



The River

Issue Three Winter 2019

Danny McLaughlin 2018

This is The River magazine Issue Three, coming to you from Peterborough Ontario, a small city between Ottawa and Toronto. The Indigenous peoples of this area, the Michi Saagiig Nishnaabeg, named this place “Nogojiwanong” which means the place at the end of the rapids. Peterborough was built on top of Nogojiwanong on either side of the Otonabee River, an Anishinaabemowin word that means the river that beats like a heart.

Without the river, the town could not exist. Its water is essential for life. Its water comes from the lakes to the north of here, Katchewanooka and Clear lakes, up to Stoney Lake, flowing from these places through the hills of Peterborough and on to Rice Lake. The town clings to the sides of the Otonabee as the source of life, and most of us have never thought about how our town has been shaped by the river. It is always there, before we were here and long after we are gone. So that is why the magazine is called The River.

The River magazine publishes the work of individuals who experience poverty and/or live on a low income. These individuals come from diverse backgrounds and lifestyles, but what they all share in common is that they do not receive the opportunities to express their point of view and their art that those with higher incomes do. Their work may reflect their experience of poverty or it may not, the important thing is that these artists and writers have something to say that should be heard on their own terms.

We would like to thank the Peterborough Foundation, the United Way, the Brain Injury Association of Peterborough Region, PARN - Your Community AIDS Resource Network for support for this issue and also the many individuals who contributed to making this project a reality.

December 2018



Kayla Lambert

Is that You Aunt Helen?

Susan Cruickshank

Her fine white hair, unkempt, was pushed off of her pale, drawn face.

She was tucked into crisp white hospital sheets; a thin white blanket had been laid across her shrunken body. Her frail shape, ashen and small, was framed by the white wall that stood behind her.

The effect was stark and depressing.

The only things that held any colour in the room were her blue eyes.

Wide like an owl's or those of an infant: searching, deep, blank. She stared at me and I stared back.

I didn't recognize her.

I didn't recognize her at all.

Was this Aunt Helen or was this her roommate?

I hadn't seen my aunt in over 20 years, not since Uncle Paul's funeral. She had married into our family, had married my uncle, when they were both in their late-50s; so much of his story had already been lived, and it was easier to lose track of her when he had died.

But today on this crisp fall afternoon, when the sun's light was soft, and the trees were shocked with saturated colour, Aunt Rita, my mother's sister, and I had made the trek to this long-term

care centre in the west-end of Toronto for an overdue visit.

So much time had passed.

I stared hard at this woman, taking in her details when my Aunt Rita, who had been out in the hallway talking to a nurse, entered the room and exclaimed, "Helen!"

REALLY?

I was stunned; turning my gaze back to this unrecognizable woman, searching even more intently, trying to find something in her face in which my memory was acquainted.

Nothing.

It was only when she spoke that I recognized her as someone I knew.

The gravelly smoker's voice was unmistakable.

It was jarring to hear something so familiar from so long ago coming out of this stranger's mouth. To see facial expressions animate her, expressions I knew to be my Aunt's, but that now seemed foreign and incongruous when they moved along this countenance.

What makes a person recognizable to the outside world?

What makes them uniquely themselves?

I had no clue that I had relied so heavily on the familiarity of a person's physical appearance until

it was no longer there to cue me.

I find it amusing that as a someone who has claimed that the most essential aspect of a human being is that which is intangible, it was I, who was completely flummoxed when it was only the nonphysical part of my aunt that was recognizable.

The essence of my aunt continues to move through her in voice and movement despite how time and disease have ravaged her body. Her crabby temper may have mellowed, ever so slightly, as her greeting to my Aunt Rita confirmed, "I never liked you, but thank you for coming," but is a marker nonetheless of character and person.

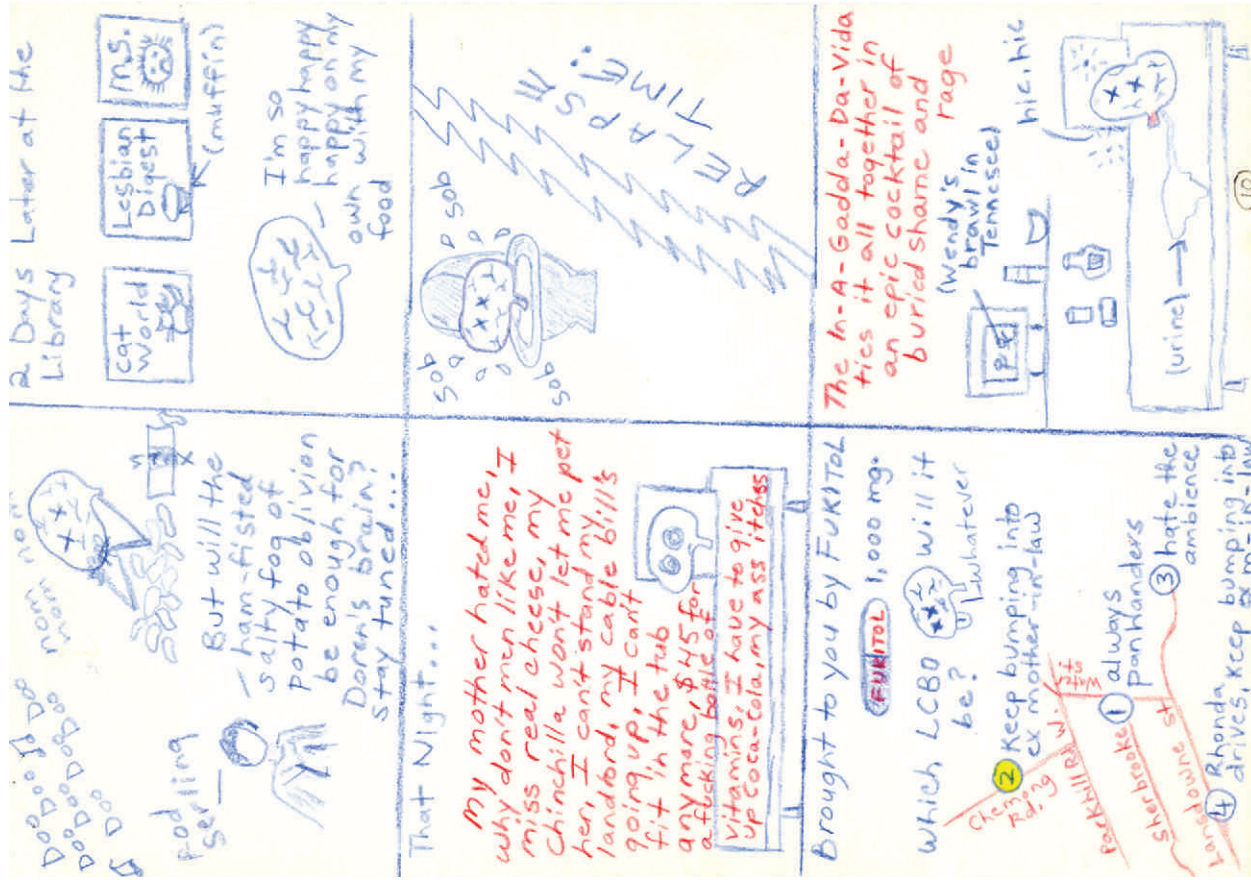
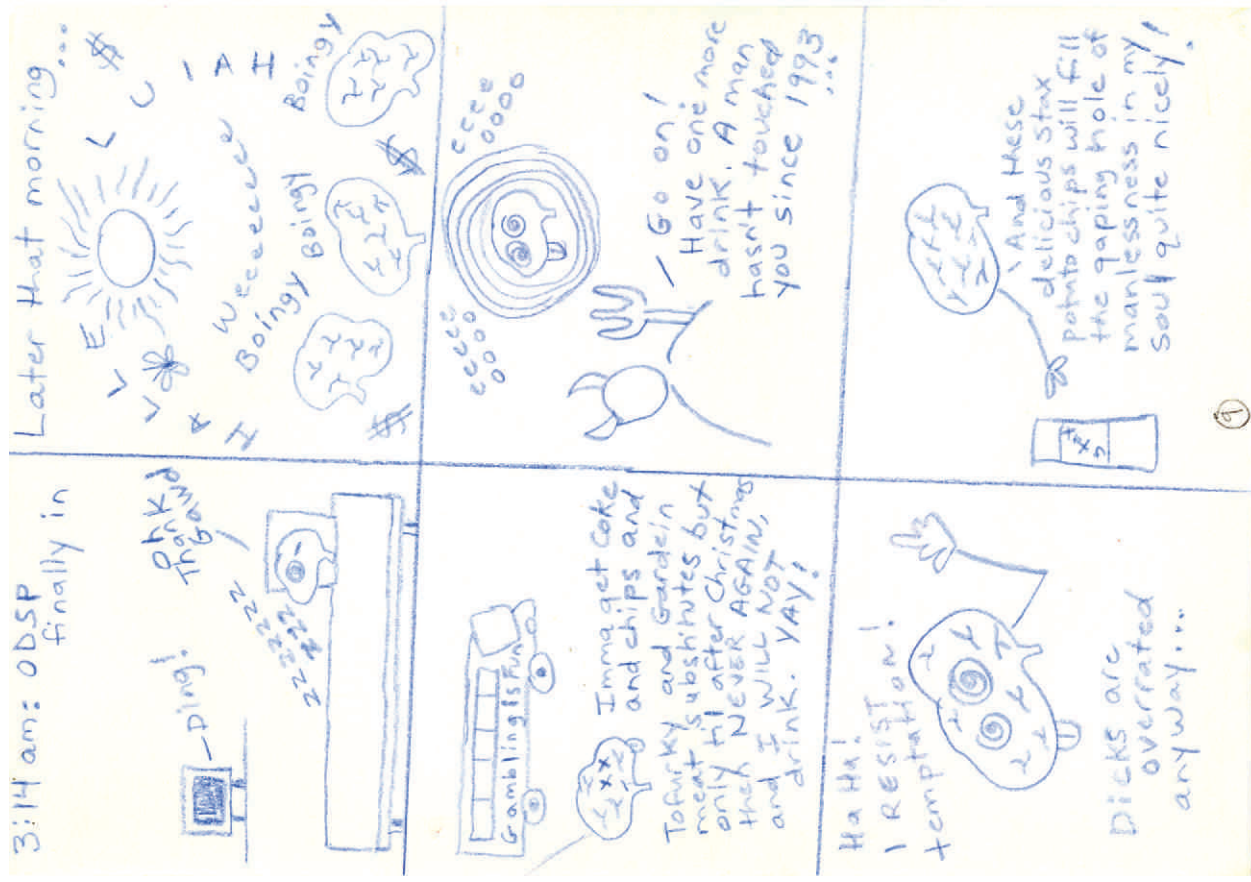
We are not merely our physicality. Our vigour is housed here and enlivens here, but the two, although inextricably linked, are separate.

My aunt's world has shrunk down to four white walls; living does not get much smaller.

And yet, she STILL lives.

The essence of who she is, who she has always been, still lives in what is becoming an unrecognizable and lifeless shell. Her life force has vacated much of her physical being, leaving a lot of her body empty of 'her' as it were, but the life force that still quickens is most assuredly Aunt Helen.

No question.



There's No Planet B
by PJ Thomas

Time on this planet is caught in a loop
of the ever breathing universe
and this human chicken coop.

Sons of the Earth, we follow the sun
through Smoking Room windows,
alternately worshipping and being burned,
hoping neuro-disruptors can right all the wrongs,
like being locked up, held down and shot up,
then like grapes to raisins, we cannot go back.

Once they lock you up and hold you down and shoot you up
then around goes their game
of needles and nurses,
psychologists and purges,
escape alarms and magic charms
because everything has meaning,
from this door-stopper to the feelings
of patients on wards in hospital robes,
scared of microbes and "those lunaphobes"
and the stark fact there's no Planet B.
"Quiet now, lights out! Take your meds and go to bed."

April 13, 2014

Your crazy
make me sad
sea toss
I have sunk
all my beloved keepsakes
long ago
into your depths
You bled life
into me
until
I plunged forth
emerging
from you bondage
to trust in your sacrifice
Your affection
you sang out
liltingly
among the clapping
of pans and crockery
and sauces that simmered
into thicker pools
of mood

Your tone
- your touch
of warmth
could turn like rusted faucets
into the ice
of treachery
and again the blood
in my veins
would throb
to your angry chill
Still
you kept
the cold at bay
with the devotion
of blanket

and sweater warm
at night

and during the day
I could never reverse
your verdict of sorrow
nor ransom
from you
my heart
drowned in a thousand deaths
of you
though by water side
you watched
till I knew for sure
I could not drown

I buried myself
in your tomb
of whims
and brooding mystiques
to live now
to see you
diminished
in mind and physique
Your discordance
you utter
in muttered prayers
of rage
and I ache
to retreat.

-Maureen McGarity

SEE SAW

ONE DAY UP
TWO DAYS DOWN
THREE DAYS CRYIN' LIKE A CLOWN
FOUR SAD
FIVE DAYS MAD
SIX DAS FEELIN' STEAMIN' MAD
SEVEN DAYS HIGH
EIGHT DAYS LOW
NINE DAYS LIVIN' ALL ALONE
TEN DAYS GONE - OUT OF TOUCH - DEEPLY
FURROWED IN A RUT

CAROLINE

The Tie That Binds: Part Three

By Kinyon Annan

The calling of names, like that of an executioner, stopped, and Delaney began patrolling the aisles again. On his second sweep, I heard his footsteps stop behind my back. The hairs on the back of my neck stood up.

“Tighten your tie.” He said.

“Yes Mr. Delaney,” I said through gritted teeth and drew the knot tight. How he always knew was beyond me – there was no way he’d been able to see my tie from behind. Should lay him off, I thought bitterly, doesn’t seem like he does anything but bother us. I heard him walk away, and a psst came through the right cubicle wall.

“Do you think they’ll be calling more names?” Shelley whispered.

“Maybe. How many names were called?”

“I counted eleven.”

“Wouldn’t put it past them to make it a nice round number,” I said. “There are still a few dozen coders left to squeeze some more profit from.”

I could hear her snort through the wall. No more names were called by five o’clock when the work day ended. My coworkers and I left for the day demoralized, and fearful of more names to be called on the next day.

* * *

The next day I returned, the positivity that had started my day the previous morning dead and cold in memory. The commute was spent with dread as my passenger, and my palms sweated on the steering wheel at the thought of the approaching work day. Entering the building, my dread only built to a crescendo. I stopped after the entrance and stared at the field of boxes, already filled with workers starting their shift early out of fear.

I realized it wasn’t the actual work that I dreaded. I liked my profession; coding was fulfilling for me, and in past conversations, my coworkers agreed. Why then, was work so gruelling? Why did we all loathe our work? By all rights our heads should be held high in our labour.

Instead, I saw my coworkers’ heads bent low, their noses to the computerized grindstone. Delaney stalked amongst them, interrupting their work to whip them ‘faster!’

That was the reason: that figure staring down at us. We worked and worked, but we didn’t work for ourselves. Instead we worked, and what we produced went into his pockets. He alienated us from our work, and gave us a pittance for it. Bit by bit, he bought our lives at a low wage to reap a profit. That was the great pleasure of my fishing trip – working for myself; it was a concept alien to this place.

Delaney walked towards me, and saw my tie was loosened again. “Tighten that tie!” he barked, and my hands moved at his command. My feet marched me to my cubicle, and I took the seat and began to work at something which I enjoyed, but that was made into toil.

“I almost didn’t come today,” Shelley whispered through the wall.

“Why did you?” I asked wryly.

“Gotta pay the bills.” She said and was silent for a moment. “I hate this. We all hate this. Our quota for today is already overloaded with the work of the people they laid off yesterday.”

“At least we weren’t the ones laid off.” I said.

“What a consolation,” she drawled.

The intercom crackled and came to life with dire purpose, silencing us. Even the multitude of keyboards ceased their

chorus, and the names began to be called again. I stopped my work, unable to focus, and looked around the office. Grey walls separated grey faces. Above each one, light without warmth buzzed to keep them working. A clock on the wall ticked the seconds of the work day away. I realized that I felt worse then than I did when I was dying of cancer.

My eyes went to the picture frame and rested on the smiling faces. The photo had more colour to it than the whole office building and its inhabitants. My father had told me in that boat, long ago, that life was unfair and spent toiling. He was right, and he was wrong – life was unfair, but because it was spent toiling. Life at some point in history had been replaced by toil. Since my career had started, I had ceased to live; I simply existed.

The clock hands spun around on the wall, the future being lost with every forward motion of the hands. Time lost with friends, with family, with self, all lost to the thief of toil – with what to show for it? A pink slip and a pat on the back? Increased work for less pay? Our lives had been enslaved by a paycheck, and a tie around our necks.

I remembered the way the fishing rod had felt in my hand at the lake. It had taken dying for me to start living again, for a brief time.

The intercom stopped its roll call of unlucky names. Only a handful in comparison to the previous day’s layoffs. Delaney left his office and began his patrol again, stalking amongst the cubicles like some predator. The clattering of the keyboards resumed in earnest. I couldn’t take it anymore. I stood up.

Chin raised, I began to undo my tie.

Read parts one and two in previous issues of The River!



Looking out from my balcony at the beautiful skies makes me feel happy. I like sun in this picture. It makes me think of a sunrise and that it feels like it's going to be a good day. I like taking pictures because it's relaxing and it makes me feel good.

- Stephen Land

Lament for Sandy Lake

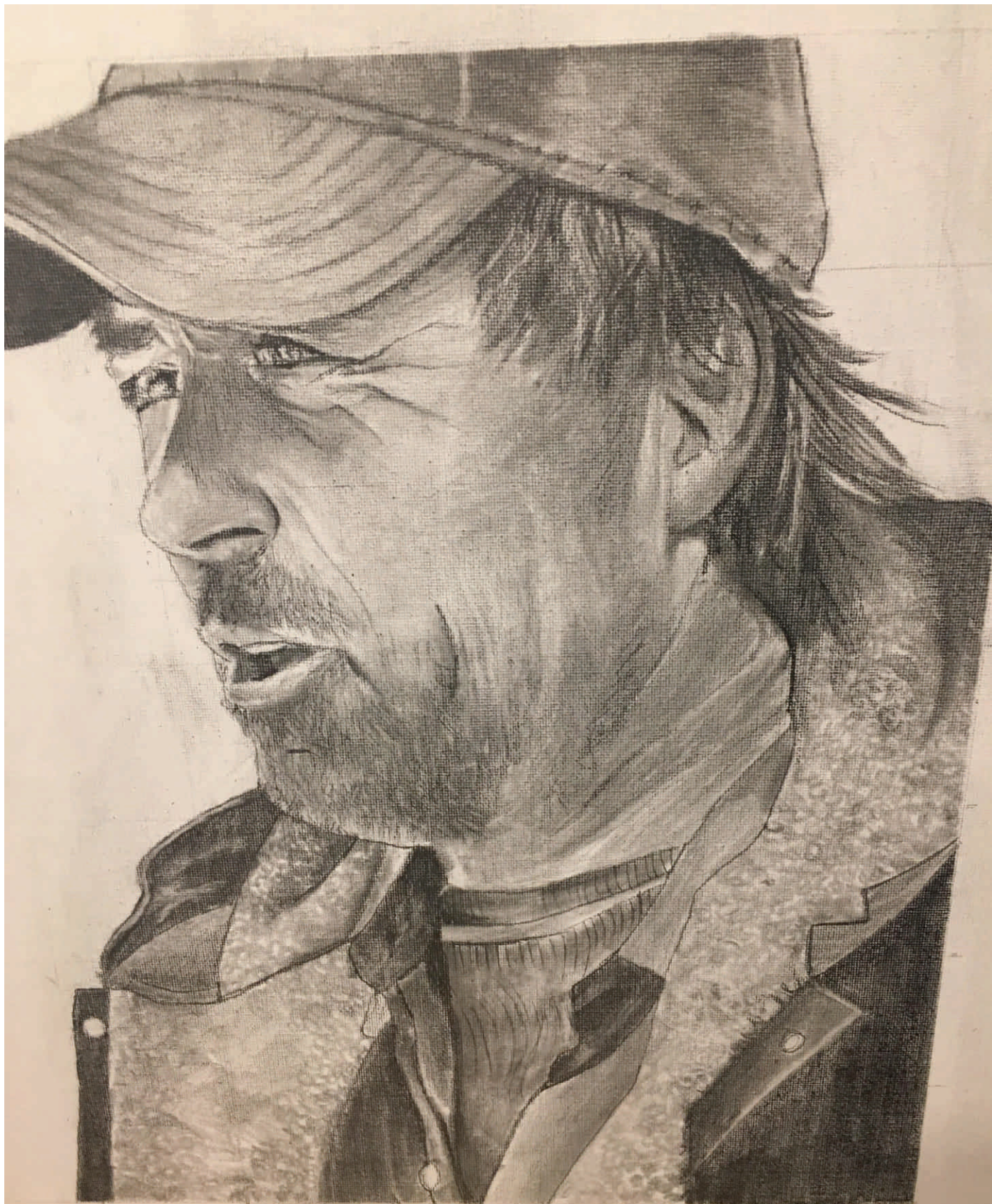
You are the Lake of Spirits, though none I've seen;
Your moody waters reflect shades of aquamarine.
Coloured so by deposits of marl and silt,
You live in a spring-fed basin the glaciers built.
Along your shores so verdantly wooded
Live wood ducks and mergansers, both common and hooded.
Great blue herons range from a colony nearby,
Its large, stick nests lodged in treetops high.

As the day winds down, and the moon appears ghostly pink,
The air becomes quiet and cool; one can relax and think.
When twilight comes, I hear the tremolo cries
Of a lonesome loon searching your darkening skies.
A beaver makes a wake toward secret parts
To survey and feed before the new day starts,
And as the black of night finally falls,
Sleep comes easily as a barred owl calls

Now a bright orange sun peeks over the treeline,
Causing a fire-licked strip of water to shine.
As the mist burns off, one can see
Two-storey houses where cottages should be
In gaping wounds where the trees are gone –
Natural diversity replaced by monocultural lawn.
If the animals could talk, wouldn't they say
That 'progress' can't continue on this way?

Borne on the breeze are the exhaust and noise
Of over-sized boats and other harmful toys.
With how much disturbance can you cope?
Will your waters be fouled with oil and soap?
For those seeking peace, it seems such a pity
That others can't come without bringing the city.
Now greed exceeds need; it's truly insane
For you are a paradise that won't come again.

Murray Arthur Palmer, 2010.



Nancy DeRivers

Nancy De Rivers

After school the children that lived on my street would play outside,
The street was shaped like a circle. In the front of many homes was a group of
Trees. One tree was the home of warps, their nest was peeking through the
Leaves of the tree that could be seen as the wind played between the branches.
Upon hearing about the hive, Dad departed the house dressed like he was
Expecting snow on this July day.
Included in the look was heavy winter gloves, face protection and winter boots.
We were not sure of the kind of Warps so Dad was ready for anything.
We – the children of the street were told to stay indoors during the - take down.
Dad, feeling the heat from his winter coat and snow boots went on with his plan
Of making the street safe to play outdoors.
He used garden shears and a large heavy duty garbage bag to contain the warps
Nest. Snip with the large garden shears and the warps nest fell in to the garbage
Bag, it is done, the world or our part of the world is once again safe.
Dad quickly put the hive in a garbage can and tied on the lid. The world
Will still turn on it's axis. We cheered as the garbage can was toed out of sight.
Dad went into the shed to take off the winter clothing.

Kellie Fairman

excerpts from the ULTRAVIOLET OCEAN

Continued from Issue Two

gwynception. writer bard
they/them schizoaffective
trans femme living on disability.
moon in pisces

07 staying alive even though you don't feel like it

As she started the dishes that piled up from the day she remembered the conversations she'd have in her head with someone who was her best friend since elementary school. Someone who got lost in the psychosis, of which when exited left her a completely different person. Unable to really face up to ever coming out to him and having to deal with his reaction she let the friendship die its death she initiated.

"You have to understand that it's a totally different concept of gender compared with the more common place binary understanding of gender. It's nothing new this understanding, it's been with humans in varying forms throughout cultures throughout the world and history."

She felt like she was speaking like a pamphlet with those words, in that imaginary conversation with her former friend, she had felt defeated and male.

Can't destroy the binary in the world.

She would sing in her head.

Start with yourself.

Heck.

Start today.

"There are different manifestations of gender but they're not essential to gender. Gender isn't restricted by the common associations of different genders. What you see isn't the gender you think it is."

She could see herself and in the haze of memory of when this conversation would have taken place she would see herself looking like an unshaven guy. She would

have felt more male being around her best male friend since the lower grades.

There were just some forms of gender to her that didn't feel natural to her. They didn't seem to fit right or feel right at all.

Feeling as she did around him could explain why she began distancing herself from him. She heard this happens with some trans people.

"This is who I am now, I am a different person, I've embraced sides of myself that have been manifesting for years. I don't expect you to understand at all."

She knew she could never ever see herself say any of this to him, so she never did.

She imagined the reaction of his outright refusal to hear any of it, to claim she was just following some trend, going through some sort of phase. Things she heard herself telling herself at that time, all the time.

Confusing thoughts and contradictory thinking, cognitive dissonance, unsure what to think, while holding onto the knowing that it all added up to her accepting herself as she was. This was all amidst a terrible feeling of discomfort and paranoia over how her life was going to look like when she was her age now.

She didn't think she'd end up working in a retirement home. She obviously accepted the job offer but felt as if she was taking a leap into the unknown possibility she would be taking on too much

08 addiction and suicidality

She spent the next three and half hours with an agonizing lack of smoke break in the back of the tiny kitchen slugging through the dishes. It was a game of scrubbing dried caked on food off and loading the washer with another tray.

Being able to get paid to come here, that's what kept her going for all that time. No one came to check on her which was odd. She dried her hands as the last tray went in.

She found herself outside finally having a smoke. She basically rushed her way there, and she saw things only in grey it seemed, but didn't find herself too confused about

it. Outside everything was yellow.

After two smokes Charlotte came out laughing with the same person as before. The laugh seemed identical. It was an exact movie like repetition of when Charlotte came laughing out the door with the person before, but there was a different perception, a gendered perception of the person who was with her.

The comedy died as before. Fara's sense of reality died as well. She was lost in a thought hole when she noticed the conversation was different. She heard so-and-so speak that deepish voice and suddenly was considering the person to be very feminine and exuding a beauty that spoke of poetry that uses words such as jaded and gems and dying for a grip on a reality.

So-and-so left.

Charlotte broke the silence that followed.

Fara was standing there with a burnt out butt in her hand.

"We'll need you to go visit Mr. Thompson. He looks to be on his last few hours of life as we speak."

Charlotte turned at the sound of a beeper at her hip and left abruptly.

It was daylight out.



Phases

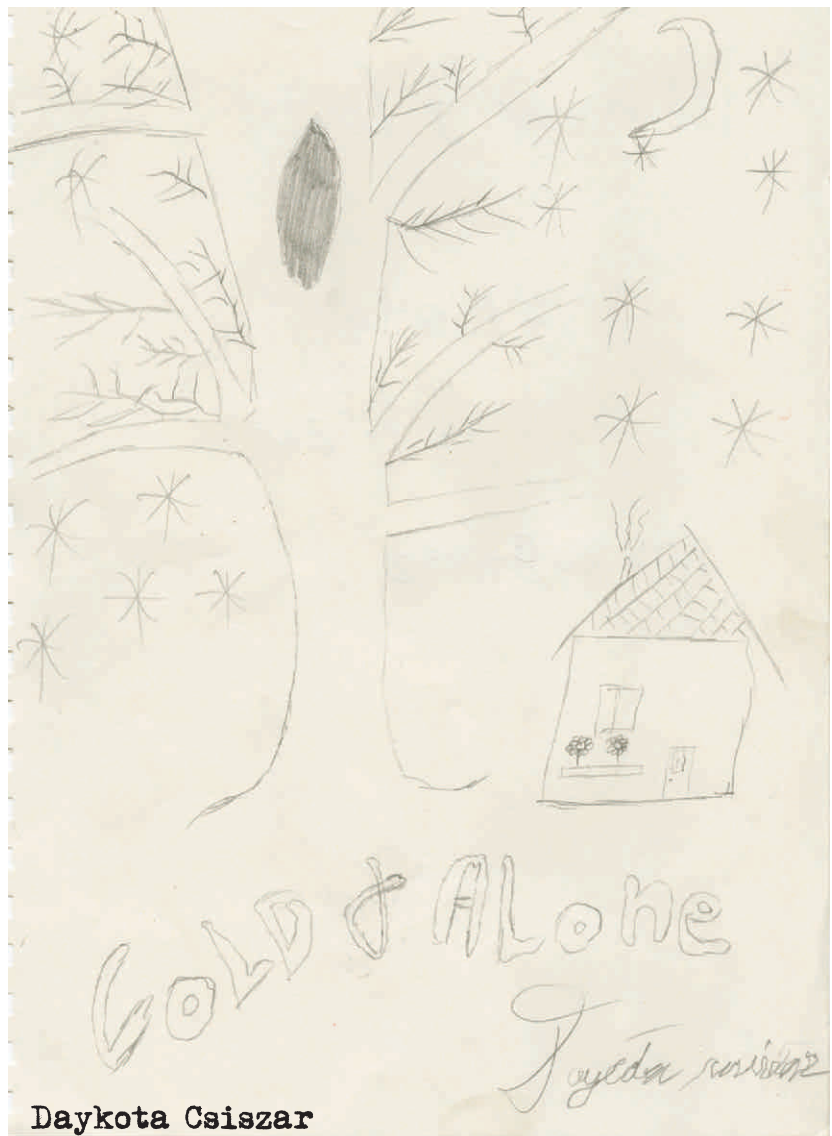
Nothing makes me feel stronger
 Than staring up
 At an almost full
 Spring moon
 It stares back at me
 And it seems
 Me alone
 It sees right through me
 And it glows with understanding
 The promise of its fullness
 Makes me hopeful
 Soon it will be whole again
 And maybe I will too

- Emily Clarey

economy (or high finance)

a dozen seagulls fight
 on George Street
 over
 one
 discarded
 pizza crust

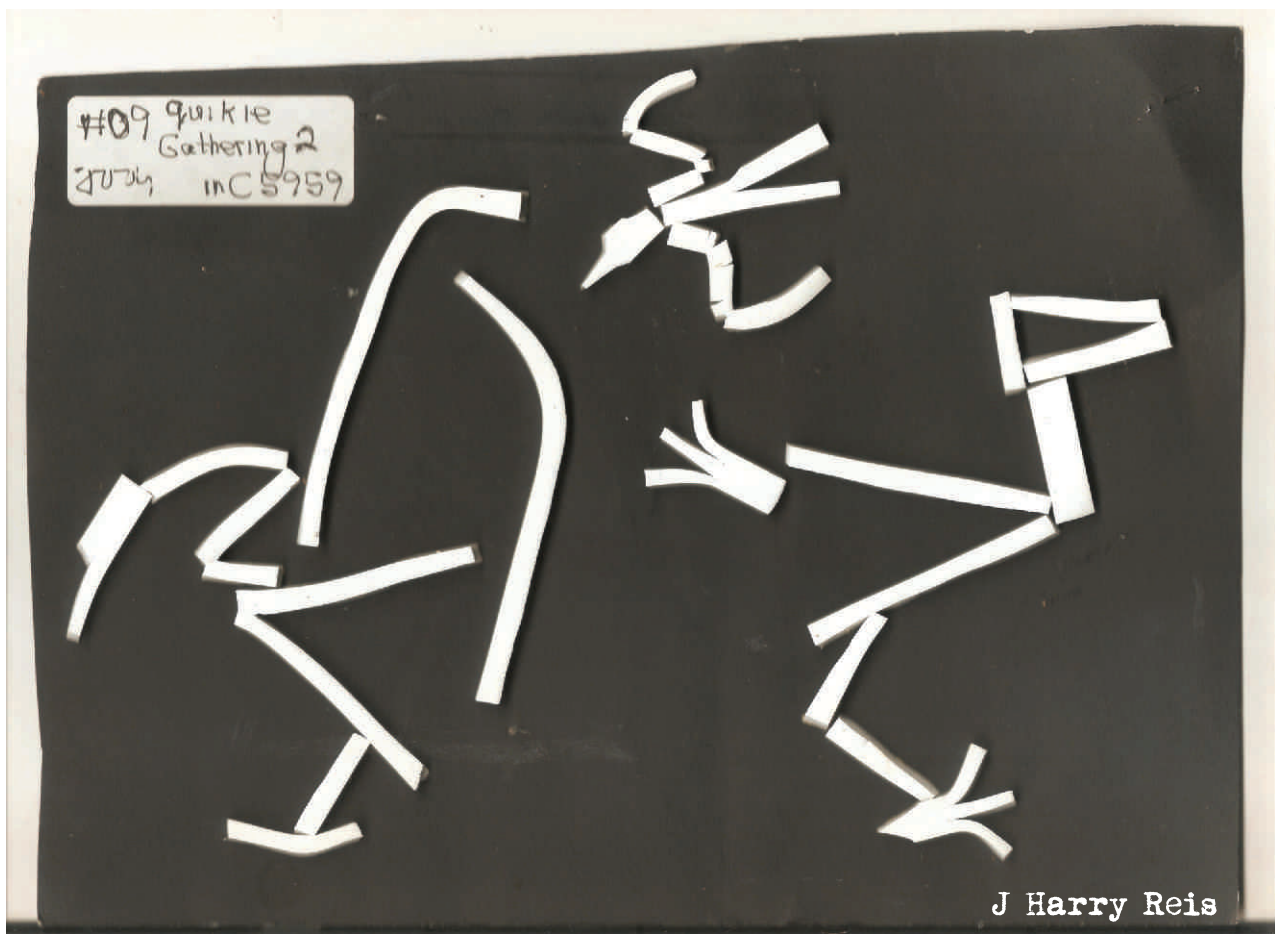
- Elisha May Rubacha



Smoke and Mirrors

by Sarah Cockins

She lies surrounded in shattered glass and broken mirrors.
Countless nights spent awake, pleading for her
hemorrhaging mind to cauterise her thoughts.
Pirouetting round and round with mechanical limbs
and a mirrored persona; a forgery of a stranger's.
She waits for the music to end, so that she may collapse.
Make this your happy place.
But how can anyone be happy in a place like this?
She has an anaemic heart, a fractured mind, and a body
made of broken glass. Malaise and diagnoses, prescription notes
and an encyclopaedia of side effects.
She waits for tranquility, the silence in between.
The music starts up again.



Reflections on being a mentally challenged woman

Sometimes being mentally challenged is hard. Mental challenges come in different ways. It is hard to be a female who is mentally challenged because some men get the idea that you are “easy” prey. Some people think that we, who are mentally challenged know nothing. Sometimes because you are mentally challenged people look at you different and think that you are different or not as smart as other people.

What people don’t know is that I am a strong, independent, big hearted person. I try to please everybody, as in make everyone happy. I love to make art, bake, and hangout with my granddad. I don’t put up with no man’s bullshit. These are the things that I love about myself; the things that my family helped me to learn.

Peterborough needs more housing and support for mentally challenged women. Women like me should get the support they need in the type of housing that they want.

I have experienced service that could not meet my needs when I was in crisis. I wasn’t accommodated in group settings, even though I wanted to hear the stories of other women who had been through the same things as me. When I am not accommodated it means that I don’t get to interact with other people and I am outcast and put into a situation where I am alone. Mentally challenged women can have the same bad experiences as any other women and I would like to be able to be allowed to participate as I am in group settings.

- Shelby Hulme

"You are Worthy"

By Geegoy_19

Today is a Thursday.

Thursday for me has been a bright day.

It became even brighter when your physician tells you,

"You are worthy."

I am worthy to *enjoy the world.*

I am worthy to *reconnect once again from my seemingly*

disconnected life."

I am worthy to *bounce back and walk my way through in life.*

After all the adversity that has come my way unexpectedly, I am now ready, bolder and braver to face the bigger real world out there.

It may have taken me several knockouts (K.O's) to realize how life's beauty always reigns, but what matters for me now is how united and driven I am to keep moving forward.

"You are worthy."

You are worth the time, dedication and prayer of other people loving you.

You may not see it like the breeze of the air but you can feel the warmth just like the warmth of a latte; going down into your body and into your soul to fill every cold place to become warm enough to keep you going, my friend.

Just remember, everytime you feel God's warmth, you are loved and

you are worthy.

2017, the year to get a new experience to meet new people, new country and i am alone travelling from India to Canada. I had just one dream, when I will come back to India I will have a lot of money then, I can buy house for my family, car for my father and complete all needs of my family. For a moment, I just forget it will get a lot of time, patience and hard-work.

I entered in Canada, I felt like I am very very new here, Nobody knows me. When I started my college. I met with new friends that was from my country and some from Canada. When I got an email for fees, it was \$8000 per semester. I was in some depression how I will arrange this money. Again, I called my father they sent me money.

I struggled a lot to find job or earn something but till now I just got new experiences or learned new lessons. I feel very bad that my home conditions or lack of money makes me sent me away from my family and home. I really miss them every moment. But I do not have any other option. I pray nobody will be separate from their family.

Jaspreet Kaur (Jassi Sokhi) Jaspreet Kaur

Jaspreet Kaur

Recently I was informed by the medical profession that my psychiatric medicine, Modecate would be taken off the market. The rationale I've had to deal with is it's a money problem and has nothing to do with care or medical principles. The evidence of success for Modecate need not go beyond example of myself. I've been on this medicine for 50 years, I've had success. I completed a university degree, married and had a family. I spent my life advocating for people and managed to make a living for myself. Without this medicine I was a psychiatric mess. Now I face the struggle at age 71, of finding a medicine to replace Modecate. I also just underwent cancer surgery, which seems secondary to my mental health problem. I don't expect a great deal to happen out of this letter, I'm up against powerful and rich people interested in making money. They don't care about psychiatric patients. I hope your readers realize I'm not the only person on this drug. Probably as many as a million people use this drug but that's irrelevant in the face of avarice. Many people will be affected, and some might commit suicide after prolonged illness. It's irresponsible and sick.

Robert Bowers

"our lives begin to end the day we become silent"



Majestic Honour

This photo was taken outside of Bridgewater NS at a conservation area. Instead of logging the trees here they chose to save these trees and let them grow, live and die naturally. The tree that I am hugging in the middle photo is approximately 400-500 years old. The feeling of being near those trees was a majestic honour. It felt like I was in a fairy tale. The peat moss on the forest floor was like a carpet under my feet. The fallen tree in the top photo reminds me of a moose antler. The bottom picture shows old roots where the bark has aged and fallen off; this reminds me of an animal skull. In this same photo you can see different red and green mosses; these mosses can't be found in Ontario very often. The forest felt sacred to me and recalled a time when First Peoples lived on this land in harmony with nature and the oneness of it all.

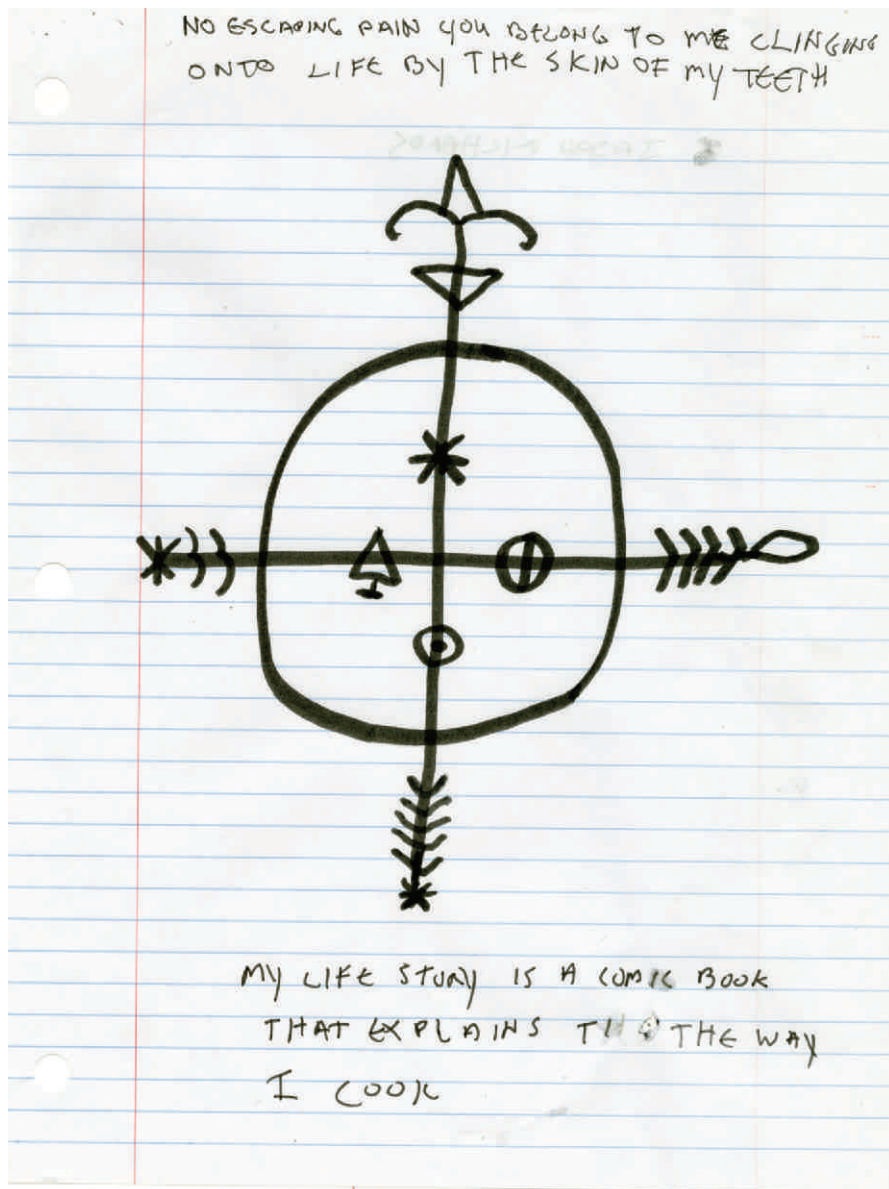
- Elaine Faelan Dobbin



Timothy Doyle



Chelsey Johnson



Jason Richards

Grocery store guy,
you seem fly,
but who do you think you are?
Telling me things will get hard,
I know,
its hard already,
I'm stuck in a bevy.
Of emotions.
You're just causing my mind commotion.
I know,
you just wanted to help,
but next time,
wait for the yelp.
Grocery store guy...
JUST LIE!

- Erica Hutchinson

ODE TO A TWO FACED CAT

CROSSING THE RIVER AT DAWN AS BEAMS OF LIGHT FILTER THROUGH THE CANOPY OF TREES
THE AUTUMNAL HUES VIBRANT AND BACKLIGHT LIKE A FIRE AGAINST A GREY AND DULL SKY
I WAS THINKING OF GHOSTS AS THE MIST ROSE OFF OF THE WATER

THE RIVER CURRENT SWIRLING LIKE THE LEAVES, OFTEN INDECISIVE AND CHANGING DIRECTIONS
MUCH LIKE MYSELF

I ENCOUNTERED SOULS ALONG THE PATH AND ON THE BRIDGE IN THE FORM OF HUMANS AND CANINES,
OFTEN I PREFER THE LATTER

AS I APPROACHED THE BENCH I SAW A SHAPE THAT I COULD NOT DECIPHER, A PASSERBY STATED THAT
IT WAS A KITTEN

AS I APPROACHED I SAW THAT IT WAS INDEED A FELINE, DRENCHED AND SCARED AND SHAKING, MUCH
LIKE MY OWN HEART

I SAT ALONGSIDE THIS BEING UNTIL I WAS ABLE TO CALM IT ENOUGH TO PICK IT UP, ADMIRING THE PAT-
TERNS THAT ONLY MOTHER NATURE CAN CREATE

THE KITTEN HAD TWO DISTINCT PATTERNS ON ITS FACE AND EYES THAT SPOKE OF KNOWLEDGE BEYOND
THIS TIME AND PLACE

MISSING MY OWN FUR CHILD AND DAYDREAMING OF A REUNION I CARRIED YOU ACROSS THE BRIDGE
SHELTERED IN MY ARMS THE WAY I LONGED TO BE SHELTERED IN ANOTHER'S
I WISHED THAT I COULD KEEP THIS NEW LIFE WITH ME BUT ALAS I AM STILL REBUILDING MY OWN

I FELT THE SADNESS AND WITHDRAWAL WHEN WE PARTED WAYS AS I GAVE YOU OVER TO THE HUMANE
SOCIETY, HOPING THAT YOU WOULD FIND A BETTER PLACE THAN THE ONE THAT YOU CAME FROM, I ALSO
HOPE THE SAME FOR MYSELF

-J

HOME

I'm sailing onward to new horizons.
With a little hope, brand new eyes and.
I never thought I'd feel so free.
The scent of you floats through the summer breeze.
And I never thought I'd feel complete.
Your eyes are like the stars I float beneath.

I'll be there In October, by then I should be sober.
And you'll see, you're the one who changed me, only for the better.
And come the sweater weather, when the leaves have turned into the most beautiful of colors.
We'll shine so bright, ignite the flame within each-other.
And that's when I'll know...I'm finally home.

The deadly tide has finally calmed.
Just like I hoped my mind would for so long.
The thought of you keeps me going, keeps me strong.
I can hear your voice from here and it's the sweetest of songs.
And like a beacon breaking through the night.
Your precious words pull back the darkness to reveal a better life.

I'll be there In October, by then I should be sober.
And you'll see, you're the one who changed me, only for the better.
And come the sweater weather, when the leaves have turned into the most beautiful of colors.
We'll shine so bright, ignite the flame within each-other.
And that's when I'll know...I'm finally home.

- Chad Northey

Connected

-B.

I woke up this morning and made myself a cup of tea and got myself dressed and ready for the day. I prepared breakfast for myself and my daughter and we lazed around the house in a way that feels foreign to our regular routine. Her day off school and mine off of work was a blessing in disguise as we cozied up with our breakfast and watched the beginning of winter unfurling outside our patio window together in a rare moment of quiet. As she finished up her breakfast and quietly went to play I pulled open my laptop to quickly check the emails I had not been bothered by over the weekend and to quickly browse social media before returning back to my regular daily activities. In the few moments I spared to scroll through my facebook feed I saw several disgruntled posts about the weather, the news and posts generally complaining about the hustle and bustle that I certainly hadn't been missing on my cozy day at home.

I thought about the weather and the news and how generally I would be able to count on some form of upset in the digital space and clicked to begin a post of my own. I began to praise some friends for something they had succeeded in the week before, to thank my partner for his hard work which had been the reason he had to leave into the bitter cold earlier in the morning and to set some goals for myself so the friends I connected with could hold me accountable for reaching them. I closed off my laptop and went to play with my daughter who was carefully directing some dolls and dinosaurs through an elaborate dollhouse drama.

I have been met with the challenge of raising a child in an era where this entirely new world of online communication exists. I am open to experiencing this new ecosystem of networks, advertisements, phishing schemes, digital diaries, Instagram vanity and Pinterest expectations. I have people who feel entitled to critique my generation, my financial status and what I chose to share or not share because there is no status quo set out in the online world, at least of which I know, on how to do it right. So, I chose to do in the online medium what I had always valued most in the physical world as well. I chose to give back and to try and add positivity and kindness to discourse. I seek to uplift and empower others and to leave that space better than I came into it. I'm grateful that I can experiment with the online world, to be able to have a time capsule of how I and my family have grown over the years and endless resources for learning and trying new things. I am equally grateful that in the era of connectedness, I can choose to shut down and spend a quiet day with my daughter, observing the weather from the patio door.

The Girl In The Mirror By Carol Ann's

I look at my reflection in the mirror.

But what I see is unclear.

I stare and stare until my eyes start to tear.

Then I stop and think, who am I?

I realize I don't ~~know~~ know and I start to cry.

I don't know at all, and instead I'm lost.

I've made so many bad choices with no thought of the cost.

I've forgotten how to take control and be my own boss.

Now I'm ~~sw~~ swimming in an ocean of my thoughts.

It feels like I'm drowning and I can't come up for air.

Everything's spinning out of control, does anyone care?

I look again at the girl looking back.

And I realize ~~at~~ at that moment, I can get ~~back on or~~ back on ~~back~~ track.

I don't need anyone to make me strong.

That's something I've been all along.

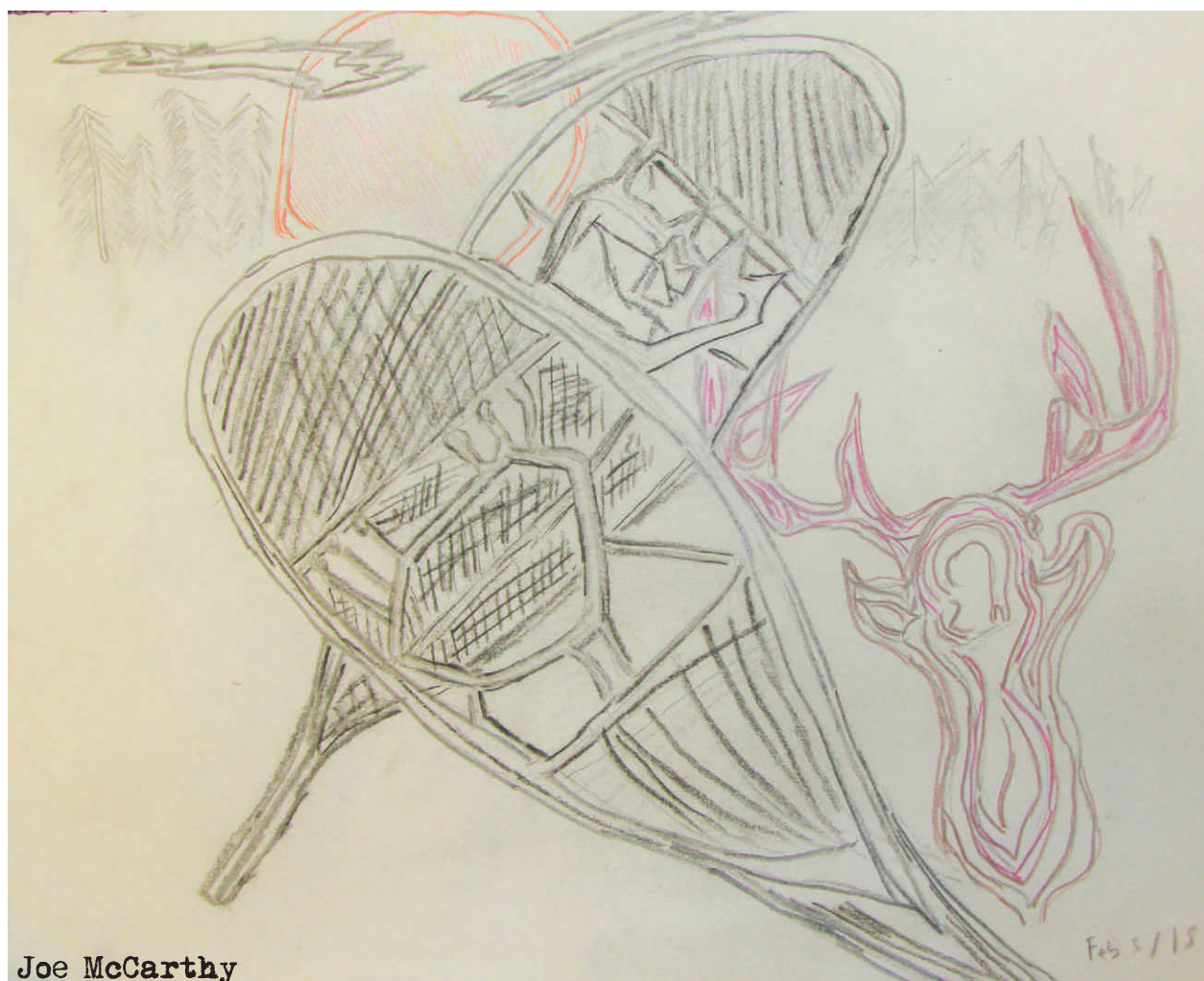
I look ~~at~~ at the mirror again, but I smile this time.

Because I know that no matter what, I'll always be fine.

downtown Peterborough



Leonard Hill



My Life Story

July 21, 2018

By Mary Ireland

I was born in 1963. My mother's name was Violet and she was born in 1934 in Toronto, Ontario and my father's name was George and he was born in 1914 in London, England. My father was a farmer before he came over to Canada in 1929. I don't know a lot about my father. I did not know who his mom or dad was. I just know that my father loved fishing and that he had a black out on a boat. My dad died in 1966 in Fenelon Falls, Ontario. My father died when I was only 3 years old and I knew nothing about him. I don't even know where any of his family is from or alive. When I was younger I remembered that my mother tried drowning me. When I was a child all I remember is that my mother drank a lot of alcohol. I remembered that my older sister raising me and my younger sister. Once I was old enough I asked my mother questions about my father but she couldn't answer any of my questions about my father. When I was about 20 years old I had my first child which was a boy who was born in 1984. I had my second child who was a girl and she was only 2 1/2 lbs at birth. The doctors didn't think that she was going to live. She is still alive to this day. In 1991 a third child was born, a boy. A fourth child which was a girl born in 1993 and fifth child was born on in 2001. I lived on a farm with Karen & Nelson Northey. I worked on the farm doing Maple Syrup and helping Nelson getting wood piled up for the winter. We used wood to keep the farm warm for the winter. I found a great guy to get married to on September 18th, 2010. We are still married to this day. He is good with my kids.



I won't go there anymore
never again darken your door
You purport
To support
But i retort
How?
Respect and trust
are earned
But you are a bust
and bridges burned
So far removed from struggles and strife
you get to go home and live your life
not surrounded daily by despair
Have come to realise you don't care
Surround your self with idea thieves
Who have helped compromise your beliefs
But
Did you ever have any and be honest here
For it is only you that must look in the mirror.

- Peterborough Streetvoice

Like blooming spiders they crawled in a great mass. If you were on the surface, you would hear them thunder like a billion nails clacking on the desk of a clerk lady. They move, in a great mass, at the edge of the sunlight, a forest along the edge of the dark, almost always staying in the light. It was a rare sight indeed, to get to see the forests moving along the planet surface. The haze would clear slowly, and the vibrant green would reveal itself below in stark contrast to the bolts of red magma, and black igneous mountains. The forests would scuttle and bottleneck to avoid lava fields. They moved quickly, you could see them visibly shifting over the course of the few hours of clear weather the planet may get. But every year, it grew clearer.

Nearby a young boy was carrying a Seedling. He was looking down as he trotted through the halls, at the glass floors. He caught a glimpse of the surface through the clouds once more, and did not notice the little seedling scuttling towards him. The little plant had roots deeply embedded in the soil, safely supported by the robotic spider body, everyone the boy had ever met had called, prosthetics. The Seedling attempted to swerve out of the little boy's way, but even for A.I. systems, little boys can be unpredictable.

The boy teetered over, after being surprised by the little robot. He fell, the Seedling in his hand flew through the air, the boy looked around for the other Seedling, not initially noticing it was under his bottom. When he found that he had damaged not only two of the prosthetic legs, but also a few of the stems as well, the boy began to weep.

It felt like eternity for the young child before an adult scooped him, the boy was sobbing apologies.

"It was an accident, don't worry little guy. Accidents happen, as long as we set them right, we have nothing to worry about." He began pouring a soft blue liquid into the soil. The plant's fibres straightened. Next he tinkered with the legs for a moment.

The man hoisted the boy up and put him on his shoulders. They walked down the hallways of the station. As the boy walked a berry bush approached on the ceiling. He reached up and grabbed a ripe strawberry. Had they been on Earth, it would have been the right moon. But they were not on Earth. So the strawberry grew here always, but reciprocity had never been so alive, so tangible.

"Hey, little guy lost his way earlier. Thought I would just bring him back to you. Had a little accident"

"Accidents happen, as long as we set them right, we have nothing to worry about mamma."

"Such a smart kid. Hey, speaking of. We gonna see you at the Last Call party tomorrow."

"How many years has it...," a glint of nostalgia in her eye.

"Uh, the big 1-0 I guess. Ten years..."

"I not ten, I two." The boy interjected. The adults laughed, waved softly at one another.

The man left, and the boy and the mother hugged and ate. They snuggled, they fed the plants. She read him a story, he gathered all the little Seedlings in the room to join him for the story. The story was a classic, many of the words were nonsense and whimsical. Magical creatures, in a magical land, tainted by greed and industry's hand, and a dying world that bleeds and bleeds, won't somebody, **somebody** stand up for the trees!

It did not go exactly like that. But it is a good summary. It was the boy's favorite book. They say it was written by a Doctor on Earth. The little Seedlings all around him loved it too. It was all a part of his bedtime ritual.

The boy and his mother ascended to the rooftop of their station. A glass dome encased the rooftop, a forested park was encased within. It was large enough that distant trees obstructed parts of the park from view, though most youth knew every nook and cranny by age ten.

In the center was a stagnant, monstrous ash tree. At the area above most other tree's canopy, but below that of the ash itself, was a large swing set that overlooked a swirling sky of reds, oranges, blues and other vibrant hues as the sun shifted through the clouds.

"Who live in that mamma, who live there."

"That is station Ve-UK-11 darling. Other people live there like us. They are waiting too." She slowed her pushing and stared into the distance.

"You, you will get to see it one day. You will breathe the sweet air of the goddess for the first time. Walk her shores and drink her waters, feel her soil under your feet. You are blessed with a true rebirth. Stare upon your paradise, Aeneas."

By Alex Roper



This picture was taken at my family's trailer. In Apsley. Is a beautiful place lots of memories. Growing up there. Seeing my cousin and grandparents ever summer. Having lunch on the dock swimming fishing. Frog catch. So many laughs. Taking this picture was kinda risky because I was bringing my camera on the boat with me while my dad and little brother was fishing. And I don't know if you have any fishers in your family but they get excited and rock the boat hahah. the setting on my Sony camera was pretty easy and it pick up the colors well. I have to say this picture is my favorite one. And I take a lot of pictures. Thank you for taking your time to read this.

- Kristen Chatten



NW
18

"I Stand Solid"

In these constant times
of rush,
in this vertical hell,
with you,
I stand outside
the lines,
of who was wrong,
or right.

It doesn't make
a difference,
how the story
went,
you never
had to hit
so far below
the belt,
in all your pain;
you sow,
to reap.

These dynamic chaotics
of love,
have spiraled out
of control,
to a place of
a different orbit,
than the one
that moved us,
before.

It was never
always easy,
I could never
promise
that,
but it never
had to go
so far,
to where it has,
to the center-heart
of madness.
I wondered why
the thunder
boomed,

each time you
kissed my lips,
and why my light
of logic,
went out on me,
like this?

I really thought
I knew you better,
than all your
piercing words,
you said;
did you really think
you'd cut me down,
not to rise
back up,
again?

It was all your
cutting blows,
you hit me with,
that made me strong,
to close the door,
on you and me,
forever,
now.

It will never
matter,
anymore,
all the things
you did and said,
I'm moving on
and over it,
to higher grounds,
in a better place,
of solid standing.

© Janine Y. Cranley, 2018.

Moll

I'm not stupid.
Sure, I chew gum,
my hair's a blonde fire,
I walk in French curves,
I laugh on cue,
and my laugh is a stupid laugh.

I never get it,
what those small violent men
do to flesh.
I never got it.
I'm the three monkeys in one.

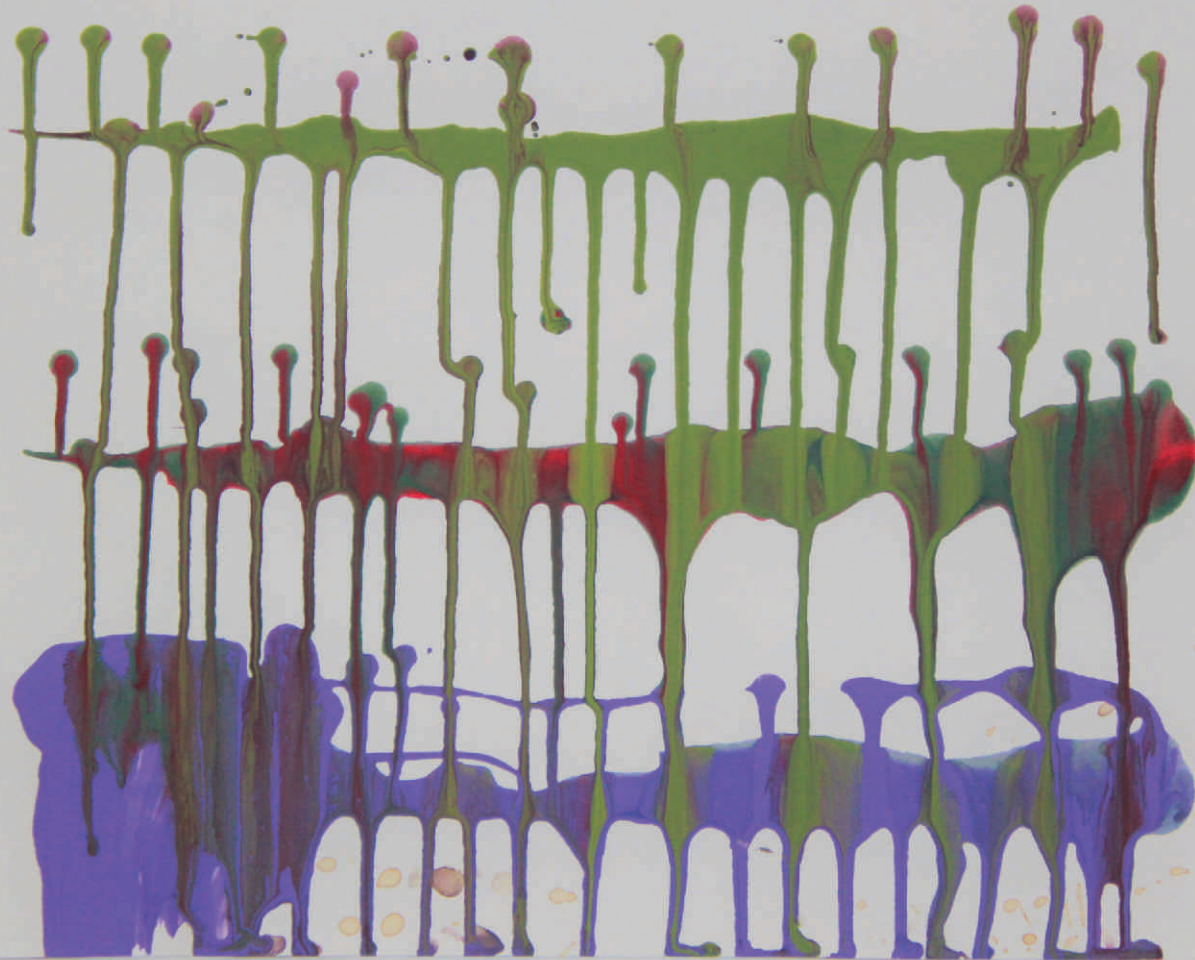
Oh, I get my dresses,
my perfume, my endless drinks;
and I drink until I finally talk back.
Then the open hand flies
and a red negative explodes in my head.

Dependably ditzzy,
always available,
he leans on me
more than I on him
as we saunter
to the hotel.

Endlessly replaceable,
uniquely the same,
I am moll.
And the movie-goers
miss my real name
as the credits roll.

- Anonymous





Caroline
Barber

Expensive Taste
By Katherine Heigh

I know when I was younger
I could eat hotdog buns with cheese
microwaved on top
and it was cheesy artisanal garlic bread –

‘cause why not?

And I could dump
half a can of stewed tomatoes
on an everything bagel
and it was aromatic, balsamic bruschetta –

my favourite!

Now my palette has matured,
flowered beyond my means.
But when I was younger I could
believe what he did was love.

BIAPR

BIA you make my day
Such a happy place to stay
All our frowns turn away
Beautiful people every day
Come join us, we're here to stay
Open our doors, a positive way
A cheerful environment all day
Full of love and laughter
For everyone every day!

- Katherine Weidenhorn

In this Moment

I enter the room.
I become aware of myself in my new surroundings.
I feel a little anxious, but I really shouldn't be.
I sit in my chair attempting to accommodate the restrictions of unyielding angles, against my aching body.
With all things considered;
My back, hips and legs are as comfortable as they can be.
New elements are factoring in at this moment.
Tremors, pulling, tingling up the back of my neck.
A twinge over my left eye.
Yes, it's one of **those** days... Just one of those days
I have the impression that there is a façade donning my face,
Camouflaging my flaws and imperfections with smiles and laughter.
Suddenly, I feel a chill in the back of my head.
I feel exposed and vulnerable to my very core.
The sensation of rolling thunder runs through my tattered crown.
I observe a brilliant flash of red, orange and yellow in the far reaches of my grey matter. The vision is akin to the intensity of flames in a fire storm.
A commanding figure enters the scene and attends to the sudden combustion of colour.
Just as a passionate artist takes to a blank canvas with masterful brush strokes.
From the intense blend of colours emerge a stunning rendering of a sunset over serene waters. Relief. I am enlivened spiritually.
My thoughts ebb and flow in this moment. Unexpectedly, I drift away from the pains this rainy day has conjured up for me.
It is inevitable that suffering and chaos will attempt to impede my daily journey through life.
But I have to come to the realization that it is within my realm of power to generate the calm I seek, from within.

- Patricia Weafer

what the people that're
Helping us need to know more of
is - where the supports are
where the shelters are
where are NA A.A + four
County + four Court + Canadian
mental Health supports +
+ Helping 2 understand the
people that have drug + mental
Addictions so that way they
can better help them also
+ Housing resources is so that
way they can help understand
where people with drug mental
+ ~~the~~ way of living is also
The Help is there if you
want it

Peterborough is so Meaningful
to me because the Help + the
Support is here if you want it
also we need to focus on
the Homelessness + drug
problems that is starting
to plague Peterborough instead
of putting this sort of problem
on the back burner we need
to Help + Educate the
people that we so need
the Help from

Save the Homeless



Drugs
Kill

Please Help

Shane G

THE TREE

At times I can see it, and at times the movement is so slick that it passes me by. When the contact comes it is a direct and unwelcome thing. A cold and clammy touch on the flesh of my soul, iron fingers of a most exquisite strength. I am touched, as we all are, by the tyranny of power.

This power is a thing no greater than that which we hold within ourselves, unless we forsake the discipline to wield it. We are strong, and powerful - but we sap our motivations on futile gestures. We must clear the path to our own future, so as not to walk in the circles of the past.

So many of us are lost. Fragile organic things trapped by the will of machines made to misguide us. Machines that keep us apart, when by their design they could unite us. They keep us in this ceaseless loop of ego. Fear resides in our view of others. We project onto them all that we hate of ourselves. We worry that the sins that we have committed will be visited upon us by those who seem to be different.

There are people who live in the shadows we create. There are people there who only see light in what we perceive as darkness. There are people who find only wealth in what we see as poverty. Sometimes these people are strangers; but more often than that, those people are our neighbours, our friends, our families. And we fight them to hold onto our scraps, never admitting that we live in the shadows of those up the line from us.

Fighting to stay on the branch of a tree that is dying, hollowing itself with rot.

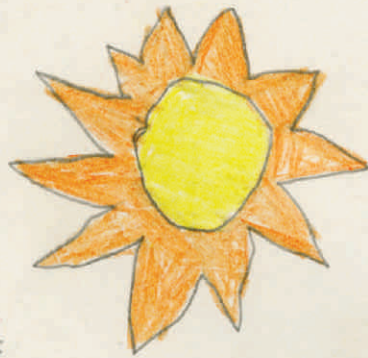
I want to look down, and into the past. Not just my own, but the collective past. I want to welcome people into what light I have. I want to share my space and my air. I want to share the stories of who we were, who we are, and who we can be.

It is the sharing that will unite us, and allow us to jump from the branches of this dying tree.

Scattered on the winds like the seeds we can choose to be.

Kevin T. Gallagher aka spypoet

Charlene Brooks



Charlene Brooks

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 (no copyrighted colouring book material)
- 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, New Canadians Centre, the Nurse Led Practitioner 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. 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

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.



The River is an arts magazine by and for the low-income community in Peterborough, Ontario.
To learn more, visit www.rivermagazine.ca.

Kayla Csiszar