



# The River

Summer 2022

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## Editorial

Welcome to the 7th edition of the River Magazine, we are glad you are here. The River Magazine is published on the traditional territory of Michi Saagiig Anishnaabeg, along the shore of the Otonabee river. The Anishinaabemowin meaning of Otonabee is “river that beats like a heart”. The Otonabee river is a life force that flows through our community, as is the art people make to express their experiences of this life, the art you find along alley walls, in skillfully piled sticks and stones among the willow trees and the work flowing through these pages.

The River Magazine has published the original artwork of people living on low incomes and/or in poverty in the Peterborough/Nogojwanong area since 2017. The River Magazine is a record of people’s personal reflections as well as a testament to the collective experience of its contributors. It’s hard to believe that the first River Magazine was published before the Opioid Poisoning Crisis struck

our community, no one had heard of COVID 19 and a basic income project was being piloted across the province.

This issue of the River Magazine is dedicated to the memory of Erin Browne, who believed in the power of art to transcend. Before her death, Erin worked with the River Magazine and One City Peterborough to organize an art show and a series of events to spread awareness about the inherent value of creative practice and artistic expression. We hope that you will consider joining the River Magazine community and attending this important event at the Peterborough Library from September 1st to October 16th.

We would like to thank the City of Peterborough, United Way of Peterborough, CUPE 3908, the Human Services and Justice Coordinating Committee and all our other supporters for this issue.

*If you want to learn more about the River Magazine you can check out our website at: <https://rivermagazine.ca/> or email us directly at: [theriverpeterborough@gmail.com](mailto:theriverpeterborough@gmail.com)*

*Front cover illustration by Trinity Lachlan.  
Back cover illustration by Juneth Champagne-Wilson.*

My dear friend Erin Browne died unexpectedly on May 10th at the age of 50. Erin was part of the team that brought the River Magazine to our community. She was also a very important and now much missed friend.

As a former member of the River team and the person who recruited Erin to the magazine, I was asked to write a short reflection on a friend whose life contained many challenges but was full of love and support for those who also found life difficult.

I first met Erin about 15 years ago in a friend's garden as I was entertaining a gang of kids with a potato cannon (don't ask!). Our paths crossed a couple more times over the years as tends

to happen in our small town, then just before COVID we got to know each other at a weekly art drop-in at the Mount Community Centre. We became mutual support through the early months of COVID, at times, spending a couple of evenings a week together. Erin and her sons became my 'COVID family'.

I started to learn about Erin's life. I learned that she loved dogs, really loved dogs. She taught me to love her dogs and be patient with her need to meet and greet dogs on the street. I learned about her mother dying of cancer, of her sister's accident that left her paralyzed and in need of 24-hour care, and of her sister's eventual death from complications associated with the accident. I got to know her boys, particularly her younger son. He and I would play basketball, occasionally cook together and trip into the bush by ski, canoe or bike. Erin, her younger son and I would go to my cabin and Erin would lie on the grass by the river and play with the dogs and read. She had a quiet, unlimited love of nature, its sights, smells and its capacity to bring peace. She had more bird feeders than anyone else I know, and she could watch the birds in the trees by her house for hours. Somehow there was a greater variety of birds at her place than anywhere else I have ever been in Canada.

Our friendship had its ups and downs, there was much we didn't agree on. We argued about approaches to parenting, how to respond to COVID, what a good movie was, and if her art was any good (at times, when she found

focus, it was). What we did agree on was that the world should have more love and compassion in it, that those who struggle through poverty, disability and all forms of marginalization needed love and support. We agreed that our world and our local community needed to do more for those getting left behind. This shared belief reflected Erin's own personal struggles with the complexities of our world and her struggle to find a role and meaningful work. She read a lot about the residential school system; the poor treatment of children always pained her deeply.

In looking for ways to give back, In the first COVID summer she hosted outdoor art sessions in her garden

and also joined the team at the River. The River Magazine became a passion for her and the work gave her purpose and connected well with her belief in the healing value of art. It also pointed towards a new direction for Erin that I hoped she could follow as her boys grew up and needed her less. In the last six months of her life she started training as a death doula.

- Pottery by Erin Browne

Her choices in life were always

complicated by her own health. She suffered from regular migraines which left her incapacitated for a few days at a time. Over the last couple of years, it appeared that these were getting better and less frequent, but sadly this last winter they came back more regularly and with a greater intensity. She was diagnosed with blood clots in her legs and was put on blood thinners. In early May Erin was admitted to hospital where it was discovered that she had a blood clot in her brain and in the early hours of May 10th, she died of a brain haemorrhage.

In many ways Erin was too sensitive for our world, it contained too many choices, too much suffering, and ran at a pace that did not suit her soul. Erin was more at peace with nature, with listening to the birds sing, spending hours throwing a ball for her younger dog Leo or caring for her rescue, Lucy.

Erin is missed greatly by her family, many dear friends, two dogs in particular, and all the dogs of the world.

- John Marris





- Anonymous



- Leo Smith





### **Squirells** **By Dave LaChappelle**

They jump from tree to tree  
 Trying to find a mate  
 They get in fights  
 And retaliate  
 They beg for food  
 With their sad eyes  
 Their hearts beat a million times  
 Or so it seems  
 Nervous creatures at their core  
 They each have a personality of their own  
 If you would only look and relate



### **Taylor** **By Dave LaChappelle**

A cat with attitude  
 If you pet it  
 It will bite you  
 You can play with him  
 He seems disinterested  
 Short attention span  
 He is young for his age  
 Full of energy and vim  
 He likes to keep to himself  
 He is not picky about his food  
 And does not meow at all  
 He is a cat  
 In his element



### **Rocky** **By Dave LaChappelle**

He is a toy Chihuahua  
 He is big and tough  
 His bark is bigger than his bite  
 He is the security force for the house  
 So you better watch out  
 He sleeps all day  
 Under his blanket  
 Unless there is food  
 He comes to attention  
 He will stare you down and whine  
 Until you give him food  
 Especially meat  
 He has to go out every two hours  
 My dad is giving him back  
 To its rightful owners  
 Dog sitting was fun

## **The First Thought I Had When I Woke up Today**

*By Emily Clarey*

How many mornings do I have left here?  
This home doesn't feel like home anymore  
The walls don't hold me the same  
The windows are no longer worth it  
My stomach can't handle the knots my landlord ties and never unties  
In November  
The floods came  
And not for the first time  
Slap another band aide on the boat  
Everything will be just fine  
In January  
She won't fix the heat  
Three nights in a toque under every blanket my grandma ever made me  
The lights danced a sinister disco before the power went out  
When the power went out  
The soft glow from the street poured in  
The view that captured my heart no longer keeps me warm enough  
This home taught me how to stay put  
Now it whispers every morning  
"It's time to go"  
I thought the oven was trying to kill me  
When really  
It was screaming  
"Time to go"

## **The Poop on Puffins**

*By Murray Arthur Palmer*

I'm just off of Funk Island, Witless Bay, in troubled Newfoundland  
Where a colony of Atlantic puffins seems nothing less than grand.  
But present populations are but a fraction of what we have been.  
Killing for food, overfishing our prey, pollution ... it's almost obscene.  
'Round on the swirling wheel in the sky, in front of the colony I go,  
Flying in to reach our single chick waiting in the burrow below.  
My beak is full of capelin held by my jaws hinged in parallel;  
My muscular tongue clamps up to sixty fish in rows so well.  
I fly underwater on powerful wings, steering with legs and feet.  
I catch more fish for my young lad; he needs lots to eat.  
Growing fast, he'll fledge after six weeks, going to sea at night ...  
Careful now! There are great black-backed and herring gulls in sight,  
Looking to steal food bound for, or eat, chicks in attacks so bold,  
Pouncing on starving chicks waiting at the burrow's threshold.  
One gull can destroy our own breeding attempt in one fell swoop ...  
When our population drops to a certain number, will we ever recoup?



I thought I would be

one person  
my whole life,

and now my wings are  
outstretched upon my back,

my feet on the edge .

*"this is what growing feels like",*  
a voice inside of me whispers.

I'm both living and dying  
in the same breath.

By Jacquelyn Toupin  
*@raisinghay*



- Darci Sweetman



- Joe McCarthy



**The Commute** by Kip Gordon

Today, a man told me to "Get a Job!"  
now, there's money in my pockets  
& I'm on my way for coffee  
so, I punched him in the face  
in a very satisfactory way  
knuckles dusting & busted chops  
then the bus rattled  
...waking me up

## Autumn Gold

I still remember the day  
Back in Two Thousand Ten  
When Dad called me outside  
And said "come meet my new friend"

"New friend?" I thought;  
This was out of the blue  
What is he talking about?  
I hadn't a clue.

He led me out back  
So I looked all around  
When he smiled at me  
And pointed down.

That's when I saw her;  
The most adorable pup  
I gasped with excitement  
And scooped her right up.

The most adorable little puppy  
Fur of soft fluffy gold  
"Her name is Amber"  
I was then told.

From that day on  
She was by my side  
We went on on walks and hikes  
And the occasional bike ride.

What a smart dog she was,  
She caught on pretty quick  
All the basic commands  
And every new trick.

She had a spot on my bed  
Where she slept every night  
Her toys and her pillow  
Was just off to my right.

When bedtime came  
She curled up in her spot  
Still gently carrying  
The stuffy she brought

I never believed in that saying  
It was love at first sight  
Until I met a puppy  
One warm Autumn night.



Lissa Bruce

Dedicated to my Best Friend, Amber Ann  
💛 August 16, 2010 - August 15, 2018 💛



## Trumpeter Swans on the Trent Canal.

A Trumpeter swan can be identified by its black beak. Other swans have an orange beak. Trumpeter Swans were reintroduced back to the Peterborough area in the early 1980's after they had become extinct in the Peterborough area. This pair of Trumpeter Swans will swim right up close, making it easy to get some nice close up photos. They have made their home on the Trent canal, with the Trent Nature Trail on one side and Trent University Nature Area on the other side of the canal. This photo was taken near the dam at the start of the Trent Nature Trail when there was still ice on the water in April 2022.

- Ken Oliver



## Fresh

*By Josh Gillis*

The air in the forest smells so nice  
Its fresh air we crave and freedom from the bounds of the city  
Which trail do you want to go on? Right or left? Let's roll the dice  
The land out here is fresh, lush, and pretty.

The lakes, streams, tree's, and the endless possibilities that the forest beholds are bright  
The air from the water smells so fresh, as I sit by it for a time  
The sun is going down, the sounds of the forest change to the sounds of night  
I set my tent up, make a fire, and relax watching the fire burn away the barks grime

I realize after a day or so, I'm not smelling so fresh  
I look at the forest and turn back with all my gear and trash in tow  
To civilization I return as I take out the bushes with a whack

I pass sights I have seen, lakes, ponds, and some other of natures wonders  
Smiling while I do, since I took some photos of them  
I stop for a while and look around while I ponder  
Out of the bushes into the field, what pops out? A wild hen!

I make my way home, tired, and not so fresh now  
But a shower will make my fresh again  
As I was my wash with fresh warm water I take a bow  
A wash of my clothes will have them fresh, and hopefully no stains

As I lay down, I see the sights I have seen, as I drift off to rest  
Tomorrow I may not feel it, but I'll be fresh and at my best



# Preparing for the Throne

Friends Forever :)

TAKE 100%

WHAT'S YOURS

Feeling Great

HERE'S JUST A LITTLE UNDERSTANDING AMONGST ME AND MY BLACK GIRLFRIENDS THAT WE'RE ALL IN THIS TOGETHER

HELP HEAL YOUR SKIN FROM WITHIN

9 Easy Ways to De-Stress

QUEEN

CHOOSE JOY

It'd be weird if you "didn't" feel like you've been thrown into the deep end of the adulting pool at 23 only to emerge soaked, tired, and somehow 40 on the inside.

Don't sleep on the fashion

- Iyya-Hollyne Foster





- Dan Nugent



- Chastity Ellis



- Em Farquhar-Barrie

### **Familiar, but Not Home, Keep Going**

*By Amber Rose*

you will never know the pain you sent through my body but i clung to yours hoping we'd both  
end up drowning.

writing love letters to Satan, is this the way of entrapping a beautiful soul?  
waiting for my back to blow out you held me close with your hands in my hair.

you were happy  
your eyes indulging into my skin  
i was left decaying on the inside but your stare remained the same  
committed to a sin, how else do i escape?  
you had me tied around a string but you tied a pretty bow.

you stomped on skulls to hold mine in your chest. you said i made you want to be a better  
person but at what cost? even when youre gone i listen to old songs we used to smoke to in the  
dimmed light, crushed lungs  
you told me to breathe





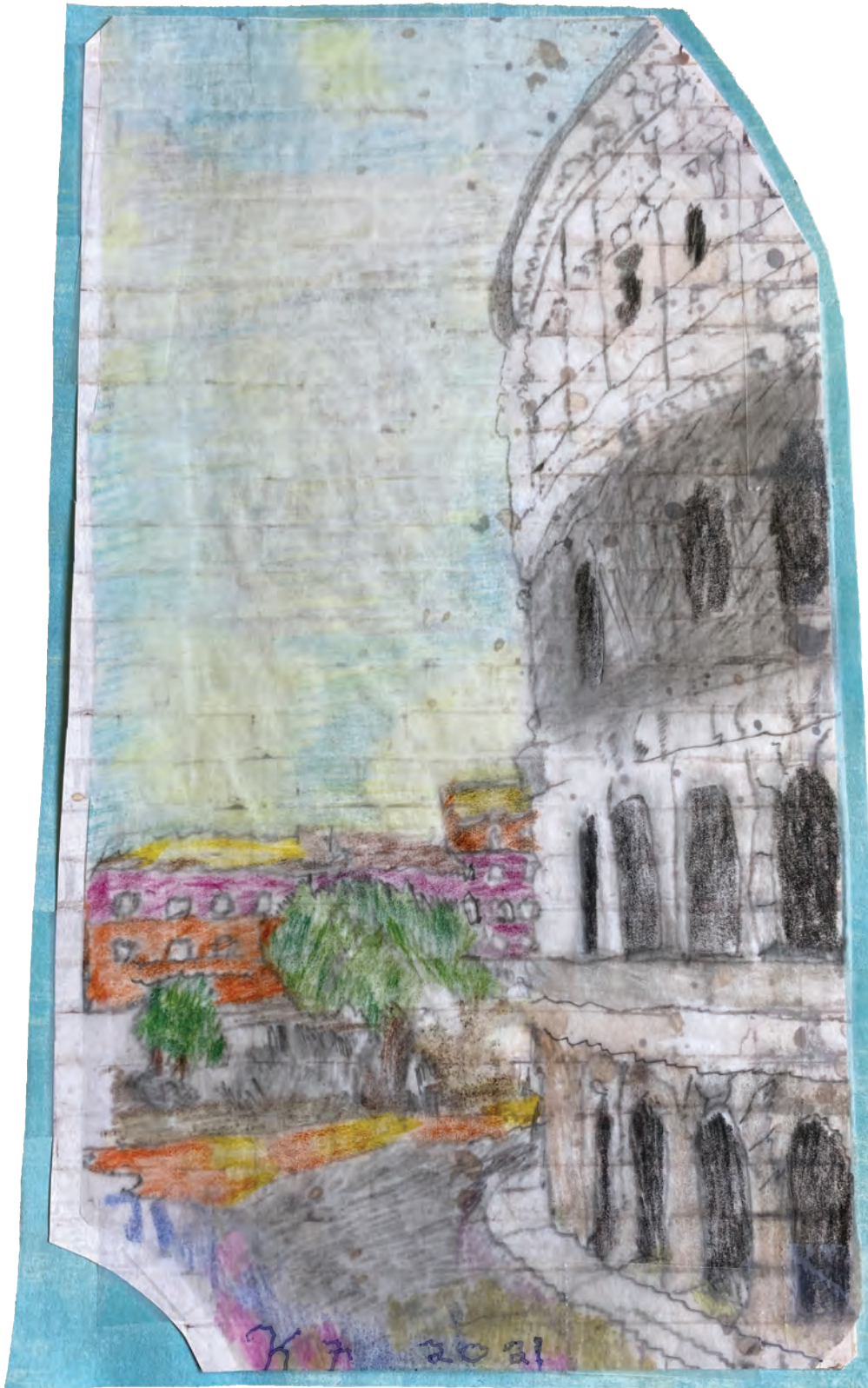
- Dylan Ford

### **My Grandmothers Furniture**

**By: Laura Colasacco**

I run my hand over the embroidered fabric covering my grandmother's sofa. I can feel the ridges of the floral pattern beneath my finger tips. The sun beams through the window, past the matching embroidered curtains. I lay down across the sofa staring up at the ceiling, and pulled a blanket over me for warmth. I think back to a class field trip to the medical student anatomy lab at the local university. The couch beneath my fingers softly rebounds, like the lung I was invited to explore. I marveled at the strength of the human form, and how our built environment reflects our most necessary parts. Suddenly the furniture appears to be alive, and I am comforted by this sudden reflection and no longer feel so alone.



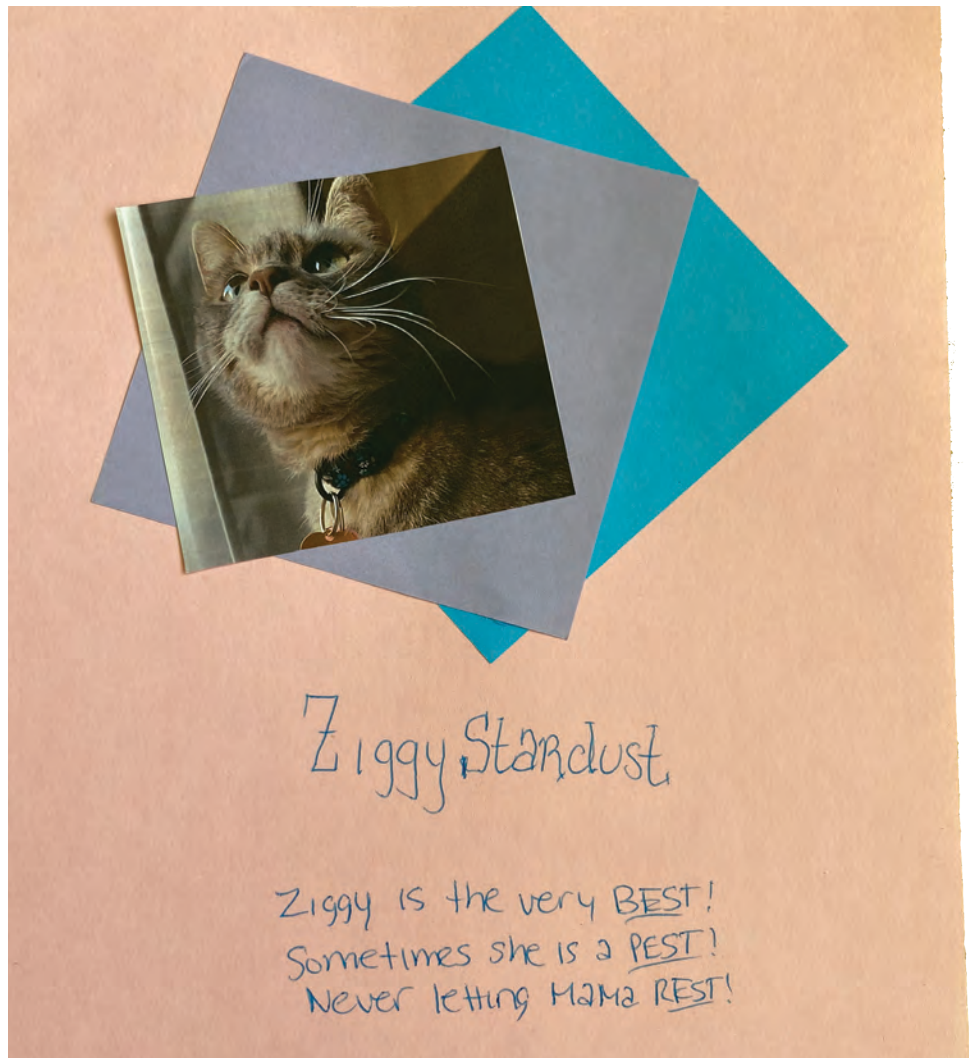


- Kellie Fairman

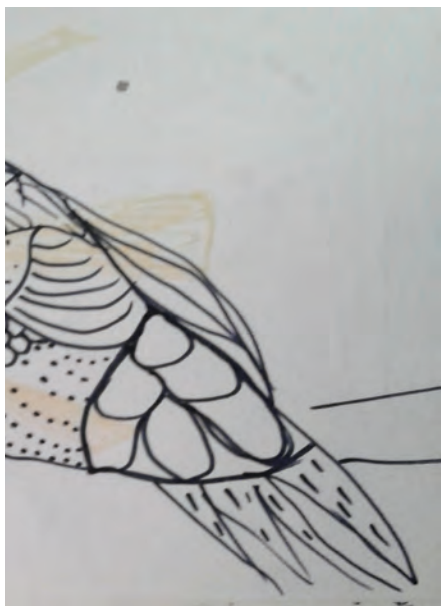




- Lori Richard



- Katherine Wiedenhorn



- Judy Filion



- Stephen Land



## A couple of bad months

*By Alex Karn*

It was a cold winter day in Peterborough, and I was walking downtown with a friend. I wrapped my fingers around my takeout container gratefully, warming my hands as we cut through a slushy parking lot on our way back to work.

The conversation had turned to housing and basic needs. As mental health workers, we often spoke about how the lack of secure access to food, medicine, a safe place to sleep, and other necessities was a frustrating roadblock in our efforts to help folks in crisis. We knew we couldn't solve the problem, but the venting usually helped in its own way. When the words hit the frigid air, we knew we weren't alone.

"There's a lot less difference between us and them than people think," he said. "We're all just a couple of bad months away from homelessness. It could happen to anyone."

I nodded my agreement, and tried not to let on just how much the thought scared me. Because what my colleague didn't know at the time was that it had happened to me before. When I was a teenager, my mom left her abusive partner of many years. His rage was frightening, but he was a great provider and she had never worked outside of the home they'd built together.

There was relief when we left, but a new kind of fear too. Where would we go? How would we get money to survive? After a couple shelter stays and some months cramped into spare spaces in the homes of our loved ones, a few humbling trips to community food cupboards, and help from an Ontario Works social worker, we were able

to find our feet again.

The thing no one tells you though, is once you've lost your sense of home the word doesn't feel the same in your mouth anymore. It becomes aspirational - something to reach for.

Unfortunately that wouldn't be my only experience of homelessness. After I separated from my partner of ten years, my young daughter and I were in a similar spot. I got laid off, and maybe a year after that chilly conversation with my coworker, home wasn't something I could hold onto for us anymore.

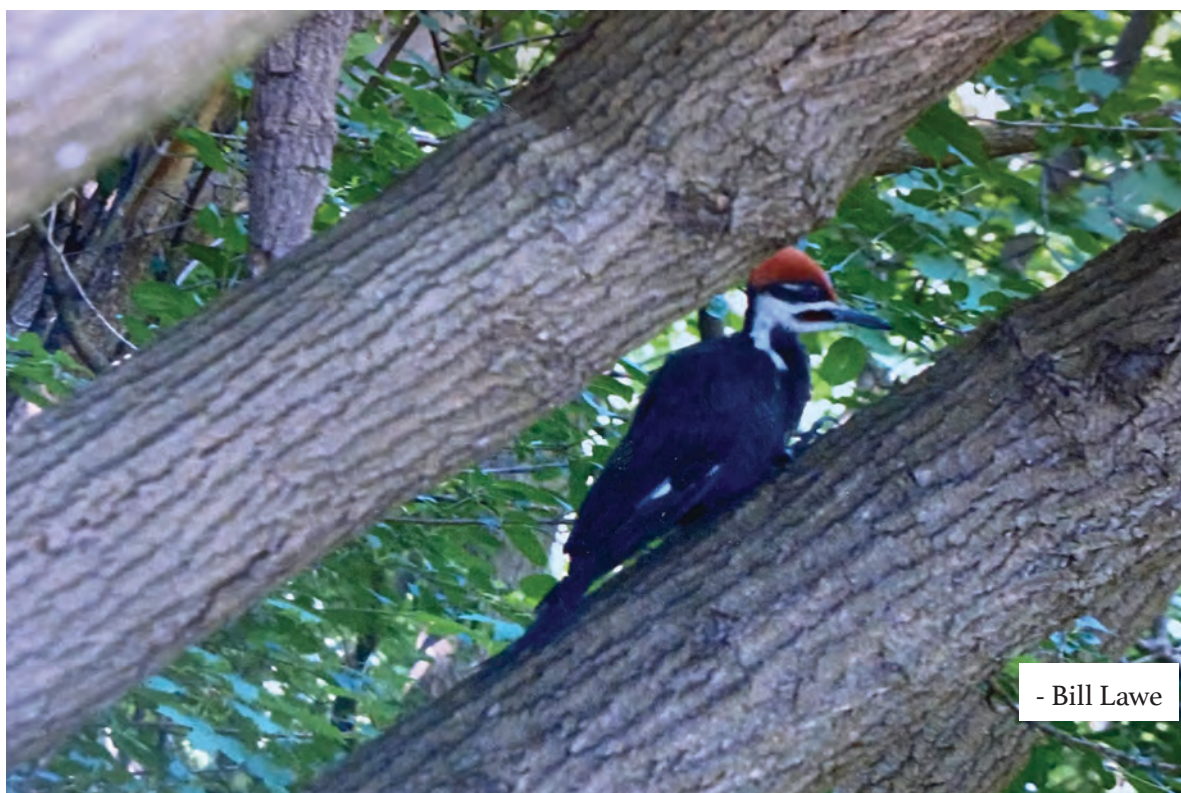
Suddenly an affordable apartment in Peterborough, the city that we'd called home for almost a decade; the place where I'd found myself, my voice, my community, felt unattainable.

This time I had a road map. We stayed with a string of loved ones, in whatever cramped spaces they could rent to us. I took the time I needed to recover, then I found a new job and worked my butt off to save enough money for first and last months' rent for a place of our own.

It took well over a year to get here, but I'm finally back home. But so what? Like many in this city I love, I am privileged to have an official residential address again - for now.

My friend was right when he said it could happen to anyone. Between the outrageous housing costs, the rise of renovictions, stagnated wages, and the unsure times we're all facing, there is no guarantee any of us will be housed a year from now. Illness, disability, personal tragedy, employment changes; so many factors could throw any one of us off balance and cause a loss of housing stability.

We deserve better. Safe, stable, affordable housing is a human right, not a commodity.

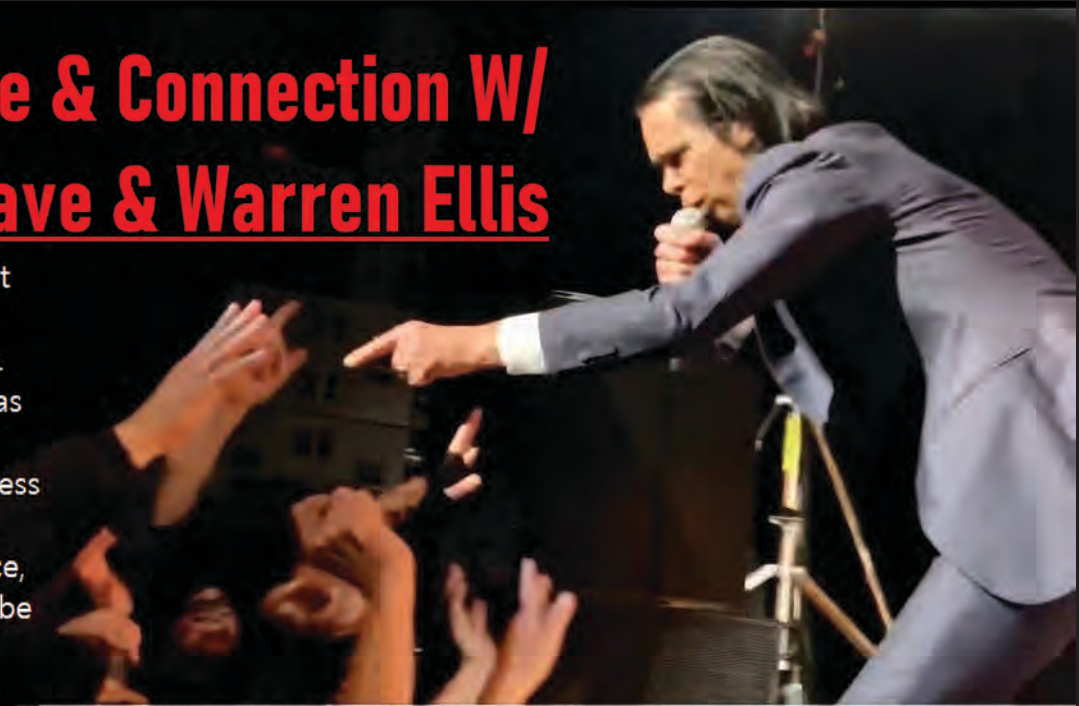


- Bill Lawe



# Carnage & Connection W/ Nick Cave & Warren Ellis

March 16th 2022 at  
Queen Elizabeth  
Theatre Vancouver.  
First, I confess, I was  
skeptical. At bad  
Seeds prices with less  
than half The Bad  
Seeds in attendance,  
I worried it would be  
half a Bad Seeds  
show.?



Lights go down, Band walks out to thunderous applause, a roar that rattles. They've been missed for 3 years, and you can feel it. Open with Spinning Song (BS Cover) and it doesn't feel like it's missing a thing. Warren's loops drown the room, and you're left swimming for your life in them. Nicks voice is strong as ever, riveting and beautiful. *Hand Of God* and *White Elephant* were recognized among fans as potential BS setlist staples and their performances surpassed expectations. Nick stalks the stage, gripping hands and shouting in the faces of fans in total ecstasy to be on the receiving end. This what's NOT on the record .Among the immense praise the two albums the setlist leans heavily from (Ghостeen and Carnage) were met with a common complaint about being "atmospheric" and lacking the intensity of his past works. Even a lot of the softer tracks (eg. *Leviathan* and *Ghостeen*) were kicked up to 11 in big part to the efforts of young cat of the bunch Luis Almau on double duty in the rythm section with Bass and Drums. The piano ballads all as beautiful as one

would expect, *I Need You* being an emotional highlight. In conclusion, it wasn't half a bad seeds show, but a whole other ball of wax. Whole being the main word 5/5

Tyler Smith



## **All Wisdom is Just Healed Pain**

*By Rosanne Fortin*

Beloved Brion,

I have been setting the past on fire as I wander the shores of New England. I have been chasing dragonflies in the marshes and I feel I have been here eternally. I am glowing like the sunsets along the bay.

I wait in the dark. Our love disappears but it is waiting in this darkness to be remembered. My mind feels free here. I have been sleeping on the beach, beneath the mourning sky. This journey is asking me to be brave. Because if you don't bleed you won't grow. Because all wisdom is just healed pain.

I remember when we were younger. We were braver. I don't want to take the world for granted anymore. I'm watching the sparks rise and become the constellations. I see you again as a spectre of energy. Now that you are a spirit, I know you are beside me at this moment. I feel you, your warm hands against my cheek. I still write you letters even though I do not mail them.

I will follow you into the unknown. I will leave everything behind for you. You are the best part of me, shining like aurora. But I am not ready to die. I will not forget you. I will keep you in my soul. I will keep all of this a sacred memory.

And I will be here floating on the waves with blue herons and dragonflies.

With Infinite love,

Onyx

## **Standing Alone**

*by Cliff Nicholson*

I am standing alone  
In this world  
No one to talk to  
I am yelling help me  
No one comes to help me  
I remember  
I am standing alone  
I didn't know standing alone would be like this  
Standing alone feels like  
I am an empty  
Broken shell.

## **Tear Drops**

*by Cliff Nicholson*

These teardrops are  
From a broken heart  
That has been hurt  
Too many times  
These teardrops will never stop  
These teardrops are from losing loved ones  
Tear Drops like the rain  
Keeps on falling  
Until happiness comes  
These tear drops of mine  
Will keep on falling.







- Julie



TRUE FRIENDS ARE like angels.

★ THEY PRECIOUS ARE RARE, ★

★ and false ★ FRIENDS ★  
ARE like Leaves, FOUND ★

★ everywhere. ★

LESSONS Learned in LIFE ★

Charles ~~10~~  
Bird March 30, 2022

- Charles Bird

### Just checking in

*Anonymous*

I'm still waiting to meet you,  
the person I wanted to become.  
I don't really know how to write anymore.  
Those old hobbies and dreams are buried somewhere.  
I hope.  
I don't even know what to write here.  
I want to shake my head and laugh.  
Words are just words.  
It should be easy.  
How long can writer's block last? Years?  
I hope you read this in the future and laugh  
and you can tell me sincerely: it gets better.  
But for now, at least,  
I'd rather feel nothing than something.  
Are you still there?





- Faelan Dobbin



I taught myself to live

I taught myself to live simply and wisely,  
to look at the sky and pray to God,  
and to wander long before evening  
to tire my superfluous worries.  
When the burdocks rustle in the ravine  
and the yellow-red rowanberry cluster droops  
I compose happy verses  
about life's decay, decay and beauty.  
I come back. The fluffy cat  
licks my palm, purrs so sweetly  
and the fire flares bright  
on the saw-mill turret by the lake.  
Only the cry of a stork landing on the roof  
occasionally breaks the silence.  
If you knock on my door  
I may not even hear.

By David Hansen



- Amanda Brownhill





### **Marylou Green : Mourning into Morning**

**My art and my life have shown me that you cannot give up on yourself and that healing from mental illness is possible. My journey as an artist has been towards healing myself and the corner of the world that I live in.**

**I have discovered that therapy is about expressing feelings that may have been hidden or blocked for a very long time and after that the images and lost memories can be accessed through art making. When words are not enough to describe our individual stories, art bridges this gap.**

**The many labels I have been given (borderline, psychotic, hopeless, bad, depressive, and crazy) were never me. The labels given to us by the mental health system and our families are not who we are. There is a story behind the label that is often neglected or dismissed by many professionals. Because of this, the label assigned to us does not apply.**

**I truly believe that art can reveal the interior life or soul, which is the real life of the individual. My journey has not been fast or easy but it has been worthwhile. Healing comes from peeling off the myriad layers of all the lies which others have told us about ourselves. I now feel whole and more authentic than I have ever felt. I believe that no one is disposable or hopeless and that it is only by coming together that we can truly flourish. The Monday afternoon open studio at One City provides a place for all to come together to make art and to explore our collective humanity.**



# Library Art Show: September 1 - October 16, 2022

September 2 - Collage Workshop w/ First Friday

September 20 - Collage Workshop #2 (1-3PM)

October 1 - Collage Workshop #3 (1-3PM)

Stay Tuned to One City Peterborough's Social Media to hear more about a panel discussion with Stephen Legari (Museum-Based Art Therapist, Psychotherapist and Arts-In-Health Advocate), John Climenhage (Peterborough Artist), and Christian Harvey (Executive Director, One City Ptbo).



By: John Climenhage







He said he loved me. He said I was his princess. He said he'd protect me but instead he hurt me, broke my heart, and claimed what he called free. He broke my innocence with every punch and verbal threat. Tore down what little self respect I had. To add to that I was a child. Even though I'm grown I still carry the scars, and bruises you gave me. The form my mental illness, that people call "crazy," but what's someone who loves you, I know normalized to you, but mental, and physical. I still loved you. You tried to try and make things have survived. I grow and be better someone I'm proud the victim of your deserve what let it destroy me. than my trauma & past.

I AM STRONG.

Just Fuck3d

He said he loved me. He said I was his princess. He said he'd protect me but instead he hurt me, broke my heart, and claimed what he called free. He broke my innocence with every punch and verbal threat. Tore down what little self respect I had. To add to that I was a child. Even though I'm grown I still carry the scars, and bruises you gave me. The form my mental illness, that people call "crazy," but what's someone who loves you, I know normalized to you, but mental, and physical. I still loved you. You tried to try and make things have survived. I grow and be better someone I'm proud the victim of your deserve what let it destroy me. than my trauma & past.

