

A Journal of the Arts & Aging

Edited by Karen Close & Carolyn Cowan

NUMBER 3, SPRING 2012

SAGE-ING

WITH CREATIVE SPIRIT,
GRACE & GRATITUDE



A PUBLICATION OF THE OKANAGAN INSTITUTE

AVAILABLE ONLINE AT www.sageing.ca

A Journal of the Arts & Aging

Edited by Karen Close
& Carolyn Cowan

NUMBER 3, SPRING 2012
ISSN 1920-5848

SAGE-ING WITH CREATIVE SPIRIT, GRACE & GRATITUDE

2. Introduction
3. Dr. X's Lifeline to Creativity and Maturity
5. The Body Seeks Your Creativity
8. Careful Seeking, Part III
10. Walking into Sage-ing
14. From Our Readers
18. Gifts from an Art Form
22. Winter Vision Quest
24. Just Creating Brings Joy
26. Creativity Makes Connections
29. Skin Deep
30. Revisiting Elizabeth Layton
33. Art in Transit
35. Words from the Heart

A PUBLICATION OF THE **Okanagan Institute**

1473 Ethel Street
Kelowna BC V1Y 2X9
www.okanaganinstitute.com

Copyright © 2012 Okanagan Institute.
All rights reserved. No part of this publica-
tion may be reproduced in any form
without the permission of the publisher.

This publication is included as an insert in
Next Okanagan, the quarterly journal of the
Okanagan Media Alliance.

It is also available in full colour for online
viewing and downloading at:

www.sageing.ca

Email sageing4@gmail.com

INTRODUCTION

The spring 2012 journal is our third issue. It's hard to believe six months have passed since we released the first journal. With more letters from our readers and article submissions with photos, the journal is evolving as the organic art form that we originally envisioned. Over time, you may find that a section has been retired and new ones added, as inspiration moves us.

If you prefer to print and read from a hard copy, you can click on the PDF Version link at the bottom of the first page.

This issue is full of wonderful articles and stories. An article by Sandy McNolty, our people person, is the final Part III of an ongoing conversation. It explores the ancient Japanese concept of Wabi Sabi. Wikipedia describes the aesthetic as one of beauty that is imperfect, impermanent and incomplete. The intent of Wabi Sabi is to find perfection in imperfection, thereby increasing one's satisfaction with how things are in life. If the concept of Wabi Sabi resonates with you, the challenge is to incorporate it into your everyday life.

The retired Dr. X, Sterling Haynes, writes about his love of a life surrounded by women; our Shaman, Ruth Bieber, describes her journey through a Winter Vision Quest; you can watch the Science Opportunities for Kids (SOKS) video by clicking on the *Science Meets Art* link at the bottom of the front page. It was created by Jennifer French as an adjunct to her SOKS article, included in the journal.

Walking into Sage-ing reflects upon the two-month, 2,500 km. pilgrimage, undertaken last fall by Tom Close, from Kelowna. Tom's pilgrimage began in Canterbury, U.K. A month later, Karen Close, his wife, joined him in Italy and they ended the pilgrimage at St. Peter's Basilica in Rome.

Carolyn Cowan writes about *blind contour drawing* from a personal experience gained through 27 drawings. Andrea Farrell, a multi-talented artist, writes about how the symptoms of Parkinson's disease can be eased through creative engagement. She showcases her beautiful jewelry creations. In another article, she reflects on her experience of self-portrait *contour*

drawing as a spiritual journey. Although readers might feel self-portraiture is beyond their talents, it isn't if you can draw a line. It is fascinating to discover the revelations that the process can make known with just a little practice. We invite our readers to experiment and submit their discoveries and drawings to our email box at sageing4@gmail.com

We expect that you'll enjoy reading our first *Letters from Our Readers* section. We want to thank everyone who has responded to the first two journals and look forward to your further involvement. Sage-ing is about building community. We can't do it without you. You are our community!

Mission Statement

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. Aging can be alchemy when one allows the realization that to *Know Thyself* and contribute that knowing to our culture is indeed our highest purpose. That knowing brings the gratitude, grace and integrity that a life deserves.

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 artistry undertaken out of personal intuition and imagination.

DR. X'S LIFELINE TO CREATIVITY AND MATURITY



Sterling Haynes

The women in my life have played an amazing role in helping me mature. Women have always been available to talk, and advise me. My creative spirit was developed in me by my mother, Elizabeth Sterling Haynes. Mother was one of the three founding members of the Banff School of Fine Arts, in 1932. For years, mother was employed by the Alberta Department of Extension. She travelled the back roads of Alberta stimulating people to stage plays and concerts. Mother gave Albertans hope and happy times during the 1930's and '40's.

Our house in Edmonton was always filled with creative people. There were actors, artists, politicians, writers, scientists, explorers with different ideas and interests. There were always lively discussions at the dinner table on a variety of subjects. There were always one or two guests from all walks of life. My older sister, Shirley, was an outstanding student and she corrected any misconceptions of the *facts of the day* in an easy going way. Shirl knew everything about everything. I can remember that the house was full of laughter and it was difficult to break away from the table conversation and go upstairs to do my algebra homework.

After receiving an undergraduate degree from Alberta, I became a British Colonial Officer, trained in England and was posted to northern Nigeria. While stationed on the south edge of the Sahara for three years, I grew up mentally. My family helped me change my vocation. My folks suggested I enrol in medical school. My sister, Shirl, had graduated with an MD from the University of Alberta, in Edmonton, and loved the life. Shirl encouraged me to go to medical school, too. In 1954, I was accepted at the University of Alberta and started my journey to becoming a happy doctor. The *jolly green giant* was my student and intern name on the obstetrical wing at the Royal Alexandra Hospital, in Edmonton.

In my second undergraduate year, I married Jessie, from Biggar, Saskatchewan. Jess was an Edmonton grade four teacher, a feisty, tough little prairie woman. We worked and I studied. I finished school in 1958 and interned at the Royal Alexandra Hospital then to the Kaiser Oakland Hospital for a G.P. residency. Before we went to California, we had our first daughter, Elizabeth Jane.

After a year of training, I was offered a job in Williams Lake, B.C. In Willie's Puddle, I did everything. I was a GP, anaesthetist, midwife and generalist. On my days off, I helped my veterinarian friend, Dr. John Roberts, give anaesthetics to large animals.

I liked delivering babies and I liked women patients. Over the years, I reckon I delivered over 3,000 babies and looked after the kids. I loved the life.

Our next three daughters were all born in Williams Lake, Melissa, Jocelyn and Leslie. From then on, I was influenced by the female mind. All the trials and heartaches of four female teenagers, living in one house with only one and a half bathrooms, helped me partly understand the female psyche. I am so very proud of these women today.

I wrote these two poems to honour all the women in my life, *Momma Does Milk* and *My Mommy Brain*.

My Mommy Brain – Dedicated to Jessie

Sterling Haynes

Erupting burps, small volcanoes
early in pregnancy, unique
sensations trigger a new era of
feelings and of the growth of
an impossible belly. Smells
change, an awareness of
a unique role and a new life and
of responsibilities and emotions.
Developing a Mommy brain?

A wave of new hormones of love,
empathy, and milk making, baths
her brain's convolutions of concern.
A maternal morphine is at work
from dendritic spines, a razor like
barb wire in the gray matter encircles
and protects her baby and herself.
Electrical connecting neurons fire off when
baby suckles, grabs at fingers and coos.
Yes, the Mommy brain of satisfaction.

A pregnancy brain, a multi-tasking
brain being built to protect, cherish, survive.
Emotions from the heart, endearments
for life- my babies: "the best thing that ever
happened to me." Hold, rock and change
the diapers that never smell, cuddling infants in
the crook of arms for protection,
swathed in a blanket forever, a softening
afterglow of survival. You know, father
"My Mommy brain."

Momma Does Milk

Sterling Haynes

Momma does nine months
of indigestion and awkwardness,
and massive breast enlargement.
Momma does milk.

Momma does the housework and laundry
despite enlarging horizontally and develops
the mid trimester's bloom of pregnancy with
big boobs, momma does milk.

Momma gives up her job,
loses her place in the hierarchy of business
CEO's while maintaining her family's needs.
Yes, Momma does milk.

Momma does hard labour for 12 hours
plus 'crowning ' for 30 prolonged minutes,
then a tear into her rectum with sutures.
Ouch, momma does milk.

Momma does sitz baths and heat lamp
twice a day – with slow healing and constipation.
Cracked nipples above, sore bottom below.
Oui, momma does milk.

Momma does the blues on day five.
While baby sucks, momma drinks ounces of melancholy
with sore stitches and a colicky baby boy.
Sadly, momma does milk.

Momma is awake all night, hubby sleeps
but gets the twins to school on time. The kitchen is
a mess and the laundry piles up. With her
hair untidy, momma does milk.

Momma does sex at six weeks,
Yucky mommy! Mini – pills or an
I.U.D. Does mommy have a choice?
And momma does milk.

THE BODY SEEKS YOUR CREATIVITY

Andrea Farrell



Being creative doesn't necessarily mean painting a fine picture or writing a book, but rather it involves taking a stance toward life that allows every act, no matter how mundane and familiar, to become fresh and interesting, very much how the Dali Lama defines *Mindfulness*.

The surprising gift of symptoms associated with a diagnosis of Parkinson's is that many people shift gears in their life, and in some cases this translates into creative endeavours.

Why does this happen? One answer may be that the body demands that mental as well as physical activity slow down several notches. The body reacts by firmly guiding you to the place in your soul that insists that standard routines of the past be interrupted.

The question then turns on – what now? What do I do with my life now? With a little reflection, many people realize that they have not been pursuing their life's passion. A creativity switch gets turned on.

When the creative juices are flowing, it's a high. Creating is effortless. In fact, creative people describe the creative process as one in which something simply comes through them. There's a sense that *I didn't create this, it came on its own*. It feels like a gift that comes spontaneously from a source outside ourselves. In fact, it's the bypassing of the *me* who gets involved in trying to control the creation that allows the creativity to happen. It's the *me* with all its doubts and anxiety about outcomes that becomes the block. It's the *me* who wants to control the creation that gets in the way.

One's later years, when Parkinson's Disease is mainly diagnosed, are often accompanied by an enriched sense of self and a greater flexibility of attitude. In short, most of you who have entered your 50's and 60's and beyond, have finally grown up and you're pretty sure who you are, which generates a great feeling of comfort in life. This comfort also generates creativity, a state of mind, an openness to life. Being creative doesn't necessarily mean painting a fine picture or writing a book, but rather it involves taking a stance toward life that allows every act, no matter how mundane and familiar, to become fresh and interesting, very much how the Dali Lama defines *mindfulness*.

Don't get me wrong. Activities that usually are thought of as being creative like writing a poem, playing an instrument, learning how to cook Italian are indeed creative, and are to be encouraged as new adventures rewarding your pursuit of satisfaction. There are, however, many other less traditional creative activities that can change one's life dramatically and broaden your expectations of yourself. Creating this change often requires great discipline and struggle. Expanding your thoughts and actions beyond routines can be hard but worth the struggle.

You can use your creativity to heal by going on a journey inward. It can provide you with a means of non-verbal communication through which you



This necklace is the most precious to me. It took years to collect the copal amber beads and has been a collaborative effort in putting it together with all my friends adding their ideas. The beads are mostly from Tibet but some are from Georgetown in Washington, D.C. The necklace is so heavy that I think that when wearing it, I'd be leaning forward from the weight.

The beady girls



have the chance to express yourself consciously as well as unconsciously even if communication in other areas such as speech and lack of facial expressions have forced you into isolation and plummeting self-esteem.

Art-making also provides people with Parkinson's Disease with a powerful tool to reduce the anxiety felt towards the illness and a way of adapting to the changes imposed by aging as well. Creative expression allows you to continue to feel autonomous, which often is lost as you share your life with this quirky partner. A feeling of greater peace is often the result. You can have a heart filled with gratitude (and when did you last have that?) while you develop your inborn spontaneity that can often translate into exploring your individuality as well as healing your limitations of movement caused by Parkinson's. Your brain gets a real workout as you practice concentration, memory, coordination and other declining brain functions – and you are having so much fun just being in the zone.

Freedom in decision-making, experimentation and the trying out of new ideas in the creative process enhance the capacity of self-determination; goals can more easily be planned and executed even when every day looks pretty grim. Art-making can provide a safe and pleasant space in which it is possible to express and share subjects which are often difficult to be confronted, such as pain, loss, death and dependency. As you create, you work through and come to an acceptance of shattering emotions. Astonishingly, there is evidence that people with Parkinson's Disease actually discover that their creativity is enhanced by the disease. How about that! Evidence suggests that because making art provides an opportunity for you to exercise your hands and eyes, to improve eye-hand co-ordination and to stimulate neurological pathways from the brain to the hands, your brain actually grows.

All my life, I've primarily been a painter but as my Parkinson's has progressed, I've found standing at an easel to be very tiring, especially as my most satisfying endeavours include experimenting using house paint on large canvases. This activity remains my favorite way to express myself, but beading has definitely filled in the gaps necessary to keep the energy flowing. And you can wear the results!

It started off by being one of those Jungian moments of picking up a beading magazine while waiting in my neurologist's office. I was instantly attracted to the beauty and mystique of old beads; ones that had been created many years ago in ancient times in far-off exotic lands, using little known, handed-down secret tribal techniques such as those from Tibet and North African countries.



Above: This coral one is a tribute to Georgia O'Keefe as I picked up the poppy centerpiece at her museum in Santa Fe, New Mexico. It's pure silver and many people have stopped me in the street (or elevators) to ask about it. It makes a statement about how very much her art is admired.



Above: This healing bracelet is made of silver Milagros and turquoise from New Mexico, worn for protection as well as healing. *Milagros* mean miracles and are religious folk charms traditionally used in many Latin countries. The piece, also, has beads from Nepal. Can you feel the vibes?

Right: The necklace is another one that is special as its hard-to-find, light-colored ivory amber is from Russia and the beads are very old. It's as light as a feather to wear. I keep wondering who wore the beads before me; they come from a part of the world that has great mystery attached to it.

I started drilling down on the internet in search of these old beads and attending Seattle's jewelry conventions three times a year. It was an explosion of creative energy! Thus began the early days birthing the Tibetan copal amber necklaces illustrated in the photo.

It has taken nine years of searching and collecting to get these beads to this point of a probable finished piece. One of the truly wonderful aspects of this work-in-progress has been the fact that for the last few months I've been in the back room of my friend's bead shop. *BEADIFUL ARTS*, 510 West Ave., in Kelowna, is a space that's not only full of creative excitement but always has at least a small group of my beading friends (we call ourselves the beady girls) to catch up on the newest intel in Kelowna, be it music, photography, art gallery openings, or terrific ideas on how to play. You're NEVER too old to play. Visit www.beadifularts.com/

My necklace developed into a work-of-art piece nurtured by eight midwives and what a support group! What a blessing to surround yourself with people who care for you as your communication skills become pretty pathetic due to a number of progressive bodily and emotional changes. Being creative is PLAY at its most serious. The inability to move your facial muscles or speak clearly can make you look different to how you feel. Art allows you to express yourself to others. You are lifted from your isolated world and into friendship.

Creativity may not be the single, most important aspect in recovery from Parkinson's Disease, or even slow down the aging process, but it does enhance quality of life by giving you strength on those bad days (which seem to come much more often) to keep on following your heart. I mean, what can you lose?



CAREFUL SEEKING, PART III

Wabi Sabi nurtures all that is authentic by acknowledging three simple realities: nothing lasts; nothing is finished; and nothing is perfect.

In essence it means to look for, see and feel the perfection in imperfection.

Seeking



Sandy McNolty

Hazel and I met again to continue our conversation, this time during a walk along the beach, where we spoke about the concept of Wabi Sabi.

Sandy. Hazel, have you ever heard of Wabi Sabi?

Hazel. No, what does it mean?

Sandy. Before I explain it to you, let me just say that I feel that these words so beautifully and simply sum up this three-part interview. I believe every person's journey is similar, in the sense that our perception decides our reality; our individual reality, in turn, decides the destiny of this planet.

Wabi Sabi nurtures all that is authentic by acknowledging three simple realities: nothing lasts; nothing is finished; and nothing is perfect.

Wabi Sabi is an ideal that originated in Japan around 700 years ago. After centuries of incorporating artistic and Buddhist influences from China, it was believed, particularly among the Japanese nobility, that understanding and honouring emptiness and imperfection was the first step to enlightenment.

Today in Japan, Wabi Sabi basically means *wisdom in natural simplicity*; in art books it is defined as *flawed beauty*.

Buddhist philosophy warns that genuine understanding of Wabi Sabi cannot be achieved through words or language. Accepting Wabi Sabi, therefore, on nonverbal terms may be the most appropriate approach.

In essence it means to look for, see and feel the perfection in imperfection.

Hazel. It sounds pleasantly humbling and has so much depth, too. It sounds like a feeling, a universal feeling.

Sandy. I agree. I believe that embracing the philosophy of Wabi Sabi is the key to changing our perspective about the way we look at anything and everything, especially ourselves. Changing our perceptions enables us to consciously choose to see and feel perfection in imperfection.

Do you see or feel a connection between Wabi Sabi, yourself and your journey?

Hazel. I still struggle with applying this to my own life. I guess it is an ongoing process and I do like the idea of simplicity. I find value in thinking about an uncomplicated life. I think I make life a lot more complicated than it really is.

I guess we will always have problems and struggles, as well as good times. I would love to learn how to integrate

If nature is perfect, then so are we, because we are nature, too. Embracing the creative outlook of Wabi Sabi enables us to see the extraordinary in the ordinary,

the meaning of Wabi Sabi into my awareness. I hope, one day, to achieve a new perspective.

It is true that nothing lasts and nothing is ever finished and nothing is perfect. Wabi Sabi is really saying that, in all the imperfection, everything is perfect.

Sandy. Yes, exactly!

Hazel. Just like this tree, this lake, the sun, the clouds, the mountains; everything in nature is perfect! Embracing the creative outlook of Wabi Sabi enables us to see the extraordinary in the ordinary.

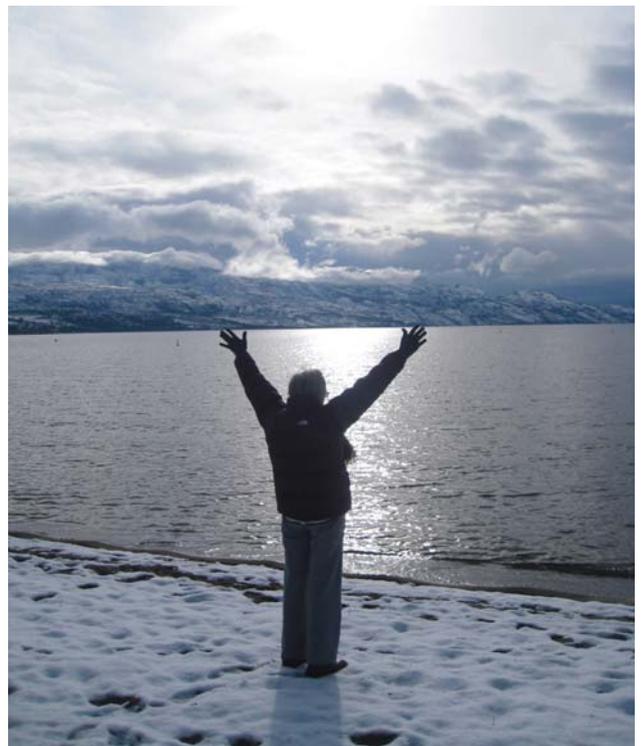
Sandy. Yes, we are all so interconnected. If nature is perfect, then so are we, because we are nature, too.

I challenge you, Hazel and all the readers of this article to try to adopt the attitude of Wabi Sabi in your daily thoughts, feelings and actions, and to create your own internal environment of natural simplicity and perfection. Once we embrace this feeling into our lives, we will notice an immediate physical, energetic and spiritual transformation that will expand beyond ourselves. It has to – it is the law of physics.

Dr. Wayne Dyer says, “When you change the way you look at things, the things you look at change.” Embracing the creative outlook of Wabi Sabi enables us to see the extraordinary in the ordinary, to see common, everyday objects or events like autumn leaves or our natural aging process, as interesting, fascinating and beautiful parts of the creative ebb and flow of the universe.

It is so simple, yet so profound! Natural simplicity is the path to harmony, peace and truth.

**Left: Seeing
Right: Celebrating**



WALKING INTO SAGE-ING

Karen Close



Top: Icon of The Trail

Above: At One With The Road

In 2007 my husband and I walked the Camino de Santiago de Compostela, the popular pilgrimage in Northern Spain. I believe nurturing creativity to be my highest purpose. Initially, I struggled to understand a pilgrimage as a creative journey, but as I listened more closely to my husband, I felt his energy acting out his life according to his own creative urges. He embraced the path of a pilgrim walking into new awareness.

Beginning in the late summer of 2011, he set out on a 91-day continuous walk on the Via Francigena following an ancient 2500km pilgrimage route from Canterbury to Rome. Reluctant at first, I ultimately joined into the production he was designing. Like those from the earliest times, a modern day pilgrim's preparation must be focused and comprehensive. Philosopher, Reinhold Niebuhr says: "Pilgrims are poets who create by taking journeys."

As an evolving Thomas planned for the Via Francigena, he thoughtfully fashioned his outfit: a cap labelled Roma in front and Canterbury on the back, walking poles, a back pack prominently displaying the Canadian flag, an ancient key symbol of the Via Francigena, and his scallop shell from our 2007 pilgrimage and symbol of the Camino.

On the day of arrival in Canterbury, Thomas began to journal, a first for him. Daily, he emailed to family and close friends. Quickly he developed an audience of admirers delighted by what they were receiving. Forty seven days into the journey, I flew to Turin to join my pilgrim on the final Italian leg of his journey. A pilgrimage is not just a physical journey but most importantly an inner journey. Each follows the path, sees the metaphors and gleans awareness at his or her own pace. Neither Tom nor I have deep religious roots in a traditional practice, but we do agree that to *know thyself* and to give from our best resources is our highest calling.

As we walked each day together, I began to think of a pilgrimage as an evolution from The Peripatetics, a school of philosophy in Ancient Greece. The school's founder, Aristotle, knew true understanding needs physical embodiment and thus he liked to walk about while he taught. Walking promotes the embodiment of ideas and each absorbs or learns according to his or her nature. My husband and I process and react very differently, but for both of us the days together on the Via Francigena were days of walking into newer awareness - and that's sage-ing. At the end of each day, we would sit and journal. Let me share how we each saw three of our days. Although the days described in these entries from each of our diaries are the same, we each absorb and describe the experience of them very differently. There is yang and yin.



Top: Tuscan Mosaic

Above: Heart of Marble

November 3, 2011, Camaiore, Italy

TOM:

Three weeks tonight, we are in Rome!! Why do I walk? It wasn't my idea! As an infant, I thought it was much better to be carried around. Yes, I knew how to walk. It just seemed to be a waste, if others were willing to carry me around. My mother and aunt Betty, tricked me into admitting I could walk. They gave me a clothes pin in each hand and told me they would hold onto the other end while I toddled along. They let go!! I was left with my hands in the air, holding clothes pins with no one on the other end!! That did it! The gig was up! They would pay for their trickery. I come from a large extended family. It was easy to go missing. I went for a "walk about". I was found walking up the middle of the main street of Waterloo! That was my first great pilgrimage. Ever since, I have had, Happy Trails!!

KAREN:

This morning I strike out with great anticipation. The area is remarkable, hugged by the marble cliffs that support it.

Morning traffic is busy, but very shortly we are on a deserted country road winding among beautiful villas. The clouds clear and it is another fabulous day unfolding. I am deeply involved by the journey. We move from marble slopes to vast ridges of rows stacked upon rows of grape vines. The harvest is over and we are left to contemplate how generations have picked

these almost vertical layers of vines. Breathing deeply into the musky scent of centuries, I come alive. This is not a season of busy activity and I feel at one with a quiet awareness of nature easing, ripening. A local dog adopts us and we three travel this old road together until a shepherd briskly tells our new friend to return home. He and his sheep have ownership of this hill slope. It is always startling to wind down into another bustling town. This is the rhythm that is Tuscany dating back centuries and engulfing the viewer like a well constructed piece of art.

This mosaic of colour opens into a small village coming to life as citizens return to its comfort at the end of a work day.

I felt his energy acting out his life according to his own creative urges. He embraced the path of a pilgrim walking into new awareness. "Pilgrims are poets who create by taking journeys."

Philosopher, Reinhold Niebuhr

A pilgrimage is not just a physical journey, but most importantly an inner journey. Each follows the path, sees the metaphors and gleans awareness at his or her own pace.

November 8, 2011, San Gimignano, Italy

TOM:

Only a 14 km walk today!! It was a misty rain as we started out. The route soon left the road and went downhill on a country road that soon turned into a muddy track. I plowed on ... Karen called out to me, saying her feet were like cement!! Her shoes were caked in mud!! I felt hugely guilty for having Karen walk with me. She has six inch legs, but a six foot heart!! Time was taken to get rid of some of the mud. We then slugged on through the fields and finally came onto a dirt road. The rain let up! The end of today's walk became a time to remember. We were high up in the Tuscan hills and could enjoy the rolling beauty of this region. The afternoon was spent enjoying a celebratory meal and a little wine tasting. Happy Trails!!

KAREN:

Despite the rain, I can't miss today. The rolling hills misted in subdued autumn colours live up to everything that has been written about Tuscany. Our initial path is a country road trellised by trees. When we emerge into the open, the rain falls harder, but I feel invigorated as my eyes feed on the setting. There is an expansive orderliness that absorbs both of us in our thoughts. For centuries, humans have been building and planting, living in alliance with this land. Crops, buildings and vegetation intermingle and harmonize into an amazing composition of shapes and tones. Geometric and organic areas meld. Nature created the flowing terrain that gives variety and intricacy to this grand design. Human kind has co-operated. Species of crops, olive groves and grape vines have been planted in accordance with the rolling landscape. Human respect for the land and its rhythms joins in creating a deep sense of compatibility and harmony. I relax into the energy of this harmony. I am intoxicated in my whole being as my feet, in contact with the earth, lead me onward. Suddenly I can hardly lift my feet; I didn't see how muddy the path has become. I look at my watch and realise that at this time yesterday I was enjoying a sculpture exhibition. I am thinking about the diversity that a pilgrimage brings, when my mind jolts to the recognition that my legs, with their caked feet, are moving like those of the young crippled curator's as she came out to greet me yesterday morning. I give thanks that my limbs may

protest at times, but they are carrying my imagination on this journey of discovery.

November 23, 2011, Rome, Italy

TOM:

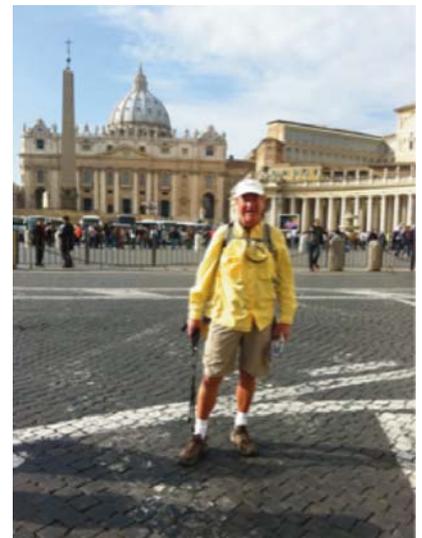
“Little step by step you walk a long way” Anon. That quote is on my Pilgrim’s passport. It speaks to my own philosophy throughout life.

Tomorrow, Karen and I will walk the Apian Way into Rome. Karen joined me six weeks back. Thank you, Karen!!!! It’s been an adventure of a lifetime! You have been here, happily, to support an old man’s folly. It has made a lonely walk into a joint trek to treasure!!!! I love you, Karen. Thank you!!

KAREN:

Walking together into Rome on the Apian Way is the “Grand Finale.” It delivers a summary that echoes with history. The Appian Way is the queen of the long roads. It was built as a military road to the south of Rome. The first section was completed in 312 BC.

As we enter The Way, it is early morning and very quiet. Imagine a road on which mankind has travelled for twenty three and a half centuries driven by every human emotion. Ruins of graves and buildings line both sides. The history of humanity has been scuffed into these cobblestones. The first people we encounter are a couple with their belongings in a cart. They appear to have slept along the road. Next is a jogger. The diversity overwhelms and I am reminded again that a pilgrimage offers up life in slow motion testing me to discover where I fit. We each bring our own story, but our footsteps blend with all those who have come before. As we get closer to Rome the ruins integrate with more recent structures and almost imperceptively the path becomes a heavily trafficked, very narrow two-way road into a dense city. Commuters race where Roman soldiers trod. Approaching the Coliseum and on to St. Peter’s Basilica, we are trapped in gathering throngs of a multicultural human deluge. You are wearing a yellow shirt, like those bicyclists who finish the Tour de France. You stand out in this mass. Modernity fights individual spirit, but I am so proud of you my husband, my pilgrim. You show us a way to know ourselves in a greater context.



Arrival

As we walked each day together, I began to think of a pilgrimage as an evolution from The Peripatetic School founded by Aristotle.

We each absorb and describe the experience... very differently. There is yang and yin.

Breathing deeply into the musky scent of centuries, I come alive.

FROM OUR READERS



I set her up with a canvas and some paints, etc. and she just got right to it. She was painting with gusto and is incredibly free with every movement.

A Day in the Life of a Grateful Gramma

I am blessed to have had all sons and then four grandsons. Then, came Ella Grace. Please understand that I love, cherish and adore each of my boys, but it is just a little bit different with Ella. I am a little more experienced and relaxed. Besides, I have much more time. I am wiser about the how fast time goes so I let many things slide.

When my Ella Grace comes to visit as she did last night she likes to do pretty much the same things every time. Oh, Ella is two and a half years and she can do everything herself. Just ask her!

She came in last night and barely through the door she says “I paint” and immediately walks over to where the paints are. I set her up with a canvas and some paints, etc. and she just got right to it. She was painting with gusto and is incredibly free with every movement.

When she had painted enough, she went and got an old camera that ended up in the toy box. She took pictures of her beautiful new painting. So cute! She fills me up with Joy.

As part of her time at Gramma’s, she also loves to drum and drum she does. She gets right into it, just like she does her painting. Then she plays the recorder for awhile and then the piano.

She especially loves it when I hula hoop and she plays music. Did I mention how cute she is?

I don’t know how routines happen but part of her routine, when visiting Gramma, is a bath.

She loves having a bath while she is here and loves to hang out in the tub just playing and singing.

She is such a lovely and easy spirit to be around, and like most grandparents, I love to be with my grandkids. I feel that painting and playing music with Ella bonds us at a different level.

Thank you to HeART Fit. I have learned how to play and not judge myself. I look at my paintings now just like Ella looks at hers. I take pictures of them.

Thank you. Wishing you all Love, Peace, & Joy,
Rose Sexsmith, Kelowna

Blessings

I have been perusing the *Sage-ing* journal and just wanted to tell you how very inspiring it is and to express my gratitude to you and your co-creators for bringing this into being.

With blessings,
Joan Connelly, Kelowna



Left: Artist in Her Studio
Middle: I like this one
Right: All Walls Need Art



Abbey's thought process took her to the only walls in the house that had an absence of anything hanging on them, they also happened to be white, and they were of a fairly good size. Why, of course, the furnace room!

heART Inspired

One snowy winter day this February, Abbey Broadland, an imaginative, bright 12-year old, (aren't they all) and one of the youngest members of the HeART Fit painting group, had an idea and a conundrum.

Inspired by a visit to the Lake Country Art Gallery to see the latest exhibit, *Lose Yourself to the Answers Within*, Abbey came home with the idea to put together an exhibit of her growing collection of HeART Fit paintings. The only difficulty was where to do it. Never one to be daunted by a minor obstacle, as children's imaginations are want to do, Abbey's thought process took her to the only walls in the house that had an absence of anything hanging on them, they also happened to be white, and they were of a fairly good size. Why, of course, the furnace room!

In a couple of hours the empty cardboard boxes had been moved, nails had been hammered and identification labels made and Abbey had herself an exhibit to rival any small room exhibit, complete with cool, contemporary concrete floors!

Mary Broadland

Residence at McGill University, Montreal, Quebec Welcomes heART Fit

Sierra Clark is delighted by how her residence has responded to spontaneous, process painting as a stress buster.

"Hey guys, the painting is going great! It's an awesome expression of the unique qualities that everyone on the floor possesses, based on the way they approach the painting. It's, also, a cool illustration of character. We paint as a tool for relaxation and release. It can get quite stressful with exams and essays. Painting is so freeing that it is a huge benefit in this environment."

Her new participants join in her enthusiasm.

FROM MICHELLE

I never thought that I was artistic in any way, and when Sierra asked me to paint with her and a group of others, I felt nervous. My painting wouldn't be as good as theirs, so I declined. But when I watched them paint, it was an entirely internal experience. Whatever they felt like doing was what they did; no time to think, just paint. I tried it one day and I realized I loved the process. No rules, or inhibitions, just painting from the heart! Our floor piece is really coming along. Some people are bolder and cover the entire canvas, while

Below: We're Better Together





Above: It's Done

Fall Encounter

Antoinette Voûte Roeder

Tawny grasses bend back and part
from our boots as strawberry runners,
rosy-leaved, spread around us like the
cracks in a broken mirror.

Further on the grove of yellow aspens
calls, a sanctuary inviting ritual.
The large old poplar that takes center stage
and blazed so brilliantly last year
is threaded throughout with dead twigs.

I rest my hand on her trunk.
We talk. I feel her voice.
She accepts life as it comes and
withered branches are but part of it.
I listen to the quiet mutter of leaves
and hear them snap as they start their
descent
towards the ground.

I have but lately joined the conversation.
These trees are always chatting
from the robust rustle of summer's foliage
to the pale sparse dialogue of this late fall.
Soon they will be all but mute
except for the occasional creak and groan
of wood bending under snow.
Denied their voices they will stand
receiving their lives in stillness.

others stick to a corner; however, in the end, it is always an expression of the collective energies that people possess on our floor and the ways in which they express themselves.

FROM MIKEY

Everyone on my wing on our floor is in the faculty of arts, while I am the sole science student. So when my friends started painting, I thought it was an arts' thing. I came back to rez a couple of weeks ago and Sierra asked me to join her in painting a huge canvas that was

just lying in the hallway. I didn't want to ruin the work she was in the progress of doing, so I said something about a book and its author. If I came in and wrote a random chapter, the book would have no continuity. But apparently it's the opposite. The uniqueness across the painting is what makes it great.

Tongues in Trees Invites a Poetic Response

Dear folks,

I saw that you are looking for something having to do with nature and creativity. I've sent two poems that combine my love of nature, a constant source of inspiration, and age. The other two poems are strictly about aging. All four poems come from my 2010 volume of poetry called *Still Breathing*, available on Amazon.com.

I am a 68-year old poet and author, spiritual companion and workshop facilitator. I've had my poetry published in yoga magazines, spiritual journals, and anthologies. *Still Breathing* is my second volume of poems, published by Apocryphile Press of Berkeley, California.

I would also appreciate knowing whether I can subscribe to *Sage-ing*. I much prefer to hold a hard copy in my hands to reading it online... I forwarded the last issue to a friend in Denver, Colorado, so you can count on the journal being read! It's a grand creative effort and I admire the spirit of the volunteers who are making this possible. Thank you all for the rest of us!

Shalom, salaam, namaste,

Antoinette Voûte Roeder

Family Painting through Skype

What started some years ago, when Samantha was tiny, and was cemented so well at heART Fit over their recent visit with us in Kelowna at the Rotary Centre for the Arts when we all painted together, has taken up where we left off. It has proven to have a very interesting and positive spin off for Jene and the two girls, Samantha and Sarah.

The girls are being used as weapons by an unscrupulous "ex" in the aftermath of a messy divorce, and have suffered badly in the scenario being as little and sensitive as kids can be. They had to spend time with the man after they returned to New Zealand. Getting back to the warm, nurturing

Autumn Country

Antoinette Voûte Roeder

This country comes to meet me,
not shyly, not hesitantly, but
with arms open wide, filled with
textured grasses, clumpy bushes, shades
of blonde and bronze and scarlet, swept

along by an icy wind off
freshly-fallen snow on Castle Mountain,
rippling, brushing, waving this brocaded
carpet, rich as any Persian rug. It comes

to meet me, all around me, flowing
through me, leaves me gasping till
the next wave, and the next. I am
drinking, eating, breathing color, gulping

air so crisp I have to chew it,
spitting rose-hips red as blood, golden
grasses liquefying in my veins and
running out my toes. This country meets
me, *is* me, in the autumn of my life.

My eyes fill as I walk slowly away.
I've heard their goodbye in my soul.
Could this be a final parting?
Perhaps.

Like aging, it too is acceptable.
Goodbye is continually woven
into the pattern of our lives.

On this occasion, on the morning after the return, their Mom put us together on Skype when the growls and hissy fits started. We painted together for one-half an hour.



home with their Mom usually takes days to work out the hurt and frustration.

On this occasion, on the morning after the return, their Mom put us together on Skype when the growls and hissy fits started. We painted together for one-half an hour. The focus on the artistic tasks and images took over and they each finished a couple of *works of art* and we had a connected and precious time and got rid of the knots of their past weeks.



It is hard to be away from them... As grandparents, you will know that we would love to be there to just hold them tight and reassure them of the love and acceptance they had while here with us. It was marvelous to see how by painting together, even though half a world away, the bond we had built here was re-established and we were at peace painting together.

Thought you would like to ponder on the joys of sharing our "passion" for paint!

Blessings to so many of you who welcomed them so warmly when they spent those times with the Tuesday gang at RCA!

Dave Griffith

GIFTS FROM AN ART FORM

Carolyn Cowan

The project is to draw the contours and features of my face, as reflected in a mirror, without looking at what I am sketching.

She started to draw late in life, at the age of 68, upon the death of her son and after suffering through a lifetime of bi-polar disorder and severe depression.

For the spring issue of our *Sage-ing with Creative Spirit, Grace and Gratitude* journal, a colleague suggests I experiment with and write about the experience of blind contour drawing. The project is to draw the contours and features of my face, as reflected in a mirror, without looking at what I am sketching. After agreeing, I set parameters: I will not consult the paper while drawing the outline of her face or the features. I will practice on 25 to 30 drawings of the full contours including facial outline, eyes, eyebrows, nose and mouth. I will not look at the results until the face is complete. For those drawings I like, I'll paint in with pastels or watercolours for a finished art piece. That's the plan.

From the beginning, I refer to the drawing as *her*, not myself. I suppose it allows for a comfortable and objective distance between me and the drawing.

As I sit in the Tuesday morning, heART Fit art group at the Rotary Centre, in Kelowna, I contemplate blind contour drawing. I start with the wrong attitude when I instinctively react and think, *I can't do this!* Realizing my negating thought, I rephrase the sentence to say *I can do this!*

In the 18 months since I began painting, there is still no defined, unique style. Now, I'm changing direction to experiment with a new (to me) art form. It is a form of drawing popularized by Kimon Nicolaides' book *The Natural Way to Draw*, published in 1941. Technically, *Blind contour drawings* consist of looking at the outline of an object and very slowly drawing, without lifting the pencil or looking at the paper, the contour of the object. It is acceptable to briefly look at the paper to position a feature – this is not in my plan — but once you have pinpointed a location with your pencil, you no longer consult the paper. Blind contour drawing is a basic exercise tool used by the beginner and advanced artist. The alternative form is called *contour drawing* where the artist glances back and forth between the object and the drawing.

Elizabeth Layton was an eminent U.S. artist in the technique of blind contour drawing. She was the first artist to use it as a therapy in self-portraits. She started to draw late in life, at the age of 68, upon the death of her son and after suffering through a lifetime of bi-polar disorder and severe depression.

Shortly after she began drawing, Don Lambert, a reporter from Topeka, Kansas, was the first to discover Layton and her drawings. After the death of her son, Don Lambert wrote that Elizabeth was urged by her sister to take an art class, Ms. Layton enrolled in the blind contour drawing. By focusing on sorrow and loss in her drawings, Elizabeth was cured of depression within



Contour Drawing 1 (Mexican Mask)
Watercolour and bark

Blind contour drawing is a basic exercise tool for the beginner and advanced artist.

six months. Her depression never returned, and she ultimately exhibited artwork and her story at the Smithsonian Museum. Ms. Layton's art is found at her website, www.elizabethlayton.com

Eye-hand coordination is a component of kinesthesia, also known as muscle memory. Practice is key to developing, refining and automating muscle memory and joint coordination. Eventually, with repetition, the eye and hand work together, integrally. Kinesthesia plays an essential role in our daily life, movements and sports. Handwriting, picking up a book, pouring coffee or tea, swinging a golf club, pitching and catching a baseball all require instinctive eye-hand coordination.

I begin my first drawing by focusing on the edge of a very old Mexican mask brought in from home. My pencil is poised on the drawing page. Peripheral vision tells me the pencil is located where I want it to be, the upper left section of the paper.

Without intention or realization, completely absorbed in the mechanics of the work, I begin to move my eyes from the mask to the paper. So much for the disciplined practice required for *blind contour drawing*. Discipline lasted maybe five minutes before the process becomes *contour drawing*.

Lesson 1 – Losing Control

It's the next Tuesday morning art group and my third attempt at blind contour drawing. To relinquish control is essential. The reason my first two drawings actually resemble a mask and a self-portrait is because I could not allow myself to trust the process and lose control over the final outcome.

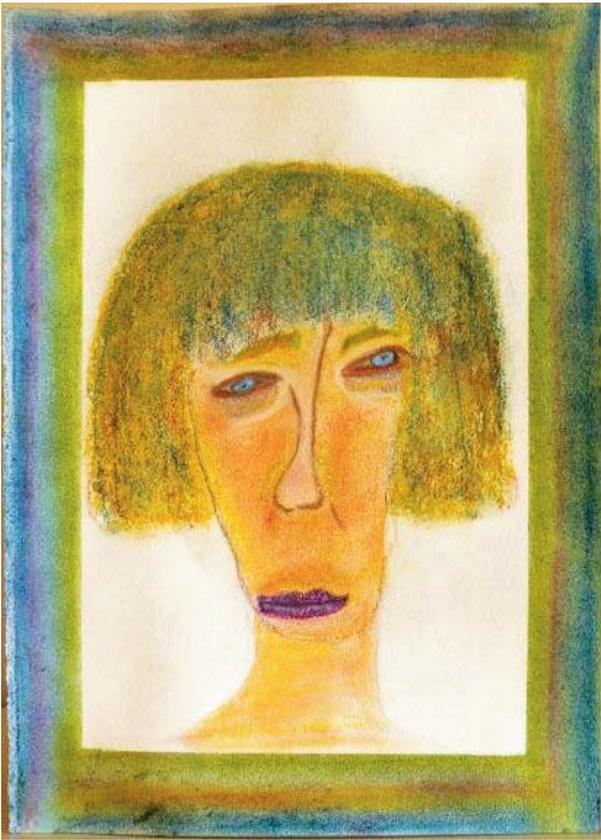
It is frustrating to draw without looking. Surely, her face needs some semblance of reality? After observing the drawings for awhile, I understand realism is unnecessary. After all, it's art. The drawing need only be interesting and appealing to my eyes.

Lesson 2 - Trust and Acceptance

Today is the sixth attempt at blind contour drawing. The outline of her face and features are still unrealistic. Suddenly, help arrives in the form of an artistic epiphany. I discover with great pleasure that I am engaged in a form of art that has vast appeal to me. The uncontrolled facial contour and features are distorted and impressionistic. That is what I connect most with, the unconventional.

The Italian Modigliani (1884 – 1920) is my favourite artist. His paintings and sculptures seldom replicate a subject or object. Most of his works are impressionistic. He emboldened his vision with passion and an instinct for long, graceful lines. He had an eloquent eye for unnatural and odd alignments. His artwork is compelling, whether as a painting or sculpture.

With drawing seven, I lock my eyes on the left side of my mirrored face, allowing my pencil to become an extension of my eyes. I move the pencil slowly. My methodology is to draw the outline of the face, followed by the eyebrows, eyes, the nose which is the most difficult, and finally the mouth.



Blind Contour Drawing 22,
Pastels on watercolour

Eye-hand coordination is a component of kinesthesia, also known as muscle memory.

This time, half way around the facial contour, I become impatient to be finished with the outline. As a result, the right side of the drawing's face is narrow. It causes the other features to be out of alignment and the drawing distorted. Yet, it wins me over with its composition of lines and distortions. I have drawn her face without looking; a blind contour drawing at number seven!

When I finally finish and look at the next sketch, there is no room left for a mouth; the left side of her nose is resting on the chin. The mouth is an inch or so below the chin. Perhaps, that's a metaphoric counsel for me to listen more and talk less!

So far, I'm tracking 15 blind contour drawings. Except for the first six, the rest of the sketches are drawn without looking. None of them has my eyes, mouth and nose located in the expected position. I decide that these black and white pencil drawings need colour.

Lesson 3 – Arrival

Aesthetics is an essential component to anything I try to create. There is a need to add my kind of beauty to the everyday world. Pastels are my paint of choice for the

drawings, or, maybe, the pastels choose me.

The combination of drawing blind and painting with pastels is liberating to an extent that I never imaged. The out-of-control drawing of a facial contour can be complimented with colours chosen by imagination, not reality. With paint added to the mix, I see the potential of this art form. These odd and painted drawings suit my personality and aesthetic eye. I connect with the faces and I wonder how or if a poem can be incorporated within their framework.

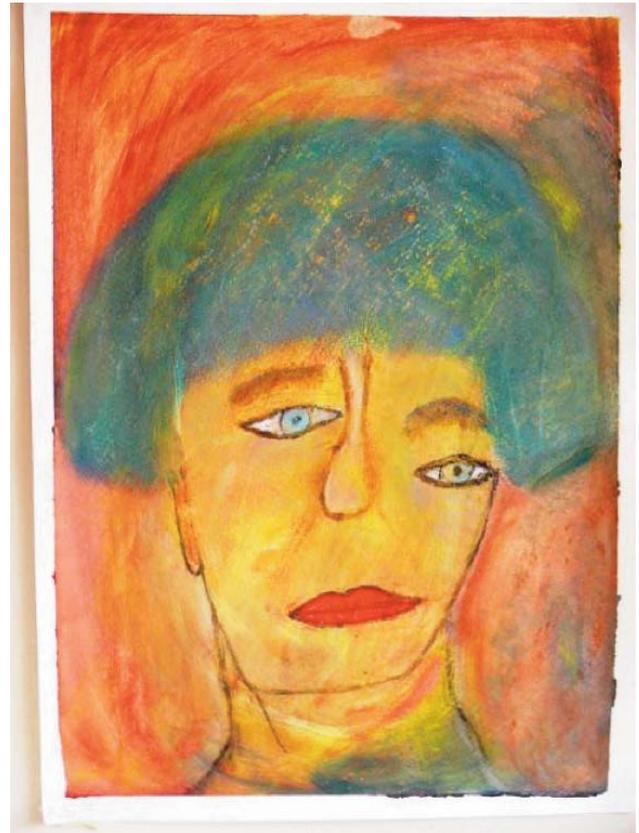
Lesson Four – How We See Ourselves

Today is Valentine's Day. I'm at the Tuesday morning heART Fit group. Most of us will work on contour drawings of our face as reflected in a mirror we each brought to the class. For this article, I continue to draw without looking. Others in the group use the more common method of contour drawing, looking at both the mirror and their sketch. Then, we paint our work. I'm stalling since blind drawing is still not easy and I have one piece of paper.

The results to a person in that room are amazing. Some paintings resemble their artist. Some are a younger version of a resemblance carried in memory. Most paintings are impressionistic and playful. One artist appears self-conscious when her turn comes to explain the painting. She makes a face, and explains first that facial contortions are a tradition in her family. Yet, both of her sketches over the two weeks of contour drawing are



Left: Blind Contour Drawing 27,
Pencil drawing



Right: Painted Drawing 27,
Pastels on watercolour

of the same beautiful woman in her late 30s or early 40s, with long, waving, soft hair. She is elegant and thoughtful; a woman of the world. I find the drawings intriguing; a juxtaposition, perhaps, of the woman's conscious and unconscious view of herself.

Drawing number 23 has both eyes above the eyebrows and the mouth in the middle of the nose. I do make it to drawing 27 with similar success. My progress with the art of blind contour drawing and eye-hand coordination appears to be timeless!

Can We See Ourselves?

I think not!

Age gathers and
Parades the years
Upon our face.

Changes are incremental.
The brain carries forward
Memory of the day before
And all days before that.

We observe individual features,
The topography of our face,
But not the minutiae
Gravity inflicts on everyone.

You can see my face
With its lines, wrinkles.
Now shapeless rather than the
Shapely structure of youth.

Yes, you can see my face.
I can only see the past.

WINTER VISION QUEST

Ruth Bieber, Photographs by Carole Hebden

A Shaman is someone who is able to live in various states of reality, simultaneously.

At least, the stones are my focus until that old hip, my right hip, the knot in that masculine section of my second chakra, begins to ache. With a single inspiration, I tip myself forward from the waist. My own flexibility surprises me.



Sacred Drum - This was taken on the day Wind Walker was made. Eight Ayllus, members of the *White Drum Mesa*, lay their hands on her edge after lacing her two hides.

It has been my calling to discover the threads of truth which accompany all spiritual paths. It was no surprise when I, then, decided to learn about the path of Shamanism in the year 2007. A Shaman is someone who is able to live in various states of reality, simultaneously. Marv and Shanon Harwood were my first teachers, and they taught their students about four primary states of reality: literal, symbolic, mythic and energetic. The power of moving through these states of reality, given any situation, is remarkable. The process of doing so is one of creativity; a true journey into the subconscious mind, but is it more than that?

It is minus eight degrees Celsius. I am sitting outside on the ground under a tree for maybe eight hours; not exactly certain how long. It's a Winter Vision Quest, and as I am the last to pass through the threshold to the underworld, the subconscious. I am very cold by the time I reach my internal lodge. My name is Ice Queen, an underworld name given to me as a symbol to melt my pride. My intent is to seek to discover the bodhicitta, the Buddhist term for the soft spot in all things. Val Lordi, a Shaman teacher from Bronx, New York City, has guided me to this place, departs, and I am alone with my mesa stones. We have been instructed to use these when the drum, Wind Walker, sounds to signify the end of the Winter Vision Quest. Wind Walker is a being at the heart of the teachings of the *White Drum Mesa*. The teachings help one to return to conscious awareness and an understanding of who you are and why you are here at this evolutionary time. They are part of the foundations in a global medicine path.

Stay in the moment, I think to myself, and in response, I grab the blanket, gratefully noting its bulk, and hook myself up to the chakra of a chosen tree. Off go the boots and gloves, and I wrap myself in the quilt, sitting in a lotus position. My feet are tucked in between my thighs and shins with hands under my arm pits, I begin to feel the warmth seep into these precious extremities. My thoughts are always on my stones, wondering if I will be able to find them when the drum sounds. At least, the stones are my focus until that old hip, my right hip, the knot in that masculine section of my second chakra, begins to ache. Slowly, I realise that this is the path, my opportunity to discover the bodhicitta, to work out the tension from my own body by discovering the softness. I twist my spine around the tree, left then right; kundalini rising. Yes, the tree, the treasure of the Mother Earth is supporting me fully and lovingly.

While I move, I suddenly realize how I am working with my stones luminously. Who to communicate with? Each stone is to represent a person in my life with whom I wish to make peace. Several people pop into my awareness, and before long the work with the stones is done. I am loving this experience,



Ayllu-Hands



Dialogue Drum

Wind Walker is sitting before the skins are put on her. There is a vase of flowers inside her, feathers and crystals on her edge, with sacred cedar branches around her. She is the heart of the teachings.



Drum Spark

his is taken later in the day while the skins of Wind Walker are being dried. She is on her side and there is a candle in front of her that arches like a lightening bolt across her beautiful face.

this journey into the underworld of the *White Drum Mesa*. White Spirit Bear comes to visit, giving me the comfort and familiarity of hibernation, the gift of the dream world, and timelessness. With a single inspiration, I tip myself forward from the waist. My own flexibility surprises me. Before I know it, there I am, third eye pressing on Mother Earth in front of me, my rear propped in the air behind me. For a moment, I panic because my arms are wrapped so tightly in the blanket. I fear I can't get back up. Just breath, I think to myself, and then I begin to laugh. Tipped over forward, I realize the significance of this posture. Third eye to the Mother Earth and root chakra pointing up towards the sky above signifies the transformation of the underworld, symbolized by the North West direction. The cold, Mother Earth, tree, my right hip and this process taught by my Shaman teachers, Val Lordi and Valerie Owen, have all been my allies, together with spirit bear, white buffalo and white feather.

Returning to the literal world, I am moved once again to see if I can locate my mesa stones. My search is difficult using only my bare hands to feel the frozen ground. I am greeted with intense Jack Frost, "Give it up, will you just give it up?" I hear. Give up what? I think to myself. Then it comes. Give up the struggle, of course. That is what we are called to do, and we are indeed, "the ones we have been waiting for!" I feel this ancient Hopi prophesy in my heart more than I have ever felt it before.

When I returned to my home after that accelerated Winter Vision Quest of last November, held in Sorrento, British Columbia, I had a personal experience. It allowed me to rewrite a big chunk of my own history; and yes I mean symbolically, mythically, energetically and literally. Did this experience have an impact on the world beyond my own skin? Perhaps yes, if only through the telling. Still, any good Shaman will teach the fundamental truth, that in the end, everything we experience is about us - absolutely always about us. In other words, everything in our environment is simply a reflection of ourselves. I like to remember that when I catch myself having one of those theatrical arguments in my head with a sibling or friend whose behaviour has challenged me. When I speak to them in my head, they can't argue back. I am quite sure this is a familiar phenomenon to us all. When this happens to me, my practice is to remind myself I am really just me, talking to me, and as witness to myself the head chatter quickly stops. Another interesting way to do this is to write an imaginary dialogue. This process alone can result in peace of mind, not to mention peace with others, but you decide.

Shamanism transcends conventional wisdom and predates all other organized religions. Every culture can trace its roots to a Shamanic history. Presently, I am a full mesa carrier, which in essence implies I am a Shaman. However, next to the wonderful and dedicated teachers from whom I have had the privilege of learning, I consider myself an eternal student. Having said this, Shamanism belongs to everyone. If you don't believe me, the next time you are outside on a sub-zero winter day, take a big breath in and then let it all out. I am quite sure you will see white buffalo, who very likely will have a message for you; yes you. Just imagine!

JUST CREATING BRINGS JOY

April Chretien

When someone asks me who I am or what I do, I say, “I’m an artist.” After all, I’ve made art since I was a child and even studied Fine Arts at the University of British Columbia. However, I often feel like a fraud when I say it, because I don’t think I’m as actively creative as I would like to be.

While art is an important aspect of my life, it is not the only one. As a business owner and the mother of two teenagers, my work and my family take priority over my artistic pursuits. Still, when I think back over the last seventeen years, I see that I have managed to find a number of ways to express my creativity.

Making Halloween costumes for my kids is a major one that stands out for me. Each year, I completely lose myself in a new creative project, going all out, staying up until two or three in the morning, sometimes even all night, trying to bring ideas out of my mind and into the world.

At the time, I just thought I was doing what I had to as a mother,

**“I’m an artist.”...
However, I often feel
like a fraud when I say
it, because I don’t think
I’m as actively creative
as I would like to be.**

**Making Halloween
costumes for my kids ...
I realize I was also
having fun creating art.
I found it energizing
and it brought me
happiness.**



Right: Portal, acrylic, 1997.



Above: Halloween as a Cyclops

Right: The Council, acrylic and collage, 1997



What really matters is to experience and honour those beautiful moments of joy and energy that come from expressing myself creatively.

Art shouldn't be defined just by masterpieces in museums.

providing my children with something they needed. Now, however, I realize I was also having fun creating art. I found it energizing and it brought me happiness.

It was only recently, when I was journaling about what brings joy to my life that I became aware of how much I enjoy these isolated moments of creativity. I have always thought that, to be a real artist, I needed more – more studio space, more money, and more time. I now realise that what really matters is to experience and honour those beautiful moments of joy and energy that come from expressing myself creatively.

So now I find myself excited about undertaking creative projects, because my focus has changed. I now think about art in terms of how I want to feel and what I want to experience. This shift in outlook has taken the pressure off and has provided me with the mental space to feel free and excited about newfound possibilities. Even though my life may appear the same on the outside, the difference on the inside is significant. And, that's the space in which I create. Art shouldn't be defined just by masterpieces in museums. Whether I produce finished paintings or help my daughter to make a cool Valentine's gift, I will continue to pursue the experience of just creating because, at last, I truly feel like I am an artist!

CREATIVITY MAKES CONNECTIONS

Jennifer French and Karen Close



Jennifer French was the recipient of the Daphne Soleki Award in 2010 for her work with nature and children.

“The tree which moves some to tears of joy is in the eyes of others only a green thing which stands in the way. Some see Nature all ridicule and deformity, and some scarce see Nature at all. But to the eyes of the man of imagination, Nature is Imagination itself. As a man is, so he sees.” William Blake

In later years, lamenting the moral decay his life had witnessed, Albert Einstein wrote:

“All religions, arts and sciences are branches of the same tree. All these aspirations are directed toward ennobling man’s life, lifting it from the sphere of mere physical existence and leading the individual towards freedom.”

Experiencing the mysterious union between oneself and the universe heightens curiosity and builds self-confidence for all ages. When young people feel an interconnection between themselves and the natural world, a sense of awe and a deeper sense of belonging emerge.

To quote Albert Einstein again, “The most beautiful experience we can have is the mysterious - the fundamental emotion which stands at the cradle of true art and true science.”

Jennifer French understands this deep emotion from a personal perspective: “I went to boarding school in Toronto, on to the University of British Columbia, in Vancouver, graduated with a BEd and then launched into a profession as a teacher for five years. Six year later, while working in Golden, B.C., the catastrophic and mysteriously beautiful landscapes of the Columbia Valley, the Purcells and the Selkirks landed squarely in my heart.

My transition from full-time teacher to field technician, working on mountain pine beetle assessments in the Big Mountains, gave me soul and craving. The experience created an opportunity for me to start accessing my spatial and graphic IQ. This was in the days before GPS, GIS and Google Earth. I carried a compass and 50 metre chain and planned my day’s route on stereo air photos. Along the grandest of mountain ranges, steepest of cliffs and longest of sheer rock walls, I had to be able to see and interpret things from above and far above. Thus began my love of symbols, icons and eagle’s eye views.”

Now, after several transitions in her life, Jennifer has found her calling and translates her love of nature into love of creative endeavour, whatever it looks like. “I believe that kids do need to find inspiration away from technology and close to trees, wild grass meadows, swamps and wildlife. I am with Richard Louv’s *Last Child in the Woods: Saving Our Children from Nature-Deficit Disorder* and more recently his book, *The Nature Principle*, in which Richard Louv write that by tapping into the restorative powers of nature, we can boost mental acuity and creativity; promote health and wellness; build smarter and more sustainable businesses, communities, and



Top: Youngster in contemplation at Mill Creek Waterfall

Above: Helping children look closely

Below: Introducing children to EcoArt through experience with nature



economies; and ultimately strengthen human bonds.”

Jennifer’s childhood led her into nature and now she reaches out to share her love with the next generation. She is a sage, generously giving from the wealth of her experience, although she explains it with more modesty. Jennifer says this is what I do. I find artists, search for youth, connect with teachers, enable children, and together we move out on the land to the closest wild spaces in which we can find inspiration and engagement. Of course, somewhere in here I must make this work for me to provide food on the table and a roof overhead. I worked on SOKS, Science Opportunities for Kids Society. www.soks.ca This organization grew from public requests for science and nature programs when I owned and worked at *Quasars and Quicksilver Science and Nature Store*, at Guisachan Village, in Kelowna. As the programs evolved and more queries came to roost on the counter top at the store, the society evolved with five founders. Our goal was to engage children and parents with dynamic interactions with all natural sciences and particularly with nature. Along the way we envision enabling youth to understand how they can be part of recreating our culture’s ecological values.

“In 2007, through SOKS, I met and worked with Okanagan artist, Dawn Emerson. With children, we created banners that represented the places we visited in the natural environment. These banners hang today at the Parkinson Recreation Centre on Highway 97 in Kelowna. The City of Kelowna Public Art program funded the artist and the materials and supported SOKS in other ways to achieve this work. The B.C. Gaming Commission funded the facilitator through SOKS.

In 2011, the city’s Public Art funded another SOKS program. I had met Okanagan Lake Country, fibre artist Pippa Dean-Veerman of Quail Rock Studio. www.quailrockstudio.ca

She was an instructor with Karen Close’s New Horizons for Seniors art program, *Sage-ing With Creative Spirit* and I was a participant. I soon engaged Pippa in SOKS’ goals. She was a good fit for us. Pippa and I would work with children and introduce them to both the place and science of Okanagan ecosystems where water is a limiting factor. Youth discover that water and its availability affects everything in nature and in ourselves. Our adventure took place over four days with the start in the classroom and then into the observing. Over two studio sessions and using the process of fibre art as the expression of their experience in the parks and wetlands, children from kindergarten to grade 5 were inspired to respond to their observations of these ecosystems. These rich, natural resources are slowly dwindling in the Central Okanagan.”

The universe invites imagination and creative expression. Like those humans in the earliest of civilizations who felt compelled to tell their stories on cave walls, youth will naturally and eagerly respond when exposed to the biology of the universe.



Pippa Dean-Veerman welcomes visitors in front of the EcoArt display at the Kelowna Heritage Museum on opening night. Behind Pippa are the abstract *Poison Ivy* felted sculptures with its associated poem, Scenic Canyon, shibori pieces and the tribute to the ponderosa forest. In the far distance, the Cedar Creek fire totem swings in response to the 2003 forest fire.

Experiencing the mysterious union between oneself and the universe heightens curiosity and builds self-confidence for all ages.

Children need opportunities to understand the biology of our universe through intimate creative engagement with the natural environment.

but the first step can begin with a walk in the woods and picking up a stone. I cherish a heart shaped stone, clearly dark on one side and light on the other. When I first found this stone, I drew it and watched it transform into meaning. As I share my experience with others, the stone excites their imaginations and invites stories.

Shortly after my arrival in the Okanagan, I met Jennifer French and learned about SOKS. Eagerly, I explained the synergy I saw between her science program and my art program. Through SOKS, Jennifer has evolved a model experiential arts and science program. SOKS is a valuable resource for classroom teachers and other youth groups. It can also easily be adapted to family excursions. Children need opportunities to understand the biology of our universe through intimate creative engagement with the natural environment. Through SOKS, I sense Einstein reaching his ideas into this century. Who really knows how the universe works?

Patti Kilback, Associate Director of Exhibitions & Public Programming, at Kelowna Museums, says that the youth of today must be included in the process of creating their own culture and identity. Interaction brings with it a sense of awareness and connection to the world around them. This same form of connecting was incorporated into learning about ecology in an exhibit that SOKS facilitated with Pippa Dean-Veerman and school children and which was later displayed at the Okanagan Heritage Museum. Learning to look at the environment through a creative, hands-on lens, Pippa created a whimsical, engaging art installation using an interplay of student artwork, made in response to field experiences. Connections between respecting the environment and creatively displaying what they learned will have an everlasting impact on their view and responses to our natural environment. Ms. Kilback believes that recognition at a public museum may also help to elevate the importance of creative expression and hopefully encourage the next generation to value the importance of history, art and culture!

In keeping with Jennifer's philosophy behind SOKS, the signature on her emails includes this Einstein quote, "Look deep into nature and then you will understand everything better."

Like Jennifer, I was unable to really retire from being an educator. In the mid nineties, I created a program called *ABC Experiencing: Experiential Adventures in Art, Biology and Culture* and presented it to many youth groups. The program was designed to give youth the opportunities to find creative ways to discover and express their personal connection to the biology of all life forms; to build belief systems that reflect this connection and to help create a culture that ennobles life in all its forms. The goals might sound grandiose,

SKIN DEEP

Lesley-Anne Evans

Every once in a while, OK, let's be honest, almost daily, I find myself staring in a mirror, and what starts as a quick fix of the hair or a lipstick touch-up, becomes a critical assessment of what I see. I push and pull my face, considering my chin's defining curve, or how the lines on each side of my mouth – my smile lines – remain long after my smile is gone. And then, while I stare in a slightly unkind way at my reflection, my mind wanders to Botox and other procedures that are now mainstream in our culture, relatively affordable, thus luring me dangerously close. Part of the attraction is vanity, no doubt about it, but part of it is because the age I feel inside doesn't match how I look on the outside. It's easy to get stuck in the dichotomy of this.

This morning as my husband and I lingered over our last breakfast in Maui, an older couple sat down at the table next to us, and caught my attention. I was soon mesmerized by them. They appeared to be in their 80's and on vacation, just as we were. And they were in love. They spoke in hushed voices, she often reaching over to touch his face. She smiled, eyes crinkled up in a brown, age spotted and furrowed face, and I caught a glimpse of true beauty. It wasn't pretty or smooth or timeless or even made up, but it was full of joy. Her face radiated joy. It was the *Joie de vivre*, a beauty that time brings, beauty of a woman loved for many years and one who appeared to love herself as she was.

Now I don't pretend to know her life's details, or see beyond my superficial observation, but she made me stop and consider what true beauty is. And as I, and perhaps you too, contemplate various means to alter the signs of aging, I wonder if it might be better to embrace my age and stage as a gift. The lines I would choose to erase are the very indicators of wisdom and character, tried and tested and true. Would I wipe the slate clean of what proves me to be a survivor, creating a taut canvas rather than a beautiful masterpiece made more priceless with years.

It's a battle, and one I am sure to fight again and again. But, I'm determined to not give in to the cultural message that says *youthfulness equals happiness*. I will seek to discover the joys of my aging beauty in new ways, ways of wisdom and grace, rather than covet the untried, wild and illusive beauty of youth.

And you ...?

Part of the attraction is vanity, no doubt about it, but part of it is because the age I feel inside doesn't match how I look on the outside.

I was soon mesmerized by them. They appeared to be in their 80's and on vacation, just as we were. And they were in love.

The lines I would choose to erase are the very indicators of wisdom and character, tried and tested and true.

REVISITING ELIZABETH LAYTON

Andrea Farrell

These days I find myself, at the ripe old age of 62, seriously contemplating my feelings about who I am and how I relate to the world - even during the most mundane of routines.

The question of who I am, at the essential core of my *self*, suddenly takes over my whole attention while folding laundry or vacuuming the layer of cat hairs off my rugs. Something has changed in me. This all came about from the introduction to contour drawing and journaling Elizabeth Layton style while attending heART Fit, one chilly winter Tuesday, in January. I think it has to do with spending so much more time in my right brain.

How, you may ask, does this fit together? Read on.

Once being introduced to the concept of truly drawing from the right side of my brain, I had to understand what this process was that allowed this shift to happen. Why contour drawing? Whether it be pure contour, where you do not look away from your chosen image, or modified contour drawing, where you allow yourself to glance briefly at your page at intervals to monitor line direction, some anatomy is in order, at this point.

We've all heard of the left and right sides of our brains, but I wonder what else we actually know about why we have this split that results in our having two cerebral hemispheres joined by the corpus callosum, a bridge-like structure consisting of millions of nerve fibers. This bridge allows humans to communicate between the two halves, combining the two perceptions and thus preserving our sense of being one person, a unique entity.

Though right-brain or non-verbal thinking is often regarded as more creative, there is no right or wrong here; it's merely two different ways of knowing. One is not better than the other, just as being right-handed is not *superior* to being left-handed. The left brain is verbal, analytical and linear - the logical side. However, it seems that the right brain sees things differently - and is invaluable in creating art. In a right-sided mode of processing information, we use intuition and have leaps of insight; things fall into place spontaneously and we have that *Ah-Ha* moment. We see how things exist in space and how the whole is formed with these parts coming together.

Many of us live mostly in our left brain as Western culture dictates that we move fast and analyze faster. Driving in rush hour traffic is a good example if you want to get home unscathed. When creating art, it's a priority that we somehow get ourselves into the right half, the intuitive, visual side. Amazingly, contour drawing is an excellent way to accomplish this.



The question of who I am at the essential core of my Self suddenly takes over my whole attention while folding laundry or vacuuming the layer of cat hairs off my rugs.

The line that you slowly and carefully produce while intently observing what you are drawing, forces the left brain into too much information. The slowness of the drawing seems to push the left brain mode deeper and deeper into a neutral or *off* state, thereby allowing the shift. This pure contour drawing will cut off what you are not paying attention to; specifically, that is the visual input that would allow the left mode to name, categorize, judge and otherwise leave the brain in the state that it's used to. Some folks' left hemispheres are very stubborn and may be fearful of giving up control to the right, but patience and practice will make it easier each time you try. It stands to reason why many artists use this as an exercise to warm up before getting downright serious and thereby turning off the left brain mode and allowing the shift into the right.

I had to understand what this process was that allowed this shift to happen. Why contour drawing?

The left brain is the verbal, analytical and linear - the logical side. However, it seems that the right brain sees things differently - and is invaluable in creating art.

Journaling with Contour Drawing

Shirley MacLaine in *Sage-ing While Age-ing* writes: "By keeping a journal, by applying the simple techniques of interpretation and integration, by recording our dreams, by writing down every synchronistic event that may happen in our lives, we will be on our own grail quest toward the authentic life with the God source as our co-creative inner partner. The more we pay attention to synchronicity in our lives, and the more we record it so we can look back on it later, the more we see that our lives will improve and our destiny will unfold as it was meant to be."

I've been journaling for more than twenty-five years. Looking back, rarely did I let myself ask questions that I knew could not be answered with an easy out. But after keeping a Spiritual journal beginning only weeks ago, I now record a wide range of personal reflections and insights - I needed a place to store all the inspiring, thought-provoking facts and quotations that stood out in the books I was reading, mainly revolving around creative aging. And every day now I try and finish a drawing.

There seems to be more days behind me than ahead. I'm aging fast. Hurry, I say to myself. The notion of us taking time for serious introspection is uncomfortable. We want answers not questions in our society. When we deal with moral or existential matters we deal with mysteries, the insolubility of which I personally find deeply discomfoting. Our capital-driven society discourages reflection in order to encourage consumption and 'man', I was the queen of it all. For me, now it's more important to put the emphasis on BEING rather than on DOING or HAVING. I'm learning this slowly, but the light at the end of the tunnel is shining brightly, although I'm acutely aware that I have many miles to trek the path.

In speaking of spirituality, I'm sticking to Webster's broad definition of spirituality as "not having to do with the tangible or material, but with the nature of the sacred". As I continue to draw and ponder and then draw again, not knowing which is influencing what first, I seem to be developing a self-dialogue, a life review based on the peaks and valleys of my life. I've found that there is an underlying truth as I ponder and draw and journal, and that

it's simple, yet incredibly powerful.

As human beings, we are all connected to the sacred through the living web we call the earth. This living web includes our choices, feelings, thoughts, and questions. The Desana people of the northwestern Amazon believe each sound, taste, or aroma of the rainforest carries a message about their lives, the earth, and the universe. Their understanding of the world is just one expression of the universal truth that all of life is inter-connected.

Lately I have come to realize that when we acknowledge and accept the sacredness of the universe, we're free to live more authentically, more fully, more deeply, and with greater satisfaction. We also create a new synergy that advances our ability to cope with illness and our ability to promote healthier aging.

As you ponder these thoughts of mine, remember that this dimension of personal growth is always available to each and every one of you, at any time or place. Only recently has our society begun to accept the idea that the spirit is an integral partner with the mind and body. The answers you come upon during the course of your spiritual journey will help you to better understand your thoughts and actions, as well as your unique inner world. These responses will, in turn, no doubt, have an enormous impact on everything you think, feel and do as you face each new day with an attitude that accepts change and encourages growth. All you need to start with is a pencil and mirror - and Elizabeth Layton's web site. www.elizabethlayton.com

The slowness of the drawing seems to push the left brain mode deeper and deeper into a neutral or 'off' state, thereby allowing the shift.

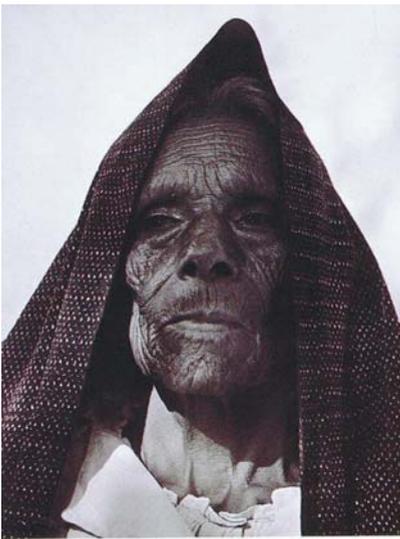
Some folks' left hemispheres are very stubborn and may be fearful of giving up control to the right, but patience and practice will make it easier each time you try.

The notion of us of taking time for serious introspection is uncomfortable. We want answers not question in our society.

The answers you come upon during the course of your spiritual journey will help you to better understand your thoughts and actions

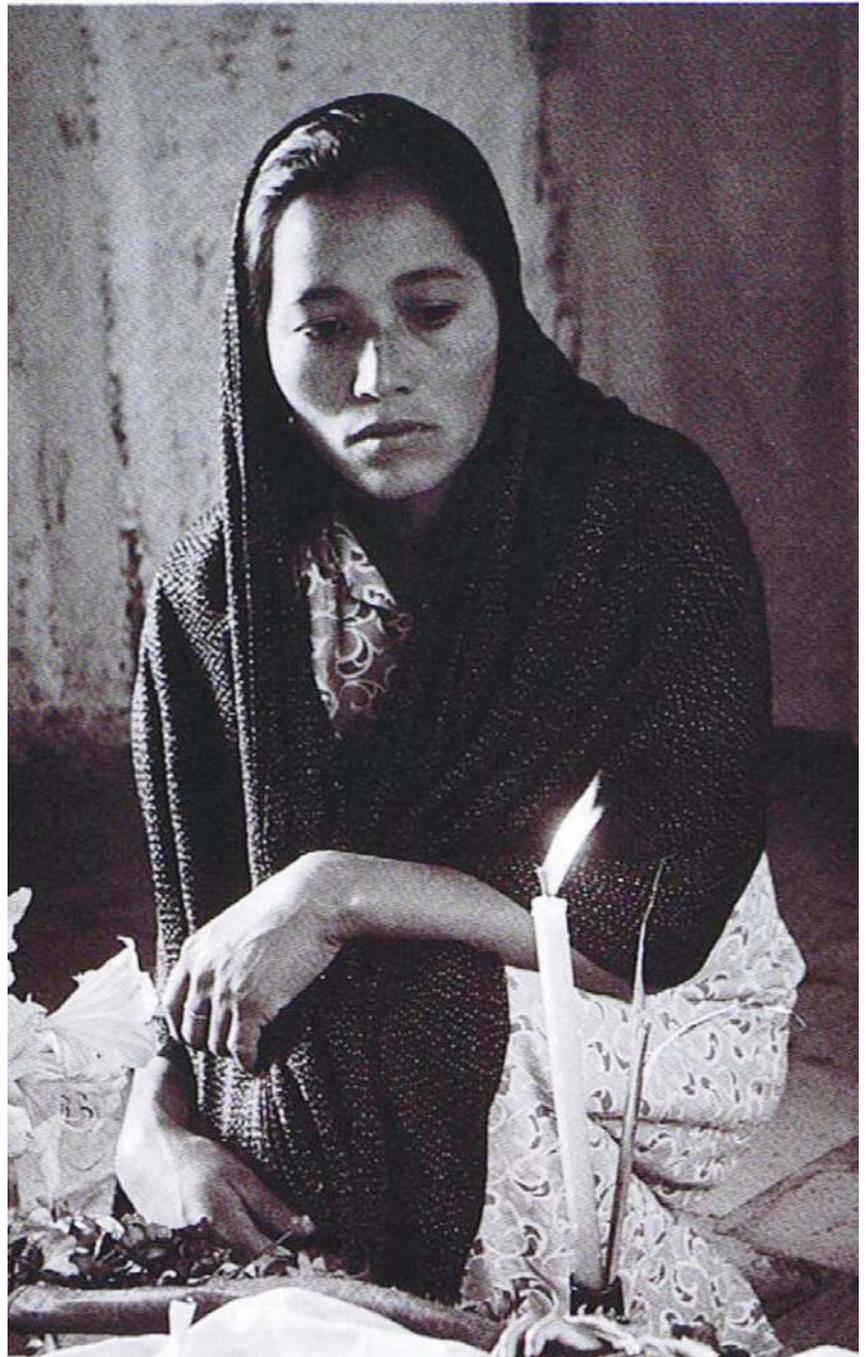
ART IN TRANSIT

We look at a Turner, Modigliani or Rembrandt and marvel, Isn't it sublime? Yes it is, but their art emerges from one of the greatest works of creativity: ourselves. So often, we forget that, as members of the human race, we are genuine works of art, infinitely more complex and interesting than any created art piece. *Art is Transit* pays homage to the beauty of human face and body as we emerge and evolve through time. Each of us is *in transit*. We look to you for photograph submissions of interesting faces of all ages.



Above:
 Photographer, Reva Brooks (1913-2004)
 Title – Anciana
 Anciana was a beggar in San Miguel de Allende. She and Reva Brooks became good friends.

Right:
 Photographer, Reva Brooks (1913-2004)
 Title - At the Wake, circa 1949
 Elodia at the wake of her dead child, San Miguel de Allende, Mexico





Above: Photographer, Sandy McNolty
A young married couple who lived on the reed islands on Lake Titicaca, in Peru. The Islands are constantly being added to as they wear down. This young couple were just married. They make and sell art that tells the story of their ancient traditions.



Top right: Photographer, Sandy McNolty
This photo is of a lady and her baby. She was the leader of a Peruvian mountain village of woman who were showing us how to clean the wool from the llamas, die the wool with bugs, clay and other types of herbs and spices and then how to weave the blankets, and sweaters.

Right: Photographer, Andrea Farrell
The woman owned and ran a small eatery in the older section of Merida, Mexico. She was so graceful and completely eager to have us enjoy her hospitality. She's wearing the traditional dress of the area.



WORDS FROM THE HEART



Lesley-Anne Evans

To poet, Lesley-Anne Evans, writing is a gift, a spiritual pathway toward a deeper understanding of herself and God. She resonates with the words of Scottish Olympic runner Erik Liddell in the movie, *Chariots of Fire*, "I believe God made me for a purpose, but he also made me fast. And when I run I feel His pleasure." Such is her experience of writing.

Lesley-Anne's poetry is rich with images of land and spirit, and the stories of humanity. Her work has appeared in several publications including UBC Okanagan's *LAKE - A Journal of Arts and Environment*, and *Sage-ing 2 - A Journal of Arts and Aging*. She recently received Honourable Mention in Pandora's Collective, 'Hibernating with Words' poetry contest. Lesley-Anne participated in the Banff Centre, *Writing with Style Residency - Poetry Genre*, in September 2011.

Lesley-Anne lives in Kelowna, B.C. with her husband, three teens, and one high-spirited German Shorthaired Pointer. Lesley-Anne writes often, blogs occasionally at buddybreathing.wordpress.com and shares her words with enthusiasm.

James Wilson Miller Cook

Lesley-Anne Evans

'Would you look at that!' you'd say. I'd
look, shadow you 'round the planted
border of
your two acres, secret shrub words in Latin
hands behind our backs. You knew

in the way of cultivated earth
rocks thrown aside seeds tucked in waiting
for sun and rain and time. You knew

in fresh picked beefsteak tomatoes
sun warmed softball sized passed into my
wide-eyed grasp
salted first bite burst of seeds down my
chin. You knew

in 'Tropicana' roses hand grafted
in the line of paraffin topped jars of black
currant jam
set on the kitchen counter to cool. You
knew

in songbirds and gophers, dew worms we
gathered by flashlight on wet grass, put in
margarine tubs for hooking catfish in the
Grande.

Was it Jersey's bawling down the way
the rough feel of calves tongues against
my open palm, the warm dent you left
when sheet lightening and blue bottles
buzz
sent me crawling into bed beside Grandma.
I wonder when I knew?

You once told me you read the Good Book
seven times over. I read it too some days.

Aging

Antoinette Voûte Roeder

The waving water dimples
like the flesh of my belly.
My own soft aging skin
ripples, weaves and sings the same song
as the rest of creation,
puckering, gathering, creasing, folding.
Such lovely words speak of wealth
hidden
but unfurling,
spreading, flowing
over all my experience,
blessing and anointing
time passed and
the reality of now.

Tree

Henrietta Poirier

Tree: 1

The tree can bear the weight of the snow
For this is all it knows to do

The ice holds firm to the surface
For it has found its place

The snow and ice melt and give way
For its time is done
For the moment anyway

Tree: 2

The tree that can bend and sway
With the wind
Grows straightest

The tree that stands headstrong
Meeting wind with hardwood
Breaks boughs and falters

In its growth towards heaven

Tree 3:

The shadows of this great beech
Gently encompass me

My thoughts in return
Bestow blessings upon her

SAGE-ING WITH CREATIVE SPIRIT, GRACE & GRATITUDE

A Journal of
the Arts & Aging

Edited by Karen Close
& Carolyn Cowan

NUMBER 3, SPRING 2012

ISSN 1920-5848



INSIDE THIS ISSUE

2. Introduction
3. Dr. X's Lifeline to Creativity and Maturity
5. The Body Seeks Your Creativity
8. Careful Seeking, Part III
10. Walking into Sage-ing
14. From Our Readers
18. Gifts from an Art Form
22. Winter Vision Quest
24. Just Creating Brings Joy
26. Creativity Makes Connections
29. Skin Deep
30. Revisiting Elizabeth Layton
33. Art in Transit
35. Words from the Heart

A PUBLICATION OF THE
OKANAGAN INSTITUTE

AVAILABLE ONLINE AT

www.sageing.ca

Email sageing4@gmail.com

The Spring 2012 issue of the *Sage-ing with Creative Spirit, Grace and Gratitude* is our third. It's hard to believe six months have passed since we released the first journal. With more letters from our readers and article submissions with photos, the journal is evolving as the organic art form that we originally envisioned. Over time, you may find that a section has been retired and new ones added, as inspiration moves us.

Sage-ing 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.