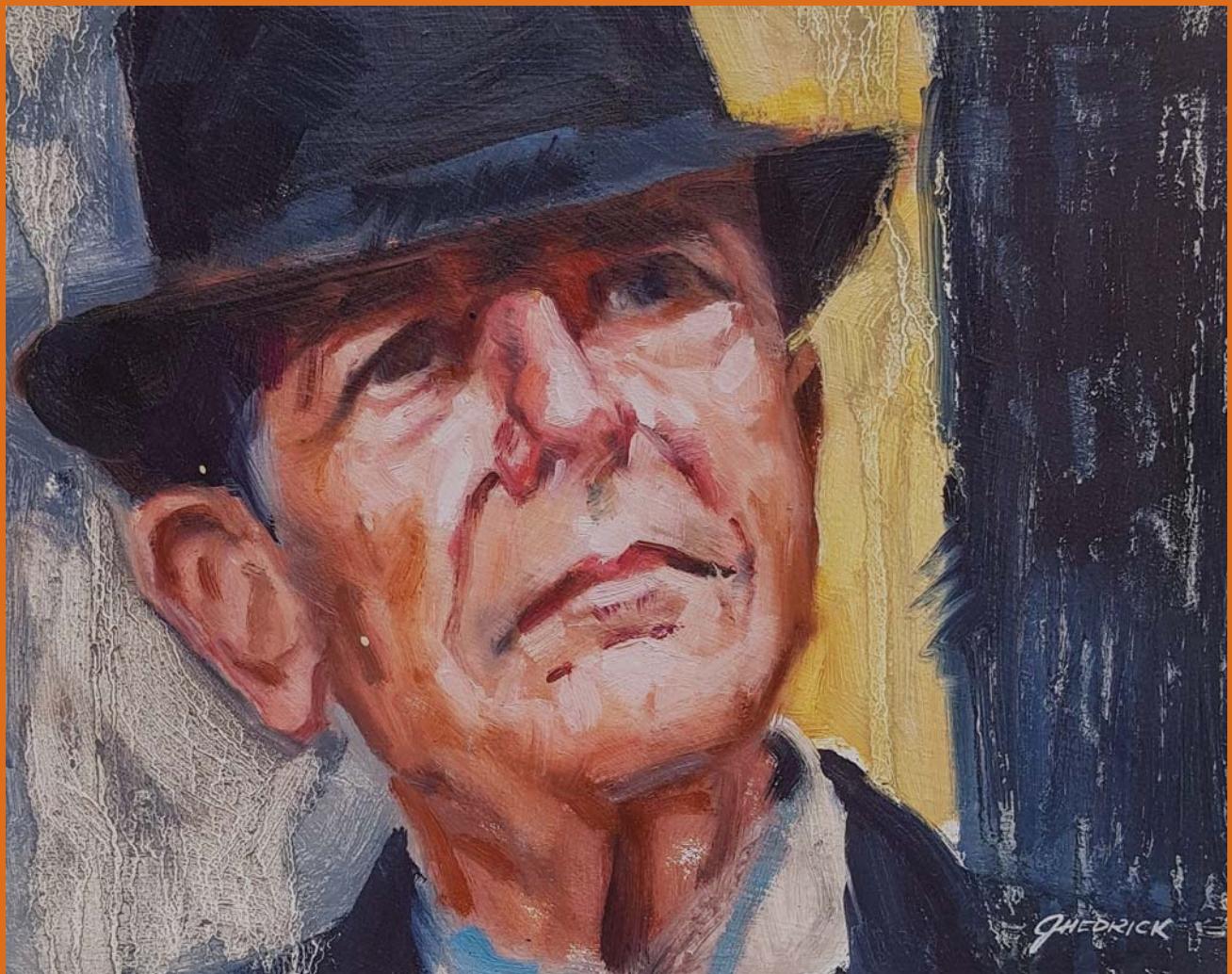


THE JOURNAL OF Creative Aging

# SAGE-ING

with Creative Spirit, Grace & Gratitude



A PUBLICATION OF  
THE OKANAGAN INSTITUTE  
NUMBER 28, WINTER 2019  
EDITED BY KAREN CLOSE

KNOW YOURSELF. BE YOURSELF.  
LOVE YOURSELF. SHARE YOURSELF.  
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# OUR SPIRITS ALIGNED

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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 Susan Landell

## FROM THE EDITOR

Long ago I wrote down the words below as a note to self. Where I read them I have forgotten, and I did not record the author, but the message lingers. Like the twinge of hunger, it urges me to collect stories of others driven by "this force, the creative power" and to bring these to you in each issue of *Sage-ing With Creative Spirit, Grace and Gratitude*. Together we can be "the Force" as described in Episode IV of Star Wars: A New Hope. Obi-Wan Kenobi explains "the Force" to Luke as "an energy field created by all living things. It surrounds us, penetrates us, and binds the galaxy together."

My note to self: "You are immersed in consensual reality, whereby the world around you reflects societal understanding of how life has been and is to be. At the same time, you have an even greater force within you inspiring you to wake up and recognize the reality of who you are. This force, the creative power underlying the entire universe, is urging you to create brand new standards of reality. The status quo is blind to our creative power. Create a brand new world for yourself, one that

meets your deepest needs, and you will help raise the quality of consciousness of the entire world." As we enter 2019, May "the Force" be with you. During the next year I urge you to allow your creative spirit to meet your deepest needs and lead you to come to your natural wisdom. As I age, I have come to appreciate that intuition or inspiration is really the experience of one's own wisdom. That is the message of the Journal: *Know Yourself. Be Yourself. Love Yourself. Share Yourself*. Together we will create an energy that "binds the galaxy together." Sharing is caring.

This issue presents a rich collection of creators who are feeling 'the Force' and sharing the enthusiasm it has brought into their lives. Credit is given to parents who urged creative appreciation and generated a commitment to sharing that enthusiasm. Sage-ing cultivates a valuation of Elders as mentors and wise counsel in community and honours the act of harvesting life's wisdom as a legacy for future generations. That is the wisdom that "binds the galaxy together."

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Often, in the early stages of working with an art medium, there is an awareness that we are being drawn towards self-awareness and a realization that, if attention is paid, creative work can aid in the search for self-knowledge. "Know Thyself." Socrates' words resound with an inner force as clear and direct as when he spoke them over twenty-five centuries ago. Implied in his imperative is the message that self-knowledge requires an active effort. Each of the pieces in our Journal is an invitation to join 'the Force' of creative community and actively seek the benefits that union will bring to individuals and the galaxy.

Let us bring a new hope to 2019,  
– 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 February 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

# LIVING A CREATIVE LIFE

## Noëlle Nadeau Khoo

Whenever I'm playing with paint or clay, digging in the garden, dancing or singing, I feel vital and whole. I also happen to be a much kinder and more generous being in the world. Conversely, I've noticed that when I'm not creating, my life force depletes and I feel stuck in overthinking. Creating is as natural to human beings as breathing. We are constantly evolving and transforming. From our first breath in this world to our last exhalation, our lives and how we live them are perhaps our most important creations.

As a five year old I accompanied my mom to her painting class at art school in Nelson, BC. I have a visceral memory of going through a nondescript door on the side of a brick building and walking up the staircase to the painting studio. As we neared the top of the steps the familiar and welcome smell of turpentine and oil paint filled my nostrils and hit my body like a wave. I was enthralled with the energy in the room and the colour flying around everywhere. Setting up at our easels and squishing the paint onto the palettes were like heaven to me. Apparently I would paint for the whole three hours. I had no idea about time; all I knew was the pleasure of playing with paint and colour and watching it shift and change shape as I moved my brush around. I've been mesmerized by paint and the creative process since then.

As all lives go, the twists and turns along the way also shape who we are and what we're drawn to. In my case, we moved quite a bit. Each move allowed me to explore a little bit more about who I was and who I wanted to be. I was always very expressive and creative by nature, but also a little shy. Letting people know how and what one thinks has its risks when you're attempting to fit in. I kept a lot to myself, and drew and wrote poetry with all my cherished free time. I also loved to sing my heart out, and in safe surroundings would do so.

I've had a lifelong fascination for birds. In Grade 7, in a Calgary, Alberta middle school, my art teacher, seeing all the different birds I drew and painted, suggested we hang my work in the school library. Hence, my first art show. I was uncomfortable exposing my most quiet and sensitive side to all the school. I felt my drawings said more about me than I ever had. Somehow something in this experience gave me both a sense of pride and shame.

In Grade 9 we moved again, this time to Kelowna. As a teenager, I found my creative expression through drama and movement. I was fortunate to have an acting teacher who encouraged improvisation and play. This was a place I felt free to mess around, laugh, invent and try on different hats. After graduation, I started into the fine arts program at Okanagan College before



Photo by Amanda Johnston

Pastel drawing my mom, Roberta Nadeau, and I worked on together





Top: Clay hand I made in art school. It served as the basis for a plaster mould, which I then made into a cement sculpture  
Middle: Me painting in my studio. Photo credit: Yuri Akuney  
Above: My husband Kong, our son Oliver and me on a hike in the Kootenays in 2016

moving with my mom and brother to Vancouver. I worked as a server in restaurants, and continued to do some acting. At this point I had the confidence to enjoy the acting roles I took on, and loved the thrill of working synergistically with others to tell a story on stage or screen. Going to the depths of my being to express an experience was very satisfying.

Another move to the wilder east coast of Canada, and a failed audition for acting school (perhaps partly due to my taking two Gravol prior to auditioning—because of nerves). I discovered I actually love to express myself authentically, but don't like attention on me. It was safe to hide in a role, but I was also still terrified of the exposure of being on stage.

It's uncomfortable, this skin.

Much too tight.

And far too thin.

This natural existential crisis led me into flower design, where I could peacefully reside in a beautiful environment with like-minded souls who also were perhaps a little more on the introverted side. I enjoyed the quiet company of flowers and flower design for the next five years. It sustained me as I set up home again, in Vancouver. During these five years I also travelled to Europe several times. I visited museums and galleries, absorbing and studying all the original art I could.

I found myself drawn to a pottery course and although it took me weeks before I could throw a decent pot, I was hooked. I could lose myself in the experience and walk away feeling emptied out and at the same time recharged. I learned I like challenges and that if something is too easy, I lose interest. I also enjoyed not having an audience and being able to create in solitude. In the shaping of things outside of myself, I was also shaping my self and discovering the connection between all things. Observing me creating was facilitating my journey into knowing me.

Teaching pottery and running a ceramics program at UBC Kids Club helped with finances while I finished a diploma in Fine Arts at Langara College and then a Bachelor of Fine Arts at UBC. I continued to sometimes struggle with the need to express myself wholly and unabashedly whilst also feeling too exposed. I still believed in duality and couldn't yet see how similar and connected we all really are, until my wise teacher and mentor, Don Hutchinson, said, "listen to the clay." My twenty-two year old self was both happy and a little astonished to discover that the clay was speaking and had its own idea of what it was to become.

As years went by, I found pleasure and challenge in printmaking, sculpture and art installation. A constant source of joy and connection has always been painting. For several years, I taught ceramics and painting at The Art Studios, run by Greater Vancouver Mental Health Services. I have always enjoyed helping people learn to express themselves through creative means. My mother was a painter and art therapist, and I erroneously believed that painting was my mom's domain, so I focused more on pottery. One day a friend asked if she could include some of my many paintings hanging in my



Alpine Allegro, acrylic on canvas, 18 x 72 inches

**Noëlle Nadeau Khoo** is an abstract mixed media painter involved in the arts for over twenty years. Born in the United States, as a young girl she moved with her family to Canada.

She earned a Diploma in Fine Arts from Langara College and Bachelor of Fine Arts from University of British Columbia in Vancouver. Since graduating with her BFA, she has studied at Emily Carr University in Vancouver, University of British Columbia Okanagan, and with several senior acclaimed artists through Federation of Canadian Artists workshops, and – perhaps most importantly – has spent countless hours in her studio painting.

Prior to returning to the beautiful BC Interior, Noëlle taught art for over ten years to children and adults in Vancouver. She enjoys teaching a Healing Art class at BrainTrust in Kelowna, and giving workshops and demonstrations when asked. Noelle loves playing with paint in her home studio and enjoying time with her young family.

About her art making process, Noëlle laughingly says, "Painting is a martial art." Layering many passes of paint and mixed media onto the support, painting becomes a conversation where she endeavours to listen and respond to what is presenting in the moment. Movements are sometimes contemplative and slow and at other times fast and furious.

Noëlle is an active member of the Federation of Canadian Artists. Her work can be found in both public and private collections in Canada and the United States. [www.noellenadeaukhoo.ca](http://www.noellenadeaukhoo.ca)

apartment in an art show she had organized. It was the first time I'd shown my paintings publicly, and the experience was not half as scary as I thought it would be.

I hadn't found a formal meditation practice yet, but art making had become my meditation. The consistent practice settled and grounded me and helped me make sense of things I couldn't put into words. Have you ever been so fully absorbed in something that time seems to stand still and the perception of any discomfort in the body completely disappears? Finding this ease is one of the most significant reasons why I paint. When I approach the canvas I attempt to open myself up and empty myself out as much as possible. I then make a mark, and consequently make a response to that mark. This continuing process draws me in and, when conditions are right, there seems to be no separation between me, the canvas and the paint. It is all one. The creative process becomes a meditation. As Thomas Merton so eloquently noted, "Art enables us to find ourselves and lose ourselves at the same time."

I have come to understand that, as we create, we are in turn shaped and created by what we create. The creative process is unique to each of us, and, at the same time, something we all share. Our thoughts, words and actions create our realities, and in turn our realities shape our next thoughts, words and actions. The more presence and awareness we bring to any moment has a positive effect on what we think, say and do.

Nothing has helped me understand this more clearly than the blessing of becoming a mother to our wonderful son. I couldn't have imagined how caring and having the responsibility for the life of another human being could help me become a better human. More than anything, our son, our Bright Light, makes me laugh and feel more love in my heart than I ever could have imagined. This heart opening experience of being with our son reminds me daily of the importance of sharing ourselves in play.

As we all learn and grow, our connections and exchanges transform ourselves and each other. Healthier humans create healthier communities. Each of us brings our individual experiences together to create a tapestry far greater and more wonderful than the sum of its parts. Albert Einstein perhaps sums this up best with his observation, "A human being is part of a whole called by us the universe."

# “WE ARE NOT JAM-BUSTERS ... WE ARE JAM TARTS!!”



Bowen crew on the steps of Camp Fircom, Gambier Island, BC at Songroots (Kathy Clarke back row 2nd from left)

## Kathy Clarke

This simple statement was proclaimed at a jam by our friend Sue. She spoke in humour and defence of our playing and style of learning (with our open binders of lyrics and chord charts as our crutches). The spirit of her words has transformed a small group of hesitant players (“What should we play?” “I dunno.” “What do you want to play?” “I dunno.”) into a group of – well, musicians!

It started for me with a nudge from a friend. “You play guitar, right?” My immediate response was, “Well, I haven’t really played for a while, and I’m not very good.” It’s funny how, regardless of age and the supposed wisdom that comes with it, it’s still easy to sell ourselves short. Thankfully, she replied, “Doesn’t matter. Bring your guitar; we can all learn together.”

Those early days saw a few of us gathering here and there, at every opportunity, to “boom chucka” and tentatively play our favourite tunes, while trying to teach each other what little we each knew. Our voices were quiet, our hands usually shaky, and our confidence not even close to being in the building. But we were determined.

Fast forward six years. What started with a few women of varying levels of ability has grown to a sisterhood of 20+ women, aged 37 to 69, who gather to share the love of our instruments and voices.

We are a collective of singers, guitars, ukes, fiddles, mandolins, banjos and a stand up bass named Billy Bob. Each of us is at a different place in our life stories, but we were brought together by a common passion – music. I can’t begin to tell you the joy and gratitude that each of us feels for having the JAM TARTS in our lives.

Bowen Island is home to all of us. Some have lived here for more than 30 years, and some are new(ish). Finding your people takes a bit more effort and commitment as a “mature” adult, but boy oh boy, how sweet it is when you find them. More times than I can count have the words “This is my happy place/therapy/godsend/saving grace” been uttered. We see each other through the joys and woes, triumphs and defeats of everything that life brings, and we are together because of music.



Top right: Waiting for the water taxi to take us to Songroots Camp

Middle: Hamming It Up

Some of us sing in various community choirs, including The Threshold Choir. Threshold singing provides comfort at bedside. I encourage you to take a few minutes to discover this international organization (<https://thresholdchoir.org/>). It is described as “One Choir. Many Voices. Singing gently at the thresholds of life in over 200 communities around the world.” It is more difficult to describe the experience of singing with this type of intention. We finish our singing evenings with the song, *I Will Be Your Standing Stone*. We stand in a circle, sing to each other, and spend a few minutes really connecting. The lyrics are simple and sung in three-part harmony: “I will be your standing stone, I will stand by you.” What powerful and heartfelt words. More often than not I leak a few tears, not from sadness, but simply – gratitude.

And then there’s camp – yep, Band Camp – just as it sounds, and we tend to travel in a pack.

The last camp at which many of us were fortunate enough to be together was The NimbleFingers Bluegrass and Old-Time Music Camp, in Sorrento, BC. Our group was about 18 of us from Bowen, and I’m pretty sure each of us pinched ourselves at some point every day and marvelled at how lucky are we.

Each of us pushed ourselves in our respective classes, and then unabashedly shared our newfound skills and knowledge with the rest. The magic of witnessing the ah-ha moments of a child is just as joyful when it’s your 65 year old camp buddy who has learned something new.

We are all still at varying levels of ability and confidence, but that doesn’t matter and just seems to make the whole experience more human.

There is no judgment, only encouragement. And it is a safe space to learn and let our creativity flow. We’ve come a long way. Various groupings of us have played at local gatherings, celebrations, coffee houses and festivals, and a few have even written and performed original songs. Individually and collectively we continue to astound ourselves.

Are we good? Sometimes. Does it matter? Not really. Are we learning? Yes. Do we have fun? Always!

We are blessed, to say the least. And I for one will always be grateful to Sue for those nine little words, and a nudge.

# MY AFFAIR WITH ART

**Jessica Hedrick**

Growing up in a household surrounded by art felt unusual as a kid. I felt as though I had a privilege that was not afforded to other kids I knew. It also made me feel alone with my love of art; few of my friends understood the depth of what art can mean. In my teen years it helped me survive through some pretty rough years. Now, in recent years, it's connected me to many wonderful people and opportunities. Art has allowed me to live a life that almost feels like a dream.

Both my father, Ron Hedrick, a successful oil painter, and my mother, Sandra Hedrick, a serious lover of the arts, encouraged all arts, at all costs. I was painting in oils earlier than I can remember. I had piano lessons, voice lessons, guitar lessons. I went to art camps and drawing lessons, and learned to comfortably enjoy life drawing at a very young age. We went to many museums and galleries. and the experiences weren't lost on me as a kid – I truly revelled in them, and my parents had to pull me out of these places. From a young age, the first thing I ever wanted to be when I got older was an artist. People told me it was a dream and to plan around it.

When my dad visited clients for commissions, I would tag along; when my dad went to pick up supplies, I would tag along; and when my dad brought paintings to galleries, I would tag along. When he needed photos to paint from, I would be the model. Aside from my dad being a role model, I picked up a few others – people who had a serious impact on me early on. I was lucky to be influenced by Min Ma, Rod Charlesworth, Gordon Applebe Smith, Roger Luko and Gabriella Morrison – painters whom I idolized before I'd even heard of bands such as Nirvana, Pearl Jam and other more destructive

mentors whom I came to adore in my teen years.

My youth was lonely; I was different. I couldn't understand why no one else knew of Tom Thompson or Emily Carr. I knew that I had a privilege in my life, but I couldn't understand how people didn't even know the most basic of our Canadian art history. As a result, many of the people I felt the biggest kinship to were adults. Aside from a few very good friends I was teased and bullied in school, but fortunately coming home to draw or play



Left: now I'm encouraging my daughter  
Right: and she helps out too





Top: 'Darjeeling' 8" x 8" oil on canvas  
 Middle: 'Wedding Memories' 36" x 36" oil on canvas  
 Above: 'Ebb and Flows' 16" x 20" oil on panel

guitar was a great way to relieve the stress built up from school.

I was very interested in how difficult it was to do something as conceptually simple as drawing something I saw with accuracy. And it became even more interesting as I started to enjoy a lot of the things that were the least accurate in my drawings. In life drawing, I most liked the drawings I'd created where legs were drawn too long, torsos overly torqued into interesting shapes, shoulders so broad they looked like they could hold up the world. My fear of drawing something "off" started to melt away and, with that, I became better at drawing.

Because of drawing I developed an interesting relationship with my own body. I enjoyed drawing larger ladies in life drawing class. With that, I became okay with not being as slim as the Kate Moss waif look. I was much more comfortable in my body than most kids my age. I encourage everyone to attend life drawing, but as a youth I was disappointed that most of my friends had no interest or were not allowed to attend life drawing.

My love for life drawing began to direct me. While at University College of the Fraser Valley, I studied under a brilliant artist, Bruce Pashak. He was open minded – almost to a fault. I found the freedom in art confusing, but also challenging. I did modelling in university for life drawing and was a model for body painting, which I was only able to do because of my early exposure to life drawing. It was the freest I have ever been or ever would be again. I learned much about opening my views to what art was, but I really wanted more rigorous study and found that my classes there just couldn't give me that. I didn't pursue a degree in art; rather I graduated in geography, but I took drawing and painting courses to round out my experience at UCFV.

After university I began a job in an environmental lab. I loved many aspects of this job, but I hated doing the same thing day in and day out, and I missed the arts that I never had time for anymore. I decided to leave to pursue arts; I had met a man, who would later become my husband, and he encouraged me to pursue my love of the arts as well – it seemed logical when he said it.

I moved back onto my parents' property and started studying seriously under my dad. It was 9-5 studying with a few shifts at the local coffeeshop. I liked doing art full-time. I was happy. Truly happy. Waking up every morning I jumped out of bed at six, and was keen to start painting. It's not to say that there weren't struggles – there were. Art is struggle – actually art and struggle are one and the same to me, but good art means you've overcome a struggle. I remember there were paintings and struggles with visual perception where I would be so frustrated with myself I would be sitting at the easel crying, desperate to get out what I wanted, but not able to do it. Yet, when I overcame each particular hurdle the satisfaction I felt seemed like the best thing I could imagine and the struggle seemed worth it. I was very lucky that some of the galleries my father was in were willing to give my work a shot. My work sold well in some and not in others.

Eventually I moved out with my husband, and art became a part-time



Top: 'Evening at Long Beach' 30" x 60" oil on canvas

Middle: 'Fresh Breeze' 18" x 36" oil on canvas

Above: 'Tranquil Riverbed' 16" x 20" oil on canvas

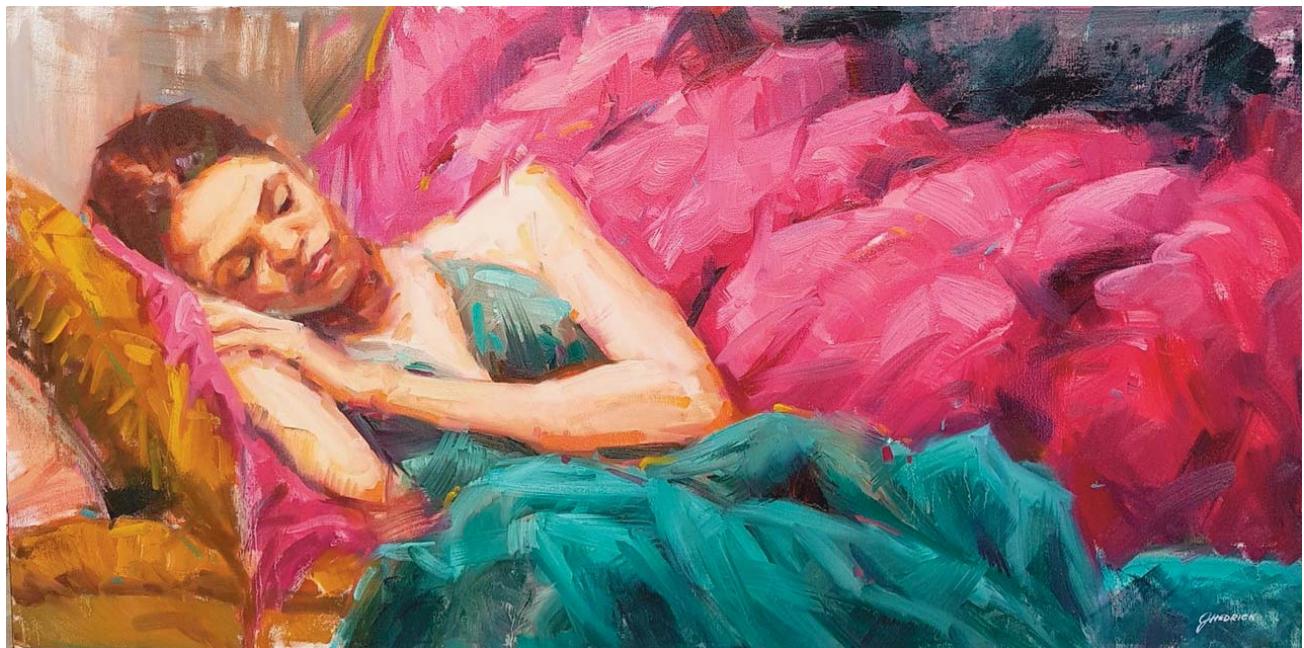
thing again – almost a hobby. I started to feel disconnected, and, although I was lucky enough to work some great jobs including at an art supply store (DeSerres) and a knitting store (Urban Yarns), I felt as if something was lacking.

Then something caught my attention. A gallery that I was exhibiting in was going up for sale. My husband and I bought RendezVous Art Gallery in downtown Vancouver. More exciting times evolved, but, oddly enough, owning an art gallery killed my art career in the short term – I had no time. Still, the inspiration, drive and exposure gave me everything I needed for later on. I loved so much of that business, and I miss much of it, but when my husband got a job offer to move to the Okanagan, we jumped on the opportunity and have never looked back. We had to sell the business, which was very sad in a way, but a blessing in another way. I now got to spend time really developing skills in areas that I needed to address in myself as an artist.

I began to work more closely with galleries selling my work. I concentrated on finding a style and trying to contain it. I began organizing the back-end of my artwork by actually going on regular photo shoots to build a reserve of painting material. Soon after moving to the Okanagan I was recruited to work in Hambleton Galleries.

Working with then owner Stew Turcotte has to have been one of the most amazing experiences ever. I learned how to appreciate a wider variety of styles; I learned to build a better relationship with clients, and I learned to vary what I can offer. I met so many amazing clients and artists through Stew, including the late Daphne Odjig. I really relished having relationships with people who were as nuts about the realm of art as I was. Stew was not only interested in Canadian art history, he knew everything, and he shared that knowledge with no restrictions. I can't say how grateful I am to have been able to work for him. I feel so lucky that I was able to see him connect so strongly with other people through the love of art. Somehow, I started to feel more myself.

Stew encouraged me to take on a project, called The Face of Kelowna, where I painted portraits of Kelowna residents. I was available to paint one per day for a year. I ended up painting over 250 portraits. There was a final show at Hambleton Galleries, and all proceeds from the sales went directly to the Canadian Mental Health Association. It was one of the best and hardest things I had ever done. I learned more than I ever could have imagined



Top: 'Dreams Come True' 18" x 36" oil on canvas

Above: 'Black and White Portrait Demo for Classes' 14" x 11" oil on panel

through painting that many portraits – not only in the arts sense, but also about my relationship to my own mental health and my relationship to other people. By the time we had the show, three people whom I had painted that year had died from mental illness. It was gut wrenchingly sad.

In particular, one story stands out. I got a message from a young man who suffered from PTSD. He was handsome and had a great face to paint. I messaged back right away and said I would paint his portrait. I didn't know how much it meant to him to have his portrait painted. I treated it the same as I would any other portrait, but his story was enough for me to want to meet him. A couple of months after completing his portrait, I received a lot of FaceBook likes on the painting and thought it seemed odd. Then I found out he had died. I had been hoping to meet him at the art show – I wanted to meet the man behind the face, to understand PTSD in some sense. I wanted to thank him for being so vulnerable with me. Now I couldn't. I got a message from his mother; she told me that she got a call from him one day – he was truly happy and excited. He had said he had been selected to be part of The Face of Kelowna, and also that he had agreed to go into counselling and therapy. I don't know how to feel about this still. I am so happy to have brought him happiness and to have connected with him on some level, but I am devastated. I feel as if I lost someone who was close to me, yet I never actually met him. I think about him a lot. I wonder what our conversation would have been like if I had asked to have a coffee with him. Life is often shorter than we can imagine.

I got pregnant early on in The Face of Kelowna project, and with the stress of pregnancy and the project I decided to quit my job at Hambleton Gallery. Pregnancy, childbirth and raising a baby took a huge toll on my own mental health, and I couldn't work much, except to help Stew out on occasions when he went on vacation. I delved into my own art more than

Study of Leonard Cohen' 11" x 14" oil on canvas



ever. I started teaching in a more serious way, and I started going to many versions of therapy.

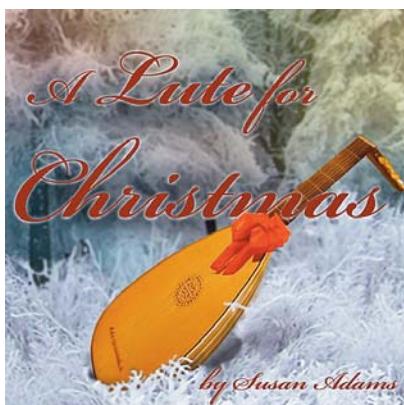
I can't discount therapy in getting out of a pretty serious bout of depression/anxiety, but art was my true salvation. And not just painting, but teaching. I found out that as much as I love painting, I love connecting through teaching art even more. Instead of art being a way of making me feel like an outsider, I found ways to make me connect through my love for it.

My students would learn things and I would get so excited. Teaching energized me instead of making me tired. There is so much mental candy in teaching art to people, and there is a real satisfaction in knowing that they are building skills that will help them through struggles in the future. Making art helps one get to really know oneself. Visual perception opens one to greater awareness on many levels. Having art as a source of mediation, study, release and connection is such a privilege, and being able to share an understanding of art with people who are truly interested in getting to the bottom of it is better than I ever could have imagined.

I have big plans for teaching and sharing art in the future, and I can't wait to share it with those in my community. Between my husband, my daughter and my art, I finally love getting up every morning and embracing connection with those around me.

Art is everything and everything is art. It's how you see the world, and it reflects back how the world sees you. Art is not essential to live, but it is essential for a good life. It is how I exist; it is why I exist: to share art with you.

# GROWING “A LUTE FOR CHRISTMAS”



Top: Susan with Broadwood piano. Photo credit: Bruce Kemp  
 Above: Album cover. Listen to the album [https://www.youtube.com/results?search\\_query=A+lute+for+Christmas](https://www.youtube.com/results?search_query=A+lute+for+Christmas)

## Susan Adams

“There was life here before the shopping malls – before watches that beep and concrete trucks, before vacuum cleaners and dryers, and squealing tires; even before the plastic, whirring telephones and candy bright neon, there were footprints here.” So begins the story of Emily, a very special yew tree.

In the early 1990s an effective cancer medication was developed, and initially it was derived from the bark of yew trees. Although these trees had been protected in Europe for a long time, there was no restriction on their use in the forests of northwestern North America, and a situation arose where the yews were being debarked and the remaining wood was left to deteriorate. Once the community of luthiers became aware of this state of affairs, there was a flurry of activity directed towards harvesting and using the valuable wood.

My husband, Clive Titmuss, was able to obtain some good yew logs, and he set about sawing them into blanks that would be suitable for making lute ribs. The process consisted of taking very thin “pie slices” from the log, so that all of the ribs would be perpendicular to the grain of the tree. Yew wood has some interesting characteristics; for one thing it has a beautiful butterscotch colour with a creamy stripe of wood on the outside. It also has many internal knots, and you don’t really know what’s inside the tree until it is sawn.

Clive selected a promising set of ribs from a particular tree, and he made them into a stunning lute bowl, the rounded back part of the instrument. As I watched this process, along with the many other steps that go into the construction of a successful instrument, it struck me that many people might be interested in the progression from log to lute. A story started to take shape in my mind.

My idea began in the Pacific Northwest forest where the tree had grown. We could tell from the grain lines that this seedling had sprouted hundreds of years ago. What was life like then? Since both Clive and I specialize in playing music written before 1900, it’s pretty common for us to think about the relationship between our time and an earlier one. That caught my imagination, and I saw how I could take the reader back in time by describing the sounds we hear now and then conjuring the older sounds of the forest.

Although “A Lute for Christmas” describes the construction of a musical instrument, it also deals with change and transformation. We must all consume things, and we must all leave a footprint as we move through time.

As a musician I believe that art reflects the best of our experience. It is a



Top left: Neck blank and lute bowl  
Midde: Poster for a live performance  
Above: Susan with Broadwood piano.  
Photo credit: Bruce Kemp  
Top right: Susan and Clive with early piano and guitar



distillation of our culture and viewpoint, with a nod to tradition and an impulse to grow. When I set out to document lute-building, I also ended up writing about the multi-faceted perception of music. This fascinates me. What I'm thinking while playing is probably entirely different from what the listener will infer, yet we have a deep communication. It is similar to the process of learning a piece of music, where I have the privilege of seeing into the creative mind of another person. This is especially true of music, where we rely on a musician to interpret the written map of the piece

so that it can be translated into sound. We can be far away in time and space from a composer, and yet we can understand their creation.

The first performance of "A Lute for Christmas" took place in White Rock, and the description of the concert was really the culmination of the story. It was read by a dear friend, Vancouver actor Anna Hagan, and I dedicated the story to her for her beautiful voice. In 2010 we had the opportunity to record "A Lute for Christmas" at Stu Goldberg Studios in Penticton. Things really came together for that recording, and it was a rewarding experience. We put the story into digital distribution – along with our ten albums of recorded music – and now it is available through digital suppliers such as iTunes, CD Baby, Spotify, Google Music and YouTube Music, to name a few. On the recording, Clive plays the actual lute that inspired the story, and you can see it in the cover photo too.

What started as a tiny seedling long ago became something that can be heard and enjoyed by many people. In our time we have access to an enormous amount of information, some uplifting, some depressing and some of no consequence at all. One thing remains true now, as in Emily's time: we learn as we go.

**Susan Adams** studied piano, harpsichord and early piano at the University of Calgary and the Schola Cantorum in Basel, Switzerland, with grants from the Canada Council. Since moving to BC, she has co-founded Friends of Early Music Studio, and has concentrated on historical performance on early keyboards, both live and recorded on an impressive collection of copies and meticulously-restored antique instruments. Her most recent recording project was performance of works by Beethoven, Field and Haydn on an 1809 Broadwood piano. Teaching and public education play an important role in her work.

You can see more about Susan and Clive on their website, [www.earlymusicstudio.com](http://www.earlymusicstudio.com), and on the EarlyMusicStudio Facebook page. Susan also loves making textiles and you can see her fibre arts at [www.etsy.com/ca/shop/Soodesigns](http://www.etsy.com/ca/shop/Soodesigns).

# COME DANCE WITH ME

## Tanya Vadurova-Bakala



Dance moves me



The excitement and anticipation in my students' eyes of "Will I be chosen for my favourite role in the Nutcracker" or "What fun steps will we learn today" is enough to keep my spirit soaring towards youth and wanting to be around for a long time to keep experiencing the twinkly eyes I see in front of me day after day. To know I am changing their lives, possibly forever, with the memories they are about to gather through their journey at my dance school keeps me going. I think the creation of all the many productions and beautiful ballets are part of a magical world inside me that I am simply expressing by running a dance school. I have always thought of myself as young as opposed to thinking I'm too old for something. I have no thoughts of retirement.

I hop out of bed smiling – assuming a sunny disposition to start the day. I choose to be in a good mood right at wakening. Lots of hugs from children help me stay positive throughout my days. For the last few years I have been practising gratitude for all my blessings. For over a year now, I have been writing out what I'm grateful for every morning (twice a day, morning and night, is ideal). I have made a point of spending precious time every day with myself reflecting on how wonderful my life actually is. Even on bad days when I'm down, or life is tough, I remind myself how blessed I am by writing out all the things and people in my life that I am grateful for. I know for a fact that the state of being I gift myself through this enlightening experience can shift the rest of my day to allow more blessings to come my way. Just feeling true gratitude, though, without the calculating of what you might get out of it, is the key. It is a beautiful state of calm, peace, trust, love, a twinkle in my spirit, and knowing I'm not alone. I suggest you notice the things and people right in front of you, and around you, that are absolutely wonderful. I will not let reaching a more mature age stop me from listening to my heart. If we adopt an attitude that we are too old, we stop creating our lives into something beautiful. I ask, What point is there in working so hard all our lives while we are young, only to later feel too old for so many wonderful life-fulfilling things awaiting us?

I am still dancing at an age when most others would have long retired from this type of career. I choreograph, produce shows, teach, and I can still keep up with the young and spirited dancers in my school. This has taught me that you can still follow your dreams at any age, if you shift from worrying about what may or may not happen to you as you age to feeling in charge of your life, and trusting in your good health. One of the reasons I chose dance as a career is because not only was it my passion, but I believed it would keep me healthy and fit for my whole life. Dancing with focus on good posture,



Left: Feeling all of me  
Right: Tanya in gold



As a young girl, **Tanya Vadurova-Bakala**, received a bursary to train at the National Ballet School in Toronto. She has taught dance in Germany, the Czech Republic and in major Canadian cities such as Toronto and Vancouver. As a professional dancer and soloist in Europe, Tanya danced a variety of styles, ranging from classical to musical theatre. Now residing in Kelowna, Tanya successfully coaches young dancers at her school, the Mission Dance Centre, in hopes of assisting the next generations of dancers to achieve their goals.

Before coming to Kelowna, Tanya's choreographic works were seen at the Montreal Fringe Festival, the Music Hall in Toronto, the Vancouver Kiss Project, the Hamilton Place with the Hamilton Philharmonic Orchestra, McMaster University, and at the Mayor's Gala '97 at the Living Arts Centre in Mississauga. It is because of Tanya Vadurova's own professional training and experiences that she can teach and encourage others to follow their dream. Her years of hard work and, too often, struggling to make a living by becoming a professional dancer has taught her how to lead and help others to overcome their own hurdles on their journey. Tanya Vadurova provides leadership, understanding, compassion and inspiration to students and professionals alike who seek her out.

<http://missiondancecentre.com/>

flexibility and strength definitely leads to keeping one's body feeling youthful longer. The reason it helps so much is that aging doesn't just happen on the surface of your face and neck, but also in the quality of the way you move your body. When you walk, do you have the energy of vibrancy and youth, or do you convey lethargy and pain? Your movements often convey more about your age than your appearance does. Dance keeps you limber and fit and capable of radiating the energy of

someone who has no physical limitations set in place by age. By retraining the body as well as the mind, you can recapture the energy of youth and banish the notion that you are any less capable or desirable than you were when you were younger. Age itself is not the problem; it is our thoughts and beliefs about aging that hold us back.

I suggest that what you believe about aging is one of the most influential factors that affects the way you age. The mindset of a dancer is to constantly challenge oneself and always work towards a better you. I am still learning and never feel that I've completed my journey and learned all there is to know. Every day, I take another step towards being the person I wish to become. I listen to the inner voice of my passion, and go forward boldly. The number of years you've lived doesn't represent what you can or can't do – it's just an arbitrary number. Dance has taught me to never let age hold me back, and it can be your mentor too. Believe in yourself and your ability to keep living your life to the fullest; carry out the work needed to make your dreams a reality. No matter how old you are, it is always the right time to start if you decide it is.

Keep believing in yourself and in your purpose. Because of your experience you are now so good at so many things; you have so much to offer and share. You can choose to share your spirit with others in your age generation or with younger individuals, but now is the time to really get going and fulfill your purpose of why you even came here. Just share and others will benefit from your experiences, successes and challenges. How you responded and solved challenges is what we now need to pass on to the next generations, so they will want to use their lives to reach happiness and personal success early in life, and be able to share that with others for years to come as they age gracefully and with purpose. We don't want history to repeat and have another generation working all their lives only to feel discarded by society as they age. Any generation has the power to stop this negativity – let's make it start with ours. Let your body show you how. "Come dance with me."

# A DIFFERENT VIEW OF OUR UNIVERSE

**THE WRITERS' GROUP OF WEST KELOWNA:**

## **Mel Kazinoff**



We have explored the astronomical sides of our writers, so now let's look at the astrological aspects. Many say astronomy is real, factual, scientific, whereas astrology is fantasy, fiction and imagination. So what is writing? Maybe we start with facts and science, then weave in some fantasy and imagination. Without going deeply into the twelve signs, let's just look at the four main divisions: Fire, Earth, Air and Water signs. What are the accepted traits of each division?

**Fire: Aries, Leo, Sagittarius**

The Fire signs tend to be passionate, dynamic and temperamental – a good start for a writer, don't you think? Easy to anger, but quick to forgive. Adventurous, energetic and inspirational – those work well. Intelligent, creative and ready for action. This sign sounds like the ideal writer. Can the other signs be as good as this?

**Earth: Taurus, Virgo, Capricorn**

These people are grounded, down to earth – this can be pretty useful when writing. Conservative, realistic and, sometimes, quite emotional – good stuff. Connected to reality, they are practical, loyal and stable. Maybe I was too quick to dismiss the other signs. These Earth guys sound like they have a great base to write from.

**Air: Gemini, Libra, Aquarius**

Now we see rational, social and communicative people – communication? Isn't that writing stuff? I think so. They are thinkers. Intellectual, analytical and communicative – perfect traits for a writer. They love social gatherings and good books – yes, perfect.

**Water: Cancer, Scorpio, Pisces**

Emotional, sensitive, intuitive and mysterious – I sure can use a whole lot of that when I write. Here we have a love of deep conversation and intimacy – a serious writer who, through his or her books, sits right beside you in your living room. What more could you ask for?

So my conclusion is that anyone can make a great writer. Call on your inner sign and set it free. Let its words race across your pages as you trust in the universe.

Now let's see what the writers of Westbank have to share with us in this issue.



## Lorraine Robinson

Lorraine Robinson is a new face to share with you. She joined the group in September, and shared her philosophy:

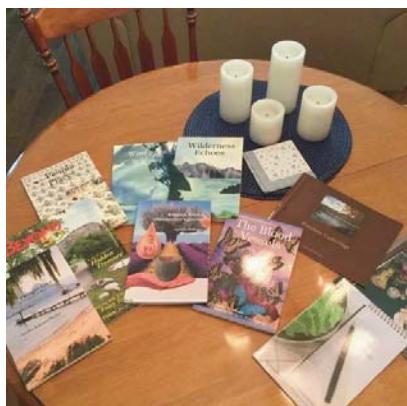
“Write or die. Write or go mad. Write. At 46, alone for the first time in my life, I decided I no longer needed to hide despite my father’s words to me, ‘Never write what you don’t want the world to know. What goes on in this house stays in this house.’

“The deaths of my husband, my brother, my grandson and my daughter’s suicide, all within months of each other, forced me to turn to writing to try and make sense. I picked up a pen. Of the four deaths, that of my daughter gnawed most at my soul. So I wrote.

“First, doing research at the college library for out of town students gave me a sense of purpose. Three professors (of Sociology, English and History) encouraged me to take courses. Creative Writing was a bonus, and, at age of 48, I entered college. My writing was enhanced with workshops, summer schools, an intensive by Joan Bodger (now deceased), and three online semesters with Susan Musgrave, our prominent woman Canadian Writer.

“Encouraged by the wonder and joy of writing, I entered a few contests. I was published first in Room (formerly Room of One’s Own, v. 21 / 2), which specializes in stories of women by women, and I was invited to read my poetry on CBC. Michael Enright introduced me, and I read a poem called *Reconciliation*, and again a piece called *Widow’s Weeds*. *The Blood Vessels* is a self-published memoir tracing five generations of related women, and *Twilight Love* is a true story of never too late.

“Life is joyfully enhanced belonging to the West Kelowna’s Writer Group. Thank you.”



Lorraine's published books

## WOMAN’S PLIGHT

### BREAKING THE LAW IN THE SIXTIES

Lorraine Robinson

Knots untangle from a Keloid Scar and the thread begins to unravel. I know the key to the scar of my heart. Gently the door is opened. I will steer my red canoe through those troubled waters and see with a clear eye.

Up through the dredge and drudge of pain dressed in shame of the game, the stamen of the four-petal lotus reaps and weeps with tears of clarification. Oh thank you, I now unlock my spirit nature to expose the ritual played to meet the needs of a young fertile mother who knew that the weight on her soul and body of four children born was plenteous.

The procedure endured, back in the day, after much pleading and wedeling was an official document signed by two doctors and a psychiatrist to commit one to being an unfit mother. She must submit to the rules. Weary to birth more.

First, the secret trip in the dark of night on the Greyhound Bus to another town. The Catholic hospital hierarchy at home refused such despicable unlawful procedures. There was a babysitter hired for four children, a

daughter, twin sons and a third son, a husband out of town on his usual weekly Kelly Douglas wholesale drummer route. A young mother set out to deliver the official letter for signature with trembling hand.

This maneuver was a long awaited imperative ritual any woman must take in those years, but with less than a five minute sit with the psychiatrist as he perused the document, looked over the top of his glasses, then quickly signed and handed it back. When trying to explain, his retort was, I can read. On that I retraced the steps home to wait in line for the release to a life of no monthly copious blood or fear of further fecundity.

The day arrived. I lay on the operating table beginning the journey into blackness and when asked, by the officiating medical staff, as I was sinking, my opinion on people who did this type of surgery, I heard my voice answer, "You probably all hate your mothers." That brought gales of macho laughter.

I was immobilized, but alert and heard the strange noise of a knife cutting a roast. The sawing of meat. Me? Yes. I am aware. Then pain of the universe sliced through the root of my uterus and I knew the indelible moment forever. I lay paralyzed. An image appeared and stayed with me until I describe it to you now, a four-petal lotus with the stamens removed.

I knew immediately. The manifestation represented symbolically my Four Children. Now their mother could no longer produce siblings.

But, there was a new birth generated in the moment. I was reborn. This moment enhanced a rejuvenated spiritual self. That became the blessing of the penetrating pain and awareness. I was there. I witnessed the depth of human agony. I became one with the knowing we do survive extreme force of the unimaginable. We are resilient.

With original fortitude I pulled myself out of the despotic state with a scar of shame on my heart. I, a mother, in her thirties paddled through the hierarchy of medical rule, religious denigration, and country law to answer the needs required for individual female salvation.

The image of the lotus, without knowing then became a guide in much of my life as I pursued numerous avenues, one golden thread leading to another until, once more I followed that thread that led me to writing my stories online with other like minded women and received encouragement. Now I sit before you opening petals of my life as my canoe slides into this bay of calm waters.

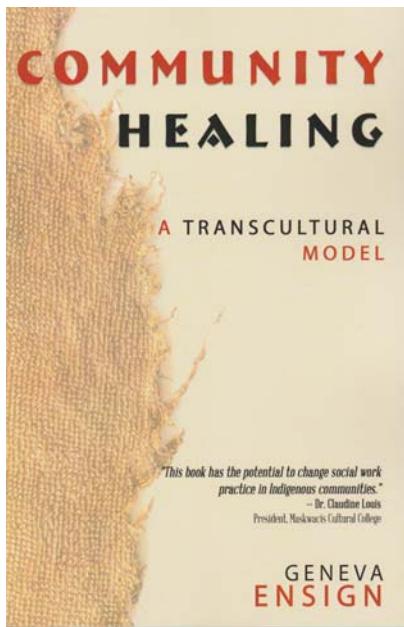
On a second thought, that lily has shadowed me, or I it, through other sacred moments to this day.

All my relations.

## Geneva Ensign

In sporting events there is such a thing as the MVP - The Most Valuable Player. This refers to the standout player in a particular game. Why not apply this to our writers?

The MVP for this quarter is Geneva Ensign who launched her spectacular book, *Community Healing: A Transcultural Model*. We've mentioned this



Top: Geneva Ensign

Above: Cover for Geneva's new book

book before but the cover changed as the publishers readied for launch.

The book has had two launches, each attended by many people from local and indigenous communities, including band chiefs and political figures.

Geneva continues to write and shares two poems she has written.

## WE KNOW NOTHING UNTIL

Two old psychics  
Together  
Discuss  
Interesting  
Theories,  
Material garnered from  
Sources  
Unknown  
Or surmised.

Funny, how  
Much we assume  
And how little  
We know  
For sure.

Yet forever  
We live  
Unknowingly  
Until  
The heart  
Is enlightened,  
Informed and  
Infused  
By love and  
By light  
From the Soul.

## THE RAVEN PLAYS

Lone,  
Against the sky,  
The raven plays,  
Surfing the crest of  
Unseen waves.  
As do I.

I am not as trusting,  
Yet, as he,  
Nor skilled,  
Falling heavily  
From sky to  
To earth,  
Again and again.  
Hurt, broken.  
There I rest,  
Until  
Re-energized by  
Mother earth and Spirit,  
I rise to  
Soar again on  
Unseen winds  
And waves.

Our group is very proud. CHBC (our local television station) wants to interview Geneva and to talk with all the writing group.

On Monday, November 5<sup>th</sup> at 10.00AM, they come. We talk. The camera rolls and we are captured for posterity. Geneva's book is front and centre. Is writing worth the effort. We all think so.

## Ede Schult

And finally we hear from Ede Schult once again. It is WW2 and the Russian army is closing fast. Death and terror is everywhere and an eight year old girl experiences it all. Now, in her eighties, she must experience it again in order to write it down, but she resists. She doesn't want to remember. Far easier to write of farms and cooking and humorous animals. The younger members of her family are asking, no, demanding, "What happened back then Tante Edeltraud?" But she doesn't want to remember even though she knows she must. Some day.



That day starts now.  
 Thunder rolls  
 Frost eats through bones  
 The earth heaves.  
 Senta, the dog, is terrified. He wants to be with me in my bed  
 Where I dream about grasses that sway in the light.

Huddled together women pray, wring their hands,  
 Endless hissing sounds, thundering ground, shattering explosions.  
 The earth trembles. Hell is chased from one side to the other.  
 I cry. My doggy is not allowed to come with me into my world,  
 To the slough where the frog population gather, kiss and touch  
 each other.  
 They sing their songs.

I am torn away from my friend, made to return to women, children,  
 gas masks and fear.  
 Now the air is still. Our house holds its breath.  
 The heavy outside door has red splinters and long scratched holes.  
 Two.

Death to the loser  
 But only those who could not walk,  
 Go any further, too young, too slow.  
 Like Wilhelm the man.

He was the village idiot  
 Told the people  
 To beware of God who takes revenge  
 For the sins of their fathers.  
 It did him no good  
 To be on God's side  
 He was the first one to die.

Senta's gut was splashed at the door  
 While I lay in my bed, I dreamed up my meadow  
 Where ladybugs flew perfect circles  
 And the grasses swayed in the light.

Why did the people pray? Why did they not leave  
 Before the front came close? Why pray at all?  
 Does anybody listen when they butcher each other?  
 How can God, any God, decide who shall live and who dies?  
 Why?  
 Mutti, why did you pray? To whom?  
 Why was Senta not allowed to be with us, in our house?

He was only a dog!  
 Left outside among murderers, thieves, whores  
 And they were not allowed under the same roof with God's people.  
 That's what they said to us children.

The boys had to stay to protect the Vaterland.  
 Siegfried, the oldest, wanted to stay with his friends, die with them.  
 They were only fourteen, the oldest fifteen.  
 Mutti, you should have left him. His Soul stayed behind.  
 He was not able to dream up a meadow where he might have  
 healed his wounds  
 From the loss of his friends. He could not talk about the horrors he  
 saw,  
 Did not see the grasses sway in the light.

Senta is gone, the boys, also the men who recruited the children  
 To stick "round things" on enemy tanks.  
 Siegfried died.

Now I live in a land of plenty, I dance and drink wine at a party:  
 Swing along, uplada, uplada.  
 Till a loud voice beside me overtones my jolly good singing.  
 He brags about bravery, fighters and "we could have beaten them  
 all .... If ...."

Numb, I stare at him. His hands turn into paws,  
 His claws scratch at his wine glass .... They drip ....  
 The white cloth on the table slowly turns red.

**Paddling Together  
Towards Reconciliation  
Part 6**

# THE LAUNCH OF “OUR SPIRITS ALIGNED”



## Karen Close

Early in 2018, JoAnn Restoule approached me with a proposal to include stories from members of her community reaching out to expand understanding of Reconciliation. To be a sage and to be an Elder have always seemed fundamentally similar to me, and I admire the creative spirit that enlivens Indigenous ceremonies and rituals. In our 25th issue JoAnn’s article “Paddling Together Towards Reconciliation” initiated the Journal’s intention to link hands with Indigenous Elders as our country unites along the path of Reconciliation. In issues 26 and 27 we continued to present stories of deepening self awareness, creative expression and reconciliation. The launch of *Our Spirits Aligned*, a compilation of these stories, was a day of celebration. I felt wisdom come alive with creative spirit.

Rituals and art pieces, enriched by traditional myths, songs, dance, masks, regalia and creative exchange, is the bedrock of community among Indigenous cultures. On this day of celebration I felt that spirit echoed in all I witnessed. Creative exchange, respect for Elders and the wisdom of intergenerational mentoring gives strength, brings unity and creates culture.

The street filled with dancers





Top: two poles

Above: the symbolism is strong

The day began with the unveiling of two poles. Mentored by an elder master carver, two young men had carved poles to stand in front of the Comox Valley Art Gallery on a street intersection adjacent to the community library. Host of the event, and author of the introduction to *Our Spirits Aligned*, Wedlidi Speck noted the placement of the poles on a route bridging the town's centres of knowledge and art, the roots of wisdom. He pointed out how creative expressions give concrete enduring form to wisdom. Poles have a long tradition in Indigenous culture.

The importance of symbols to give form to meaning is powerful. One image that stays with me from that morning is the dancers, happy to welcome the new birthing, circling the poles and offering eagle down to bless the place as they kissed the poles. The down swirled in a sacred circle of understanding and coming together. For Indigenous cultures eagles convey the powers and messages of the spirit; the eagle symbolizes man's connection to the divine because it flies higher than any other bird.

Restoring the bond between the natural world and our own inner natures is embedded in Indigenous culture. Recent studies in non-indigenous Western culture suggest that reconnecting to nature can increase one's sense of vitality, promote a sense of healing, provide inspiration, stimulate self-awareness, decrease pain and stress, support the individuation process and contribute to the resolution of trauma. The path towards reconciliation has many teachings to share.

It was a cold morning, but the intersection vibrated with barefoot dancers, chanting and gathering the many spectators to join in honouring these new cultural monuments unveiled that morning. Dance has such power to unite.

Later in the day a large crowd gathered in the K'omoks Big House to particularly honour the achievement of *Our Spirits Aligned*. Each of the contributors read passages from what they had written in the book. Contributor James Quatell began with a quote from his words: "Having witnessed and experienced the pain of our country's history, I feel that reconciliation starts with me. As I bring myself back into balance, stepping into my true self, I ask the Creator, God, to guide me. In doing so I find that I can speak my truth in a way that brings our hearts together in truth, understanding and reconciliation." James' address recalled the pain of his past, but acknowledged how reflection and then writing his story has helped him reframe his experience and find its lessons for his way forward into the future. Sharing is healing.

Contributors to this book's message had all participated in an aboriginal healing model created by Kathi Camilleri, called *The Village*. Kathi explained:

"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 healing movement has grown and is growing still. So many people from all walks of life are understanding our painful past and becoming a part of the healing movement. We have facilitated *Building*



Top Big House ceremony. I was honoured to be invited to join the Elders seated in the K'omoks Big House for the launch. (L to R: James Quatell, Kathi Camilleri Dan Billy, Alberta Billy, Susan Landell, David Somerville, Karen Close, Mary Everson, JoAnn Restoule, Meredith Martin). All have articles in past issues of the Journal (17, 26, 27)

Above: A dance of union

*Bridges through Understanding the Village Workshop© experiences across Canada and the United States.*

"Reconciliation means different things to different people. The Elders I am blessed to have had guide me, say that everyone is imbued with unique gifts. We are all medicine. Reconciliation to me means to bring our unique gifts together to change the world to make it a better place for our children, grandchildren and great-grandchildren to come. We must understand the truth of this country's past, heal together and make sure the things that caused such trauma never ever happen again."

While we were gathered in the Comox Valley Big House, on Saturday October 27th, to unite in celebration of our efforts to align Canadian spirits and move forward with forgiveness and love, a horrendous act of racism, violence and division was being perpetrated in the country across our border. In that country a re-awakening of past resentments and hate is being fed in contrast to a call for reconciliation. As I watched and listened to the panel of Elders and the group gathered, I felt deeply proud to be Canadian. In the words of Elder David Somerville, "Reconciliation is about Listening, Learning and Transforming." He encouraged peace, not division. "We are all medicine" when we gather with common purpose and respect.

Since ancient times, sages have encouraged us to understand the importance of dance. In the 14th century, the Persian poet Hafiz-e wrote:

Every  
Child  
Has known God,  
Not the God of names,  
Nor the God of don'ts,  
Nor the God who never does  
Anything weird,  
But the God who knows only four words  
And keeps repeating them, saying:  
"Come dance with Me."  
Come  
Dance.

*Sage-ing With Creative Spirit, Grace and Gratitude* is proud to present stories that urge unity and respect for everyone's voice and the harmony that *Our Spirits Aligned* can bring.

## TAKING TIME FOR ART IN THE OKANAGAN:

# PADDLING TO RECONCILIATION



### Suzanne Chavarie

"When the present does not recognize the wrongs of the past, the future takes its revenge. For that reason, we must never, never turn away from the opportunity of confronting history together – the opportunity to right historical wrong."

Governor General Michelle Jean at relaunch of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada, October 2009

The Central Okanagan Teachers' Association partnered with Westbank First Nation and offered some incredible professional development this year. Together they offered a three day Indigenous Summit that included being invited onto their land to learn about Indigenous traditions and ways of knowing. The goal of the summit was to help educators feel comfortable indigenizing and incorporating Aboriginal world-views and local ways into school culture. I was privileged to attend this offering.

The Indigenous Summit was about building an active and healthy intercultural community to support each other's ongoing efforts to live Truth and Reconciliation in our classrooms, to share our stories and truths so as to strengthen our understanding of each other, to cross boundaries of awareness, and to create new ways of thinking and doing in schools.

The first day focus, "What does reconciliation look like in education," started with a panel of Westbank First Nation Elders and Knowledge Keepers who blessed the land we were on and then brought us together through circle discussions to talk about the "how to" of reconciliation.

Later we were introduced to two remarkable keynote speakers. Ashley Callingbull was chosen as Miss Canada in 2010 and she won the title Miss Universe in 2015. She was the first Indigenous Canadian woman to win the title. She is a Canadian activist for First Nations rights and environmental causes in Canada, and she has a powerful survivor story to share. Cowboy Smithx is a Blackfoot filmmaker from the Piikani Nation in southern Alberta, and he too has a powerful life story to share. I recommend that you Google them.

While at the summit, I had the opportunity to participate in *The Blanket Exercise*, which was created in 1996 by the Aboriginal Rights Coalition working with Indigenous Elders and teachers to develop an interactive way of learning the history most Canadians are never taught. *The Blanket Exercise* has since been offered thousands of times, and the fourth edition of its printing was released in 2016. The exercise is based on participatory popular education methodology. The goal is to build understanding about our shared history as Indigenous and non-Indigenous peoples in Canada by walking

The Indigenous Summit





Top: Hoop Dancing  
Above: Shoulder to shoulder

through the stories of pre-contact, treaty making, colonization and resistance. Everyone is actively involved as they step onto the blankets that represent land, and into the role of First Nations, Inuit and, later, Métis peoples. By engaging on an emotional and intellectual level, the experience of *The Blanket Exercise* effectively educates and increases empathy. My experience of participating in this exercise brought the truth of Indigenous history to life for me. I stood on the blankets, representing the land, spread out on the gym floor. I was invited to step onto them as an “Indigenous person.” I then stood there while a narra-

tor and facilitator, playing a European, began to walk us through a script. I was asked to leave the blanket when Scroll 10 was read. For the exercise each of us was given a role through the handing out of cards. My card said that I was a child going to residential school and leaving my community.

The exercise taught me about Scroll 10 Residential Schools. I learned that from the mid-1800s until the 1900s, the federal government took First Nations, Inuit and Métis children from their homes and communities, and put them into boarding schools that were run by churches. The official partnership between the federal government and the churches ended in the 1970s, but some churches continued to operate schools until the 1990s. First Nations parents didn’t have a choice about this, and neither did their children. Sometimes the police arrived to take a child away. These schools were often very far away from the child’s home, and they had to stay at them all or most of their education years. Children were not allowed to speak their own language, and were punished if they did. Often children weren’t given enough food. The last residential school closed in 1996 (*Youth Blanket Exercise, BC Edition*. KAIROS Canada, 2016. [www.kairosblanketexercise.org](http://www.kairosblanketexercise.org)).

As I left the blanket I felt as an Indigenous child might, and moved back to my chair on the other side of the circle. I was overtaken with emotion, and shed tears mixed with anger and guilt for my new insight of what we as Canadians have to work through for true reconciliation to happen. This experience gave me a greater understanding of my historical relationship as a Canadian with Indigenous people, and left me with the questions, “Where are we now, and where can we go from here? What can I do to build safer spaces for Indigenous children and their families?”

On the second day the focus was “How to indigenize the curriculum.” We started with a blessing of the land we were on, and then a demonstration of Hoop Dancing by Jacob Pratt. It was very powerful to witness. The day had



Top: Paddling to Reconciliation

Above: We made these as a keepsake to remember our paddling

many elective sessions to sign up for and I chose to spend a full day in a visual storytelling workshop facilitated by Okanagan artist Lee Claremont, who shared a wealth of information.

On the third day the focus was all about building an active and healthy intercultural community to support each others' ongoing efforts to live Truth and Reconciliation in our educational practices. We met by the shores of Okanagan Lake, on a Westbank First Nation beach, where we shared stories and truths to strengthen our understanding of each other. Our exchanges crossed boundaries of awareness, and shared new ways of thinking and doing in schools. We then gathered for an educational water ceremony to help support Indigenous cultural training for teachers and support staff.

The water ceremony, led by Chief Roxanne Findley, was a very powerful experience for me. We were invited to each bless Okanagan Lake, and each was given a cup of water from Glen Canyon Falls and some sacred tobacco while standing shoulder to shoulder.

With a deeper understanding and knowledge, we emptied our cups of water and sprinkled the sacred tobacco.

After the water ceremony "the gathering of the canoes" happened. I came to understand how it promotes healing, reconciliation and respect for Indigenous host nations. I had the opportunity to paddle on the lake in one of the canoes. It was an honour to be a part of this gathering. It really felt as though we were building an active and healthy intercultural community to support each others' ongoing efforts to live Truth and Reconciliation in Education. Pulling together recognizes the past, and that means we talk about it openly and honestly and acknowledge that those things have happened, and then build relationships to go forward in a better way. Once back on shore we cleaned the canoes together.

Finally we all came together at Sensisusten Pavillion for a Community Salmon Feast and took time for reflection. During that time I felt I had indeed truly connected with a deeper understanding of the Truths in Reconciliation and how we all have a part in changing what tomorrow can mean.

I would also like to acknowledge and thank Chief Roxanne Lindley of the Westbank First Nation and to the other people who made the summit possible. It was the most powerful professional development that I have attended to date.

Paddling Forward! Catch my smile - Suzanne

**Suzanne Chavarie** is an oncall StrongStart Facilitator for School District 23 (Central Okanagan). She is passionate about promoting the StrongStart Centres within the board's communities from Lake Country to Peachland.

# WHEN STIRRED SOUL WHISPERS, POETRY FLOWS



## DEMENIA

Hardarshan Singh Valia

After onset of fall  
Leaves of memories  
Plucked from the arteries  
Hardened, dislocated  
Lost their familiar form.

The body devoid  
Of elegance and dignity  
Eyes unblinking, lips dried  
Heart gave up emotions  
And silence became the norm.

Searching for the fingers of setting Sun  
She extended her left arm  
A faded tattoo of "Kathy loves John"  
Engraved next to a heart and an arrow  
Gently rose to guide her through the  
impending storm.

## Hardarshan Singh Valia

"I write because all your life YOU wrote for me. Thank you to all the sages from different walks of life who have dispensed their knowledge since the dawn of civilization."

One day I heard on National Public Radio (NPR) a news item about a physician who helped residents of a housing project in Washington DC. The blanket of Alzheimer's had nearly covered his existence. It made me wonder how this noble person must be navigating his own journey during his advanced stage of Alzheimer's. I imagined that his initial love of helping residents, which had laid his initial course, must now be providing light during his own journey into Alzheimer's disease. The tattoo concept was ingrained in my brain when, a long time ago, I saw the movie *Buena Vista Social Club*, where the female singer sang under a tree where the bark was engraved with an image of a heart and an arrow. I combined the two images into my poem.

**Hardarshan Singh Valia, PhD**, is a scientist deeply moved by the experience of life.

"I sway to the song of earth, recite its magical verses, and sprinkle its blessing to all. I have contributed mostly to science journals and science books. I am a member of the Society of Children's Book Writers & Illustrators (SCBWI), Poetry Society of Indiana, Indiana Writers' Consortium, Magic Hour Writers Group, and Write on Hoosiers. I have published stories, essays and poems in magazines and books (e.g., *Diamonds – 75 Years of Indiana Poetry – An ISFPC Anthology*, 2017; *A Magic Hour Family Christmas*, 2015; *Hoosier Horizon*, 2016; and *Undeniably Indiana*, published by Indiana University Press in 2016). Other venues include Huffington Post, NWI Times, Urthona, Hub, Bitterroot, Iron & Steel Technology, Sikhnet, Sikhchic, and Sikh Review.

"I do not let the eye of a tragedy haunt me or others around me for a longer time. I do this by closing the preying eyes, eyes that keep on haunting the survivors, relatives, acquaintances and people with consciousness, through writing about these tragedies with a message of redeeming value. I have found writing to bring peace within which, in turn, helps me navigate my passage through occasional storms that swirl around."

# GIVING VOICE TO AGE

**Penn Kemp**

## Double Vision, i

Age is the phase for integration as we enter the violet sphere, embracing shadows in whatever form they appear, welcoming all. We wear our lives on our faces, to be read.

We have stood in bright glittering sunshine long enough. We have given to the world what the world required. Now we inquire what we ourselves need to feel complete.

We enter understanding, standing under all we have done, all we are. We rest in the full spectrum of fulfilment, scanning the span of a moment's totality. Time out of time expands

to include our whole life, with its possibilities realized or still potential, yet to be enacted, expended to the rest remaining to us, doubling to manifest or stay outstanding as life allows.

Now is when to remember just who we entered this world to become. To gather, to recollect, to recall, to weave into a basket of plenty and pass our basket of us as bequest on, nest for the next.

None of our history is lost. It lives in the present as presence. We are the legacy we leave and that which we've received, stretching back over generations. We hold in our palms the prints

of past, present and unknown epochs to come. What brings us to wisdom, this transmission of all we are? Our grandchildren might hear what our offspring may not yet have learned.

For our wisdom to ripen, we need shelter, a place that respects us so we may continue to live the love that is antidote to fear, free of want. Where we can reflect upon, reflect

back gleams of insight gleaned from living well, unhampered. May we listen to our body. Despite the indignities our flesh is heir to, we attend to aches in organs hitherto unknown.

## Double Vision, ii

Now we understand why old folks walk as they do, not from choice, but because knees don't bend and ankles tend to give way. We see our parents in the mirror and marvel at

the flight of time, knowing that inside we feel thirty or forty max, on good days. We know the limits our younger selves blithely ignored, growing up, growing over the lump in our heart.

As we enter elderhood, may we burn up rather than rust away, till we are entirely retread, ready for whatever awaits. Retired, may we try again, treating ourselves as well as we need be treated.

May our inner weather be sun-dappled no matter what. May we recognize in the mirror the others that we were, as we are. May we elders be seen as lineage-holders, holding the mirror for the next generation down the line and on. May we be heard.



**Penn Kemp** is a London, Ontario performance poet, activist and playwright, and has been giving creativity workshops, teaching and performing her poetry since 1966. In 2009-10 she was a Canada Council Writer-in-Residence for Western University in London Ontario and in 2015 Penn was Creative Age London's Writer-in-Residence.

Penn first published these poems in *Cautionary Tales: Giving Voice to the Elders* (2015) for the League of Canadian Poets Feminist Caucus Archives.

Photo taken by Bernarda Norwood

# THE SPACE BETWEEN

**Antoinette Voûte Roeder**

## Grocery List

The time came  
when some words  
had dumped their content.

He'd come home  
with something else  
or maybe nothing at all.

He still liked  
to go to market  
so she made it easy,  
drew a little picture  
next to every item.

So he shopped  
list in hand and still  
he'd leave something out.

Then she'd work  
around it, improvise  
a meal he'd soon  
forget.

Think of  
the love.

Think of  
the loss.

## Same

In the period  
of an hour or less  
she asks the same question  
three times over in  
the very same words.

It is as if  
her synapses  
have dropped into  
a track that won't  
let go and when  
she tries to find another  
gravity prevails  
dragging her right back.

She clings  
to the familiar. Beyond  
lies no-man's land  
where words mean less  
than nothing.

## Observations in a Time of Dying

This thin time  
delicate membrane  
that life has become

Through it we experience  
life's borrowed nature  
our gradual stepping back  
from the fray.

What remains is  
a filament, fine thread,  
diminishing flame  
burning cleaner  
falling back  
to its source.

For Paul, For Deanie, From Antoinette



**Antoinette Voûte Roeder** was born in The Netherlands. Her first exposure to poetry was in high school in New Mexico. She was bitten by the poetry bug and, though her degrees are in music, she never stopped writing. Antoinette has five volumes of poetry in print, all of which are available at Audrey's Books in Edmonton and from the author. She has been published in journals, magazines, newspapers, anthologies and online. These selections are from her most recent collection *The Space Between*. She is a spiritual director, and facilitates retreats in the area of writing, spirituality and mysticism. She is passionate about the Sacred, music, people and the earth.

# FRAME OF MIND

## Laura Draycott



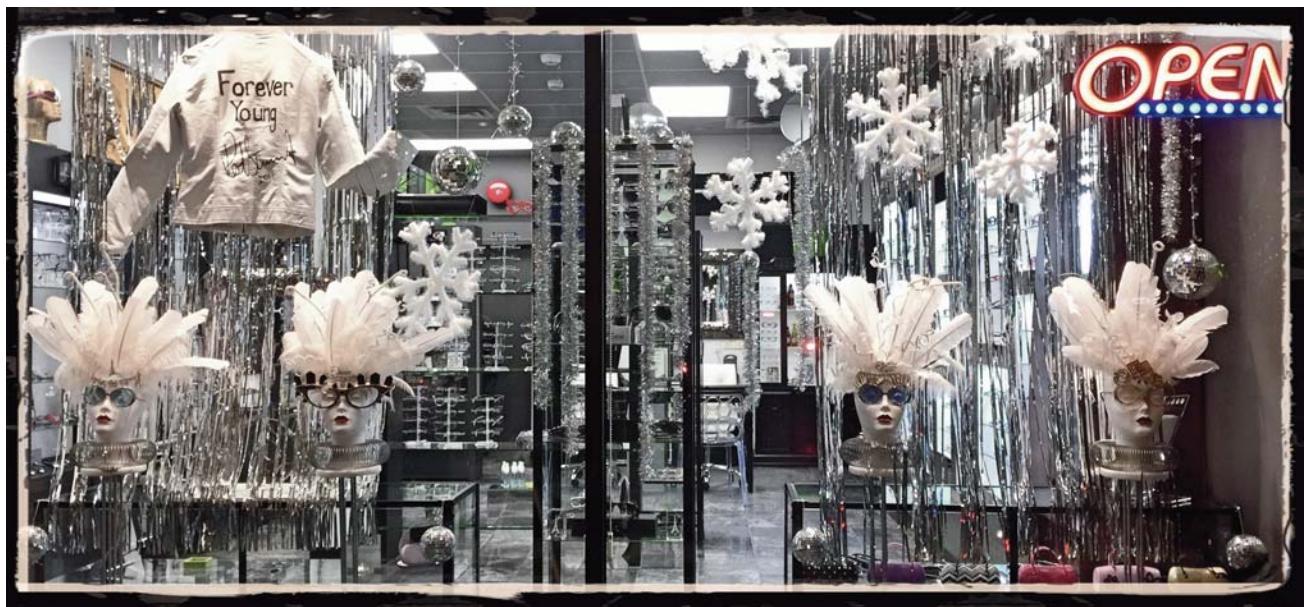
I met Karen when she came into *Wink I Wear* looking for new glasses. I was abuzz that day because I had tickets to see Sir Rod Stewart perform that night. I had just graffitied “FOREVER YOUNG” in bold black Sharpie across the back of my favorite white leather jacket in hopes of an autograph. Surely a middle-aged woman in a white leather jacket with one of his most popular songs written on the back would do the trick.

Karen enjoyed my enthusiasm and responded, “You’ve got the creative spirit that will keep you forever young. You take so much care with choosing the glass frames in your store and look at your displays.” Next she asked if I would contribute an article to *Sage-ing*. Looking at her website I was unsure that I, and what I do for a living, was in line with the message of the Journal and the creative souls who contribute to it. However, after reflection, I could not pass on a publication filled with gifted artists with imagination and an eye for detail; perhaps I did fit in as “The Framer”.

As a licensed Optician, I sell eyeglasses, the artwork is other people’s faces. My customers are a canvas for creative expression and it is a collaboration to find the perfect piece to showcase who they are, or how they wish to portray themselves. The wonderful thing is, you can change the look of a face and the attitude of a person simply by putting on a different pair of eyeglasses. I want to know how a frame makes customers feel, not simply how it looks. Eyewear can portray a mood; are you trying to look smarter, feel happier, sexier, or funnier. Whatever your desire is, the right pair of glasses can make you feel this way, and make others believe what you project.

In my years of optical experience I’ve observed that many customers are

“FOREVER YOUNG” window





Be Who You Imagine

overly critical about their faces. Personally, my once taut, oval face is gradually morphing into a rippled rectangle as I careen through my 50's. My eyes that used to be able to thread a needle, now struggle to see the dark hair that has been sprouting from my chin for the past 2 weeks. Just like any other graceful ager, I deal with these day-to-day changes and find acceptance, peace, or just some great camouflage. My ultimate ally and best makeup secret is my personal collection of eyewear. I have a pair for almost every mood or occasion. I tend toward choosing interesting shapes and textures, whereas I have some customers who find a shape that they love and get it in every colour.

My greatest visual aid is viewing the world through high quality prescription lenses. I've tried almost every lens on the market, and I have learned that skimping on the quality of the lenses deprives me of seeing the world clearly. I want to see every detail life has to offer in the greatest clarity technology can create for me. Personally, my eyes are my most important assets; I'd rather lose a limb than be without vision. Philosophically, having a business vision, based on vision was the basis of this little optical boutique I designed, created and opened at the youthful age of 48. Now 6 years later, it is my passion. I strive to bring joy and newness to our customers, the community, but also to myself. I also get to shop the world for fabulous eyeglasses; how great is that. As Karen noticed art and creative expression is also displayed through our window displays. I love taking an unusual idea and running with it. I've created window displays out of recycling, seasonal items like brooms and fly swatters, and the latest one - our "FOREVER YOUNG" window featuring the leather jacket signed by Rod Stewart.

Another thing that brings happiness to my life is giving back to our community and to those in need. As an entrepreneur it's not just about having a successful business, but the joy of knowing that we have done something kind, whether it was expected or anonymously. It's not just about a donation of money or product as not everyone has that to give, but the gift of time that is so important. We try our best to balance work with community involvement. We absolutely love where we live and are deeply grateful of the support that has been shown to our small business, and we are happy to return that.

So if you know someone who has worn the same pair of glasses for 10 years and they tell you they feel like they've been in a rut...chances are good they are ready for a small transformation, and changing their glasses is a great start. That's where *Wink I Wear* is pleased to help with not only with your actual vision, but the vision of yourself.

"Create your own visual style let it be unique for yourself and yet identifiable for others." – Orson Welles

<http://winkiwear.ca>

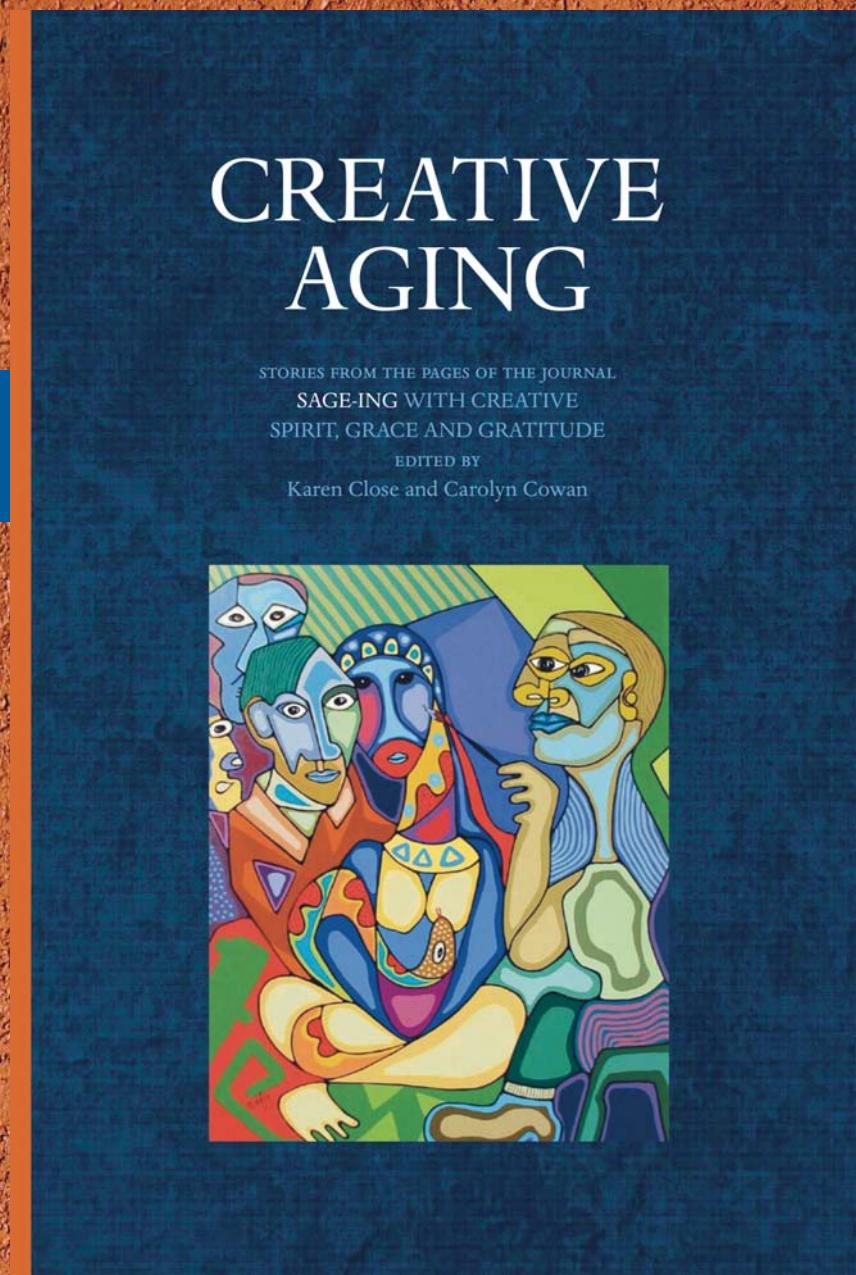
# The Voices of Creative Aging

**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.

# SAGE-ING WITH CREATIVE SPIRIT, GRACE & GRATITUDE

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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.