars, which, in turn, reduces traffic and harmful greenhouse gas emissions. One of the things that I love about living where I do is that I don’t have to own a car (though it helps that my friends and family are generous about offering rides when a car trip is inescapable).

It’s no secret that Kingston is in the grip of a housing crisis. Renting and purchasing are both increasingly unaffordable, and more sprawl can’t be the only answer. For many Kingstonians, regular, walkable access to the city centre is a matter of necessity, not of choice. But downtown high-rises are not the only answer, either. For one thing, developers typically don’t build units big enough for families with children. For another, high-rises tend to cater to higher income renters. Things are unaffordable enough as it is.

To me, the answer lies right in our own neighbourhood. We need more townhouses, more low-rise buildings, more middle. A city doesn’t need to be defined by skyscrapers; Paris is the densest city in Europe and the seventh densest in the world, and yet it’s also known for keeping high-rise buildings out of the city core. Paris is full of mid-rise buildings, and while the history of their development and construction is a complicated one, the result is a famously beautiful (and walkable) city. It might seem silly to compare Kingston to Paris, but when it comes to urban development, the City of Light proves that you can house many people without building twenty-storey towers that block the sun.

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.

Recovering a Sense of Social Justice: A conversation with Just Recovery Kingston

What to do when private profit is placed above community needs and environmental stewardship?

STORY BY KRISTIN MORIAH

KRISTIN MORIAH: Can you explain the meaning behind the name Just Recovery? What is being recovered here?

JEREMY MILLOY: Just Recovery Kingston (JRK) began during the first COVID summer. At that time, people and groups were talking about what a just recovery from this pandemic might look like. Many of us read Arundhati Roy's piece "The Pandemic is a Portal," which argues that the world would never be the same after COVID and that we had the chance to make changes that people and the planet desperately need. Dozens of groups across Canada created and signed on to the Just Recovery Principles, a set of values they wanted to guide our response. Just getting back to normal was unacceptable, because the normal pre-COVID was unacceptable for most.

We met online and asked, What would it mean to apply these principles of a just recovery to our local context? To make them real in terms of material changes that would affect our lives, our possibilities, and the land, air, and water around us? Out of that meeting, we founded Just Recovery Kingston.

As time has gone on, the meaning has changed. For me, I recover strength and hope for a better city from working with JRK.

KM: How long has JRK Housing been in existence? What draws you to this working group?

SAYYIDA JAFFER: We started the JRK Housing working group in August of 2022 because we felt frustrated by the lack of affordable, accessible, and livable housing in this city, and the ways this lack causes significant and preventable harm in local residents' and families' lives. We seek to do what we can in a municipal context to chip away at this large issue, because something is always possible when people come together to act.

KM: What are the political and social conditions that make Kingston a good location for this kind of organization?

JM: Kingston is a city blessed with amazing people in a beautiful ecosystem. The connection of Lake Ontario with the St. Lawrence, Rideau, and Cataraqui rivers is particularly meaningful to me. There are a great many smart, committed, passionate people who work for social and environmental justice.

The city itself has a housing crisis, we are sailing into the climate crisis, and power and resources are distributed very unequally. The top levels of government reflect affluent white people, mostly. Developers and landowners have an enormous amount of leverage over what happens in our city. Private profit is placed above community needs and environmental stewardship. People most affected by decisions rarely have real consultation. We can see this by how the city responds to people living in encampments. There is a lot to do, but there are also a lot of people doing the work.

KM: What is the most important initiative that JRK Housing is undertaking now? From your perspective, what will be the biggest impact of this work?

SJ: We just wrapped up our first Tenant Experiences survey with 460 valid responses, which we think is a great sample size. As far as we can tell, no one in Kingston has this kind of recent data about renters. We decided to offer this survey to better understand what tenants are experiencing so that the campaigns and projects we take on are rooted in tenant experiences in an aggregate sense. We hope to better understand what tenants are experiencing and to help identify pressure points we should focus on. Policy changes should be informed by people's lived experiences and that's what we seek to do.

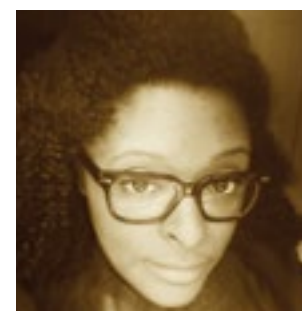
KM: What has been JRK's biggest impact? Do you have hopes or predictions about JRK for the future?

JM: One impact that has been really important has been bringing back social and political connections among different people working for justice in Kingston, which we have been doing during our monthly Connections meetings. The meetings are a great way to meet other people, and to learn about the organizing, campaigns, and issues in our city. We made a solid impact on last year's municipal election with our JRK Municipal Toolkit, which is now a guide to practical policies — in housing, climate, food, transit, and more — that will improve our city if implemented. The toolkit was published in *The Skeleton Press* last year and is available on our website.

The JRK Gardens group has done great work in expanding access to community gardening by making it more equitable. They fought to quintuple the amount of money available to new gardens for start-up, and are working to remove the requirement that a new garden have private insurance in public parks.

KM: Those interested in learning more about Just Recovery Kingston are invited to meetings held on the first Wednesday of each month. Contact JRK at justrecoverykingston@gmail.com for more information or to get involved.

*This interview has been edited slightly for length and clarity.



KRISTIN MORIAH is an assistant professor of English at Queen's University who lives in McBurney Park. An academic writer, editor, and researcher, she sits on the Advisory Board of the Skeleton Park Arts Festival.

Aerial view of Kingston PHOTO COURTESY OF: Just Recovery Kingston



On Poking the Bears



When said bruins are angry oldsters furious about inaction on climate change

STORY BY LAWRENCE SCANLAN

Protestors at RBC PHOTO CREDIT: Lawrence Scanlan



WHEN: November 22, 2022.

WHERE: The Spire, Sydenham St. United Church.

WHY: Climate change. UN Secretary-General António Guterres said then that the world is on a “highway to climate hell with our foot still on the accelerator.”

WHO: Oldsters. Codgers. Twenty-one, all told. More women than men, most grey- or white-haired. As one put it, “Angry Old People.”

HOW: Jamie Swift is a Kingston activist and septuagenarian with a long history of assembling (read, co-opting) others under worthy banners (Peace-Quest was his brainchild). He had simply messaged some in his circle to see what might be done to counter the climate change juggernaut. A friend of his had previously invited him to join a then-fledgling Ontario-based group called SCAN! (Seniors for Climate Action Now!). Several hundred people in Toronto, Kitchener-Waterloo and Ottawa had all joined SCAN!, and Jamie wondered if Kingston could come on board.



LAWRENCE SCANLAN is a Kingston writer, editor and journalist. His most recent project is a play called *The Lion's Share* about the ever-widening and ever-toxic gap between the very rich and the very poor.

Some who gathered at The Spire are grandparents now. I am one; two-year-old Kye Scanlan is the light of my life. What will the world be like when he grows up? The signs — record-setting wildfires, poisoned air, deadly heat waves and floods and droughts, tempestuous weather of every imaginable sort — are ever more ominous. But doing nothing, at least for some, is not an option.

The mood in The Spire was one of impatience. Many were keen to attend a rally at Kingston City Hall planned for the following Sunday to protest the provincial government’s controversial Bill 23. The legislation will allow developers to drain “protected” Greenbelt wetlands, which store carbon and protect against flooding. More head shaking.

There to answer our questions about SCAN! was the Toronto-based co-chair of the group, Nick De Carlo. The former union organizer has been fighting in the social justice trenches for fifty years — in civil rights, environmental rights, peace activism, and workplace safety. De Carlo was first active in the ‘60s, a time of great hope for change, and he feels he has no choice but to fight against today’s widespread despair, especially among young people plagued by acute anxiety over the fate of the earth.

What emerged from the meeting at The Spire was a determination to enlarge the group, to forge alliances, and to, as the song goes, Raise a Little Hell. The aforementioned rally at city hall drew a hundred individuals of all ages, with more protests to come.

On January 21, a yellow school bus departed the Memorial Centre en route to the constituency office in

Brockville of Steve Clarke, Ontario’s Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing, and the man ultimately responsible for Bill 23. On board were about two dozen protestors, including several members of SCAN! — but the oldsters on the bus were actually outnumbered by fresh-faced youngsters. We all disembarked at Clarke’s office and joined protestors already there (making for some seventy in total). We sang protest songs, we joined in a skit that featured a ten-foot-tall red devil (whom we loudly banished), we booed and we hissed and we cried “Shame! Shame!” As if this provincial government knows about shame.

Since then, Kingston SCAN! members have continued to meet regularly, to grow, to strategize — and to protest. A particular target has been RBC, Canada’s biggest bank and the world’s biggest investor in fossil-fuel expansion. April Fool’s Day, for example, was marked as Fossil Fool’s Day as some sixty protestors conducted a lively and boisterous protest in front of RBC’s flagship branch on lower Princess Street. Why that bank? Since 2015, RBC has invested billions (some 262 billion, in fact) in fossil-fuel expansion, making it a major player going the wrong direction on climate change. Some speakers at the event urged anyone listening to remove their investments and savings from RBC, and to bank instead with local credit unions. Several SCAN! members have done just that — to the tune of almost \$2 million.

March 21 saw yet another protest outside the bank, this time drawing about eighty individuals. A mix of young and old agitators were all chanting, “No more coal/no more oil/keep your carbon/in the soil.” Several tall puppets were on the move, with many placards fancy and plain, while a trombone player (a Queen’s student) lent an oddly upbeat tone. Speeches mocked and derided the bank. A wide bright-red banner held aloft read, “We are on fire.” Other organizations, such as 350.org and Queen’s Backing Action on the Climate Crisis (QBACC), were there as well. All drawing energy from each other.

Many older marchers held signs featuring photos of their own grandchildren, while others brought their actual grandchildren to the event.

The idea of seniors as climate-change activists is gaining traction. In mid-May, the CBC-TV web site devoted a long feature to the subject, under the banner headline, “Worried about their grandkids’ future, more seniors are taking up the climate fight.” Interviewed for the CBC Radio version of that item was another SCAN! member and long-time Kingston activist, Judi Wyatt. (For many years, this former teacher organized The Poverty Challenge, a gritty day-long, role-playing exercise that offered high school students a glimpse into the daily lives of marginalized people.) Judi Wyatt lamented that the facts on climate change, though dire, need another boost. “What motivates people?” she asked. “Love.” Thus all the placards bearing cute-baby faces, and all the grandchildren making cameos at protests.

It cost me all of \$5 to join SCAN! For more information on what its Kingston chapter has been or will be up to, or to join SCAN!, go to this web site: <https://seniorsforclimateactionnow.org/>. To contact the Kingston group, use this e-mail: kingston@seniorsforclimateactionnow.org

Since that first gathering less than a year ago, the Kingston chapter of SCAN! has become a lively and robust group that continues to picket RBC, to show films at The Screening Room, and to connect with like-minded troupes — all while holding wine-and-cheese socials and potluck dinners as counters to the dark planetary news. July 2023, in case you missed it, was the hottest month in human history. Climate change is not going away, and neither is SCAN!

Smoke in the Eyes, Fire in the Belly

STORY BY **RON SHORE**

ILLUSTRATION BY **FLORIANA EHNINGER-CUERVO**

“Our house is on fire. I am here to say, our house is on fire.”

—**GRETA THUNBERG** at age sixteen in her speech to the World Economic Forum in Davos, Switzerland, January 2019



For many days this summer our skies filled with smoke. We woke to an opaque sky, a blurry sun and heavy, lung-clogging air. We watched the sun set in unusual blazes of striking colour. Wind currents brought smoke and burnt particulate from forest fires throughout Ontario and Quebec, prompting air quality health warnings throughout Southern Ontario and even New York state and the northeastern United States. There are no borders in nature, only meeting-places. Conditions experienced in other areas across the country and beyond were much worse.

British Columbia experienced a record numbers of forest fires, much of Alberta’s north burned, and the entire city of Yellowknife in the Northwest Territories, was evacuated due to fire. Late August also brought heartbreak and devastation to Maui, a rain-forest no less.

For many, the contaminated air complicates the simple act of breathing, creating significant and additional health risk. Weather reports now include routine updates on what has somehow been normalized as “local smoke.” In fact, this is air filled with burnt carbon particulates from dead trees, brush and our animal relatives, and it also carries currents of dread, fear, and anxiety.

Fire is at the heart of human society. It brings warmth on chilly days, and light in the darkness. The Industrial Revolution harnessed fire, with its apogee the internal combustion engine and a deadly global reli-

ance on fossil fuels. The result is the Anthropocene, the current stage of earth history characterized by climate change, gargantuan losses of biodiversity (including catastrophic losses of human cultural and language diversity), and widespread pollution — collateral damage from the worship of economic production and consumption.

What does it mean when we cannot see the blue of the daytime sky or the night stars, obscured not just by human light pollution or the unnatural perfect orbits of technology satellites visible to the naked eye, but by the smoke that carries the loss of even more forest and natural life? What are we losing and what have we lost? What guides our journeys if we cannot find Polaris, the North star? Or, have we already lost our way?

The smoky mirror is a Buddhist concept: We do not see clearly because we have become attached to illusions, including the false belief that we exist separate from the world. If seeing clearly, we would be aware of both the impermanence and the “inter-being” or inter-connectedness of all things. If we are wise, we will use our grief over the summer fires to deepen our love for this experience of living, of this precious life billions of years in the making.

I’ve recently completed certification in Contemplative End-of-Life Care, the practice of the death doula. Before I enrolled, I asked death doulas, “Are you happy, or does this heavy work take a toll?” Without exception I was comforted with the knowl-

edge that to hold deep grief also allows us to hold immense joy. In one hand, says Francis Weller, we hold grief, in the other gratitude, and together they form a prayer. When we become less death-phobic and more skilled in grief, our experience of life deepens.

Our collective grief over climate crisis is a communal hall. The smoke in our eyes, the heaviness in our hearts, reminds us of the preciousness of life — the love we have for each other, and the remarkable experience of simply being.

Our lives as we know them will end. But only by finding the connections, between us and others, between us and this incredible world, will we be able to transcend a sense of separation and of finality. Once fully understanding how our actions reverberate into the future, we may discover an internal fire to protect life and prompt the collective action needed to save this planet — “our house” — for all those yet to come.



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

Find Yourself at The Lake

This shop offers everyday pleasures

STORY BY **TIANNA EDWARDS**

The Lake storefront on Montreal Street PHOTO CREDIT: Tianna Edwards



uring a time when many of us often find ourselves doom-scrolling social media instead of taking the time to pay attention to ourselves, the discussion around living mindfully is more frequent. Mindfulness is a key element to counteract a culture that is easily distracted.

Enter, The Lake. Perhaps you've already been to The Lake, or maybe you've just walked by their aesthetically pleasing and eye-catching space on Montreal Street. It is the only local business where you can pick up a delicious non-alcoholic beverage, a candle, hair clips, and a self-exploration device (aka a vibrator) all at once. The Lake is dedicated to mindful pleasures, the kind that encourage you to tune into yourself and what's happening around you.

The Lake owners, Bren and Phil Gauthier, moved to Kingston from Toronto in the midst of 2020 pandemic chaos with their then-online business, their small child, and two dogs. Once they settled in, their family fit into the neighbourhood seamlessly. The Gauthiers soon made friends with their store's future neighbours at the Montreal Street Collec-

tive, as well as other local small business owners such as Ksenia Knyazeva of Patriam Coffee and Tara Jeronimus of Onderbroeks loungewear, all of whom encouraged them to set up The Lake in a physical space.

"If not for Vanessa, Emma, Liam, and Calvin [of the Montreal Street Collective] I don't think we would have had the nerve to do it," Bren tells me enthusiastically. She adds that local jewelry designer Sherry Jeffrey "was also super supportive and encouraging. We are just really grateful that we are in this entrepreneur network."

At the centre of The Lake's ethos is pleasure. This word does not exclusively mean sexual pleasure (though they can help support that). It's about everyday pleasures, and they've done their best to create an inclusive and empowering space. They aim for a business model detached from the male gaze and the often patriarchal structure of a traditional adult shop.

"More like sexual wellness, right?" says Phil. "What sexuality brings to you versus you trying to perform for someone else. Or, for the social stereotypes that are always pushed to us."



A MIX OF FOLKS BROWSE THE STORE – FROM QUEEN'S STUDENTS TO WOMEN IN THEIR SEVENTIES.

Bren adds that her personal experiences played a role in the creation of the shop. "I see myself operate," he says, "with anxiety in my head, not really going through the day touching my face or doing these things that slow down and embody being actually present in my own physical body. We're on our phones and we're floating in the ether getting through tasks. Well, what are things that can physically entice the senses to feel pleasure? What is pleasurable? I get so much pleasure out of my coffee ritual: the smell, the feel, the taste, all those types of things." And so the Gauthiers asked: "Can we curate a shop around just pleasing the senses?"

The Gauthiers are clear that their shop is about holistic pleasure, and I can confirm after browsing the shop that the diversity of items is built to serve all layers of pleasure. The duo are creating a space that welcomes everyone. Since opening their physical store in September 2022, they've been warmly welcomed by the mix of folks that find themselves browsing the shop, from Queen's students to women in their seventies. A seventy-five-year-old woman recently came in to look at puzzles, but then asked Bren about the body-exploration devices. When Bren explained what they were, the woman immediately grabbed one and put it on the counter. Such interactions validate the culture of The Lake by empowering people of all ages to explore.

When curating the items, the Gauthier consider not only a customer's experience. They also point out vendors whose work that customer might not otherwise encounter. "The criteria [for choosing vendors] was based on us predominantly looking for female-founded brands as well as BIPOC-owned brands as much as possible, and trying to bring in smaller, undiscovered companies that we thought fit the mix," explains Bren.

And at the end of the day, the Gauthiers want folks to see The Lake as a place to find peace. "We named it The Lake because it's the place you go to restore. You can make it something exciting or you can make it something relaxing. You can do whatever feels good," says Phil. Bren adds, "The Lake is a retreat. The pandemic showed us that we need to find little things in our day."



TIANNA EDWARDS works as an Equity, Diversity and Inclusion Coordinator at Queen's University. She also founded and runs the blog, Keep up with Kingston, that houses a local Black-owned business list. You can find her podcast, "Kingston, The Black Experience," wherever you get your podcasts. She lives in Kingston with her husband and two daughters.

the power of Love

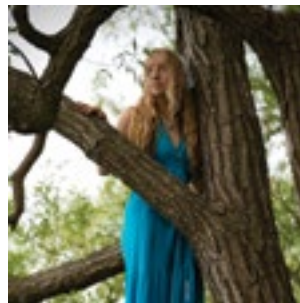
the land has been left to incinerate again
 while corporations pile their profits -
 investing
 in a future we may not have.
 the leaves are now scattered ashes -
 the homes of many are now memories.

in this world why
 are we competing
 instead of connecting
 while ignoring
 the planet we're affecting?
 when will we reflect?
 to be present is to be aware
 and connected - the air
 is warmer than it wants to be.
 I noticed as the wind spoke to me -
 shared its wisdom through
 the currency of silence -
 sang cries for help through
 the medium of music -
 healed me with
 the medicine of stillness -
 all while in infinite transition.

I am in a position
 where both the lies and truth
 are clear.

the planet is hurting -
 and still she heals me -
 and still the Earth is here.
 rooting and rising -
 flooding and drying -
 burning but still fighting
 to breathe - dying and soon to be
 reborn as she restores balance
 once our world is finally torn -
 but what could ever undo
 this damage?

the state we're in is severe
 and strange - but I want to believe
 that just like change
 the power of love is infinite.



ABBIE MIOLÉE is a Kingston-based youth climate justice activist, poet, artist, and musician from Atlanta, Georgia. Her poem was recited at a protest at City Hall against fossil fuel investments and was featured on Global News.

THIS BE THE VERSE is *The Skeleton Press's* new poetry page. Each issue will feature an original poem by a local poet, selected by Kingston/Katarokwi Poet Laureate Sadiqa de Meijer. Submissions are now open for future editions, themed NEIGHBOURHOOD KIDS and NEIGHBOURHOOD REST. Please send your work to ygkpoetlaureate@gmail.com.

Sidewalk Sketches

Love stories revealed in concrete

STORY BY **HALEY SARFELD** / PHOTOGRAPHY BY **AL BERGERON**

One summer afternoon, my partner and I decide we've had enough of Montreal Street. Veering away from the cars and the heat, we turn east at John and search for a scenic route to the grocery store.

Sauntering along a shaded block of close-knit houses and congenial front gardens, we discuss the important issues of the day: Did we bring enough bags? Dried beans, or canned? Is there still a thing of tofu in the fridge?

Just before Bagot meets Raglan, we encounter an instruction carved in the concrete: *Love Each Other*, encircled by a heart. We kiss. On our way back, we pause at the same spot, backpacks heavy with groceries (we got another thing of tofu, just in case) and stop to kiss again.

The kiss becomes a ritual on our many walks downtown. Mid-conversation, mid-argument, mid-joke, it doesn't matter — whatever we're carrying, we stop, put it down, say, "Love each other!" and observe the tradition. When my partner is out of town, I find myself avoiding Bagot, opting for Rideau instead.

I sometimes wonder how many kisses or other expressions of love the houses on this block have witnessed compared to the rest of the neighbourhood. How many moments of quiet unburdening this little square of concrete has created. What neighbourhood love stories have found their footing here?

On Victoria Street, I'm walking with a three-year-old who's just getting into spelling. His little hand tugs on my fingers like he's making a bus stop request. Yes? He points at three letters etched in the sidewalk. "F," he announces. "F, O, X. That spells fox!" I smile and agree, and privately thank the alphabet gods that this is the only F word we've encountered.

In early spring, I'm pushing a stroller and praying that the two-year-old will nap. On Patrick Street, we pass a woman who's out walking a tiny dog. She introduces herself, and her dog, loudly. I smile. I don't have the heart to tell her that we already know her dog's name and that, just like last time and the time before, I am really quite desperate to get this kid to sleep. I nod, mouth a greeting, and keep walking.

I notice a friendly doodle on the sidewalk: a smiley face, a heart, and a peace sign. Next week when I walk by, my head full of lullabies and naptime ambitions, the markings are reinforced with yellow spray paint. Hello again, they say, we're still here. It's nice to meet you.

Heading north on Lansdowne, I'm greeted by an uppercase assertion: *ALL WE NEED IS ♥*. The hippies, it seems, are at it again. I hum the Beatles song as I hurry to my next social engagement, visiting a grandmother in the neighbourhood. I'm late and arriving empty-handed — two strikes against me.

Minutes later, I've been sent to retrace my steps and I'm making a beeline for the Division Street Market. I see the first message's counterpart on the other side of the sidewalk section, this time in a less shouty hand: *Love is all we need ♥*.

Love, I think, and potato chips.

Standing on Main Street near Raglan, I'm chatting with a friend. Little blobby smiley faces made of asphalt — are they intentional, or a coincidence? — are at our feet, facing different directions. We part ways, and I wander.

Cat footprints imprinted along Barrie, bird feet stamped on York, stenciled hearts spray painted on Adelaide. There are also names and initials I've seen for years, and new ones that appear now and again after road crews have torn up the old sidewalks and poured new ones.

Recently, I've noticed red circles of spray paint on some of the sidewalks' cracks, like the weather made mistakes on its homework. I wonder how soon the City will come by to repair the damage, and if any of my favourite messages will be filled in or paved over. I imagine what new etchings will appear in soft, wet concrete — and what rituals of love will harden in them with time.

HALEY SARFELD has been contributing crossword puzzles to *The Skeleton Press* for a little over a year now. She's glad to be graduating to 'real writing' with this sidewalk article and hopes you don't find her paragraphs pedestrian.



On Finding Love in Your Own Backyard

STORY BY MEREDITH DAULT

ILLUSTRATION BY CHRISTINE JAMIESON

FOR ME IT WAS VERY CHARGED. I FORGOT OTHER PEOPLE WERE THERE.
- LAURA CHAIGNON

Shortly before declaring the iconic line “There’s no place like home” at the end of *The Wizard of Oz*, Dorothy declares to her Auntie Em: “If I ever go looking for my heart’s desire again, I won’t look any further than my own backyard.” Though she wasn’t necessarily speaking of romance, her words might ring true for those who have found love without leaving the neighbourhood.

Take Raglan Road resident Melanie Reay who found her sweetheart, Steve Ryckman, a mere four doors away. The pair had mutual friends and first met when he moved back to the neighbourhood in early 2022. A carpenter, Ryckman then landed some work at a home near Reay’s. “He came out one day when I was walking by with my dog, Maxie,” she recalls. “We got talking and it was a lovely connection.” Ryckman agrees. “I remember turning around and watching her walk away,” he adds with a smile. But when Ryckman bought and moved into the house down the street from Reay, they each took the opportunity to pursue the connection in their own way. Reay hired Ryckman to do some work on her house. “It was with ulterior motives,” she admits. While things stayed professional for some time, Ryckman’s coffee breaks while he worked on her home got longer and longer as the pair got to know one another. Then, he invited Reay for dinner and board games. “We both love board games,” she says.

For Laura Chaignon and Devon Runions, love blossomed on the basketball court at Skeleton Park. Runions, then a member of the Kingston Freestyle Dance Collective, was performing as part of a local dance showcase hosted by the Skeleton Park Arts Festival in August 2021. Though Chaignon, who was volunteering at the event, missed Runions’ performance, the two spoke after the show and quickly realized they had met at a local poetry event four years earlier. Chaignon and her friends walked Runions to his car so that he could give her a chapbook of his poems. “I felt a lot of things,” she says, thinking back to that day. “For me it was very charged. I forgot other people were there.” Though Runions was moving away for grad school two weeks later, the two became inseparable. On their first date, Runions taught Chaignon how to print her own poetry chapbook. And when COVID-19 brought another lockdown, Runions returned to Kingston and holed up with Chaignon and her roommates.

Claudia McNulty and Chris Morin came together at work. It was December 2021, and McNulty was employed as a frontline worker at the Integrated Care Hub (ICH), balancing the needs of the community against the stresses of the pandemic. Walking into the building’s rest area one night, she met Morin, who had been on the job for a week. “We sat down and worked together for a couple of hours,” she recalls, “and we just kept hanging out every day after that.” Two months later, they were living together. She believes their shared commitment to the people around them has helped solidify their relationship. “We have this tremendous desire to show up every day for this community that we love a lot,” McNulty says. She remembers a day the pair had to respond together to a drug-poisoning death in the encampment and were able to support one another through their shared grief. “It helps to be with someone who truly understands how hard this work is.”

Matt Hoult was living in the Skeleton Park neighbourhood when he decided he was ready to meet someone, and online dating seemed like the best bet. A self-described introvert, he had by then graduated from university and was finding it difficult to meet new people the way he once had. He decided to lean on his academic expertise. “I had studied social science and found online dating to be this fascinating exercise in communicating values and perspectives,” he explains. “I like how people show off what they think is valuable about themselves to other people.” Nicolle Domnik was a case in point. When crafting her profile, she had decided not to include a photograph, finding aspects of the “share-all” mentality of online dating a little too baring. Because of her public profile as an educator, she chose to let her words do the wooing instead. Domnik was pleasantly surprised that her profile generated a handful of thoughtful messages — including one from Hoult. A little over a week after connecting online, the pair, who had yet to exchange photographs, met at a downtown café: They showed up wearing nearly identical outfits — purple tops, khaki bottoms, Birkenstock sandals, and glasses. Both proceeded to order apple cider.



Hoult and Domnik got married in October 2022, seven years after their first online exchange, and McNulty and Morin, who have both moved into new jobs with the ICH, are celebrating nearly two years of living together. “We have dogs together now,” says McNulty. “Our whole little family was built around this place [the ICH] that we love so much.” The night Chaignon and Runions met, she picked up a rose petal left on the stage during a dance performance and handed it to Runions. They still have it. And Reay and Ryckman both continue to marvel at the fact that love showed up just a few doors away. “It’s very relaxing and convenient that we live so close to each other,” says Ryckman, smiling at Reay as they sit in her backyard. “Yes,” she adds, “it really couldn’t have been better.”



MEREDITH DAULT is a writer, stilt-walker, and dancer who has lived in the Skeleton Park neighbourhood for a decade. She wanders the streets and parks regularly with her dog, Frida.



Alberto Garcia, Professional Luthier

Making and repairing wood instruments as community contribution **STORY BY DANIELLE HOPE EDWARDS**

To love your art and profession, and to have the opportunity to share it with your community, is a wonderful gift. Alberto Garcia, professional luthier, makes and repairs violins, violas and cellos — a skill that requires keen accuracy. Chatting with him over a Zoom call left me more enlightened about violins, their intricate audio and physical components, as well as his love of music.

In a warm and friendly manner, Garcia told me about his journey from Mexico, to Montreal, to Kingston about twelve years ago. During all this time, he worked on his passion for making instruments. Little by little he grew as a luthier and created a full-time living restoring and making wood instruments. But he soon found the market in Canada different from the one in Mexico. Garcia became dedicated to researching and attending workshops to become more informed about the Canadian market. He wanted to enhance his business and become more efficient. His philosophy, he said, is to offer fast service while retaining high quality.

It takes Alberto Garcia three months to make a violin or viola, with the larger cello taking twice as long. He uses maple for the neck and back, spruce for the top. “It’s an acoustically perfect combination,” he told me. You might think that Canada, which boasts an abundance of both trees, would be an easy source for such wood. Not so. “The Canadian wood,” he says, “is too soft, too new. I get my wood from Germany or Italy, and it has to be naturally dried for fifteen to twenty years.” Some luthiers charge \$10,000 to \$20,000 for their instruments, but Garcia keeps his in the \$5,000 to \$8,000 range, and never more than \$10,000.

Does it ever happen, I asked him, that despite all the care taken in that long and tricky process, the new instrument simply does not “sing”? Never, he replied. “Some instruments,” he said, “have a beautiful voice and it’s for the musician to find that voice. One instrument may not work for one musician, but in different hands, it’s perfect.” Sometimes he names the violins he makes, and early on he chose the names of his children — such as Clementina and Magdalena, “good Mexican names.”

The repairs Garcia makes to wood instruments typically involve addressing cracks, regluing or replacing the bridge. “Most times,” he says, “I can fix it. But sometimes my advice is, ‘You will have to buy a new one.’”

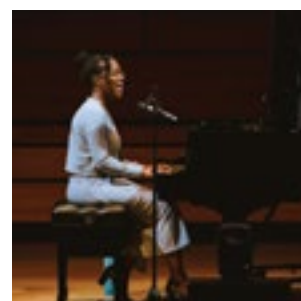
Upon moving to the Skeleton Park area, Garcia grew to appreciate the talents of artists in the neighbourhood: the writers, the painters, the musicians, the actors, and many others. He questioned how he could contribute to this social group and share his luthier service with the neighbourhood. As a person who comes from Mexico, he has a love for Latin music. Garcia wanted to represent the culture of Latin music while also providing Kingston’s culture with his services. I found this an inspiring approach: to incorporate one’s own culture while also sharing your services with people of a different culture. There is beauty in integrating multiple cultures and creating rich experiences.

Garcia also provides his services to all members of the Kingston Symphony, Queen’s students, the Kingston Youth Orchestra, Kingston’s Community Orchestra, and even musicians between Ottawa and Toronto. He also donates instruments to students for their various projects, further proof of his being a caring part of a community.

Garcia’s story offers us all encouragement to continue to live out our passions, to refine what we are good at, and to go the extra lengths to have our goals and dreams align. Through his love for maintenance, restoration, and repair of instruments, Garcia is a unique individual in Kingston. He stated with a big smile how very happy he is to be in the twenty-fourth year of his profession, and that he loves to listen to new concepts for violin music. His Facebook page and website, Virtuos Violins (<http://www.virtuosviolins.com/>), detail his journey, his business, and his love for what he does.

Were to you visit his shop at 205 Montreal Street — and he loves to have visitors — you would be greeted by the smell of wood shavings, tools, perhaps a hint of glue, and always, as Garcia puts it, “happiness.”

When I asked Garcia what he wants to see and do next, he talked about his desire to share his services with people of all ages in Ontario and beyond, while expanding on his knowledge and skills. He wrote, “. . . all people . . . are welcome to my studio, to learn, see, ask, and enjoy everything about this profession.” Garcia expressed thanks and gratitude to those who believe in his profession, and looks forward to having the younger generation as customers to share his love for music and the beauty of wood instruments.



DANIELLE HOPE EDWARDS, otherwise known as Danni, is a singer/songwriter of Jamaican heritage from southern Ontario. Hope is in her final year at Queen’s University in the Concurrent Education (teaching) program. She creates art with the intention of bringing awareness and hope to others.

PHOTOS COURTESY OF:
Alberto Garcia

Picturing Love and Friendship in Kingston

INTERVIEWS & PHOTOGRAPHY BY AL BERGERON



SHARING WISDOM: C + L

C: This project is a continuation of another project KEYS ran that taught women entrepreneurial skills and helped them to establish small businesses.

L: She's my rock. She's always there, you know? You can text her, "C, I need help." And she's right back on that phone going, "Ok, when do you want to come in?" It's not all business with her. When she's your friend, she's your friend.

C: I feel like we're friends now and it's maybe a little bit unconventional. Like, I'm not sure we would have crossed paths with each other just naturally if it hadn't been for this space. I feel like there's a lot that I can learn from her. One, because of her experience in the kitchen, but more, as a person. I think we have some pretty deep conversations—in honesty, mostly talking about the experience of First Nations people here and *her* experience.



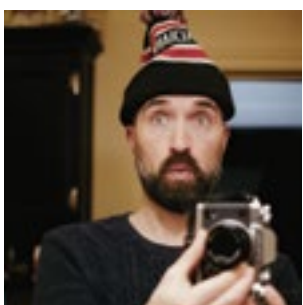
ALWAYS TOGETHER: J + J

J: Yes, we are best friends—

J: And we are twins, but not identical.

J: So, our hobbies are listening to music, you know, watching movies together—and we are taking the same courses. And an interesting thing is we are also working in the same place!

J: We are only 19 years old and we came to Canada alone and without parents. So it's huge support for us, we support each other.



AL BERGERON is a local photographer, videographer, and Dad living in the Inner Harbour. He's usually up to something or another in the neighbourhood or over at the Isabel Bader.



THE SCHOOLYARD GANG: E + K + T

T: I like to play!

K: I like to play pretending games.

E: Yeah, we like to play the "close-your-eyes" game. It's when one person closes your eyes and the other person leads you around the schoolyard or park and it's kind of terrifying because you feel like you're going to bump into a tree.

T: Yeah, or a fence. And die!

E: She's very humorous.



BONDED BY BOULDERING: C + A + D + B + J

C: This is a co-op so we're all friends! I would say we are here three or four days a week... It's a pretty cooperative sport. Everyone cheers each other on. It doesn't matter what difficulty you're climbing, you just help each other out and cheer everyone on. It's pretty amazing.

D: Drink beers.

C: Listen to Backstreet Boys!
(Laughter)



YOUNG AND YOUNG AT HEART: H + T

T: Hmm. I've known you two years? No. I've known you since you were a baby. H is very honest and very outgoing. She will just come up and tell you what's going on. She's not shy.

H: Um, I like when we sometimes... building snowmans and I like catching snow balls on my tongue!

T: Oh, and what about when we gather the leaves and jump in them?

H: Yeah



MUTUAL SUPPORT: J + R

J: I work here and R started coming to the Hub because he needed some support with us and his cousin is actually my best friend... There's a sense of safety between both of us because we are familiar to each other through somebody else... So I know that I can go to him if I need support or help with something around here and I feel like he feels the same way.

R: Same way, yeah... She's easy to talk to and if I need a hand, she's there, right?

J: He's really forthcoming and honest and I think he has a really kind heart. This is my buddy!



NEW MOTHERS: E + J

E: We're neighbours, so I guess we met before...

J: Yeah, I remember we were pregnant and were like, "Oh, you're pregnant too!"

E: Yeah. But we sort of got chatting at baby boot camp.

J: It's helpful to talk about what's going on with the baby, I don't know... You just have someone else to go, "OK, they're kind of going through the same thing." And it's like, we'll make it. And it makes me feel less lonely I guess.

E: Definitely less lonely. Because it can be lonely being home, I think, with your baby. And it's nice to have somewhere to go and someone to meet up with.



OLD POOL PALS: C + M

C: Honesty, Loyalty.

M: Trust.

C: I knew her since I was a kid. I used to swim in her pool actually.

M: It was adorable! (laughs) What do I like about him? His swag!

C: Her is her attitude.



A WOMAN AND HER DOG: N + REMI (DOG)

N: I got her when she was eight months and she's five now. She's like my kid. Even the girls treat her sometimes like a step-sister. They're wicked step-sisters! (laughs)... She means a lot to me. She's my girl. I'd be lost without her.



THE PROFESSIONALS: C + C

C: A year or two? A year and a half. I think we met at work online. Then, after, we met in person at some social event.

C: Yeah. Now, we are co-editing a special issue of a publication. So, we are writing the intro for that.

C: She is very reliable.

C: Oh, Thank you!

C: And it's just easy to work with you!

C: Yeah. Exactly. Likewise, I would say.



TEST OF TIME: A + H

A: H is one of the first people I would talk to if I am in distress.

H: Yeah, It would be the same for me.

A: Because you're sensible and will be calm when you need to be calm. And you've worked through some stuff and you've seen other people work through stuff. And I think that's been really helpful for me. You're truthful.

H: I think just knowing somebody for such a long time in that state— I don't think for me that's ever really wavered, how I feel about you. I mean, well, it's deepened. And there were times when I moved away for a few years and we didn't see each other. But being able to pick up where we left off...

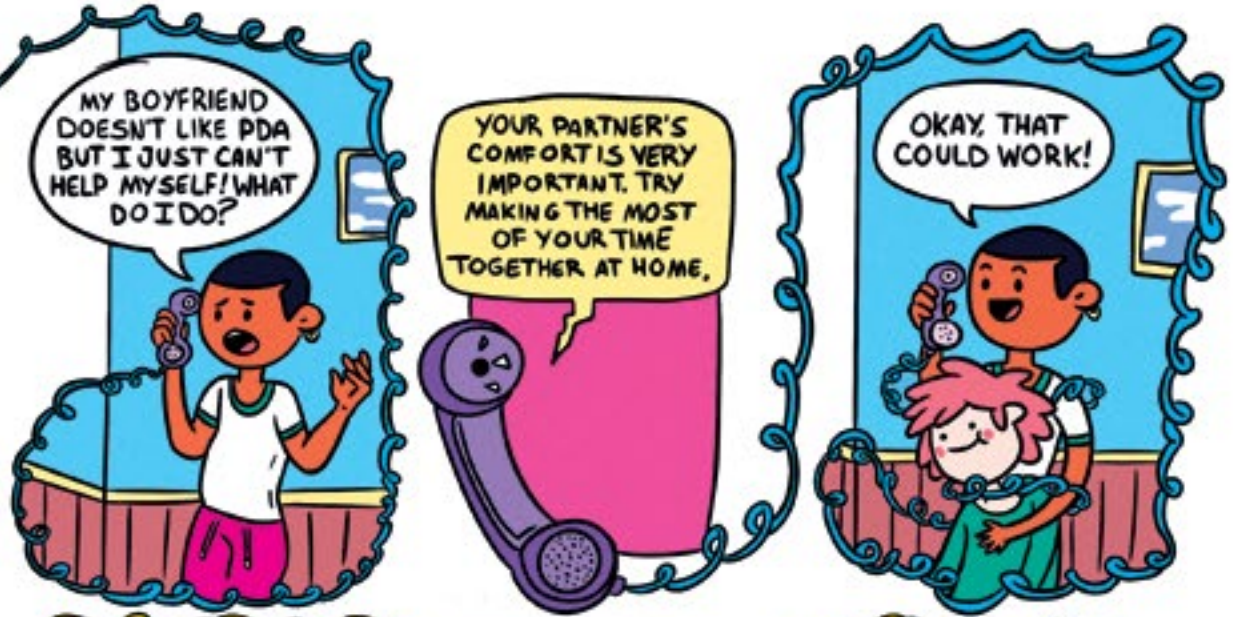
A: Yeah, there is an ease that's just always there.

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The Language of Love

In translation, sometimes much is lost

STORY BY ALISON KIAWENNISERATHE BENEDICT



Kanonronkwa is about seeing the essence of someone without any conditions or expectations and about having heartfelt appreciation for who they are.

Language is culture. Language conveys the systems, beliefs, and relationships of a group. It is ever changing, reflecting the world it seeks to describe. Embedded in the language are assumptions about the world and how it works. Language is a way of being in the world and the lens through which we gaze, individually and collectively.

Words that exist and don't exist in a language convey what matters and how it matters. Many cultures do not have a language of ownership, just shared responsibility — for the land and all inhabitants of the land, including children. Many cultures also have never had and still do not have derogatory gender-based words or derogatory words about consenting adult relationships.

The term “two-spirit” came about in the '80s, when people were trying to advocate for one another during the HIV/AIDS epidemic. Trying to fit Indigenous ways of being into the confines of English terminology was a huge challenge. Before colonization, many recognized that spirit has no gender and no colour — something many continue to recognize today. The responsibility of the human being is to ensure that all spirits are protected, nur-

tured, and respected so that the hard lessons of life can be taken in stride, reflected upon, and learned from. Today, we would call that psychological flexibility and authenticity.

What would love look like and feel like without possession? How many industries would collapse if narratives of finding “the one,” cheating, being heartbroken, suffering from unrequited love, or the violence of “love” didn't exist? Can power, control, and obedience exist when spirit is honoured, respected, and cared for?

One hot summer day, many years ago, I met a teacher, Tiorahkwathe Gilbert, who was passionate about Kanien'kehá [pronounced gan ye gay ha] and language preservation. He was wandering around the Akwesasne Freedom School carrying heart artwork the kids had made. Love — Kanonronkwa [ga na loon gwa] — was on his mind. We spent hours talking about what Kanonronkwa meant and how so much is lost when people just translate it with an English word instead of explaining the depth and description of what is being said. He taught me about She:kon. In school, I was taught that She:kon meant hello or was just a greeting. He taught me that it meant, “I come to you with Great Peace in

my heart.” He taught me that when we are asked, “Skennekowa:ken” instead of “how are you?” we are asking about the Peace within the other person's heart. My spirit felt it was so.

Then, we talked about the meaning of Kanonronkwa. Kanonronkwa is about seeing the essence of someone without any conditions or expectations and about having heartfelt appreciation for who they are. Care and respect for a person's spirit is how love is shown. Generosity with no requirements.

It occurred to me that such love is unconditional, fearless, and free. It makes me wonder what movies and music based on Kanonronkwa would look and sound like.



ALISON BENEDICT (Kiawenniserathe - Bright Day), MSW, RSW, is Kanien'kehá:ka [gan ye gay ha] from Akwesasne, Wolf Clan. The roots and inspiration for her life's work come from the teachings of the Peacemaker.

Viral Phase, Yellow Haze, and Humid Days

On Neighbourhood Love

STORY BY SEBASTIEN DE LINE

I am thinking about neighbourhood love. While the province has reopened its businesses and people have emerged from pandemic isolation, I still know people who are regularly contracting any one of various strains of COVID-19. Numbers are no longer tallied but text messages are a reminder that the pandemic is not over.

Walking along the shores of Lake Ontario, I am thinking about a love for my neighbourhood. Waking up to the sun rising over waters where only a month ago a thick yellow haze filled the sky. I contemplate the bitter irony of how, after becoming acclimatized to wearing an N95 mask, I now fit it to my face to protect my lungs from the smoke of forest fires raging across Ontario and Quebec.

I am thinking about neighbourhood love as I walk through City Park. Though I am not a botanist, I can tell that the trees are dying; their bark looks dry, tired, and brittle, their leaves withered and drooping. What is causing the trees to die? When I listen to our Mother Earth's heartbeat beneath my feet, I feel her exhaustion. She is tired from having to continually rebalance our ecosystem at an accelerated pace due to our own human insensitivities, misuse, and overuse of her resources. I think about global acceleration and resource exhaustion, and how temperatures and humidity indexes are becoming increasingly unbearable. I think about how we as humans still act like immature, selfish children who refuse responsibility for the care of our aging and tired kin. We live for today, never leaving enough for tomorrow and those who will come after us.

I think about neighbourhood love and how much we can learn from the trees. The trees give and receive freely. Trees never question their identities nor ours, they never withhold oxygen from us, rationing it in finite amounts. They do not say, “You are only part Indigenous. I'm only going to give you part of my oxygen,” or “You are a newcomer. You need a visa before I will give you oxygen.” It is we as humans who continually question and police the contours of belonging. We all have an obligation and planetary responsibility as human beings to maintain balance in sharing life's resources, untethered from property and commodification. We withhold love from ourselves and each other; we withhold resources from one another; we still stratify, propertize, stigmatize, and segregate communities.

I think about neighbourhood love despite all of the uncertainty of climate change, with a local housing market run amok and without rent control to protect the most vulnerable. Yet neighbours still manage to craft smiles on their faces, greeting each other as we pass one another along the boardwalk on after dinner strolls.

I think about neighbourhood love as a necessity to learning how to give love and receive love from our neighbours — unconditionally — taking our cues from our Mother Earth, the trees, and the lake, one of the five Great Lakes making up the largest fresh surface-water system in the world.

This may seem like a strange way to show love for my community, but I assure you it is an act of love to call myself and all of my neighbours in, instead of calling us out. It is time to dig down deep within ourselves, to stop being disingenuous with ourselves and those around us, to take this poignant time of global warning seriously. We can be and do better.



SEBASTIAN DE LINE is an artist, scholar, and Associate Curator, Care & Relations at the Agnes Etherington Art Centre.

Looking for Connection in Kingston

Lack of space thwarts queer community from thriving

STORY & ILLUSTRATIONS BY JEFF MCGILTON

Some months ago, I found myself at a street party in Toronto, enjoying chilled wine and the company of good friends. From across the street, I spotted an ascot-sporting cutie floating amongst a group surrounding the DJ, and, as per my usual means of queer detection, relied on eye contact to silently ask the questions I wanted the answers to: What are you into? Could it be me?

After some returned glances, I flicked my gaze over in the direction of the washroom and excused myself from my friends. The stranger met me at the sink, and I spent the next hour learning about his life, his thoughts about *Sex and the City*, and how he liked to be kissed beneath the street lamp outside.

When my eyes explore the crowded spaces across downtown Kingston, connections such as these are few and far between. Though my cumulative six years in this city have led to amazing opportunities, lasting friendships, and personal growth as a queer man, they have also been peppered with loneliness. And while there could be a number of contributors to this, the two that I believe have had the biggest effect are population and space, or rather, a lack thereof.



Across literature, media, and the lived experiences of 2SLGBTQPIA+* people I've come to know, there seems to be a recurring narrative regarding young people in the queer community. Someone is born into a town or small city, and a lack of representation or reflection of themselves results in their moving to somewhere bigger where there are more queer people, where there is access to better resources, and, in some cases, where it is safer to exist. This migration reduces queer representation for both queer people and non-queer people still living in the smaller community and makes access to resources and simply existing as a queer person in the public eye even more difficult. In a sense, leaving begets more leaving.

A way to combat this cycle is through space. Having designated spaces for queer people to meet and safely gather not only creates a sense of belonging, but also asks the surrounding non-queer community to acknowledge the existence of queer people and their contributions. While some might be shocked to hear it, the society that we exist in still operates through the lens of gender-normativity and heteronormativity. I feel this when I see a lack of queer people in the media, on local boards, or when I am called a f*ggot from a moving car while walking up Princess Street.

When I look for queer spaces around the city of Kingston, I am hard-pressed to find many that operate exclusively as such. Though the Progressive Pride hearts glittering in store windows tell me that I am welcome to enter, very few physical spaces reach out and say "I was made for you."

Please note, dear reader, that I am not looking to discredit any of the amazing queer talent or events that Kingston has to offer. I have seen a great many drag shows at The Grad Club, marched in the city's largest Pride Parade to date, found friends at Queer Volleyball, attended a talk hosted by the transgender-advocating Umbrella Academy, adored the annual ReelOut Queer Film + Video Festival, and have even been called an honorary member of The Beaver Lodge.

But attending an event being presented by an organization (however extraordinary) is different from knowing that there is space you can always go to and feel safe in, regardless of your sexuality or gender expression. I will also note that I am writing from a cis-gendered, white, non-disabled, settler perspective, and that while I face barriers as a result of my queerness, for some, facing hate speech on the street is just the tip of the iceberg. I have never had to worry about someone denying me employment as a result of my sexuality, never had to argue about my gender with a medical professional, or faced physical abuse as a result of my queerness. But this is all happening in Canada, and I have friends who can attest to that.

Though having designated spaces will not eradicate the homophobia and transphobia that still exists in this city both subtly and overtly, it could help to maintain and grow the queer population so it can stand more of a fighting chance.

In a recent development, the rainbow-clad Club 338, which was to be the city's first gay bar to open in over a decade, announced that it will no longer be opening its doors. In an online thread, it was mentioned that the owners are instead going to try opening a bar in Toronto, where city bylaws are less constraining. As my eyes search the spaces of Kingston in hopes of connection, I can't help but wonder if moving to a bigger city could mean fewer constraints for myself as well.

*Two-spirit, lesbian, gay/gender queer, transgender, bisexual, queer/questioning, pansexual, intersex, asexual/agender, and additional sexual orientations and gender identities. For definitions of these terms, check out ok2bme.ca.



JEFF MCGILTON is a queer resident of the Skeleton Park neighbourhood who enjoys long bike rides, cool swims, and bouldering. On the weekends you can usually find him at local cafés, by the lake, or on Grindr.

What's Love Got to Do with It

Thoughts of a long-time Kingston leader in the fight to end violence against women

STORY AND INTERVIEW BY ANNE KERSHAW

Pam Havery arrived as the new executive director of Kingston Interval House in 2014 at a time of major turmoil for the organization. The agency was in financial crisis, its future uncertain. The entire board of directors had resigned, and the agency's executive director had departed. Staff were deeply unhappy and without a long-overdue union agreement.

Pam Havery arrived as the new executive director of Kingston Interval House in 2014 at a time of major turmoil for the organization. The agency was in financial crisis, its future uncertain. The entire board of directors had resigned, and the agency's executive director had departed. Staff were deeply unhappy and without a long-overdue union agreement.

Havery's extensive experience working in protective and support services for women in Kingston and region proved invaluable. She quickly began to rebuild the organization with the support of a new board of directors and staff. And she did so with eyes wide open, knowing that KIH had evolved into a substantive organization with thirty staff, a multi-million-dollar budget and direct accountability to the Ontario government and taxpayers.

Early on, she understood the need to prepare staff for a different kind of organization. "Staff needed to see that this wasn't the patriarchy coming down on us. This is just good business. We could still be a radical and feminist organization but to ensure we could keep our doors open, we needed to be fully accountable." Havery is credited with strengthening labour relations and enlarging the agency's financial base with new and expanded sources of revenue.

Funded primarily by the Ontario government, KIH provides twenty-four-hour safe emergency shelter, community-based counselling services and second-stage housing. Last year, it gave shelter to 172 women and children and counselling to more than three hundred. Staff responded to 700 crisis calls. I met with Pam this summer when she announced her retirement as KIH's executive director after almost a decade. I wanted to know her thoughts as someone whose lifetime work put her at the forefront of the seemingly unending fight to end violence against women.

This is an excerpt from our interview.

What was your reaction to hearing Toronto Mayor Olivia Chow, soon after being elected, declare gender-based violence and intimate partner violence an epidemic, and call on provincial and federal leaders to do the same?



"This is what leadership looks like. The fact that this was one of her first pieces of business was great. The need to put a focus on gender-based violence is long overdue. She is prioritizing what's important as a racialized woman."

Is there any indication of an overall decrease in partner violence?

"Current economic conditions have only made the situation worse. Our political leaders still don't connect the dots between how the poverty we're seeing now, and the lack of a livable wage or affordable housing are pushing women back into terrible, unsafe relationships. Today there are also major mental health and drug addiction issues."

As documented by the Ontario Association of Interval and Transition Houses, Ontario sees about one femicide a week, where a woman is killed by a man because of her gender. Is the public aware of the extent and seriousness of partner abuse?

"The awareness is lacking because it scares people too much to talk about the amount of male violence in society. It's much too threatening. When there is news about the death of a woman, it's most often put in the context of general violence. It's not seen as femicide, hatred of women and the taking down of a woman who can't be controlled."

How has the COVID pandemic affected KIH?

"We needed to explain to public health officials that their infection-control edict to 'stay at home' was the worst message to give to a woman in danger. We needed women to know that our services were open. More than ever, KIH had to advertise across the city to let the public know we were still open. Despite the often life-saving role we play, we too often are not thought of as an essential service."

Why has so little progress been made in reducing violence against women?

"We know the answer is safer and more affordable housing. The Ontario government knows it and the City of Kingston knows it. Fourteen years ago, we founded Robin's Hope, named after a woman who had no option but to return to a violent home and was killed. Our second stage housing provides eighteen apartments where women can live for a

year and receive counselling and other support. One of our main strategic priorities pre-COVID was building more supportive housing. Unfortunately, coping with the pandemic took precedence."

Do you think we should be concerned about what is happening to women's rights in the U.S.?

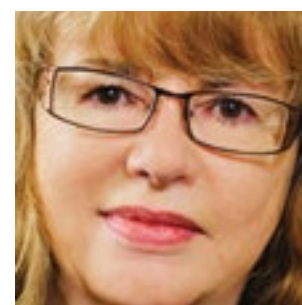
"Absolutely. Those attitudes are here. We just haven't poked the bear enough. We only delude ourselves by thinking it can't happen here. We don't have the privilege of ignoring what's happening. The threats are real. We need to be aware and get more politically involved."

What are your thoughts now as you reflect on your life's work?

"I'm aware more than ever of the complexities of human relationships and what this means when attempting to address family violence and empower women. When you love someone, when you know their history, when you know their own personal trauma, it's difficult. It's always difficult for women to prioritize their own needs."

"I never expected that the end of my career would be managing through a global pandemic. I thought we would be building more housing and developing more programs. At the same time, I'm very proud of the work we did to get through the pandemic and to keep our staff and clients safe."

"I've been surrounded throughout my career by so many passionate and committed women doing such important work. That is what has sustained me."



ANNE KERSHAW is a multiple national award-winning journalist, author and former communications and public affairs director at Queen's University.

Seeking Sanctuary

Fundamentalist scars and fundamental rights

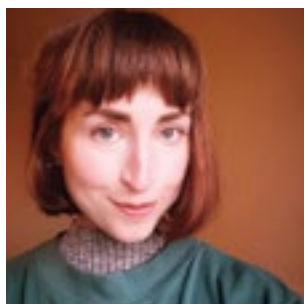
STORY & ILLUSTRATION BY GRACE DIXON

Christianity has a tangled history, with many branches jutting off in erratic directions. I grew up in a particularly conservative branch, in which I took piano lessons, taught Bible stories to kindergarteners, and learned to operate day to day under an impressive amount of fear. The spirituality underneath it all was crucial for me; Christianity offered hope in a very unstable environment. It was how I coped with the chaos of life. Until it wasn't.

Seven years ago, I began losing my faith; or rather, I began losing the brand of faith I had been taught. That was also the summer I got my first tattoo, which reads, “Heart of my own heart whatever befall.” It’s a lyric from my favourite hymn, and I chose it because I wondered if it might prevent the unraveling of my faith. But it also spoke to me on a deeper level about learning to trust my own heart. The pain of the tattoo gun was oddly satisfying.

As I moved outside of my conservative religious bubble, I made strong friendships, challenged my thinking, and grew to learn more about parts of myself that fundamentalist religion had stifled. I discovered truths and wonders within the queer community that really shifted how I understood the world. The process made me question definitions of love and it awakened me to the division, abandonment and hypocrisy within my own church. Then a Christian friend of mine came out and was met with cold disapproval. These instances spearheaded the dissolution of my churchgoing. For those close to me and for myself, I saw within the church more danger than I saw care and love. It was a time saturated with frustration and emotional volatility; to see so differently something that had been so essential to my identity . . .

I thought I had put my spirituality to rest when I left Sunday Service, but I found that it still gnawed at me. I could see my spirituality peeking out from behind the clouds when beautiful people were in my midst, when emotions escaped, when truth was spoken sincerely. But how could I reconcile something that held such damaging associations for me with the new life I was living? How could I revisit spaces where identities were questioned or condemned?



GRACE DIXON (she/her) is a settler illustrator and musician based in Katarokwi, with a specific fondness for sound design and mixed media visual art. Her practice grapples often with themes of re-evaluating spirituality, nostalgia, and emotional exploration.

I don’t have an answer to that question yet, but I think I’ve found the beginning of one in the sanctuary of Next Church on Colborne Street. I’ve never attended a service there, but within this room I have heard the tangible tenderness of Piner, the inquisitive lyricism of Princess Towers, and the dream-fueled sway of Groucho Pepe — all favourite local bands of mine. I’ve been to dances in the gymnasium, a baptism by sweat, while DJs took their turns governing the ambience. I’ve listened to discussions surrounding hard truths about the housing crisis; folks sharing their discouragements without sugarcoating reality. To think, not long ago, being within a church brought more discomfort and hypervigilance for myself than joy and connection.

I know that in navigating these spaces, places where images of Jesus hang on the wall and light filters through stained glass windows, I am not alone in my uneasiness. For some people, churches are beacons of good things such as community, hope and security in a world that aches. For others, they are structures buzzing with unchecked emotional electricity, live wires of shame and judgment humming beneath the surface. As Ruth Wood, a former minister of Calvary United Church and chaplain at Queen’s University, recently said to me, “When a church says ‘Everyone is Welcome’ sometimes they really mean ‘Everyone Like Us Is Welcome.’”

But she then spoke to me of her connection to Christianity as a queer woman, her desire to pursue faith in a community context and how integral it is to her identity. When I asked her what compels her about ministry or faith, she smiled as she replied, “It makes me excited to think about God. Reflecting on faith, I want it to be exciting for others to think about God and explore that.”

I immediately remembered times where I felt excited to think about God. There were many of those moments that I could recall vividly, when I had thrilling questions about divinity and the universe. There was a hope-emblazoned belief that something deeply, hauntingly beautiful connected us as living things, fellow wanderers in this strange, difficult and sometimes wonderful existence. I can’t speak for everyone, but I do know that my own idea of church - back before the fear of damnation, the fear of authority, the fear of “the world,” and the fear of losing loved ones turned it into something oppressive and sour — was sincerely centered upon encounters I’d experienced with something I was sure was divine. In those moments, I understood the phenomenal extent of love that we as humans and animals can carry and bestow.

But what was I supposed to do with these feelings? The truth is that it is still a very tender and complicated quest to find a church you feel safe in, especially as LGBTQIA2S+ individuals, racialized people, disabled folks and/or those in poverty.

Josh Lyon, an elder for Next Church, spoke with me about the thoughts and hopes surrounding creating safer spaces, especially for queer people of faith. “This is an important conversation to have and be honest about,” he says. “Some people have come to Next and felt that this is the only church they feel accepted and loved in, and some have felt the opposite. It’s a slow evolution of change happening. To first consider change means we will have to challenge assumptions, understandings and interpretations of theology and identity. We have to keep this conversation going with one another.”

Lyon told me that at Next church they have been rewriting lyrics to hymns for their worship services, changing pronouns for God to they/them or she/her, challenging Christian traditions and assumptions about the divine. He believes that Christianity should be evolving, growing, and listening.

Wood made similar comments, noting that it’s one thing to put a pride flag on your window, but that’s not the same as challenging traditional systems and consistently striving to make space for all people — whether that means accessible entrances, image descriptions/captions on church webpages, learning to use one another’s correct pronouns, not making assumptions about other people’s identities, and so forth.



“
I SAW WITHIN THE CHURCH MORE DANGER
THAN I SAW CARE AND LOVE.

But change is on the horizon. Linda Hutchinson, a member of the Sydenham Street United Church, pointed me towards Affirm United/S’Affirmer Ensemble (or AUSE), where she is a Coordinator of the Affirming Ministries Program. The organization formed in 1982, and was first established to support lesbian and gay members of the United Church of Canada. Since then, they have grown to extend their support and advocacy for all LGBTQIA2S+ people. AUSE’s mission statement reads: “Affirm United/ S’affirmer Ensemble works for the full inclusion of people of all gender identities and sexual orientations in the United Church of Canada and in society.”

A wonderful acronym created by AUSE is PIE, which stands for Public, Intentional, Explicit Inclusion of LGBTQ2SIA+ People. Some churches may not be technically affirming under the AUSE program criteria and still be packed with PIE-focused people. This is where denominations and institutions find themselves in the grey areas under denominational authority, which unfortunately doesn’t lessen the difficulty when searching for a church home. The journey is far from over.

At the end of the day, one’s faith is not owned by a particular church or group. For some, no denomination, however welcoming, will be worth it. For others, reclaiming faith spaces is an arduous but promising answer. There are many

queer, racialized, disabled and neurodivergent movers and shakers treading out on a different limb of Christianity. Consider, for example, the Metropolitan Community Church, an inclusive LGBTQ+ church founded in 1968.

To me, these branches might be radical, but they’re not new. Early Christianity was all about breaking down hierarchies and creating spaces where, as Paul the Apostle said, there was “neither Jew nor Gentile, neither slave nor free, nor is there male and female.” Everyone was equal. When I contemplate that period in Christianity’s history, before whispers of organized religion, I see humans galvanized by socialist ideals: community care and magnetic hope.

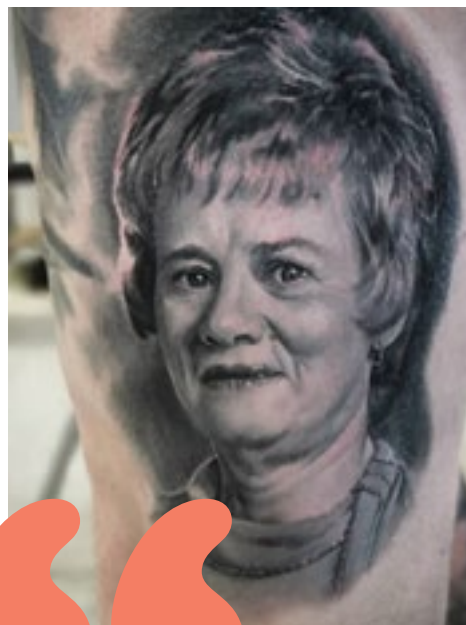
I still don’t know if church is right for me at this time or ever will be again, but I do respect and admire that many open-minded, care-centric, oppression-fighting individuals attend services, and their commitment to learning and to shaping the communities within church spaces. My faith, however ambiguous and undefined currently, has remained special to me. For now, I suppose I truly love that we can use these sanctuaries for things like thunderous punk shows. I find that, in and of itself, something holy. After all, wasn’t Christianity created from the teachings of a Jewish man living in an oppressed and colonized land? Teachings declaring the importance and sacredness of caring for the vulnerable, flipping tables in the halls of capitalism and challenging the status quo?

Love Written in Permanent Ink

The art of the memorial tattoo

STORY BY AARA MACAULEY

PHOTO CREDIT: Benoit Delongchamp and Val McBain



We all honour and celebrate the things, moments, and people we love in different ways. Increasingly, tattoos offer an opportunity to carry a custom, permanent reminder with us. Getting tattooed well requires good dialogue, design, and understanding.

I spoke with two amazing artists from Dark Tides Tattoos, Benoit Delongchamp and Val McBain, about their experiences creating tattoos in honour of loved ones for clients. The pair moved to Kingston in 2019, following their friend and the founder of Dark Tides, Cameron Roach. They've quickly gained an enthusiastic clientele and say they enjoy the change of pace Kingston offers compared to living in bigger cities.

"Memorial tattoos are always a sensitive topic," says Delongchamp. "There are always more expectations from your clients when doing recognizable imagery [like a portrait]. I try not to overthink those details and just try to help the client tell their loved one's story. I may try to sway the client on placement/scale, but I am less strict with my clients when I am doing these tattoos as I know they have a strong connection with the subject matter."

McBain calls the process "bittersweet." She says, "I've done portraits of mothers, fathers, siblings, and sometimes even children who have passed away," noting that "from the beginning of the process — reading and responding to the written requests — to executing the tattoo, the pain is more than superficial for my clients. Nevertheless, getting a portrait of a lost loved one committed to skin can be healing for many people, a sort of resolution and acceptance, and a permanent symbol of their company."

It is not just tough for the client, she says. "I had to take a break from tattooing memorials a while back. The more I did, the more requests started to pour in, and it soon became overwhelming. There were more than I could respond or offer bookings to, and it was difficult to say no to people who were grieving. It was taking a toll on me." These days she is mostly doing pet memorials, giving her clients an opportunity to cherish the good memories.

Tattoos are not painless, but McBain and Delongchamp think the process can offer catharsis, too.

"That's part of the appeal to a lot of people," says McBain, "it is mostly patience and endurance, on both the client's part and mine, to reach the end of the tattoo or session. A large tattoo, opening a large area of skin, is traumatic, exhausting, but also provides a feeling of accomplishment in the end."

"Tattooing can take anywhere from minutes to consecutive days depending on the piece and the client's tolerance and skin type," Delongchamp adds. "It is not the end of the world, but it is no walk in the park. Most people do well."

So where do folks usually begin? "The process begins with an idea," says McBain. "It can be original or inspired by art, a story, or another tattoo."

"This," Delongchamp adds, "is followed by a discussion about what the client's piece should be in the end. Once there is a general agreement, I head off to the

Getting a portrait of a lost loved one committed to skin can be healing for many people, a sort of resolution and acceptance, and a permanent symbol of their company.

drawing board. Once [the image is] situated, we go about the process of placing the stencil following chiefly the overall aesthetic of the piece and the flow to the body. Minor changes here can make a big difference, so we are not hasty."

To close, I asked Delongchamp and McBain about their favourite memories. "That is so tough to answer," Delongchamp confides, "as I treasure many of the interactions I get to have with clients. I am always amazed at the dedication the work I output requires. That said, the tattoos clients react to the best tend to coincide with the pieces I get into the most. As such I try to 'find the love' for every piece I do. Any tattoo that makes me giggle/smile is a great day."

For McBain, "almost ten years ago now, I did a portrait on a man in his late eighties — an image of his late wife, his first tattoo, I believe. He had her face emblazoned on his chest because he wanted her close to his heart, as he said. I could not help but notice a change in his demeanour from before to after the tattoo. He had come in solemn and tense, as these sessions often are, but afterwards he was relaxed. He paused quietly for a while at the mirror, poring over the details in her face, then he clasped his hands and shed a tear. But it was not a sad moment. There was a great big smile on his face that felt absolutely genuine. He returned about a week or so later to show me that she was healed; he was still sporting that smile. I think it gave him peace."



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. Former chair of the Reelout Arts Project Board and Poet Laureate Working Group, she is a proud member of the LGBTQIA2S+ community. She currently sits on the City of Kingston Arts Advisory Committee, the Art in Public Places Working Group, and the Mayor's Arts Awards Committee.



The Life-changing Power of Stone Carving

STORY BY **MEREDITH DAULT**
PHOTOGRAPHY BY **AL BERGERON**

Six mornings a week, weather permitting, Roy Torney walks his eight-year-old dog, Gypsy, to Skeleton Park and readies himself for his workday. He hauls a wagon with his supplies — big pieces of soapstone along with his carving tools — and sets up at a picnic table close to Ordnance Street. Once there, he spends the day doing what he loves best: turning those blocks of stone into birds and animals, and, if it's a good day, teaching others to do the same. He believes it's a medium that can change lives.

Torney first encountered the art form in 1979 when he was living in British Columbia and crossed paths with a man making carvings in a park. Intrigued, Torney questioned him about his work. "I had failed art in high school twice," he recalls. "I felt I had no talent of my own, but I enjoyed watching him and talking with him."

In time, the man hired Torney to help him repair a series of carvings. When that work slowed, Torney felt confident enough to try a carving of his own. Though not thrilled with his first sculpture, he found the act of making it to be life changing in more than one way. A lifelong smoker, he one day was so absorbed in his carving he realized he had not lit a cigarette in four days. He gave them up on the spot.

Torney says stone carving has enabled him to work through periods of depression, to process anger, and to develop self-control. "Instead of blowing up at something, you take that energy out on the rock," he explains. He is passionate about teaching others to heal the same way and delights in watching them develop their own confidence in carving. He is especially motivated to teach children how to work with their hands to produce a work of art. "I want them to be able to make something that they will be proud of," he says. He only charges people for the stone he provides, offering the instruction for free.

Torney's practice at Skeleton Park, which he treats as a full-time job, means he meets people from many walks of life over the course of his day. Although he knows he can't help everyone he meets, he is always open to talking, lending an ear to anyone who needs it. "People may sit with me for the carving, but sometimes they are dealing with bigger problems," he says. He has come to see stone carving as intrinsic to his identity. "I believe that stone carving helps with self-image. I always say, it's not *what* you carve, it's *that* you carve."



MEREDITH DAULT is a writer, stilt-walker, and dancer who has lived in the Skeleton Park neighbourhood for a decade. She wanders the streets and parks regularly with her dog, Frida.



My Summer of Dance

STORY BY **WINNIE SEABY** / PHOTOGRAPHY BY **SHANIQUE PEART**

This summer has been a whirlwind of dance firsts for me. Along with a group of friends, I had opportunities to dance at the Skeleton Parks Arts Festival (SPAF) and Ground Up Dance Festival, both as a member of the Kingston Youth Dance Ensemble (KYDE), and, for my first time, as a professional dancer.

Ground Up is the only professional annual dance festival based in Kingston. The performance is held every year on the waterfront at Lake Ontario Park. This was my first year participating and it was a really inspiring experience for many reasons. For one, I got to meet many new people from a variety of dance backgrounds. As the youngest in my group, I could look up to and learn from many older dancers. At Ground Up, I had the chance to work with experienced dancers and choreographers, who are actively rising in the dance world. This was a big step for me and an opportunity to build from all I've learned at the Kingston School of Dance (KSD), where I've danced for over a decade. The choreography process especially was new to me. Our residency for Ground Up was only four days long, whereas at KSD we create a dance over a full semester of classes. That meant we had only four days as a new group to pull our piece together!

Performing at SPAF as a member of KYDE was a total rollercoaster. Going into the rehearsal we all thought we were adapting Pull (the red piece, pictured) for a smaller stage, but unfortunately for us, the space was too tight. We had to start from scratch and create an entirely new piece! We choreographed, rehearsed, and then successfully performed the routine the next day. That was the most exciting part for me: being thrown a huge curveball and having to adapt.

I spoke to two youth dancers who also participated in SPAF and Ground Up, to see what they had to say. I asked: What was your favourite part of performing in these festivals?

"Being a part of Ground Up was amazing. The dances we performed were expressive and full of emotion. I also enjoyed the process of piecing the dances together with my dance friends. To make the experience even better, performing with the lake as our backdrop was beautiful."

— **EVELYN DANIELS**, 13, performed in Pull.

"The thing I love about these festivals is that everyone involved is so welcoming! They are so fun because they provide opportunities to be a part of something that is unique and new but to also be a part of pieces that carry a message."

— **ROWEN EDWARDS**, 16, performed in Pull, Chance Dance, and Ablaze.

I agree with Evelyn and Rowen. It's so exciting to see the dance community grow in my neighbourhood and city, and it's amazing to be a part of that growth.



WINNIE SEABY is a fifteen-year-old visual and performing artist from the Skeleton Park neighbourhood. She loves reading, watching Wes Anderson movies, and swimming in the lake. You might not know her but, if you live in the area, we bet you know her cat Bob. He's a local legend.

Art in the Streets Joins Music in the Park

Culture at the crosswalks

STORY BY **MADDI ANDREWS** / PHOTOGRAPHY BY **AL BERGERON**



“**THIS NEW INITIATIVE TRANSFORMED PARTS OF THE ROADWAY INTO ARTWORKS.**”

Community, culture, and creativity joined forces this summer at the Skeleton Park Arts Festival (SPAF). The Kingston community has always been at the heart of the festival, but this year the event went one step further. SPAF integrated itself more thoroughly into the city’s culture by inviting local artists and neighbours to create murals at the intersections surrounding McBurney Park.

The Crosswalk Mural Pilot Project, a partnership project between SPAF and the City of Kingston Department of Arts & Cultural Services, engaged local artists to work alongside residents of McBurney Park to design and to create a series of crosswalk murals. This new initiative transformed parts of the roadway into artworks, and worked to improve pedestrian safety, incorporate public art into everyday life, and support community-based placemaking.

Placemaking is the means through which communities collaborate to fashion public spaces. Community-based participation is an integral part of placemaking, allowing those who will use the space to work together to shape its planning, design, and management. In the case of the crosswalk murals, neighbourhood residents became the stakeholders involved in the creative process, and ultimately will become those who use these crosswalks most frequently.

In the weeks leading up to the festival, SPAF connected with local residents through outreach, workshops, and a drop-in session at McBurney Park where folks could offer ideas and feedback for the crosswalk murals. This community-engaged consultation process allowed artists to speak with residents and hear stories to inform their designs.

Taylor Norris, Public Art Coordinator for the City of Kingston, and Danika Lochhead, the City’s Manager for Arts & Sector Development, described the process as inspirational and engaging. “This hyper-local reflection of community experience and understanding is essential to building a sense of place through public art,” they said. “These murals share stories that not only locals can identify with, but [the murals] can also inspire newcomers and visitors to the area to learn more and engage with the place they’re passing through or choosing to call home.”

Mural Routes, a Toronto-based organization that assists artists, organizations, and communities in creating murals, supported the Crosswalk Mural Pilot Project by offering workshops that focused on the creation and installation of ground and asphalt murals. This partnership aimed

to help participating artists provide insights on how to effectively support community arts projects.

Over the course of the Skeleton Park Arts Festival, five local artists — Jaylene Cardinal and Dakota Ward, Floriana Ehninger-Cuervo, Marney McDiarmid and Vince Perez — created three murals around Skeleton Park. For each muralist, the neighbourhood and its inhabitants played an important role.

Cardinal and Ward interviewed representatives from the Community Midwives of Kingston to inspire their crosswalk mural at Alma and Ordnance streets, located directly across from the Midwives’ building.

Creating a sense of place in Skeleton Park through community representatives was important for McDiarmid, too. Together with Perez, McDiarmid contacted individuals in the neighbourhood and explored neighbourhood haunts seeking inspiration for the design, which ultimately became a sort of “neighbourhood eye-spy.”

Community members might recognize elements within the artwork, such as the canoe for the neighbour known for portaging his canoe down to the St. Lawrence River, or an ace for the cards played at McBurney Park by residents, and in particular one nicknamed “Ace.” These objects create meaning and express a sense of place. Many hands supported McDiarmid and Perez with the painting of the Crosswalk Mural, from families living nearby to SPAF volunteers and passersby who stumbled upon the project. One neighbourhood child arrived at 8 a.m. during set-up and stayed all day. Her dedication went so far as eating meals on site.

Since installing the Crosswalk Mural, SPAF has received heartwarming responses from community members. Some who have even changed their walking routes to enjoy the new beauty surrounding Skeleton Park. Marney McDiarmid believes the murals “create a sense of place, add art and beauty to an environment, [and] improve the health of the whole neighbourhood when you have the community engaged in a deep way.”

Alongside the Crosswalk Mural Pilot Project, Modern Fuel, Union Gallery, and Kingston School of Art invited SPAF attendees to make their mark by contributing to more large-scale murals during the festival.

Make-A-Mural featured artists Aaron Forsyth, Chelle Boo Shaa, and Lee Stewart, who spent the weekend creating their own panels alongside members of the public. A selection of these murals will be on display at the Elm Cafe this fall.

“It was quite an amazing experience overall to facilitate a complex public art installation while an amazing Festival is taking place just steps away,” explained Norris and Lochhead.



MADDI ANDREWS, Executive Director of Kingston School of Art, is an artist and art educator living in Katarokwi-Kingston. She spends her time creating, gardening, and walking her Aussiedoodle Remy.



OPPOSITE PAGE:
Community painting mural at
Balaclava and Redan Streets

TOP TO BOTTOM:
Jaylene Cardinal and Dakota
Ward posing with their mural at
Alma and Ordance Streets

Floriana Ehninger-Cuervo
painting her mural at Alma and
Balaclava Streets



Charlotte Cornfield

with special
guests



a benefit
concert for
The Skeleton Press

Saturday
25 November
1:30pm doors /
2pm concert

Next Church
89 Colborne Street

Entry by donation

SKELETON
PARK ARTS
FESTIVAL

THE
SKELETON
PRESS

DAFT
brewing

next church

Horoscopes

An astrological reading of the neighbourhood

BY ALLISON CHISHOLM

♈ Aries (MAR 21–APR 19)

You will be faced with a difficult decision when you come to a stop sign where five streets meet. Resist the temptation to act with haste, or risk losing your way home.

♉ Taurus (APR 20–MAY 20)

You feel like you are striving to grasp the unattainable — like a steady search for your stolen bike. What you are seeking will emerge when you least expect and may be closer than you think.

♊ Gemini (MAY 21–JUNE 20)

This month you'll walk with a slower stride. On your way towards the Woolen Mill and along the riverside use this opportunity to embrace the present moment. Your astrological charts attribute this change in pace to a worn-out shoe passing through your orbit. Consider Kingston Shoe Repair for a second opinion.

♋ Cancer (JUNE 21–JULY 22)

In the park at night, avoid any sudden movements that may disturb the chickens roosting along the fence line. Sidestep a resurfaced gravestone. You would be wise to circumvent Reverend John Barclay's monument until the new moon returns.

♌ Leo (JULY 23–AUG 22)

As the moon continues its journey, it illuminates growth and renewal for you. Manifest the vibrancy of fireflies in July or the persistent hum of cicadas at twilight.

♍ Virgo (AUG 23–SEPT 22)

Something will make you feel ill-at-ease this week and prevent you from getting a restful sleep. Is it the scampering feet of raccoons on your fire escape? Or the sound of someone rummaging for empties? Avoid making any important decisions until you've restored your rest — or until ordering a double espresso from the neighbourhood café.

♎ Libra (SEPT 23–OCT 22)

Take caution! You are likely to act against your better judgement this month. Resist the urge to invite the neighbourhood cat into your kitchen. Redirect your restless energy and join the Roller Derby league instead.

♏ Scorpio (OCT 23–NOV 21)

The timing is right for you to set new goals. Embrace this energy by arranging a clothing swap or constructing a turtle nesting box. Consider submitting your artwork to the Tiniest Gallery. Your hard work will be recognized.

♐ Sagittarius (NOV 22–DEC 21)

You are entering into a period of introspection this month. At the Raglan Street Library you'll discover a book written by a local poet, late and renowned. The pages still harbour his tangible spirit and his voice is audible with every word you read.

♑ Capricorn (DEC 21–JAN 20)

This period offers a unique opportunity to expand your perspective. On a walk through the park watch the morning moon fade behind a configuration of clouds that vaguely resembles a package stolen from your doorstep. Allow the celestial currents of positivity to overtake you.

♒ Aquarius (JAN 21 – FEB 18)

An energy is encouraging you to explore something new. Devote your free time to mastering a jazz instrument and showcase your new talent during the neighbourhood parade. Your zeal will inspire those who share in your journey.

♓ Pisces (FEB 19 – MAR 20)

The cosmic currents are inviting you to embrace generosity as a guiding light this month. Invest in a rental unit, and in the spirit of kindness — rent it out at half the market value! Your acts of giving have the potential to inspire positivity throughout the neighbourhood (and lower competition in the housing market).

ALLISON CHISHOLM lives and writes in Kingston, Ontario. She is the author of a book of poetry: *On the Count of None*, published by Anvil Press. Her photography has been exhibited in the Tiniest Gallery.

Missed Connections... ...and Connected Mysteries

BY MICHAEL e. CASTEELS

Five years ago the door to my Little Free Library was smashed overnight. I cleaned up the shattered window, but you were the neighbour who repaired it. I woke up one morning, and a new pane of Plexiglas had been installed. I never found out who you were, but I want you to know that if my library had been out of commission much longer I'd have been overrun with books, they would have filled every corner of the apartment, and I'd still be stuck inside, trying to read my way out.

To the person who scrawled "L+D" in a heart on the roundabout in Skeleton Park, please know: love lasts longer than permanent marker.

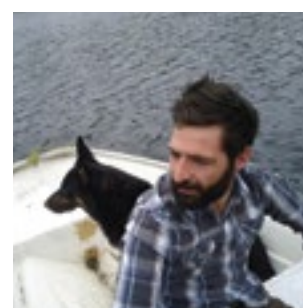
We met downtown during your weekly No Clear Cuts Kingston demonstration. When you spoke about saving eighteen hundred trees and a rich wetland habitat, I saw a two-hundred-year-old oak reflected in your eyes, even though from where we stood, on the corner of Princess and Wellington, there wasn't a tree in sight.

You were lying in long grass on John Street between Barrie and Patrick Streets. You looked to be middle-aged, with black and white fur, and a slight smile on your feline face. Your eyes were closed. You were deep in meditation. Just watching you made me feel more at peace with my place in the universe. I carried your zen-state with me, and for the remainder of the day my mantra was a quiet purr.

You are a slab of sidewalk on the west side of Bagot Street, just north of Raglan. I want to thank you for your gentle reminder to "Love each Other." You're like a holy tablet carved with the only commandment we really need to follow.

When the thunderstorm struck, I stood in my back doorway, leaning on the frame, watching trees bend in the gale, watching the rain come down in sheets, the two seagulls tossed around like small boats at sea. As quickly as the storm came, it receded. Shafts of sunlight cut through the heavy-set clouds at oblique angles. Everything was soft in the late afternoon glow. Even the air seemed lighter as I set out for a walk to Friendship Park. Everywhere, birds were resuming their daily routines, beginning their songs from where they had left off with a renewed sense of vigour. But you, solitary cardinal, stopped me in my footsteps. I stared up into the dripping tangle of branches, beheld your pure red, and listened to you proclaim that the world had changed.

You were a German shepherd who was with me for thirteen years. Together we discovered this neighbourhood: its parks, its people, and its secret avenues. Now, when I walk these streets late at night, beneath certain streetlamps I glimpse your shadow walking beside my shadow on the pavement.



MICHAEL e. CASTEELS is a poet, collage artist, and member of the Kingston School of Surrealism. He is the editor, designer, and book maker at Puddles of Sky Press, a chapbook press that specializes in handmade chapbooks of poetry.

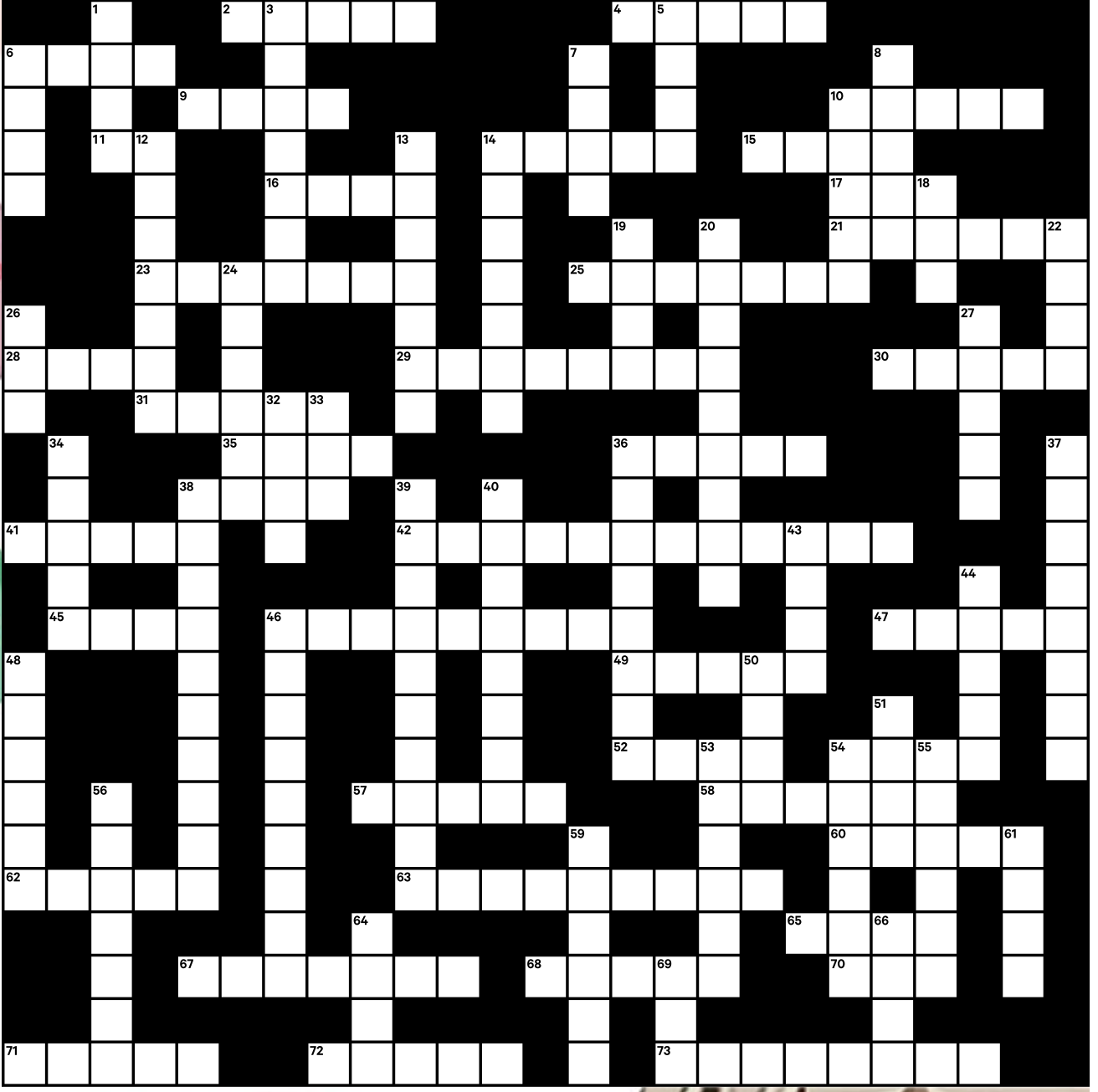
Love Letters

PUZZLE BY HALEY SARFELD
ILLUSTRATION BY JILL GLATT



- ACROSS**
- 2 Squeeze forcefully
 - 4 Increased blood flow to the face
 - 6 Sonnet, couplet, etc.
 - 9 This American hard-rock band was made for lovin' you
 - 10 Singer-songwriter covered on page 29 of our last issue
 - 11 Kingston-based indie rock duo ____ I Love You
 - 14 Antonym of dark and heavy
 - 15 Unhappy because of unrequited affection; love ____
 - 16 On Bagot near Raglan, someone carved "Love ____ Other" into the sidewalk
 - 17 Said at the altar
 - 21 When two archaeologists go out, they're carbon ____?
 - 23 ____s in crime
 - 25 Lady Gaga was caught in a bad one
 - 28 See 61 down
 - 29 To sing in the hopes of winning someone's love
 - 30 Love will tear us ____
 - 31 Yours ____
 - 35 ____ Cuisine at the corner of Princess and Barrie
 - 36 Nothing I can say, a ____ eclipse of the heart
 - 38 Bonnie Tyler, Tina Turner, and Noah Reid all think you're simply the ____
 - 41 You had me at ____
 - 42 The way in which two or more objects, people, or concepts are connected
 - 45 See 32 down
 - 46 Fondness
 - 47 Five flirty letters of the alphabet
 - 49 Performing arts theatre at 218 Princess Street
 - 52 If you only talk to people who love the same things as you, you'll end up in an ____ chamber
 - 54 Little black box theatre inside 49 across
 - 57 According to the B-52s, the Love ____ is where it's at
 - 58 If Jean-Luc Picard proposed, he might say this?
 - 60 I used to hate school, but I ____ed to love it
 - 62 Jason Mraz, "I'm ____"
 - 63 Having more than one romantic relationship at a time
 - 65 Inclusive arts centre on Wellington Street
 - 67 Unexpressed attraction can lead to this
 - 68 Soft exhales
 - 70 Fantasizing; ____dreaming
 - 71 See 32 down
 - 72 Pine, crave, desire
 - 73 With 49 across, large-scale ways of showing love

- DOWN**
- 1 The Bee Gees, "How ____ Is Your Love"
 - 3 Aretha Franklin spells this out for us
 - 5 The sauciest of the seven deadly sins
 - 6 Bluetooth devices have a ____ing mode
 - 7 A faded ____ at the side of the road says fifteen miles to 57 across
 - 8 "Do you like her?" "I think she's ____ cute"
 - 10 Annual celebration of LGBTQIA+ joy
 - 12 Loved ones might offer emotional ____
 - 13 "Is a loveseat table-ish?" "No, it's more ____"
 - 14 They fit in envelopes and in the squares on this page
 - 18 Per fanfiction slang, your favourite couple
 - 19 "Love you, I do" is how ____ would proclaim his affection
 - 20 Patron saint of beekeepers and epilepsy
 - 22 ____-giving is a tangible way to express love
 - 24 A dating profile is to the search for love as a ____ is to the search for employment
 - 26 9 across in public, for example
 - 27 Flower used in games of "He loves me, he loves me not"
 - 32 32 down + 45 across + 72 across = <3
 - 33 Nosy relatives: "Do you have a boyfriend ____?"
 - 34 Sugary, syrupy
 - 36 When you love someone but they love someone else, as expressed through geometry
 - 37 Al Green wants to stay ____
 - 38 When the crossword writer wrote too many clues, their editor had to set some ____
 - 39 Park at the end of Chestnut Street
 - 40 Form of love discussed by an ancient Greek philosopher
 - 43 I need to go to the library, I have some books on ____
 - 44 Often presented as a gift on February 14th
 - 46 Word on a French caution sign
 - 48 So romantic it might aggravate your lactose intolerance
 - 50 A lunchtime tryst; a ____er
 - 51 I'm glad we're on the same ____
 - 53 Sgt. Pepper's Lonely ____ Club Band
 - 54 Slow, romantic song
 - 55 ____ is only skin deep
 - 56 Butterflies and eyelashes do this
 - 59 Species, genus, ____, order
 - 61 With 28 across, SPAF's public art installation during the pandemic summers
 - 64 Are they into each other? I'm picking up on a ____
 - 66 Per ancient Internet lore, this means "I love you" in dinosaur
 - 69 The "o" in "xoxo"



Find solutions on page 2

Neighbourhood Wildlife

They live among us

STORY BY HELEN HUMPHREYS

ILLUSTRATIONS BY CHANTAL ROUSSEAU



When I think about the wildlife that lives within the vicinity of Skeleton Park, it seems to me to be divided into two categories. In the first category is the wildlife we want to see — the fox trotting down Barrie one summer evening, the barred owl who lived for a while in a tree behind the Boys and Girls Club on Bagot Street, the rabbits loping across lawns in the early morning or just before dark. In the second group are the animals we have no wish to encounter — the coyotes who sometimes wander into our neighbourhood from the woodland around Belle Park, the rats and mice who try to gain access to our houses, the squirrels who eat our gardens, the raccoons who nest in attics and garages.

And yet, a wild creature is a wild creature, meaning it lives by instinct, not imagination, and is mostly just trying to avoid us humans and continue on with its wild existence. The fact that we have designated it desirable or undesirable is not its problem or concern.

I often wonder what the animals think of us. I know, in cases of repeated exposure, that we are as recognizable to them as they are to us. Do they consider some humans lucky to see, the way we consider it lucky to see the fox or the owl? Do they prefer the look of one face over another, certain clothes we wear, the way we walk, or the sound of particular voices?

Once I had squirrels living in my attic. Someone came to deal with the problem by sealing up the hole where they were getting in, not realizing there were still babies inside. The next morning, when I went around back to get my car, the mother squirrel screamed at me from the roof, running back and forth between the edge of the roof and the place where the hole had been patched over. It was not hard to know what she was trying to tell me, that her babies were trapped inside, and she was asking me to do something about it because she recognized me. We were neighbours. The squirrel didn't understand home ownership, but she understood territory. Her use of my empty attic was just good sense. I called a friend, who came and opened up the roof again, so she could get her babies out.

I value these encounters with wildlife, the ones where we both seem to be understanding the same thing in the same moment.

But meeting a wild creature often doesn't go according to any sort of plan or expectation. This spring I had a rat in my small backyard. It was eating the buds off a high-bush blueberry, stretching up acrobatically from one branch to the next to gently nibble the new growth. I sent the dog out to chase it away, but the rat didn't move from the bush or its task. The dog, nonplussed at this behaviour, and used to smaller animals fleeing from her in terror, just stood and stared blankly at the rat. I tried to call

her back inside, because it seemed to me that the rat not fleeing might mean it was ill or poisoned, but the dog was transfixed by the slow-moving rat in the blueberry bush and refused to come in. And then, very tentatively, the rat and the dog touched noses — an encounter so unusual that I don't think I, or the dog, will soon forget it.

The animals move through the spaces of our neighbourhood — between the houses, through the shadows and shadowed places. They are often active in early morning and early evening, what is sometimes referred to as the “thin place” between worlds, when the veil between the different realms is most porous and glimpses into an alternate reality are possible. Some people call this time of day the “magic hour.”

For every animal we encounter, there are hundreds we don't see, or just catch out of the corner of our eye as a scurry, a flicker, a wing tip lifting from a branch. A scrap of movement from which we can imagine the whole, and call it back in our mind as squirrel, bat, bird.

Part of what is wonderful about seeing an animal is that it interrupts our thoughts, disrupts our routines. It takes us out of ourselves for a moment, which is enough time for us to remember that we are connected to everything.



HELEN HUMPHREYS is an award-winning author of fiction, non-fiction and poetry. Her most recent books are the novel, *Rabbit Foot Bill*, and a memoir of the writing life, *And a Dog Called Fig*.