

# The River

Issue Two

Summer 2018

Starla



This is the River Magazine. It is written by individuals who experience poverty or live on a low income. Contributors can publish any type of printable media they want, and the content is decided by what they choose to submit. The editorial committee that produces the magazine filters submissions on the basis of very minimal criteria (see the back page for contributor guidelines) so that the contributors really do represent themselves. The contributors are paid \$40, an honorarium for providing meaningful work. Kayla Lambert's painting, Nature Breeds Hope, was selected as the cover.

The content may relate to the experience of living in poverty or on a low income, or it may not. The point of the magazine is to give people living on a low income a platform for free expression, a demographic that very often does not get the opportunities and privileges to do so. We as a community need to hear from this side of our society not just because they are an important part of our community, but because they have a unique perspective on everything from economics to spirituality to humour that we can and should be shaped by. And far too often it is the wealthy and the middle class that dominate the discussion.

The editorial committee would like to thank Social Services Peterborough, the United Way, CUPE 3908, VON 360 Clinic and Fourcast for supporting the magazine financially this time around. We would also like to thank the dozens of individuals who donated privately to making the magazine beholden to no one but the contributors. You know who you are. If anyone wishes to help keep the River going financially, see our Gofundme page at <https://www.gofundme.com/the-river-magazine> or send an e-transfer to [theriverpeterborough@gmail.com](mailto:theriverpeterborough@gmail.com).

We hope to publish the next issue by Christmas of this year. We are always accepting submissions.

-the River editorial committee



I took this photo on one of the coldest mornings this winter. Although reluctant to get a coat on, I knew I had to capture what was going on outside of the house. Icicles everywhere; snow knee deep. I had been hibernating up till then and so when I went outside I was reminded me of how we are all in one way or another looking for that first spring thaw. I yearned for the feel of the sun.

BIKE depicts the lost days of summer; a bike mired relentlessly in snow like we all have been. Photography for me is a favorite means of capturing not only the physical but the emotional as well. It emanates the forlorn and forgotten. Taken with a FUJI Film Finepix digital camera, photo shopped with a sepia tone.

- Kelly Moore



### Ichiraku Ramen

Hello Jello in my hand I throw it at faces and scram  
I laugh I play I shoot for fun the way my gun looks  
super dumb I need the people scream my name I  
want to learn all a bout fame and never talk a bout  
the minutes between shows no wait I'm finished  
here it is the danishes dinner daminishin dinnishes  
fishes swimming quicker than her lips are flappin  
back and forth just finish the food you chewin or  
spit it in, the garbage its harmless to do what you  
want and then sip a grin. That's not an alcoholic  
beverage btw... it means smile aye... aye ... ayye!  
Ayay. Um, yeah..... ahuh huh.

- Sleepmode



### Ewok Village

Planet earth, this is where I be @. Long socks with  
the knee caps believe leafs can be fat. Tree beetles  
and seats back. Magazine leaf blower axing me from  
my seeds back. We like to weed wack. I like wash-  
ing dishes, memories bring me back to day we call  
better days. Getting chedda GETTING PAID better  
than my lemonade triple three dimensional now all  
my efforts effort phrases spoken better than the  
ways they ask me to come getta fade nappy dreads  
I said "nah, I like to be like the better me" the me  
that doesn't try to let them tell me who the let-  
ters be the numbers adding up they call me when  
I get to them like alphabetically. In that order make

stacks shorter's what you do, what we do together is much greater than voo-  
doo like you do you, I do me, we just shine like I can't see. Complete kapish  
I roll the sweet nah it's a backwood for the peace of mind I think I might be,  
rewind until the end of time – the last one in that order im that shorter not  
talking no temper im a member of the things you dismembered im done.

- Sleepmode



## The Tie That Binds: Part Two

### By Kinyon Annan

We took our seats at the tables of the cafeteria, and Delaney stood at the head of the room with a microphone. Behind him were a couple foldable tables laden with sweet foods and drinks, donuts, chocolates, etc.—a new addition to Delaney's meetings. The fact that he was trying to sweeten his message only made worry claw into my gullet.

He tapped the microphone, and the thumping white noise it produced showed it to be working. "Alright, thank you everyone for coming."

Not that we had a choice, I thought.

"As you can see behind me, the company has provided us with plenty of food to enjoy after the meeting, so let's make this as quick as possible." Delaney forced what looked like a painful smile on his face, making me wonder if he had ever smiled before. "First off, you have all been working very hard, so let's give ourselves a round of applause!" He clapped his hands together awkwardly, as one still held the mic. A few of the workers gave a languid applause, and it soon died away.

"Now, with that said, we all know times are hard right now. The economy is struggling the world over." At this, Shelley looked over at me with a furrowed brow. Around me, similar concerned gazes were cast about, with a few murmured voices.

"Don't worry," Delaney said, reading the room. "The company is doing fine! To ensure its continued efficiency in the current economic climate, I'll be conducting productivity reviews of staff to ensure we are all working as well as we can be. For the rest of the day, I will be calling out a list of names to come see me in my office to go over performance."

Murmuring intensified, and Delaney continued. "That about sums up the reason for this meeting, so enjoy the extra time for your lunch hour." He said it with a forced softness, as though the meeting was a favour for being so short.

Immediately upon his exit, the cafeteria erupted in a swarm of voices. "Oh god," Shelley said to me, "we're going to be laid off."

"No," I assured her, ignoring my own misgivings. "We'll be fine, we've been here for years."

"Gavin, we have no union. They can do whatever they want to us." Shelley said,

and I knew she was right. We were at their mercy. I felt breathless.

Throughout the lunch hour the conversation was much the same between everyone – a mix of fear and anger at what was assumed to be planned layoffs. No one touched the company food; it was tainted by Delaney's message, and stank of corporate poison. We returned to our cubicles more sullen than we had left them.

Almost immediately upon our return, the names began to be called. My coworkers stepped out of their boxes one by one, their faces stricken as they took timid steps towards Delaney's office. One by one, men and women that I had known and worked with for years left his office to be escorted out of the building by security. Some crying, others as silent as stone. Anxiety pumped acid into my veins with every buzz of the intercom, only to die away as names other than my own were called.

The fact I had missed work when on the lake seemed absurd to me now. My eyes turned back to the framed portrait with the smiling fishermen – my late father and myself at 16. I yearned to be back in a boat, peace in my chest instead of fear. The picture was a bittersweet memory of mine, and I could still remember it clear as fresh water.

\*

It had been almost dark, and the lake had sat in that time of solace where the sun glowed amber with quiet covering the water. The only sound that had punctured it was the gentle dip of an oar that had propelled us forward.

"We're far enough out, let's cast our lines." My Father had said, looking at the water. "The lake is lovely right now, with the way the light hits the water. It looks golden."

"It's nice," I had said. "I wish we didn't have to leave tomorrow."

"Me neither – here, have a beer."

"A beer? Really?"

"You're a working man now, like me. Crack it open -- but don't let your mother know."

"Mom would lose it."

"Cheers, son."

"It tastes...funny."

"You'll learn to like it."

"Why do we have to leave tomorrow? We usually stay a week longer."

"Wages got slashed at the plant, you

know that. I can't take time off for the cottage like before."

"Shit, working sucks so--"

"Don't swear," his dad cut him off.

"You're going to have to work your whole life. Which reminds me, that's why I took you out fishing again. I wanted to tell you that I'm proud of you."

"Proud of me? Why?"

"You got your first job, all by yourself. All I did was show you how to tie the tie."

"Thanks..."

"What's wrong?"

"I really don't want to work. I've hated all my shifts in the mailroom so far – and the tie chafes me mad."

"We all hate our jobs, Gavin. But we do the things we hate so we can do the things we love, like being here in this boat, enjoying a beer, and waiting for a bite."

"It's just not fair to spend most of your life doing something you hate to only have a short time to do what you like."

"I guess it is unfair. That's life, Gavin: Unfair, and spent toiling." My father looked away to the surface of the lake, seeming to take solace in the gently rippling water. "But if we work hard enough, we get to enjoy moments like this."

\*

The conversation we'd had on that last fishing trip to the cottage had always stayed with me. My father had been right, and he had been wrong. We do all have to work, but no matter how hard you work it seemed like those good moments become fewer and fewer. He was eventually laid off by the owners of his factory, who decided to cut costs to increase profits. His father had to take multiple jobs in different areas to keep our family surviving. We never made it back to the lake before he died. Now I worked, and it took dying for me to get back on the lake, and I doubted it would happen again any time soon. The prospects that faced me were the same my Father had faced; if I wasn't laid off, I would be loaded up with the missing people's work, with no time to spare. If I was laid off, I would struggle to survive, probably having to take more hours at lower rates at whatever job I could get. So, Dad had been right; it was spent toiling. I loosened my tie and left the memories behind to focus on my work.

**To be continued**

Self-care summed up in one word: funk

Old school grooves thicken my skin to face  
Trauma laced narratives  
Phat bass riffs brace against narrow minds  
Able to only see the bottom line  
Percussive triplets suture these wounded realities  
A back-line tying together singularities  
We are front-line workers rising at reveille  
When the horn blows crescendo this will not be hyperbole  
Or a militarily mixed metaphor  
There is war in the streets  
And we are all a funk army  
Whether your beat is  
Country, classical, roots, reggae, emo-pop,  
Heavy metal, jazz, or disco,  
The drum is universal  
So kick it.

- Wes Ryan

## **The Stone House**

Subtle glimpse of memories past  
Faded colours of a photograph  
The tangy reek of rotting sin  
Humanity trapped, preserved within  
Bricks of dust, wood of decay  
An echo remains, to end of day  
Footsteps by beings unknown  
The living has been overthrown  
Stands alone, bears dark disguise  
Yet still unknown its long demise  
Observers many and vandals few  
Exists proud among the earthly hue  
Free of spirit, cannot be tied  
On earth remains, though has died

Holls Hunt



### **Mama**

Comforting when she's laying on me, and purring. Piercing eyes that see you for who you really are. She has a big personality that makes you laugh. She loves when I take her picture. She has beautiful markings, you can't tell her age by the way she acts. Loving headbutts, she gives when I pet her.

Mama is a 15-year-old cat owned by my mother's soulmate. She is the pinnacle of sassy cats with big personalities, every time I see her she greets me with her funky little meow which I love to hear :) When I take my camera out of my bag she gets up on her cat tree and poses for me, it's like she's saying "I'm ready for my photo shoot." If I was to be a cat in my next life I would want to be like Mama. Fierce, loyal, and loveable.

- Kendra



### **Mom's Flower Pot**

Oddity, drifting holes and smooth,  
Smaller than you think,  
Decaying like Peterborough,  
Things in mom's flower pot.

Interesting to me where in close up view you can see all the nooks and crannies of the driftwood and of the holes made by ants. You can look at it for hours and still see new things. Mom's flower pot is at her boyfriend's place which is my sanctuary from Peterborough. Out there I can just put my feet up and relax and de-stress, and find lots of new things to take pictures of.

- Kendra





By Christopher Best



## Returning

-B.

*She shifts uncomfortably in her seat and noticed as one of the legs of the wooden chair was loose and in need of repair. Figures of people she knew crowded around her, scowls made their faces almost unrecognizable. This scene is familiar, the summer before in a kitchen she knew so well, only this time things were slightly different. Smoke coiled upward from a cigarette that lay in the ashtray and lingered in the air around her face. Each of the figures took their turn to sneer in her face a different accusation of some atrocity or another.*

*She calmly addressed each new statement, though her chest tightened as the figures became more violent in their interrogation. They began to flail their arms, some threw plates and shoved the other chairs. She tried to flee the scene as she would have in the past, but in recreation of the scene she was incapable of walking out the door. She was trapped. The faces of people she knew and loved were distorted in anger and she tried to defend herself. She knew the people who screamed at her in this moment weren't real but the pain in her chest grew sharper and her face became flush as their arguments turned ever more volatile. As she screams a last plea of reconciliation at the figures she closes her eyes and the scene repeats. She shifts again, uncomfortably in her seat.*

A heavy breath escapes her, and her lips feel dry and cracked against the exhale. Sweeping a section of hair out of her eyes she blinks herself back into the room where dishes clattering across part of the countertop. It had happened again, another flashback, though she felt less resentment towards the intrusive thoughts than she used to. Her resilience was building. Still, she was only partly in the present, part of her lingered elsewhere, although no longer anywhere specifically dangerous.

The water has become slick from the dinner dishes that passed while her mind had parted, and she pulls the drain from the sink. She stretches away the aches in her lower back from where it felt as though she had been sitting in someone else's home. She wrings out the washcloth and runs the tap cold before pouring herself a glass.

The light above her paints the room in a dull shade that resembles buttered popcorn. The fall air reminds her of her presence. She slips a light sweater on for the eleventh time that day, no longer trapped in the murky summer of a previous year.

A bitter smile tugs at the corners of her mouth. She was safe, albeit melancholy in her apartment. She was dissociative. Her body left the perfect alibi, to anyone else around her she was just standing there, doing the dishes all this time. She sipped at her glass. A sense of satisfaction to be able to ground herself back into her home, hopefully for the last time that night.

She thought back to the previous night, watching X-men for what had to have been the hundredth time. It felt like a curse to be stolen away from the present moment and plummet into another reincarnation of her past. With time and careful practice, she had garnered the ability to pull herself back from the intrusive nightmares. She could have very well been a proud student of Professor Xavier.

Reality would have it that these abilities were a series of strengths that she had built over a long period of hard work, with the support of those around her. While her strengths may have seemed more mundane than the ones on the silver screen, she preferred reality now. A new, genuine smile blossoms across her face.



By Carolyn Barber and Joan Schelling



excerpts from the  
**ULTRAVIOLET**  
OCEAN

*Continued from Issue One*

**gwynception.** they/them/their  
schizophrenic trans enby living on  
disability. moon in pisces

*04 the mundane no one thinks  
we experience*

The afternoon melted away as she stared at her phone not really doing anything, she found herself thinking about the residence once again. She only went to the residence this late once and that was when they were really in need of someone to take care of the dishes. Someone was sick or fired or something. Did people get fired at the residence?

She decided it wouldn't hurt to go drop by and see if there was anything she could assist with.

As she walked it started getting darker for some reason unusually early for this time of year. She was wondering if she thought it was later than it really was. She passed two intimidating fellows, one was wearing a hoodie that was dark blue. She didn't take much else in about them.

That's a few moments before she found herself at an intersection and she saw that familiar old chevy she had been seeing every day or was it a different chevy, she couldn't tell. She saw someone in the passenger seat who looked identical to the mysterious shadowy driver she always saw. They were wearing dark suits and dark grey shirts with light grey ties. They weren't wearing shades but something kept you from really seeing their eyes.

Fear was her first reaction, then confusion. Everything got hazy. It seemed like it was daylight for a flicker of a second, her eyes suddenly hurt.

*05 avoiding public bathrooms  
at all costs*

The residence wasn't far away, she arrived there a little shaken up and not sure if she'd even be able to make it home safely. Everything felt wrong around her.

There was a white woman behind the desk she didn't know. She had burgundy brown hair with some light reddishness to where it curled out at the sides. She didn't look alive, then when she did she didn't seem very pleased with whatever was going on. Something must have been going on.

She then plainly stated in a monotone voice of medium pitch, "You're here to do the dishes."

Fara began to speak and she only got out a mumbled "I'm" before the woman reiterated what she said but with more demand in her voice.

The haze that overtook Fara flashed away as from her peripheral she saw Charlotte walking towards her.

"Hey Fara," She spoke with gentle exasperation "You're not supposed to be here, but can you help out tonight?"

"Uh, sure."

"And there's something we have to discuss, maybe outside in five?"

*06 anxiety*

Fara headed straight to the usual spot outside at the side of the residence, which was an alleyway between the building and a concrete wall. There was barely enough room for a truck to come in and pick up the dented and busted dumpster, it's black paint was peeling away to rust underneath. There was a smell and a yellow light.

She didn't know why she chose to wear the long woolen kilt from her punker days. It was ripped and had patches. She didn't know why she was there this late and why Charlotte was still working now. She worked days, never nights. She didn't know what was going on, or if there was anything going on.

After waiting ten minutes and being in a thought hole, Charlotte came out the door suddenly laughing followed by a nurse Fara didn't recognize. They had short hair, a squarish face, their blue nurses uniform was a size too large. They had a grin as if they just finished laughing themselves.

"What's with people these days, you know." They had a deepish voice. "Tell them to go right ahead and do what they want, see how far it gets them."

Whatever the comedy was, it died quickly as Fara stood there listening to Charlotte and whoever this was complain about how two people just didn't show up and three people died at different times of the day and there was a debacle of two families and a couple lawyers. Then Fara found out people did get fired at the place. Apparently, that's why they were laughing.

There was a beeper going off from so-and-so's waste. They left quickly. There was silence. Fara was lighting another cigarette.

"So what brought you here?"

"Don't know, missed my usual afternoon nap and I have more energy and I'm bored. I like this place." Charlotte smiled and looked at the ground, she was holding her elbow as she flicked ash. Fara continued speaking. "What did you want to discuss?"

"You heard someone was fired. You don't need any qualifications for this position. Do you want me to try and get you in? There's a bit of responsibility involved and I know that hasn't always been your specialty, but I think you could actually grow into this position. I'll vouch for you if you promise me you'll do the best job you possibly can."

*To be continued the following issue.*

*The Ultraviolet Ocean is currently  
a two part novella,*

## How to lawfully free up more money for social programs By George Molson

This article is a recommendation on how we can lawfully free up more money for social programs and get out of debt by borrowing money from the nationalized Bank of Canada instead of private lenders, and redirecting the revenue that comes out inflating the money supply and giving that revenue to the government.

The primary way banks make money is off something called "the spread" and refers to the difference between the growth rate of the economy and the rate money is falling in value due to more being printed. For example, if the rate the economy is growing at 2.5% and the inflation rate (the rate a currency is falling in value) is 3% then "the spread" is 5.5% of the size of the total money supply and is returned to the banks as profit. This revenue stream if effectively redirected towards the government could get our nation out of debt more rapidly and fund more social programs such as universal housing and a basic income guarantee and still leave money over to start repaying our debt that we can not default on or we would threaten the integrity of our financial system.

The reason that money goes down in value over time is that more is printed and the proceeds of printing money out of fiat nothing are returned to the banks as profits who have been given a monopoly on being able to print money out of nothing, issuing it as debt. This activity is a wealth collection strategy not a wealth creation strategy.

It is my belief that Canada should nationalize the process of inflating the money supply by borrowing money from the nationalized Bank of Canada thereby creating an additional source of revenue for the Government of Canada. In 2017 this revenue stream was worth 61% of what the government collected in Federal Income Tax and if diverted to the government of Canada could help us to get out of debt faster and fund additional social programs of merit such as universal housing and a basic income guarantee which the Liberal Party of Canada is now experimenting with.

I believe that this is the single most important economic issue we face as a country as resolving this issue has the potential to fund the most amount of programs and is the single decision that could result in more public funding for the social programs we currently benefit from and many still so badly need.

61% of how much the Federal government collected in Income taxes last year (2017) was "taxed" by this privatized bank system by virtue of inflating the money supply and the proceeds of this "tax" are returned to private hands. The reason that money goes down in value is that more is printed and this acts as a stealth tax on the money supply.





Nicki Williamson 2017

This photo was taken using my ZTE grand X plus cell phone. I took this picture because Cameron House has supported me over the last few years. I want to show my appreciation for Cameron House and all that they do.

- Catherine Venator



The Photoglyph. I take my coffee or tea at Dreams of Beans Café. There is an outdoor tree, which is illuminated and picks me up. In late winter, there is no colour (I have done watercolour renderings) and the sun's rays are different with time and the seasons. In the rendering of the photoglyph, I inhale, exhale and caress the paper. I attempt to be invisible in the resulting work.

- Leonard Hill





## A Time of Reflection

As we are entering spring, the season of rebirth and transformation it's a time of reflecting upon change; Where we have come from, who has moved on, and where we're heading. While it's enough knowing the change always occurs in life it's not always easy to handle. Yet transformation and rebirth are necessary for us to move forward on the journey set before us. The creator, the universe or heavens plan this journey alongside our spirit before we begin this life time. Then we are born upon the earth with a fresh new beginning. Media, peers, and society dull our senses. Many people lose the knowledge within us from the heavens, the truth of who and what our true reason for coming to Earth is. The true love, light and beauty of oneness with all thing upon the earth. The problem is we allow ourselves to become trapped in the negativity of society which in turn pulls us deeper into the swamp where we can become stuck in the muck. Getting stuck in the muck isn't the trouble, it's allowing oneself to remain stuck is the problem. One must push and pull oneself free to move forward. There's so much more to experience and see, the mountain tops and valleys below, and the ocean with sunrises and sunsets. Many people are like a tree with roots in sandy soil that are easily uprooted. Then there are people that are like trees with strong, anchored roots that through the strongest wind and heaviest rains remain standing. If you are a person who is uprooted, a new sapling comes forth, so you can just start over again.

By Elaine Dobbin

I have come to realize that life is just a collection of chapters that makes up one's story. Sometimes these chapters are good and sometimes they are bad, some of these chapters are a result of personal choice while some of them are influenced by outside forces that can't be controlled or predicted. These chapters are what make us individuals and define our personalities, good or bad nice or mean. New chapters are constantly being written due to interactions with others around us and the things we do everyday that make one unique. Some people may only be a slim paperback novel while others are a multi-volume set, some stories may be best sellers while some may be boring, but they are our own. I'm not sure where my story would be located in the bookstore of life, humour, drama, tear jerker (not sure if that section exists) but I know it wouldn't be in self help. In the end I think as long as there are more good chapters than bad one's we are doing okay.

Peterborough  
Streetvoice  
Carol's Place

# UNDERSTANDING THE BRAIN

Doctors, psychiatrists, nurses, PSWE, family, neighbours, social workers, McDonalds clerks, counsellors, the bastards at Peterborough Housing, have all tried to unlock the mysteries of

## DORRIN'S BRAIN

### PART 1: Food CORTEX



Seat of:

- potatoes
- Coca-cola
- ramen soup
- Ezekiel bread (made from a Biblical recipe)
- rice and tofu, heavily salted
- coffee with 5 sugars
- a monthly serving of vegetables
- delicious Garden meat substitutes

### PART 3: SOMESTHETIC YOUTUBE CORTEX



Seat of:

- dog rescue videos
- nail art videos
- how to make vegan cheese videos
- like and then turner videos
- are you the family scapegoat? videos
- restaurant brawl videos
- Tibetan chant videos

## ANATOMY OF THE BRAIN



### PART 2: ALCOHOLIC LOBES



Seat of:

- red wine
- white wine
- by the bottle
- by the magnum
- Budweiser, the King of Beers
- by the can
- by the case

### PART 4: OCCIPITAL SEX LOBE (on menopausal hiatus)



former seat of:

- Mexican midget porn
- porn where men actually perform cummingus (extremely rare)
- oiled up young men on their knees apologizing for everything men have ever done to women

### PART 5: The In-A-Gadda-Da-Vida



Seat of:

- auditory capacity; incapable of appreciating music made after 1979
- most primitive part of the brain, ensures all other parts work together especially during relapse

### Time To

1. Take the celery you've been ignoring for 5 weeks out of fridge.
2. Find a stalk inside that's hopefully not too yellow, brown or rancid.
3. chop up.
4. Get your tin of food bank beans, open.

### Bean Juice and Celery Surprise

### Time To

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### Bean Juice and Celery Surprise

While eating do everything you can to not think about what the FUCK happened to your life, your hopes, your dreams, rainbows and ponies etc.



Prelude to a typical relapse (example #712) Day Before ODSF in:



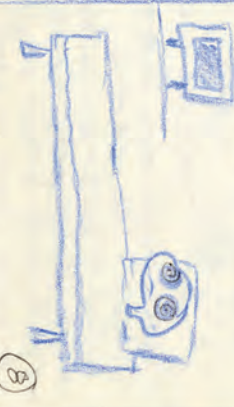
Fuck! There's nothing to!

3. Put 3 day-old hardened rice in a bowl.
4. Drain your beans, add the juice and celery to rice, mix, heat and try really hard to enjoy.



Kill me now

count the hours till your ODSF comes in at 3:13 am, trying hard not to check online just to be sure.



To be continued ...



He was a giant of a man had a heart of gold  
Only 43 he was not old  
A plunging blade, a twisting knife  
Some coward took his life

He had a few friends but liked by all  
An honourable man, My friend Paul

I was in court with a friend  
When I got the message, he met the end  
Shock and anger were the emotions I felt  
Could not believe the hand he had been dealt

A tear drops upon the page  
Fuelling fears of anxious rage  
But stop, breathe, take a step back  
This is not the way Paul would react

He did not gossip or spread lies  
Which is why he was one of the good guys  
Act on facts and not innuendo  
Believe what you see and not what you hear  
These words ring true and must be held dear

Honour his memory and think a good thought  
For he would not act before thinking, he would NOT

Tonight I raise a glass for Paul.  
RIP my friend

(written about Paul Atcheson)

*by Peterborough Street Voice*

## Smoke Room Window

As far as I could tell, we were all celebrities on the floor, being pampered and looked after, to some degree, by a staff dedicated to our mental and emotional well-being. At least that's how I felt about it at the best of times. TV and radio broadcasts designed and tailored to coax us along the introspective mind highway to a destination which appeared to be glorious and prophetic. We speculated endlessly about who or what was behind the thought machinery being beamed into our enclave, and even thought it might be coming out of some secretive office situated in Hollywood, or perhaps, even at the cable service's head office. But after several nights of discussion in the nicotine caked smoke room, we came to the conclusion it was something much bigger than that. Oh ya, much bigger.

I told her about the fellow I'd seen on Sunset Blvd. in 1995 with a homemade satellite dish on his head, rolling cigarettes from discarded butts carelessly tossed around the city transit stop bench. I figured that if we able to get in contact with him, we might just be able to get some answers to these bigger questions which were keeping us awake throughout the night. But for now we would just have to let the concepts and conjecture rest on the table and allow time and whatever insight we might have to glue all the pieces together into a tidy and neat package.

"So did you ever read Schrodinger's Cat?" I asked.

"Didn't everyone..?" she replied.

"Ya...you're right I suppose..."

Sometimes we had the feeling, drenched with elation, that we were hot on a trail of breadcrumbs, which were headed toward something very special that awaited us just over the horizon. But on the other hand, it could have all been like the yellow brick road, painted beautifully on canvas and nailed up in the background, as we did our dance scene, read our lines and headed straight into a well choreographed non-reality. No need to point out who was the scarecrow here.

As the weeks wore on, the colours disappeared, and the future didn't seem so inviting anymore. More casualties were passing through the ranks and other theories were being brought to the table. It was very difficult, admittedly, being in such a state, where I was constantly reading myself into everyone's conversation. But that was just part of the nature of this truck stop along the journey. And as depressed as we were getting, I still believed that the Ark of the Covenant was located somewhere in that room. I just knew it. And no one could tell me any differently.

## Gideon Bibles

He walked into the smoking lounge with an air of humility that was unmistakable. Call it intuition, but I knew that he thought that he was Jesus Christ. I offered him a cigarette and a copy of one of the Gideon Bibles I had stolen from the chapel. "You may need this," I said to him, trying not to appear as if I knew what he thought, but the fact of the matter was that saviours were frequent visitors in these parts and I had a talent for picking them out of the crowd.

## Institutionalized

The sun was shining, the sky was blue and the snow was melting ever so slightly. Other than that there was nothing going on here. I had 4 bottles of Diet Coke delivered and the clean laundry needed to be folded. The mail had just arrived and there were a few dirty dishes in the sink. I looked out the window just as a taxi was driving by. The phone hadn't rung in hours. Maybe Sylvia was going to give me a watercolour lesson on Skype. I hadn't heard.

There are a lot of days I miss that old smoke room. At least there it was ok to be nothing.

## Psychiatric Candy

Surely I had more than these few cigarettes to keep me going; perhaps it was time to make a coffee? I had

thought of ordering a pizza, but the walkway was too slippery for the delivery guy and I just couldn't get myself in the mood to get dressed and do something about it. What a lazy good-for-nothing I had become after all these years and years of psychiatric candy.

So it continued to snow outside the kitchen window. I had a front row seat to nothing-going-on. I had just finished listening to the latest U2 album and came away from the experience rather disappointed. At one time they had been the voice of a generation, but that generation was retired and was hardly in the mood to change the world, unless it meant increased income from their retirement funds, something I had no understanding of, being a permanent resident of The Mental Break Hotel. I knew very little of the workings of the real world. My assignment here was to sit by the kitchen window and be on the lookout for the Second Coming; and to read, occasionally, from one of several Bible translations I had neatly placed on one of my book shelves. Where this was all getting me was anyone's guess. All I knew is that it was something I felt compelled to do. And so I lived alone, in The Mental Break Hotel popping my lithium, clonazepam, risperidone and so forth and so on. That, and a mind full of memories.

Numb. Sitting by the kitchen window. Watching it snow. No pizza. Lots of cigarettes and coffee. Waiting for Jesus Christ to come and straighten things out.

**By Alex Stangl**



Money, money, money, money;  
It's all your's if you ain't got your honey.  
Money for this, money for that  
~~I~~ ain't gonna get to far by holding out  
~~my~~ hat.  
It takes money to make money,  
Yeah that's real funny,  
Walk for this, walk for that  
Take the long way home. Yeah, that's  
where it's at.  
Trying and trying to make a decent  
life, but for now I'll settle for the  
gold on the rye. Because with all of  
this struggling I'm ready to die.  
So you live your life through experierees  
Cause wherever we're going it's all so  
mysterious.  
Get a lawyer to get your pay,  
If you can't afford one, try legal aid.  
Car here, Truck there Everyone's going  
Some where. But take a closer look at  
all of the kaos.  
Because wherever we're going we can't  
take it with us.  
So take a drag; Blow some smoke  
Cause it aint no joke  
When you're crazy & Broke.  
The End. R. Casey

Photography itself ...

The arts are something I have long been both fascinated and in awe of. By showcasing this photo of the tablemat with candy heart I choose to showcase and applaud the craftsman and candy-makers

finished product and by doing so I am showing my respect for them and their art.



The field of symbolism is something I have taken interest in also; Being mainly inspired by Dan Brown's book "The Lost Symbol" and Drew Barrymore's book "Find It In Everything: Photographs by Drew

Barrymore".



By Vanessa Schmidt





## Institutional-Lies

How does the government expect us to succeed? I've seen many things in the prison misery and greed. It's a cataclysmic event that happens to breed, hopelessness, pain once one enters the system, it's a revolving door. Running scared, running in circles institutions creating institutionalized men, women and children. I'm speaking from experiences not speculation. So my education as a convict is perfected. And when I get high to forget all my regrets, I become a fucking zombie. I've been some shit, juvenile halls, open custody's and the county jails. The one thing that never fails is going back to jail. Have you ever been jumped? Thumped, broken bruised and bumps? Treated like a chump. Kicked while I was down but I admit it's made me stronger than ever. Fearful but remain fearless. Does that even make any sense? I'm feeling lost. I can't win, lost in this life of sin. Where do I begin or have I already begun? If I'm kind I get hit from behind and when I told them my vision they told me I am blind! I asked my Heavenly Father to show me some signs. Signs of peace, I need peace, hope and liberty. You see it's difficult when you're a ghetto rose that bloomed from the concrete. How many lost souls are trapped in the penitentiaries? They are all trapped for past crimes with a dream to be free. I can answer the questions but I still question the answers. Turning to drugs but it turns me into a zombie. Discombobulated, yet I related to the next, I seen a woman that was like me so we got high in the hallway steps. It was the stairway to hell. Good byes the farewells. Is the same as when I said hello to the devil. Evil breeds evil so I try to surround my soul with good but it's harder than you know when you were raised in the hood. Truly I am misunderstood. I am sick of staying high off the methadone; it's a crutch an excuse that the government got me on. Slowly dying, I can feel it but not a soul knows. Will you acknowledge my death even when my soul turns cold in the grave? So many thoughts contemplated thoughts of suicide, thoughts of love and life but killing me isn't brave. But how do I move on every day? I'll remain unsaved. Imprisoned by the way I think even though I wasn't born this way.

Terrence Freedom Thang



## Prodromal Blue

*Constructed from headlines containing the word “bipolar”*

by Katherine Heigh

Things to do when you feel like a failure:  
rest in murder (hate does not impair cognitive function),  
spend, spend, spend! uncontrollable anger, delayed sleep,  
learning to fly. Music helps.

A slow road toward depression before death,  
before it really starts.

Here are the symptoms I ignored:  
throwing herself into wine,  
treatment-resistant depression  
without a depressed mood,  
prodromal blue blood moon.

Self-aware teen suffering has  
many causes. Traumatic  
stress interacts with my IUD trigger  
when I tell people about my altered sensory phenomena.  
Secret childhood battle from pole to pole  
continues to slide months after being found safe.

Cold water consistency soda pop,  
super pumped. Living with purpose,  
I felt powerless. Patterns may help predict  
why some people walked onto a motorway  
during winter, tired in so many ways.  
Scientists think they know.

## The Roar

Sunset on a bright spring day,  
Walking together, enjoying the evening breeze,  
Luxuriating in the the warmth of a new season,  
Light clothing laughing in the face of winter,  
Feeling the pulse of the city around them,  
Daring Old Man Winter to show his face again,

Darkness falls on the cobbled alleyway,  
He wakens as the warmth disturbs his slumber,  
Stretching, he slowly takes stock of the area around him,  
It seems he has been sleeping forever,  
Just as the spring air has returned life to his alley,  
So to comes the hunger,

Full of life, the couple turn into the alleyway,  
Still enjoying their evening,  
The change of seasons,  
Unaware of what waits within,  
Walking quietly, talking softly,  
Hoping to prolong the beautiful night,

He senses them before they enter his sight,  
Soft voices disturbing his silence,  
He can see their breath cloud around them,  
He desperately scrambles along the wall of the alley,  
The bricks harsh against his touch,  
As feeling slowly returns to his limbs,

Fearful of giving himself away to his prey,  
He moves fitfully from one shadow to the next,  
Eyes locked, never blinking or wavering,  
Drawing in closer, the hunger becomes unbearable,  
Able to taste the pulse beating under their skin,  
He launches himself at them through the air,  
Emitting his call.... the Roar of the Mighty Mosquito!!!

Chris Hunt



They said I had bipolar, and tendencies of borderline personality disorder. Okay. All I know is I'm sitting in the psych ward at Peterborough hospital after yet another overdose and subsequent drug induced psychosis. They told me to take the meds, so I did. Always a people pleaser. They didn't help. Neither did the next ones, or the next, or the next. I saw a flyer from an organization offering help for "people like me", the drug users, the (maybe?) addicts. But they told me that organization wouldn't help, don't bother trying. Okay.

They set me up with a psychiatrist, who told me I shouldn't try to work anymore, shouldn't try to go to school "right now", so I dropped out and they filled out some forms and then I'm on ODSP. Okay. Years go by. 5, I think. Lots of visits to the crisis unit, overdoses, suicide attempts. Some stability mixed in there. I'm a little depressed.

My psychiatrist adds an antidepressant to my cocktail of mood stabilizers and anti-psychotics. Okay. I don't react well to it. I'm manic, flying high, truly believing I'm invincible. My psychiatrist says to stop the antidepressant after 5 days. Okay. But I'm messed up for months after that.

Finally feeling stable again. Now what? When is it not "okay"? I want to be in school, but I've messed up and dropped out so many times that I'd have to pay my own way to go back, and I can't afford that when I'm on a strict budget, once the bills come out I have \$300 for food and clothes and whatever else I might need in a month.

I want to work but I'm being told I can't handle it, and my track record is supporting that statement. But when I'm feeling stable and I can't work or go to school, time is the enemy. There's too much time in each day. I try to fill it with appointments and errands but there's not enough to do.

I offer myself up as a volunteer. That at least makes me feel good, like maybe I am kind of a productive member of society. I try to keep busy because when it's quiet, that's when I feel all the feelings, and then I want to numb out through drugs, cigarettes, self-harm, food, ANYTHING, and I'm trying so hard to move away from those things.

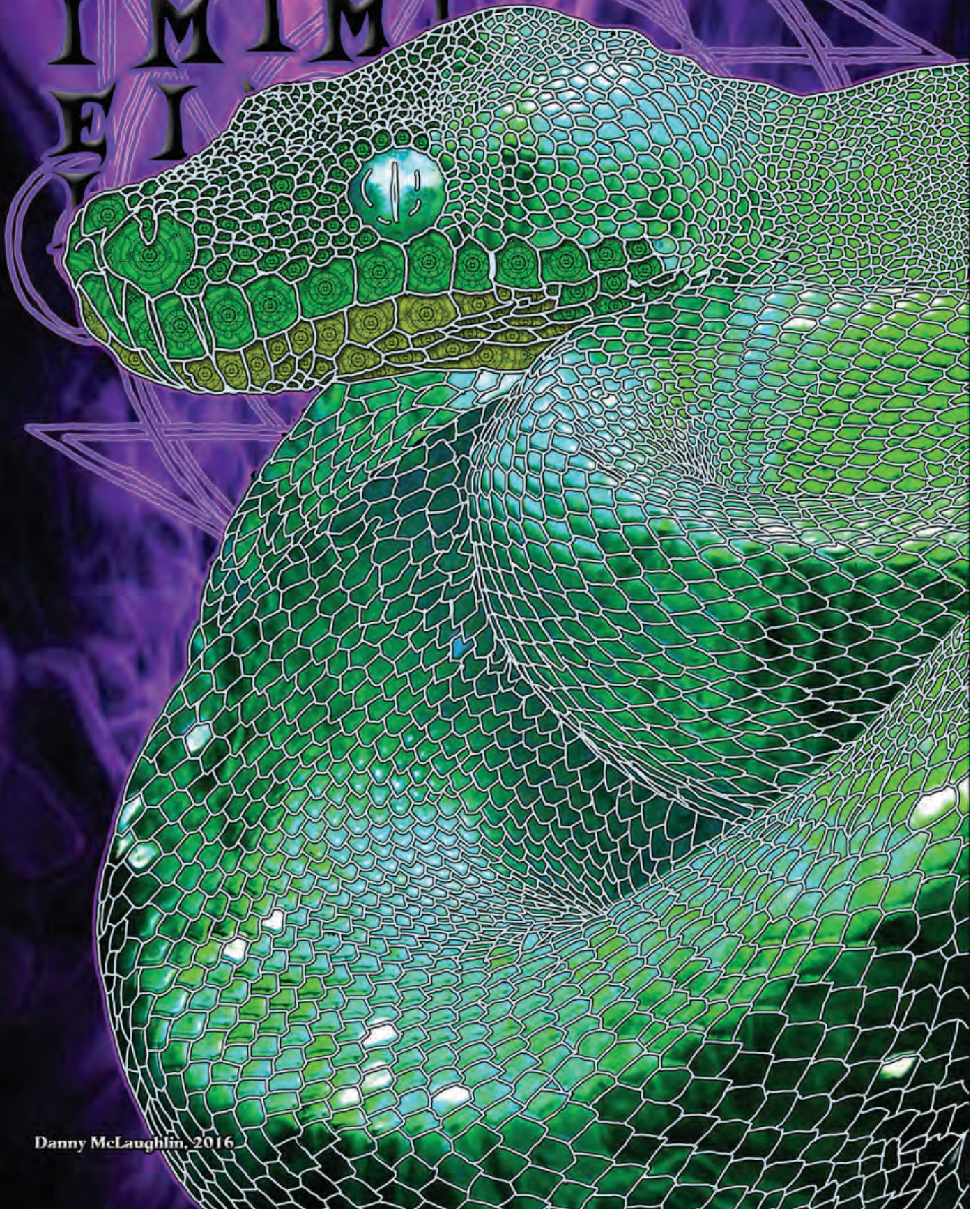
When I was growing up, I had dreams. A doctor, a teacher, a psychologist. I wanted to be somebody. I feel like nobody. Okay...

Rebecca Turland

The Gods that run the universe meet at the food court.  
They read the newspaper and discuss the headlines and the sports.  
They chat about the weather and what the young people are doing with their hair  
these days. The Gods remember the friends that were lost in battle so long ago.  
Their wives return from shopping and the God's get  
in to their chariot. All the while the Earth keeps turning on it's axis.  
Kellie Fairman  
Peterborough, On



URIEL  
RAMIE  
IMIMI  
FI



Danny McLaughlin, 2016





By John McLennan



When Hunter Street can't hold you  
by Tyler Majer

When the patios snuff the words  
Before they even come  
And the melodies evaporate  
Into Jackson's Current

Currently,  
A clock is ticking within  
\$8 beers and  
Words that won't come  
It's not just writer's block  
It's not just  
The inability to create  
It's stagnation

The sidewalks are cracked  
But it's your own back that breaks  
Under the weight of a 1000 words  
Not even worth 1 measly picture

Hunter Street can't hold you  
Because it never could  
It was just an edifice  
An illusion  
A haze of beers that made us think  
We were better than we were  
And worse than we actually are

I saw a movie once  
Hitchcock & Lynch  
Hanging off the edge of a clock  
tower  
Tarkovsky & Cronenberg  
Your desires realized  
(not enough, never enough)

The recurring motifs  
Of Peterborough's streets  
Hunter Street, a common thread  
Pulls & Unravels

Sadomasochistic  
Perversion  
We get off on our own hatred of  
And the pain situated within  
The places in which we reside  
I can't stop drinking at The Only  
What am I do?  
When Hunter Street can't hold me

Brain Injury  
(Anonymous)

Not able to work my job

Not able to play the sports I love

Not able stay focused for any length of time

Not able see a productive future

Not able find the right words

Starting to see there is support

Starting to see I am not alone

Starting to see things I can do

Starting to see I can still be useful

Starting to see I am valued

Able to volunteer

Able to support others

Able to enjoy time with family and friends

Able to enjoy each day

Able to see a brighter future



By Joe McCarthy



# STRAIGHTJACKET

Here I sit.  
Staring at the walls again.  
The lights are on my world is so dim.  
So many thoughts race through my head.  
Can't slow them down even though my life dep  
I wanna scream out loud but I keep it all in.

Where do you run?  
Where do you go?  
Where is the light?  
Where is the hope?  
I can still breathe.  
But I suffocate.  
Someone save me.  
Before it's too late.

You still have so much left to lose.  
Before your straitjacket becomes your noose.  
You still have so much left to give.  
Before you call it quits.  
You may not know this but it's the truth.  
There's so many hearts that beat for you.  
So I hope that you keep yours alive.  
And know you have support in your life.

I don't know.  
What the future has in store.  
Uncertainty eats away like a disease.  
I scream out loud as I fall to my knees.  
I'm paralyzed can't save myself from wearing t  
Always in last place in this game I could never

This is my life.  
It's all I know.  
I suffocate.  
Hung from gallows.  
I see the end.  
Close to the edge.  
After I fall.  
It starts over again.

You still have so much left to lose.  
Before your straitjacket becomes your noose.  
You still have so much left to give.  
Before you call it quits.  
You may not know this but it's the truth.  
There's so many hearts that beat for you.  
So I hope that you keep yours alive.

And know you have support in your life.

It just takes some time.  
Every storm passes by.  
You'll be alright.  
You'll make it out alive.  
Put your hand in mine.  
Look deep inside.  
And there you'll find.  
Within the darkness there's light.

By Chad Northey

February 4, 2014

my culture's  
bomb sirens riddle  
through my brain  
they tear - jarred  
into my nerve cells  
- out of transition  
a warning  
- someone else is dying

too many of us  
have disappeared  
buried under  
by our work  
our station  
our allegiance  
we have been misconstrued  
by our fashion  
devouring us  
piece by piece  
- has grown monstrous  
in our dreams  
I reach out –  
and meekly  
quietly  
slip on my warmest  
cleanest pair of socks  
I am consoled by  
this simple gesture  
cogent  
in its weight of comfort  
for just beyond  
the brimming  
of my smoke stained window  
a tentative war  
broods  
from boozys' fancy bars to street corner  
with slight regard  
for frailer minds

I am swallowed down  
low in the darkness  
leveled  
by the designated drugs  
and the warmth of  
issued blankets  
and well intended socks  
my thoughts wander  
not so far  
to souls  
with more thread bare  
feet  
they – who have  
paid the price  
for slipping under  
Freedom's bus  
cargoes to hideous heights  
with the demands  
of the more lofty.

- Maureen McGarity

★ AND I CRY, CRY AND CRY... I CRY FOR ANCESTORS AND FRIENDS LONG GONE. I CRY FOR FAMILY AND FRIENDS THAT DON'T HAVE A HEART OR COMPASSION FOR MENTAL ILLNESS. I CRY FOR MY DOG, HE'S ABSOLUTELY WONDERFUL TO ME, BUT HIS LIFE IS FADING FAST. I CRY FOR NOT HAVING ENOUGH MONEY OR FOOD FOR 1 MONTH, EACH MONTH. I CRY FOR NOT BEING LIKE I USE TO BE I CRY FOR THE PAINS THAT WON'T GO AWAY. I CRY FOR THE MEAN AND RUTHLESS PEOPLE THAT HURT SO MANY. I CRY FOR CHILDREN THAT HAVE NOTHING. I CRY FOR MOTHER EARTH AND ALL THE DESTRUCTION AGAINST HER. I CRY FOR THE UNWANTED, ABUSED, USED AND REFUSED. I CRY FOR THE INSENSITIVE AND THE SUFFERING THEY CAUSE. I CRY FOR THOSE WHO CAN'T. I CRY BECAUSE I HURT. I CRY FOR A NEW DAY. I CRY SO I CAN BE STRONGER. I CRY FOR A WAY OUT. I CRY BECAUSE I AM TIRED.

I CRY, I CRY, I CRY... ★

• AMETTE AGE © 2017 ★





## THE RIVER MAGAZINE CONTRIBUTOR GUIDELINES

**What is The River Magazine?** This is a magazine of art and writing representing people living on a low income in the area of Peterborough. Contributions can be any written or drawn media: painting, drawing, poem, story, essay, article, photograph. Whatever you want to say or think should be said and brought to the attention of the community, that is what we are looking for.

**How can you contribute?** Anyone who identifies themselves as living on a low income qualifies to contribute to the magazine. No one will require proof. There is a small board of people passionate about community who have editorial decision making but the content is truly up to the contributors. Guidelines are few, but important:

- No hate speech or incitement to harm others; no slander towards another person or group of people
- Sex and nudity are acceptable topics but nothing deemed pornographic will be accepted
- Contributions must fit on a 8.5 x 11 page maximum, but can be smaller
- The contribution must be able to be read or understood; work must be original
- We do not publish web addresses or promotions for private enterprises
- Photograph submissions must be accompanied by a 100-word discussion of the meaning of and/or work it took to take the picture.

**Caution:** If you are thinking of submitting something that contains personal information about yourself, remember that once it is in print it will be public information. Be sure you are ok with this and prepared for how you might be affected by people approaching you after seeing what you've submitted.

**What do you do with your submission?** When your piece is ready, you can hand it in at one of the participating agencies:

- Community Counselling and Resource Centre, Brain Injury Association, Canadian Mental Health Association, New Canadians Centre, VON 360 Clinic, Peterborough AIDS Resource Network, One Roof Diner, Nogojiwanong Friendship Centre, Peterborough Social Planning Council or Cameron House (women only).

They will take it, attach your identifying information, give you a receipt if you want, and send it along.

OR you can submit it by email to [theriverpeterborough@gmail.com](mailto:theriverpeterborough@gmail.com). Please attach a signed copy of the submission form along with it. OR you can submit it through our easy to use website at [rivermagazine.ca](http://rivermagazine.ca)

The committee may or may not suggest changes if the work is hard to read or falls outside the limits of acceptability. You are encouraged to work with them on any problems they point out.

**How will you know it's going to be published?** If the work has problems that make it unpublishable, we will try to inform you, but otherwise it may not get published and it will be returned to you. The submissions go to an editorial committee that reviews them and decides if they comply with the rules mentioned above. They decide whether to accept, reject or send back submissions with a request they be changed. If your work is published, a cheque will go out to an address you provide after publication. This cheque can be cashed at the Kawartha Credit Union if you don't have a bank. If there are other issues with cheques, this can be addressed.