

THE JOURNAL OF Creative Aging

SAGE-ING

with Creative Spirit, Grace & Gratitude



A PUBLICATION OF
THE OKANAGAN INSTITUTE
NUMBER 26, SUMMER 2018
EDITED BY KAREN CLOSE

KNOW YOURSELF. BE YOURSELF.
LOVE YOURSELF. SHARE YOURSELF.
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When we allow our hearts to resonate with stories, we feel a reverberation, the echoing spirit of all humanity, and the universe itself, beating within. We are called into harmony, and we feel our spirits aligned with all that is. As Wedlidi Speck states in his introduction to this important book:

Reconciliation is storied differently by different people... In the end, by sharing the stories in this book, we may just find the definition of reconciliation is embedded in each story shared... Readers will find that reconciliation is personal, and it includes family and aims towards community. To that end, in order to understand the fullness and richness of reconciliation, we hope each reader will find a role in reconciliation by placing all these stories together in a mixing bowl of sorts and coming up with a broader view that will heighten our country's cultural awareness, deepen Canadian sensitivity, sharpen Canadian agility and grow cultural safety in all our country's homes, villages and work spaces.

The Journal of Creative Aging

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SAGE-ING WITH CREATIVE SPIRIT, GRACE & GRATITUDE

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Cover image by Meredith Martin

FROM THE EDITOR

With this 26th edition of *Sage-ing With Creative Spirit, Grace and Gratitude*, we complete seven years of publication begun in the fall of 2011. Our mission, to honour the transformational power of creativity, puzzled some. The title *Sage-ing* left many more perplexed, yet stories from those who understood and wanted to be part of our fledgling effort trickled in. We have persisted, knowing the creative journey into self is a strong aid to health and well-being for the individual and for our culture.

I have always been quick to spot fellow believers and, in 2012, was delighted to hear an echo of our mission in words from Robert Redford, spoken at his country's National Arts Policy Roundtable: "The country is so wounded, bleeding, and hurt right now. The country needs to be healed – it's not going to be healed from the top, politically. How are we going to heal? Art is the healing force."

How strongly Redford's words echo as we bring this edition of

Sage-ing to you. I am proud that many have supported our journal and told their stories of how creative engagement has brought them insight, wisdom and deeper consciousness. Indeed, "Art is the healing force." As introduced in our last issue, creativity and well-being have deep roots among Indigenous cultures. The wisdom of intergenerational mentoring, embedded in community through honest sharing and creative expression, is voiced in the words from *The Village*, an aboriginal healing model created by Kathi Camilleri: "We are each medicine." The twenty-first century is putting an urgency to the responsibility of each of us to discover who we are and the medicine, intuitive to each of us, that is waiting for release. The Journal's message – KNOW YOURSELF. BE YOURSELF. LOVE YOURSELF. SHARE YOURSELF. – is for today's global village in which cultural healing for all humanity can be achieved by individuals striving through their

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own efforts. That is the gift of the Internet.

In this issue, elder Dan Billy, participating in *The Village*, describes a leadership that was based on traditional values and directed towards health. He expresses faith in the gifts of each young person to keep the future strong. His wife, Alberta, echoes his confidence that the passing on of rituals, dance and stories will take Indigenous peoples into a strong future. In her article, Meredith Martin presents her installation piece *Messages From the Ancestors* that explores the known whispers and songs placed inside of us by those who have gone before. In *Why I Make Art*, senior artist and arts educator Robert Bigalow explains the need for each of us to access these messages. In *Portal to Imagination*, Destanne Norris relates a deeply personal experience of how creative energy has spoken to her. This issue is rich in inspiration to move into personal understanding of how "Art is the healing force."

– Karen Close, Editor

SUBMITTING AN ARTICLE TO SAGE-ING

• **Article is to be related to aging and creativity, in any of its many forms, as a path to gaining wisdom and self awareness and/or the act of harvesting life's wisdom as a legacy for future generations.**

- Article to be attached as a document in .rtf format;
- 500 to a 1500 word maximum;
- Photos: Please attach each photo separately including: the writer's headshot photo and four or five photos, related to article. All photos should be attached in high resolution jpg format with a caption;
- Insert the word "photo" with its caption within the article where you would like each image placed (we'll try to honour this request as layout permits).
- Please include brief bio information (one or two short paragraphs) placed at the end of your article; this is meant to give the reader an idea of who you are, your passions and/or what you do and have done with your life that feels relevant to the article. Include contact info: email, website, blog address – whatever you want to include. For each journal, due date is the 10th of the month preceding release date. We release around the equinoxes and solstices. **For next issue due date is August 10th, 2018**
- Email the article and photographs to karensageing@gmail.com

Antiquity identified a sage as a wise person ... wisdom is a form of goodness, and is not scientific knowledge but another kind of cognition.

– Aristotle, *Eudemian Ethics* 1246b

PADDLING TOGETHER TOWARDS RECONCILIATION

PART TWO

DANIEL BILLY & ALBERTA BILLY

TRANSCRIPT OF AN INTERVIEW

G'ilakasla. My name is Daniel Billy. I am from the Wei Wai Kum First Nation of Cape Mudge, of the Laich-Kwil-Tach people. I have been living in my village of Cape Mudge on Quadra Island all my life.

Our Elders were the most beautiful people I have ever known. When I was a child, they would always tell us "*Gleek sala,*" directing us to do the right things in life. Our chief at the time, Billy Assu, was an amazing man; he and the Elders were always good to us. The Elders always watched over the chief and our village.

Fourteen men guided the chief. Our leadership was based on our traditional values and directed towards health. When I went to school, it was not a residential school, but I was not allowed to speak my language. I remember the principal telling us, "If I hear you speaking your language, you will be strapped." I could not help myself; my language was so ingrained in me. So I got the strap, twelve times – six straps on each hand. I remember crying a lot, and then running away to my village, which was seven miles away. I did not understand why we had to lose our language. Although my dad sympathized with me, he sent me back to school. Amazingly, thirty years later, the man who was the principal became a changed man, and we became good friends.

The influence of the Elders kept me strong. It was the Elders who told me that we had our own origin story of the great flood, very much like the biblical story of Noah and the Ark. In our story the flood took place in Jackson Bay, Topaze Harbour, about 65 km northwest of Cape Mudge.

Over time I realized that there is a value and truth in our oral history, our stories and legends. It was told to me that the place from which the six canoes departed at the time of the great flood is where our people used to live.

The Elders in my village had not gone to school; our parents attended residential school. The Elders were so capable they built their own houses and their own boats. I have served on the Band Council for over forty years. The Elders taught me. I listened to my Elders and I always wanted to help my village in any way that I could.

I believe that we are coming back. I am confident that we will thrive as a people. My wife Alberta and I fished for a long time; we had our whole family on the boat. Our three daughters were very skilled and it helped them



to become even more skilled in their lives. We all worked together. We have been blessed to have a good life, because we respect the land, the sea, and all of our surroundings.

Our young people all have gifts. We can see that, and I have faith that they will help to keep the future strong. I watch them and see that they love to go to ceremonies and dance. Our youngest grandson is gifted in this way. This helps me to feel safe and have hope for the future.

We need to let people know how much we love them. Aboriginal people around the world have a bond. It is like we recognize each other at a deeper level. Our connection helps me to continue my life in a hopeful way.

In our village we have a sacred site. It is where we have placed our *TsaKwaLuten* lodge – “the Gathering Place.” We placed it there because of the sacred energy that exists in that spot. There is a natural underground spring there, a place to cleanse and bathe and to connect with the Creator. When we completed building the lodge, many of us felt a strong presence there. My great-grandmother said, “Our people never leave us.” I have passed this teaching on to my family.

My wife has had a very powerful life; she has worked tirelessly for our village. She has dedicated her life to this good work. I remember the first time I saw Alberta as a young girl in my village – I knew in my heart that I would marry her someday.

Alberta Billy is an Elder of the Laich-Kwil-Tach First Nation of the Kwakwaka'wakw peoples of Vancouver Island. In her youth she was the driving force behind the apology to First Nations people of the United Church of Canada. She has been married for over fifty-five years to her husband of the same community – Dan Billy, who works tirelessly to maintain Aboriginal rights to food sovereignty, in particular the oceans gifts.

I come from the Laich-Kwil-Tach people and have lived in my village all of my life. When I was young, a woman in our village, a name giver, gave me my name: *Wadzeed*, “Precious One.”

I remember meeting Dan while I was growing up in my village. I was fifteen years old. It was not long afterwards that he went before my father to ask for my hand in marriage. I told Dan that I wanted to finish school. I graduated in 1960, and we were married on May 5, 1961. We have been together for over fifty-six years. Dan and I were chosen by the Elders in our village to carry on the traditional knowledge. When I was nine years old, I knew I had a purpose.

Growing up in my village, the Elders guided my life. I used to go to meetings when I was young. I remember one time an Elder pointed at me and said, “Do you want to be just status quo?” The way he said it, I had such an internal reaction, I said “No.” I never forgot this.

These experiences have guided me onto my path.

When I was in public school, I remember being ridiculed for the way I spoke. Because I knew who I was and had the strength of my identity, I never

let that get to me. I knew the ancestors were with me. I never looked back. My grandmother taught us our culture, the songs, the dances, although she would still pull the curtains closed because she was afraid. It was still illegal to do any cultural activities.

I am so grateful to her for teaching me; our parents had lost their connection to our identity because of their experiences in residential school.

My path led me to work with people across Canada, to bring a message to the United Church of Canada. That message was that we had our spirituality before Christianity and that all Aboriginal people across Canada and the world have similar beliefs and concepts. To keep our belief systems alive, we had to continue our ceremonies, songs, dances and language. These

are the essence of our identity. Understanding this is what we wanted acknowledged by the United Church. When I began working with our people, we knew that we had to bring back our beliefs and values. We went before the High Court of the United Church of Canada. I looked at all the promises that had been made to our people; none of them had been fulfilled. In my presentation, I asked them to ask themselves if they felt they had fulfilled their promises to us. I told them that it was important for them to apologize to the indigenous people of the Americas. In the time they had spent with our people, they had caused us to lose our values, our identity, our way of life.

The United Church of Canada apologized in Sudbury, Ontario, in 1986.

We, the Aboriginal people of Canada, accepted the apology in principle. Thirty years later, the Church called me. Gordon Barrens, an ordained minister, said that they now know that they could use our values as part of their spiritual message. He stated to me, "I always knew the Church was wrong." He had reconnected with his identity, his traditional values, where he was from. His sense of connection had come back. It was so wonderful to see that

we all looked to the Creator, the land, the sea, the air, the water – all of creation – in a similar view of connectedness.

Now I see the good work that is taking place all across Canada to help us understand. The teaching circle of *Building Bridges Through The Village* shows all of us how we are connected and interconnected. It shows us very clearly what life was like before contact with outsiders. Our family structures were very strong; we had our identity, our spirituality, our culture, dances, songs, crests, and names. We knew who we were. We lived holding our values close, holding our children as sacred. We were strong and resilient people.

First they took away our culture, and when that did not work, they took our children. That is what *The Village* demonstrates so clearly. Without our children, we had no identity, no future. *The Village* not only helps us to see



this, it helps us to come together, to develop ways and means of moving forward, together.

The Village demonstrates our collective world view, how we thought, how we think as “We and Us.” It is a powerful way to be in life.

When I was a little girl, we would travel to Alert Bay and at one of those times I wandered through the village. It was not too long before someone approached me and, just by looking at my features, they knew what family I belonged to. I was always safe because our people would take care of us.

“Truth and Reconciliation” to me means regaining our strength and helping our people in any way that we can. It means that we all have to look for ways to reconcile. The greatest opportunity for us is to step forward to take care of all of our children, especially those that are in the foster care system. By bringing forward our values and traditional family practices, we can become stronger, and develop ways to take care of them.

The Government of Canada needs to truly hear us. Today more than at any other time, we have so many ways to be heard and to get things done. We have our people as Members of Parliament. I believe that the teaching circle of *The Village* should come to Parliament. Our MPs Jody Wilson Raybould and Rachel Blaney will help us with that.

Reconciliation is our mandate now. The apology opened the door. Chief Robert Joseph, Gwawaenuk tribe, Kwakwaka’wakw First Nation, told me that a long time ago.

The following links expand on Alberta’s story:

<http://www.united-church.ca/social-action/justice-initiatives/apologies>

<http://www.united-church.ca/blogs/round-table/marking-journey-apology-towards-reconciliation>

<https://commons.united-church.ca/Documents/Programming%20and%20Education/Aboriginal/Living%20Into%20Right%20Relations%20Report.pdf>

<http://www.united-church.ca/sites/default/files/resources/1986-1998-aboriginal-apologies.pdf>

<http://www.united-church.ca/news/moderator-apology-towards-reconciliation>

PADDLING TOGETHER TOWARDS RECONCILIATION

PART THREE

MEREDITH MARTIN

LIBERATING FROM A PAINFUL PAST

I was born in the Comox Valley of British Columbia on November 10, 1950. My traditional name is *Xwalapia*, which translates to “Woman who belongs in the House.” This name is a guide and has afforded me the strength to walk my path in learning who I am as an Aboriginal woman. I was not raised within my culture, but I became aware of my Aboriginal ancestry as a young adult.



I have a memory of meeting my Aboriginal grandmother when I was four years old. This memory always brings feelings of sadness and yearning, as I did not know she was my grandmother, and I never saw her again. My journey towards embracing my culture has been a long one. I would step in, then step out, because I did not feel I belonged in either world. The fact that my father did not embrace his Aboriginal ancestry was also a barrier; “not belonging” became a theme of my life.

My art forms have guided me into myself and supported my walk towards liberation and personal reconciliation. When I first began working with clay, which I consider to be alive, it became a twenty-five year love affair. You do not work clay; it works you. Creating in clay requires a deep love, a give and take, developing sensitivity, and allowing the clay to speak. I remember, while doing my Bachelor’s in Fine Arts, I created an installation titled *Ancestors*. It was an emotional journey of honouring those who have come before and who were my teachers, and who continue to guide me on my path to claim my Aboriginal identity and to serve my people.

The connections to my art forms are a direct result of how I grew up. As a young person I lived at Comox Lake near Cumberland. My relationships were with the trees, the lake and the mountains. It was where I found my home.

Ancestors is an exploration of how our dominant society’s culture walks with death and dying, in contrast to the sacredness of how death and dying are held within the Aboriginal culture. Tribal communities honour those who have journeyed to the other side. Those who have passed take their place as ancestors and continue to teach and guide our journey on this side. This installation, on Hornby Island, B.C., represents those who have been and continue to be my teachers and guides walking with me always.

In 2002, working as a therapist for Child and Youth Mental Health (B.C.



Top: installing *Ancestors*
 Middle: my installation piece *Ancestors*
 Above: *Messages From The ancestors*

Ministry of Children and Families), I attended a five-day cultural safety training workshop. It was at this time that I first experienced *The Village*, and met Kathi Camilleri. The workshop was to change the course of my life. It was at this training that I committed to a path of truly searching out my identity as an Aboriginal woman. At the workshop I approached one of the facilitators to seek guidance about how I could best connect with my culture. This woman gave me the sound advice of telling me to make sure that I connect with healthy people. I believe this training experience was Creator guiding; I was to later discover that the woman I asked was a relative. Her mother and my grandmother (Florence Thomas) were sisters.

Soon after, I applied for and was accepted for the position as an Aboriginal Outreach Clinician for Child and Youth Mental Health. I feel that the Creator guided this connection too, in that Kathi Camilleri had also applied and been accepted onto the Aboriginal Outreach Team. My acceptance on the team became a fifteen-year journey of learning from Kathi's wisdom, of connecting with amazing Elders, and of working together in community development and in cultural awareness, both for our own community and throughout the province.

Not having been raised with my culture, it took time for me to have a felt understanding of how Aboriginal people find themselves today. Working in community development as an Aboriginal Outreach Clinician, I found that one of my gifts was to bring people together. Recognizing that we have generations of woundedness, my goal has been to promote the types of services that are needed and are guided by our people for our healing. My passion is to find ways to contribute towards the development of ways to

enhance a better life for Aboriginal people. Doing this has required that I embrace all these gifts that Creator has given me, step out of my comfort zone and into all of who I am.

My work as an artist has been driven by a felt connection to the land, to the spiritual and to the ancient voices that whisper from the past. In spite of being raised within the dominant culture's values and linear ways, I experience a strong sense of this connectedness to nature and all things within the mystery of life. As I work, I hear the whispers and I am driven to explore and express through my art – driven towards my own Aboriginal identity.



Top: I've learned from the ancient ways
 Above: *Relationship: Fluidity and movement: Willingness to step into connection: Curiosity of the other: Courage.*

Ancient Messages is an installation piece that explores the known whispers and songs placed inside of us by those who have gone before. Whispers of wisdom are present in each of us if we dare to listen. They are parts of ourselves, our DNA, the memories of ancestors' journeys calling to be heard. My work is an exploration of how it is we awaken to these messages, these gifts.

Art making allowed a connection and an acceptance of who I am as an Aboriginal woman on a deeper level as I responded to my inner urgings. Responding brought with it the courage to go further and to commit to walking into a world where, although I carry its DNA, I did not understand the complexities or the effects of colonization and assimilation. I did not understand the deep scars placed upon our People. Art making gave me the courage to face the painful feelings of not belonging and to understand how so many Aboriginal people do not feel their belonging. For many our identity was stolen from us. Art making facilitated a commitment to contributing to the healing of my people by sharing visual statements of my own healing.

I was privileged to be taught by an Aboriginal woman to make pots as the Hopi had created them from the beginning. In this slow process of coil building, stone burnishing and smoke firing, connections were developed to the ancient ways of Aboriginal people and how all things were created from a place of relationship with the things around us – the clay, the fire, the stone.

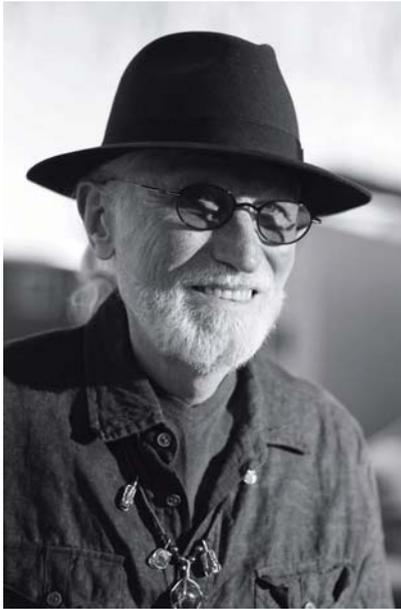
Reconciliation is complex and will require a deep understanding on the part of non-Aboriginal people. For me, reconciliation is about liberating Aboriginal people, and all other people, from a painful past. We must be further liberated from the damaging roles that have been played out. Reconciliation will finally give a home to Aboriginal people to walk on Mother Earth in the way that the Creator intended.

Today I have a private practice as a counsellor, and I am also employed as an eating disorder therapist. My real work though, the work that comes from my heart, is supporting reconciliation in whatever way I can. I am blessed and grateful to have been accepted into an amazing group of Elders. I see it as my opportunity to apprentice and to one day carry their work forward.

Meredith Martin is of Coast Salish ancestry. She has worked as a clinician, bringing support and healing energy to the youth and families of her area. Meredith has been involved with *The Village* for over ten years, helping to co-facilitate this healing model. Through her own personal journey, Meredith is an example of how we can step into our identity at any time on our life's journey.

WHY I MAKE ART

EXAMINING ART AS A LEGITIMATE VEHICLE FOR SPIRITUAL EVOLUTION



Robert Bigalow

Although mainstream science is reliant upon the observation and study of that secondary reality called five sense reality – the narrow spectrum of visible light – all spiritual and mystical experiences transpire beyond the frequencies of visible light, or beyond the world of bricks and mortar. This is the world that interests me and other artists, musicians, writers, poets, storytellers and dancers – those creatives who are not confined to narrow paradigms and are free to venture where fancy takes them. The arts in general provide a platform for exploring the unknown, while cultivating the wild and magical imaginings of a creative yet lucid mind. Fortunately, quantum physicists such as David Bohm, Karl Pribram and Fred Allen Wolf have brought support to my claim that spiritual and mystical experience lies beyond visible light and provable science. I feel vindicated by these advanced scientists.

A movement in art and literature that flourished in the early twentieth century was Surrealism; it aimed at expressing imaginative dreams and visions free from conscious rational control. Automatism is a strategy formalized and put into practice by the surrealists. The automatistes sought to probe the deep recesses of consciousness for visions gleaned from the beyond. I have adopted automatism because it validates my heavy reliance on intuition. Beings are born every minute of every day with a frequency signature that never existed before their birth and cannot be duplicated. A unique frequency beats within each of us. Van Gogh wasn't important because he pushed the boundaries of art; he pushed the boundaries of art because his frequency, his specific signature, had never been experienced before.

For me, making art is a meditation and needs no preparation. I sit down with my hands, tools and materials, and go into trance in a matter of seconds. If I look back over the years, entering my own creative place was much more difficult in my beginning years; I was carrying a lot of indoctrination about what art should be that cluttered my awareness. Fortunately, I have managed to purge myself of others' beliefs and have confidence in my own art-making instincts.

We all rely on intuition in our everyday lives, although we don't exploit it to its greatest potential. In my work I choose to visually record the higher frequencies with which I resonate. You will find little or no reference to the physical world in my images. I retrieve from the beyond. I strive to make the intangible tangible by mirroring the frequency or frequencies I can access or resonate with. The versatility of this process is that another artist, imple-



Image #46



Image #65

Image 46 and 65

menting an identical process, will access a totally different frequency signature, one that is compatible with their individual resonance. When one allows total integration of one's faculties, a unique vision is produced. Finally, I must emphasize that there is nothing accidental or arbitrary about my work; it is meticulously executed, conceived in a protected place and sincere in its intent.

The process that I employ is derived from my personal experience, but parallels the doctrine called automatism, as conceived and adopted by the Surrealists. To explain it, I'm going to compare and contrast my approach in two extremely different paintings, but from the same series. Number 46 is an image of a more specific, more particular, more precise formation, and Number 65 is a looser, more relaxed approach, where the lines and strokes have no apparent reference to anything beyond the emotions they evoke and the impact they exert on the compositional dynamics. Both images are based on frequencies beyond the reach of visible light, and informed by an infinite wealth of inner guidance.

Image 46 can be viewed as a stack of forms situated in a landscape setting, with a smaller form protruding from beyond the horizon. The smaller form is essential in establishing a dichotomy of size and location. The pile of forms is set apart by colour identity and circumscribed by a prominent black line. The black lines inside the forms add depth and structure, setting off one form against another while adding interest to an otherwise bland and featureless shape. The subtle modulations of the colour field are to disrupt the dead flatness and bring it to life, creating movement and depth of field while providing a richer context for the forms. This work has a subdued colour scheme with the exception of the red and, to a lesser extent, the orange accents. Both were added to inject some stimulation and excitement. Similarities in a work – a repetition of visual attributes – produce cohesion, but one must avoid creating boredom. Differences, including stark contrasts, create focus points of excitement and interest, but if used in high frequency they will fragment images and produce chaos. Although Image 46 is highly controlled and deliberate, I had no sense of how it would develop and finally resolve itself. I have no idea what it represents, other than my experience of consciousness at the time of making it. My intention is always to heighten excitement and visually arouse a strong sense of aliveness and alertness for the viewer. It is essential to reclaim our life force. I hope my work, at the very least, can excite my viewers and urge them to consider what they are looking at.

Image 65 is a far looser execution and gives the appearance of being less strategic in the placement of elements, with less control over the execution. Nothing could be further from the truth. A spontaneous and boldly executed stroke or splash is unsurpassed in its freshness and clarity. It is the perfection



Sculpture A

of pure expression. The central body of a splash usually displays a highly nuanced and uncontrived contour, and sends out very delicate and refined tentacles that are impossible to duplicate. In Image 65 I employ the splash, the quick stroke and the extended drip to evoke a fresh, uncontrived experience that liberates the human spirit and releases it from inhibition and expectations. The freedom of these marks clears the air, provides relief from tension and allows one to settle into a more comfortable, natural demeanour. The black lines function independently from any contour of colour, and define their own extension, density and configuration. The line, as it is used here, acts as a counterpoint to the feely applied colour fields and allows the background colour to flow uninterrupted behind the network of lines. The colours pass behind the lines, rarely conforming to the edge implied by the line. This freedom reinforces the integrity of the two-dimensional surface. The continuation of uninterrupted colour passing from foreground to background cancels out depth of field and flattens the surface of the picture plane. The edges of abutted colours produce separation and interaction. Although 46 and 65 are very different images, they both adhere to the strategy of automatism. Both images accomplish the same objective of bringing the unseen into the world of the seen by giving the viewer a concrete representation of the invisible. Within I sense the invisible flow of my internal energy, and then I bring it into the visible world through the responding gestures of my hand. Each work stands as the verification of an underlying order, because in that moment I am in tune with the beat of universal energy, that life force that keeps the universe evolving. Making art is as close as I can come to describing my experience of existence. I recognize that same experience when I'm in the presence of real art in all its forms.

The next set of images is of three-dimensional, sculpted forms. I will identify them with the letters A, B and C. *A* was sculpted in wax and cast in bronze; *B* was carved out of boxwood and finished with oil paint; it sits on a base also cast in bronze and has a cradle cushioned with leather. *C* is carved from basswood and painted with oils over acrylic.

A was initially sculpted in pliable wax and then cast in bronze as a one of a kind piece. I wanted to combine the characteristics inherent in the wax with those of the metal in the look of the final object. The surface of the cast bronze is reminiscent of the malleable wax of the original, formed with my hands and the tools used to shape it. The solidity and reflectivity of the bronze cannot be mistaken for anything other than its metallic nature. The blade-like form stands in contrast to the rest of the object, with its sharp, machine-like edges and its highly polished finish. The rest of the object has a brownish patina to give a monochrome colour, highlighted to expose the reflective metal. I was lifting my unique frequency signature from the wave field and manifesting it in the 3D, tangible world.

A was constructed in an additive process, which simply means by first



Top: Sculpture B
Above: Sculpture B alternate view

forming the separate elements and then assembling them into a unified whole. The base is built like a quarter slice of a form that is much like the shape of a football. I attached four to the base. One slice is reminiscent of an orange juicer, another reminiscent of some sort of a helmet, a third shape is vaguely like a leaf, and finally there is a piercing wedge pointing upward with sharp blade-like edges. I have described each element in a way that emphasizes how different one is from the other, thereby heightening the visual experience of the piece. Not only do these different elements define and clarify each other because of the way they activate the negative space between them with their positions and with the articulation of their surface contours, but the identity of each element elicits a response

consistent with the viewer's experience of similar forms. I don't use a form that doesn't have a particular interest to me. It is all these considerations that contribute to the overall complexity and look of the finished sculpture.

I have dissected the anatomy of my sculpture as if it were calculated down to the last detail. Again, nothing could be further from the truth. For me, the fascination of my process is that I was trusting in a higher order while pushing the process forward, never knowing when and where it would culminate. I like to think that, if nothing else, a glimpse of a profoundly higher reality is conveyed through the revelations of my work. To me it has to be this way; otherwise I'm idly squandering my life.

There are similarities between *B* and *C*. Both were carved from box-wood; both are the result of the removal process; both are fully painted objects, which is indeed a violation of traditional sculptural practice. The uniqueness comes in that *B* was conceived to have no top, sides or base. Every side was treated like an important part of the visual integrity; this meant it had to hold up to an observer's scrutiny from every conceivable angle. At the outset I had no idea what a challenge that objective would turn out to be. I started with a block of wood, believing that somewhere in it was a sculpture waiting to be discovered and revealed. I set about removing as much mass from the block as was necessary to achieve this objective. This is the removal process that I employ, coupled with a personal implementation of automatism. The decision to paint the carving was taken because the form was too bland; it lacked the excitement I want my work to convey or evoke. Once I experienced the energy that a painted form could generate, I was hooked forever. The curiosity of this sculpture is that it can be rotated from time to time to show a different view. A cradle, cast in bronze, was conceived to create the illusion that there is no base to support the object. The rockers on the cradle posts are wrapped in leather and stitched in place to protect the painted surface of the sculpture. In creating this piece, as in all other work I produce, I come step by step closer to understanding who I am and what my purpose on this earth is. I am here as one dedicated to raise the frequency and hold the space. When those of us on this path reach a critical mass the world will be transformed. I try to do this with grace and beauty through my work.



Top: Sculpture C

Above: Sculpture C alternate view

Creating enjoyment for those who perceive my work for what it really is is my goal. Making true art and enjoying true art produced by others is what makes my stay here on our planet earth worthwhile. I want the genuine article; no fake, popularly sanctioned substitute will satisfy me.

Sculpture *C* amplifies what I have said about *B*. My work is definitely quirky because that's how I choose it to be. It's not because I'm out of touch with reality. It's because I serve a much bigger, higher and more stimulating reality. I choose not to follow the art world's narrative like a clone, because I've tuned myself to the offerings of the multiverse.

In conclusion, I believe no serious art is worthy of notice if it doesn't have a spiritual element that uplifts and inspires the human spirit, built into it by its creator. The highest good a body of art can achieve is to raise human consciousness to unprecedented heights of awareness and understanding. Reaching greater heights in spiritual growth and development is the responsibility of all sovereign beings. We must not acquiesce to social pressure and the authority of others. As a spiritual being and an artist, I rely on and trust my inner being and its guidance. It has served me well over the years, and spares me the uncertainty of seeking council in the external world. I'm often reminded of an early quote from Bhagwan Shree Rajneesh, which I remember as something like

"To be ordinary is the most extraordinary thing because every ordinary being is striving to become extraordinary and that is a very ordinary thing." We must not look left or right to realize who we are. We must look within, deep within. Art is an effective vehicle that can transport you to unimaginable depths of consciousness or the highest peaks of awareness that you are willing to climb.

Born in 1940 in Los Angeles, California, Canadian artist and printmaker **Robert Bigelow** graduated in 1967 with a BFA (Major in Painting) from the Chouinard Art Institute in Los Angeles. Bigelow taught painting, drawing and lithography in Western Canada from 1967-1971 at Simon Fraser University, Capilano College and the Vancouver School of Art (now Emily Carr) in Vancouver, B.C., and was a guest lecturer at the University of Calgary in Alberta. From 1965-1978, Bigelow worked intermittently as a printmaker for prestigious international print houses such as Gemini G.E.L., Tyler Graphics, Cirrus Editions, Petersburg Press, and the Tamarind Lithography Workshop. During those years he collaborated on print editions with artists Josef Albers, Jim Dine, Sam Francis, Richard Hamilton, Masuo Ikeda, David Hockney, Ellsworth Kelly, Roy Lichtenstein, Frank Lobdell, Robert Rauschenberg, Robert Motherwell, Bruce Nauman, Claes Oldenburg, George Ortman, Tony Onley, Man-Ray, Ben Shahn, and Frank Stella. Bigelow worked closely with Robert Motherwell on his paintings, collages and prints during a position as Motherwell's Connecticut studio manager from 1975-1978. Returning to Canada in 1978, Bigelow worked until 1995 as Associate Professor and Associate Dean at the Faculty of Fine Arts, Concordia University, in Montreal. With an extensive exhibition history, Robert Bigelow's works have been collected by the Portland Art Museum, Boston Museum of Fine Arts, Pasadena Art Museum, Los Angeles County Museum, Museum of Modern Art, National Gallery of Canada, Bank of Montreal, Shell Canada, and Air Canada. Robert Bigelow lives in Vancouver.

PORTAL TO IMAGINATION

A PASSAGE TO CREATIVITY

Destanne Norris



In many ways my art practice reflects Pablo Picasso's quote, "Painting is just another way of keeping a diary." For those who keep a diary or journal, you may have found while reading back into the chapters of your life that what you subconsciously wrote – or painted and drew as in my case – has actually manifested in your life. This is a mystery. We live it and its manifestation is something that I rejoice in.

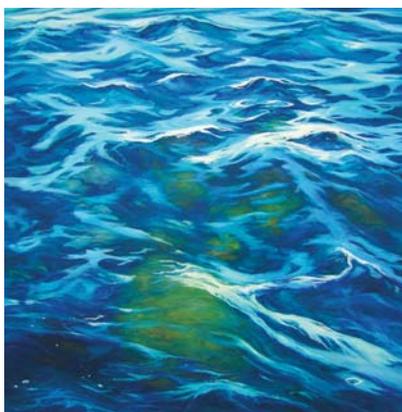
My fascination with this mystery – the weaving of past, present and future – the creative process and consciousness began more than thirty years ago. I had intuitively made a number of paintings and drawings whose true meaning I couldn't understand until it revealed itself to me many years later.

It was in the early evening of Spring 1995 when Leah, my one-and-a-half year old daughter, went missing from our picnic site and left us for the rushing water – the river. She fell in and was carried away. It was while I was withering on the earth, feeling like I was giving birth to her death and incapable of searching with the others, that I had flashbacks. The artworks I'd made, the writings I'd penned, the things I'd said and done and, more so, my daughter's heart-stopping gaze into my soul a couple of hours earlier before she left our campsite. I knew she would be leaving, but didn't. Could I have prevented her drowning, or was this her destiny?

A year after Leah's passing, I commemorated her life in an art exhibition, *Leah's Gift*, presenting premonitory paintings and drawings made years before the accident, and the artworks that I had made while grieving during that first year. People commented at the exhibition that the child in the painting *Electrogenesis*, painted in 1985, looked like Leah, who was born in 1993.

It felt as though Leah, after her drowning, was calling to me from the other side. I knew she was directing my path. Together with being a loving wife, and mother to my other two children, I was to commit myself more fully to my painting practice and to share the exhibition *Leah's Gift*. For me she was offering the most precious gift of life. She was showing me that there is a mysterious dance between past and present, and how, ultimately, it is not for us to know, but rather to live fully in the moment – in faith, in hope and in love.

In my creative journey there is nowhere I feel more present, inspired and connected to source than in nature. I went into nature to heal, and my paintings became about the landscape, my connection to place, the environment and the wilderness areas in the Canadian Rocky Mountains where I was



Top: Electrogenesis

Middle. Photo: *Contemplation*

Above. photo: *Water and Stones*

living. Within a short period of time, my landscape paintings were successfully selling in galleries; I was participating in art residencies and workshops, and travelled on painting excursions into the foothills and southern Alberta. After five years of focusing on my practice, my life in art – and life in general – felt purposeful. Still, for some unknown reason my existence didn't quite feel enough. A dark night of the soul moved through me, and I rediscovered the buried dream I once had of completing a Master of Fine Arts.

At the end of my undergraduate studies in fine arts at the University of Victoria in 1987, I had seen a catalogue of the University of Tasmania in Australia. I remember thinking, if I ever do a master's degree I want to go there. Fast forward – it's 2002 and it's time. After researching Canadian universities on the Internet, I remembered, in my mind's eye, the University of Tasmania catalogue. Through the Internet, I learned that Environment and Wilderness Studies is a concentration in its Art Department. This description was like a red flag to me. The University of Tasmania was the only place I applied, and I got in. The last mountain painting I made before flying away with my family was *Contemplation*.

The journey, 7000 miles across the Pacific Ocean, to live – on and off for three years – in Hobart, Tasmania, to undertake a master's degree was, once more, life altering, with a number of personal life losses. I was so tempted to quit my studies and return to Canada. I knew, however, that not finishing what I had started held greater consequences for my teenage children, and others in my life, than just myself. With my teenagers' encouragement, I persevered.

My thesis project, *Painted Pools: A lens into Subjectivity*, investigated pools as repositories, not only for water, but for memory, experience and consciousness. One of the water paintings, *Water and Stones*, was named after the first words in James Elkins' book, *What Painting Is*.

I adopted Elkins' idea of how, like the alchemists, painters seek to transform and be transformed by their medium. To the alchemist, the stone is a symbol of one who is aware of his true state. Water, flowing out of the stone in early alchemist art, symbolizes the spirit or life force. In some way, I felt that my master's project, as well as my experiences in Tasmania, was the beginning of an alchemical transmutation in my life and art.

In 2006 I moved from Tasmania to the Okanagan Valley to live and be close to family. After a period of time my perspective shifted. I felt my vision was focused on a distant horizon, out and across the expanse of landforms, mountains and water. I would tilt my head back to observe and meditate upon the sky. I was beginning to focus more outwards, rather than inwards. As I allowed the heavens to communicate to me, I saw an open space of possibilities. Skyscapes became my primary painting subject and, as was my tendency in earlier work, many of the titles of these paintings were reflective of both my physical and metaphysical inquiry, as in *What Dreams May Come*.

In Spring 2015, while I was immersed in *Whether from the Centre* – my artist-in-residence painting project at the Allan Brooks Nature Centre in



Vernon – I learned a dear friend had passed away unexpectedly. Yet again, I was struck by the mystery of what I had painted. At the time my friend had taken his final flight, unawares I was making a painting of three birds flying in a sky. He left behind his wife and two children. In my work, there were clouds that looked like wings and as though a jet had just left behind its contrail. I titled my painting *Flight Path*. The synchronicity was made greater because a filmmaker, Brian Taylor, was filming me that day; the drawing and the later creation of it into a painting were captured and released in a short film, *A day at the Allan Brooks Nature Centre with Destanne Norris*. This last painting I made in the project for the Centre



was from the view of looking back from space over the curvature of a cloud-scattered earth. Later, contemplating the mystery of how we make our final exit from this life and what happens next, I named this painting, *Where there are no Edges?* This is the link for the Allan Brooks sequence, *A day at the Allan Brooks Nature Centre with Destanne Norris*, <https://youtu.be/yuVeqqVxDk>.

Making this series and my experience at the Centre have been the force to launch me further into space with a new body of recent work – paintings of the cosmos – in particular, nebulas and stars. The departure into deep space is a progression in my work to find new discoveries in my art practice. My goal is to keep on posing questions into nature and the nature of our human existence – our universal purpose, our beginnings and endings, our embodiment, our consciousness.



When I am in the creative flow of self-trust, and allowing the creative process to lead the way, images emerge and take on their own life, unconscious of me, their maker. In my imagination as a little girl, I envisioned myself as an artist, a painter. While I've lived this dream of being an artist, through tragedy, loss, trials and tribulations, I've healed and transformed from the inside out. Sorrow is the twin of joy, and I am ever so grateful to know

Top: *What Dreams May Come*

Middle: Drawing that day

Above: Painting from the drawing, *Where there are no Edges?*

both, deeply. Even more so now that I am in my late fifties, I see my art and story as a platform, a way to connect and share with others. I want to touch those who want to find hope and faith, who want to learn to trust and listen



Portal to Imagination: Rosette Nebula

to their own inner voices – to tap into their imagination, to be co-creators in life – to choose. After listening to my story, Brian Taylor, the independent filmmaker who filmed me at the *Allan Brooks Nature Centre*, felt enthused about making my story into a documentary film. The release, *Beneath the Painted Surface*, is planned for the near future.

I love this quote by scientist Albert Einstein: “Imagination is everything. It is the preview of life’s coming attractions.” Peering through the *Portal to [my] Imagination*, it’s my heartfelt hope that my ongoing art practice – making paintings, giving visual presentations and writing – and the documentary film, once released, will serve and benefit others.

Our creative service, as well as the mystery we live, can be summed

up in two words: WITH LOVE.

Life, art, the journey continues.

“**Destanne Norris** has a visceral connection between the physicality of existence and spirituality that is brilliantly composed in her Stellar series, which showed at the Vernon Art Gallery in 2017,” writes artist, writer and gallery owner Julie Oakes in her essay in the exhibition catalogue for the four-artist exhibition, *Running with the Ball*, at Headbones Gallery in Spring 2018. In October 2018, Stellar will be on exhibition at the Jasper Museum in partnership with Fairmont Mountain Galleries for the Jasper Dark Sky Festival in Alberta. You can discover more about Destanne Norris on her website www.destannenorris.com and also watch the trailer for the upcoming documentary film, *Beneath the Painted Surface*. This is the link for the trailer *Beneath the Painted Surface* <https://youtu.be/qqTJcGW0bo>

INFUSING YOUR LIFE WITH CREATIVITY



Julia B. Riley

I decided to be a nurse when I was six years old. I was spending my days in the waiting room in a hospital where my father lay dying. The nurses came into the hospital in navy blue capes with red linings. I wanted one of those capes and I wanted to be a nurse.

Now a nurse for fifty-one years, I still believe in better living through accessorizing, both in fashion and in life. I am dazzled at the notion of all the things that fill my days now in my time of “re-firement.”

Karen Close and I reconnected when she learned about an e-course I am co-facilitating with Anne Boynton, in partnership with *Spirituality and Practice* and *Sage-ing International*. Our course is *Infusing your Life with Creativity*. So many people say, “Oh, I’m not creative.” What if we became curious about this notion and just took a chance that we might surprise ourselves with what we can get up to that looks very different than we expected? If a nurse can move from psychiatric nursing to teaching the expressive arts... who knows what you can do.

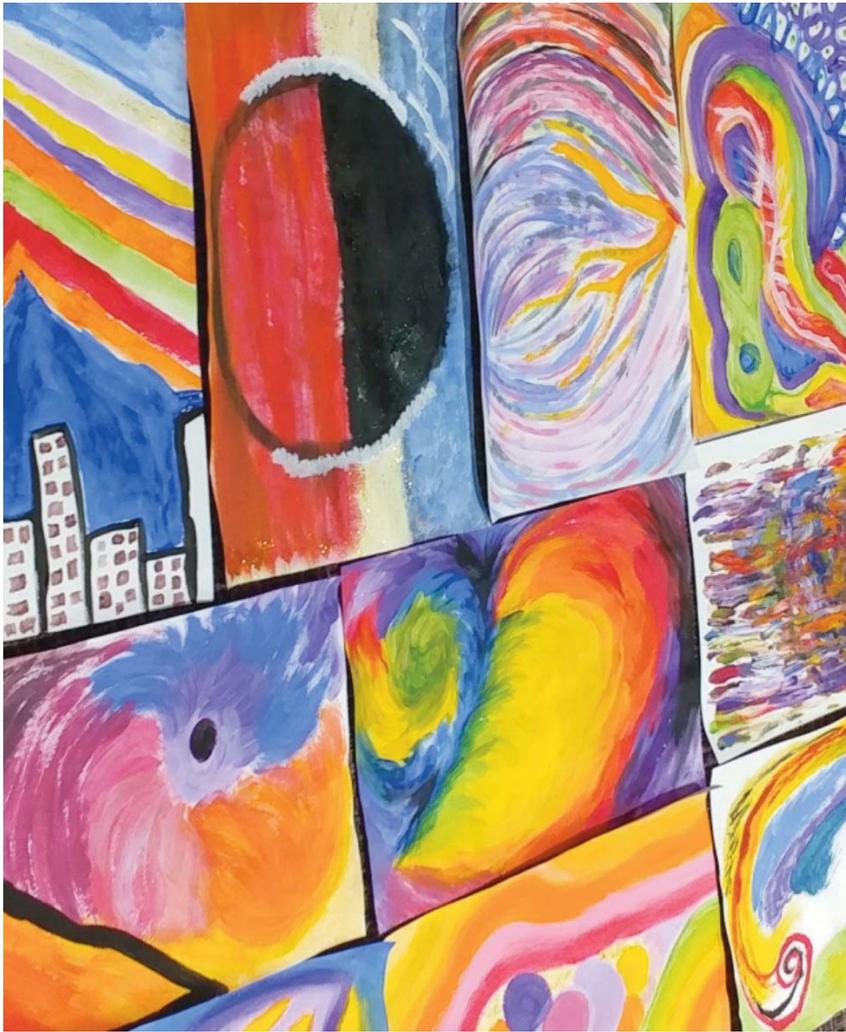
Infusing your Life with Creativity coordinates a Practice Circle where we create community in our journey to turn the ordinary in life to the extraordinary. Take a quick look and see what you think!

<http://www.spiritualityandpractice.com/ecourses/course/view/10223/infusing-your-life-with-creativity>

After Karen and I had a two-hour conversation by phone (even a therapy session is only 50 minutes), I knew I wanted to accept her invitation to introduce the e-course and share a bit about my journey to encourage you to reflect on your own. As you read, ask yourself how you might begin or continue to embrace creativity to add joy to your life.

Here is a link to *Sage-ing International*, <https://www.sage-ing.org/>. It is full of rich resources and opportunities to explore our Sage-ing journey. I am one of the faculty, co-facilitating the Certified Sage-ing® Leadership program. I began this work in 1999, in my 50s when I still knew everything, and continue to live the work and be fascinated with it as I ease into my 70s, living with the intrigue and challenge of uncertainty.

My path began when I graduated from a diploma (hospital-based) school of nursing at twenty years old – old enough to give narcotics to patients, but too young to vote or drink in my home state of Virginia. Oh, the ironies of our lives. On to the University of Virginia, where I took classes on impressionistic art, creative writing and religion. Influenced by the philosophy of



Top: Spontaneous paintings by nursing students

Martin Buber, I wrote a paper on the nurse-patient relationship as an I-Thou experience. This would begin my life-long learning about what it means to be truly present for yourself and for others, and to embellish your work and your life with who you are.

I became passionate about helping health care professionals to stay connected to themselves and to their clients. I taught and wrote about self-care; I explored guided imagery, hypnosis, humour, holistic nursing, Sage-ing, and the expressive arts.

Taking a breath after more years of life experience, I can confidently tell my nursing students, “You cannot give what you do not have.” Further, I now ask, “How can all of us, not just nurses, lovingly learn more about ourselves?” I believe this happens when we give ourselves permission to play, and to risk exploring things that have intrigued us, but had been put on the back shelf. Remember, too, that we have

to listen to the call to take naps, to be a bit more careful as we walk and drive, humbled at all our parts working when they do, and graceful and changing gears when the parts don’t. One of my nursing students told me I reminded her of her grandmother, and I replied that this was the greatest compliment I could have.

This is my grandmother time, and by grace I am still excited about life – Weight Watchers, a treadmill and regular connections with people I love. I am convinced that attitude makes a difference. Happiness and positive psychology research supports the understanding that social connections contribute to our health. Florence Nightingale taught that light, colour and nature heal.

More recently, quantum physics has told us we are all connected. My work as an expressive arts facilitator in hospice, one of the most stunning times of my life, brought that home to me. Clients used words like “You bring the light,” “You bring the sun” – energy words. Visiting a ninety-year old woman in her home, I would brew a pot of tea, we would “colour” with watercolours, trying to dip our brushes in water and not our tea, and laugh, and she would share stories of her life. An AIDS patient created a mixed-



media collage for a caregiver after I had instructed him to take a “field trip” around his house for things that were special. This work became the cover of my book, *Art in Small Spaces... Art at the Bedside* (CSP, 2012).

In our conversation, Karen and I discussed a quote from the last issue of this journal, #25, by Kathi Camilleri on reconciliation: “We are all medicine ... to bring our unique gifts together to change the world.” I have come to believe that we are all creative and that claiming that perspective frees us to show up to live as our authentic selves. Nurses who cook bring food when staff are griev-



ing; nurses who garden bring flowers; nurses who sing sing to their comatose patients.

Perhaps you have a story to share. Perhaps you will choose to experiment in our e-course, *Infusing your Life with Creativity*. Perhaps you will want to share your experience in an article in this journal. We are all in this experience of life together. We are all connected. As we care for ourselves so we care for others. You might just surprise yourself with your creative expression.

Top: Mixed media dolls. From my love of paper dolls, I create mixed media dolls. Here are some of mine and Anne Boynton's, co-facilitator of the e-course. Above: *Healing.* Segment of a touch drawing, photography and a poem created from poetry magnets. This mixed media piece, a gift from a patient to his caregiver-friend, is a collage of found and treasured objects.

Julia Balzer Riley, RN, MN, CSL, is a Board Certified Advanced Practice Nurse and a Registered Expressive Arts Consultant and Educator. She is an adjunct faculty member in nursing at the University of Florida, Tampa, Florida, where she teaches the courses Expressive Arts in Healing...Health promotion through the Arts; Complementary Therapies for Professional Self-care and Practice; and Health Caring Communication. She is the author of *Communication in Nursing* (Elsevier, 2017).

Contact julia@constantsource.com to order an e-book version of *Art in Small Spaces*, a guidebook for wellness and self-discovery. Her keynote presentation is called *I'm Transforming as fast as I can...Please send C.H.O.C.O.L.A.T.E.* ©

MEET THE WEST KELOWNA WRITERS' GROUP



Mel Kazinoff

Introduction: A Brief History of...Our Time

Our Big Bang occurred when, in 2016, Blair Jean and Geneva Ensign began a collaboration to solve problems encountered when attempting to self-publish their manuscripts. We wanted to share our voices. We wanted to share the wisdom of our experience. Many companies out there were able and willing to take our money but this wasn't good enough. We wanted to feel that our voices were going to be heard. Blair started to research publishing for himself, and Geneva encouraged him to document the results. Their discoveries led to the creation of the *Independent Self-Publishing Guide*, which, in turn, was the basis of the creation of the Writers' Group in West Kelowna.

Blair and Geneva got permission to hold a meeting in the Westbank Library and put out feelers to see if any other writers out there in "publishing space" might be interested in learning about self-publishing as well. On January 25, 2017, the first meeting was held. In addition to Blair and Geneva, there were three other courageous travellers: Michael Jensen, Donna Bird and Ede Schult.

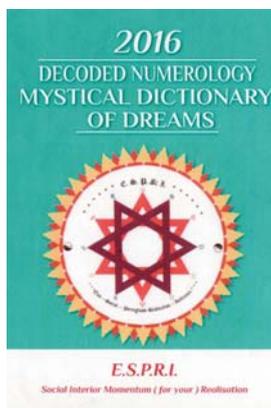
A Christmas party was held in December of that same year. The group's universe has now expanded to over thirty members and we're still expanding. Unlike the other universe, in this one the "heavenly bodies" are getting closer together, not farther apart.

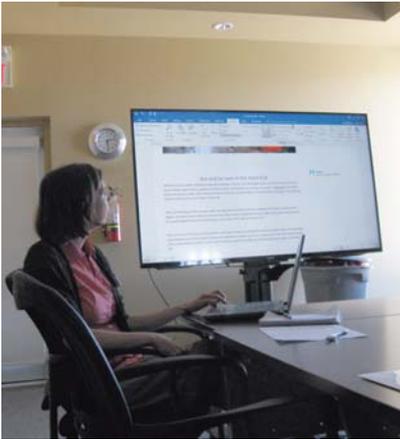
I decided to write to Karen Close, editor of this journal, *Sage-ing With Creative Spirit, Grace and Gratitude*. I wanted to share our group's experience, our universe. I hope our story will inspire others who want to offer their experiences to the future. We are a community united in creative spirit.

In memoriam to a special member of our group

Pierre Dumas was an active member of the group since its early days. He was a published author and working on another book. Suddenly, he was diagnosed with cancer, which turned out to be very aggressive, and he was moved into hospice care. With all of this, when he heard of the *Sage-ing* article, he wanted to be a part of it. More important than cancer, more important than pain and drugs, his writing was uppermost in his mind and heart. Pierre died May 9th, but his writing will live on. You will not be forgotten.

Pierre's upcoming book *Mystical Dictionary of Dreams*





Alison using her computer and smart TV as she attempts to enlighten the unlit.

A Thank You from our group

Before I introduce our community, we'd like to recognize the support of the Westbank librarians. Members of the Writers' Group cannot say enough in praise of the Westbank librarians. They have gone far beyond the call of duty to ensure the success of our group. Not only did they make our group an extension of the library program, they made the conference room available for our meetings, answered endless questions, helped us with advertising and demonstrated the use of the equipment. Most of all, they provided these many services cheerfully and always with a smile.

Special thanks go to Elena Valkenburg and Alison Hayman, Branch Head and Acting Head of the Westbank Library respectively; Tara Thompson, Community Engagement Coordinator; and Nicci Cabrejos, Branch Services Supervisor. Alison has given several tutorials to our group. Below are some pictures of one such event. We may be untidy but we are very attentive.

A description of our few Stars and Planets

"In 2013, after retiring as Manager of Training Services Heavy Construction and Mining, I started writing books on northern history. In so doing, I had to research and navigate my way through self-publishing. This seemed to take more time than writing, and I would rather be writing, or at least researching history. Geneva Ensign was also writing a book, and urged me to write down the steps to self-publishing that I was taking. I did, and she helped with the feedback and proofreading. This resulted in a manual, titled *Independent Self-Publishing Guide*.

We also thought we should help other local authors on their journey to self-publishing, so we founded the Writers' Group at the Westbank Library. It was my hope that the group's efforts would result in others authoring and publishing their own works. To my delight, this is now happening." — Blair

SOME CHILLING DRAMA FROM BLAIR'S BOOK, *CLEARWATER MEMOIRS*

"It's fifty two below with fifty mile an hour winds! Get back to your cabin you silly @#*#@!"

My reply was ignored as the truck was in gear and underway again. The suspension creaked from the cold and the truck, engulfed in a cloud of exhaust steam, was soon out of sight.

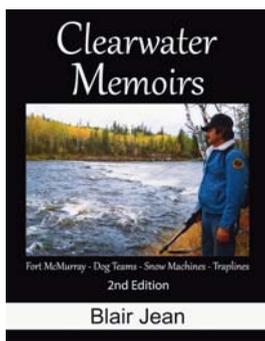
I had not seen a logging camp close previously, or since, due to cold weather. This combination of cold and wind made logging operations unsafe. Now that I knew the official weather report, I too gave up on trapping activities and hung around the cabin for several days.

While the ravenous winds rattled the stovepipes overhead, I fed the insatiable appetite of the wood burning stove. There would be no river travelers in this weather, but solitude was okay with me. I busied myself with making snares, cleaning the cabin and other inside chores.

In a few days, the winds subsided and the temperature rose to thirty-five



Blair Jean
and his
upcoming
book



below. I turned my attention to outside necessities. First, I had to replenish my water barrel which was nearly depleted. So down to the river I went with a five-gallon pail in each hand. The river ice was three foot thick but I already had a hole chipped out. A covering of spruce bows and snow slowed the refreezing process if the hole was reopened each day. The needle bar made quick work of the one foot of new ice in the hole.

My woodpile had also diminished at an alarming rate so it was restocked from nearby stores. With a day of preparations, including snowmobile repairs, I ventured back out to check snare lines.

Geneva Ensign

In 1991, Geneva co-authored and published, with Peter Erasmus, *A Practical Framework for Community Liaison Work*. She is also on the verge of a new publication. Her spectacular manuscript, *Community Healing: A Transcultural Model*, is being published by Hancock House, Sydney, B.C.

This latest book has some amazing endorsements: Dr. Claudine Louis, President, Maskwacis Cultural College, Alberta; Dr. Wilton Littlechild, Grand Chief of the Confederacy of Treaty Six First Nations, Edmonton; and Robert Louie, Former Chief of Westbank First Nation, Westbank – these are just a few.

The book is to be used as the basis of a Community Healing Facilitator Training certificate program at Maskwacis Cultural College. The preparation is already underway, and select students will be taken into the program this fall. Dr. Louis plans to expand the course to four sister colleges.

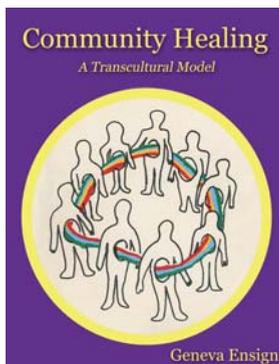
WHAT DOES GENEVA HAVE TO SAY ABOUT WRITING IN RETIREMENT?

“Being self-employed as a workshop developer and facilitator in Indigenous communities for over forty years, documenting my work and writing various papers were requirements of my job. Writing always felt like a chore, a struggle, to organize what I wanted to say and to find the right words to say it. After retirement, I became a caregiver, tending my husband through his illness. As many others can testify, being a caregiver does not leave much time or energy for any outside endeavours – creative or otherwise. After his death, however, I discovered that I had nothing but time – lots of it. To fill the empty hours, I began to organize and condense my professional files. I wanted to be able to summarize my philosophy of life and my workshops between two covers, thinking that I would leave a record about my career for my children. My project began to take on a life of its own, however, and one thing led to another. Now I have a book that will be published this summer, called *Community Healing: A Transcultural Model*, and a training course, based on my book, is being developed at Maskwacis Community College in Alberta.

Along the way, I helped Blair Jean to develop his guide on independent self-publishing, and we co-founded the Writers’ Group. Much to our sur-



Geneva Ensign and her book cover



prise, it grew like Topsy; aspiring writers kept coming to our sessions. We have gone to workshops, book launchings and to writing festivals; we have invited authors and publishers to share their experiences with us, and we have given and gotten feedback on our own work, often over a “cuppa.” And several of our group have self-published their work.

Looking back over what is now almost three years, I realize how much I have benefited from working and playing with like-minded people, now my friends and colleagues. My horizons have expanded; I can now comfortably call myself an author and a poet. My professional work has been acknowledged and will be shared with others through the training program. I have pride in my accomplishments – and in the accomplishments of the others. Writing is no longer a chore, but a pleasure. Perhaps I have met my Muse.”

A QUICK TASTE FROM GENEVA’S BOOK

Healing is a process, a river, that flows back and forth from darkness to light, from pain to joy, from fear to love, if I allow it to happen.

As I heal, I swing back and forth between these opposites, but I swing less far each time if I am sincere in my effort to heal.

This process underlies many cultures and is called by different names: The Warrior’s Path, The Watercourse Way, The Red Road, The Path of the Heart, The Spiritual Journey.

My Spirit is the guide on this journey, enabling me to become aware of my patterns, deal with my pain and break the negative cycles that often have been passed down from generation to generation.



Mel Kazinoff

Mel has self-published his first novel, *Broscombe Manor*, as well as two mini photo books, *Mount Boucherie: Up Close and Seasonal* and *Residents and Visitors*. He is at present working on a life history. The initial volume’s title is *22 years of Memories – 1942 to 1964*. He also has a never-ending project of short stories, titled *A Very Strange Mind*.

A surprising revelation

I am amazed that I write. In high school I failed every English exam except the very last one. Which, I guess, was the most important for graduation. But I just didn’t get it.

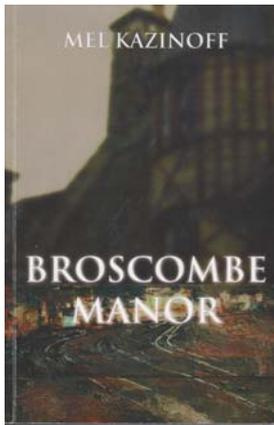
When asked to write on “What I did in my summer holiday,” or “What is my favourite . . . whatever,” I would make a comprehensive list covering all aspects of the question. And without fail, I failed. A big F every time. One day my dad took charge and explained the art of writing. I looked at him as if he were talking another language.

“Show me what you mean,” I demanded. He wrote the essay that was my current assignment. I read it in horror.

“I can’t show anybody that.”

He insisted that I hand it in. “Tell the teacher what happened and then sit back and watch what happens next.”

Cover
Broscombe
Manor



What happened was that the essay was praised, read aloud to the class as an example of what creative writing should be. Now I had to face my classmates. The real test. To my shock I was the hero of the class. For that day anyway.

Why am I telling you this? Because as I started to get it, it set the stage for a love of writing that slowly percolated through my system until now, as a retired senior I can express this love and give it the time it deserves. And it's not a one way street. As I throw myself into a writing mode, I get back as much as I give. My enthusiasm for life grows, my mind is active and adventurous and my spirit soars as each page emerges. I don't always know where the words come from, or maybe I do, but the paragraphs materialize, and on reading what I have written I often ask myself, "Where did that all come from?"

I don't have to answer; I just have to enjoy.

A SNIPPET FROM *BROSCOMBE MANOR*

The morning sun streamed in through the window. Stretching languorously from the warmth of

the bed my arm brushed against the soft warm body beside me; I sighed happily. She stirred

uttering a tiny squeak of pleasure and rolled towards me allowing her body to gently touch mine.

I kissed her forehead, as the memory came rushing back. I'm not one who generally remembers my dreams but this one was so vivid. These people were real as were their lives. So who the hell was Jonathan Stanhope? I felt so connected with him, as if he were me. And Broscombe Manor and Jonathan's family, they all seemed so familiar. And then I thought of the new life spreading out in front of Jonathan and I shuddered. Why? How could I know that troubled times were ahead of him, if he was only a figment of my dream imagination? He was, wasn't he?

Some of our Planets

A SHORT PIECE FROM "THE OLD MAN COULD SEE ANGELS," BY TED MONTGOMERY

"Hey Old Man, you wake up," Tyler shouted! "You're a good for nottin bum, get outta here," Jimmy added as his wet and dirty snow boots connected to the old man's ribs. "You stink like the whole lotta trash you sleepin in, get outta our neighborhood," muttered Tyler as he dropped a cardboard box full of wet garbage on the old man, who by now had curled into a fetal position, and was tightly glued to the side of the dumpster. "Stop! Help! Stop kicking me you little buggers!" the old man shouted, as his scarred and shaking hands covered the exposed side of his wrinkled unshaven face.

Ted adds the following:

"Our mortal footprints mark our paths on the landscape of this planet for

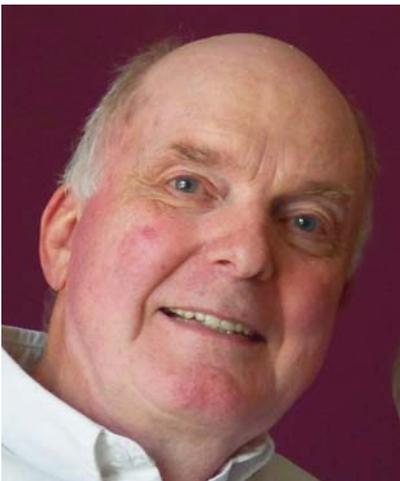
such a brief time before we become the dust for future generations to tread upon. From birth to death, a morality of reward and punishment governs our lives. During the latter part of their life, can anyone find *Happiness* without first finding one's *Purpose*? I don't believe that they can. Society dictates that they must move aside and let a new, naïve generation take the stage.

Choosing to become a writer, if one can choose to become a writer, has provided me with a sense of purpose, and a platform that can provide reward and recognition. Before the final moments of my life, through the written word, I will have an opportunity to achieve *Happiness* and possibly even immortality. The authors of our religious texts, of all faiths, did this. Thanks to the scribes of the great Sumerian race, who pressed symbols into clay tablets and dried them, we have today a preserved history of a people, who gave us so much of what we cherish today.

Having turned seventy, a word I still struggle to say, I urge you to sit down and write something – you know, the kind of something that needs a pen, paper and a stamp. Tell someone that you love them, with words. When your hourglass is empty, and your dust is free to wander, the ones that miss you will surely find joy reading your words again and again. What greater reward can there be than finding immortality in someone's heart."

And four others: Michael Jensen, Dorothy Wijnruit, Ede Schult, Donna Bird

Michael's family memoirs are almost ready for the printer, and Ede's delightful book on farm life on the Prairies has been completed and is being readied for printing. Donna's short stories are being merged into a full-length novel.



Michael Jensen

FROM MICHAEL JENSEN'S FAMILY MEMOIRS

My friendship with Gloria suffered an almost fatal blow when she and I played swords with a couple of pointed sticks. When I opened my mouth to say, let's stop, she chose that moment to make a thrust with her sword – and stuck her stick into my mouth. I ran home across the street, crying and screaming with blood pouring out of my mouth. What a sight I must have presented to my mother. Fortunately Mrs. Siemens, an RN, was home and provided the medical care needed. And the assurance to my mother that I wouldn't die.

From this episode I learned not to open my mouth at the wrong time when enjoying the company of the opposite sex. I wonder if that's why I'm so quiet when on the receiving end of a woman who talks excessively. I still don't like it when a person, usually a woman, dominates the conversation, although in my old age I do more often intervene to include others and myself.

A FEW INSPIRING WORDS FROM DOROTHY WIJNRUIT

"We, my husband and I, were at the park on a beautiful summer day in 2017 when we first heard about a writer's group at the library. On September 14,

2017, we attended our first session, something I in particular was looking forward to. For many years I've been journalizing, writing songs, playing music on my guitar, making a joyful noise unto the Lord.

This is what I enjoy doing. Living that life of gratitude. Giving thanks for what the Lord has done for us. For years it has been on my mind to write a book and have it published. I was told that writing a book has been on my mind ever since I was a child. It was not until I was heavenly inspired in a dream to "cultivate and compose" that I seriously thought about writing and publishing. Now some years later here we are together with a group of people in a community who have the same interest.

This is fun. We get to know each other, love, appreciate and learn from each other in our own uniqueness, for everyone is unique. We are happy with the writer's group in West Kelowna and thank everyone for their participation as a member, a guest or facilitator."

FROM EDE SCHULT'S COLLECTION OF ALBERTA FARM STORIES

The Gamblers, the Farmer and the Geese

The spool was half filled with the fine hair from a sheep. I laid my hand into my lap, glanced at the sunshine and thought, "it will be a fine day tomorrow, perhaps we can get out the combine and bring in the wheat."

"The combine will roll again, the wheat field is ready for harvest." This is what the farmer said after he thanked the Lord for his blessings.

It just happened, a large flock of geese prayed to the Almighty

If he would be so kind as to let them have a grain field for supper.

Amused by the prayers, the Lord rolled His dice.

"Hallelujah," He shouts. "Go Gabriel and show them the way."

Not long a large acreage was seen with the reflection of pure gold in the sun

And the beggars said thanks to the Angel.

Now the feathered invaders dropped right out of the sky.

Two geese, just married, are stunned

By the abundance the Lord had offered that day.

The farmer prayed again that day, after he saw the stubble and dust on his field.

"How could you do this to me?" he asked, on his knees.

"Well!" said the Lord and He kept on rolling his dice.

"Mine is the Kingdom

I do whatever I please."

Two old granaries stood in the field.

"Do we need more space?" we asked ourselves.

"Perhaps a new one made out of steel would be able to store all the grain?"

Those questions we kicked around in our minds

Before the invasion took place.
So we looked for the money
In a bottomless pit.

After the geese had finished their supper, they flew away.
They took the route first to the west and then the south.
We looked at each other and started to chuckle.
“Let’s go to the dance in Glenevis, the geese have done the work.”
That’s what we said.
And the Lord kept on playing His dice.

AND THIS ONE FROM DONNA BIRD

Junk Man

I could smell him before I saw him, the old man in the junkyard. It was going to be a very hot day and it was humid with a strong breeze when I walked over to see him just before noon. I wasn’t going to see him specifically, but more just to check on him. He was old, wiry, weighed only about 95 pounds and yet he was strong; the hard physical work he did daily would easily fatigue a younger man. He worked robotically like he was driven by a deadline or higher purpose, and the stickiness of the humidity and the furnace-like air movement did not seem to bother him. I only checked on him because I really worried about the old guy.

His business was junk – metal junk only – and was located just down the street from where I worked. He was the ultimate recycler guy. People would bring all kinds of old metal stuff to him, to save having to pay to take it to the dump. In his yard you could find anything from old household goods like toasters and washers, to heavy industrial discard. If you wanted you could find car frames, step ladders, chicken wire, rebar or display racks for clothing. He could not see anything go to waste which is why he allowed people to drop stuff off at his place. A lot of it he could not sell to the big scrap guys, so he constantly moved it around his yard until someone came in looking for that particular item. And he knew exactly what he had in his yard even if it sometimes took awhile to find it; you just had to not be in a hurry if you asked him for a particular item, because if he said he had it then he did indeed have it – somewhere.

I worried about him working so hard in the heat and fully expected to find him dead one day beside one of his scrap heaps. That’s why in weather like this I liked to go see him, to make sure he had water and didn’t look too close to death. Today he looked not much different than any other day, except that he was sweating more profusely than normal, (who wasn’t) and consequently his sour, odorous aura extended farther than the regular two feet so I moved up wind of him.

I asked how he was doing in the heat and he replied that it didn’t make much difference to him because the work still had to be done. He then invited me to his shack for a drink of water, which I accepted, or he wouldn’t have



Donna Bird

stopped for one himself. He also asked if I wanted to join him by taking a salt pill and this offer I declined saying that I work in an air-conditioned building and probably didn't need one.

He could always justify stopping work when I came around because I was female. He had a wife who 'passed a few years back' and a daughter who he hadn't seen or heard from since his little woman's funeral. The daughter, he said, had 'moved up in the world', didn't understand the importance of his recycling business and was embarrassed by him and his work. In fact, he wasn't even invited to her wedding, still never met her man, and heard via the gossip tunnel that he was a grandfather to two little boys. So when ever I stopped by to see him he quit what he was doing so that he could entertain a lady for a while, since he didn't have any one else, and he liked to hear what the females of the world were thinking – not that I ever got a word in edgewise when he was talking.

Our usual visit protocol was that he would talk and I would listen, and I honestly didn't mind because he was interesting. He spoke as though I wasn't there sometimes. His voice betrayed a loneliness and wistfulness that didn't show in his face, which he mostly kept expressionless. Once in a while his eyes opened directly to his heart and the pain became visible, and when the tears attempted to force their way out he would catch himself, and the tears, by saying how badly the dust in the yard was affecting his eyes lately. Then I knew that the conversation was over for another day so he could get back to work, 'junk' work and 'forgetting' work.

Sitting in his shack for our drink of water and his salt pill on this stifling day started out like all our other visits; he spoke of the price of scrap going up because of all that China was buying, he spoke of the weather and how his wife could never handle the heat and he spoke of how nice it was that I came to visit him. Then he seemed to agitate and said that we wouldn't get to talk too many more times because his landlord wanted his metal business out of there so he could build a strata business building on the property. Three months is all the time he was given to get all of his junk out of the yard before the excavators moved in, and he was angry! The landlord, he thought, was his friend and the implication given over the years was that he could operate the metal business for as long as he wanted from that lot, but now that the city was growing so quickly and moving out this way, friendship flew out the window to be replaced with dollar signs.

I nodded and listened as he explained that with all of the city's new zoning regulations he wasn't sure where he was going to go with his scrap. He seemed resigned to the fact that this may be the end of the road for his recycling business – and for him personally I thought to myself. His business had become his whole life, his way of putting his hurts out of his mind, at least for the daylight hours. He would have to let some of the metal go at much reduced pricing just to meet the deadline, and he'd have to work even harder to get the lot cleaned up in time or the landlord would charge him to have it cleaned up by a 'professional.'

He was listless as he sat there and told me all of this, and then he shocked me by admitting that he was just getting tired. He looked it too, defeated, tired and ready to admit it. I followed his lead when he stood up and walked the two steps to the door of his little trailer – what he called the shack. He went down the stairs first and extended his hand to help me down, not that I needed it as the stairs were only slightly rickety, but he was still a gentleman, even if his business was ‘recycling.’

It was good to be in the fresh air again, even if it was hot and sticky outside – the shack was that and more. It smelled of dust, grease, oldness and a smelly, sweaty old man. He smiled at me, told me to stay cool and pretty and then turned back to his junk. I watched him for a moment as he walked back to the pile of tire rims he was sorting and it dawned on me just how stooped his tiny frame really was. I gave him a smile and a wave as I turned to return to my office and I hoped he hadn’t seen the worried concern that was on my face when he noticed that I had been watching him.

The heat wave lasted for another two weeks. Two weeks of working outside in that heat and the old guy never missed a day. His various piles seemed to have some semblance of order now and trucks were coming on a regular basis to haul them away. I’m not sure where he was sending his junk, if he was getting paid for it, or if he was still keeping track. I only know that he was not going to let that landlord get one little bit of his stuff! It would all be gone by the deadline right down to the last clothes hanger, screw and nail. He also had a couple of hire-a-labourer guys to help him now and one of them actually showed up three days in a row before the heat and ‘labour’ got to him and he was replaced.

I tried not to go over very much in those two weeks because I knew that the old guy would feel he had to stop to visit and he was running out of time to clear the lot. Besides if he stopped, so would his workers. As I arrived at work each morning I took notice of how each day exposed more of the bare soil, starting at the far corner of the yard, and the trucks kept coming and going. I would wave at him, and he back at me as I parked my car before work and then again after when I left for the day. I had no idea how long he worked into each evening, maybe he slept in his shack, but he seemed to be getting smaller and more stooped by the day.

The lot was finally totally cleaned by the second to last day before the deadline and all he had left to get out of there was the shack, that little trailer that doubled as his office, lunch room, biffy and perhaps sleeping quarters. I went to see him then.

He smiled, yellowed old teeth and whiskery, wrinkled old face looking at me with relief written all over it. The trailer, he told me, was going to a little farm down south as he didn’t need it anymore. He asked if there was anything I wanted out of it before he moved it. I asked for a little mirror that he had hanging over the sink. He seemed pleased that it was what I’d asked for, as if that was what he hoped that I would take and I was equally pleased with myself for cluing in that he wanted me to have something. He then surprised

me by asking for my address, so he could send me a postcard he said, and I knew he didn't mean the work address. I gave him my mailing info and he surprised me again by giving me a very quick, self-conscious hug and saying that he'd best be getting the trailer hooked and making some miles. As he turned to shut the door of the shack behind us he mumbled something about the damn dust getting to his eyes again, and I spared him the embarrassment of seeing his tears as I walked away clutching the little mirror.

I never saw him again after that morning, but thought of him every time I saw the empty lot and the earthmovers and excavators working there. I wondered where he was and how he was managing to do nothing. I also chastised myself for not asking him and finding out where he was going. I had yet to receive his postcard and after about two months I didn't really expect one. What I did receive both shocked and saddened me, and yet looking back now, it all makes sense.

An official looking letter from a law firm arrived at my home, three months to the day from when I last saw the junk man pulling out of the now vacant lot. The letter requested that I come in to the office and ask for a specific lawyer who would explain everything. Curious, and a little scared, I went at the appointed time. After I was seated in the attorney's office, he handed me a postcard and asked me to read it and then we would look after the 'other' matter. I knew who the postcard was from even before I started reading it.

"Hi Kiddo", it said. "Here is the postcard I promised. I'm sorry I sent it to you this way but there are other things to look after as well and they have to be done through this office. Thank you for caring and being my friend." It was signed "Harry." It's strange, but I never knew his name until that moment.

The lawyer explained that Harry had passed away two weeks ago from some sort of cancer that he had found he had just before finishing his junkyard. Apparently, Harry had been well enough off to establish trust funds for both of the grandsons that he had never seen. He also had left me his little acreage just south of town, and requested that I try to establish contact with his daughter to see if I could get her to understand what kind of a man he was. He also wanted me to go to his wife's grave to put some sort of marker there so folks would know that they were together at least in spirit again. The biggest stunner was that Harry had left his entire body to the medical department of the university, for research purposes. His lawyer would look after the rest.

I must have taken a very deep breath because the lawyer asked if I was OK and handed me a glass of water. Oh I was OK alright, I told him as I signed the papers he had put in front of me allowing me to take over ownership of the acreage. I then thanked him and left his office with my land title and Harry's daughter's address.

I would let her know about the dad she had rejected and was ashamed to know. I would let everyone who remotely knew him know of how the

'junkman,' the 'recycler guy' had truly recycled everything including himself in the end. I would make sure that he would not be forgotten. I smile every time I think of him as I try to get the dust from my eyes.

Some amazingly creative writing is being done within our West Kelowna universe. As an introduction, we have just shared a snippet of who we are. Our light matter space, senior imagination, is being filled with fact, fiction and even verse. The Space Station known as the West Kelowna Library has taken us on board. Occasionally, visiting travellers drop in, share their knowledge and experiences, and then move on. The energy being generated is astounding and maybe one day one of our stars will go Supernova. Only space-time knows. Expect to hear more from us.

APPENDIX

1. Light matter: The universal energy we, as writers, draw upon to create our stories.
2. Gravity: Something we use with caution.
3. Comets: Sparks of ideas that flash across our minds and disappear if not held tightly.
4. Black Holes: The place these ideas disappear into.
5. Planets: Writers who are moving through our space while heading to the publishing goal. Most of our planets are populated with wondrous ideas.
6. Stars: Writers who have already published or are in the process of doing so. Most of our stars are still in the dwarf stage. One day they may become "read" giants.
7. Seniors: Our universe contains mainly older bodies. Younger ones tend to flit in and out.

BEDTIME STORIES FOR ELDERS

WHAT FAIRY TALES CAN TEACH US ABOUT AGING

John C. Robinson, Ph.D., D.Min.



“Our deepest truths are hidden in fairy tales.”

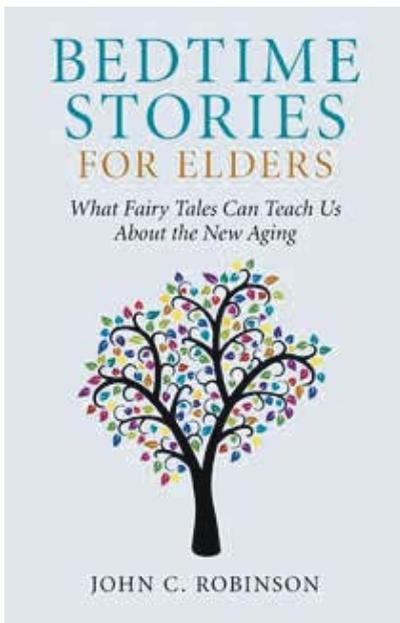
I remember my grandmother sitting on the patio of our home in California, happily absorbing the winter sun. Looking up from her reading, she began talking to me about fairies, who, she insisted, still lived in the world, including our own garden. But I was ten years old and did not believe in fairies. The fact that she did, however, intrigued me. How could a sixty-three-year-old woman, a real grown-up, consider such silliness? With my superior knowledge, the conversation did not last long.

My grandmother went on to write a collection of fairy tales for her growing gaggle of grandchildren. I carried her little book of mimeographed stories with me through six cities, four academic degrees and fifty-five years of life, but never read it. Recently I dug it out of storage and was stunned. Her fairy tales now spoke to me in a completely different way.

My education in fairy tales (and the related genres of myth, parable, fable and legend) began in the mid-1990s when I became involved in the men’s movement – a rising up of midlife men frustrated with the exhausting, soul-numbing, competitive model of masculinity championed by popular culture. The requirement to be strong, confident and stoic in the world when feeling compromised, broken or dead inside was both painful and dishonest. Deep in the Mendocino redwoods of northern California, we came together as men to acknowledge our wounds and explore an alternative vision of manhood, one surprisingly sourced from ancient stories.

Spread across the daily storytelling portion of these retreats, a single fairy tale or myth would galvanize the gathering for a week, holding each man spellbound as he discovered his own personal connection to its remarkable wisdom. Building on the profound understanding of symbols advanced by psychiatrist Carl Jung’s analytical psychology, mythologist Joseph Campbell, drumming storyteller Michael Meade, poet Robert Bly, and Jungian analysts James Hillman, Robert Johnson and Allan Chinen, we learned to access the wisdom of these stories in new ways. The Rosetta Stone of depth psychology uncovered insights of timeless value. It was amazing!

I learned much from the teachers of story and myth. I learned that a simple fairy tale, told over and over across the centuries in the oral tradition preceding the printing press, collected the wisdom and experience of each generation, its symbolism growing ever more profound with time. I learned, too, that we each held a piece of the puzzle, for as we explored our own personal meanings, we were uncovering the story’s deeper archetypal ones.



Interpreted symbolically, fairy tales taught us about men and masculinity, women and femininity, and the great adventures of love, sorrow, death and transformation. They nourished every nook and cranny of the tired soul, restoring not only our humanity but, as we shall see, our path to divinity as well. And for me, they met a particularly deep and unusual need.

Since my earliest years, I have been studying the psyche, my own and others'. Turning psychological observations and insights over and over in my mind as a lapidary tumbler polishes stones, I kept looking into the hidden depth and nature of the personality. Of course, a child does not understand such a quest – it is only truly appreciated looking back; but for me, the search was always present, growing clearer with each decade. Then, in the swirling and painful chaos of midlife, I listened to Robert Bly explain the symbolism of Iron John and Michael Meade unwrap the deep meanings of *The Spirit in the Bottle* (a fairy tale from the Brothers Grimm), and my mind exploded with the insights hidden in these tales.

Suddenly I saw how fairy tale, myth, fable, legend and parable – and for that matter, poetry, novels, movies and life itself – spontaneously express the same unconscious themes in myriad and protean ways, constantly renewing humankind's universal motifs of ultimate meaning. I began to understand the “purpose” of relationship struggles, emotional wounding, and the long journey of life in a new way. As a clinical psychologist, I had been given theories and diagnostic categories for comprehending the emotional problems of life – heady and scientific; now I accessed the far deeper symbolic significance of these problems.

Fairy tales and myths became my new diagnostic manual, and for me they made so much more sense than the medical model. It was glorious. I saw how we must all go out into the world like the Prodigal Son, face the death of the hero like Prometheus, and finally mature like Abraham and Moses to a greater understanding of life in old age. Long interested in spiritual growth, I was disappointed to find very few fairy tales describing enlightened aging. Indeed, Alan Chinnen discovered that elder stories comprise less than two per cent of all fairy tales, suggesting that humankind really has very little experience with old age, which is not surprising when we recall the average lifespan in the Middle Ages was 25 years (it reached 45 in 1900 and 65 when the baby boomers came along). Living now into our mid-seventies and eighties, however, has created a new aging experience, but we need new elder tales to fill the void.

My book, *Bedtime Stories for Elders*, is built upon ten profound and powerful stories, revealing the unseen psychological and spiritual dimensions of this new aging and providing a lens through which our own aging will make more sense. With each tale, we travel more deeply into the ultimate meaning and transformational potential of aging. Enjoy these tales but do not rush through them – profound teachings take a long time to digest. Instead, take one story at a time; imagine yourself as the protagonist, carry the story around for several days and let it work in your unconscious, stirring up

imagination, dreams and unexpected insights. For me, this deep absorption in fairy tales is more than an academic exercise; it has become a spiritual practice, and I find it fascinating that we can return to the world's fairy tales in old age to discover their ultimate wisdom. I encourage you to apply this wisdom to your own life, for the real gold nuggets glitter there.

Finally, don't be fooled by the apparent simplicity, superficiality or strange symbolism of fairy tales – they are profound and powerful beyond measure. Even more amazing, like Russian nesting dolls, this book is made of story within story within story, and the most fantastic may just be true. So here is my guarantee: understood deeply, these fairy tales will change you. And for those wishing additional guidance on interpreting fairy tales, please consult my book *Bedtime Stories for Elders*. Once on board, you can journey on your own into the deep and shining wisdom of fairy tales.

John C. Robinson is a clinical psychologist with a second doctorate in ministry (studying with Matthew Fox), an ordained interfaith minister, the author of nine books and numerous articles on the psychology, spirituality and mysticism of the New Aging, and a frequent speaker at Conscious Aging Conferences across the United States. You can learn more about his work at www.johnrobinson.org.

MAKING ART IN COMMUNITY HAS INSPIRED ME



Heather Borojevic

I have always loved art in one form or another since I could process colours and shapes. To live on this planet with eyes to see its beauty is evidence that art is integrated into the very fabric of existence. Art, to me, is what happens when we explore the gift we have to create, communicate and share who we are with others.

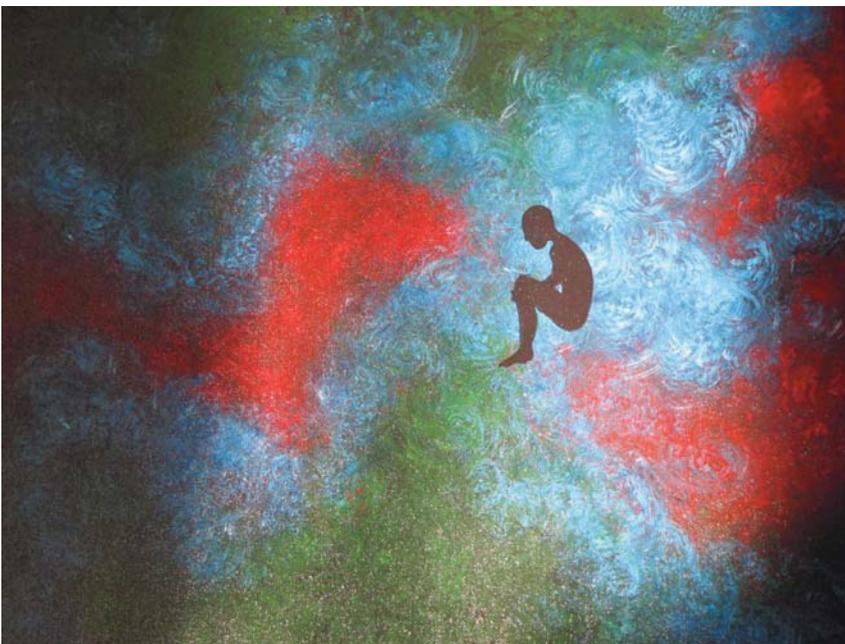
There are unlimited ways to tap into one's creative ability. Most common are: drawing, painting, music and dance. With reverence these are known as "The Arts" and those involved as "Artists". Somehow these words have been put on a pedestal and only a select few are allotted the title of "Artists" and the average person more commonly laments, "I can't draw; I can't paint; I can't; I can't." Yet this prevailing assumption, of "I can't", more often than not, is completely untrue. Exposure to historically significant artists such as Van Gogh or Da Vinci or Rembrandt encourages us to believe they are the greats and none other can replace them.

I am not Van Gogh nor is the average person a Da Vinci or Rembrandt, yet all of us have the ability to create. The average person has the ability to draw, but don't think of it as art. Every time you write words or calculate numbers on a surface you are creating a new singular whole. Symbols, letters and numbers, at their most basic are drawings, which we as a people have

created to communicate. Our natural creative ability, used at such a basic manner, is so widely taken for granted that we no longer see our true potential.

I did not have such a simple understanding of this until I joined a simple little art group unlike any art class that I had ever encountered. There was no orientation, but an intention, no rules, but manners and a willingness to explore. I was not being taught by teachers about styles, history or technique, but rather by myself and fellow "explorers". There is an openness to this group that allows newcomers plenty of room to grow,

Inner Sanctum: This was about exploring the inner being and being OK with being by yourself. I particularly love the background texturing of this picture.





while allowing them to feel safe. The group also has room to receive those transient seekers occasionally passing through for a creative boost. Each participant's artistic expression or view-point is different, yet within the group there is an atmosphere that nurtures each person's inspiration and growth. Purely through spending time with this group I have felt barriers to my perception of art and how I can express myself change. What was once a barrier or problem, is now a unique solution where I perceive great potential. I mistrust my judgement less, and trust more in the process than in the need to be considered a success by



others. This group helped me to realize it was OK to not be an historically recognised artist because a "Heather" creating what feels true, only to her, is just as beautiful and inspiring as that which is in a museum. "Heather" is as able to communicate her wonder for existence through her own creative impulses as openly and freely as any historical figure. I am me, with my unique perspective.

As I began to explore this "creative me" there was, of course, a desire to share my experiences with others. We humans want to share and feel approval, but in order for the self to know and be capable of free expression, it needs a space where it will be nurtured and allowed the freedom to just be and grow in its own unique way. If we do not openly delve into our creative urges, mistakenly thinking this thing called art is beyond our capacity, this misperception will lead one to believe only in their limitations and forget their curiosity and adaptability which is needed to help them grow and cope with life.

I am thankful to have found this special art group called heART Fit, run by a truly perceptive individual who helps to provide an environment where regular "folk" can get in touch with something we are all born with. This getting to

Top: Koi Fish: This was more an exploration of letting go of analytical perfection
Above: King Dragon: I've always loved seahorses and his name is King Dragon because he's a fantasy and has gold plating so he was regal enough to be a king.

know I now know to be fundamental to our growth as individuals by allowing us to better communicate our perceptions and experiences. HeART Fit offers an environment that is safe, but open for one to delve back into an unnurtured skill. There is no judgement or preconceived notion of what art "should" be, just an acceptance for what ideas each individual brings to the group. The vast openness with no boundaries that is heART Fit's approach



The Lady of the Dead: I was dealing with the death of a loved one and I was thinking about what it would be like if there was a being that came and collected you and she came out.

is simply is too big for pre-judgements of what art should be to stay, even for those who might come with these in mind.

We all strive to be understood more deeply and to understand what we are perceiving with greater clarity. Unfortunately, we often forget to utilize all our resources at hand to maximize the results. Often extraordinary skills we have are minimized and delegated to mundane menial things all because we did not fully realize their potential. Not noticing the potential of skills we have causes a lack of appreciation for how we can indeed use what we already know to be an artist in our own way. We lose out when

we allow ourselves to become intimidated and believe that making art is beyond us only because we have not explored and opened ourselves up to the learning process of experimentation. Creative expression is not about our success externally, but more importantly success is discovering the talents within; that is the real treasure. Recognizing inner urges to play gives a feeling that there is growing limitlessness within. Realizing that anything can be a potential rather than a hazard is so much more gratifying than any external success.

Oddly, and sadly, many view time developing our creative playfulness as frivolous, lazy or useless. Yet without the uninhibited use of their curious, playful side humans would not have created inventions such as cars, planes or computers. Inventing - creating - makes life more pleasurable, beautiful and fulfilling. We need more places such as HeART Fit to help us realize that natural born talent is not something only a select few are capable of. Rather, we are all born able, we just need the right place to be free to explore our own way in the most honest true manner possible.

Being introduced to this lack of "pre-judgement" and being set free from organized structure has, to my astonishment, allowed me the space to become more of who I am. As an artist, I have grown in leaps and bounds and am also receiving external gratification and reinforcement for my work. Even my inner "disbeliever" is in awe of what I am creating. Driven by myself, my skill and technique are racing towards a wonderful mastery that even my I did not dare dream for. On top of that, I feel a subtle, but extremely powerful creation forming within, like a blossoming of awe that is starting to permeate out into everything I see, touch or turn my attention to. Words fall short of the experience I want to express, but art has stepped up to fill a gap. Having the space and environment to allow this kind of growth has in many



45. Photo: Mermaid: The mermaid is the sidebar, the main point were the rocks and water. I was working with water colors and texturing with rubbing alcohol and salt.

ways changed small but important perceptions within, rippling outward to affect my perceptions of other external dealings. I no longer see the skill of being me as something that I can only express through painting, but have, instead, found it flows into all around and within me. I am awakening to an awe of life and the creative potential I see everywhere. I am feeling connected to a greater creative cycle that is much more limitless and open than anything I have ever experienced. It is hard to have one's outside environment match our internal yearnings. Now to feel them actually working together to properly express my impressions and experiences has been a great surprise.

HeART Fit is a rare experience of community. Each participant leaves a little bit closer to who they really are and this flows into what they create. Not one of us is a Da Vinci or Rembrandt, however, every one of us is certainly worthy of being honoured as an artist for our willingness to explore our very own new ways to create. Each of us has inspired and guided each other in our own growth. I have never felt more connected and inspired at the same time as I do when I am in this group painting and conversing. My heart is overflowing with joy and wonder at being able to express my perceptions with so much freedom to enjoy the learning process, rather than the end

results. Making art in community is such a simple concept, triggering such profound results.

I ONLY HAVE TO PLEASE MYSELF

Janice Blackie-Goodine



I cannot remember a time in my childhood when I did not draw or paint. It was as essential to me as breathing. I was raised by a farming, ranching and rodeo family in Alberta. I sought out animals, people and landscapes to paint. Anything to do with the West, historical or modern, captivated me.

My parents taught me a work ethic and a love of the beauty in nature. My mother, who did some painting herself, would point out an old barn or fence line and encourage me to notice detail, shape and colour. I feel at home painting western scenes. It is exactly how I grew up. I was immersed in this hard-working, beautifully simple way of life. I was also very fortunate to have had a high school teacher who encouraged me to further my art education.

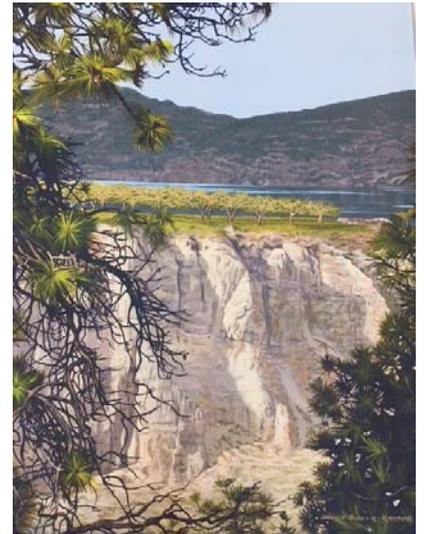
After graduating high school at the age of sixteen, I attended the Alberta College of Art specializing in Fine Art Painting. My parents were surprised that the college accepted me at my young age. However, into my third year of college, the modernistic attitude of the 1970's completely discouraged me and I left college and put my art aside. I did not paint again for 25 years. I got married and had a son, got divorced and found work in the emerging film industry in Calgary.

Painting was my first love but it is hard to make it as an artist when you are young and raising a child. Proving myself through my creativity and my particular attention to detail, I became the first woman Set Decorator in Alberta. I feel set decoration is a form of art. I use all of my knowledge about composition, colour, texture and lighting to create the character's environment. Not only do I have to do research about people and the time period,

Left: Trail Boss

Middle: When the Truck Won't Start

Right: Spring In The Canyon





Top left: Into The Light
 Top middle: Okanagan Sage
 Top right: Sage Mesa
 Above: Tranquility

but I have to imagine myself as the character and the sort of things they would have around them. I have forty years experience in the film industry creating sets on varied projects including historical, modern dramas, fantasy and science fiction movies and television series. The pinnacles of my film career include being the first Canadian Set Decorator to be nominated for an Oscar (Clint Eastwood's *Unforgiven*) and winning a Genie for my work on the First World War epic *Passchendaele*. The city of Calgary and Global Television honoured me with a Woman of Vision Award for Arts and Entertainment.

My inspiration to start painting again came from an unfortunate tragedy. A fire on a ranch in Alberta consumed the home of a couple I had known for years. Many cowboys on the rodeo circuit came together to hold a benefit auction. After talking to my husband (yes, I remarried a wonderful, supportive man), he suggested I do a painting to contribute to the auction. I painted three work horses on a piece of tanned leather. It sold for \$2500 dollars and there were a lot of positive comments on my work. In 2002 I was approached by the Calgary Stampede Art Auction to submit a painting and I have continued to do so for many years. One of my western paintings was chosen for the cover of the auction catalogue.

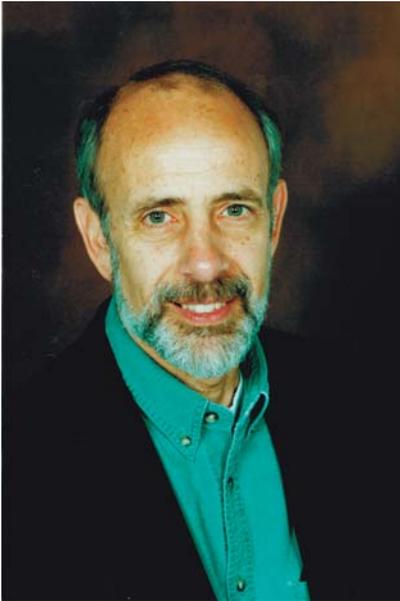
Working in the film industry was very rewarding, but after doing it for so long I was ready to try something new. I also had to please many people in that occupation, including directors, producers, designers and actors. When I am in my studio I only have to please myself, and I've discovered how truly rewarding that is.

In 2004 my husband and I moved to Summerland. I now love painting scenery, trying to capture the beauty, diversity and the changing light of the Okanagan. As I get older, I am 68 this year, I am no longer afraid to fail. People have begun to notice and appreciate my art and that has given me inspiration to continue to please me.

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ALIVE AND WELL

MORE THAN MERE EXISTENCE



Tom Stella

The question, “Is there life after death,” has been debated by theologians, philosophers and thoughtful laypeople since the dawn of consciousness. But perhaps an even more important query would be “Is there life after birth?” Existing is a good beginning, but because being truly alive means experiencing vitality, passion and enthusiasm, mere existence is no guarantee we are alive and well.

Life after birth requires intentionality, the courage to take risks and the willingness to learn from failure. Such aliveness demands of us a refusal to succumb to the gravitational pull of the status quo, and the radical resolve to always remain true to ourselves. It is one thing to exist, and another to be alive and well.

Age Is Just a Number

The first day of school our professor introduced himself and challenged us to get to know someone we didn’t already know. A gentle hand touched my shoulder... “Hi, handsome. My name is Rose. I’m eighty-seven years old. Can I give you a hug?” “Why are you in college at such a young, innocent age?” I asked. “I’m here to meet a rich man, get married, have a couple of children, and then retire and travel.”

Over the course of the year, Rose became a campus icon. We invited her to speak at our football banquet. As she began to deliver her speech, she dropped her three-by-five cards on the floor. Frustrated, she leaned into the microphone and said, “I’m sorry I’m so jittery. I gave up beer for Lent and this whiskey is killing me! I’ll never get my speech back in order so let me just tell you what I know. We do not stop playing because we grow old; we grow old because we stop playing. You have to laugh and find humour every day. You’ve got to have a dream. There’s a difference between growing older and growing up. Anybody can grow old. The idea is to grow up by always finding the opportunity in change...”

This story is fictional. Although Rose is not a real person, the spirited way she is portrayed conveys a real truth – we do not have to act or think old just because we’ve been alive a long time. Our spirits can soar even when our bodies decline. According to Rose, the recipe for staying young at any age involves playfulness, humour, dreaming, and the ability to embrace change.

Play is not merely a matter of fun and games. Playfulness becomes possible in any endeavour, work included, when we are unselfconscious. When we are fully present to what we are doing, we may find ourselves



renewed rather than depleted, no matter how taxing a task or encounter might be.

Just as play need not involve playing, so humour is not necessarily a laughing matter. It has been said that angels can fly because they take themselves lightly. Even in trying circumstances, humour is possible when we learn to hold our convictions and opinions lightly enough to honour the truth others hold dear.

When life's demands and circumstances limit us, dreams can liberate us. When we feel constricted and restricted, dreams beckon us to imagine an expansive life. Our dreams may not always be realistic, but they can give us something to look forward to and to move towards.

Expect change – except from vending machines! Many of us become creatures of habit because sameness and predictability can make us feel secure. But because change is the only constant, it is crucial that we open ourselves to the possibilities change might hold.

When we learn to be present to the present, take ourselves lightly, allow ourselves to dream, and *yield to* rather than *resist* the flow of life, we may discover age is just a number and we can feel younger than our years.

This essay is excerpted from *CPR for the Soul: Reviving a Sense of the Sacred in Everyday Life* Tom Stella's insightful, important, and inspiring exploration into the life, death, and rebirth of the soul. IDivided into 13 sections, this collection of over 130 short reflections speaks to the countless

people – young and old, male and female, churchgoers and church avoiders – for whom life's demands and stress have caused them to lose touch with their soul; the "still point," to use the words of Dag Hammarskjöld, "surrounded by silence." This remarkable book offers a revival for the soul, a reminder that "we are one with something vast" – a "Something" that "is not a thing or a person, but the spiritual source and force at the heart of life." The book is published by Wood Lake, publishers in Kelowna. www.woodlake.com

Tom Stella has been sharing his spiritual wisdom with the world for years. His books include *The God Instinct* (Sorin Books), *A Faith Worth Believing* (HarperSanFrancisco), *Finding God Beyond Religions* (Skylight Paths), and, most recently, *CPR for the Soul* (Wood Lake). Before resigning from the Congregation of Holy Cross in 2009, he ministered to thousands of people in parishes and on campuses for 30 years. He is a spiritual director, retreat facilitator, hospice chaplain, and corporate chaplain for Centum Health, a Catholic and Adventist health system headquartered in Denver, Colorado. Stella holds a Master of Divinity degree from the University of Notre Dame, an MA in counselling from the University of Michigan, and a Master of Sacred Theology in spirituality from the Jesuit School of Theology in Berkeley.

The Voices of Creative Aging

CREATIVE AGING is a powerful new social and cultural movement that is stirring the imaginations of communities and people everywhere.

This is the first book to document the movement.

Often called Sage-ing, Creative Aging takes many forms: academic, social and personal. It includes festivals, conferences, classes, group sessions and individual creative pursuits. The Journal Sage-ing With Creative Spirit, Grace and Gratitude was founded by the Okanagan Institute in 2011 to honour the transformational power of creativity. Intended as an initiative for collaboration and sharing, the Journal presents the opportunity for the free exchange of wisdom gleaned from creative engagement.

Sage-ing is about seeking – satisfying inner gnawing and transforming it to knowing and action. Aging can be alchemy when one allows the realisation that to Know Thyself and contribute that

knowing to our culture is indeed one of life's highest purposes. That knowing brings the gratitude, grace and integrity that a life deserves. The creative journey into self is a strong aid to health and wellbeing

for the individual and to our culture. Creative Aging brings together more than 50 essays and galleries of images that showcase the power of the imagination expressed and enjoyed.

CREATIVE AGING

STORIES FROM THE PAGES OF THE JOURNAL
SAGE-ING WITH CREATIVE
SPIRIT, GRACE AND GRATITUDE
EDITED BY
Karen Close and Carolyn Cowan



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Sage-ing With Creative Spirit, Grace and Gratitude exists to honour the transformational power of creativity. We are a quarterly journal intended as an initiative for collaboration and sharing. We present the opportunity for the free exchange of wisdom gleaned from creative engagement. We invite all ages to contribute their discoveries.

Sage-ing is about seeking - satisfying inner gnawing and transforming it to knowing and action. Ageing can be alchemy when one allows the realisation that to *Know Thyself* and contribute that knowing to our culture is indeed one of life's highest purposes. That knowing brings the gratitude, grace and integrity that a life deserves. The creative journey into self is a strong aid to health and well-being for the individual and to our culture.

This journal exists for all those serious in exploring their creativity, in a chosen expression. It is a forum for publication and exposure to other artists, both novice and established. This journal is an easel for any form of artistry undertaken out of personal intuition and imagination.