

# MEMORIES, DREAMS,



# FEARS AND HOPES

A ZINE BY THE QUIRK-E ZINERS

**QUIRK-E**   
Queer Imaging & Riting Kollektive for Elders

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*We are grateful to be living and working on the unceded and stolen land of the Coast Salish people, the First Nations. We acknowledge the responsibility we have as colonizers to reconcile with and support Indigenous Nations. Canada stole their land and their children and still operates under the oppressive Indian Act. We must do better.*

## INTRODUCTION

### River Glen

Welcome readers to our first 2024 Quirk-e Zine. The purpose of the Quirk-e Zine group is to provide a platform to write on specific topics that are important to us as individuals, as members of our queer community and our larger society. This issue we collected pieces from our members and our community that give voice to the hopes and dreams and some of the fears we have for our queer lives or for the world in this new year 2024. Some of our pieces are of personal aspirations and some are about the direction the writer hopes society will go. Some are simply memories.

The first step to a goal is a vision of what one would like to see. This zine encourages creatively throwing the pasta at the wall because when one is dreaming it is OK to imagine first and then move on to the what ifs. Given the current state of the world with the Israel/Gaza genocide, Russia/Ukraine war, climate change flood, fire and drought, and the massive involvement of the military industrial complex which is making huge profit off human misery, some of our hopes like world peace, the curbing of climate change or eliminating poverty will require global solutions, but each of us can and should be part of solutions. And each of us can protest for and demand solutions from our governments.

Being elders, we may hope and dream a little less largely than in our younger days, and basic things like health, finances and support systems are increasingly the focus, but we have our lifetimes of experience to draw on in helping us attain what we need and want. Besides, all the ages we have ever been still live inside us, and, of course, Rainbow people need to dream in vivid colours.



Jan Bruce

### BREAKING QUIRK-E NEWS!

Quirk-e is proud to announce that Quirk-e member Jan Bruce just won an Exceptional Advocacy Award from the ALS society. Amyotrophic Lateral Sclerosis (ALS), often referred to as Lou Gehrig's Disease, is the most common degenerative disease of the adult motor system.

As Pat Hogan commented on email to Jan about the award : "Jan, this is an honour well deserved. Your perseverance, bright spirit, and ability to keep making a difference touches me deeply. Quirke is lucky to have you with us." And Jan's reply was typical of her courage and spirit: "The BC ALS Society has supported me from Day 1, 12 years ago. Equipment loan, and transportation needs when I lived on the island. My life would be very difficult without their support. All I say is "sure, my pleasure" to whatever is requested by the society. And they give me an award? Go figure!"

### QUIRK-E DECLARATION

The Queer Imaging and Riting Kollektive for Elders hereby declares its adherence to the Canadian and BC Human Rights Codes, including, but not restricted to, prohibition of discrimination in publication or speech, because of the Indigenous identity, race, colour, ancestry, place of origin, religion, marital status, family status, physical or mental disability, sex, sexual orientation, gender identity or expression, or age of that person or that group or class of person.

## HOPE OR . . . ?

### River Glen

The opposite of hope is not necessarily hopelessness. One of its aspects can be rage: to be so angry, so seething in frustration, so flooded with the absolute refusal to take another one on the chin kind of despair. Individuals can be lost in rage, like those murderers with assault weapons, but so, too, whole societies can flare, and that is when things get really dangerous. Maybe it built up over decades, maybe a current event is a trigger. The kind of rage/hopelessness that burns inside but shines out red from the eyes. Blinding, but never seeing clearer than from their position. One side may see the machinations of the few. Those bastards, the few at the top: it's always them trying to reign in the franchise purchased with so much blood. How many wars?



Yet sometimes the top being in control is embraced by many citizens. The top knows that these citizens' collective energy of outrage can be harnessed and directed towards a weaker group such as a minority or even another country. Facts are not always regarded in a favourable light when ire is up. Those who are self-interested, lazy or overwhelmed by their own trials can be pandered to, and they will follow. But usually the following is ultimately at the people's expense, while the top orchestrators, in victory or defeat, have been known to hole up in comfort while waiting for the whitewashing of history in their favour.

Breathe. Rage is hope depleted and despair turned outward. It is a tempered state of ingredients, light years from the temperate or the widened perspective. It does have a short fuse and needs steady feeding, or it flames out and can be replaced by the other scion of hopelessness, apathy, which is also terrible in itself, draining life force out of a person. Better to identify the root causes of hopelessness and or anger and help the people when they're only mildly disillusioned and more frustrated than mad, and offer some hope and opportunities. Not a cheap fix, but definitely less costly than murdering, warring or wasting lives and withering away. Humans need hope.



Sheila presenting

## SHOCK

### Sheila Gilhooly

When I came out and realized I was a lesbian, my life came together. I realized I had always been a lesbian. I always knew I wasn't like the other girls, and they knew it, too. I didn't bond with them around things like boys or makeup or clothes. I was thrilled at my lesbian discovery, and I was scared, too. What I knew about lesbians was limited to nasty name calling and physical assaults. Kids at school made nasty jokes about 'bull dykes'. Or nobody mentioned us at all; we were invisible.

I wanted to figure out how to tell my parents. I had come out to one of my professors. She was big into shrinks and suggested I make an

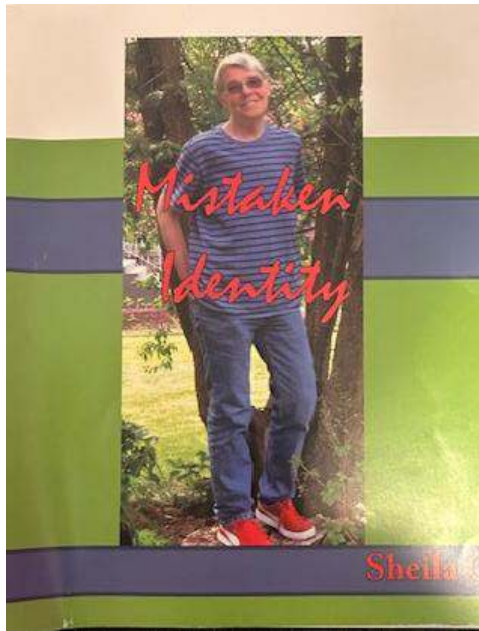


appointment with the school counsellor and get some advice on how to tell them. I made it clear I only wanted to see a woman, thinking that she would be more understanding and reassuring than a man. I figured that the university counselling office would be totally cool about someone being a lesbian.

So I went and told this woman my new found discovery and what I wanted from her. I said, "I've just realized I'm a lesbian, and I need help." She pursed her lips and asked how I knew that. I explained that I thought I had always known, but didn't really see it. She asked me what had convinced me. I felt uncomfortable, but I said "I had sex with a woman and realized that's who I am." She pursed her lips again. She referred to lesbianism as a disorder. As an introduction to telling my parents, I didn't think this was going to work out! I was freaked by what she said, but I still knew I was a lesbian.

She told me she thought she should give me some medication for my anxiety and depression. I wasn't really depressed, or at least I had not been when I got there. I let myself be convinced to be driven to the local mental hospital to get the prescription filled. She said the hospital and university were connected, and prescriptions needed to come from the hospital. She told me her assistant, Jim, would drive me there. When we got there, we were greeted by a woman sitting at a big desk looking more intimidating than welcoming. Jim stepped up to the desk and said he was dropping me off. I cut him off loudly, saying "I am only here to pick up a prescription." By this time I was shouting.

They spoke sternly, saying that I was to stay there. I became more frantic and combative and headed for the door. Two security guards blocked my exit. Next thing I knew, I was getting an injection. When I woke up the next morning, I didn't know where I was. The light was grey, and I felt confused about whether it was day or night. I was wearing a hospital gown. As I wondered what to do, a uniformed nurse came into the room and asked how I was doing. "Not so good," I said. I explained there had been some mistake, and that I was not supposed to be admitted. She told me the doctor would see me when he could. I asked for my clothes, and she told me the doctor would arrange for that.



Mistaken Identity cover, with Sheila in it, by Dorothy Elias

He did come after several hours. He spent about ten minutes with me and came up with a plan. He transferred me to a higher security mental hospital and set me on a path of mental unwellness that lasted for several years. I was in and out of various hospitals during that time. I was on a collection of medications which didn't make me feel better. They had no concept of treatment really, only confinement, with a side of humiliation. I felt my depression worsen. I kept trying to make it clear that I did not want to be cured; I just didn't want to be depressed. Nobody was listening.

The last place I was sent, the shrink referred to lesbianism as a personality disorder and a psychosis. He said the fact that I did not want to be cured was proof of how depressed I was. And he felt it would be better if I was committed and had shock treatments, formally known as ECT -- electric convulsive therapy. He claimed that nothing else would help my condition. The longer I was there, the more depressed I got. My doctor insisted I should have shock treatments. I went along with it, but I still knew I was queer. And I told him so. He assured me I would feel better after shock treatments. However, shock treatments were a huge shock to my system, and the injury to my brain never really went away. I stopped talking about them and acted like I could see their point.

The shock treatments happened in the morning, twice a week. Everyone went down the same hall till we came to a fork. Those getting shock treatments were herded to the left. The rest were escorted to the dining room for breakfast. The first time I had a treatment, I was strapped to a stretcher, and the last thing I remember was the sting of a needle in my arm and the feel of something rubber being slipped my mouth. I found out later the rubber thing was so I didn't swallow my tongue. When I came to, I was really

confused. My head was splitting, and I felt like throwing up. I was in row with six other stretchers, with people in various stages of waking up. After that, the shocks continued twice a week for what seemed like ages, but I can't remember how long exactly. My head ached a lot, and my memory was shot. I could only read something if I could do so in one sitting. If not, I couldn't remember what I had already read.

When I got out, I eventually ran into my former sociology professor who encouraged me to take her night course, Sociology of Deviance. I met my first political lesbian in that class. She invited me to a women's pub night. She introduced me to the community of lesbians. I was welcomed. The constant anxiety and loneliness turned into political action and friendships. I became part of a whole community determined to deal with how women, and specifically lesbians, were treated.

Up until then, I had hardly ever told people I had been in the nuthouse, and I rarely told anyone I had had electric shock treatments. When I had first told someone, I received a horrified reaction which seemed half fear and half disgust. So I stopped talking about shock treatments or any of my experiences in the nut house. Mental patients, especially those who have been committed or had electric shock, seem very sick to others, like only a really crazy person would be given shock treatments. And since the treatments left one with memory loss, feelings of incompetence and depression, it was easy to see why they might think that.

I eventually did tell my dyke friends, and some years later did an art show and wrote a book, *Mistaken Identity*, published by Kate Nonsuch 2012, with another lesbian, Persimmon Blackbridge, who had struggled with shrinks in her teens. Going public meant finding out how many lesbians had been locked up. It was amazing how many of us there are. A workshop I facilitated, called Mad Dykes and Angry Weirdoes, drew many lesbian-mental patients, eager to talk about their experiences.

My partner and some of my friends are survivors. We know that help can be delivered with an iron fist.



Card Art by Cyndia Cole and Angie Joyce



## TRUTH

### River Glen

The truth bright and shining and all so clean.  
 Tough as diamonds and wise as a sage.  
 Can be armor, can be a sword or pen.  
 Truth under a microscope is still true.  
 Provable, reliable, authentic, unvarnished.  
 Something pure and basic. Legitimate.  
 A virtue, a predication, an affirmation.  
 The verdict, the judgment, the accountable.  
 The idyllic, the ethical, the reality, coherent, unique but  
 universal.

A platitude, an archaic commandment, truth even called  
 god or divine.  
 Naive, intuitive, or pragmatic truth put into practice.  
 Dharma. Sold.



Truth is uncovered, not created. There can be more than one. Conceptual.  
 No such thing as truth without the humans observing it, interpreting it, categorizing it. So subjective,  
 dependent on the observer. And, or, but, it is whether observed or not. The tree felled with no one there of  
 course makes a sound. Yes, truth matters, it binds social contracts, it is the accumulated knowledge of  
 civilizations, it is fundamental to all trust. But absolute, not so fast, something else may be discovered.

She thinks, and therefore she is.  
 She searches for the illusive meanings. She of the Fifth Estate. She suckled on the Declaration of  
 Independence and the unalienable, and the enemy of despotism and tyranny, and the incongruent irony of  
 genocide and slavery. An immigrant, arriving in Canada in 81 she was celebratory in 82 with the Charter  
 born. She has watched the seesaw of Liberal to Conservative to Liberal. Is democracy but a back and forth,  
 up and down, or are we actually heading somewhere?

The issues couldn't be more vital. Climate, war, poverty, injustice, diluted democracy by billionaires and  
 corporations. Fake news, foreign interference, nefarious artificial intelligence scare the crap out of a  
 reasonable person, right? With baited breath, we stare into the abyss; what will the courts and elections  
 decide?

There is hope, but only if some basics are agreed on, and the whole is greater than the sum of the parts.

The bitter taste of truth.

PRACTISE KINDNESS. IT'S NOT ALWAYS EASY, BUT IT'S ALWAYS WORTH IT.



## THE DREAM CATCHER.

Garth McIvor

In recent times, Dream Catchers have become very popular. They can be found dangling from the rear view mirrors of automobiles or hanging in windows or walls almost anywhere. I'm not sure why they became so popular, although I can appreciate their decorative appeal. I have wondered if they represent the wish to capture their owner's dreams by some mystical indigenous sorcery.



Garth's Dream catcher

You see, I thought that Dream Catchers were literally meant to catch dreams, and I was certain that I didn't want to snag and hold most of mine. Too many of my dreams feature cast away opportunities, unreturned love, and lost youth. My dreams are inhabited with parents, lovers and friends long gone and confusing replays of remote memories with regrets of what could or should have been said or done. It would be lonely and disheartening walking down my street of dreams.

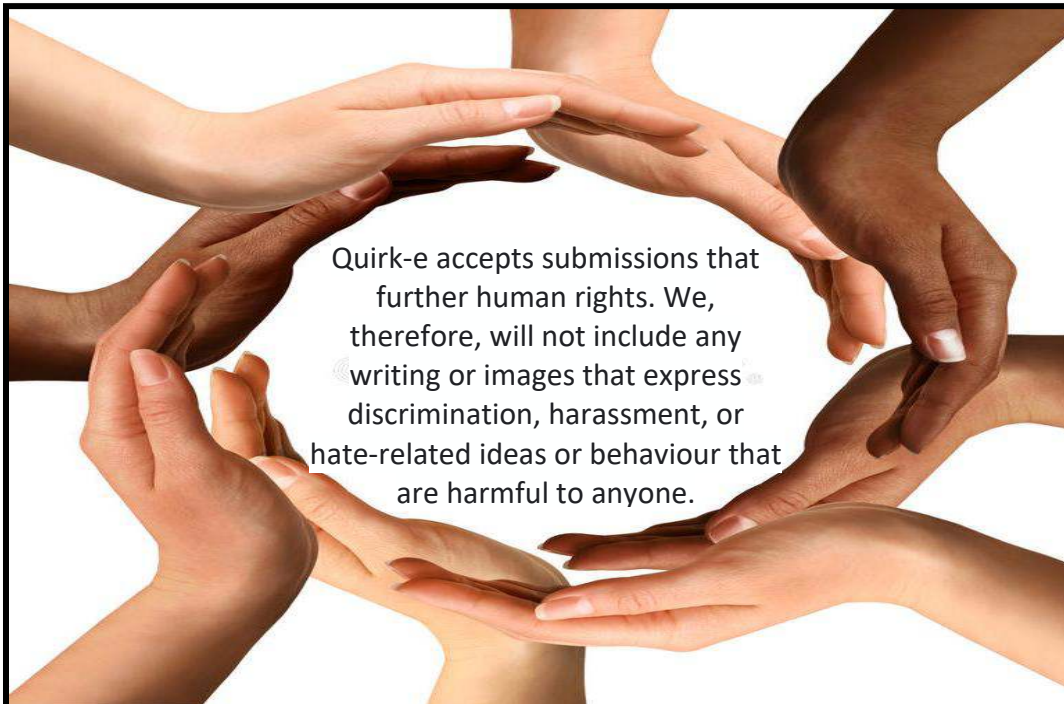
This Christmas I was gifted a Dream Catcher. It is quite nice. It has a kind of maple leaf mesh design with real feathers, and I think it is also a wind chime. The insert says it is handmade by First Nation Women in Canada.

What do I do with it? It's too large to dangle from my rear view mirror. It's too delicate to hang as a wind chime on my balcony and exposed to the elements. Do I even want to invite the possibility that my Dream Catcher has

the secret of holding my dreams?

I googled Dream Catcher. Goodness me. I have learned another lesson in contempt prior to investigation. Dream Catchers don't catch dreams. Dream Catchers protect sleepers from bad dreams, nightmares and evil spirits. It would seem that I have needed a Dream Catcher for a long time.

I'll hang mine over my bed.



Quirk-e accepts submissions that further human rights. We, therefore, will not include any writing or images that express discrimination, harassment, or hate-related ideas or behaviour that are harmful to anyone.



**ALL WE CAN SAVE  
FEAR . . . AND HOPE . . .**

Val Innes



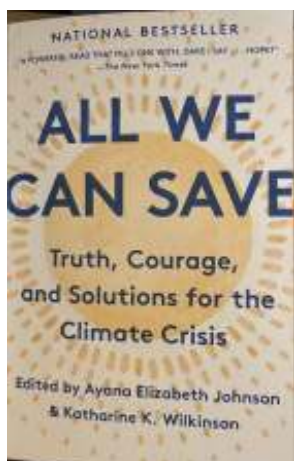
What do I fear? My major, overwhelming, fear is climate change and that we, and our governments, will not do much to prevent it and, therefore, will not prevent the result of it: a world deteriorated beyond natural recovery, leading to mass extinction of current life on this planet, and on the way to that, chaos, with fire, flood, drought, food and water scarcity, some of which we have already seen, leading to the eventual collapse of civilizations. We are already at 1.48 degrees above preindustrial levels<sup>1</sup>, and this year will be even hotter. Mass extinction has happened before on planet Earth; it's happening right now, and this time, we caused it. This is real; it is not science fiction, and it is going to affect you and those you love.

But as well as fear, I have hope. As Nature Conservancy Canada observes, "There are solutions to climate change and biodiversity loss. Will you be part of it? This is the moment where a decision must be made to work together to avoid the worst case scenario or stand idly by and watch. . . . *You have the power to save the world.*"<sup>2</sup> It is not yet too late. So do yourself and the world a favour: get involved instead of shrinking back because you're too busy, you don't know what to do, it's too overwhelming, too grim and too hopeless. It is only hopeless if we do nothing. Now is the time to be a climate activist, as the young people are telling us, the ones who will reap what we do or don't do now. There are many ways we can do that, not just the obvious one of stopping using fossil fuels.



The Tye: Youth climate change protest

Read *All We Can Save: Truth, Courage and Solutions for the Climate Crisis* edited by Ayana Johnson and Katherine Wilkinson for, as Rolling Stone tells us, a "feast of ideas and perspectives, setting a big table for the climate movement, declaring all are welcome."<sup>3</sup> It should be required reading for all of us, and it will give you a clear picture of what needs to happen to restore mother earth and so many ideas for what you, personally, can do, and where and how you can apply pressure for change. It will give you hope and show you how you can make a difference. You'll meet women like Mary Ann Hitt who, working with Beyond Coal Campaign, shut down 315 coal plants in the USA and is working on the remaining 215.<sup>4</sup> And many of the articles make it clear that working for a way of living for humanity that does not create climate change, also means working for a fairer world, one that re-envision "our societies in ways that are not just in keeping with our ecosystems but also make our lives better."<sup>5</sup> As Fix The News reports, "Our conversation with activist Flora Vano showed us that climate justice isn't just about the environment. By training women in Vanuatu to lead the disaster response, Flora has created a wave of social change that's making room for women in decision-making spaces and challenging traditional gender norms."<sup>6</sup>



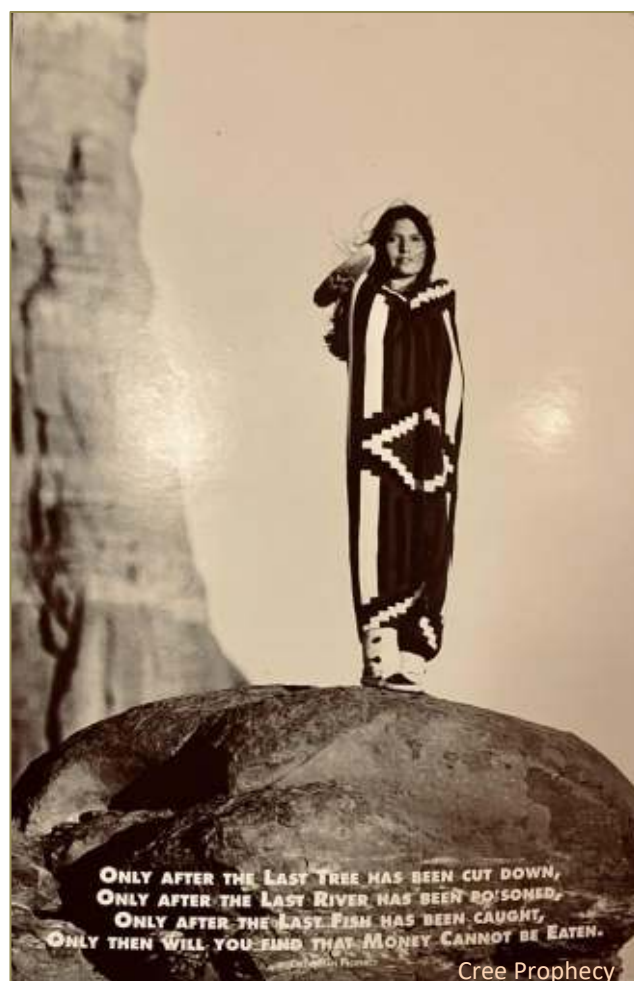
*All We Can Change* is a powerful, compelling read, both realistic about the enormity of the problem and the solutions, and hopeful. It's a collection of sixty essays and poems from sixty women, including Alice Walker, Naomi Klein, Marge Piercy, and Mary Oliver, to name some of those more familiar to you. Many of them are making a concrete difference in the world right now as well as building communities of support -- which is huge in this effort to make the earth carbon neutral. As Johnson and Wilkinson comment, "All

around the world, women and girls are making enormous contributions to climate action", and many of them are introduced to us in this book. They're "bringing forth what Johnson and Wilkinson call a feminist climate renaissance"<sup>7</sup> built on concern, compassion and connectivity. Included in this approach are actions that any of us can take, from composting your garden, so the soil becomes rich and absorbs carbon, or buying your food from a farm that refuses to monoculture or use chemicals, to emailing or phoning your MLA and MP, urging them to support building adequate public transit and electric car infrastructure, stop subsidizing the oil industry, and stop logging so much and so carelessly, as well as incentivizing farmers to stop using chemicals and to rotate crops, so the soil is healthy and will absorb carbon. You can talk to people about climate change, every day. You can get out on the street and march for action on climate change and march for peace to end the military's huge carbon footprint. Last year, Canada spent \$27 billion on the military and only \$2 billion on climate change; \$22 billion went to subsidize the oil industry at a time when it was making record profits and continuing to accelerate climate change.<sup>8</sup> You can work on changing those priorities, and you can work on making sure the Conservatives don't form the next government because they will do NOTHING to stop climate change, plus they will do everything they can to affect our queer rights.

As you read this book or think about this article you're currently reading, remember our queer fight for civil rights -- our *successful* and *rapid* fight for civil rights -- which we gained in 1994. We're good at exerting public pressure, and we have the numbers to do it. According to a major study by Chenoweth and Stephan, non-violent protests involving 3.5% of the population that have the support of a majority of that population have always succeeded in bringing about serious change.<sup>9</sup>

It's up to the people to force politicians to deal with the climate emergency as radically as is necessary. It's up to us, every single one of us. We have a voice, each of us, and we should use it. We can help move people and our governments to action once more. It is our responsibility to do what we can to heal the sea and the soil, re-grow the forests, heal the atmosphere and curb emissions. This time, climate change is caused by human activity, and the planet's next mass extinction will be our fault because we did not, would not, change. There is still time to prevent that. Use it.

R.O Kwon says in *All We Can Save*, "I want to live on a planet that can hold us. I believe we can all still help it, us, do that. If nothing else, why not try? Why not hope and then act as if? This is our one wild, lone home; what other choice do we have?"<sup>10</sup>



1. CBC. The National. March 2024.  
 2.. Nature Conservancy Canada, <https://www.natureconservancy.ca/>  
 3. All We Can Save. P 22  
 4. Ibid. Grist  
 5. Ibid. P. 144

6. Fix The News [fixthenews@ghost.io](mailto:fixthenews@ghost.io) via [m.ghost.io](https://m.ghost.io)  
 7. All We Can Save, P.xix  
 8. CBC The National, February 2024  
 9. Chenoweth, E., and Stephan, M., 2011. Why Civil Resistance Works: The Strategic Logic of Nonviolent Conflict. New York, NY: Columbia University Press.  
 10. Kwon, R.O. All We Can Save, P. 165

## LESBIAN SHOES

Cyndia Cole

It's 1978 and I am on a Vancouver city bus heading over to Kits Point, not a place I venture to frequently, ensconced as I am in my East Van life. I am noticing a woman I find attractive. I have only been out to myself as a lesbian for a bit over a year, so allowing myself the pleasure of looking at her is new and a bit risky. She seems just a little younger than I am – early twenties, has dark short hair and a confidence and ease in her body language that assures me she is also a lesbian. I don't think she notices me. I don't think anyone notices me admiring her. So, I don't feel too exposed, not too, too much at risk.

Suddenly I notice her shoes. She has one leg crossed over the other at the knee placing one foot and shoe up near hip height – not a ladylike pose in this decade. Her shoes have brown leather soles and uppers, cover the foot to below the ankles and are tied with short brown laces. I don't know the official description of this kind of shoe, but in my mind, they are always 'boy shoes' or 'Buster Browns.' I am stunned that I find they add to her attractiveness.

I am stunned for two reasons. One – I would never find shoes like this appealing on a man. I wouldn't find them unappealing either. I just wouldn't notice or care. Two - I was forced to wear Buster Brown shoes of this style and colour as a child and absolutely hated them. To me, they were punishment for having weak feet that needed 'corrective shoes.' In other words, they were ugly shoes. Throughout my childhood, I longed for cute little black Mary Janes with a strap across the foot or even the kind with two straps. I thought these cute little girl shoes were practical shoes in that they had no heels. I have always hated high heels on me and on everyone else. How the rest of the world finds them sexy is beyond me. They are simply ungrounded.

My two sisters had Mary Janes. But my parents said Mary Janes 'did not give my feet enough support.' I was not allowed to wear sneakers except while playing sports because they 'did not give my feet enough support.' I stood on a piece of paper while my mom traced my bare feet. Then she sent the drawings off in the mail and later the expensive ugly, boys corrective, Buster Brown shoes arrived. Wearing that same pair day in and day out helped me to understand that I would never be a cute girl.



Cyndia as a child with buster browns

When I came out, I discovered a great peace in abandoning the idea that I would be happier if only I could be a cute girl. I threw out the platform clogs I had tried to wear to be fashionable. While hurrying to work in these fashionable platform clogs, I tripped on a one-inch lowered curb, landed on both knees, ripped holes in the dark tights I was wearing and spent all day at work with bloody knees surrounded by small circles of pale skin engulfed in dark tights. They were like little bulls-eyes. It took 6 months for the scabs on my knees to disappear.

As a newly empowered feminist, I bought myself a pair of expensive Roots shoes. They were 'earth shoes' with the heels lower than the roomy rounded toes but they had a strap in a woman's style that made me feel they were adult Mary Janes. Comfort and style as defined by me were finally within my grasp.

How can I possibly find the ugly brown boys' corrective shoes attractive on this woman I see on the bus and around at women's dances but whose name I never learn? Does this mean that I wasn't ugly back when I wore Buster Browns? How amazing that affirming my lesbian identity has turned my world upside down. My view of everything is shifting - even how I see shoes.



Cyndia's shoes



## AWARENESS AND LOVE THROUGH ABUSE, SHAME, BLAME AND RESENTMENT

Farren Gillaspie

Dreams have always provided powerful insights into my sub-conscious. After a tumultuous childhood, I have spend a lot of time trying to figure out the whys. My Mother and I were constantly bickering. We were a cold family, no hugging or touching for us. After my sixtieth birthday, I thought, to hell with it! I am who I am, and if it is necessary for me to know the details, then my Higher Power can just make the answers more available to me. I was tired of puzzles. Well as one of my mentors said one time, "if you ask, be prepared to receive!"



Several nights later I had an unusual dream. In reality, I had moved away or maybe more precisely ran away many years earlier. In my dream, however, I was in my old bedroom in my family home except it didn't quite look my room. My sister was with me, and we were catching up on what had happened with each of us since I had been away. I knew she was my sister, but she didn't quite look like my sister. My grandmother came to the foot of the stairs, telling us mom was calling us for dinner. My Protestant grandmother and my Catholic mother were seldom under the same roof. She didn't quite look like my grandmother either. While I was heading down the stairs, I saw my mother at the foot of the stairs, and, yes, she didn't look like mom either. She was singing a cheerful song that sounded familiar, something about her wayward son returning home, and he knew how much she loved him, and he loved her. I was so filled with joy that I started spontaneously laughing. When I reached her, I put my arm around her as we bounced off each other heading into the dining room. In real time, we were definitely a no-touch family

I woke up in total bliss. As I am often prone to do, I queried my higher self before I could adulterate it with thought. The answer was instant. "That was your real family seen through love, without all the baggage." I was on a high for the rest of the day. But that was not the end.

A few nights later, I had another dream. I was having tea with my mom in a love-infused room filled with flowers and light. All of the heaviness between us was gone, and in its place only what I could describe as love. It felt like we were there to resolve something. The conversation went something like this.

"Mom I have spent so many years being ashamed. At first I thought it was because I was so skinny or my head was so big. Then I thought it was because I was gay. But in this moment with you right now, I am drawn back to a summer day when I was twelve and I was wearing some old shorts that I often wore. In a very firm maybe even angry voice, you told me to go upstairs right away and change into long pants, that I was too old for shorts, and they were indecent. I am realizing just now that I thought I must be indecent and my body was bad."



As I shared with my mom, I could see and feel her pain.

"My dear son, you were not indecent, and your body wasn't bad. You were my beautiful son. I wanted to keep you safe. I saw you as vulnerable."

She paused, "I know, when I was that age, I was vulnerable and my mother didn't protect me."



## WHY FEAR?

Mela Brown

I fear my fear being erased.  
I fear toxic positivity.  
I fear fascism, racism, and misogyny.

I fear one point five degrees.  
I fear heat domes and floods.  
I fear no more grain in the bread basket  
of Ukraine.

I fear the salmon will stop running.  
I fear oceans warming.  
I fear storms humans never built for  
washing away our homes.

I fear Trump.  
I fear Netanyahu, Putin and, Milei.  
I fear you don't care who those men are.

I fear greed.  
I fear my heartbreaking disappointment  
in the failing human project.  
I fear profit and loss. Too much profit.  
So much loss.

I fear aging is a liability,  
I fear crisis burning down society,  
I fear no food or health care for vulnerable elders like me.

I fear white supremacy!  
I fear surveillance, psychopath billionaires and their technology.  
I fear ignorance, colonialism and apathy.

I fear I am numb.  
Too numb to run, too numb to scream . . .  
I fear no one feels the urgency.



Mela Brown with OpenAI (DALL-E) & Photoshop

"Twenty years from now you will be more disappointed by the things you didn't do than by the ones you did do.  
So throw off the bow lines, sail away from the safe harbor. Catch the tradewinds in your sails.  
Explore. Dream. Discover."

Mark Twain

## HELLO FROM VIETNAM

Paula Stromberg

Hello from Vietnam, dear Quirkies,  
I've read emails about various Quirk-e readings over the past few months — sounds fab! Travel life is going well here, but the Land of Blue Dragons gobbles time — I will be home very soon. Meanwhile here are a few travel encounters and stories I've shared in Vietnam.



Rural restaurant owner happily documents her new tattooed eyebrows and a trendy cosmetic product that creates her tight, shiny complexion, almost like saran wrap.

These Scooter Doggies ride their owner's motorbike and guard her packages as she delivers orders to local tailor shops.



Photo by Paula



Photo by Paula

**International land grabs:** A pal and I travelled the famed Há Giang mountain loop featuring 400 km of snaking turns and limestone forests in northern Vietnam near the Chinese border. Landscapes, including twin peaks shown in the picture (known as *fairy bosoms*) are magical — but indigenous groups have had their communal forests and ancestral lands seized by mining, forestry and hydro power interests— including the Hmong, Tau and Dao people. Impoverished locals say they are born into the rocks, live among the rocks, and die covered by rocks.





One highlight this year is volunteering as an English conversation teacher in a language school for young professionals. Last week I spoke with a civil engineer, an accountant and a smart grade 11 daughter of a commander in the Coast Guard (*see photo*). These young women became emboldened after I told them I'd collaborated with Cambodian garment workers who announced, "When we are with you, Paula, we feel we can speak English."

Local Asian beauties in Hoi An accepted my help in documenting their friendship (ha, ha, of course) . . . Being here is as idyllic as floating on flower petals. Again, I experience many people in Vietnam as being deeply kind.



This is why I travel. The joy, fascination, the *Puhpooe* of engaging with brilliant international Queers can keep me awake at night. One new friend, **Frankie** is Maori, a community worker from New Zealand who last year finished a housing project with third and second generation homeless people. She also worked with newly-homeless Queer youth, arranging safe places for them to live. "Third-generation homeless people have different skill sets than Queer teenagers who have grown up in family homes and who've been only recently rejected by their parents," explained Frankie, who finances some travels with brief stints as a nanny.

We met for lunch at Vegetable Village near Tra Que farming area and talked until mosquitoes arrived by twilight. Our conversation manifested varying, even conflicting realities. Frankie seems to float through her days like a molecule, absorbing experiences like an enzyme, rarely claiming to 'know'— instead she seems content in 'becoming'. I aspire to her patient fluidity.

Her observations as a self-described leftist-activist deserve a movie title like *Everything Everywhere All at Once* (but that's taken). Here is some of what she has given me permission to tell you: in photos, Frankie is partial to showing a bit of tongue. She is Queer. Her first nanny posting was with a branch of the Saudi Royal family in London, UK. Another nanny gig was with the family of a fossil fuel billionaire. She loves the book *Misfits*, by Ghanaian actor Michaela Cole. When asked by ex-pats about her kind of work, Frankie replies, "I'm working on my tan." Hilariously, she claims she is dull.

Over papaya salad with fish sauce, Frankie recounts shifting between alternative universes: in one, she is nannying with billionaire's baby in her arms, while reading internet reports about a recent protest march she had attended— a march against homelessness, poverty, and climate emergency. The featured speaker had been a brown-skinned Trans woman who used familiar protest slogans like *Smash the Patriarchy*, and *Eat the Rich* — also used a current slogan, *Shoot the Billionaires*.



Paula and Frankie

Frankie: “In another reality, I am holding the billionaire’s baby, knowing our world is burning, Queers & homeless people are despised, we’re all breathing poisoned air, police shoot people of colour with impunity, oceans are warming, many peoples’ ancestral lands have been stolen, and environmental activists are being killed. I cradle the billionaire’s baby while I read that the Trans speaker with a prior record has been arrested and imprisoned for inciting violence for using the slogan, ‘Shoot the Billionaires’.”

Somehow able to traverse these multiple universes, Frankie has a stellar record as a nanny. She is a listener, full of questions about my own life accomplishments: How as a 17-year old runaway, was I able to open a Safe House in Montreal for deserters from the Vietnam war, then forge a communications career amidst unions and social justice activists, track down Queers in hiding in UN Refugee camps in Africa, collaborate with a union of Cambodian sex workers to amend trafficking laws, or collaborate with garment workers on movies about improving their lives? How my documentary with Asian lesbians screened in Paris and Milan. She wonders aloud, “How did you manifest these all these disparate projects?”

In the twilight, we both realize we value trying to be of use each day — and it’s also fine not to have any projects. As we flee the mosquitoes, we acknowledge that old Queers and young can nourish each other. *Puhpowee*. The Potawatomi word meaning the life force that causes mushrooms to emerge from the earth overnight. Insomnia — digesting the nuances of Frankie’s story took me most of the night. Unseen energies vibrated — leaving me feeling brave enough for faith.

Travelling, sharing stories with young Queers like Frankie, experiencing the unseen energies that animate everything . . . creates a series of conflicting, yet interconnected shared realities, a bit like with mycelium, nature’s communication network. Frankie’s stories intertwine with mine, fungal mycelia spread through our environments secreting enzymes that dissolve food to be absorbed into our cells. These fungal networks bind our soil together, connect the trees of the forest, and churn living and dead organic matter into elements of new life. I am thankful to connect with a young Queer. I’m 73, and I’m tired. Our world, based on patriarchy, capitalism and misogyny, is on the brink. *[In response to me expressing a sense of doom about our environment, Frankie reminds me that dozens of generations of old people have always thought the younger generation is ‘going to hell in a handbasket’. We ruefully chuckle as I insist that this time it’s different— it’s the earth, nature that is screaming at us.]* But perhaps, in sharing our stories, we can grow new realities, create new ways of being. This is one reason I am in awe listening to fellow travelers— especially young Queers.

Closing now, dear Quirkles, it feels so lovely to connect, to share the *Puhpowee* of our ever-emerging realities. Meanwhile, I can’t wait to hear more of your stories. See you soon.  
Paula



Photo by Paula

"Wherever you are it is your friends who make your world."

William James

## AS IS—LOVE AND THE OTHER PANDEMIC—SPRING 1988

Don Orr Martin

Patrick's voice shook. "It isn't safe. You're putting me in danger . . . you're putting both of us in danger."

"Come on Patrick. You know AIDS isn't spread by just touching someone or probably even by kissing," David insisted. "Anyway, I'm not the one who is sleeping around." He immediately regretted not stopping himself from saying that.

"Oh, I see. You're getting even?"

"Fuck . . . no . . . I'm sorry. I'm not mad at you. Please don't be like this. This is my first really big part in a dramatic play, and I get to work with a professional actor. Yes, he's got AIDS, but it's not like we're exchanging bodily fluids." David took Patrick's hand. "He's been living with it for more than a year. I think he knows the risks. He doesn't want me to do anything that's unsafe." Patrick pulled away and crossed his arms.

"Well, I don't like it. I wish you wouldn't do it."

"I have to." David had made up his mind. "It's an important show, an important message. And who else can Rebecca get to play the part? Jack Prince won't do it. He doesn't want the town to know he's gay."

"What. A. Joke." Patrick said with a big guffaw. "Does he really think they don't know? He's the biggest fag in sixty miles. I think what he's afraid of is that parents won't send their kids to his acting classes, if they know he's in an AIDS play with an actor who has AIDS."

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David Smithe and Patrick Rooney had been lovers since 1985 in their town on Puget Sound. Patrick was a 22-year-old punk rocker. He was short and athletic and had a mane of long red hair that he often fashioned into foot-tall spikes. He dropped out of high school after being beat up too many times by the jocks, graduated from beauty school, and was making a name for himself as an avant-garde hairstylist.

David was fourteen years older and had been a graphic designer and anarchist printer for ten years in a radical collective. He came out in the early 1970s and was one of the town's first gay rights activist. Recently, he had cut his thinning hair, shed his genderfuck wardrobe, and got a job at a state agency earning the best living of his life so far.

Theatre was David's first love. He'd been performing since childhood, mostly in musical and comedy



roles. When David met Patrick, he recognized Patrick's natural talent as a performer and convinced him to audition with him for several community theatre productions. Patrick, too, fell in love with theatre, and in three years they had done six shows together. If their relationship survived, they imagined themselves one day becoming the town's most celebrated acting and singing duo. David had been cast in a few lead roles, but he wanted to stretch his acting chops to serious drama.

Jack Prince was perhaps the town's most famous actor, director, singer, and impresario extraordinaire. He ran a playhouse in the old Vaudeville theatre building downtown. David and Patrick were regulars in his troupe. Each summer, Jack hosted a children's acting school that turned out some amazing talent, but he was always dodging rumours about his private life. Jack had a big personality, animated, and ingratiating, especially to those who might be financial contributors. He lived the cliché of a community theatre drama queen.

Rebecca Glover taught costume and set design at the state college and helped produce all of their theatrical performances. She also worked with several local theatre groups and had begun directing lavish



musicals in the newly remodeled Performing Arts Centre downtown. She was in her late thirties, creative, driven, and part of a cadre of prominent feminist artists in town. Being a lesbian, however, excluded her from certain social circles. She and her partner Anita were raising a son together.

David Smithe's first show with Rebecca was as a dancer with no lines. He discovered that a man who can dance often gets a part. He had since done three other musicals with progressively bigger roles and Rebecca directing. If David took a lead role in *As Is*, the AIDS play Rebecca was planning to produce, it would be his biggest line load to date.

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By 1988, there were dozens of AIDS cases in their city and already some deaths. Gay and lesbian health activists formed a nonprofit taskforce to provide housing and social support services for people living with AIDS. A week-long statewide AIDS conference was scheduled at the college where Rebecca worked. Because the theatre community across the country had been so disproportionately devastated by the disease, Rebecca decided to do a fundraiser for the local taskforce with the play *As Is*. It would be part of the conference program.

*As Is* by William M. Hoffman was one of the first in the genre of AIDS plays to be staged in New York, in 1985. It was written about the same time as HIV was isolated as the cause of AIDS, but before much else was certain about how the virus is transmitted. This was at the height of public panic about AIDS being god's punishment for homosexuality. Gay men diagnosed with the disease were treated horribly, even by many health care professionals. Politicians wanted to round them up and put them behind barbed wire. Families that hadn't already disowned their sons for being gay now disowned them for having AIDS. Many patients died agonizing deaths, alone in taped-off hospital rooms, unable to have visitors or be touched.

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By chance, in 1987, Rebecca reconnected with an old college friend, Tim Tynan, over the holidays in New York. Tim and Rebecca had done a number of shows together in their California college drama department. After graduating, Rebecca went north to teach and Tim moved to New York City to pursue an acting career. He did pretty well, landing a recurring role on a soap opera, small parts in off-Broadway plays, and even a movie credit or two. He also wrote and performed original songs in Greenwich Village.

It was an exciting new life for Tim in NYC with his chiseled face and toned body. He dove deep into the libidinous gay scene of clubs, bathhouses, and backroom bars. Sometime in 1986, he developed a persistent cough he couldn't shake. Rebecca was crushed when Tim told her he had been diagnosed with AIDS. At the time everyone saw it as a death sentence. Fortunately for Tim, his family and partner of eleven years were very supportive, and he was staying relatively healthy and taking experimental treatments.



Don 1988

While Rebecca was visiting New York, Tim played her his song "Without Love Where Would I Be?" She realized it would be perfect in her production of *As Is* and made a pitch for permission to use a recording. But Tim went even further—he offered to perform the lead role in the play. Tim hadn't worked for months, and this show would look impressive on his resume. Rebecca was excited about the idea of working with her old friend. She offered to fly him out to the west coast and cover his room and board. He agreed to waive his normal actor's fee as a donation to the fundraiser. It seemed like a match made in theatre heaven.

But it was far from angelic. Rebecca couldn't afford to pay for a hotel for Tim. She planned to put him up in a spare bedroom in her large house. But her partner Anita vetoed it. Anita was worried about possible exposure of their toddler to Tim's disease which they knew so little about. So, Rebecca had to beg

friends for a place where Tim could live for the month. Fortunately, someone finally stepped up. But then Jack Prince turned down the other major role in the play. Rebecca had been counting on him. She had only three weeks to produce and rehearse a full-length play. Now she was scrambling to fill out the cast.

David Smithe knew he wasn't Rebecca's first choice to play the other main character, the alienated lover. Still, he was grateful and excited to have the chance. It was unlike anything he had ever done in theatre—portraying an openly gay character in a relationship that was falling apart. Lots of anger and pathos. He threw himself into the role. He spent every waking hour memorizing the heavy line load. Co-workers thought he was losing it when they saw him walking around during break periods seemingly talking to himself, running his cues and soliloquies.

"You're not angry enough, David," Rebecca told him in the second rehearsal. "You are a sweet man, but you have to put that aside. Find something that taps into your rage. Try the line again, but this time scream it . . . Nope, not angry enough. . . I'm not believing you, David. Do it again . . . Get mad, dammit . . . Again . . ." The character David played goes through a lot. Anger, despair, reconciliation. There is humour, too, which was a bit easier for him.

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On top of all the stress, Tim had developed a more advanced case of Kaposi's sarcoma, the rare cancer that disfigured so many AIDS victims with purplish lesions on the skin. Kaposi's was usually the end stage of symptoms. Tim was getting adequate medical treatment, but his stamina was wearing down, and he was finding it challenging to remember his lines. Fatigue was taking its toll on Tim but also on David who was working a full-time job. Yet Rebecca and the whole cast were undaunted. The more obstacles, the stronger their resolve.



DermNet. Kaposi's Sarcoma

At the end of a long night of rehearsal, Rebecca had Tim and David work on one last scene. It's a point in the play where the two main characters try to reconcile after splitting up. In the scene they attempt to rekindle the sex in their relationship. They roll around on the couch, tickling and nuzzling. They kiss tentatively. Then passion overwhelms them. Heavy petting gets hot. Shirts come off . . . and for the first time David's character sees the Kaposi's lesions on his lover's chest. He recoils in horror. That night in rehearsal, David wasn't acting. Tim's back and chest were covered with purple sores. No makeup was needed for the stage. David dropped his script. Time stopped. Then, steadfastly, he took Tim in his arms, buried his head in Tim's shoulder and broke down crying. Tim couldn't continue. Rebecca ended the rehearsal for the night.

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Something David had experienced as an actor was happening again. His real life was mirroring the drama and dynamics of the play. As rehearsals continued, his relationship with Patrick grew more strained. They were having similar arguments as those between the main characters in the play. Angry break-up arguments. Intimate moments felt forced and complicated.

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The day before opening Rebecca picked Tim and David up for the tech rehearsal. Tim rode shotgun, David in the back seat of her VW van. On the drive out to the college, David told Tim and Rebecca about his tension with Patrick.

"I think he's kind of jealous, but he's terrified of being exposed," David said.

"My partner is the same," said Tim.

"Really? How do you deal with it?"

"Well, we're very careful about fluids of course, and we've been trying some new safe and interesting sex techniques."

"Ooo. You'll have to tell me . . . Do you miss him?" David asked.

Tim turned to the back seat. “A month apart . . . while I’m staring at death. Of course, I miss him. But you know, we’re used to spending time apart. We both think it’s healthy. And it’s giving him a break from taking care of me, which is only gonna get worse.” Tim turned to the front again and fell into a contemplative silence.

“Is he HIV positive, too?” Rebecca asked eventually.

“Not yet.”

“Do you think about who gave it to you?” David was reluctant to ask, but this was the first time they had really talked about Tim’s sex life.

“I had so many sex partners, who knows.”

“Was it worth it?” David asked. When Rebecca raised her eyebrows in the mirror, David quickly apologized. “Sorry, that was out of line.”

“Look, I have no regrets.” Tim stared straight into David’s eyes. “I had a great time. The time of my life. I wouldn’t change that. Anyway, in New York you could get bashed or knifed or hit by a cab. Who knows? We all have to face death.”

“How are you feeling, Tim . . . about the show?” Rebecca wanted to change the subject.

“I’m doing okay. Being sick fucking sucks, but I’m so glad we’re doing this.”

“Me too,” said David. “This show has been hard, but I’ve learned so much. Thank you. I mean it. Both of you.”

“I love you man,” Tim said in a mocking, quavery voice. David and Rebecca laughed.

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There were only three performances of *As Is* during the weekend of the AIDS conference. They all sold out. Patrick refused to attend opening night but did come to the last performance and was deeply moved, maybe because it was finally over. The play was an artistic success, and though it didn’t make much money, it helped change the community toward greater empathy and acceptance.



David got offers for acting parts from other local producers who saw the show. And Rebecca would cast him and his boyfriend Patrick in *West Side Story* the next summer. After that, she decided to produce *Torch Song Trilogy*, and David convinced her to let him direct it, the debut of his own successful directing work.

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When Tim got back to New York, he and his partner decided to take a trip to London while Tim still felt able to travel. They spent a couple of weeks seeing the sights, but on the flight back, Tim had a seizure on the plane and died before reaching the hospital. It was just four months after the production of *As Is*.

This year’s [theme for World AIDS Day](#) is “*World AIDS Day 35: Remember and Commit.*” This annual event serves as a reminder of the global struggle to end HIV-related stigma, an opportunity to honor those we have lost, and a rallying cry to commit to working toward a day when HIV is no longer a public health threat.

<https://www.hiv.gov/blog/world-aids-day-35-remember-and-commit>



## MY AMBITION TO BE A GREAT WOMAN

Cyndia Cole

When I was ten years old  
I wanted to be the first great woman astronomer  
and know the mysteries of the universe.  
I didn't know that Caroline Herschel had already been  
the first great woman astronomer two hundred years before.

When I was fifteen years old  
I wanted to be a great woman nuclear physicist  
and tap the power at the core of existence.  
I knew that Marie Curie, Irene Joliot-Curie and Maria Goeppert Mayer  
had already been great women nuclear physicists  
and I wanted to be like them.

When I was twenty years old  
I wanted to be a great woman fighter for social justice  
by writing and singing impassioned folk songs  
like Joan Baez, Ruthie Gordon and Buffy Ste Marie.

When I was twenty-five years old  
I wanted to be a great woman revolutionary.  
I wanted to create a new world of love and freedom for the oppressed  
like Emma Goldman, Rosa Luxemburg and Alexandra Kollontai.

When I was thirty years old  
I wanted to be a great woman writer  
who gave birth to a new language from experience  
of, by, and for women like Sappho, Natalie Barney and Virginia Woolf.

When I was thirty-five years old  
I wanted to be a great woman of the common people.  
I wanted to be strong from surmounting hardships  
and to embrace people who are suffering with compassion  
like Elna Backlund, Betty Hardcastle and Elizabeth Izumi.

When I reached forty years old  
I wanted to be like the first great woman I met,  
My mother.  
She showed me  
It's great to be yourself.



Kathryn Virginia Cruser Cole





## GETTING LOST

Janie Cawley

It was 1953, I was six years old, and there were only four days to go before I started Grade One. Mom was on the phone with my Aunt Laura. I heard Mom say, "What do you mean, Julie's going to school this year? She's only five years old." There was a pause and then Mom said, "Oh, I see." A few minutes later Mom said good-bye and hung up the phone. She looked at me. She knew what I was going to ask. She said, "Your cousin Julie is going to something called kindergarten. It's for five-year-olds. It's something new that has only been started in a very few schools. Your school doesn't have kindergarten, so you start when you're six, and you start in Grade One."

With that statement Mom got back to washing the breakfast dishes. I went to my bedroom and told myself how unfair it was that some kids got to go to school when they were five and I had to wait. I thought of how hard it had been to make friends from just the few kids on our block that were around my age and how much easier it would have been if I was with a bunch of other kids every day. I felt sorry for myself for a while, but it wasn't long before the excitement of knowing I would be going to school on Tuesday made me forget all about my cousin and her good luck.

My brother Martin had made it clear that he wasn't going to walk me to school. Since he had started Grade One, he had walked to his friend Neil's, and then they walked to school together. I didn't care much because I knew from watching one of my friends go off to Grade One last year that almost all the moms walked their kids to school until sure they could get there and back on their own.

Two weeks later, after walking to school with my mom every day, I was feeling sure that I could walk to school and back on my own. On Monday morning I was about to ask if I could walk to school on my own when Mom said, "I can see that you're ready to walk to school and back on your own, so I didn't make your lunch today. I'll walk with you this morning, but you can walk home at noon, and we can have lunch together." This would be the first time I would walk home for lunch. I usually had lunch in the cafeteria, sitting with some of the kids in my class. I did have a funny upset feeling in my stomach, but I didn't panic. I knew how to get home. "Ok," I said.

When the bell rang for lunch hour, I headed out of my classroom, down the hall, and out the front door of the school. I felt confident because I had a plan. On my walks home with Mom, I had identified five kids coming home from school. They passed our house and kept going, but that didn't matter. I just had to follow them until I saw my house.

That day nobody I recognized was going home for lunch. I was on my own. In a panic, I wandered around for what felt like hours. I went up one street and down another trying to find something I recognized. I then tried to go back to the school. I didn't want to ask anyone for help. I had already been lost once before when I was four. I'd asked for help then, and it had turned out all right, but I thought if I couldn't find my way home from school, I would have to walk with my mom forever. I had just started to cry when I spotted something I recognized. The school playground. The bell had just started ringing. For some reason, the bell ringing made me think of Mom. She would be worried. She would never have forgotten I was coming home for lunch. Ever since I had got lost before, Mom worried if I was just a few minutes late getting home from visiting a friend who lived on the same block.

By the time I got to my classroom, I was a sobbing mess. I went right to my teacher, Miss Robinson, and told her I had got lost going home for lunch. "My mom must be worried about me," I sobbed. "Has she been here? Can I call her on the phone?" Miss Robinson handed me some tissues and told me that she knew I had been lost and that the principal, Mr. Peterson, had been on the phone with my mom for most of

the lunch hour. She said, “Your mom wanted to go out and look for you, but Mr. Peterson told her she should stay where she was in case you found your way home. He also told your mom that if you weren’t found soon, he would round up some of the more reliable Grade Six boys to go out and look for you.” Miss Robinson then told me that as soon as she saw me come into the classroom, she had sent a student to tell Mr. Peterson that I had found my way back to school. Mr. Peterson would call my mom and let her know all was well.

“Everything will be all right,” Miss Robinson said. “I got lost walking home from school when I was in Grade One. Everyone gets lost every now and then.” I couldn’t imagine Miss Robinson ever getting lost. My brother never got lost. I really couldn’t imagine Mom or Dad getting lost. I knew that Miss Robinson was just trying to make me feel better. She stood up and took my hand. “Let’s go down to the office,” she said. “I’m sure Mrs. Dobson will take you to the cafeteria and get you something to eat.”

When we reached the office, Miss Robinson introduced me to Mrs. Dobson, saying she was something called the school secretary. Mrs. Dobson looked up from a pile of papers she was reading. “So, you’re the one causing all the upset,” she said. “Janie didn’t have any lunch,” Miss Robinson said. “I must get back to my class, so I would appreciate it if you would take her down to the cafeteria and get her something to eat.”

I didn’t want to be handed over to Mrs. Dobson, who didn’t look very friendly, and I didn’t want anything to eat, but nobody was asking me what I wanted. And really all I wanted was to magically go back to this morning and tell Mom I didn’t want to come home for lunch. That way, after school the usual kids would have been walking home, and I could have followed them.

When we reached the cafeteria, Mrs. Dobson handed me a tray. The lunch lady, who I knew from the last two weeks was called Mrs. Mac, smiled at me. She put an egg salad sandwich and a carton of milk on the tray. Mrs. Dobson took me to a table, and I put the tray down. “Eat up,” Mrs. Dobson said. “It will make you feel better.”

I was pretty sure she was wrong. Although I wasn’t crying anymore, I was having that noisy gulping of breath that someone gets after they have been crying hard. My friend June sometimes got so upset when she couldn’t get her way, she would stamp her feet and cry. She would cry louder and louder and then she would make the noise that I was making. Even though her mom always said she wouldn’t stand for such goings-on, June usually got what she wanted. I was always embarrassed when June acted like that. I didn’t want to be like her, so I tried very hard to stop gulping. I still didn’t want anything to eat.

Just then, Mrs. Dobson, who had gone to the lunch counter to talk to Mrs. Mac, came back to my table. She frowned at me. “Now you can’t go back to your classroom until you finish at least a bit of your sandwich and drink your milk,” she said. “I do have several letters in the office to finish, so it would be nice if you would stop staring off into space and start eating. We have already been here for half an hour.”

I wondered if Mrs. Dobson had any children. If she did, I felt sorry for them. I was glad that Mrs. Dobson wasn’t my teacher, and I was sure glad that she didn’t sit down with me. She went back to the lunch counter to talk with Mrs. Mac.

At this point I noticed a dampness on the side of my leg where my skirt pocket was. The tissues my teachers had given me had turned into a soggy mess. I hadn’t seen a garbage bin I could put them in, so I had stuffed them in my skirt pocket. That was the source of the dampness and a big bulge in my pocket. I loved this skirt. My mom had made it. She even let me choose the material. Well, it wasn’t much of a choice. I could have either a brown checked skirt or a blue checked skirt. I picked the blue. It was my favourite skirt not only because of the blue checks but, much more importantly, because Mom had added a pocket in the side. It was the only skirt of mine that had a pocket, and it was a large pocket. I often wondered why boys’ clothes had pockets all over the place while girls’ clothes hardly ever had any pockets and, if there were any, they were hardly big enough to get a hand into.





While I was thinking about the unfairness of pockets in clothes, I looked at my cafeteria tray, and to my surprise saw that I had eaten half of my sandwich. Mrs. Dobson, still at the lunch counter with Mrs. Mac, had also noticed this. She really must have been in a hurry to get back to her papers because she didn't notice I hadn't even opened my milk. She walked up to my table and looked her watch. "Well, let's get you back to your class," she said. We have already been here too long."

I knew Mrs. Dobson wouldn't be happy if I asked to go to the washroom. I didn't need to pee, but I knew that I had to get rid of the soggy tissue before I went back to class. The kids were already going to make fun of me for getting lost. No need to have them wondering what the wet bulge in my skirt pocket was. I tried my best to make it look like I needed to pee. I put my legs together tight and rocked back and forth in my chair. "I really need to go to the washroom first," I said. Mrs. Dobson frowned. I rocked back and forth even more. She looked at her watch again. "All right," she said. "Make sure you don't dawdle. I'll stand outside and wait for you and then take you back to class." I was very relieved that she wasn't going to come into the washroom with me.

As soon as I got into the washroom, I quickly checked under the stall doors to make sure no one else was there. Then I flushed a toilet, dumped my soggy mess of tissues in the garbage bin, blew my nose, washed my hands, and put cold water on my face. After I had dried my hands and face, I felt a little better. I mean, I only got lost. Last week Ricky had wet his pants in my classroom, and the kids had teased him for the rest of the week.

When I got back to my classroom, the kids were already working on what Miss Robinson called a worksheet. When I got to my desk Miss Robinson brought a worksheet to me. She said this one was about simple addition. Last week we had been memorizing numbers up to ten and what numbers added up to ten, or as Miss Robinson said, equaled ten. I was glad I wasn't having trouble with adding like some of the kids were. I sat down and stared at the worksheet, but I couldn't pay attention to the numbers. I had started wondering why Mom wasn't at the school. Not that I wanted her to be there, but given how worried she got when I was a few minutes late getting home from a friend's place, I thought for sure she would show up at the school to make sure I was all right.

Mr. Peterson had been talking to my Mom at lunch hour, but what if Mom came to the school before the bell went and insist that I go home with her? That would be almost as bad as Donna's mother standing in the school yard all day in the first week of school so that Donna would know that her mother was always nearby. The kids teased Donna even longer than they had teased Ricky.



Finally, the arithmetic part of the afternoon was over, and we moved on to reading. We had started trying to read Dick and Jane at the end of last week. So far most of the class recognized the names of the kids in the book, Dick, Jane, and Sally, and the name of the dog, Spot. I had been doing ok in reading, but the whole getting lost thing had made me forget most of what I knew.

Just as I was beginning to think that Mom showing up at the school early wouldn't be so bad, Mr. Peterson came to the door of our classroom. He motioned to Miss Robinson to come to the door. She then went outside and talked with Mr. Peterson in the hall. When she came back in the room she walked to my desk. What now, I thought. Miss Robinson said, "Your brother is going to walk you home from school today. You don't have to worry about getting lost." Wow! That was a relief. Mom wouldn't be showing up at all, and I wouldn't have to depend on following any kids home. I mean, what if they were all sick today.

When the final bell rang, I started looking for the arithmetic worksheet so I could finish it at home. We weren't supposed to take our worksheets home, but I liked working on them. Just as I spied the worksheet on the floor under my desk, I heard someone walking toward me. I looked up. It was Martin. "You going to stay here all day?" he asked. "I got more fun things to do than walk home with my sister." "Miss Robinson said you were going to walk me home," I said. "But who told you?" "The principal called me to the office," said Martin. "For Pete's sake, I thought I was going to get the strap or something. And then he told me about you getting lost, and that Mom said I was to walk home with you." I was very glad to see Martin, but I couldn't help asking why he thought he might be getting the strap. "It's not that I did anything wrong today," he said. "It's just that that's what usually happens when someone gets called to the principal's office."

Martin should know. He got the strap when he was in Grade Two because he and his friends went to look at a place near the school where a new building was going to be built. At that time there was just a big hole in the ground. Mr. Peterson had told all the students that anyone going near the building site would get the strap. That didn't stop Martin or his friends. Someone told on them, and they all got the strap.

After it happened, Martin told me what getting the strap was like. He said, "The principal makes you hold out your hand, and depending on what you have done wrong, he hits your hand with a thick piece of leather. He hits anywhere from one to six times." Martin and his friends were each hit twice. It sounded awful. But that wasn't all. By the time Martin got home, the principal had called mom and he got into big trouble at home.

"Come on, let's get going," Martin said. "I want to catch up with Neil. You know, you can be a pain in the neck sometimes." I was about to say, 'you should talk', but thought better of it. He was, after all, here. We went out the front door of the school. Immediately I got that funny upset feeling in my stomach again. I stopped abruptly when we reached sidewalk. Martin sighed. "Ok," he said, "when you come out of the front door and reach the sidewalk, you turn right." I looked both ways, then I looked again. "Which way is right?" I asked. "You've got to be kidding," he said. I waited.

"Ok, which hand do you write with?" he asked. "We don't write, we print," I said. "We don't get to write until we're in Grade Three, like you, and then we get a pen and an inkwell and everything. Some kids in Grade Two get pens and inkwells if they can print neatly." Martin looked up at the sky. He always did that when he was getting impatient. "Ok then, what hand do you print with?" he asked. I looked at my hands. I thought about myself at my desk, picking up my pencil. "This one," I said, lifting my pencil hand.

"It's going to take too long for you to figure out which is your pencil hand every time," Martin said. He looked up at the sky again. "Why does it matter how long it takes?" I asked. "It matters because Mom wants you home before dark, and I will be the one that has to go out and find you," he said. I didn't think it took all that long to figure out which was my pencil hand, but I decided if I said anything it would take even longer for us to get home.

"Maybe we should use things like landmarks instead of right or left," he said. "What's a landmark?" I asked. "Ok, look down there," he said, pointing down the street. "What do you see on one of the corners that isn't on any of the other corners?" I looked. "A fire hydrant?" "Yes!" he said. "Now look up at the other end of the street. What don't you see?" Well, there were many things I didn't see at the other end of the street, but I thought the fire hydrant was most likely and said so.

"That's right," Martin said. "That's a landmark. Something you can look for and know you're going in the right direction. Now when you come out of the front door of the school, you look for the fire hydrant and walk towards it." And that's what we did, we walked towards it. When we got to the end of the block,



*Janie and Martin*

the fire hydrant was across the street. I moved towards the curb to get to the side of the street the fire hydrant was on.

“Don’t cross the street!” Martin yelled. I jumped. He’d scared me. “Don’t yell at me!” I yelled back. “I was only doing what you said.” I started to cry. Martin hurried to apologize. “Yeah, yeah, sorry. Just remember, you don’t cross the street here.” He looked around. “Which way is uphill?” he asked. I gave him my own ‘you’ve got to be kidding!’ look, pointed up hill, and said, “I just have trouble with left and right, not up and down.” “Yeah, well, with you,” Martin said, “I never know what you know and what you don’t know. I thought you knew right from left when you started getting your shoes on the right feet.”



freepic

“I didn’t need to know left from right.” I said. “I saw that when I put my shoes side by side in front of my feet, if there was a space in the middle of the shoes, they were in the right order. If there was no space in the middle, but the toes pointed away from each other, they were in the wrong order, and I needed to change them around.” “You know, you have a very complicated life for a six-year-old,” Martin said. I nodded in agreement, then looked both ways before I crossed the road to the sidewalk that was going uphill. Martin walked behind me.

“When you get to the top of the hill,” he said, “you’ll see the corner store.” Finally! Something I recognized. Every weekend, on Saturday, Mom would give Martin and me each a dime to go to the corner store. Martin had to take me with him. You could get a lot of candy for a dime. I usually spent my money on red licorice and jaw breakers. Martin spent his on licorice pipes and cigars and caramels. We walked up the hill and stopped in front of the corner store.

“So far, we have three landmarks,” Martin said. “The first landmark is the fire hydrant that you don’t cross the road to get to. The second landmark is going up the hill, which probably isn’t a landmark, at least we never used it as a landmark in Cubs, but we are going to treat it like one. And the third landmark is the corner store. Ok, now it gets a little tricky. You have to turn left at the corner store. That would be your non-pencil hand.”

I once again thought about going to my desk, sitting down, and picking up my pencil. Then slowly I raised my non-pencil hand. Once again this took too long for Martin. He sighed. “Forget that!” he said. “Turn your back to the store and look across the street.” I turned and looked. “Do you see the big yellow house on the pencil-hand side of the street?” he asked. I looked. Oh, no. There was a big yellow house on both sides of the street. This wasn’t going to be a good landmark for me. “Why don’t we pick the house with the green door?” I asked. “It’s the only house with a green door. Then I don’t have to think about pencils.”

“Yeah,” he said. “That’s a good idea.” High praise, coming from my brother. “Now,” he said, “We are going to walk along that sidewalk, pass the green door, and keep going until we get to the end of the street.” Which we did. “Ok,” he said, “we’re getting close to home.” That was a relief. I didn’t think I could remember many more hydrants, hills, doors, and whatever. “Ok, now we are going to go uphill again,” Martin announced. Martin paused to look for another landmark. I looked up the street. “How about that house with the red roof? I asked. “It’s the only one in this block.”

“Way to go!” he said. “You’re finally getting it.” I was getting it all along, but now I just wasn’t sure I would remember it. At the next corner Martin asked if I recognized anything. I looked around. Right across the street there was a white house with round windows. I recognized it! I loved those windows. The white house was so big it blocked the view of our house, but I knew our house was right next door. I looked both ways and then started to cross the street. “Wait.” Martin said. “There’s just one more landmark you need to know. Look across the street from that house. What do you see?”

“Chestnut trees!” I shouted. I loved the chestnut trees. Not just for the shiny chestnuts that fell in the fall, but because when I got lost when I was four, it was remembering that our house was across from chestnut trees that helped a man and his two daughters bring me home. “Right,” Martin said. “Now, if you



pass those chestnut trees, you'll know you've gone too far." We crossed the street towards the white house with the round windows. When we reached the front steps of our house, Martin stopped and looked at me.

"Ok," he said, "now tell me all the landmarks you can use to find your way home."

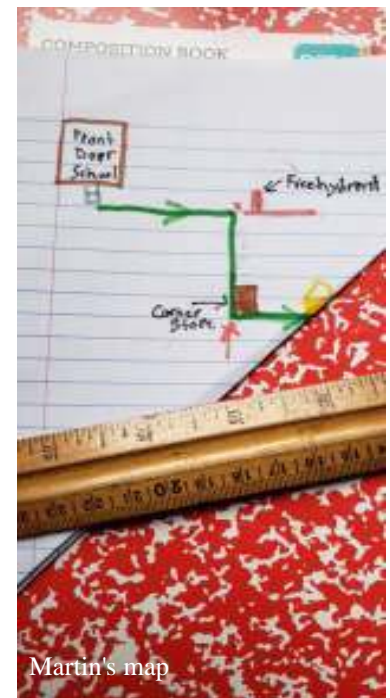
Oh, oh, I thought. There are only so many things a kid can do. Recognizing landmarks, picking out landmarks, and following directions was it for me. There was no way I was going to remember what all the landmarks were. I did my best. "Well, first there was the fire hydrant." I said. "No," Martin said, "first there was the front door of the school." Well, I did know that. I just didn't think I needed to say that because the front door was the only way I ever left the school. "All right," I said, "first is the front door of the school, and then there is the fire hydrant, and then, uh, maybe the house with a green door?"

Just then Mom opened the door of our house. Martin stomped up the steps and marched past her muttering, "She's never going to get it." Mom gave me a big hug. "You will get it," she said, "and Martin will help you until you can walk to school and back on your own."

Martin had gone right into his bedroom. He didn't even come to the kitchen to have the cookies and milk that Mom always had ready for us when we get home from school. Now it was just me having cookies and milk. I started telling Mom about what a bad day it had been, and how it would have been ok if the kids who walk by our place on their way home had been going home for lunch. I also told her how much I didn't like Mrs. Dobson. Mom interrupted for the first time. "Who is Mrs. Dobson?" she asked. "The school secretary," I said. I told Mom I couldn't do my arithmetic worksheet in class, so I brought it home, and how glad I was to see Martin when he came to my classroom. I'm sure I would have kept chattering non-stop, but just then Martin walked into the kitchen and put a piece of paper on the table. "I've drawn a map of our landmarks," he said. "This should help you remember what order they're in."

I looked at the map. It made perfect sense. He had drawn the front door of the school. I couldn't read what it said, but I did know what the word school looked like, and Martin told me it said Front door of school. He then took me through all the landmarks, telling me what the words said, and what the symbols meant. The red X's meant don't cross the street this way, and the green lines meant that was the right way to go. There was a fire hydrant in red, then a green line to a brown square that was the corner store. Then there was the green door, the red roof, the big white house with windows, and the chestnut trees across from our house. Martin wasn't a very good artist, but I could tell what the things he drew were.

Martin only had to walk me to school and back two more times before I was confident to walk on my own. But even when I made friends and walked home with them, I never changed the route I took home. I knew how easy it was for me to get lost. Although I didn't need to use the map, I kept it until the end of Grade One. Just in case.



*The doors we open and close each day decide the lives we live.*

Flora Whittemore

## A LIFE ON THE LINE . . . ELLEN WOODSWORTH

River Glen and Val Innes

Ellen Woodsworth is a woman who not only dreams and hopes for a better, more peaceful, less violent and fairer world, but has worked for that all of her adult life. Ellen was born into a strong left-leaning family. Her mother, a strong feminist social worker was the National YWCA rep on the first board of National Action Committee on the Status of Women. Her father, a lawyer, was President of the Canadian Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament. Not surprising then, that in 1962-64, Ellen while attending Humber College, Toronto, helped set up Canadian High School Students for Nuclear Disarmament. In 1964, the family moved to Japan and visited China in 1965; this was a move which greatly influenced Ellen. Women were holding up half the sky! That's where she decided that women could make the revolution.



Ellen Woodsworth

At the University of British Columbia from 1966 to 1970, Ellen was involved in working for Civil Rights and the protests against the Vietnam war, as well as working for Red Power and the women's movement. She was elected Head of the Speakers Bureau and set up the Women's Centre in a tiny office in the Student Union Building. She went on to join the Vancouver Women's Caucus, participating in growth of the women's movement and gay liberation. Ellen came out as a lesbian feminist, and in 1970 she joined the Abortion Caravan driving across Canada, speaking and then chaining herself in the House of Commons for women's right to choose. In 1971, Ellen became part of women's group that occupied the Georgia Straight and put out a women's issues newsletter. She also was an organizer of first Gay Women's Conference in Canada at 1973. Ellen moved to Toronto, started the "Other Woman Newspaper", the first lesbian newspaper, with Holly Devor (now Aron Devor and head of Trans Studies at University of Victoria). In 1973 Ellen also became Co Founder of CORA the Women's Liberation Bookmobile and Co-Founder of the Toronto Wages for Housework Campaign as well as belonging to Wages Due the lesbian Collective. She then moved to London, England for three years to join the Wages for Housework Campaign and Selma James who wrote *Sex Race and Class*.

Back in B.C., Ellen co-ordinated the Housewives and Reach Project at the South Vancouver Neighbourhood House with welfare mothers; there she wrote two reports and was President of the Board. In 1981, she was Co organizer of the Lesbian Conference at Langara. She also worked with Betsy Warland and Cheryl Street to organized two Lesbian Art shows at Women in Focus. She was part of the "When Women Count" coalition which got unpaid work by women to be included in the Canadian Census. Canada was the first country in the world to do that.

Over the next years, Ellen was involved in many activities. She was President of the Board of Britannia Community Centre. She was on the Board of REACH Community Health Clinic, where she came up with their logo "community health in community hands." She worked as a Social Planner for North Vancouver, writing up a survey of child care needs. She was also Chairperson of the BC Action Canada Network fighting Free Trade. Then she worked as a community organizer for ten years in the downtown eastside of Vancouver, the lowest income area in all of Canada. She also worked at the Downtown East Side Seniors Centre on issues for seniors, women, indigenous and low income people, organizing conferences, consultations, writing policy and building organizations. She chaired Bridge Housing Society for women and raised the first \$500,000 from Working Opportunity Fund's (W.O.F) through David Levi. W.O.F. built housing for women and a women's centre in the downtown East Side. Ellen helped organize the Women's Memorial March for 10 years. For three years, she worked part time at 411 Seniors Centre as the Seniors'

Summit Coordinator, and set up WE\*ACT, Women Elders in Action, and was on the first Board of the Generations Project.

In 2002, Ellen was elected as a City Councillor in a Coalition Of Progressive Electors (COPE) sweep of the municipal Council, School and Park Board, and she was a Vancouver City Councillor for six years. She was Deputy Mayor on a rotational basis and sat on the Executive of the Union of BC Municipalities and the Lower Mainland Treaty Advisory Committee. She focused on social, political and economic justice looked at through an equity/intersectional lens and worked for environmentally sound planning and the arts. Her goal was to make Vancouver the greenest and most socially just city in the world. Ellen moved motions and actions to set up Council Advisory Committees for Women and LGBTQI2SA+ people, create real affordable housing, implement electoral reform, and address the causes of the missing women. She spoke at the Women's Panel at the Barcelona Urban conference and came up with the idea of designing an ideal city for women and girls. Anne Roberts and Ellen created a committee of women leaders, urban staff and themselves which then created the first Canadian Municipal "Gender Equality Strategy for the City of Women". Then, in the next Council, set up the Women's Advisory Council where she proposed and created "Women Transforming Cities".



Ellen got the Council to join the Canadian Coalition Municipalities Against Racism and Discrimination, spoke out for the protection of civil liberties during the Olympics, and supported local area plans for all neighbourhoods. She worked for electoral reform and chaired the cross party committee which made recommendations to Council and to the Union of BC Municipalities for limits on spending by parties and candidates. As well, she worked with citizens and neighbourhood organizations to make Vancouver a city for everyone. Her Council responsibilities included the following: Vancouver Director, Union of British Columbia Municipalities, Vancouver Director, Lower Mainland Treaty Advisory Committee, Alternate, Greater Vancouver Regional District, Director, Hastings Institute Inc. Board, Vice-Chair, Standing



Committee on City Services and Budgets, Member, Standing Committee on Planning and Environment, Member, Standing Committee on Transportation and Traffic, Council representative to the Seniors, Womens, LGTTBQ , Family Court and Youth Justice Council Advisory Committees, Member, Food Policy Task Force, Member of the Creative Cities Task Force, Vice Chair, Peace and Justice Committee, Co-Chair, Women's Task Force, Gender Equality Strategy for City of Vancouver. During those years, she was also a consultant with equity seeking groups travelling to Japan, Brazil, Turkey, Spain etc.

Ellen co-founded the World Peace Forum 2006, attended the Mumbai World Social Forum, spoke at the Tokyo Article 9 Conference and the Hiroshima and Nagasaki Nuclear Disarmaments conferences and sat in on the High Court Tribunal about the use of chemical warfare by Japan against China. It's no surprise that Ellen was named one of Vancouver's 30 most influential female politicians in history. Ellen has also been a Consultant to the City of Vancouver Engineering Department, Women Transforming Cities in partnership with CRIAW (Canadian Research Institute for the Advancement of Women) and organized a 3 year project "action on systemic barriers to women's participation in local government" focusing on cities of Vancouver and Surrey.

In 2011 Ellen lost the Municipal election and in that same year went through some major personal losses; however, she continued as the Co Chair of Women Transforming Cities (WTC), and in 2012, she joined Quirk-e, the Queer Imaging and Riting Kollektive for Elders and began writing seriously, publishing in our books and Zines. In 2014 and 2018, WTC launched "Hot Pink Paper Municipal Campaigns" working with



local women and women's organizations to find the 11 key issues which would make cities work for women and girls. Ellen worked with Councillor Jean Swanson to reach a unanimous agreement on May 29, 2019 with the Mayor and Council to put a gender intersectional lens on the entire city, so that every department for six years would be measurable and supported. Ellen also led WTC Jane's Walks for liveable cities in the Downtown East Side.

In 2015-2016, as Chairperson of WTC, Ellen participated in UN Habitat Urban Thinkers Campus events with a focus on cities using an intersectional lens on policies, programmes, budgets, staffing and governance. WTC hosted over thirty Cafes for women in local neighbourhoods and a large Grand Tea Party, a workshop for NGOs and individuals on how to use our "Advancing Equity and Inclusion Guide for Municipalities" now an Urban Solution of the UN Habitat World Urban Campaign. She was also a presenter at Columbia Institute on "Advancing Equity and Inclusion a Guide for Municipalities" which is endorsed by UNESCO, Federation of Canadian Municipalities etc. online at [www.equityandinclusion.ca](http://www.equityandinclusion.ca)

The following years were happy for Ellen. She met her partner, Dr. Joy Masuhara who is also a very accomplished person working for human rights and people's quality of life. And in 2015, Ellen was the Keynote speaker at the United Nation's (UN) International Women Friendly Cities Conference in Ankara, Turkey. In 2016, she became Youth Habitat Organizer and Moderator of the Queer Consultation and Declaration. She also spoke at the UN Habitat 3 in Quito, the World Urban Campaign forum, the Women Friendly Cities Challenge panel, and the YoutHab panel on LGTBI inclusion in New Urban Agenda. She also spoke about the WTC use of Cafes as organizing strategies to talk and plan with local women at the Women's Assembly of World Urban Forum 9 and moderated the launch of the online library of wise practices ([www.womenfriendlycitieschallenge.org](http://www.womenfriendlycitieschallenge.org)). She also was speaker on Equity & Inclusion at Placemaking Leadership Forum and the 6th Green Standards Week Creating Smart Sustainable Cities as well as speaker at Montevideo, Uruguay. She participated in an Expert Group Meeting on Human Rights and the City and the New Urban Agenda in New York, as well as in the 2016 Prague UN Habitat III Towards A New Urban Agenda EU/North American Conference Social Inclusion panel, WTC workshop, and read the women's statement at final plenary.



2017 Canadian Institute of Planners Conference



Ellen continued her WTC work, and in 2018 received the Rosemary Brown Award For B.C. based women who work for the empowering of women. She was one of 28 participants at the Female Leadership in Resilient Cities, one BMW Foundation Conference Udaipur, India as well as Keynote speaker at the Simon Fraser University (SFU) Roundtable on the Research and Practice of Women's Participation and Leadership in Climate Solutions. She was also a speaker at the Canadian Institute of Planners AGM "Building Resilience" and the Minerva Foundation Women in governance forums. In 2019, Ellen spoke at the National Democratic Institute (NDI) Leadership conference in Udaipur, India and at the NDI Berlin Conference. She was an organizer and speaker at Feminists Deliver, a grassroots organization of B.C. organizations working on key provincial issues for women and girls (see [www.feministsdeliver.org](http://www.feministsdeliver.org)) and moderator of Women Making Women Friendly Cities panel for the City of Vancouver Women Deliver conference. She was awarded the B.C. Achievement and was the Mitchell Award winner.



Erbil, Iraq "Herstory"

In 2020, she was Speaker at NDI Iraq Herstory Conference in Erbil, Iraq. Note that: Iraq. Think of the courage that took! And also for this one: in 2021 Ellen spoke at the World Urban Forum Youth and Women's Assemblies on lesbian and queer issues in Abu Dhabi. That takes sheer courage!

Ellen then started taking courses on writing with Wendy Bancroft at SFU and was on the Jack Blaney Award for Dialogue committee at SFU. She also went to Japan, hiked the Kumano Kodo, visited Fukushima and worked on the Sendai Japanese commemorative garden to those who died in Fukushima nuclear disaster, 1,200 housewives who were invisible, and she is now on its international Advisory Committee. In 2022, Ellen stepped down from board of Women Transforming Cities after 18 years and became the Matriarch. She also spoke at the Winnipeg Pride conference, and was a delegate at the DIGNITY NETWORK Ottawa Conference. She became the Co Chair of the Women's International League for Peace and Freedom (WILPF) Canada, as she began to realize that we need to work on the issues of peace and climate change. The WILPF slogan is Demilitarize, Decarbonize, Decolonize.

More recently, Ellen celebrated her 75th birthday and gave the majority of her files and photographs to SFU Archives. She began the Wordy Women Writing monthly group as well as remaining with us in Quirk-e. She also continues being a treasured speaker and has spoken at the following: the Women Building Communities panel at Unitarian Church, the pro Social Orientation and Gender Identity (SOGI) rally at the Vancouver Art Gallery (VAG), the National Council of Women Meeting Housing as a Women's Right, the North Shore Women's Centre Fundraiser, as well as organizing and being emcee at the WILPF Ceasefire Rally at the VAG. She has also spoken at the Mobilization Against War and Occupation rally at the VAG as well as the Pan Canadian Housing panel. Ellen has been interviewed for Broadview Magazine in its March 2024 Issue. Clearly Ellen hasn't slowed down much!

Ellen comments that today, we need to fight for rights more than ever. We are facing a global crisis with wars helping to cause climate change. We are losing the things we've worked hard for as the right wing shifts the Canadian agenda from social, sustainable values. Since COVID, domestic violence globally has soared, and despite strong international women's groups, even countries that have put a gendered intersectional lens on their foreign policies are still pouring enormous amounts into their military and their war and defence budgets rather than programs such as housing. These wars are adding to the environmental disasters we face today. If the right wing here in Canada wins the next general election, which we will face within the next two years, we will lose our funding for Women and Gender Equality and other social programs. Canada could have a role as a peace keeping nation, but under right wing control, will not.



Ellen, as Co Chair Canada WILPF, organized a Ceasefire Rally of Indigenous, Palestinian, Jewish, Asian, choirs, poets recently, expecting 50 maybe a 100 people, and 1,000 people showed up. She believes people want peace, and that they are willing to join with others to achieve that. In order to encourage that, Ellen created an "On to Ottawa Peace Caravan" co-sponsored by WILPF and Voice of Women for Peace (VOW). It will be leaving Vancouver on Mother's Day, May 12 and aims to arrive in Ottawa for a Rally and Teach In. She is inviting people all across Canada to join the Caravan. Join her and a community of people actively working for change!

## LEGACY

Ellen Woodsworth

I am scattering the seeds for peace: letters, flyers, buttons, banners, organizing fundraisers, and finding endorsers day after day. Sharing my idea of an “On to Ottawa Peace Caravan”.

Sharing my desire for peace. I am in agony watching the slaughter of the Palestinians, the devastating war in Ukraine, the hunger in Sudan, the sabre rattling in other parts of the Middle East and Asia. A recent article in the Guardian says that global Defence spending has risen 9% to \$2.2 trillion. I learn of millions of refugees from wars causing climate disasters, huddled hungry and thirsty beside makeshift dwellings. Huge numbers of women and girls are trafficked, and queer rights are deteriorating. I wake up one morning and realize I must do something, and as I write, I realize I can organize. I am an organizer, and suddenly I feel alive again. I share my idea of a peace caravan with Women’s International League for Peace and Freedom. They are inspired and inspiring. Yes, yes. A peace caravan to Ottawa.

I reach out to the women’s movement, churches, to the unions, to the environmental, Jewish, Palestinian, social justice NGO’s and Ceasefire organizations and ask for help. I ask my cousin-in-law, Xwalactun, who to talk to at Squamish Nation and send a letter to the Union of BC Indian Chiefs. I reach out to a good friend, Margaret, asking her to contact environmental groups. Bumping into a labour activist walking along the Fraser River, I ask which unions would sponsor it. I send our letter to the BCFED and VDLC, asking them to endorse us and decide to go to the BCTF Peace & Climate Change event with some of our flyers. One step, one seed one idea at a time. Within a week we have the endorsement of the Voice of Women for Peace, World Beyond War, Independent Jewish Voices, Conscience Canada, the Vancouver Council of Women and a friendly NGO sends the poster to 1,700 organizations. We have less than three months to pull this all together, and our website is down.

I realize my final legacy will be my work for peace. I am almost 76, but I have a vision. I will follow in the footsteps of my great uncle, J.S WOODSWORTH, in his belief in pacifism, which has been a beacon of light my whole life. He held steadfast to his belief, even throughout WW2, and was forced out of the United Church because of his belief. My Dad’s early work as President of the Canadian Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament has influenced me, though the right-wing reaction to his work had me as a child, crouched terrified, alone at night, as red necks screamed obscenities at our house. I was often afraid. Looking through my albums, I find my grade eight graduation photo. I am wearing a peace button. An old family friend sent me a photo from a 1962 issue of the Globe and Mail, showing me marching in the front of a rally down Young Street carrying a Disarmament sign. Some friends and I had founded the High School students for Nuclear Disarmament, and both my brothers were presidents of their university Nuclear Disarmament organizations. Last summer, searching through my mother’s papers I discover my Grade nine essay with the interview with my Dad’s old friend, Setsuko Thurlow, a Hiroshima survivor, now a UN award winning advocate against nuclear weapons. The idea and need to work for peace is not new for me, I realize; it is in my DNA.

I fought against the Vietnam war, was an organizer of the Indochinese women’s conference and marched in huge peace rallies, inspired by a book about the Peace Pilgrim, a member of WILPF, who left a job at the UN and walked all over the US for years calling for peace. What courage she had, sleeping under bridges, curled up against the storms. I Co-Founded the World Peace Forum attended by over 35,000, where I discovered CODE Pink, an anti-war women’s organization which dresses in pink, confronting Senators and Presidents demanding their support for CEASEFIRE. I have spoken at the Hiroshima and





Nagasaki Anti-Nuclear Conferences, where I discovered my Dad had spoken in the early 60's. These deep connections led me to be invited to speak at the Article 9 conference in Tokyo in 2006, where we discussed how to get more countries to adopt a resolution saying they would never go to war. As a Canadian witness in the Tokyo High Court trial charging Japan with using chemical weapons against civilians in WW2, I heard how perverted war makes nations, like the use of white phosphorus against the civilians in Gaza. Speaking at an international conference on the Fukushima Nuclear Disaster and its impact on women, I learn that over 1,200 housewives died because they were invisible at home doing unpaid work. Today, I sit on the international board of NAJG the National Association of Japanese Gardeners, creating the Fukushima memorial garden in Sendai.

Over the years, I have been focused on urban issues with Women Transforming Cities. But one day, a couple of years ago, I lifted my head and saw the spreading dark clouds of global wars and consequent climate disasters. I read in the Guardian that global spending on military is \$2.2 trillion annually and that the military industrial complex Loughheed Martin made billions in the first week after Oct.7. 49% of the Israeli budget comes from militarism, and 19% of the Canadian budget goes to "Defence"; one fly-over of a fighter jet uses 700 gallons of fuel, brutally taken from unceded indigenous land. Stunned, I watch the media frenzy spreading anti-Hamas and anti-China propaganda. I watch in horror as anti-Asian, Islamaphobia, Antisemitism and Transphobia rise as the right-wing manipulation of the media grows and divides us from each other.

After 18 years as Founder and Co Chair of WTC, I leave to focus on global peace. I join the Women's International League for Peace and Freedom Canada, one of over 50 countries in WILPF International, and become Co President, carrying our banner, Demilitarize Decarbonize Decolonize, in climate change and weekly CEASEFIRE rallies. We support the South African petition to the ICJ to stop the genocide of civilians, but IT IS NOT enough. Canada is sending drones, weapons, warships, and fighter jets with nuclear capabilities to Israel and the Ukraine and joining the US led ANKUS military exercises in the south pacific this spring.

I wake one morning drenched with sweat and realize I must do more. I begin writing a piece putting down everything I know is happening globally. Once the piece is done, I share it with my writing groups who support me. Then, the next morning, I know what I have to do. I have to organize an On to Ottawa Peace Caravan. The unemployed did it in the 30's; indigenous women did it the early 2000's, as did the Chinese fighting for an apology and redress for the Head Tax. I was on the On to Ottawa Abortion Caravan and on the Action Canada Network Caravan to fight Free Trade. A peace caravan can weave together and expose the interconnectedness of militarism, climate change and colonization and draw people out.



Michelle Fortin

One day at a time, walking, seeding, watering, fertilizing the call for peace. People are calling me from Halifax, Montreal, Peterborough, Toronto, Winnipeg, Calgary, Victoria, Duncan and Vancouver wanting to help. They offer donations or plan to organize an event; others offer to join the caravan. It keeps growing one day at a time. We will leave from Vancouver on Mother's Day, and from Halifax on May 25, stopping along the way to listen to people and share our information about the impact of militarism on climate change and lack of money for housing, health care, implementation of the TRC and 2SMMIWG recommendations and the importance of support for UNRWA. We must call for peace.

We all agree, if the planet and the world's people are to survive, we must rise together and call for peace. We will rally in Ottawa and hold a Teach In on May 28 the day before CANSEC the largest arms fair in entire world. Please JOIN us.





## YOU DIDN'T INVITE US?

### River Glen

You're out there on your yacht, but you forgot to ask us. We assure you we'd be most delightful companions if given the chance.

We are running to catch up with your private jet, but security is tackling us. We don't understand what the problem is, as it is a fairly large plane, and you have plenty of room.

We see you stroll into Tiffany's, etc. like you own it. Well maybe just shares, but it might surprise you that we would never venture into a luxury store, being not sure if we could survive on the rarified air.

Yes, we have heard of fine dining, seen it in movies. And elegant hotel suites we're sure are a hoot. How much did those boots made from an endangered species set you back? Or the blood gold and diamonds? Wow, dozens and dozens of high-end vehicles, and you never drive them, or fabulous art you have in storage, or homes and buildings all over the planet that are just items on an inventory.

We are impressed by the stuff, believe us, but what we really would love being included in is some of your power. We have found out there are candidates we vote for in your pocket. There are countries you can make or break by providing weapons or buying leaders. You have the power to affect global issues, like war and peace or climate change, making corporations do your bidding. We recycle, reuse, and consume less, but it's small potatoes to what you could do. We wonder if you invested some of that ill gotten money in our education, more of us getting post secondary educations might produce even more good science, skilled doctors and inventors to solve problems?

We know there are billions of us, and, of course, we don't expect you to share so much you'd be anywhere near the level of our more or less mundane, mediocre lives, but while you are hiding in fortified compounds, building underground mansion bomb shelters or trying to run off to Mars, doesn't it at least make sense to try for more social equality, better resource distribution, the collective and aggressive action on climate change and controlled militarism? Oh my! There's that yacht sailing off into the sunset, and the rising sea is coming down our street. . .



Card Art by Cyndia Cole and Angie Joyce



## TIPS FOR CYBERSECURITY

Mela Brown

I work in IT. I like to nerd out on stuff like information security and password managers. One of the things that makes me the angriest is how people, especially elders, are preyed on by cybercriminals. Cybercriminals use social engineering to exploit compassion, fear, empathy, loneliness, pain, coincidence, confusion and so on. With the advance of Artificial Intelligence, the threat of cybercrime is getting worse. **The best protection is to train your brain to resist manipulation.**

1. If you take anything away from this article, let it be that you will remember the THREE RED FLAGS of cyber crime. When you experience one or a combination of these flags, take a beat. Think twice.
  - ⊗ It's urgent.
  - ⊗ Your personal information is requested.
  - ⊗ You are invited to click a link.
2. Don't give out information to someone who phones even if they say they are the Canada Revenue Agency, k.d. Lang, your bank or your doctor. If you're not sure if it's a scam, hang up and call the organization (or person) back at the number you have on file.
3. Create a safe-word with your trusted friends and family that only you would know. If you ever get a call saying a family member is travelling and needs money, or has been in an accident and needs money, ask for the safe-word. A good way to do it is with question and answer. For example, Q: Who is your favourite character from *Dykes to Watch Out For*? A: Sydney.
4. AI (Artificial Intelligence) can now create fake video and audio with only a small sample to replicate. AI can also fake images and writing such as correspondence. But it's not perfect (yet). Ways to spot AI generated products:
  - ⊗ Blended images (e.g., an ocean image where the waves are different)
  - ⊗ Lighting is often wrong (e.g., shadows in the wrong place, reflections missing)
  - ⊗ Faster video speed
  - ⊗ Humans in video are never shown in profile
  - ⊗ Hands and fingers look wrong
  - ⊗ In writing, odd words or wordiness
5. As queers, we're naturally good at cybersecurity because we've learned to trust our intuition and not make assumptions! Stay safe out there.



**IT IS FOOLISH TO DO NOTHING BECAUSE YOU KNOW YOU CAN ONLY DO A LITTLE. MANY OF US, EACH DOING A LITTLE, CAN MAKE A BIG DIFFERENCE.**

## CONSCIOUSNESSES

Adriaan de Vries

I am old now.

My body aches,  
     somewhere, everywhere,  
 hour by hour;      hurrying me  
     to embrace heuristically my bind to  
 the law of cyclical passage.

My mind mendaciously maunders on,  
     then cavorts like a kitten,  
 a calf;  
     a cub confidently crashing,  
 on to continuous youth,  
     breath,      beauty,  
 relishing a fleeting febrile reality  
     ...or an effulgent fantasy.

Savouring, smell, sense, sonority, sight:  
     my grounded consciousnesses  
     tell me  
         nothing.

My depth sounder,  
     sometimes alerting me without  
     the basic five,  
 refuses comment  
     or conjecture.

Alaya sleeps sonorously,  
     revealing  
         nothing.

My life form,  
     fundamental source of all I am,  
     only smiles with  
 certitude,  
     . . .finally grinning:  
 How long do you need  
     to know you know everything,  
 while being conscious of  
     nothing?



☐ Alaya refers to the 8<sup>th</sup> level of consciousness in Buddhist philosophy. It comes after sight, hearing, touch, taste, smell, instinctive integration and discernment. Then Alaya [active mind when deeply asleep], surpassed only by Amala, the pure fundamental life force when free of Karma; source of energy for all physical, mental and spiritual activity].



## CANDLE IN THE WINDOW

Lukas Walther August 1998.

*"I saw the best minds of my generation destroyed by madness, starving hysterical naked, dragging themselves through the negro streets at dawn looking for an angry fix."*\*— this is the opening stanza to a poem I read while headed to my own 'negro streets', also known back then as 'The Ghetto', any ghetto. That one line cut to my quick. That was me—enraged, betrayed, desolate, far more alone than any kid should be. I didn't know it yet, but within days I'd find myself in the seediest most notorious part of Boston, spending nights in a nearby graveyard hiding from very real dangers, curled up inside newspaper-lined garbage bags, using my own breath as a meager heat source. It was early 1967. The Summer of Love was on its way; I was 12 years old.



Boston Redevelopment Authority photographs, City of Boston Archives,

School was a nightmare. I was one of the smartest kids, loved to learn anything, but I didn't fit in, so was often humiliated and shunned by other kids. I had no idea back then why; the consistent message was simply that I was... Unacceptable. Around grade 6 I started taking whatever drugs or booze I could get my hands on, trying to dull the shame that was crippling me. While my teachers kept showing off my scholastic abilities, and encouraged my folks to "aim this child as high as you possibly can", all I wanted to do was disappear and hide, from myself and everyone else.

If you're a man reading this, try imagining waking up one day with... breasts. If you're a woman reading this, try imagine suddenly sprouting a moustache, a penis. Think about how self-alienating that might be, how surreal, and, frankly, horrifying it would feel, especially, say, at around puberty. Forget about what <you> know you are: put yourself in the 'body-appropriate' locker-room, naked, surrounded by other kids celebrating the very same-looking body you now find yourself encased in and absolutely cannot relate to. You have no script for this; cast into totally the wrong role, the wrong costume; you look the same as them, but like left-handed or right-handedness, you just know you're not. It's all horribly wrong. You have no sense of this character, but the show continues, and act you must, however awkward. You know you don't belong here, like this, and you're terrified someone else might see it too.

But you don't know why. You don't dare talk about it, don't even have the language. There is no one to explain it, nowhere to turn. While the others flaunt and exaggerate their pubescent developments, and mimic their favorite role models, you find no role model, see yourself reflected nowhere, except in the cruelest jokes, the most cutting remarks.

You scramble to create a plausible persona, flubbing your lines, one faux pas after another. An obvious misfit, you quickly become their special target. Then the teachers get in on it, misinterpreting your drastic drop in grades and your defensive, seemingly antisocial behaviour as intentional, disruptive, manipulative. You're singled out further, desk moved into the hall until you "learn to behave", and now you sit where anyone in the whole school can take unobserved potshots at the freak. At home it's just as confusing, well-intentioned constant pressure to tow the (gender) line: the 'innie' line, no exceptions. Clothes, behaviour, hair, activities... pronoun... name... everything devised to reflect the designated gender.



At some point you finally realize you're deeply, irreparably flawed, and that there is no relief, no way to avoid it. There's only leaving . . . via drugs, via running away, via suicide.

I tried all three, and have spent many adult years recovering from damage caused by the first two before I could even begin to repair the damage caused by growing up under such scrutiny, simply for not fitting adequately into the 'girl' slot. 'Gender ambiguous' is how it's referred to today (1998).

Transgendered, possibly transsexual.

Societal intolerance towards gender diversity cost me dearly: my home and safety, my youth, my family, and, equally, an education and fair shot at choosing my own 'career path'. I was gifted, and I was tormented. No matter what I tried, I couldn't make it work. So finally, I ran, as far as possible, bitterly, bitterly aware of everything I was sacrificing, but flat out of any other options. It was the Age of Aquarius, of Peace, Love and Flowers, and into The Happening, I launched myself, a true believer. Back then, nobody talked about its increasingly grim sleazy underbelly . . .

Almost 30 years later (1998), I'm no longer tormented for who I am. As a transitioning female-to-male transsexual, I'm gradually attaining the freedom to move through life relatively unafraid; now I'm seen by others the way I've always seen myself. Fitting into one of the ever-expanding 'slots' now, I'm mercifully invisible, just another guy, no longer stuck in that 'ew, what are you, anyway?' zone, no longer a bully magnet for crude comments, jokes, threats.

For countless transgendered and transsexual people of my era and before, this is not the case, will never be the case. The mismatch between body and self is sometimes acutely visible, that bulls eye on their foreheads the cost of authenticity. Heroes all (and upon whose shoulders, I very gratefully stand), their lot is far graver, because it is (or, sadly, was) never-ending.



I firmly believe that educating K-12 school staff, health care providers, parents, anyone involved with youth, will have a vast and lifesaving effect on all our kids, not just the ones who would otherwise shatter and die. By embracing all diversities— gender and sexual as well as racial, body image, cultural, class, to name a few— and providing accurate information and positive role models, each kid will see themselves reflected and included. This, in itself, can protect them against what happened to me and so many others, many of whom did not survive.

This will put a candle in the window, so that every child can find their own unique and rightful way, hopefully ensuring them an actual, self-determined future as well.

March 2024: Update: the author went on to do just that: educate school staff, health care providers, parents, anyone involved with youth, from 1998 until now, ongoing.

1. Allen Ginsberg, 'Howl and other Poems'.
2. Several words used in this piece are outdated and merely reflect the times in which it was written, not any resistance on the author's part to embrace current terms.
3. Photo: The Combat Zone was the name of the district of Boston where I found myself, at 12. Credit for photo: @Jerry Berndt Estate Title: CBD: Washington Street Adult Entertainment District

## QUEER ELDERS CHRISTINE WAYMARK & ROBIN RENNIE FOUNDED VANCOUVER'S FIRST LGBTQIA-FRIENDLY COUNSELLING SERVICE

Paula Stromberg

We grow old, we grow old . . . and we draw inspiration from our queer elders such as the brave couple, both Quirke members, who founded Vancouver's first counselling office that welcomed LGBTQIA+ clients: Christine Waymark and Robin Rennie. In 2017, Christine stopped attending Quirke due to a diagnosis of memory loss. She turned 84 in 2024.



Christine, Robin and Chris at Quirk-e

“Despite my faulty memory, I have lots to live for — and yes, I love being interviewed,” says Christine who trained as a pastoral counsellor. Back in 1980, she was working for the Pastoral Institute when she met fellow therapist Robin Rennie at Family Services in Vancouver. The two women fell in love but were both fired due to their agencies’ heteronormative rules. “Robin and I lost our jobs for being in a lesbian relationship, so we decided to establish a LGBTQIA counselling business together, Dragonstone Counselling,” said Christine, adding that her greatest act of courage was saying ‘yes’ —in those days— to loving Robin Rennie. “I’m proud of our long relationship, and proud we took the risk of opening Vancouver’s first queer-friendly counselling office.”

The two women lived together for 35 years until Robin was diagnosed with Alzheimers and died at home in 2015. Christine recently moved to a Burnaby care home. We miss them.

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### DREAM TIME

#### River Glen

Of course, after touching the hot stove of life over and over when you're old, you're pretty likely to have boundaries, preferences, routine, caution and more to lose, but hopefully you have memories where caution was thrown to the wind, spontaneity was easy, and the school of hard knocks opened heart and mind, and life was filled with adventure. From my recliner, I will myself up and out, grateful I still can rouse with some old motivation in my circulating blood. My dreams are on a shorter tether now. . . but I have a general assumption I have more time, with the horizon, hazy in a misty unknown. I do appreciate the link between dreams and finite time more than I have ever before.



River at home

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## HOPES, DREAMS AND FEARS

Adriaan de Vries

When I was twelve or thirteen, I started to feel trapped in a “foreign” culture. I grew up in a socio-religious paradigm that was a tight box with no openings and no place for me or my evolving worldview. I was tightly bound by rigidity and dicta. I knew nothing else. I felt despondent at what I saw as my prospects. I was unacceptable in that world. I was condemned to hell by that paradigm’s God even though in that paradigm, God had created me as I am.



65 years ago, I started my quest to freedom, to acceptance, to self-acceptance, to contentment. This quest, taking place over many decades, grew from the perspective of a very personal limited world to the perspective of dreaming, hoping for an accepting world for all. The quest never ceased. It took many twists and turns; constantly growing hopes for achieving an equitable existence in new and previously unknown ways, with a myriad of people, in places all around this magnificent globe. My hopes and dreams still have some of that very personal slant but have also evolved to some that hope and dream for all humanity, the planet and the universe in their embrace.

I enumerate them here.

### I hope:



1] to find some emotional/ psychological balance in the discombobulations of hardship and suffering in life and in the equanimity of peace and contentedness. Life is the journey of finding balance.

2] to come to a greater degree of contentedness and acceptance of what is. Buddhism says: “Life is suffering”. But I find that that is the source of growth when I realize and experience the beauty of that consciousness.

3] to continue in growing consciousness. Then, commensurate with that, growing an empathy and love for all that is. “Love is all there is.” as the song goes. I find that increasing mindfulness creates more space for love.

4] to endure in life with a minimum of debilitating pain, lingering illness or incapacity. Life is ongoing change, and accepting all change, including the inevitable pain and death, enriches life, easing the fear of the inevitable.

5] to live each day as if it is my last, living fully, and regretting nothing.

6] to add meaning to the world and life each day, no matter how little. As I said to a friend recently, this value added is my *jus de vivre* giving me *joie de vivre*.

7] to die peacefully without trauma or drama, without long incapacitating illness. My hard-won self-love accepts and embraces this positive selfishness.

8] to experience the perpetual beauty of life and living. I hope to transition out on that pinnacle.

9] for the improved well-being of a close friend who now lives with intense chronic pain from deteriorating illness. My love for her seeks an end to her pain. My selfishness wants her to be with me longer.

10] that neoliberal capitalism dies, reducing its inherent source of existence: greed. I wish to end its devastating lack of humanity.

11] that medicalization and pharma control of mental health care is over. That we can bring humanity back into people care and wellness support instead of selling another pill, without talking, touching, and nurturing those in care.

12] to be able to read until I go. Reading opens the universe to me. It is my sustenance and source of my growth. It was my escape from the tight box that I lived in as a child. I came to experience the universe, and so much more as a result of it. As a senior, it is a part of my inherent, eternal journey to greater consciousness.

**I Dream of:**

- 1] a kinder, violence free world;
- 2] more humanity to humanity;
- 3] tolerance and acceptance;
- 4] no anger and hate;
- 5] no "perfect" and so, no divisive ideologies or world views / religions;
- 6] a stop to worrying;
- 7] freedom from existential trauma;
- 8] deeper and genuine humility;
- 9] of living being surrounded by love, bathed in it;
- 10] no more greed;
- 11] that neoliberal capitalism disappears as the collective rises.

**I Fear:**

- 1] the absence of my Hopes and Dreams;
- 2] omitting / overlooking the mutual healing of forgiveness;
- 3] continued anger, hate and rejection;
- 4] affected superciliousness and arrogance;
- 5] the overwhelming greed, that is destroying everything;
- 6] although change is eternal, I fear the current trajectory that humanity is on;
- 7] lingering illness and drawn out, slow dying.



I have made some little progress to greater awareness, active empathy and unfettered love in my 65 year journey. I hope and pray that I be allowed to progress on this journey as long as I have consciousness. I am so grateful for the gift of the possibility of this journey and for having it.

I wish contentment and peace for all, in every conceivable possibility or contingency.



Card Art by Cyndia Cole and Angie Joyce





## THE PERILS OF CAMPING ON THE WEST COAST OF VANCOUVER ISLAND

Lorri Rudland



My new partner and I started talking about taking a holiday for a few days in the late spring and I suggested a camping trip. She had never camped before and was initially reluctant until she warmed to the idea when I mentioned the west coast of Vancouver Island – long sandy beaches, driftwood, tidal waves. It seemed magnificent. She got excited and decided to join me on this grand adventure. I neglected to mention the rain. Perhaps I had even forgotten it.

We got along quite well packing the car and discussing our route. The trip to Ucluelet, a picturesque little town on the coast, was beautiful. We had booked a campsite with an amenity that Deb considered mandatory: coffee. I even acquired an old fashioned lamp for the small pup tent we would be sleeping in.

The first day was sunny and warm. We walked along the beach, waded in the water, collected driftwood, checked out the restaurant down the way, and had a wonderful experience. She was ecstatic. The next morning was gloomy, foggy, and freezing cold. She was not happy. I have a memorable photo of her by the camp stove, which she also failed to enjoy, as she was cooking breakfast. She was wearing a full-length flannel nightgown with ruffles at the neck and wrists, topped by a long winter coat, and a bulky scarf. Her outfit would not be complete without mentioning the scowl on her face.

Things proceeded from bad to worse as the heavens opened with a torrent of rain. We ran for cover into the pup tent, which was at the most about four feet high, high enough to sit on the floor with your legs crossed, but not high enough to stand in. We sat looking at each other while I rigged up the lamp and prepared to wait out the rain. Her eyes were flinging an angry message to me, something that wasn't good in any language. I think they might have been saying something on the lines of "why did you bring me to this godforsaken place?"

Why indeed? I began to remember another trip here where the rain fell down in buckets and relations with my partner on that occasion did not fare any better. It would have been good if I had recalled that memory before I had booked this trip. I decided to make a joke and said, "Well, at least we have this lamp. Can you imagine if we were stuck here in the dark?"

She didn't get the humour of the situation and continued to visually throw daggers at me. We manufactured some lunch and dinner sandwiches in virtual silence but my girlfriend was not amused. We were also concerned with touching the sides of the tent, in case of spot leakage. At some point I said that I

thought the water was encroaching underneath the tent and I had better dig a trench. She said, “What, a trench? Oh my God.” I replied, “A trench around the tent, for better drainage.” “Is the tent going to float away?” she said, looking terrified. “Not if I can help it,” I replied. So out I went with a small collapsible shovel and dug a channel all the way around the tent with a runoff lane. When I had finished, the water was running freely away from the tent. The pouring rain was running freely down my neck.

As I crawled back into the tiny tent, soaking wet, over the sleeping bags, she declared, “I’m never coming camping again.” The next day, it stopped raining and we packed up and left. That was the second trip that went wrong because of the relentless rain, and I had learned my lesson: don’t ever take a new camper to the west coast, particularly a girlfriend.

## GAIL

Jan Bruce

This is Gail, a cow I knew. One warm spring day, a friend invited a group to her farm for a potluck lunch. After lunch, we toured the barns and met Mr. bull who was sequestered behind a high secure paddock fence. Behind the barns stretched two large pastures. The herd of fifteen cows was loosely gathered in one corner of the nearest pasture.

As we crossed into the pasture through the large metal gate, fifteen cows raised their heads. Some exchanged nervous glances, some shuffled together nervously. Collectively the herd began to move slowly toward the group of women. Half of the group of women decided to go back through the gate, uneasy with the advancing bovine bodies.

Gail stood out; she had an air of confidence. She was the leader, advancing ahead of the rest of the herd. Calmly, walking, stopping occasionally to survey what remained of the group of women. A flicker of fear entered my consciousness. I moved my wheelchair to the higher ground.

Gail stopped four feet from me, her posse fanned out behind her. She looked me in the eye and sniffed, as it if to say, “what strange legs you have”. The other cows relaxed and spread out to graze around us. Gail was the Boss Cow. Her herd trusted her. She led the herd back and forth on the daily barn-to-pasture routine.



Painting of Gail by Jan Bruce

KINDNESS IS CONTAGIOUS

## ALBERT TAKES A WORKING VACATION

Gayle Roberts

Fictional but realistic dialogue between  
Albert Einstein and a British/African postal clerk (circa 1904)

"Two hundred and fifty words!"

"Yes sir. Two 'undred and fifty words; that's all yer can mail."

"But I've got to mail this to the Swiss patent office in Bern."

"If yer referring to that envelope under yer arm, sir, it's a no go. That's at least an inch thick."

"What about sending it by telegraph?"

"I've 'eard of them things. We 'aven't got any. Yer in the middle of the Congo Free State, yer know."

"*Gott im Himmel*.... Is there anything I can do?"

"Yer could take it down river yerself and mail it from Brazzaville. That's not very practic'I though.... What about sending postcards? Yer can send as many as yer want...as long as yer put a stamp on each of 'em."

"Which one's faster?"

"It's six of one or 'alf a dozen of the other. It's all relative."

"Who takes the mail out?"

"Brown, sir, in 'is boat. 'e lives in the village. 'e's good at keeping things moving around 'ere."

"Priority! I've got to have priority. Poincaré's too damn close."

"What's that, sir? We don't 'ave priority post. Nothing's special 'ere. Generally, it all goes out in the same bag. I tell yer what, sir; why don't yer dictate yer message and I'll write it down on these postcards the post office sells?"

"December 24<sup>th</sup>, 1904....  $E$  equals  $m$  c squared.... Sign it A Einstein."

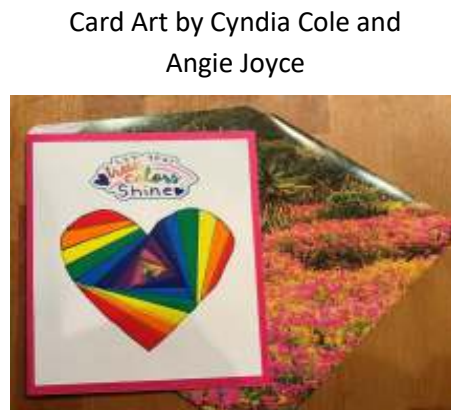
"I'm sorry, sir, yer can't mail that."

"Why not?"

"Yer not allowed to mail anything that's in code."

### Addendum:

I wrote **Albert takes a Working Vacation** about fifteen to twenty years ago. The story line occurred to me one day when I was reading a biography of Einstein and his development of the Special Theory of Relativity. Probably, every child has a hero. Einstein was mine. More and more often as I reread the story, the printed words diminished in importance, and they seemingly morphed in my mind into actual dialogue. With that insight, I realized that each reading of my story created a feeling that I was actually listening to Einstein and the postal clerk discuss what they might do to resolve their postal problem created by me.





## WHAT'S HOT?

Marsha Ablowitz

School was out for the summer of 1956 and I was going to Camp Hatikvah. I imagined my summer of freedom and couldn't wait to see all the beautiful counselors. My heart swelled with joy as I sat in the camp dining room close to the girls in my cabin. We passed the dishes down, chanted the Hebrew blessings and sang loudly:

"There was a little Chickey, and she wouldn't lay an egg, so they poured hot water up and down her legs. The little Chickey cried, and the little Chickey begged, and the little Chickey laid a hardboiled egg." And my favorite: "Picture a cowboy all dressed in red, fell off his saddle bashed in his head. Blood on the saddle, blood on the ground, great big gobs of blood all around." Eating with my cabin 6 gang I felt like I belonged. It was way better than at my school lunch period. All winter I munched dry peanut butter sandwiches alone in the corner of the Junior High school gym.

An exciting part of camp was swimming or singing or folk dancing with my counselors. They were tall long haired older girls wearing tight blouses over their big breasts and cat's eye shaped sparkly sunglasses. At home those senior high school girls never even noticed me. At camp my counselor Terry talked to me and smiled at me every day.

"Hey, Marsha, would you go check that the kids all made their beds? And make sure the little kids didn't leave wet bunks." Saying "Sure Terry," I dashed off to do the job as fast as I could. Terry laughed when another counselor joked, "Terry do you get her to do all your work?" When I reported back, breathless, Terry smiled and her nose crinkled up at the top. I felt warm all over. She said "Thanks Marsha, you're a good kid." Her teeth were so white and her lips . . . she layered pale pink lipstick over her white lipstick. Even the camp director and the tall blond goy lifeguard talked with me.

There was a different status system at Camp Hatikvah than at my Junior High School. At Lord Byng, the top status kids were the big guys with bulging arms on the sports teams. They wore team crests sewn onto their school sweaters. Next down the ladder were their girl friends, the cheerleaders in tight sweaters. Near the bottom were the nerds. I had asthma. I didn't get A's. I had no boyfriend. I couldn't do sports and never went to cheer at a school sports game so I was nowhere.



Marsha

At Camp Hatikvah, the top status kids were the smartest boys. The guys with glasses who were going to make it. They would be 'Big Shots, Big Machers' when they graduated: rich doctors and lawyers with big Cadillacs and diamond tie clips. Next down the camp status ladder were their red lipped girlfriends with spotless matching shorts and shirts. They wore ironed blouses with little Peter Pan collars. How did they keep their clothes so clean and pressed in their camp suitcases? I couldn't stay clean after digging clay for pinch pots and lying in the muddy reeds trying to catch that big turtle. I didn't rate in the camp status system, but some nerdy kids hung out with me and the counselors always talked to me.

Since the high status campers totally ignored me, I was surprised when Terry assigned me to plan the evening program with snotty beautiful Zelda and sarcastic hairy Marty. It was dusk as I followed the two of them down the grassy hill to the badminton court. I was just turning twelve. Why had I been chosen at the staff meeting to plan the program with the two highest status older kids in camp? I squirmed in the prickly grass wishing my short shorts covered more of my legs and



Marsha

looked up at Marty and Zelda. They were sitting close to each other facing me. I was surprised they even knew my name. Zelda was fourteen, and Marty was almost sixteen. He was going to be a lawyer, a "Big Macher".

So the three of us were alone down in the badminton court, sprawled on the dry grass quietly watching the light fade and colors change on Lake Kalamalka. Soon it would be dark, time for the evening program. Our job was to work out the details and then to lead the program tonight. The whole camp would be re-enacting the Warsaw Ghetto Uprising against the Nazis in World War II.

"Stop doing that Marty," said Zelda, pushing him and stretching out her long smoothly shaved legs. "Why? Does it make you hot?" asked Marty. Marty was leaning close, pursing his fleshy lips and blowing into Zelda's ear. She tossed back her long dark hair. "It tickles. Stop it I said." Zelda was giggling and shaking her head, Her shiny hair was brushing Marty's face. Zelda pulled her lipstick out of her breast pocket and put on one more bright layer. She smacked her lips. She wore a spotless white Camp Hatikvah T-Shirt and her bra strap was showing.

I was wearing a new bra that my mom bought me for camp; I didn't have much in it. Some girls stuffed their bras with kleenex, but I didn't. And I'd lost my orange lipstick the first day of camp. I didn't care because I hated the way lipstick felt itchy on my lips. "Aren't we supposed to be planning the "Warsaw Ghetto Uprising?" I asked. " Don't always be so serious, Marsha. Benny will take care of the explosions and the smoke. We can just gather all the little kids to follow us for the part where we escape from the ghetto through the sewers. We'll crawl through the dry drainage ditch behind the dining hall."



Marsha at camp

"Is that all?" I asked. I was uncomfortable about the way Marty kept reaching for Zelda's breast. "Marty, I told you to stop...." said Zelda. "But...but Zelda won't we shoot at the Nazis?" I asked. "We can skip that part," said Zelda. I realized that Zelda was not all that interested in the Warsaw Ghetto Uprising. Probably that was why the counselors had assigned me to work with her on the evening program. And while Zelda kept telling Marty to stop, she was blushing and giggling. She didn't seem angry, and she didn't even try to push him away when he reached to put his big hairy arm around her waist, his fingers crawling up under her T-shirt.

"I know six ways to make a girl hot," he said. His lips were so fat and his face was growing dark hair. "Tell me how," said Zelda. "I'll show you!" Marty winked at her. "No, stop it Marty." Zelda shuddered as Marty blew in her ear again and he pulled her towards him. She slapped him away. "Tell me all six ways, Marty." She giggled. I was confused. What were they talking about?

"What's hot?" I asked. " What d'yuh mean?" asked Marty. "Are y'u joking?" He laughed. "No I'm not joking. What does that mean 'Make a girl hot'?" I really wanted to know what the girls in my cabin were always whispering about. They both laughed. "Don't you know?" "No I don't."

"You must know," said Zelda searching for words, "Hot...turned on...umm...aroused."

"Hot like in the sunshine?" They both stared at me. "You're teasing us."

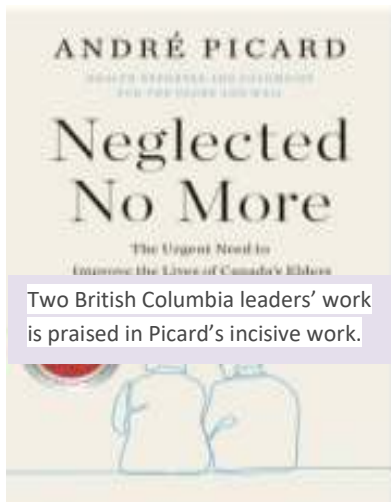
"No I'm not." I was embarrassed but needed to know. Zelda rolled her eyes. "Tell me...Turned on... Turned on to what?" I asked.

"I'll show you," said Marty. He laughed as he stepped toward me and reached out his big fleshy hands. I jerked back quickly. My heart was pounding. I wanted to jump up and run, but I felt frozen. Zelda grabbed Marty's arm. "Stop it Marty," she said. "Leave her alone. She's just a child. She's just turning twelve. She really doesn't know."

## DREAMS, HOPES, FEARS AND FAILURES: SENIORS IN CANADA REVIEW OF A TIMELY BOOK & A CALL TO ACTION

Adriaan de Vries

**Neglected No More: The Urgent Need to Improve the Lives of Canada's Elders in the Wake of a Pandemic**, by André Picard, Random House Canada, 2021. André Picard wrote this book in response to the flaws exposed in the Canadian Health Care System with the disproportionately high number of deaths of elders in residential care at the outset of the Covid pandemic in 2020.



Two British Columbia leaders' work is praised in Picard's incisive work.

Dr. Bonnie Henry is described vis à vis the COVID 19 pandemic, noting that at the start of it: "There is no doubt that the swift and decisive action by Dr Henry saved lives. By September 2020, BC had recorded just 140 deaths in care facilities. Ontario and Quebec, both of which dithered before moving to protect seniors in care, had recorded more than 4,600 and 2,800 respectively; these are likely to be underestimates as Ontario doesn't track deaths in retirement homes." [p.27]

The BC Seniors' Advocate, Isabel McKenzie's work in several in depth reports on Long Term Care facilities in British Columbia, exposes the great deficiency in funding and in lack of political action. Particularly noted are discrepancies in funding, inadequate/ ineffective, largely voluntary reporting, and widely diverging care results recorded by For Profits and Not For Profits forcefully bring attention to the need for completely revamping the Long Term Care policies and system. The need is dire vis à vis consistent comparable reporting of care results and uniform statistics at all levels of the operations, financing of For Profits and Not For Profits, profit making and taking, staffing levels, staff qualifications and staff pay. Management wage differences between For Profit and Not For Profit managers cry out for rationalization, consistency and systemization. To date, there has been little action on that front in British Columbia, other than to throw some more money at the problem, but no action yet to redesign a woefully lacking and inadequate elder care system.

Elders in care have been ignored and bypassed in a system that just grew, like Topsy. Over the last 75 - 100 hundred years, it grew organically [and not in a good way, as we see today] with the easiest, not systematically planned fixes implemented as the need for elder care grew dramatically, spurred by fewer multigenerational homes, increased life spans and better health care available, first out-growing hospitals with too many people needing care that cost too much and then evolving through various hodgepodge band aids such as nursing homes, assisted living homes, long term care facilities and more. The private sector saw an opportunity to fill and has jumped in to provide luxury care for those who can afford it. But starting cost in the arena of \$5000+ per month, this option is out of reach of those on fixed incomes and "middle class seniors".

Some Key Topics:

### Long Term Carelessness

- Covid 19 exposed a Long-Term Care system that has long been broken.
- +150 official reports have been mandated / funded over decades, only to collect dust [see consistent findings in paragraphs 3 and 4 above].
- The shock is their unfailing consistency with NO resulting action.
- ~1/3 of money spent on elders goes to assessment, NOT to care.

### Aging in place / at home

- There is no planning for this and no synchronization with other care modalities to improve efficacy.
- Largely preferred by most seniors but is the least funded option although it could be the least costly. It IS less costly than residential care.
- Home Service Workers are greatly underpaid and on schedules that force a task assembly line with no regard for patient Quality of Life. This worsens as patients have increasing physical and mental challenges.
- 20 – 50% of Canadians in residential Long-Term Care could be at home!

## Dealing with Dementia

- There is a wide belief that not much care needs to be provided other than safety.
- Those with dementia are often moved to a more costly facility if there is a management issue.
- Often “imprisoned” with locked doors rather than guided programming.
- Prevention work can delay and reduce dementia. Early life is when to start.
- Personal Service Workers often have no dementia care training.

## Healing Hands: Service Workers

- Work is task-oriented assembly line rather than relational care.
- Poor standardless training, poor pay → high turnover of 33.3% per year.
- Most work is part time to avoid paying benefits esp. in For Profits → multiple jobs and exhaustion, as well as increased
- risk of spreading illness.

## Palliative Care

- Limited availability but most important for a good, pain-controlled death.
- Offers end of life wishes being honoured and Quality of Life to the end.
- May include MAID or VSED [Voluntary Stop Eating & Drinking] if MAID is not available.

My personal advice is to be prepared. Overcome the cultural resistance to talking about death and planning for it. Start with the easy stuff like wills, powers of attorney, representation agreements and funeral pre-planning to record your wishes. Plan for caregivers and care for them. Start early with obvious good health practices to lessen chronic illness and pain later.

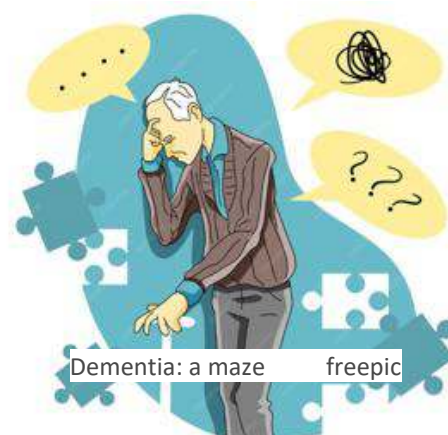
Picard covers much more such as NORCs [Naturally Occurring Retirement Communities], Canada’s eldercare performance record compared to other countries [it’s not so great] and ends with possible recommendations, and options to explore for the future. Key areas are staffing, training and caregiver support, options to long-term care facilities, improving home and palliative care, patient advocacy, simplifying the funding and structure of the long-term healthcare system including initiating single points of information to cope with the current confusing maze of possibilities.

See the latest report, just released: <https://uwbc.ca/wp-content/uploads/2023/11/uwbc-seniors-housing-report-hi-res.pdf>.

“Picard shows that the entire eldercare system – fragmented, underfunded and unsupported – is due long overdue for a fundamental rethink. Our elders deserve nothing less.” [back cover] This is an important read if you expect to die someday.

All seniors and other people are encouraged to speak out for their future and well-being by demanding our politicians act on the many issues raised in this book and so many shelved reports and studies as well as what we know from personal experience. This is very important as senior long-term care is not a front of the line issue with politicians. We can only get their attention through raising our voices in great numbers. The BC Health Coalition recently did a citizen mail-in with 1600 individuals demanding action on the BC Seniors’ Advocate’s reports’ recommendations. [[https://www.bchealthcoalition.ca/postcards\\_to\\_minister\\_dix](https://www.bchealthcoalition.ca/postcards_to_minister_dix)].

Add to that with your input. Simply send a note with your concerns and attach a copy of this book review. There is strength in numbers. That is how 2SLGBTQIA+ people got the legal and social rights that we have fought for over the last century.





For British Columbia, contact your MLA and the BC Minister of Health: Adrian Dix at: [HLTH.Minister@gov.bc.ca](mailto:HLTH.Minister@gov.bc.ca) . Federally, contact your MP and the Minister of Health: Mark Holland at [hccminister.ministresc@hc-sc.gc.ca](mailto:hccminister.ministresc@hc-sc.gc.ca)

### **A SUGGESTED LETTER /EMAIL**

**is written for you below to speak at both provincial and federal levels to the politicians relevant to you. This is a model and can be adapted to fit your thinking and concerns.**

Dear [MLA name], [MP name], The Honourable Adrian Dix, BC Minister of Health and The Honourable Mark Holland, Canada Minister of Health.

Thank you for your dedicated service to Canadians, provincially and federally.

I am writing to you because I have fears for the future and for the current wellbeing of Canadian seniors. Services and care for seniors is not meeting the demand, falls below agreed upon standards both provincially and nationally and is catastrophically unprepared for the tsunami of Canadians reaching their senior years now and over the next few decades.

Please refer to the reports from the British Columbia Seniors' Advocate released over the past decade [<https://www.seniorsadvocatebc.ca/osa-reports>]. The issues, concerns and recommendations are repeated on a national level in ~150 other reports and in André Picard's seminal work: Neglected No More, 2021 [attach book review here] in which he documents the devastating effects of Covid 19 on seniors everywhere and the exorbitantly high death rates in long term care facilities at the outset of Covid 19.

My Main Question is what is your government doing and planning to deal with recommendations that have been out in the health sector across Canada for decades? Those are outlined clearly by André Picard and by the BC Seniors' Advocate.

1. What are you doing to help people to age in their homes with appropriate supports at a lower cost than residential care which is the expensive, less preferred and less humane default when seniors need assistance to stay independent in their own homes and communities?
2. What are you doing to make standard the practices for care givers to meet both in the home and long-term care?
3. What are you doing to regulate accountability from long term care facilities and to level the field between "For Profits" and "Not For Profits"?
4. What are you doing to support service workers at all levels in training availability, with set standards and with appropriate wages and benefits, so they do not have to work in several facilities to make a living [which endangers residents as we saw with Covid 19]?
5. How are you managing the funds your government gives to support residential care, including For Profits, in terms of required standardized reporting, staff skills and money being used for its allocated purpose?
6. What are you doing to stop Long Term Care facility management from hiring unskilled workers at minimum wage in order to allocate more monies to non-care expenditures including to privately held mortgages and management pay/bonuses in the For Profit sector?

These are just a few of the many concerns currently causing consternation in this arena both for us in the future and for today's seniors who desperately need help to live with dignity and humanity. As André Picard makes amazingly clear, the whole Health Care System in Canada needs to be redesigned, revamped and reconstituted. Throwing a bit or a lot of money at some of the many symptoms is just a band aid. We need sustenance now, concurrent with serious redesign to prepare for the next 50 years in Canada.

I appreciate that this is a big request, but I trust that you have the same concerns as I do. I look forward to hearing back from you soon. Thank you.

Respectfully,  
[name + contact info]



## RESPONSE FOR TRANSGENDER RIGHTS

River Glen

Thank you, Prime Minister Trudeau, for calling out Alberta's draconian attack on the most vulnerable of the vulnerable. According to Canada statistics on youth age 12 to 17 approximately 0.5% were classified as non-cisgender, 0.2% non-binary, and 0.2% as transgender<sup>1</sup>. That's hardly a stampede overthrowing the cis majority or threatening sports or anything else!

People can be born intersex, have XXY or other chromosomal or hormonal variable. There is enough complexity that scientists and medical professionals can dedicate their entire careers to the understanding.

People who know they are in the wrong body suffer terribly psychologically. When puberty hits the pain amplifies, and so too many commit suicide.

Each person's case deserves professional help, the best practices and what will help their unique circumstances. Members of the public and politicians do not know all the conditions, circumstances, and treatments, and they don't have to know, as the person, the person's doctor and the family are the ones that need to make decisions. The political right or conservative religious have every right to live the way they want, but when they seek to impose their will on our bodies and private lives, we must face off.



1. [www.canada.ca/gender-identity-sexual-attraction-canadian-youth-2019-survey.html](http://www.canada.ca/gender-identity-sexual-attraction-canadian-youth-2019-survey.html)

## BETTER FOR THE EARTH

Val Innes

Ok, this topic is going to seem a tad weird here. I'm writing about TP. Yep, that stuff you use in the bathroom. I want to persuade you to stop using tree paper and use bamboo paper instead. Remember all those forest fires last summer? Ever think about the fact that this year is going to be hotter yet, and there'll be more forest fires? More trees gone. Fewer to soak up carbon. Well, here's one small but mighty thing you can do to help trees (and us) survive. Here are some facts: tree toilet paper uses 37 gallons of water per roll. Trees take 30 years to grow. It takes 1.5 lbs of wood to make one roll of tree paper. Bamboo? 1 gallon of water per roll. It grows in 1 to 2 years, and no trees are involved at all.<sup>1</sup> A win for the carbon sinks of the world. We desperately need that. Bamboo TP is just as soft, just as strong and way better for the earth. Switch now! We queers are three or four percent of Canada's population; that's a lot of people: think of the impact we can have.

Canada accounted for [more than half](#) of the world's forest loss due to fire last year. Global rates of deforestation would actually have gone down in 2023, if it weren't for Canada's loss of 18.5 million hectares due to forest fire. That's five times more tree cover lost due to fire in 2023 than the year before!<sup>2</sup> We should take better care about how we treat and use what's left.



1. Caboo, Planet Re-Leaf.

2. Sonia Furstenau - BC Greens <[info@bcgreens.ca](mailto:info@bcgreens.ca)>

## VICTORIA'S GIFT

Garth McIvor

Victoria was one of the most colourful and interesting women I have ever known. We met in 1987 when I was living in New Orleans. She died in 2015, and I have missed her more than I could have imagined.

By profession, Victoria was a psychiatric nurse, by vocation an intuit, believing that she had a strong sense of most things using only her intuition. She esteemed the rituals and teachings of old which she believed held secrets of the universe. To this end, she was a skilled Tarot reader, a Reiki Master, practiced healing touch and guided past-life regressions. She was an occult master of the mystical, the supernatural and magical phenomena.

Victoria was kind, kooky and kinky, but she could also be gullible, child-like, and overly sensitive, vulnerable but resilient. She was spiritual. The stories of Quon Yin were a favourite, and she kept a prayer to Archangel Michael on her person.. She believed in past life experiences, guardian angels and that we all were all blessed with spiritual guides, if only we would search them out. If someone died unexpectedly or tragically, she would look for their wounded spirit and walk them into the light. Over the years, she coached me in the unknown, its wonder and its potential.

Victoria was the Head Nurse of the Chemical Dependency Treatment program at the private psychiatric hospital where we met when I became the Medical Director of that program. Never a conformist, she was constantly at odds with administration over her approach to patient care and even her work-a-day dress. Floppy hats and flowing floor length skirts, not to mention a ton of makeup and bleached blonde hair were the norm. Many years before she had been a bunny girl at the now defunct Playboy Club in New Orleans, and, even now in middle age, she had a beautiful face, albeit on a corpulent body. Every morning it was a treat to see her glide onto the unit with her beautiful smile and eye-catching garments. Victoria was an innovator and moved with the times. She introduced Healing Touch and Reiki to our patients, but in the 80s this was controversial, and when administration got wind of it, she was called on the carpet. She narrowly missed losing her job, but for the outcry of support by patients and counsellors for the benefits they observed from her work.

Victoria eventually left nursing in the mid-90s and concentrated on her real life quest for inner knowledge and the unknown. She eked out a meagre living throwing Tarot, teaching Reiki, offering past life regressions and the like. Her little house was a cornucopia of literally thousands of books on spirituality and mysticism, crystals and statues and shrines to various religions and deities. She wasn't financially successful, but she survived, occasionally depending on the kindness of friends to pay the utilities.

When I decided to return to Canada in 1994, leaving Victoria was hard, but despite living thousands of miles apart, we visited often, travelled together and spent long hours on long distance phone calls. Escaping hurricane Katrina, Victoria moved to Arkansas because as she said "that's where my car ran out of gas". Not long after, she was diagnosed with cancer. Surgery and chemotherapy followed, and we hoped for remission. Unfortunately, within a year the tumors reappeared, and Victoria steadily declined. We kept in frequent contact, but one day I received a call from her home care provider to say that Victoria was failing fast and was now bedridden. I booked flights and rental car. When I arrived and walked into her bedroom, she smiled that huge smile and said "I knew you were coming you know".



Here is my little story of Victoria and angels. I have a leather bound address book which has been in my possession since the 1970s. It contains the names and addresses of the many people I have known over almost 50 years . . . some almost forgotten, some passed, some fondly remembered, and some still friends. It is a compilation of my life companions, and I treasure this record. It gives me great pleasure to turn the pages and reminisce. I lost this treasure on the trip to be with Victoria on her final days. I realized the loss on the trip home after her death. It was not in the front pouch of my backpack where I always kept it when travelling.

I turned the backpack inside out, I searched all my luggage, the rental car. I phoned Victoria's caregiver to search the bedroom I had used and all of Victoria's house. I knew that I had brought it with me. When I returned to Vancouver, I searched my apartment just to be certain. It was gone. I felt like I had lost a part of me and my past.

Several months later, I planned a road trip down the Oregon Coast and on to California. I love road trips. It is a time to reminisce, enjoy the freedom from routine and listen to all that great music from the 60's and 70's. Not surprisingly, Victoria crept into my thoughts, and I smiled remembering all our past adventures, shared times and all that she had meant to me. I remembered our last visit and our final goodbye, holding her hand as she slipped into coma. Then my lost address book came to mind and another thought. Could Victoria find my address book? After all she believed in the work of angels and mystical happenings. Motoring down the Oregon Coast Highway 101, I summoned Victoria and asked her to find my address book.



That evening I stopped for the night at a motel. I was tired, but would read a bit of the novel I had packed before falling asleep. I opened the backpack to retrieve the novel, and my address book fell out. I guess there is no point repeating that I had searched and researched my backpack several times including packing it for this trip. The reader can believe what they will, but I believe Victoria found my address book, and Victoria and her angels put it safely back where it belonged. All I had had to do was ask.

Soon after returning to Vancouver, I was sitting in my easy chair and glanced out at my balcony to see a Morning Dove observing me from the railing. It cocked its head to one side, bowed, and after another quick glance, flew away. I live on the 9th floor of an apartment building. My balcony has been visited by the odd pigeon, (once a pair had to be discouraged from nesting), a crow once or twice, but never in the over 20 years that I lived here have I seen a dove. Victoria believed in spirit animals and once said that doves were spirit messengers. Victoria was letting me know that her spiritual love still surrounds me. I am so grateful that she introduced me to a universe where there are more things in heaven and earth than mere mortals know.

**WOMEN LOVE TO DANCE  
PRIDE DANCE AUGUST 4  
FEATURING TUNES BY DJ JOAN AND A SPECIAL TRIBUTE TO JACQUI HOPE**

At the Vancouver Rowing Club. Tickets on Eventbrite.

It's a fundraiser for a large family of Afghan activist immigrants sponsored by Rainbow Bridge.  
There will also be a silent auction and a 50/50 draw.



## A FASCIST REBIRTH

### River Glen

I listened to an audio book, or more precisely, to a historical fiction book, about the Los Angeles Nazis pre World War11. Written by Susan Ella MacNeal, *Mother, Daughter, Traitor Spy* outlines the ideology, organizational structures, scapegoating, militias, and contempt for democracy that underlined the planned coup of the white supremacists back then. That really has been a playbook for the current incarnation down in the USA, and, yes, it is happening in other countries as well. If you are interested in the prequels and sequels to the events happening before the timeframe of the book, then look up the following: Silvia Comfort, German American Bund, Ku Klux Klan and the fascist Silver Shirts, America First Committee, Trump's dad, Fred, and the America First party. It is mind-blowing that the fascists were defeated at such horrific cost seventy plus years ago, and now people are embracing the new reincarnation. Know history, or repeat it until you do, I guess. If these things only matter to the half of the states going along with this, hopefully it's only a present day last-ditch attempt to end democracy.



Fascism-Political ideology definition: "Fascism is a far-right, authoritarian, ultranationalist political ideology and movement, characterized by a dictatorial leader, centralized autocracy, militarism, forcible suppression of opposition" ... Wikipedia

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## Mooning About

### River Glen

Sunday April 7, 2024. The day before the Solar eclipse, I'm thinking to myself . . . I'm sorry, but the hype is a bit over the top at this point. I guess it's cheap thrills for those on the path of the eclipse, but a destination trip? I'm not talking about the scientific studies where they can look at the corona, ionosphere and animal behaviour. Ok, forget my original humbug . . . It will bring people together and outside, maybe even talking to each other. I like to think my "belief system," in quotes because it's threadbare, is cosmic based. What if witnessing the event moves others to a more science/cosmic understanding of their place in the whole enchilada? Now that is something I can get excited about.



[eclipse.aas.org/resources/images-](https://eclipse.aas.org/resources/images-)

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**Rainbow**  
REFUGEE 

**RAINBOW REFUGEE** is a Vancouver organization founded in 2000 to promote safe, equitable migration and communities of belonging for people fleeing persecution based on their sexual orientation, gender identity, gender expression, or HIV status. Rainbow Refugee provides support, information, and system navigation to refugees and refugee claimants seeking refugee status in Canada. Rainbow Refugee works in partnership with Immigration, Refugees Citizenship Canada



**RAINBOW BRIDGE** is a Circle of Hope, created within Rainbow Refugee, and we're currently sponsoring a large refugee family that includes children and a member of the LGBTQ community to settle in Vancouver. They have actively protested the Taliban regime and their lives were in danger. Six of the family have escaped Afghanistan and Pakistan, and have arrived safely in British Columbia as Permanent Residents. It was a very emotional welcome at the airport! They are grateful to be safe and have their own home, and the female children can't wait to be in school after being deprived of formal education for the past five years.

**Our Mission:** We raised over \$100,000 to get the family safely here and into a house in Abbotsford. We are responsible for the expenses of the family and the welfare of all of them for the next year to see them settled into school, training or a job, including language training and, importantly, trauma counselling, so as to be able to thrive in their surroundings. So we need to continue to fundraise for them.

### How you can help:

- Can you hold even a small fundraiser? This could be as simple as a small dinner party where you invite donations, or even an email to your friends inviting donations.
- Can you make even a small donation? Just use the QR code at the bottom of this post, and remember that every dollar counts. You will get a tax receipt instantly.
- Can you donate goods that we can raffle or auction to raise money?

**DONATE**

**Support people who risked their lives to make a difference**



Use your phone camera to scan the QR code to make your donation.



**Qmunity** is a non-profit LGBT2S+ organization based in Vancouver that works to improve queer, trans and 2-Spirit people's lives, providing a safe space for them and their allies to fully self-express while feeling welcome and included. The new building under construction will be an even greater catalyst for community initiatives and collective strength.

Quirk-e has been in a mutually beneficial relationship with Qmunity for many years. Qmunity provides us with events that we can participate in throughout the year. In addition, Quirk-e's zine publications have been graciously printed and distributed by Qmunity.

Quirk-e looks forward to many more years of collaboration with Qmunity.

Qmunity- <https://qmunity.ca>, [reception@qmunity.ca](mailto:reception@qmunity.ca), 604-5307 ext. 100  
1-800-566-1170

## QUEER ORGANIZATIONS

If you're looking for connections within the queer community in the Lower Mainland or on Vancouver Island, the following contacts should be useful.

- Rocketman website with a list of queer organizations: <https://rocketmanapp.com/blog/13-organizations-supporting-lgbtq-communities-in-british-columbia/>
- Qmunity- <https://qmunity.ca>, [reception@qmunity.ca](mailto:reception@qmunity.ca), 604-5307 ext. 100 , 1-800-566-1170
- Vancouver Island Queer Resource Collective (Vancouver and Victoria) <https://viqueercollective.com/>
- Dignity Seniors Society <https://www.dignityseniors.org/>, [dignityseniorssociety@gmail.com](mailto:dignityseniorssociety@gmail.com)
- Vancouver Pride Society <https://vancouverpride.ca/>
- Surrey Pride [surreypride.ca](http://surreypride.ca)
- Alex House [alexhouse.net](http://alexhouse.net),
- New West Pride <https://newwestpride.ca>
- Youth 4 A Change <https://www.youth4achange.net>

Collected by River Glen

A site River Glen thought you might be interested in is **Good News from LGBTQ Nation** <[newsletter@lgbtqnation.com](mailto:newsletter@lgbtqnation.com)> As the site says:

Good things are happening to LGBTQ people. It's easy to overlook the positive stories in the daily mix of news, so every other week we highlight moments you may have missed.

Like it? [Share it with a friend](#). Everyone could use a little good news.

**TREASURE GOOD MEMORIES ...**

**DEAL WITH THE BAD ONES**

**AND LEARN FROM**

**THEM ...**



**DREAM ...**

**CONFRONT FEARS**

**AND BUILD AND NURTURE HOPE ...**

**QUIRK-E**

Queer Imaging & Riting Kollektive for Elders