



Issue Fifteen **THE** Winter 2024

SKELETON PRESS

NEIGHBOURHOOD REST

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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AND TRADITIONAL MAIL TO:
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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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Thank you to our supporters.



To donate to the Skeleton Park Arts Festival and help keep this newspaper in print, please visit our donation page at CanadaHelps.org

COVER ARTWORK:
Era of Janus by Lee Stewart

ILLUSTRATED ICONS:
 Pierre Collet-Derby

The Skeleton Press has recently begun to receive letters to the editor, which is exciting for us because we have been waiting for this kind of engagement since our first issue in 2019. We have been eager to facilitate wider discussions about what we publish. For the 2023 fall issue, we decided to publish every letter to the editor that we received from community members.

In our eagerness to share opinions from our readers, however, our decision caused harm to many of our readers, including members of marginalized communities who we are committed to protecting. Specifically, we failed to protect Queer people and people of colour — especially with respect to SPAF’s commitment to an ongoing process of naming, challenging and transforming unequal power relations.

As co-editor of *The Skeleton Press* and Artistic Director for the festival, I would like to offer my sincerest apology for not taking sufficient care in assessing how the content of the Press could adversely affect members of our neighbourhood and community.

SPAF’s Board of Directors has since resolved to provide an additional review process to catch content that might be harmful for our readers. This mandate may somewhat limit the diversity of opinion that we publish, but in a dominant culture that still privileges white and heteronormative people, we believe that our approach will help contribute to more healthy, vibrant communities. Our intention, as always, is to promote and celebrate arts and culture with social and racial justice as our guide. The diversity of representation from marginalized communities who sit on SPAF’s Board will help ensure a greater level of sensitivity and protection for readers of *The Skeleton Press*, and in my privileged position of leadership, I am committed to the labour of learning and doing better.

—**Greg Tilson, *The Skeleton Press* co-editor**

I have immensely enjoyed the opportunity to act as co-editor over the past year and to come into contact with so many talented writers and people committed to making the Skeleton Park neighbourhood and the world a better place. I leave partly because of irreconcilable differences in editorial policy with the SPAF Board overseeing the publication and also to make room for someone else to bring their ideas and energy to this rewarding role.

—**Anne Kershaw, *The Skeleton Press* co-editor (outgoing)**

FUNDRAISING UPDATE

Since the publication of issue 14 of this newspaper, a concerted fundraising effort aimed at sustaining *The Skeleton Press* has been underway. We would like to thank all of those who generously donated so that this newspaper can continue being published. The greater part of our budget goes to pay our talented contributors — journalists, poets, illustrators, photographers and more — so please be assured that your money returns to the shared project of our community’s cultural health.

Our fundraising will necessarily continue as long as *The Skeleton Press* does, so please do not let up. If you have a donation to spare, however small, please consider kicking in at canadahelps.org/en/charities/skeleton-park-arts-festival.

You can also help by volunteering to distribute the newspaper on your block. As a cost-cutting measure, we have not distributed this issue via Canada Post and are looking for alternative ways to deliver *The Skeleton Press* to doorsteps and mailboxes. If you’re interested in grabbing an armful of newspapers to share with your neighbours, please write to skeletonpresseditor@gmail.com.

Importantly, we’d like to thank those special benefactors who have committed to substantial and ongoing donations. Their support is crucial for the longer term planning of the newspaper. These donors, **The Friends of *The Skeleton Press***, are:

Cam-Rog Enterprises
Cold Snap Music Ltd.
Jonathan Rose

Finally, we’d like to thank our fundraising strategist, **Heidi Wallace Patenaude**, for her vision during this leg of our fundraising campaign.

—**Vincent Perez, *The Skeleton Press* art director**

Rest

BY **HALEY SARFELD**



I suggested the theme of rest for this issue of *The Skeleton Press* because it seemed like a good way to approach winter. For some, the very mention of rest sounds either like an admonishment — *Have you been resting? You should be taking better care of yourself!* — or just seems absurd. Rest is doing nothing. How do we journalists write about nothing?

Well, what do we all do in these cold, bleak months when the earth is at rest? We recreate recipes from inscrutable notecards, we remember beloved community spaces long gone, we try to recall our dreams. We read books, solve puzzles, learn how art is resting, rebuilding, and hiding in plain sight. We deal with injuries, evictions, cruelty, austerity. When we can't rest, we protest horrors near and far, we start tough conversations, contemplate hard-earned lessons in boundary-setting and break-taking. We make serious efforts to do right by our dead and dying in a culture that is terrified to talk about death.

Sometimes, we remember to stop for a moment. We look up to the sky and see thousands of crows resting in the trees — and, when we're lucky, we run into a neighbour who is watching them, too.

Whether you're resting your eyes from the blue light of your devices by reading *The Skeleton Press* in print or wresting your life from the death grip of productivity by taking a break to flip through these pages, I hope that somewhere this winter you're finding rest.

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 have had to print fewer copies of this issue and forego its distribution by Canada Post. 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*' April 27 fundraising concert (see page 23) or by offering ideas and help in organizing other fundraising events.

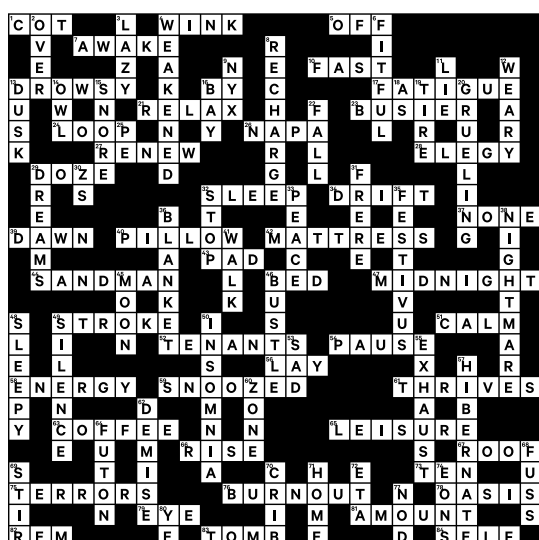


canadahelps.org/en/charities/skeleton-park-arts-festival

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.

Our future theme is Neighbourhood Kids (what they're doing, thinking, experiencing). Send inquiries with samples of your work: skeletonpresseditor@gmail.com.



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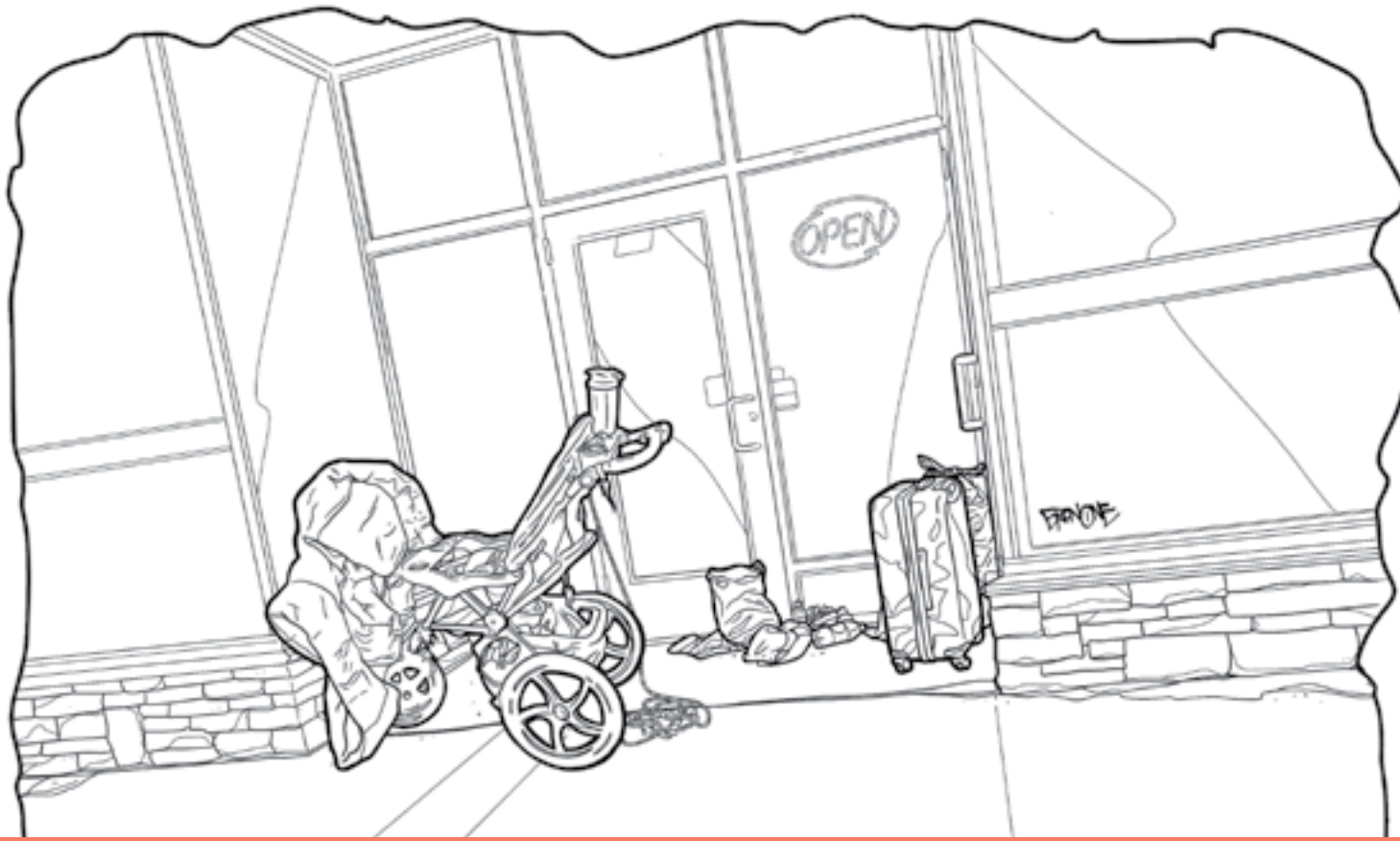
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Bylaw Band-Aid: “An Emotional Solution to a Structural Problem”

Critics say new Community Standards Bylaw won't increase public safety

STORY BY JANE KIRBY / ILLUSTRATION BY ERONONE



The Kingston community confronted a test of its compassion this fall when City Council deliberated on how to address citizen complaints about behaviour in public spaces.

Passed by council on November 21, the Community Standards Bylaw enacts restrictions on a range of “nuisance behaviours,” including causing public disturbances, urinating or defecating in public spaces, loitering in a manner that makes others feel unsafe, and displaying drug paraphernalia. Those convicted under the bylaw could face fines of \$500 or more.

Passed by a motion of 10-2 (with Councillors Brandon Tozzo and Lisa Osanic opposed), the bylaw faced significant criticism. Eight out of ten delegations presenting to council on the issue argued that the bylaw would cause harm to people who are unhoused or use substances while doing little to substantively address peoples’ safety. In light of some councillors’ qualms about the direction of the policy, the bylaw was amended to include a health equity impact assessment for evaluation one year after the bylaw comes into effect this spring.

“My support for the bylaw came from speaking with constituents expressing their concern with problematic behaviours, whether these are menacing behaviours, sexual language, racist language, or escalating into actual crimes,” says King’s Town Councillor Gregory Ridge, who had heard such concerns even before becoming councillor.

Ridge is adamant that the bylaw is intended to address harmful behaviours rather than target particular groups of people. However, advocates for the unhoused suggest the bylaw does exactly that.

“The draft bylaw uses language like ‘no person will cause disturbances in public places by yelling, screaming, shouting, or using threatening language,’” says Sophie Lachapelle, a PhD candidate in Criminology at the University of Ottawa and a Kingston resident. “But people experiencing poverty are also more likely to experience extreme mental distress. Likewise, people without access to private space are more likely to be urinating or defecating in public.”

Lachapelle points out that the bylaw is rooted in an anti-loitering bylaw proposed in June 2022 by City staff to deal with the Belle Park encampment. At that time the only presented option, it recommended that campers be evicted and clearly targeted the unhoused. After pushback from the community, the city renamed the Anti-Loitering Bylaw the Public Nuisance Bylaw, and eventually the Community Standards Bylaw.

Dawn Clarke, a retired United Church minister and a volunteer with several projects concerning unhoused people, agrees it is “quite clear that the target is going to be a person with no income and no house.” She notes that middle-class people are unlikely to be targeted for wandering around downtown or even urinating publicly if they can’t make it to the bathroom.

Ridge, on the other hand, says enforcement is not the point. “It’s more the interventionary piece that is effective. It is up to the discretion of a bylaw officer whether a fine would be issued,” he says. “It is meant for the bylaw officer to intervene and direct the individual towards services if they are in need of them.”

“But,” says Clarke, “the impact is going to be harassment and discrimination, which is going to have a chilling effect — even if the rules are never enforced.”

Clarke and Lachapelle point out that the discretionary nature of the bylaw — since many of those who might be fined will be unable to pay — may have the unintended effect of understating its full impact on the community.

“Research on bylaws like this one has shown that most interactions won’t rise to the level of a ticket,” says Lachapelle. “It’s more likely that a bylaw officer will ask a person experiencing visible poverty to ‘move along’ or say they can’t be there because

there’s been a complaint. But that also means there will be no public record of that interaction — the tone won’t be captured.”

“It isn’t going to be an accurate assessment,” agrees Clarke.

Lachapelle argues that the bylaw amounts to the criminalization of poverty and increasing surveillance of the unhoused. Ridge, for his part, says that involving bylaw officers before police might be preferable for people whose experiences with the police may be traumatic. Clarke isn’t convinced: “It is not true that bylaw officers will be less threatening than police. Unhoused individuals on the street will indeed be quite threatened by the approach of bylaw officers.”

Lachapelle also believes the bylaw is likely to be ineffective. “I can empathize with the frustration of having someone sleeping in your storefront or having someone come into your store and vomiting or falling asleep,” she says. “These aren’t small things. But if you call police, they are likely to take a while because no one is in immediate danger. If you call bylaw, they’ll still take a while, and they can’t physically remove anyone. And even then, bylaw officers can’t keep this kind of thing from happening again because these ‘bad behaviours’ are the result of people trying to survive untenable conditions — things that a bylaw cannot address. “We do need to do something, but this bylaw is only going to be a drain on public resources.”

Lachapelle questions why a health equity assessment wouldn’t be performed before the bylaw comes into effect, and why the City seems unwilling to look towards more evidence-based solutions. Both Lachapelle and Clarke are convinced that having more safe disposal boxes, more public washrooms, and social workers able to address individuals’ immediate needs (without support contingent on their accessing housing or other services) would better address the issue. They emphasize that any solution needs to meaningfully involve the voices of the unhoused community.

Ultimately, Lachapelle and Clarke believe the bylaw is about the need for the City to be seen as acting to address the bigger social issues of housing and addiction, but also about social stigma — problems the bylaw cannot possibly solve.

“Why does the presence of an unhoused person make you feel a certain way?” asks Lachapelle, suggesting the bylaw at its root is attempting to assuage people’s discomfort about homelessness and substance use. “Councillors,” she says, “are trying to find an emotional solution to a structural problem.”

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

Endemic homelessness signals a deeper problem

STORY BY LAWRENCE SCANLAN / PHOTOGRAPHY BY JAY BRIDGES

TENTING AT BELLE PARK: LEGAL AT NIGHT BUT ILLEGAL BY DAY?

The Anglo-Irish writer Jonathan Swift is remembered primarily for *Gulliver's Travels*, but his satirical essay, *A Modest Proposal*, is much in my mind these days as I walk around Kingston and see this: men and women squatting under blankets on Princess Street with their hand-lettered "Please Help" cardboard signs as condo-canyon winds assail them, while others push wheeled carts piled high with belongings, and the cheek-by-jowl tents at Belle Park remain a visible symbol of our neglect. And every one of these individuals exists under the fear of an order to move along.

In 1729, Swift was appalled by poverty and famine among the Irish. His "solution"? Butcher the young ones and feed their flesh to the English aristocrats. "A child," he wrote, "will make two dishes at an entertainment for friends, and when the family dines alone, the fore or hind quarter will make a reasonable dish, and seasoned with a little pepper or salt, will be very good boiled on the fourth day, especially in winter."

Three centuries later, I wonder how Swift might view Kingston. Would the satirist suggest some new twist, one in which the aristocrats are the ones to be butchered, and their flesh fed to the young ones?

No one knows how many men and women are "camping rough" in our city (some stay hidden and uncounted in urban forests), but 400 is a reasonable guess. With passage in December of a City bylaw that threatens to criminalize poverty by ticketing panhandlers (see Jane Kirby's story on page 4), their circumstances are now more dire than ever.

One sunny day recently I spotted a woman in a park. Hatted and bundled up in her winter coat, she was sitting in a folding chair outside her solitary green dome tent. I paused to chat. "A room with a view," I joked. Did she smile a little, or did I imagine it? In the few minutes that followed she gave me her life story in a nutshell: her early childhood scarred by trauma, her father dying by his own hand, her husband murdered, her two children taken away, access to local shelters denied. I did not press for details, and none were offered. But this woman had also experienced decades of normalcy: holding jobs at Queen's and, most recently, as a personal support worker. Then rents soared, paying the landlord took precedence over paying Mr. MasterCard, and now, her credit rating in tatters, renting is impossible.

As for Kingston's shelters (166 beds), there aren't nearly enough spaces for all those living on the street. Besides, the spaces are less than ideal. Some shelters harbour people who use, share or deal drugs — anathema to substance abusers trying to stay clean. Belongings may get damaged or stolen in a shelter. A neighbour one bed over may turn aggressive in the night. Pets and intimate partners are typically unwelcome. Show up a minute late to some shelters and you lose your spot. For some individuals, especially those with mental illness — and research suggests that burden is also carried by most people living on the street — even a cold tent or a doorway is the better option at night.

Meanwhile, the longer the twenty-seven-tent Belle Park encampment exists, the greater the surrounding pile of garbage. Humans in survival mode are not tidy. With neighbouring businesses and residents complaining of vandalism and theft, lawyers for the



The shelter on Concession Street: For many of the estimated 400 men and women "camping rough" around the city, the available shelters are too few, too restrictive, and, sometimes, too risky.

City and lawyers for the tenters took to arguing in court. In November, a Superior Court judge ruled that camping in parks by day breaks local bylaws but that punishing camping at night in those same parks violates tenters' charter rights. Where does that leave the tenters? On the precipice, as usual.

Mayor Bryan Paterson announced (to a *Globe and Mail* reporter) on December 8 the City's intention to clear the Belle Park encampment by day while still allowing night-time camping. This sounds like something out of absurdist theatre: what's legal at night is illegal by day? Many of the thirty-five individuals camping in the park chose that location because of its proximity to The Integrated Care Hub at 661 Montreal Street, which offers a safe drug-consumption site, medical care, counselling, and food. Enforcing the ban on daytime camping would put those men and women — some with physical disabilities — on the move daily. The mean streets of Kingston got meaner just as winter was closing in.

Gilles Charette, executive director of Trellis HIV and Community Care, one of three organizations that collaboratively manage The Hub, told me in December, "There's already some anxiety [among tenters] about the prohibition of daytime camping, and some people have already moved into the bush." That relocation may push homeless people away from bylaw officers but also away from help. Two individuals died at the encampment in November from drug poisoning.

—CONTINUED ON PAGE 31

The Ins and Outs of “No-Fault Evictions”

Challenging landlords takes a terrible toll on tenants’ health and well-being

STORY BY **TARA KAINER** / ILLUSTRATION BY **CHANTAL BENNETT**

Soon after buying the building where I’d been living for five years, the new landlord began complaining.

“You don’t pay enough rent!”

(We’ll call him Oil Can Harry after a sinister cartoon villain who ties helpless damsels to the train tracks.)

First, the landlord took away my parking spot. He raised my rent despite a 2021 COVID provincial rent freeze. Then he stoutly resisted posting health warnings during COVID. After more than a year trying to squeeze me out, he issued an “N12 application” claiming that his mobility-challenged wife needed my apartment. Seems my place was the only suitable apartment in the six-unit building, despite the fact it had the exact floor plan as the unit below and was up four flights of stairs.

Ontario landlord/tenant legislation makes things easy for landlords. The Ontario’s Residential Tenancies Act includes “no-fault” evictions. They can be imposed by landlords who claim they need to do renovations (N13s), or that they require the unit for their own use or for that of their spouse or child (N12s).

My landlord hit me with an N12 in March 2022. I was supposed to move out by the end of May. I didn’t. Kingston is a landlord’s market with few available rentals, all of which I couldn’t afford. I decided to take my chances at the Landlord and Tenant Board (LTB), Ontario’s adjudication tribunal. Because all the evidence indicated that my landlord was acting in bad faith, I felt I had to challenge him.

By the end of August, I still had not received a hearing date. Thanks to friends I was offered a good place near Skeleton Park for September 1. It was sixty per cent more expensive than my apartment but still a good deal in Kingston’s rental market. I decided to hedge my bets, securing it in hopes that my hearing date would come up soon.

So I began to pay double rent and utilities, even though doing so ate into retirement savings I needed to support me for the rest of my life.

I finally got an LTB hearing date for late October. I showed up via Zoom with the technical support of a friend. But there were fourteen cases on the docket and the adjudicator got to only five. Mine wasn’t heard. My landlord refused mediation. Although told I’d get a hearing date within a month, by January 2023 I had heard nothing.

I couldn’t pay for two places, so I decided to stop paying rent at my old apartment and move out. I told my landlord that he could apply my last month’s rent to January.

He immediately issued an N4 for non-payment of rent and threatened me with the Sheriff, claiming he’d be at my door within days. I ignored the threat and prepared to move.

But this meant my landlord had won. He withdrew the N12, meaning he didn’t have to move his wife into my place. Instead, he could sign a lease with any tenant and raise the rent as much as he thought the market would bear. Oil Can Harry got what he wanted.

A lifelong tenant, **TARA KAINER** is an advocate for safe, affordable housing. She has served on the boards of both the Kingston Community Legal Clinic and the Advocacy Centre for Tenants Ontario. She was a member of Kingston’s 2019 Mayor’s Task Force on Housing.

Ontario’s currently overheated housing market features stratospheric rent increases. Landlords have every incentive to circumvent rent controls, imposing “renovictions” (N13s), or own use (N12s).

In 2022, the Landlord and Tenant Board received more than 5,550 eviction applications in which landlords sought units for themselves, family members, or new buyers. A stunning forty-one per cent increase over 2019, just prior to the pandemic, according to *The Globe and Mail*.

This sharp increase has coincided with a significant decline in affordable housing rentals. A CBC News story in October noted that in Toronto “applications for personal-use eviction are up seventy-seven per cent.” In Kingston in 2022, then City Councillor Rob Hutchison sponsored a motion requesting that the province provide Kingston with data on N12 and N13 applications filed between 2008 and 2022.

City staff reported this past June, acknowledging that the data are “most likely an under-representation of the number of [N12 and N13] notices issued to tenants.” That’s because so many tenants feel powerless and don’t challenge their landlords. We tenants move before we get to the Landlord and Tenant Board. The Kingston report points out that the applications for both types doubled between 2017 and 2021, but N12s were by far the most common evictions ordered by the Board.

Landlords understand that they can be rid of their current tenants (often protected by rent controls if they stay in their apartments) by evicting them. It matters not whether tenants have always paid their rent on time, whether they’re clean, quiet, and law-abiding. Many landlords are simply dazzled by dollar signs. No matter the insecurity and stress — not to mention spiralling shelter costs — that their tenants might experience, it’s all about maximizing profit. Markets decide. Supply and demand. That’s just how poorly-regulated capitalism works.

“It’s not personal. It’s business. It’s legal.” Or so goes the landlord chorus.

Tenants have little recourse in the face of N12s and N13s. We can rarely convince an LTB adjudicator at our Landlord/Tenant Board hearings that our landlord is acting in bad faith. Most tenants are above the financial threshold allowing them to qualify for legal aid. But like me, they can’t afford their own lawyer. No matter how savvy and articulate a tenant may be, it is a serious disadvantage to navigate this system without legal help. Inexperience with legal procedures and lack of technical expertise required to navigate an LTB hearing (let alone on-line, now the only option available) biases adjudicators against unrepresented tenants.

Only after tenants have been forced to leave their homes (for a year for N12s) so that landlords can renovate or move in can a tenant file a T5 application. That’s a claim that the landlord’s original Notice of Termination was issued in bad faith. So it’s back to the thorny thickets of the LTB.

“What tenants really need,” says Toronto-based housing historian Matthew Alexandris, “is for ... provincial government(s) to implement policies that will prevent landlords from arbitrarily removing [tenants] from their homes and drastically hiking the price of rent.”

Under Ontario’s current system, tenants live in anxiety and fear for months, even years. Cases at the Ontario LTB trickle through at a glacial pace, in part due to an enormous backlog worsened by the pandemic. This past spring the Board was scheduling hearings seven to eight months after receiving applications.



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Ottawa lawyer Michael Thiele, who represents both landlords and tenants, told *The Globe and Mail* that some cases can drag on for years. “That timeline between filing and getting a hearing date is the thing that is driving people insane.”

In the majority of N12 cases, the adjudicator will decide in the landlord’s favour because the landlord has filled in the forms correctly. And they or their family members have signed a good faith affidavit claiming they will live in the evicted tenant’s home for at least a year. No evidence required beyond that. In the numbers acquired by the City of Kingston, out of 157 N12 applications submitted to the LTB, ninety-four resulted in evictions.

In his 2022 motion, Councillor Hutchison requested that the province tie rent-control regulations to residential units. While the Ford government has shown no sign of acting on such a suggestion, that would be a good start. Rent controls, if implemented as provincial policy and tied to units rather than to tenants, would stabilize the average rents while helping to maintain the fast-disappearing stock of affordable units available on the private market. Vacancy control would also improve housing stability, reducing tenant displacement.

Given my struggle with Oil Can Harry, I know that no-fault evictions take a terrible toll on tenants’ health and well-being. Making landlords accountable is crucial. “It takes political power to go up against the landlord class and force governments to rein in their markets,” declares Ricardo Tranjan, author of *The Tenant Class* (BTL, 2023). Only when housing becomes a fundamental human right, with profit severed from our need for shelter, will tenants attain justice.

KINGSTON’S EVICTION EPIDEMIC

“People with any kind of longevity are not desired tenants, for many reasons, and I understand that now, which is quite the opposite of my experience my whole life of renting.”

— ‘Alberta’ FROM KINGSTON REPORT

My eviction story is far from unique. Indeed, Kingston, like the rest of Ontario, is suffering from an eviction epidemic.

Studies of the breakdown of the housing system abound. Last year Kingston’s Social Planning Council (SPC) published one based on interviews with people who had lost their shelter. *Many Faces of Urban and Rural Displacement: Kingston Report* by Dilyn Reid-Davies provides first-hand accounts of twenty-eight anonymous tenants who were pushed out of their homes. Eviction. Renovation. Disrepair. Unaffordable rents. Discrimination. Ignorance of tenant rights and a byzantine legal process.

These stories are about tenants who didn’t choose to move. They were squeezed out by forces beyond their control. Their voices provide an understanding of the challenges that tenants encounter as they struggle to stay in their homes, the impact of displacement on people’s lives and an analysis of displacement’s root causes. The study asks big questions such as, *How can tenant experiences inform rental market policy and decision-making? and How can research support tenant organizing and advocacy?*

The study was undertaken in collaboration with the Social Planning Network of Ontario and is part of a nation-wide struggle to secure equity for tenants by ensuring decent homes and fair rent.

It’s worth noting that the Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation’s (CMHC) 2022 Rental Market Report showed that, for two years running, Kingston had Ontario’s second-lowest vacancy rate: “Despite strong growth in supply, the number of affordable rental options remained limited.”

Together with the important SPC report, the CMHC report puts the lie to the dominant thinking at City Hall. Simply paving the way for profit-oriented developers will not, in fact, do anything to foster housing affordability hereabouts.

—TK



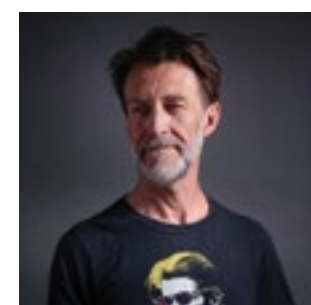
A Legacy of Compassion for Kingston's North End

How a community organization helped prove the power of prevention **STORY BY LUTHER WRIGHT**



Protesters, including organizers from the North Kingston community development project at Kingston's city hall calling for housing solutions in the 1980s

PHOTO CREDIT: Michael Lea



LUTHER WRIGHT is a fifth-generation Kingstonian who now resides in west Quebec but who keeps the hometown close to his heart.

KINGSTON'S NORTH END is rich in modest, unique family homes tightly tucked together in a non-grid layout of streets. The pleasantly walk-able neighbourhood is laid out with many streets leading to or bordering the wonderful McBurney Park, site of the annual *Skeleton Park Arts Festival* (SPAF).

Over the past three decades, and noticeably since the founding of SPAF, the community has flourished and seen a growing and eclectic mix of residents engaging in many creative, grassroots-organized initiatives and events.

However, many of today's residents in the area are likely unaware of the determined early efforts of some of their current and former neighbours to build a caring community.

In the late 1970s, the north end was a rough part of town where the economic struggles of the era were plainly apparent. In keeping with the political sentiments of the time, Kingston MPP Keith Norton, then Ontario Minister of Community and Social Services, pushed to de-institutionalize psychiatric hospitals and other care facilities, return people to their communities, and provide resources and support through government programs. This created an intense need for support services in the community.

One service that emerged was the North Kingston Community Development (NKCD) organization. Two community residents who provided the early energy to get NKCD off the ground were David Middleton, a former family and mediation counsellor who has since passed away, and Jeff Evenson, a Queen's University political science graduate and now a vice-president of Options for Homes, Canada's largest non-profit developer of attainable home ownership.

NKCD believed it could help people improve their lives or at least stop problems from getting worse. The idea of prevention was a novel approach at the time, and it wasn't easy getting buy-in for their model at a time when governments wanted metrics proving results.

As social services have historically been rooted in the church, the Ontario government partnered with the United Church of Canada to create the organization. Middleton and Evenson set up shop at 286 Montreal Street in a former pizza parlour.

NKCD helped establish group homes to assist offenders making the transition from prison to the community while providing support for families and youth. One of the north end's few welcoming places for youth at the time, the Montreal Street location soon became a drop-in centre for area kids to do homework and hang out.

One of NKCD's early projects was to set up a toy-lending library at a local north end school. It was a simple and effective way to draw people out of their homes by providing a safe, pleasant location where children could play, and parents could share experiences and find common ground.

Having proved its value to the community, NKCD soon gained support from other local organizations who took interest in its work and found ways to contribute. Women from the highly engaged *Kingston Artists Association Initiative* (KAAI) filmed a series of interviews with women from the neighbourhood who described their lives and shared their stories.

The very fact of overcoming the isolation experienced by women in abusive situations proved to be a powerful way to support them, Evenson says.

NKCD came to see its mandate as providing relief from isolation associated with poverty or the burden

of being a sole income earner, often the spouse of an incarcerated person.

The Child Parent Resource Centre was another NKCD endeavour offering several types of support as well as training in how to run a home daycare, a way for some women to make money while providing child care for neighbourhood families. Eventually the Centre partnered with the City of Kingston and moved to a larger space where it outlasted NKCD.

Funding for NKCD eventually dried up. But the legacy of its vision of caring and sharing on the street and within neighborhoods is seen today in a wide range of housing, addiction, and legal support services.

Evenson says that he and his colleagues learned many lessons through their prevention work in north Kingston, lessons that they carried forward in their careers.

"One was that you would have better success when you actually put an agency dedicated to community development in the neighbourhood. Another was learning to listen to people, and they will tell you how to help them.

"They told us they needed toys for their kids and that they wanted to be able to provide child-care and to charge for it as a job," he says. "We saw that it was our job to help people marshal the resources.

"It was too much to expect mothers who were single parents living in isolation to figure out how to battle the school board to get space inside the schools, but that was something we could do."

NKCD played a critical role as leader in a movement to ensure social supports for the marginalized and is a valuable piece of the rich history of Kingston's ever-evolving north-end community.

The Queen's Grad Club Faces An Austere Future

Drastic rent hikes imperil this venerable — and valuable — venue

STORY BY **CAROLYN PROUSE**

BACK WHEN I WAS A MASTER'S STUDENT AT QUEEN'S,

I would spend hours at The Grad Club with friends, teasing out the differences between various political economic theories. At the time we didn't appreciate how relevant these concepts were to the heritage house on Barrie Street where we conducted those debates. As a faculty member today, I teach my students the startling tension between use value (the social and cultural need that a space fills) and exchange value (how much it can be exchanged to create profit or extract rent).

These lessons are coming full circle as The Grad Club may well become a victim of this contradiction. The Club is currently facing rent hikes that could compromise its long run as a local cultural hub for artists and graduate students. The Club's landlord, Queen's University's Housing and Ancillary Services, has announced rent increases of up to 400 per cent over the next five years. Gabriela Castillo Raga, President of the Queen's Grad Club Board of Directors, is concerned that The Club won't be able to manage these rent increases.

But how can you put a dollar value on the cultural and social service The Club provides?

I have attended trivia nights, poetry readings, beers with profs, guest lectures, dance parties, student government meetings, and program meet-and-greets at The Club. For many Queen's students, faculty, and staff, as well as Kingston community members, the space is hallowed social and cultural infrastructure. In a university town where the rent on housing and commercial space has grown astronomically, there are few spaces where Queen's students and Kingston community members can just be. Castillo insists that The Club is just that: "The Club is not just a bar. The Club is a social space."

Twin Crises

Like so many businesses in Kingston, The Grad Club has experienced financial difficulties due to COVID-19. While Queen's has kept rent stable since 2013, a university representative explained that they are using revenue from student rental properties to keep The Grad Club afloat. Since Queen's has relaxed its pandemic regulations, the University is raising

TO VIEW THE CLUB AS SIMPLY A FOOD-AND-DRINK TENANT IS TO IGNORE THE VITAL ROLE THIS OLD VICTORIAN MANSION HOLDS IN THE COMMUNITY.

rents to address the "operating costs and required capital investment [that] have far exceeded the rent." But The Grad Club is still experiencing pandemic-related difficulties: while many of The Club's evening events have bounced back — including its legendary Thursday Trivia Night — lunchtime clientele has not.

Hard times have only grown as austerity measures sweep across the university campus. The administration, under a projected \$48-million deficit, is looking to slash non-lucrative academic units and contract staff and faculty, increase class sizes, and cut already dismal student support services — all while sitting on \$600 million in accumulated surplus. The Club's non-market rent is just one target of an administration seeking to extract rent, profit, or return on investment wherever it can.

A Music Hub and Local Talent Incubator

To view The Club as simply a food-and-drink tenant, however, is to ignore the vital role this old Victorian mansion holds in the community. The Club itself has a storied history as a local talent incubator in Kingston. Famed Kingston bands The Gertrudes, PS I Love You, and even The Tragically Hip refined their sound performing at The Club during their early days. Nostalgia tinges the memories of Kingston music lovers recounting crowd surfing to Death from Above 1979 or Neko Case taking the mic with The Sadies. The Club has hosted legendary Open Mic nights and brought A Tribe Called Red (now

Halluci-Nation) and Half Moon Run to the space, helping catapult the venue into one of Canada's top music institutions.

What is common to the experiences of many artists and patrons is the social need the Club fills in an otherwise fairly white and heteronormative community. Karen Dubinsky, a Queen's faculty member who has brought many Cuban musicians, including Cuban-Canadian band Okan, to The Club, calls the space "a canvas that anyone can write on." Drag queens in Kingston have blossomed in The Club's environment, recently revitalizing the space with Rowena Whey's monthly Open Stage Drag Nights. Drag queens Yuni Verse and Joy Stix both relayed that this was where they first felt comfortable enough to perform. "The Grad Club is a space where we can express ourselves and show sides of us that we don't get to express in regular life," says Verse. And people from both town and gown show up for these events: The Club is one of the few spaces in the city that builds meaningful connections across diverse communities.

Social and cultural spaces such as The Grad Club — which build relationships, foster talent, and provide a welcoming and inclusive environment for diverse communities across the city — pose a challenge to the capitalist imperative to reduce everything to profit or rent. Castillo ends our conversation by pointing out why this struggle for non-market rent is important: "We are a constant reminder that social and cultural space is there for everyone. We're not fighting to keep a bar open. We are fighting to keep a social, truly inclusive space. A non-capitalistic, non-profit space."

If you'd like to support The Queen's Grad Club, scan the QR code below to donate. Or pop over for lunch or a drag show!

Stay tuned for a series of fundraising activities currently in the works.

CAROLYN PROUSE is an Assistant Professor at Queen's University in the Department of Geography and Planning. A Skeleton Park resident, she loves dogs, sports, food, and novels, but hates austerity.



The Grad Club **PHOTO COURTESY OF:** The Grad Club



Safer Streets Initiatives in Kingston

Efforts underway to tame accelerating increase in car-related accidents

STORY BY ANNE THÉRIAULT / PHOTOGRAPHY BY DIEGO FERNANDO RUEDA

The Netherlands is known to have some of the best cycling infrastructure in the world, so much so that even small children there are able to safely navigate big cities on two wheels. Bikes are a deeply ingrained part of Dutch culture. Many people assume that this has always been the case, but the reality is activists had to fight for the bike lanes and paths that many take for granted today.

Like many cities in the mid-twentieth century, Amsterdam saw cars as the way of the future, and its urban policy-makers acted accordingly. The 1950s and '60s saw an accelerated increase in the widening of roads and construction of motorways; those decades also saw an increase in car-related deaths, which hit a peak of 3,267 fatalities in 1971. More than 400 of those fatalities were children, many of whom were walking or cycling when they were killed. This led to widespread protests, one of which was called Stop de Kindermoord (“stop the child murder”). These protests, along with other factors, brought about the strong cycling culture enjoyed by the Dutch today — and to a major decline in car-related deaths.

Meanwhile, here in Ontario, the numbers are trending in the opposite direction. In 2022, 359 people died in traffic collisions, up from 315 deaths in 2021. Overall, 2022 saw 13,514 more collisions in our province compared to the year before. Naturally, these collisions don't just affect adults. In Canada, “unintentional injury” is the leading cause of death for people under the age of nineteen, and motor vehicle collisions make up the majority of those injuries.

Closer to home, many people in the neighbourhood have noticed a marked increase in traffic on our residential streets, along with an increase in speeding, running red lights and stop signs, and other dangerous behaviour. Fortunately, several local efforts are under way to make our streets safer for everybody.

First, there's the North King's Town Secondary Plan, which the City of Kingston's website describes as promoting “a sustainable, vibrant and liveable community” for “the Inner Harbour and Old Industrial areas just north of downtown.”

“The North King's Town secondary plan looks at growth in the area, and particularly focuses on ensuring the growth that generates trips focuses on transit, cycling, and pedestrian trips, to ensure that growth can be accommodated sustainably within the neighbourhood area,” says Matt Kussin, Manager of Transportation Policy & Programs for the City of Kingston.

The project is currently in its second phase, which involves technical studies of the North King's Town area with regards to land use, transportation, servicing, cultural heritage, and finance and implementation. These studies will form the basis for more detailed work on how changes will be carried out. Kussin suggests those interested in the project should check out the North King's Town “Get Involved” page on the City's website and consider signing up for the project's newsletter by contacting nktplan@cityofkingston.ca.

Another traffic-related project happening in the neighbourhood is the School Streets program, which saw the stretch of Sydenham Street near Central Public School closed to cars (or open to people, depending on how you think about it) every school day during drop-off and pickup times over the course of the 2022-23 school year.

Reflecting back on it, organizer Nico Koenig feels it was a successful start to the program, though it did come with some unanticipated challenges — such as the fact Google Maps didn't know the street was closed at 9:00 a.m. and 3:30 p.m. and would still direct drivers there, or that big dumps of snow would mean even less parking on surrounding

streets for parents who drove their kids to school. But in spite of a great first year, at the time of writing School Streets has not been able to operate at Central Public School during the 2023-24 school year due to issues with liability insurance.

“School streets have this nebulous ground where [they're] technically part of the school . . . transportation system, but it's off school property,” says Koenig. “The street is city property.”

The Kingston Coalition for Active Transportation took on liability insurance for the program's first year, which was reimbursed by the City, but they weren't able to continue doing so on a long-term basis, especially since organizers hope the program will grow beyond its pilot schools. This left Kingston's School Streets in a sort of limbo until now, though the Limestone District School Board has recently said it will take over the liability insurance. Koenig is hopeful School Streets will be able to begin operating at Central Public School again soon.

Kingston may never be a cyclist's paradise like Amsterdam, but the success of Stop de Kindermoord and other protests prove that citizens have power to effect change. School Streets proves that, too. We don't have to accept a high rate of traffic collisions as the status quo; a different way of being is possible. We just have to figure out how to get there.

NOTE: Nico Koenig says there will be a major announcement about School Streets coming soon. Stay tuned!

ANNE THÉRIAULT is a neighbourhood scribbler with bylines at *The Walrus*, the *London Review of Books*, *Longreads*, and many other outlets. She also researches, writes, and co-hosts *Broadview Magazine's* podcast *And Also Some Women*. She likes nothing better than to sit on the Juniper Cafe patio with a beer and a good book.

IN CANADA, “UNINTENTIONAL INJURY” IS THE LEADING CAUSE OF DEATH FOR PEOPLE UNDER THE AGE OF NINETEEN, AND MOTOR VEHICLE COLLISIONS MAKE UP THE MAJORITY OF THOSE INJURIES.



A Better Choice

I should be doing something productive—

cleaning the house, paying bills.

Instead, I'm sitting here

watching my cat watch starlings.



C.A. TOKAY is an LGBTQ+ writer, martial artist, and general-purpose nerd living in Kingston, Ontario.

THIS BE THE VERSE is *The Skeleton Press's* poetry page. Each issue features an original and previously unpublished poem by a local poet, selected by Kingston/Katarokwi Poet Laureate Sadiqa de Meijer. Submissions are now open for the NEIGHBOURHOOD KIDS issue. For this edition, we are accepting submissions from poets aged thirteen and under, and will be publishing a range of poems. Please send your work to ygkpoetlaureate@gmail.com.

Lee Stewart: An Artist Who Zigs When Others Zag

Playful, prolific, passionate — and never predictable

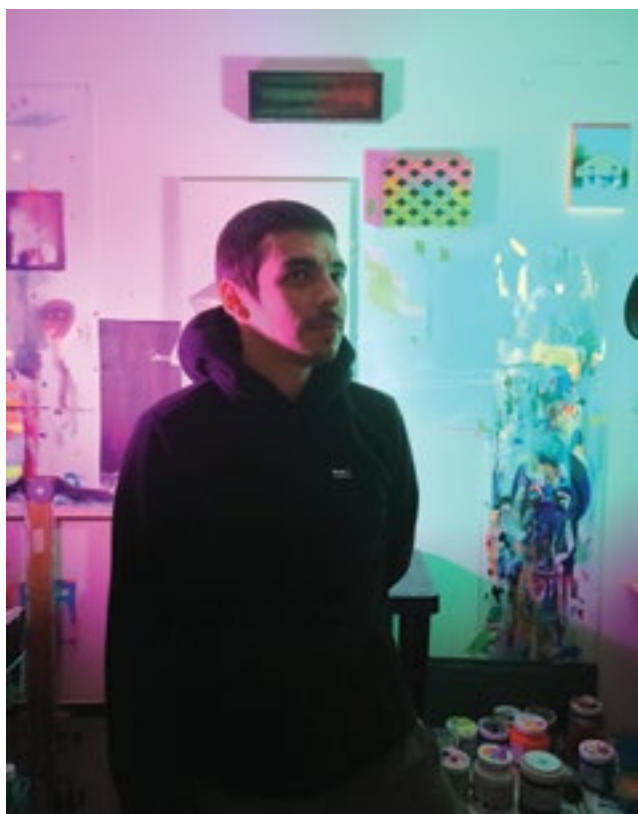
STORY BY TAYLOR FOX

In the vibrant Kingston art scene, Lee Stewart is a painter reshaping the canvas with bold innovation and unwavering determination. As he shares a piece he's immersed in, he remarks, "I like how it is a mix of chance and intention." This blend reflects Stewart's career journey — a seamless intertwining of spontaneity and purpose.

"I draw, paint, sculpt, carve and assemble art that attempts to imagine the future trajectory of art history," he says in his 'artist statement.' "I am constantly looking backward as I run forward. Everything is a blur. All images have no hierarchy or elevated status. To me, a Velazquez painting has as much beauty and gravitas as a blurry VHS screenshot from an episode of Jerry Springer."

For Stewart, life began in Kashechewan First Nation, a small and remote reserve on James Bay, where Cree was his primary language until his family moved to southern Ontario during his early childhood. His family tree boasts a diverse lineage of artists, a legacy that profoundly shaped his artistic identity. Embracing a passion for cinema, Stewart pursued film theory at Carleton University, probing deeply into the works of acclaimed directors such as Stanley Kubrick, whose film, *The Shining*, remains a key muse for Stewart's current artistic endeavors. His academic exploration in film theory and art history, as well as his own research pursuits, nurtured his path as a self-taught artist.

Following his studies, Stewart embarked on a six-year investigation of archaeology, unraveling imagined narratives and exploring untold histories. This aspect of his career necessitated the ability to bridge gaps within stories and to reflect on many "what ifs." During this period, Stewart sustained a significant injury, which became the catalyst for



his leap into the world of full-time art-making — a moment that once again underscored the interplay of chance and intention.

His archaeological mindset offered Stewart a unique advantage on his path as a self-taught artist — both empowering him and allowing him to challenge established artistic norms. As he aptly puts it, "I like to zig when people zag," intentionally embracing what others avoid. This inclination led him, for example, to reverse-engineer the methods and processes of master artists such as Leonardo da Vinci.

During our conversation, Stewart was passionate in sharing his recent exploration into the painting methods used to create the Mona Lisa — all sparked by a documentary he had just watched. He intertwined this newfound knowledge with his fascination for CMYK (it stands for cyan, magenta, yellow, and key, or black) printing, a process that extracts a spectrum from only four primary colours. The innovative merging of these two methods, spanning different time periods, serves as the foundation for a piece that Stewart is currently developing. He likens this part of his creative process to a personal game of telephone tag — absorbing information and relaying it onto the canvas in an innovative and transformative manner. His is a constant endeavor to fit puzzle pieces together.

While sharing a sneak peak of more than twenty mid-progress artworks, with almost half showcasing novel experiments, Stewart's creativity shines through. Discussions with him — ranging from exploring the structure and finesse of Nike's designs to the vivid hues of a sunset — could easily stretch for hours. Days could pass as Stewart unravels the concealed narratives within *The Shining*. There's a curious mix in him — a profound dedication to his craft, yet an effortless ease that permeates every interaction.

LEFT TO RIGHT:

Lee Stewart

Lee Stewart, *Seen and Not Seen*, 2023, Acrylic on Canvas. Courtesy of the artist.

Lee Stewart, *Heat Munch*, 2021, Acrylic on Board. Courtesy of the artist.

For Stewart, every sight, every moment, holds a creative spark — be it contemplating how to capture a building on canvas, or discovering that the Cree word for dragonfly also means helicopter, which further ignites a vision for yet another new piece. This is an artist in constant and fearless pursuit of discovery. And while it might seem overwhelming to some, Stewart thrives on juggling numerous artistic projects, much like an acrobat spinning plates in a masterful display of balance. Only when he tries to fight this natural tendency does he end up uninspired.

Stewart's identity as a person of mixed-race Indigenous culture deeply influences his artistry and even shapes his perception of Kingston. The city embodies a rich historical backdrop, with its layered narratives of conflict between settlers and Indigenous communities. However, as Stewart astutely notes, "You need friction for sparks, right?" In many respects, his art mirrors the tension observed in the world around him — sometimes even within his own identity. The complexities that arise from carrying both Indigenous and settler kinships create a poignant friction when Stewart contemplates imagined histories. What a captivating alchemy.

Piece by piece, Lee Stewart delicately captures fleeting moments. Some pieces aim for precise representation, while others seek to subvert expectations and ignite conversations. Often, he injects humor, or an unexpected twist, into his art — adorning, for example, a demon with sneakers. Purposefully bending timelines, he crafts narratives that defy expectations, leaving room for interpretation. Stewart's art sometimes features elements added just for the sheer joy of it, inviting viewers to ponder and question what they see. "These things are there to just add more questions," he notes about one of his mid-progress pieces. Ultimately, his creations serve as portals, prompting viewers to discover concealed layers within the artwork.

Lee Stewart's narrative extends beyond the canvas; his artwork is a testament to the beauty born of an unconventional path, one that challenges artistic norms. You can find his available works at Kingston's Studio 22.



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

Agnes' Love Letter to Kingston

Hidden in Plain Sight highlights ordinary but iconic city landmarks

STORY BY **EMELIE CHHANGUR**

TOP TO BOTTOM:

Jay Bridges, *Gino's*, 2021, Pentax 67, Kodak Portra 400. Courtesy of the artist.
Jay Bridges, *Wash and Fold*, 2021, Bronica SQ A, Kodak Portra 800. Courtesy of the artist.

I've now lived in Kingston for three years. I moved from Toronto early-pandemic to take the position of Director/Curator of Agnes Etherington Art Centre, just as the bequest for a new building was announced. I thought, Build a new museum? Nah, let's rebuild museum practice from the ground up! I think art institutional change happens from the bottom up, and alongside artists. Because I believe that art galleries should fundamentally serve a civic and social function, being embedded in one's locality is important to me — but this takes time and trust. So when I arrived at Agnes, I asked two guiding questions:

How does Agnes attend to community? and, What does an art centre centre?

Over these past three years, I've grown to like Kingston — a lot. That first winter (2020-21), I had the great pleasure of being introduced to the city by a group of graffiti artists, whose support has empowered me: our reciprocal relationship shows on the very façades of Agnes' building. Fast forward to 2023-24: on the brink of *physically* recreating the institution's architecture, we lovingly programmed our last season in Agnes' current facility as a constellation of solo exhibitions, commissions, and interventions that rightfully celebrate and elevate the culture and artists of our hometown. From a tattoo parlour to a mobile printing press; from retrospective to first-ever gallery exhibitions; from re-patterning Agnes' historic dress collection in collaboration with members of the local drag community to tracing "hidden" histories alongside Black protagonists of Kingston's past and present, these hyper-local projects participate in the range of cultural production that enlivens this place. Today, I'm megaproud to be Director of Agnes.

Kingston artists are creatives *and* entrepreneurs, astute aestheticians *and* community activists. Not all are formally trained. Some arrive as artists through sheer tenacity, building on their family's working-class ethos. Others transform practices here by adapting artistic traditions brought from homelands elsewhere. All Agnes staff collaborated to choreograph this final season, which has made its planning process particularly special. Agnes is proud to share these artists' sensibilities and their steadfast commitment to transforming the culture of this city.

Seven solo exhibitions enliven Agnes' galleries for the last time. You'll recognize iconic landmarks from the Skeleton Park neighbourhood in *Hidden in Plain Sight*, featuring photographs by Jay Bridges.

I met Jay Bridges at BSE (the Skateboard Shop + Coffee Bar at 225 Princess Street), where I bought my Penny board in early spring 2021. I became interested in Jay's history as a skateboard photographer, his self-made sensibility, and his obsession with camera technologies. In 2022, he showed me his "Kingston" series. The resulting exhibition's title, *Hidden in Plain Sight*, suggested by Jay's partner Jenna, means something right before you that you don't see, because it is too obvious or too common to pay attention to. Or you've seen it a thousand times.

Jay makes us pay attention to Kingston in new ways in this series that highlights ordinary but iconic landmarks. My own belief that Agnes' role is in writing art historical futurities — which must include both vernacular and submerged kinds — frames the show. Jay's photography extends from an artistic tradition once known as the "new topographics," which was influenced not by fine arts photography but pop, minimal, and conceptual art, and which documented the new industrial landscape, the suburbs, and the generic built environment.

Jay adheres to an ethic of presentation that is plain and honest, with no added artistic flourish or the photographer's subjectivity. Each image is treated similarly: carefully composed, shot frontally, and generally symmetrically, with the even lighting of day or the lighting the building itself produces at night. These are formal devices to make us attend to the subject in new ways but also to categorize the buildings into types. These photographs are not simply snapshots. Jay may wait months for the proper lighting conditions to capture the precise image with his large- and medium-format cameras. Valuing the vernacular, Jay Bridges patiently waits to bring Kingston's hidden gems into view.



EMELIE CHHANGUR is an influential voice of cultural change-making in Canada. An artist, writer, and curator, she is celebrated for her process-based, participatory curatorial practice, the commissioning of complex works across all media, and the creation of long-term collaborative projects performatively staged within and outside gallery contexts. She has curated more than 150 exhibitions/special projects, published more than twenty-five books, and received more than thirty awards for her creative work. Chhangur is currently Director and Curator of Agnes Etherington Art Centre.



UNTIL 28 MARCH 2024

Turned Back: Filaments of Renewal

Emebet Belete / Curated by Sebastian De Line

Jay Bridges: Hidden in Plain Sight

Curated by Emelie Chhangur

Ann Clarke: A Life in Motion

Curated by Mark Birksted and Alicia Boutilier

De

Frank De Sa / Curated by Suzanne van de Meerendonk and Sunny Kerr

Who is Belle Island?

Billie Kearns (aka Billie the Kid) and Jill Glatt / Curated by Sunny Kerr

we are magic: a love letter to our tattoos

Abby Nowakowski / Curated by Charlotte Gagnier

Joan Scaglione: Shifting Realities

Curated by Sunny Kerr

+

Wee Bit Off Centre

Tear Jerkers / Curated by Nasrin Himada

Tracing Kingston's Solidarities

Alejandro Arauz / Curated by Qanita Lilla

Agnes's Historical Costume Ball Drag Show Fashion Pageant Spectacular

Dare de LaFemme, Tyffanie Morgan, and Rowena Whey / Curated by Alicia Boutilier

Give It A Rest



PUZZLE BY **HALEY SARFELD**
ILLUSTRATION BY **JILL GLATT**

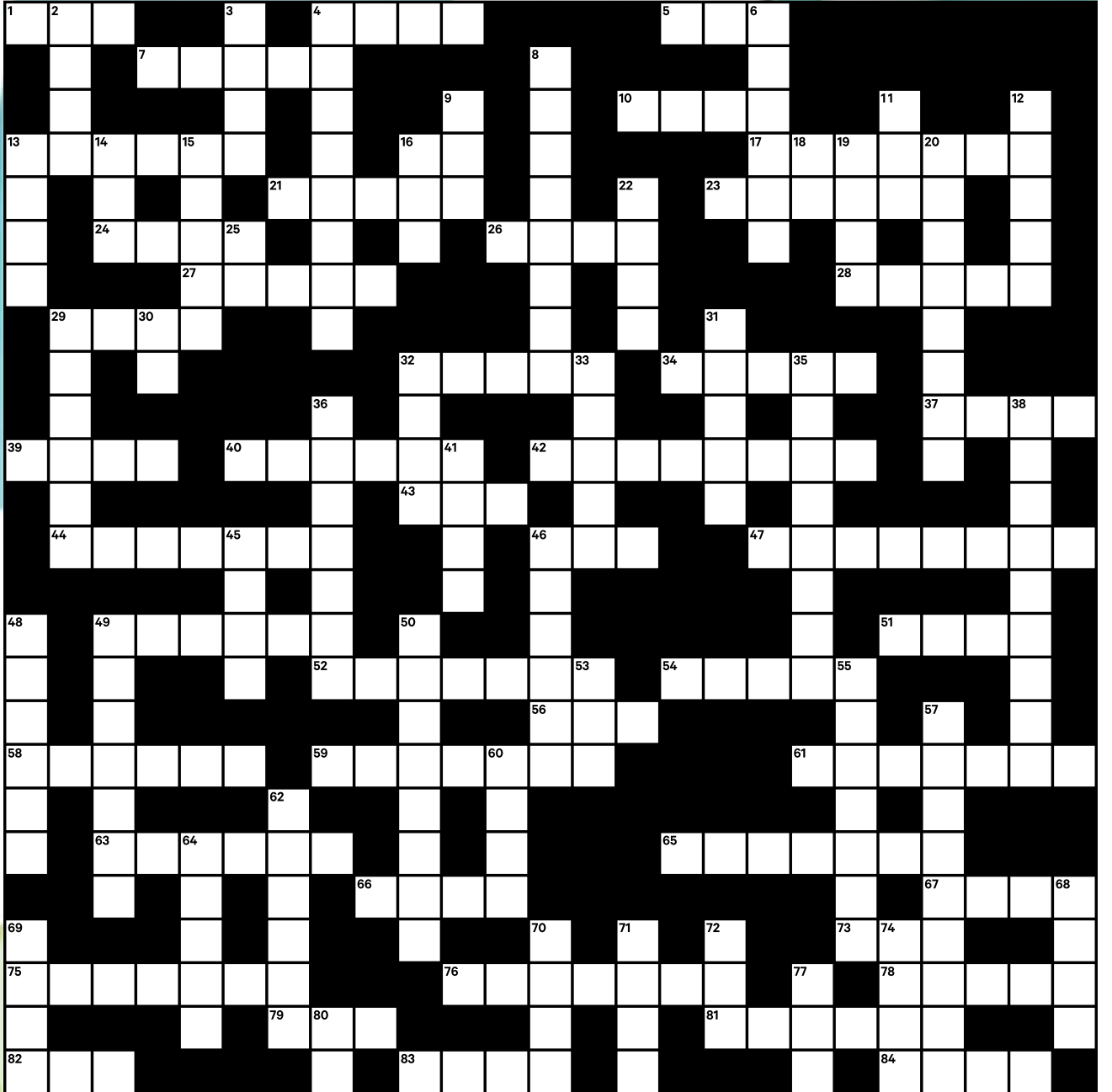


ACROSS

- 1 They tried to make portable beds a trend, but it never _____ on
- 4 ☺
- 5 With 77 down, to fall asleep
- 7 When keeping vigil, it's important to stay _____
- 10 Broken in the morning
- 13 Sleep-inducing cold-medication type
- 16 "Rock-a-bye Baby" is of uncertain origins; we don't know who it's _____
- 17 Exhaustion, weariness
- 21 I'm tense and nervous and I can't _____
- 23 I want to take a break, but things keep getting _____
- 24 Forgive me for going in circles; I'm a bit _____y
- 26 The sleepest baby in the cabbage patch?
- 27 To keep a library book longer
- 28 Poetic lament for the dead
- 29 I snooze my alarm for 12 minutes when I want to _____ in
- 32 With 2 down, to wake up late
- 34 If you catch my _____
- 37 "Where's the rest?" "Sorry, there's _____ left"
- 39 When the sky gets brighter
- 40 What kind of cushion is best in a fight? A throw _____
- 42 Can contain springs, foam, or even water
- 43 Word to follow lily, mouse, or sanitary
- 44 Mr. responsible for bringing me a dream
- 46 After waking too early: "I'm going back to _____"
- 47 The witching hour
- 49 At the _____ of twelve
- 51 The _____ before the storm
- 52 People who live in a home owned by a landlord
- 54 Two vertical lines on the TV remote
- 56 Past tense of "lie"
- 58 Monster and Redbull are _____ drinks
- 59 Delayed the alarm clock
- 61 Flourishes, prospers
- 63 Bean-based beverage
- 65 Do it in your free time, at your _____
- 66 What yeast makes bread do
- 67 One _____ Kingston is a local youth services hub
- 73 If it's 9:50 and your bedtime is in 600 seconds, you're going to bed in/at _____
- 75 If you wake up screaming, you may be suffering from night _____
- 76 Happens to candles and overworked people
- 78 Desert refuge (where "Wonderwall" might play?)
- 79 Still area at the centre of a hurricane
- 81 Seven or more hours per night is the recommended _____ of sleep for adults
- 82 Stage of sleep when all I have to do is dream
- 83 Why don't you work the graveyard shift? Is it _____ much for you?
- 84 Band that contributed "Stay Home" to the *Shrek* soundtrack

DOWN

- 2 With 32 across, to stay the night
- 3 Lackadaisical
- 4 I worked out nonstop Saturday and Sunday; now I'm _____
- 6 Sporadic sleep
- 8 To refill a battery
- 9 Greek goddess of the night
- 11 Let sleeping dogs _____
- 12 A word that means tired, similar to one that means distrustful; I'm _____ of people confusing the two
- 13 Twilight
- 14 Who, who, who is awake at night?
- 15 Loud slumber sound
- 16 If you're haunted by bad dreams, walk east from Skeleton Park toward the water to keep nightmares at _____
- 18 _____ *You Like It* plays at the Domino Theatre in March
- 19 In wintertime, people put snow _____s on their vehicles
- 20 I wake up early each morning to make porridge; the work is _____
- 22 Season before winter
- 25 Gym class, for short
- 29 Nocturnal visions
- 30 If you're up late thinking about your Xs, it might be Ys to catch some _____
- 31 _____ Jacques, dormez-vous?
- 32 Used to separate sentences in a telegram
- 33 _____ and quiet
- 35 Frank Costanza's winter holiday for the rest of us
- 36 Under a _____ of snow
- 38 As opposed to a day stallion?
- 41 What somnambulists do in sleep
- 45 Jumped over by a nursery rhyme bovine
- 46 Hustle and _____
- 48 If you visit this Hollow, you may lose your head
- 49 Theatres ask you to do this to your phone
- 50 Inability to fall or stay asleep
- 53 Aptly acronymed affective disorder
- 55 I'd complain about my neighbour's truck idling, but I'm too _____ed
- 57 What bears do in winter
- 60 "What did they say about land-use bylaws?" "I don't know, I _____d out"
- 62 Loss of life
- 64 "You ate bread on the bed!" "Well, you ate croutons on the _____!"
- 68 Overtired children might do this
- 69 Not a creature was _____ring, not even a mouse
- 70 At the sleep exam, the baby was caught using _____ notes
- 71 There's no place like _____ for the holidays
- 72 "Slept in — running late." "What's your _____?"
- 74 Billions of years
- 77 Affirmative head movement
- 80 God rest _____ merry gentlemen



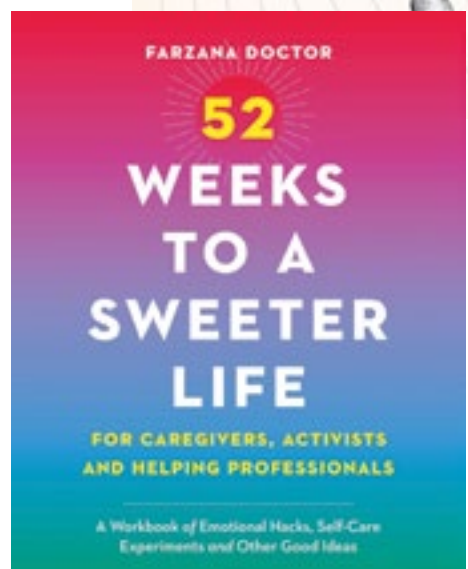
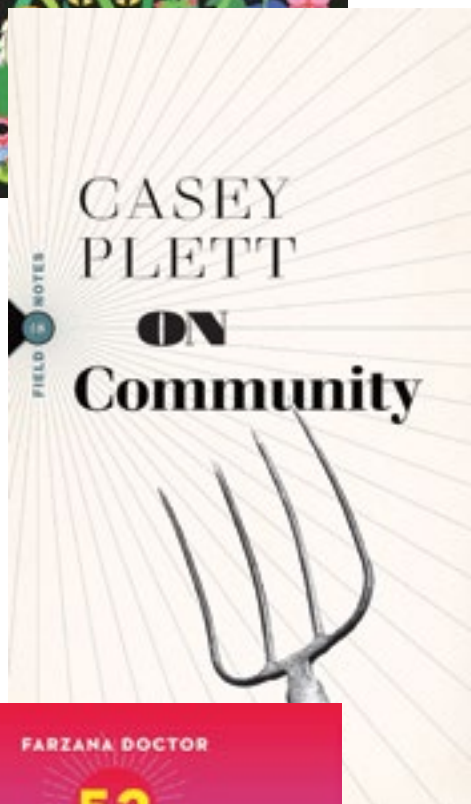
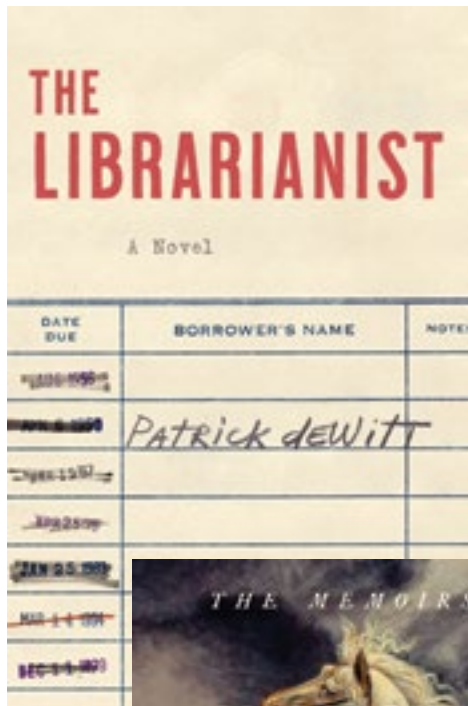
Find solutions on page 3



Cozy into These Winter Reads

New books for the new year

REVIEW BY **AARA MACAULEY**



As we ease, carefully, cautiously into a new year and the longer winter months, the idea of seeking out activities that facilitate rest is particularly appealing.

Books are a welcome escape any time of year, but they seem especially suited to days when you want nothing more than to curl up on the couch, wrap yourself in a blanket, and nurse a hot beverage. Winter reading has sparked some lovely traditions in cooler climates. Iceland is one of the best-known examples of embracing this practice with *Jolabokaflod* — literally “a Christmas flood,” an annual festive custom of gifting books to each other to read before, during, and after the holidays. Sweden dedicates a whole week to books with *Läslov* (reading holiday) each November, another wonderful way to stock up for the coming winter months.

With these warming customs in mind, here are some suggestions for reads that can help you move gently through frigid days and dark nights.

THE LIBRARIANIST by *Patrick deWitt*
(House of Anansi)

A favourite at Kingston WritersFest this year, *The Librarianist* is arguably deWitt’s gentlest book to date. Introverts rarely get to be the main character, but in this book, deWitt offers a warm and funny character study of an everyman — a quiet, bookish, reserved figure whose story unfolds to reveal a richer life than even he realizes. Bob Comet is a retired librarian who starts — disastrously — volunteering as a reader at a seniors’ centre. As arrogance makes way for empathy, Bob begins to forge meaningful relationships, and to let us into his secret inner life. DeWitt has won many awards, including the Leacock Medal for humour, so there is plenty of wit to devour as this unassuming tale unfolds.

THE MEMOIRS OF MISS CHIEF EAGLE TESTICKLE:
Vol. 1 and Vol. 2: A True and Exact Accounting of the History of Turtle Island by *Kent Monkman & Gisèle Gordon*
(Penguin RandomHouse Canada)

Described as “genre-demolishing,” this two-volume memoir/history lesson/art book is a gloriously queer Cree, art-filled account of the world from creation to the present day as told through the eyes of Monkman’s gender-fluid, shapeshifting, time-travelling alter ego, Miss Chief Eagle Testickle. Monkman, an interdisciplinary Cree artist, is well-known for his thought-provoking exploration of colonization, sexuality, loss, and resilience through painting, film/video, performance, and installations which offer a scathing and darkly humorous look at moments in North America’s history. A spirited, bold, and eye-opening read for grey winter days.

THE FIELD NOTES SERIES (Biblioasis)
One of the most interesting series to come out in response to the pandemic has been Biblioasis’ *Field Notes*, “a series of nonfiction titles exploring timely issues of public interest.” Meant to draw on the

historic tradition of pamphleteering, these titles offer a fresh, contemporary look at current social issues. Some stand-outs for me have been Rinaldo Walcott’s *On Property*, which investigates colonial ideas of ownership and the movement to defund the police, and Casey Plett’s *On Community*, which considers how a sense of community can help or harm — think the rise of nationalism. These books are quick to read, but invite careful reflection, making them an excellent choice for those seeking thoughtful, more personal reads that capture our current zeitgeist.

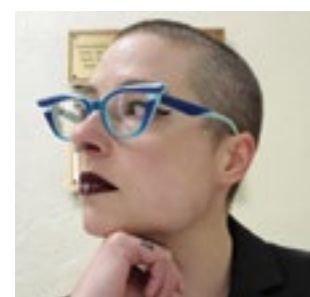
NEVER WHISTLE AT NIGHT:
An Indigenous Dark Fiction Anthology by *various authors*
(Penguin Random House Canada)

Want a reason to be *very* grateful to be tucked safe in your bed? For many, a good scare can offer real catharsis, allowing us to process anxiety in a safe space. This collection offers a chilling and fascinating look at horrors from ghosts, creatures and curses to mental illness, poverty, and cultural erasure — from various Indigenous cultural perspectives. With stories from more than two dozen authors from across North and South America, this collection offers a great way to discover exciting new voices and to hear from favourites such as Cherie Dimaline, Tommy Orange, and Waubgeshig Rice as they use their art to give us the shivers.

Finally, if the burnout is real — which it has been for many of us — here is a good, soon-to-be-published title that addresses this growing crisis and offers ways to help cope:

52 WEEKS TO A SWEETER LIFE FOR CAREGIVERS, ACTIVISTS AND HELPING PROFESSIONALS: *A Workbook of Emotional Hacks, Self-Care Experiments and Other Good Ideas* by *Farzana Doctor* (Douglas & McIntyre)

Farzana Doctor is, herself, an activist, community organizer, and social worker, on top of being an award-winning author. Like many who work so hard to do so much, she found herself far better at preaching than practicing the importance of self-care. Doctor has developed a fifty-two-week workbook meant to offer the overworked and the overwhelmed lessons and ideas to help them take gentle steps towards setting boundaries and taking time to pause.



AARA MACAULEY is the Director of Kingston WritersFest. A former business owner, Aara has also been involved in the fundraising, event planning, and promotion committees for various local cabaret, film, and arts festivals. She is a proud member of the LGBTQIA2S+ community and for eight years served as Chairperson on the

Reelout Arts Project Board. She currently sits on the board of the Canadian Association of Literary Festivals, the City of Kingston Arts Advisory Committee, and the Art in Public Places Working Group, and recently co-chaired the Mayor’s Arts Awards and chaired the 2023 Poet Laureate Working Group.

Reclaiming Community Participation in Caring for the Dead

Is it time to rethink the deathcare model and bring it home?

STORY BY **LAURA CHAIGNON** / ILLUSTRATION BY **GRACE DIXON**



MARY FARRAR'S HUSBAND EDWARD had suffered from dementia for nearly ten years before he had to be hospitalized in 2016. By the time he died in 2020, Farrar, president of the Friends of Kingston Inner Harbour, had had time to think about what to do. Edward Farrar cared deeply about the environment, so Mary Farrar had purchased a green burial plot for him at the Cobourg Union Cemetery. He was also a frugal person, and would have wanted her to save her money as much as possible.

After meeting with a death doula and learning more about her rights, Farrar decided she wanted to do the deathcare herself — without involving a funeral home at all. That meant picking up and driving Edward's body to his burial plot in her own car. Farrar was a trailblazer in her advocacy with the hospitals, and, on top of procuring the right documents and permits, she had to do a lot of convincing and breaking through bureaucracy. The hospitals had never heard of a family foregoing a funeral home completely and transporting their loved one's body themselves. It is, however, a perfectly legal practice in Ontario, and it is far from being a new one.

Before the 1800s, funeral homes, embalming, and multi-thousand-dollar varnished coffins did not exist. The funeral industry consisted of furniture makers who also happened to sell caskets. Caring for the dead was a family affair. Today, the Canadian funeral industry is worth \$1.7 billion, and most people don't really consider getting involved in the care of their dead loved ones.

Aileen Stewart, a deathcare guide living in the Skeleton Park neighbourhood, explained to me that families have many rights when it comes to their loved ones' bodies — including the right to transport and care for the body, and keep the body at home — but

that most people are not aware of these possibilities, partly due to the medicalization of death and the ensuing taboo surrounding the dead. "But now we are seeing people wanting to reclaim that process," says Stewart, "in a movement quite similar to what happened a few decades ago with birthing. If you opted for a home birth, why wouldn't you consider a home death?"

As a deathcare guide, Stewart walks people through different ways to care for the dead and dying. "It is not for everybody, of course," says Stewart, "and it's good that the option to work with a funeral home exists for when people need it. But getting involved in the process of caring for our loved ones and creating meaningful ceremonies around their death can be incredibly healing."

One way that people reclaim deathcare is by washing their loved one's body. Farrar got to experience this process when Providence Manor put aside a space for her and her daughter to wash her husband's body and put him in a beautiful shroud. It was important for Farrar to "be in proximity with his death that way."

Susan Walker, a life-long educator and social justice activist living in the neighbourhood, reminisces about washing her dear friend Wayne Westfall's body, with Stewart's support, after he died: "Five of his closest women friends came together and washed him, talked to him. It was incredibly peaceful, and there was joy, too. It was so calming and so beautiful."

Westfall was an artist, activist, a wise friend, and a pillar of the neighbourhood. He had chosen to die through Medical Assistance in Dying (MAID) on January 12, 2020, and had been surrounded by a circle of close friends (Annie, Derek, Jess, Anne,

Kate, Barb, David, Gini, Greg and Susan) for almost a month before the day he died peacefully at home. The community had been previously invited to come to his home to visit with his body during the evening of January 12. He was dressed, laid out in honour on his bed, and covered with a shroud — made by a friend, and with a pocket for people to leave written messages. The room was filled with yellow roses and candles, and some of Westfall's art was on display. There was food, stories, art, music; it was a joyful celebration. Close to one hundred people came to visit him on that evening, braving the cold, icy night.

"I have never experienced anything quite like this," says Walker. "I think it was the most powerful experience for dealing with grief. It felt so complete. There was so much positive energy around him. Because I was able to play a significant, intimate part, it was powerfully complete."

As more people become aware of their rights and learn to reclaim traditional practices, we may see more family and community involvement in deathcare in the coming years. If you want to learn more about family-led deathcare practices, you can visit the Bereavement Authority of Ontario's website at thebao.ca/for-consumers/family-led-death-care/.



LAURA CHAIGNON is an arts worker and a grateful neighbour to the lake. She whispers, "I too shall die" when she passes a dead squirrel on the street.

Proposal to build tunnel under Skeleton Park excites residents

STORY BY ANNE KERSHAW

The prospect of building a tunnel under Skeleton Park in the heart of Kingston has sparked both excitement and skepticism among residents. Advocates argue that a tunnel would alleviate traffic congestion, enhance pedestrian safety, and preserve the park's historical integrity. Skeptics raise concerns about potential environmental impact, construction disruptions, and the hefty price tag associated with such a project.

Proponents of the tunnel emphasize the practical benefits it could bring to the community. By diverting

traffic beneath the park, the surface would be freed up for green spaces, recreational activities, and community events. This transformation could turn Skeleton Park into a vibrant hub for residents and visitors alike, fostering a sense of community and well-being.

However, it's crucial to address the concerns raised by opponents. A thorough environmental impact assessment must be conducted to ensure that the construction and operation of the tunnel won't harm the local ecosystem. Also, the city should develop a comprehensive plan to minimize disruptions dur-

ing construction phase, prioritizing the well-being of residents and business in the area.

Ultimately, the decision to build a tunnel under Skeleton Park should be guided by a balanced and informed approach. The potential benefits are promising, but it's essential to navigate the challenges with careful planning and community engagement. Only through thoughtful consideration can the City of Kingston make a decision that will stand the test of time and benefit generations to come.

— generated by ChatGPT

The Pros and Cons of Artificial Intelligence

Is ChatGPT a useful writing aid? Or the wrong way forward?

STORY BY ANNE KERSHAW

So, how well did ChatGPT do when asked to write an editorial extolling the benefits of building a tunnel under Kingston's Skeleton Park?

If I were still an editorial writer at the *Kingston Whig-Standard*, I wouldn't be too worried about losing my job...yet!

ChatGPT — the GPT stands for Generative Pre-Trained Transformer — can spit out (in mere seconds) a cogent, grammatically correct piece of writing on a controversial issue. But this highly touted Artificial Intelligence (AI) breakthrough overlooks some key prerequisites of editorial writing: accuracy, fire in the belly, and a serious reality check. The Chat robot's platitudinous prose and temperate, templated approach fail to impress. And it's apparently easy for us mere humans to lead Chat astray into fake news. The idea of building a tunnel under Skeleton Park (officially McBurney Park) is,

of course, preposterous. Despite supposedly having access to decades worth of books, news stories, websites, and archival material, ChatGPT appears capable of being entirely clueless on basic facts.

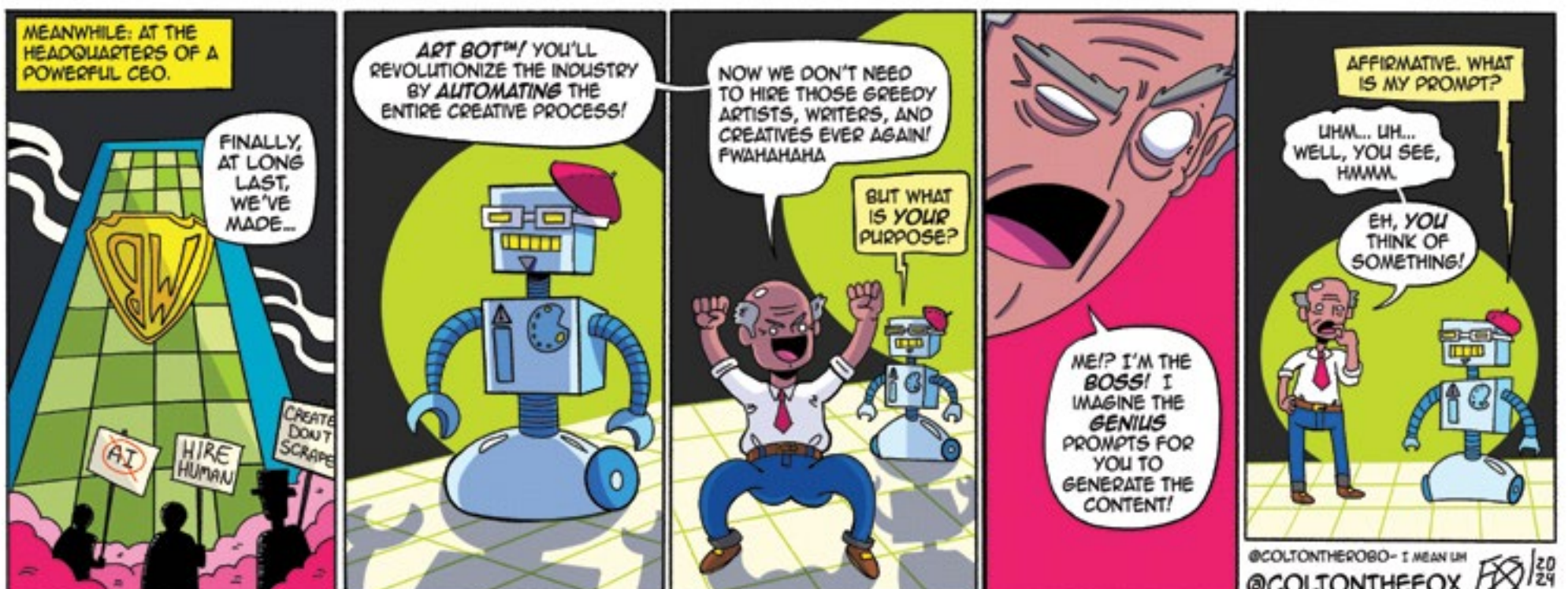
I do, though, envy ChatGPT its cool-headed efficiency. It would take me hours of research, multiple coffees, diet Cokes, cigarettes (another era!), re-writes, fact-checking, angst, and second-guessing to produce an editorial for next-day publication. Despite its deficiencies, ChatGPT's instantaneous, no-sweat service is pretty mind-blowing.

Now marking its one-year anniversary, the free-to-use AI system has had a year to "disrupt" the world of content. That has entailed wreaking havoc in academe, undercutting freelance writing and editors, making redundant much of the marketing and communications field, and making pseudo-Hemingways out of anyone required to routinely string a few words together for official e-mails, memos, company plans, annual reports, etc.

Kingston author and journalist Alec Ross discovered that ChatGPT can pose a serious competitive threat to freelancers. Offering his services through a popular skills-sharing site since 2014, he found around April that "orders were dropping, things started to dry up." Given his five-star rating on the site as one of its top editors, he figured the reason was ChatGPT. He also noticed that market analysts were speculating about how ChatGPT would affect the fortunes of his online company.

Ross experienced a resurgence in orders once clients discovered that Chat was no match for the human touch his editing could provide.

He describes some of the unethical requests he gets from clients, including international students needing a personal essay statement for their applications to North American universities. "They ask me to write their essays or if I can make their Chat-generated essay sound more human." (Ross declines such requests.) —CONTINUED ON PAGE 31



Neighbourhood Roost

The crow's version of rest

STORY BY **HILBERT BUIST** / PHOTO BY **REJEAN LEMAY**

Murder of crows flying over the Our Mother of Sorrows Chapel on their way to a nearby roosting site



Darkness has descended across the city on this chilly night in December. Tall trees lining residential streets, in backyards, or nearby parking lots are filled with black diamonds silhouetted against the sky. With beaks pointing into the wind, crows cling to slender branches murmuring in low rattles and muted *ahs*. Deep into night, small flocks continue to join the roost, welcomed by the caws of others.

I pull my coat tightly around me and walk through Douglas Fluhrer Park in search of the nightly roost. I'm drawn to the trees between the Frontenac Village condominium complex and the city courthouse on Wellington Street where a murder of crows rests silent. By early morning, legal opinions will be vocalized and escalate toward sunrise and departure.

Crows gathering nightly to sleep in communal roosts is not new. The birds are doing what they have done for millions of years. Their numbers have been growing, particularly since the 1970s when crows were added to the Migratory Bird Treaty Act (U.S.) protecting them from being hunted.

Crows are remarkably intelligent, highly sociable, eat a wide variety of foods, and raise their young in family groups in a manner known as cooperative breeding. In spring they are busy with mate selection, nest building, incubation, fighting off predators, and feeding and raising young. They fiercely defend territories against other crows in breeding season but forage and roost communally in winter, which is unusual for birds. Foraging and roosting together in winter leaves them open to losing their home territory.

In this part of Ontario, crows are resident birds, but crows breeding in the boreal forests of northern Ontario migrate south, swelling their numbers. When breeding season ends, crows have only three concerns: food, warmth and safety. Communal roosting in urban centres satisfies all three. Cities provide warmth and security, and if you want to find the best foraging sites, follow the crowd the next morning.

An avid crow chronicler and sometime guide for others interested in this remarkable bird, I'm always alert to potential sightings. When I heard in September that crows were gathering by the hundreds on Belle Island, I knew I had to see them. Over the years, I had watched them forage under attentive sentinels, delighted in their riding stiff south breezes above tall trees like so many gnarly surfers, and waited nervously to discover the outcome of their mobbing of a great-horned owl, their fiercest enemy. I had even watched them nest and raise young ones under the predatory glare of a breeding pair of Cooper's hawks. The most crows I had ever seen was probably sixty. By the

end of September, Steven Manders, a local researcher with skills in counting crows, reported 900.

Years ago, I learned to say hello to crows when one first said hello to me. One fall day, I went to Belle Island to give greetings from my people. With every step I took through the leafy fall forest, the cawing steadily increased. High overhead, crows streamed in from all directions. The black pulsating crowd was deafening — and glorious! While many crows were perched, dignified and unflappable, like adults, others were given over to divebombing, barrel-rolls and wild loop de loops, like reckless teens. I called hello. They paid no attention to me. I shouted but they flew away. As their ranks multiplied, they catapulted to the southwest tip of the island opposite the city. I ran to the water's edge. The sky was already a dusky orange. Then, in ominous silence, the crows lifted off in large disorderly flocks, swept over the Inner Harbour, crossed the city and disappeared into the setting sun.

Aside from pure magic, what had I just seen? This was a staging. Unlike the roost, the staging is a noisy affair. No one knows why crows stage before roosting. Why not just go straight to the roost? Over several hours in the afternoon, the crows surge in numbers from one site to another until the final lift-off. Each night the location is a surprise. The crow mystery only deepens with their disappearance each morning.

Those who are less keen on crows will be heartened to know that strategies for surviving noise and droppings in their backyards are relatively simple. Crows are agitated by humans, noise, and light. To avoid crows whitewashing your car, take periodic walks under the roosting tree throughout the night. Clapping wood blocks or creating other noise will help, as will motion-sensor lights, sprinklers, strobe lights, or a low-powered laser.

Love them or hate them, crows are here for the winter. Last year, Manders counted 2,300 for the entire season. This winter, numbers are expected to be more than 5,000.

By March the crows will begin to move back to their breeding territories, raise families, steal eggs from other birds, fight off predators, and teach young ones how to survive winter. By September they'll return as a wondrously noisy spectacle to roost on a street near you.

HILBERT BUIST is a part-time pastry chef, part-time wildlife guide, and a full-time nature noticer.

Lamenting the Loss of a Soulful Corner of the World

In praise of The Sleepless Goat Cafe STORY BY JAMIE SWIFT / ILLUSTRATION BY PHILIP STREET



Coming across former Kingston residents who lived here as students in the 1990s and early 2000s, I like to ask what made the place stand out for them.

Many respond without hesitation: “The Goat.”

The Sleepless Goat cafe lives on in the memory — and imagination — of many current and former residents. Why? Because the place was so very different. Can you imagine a downtown eatery today offering a kids’ play space complete with toys, ideal for moms with toddlers? Free soup and homemade bread for people in need, no questions asked?

Kingston’s downtown business lobby, in sharp contrast, is eager to sweep poor people off the streets, having recently promoted an “anti-loitering” by-law.

The Goat opened in 1993 and lasted twenty-three years, an impressive run for any independent business. Especially one that was an undercapitalized workers’ co-op. No bosses. Consensus decision-making. (Meetings could include long discussions of mango chutney or where to place the ketchup.) Groups were free to use the big booths for meetings, staying as long as need be. For many Queen’s students, it was a favoured study venue. Well before the rise of the local food movement, The Goat’s dedicated idealists prioritized purchasing from local farmers and other suppliers.

What The Goat may have sometimes lacked in efficiency, it made up with soul. Vegan bunz Friday. Queer speed-dating. Countertop dispatches (“Who needs gender roles when we have cinnamon rolls?”)

“They allow me to do my thing out front,” a panhandler once noted. “They also have free soup, free bread. They’re really down-to-earth people.”

“We weren’t trying to be Martha’s Table,” says one-time co-op member Marney McDiarmid, recalling the unadvertised free meals central to the world view that The Goat embodied. “It was a free and open democratic space that welcomed anyone and everyone.”

The Goat was run by young people. One woman had been spending time there since she was ten, joining the co-op after high school. “It’s more of a community than school,” she once commented. “If it wasn’t for The Goat, I’d feel like Kingston didn’t have a centre.”

“Prefigurative politics” involves developing organizations that embody the kind of society you’d like to live in.

“If your activism is already democratic, peaceful, creative, then in one small corner of the world these things have triumphed,” observed the splendid writer Rebecca Solnit in her book, *Hope in the Dark*.

This sort of activism isn’t just about changing a world that oftentimes seems pretty dismal. For Solnit, it means building “a home in which to take up residence and live according to your beliefs... this paradise of participating, this vale where souls get made.”

“**FREE SOUP AND HOMEMADE BREAD FOR PEOPLE IN NEED, NO QUESTIONS ASKED?**”

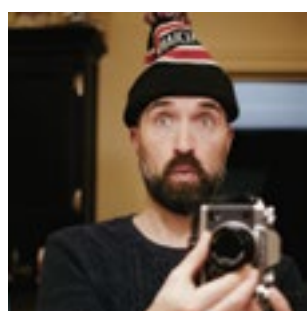


Kingston writer **JAMIE SWIFT** has noticed that of the two coffee shops near The Goat’s former location, one has signs restricting seating time and the other has no seats at all.

Rest

PHOTOGRAPHY BY **AL BERGERON**

Most of us don't need a rest from physical labor. We don't till the soil or thresh wheat. Modern stress is often about days sitting in front of the same screens we use for recreation and communication. With endless notifications begging for our attention and constant reminders of existential threats on the horizon, where does our community find rest?



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.

TOP TO BOTTOM

Meeting a friend at a local pub to relax from the day's stress.

The gentle clickity-swish and meditative rhythm of knitting in an Inner Harbour home.





CLOCKWISE FROM TOP

The practiced harmony of community voices with The Cantabile Choirs at The Spire.

Quieting the mind with meditation at the Kuluta Buddhist Centre.

Calming the body with the flowing physical movement of Tai Chi at St. Andrew's Presbyterian Church.

Birdbone Theatre: In Praise of Slow Art



Broom Dance blends shadow puppetry with music and sound

STORY BY MEREDITH DAULT

BROOM DANCE IS “A PIECE EXPLORING THE SPACE BETWEEN THE WILD AND THE DOMESTIC, AND BETWEEN THE SPIRITUAL AND THE PRAGMATIC.”



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.

When Aleksandra Bragoszewska set out to make the puppets for Birdbone Theatre’s latest show, *Broom Dance*, she decided to take her time. Settling down with her sketchbook, she made drawing after drawing until a key character emerged on the page. “I sketched and I sketched, until this line would keep showing up and I could see that, ah, this is the curve of her nose,” she recalls.

The resulting puppet, Baba Yaga, a witchy character from Slavic folklore, now plays a central role in *Broom Dance*, a show that weaves shadow puppetry with music and an immersive soundscape. “She is a sort of wild forest-dwelling or subterranean force,” Bragoszewska explains. “In our show, she also provides the divine function of the threshold keeper.”

The transitional significance of thresholds is a theme that Bragoszewska and her co-creator, musician Alison Gowan, wanted to investigate. “It’s a winter piece exploring the space that manifests between home and outside of home,” says Gowan. “It’s a piece exploring the space between the wild and the domestic, and between the spiritual and the pragmatic.”

Broom Dance is also, fundamentally, about slowing down — something that Bragoszewska, who founded Birdbone Theatre in 2012 with Alison Boyce, has moved towards doing over the course of her artistic practice. “*Broom Dance* has been a big work to break the habit of rushing through a show to put it on its feet,” she says. “We are learning to care for the quality of the puppetry and the music we are bringing to the rehearsal process so that we can make something really beautiful and worthy for the world and the show’s audiences.”

That slowness, and the analogue simplicity of shadow puppetry — a 2,000-year-old art form thought to have originated in Asia, wherein flat puppets are held between a light source and a flat surface to create shadows — are things that especially delight Gowan. “It takes a certain quiet attention,” she says. “It’s the opposite of what we are used to now, being attached to screens.”

But for Bragoszewska, learning to make art slowly has taken some time. It was while working at the CFRC radio station after earning a degree at Queen’s that she first came upon a book of photographs about the American activist theatre troupe, Bread and Puppet Theater. “I was young and struggling to articulate some kind of activist message,” she recalls. Inspired by images of giant puppets

being used for political purposes, Bragoszewska signed up as an apprentice with the company, eager to learn everything she could.

In time, she was touring with the Vermont-based company, learning from founder Peter Schumann. “It was my anti-school,” she laughs. “I learned everything there.” But with Schumann already near the end of his career, Bragoszewska remembers every show being rushed out the door in the spirit of quantity over quality, message over medium. The result was puppets and props that were sometimes coarse and hastily completed, the pursuit of beauty long cast aside. “I had learned to work with that aesthetic,” she admits. “And since then, I have had to unlearn some things to keep my own theatre going. It has been hard to break the habit of always rushing.”

Though Bragoszewska is now based in Lyndhurst, about forty minutes northeast of Kingston, and Gowan lives in the Upper Laurentians in Quebec, both artists still have strong ties to Kingston and the community, and look forward to performing their forty-five-minute show here in March. “Skeleton Park is the neighbourhood that really nourished my career,” says Gowan, who is known locally for her prowess on the hurdy-gurdy.

Indeed, Gowan stresses that the unexpected sonic experiences in *Broom Dance* will take audiences to new places. She points to a slew of new folkloric-inspired music that will weave its way through the show, thanks in part to her recent experiences studying with a hurdy-gurdy master in France, as well as the participation of Slavic polyphonic singer Ekaterina (she does not use a surname), who will be performing. “We want to be able to challenge many people’s limited notion of what puppets are,” Gowan says. “It’s a much broader notion, appealing to all ages, and part of a grand performance tradition.”

Ultimately, both Bragoszewska and Gowan hope that *Broom Dance* — which they plan to eventually tour internationally — will enable audiences to slow down and sit together in quiet contemplation. “There is nothing about our world that asks you to slow down,” says Bragoszewska, “so this is one of the thresholds that we are proposing: you sit, and you watch in the dark. And you have to be quiet! The show doesn’t work if you aren’t quiet.” In that sense, she explains, the very act of watching a shadow puppet show is an act of “forced slowing.”

“I think a puppet show is a rest from all that we are obliged to insist is reality,” she adds with a laugh. “The act of making artwork — and then of sharing it in a way that requires people to come and be part of it by watching it, or to make it real by watching it, is a real act of rest.”

Birdbone Theatre will perform *Broom Dance* on March 3, 2024, at Next Church. For more information visit birdbonetheatre.org

A benefit concert for The Skeleton Press

**Saturday
27 April**
1:30pm doors /
2pm concert

**Next
Church**
89 Colborne St.
Entry by donation

Old Man Luedecke with special guests



SKELETON
PARK ARTS
FESTIVAL

THE
SKELETON
PRESS

DAFT
brewing

DELTA
HOTELS
MARRIOTT

Dream Diary

Do the neighbours (or the neighbourhood) come to you in your sleep?

STORY AND ILLUSTRATIONS BY **HALEY SARFELD**



HALEY SARFELD (she/they) is a writer, composer-lyricist, and theatre critic who's been dreaming in and about Kingston for nine-and-a-half years. Tell Haley about your dreams: lucid.skeletons@gmail.com.

In late November, I find myself sleeping longer. Maybe it's the weather, the darkness, or the colds I keep catching, but I'm tired. I get into the habit of snoozing my alarm and lingering in dreams.

My dreams typically take place in some version of the Skeleton Park neighbourhood, often with a surreal twist. The garlic in my garden sprouts a litter of tiny white kittens. I find a mansion full of cabaret dancers on Raglan Road. People I know appear and disappear, or switch places. I wonder how common this experience is, so I embark on a project to push through the seasonal inertia: a neighbourhood dream diary.

I put up posters asking, "DO YOU DREAM ABOUT THIS PLACE?" and offer an email address to send stories to. Weeks pass, and my inbox is barren — it seems I've overestimated people's willingness to volunteer such intimate, ineffable information. So I take a more direct approach, weaving the dream question into my daily interactions. It's an unusual icebreaker, and it leads to surprising and profound conversations. But most Kingstonians I speak with — even the vivid dreamers — say they don't recall dreaming about Kingston.

Jesse Vriend, a friend of mine who moved away several years ago, finally gives me a glimpse of a neighbourhood dream:

"I was lying in the grass trying to cure my laptop of a virus," they write. "You wandered by, and we climbed a tree until we found the handprints of children in the trunk halfway up, not pressed into, but bulging out of the bark. We became very frightened and then I woke up."

Inspired by my cameo in Jesse's dream, I make a list of neighbours I've dreamt about. It seems logical — dream-logical, anyway — that they might be dreaming about the neighbourhood, too. I start by asking a musician who lives a few blocks away (and who wishes to remain anonymous). I once dreamt that I gave birth to her son, so I figure we're entangled. She's enthusiastic about the concept, but when I ask, she tells me she can't think of any local dreams: "I don't think my subconscious is rooted in this town."

I get a similar response from Billie Kearns. While some of her dreams take place in her apartment, the landscapes of Kingston don't stand out. Meanwhile, I once dreamt that I saw a woman walking by with a pile of Billie's clothing. *Hey!* I yelled. *Those belong to my friend!* The thief dropped the clothes and ran off, and I picked them up and brought them back to Billie's place. (A week or so after our conversation, Billie sends me a voice note: she's had a stress dream about going to the local laundromat.)

My third attempt is more fruitful: not only has Laura Jean Cameron appeared in my dreams, she's published academic work about historical dream interpretation, and she's dreamt about the neighbourhood. Before I knew Laura well, I once dreamt that I walked into a house and found her there with her husband, Matt. Laura offered me a plate of food, but I panicked and left without saying goodbye. Back in the waking world, Laura invites me over for lunch, and I accept. We're joined in her living room by Maeve (who's opted to use a pseudonym), and Arden Rogalsky makes an appearance via video chat.

As a child, Maeve often dreamt about flying. "It was a very physical sensation, trying to lift myself up," she tells me. "I had to flap my arms in order to fly."

Maeve remembers her last flying dream, which occurred when she was about nine years old: "I was on Redan Street with a bunch of kids, hanging out and playing. I remember standing there and trying to fly, and it was really hard to. It took me a lot of time... Eventually I did, and the dream ended. I didn't have any more flying dreams after that."

While her earlier dreams of flying had been fun, the emotion Maeve recalls from this one is frustration.

Death looms in many of Maeve's dreams. "The dreams themselves are so silly. I had a dream that my dad died, but the story around it is absolutely bonkers. We were at Duncan McArthur [Hall, at Queen's University] in front of my Grade seven and eight class. My dad was in this play with my aunt and my cousin, and they were tap-dancing alligators. He was singing, and he didn't see the end of the stage, and he walked off the edge."

Maeve laughs as she recounts that dream to the group, but at the time, she woke up crying.

Hearing about each other's dreams leads us to remember more of our own. Arden recalls a recurring childhood nightmare: "[I'm] in the car, driving to the Modern Fuel [Artist-Run Centre] at night with my dad, and he has to go in to get something. He leaves, but then the car starts rolling toward the lake, and there's no way to stop."

As Arden tells the story, I hear their dad chuckling in the kitchen.

"That happened to me with my dad," Matt tells us. "The emergency brake wasn't on."

Arden remembers learning about this, and we ponder whether they first inherited Matt's memory through the dream or the story.

Years ago, Laura dreamt that she was walking on Ordnance Street toward Barrie Street when she heard a baby whimpering in Skeleton Park. "I look and I realize it's coming from this pile of detritus, garbage, scraps and stuff. There's a clear feeling that I'm being called, I should go check it out, but no one else is hearing it. Do I help? Do I go get the baby from the garbage pile?"

She woke up before she could reach the baby.

At the time, Laura discussed the dream with a friend, who suggested that the baby represented her soul. "I agreed with that. But we kept reinterpreting it. The baby connected with all my feelings about the neighbourhood, what's happening on the tannery lands, Belle Park. There are so many of these messy stories. But we have to look after this baby. When I think of it that way, it still resonates."



A few days later, as I'm pondering Laura's dream, a similar image appears in my newsfeed: a nativity scene at a church in Bethlehem. Baby Jesus is laid atop a pile of rubble, representing the brutal destruction being waged on Gaza. The timing of my encounters with these two images is coincidental, but I sense something deeper in this shared symbolism. While my background is secular, I've always found the nativity story to be intensely impactful. Although Jesus doesn't fit into my spiritual world-concept, the image of a baby — in a manger, in a park, under rubble, in a dream — strikes me as a powerful call to responsibility. What is more moving than a child being born? What is more devastating than the neglect of the small, the downtrodden, the vulnerable?

Why talk about dreams? Exploring these images and emotions, however random they may seem, is an incomparably fast and deep way to connect with others, and in doing so, we can process challenging experiences together.

For a few months in university, Arden gathered friends to form a dream society: "No one knew anything about how to interpret dreams, but because we were all in a similar space and time of life, our dreams were resonating. There was similar imagery that we could help each other understand."

Laura recalls occasions when friends — or acquaintances who would later become friends — have reached out to share their dreams. "That social nature of dreams, and how it can work to bring people together in ways you just didn't expect...it becomes a surprising thing, however you approach it."

The following week, I receive my first honest-to-goodness dream email: C.P. has seen my poster on social media and writes to me about his midnight trips back to the neighbourhood. "When I lived in Kingston, I would visit the Elm Café every Friday morning I could... Last week I found myself there again, except things were different. There were walls in new places, light filled the café in a way I didn't recognize, and each face I saw was blurry and unfamiliar."

C.P. isn't one to analyze dreams, but this one stood out as an indicator of longing. "Maybe this dream was informing my conscious self on how we build relationships with our communities — and the importance of its connection to a sense of space."

As December rolls on and days get shorter, I'm still tired, but I'm surprised at how willing I am to get out of bed. It seems paradoxical that turning to this inward topic has made me more curious about the world around me — that these private, ephemeral experiences can bring people together.

I still check my inbox once in a while, hoping to hear from more of my neighbours. Either way, I know I'll see them in my dreams.

How Aba Learned to Rest

Teaching yourself to disconnect

STORY BY **TIANNA EDWARDS**

When *The Skeleton Press* assigned this piece on Aba Mortley and mentioned that the theme of this issue is *rest*, I chuckled. If her name is unfamiliar to you, you are one of the few folks who haven't crossed paths with this Skeleton Park community member, entrepreneur, organizer, and most recently, professor at St. Lawrence College.

Aba has a BA in engineering chemistry from Queen's and a doctorate in chemical engineering from Royal Military College. She owns and runs two day spas, Cher-Mère, that carry her family's line of natural skin and hair care products. And she does so much more, including sitting on many boards, volunteering with Youth Diversion and the United Way, all while being a wife and mother to four children. She cares deeply about her community, and this level of care and attention to others means there's rarely time for rest.

We arrange to meet up for lunch to talk about *rest*. She finds this theme as funny as I did when I read *The Skeleton Press* email. After much back and forth on scheduling, we find a quick window between meetings to connect over lunch and discuss what rest means to one of the busiest people I know and admire. This is a transcription of our chat:

TIANNA: When I think about the concept of rest and think about you, I feel like you've come a long way in your ability to find rest.

ABA: Mhmm true.

T: When I think of 2020 Aba...

A: That was insane.

T: And I think of you now.

A: Two different people.

T: Let's talk about what rest means to you now versus what it meant to you then.

A: If I think of 2020 Aba, just the time and the period — I didn't know how to rest. I have four kids, it was COVID, I had a business that was closed, George Floyd happened, and I was trying to educate everyone on how we could be better people. I was on lots of boards, and the workload doubled because then we were like, "How do we deal with COVID?" I think I slept three hours a night. That was rest for me, trying to get a consistent three hours a night. It was ridiculous and unsustainable, obviously. So now, when I think about rest, I am still very much a busy person but rest to me is, *How do I get the mental rest? How do I allow myself space to have quietness in my mind?* Because I am always thinking and trying to be on the go. I try to think, *What are a few simple key things that I can fully be present in*, and do that fully, and that's my rest.



I THINK I SLEPT THREE HOURS A NIGHT. THAT WAS REST FOR ME.

T: You've learned how to set boundaries?

A: Yeah, set boundaries. For the most part. For myself and for other people. Also, realizing I can feel now. At the end of 2020, it became too much. I feel like my body literally disassociated from the rest of me. I would look at myself and think *Oh, that's a strange thing she's doing or Why is she doing that?* and I never want to be back in that state. That's the sign when things become too much and I just have to say no and walk away. It still takes me a while. I am still very empathetic to people, so my husband always says I take too long to disconnect from something and I need to disconnect quicker. I am working on that. How to emotionally separate the emotional empathy for someone in a situation to what can I actually do to progress something.

T: You can't always fix the thing, sometimes you have to walk away...

A: Yes.

T: The proximity between your neighbourhood and your business downtown: how does that contribute to your sense of rest?

A: I think rest, to me, in my neighbourhood, is taking the time to enjoy my neighbourhood, because I am busy and I want to see what's going on. Rest, to me, is I work out at F45 downtown — shout out to them! And if I feel like it, I go to Northside and have a delicious meal. And I bring a book and I have a moment to read, or I walk through the park, or I go to the water along the K&P trail, or I go towards

Queen's. Just being in the moment and the fact we have the luxury to spend a few moments doing such simple tasks that can bring such peace and stillness without having to drive or go anywhere. It's just appreciating what we have in the neighbourhood. Hopefully this year, maybe, my cross-country skis will come (laughs) and maybe we'll use the lake if it's frozen. (Laughs)

T: Do you feel it's ironic the spa offers rest to folks but you...

A: Are crazy? (Laughs)

T: When do you ever get to enjoy your own amenities?

A: Not often. Whenever I get in, I go *Oh, this is amazing! I should do this more often.* (Laughs) Every time I go in, I say *That was nice!* Literally. So, I guess when I do go in, I realize how amazing it is. There is something about being in a space where you can just relax and take away physically whatever it is you are holding, you know? There is something to be said about that. And when I do get in, it's phenomenal, so note to self, *Get in!*



TIANNA EDWARDS is an Equity, Diversity, Inclusion Coordinator at Queen's University, host of podcast, *Kingston, The Black Experience* and the creator/author of a blog, keepupwithkingston.com. She lives in Kingston with her husband and two daughters.

Seeking Rest-Calm-Balance in a Frenetic World

Why we need to unplug and detoxify

STORY BY **HARVEY SCHACHTER**

ILLUSTRATION BY **FLORIANA EHNINGER-CUERVO**



HARVEY SCHACHTER writes the “Managing” and “Power Points” columns for *The Globe and Mail*. From 2011 to 2016, he wrote a “Balance” column for that newspaper.

Chris Bailey found himself in an embarrassing situation a few years ago: once billed by the TED Talk organization as probably the most productive man you would ever meet, he was suddenly overwhelmed by anxiety and accompanying burnout.

At about the time he moved from nearby to a new home in the Skeleton Park area, the productivity consultant determined to find out why. “I was relieved to discover that the productivity advice I’d been giving wasn’t wrong. It was, however, missing a critical piece of the productivity picture,” he says in the book he wrote during that research and recovery period, *How to Calm Your Mind*.

He argues that productivity is intrinsically tied to our ability to achieve calm, and the two main enemies of calm are our quest for more stimulation and our related desire for dopamine, a neurochemical in the brain that leads to overstimulation. Often when we seek more stimulation, we are craving dopamine.

To counter his familiar accomplishment mindset, Bailey sets boundaries, carving out time to purposefully not care about productivity or accomplishment. Every day, he delineates what his productivity hours will be, both for professional work and housework.

He undertakes dopamine detoxes periodically, stepping back from artificial stimuli as much as possible for one month, using a blocker app for web sites and social media — an exception is yoga and workout videos on YouTube — while checking email only three times a day. If he wants to watch TV, a movie or something on a streaming site, he must decide twenty-four hours ahead of time, so he is not giving in to impulse, and if he buys something online, he has to know what he wants before visiting the site. As part of a broader and important shift from digital to analog living, he limits his news consumption during detox periods to the morning print newspaper.

Some people have returned to the notion of a Sabbath to find calm and rest or, as San Francisco consultant Margaret Paul puts it with the title of her book, to carve out an Oasis of Time. A workaholic, she started simply by joining friends for a Friday evening meal welcoming the Jewish Sabbath, then over time extending the break to include Saturday morning, and eventually a full day. She found you must protect that time, know precisely when you will begin and end, turn off all digital devices to connect with your at-peace self, slow down to savour the moments and, echoing Bailey, let go of achievement mode to instead reflect, play and rest.

A RELATED READING LIST

How to Calm Your Mind by Chris Bailey

Four Thousand Weeks: Time Management for

Mortals by Oliver Burkeman

Indistractable by Nir Eyal

Attention Span by Gloria Mark

Beyond Burnout by Suzi McAlpine

A World Without Email by Cal Newport

Deep Work by Cal Newport

Pause by Rachael O’Meara

An Oasis in Time by Marilyn Paul

Tranquility by Tuesday by Laura Vanderkam

Sabbaticals are longer break periods from a regular routine and usually associated with professors. But DJ DiDonna, a lecturer at Harvard Business School, believes they should be available more broadly, in particular to young people about five to ten years into their career. Extended breaks of varying lengths come in three types according to research he conducted with colleagues: a working holiday, combining chosen work and rest; an adventure and soul reset, trekking in Nepal or sailing the Pacific; or a life quest, when someone is ready after taking time to heal from toxic work situations to push beyond their usual personal limits to find a new path in life.

But that might suggest rest comes in large chunks. In essence, we face the battle every second. University of California informatics professor Gloria Mark, probably the leading academic studying how we interact with computers, interruptions, and distractions, warns that our limited cognitive resources must be replenished throughout the day. So, the need for rest is continual. The key is to be alert to cognitive depletion by assessing the difficulty of a given task and monitoring and adjusting your activities. Rapid shifts of attention — common these days, with a world of hyperlinked information at our fingertips and emails pouring in — deplete us. Contrary to popular belief, lying in front of the television as a form of rest does nothing to deflect this assault: Video “shots” — the shortest unbroken unit of film that we perceive — have been dramatically shortened and infused with even more action in television and movies over recent decades.

In her book *Tranquility* by Tuesday, productivity author Laura Vanderkam recommends taking one night each week to pursue personal interests. Plan one big adventure of a few hours and one little adventure of an hour or so that offer novelty. “This habit builds regular doses of anticipation into our mental landscapes,” she says, as well as providing happy memories afterwards. Also, choose effortful over effortless: read, or work on a puzzle, before opting to simply check email or turn on the TV. “It is absolutely just as easy to open the Kindle app on your phone as it is to open Facebook, Twitter or a news app,” she notes.

While living in the Skeleton Park neighbourhood, Chris Bailey consulted across North America and was exposed to many different communities. He relocated to Ottawa, after his wife, economist and Queen’s PhD graduate Ardyn Nordstrom, was hired by Carleton University. But he loved the pace and spirit of Kingston. “Some cities feel immediately hectic, and by a certain point I begin wondering what everyone’s running around for, what they’re truly chasing. Kingston feels like a city where everybody has already arrived,” he says.

He wishes Ottawa could borrow some of Kingston’s calm. We wish for even more.

Kathy Brant's Long Road to Home

Mohawk elder is a role model, a leader, and a matriarch

STORY BY **PYTOR HODGSON**

PHOTO COURTESY OF:
Pytor Hodgson

Shortly after first meeting Kathy Brant, commonly known as Grandma Kate, I saw her doing what she does so very well: sharing love and care via food. In a partnership with Pathways to Education, a program of Kingston Community Health Centres (KCHC), we benefited from Kate's role as an Indigenous Community Development Worker at KCHC, where she opened the door for young members of the Mohawks of the Bay of Quinte to join a shared project we were all working on. She also joined us on Sunday nights, where her years of experience cooking nourished not only our bellies but our spirits. I was witness to the special gift Kate carries: the capacity to ensure folks understand deeply that they belong.

Kate didn't always feel that herself. Born in 1952 in Kingston, and raised — along with her nine siblings — by her parents Millie and Roy Brant, she grew up Mohawk in the white neighbouring community of Deseronto. Not allowed to live on Mohawk territory due to the discriminatory policies of that time, Kate and her family were left “on the outskirts,” as she puts it. Today, Kate bravely speaks about those childhood experiences of racism, discrimination, and isolation; she had to undertake powerful spirit and heart work to heal from all those hurts.

Kate wasn't recognized legally as a Mohawk and she didn't live in Tyendinaga until 1985, when amendments to the Indian Act (known as Bill C-31) allowed Kate and her children to become official members of the Mohawks of the Bay of Quinte.

After moving to Tyendinaga as a single mother of two, Kate took on factory work and custodial jobs, cleaning offices and community spaces, including the health centre where, thirty years later, she would become a health worker. It was at this time she met Elton Adrian Brant, whom she went on to marry in 1988 and with whom they raised their blended family, each with two children.

Encouraged by her husband, Kate returned to school while Elton cared for the house and children. Kate soon earned her Social Service Worker — Gerontology diploma and entered a new phase of her life, one that would last for the next twenty-five years. In 1998, after their youngest child, Sally, went off to university, Kate and Elton moved to Fort Frances in northwestern Ontario. There, Elton practiced Indigenous law and Kate worked for the Fort Frances Tribal Area Health Authority, eventually moving to The Gizhewaadiziwin Health Access Centre, where she worked for seven years as a health educator.

As they got older, and because family members were aging and encountering health challenges, Elton and Kate returned to Tyendinaga, where Kate attended the First Nations Technical Institute. Kate was hired by the Mohawks of the Bay of Quinte as a community health representative. She focused on disease prevention and health promotion, a role strengthened by again furthering her education at Mohawk College. Kate maintained that role in the community until she began working for KCHC, providing care in Deseronto, Napanee, and Kingston.

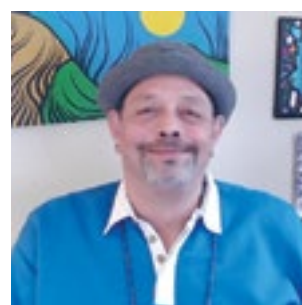


Kate is now the KCHC Resident Grandma, a title she also holds at the Grand Theatre, and the Skeleton Park Arts Festival. Yet the most significant title she carries is that of Mother and Grandmother to her seven grandchildren and three great-grandchildren.

After the sudden passing of Elton in 2018, Kate continued to live in Tyendinaga. She recently moved into the Elders Lodge where one of her brothers also lives. While she couldn't spend her childhood in her home community, she is able to have secure housing there for this current stage of life.

Grandma Kate is love driven, and if you have ever received one of her hugs, you know. Since Elton's passing, I have watched Kate support and care for others, with an open heart and love-driven approach. I have hoped that with each moment of care shared with others, she has felt that same love in return.

As a descendant herself of Joseph and Molly Brant, the brother and sister who were significant figures in Mohawk history (Tyendinaga is named after Joseph's Mohawk name), it is no surprise that Kate has demonstrated such strength, resilience, and commitment to her own well-being and that of all Indigenous Peoples. This capacity for self-reflection and important community work has made Grandma Kate a role model, a leader, and a matriarch to many. Anchored in her knowledge, care, and love for family, land, water, children, and community, Kate is treasured for her compassion and commitment to peace. If we all could match even a fraction of what Kate demonstrates, our shared world could look very different. I'm eternally grateful that my world looks so different — brighter, richer, and with many more laughs — with Grandma Kate in my circle.



PYTOR HODGSON, who is Anishinaabe, is the CEO of Three Things Consulting, though his most important title is Mishomis (Grandfather) to Everett and his big sister Aaliyah. He has called Kingston home for more than twenty years and has been lucky enough to be a dance partner of Grandmother Kate from community halls to dance floors and beaches throughout the world on their shared adventures.

Glamour Rising

Drag diva Miss Tyffanie Morgan reflects on the influential women in her life

STORY BY **MISS TYFFANIE MORGAN**
ILLUSTRATION BY **JON CLAYTOR**

My journey into drag began 23 years ago,

sparked by a deep fascination with its empowering and awe-inspiring nature. I was enchanted by drag and by the audience's love for drag here in Kingston. My name is Miss Tyffanie Morgan, and I am a drag artist. When I started drag, I used my skills, knowledge, and my love of pop culture to build my persona. I loved club kids. I loved wearing a blue wig. I loved being not necessarily a replica of a woman, but being my own woman. Surrounded by a strong community of drag artists, I knew that inevitably I would learn a thing or two to become a future mentor and leader.

I love my community of drag performers. I am now the most senior drag artist in town, and as such, I have become a leader and a mentor to many of the younger artists. I am the queen mum of Kingston. This is where I find myself today. I share my teachings and share the strength my family gave me.

I continue to rely on the memories of three strong women from my family — my great grandmother, my grandmother, and my mother — and I channel their teachings in my own life, every day. Elvina Plummer, my great grandmother, who I knew in life, was a strong and empowered woman. She was one you would not want to mess with. After surviving an abusive relationship, she took it upon herself to support her family on the farm in Monteith, in northeastern Ontario. After that, she went through a sort of personal renaissance. Elvina bought a car and learned how to drive — in that order. She took up oil painting. She continued volunteering with the Women's Institute, so much so that the Women's Institute of Monteith still remembers her fondly. I also remember my great grandmother fondly. I remember her as a woman who loved her polyester pants. Yeah, I loved her right to the day that she passed away. I love her still. She was a survivor and I hope I've taken from her the strong will to survive and thrive. She paved the road for the next generations in the family.

Including my grandmother. My grandmother, Bernice Hutchings, was a kind soul, filled with love and charity towards others. I feel those traits have rubbed off onto me, and so they remind me of her. Bernice also had a learning disability. I remember I was a teenager when I realized that my grandma wasn't like other grandmas. I could understand complexities where she had difficulties. The greatest skills she taught me were to be patient and to craft messages to be understood. And that is especially true in the world of communications. It's important to craft messages that are accessible to everyone. Sometimes you explain something and then you would have to form the message in a different way. I think about having that experience early in life. It has prepared me for the task at hand, for my current role as queen mum. As a local legend drag artist, I have the privilege of being heard and listened to by others. It's important whenever I'm crafting my messages to do it in a way that people can understand. I hope you can understand this message today.

I LOVED BEING NOT NECESSARILY A REPLICIA OF A WOMAN, BUT BEING MY OWN WOMAN.

The third woman, of course, is my mother. Not my drag mother, Jas Morgan, but my mother, Barb Hutchings. She's still with us today, and I love her dearly. She taught me never to be afraid to reinvent myself, and to always stay active in life and in the world. She is an amazing mother. She sacrificed a lot for us kids. When I was a teenager, mom decided she wanted a new career. She went back to college to become a social worker, which she did for many years until her retirement. She's now semi-retired at sixty-eight years old. She continues to take on jobs because she refuses to be idle. That's one of the things that I've learned from her. If you know me, it is impossible for me to be idle. I find myself very bored unless I am focusing on a project of some kind, whether it be a drag show, a podcast, live streaming, an online directory of drag shows (dragshow.ca), a project with the Agnes (Patterns for All Bodies), or even a photo book. My mom was able to reinvent herself without fear. She just trucked on through.

One of my earliest memories of my mother is of her volunteering at my school when I was still a young kid. Volunteering is part of me but another part of volunteering is mentorship. In my twenties, I started building my leadership and mentorship skills. Today, at my age, people look up to me. I realize that it's important to foster new leaders, especially amongst our youth. It takes a long time to grow into an effective leader. If I can impart any kind of knowledge or advice, I always will.

Give your children the skills they need to face the challenges of life. These skills are ones that, I hope, I am able to impart to young, developing drag artists. Drag artists of today and of tomorrow.



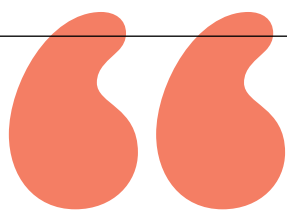
TYFFANIE MORGAN is a drag queen entertainer, gardener & horticulturalist, online personality, hostess, event manager, and community leader in Kingston. With more than twenty years of experience, Tyffanie can be found leading successful drag show events, sharing her popular gardening stories with the hashtag #TyffsGarden, and producing and co-hosting a live broadcast podcast called "What's the Maple Tea?!"



Joan's Gold

On solving the puzzle of the perfect marmalade

STORY BY JASON MERCER



I BEHELD THE MOST BEAUTIFUL DEEP, AMBER-HONEY-COLOURED MARMALADE I HAD EVER SEEN, WITH A TASTE THAT WAS PURE GOLDEN JOY

My interest in preserving started with exactly that, a preserve.

Around mid-winter I would watch with fascination as my mother-in-law, Joan, and her best friend of sixty years, Joan — the Joans, as they were called — put together a Seville orange marmalade from a weather-beaten, worn-at-the-edges recipe card.

An arduous two-day task of, first, finding the bizarre lumpy oranges, which are seasonal, cutting and juicing them, stripping and saving the pulp, slicing the rind wafer thin with the help of an antique hand-turned meat slicer, soaking them overnight, then finally boiling the batch while adding the sugar and cooking until the mixture was finally ready and sent to the awaiting sterilized jars.

When these jars cooled and set up, I beheld the most beautiful deep, amber-honey-coloured marmalade I had ever seen, with a taste that was pure golden joy, both sweet and tart, which is the clear signature of Seville oranges.

Every year, just after New Year's, I would watch the Joans work, chatting and laughing while they put together a batch, seemingly nonplussed by the arduous tasks at hand, and every year a delicious golden run was produced to be enjoyed throughout the following year or shared with friends.



PHOTOS COURTESY OF: Jason Mercer

This continued until the passing of my mother-in-law in 2006 and for the few years that followed there was no batch marmalade made. That is, until I discovered the recipe card nestled in a small box full of old, handwritten recipes.

The marmalade recipe was handwritten, smudged and worn from years of handling, and it was seemingly filled with code English instruction that had been clear to the Joans but definitely wasn't to me. Exact measurements were sketchy, times and temperatures weren't noted precisely, words were unclear ... but the possibility certainly piqued my interest.

I felt I was holding a treasure map, or that I had just found a puzzle to be deciphered and solved. The outline was there. It was vague and Joan wasn't around to ask but I was determined to try my hand at resurrecting the little pots of gold that were a significant winter heirloom. How hard could it be?

"I'm going to make that marmalade," I said to my wife Martha. "Where's that meat slicer?"

"I think it got thrown out," was her response. Strike one.

Ok, no biggie. I'm good with a knife, I'll just do it by hand. Little did I realize just how hard on the wrists that would be.

First things first. I had to find the oranges.

I went to every grocery store in my old neighbourhood in Brooklyn, New York, but to no avail. Seems that Americans don't harbour the same warm and fuzzy feelings towards marmalade as Canadians do. I put it down to a leftover from the War of Independence and left it at that. Strike two, but we were up for a family visit and I quickly found the oranges here at our local grocery store.

Next was to simply follow the card. Slice the oranges in half and juice them, cut them into quarters and remove the pits and pith from the rinds. At first this all seemed simple, but scraping the insides of a thin-skinned orange soon proved to be a messy, ridiculously challenging task, and I was quick to curse under my breath.

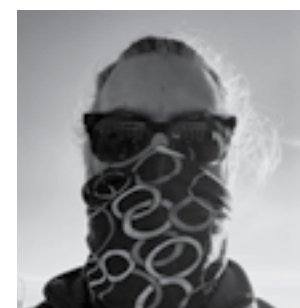
Then came slicing the rind, which went somewhat quickly but little did I know that the rind blooms as it cooks, and my cuts, in the end, were much too large. There was a reason for that meat slicer.

After letting the rinds soak overnight, boiling the batch was as simple as following the instructions until, of course, knowing when to stop was left up to a cryptic "till it coats the back of a spoon" from the card.

When I thought the batch was fully cooked, I lovingly ladled the golden syrup into awaiting jars and waited overnight with anticipation for them to set. The next day I came down to the kitchen and held a jar up to the light. Disappointingly, only little jars of runny orange sauce stared back at me. It would appear they hadn't set up. Strike three.

I then commenced to re-boil all of the jars — which has jokingly been referred to as the "double boil" — until I was sure the marmalade was fully cooked. This led to my first successful run of Joan's Gold.

After some necessary research, a re-writing of the recipe card to include times and temperatures, finding the meat slicer of my dreams on Facebook Marketplace, and many years of practice, I continue to make this recipe every year when the Seville oranges are in season. I look forward with glee, pride, and anticipation to this yearly event that is not only delicious and beautiful to behold, but clearly nourishing to my soul.



JASON MERCER is a world-travelled musician and producer. In his off time he can be found planting in his garden, petting the odd cat, and baking cake. His father-in-law likes to call him by his nickname, Pie Guy.

Endemic homelessness signals a deeper problem

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 5

“How,” asks Charette, “is the decampment order helping to solve the homelessness crisis? Having unhoused people pack up and move along during the day creates additional questions — where do unhoused people go during the day? There currently aren’t enough day programs and drop-in spaces. Even if there were, where do people wanting to access these spaces store their belongings? Their tents and sleeping bags, their personal effects?” The physical toll of having to set up and take down camp each day would simply add to the daily burden of finding the next meal, or a washroom.

Other cities in the province, such as London and Hamilton, are taking a more compassionate approach to encampments. As long as the clusters stay small (no more than five or six tents), these cities are offering washing facilities, garbage pick-up, portable toilets, food and water, warm clothing, and safe-use drug supplies. Critics contend that all this simply normalizes homelessness, but homelessness in this country was normalized a long time ago. Ottawa City Council is pondering putting up huge military tents — the kind erected in the wake of earthquake and flood disasters. Homelessness in that area has increased fivefold since 2018, with several deaths reported in December alone. The same month in Gatineau, meanwhile, a developer (Devcore) set up twenty-eight, two-person heated tents in a parking lot — all with municipal approval.

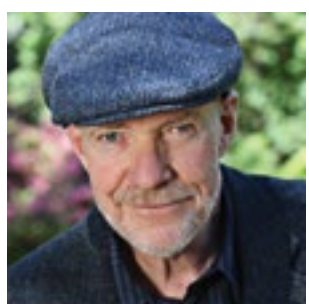
In mid-December, an eight-year-old girl in suburban Halifax came up with the idea of helping the homeless in her community by making arts and crafts, raising \$700, and using the money to buy bags containing socks, hand-warmers, food, and other essentials. She called them “kindness kits” and hoped the idea would inspire others.

“I don’t live day to day,” I heard one homeless man say on CBC Radio. “I live hour to hour.” In winter, the great challenge for homeless men and women is staying warm. And for some, given the often-deadly toxicity of street drugs, staying alive. With nowhere to turn, some on the streets turn to the emergency departments of hospitals, exacerbating that other crisis of a seriously overstretched medical system.

Toronto is “home” to some ten thousand homeless; Canada-wide the figure is two-hundred and thirty-five thousand; both figures are rapidly rising. Our neighbour to the south has some 600,000 homeless citizens. Encampments form, get swept, reform. Belle Park writ large. The city of Phoenix last year cleared three thousand encampments, up from twelve hundred in 2019. And, in an even darker turn, Las Vegas and Los Angeles are dealing with violence aimed specifically at homeless people. Eight were shot, and four died while sleeping last December.

Here in Kingston, some exasperated friends pooled funds and donated an insulated tent (designed for ice fishing), a sleeping pad, and a winter sleeping bag to The Hub. As they entered with the gear, two of those among the dozen or so individuals gathered outside asked, “Can I have that shelter?” Once inside, the friends encountered other donors with new sleeping bags in hand. Hub staff had to decide who would get that tent, those sleeping bags. Not an enviable task, one bound to engender disappointment and resentment, and a reminder that while individual acts of charity are most welcome, they are not the answer to this ongoing and relentless human crisis.

What’s required is structural change to the way wealth is shared in this country — and the louder we demand that of government (federal, provincial and municipal), the better.



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.

The Pros and Cons of Artificial Intelligence

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 17

Queen’s University’s professor Daryn Lehoux of York Street calls the incursion of ChatGPT into higher education “a real stumper” that has turned the academy on its head, particularly in the humanities.

“Always in the humanities, we’ve used writing as a substitute for thinking. We can assess how well students understand the material based on how well they can write about it,” says Dr. Lehoux, head of the university’s Department of Classics and Archaeology.

That learning-assessment approach is no longer reliable now that students who are in a deadline pinch or simply lazy can ask Chat to produce a plausible essay on any conceivable topic. “It takes a pretty careful reader to realize the [Chat] robot is making mistakes or that something is not quite lining up,” Laroux says.

He recently caught a student passing off as his own a Chat-generated essay on the history of technology. The tip-off, says the professor, was “the collection of platitudes without any actual facts” and, even more of a giveaway, a reference in the essay to a technology that didn’t exist during the period that was being written about.

Compared to much of the professoriate who have been blindsided by Chat, Lehoux is wise to the incriminating features of this latest version of essay cheating. He began his career twenty-five years ago, when Google appeared on the scene and students took to cutting and pasting with abandon.

“At that time, a lot of profs hadn’t grown up with search engines and didn’t know what to look for. But I’ve seen a lot of cases [of cheaters] in my career, and it’s given me a sense of how often it happens and what to look for.”

But he’s not sanguine about what large-language models (LLMs) such as ChatGPT mean for higher education. Now we’re faced with a new kind of plagiarism, says Dr. Lehoux, and we’re unsure we can beat it. “I don’t know if we can win this particular technology arms race.”

While some universities are flat out treating anything Chat-generated as plagiarism, the Queen’s professor is taking a more roll-with-the-times approach. “We may have to learn to live with it somehow. We may have to find ways to tell students they are allowed to use it while also teaching them how to write instead of letting the robot write for them.”

Laroux has added his own caveats to the university’s official statement on academic integrity: unless explicitly stated in writing, everything done for the course must be the student’s own work, and any use of a large language model will be treated as if someone else wrote the essay for them.

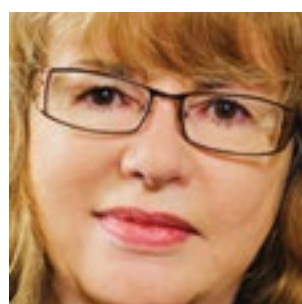
Like most of us, Lehoux can only speculate about how ChatGPT and other large language models to come will change how we perceive the world.

“At one point we would have been talking about redundancy in jobs that involved putting bolts on things in factories. Now we are talking about creative industries like writing. “In the future, when everyone has AI in their pockets, what will it mean to write a research essay, to write a manuscript, to write a newspaper article, to write a novel?”

Can Chat evolve to where it’s impossible to distinguish between one of its commissions and a *New Yorker* magazine piece written by Zadie Smith? “I would like to think that with a good writer, it would be clear that there is a human soul at the heart of it,” Laroux says.

Despite some serious concerns, ChatGPT is fun to mess around with. Dawn Clarke of Ordnance Street has enjoyed assigning the system various off-the-wall topics. She asked Chat to compare Romeo and Juliet to West Side Story; compare the work of Russian writer Anton Chekhov to that of Canadian author Vincent Lam; and argue that the Canadian flag should have blue borders or that flowers should be stained brown. Each inquiry produced a somewhat credible response. ChatGPT showed some moral fibre, however, in refusing to entertain her wackiest question of whether people should have sex with mice. (She was invited to appeal). ChatGPT was happy to convincingly argue that Clarke (a retired English teacher and United Church minister) was the best physicist in Kingston but, bringing historical accuracy into play, wouldn’t make the same case for George Eliot of Victorian England.

The jury is still out on whether AI in all its iterations will help save the world from today’s seemingly intractable crises or turn an army of machine learners against humanity.



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

The Ritual of Dinner

And the pasta recipe that gets me through the winter

STORY BY CATHERINE MARCOTTE

During the long winter months, as the natural world engages in rest,

I often find it difficult to adjust to the rhythm of the seasons. While plants go dormant, animals hibernate, and daylight hours grow shorter, the demanding hours of school and work persist. Amid the tension between these schedules, I find myself turning to the kitchen, and the ritual of making and sharing dinner, for solace. I gravitate towards a beloved food that is always abundant in my home, regardless of the season: pasta.

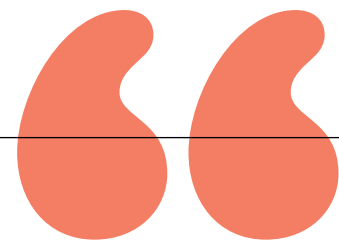
In all its forms and flavours, pasta, and the many sauces that accompany it, make for warm and comforting meals. Most often, they come together quickly and with ingredients easily kept on hand. Boil a box of spaghetti and toss sliced garlic, chilli flakes, and salt in a pan of olive oil, and you're moments away from a beautiful bowl of *aglio e olio*. Add a can of crushed tomatoes and before you know it, you'll have a luscious *pomodoro*. The possibilities for good sauces are endless, and they can be made with just about anything. These days, in my kitchen, garlic and onions can regularly be found sautéing in shimmering olive oil and salt before they are bathed in a can of crushed tomatoes.

As I return to the ritual of the kitchen again and again, the act of making a bright, warm dinner, especially against the backdrop of a cold, windy evening, has become a meaningful way for me to slow down and reconnect with the people I love. Just the other day I stepped out of the shower to the smell of warm garlic frying in olive oil. Before I even made it to the kitchen, I knew that my best friend had made us pasta. She had chopped garlic and onions, bloomed chilli flakes in oil, waited for tomato paste to turn a deeper shade of rusty red, and poured vodka, then cream, then pasta water into the pan to achieve a starchy, pasta-gripping sauce. Her creamy, emulsified, pasta alla vodka was finished with heaps of Parmesan cheese. It was delicious.

To me, what she didn't say in so many words was: "I bought my favourite pasta shape — bowties — and I wanted to share it with you." As we lit candles, poured a dry red wine, and dished pasta into our favourite blue bowls, what we really did was make space to slow down after the pace of the day and enjoy each other's company. So, while I rejoice at the chance to cook for others, I am fortunate to know the pleasure of being cooked for, too.

My sister, who also revels in pasta of all kinds, is particularly good at gathering friends around the table to share a meal. A few months ago, she made what seemed like a twenty-pound lasagna. Between layers of homemade béchamel, fresh marinara, and seemingly endless amounts of cheese, she layered crimped pasta sheets before lovingly packing her baking dish into a cooler and driving it to our grandfather's house in Montreal. That evening, with the baked, bubbling lasagna resting on the countertop, we sat, drank a chilled white wine, and basked in each other's company. While it was the lasagna and the care my sister put into making it that brought us around the table, it wasn't what kept us lingering there long after the last forkfuls of sauce and melted cheese were scraped from our plates. As delicious as it was, the lasagna isn't the part of the meal I remember most vividly. Instead, it is the sense of contentment I felt as we sat around the table long after the sun had gone down and its warmth had left the air. It is the time we spent savouring the very occasion of the meal that I remember. To me, this is where the restorative power of the dinner table lies.

Though I find joy and contentment in the solitude of cooking, I know that there's an unmatched energy that comes from gathering with loved ones around the table. In my circle, making pasta just seems to be a good way to get us all there. As someone who has long been confounded by the challenges of navigating the dark and dreary snail's pace of winter amid the continued rocket speed of life, long, lingering meals with family and friends have helped me adjust to the rhythm of the season and recharge my cold, sleepy body, if only for a few precious moments.



WHILE I REJOICE AT THE CHANCE TO COOK FOR OTHERS, I AM FORTUNATE TO KNOW THE PLEASURE OF BEING COOKED FOR, TOO.



CATHERINE MARCOTTE is an avid reader, writer, and passionate home cook. She is pursuing her MA in English Literature and Language at Queen's University where she is writing about intersectional feminism and ecocriticism.

Spaghetti Pomodoro

Serves 4-6

INGREDIENTS

1/4 cup of olive oil
4-6 large garlic cloves
2 cans of crushed tomatoes
(796ml each, whichever brand is available to you)
Fine sea salt (or whatever you have on hand)
Fresh cracked black pepper
(or your preferred black pepper)
1 pound of spaghetti
1/4 teaspoon of red chili flakes
(or more, to taste, optional)

METHOD

1. Thinly slice garlic gloves. Use the full 6 for a deeper garlic flavour.

2. Add the olive oil to a pot or high-sided skillet,* preferably one with a lid, and turn to medium heat. When the oil starts to shimmer (1 or 2 minutes), add the thinly sliced garlic cloves. Salt the cloves to taste. Cook, stirring occasionally, until fragrant and lightly golden (1 to 3 minutes). If the garlic appears to be burning or darkening too quickly, remove the skillet from the heat and allow the residual heat to soften the garlic (2 minutes). Add a pinch of red chili flakes and stir, if desired.

3. On medium heat, add the two cans of crushed tomatoes to the skillet and stir to combine. Season generously with salt and pepper.

4. Once the sauce starts to simmer, lower the heat slightly and cover the skillet. Simmer for 20 to 40 minutes, stirring occasionally. The sauce will be thick. The flavour will deepen the longer the sauce simmers. Taste for salt and pepper after 20 minutes and season accordingly. Since this sauce is mostly tomatoes, the salt will balance their acidity.

5. While the sauce finishes, bring a large pot of water to a boil. Once the water has boiled, generously salt it. Cook the spaghetti, uncovered and stirring occasionally, according to the package instructions for al dente pasta. This is usually 10 minutes. Try not to overcook the pasta as it will keep cooking from the heat of the sauce.

6. Before draining the pasta, reserve 1/2 a cup of the pasta cooking liquid, using a ladle or glass measuring cup.

7. Add 1/4 a cup of the pasta cooking liquid to the tomato sauce and stir to combine. Add the other 1/4 cup, or less, as needed, to achieve your desired thickness. The cooking liquid will thin out the sauce and its starch will help it adhere to the pasta.

8. Add the al dente pasta to the skillet and toss to combine. Serve immediately with a dusting of Parmesan cheese or fresh basil if you like.

*Avoid using a cast-iron pan here as the acidity of the tomatoes may erode its seasoning.