

THE JOURNAL OF Creative Aging

SAGE-ING

with Creative Spirit, Grace & Gratitude



A PUBLICATION OF
THE OKANAGAN INSTITUTE

NUMBER 30, FALL 2019

EDITED BY KAREN CLOSE

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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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Cover image by Corinne Crockett

FROM THE EDITOR

Assembling this 30th issue, and now entering into the Journal's 10th year of publication, has brought wonderful moments of reflection and much gratitude. I remember my promise to *self* after reading the words of Dr. Shelley H. Carson, a psychology professor at Harvard University, when she wrote:

"I challenge each citizen, whether you are currently a senior citizen or a senior-to-be: first, consider one life lesson that you would like to pass on to future generations. Second, decide upon a creative medium in which you could embed this lesson ... Then make it the work of your post-retirement years to grow proficient in that medium and to produce a work that embeds your message."

The decision to create the journal *Sage-ing With Creative Spirit, Grace and Gratitude* was my response to her challenge. Our volunteers, contributors and discerning readers are influencing how the twenty-first

century is embracing creative spirit. Thank you. Together we are informing appreciation for the constant flow of life energy, the energy of wholeness that creativity awakens within each of us. By expressing one's identity, concerns and aspirations through some form of creative expression, one's sense of self is enlarged and transformation happens. Creative expression brings an increased sense of self-acceptance and well-being, which enriches the quality of life. Across our country this message will be celebrated on the 10th anniversary of *Culture Days* September 27-29. This issue of the Journal salutes that mission.

I welcome back Lisa Lipsett <http://creativebynature.org> who shares my passion to ignite others to explore the process of painting for its qualities of inner adventure, joy, connection & self-change. Lisa has a deep well of understanding and learning. The Journal delights in saluting the contribution to Arts and Wellness made by Suzanne Valois. Indeed this issue hosts a rich gather-

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ing of writers, experienced and just beginning, eager to shout out the magic of opening to creative spirit and embracing creative practice and intuition into their way of being. Hear the invitation to SPEND YOURSELF, and celebrate ART AS MEDICINE.

"You must be the voice of your own cultural spirit as you create your life." – Daphne Odjig

Let us join together on *Culture Days* to embrace *Creativity, the Arts and Well-Being*. Let the eye of heART direct our paths. Thirteenth-century Persian poet Rumi suggests that "everyone sees the unseen (truths awaiting discovery) in proportion to the clarity of their hearts." In our dreams or with consciousness heART is capable of a broader and more precise sight than the vision of the eyes. It's a matter of opening and choosing imagination and expression over judgment.

"If we are to achieve a rich culture, rich in contrasting values, we must recognize the whole gamut of human potentialities, and so weave a less arbitrary social fabric, one in which each diverse human gift will find a fitting place." – Margaret Mead
KAREN CLOSE

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 November 10th, 2019

• 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

BEING IN TUNE

THE CREATIVE NATURE OF WELLNESS



Lisa Lipsett

“Life’s solutions lie in the minute particulars, involving more and more individual people daring to create their own life and art, daring to listen to the voice in their deepest, original nature, and deeper still, the voice within the earth.” – Stephen Nachmanovich, 1990, *Free Play: Improvisation in Life and Art*

I am at the 20th annual Fiddlecamp on Salt Spring Island, B.C. this week, helping campers to paint with nature. Fiddlers of all ages from all over North America gather for a week of workshops, jam sessions, dances and creative art. It is important that everyone strive to play in tune, listening simultaneously to their instrument and to other instruments, then making the necessary adjustments. Players tune in and tune up to co-create beautiful music. Similarly, painting, when approached as “creative resonance,” is a potent wellness practice that enlivens the hands, heart and mind, keeping us in tune with nature and ourselves.

Why Everyone is Creative

“Creating and self-creating is what all living beings do.” – Fritjof Capra, 1996, *The Web of Life: A New Scientific Understanding of Living Systems*

We are born equipped to create, yet I regularly hear students, both adult and youth, declare with conviction that they are not “creative.” I am certain that this is simply a misunderstanding. Could they mean they don’t know how to draw what they see, or are a scientifically inclined individual who knows nothing about the arts? Likely, they lack specific artistic skills and knowledge, but these can be practised and developed over time. Being “creative” is different. I have taught over 2000 adults and youths in workshops, courses and retreats in educational, contemplative and professional settings, and I have yet to meet anyone who is truly uncreative. In fact we live our lives in a continual creative call and response. We invent ourselves anew, regenerate our cells hourly, solve a myriad of problems daily, make beautiful meals from nothing, and some of us transform a blank canvas with bright reds and oranges.

Being creative is not even a solely human endeavour. All beings are creative. For example, humpbacks create bubble nets for fishing, chimps use sticks to pull termites out of mounds, sea worms make beautiful patterns in sand, apple trees birth apples, waves over the millennia carve beautiful cathedral domes in sandstone. We live embedded in a living creative planet, it is natural, instinctual to create, all creatures do this. To be alive is to be creative. If you have a body you can create. The sensing body is our vehicle of connection.

We live our lives in a continual creative call and response.



Top: Transformation through our hands

Above: Sensing



How Nature Connection and Creativity Boost Wellness

According to Florence Williams in the National Geographic article “This is Our Brain on Nature,” simply by being in nature, sometimes even by looking at a picture of nature, we reap the benefits of increased oxygen and sunlight, are grounded by earth energy, and reduce our heart rate and stress hormone levels, supporting a subjective feeling of well-being alongside observable changes in our physiology! When we spend time in green space, “there is something profound going on.” Nature makes us kinder, happier and more creative too, according to Jill Suttie in Greater Good Magazine (March 2016).

Similar to the effect of time spent in nature, time spent making art also boosts our health and wellness. Our brains are wired to create and when we do, a simultaneously grounding and energizing effect refreshes us. This is the core conclusion from a report by a UK all-party parliamentary group (APPG) – *Creative Health: The Arts for Health and Wellbeing*. The report, published in July 2017, which followed a two-year inquiry, found that “the arts can help keep us well, aid recovery and support longer lives, better lived. The arts also help meet challenges in health and social care associated with ageing, loneliness, long-term conditions and mental health. Crucially they can also help

save the care sector money.” Read this marvellous full report, including podcasts, here: <https://www.culturehealthandwellbeing.org.uk/appg-inquiry/>.

In Canada we have the Arts Health Network doing very similar work. When we combine creativity with nature connection, wellness is given a boost.

Listen Paint: Staying In Tune through Creative Resonance

“We have such grand powers for empathy and communication, since there is something in us of every animal, and something of plants and of stones and of seas, for we are woven of the same fabric as everything on earth, and our textures and rhythms are those of the planet itself.” David Abram, 1988, *The Spell of the Sensuous*

By “resonance” I mean a coming together, like when tides resonate with moon and sun. As well as having multiple meanings in the science of sound, the word “resonance” derives from the Latin “resonantia,” meaning “echo,” and also from “resonare,” “to sound again.” However, the definition I think



Feel the marks

(Painting) favours spontaneity and mindful presence, while we follow what we love, not what we think we should love.

fits best for our purpose here is “The quality of emotional intensity or richness of expression that evokes a sympathetic response in another being.” When we resonate with another person, an idea, a feeling or a beautiful flower, we feel intimately tuned in, and we sense we are not alone. We are intertwined with the forces of the living world and are embedded, feeling that we too belong. I would go further and say that when we resonate, we communicate, and are in a reciprocal exchange. We enliven and are enlivened. We empathize yet also attain personal insight, boosting both knowledge and caring for self and the world. There is empathy, communication and sympathetic understanding. Like pausing to breathe into another,

share breath together with another, we feel connected, as theorized by ecophilosopher David Abram in “Becoming Animal.”

In addition to making pretty pictures or painting a beach scene from a photo, painting can also be a creative act that deepens relationships, helps us to reflect, to be in the moment, and, over time, to learn about self and nature, and opened to self-change. Painting, approached as creative resonance, side-steps the planning mind by inviting us to connect and create naturally through our bodies and our senses. It favours spontaneity and mindful presence, while we follow what we love, not what we think we should love. In this way we animate intuition and sensation, we feel more alive, and we attain a sense of peaceful well-being. By letting our two hands dance to sounds, as if our body were dancing to an uplifting tune, we can experience creative resonance first hand.

Listen Paint: An Activity to Try

“There is an intimate reciprocity to the senses; as we touch the bark of a tree, we feel the tree touching us; as we lend our ears to the local sounds..., the terrain gradually tunes us in turn.” Dave Abram, 2010, *Becoming Animal*

I love how tuning into nature gradually tunes us. We become more in tune with the living world and ourselves. Like a drumhead that vibrates in unison to a nearby drum being played, the act of opening to nature to listen as we paint moves us into harmony. What better way to experience this expanded awareness than to paint with sounds that call our attention?

There are so many incredibly subtle and complex sounds in nature. There is so much to hear when we slow down and listen. It’s a wonderful experience to open to these sounds and to track them with painting.

While you focus on sound, you will also be practising the skill of painting with both hands at the same time. We open to our wholeness when we create with both hands. Both the right and left brain are invited to create. We hold two different ways of knowing in balanced harmony. We are creating with the sound itself—its rhythm, pitch, impression, uniqueness. As a seismograph



Painter in communion

tracks the motion of an earthquake, we are tracking a sound on the page in real time while listening. To make this easier we do this with our eyes closed.

I invite you to try this. Find a spot to sit in a park, yard, anywhere really. Now close your eyes and listen attentively to the sounds you hear. When you find a sound that attracts your attention, paint first with your right hand, then your left and finally with both hands. We are not painting what is making the sounds (like a bird), we are painting with the sound. Tune in and let your hands track what you hear. Let both hands move with the rhythm and cadence of the sounds in your world, in your heart. Tune in to bird call, the wind, or maybe, like artist Sam Winston, listen and draw the sound of your breath, one stroke for each exhale. <https://bit.ly/314pIHZ>

When we paint with sounds we are doing more than listening, we are tuning in and tuning ourselves, feeling and moving, ultimately letting ourselves be moved.

Here is a link to a brief 'Listen Paint' instructional video <https://vimeo.com/142757706>. Enjoy!

Visual artist **Lisa Lipsett, EdD**, develops *Paint with Nature* courses, books and videos for nature lovers and those curious creative individuals who wish to experience joy and connection through art, anywhere, anytime. She is the author of "Beauty Muse: Painting in Communion with Nature," and is soon to publish "The Paint Joy Playbook: A creative field guide to painting with nature and your wild heart" (www.creativebynature.org).

SUZANNE VALOIS

A PIONEER OF ARTS AND HEALTH IN CANADA

Karen Close



“At the deepest level, the creative process and the healing process arise from a single source.” – Rachel Naomi Remen MD (Clinical Professor of Family and Community Medicine at the University of California San Francisco School of Medicine)

In telling our stories and exploring our imaginations through creative expression, we find well-being. Medical research has demonstrated that creative expression improves not only our quality of life, but is also effective in reducing pain, fatigue and stress, and in increasing cognitive abilities and emotional well-being. Popular culture writer Elizabeth Gilbert, in *Big Magic: Creative Living Beyond Fear*, explains, “The universe buries strange jewels deep within us all, and then stands back to see if we can find them.” Gilbert continues, “It is only through a human’s efforts that an idea can be escorted out of the ether and into the realm of the actual.” In Canada, those striving to advance awareness and understanding for the idea that creative engagement should be incorporated into an integrative health care strategy within our educational and health institutions need to be heard. Both Art and Action need to be recognised as interwoven into our understanding that created pARTicipACTION. This national organization, originally launched as a Canadian government program in the 1970s to promote healthy living, then revived in 2007, needs further upgrading. It is time to hear the voices of arts and health advocates pioneering the movement into this century.

An Ottawa advocate pioneering the movement into this century is Suzanne Valois. In an online interview (<https://artshealthnetwork.ca/arts-health-101/featured-articles/snapshot-suzanne-valois>) she gives clear guidance for how agencies, media, institutions and individuals can step up:

“... art-funding agencies have had a history of promoting and backing the arts and artists within Canada, but they could increasingly put their focus on the role that the arts play on health, much like the ParticipACTION campaign did for the fitness movement in Canada. This would expand their effectiveness in promoting the arts by reaching out to the public whose role has been mainly as passive observers and spectators of the arts and instead initiate a more engaged and participatory role which would I believe alter the public’s personal relationship to the arts.”

Suzanne has been determined to bring arts and health “out of the ether and into the realm of the actual.”

“If the underpinning of the arts is not present in the Canadian psyche then arts and health will continue to have difficulty reaching its full potential. With this in mind the context of my work includes the arts’ humanistic role for our

Suzanne Valois



I began teaching VTS (visual thinking strategies) to third year medical students for the Family Medicine department of the University of Ottawa – where my father had also practiced and taught medicine.

culture, our world and ourselves. I am encouraged and excited about working within the medical community which I believe increasingly lends credibility to the arts in the public's eye. I also believe that the intersection of health and the arts will invariably increase the value of the arts in Canadian culture."

Suzanne is an Expressions Arts practitioner, teacher, artist and founder of The Art of Being Human. She has been committed to helping individuals uncover and value their authentic voice through Creative Expression, for personal and global well-being. She has worked with the City of Ottawa, the University of Ottawa and the Ottawa School of Art, offering workshops on Creative Expression for groups and individuals, creating and promoting programs using VTS (Visual Thinking Strategies) and Art for Health. Suzanne teaches an elective for the University of Ottawa Faculty of Medicine, Medicine and Humanities program. (See article page...)

"My involvement in arts and health has been a very personal journey. As a child I took my first art course at a community center and was amazed that such a thing existed. The fact that you could spend your time making art was a Godsend to me. I realized at that point that art was what spoke to the deepest parts of me. On the other hand, my father who was a compassionate physician, though pragmatic, did not really see the value in artistic expression. I nevertheless studied fine arts and I have taught art in a great number of settings including the National Gallery of Canada, for over 30 years. The connection to health and art became apparent to me early on as I witnessed the benefits that engaging in art brought to my students and it became the focus of my teaching and my business The Art of Being Human. When I began teaching VTS (visual thinking strategies) to third year medical students for the Family Medicine department of the University of Ottawa—where my father had also practiced and taught medicine—I realized that the relationship between health and arts for me had come into a symbiotic full circle... I teach art for health workshops to people in many different life circumstances. They may be on a personal and or spiritual journey, dealing with mental or physical challenges, aging or looking for ways to incorporate a creative and more humanitarian outlook and approach into their work or lives. My work allows me to see how many ways the arts can benefit people's lives, from self-discovery to developing a healthier state of mind. More so, I believe that our state of mind, not only has the power to change ourselves but our community, and the world around us.

Looking at yoga as an example, at one point it was relatively unknown, but has now grown into a household word that people associate with fitness and health. I would like to see that same kind of connection take place between arts and health. I believe that this can be done through the media as well as organically through word of mouth. Seeking out and generating avenues to publicize the role and benefits that the arts bring to health and wellbeing will further educate the public on the topic and pique their curiosity to find out more. The best publicity however, is word of mouth by

people who have experienced the benefits. I think that arts and health workshops can be extended outside of their applications within healthcare institutes and their offshoots and be increasingly offered to the public in alternative spaces such as the workplace.”

Suzanne’s continued initiatives are intended to help communities, medical institutions, schools and art institutions develop and implement arts and health based programming into their milieu. She also would like to curate exhibits and create projects that would demonstrate to participants and viewers the benefit of engaging in arts and health based programming. Medical facilities, art galleries and community centres as well as workplace settings could benefit from these exhibits and projects, as visual evidence and hands-on experience of the symbiotic relationship between arts and health in the celebration of our humanity.

ARTFUL MEDICINE

Suzanne Valois

I am an artist and art educator with a keen interest in the humanistic quality of the arts. I grew up the daughter of a compassionate family physician, in an atmosphere that questioned the relevance of the arts. In the course of my interest in finding the association between the arts and the broad subject of health, I started my company called The Art of Being Human <http://www.theartofbeinghuman.ca/>. I now teach for the University of Ottawa’s Medical Department, from which my father was a graduate, and I combine the arts and health worlds to celebrate the humanistic aspect of both.

My first initiative into this emerging area was in 2010 after training in VTS (visual thinking strategies) while working at the National Gallery of Canada. The University of Ottawa’s Medical Department offers VTS as part of their Medicine and Humanities program to third year undergraduate medical students as well as residents. VTS fosters collaborative, inclusive, community-building dialogue to increase critical thinking skills, visual literacy and communication. The sessions include an hour-and-a-half visit in a gallery, spending about 15 minutes on each artwork. Students are asked three questions: What is going on in this painting? What in the painting makes you say this? What more can you see? My role is to engage the participants in a discussion. In this technique I use mostly narrative paintings with people in them and am asking the students essentially to ‘substitute’ the painting for a patient. I am asking the students to ‘read’ what clues they can gather from the details in the painting about what is happening in the scene. Through body language and gestures of those in the image, their attire and surroundings, the students slowly piece together what they feel is the narrative within the work. The students are informed beforehand that there are no wrong answers. The accompanying physician facilitates a thirty minute debrief at the end of the session in order to be able to get feedback from the students, and to help them to dialogue about the relevance of incorporating this

Suzanne’s continued initiatives are intended to help communities, medical institutions, schools and art institutions develop and implement arts and health based programming.

My project, based on self-portraits, was called “Physician Know Thyself.” It was accepted into the (University of Ottawa) initiative.

approach into their medical training. Students are also invited to link the gallery experience with case studies they have read and to share personal insights as to how they feel that this approach reemphasizes the humanistic aspect of medicine.

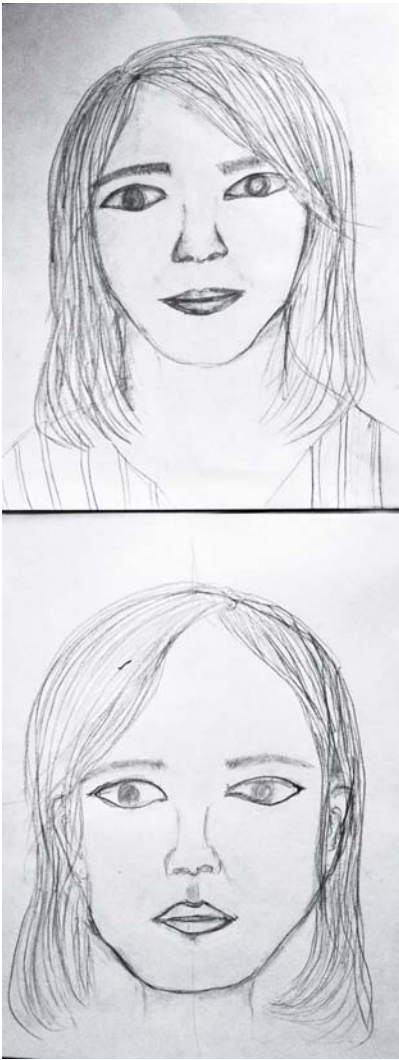
I choose to show the artworks chronologically to take advantage of the students’ presence in the gallery (many of them have never been to an art gallery) and talk about how the artworks are reflections of the society in which they were created and how artists continually introduce new ideas and concepts. I help the students to feel comfortable with art and to understand how with a few essential tools they can learn to approach any artwork, dispel the fear of ‘not knowing’ and embrace the wonder of discovery.

It is also important to me that the students be able to catch their initial reactions to a work of art. This is not within the pure VTS criteria, but I feel our connection to people begins the moment we set eyes on them and we have a gut reaction. Like it or not, this is also our starting point for every encounter we have, and we need to build an awareness of this and how it affects future understanding. Most of the physicians who accompany the tour are in favour of this add-on. Many will relate how first perceptions affect their own practices, and acknowledge that whether their initial instincts are right or wrong about a patient, this perception is in essence the starting point of their interaction. VTS is therefore, for me, not just a training tool of facilitated discussion, but an approach to a mindful way of interacting between two people.

My personal observations have been reinforced by answers to the questionnaires returned by students responding. For many, there is a realisation of their own sensitivity towards the artworks in front of them. They often feel hesitant about offering an opinion or an observation on an art work. There is agreement that this kind of non-pedagogical teaching causes a lot of discomfort. However, fortunately, by the end of the session there is often a feeling of appreciation for this alternative approach to teaching.

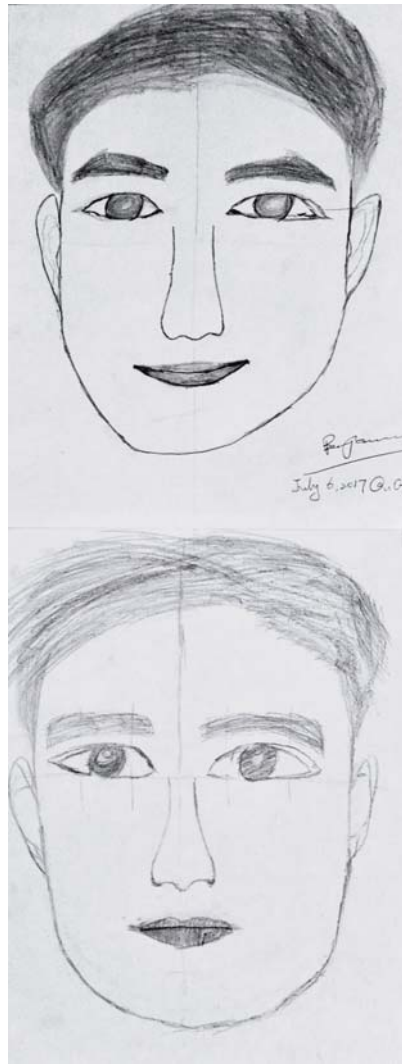
The success of the program is very dependent on student willingness to respond to lengthy and detailed questionnaires asking the students about the effectiveness and relevance of the session, as well as the abilities of the educator.

In 2015 I applied to be part of the University of Ottawa Faculty of Medicine, Medicine and Humanities’ artist-in-residence initiative. My project, based on self-portraits, was called “Physician Know Thyself.” It was accepted into the initiative, and is now offered as an elective within the same program. In this elective, students are asked to draw themselves twice, the first while looking at themselves in a small mirror and the second from a selfie. These exercises are intended to improve observational skills by having participants use their own anatomy as a model, and also to encourage some aspects of mindfulness, which is part of the curriculum. I give basic guidelines to help them with facial proportions and ask them to be aware of their inner dialogue as they work on their first portrait, and if need be to quickly jot down some



Left: first drawing bottom second drawing top. jpg

Right: first drawing bottom second drawing top. jpg



of their inner dialogue. The second portrait is done using a selfie. The reason for using a selfie is that newer generations have been raised to peer into the camera of their phones with no one behind the camera, and have developed a very personal and comfortable relationship with selfies as a consequence. To me it seems reasonable that perhaps the students would be more able to draw themselves from this more intimate setting. I ask them to frame the selfie with the same angle and size as they appeared in the mirror of their first drawing. They then draw themselves again from the selfie. Initially I had not anticipated giving them further instructions about changing the dialogue that they had had with themselves, but the comments they shared after their first self-portrait attempt (“How I hate my nose”; “I look so awful”; “This is too hard, I can’t do this”) prompted me to ask them to be more vigilant about their language and thoughts, and to only think positively and encouragingly about themselves and, even more so,

to be extremely kind and generous to themselves. This greater consideration is therefore the way that they spoke to themselves throughout the entire second drawing exercise. I was not sure what the outcome would be initially other than the intended goals of improving observational skills and building on basic notions of mindfulness. However, what occurred was something far greater than I could have anticipated. Although none of the students was trained in drawing, the difference between the first and second drawings was startling. The second drawing demonstrated a much more relaxed, more empathic treatment of themselves. This treatment was evident through very subtle changes in their demeanour, expressed in a softer, more relaxed expression, especially in the eyes and mouth. Seemingly they were able to draw themselves with an understanding and acceptance of their inherent best self.

My question was and still is: How is it possible for someone who has no training in drawing to convey a very different feeling in their rendition of themselves from one drawing to another. In medicine the surface anatomy of the face is linked to everything below it, the muscles, the bones and nerves.

“Before, a traditional Chinese physician had to have an arts practice as part of his training, and it is wonderful to see that this is coming back.”

I wonder, do these drawings show a different kind of surface anatomy in that the students are linking with what is below the surface emotionally?

“I think that these sessions allowed me to improve my drawing and observation skills, as well as my self-awareness... In drawing myself, I became more aware of the feelings I had about my own appearance, and I learned to love the things in my face that I hadn’t noticed before.” Julie El-Haddad, medical student

I have been very fortunate to journey into the exciting field of arts and health, and to apply it to the burgeoning new arena of Medicine and Humanities programming. Creating, developing and finding the links between the two is an ongoing organic process. What is evident is that there is a symbiotic relationship between the two that speaks to our humanistic attributes. Perhaps the practice of this relationship existed a long time ago when our world had not broken areas of knowledge into strict silos as in art and science. As a Chinese medical student, who was participating in one of the sessions, said, “Before, a traditional Chinese physician had to have an arts practice as part of his training, and it is wonderful to see that this is coming back.” In the end, my father, the physician, and myself, the artist, were perhaps talking about the same thing when we spoke of the importance of arts versus medicine; we just didn’t know it.

SPEND YOURSELF

Corinne Crockett



If I'd known how much fun life being an elder would be, I would have done it earlier. The reality of aging is far removed from any preconceptions I had as a younger woman. I'm delighted to find my youthful view was sorely mistaken. It's the best time of life.

I watched my parents as they aged, and wondered what was the purpose of it all. Each of their days was filled with the same activities, the same routine, the same, the same, ad nauseam. To my young mind, they seemed to be the living dead, just living out their days in a repetitive routine. They'd spent their lives dedicated to supporting and raising a family, but they'd not spent any time discovering or following their own passions. I clearly remember my workaholic father sadly telling me in his senior years, "If I'd only known how little it [work] mattered, I'd never have lived my life the way I did." Sadly, in his later years, my dad recognized the error of not finding and following his own passion and purpose, of not finding his own unique brand of creative expression. There were so many things he wished he'd tried, but he never found the time. I didn't want to make the same mistake.

Henry Ford said, "If you keep thinking what you've always thought, you'll keep getting what you've always got." A new experience of life requires a new idea. I decided to follow my heart, and returned to college when my children were young. I wanted to be a nurse. And so I did. I thought my evolution would end there, moving from housewife and mother to one of staff nurse in a hospital. But again, I was wrong. The adventure had only just begun.

One day, a colleague arrived at work filled with excitement. She was lit up. Her exuberance filled the room as she excitedly shared pictures and stories about her pottery classes. Her sense of aliveness and vitality were contagious. As I felt panic rising in my body, I recognized my life had been so filled with work and doing what needed to be done, I'd never found or cultivated my own passion. I was soon to turn 40, a big year, time for a change.

Memories of my father came flooding back in, and I knew it was time to wake up and find what would light up my world. This was a pivotal moment for me. There was so much I 'had' to do, but nothing I loved to do. I used to say I didn't have a creative bone in my body. I was wrong. I just had too small an idea of what creativity is. I started to check within, asking myself what I'd love to do, who would I love to be. You can't ask questions of your soul without receiving an answer. And then, listen and take action. Since that day nearly 25 years ago, my life has become an epic journey of discovery of who I am and what exists inside of me.

Breaking the mould I thought was cast for me, I started to take risks. I

Poppies





Top: First try

Above: Another watercolour

Corinne Crockett is first a wife, mother and grandmother, whose eclectic background has created a rich alchemy that serves to inform her perspectives on life. Corinne is a Registered Nurse with a Master's degree in Health Science; she is a staff minister with the Centre for Spiritual Living Kelowna, and a hospice volunteer. She is an adjunct professor with the School of Nursing at UBC Okanagan, and is currently spending herself in Teaching Smart UBC, a unique mindfulness program offered at UBC, to the public. She is an invited speaker and presenter. From diverse experience and knowledge, personally & professionally Corinne has developed an extraordinary passion for helping people to gain a new perspective, awaken and recognize that we do not have to be a slave to our thoughts or to life; we are always at a point of change. Corinne resides in Kelowna with her husband of 42 years, and can be reached at corinneacrockett@gmail.com.

started to follow my own heart's calling. In doing this, I have lived a life uncommon, and I've loved every minute of it. My heart's call has led me on an adventure of a lifetime. At times it maybe didn't make sense to the world, but it has made sense to me. When I write about something that makes sense, I'm not referring to the logical mind. For something to make sense for me, it makes my senses tingle, it's a knowing that transcends what the mind understands. It feels right, 'it makes sense.'

Following the deep-knower within, I've never been led astray. I've travelled an unusual path, but it's always been right for me. I feel more alive than I ever did in my youth. I remain amazed as I discover new abilities, talents and passions as they emerge. These are my harvest years; harvesting all of the wonderful fruits of the bounty of my life and sharing them with the world, as only I can. You can't learn this stuff in a text book. I believe a secret to a rich life in my 60s is spending myself with passion. In the spending, in the giving, I am fed. This spending of my life's harvest

draws people into my life who seem eager to partake as I express myself through teaching, speaking and writing.

Even though drawing is not my strength, I delight in the great joy I've found as I dabble in painting. As the critical nature of my youthful mind falls away, I enjoy what I've created and find myself surprised at what emerges from the canvas, much like the canvas of my life. Stretching myself outside of my own comfort zone has been essential. Comfort is overrated, and it's been years since I've been comfortable. I've learned 'perfect' is just a word in the dictionary, and often is an imitation of what someone else has done.

Creativity is not doing what others have done, copying and colouring within the lines. It's making something new, as only I can. Life has become a creative adventure as I've opened myself to my own inimitable expression of life. While there have been many people full of suggestions about how I can best participate in the world, it's been by following my own creative desires that I feel most alive. Life is not 'one-size-fits-all.'

Within each of us lies a seed of creativity that's unique to each one of us. It's the seed of who we're here to be. The evolution of our creative capacity expands and changes through life as we open to new ideas. I am the embodiment of creativity, and it's been up to me to find my own brand of art. Life has become my canvas. Life has become richer and far more exciting as I feel the aliveness of the creative flow pulsing through my body and mind. I learn and grow in the process. Twenty-five years ago I never could have imagined I'd be doing the things I'm doing now. My hope is the next quarter century will hold as much adventure.

EYES IN NEPAL

Mary Lou Johnson



I arrived at Kopan Monastery just outside of Kathmandu at 1 pm on January 1, 1997. The group that I was travelling with was becoming increasingly dysfunctional, so I decided to take a break from them and go off on my own.

A young woman named Meg from Oregon arrived as I was checking in, and we decided to share a room. We had several choices of rooms at different prices and levels of comfort. Unfortunately, we chose one that meant sharing the vile-smelling toilet with too many others, as well as being too far from the solar showers. Our first night we barely slept as we hadn't noticed that one of the windows was open, and wondered why the room was so cold.

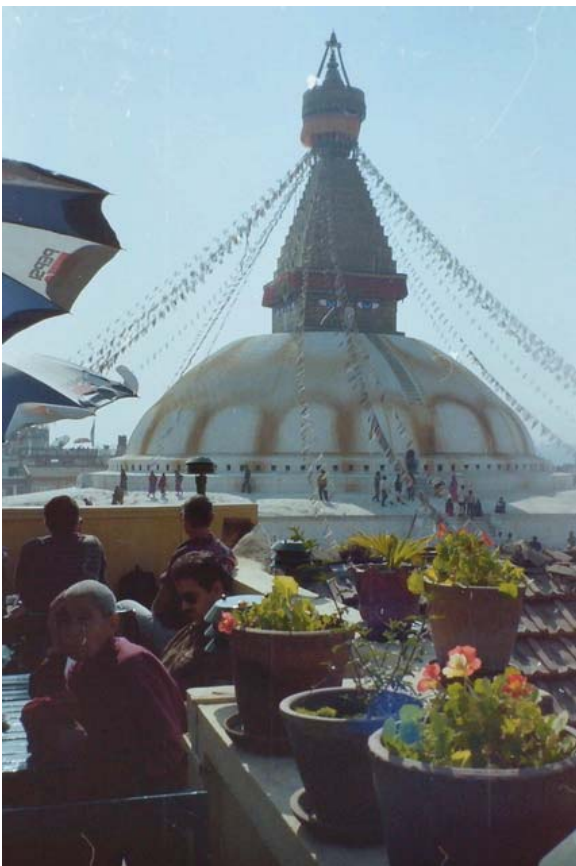
Although Meg was young enough to be my daughter, we made a nice connection. After her recent completion of a degree in anthropology, she had received a grant from IBM to spend a year travelling and exploring women's spirituality throughout the world. Her delightful curiosity and intelligence felt refreshing compared with the people that I had been thrown in with on my Buddhist pilgrimage with a Tibetan Lama from Vancouver.

Meg had done her university practicum in Nepal, and had learned to speak the language. Now she was living with three other young Western women doing field work in Bodha, a part of Kathmandu that was filled with Tibetan stupas, temples and shrines. There did not appear to be any other women of my age here.

My first time in the dining hall at Kopan, I found myself sitting opposite a young woman who had gone to school with my daughter at the University of Victoria. What a small world!

Day Two of the new year dawned chilly and overcast. My mood matched the dark skies, and I felt homesick for family and friends. I felt the need for a change of scene and decided to walk to Bodha to visit the famous Tibetan stupa. Meg gave me instructions and told me it would be about a twenty-minute walk down the hill. Having set off in the wrong direction it was about a half hour before I realized that I was lost. After twisting my ankle on the uneven roads, I was forced to keep my eyes on the placement of my feet instead of enjoying the rich pageant of Nepali semi-rural life. At every corner I would ask directions and after another hour I arrived limping and exhausted at the stupa. Suddenly the clouds parted and the sunshine revealed a colourful scene of Tibetan families, shops, antiques, tangkas, figurines, prayer wheels and

Tibetan stupa





Top: Young Tibetan man

Middle: Mary Lou checking eyes

Above: The eyes of the Tibetan Stupa

strings of prayer flags. My mood immediately lifted, and I found my way to the Stupa View, a clean Australian-run vegetarian restaurant with a rooftop garden facing the eyes of the stupa. The place was packed with Europeans speaking a cacophony of languages, and the delicious food revived my body and soul, giving me a chance to regroup before climbing the stupa.

An hour later I descended the steps to the first level and began to circumambulate clockwise as was the custom. Very soon a young Tibetan man, who appeared to be in his thirties, approached me and gifted me with a prayer bead with an eye on it, which he informed me had been blessed. He told me that his name was Amba Lama and that he had been a monk, but had contracted tuberculosis and was forced to leave the monastery. He told me that his medicine had been paid for by a Canadian and had allowed him to recover from his TB, but it had now returned and he needed forty dollars to fill his doctor's prescription. He had come to the stupa to pray for help.

Was I the answer to his prayers? Or was I being scammed? I gave him all of the rupees that I had, but it came to only thirty dollars. I advised him that he should look for someone else to supply the remainder of the sum. The sadness in his eyes would haunt me for the next few hours and lead me back to the stupa with a full wallet. While shopping for a warm hand-knit wool sweater, the eyes of the stupa followed me; before long the sad eyes of the monk replaced them and I parted with the remainder of the money he would need to get his medicine.

The following week I found myself doing volunteer work in an eye hospital in Lumbini, the birthplace of the Buddha. I accompanied a medical team deep into the Himalayas and helped set up a field hospital where, over the next week, we restored sight to over one hundred elderly Nepalese who had been completely blinded by cataracts.

Perhaps the blessed prayer bead with the eye led me to this opportunity. I still have the prayer bead that I paid forty dollars for and hope that Amba Lama now has a healthy body and a sparkle in his eyes.

The above was written for a Creative Writing course that I attended at the Society for Learning and Retirement in Kelowna, B.C. It came from excerpts from the journals that I kept during my travels. Journalizing has always been my creative outlet. After more than 40 years as a meditator I have learned how to access my inner sage through writing. Now that I am in my mid-seventies and my world has dramatically narrowed by being unable to participate in my former physical pursuits, I have found comfort in returning to my life-long love of the written word and am working on an autobiographical book.

Mary Lou Johnson spent more than 40 years as a Registered Nurse, and was the founder and Past President of the Canadian Holistic Nurses Association. She has travelled widely and done volunteer work in India and Nepal. She resides in Kelowna, B.C., and is teaching a course called "Aging, Sage-ing and Engaging" at the Society for Learning in Retirement.

THE JOY OF HANDWORK

Ruth Jarrett



My excitement about the Fibre Arts started after I attended a conference in Pullman, Washington. I walked around with my mouth open! The creativity, colours and woven articles, lectures, slideshows – all of it spoke to me and I wanted to do it all! Bit by bit, with encouragement from my husband and being able to slowly acquire some equipment, I was on the road to an exploration in the fibre arts.

The sharing and learning I have found in belonging to a group of weavers and spinners has been invaluable for me. The exploration of new fibres, the encouragement and support from other members have been educational and led to many friendships over the years. I find inspiration to this day by the feel of some lovely fibre in my hands. The exhilaration I felt when I took a hand painted silk scarf off my loom stays with me still; it's a feeling of accomplishment and satisfaction.

Having been so lucky in my life to have had a supportive husband and family has enabled me to explore loom weaving, spinning, dyeing, colour theory and fibre. Basket weaving also became a keen interest of mine, using pine needles, cedar, oak, willow, roadside reeds and fibres from garden plants, all of which have been fun to explore.

Meeting and sharing with others has always been my greatest source of inspiration – all the questions and conversations, and figuring out how to create what is in our minds. I have belonged to three different guilds throughout this beautiful province we live in, and I have had different opportunities for learning, great memories and friends from them all.

I remember fondly a workshop day on Granville Island. It was not the Granville Island of today; it had space, trees and grass for us to set up a day of outdoor dyeing. A big dye pot of indigo was set up on some grass under a few trees. Clotheslines, soon to be dripping with skeins of yarn or t-shirts, were strung across the trees everywhere; what fun that was. I arrived home all inspired and excited about the potential of the dye pot and what that could bring regarding colour to my spinning and weaving. (Sadly, those trees and grass are now gone, but the memory is as clear as if it was yesterday.)

My fondest memories in my journey through the world of fibre arts often come not from what I have done, but what others do and have done; their gift of sharing their skills so we can all learn to create through new avenues continues to inspire me. Meeting my Navajo weaver friend, Mae Jean Lewis, is one of the special times in my life. The Navajo rug collection of our dear friend Hugh Hamilton and the cooperation with the Kelowna Museum allowed our guild to sponsor two Navajo weavers. The mother and

The yarn is very important





Top: My silk scarves

Middle: Scarf patterns

Above left: Baby accessories

Above right: Woven from hand picked pine needles

daughter set up an exhibition and presented demonstrations at the Kelowna Museum. They shared, and we learned how they spun their yarn on drop spindles, wove their lovely masterpieces on simple looms, and created beautiful designs without sketches. Navajo weavers use the simplest of tools and create lovely rugs. Using the wool from their sheep, turned into yarn by their hands, and using the weaving from patterns kept in their minds is incredible to see. My friend, Mae, has been weaving all her life and has never repeated a pattern. Such skill moved me then and still does today.

One of my greatest pleasures has been seeing two of my daughters take up weaving and spinning. We share ideas, fibres and equipment, and discuss colour. I often hear, "What do you think of this?"

As I look back from my age of 86, I can only say what a great pleasure it has been to have had the fellowship of the Weaving Guild experiences in my life. As I slow down, and my body begins to feel my age, I can still enjoy so many aspects of my life: listening to music, reading a good book (the real thing) and sitting at my spinning wheel or with my knitting needles, letting my thoughts and ideas take flight. What can I create with these lovely fibres, the colours blending in harmony under my fingers? Smaller items can come from this, not the bigger ones of old, like blankets or wall hangings, but creations for those who enjoy and appreciate handmade items created in the hands of others!

I still belong to and participate in the Ponderosa Spinners, Weavers and Fibre Artists Guild, and will always be grateful for the support, ideas, friendships and learning over the years and look forward to those to come. My life would not have been the same without being part of the inspiring world of fibre arts.

Ruth Jarrett was born in Norway, but has called Canada her home most of her life. Her work in the Fibre Arts has been a

very welcome interest, allowing her the avenue to participate in the arts community. During her marriage her husband loved long distance sailing, and she would fly to join him in different parts of the world. They would connect with the local fibre artists and guilds in many of their destinations, always a treat to meet and learn from others. She no longer weaves, but still continues to spin, dye and knit.

ART AS MEDICINE

CELEBRATING DAPHNE ODJIG

Karen Close



Daphne Odjig and Karen Close

“There’s nothing else that I like to do more than creating something out of my mind and heart, nothing else. I live it. I eat it. I breathe it.” – Daphne Odjig (September 11, 1919 - October 1, 2016)

Daphne died during Culture Days 2016. Had she lived she would have been 100 years old on September 11th, 2019, in time for the 10 year celebration. This year’s intention is to examine the arts and culture sector through the lens of Creativity, the Arts and Well-being. Across the country the weekend’s goal is to share the research, ideas and stories connecting the many ways engagement with arts and culture influences the vitality and well-being of individuals and communities. With *A Paintbrush In Her Hand* (the title of a book telling her story, published by Natural Heritage / Museum Inc., 1992), Daphne Odjig spent almost a century influencing Canadian culture and creating personal well-being.

Odjig had a Grade 7 education, but was awarded eight honorary doctorates, the Order of Canada, the Governor General’s award for Lifetime Achievement in the Visual Arts, and the Order of BC. Such recognition from our Canadian universities and governments was a great honour. She would smile with humility while maintaining a deeper pride in knowing that her life and work were a deep expression of being true to herself.

For the memorial tribute at the Art Gallery of Ontario, the invitation featured a spunky photograph of the artist and read, “She kicked open the doors for all of us.” From October 23, 2009, to January 3, 2010, The National Gallery presented *The Drawings and Paintings of Daphne Odjig*, the institution’s first solo exhibition by a First Nation’s female artist. Readers of the Journal may remember that my friendship with Daphne evolved into a rich mentoring experience in the spring of 2013 when she became a resident of Cottonwoods Care Centre in Kelowna BC. Please enjoy my sharings in Issue 9: Fall 2013 <http://www.sageing.ca/sageing9.html> and Issue 12: Summer 2014 <http://www.sageing.ca/sageing12.html>.

As important a voice as Daphne was for Aboriginal artists during her prodigious career, during her final years she modelled the wellness benefits of creative engagement. In discussing “The Stages of Life,” Carl Jung said, “For the aging person it is a duty and a necessity to devote serious attention to himself.” Jung explains that as we age our power of creativity can help us “explore and bring to life” our unused potential, remain connected to and engaged in our communities, and live with a sense of purpose and meaning that validates our existence. At an early age Daphne had discovered there is an innate part of all of us that strives to heal. She said: “Art can be anything.

Daphne drawing, summer of 2016





Top: "I am"

Above: Reflecting

You have to be free to be yourself. Making art opens the level of the universe's perceptions of who a person is. When you listen to the spirit in nature, the 'it,' you're never alone. It gives you confidence and hope."

Our artists are national treasures not because of the worth of their paintings, but rather because of the wisdom their creative engagement has brought them and the gift that wisdom is to a culture. As I observed, listened to Daphne's stories, relaxed into her humour and watched her draw, I saw her putting the finishing touches on the life she had created and the joy creating brought her.

She explained how, as a preadolescent, she had sought out her favourite spots in the grove surrounding her home. Leaning against a tree trunk and looking up into the mysteries of the world above, she remembered losing herself in the changing forms and then shutting her eyes, listening and feeling herself part of the natural design. At a young age, Daphne's mother, Joyce Odjig, had been struck with rheumatic fever and never truly recovered. Joyce was an invalid for most of Daphne's life. In Grade 7, Daphne was also struck with rheumatic fever. Fearing for her daughter, and in declining health herself, Joyce kept Daphne in bed for six months, and then at home to rest. Daphne spent her days in the nearby wood with her grandfather Jonas, a stone carver, who urged her to explore the images nature excited in her imagination. Joyce Odjig died at age 38 with 19-year-old Daphne at her side. Always Daphne would refer back to the earliest teachings she had received in the woods from her grandfather, "You must be the voice of your own cultural spirit as you create your life."

Life presented many obstacles, but guided by her grandfather's words, Daphne was determined to become the voice of her own cultural spirit. Through the next four decades she worked in a variety of locations advocating for emerging Indigenous consciousness in Canada. In 1976, at age 57, Daphne and her husband moved to Anglemont, British Columbia, on Lake Shuswap, located between the Okanagan Valley and the Shuswap Valley. Daphne arrived with a commission from the Museum of Civilization (now The Canadian Museum of History) to create a mural 27 feet long and 8 feet high. She rented a neighbouring barn, had the back wall taken out, and began the challenge. She credits this creation for bringing her fully into herself as she explored her personal reactions to native history. She physically came alive to the act of painting on such a large surface, and allowed her life and the experience of indigenous peoples to mingle in her mind. Emotions of horror, pain, anger and hope released themselves as she watched the imagery emerge from her hand in the four-part mural, *The Indian in Transition*.

Daphne explained that the subject matter was "just the facts, just history," but more significant for her were the emotions called forth in response to these historical facts. They brought a catharsis for the creator and evolved her steadfast faith in creative spirit. After the experience of this mural she continued to paint intuitively. She said, "You find out who you are and are proud... Only when you discover yourself, can you be secure." A mature



Top: Imagining her friends

Above: "My Grandmother Smoking Pot – Why Not?" I see her delight and hear her laughter when she named this one.

Odjig style slowly emerged. She was not as reliant on her people's mythology for subject matter. She had the time to reflect on her surroundings and their connection to her own inner emotions and beliefs. She regained her childhood relationship and spiritual alignment with nature.

In the early 1980s a sixty-year-old Daphne became a pioneer in what has come to be known as the consciousness movement. She was adamant about the need to know oneself, and the power of creative expression as a conduit to human growth. On July 4, 1885, Louis Riel is recorded as saying, "My people will sleep for one hundred years, but when they awake, it will be the artists who give them their spirit back." I feel certain he was predicting Daphne.

Certainly, as I watched her draw at Cottonwoods, I could feel the spiritual concentration that guided her hand. She had rheumatoid arthritis in both hands and had been advised to stop painting and drawing, but, mentally in good health, she remained true to herself. In the winter of 2014, she asked for coloured pencils and began to draw again. From that day forward creative energy filled her waking hours. I watched her push her fingers into a grip she could make work. "There are no mistakes you know. Just go with what happens." Looking right into my eyes, she said, "I must do what my self wants me to do. Always." My job was to come each day and take a photograph of that day's work as we discussed possible titles.

I was often in the room when her doctor visited and Daphne would be intent at her drawing pad. "You're the most alert patient I see," he'd laugh. "No medication needed here."

"We think it is the drawing," I'd joke with him.

"I don't know, but she's doing something right."

Almost two centuries earlier, Ralph Waldo Emerson had proposed:

"To finish the moment, to find the journey's end in every step of the road, to live the greatest number of good hours, is wisdom."

In our earlier visits, Daphne and I spent many hours talking about how her daily drawings brought satisfaction to her. She enjoyed reflecting on the moments of her life as she drew and felt her hands enlivened by an inner drive and self-awareness those memories brought. She liked the challenge of finding a grip that would allow her arthritic fingers to respond. As her hearing worsened, balancing colours with her eyes allowed her to relax, alone with an inner peace. Immediately she knew if her eye was offended by the choice or placement of a colour.

I understand that many will remind me that Daphne had a lifetime of experience to draw from. This is true, but most importantly she knew to relax and allow herself to go within as she let her pencil explore the page while she watched. I called these intuitive works Daphne Doodles. We can all allow ourselves to develop a personal doodling style and feel the healing energy of private connection.

Remember the pleasure drawing as a child brought before one's natural expression became influenced by others. More and more research is bringing



awareness to the physical and mental benefits of self-directed creative exploration for all ages, but particularly as we age. It is my hope that Daphne's story of lifelong engagement with art and its influence on her vitality and well-being will become a great Canadian story that inspires all who hear it.

Pass it on. Help integrate her belief that "You must be the voice of your own cultural spirit as you create your life" into Canada's Culture Days.

Top left: A Rooster for Abby

Above: Peace

Top right: "Let the pencil direct you"

Karen Close is editor of the online journal *Sage-ing with Creative Spirit, Grace and Gratitude* www.sageing.ca. She is a painter and author of two books: *Unfinished Women: Seeds From My Friendship With Reva Brooks* and *Spirit of Kelowna: A Celebration of Art and Community*. She was recipient of Kelowna's 2016 Honour in the Arts award. In the fall of 2018, she coordinated *Our Spirits Aligned: Aboriginal Voices of Healing and Reconciliation* (Woodlake Books, 2018). Teaching English and Visual Arts for 27 years gave Karen a deep appreciation for the healing benefits of creative expression. Retirement gave her the opportunity to meet vibrant senior Canadian artists and to hear their stories of how creative expression is a path to self-actualization.

CREATING HEALTH



Katerina Vaughan Fretwell

Easing into the zone, I slide into my higher self, the divinity within, trusting in the creative process for direction. Whether entranced in painting, poetry, piano or song, I'm on a pilgrimage of self-discovery.

I grew up in a troubled extended family. Most kin died young from abuse of alcohol and cigarettes.

The five of us cousins followed the pattern, until three of us eventually found a better life. Alcoholism, like other addictions, tries to fill a spiritual void. Think of the Latin *Spiritus* morphed into spirits: hard liquor.

I remember my uncle through marriage taught me piano and I joined my school choir. I tried.

I was desperate for outlets to express my tumultuous emotions, and I blamed the god as taught in Sunday school for hating my family and picking them off one by one. But I loved the sad violin music Mom favoured, the jazz my artist-aunt preferred, and Chopin's Polonaise Opus 53 that my uncle-teacher played. Fortunately, high-school years brought momentous discoveries in art, music and poetry.

I learned how drawing and painting could focus my sense of self in self-portraits. I struggled to capture my essence, colours as emotional signposts, composition as a balancing act. Glee Club served up joy; writing in my journal and creating poetry gave me catharsis, hope, perspective.

University continued my creative exploration: singing, writing, acting and immersing myself in the study of literature, music and sociology. Orphaned at seventeen, I still managed to get an Honours English degree, a BA in Sociology, a Masters of Social Work, and to go on to marriage and motherhood. Still I felt like the hole in the doughnut, as I wrote in a poem and expressed in my first two poetry books, revealing my feelings of emptiness. My books were published by Fiddlehead Poetry Books. *The Ultimate Contact*, 1978, and *Apple Worm and All*, 1979, chronicled my failing marriage, terror of being alone, and bewilderment at self-sabotage.

On New Years Eve, 1979, I prayed, "God, take me now or help me; I don't want another decade like the 70s." Seeking self-knowledge through my poetic pilgrimage could only take me so far. Six months after that prayer, I discovered my barrier to self-growth – excessive use of alcohol blocking my light of awareness. Fittingly, a book, Joyce Rebeta-Burditt's *The Cracker Factory*, forced me to face my alcoholism and be ready to honour my mother's deathbed quote for my 1962 high-school yearbook: "Seek the truth for it will set you free."

I had my last drink on July 19, 1980, and my last cigarette on May 5, 1992.

The Ultimate Contact

(1974)

Well clipt grass
outlines
the bronze plaques:
father
mother
grandmother
grandfather.

I shout at the inscriptions
trying to breathe life
into the metal epitaphs.

Two chickadees
call sounds of love.

My family,
huddled together
in the clouds,
laugh
at my solitude.

Learning the Polonaise

(2005)

Clutching Kleenex, my uncle/teacher
chorded and dabbed *the Polonaise*
and my pre-teen doldrums into larger
harmonies, my lessons of *Artist's Life*
till thrown into finishing school

Predicting I'd love *con passione*,
his chordal descent and last angelic
treble descanted above
baby-fat and braces,
drunk and dying grownups

His concert career flat-lined early,
teaching, a grace note,
as he poured Chopin's *Polonaise*
into my discordant youth
and stilled fingers aching to play

Forty healing years later,
memento mori, I master his piece:
the chromatic, military, lyric,
our epic arias, jittery fists
well-tempered *maestoso*

Poetry Society

(1979)

I read blank verse
vers libre
in a field
where every flower rhymes
and the iambic wind
pushes into couplets

the stamens talk about
the changing seasons
divinities

my roots drawing
moisture from the earth
spawn oak leaves
of death, sex, and violence

the flowers fold their petals
inward
when one of my leaves
brushes them in the wind

my leaves jerk and start
in the iambic wind

but somehow
the field is completed

Medication

(1974)

The mist rolls in,
waves eddying up to the bed-sheets
as I breaststroke toward you.
The sediment collects
while my voice responds
to a question asked eons ago.

My foot fights through mud
groping for the gas pedal.
A stop sign swims into focus
as I drive past it.

I am not surfing, cresting,
just treading water
watching a rainbow form
on the oily surface
as four waterskiers
skim effortlessly
over turquoise horizons.

Pilgrim

(Calgary, Alberta, July 19, 1980)

Immersed in my book-gift,
I seize the word "Hope"
black letters transfigured,
crowned white.
Yanked out of me
in my host's backyard,
words ack-ack:
"I am –
I am an alcoholic."

The book's heroine,
alive, sober, and on
a mission to loving herself,
could be me. Her story
slides into my conscience
as few have in twelve years.
The word "hope" a
marquee in my mind
isn't even on the page.

Immediately after
we arrive home,
I grab that damn
cesspool six-pack
and slop it down the drain,
every suicidal drop,
hug my un-mothered daughter,
and step out
of the gutter.

Out of the Woods Yet

(2019)

Forest deep where I dare dream
lines waver in my sights –
iambic, contour, melodic
and underfoot – trail by my Crying
Hemlock.

That sacred fragile line
joining me to oak and pine,
exiled, dead kin soul to soul,
mate's ashes circling Hemlock bole.

That visual, aural, pine-swept line
where I wept, weaves through leaves,
retrieves my sense of soul,
shimmies in nimbus, sears whole

fractured family fragments –
artist-aunt lived longest,
parents and extended kin
died young, no buffer given.

Forest deep where I dare dream,
lines wind spondee, gesture, trill
circling still exiled hearts,
Indra's Net shining on parts

into Boreal forest, Hemlock
absorbs artfully released grief,
my seventy plus years a lock
on sturdy bough, dancing leaf.

In Colour

Two Poets at a Reading (1997)

Appraising other students,
Kohl-rimmed Eyes pronounced
my threads brightly unpoetic,
then lit her cig off my ember.

At centre-stage, her eyes and coal-black
dress eclipsed her words and name.
I can't search for her verse
or draw any conclusions.

Now it's me who wears black,
cloaking the weight gained
after I stopped smoking,
started The Change.

Impelled to express what's in
my poems that boomerang many times,
I paint the luscious pink dying
trillium, vipers' bugloss and bones.

I hug a Wise Oak to draw
from earth's core the force
to fire into form the icy
magic of evergreens.



Left *The Wave*, mixed media.

Right: *Growing Artists*, mixed media.



Self-Love

(Aurora, Ontario, December, 2000)

At this house of healing
we're sent out into the snow
to fetch whatever
cattail, pine-cone, stone
and whatever frozen bloom
catches our eye, locks us down.

In the weak wintry light
I stand, paralyzed by two words
spinning inside me, the self same
words blanching of meaning

in hundreds of how-to
presto whole-person formulae
I skimmed through, my core
petrified yarrow – ignored.

For the first time, this
adjective-noun duo
slides into my marrow
so hard and true

that I shake all over,
melting, flexing –
and these two words
are now and always

mine.

Now at almost 75, I've lived longer than almost everyone in my family.

*Indra's Net – each being is a pearl, shining on each other, we are all connected

*spondee – two consecutive words or syllables are both stressed/ accented beats in a poetic line

For me, writing poetry indicates where I am in self-growth and where I wish to be; this realism and idealism is a revealing spiritual yardstick. My earlier poems are tinged with self-pity and self-indulgence; after intense self-work, my poems have evolved to reflect the maturity that can be attained only in clear-headed sobriety. Processing rejections and acceptances and befriending other poets, artists and musicians humbles and positions me as part of other sojourners on the road to self-knowing, no greater or lesser than anyone.

As I create, choosing the telling word, the right note, the descriptive colour excites me. Being immersed in aesthetic, spiritual, emotional and artistic decisions puts me outside time in a wondrous, reverent state of being that grows my gratitude exponentially.

This marvellous new zone I've found allows divinely inspired answers to come, giving me apt solutions, because I am not obsessing over a problem, a hurt received or given, or a bungled connection. I'm joyfully busy being in beauty, grace, love and the inspiring wisdom of sharing with others.

Sitting on my well-worn, cat-scratched couch, I believe that things happen for a reason, and I think Karen requested this article so I could reflect on this singularly precious gift, my arts-dedicated life, which has seen me through so much trauma, turmoil and change.



Life: *Ochre Epiphanies*, acrylic. This won third prize at PoeArtry North.

Right: *Enlightened Path*, acrylic.



To My Daughter

(2019)

Letting go pinnacles – an endless process
disentangling miasma-bound mistakes,
clearly owning our tangled tapestry,
keening beside back-lit hemlock,
sylvan silence, not forest fog –

stark-sighted, aware the muddy glue
is in me, not you. My own bogs beckon,
not those from your specific thickets.

My Celtic love-knots tried to guide, protect
you,
effective or not – my guessed, stressed trail.
Slow-grown resolution – resolved
not in your current swamp-grass, but in
my own marshy, red-faced remembrance.

Deep into motherhood, we all slide
onto our own stepping stones,
into our own sinkholes. Why do we

inherit silverware, silky hair, cold
extremities, thin bones, chins upfront,
but not our moms' experienced wisdom.
Century quarter-short, I've borne witness –
saplings turned sentinels. Love, grow with
grace.

Whether co-creating as in choral singing, painting in my art group, teaching and performing poetry or solitary creating, I am connected to sacred traditions. Widowed from my second marriage and forced to keep distant from my child's and grandchild's difficulties, I find strength, solace and support through my art in all its forms and friendships.

These paragraphs of reflection, and recalling the success I have felt, make me appreciate the critical choices I have taken in my life to move into creative directions. I've been a full member of The League of Canadian Poets since 1990 and CARFAC Ontario since the 90s. Born in NYC in 1944, I became a Canadian citizen in 1970. Granddad ran away from Nova Scotia to New York; I fled from New York to Nova Scotia, completing the circle, and now I live in central Ontario, busy creating a life of purpose and well-being.

Katerina Vaughan Fretwell's recent poetry collections, *Angelic Scintillations* (2011), *Class Acts* (2013), *Dancing on a Pin* (2015), and *We Are Malaga* (2019), published by Inanna, include her art work. Her award-winning poetry has appeared in journals and anthologies in Canada, Denmark, Japan, the United States and Wales. .

TO SEE OR NOT TO SEE

THE HEALING POWER OF THEATRE

Ruth Bieber



Top: Ruth Bieber and Caroline Collier at the Kelowna performance (Kelowna Art Gallery)

Above: Ruth Bieber and Christopher Sveistrup at the Kamloops performance (Smorgasbord Deli)

Ruth Bieber holds a Master of Education degree from the University of Calgary, with a specialization in Rehabilitation and Theatre. In the early 1990s, she founded *InsideOut Theatre*, which was a reflection of her own evolution from therapy to theatre. Her publications also reflect the evolutionary nature of this process. The most recent publication, *Disability Theatre from the InsideOut* is available as an E-book or in paperback. *To See, Or Not To See* is a 14-actor ensemble performance (Kelowna 2016). Her current creative project is a solo, multimedia house performance adaptation of the original ensemble production. Ruth currently resides in Creston, British Columbia.

Many people are familiar with the healing power of journalizing. Now, consider for one moment the potential healing power of taking the written word one step further, into action.

In 2008, I wrote a script titled, “To See, Or Not To See.” It was a particularly challenging time of my life, and writing the biographical memoir ensemble proved to be insightful. I was born in 1956 to immigrant parents, whose dream was to come to Canada and farm: grow crops, raise animals and love the land. At least this was my father’s dream. Turns out the dream was more of a nightmare for my mother, who was ultimately diagnosed as having schizophrenia, but no doubt suffered from Second-World-War PTSD, and a serious case of postpartum depression. We didn’t have words for these conditions then, so my mother was simply ‘the problem’ to be dealt with by the then conventional treatments of shock therapy and hospitalization. Back to the play.

The ensemble was produced in Kelowna B.C. in the fall of 2016, and by then I had gained insight into Mother’s victim status. My mother was not the problem; she was simply a victim of circumstances beyond her control. Women just weren’t empowered enough in those days to stand up for themselves, so spending time in a mental hospital was simply the only choice. It was either that or try to endure the hell that was her isolated life on the farm. My writing and watching of this first script of the play was very revealing for me, but then the true enlightenment came when I turned the ensemble into a solo, multimedia performance. Acting my life, my story, I was able to feel transformation deeply within my own being, my own body. Forgiveness became my experience of my story. First for my mother, then for my father, and finally the realisation that forgiveness for all truly transforms us. It is the ultimate power on this ‘solo’ journey we must all make.

A final word must be given to the healing potential that sharing one’s story offers for the audience. Viewers can experience the cleansing relief offered by tears, laughter and the well-understood catharsis that comes as a result of commiseration. Perhaps my story and my performance deepen for the audience because I am blind. I am told the experience of me on stage openly sharing my story and my personal transformation is inspiring. I believe I have added a deeper layer of insight for my audiences by inviting them to wear blindfolds. Listening becomes the experience that lends an even deeper layer of insight. “To See, Or Not To See,” that truly is the question I invite my audiences to consider and perhaps to relate to their own lives.

CREATIVITY AND AGING

THE NEUROSCIENCE

Jacques G. LeBlanc



“Creativity is the most fundamentally human characteristic. It is in fact the unique and defining trait of our species.” – Pulitzer Prize winning biologist Edward Wilson in his book *The Origin of Creativity*

Creativity is driven by the constant human desire for innovation, the discovery of new entities and processes, the solving of challenges and the finding of new ones. Creativity in our society is often portrayed as the domain of artists, painters, musicians, poets or filmmakers, but some of the world’s great creators and/or inventors wore lab coats and never picked up a brush or played music: Einstein, Darwin, Newton, Bell, Edison, Tesla, Jobs and many more. Creativity is also present across a range of professions, including medicine, engineering, marketing, law and research. It is misleading to presume that anyone who pursues the fine arts is by virtue of this fact guaranteed to be highly creative. This myth propagates a misrepresentation of creativity as well as art, and inhibits many people from getting involved.

It is not easy to define creativity. The field of creativity has been examined, written about and researched since the 1940s. In fact, Norman Bethune, in 1939, was already trying to define genius, and creativity played a huge role. It appears that we are born with more or less the same brain, and we more or less use it the same way, but creativity is more complex and involves imagination, originality, innovation, and seeing something that others cannot see or sense. Creativity implies curiosity, exploring knowledge, being engaged and yet observing, indulging in fantasy, being open to opportunities and exploring ideas.

With advances in the field of neuroscience and technology, we are now able to pinpoint the process of creativity. Integral is understanding the neuroscience of anatomical structures. Within these structures, cognitive functions, which are the basis of neural activations and deactivations, occur at different stages of creativity. Using new tools and neuroimaging technology, such as functional Magnetic Resonance Imaging (fMRI), computerized Electroencephalograms and PET Scans, scientists are learning how to trace the higher cognitive functions and consequently the source of creative thinking. It is hard to understand how neuroscientists can trace a thought process, a decision-making function, a mind-wandering action, an emotion or a creative thought. The course of the action is not something we can touch; we see only the outcome. Try to image the hard drive in your computer. At the touch of your keyboard, you can retrieve information, pictures, talk, music and much more. These gigabytes of memory can be stored forever.

With advances in the field of neuroscience and technology, we are now able to pinpoint the process of creativity.

We may not pack so many raw data into our memories as we used to do in our early 40s, but our ability to manage the information and knowledge is increased through our developing flexibility.

The brain is the same. Neuroimaging tools cannot measure a thought or an image in our memory, but they can measure the use of energy – the amounts of glucose and other enzymes in our brain cells, the energy-glucose flowing through our neurons. By using the fMRI or PET Scan and other technologies during a task done by a patient, neuroscientists can determine and visualize which areas of the prefrontal cortex – frontal, lateral, posterior – are activated. They can determine which central parts of our brain are using energy and lighting up on the computer screen. David Dunson at Duke University and Rex Jung at the University of New Mexico have also been studying white matter tracks (neuro-fibres), using fMRI and diffusion tensor imaging, to understand the connections between the two brain hemispheres during creativity. They are measuring the speed of connections and the use of energy-glucose by our brain cells and neurons.

Empirical evidence suggests that the prefrontal cortical functions are among the first to deteriorate in older age. Studies suggest that the elderly are less able to inhibit well-learned rules, and have less independence from memories stored in their brain. Until quite recently, aging was thought to be associated with functional and creative decline, but now researchers believe that the human brain follows a fairly predictable developmental process. The brain of a foetus starts with poorly differentiated soft small matter and evolves as it matures; it gains shape and intellectual power until its peak performance, believed to be at around 40 years of age. After that, the brain begins a slow decline, getting slower and cloudier by the 80s. But not all is lost; as it turns out, more and more psycho-neuroscientists are coming to the conclusion that the brain in the mid-life period, described as between 40 and 65 years, is more elastic and flexible than we had thought. We may not pack so many raw data into our memories as we used to do in our early 40s, but our ability to manage the information and knowledge is increased through our developing flexibility.

Anatomically, our brain is composed of white matter, about half the grey matter or nerve cells, and glia (like glue), which keeps the nerve cells and connective white matter together. Much of the white matter is made of conductive nerve strands, like invisible wires; covering each nerve strand is a fatty sheath called myelin (like the plastic around a copper wire). Throughout our lives, fresh layers of myelin sheathing are laid down in the brain. These sheaths grow from infancy through childhood and into adulthood. In the early years, there is increasing maturation of motor and sensory activity; thought processes, reasoning skills, emotions and so on mature later. Essentially, the brain is upgrading itself until 45 years old, with the most myelin formation occurring in the frontal and temporal lobes. The cerebral cortex and, in particular, the prefrontal cortex represent the area of higher cognitive functions, such as integrating information, reflective consciousness, complex social function, abstract thinking, planning, memory and attention. Perhaps the greatest interest is in how the left and the right hemispheres often work independently from each other. As we age, this somewhat independ-

Too many people see getting older as a downslide of mental and physical deterioration through illnesses, disability and death. We may have health issues, but we do not need to be defined by them.

ent process tends to decrease, with an increasing process of bilateralization to compensate for the decline, thus integrating both hemispheres. This integration may lead to thought and reasoning processes that become even better with age. Interestingly, many people describe personality changes in the middle age as a mid-life crisis with all its negative connotations, but perhaps this supposed crisis is a reorienting, a re-connection of neurons, and not a crisis.

Research has consistently found that neural conduction and processing speed as well as stamina decrease as we age; however, applied intelligence, knowledge, expertise and memory are maintained. Pattern recognition and intuition, diversity, verbal, visual and auditory processing, resilience and perseverance are maintained. Neurological research shows that engaging in art or any creative activities improves cognitive functions and enhances cognitive reserves, thoughts and memory. Engaging in a creative activity helps the brain to compensate for aging and develop alternative brain strategies.

Researchers at Mayo Clinic, Rochester University, Minnesota, followed 256 people aged 80 years and older. The volunteers reported being engaged in a variety of creative activities for many years. Although a third of these individuals had developed early mild cognitive impairment, the others involved in creative activities were 53 to 73 per cent less likely to develop cognitive impairment. In fact, researchers concluded that those people who had developed rich and fulfilling lives with multiple interests and multiple talents continued to develop psychological and social complexity, well into their senior years.

Too many people see getting older as a downslide of mental and physical deterioration through illnesses, disability and death. We may have health issues, but we do not need to be defined by them. We have the knowledge, expertise, information and memory to age well. We have the talent for reflective thinking that supports the role that older adults can play in our society. Not everyone achieves serenity and creativity, but for those who do, the later years can be the best. Let's emphasize encouraging creativity as a brain healthy behaviour, at any age.

Dr. Jacques G. LeBlanc is a retired pediatric cardiac surgeon. In collaboration with his wife Susan, a retired nurse, they have created LeBlanc Wellness Consulting Inc. to share the discoveries each has made about the work one must do for oneself to create wellness. leblancwellness.com. leblancwellnessconsulting@gmail.com

DREAM, DANCE AND DIVERSITY

THREE PERSPECTIVES

Sarah Lapp, Mary Ann Fowler, Lucy Hazlewood

“You have to love dancing to stick to it. It gives you nothing back, no manuscripts to store away, no paintings to show on walls and maybe hang in museums, no poems to be printed and sold, nothing but that single fleeting moment when you feel alive.” – Merce Cunningham



Sarah Lapp

All Bodies Dance project offers accessible and inclusive dance classes for people of all abilities, genders and backgrounds. In our mixed-ability dance practice, differences are regarded as creative strengths. The company explores the choreographic possibilities of wheelchairs, crutches, canes, and celebrates different ways of moving and perceiving. It seeks to make opportunities for *every body* to discover dance and for artists with disabilities (and without) to access dance training. *All Bodies Dance* wants to widen the spectrum of who dances and what dance can be. It was founded in 2014 by Naomi Brand, Sarah Lapp and Mirae Rosner. The company is the foundation for artistic opportunities for those of all abilities in Vancouver and Kelowna, British Columbia.

I was born with a physical disability in the 80s. I recall imagining myself in a typical dancing body quite often as a young child. I always wanted to be an entertainer – and I was; my limitations didn’t stop me from expressing my thoughts and passions. At age five, I created dance performances in the cul-de-sac outside my home in Surrey. Back then, my version of dancing was on my back, making choreography to my favourite music.

As a wheelchair user, there weren’t many opportunities for me to dance with groups as a kid. In 1994 and 1995, however, I performed in a ballet for the Variety Children’s Charity Show of Hearts Telethon, and will never forget the joy I felt performing in my power wheelchair with a typical ballerina riding on the back, but relying on me to move around the stage as we did an arabesque. I continued to dance as part of exercise routines in elementary school, but then the dances faded quickly after moving on to high school. After graduating, I focused on developing a career as someone who supports artists from behind the scenes. I earned a certificate in Advanced Arts and Entertainment Management from Capilano University. Wonderfully, during the 2010 Winter Olympics, I was given an opportunity that reignited my passion for dance. I choreographed and danced in a performance sponsored by a world-wide soda company.

I knew I wanted to keep my dream of ‘dance artist’ a regular part of my reality. The biggest challenge was finding accessible spaces to move and create. I did find a brief opportunity to dance with a theatre company for



All Bodies Dance, Rotary Centre for the Arts, Kelowna

performers with disabilities, but in 2013 I joined a community class at the Roundhouse Community Arts & Recreation Centre that became the start of my long-term dance career. Naomi Brand – who I now call my friend and colleague – was the instructor and, through conversations after class, we quickly discovered our shared passion for creating mixed ability choreography. We knew there was certainly a lack of programming for that in Vancouver. Since our beginning, *All Bodies Dance* has welcomed hundreds of participants into weekly dance classes and workshops, created performance opportunities for artists with and without disabilities, mentored new dance teachers and choreographers and grown audiences for inclusive dance. Personally, *All Bodies Dance* has been a catalyst for many opportunities to develop as a dance artist, choreographer, teacher and mentor. With the funding from arts grants, I have been to dance intensives and workshops with industry-leading companies in the UK and USA, as well as other provinces in Canada, and have utilized this knowledge to advance my dance practice and training.

All Bodies Dance has adopted a particular process of having an opening and closing circle during each dance class. This provides participants with an opportunity to get to know each other, creating connections on a deeper level between individuals. For example, a participant's mobility or health challenges don't need to be mentioned, unless, of course, they want to share. The main question asked each is: "What do we need to know in order to dance with you today?" Because we realize that day-to-day things can change, we foster a very open and safe environment for people to discover themselves and how they move. The goal is to reduce barriers and create opportunities for those who may not otherwise have access to their dreams. In June of 2016, the company was invited to lead a one-week residency project at the *Rotary Centre for the Arts* in Kelowna. I permanently moved to Kelowna in 2018, and was able to continue the partnership with RCA and local dance artist and studio owner Lucy Hazelwood. The Kelowna Chapter is known as *All Bodies Dance Kelowna*. I am the project lead and facilitate classes with Lucy Hazelwood.

In the interior of B.C. and in Kelowna especially, there are limited activities to facilitate healthy and inclusive lifestyles for people with disabilities. Furthermore, there are many people who are uncomfortable participating in 'regular' dance classes, and our programming allows anyone to participate in dance regardless of where they are at. We are bridging this gap while uniting a unique community of people of all ages, genders, orientations and abilities, whether a participant has never danced with purpose before or brings years of professional training. Everybody is welcome! Together we focus in on one common goal of exploring movement and creating art in a safe environment. Whether we dance in Kelowna or Vancouver, *All Bodies* dancers are a family with an uncanny ability to create art that radiates beyond studio or stage. *All Bodies Dance Kelowna* participant, Mary Ann Fowler, will tell you how her perception of dance has evolved in our program.



Mary Ann Fowler

Although no formal dance training was part of my childhood, music and dance have been part of my life since I was a young girl. My imaginative dreams put me on a stage, gracefully spinning and gliding through space like a butterfly.

I moved to Kelowna on April 1, 2019. It was time for new beginnings. Happiness and excitement had eluded me for the past few years, and I was on a quest to replenish my soul. To begin this journey, I went online and found *All Bodies Dance*. I registered at the Rotary Centre of the Arts, and on April 2, 2019, I walked into the studio and met my future dance partners. We were all different but the common denominator was we were all there to dance. My dream was about to come true, and I knew I had found my happy place.

“To dance is to be out of yourself. Larger, more beautiful, more powerful... This is power, it is glory on earth and it is yours for the taking.” Agnes De Mill

All Bodies Dance met Tuesday mornings. Drawing from contemporary dance and theatre techniques, Sarah and Lucy guided us through the process of improvisation as we moved to the music. The structure of each class was consistent and set dancers up for success. Prepositional concepts guided us in developing our choreography. I learned how to do the Wave, Leap Frog and the Beehive Clump.

Initially, I felt vulnerable and nervous. This was risky business! What did I know about dance, choreography or improvisation? A few weeks into dancing, we formed groups and found partners. Lucy was my primary partner. She taught me about spontaneity in moving to music! Lucy knew how to “bust a move”! When I forgot a sequence, she signed the move and we were back in sync. Her love of dance was obvious! With a twinkle in her eye and her incredible smile, she taught me how to improvise and dance.

“Diversity is not about how we differ. Diversity is about embracing one another’s uniqueness.” Ola Joseph

One of the dancers chose to perform a solo to “All of Me” by John Legend. He communicated the message of this song with his eyes and body.

Each time he rehearsed, tears welled up in my eyes. When his eye met mine, we didn’t need words. He knew he had touched my heart. I will never forget him, his dance or this song...

“Cause all of me
Loves all of you
Love your curves and all your edges
All your perfect imperfections
Give your all to me
I’ll give my all to you
You’re my end and my beginning
Even when I lose I’m winning
Cause I give you all of me
And you give me all of you”

All Bodies Dance (photo courtesy of Catie St. Jacques)





Joining *All Bodies Dance* brought happiness, excitement and friendship. There was no right or wrong way to dance... We just danced! All of me loved all of them! Huge thanks to Sarah and Lucy for this magnificent opportunity!

"We are not put on this earth to see through one another. We are put on this earth to see one another through." Gloria Vanderbilt

Mary Ann Fowler, BA, BEd (after), MEd, is a retired educator. Her role as a teacher found her in Alberta, Nova Scotia and Manitoba, and included stints in administration, as classroom, resource and learning support, and with the Reading Recovery project. She spent most of her amazing teaching career in what she considered the best school division in Manitoba: Seven Oaks School Division, in Winnipeg.

My family loved athletics! If it was sports related, we were either watching it or my brothers were participating in it. It was unexpected that I would have a passion for dance, but I lived a life filled with dance and theatre even before my professional training.

As a toddler I wouldn't stop moving, always looking for an excuse to perform for my parents' friends, and always with my nose in a book seeking information and craving to learn. At four, I was put into a recreational dance class, the kind where they line you up in rows and as you get better you progress to the front. Apparently, I moved through the lines in record timing, and I was constantly hungry to learn more. After seeing this interest grow, my mom found a local dance studio that was considered more "serious" and structured (they did exams!). That was the beginning of my formal classical training: Tap, Modern, Ballet, Musical Comedy, Latin, Ballroom, Speech & Drama – if there was a class they were offering that I could take, I was taking it. The studio owner would often joke that I needed a bunk bed upstairs as I was there so often, and I wouldn't have had it any other way. Dance was my everything. At school, teachers were always asking me for movement ideas. I was the student holding break-time dance rehearsals to a full mix-tape of Christmas songs for that Year to present to no-one in particular, just because I wanted an excuse to choreograph and perform. At 6 years old I was approached by a local contemporary group, the "Jigsaw Dance." Typically this group was for ages 9 and up, but they had seen me dancing at school and asked my mom if it would be okay for me to see how I liked it. Naturally I loved it! I loved the challenge of holding my own with the older kids and to be pushed beyond my years. This is where my passion for contemporary dance began. It showed me that I could be creative in an intelligent way and be inspired to try anything. My creations didn't have to fit into the set vocabulary of classical technique – the movement language was all mine.



Top: "All of Me" (photo by Donna Long)

Above: Mary Ann with her dance partner



Lucy Hazelwood

Fast forward to my dad taking a job at a “Special Needs” school. Unfortunately, back then students that had diverse abilities were not in mainstream schooling. My dad’s school went from primary to secondary in one building, which was unusual back then. If the opportunity presented, I would accompany my parent on a Take Your Child to Work Day. At my dad’s school I learned my passion for showing people what they are capable of. I’m stubborn, but patient, especially when people are learning. If they are trying, I have all the time in the world. If you don’t think you are able, I accept the challenge to show you just how capable you are. I never considered the students in this school to be limited, rather they just had a different way of learning or interacting. As humans we are all so unique in our learning curves, and I think that is missed a lot by mainstream schooling. We expect everyone to tick certain boxes to be considered “the norm.” I wonder, what if that person’s “normal” was in fact someone’s “atypical,” setting the standard for others who are functioning differently – a new kind of “normal.”

Skip ahead now to high school. I lived in England where we were lucky enough to begin specialized dance training within the high school system. By this I mean studying the history and theory of dance, not just dance steps. We studied all the great pioneers: Martha Graham, Merce Cunningham, Christopher Bruce, Richard Alston, to name but a few. It was also during these studies that I was first introduced to the idea of “Integrative Dance.” We first watched a video of a choreography piece created by Darshan Singh Bhuller for BBC2, called “The Fall.” A dance that was so poignant and moving, it told the story of a prima ballerina and how she had been dropped on her head during a lift resulting in quadriplegia. However, rather than find an able-bodied dancer to portray her story, Bhuller created movement that allowed her to move within her new, restricted body, but with the support of another dancer. The movement was seamless and beautiful; it was the first time I started to question why there were not more options for everyone to participate in dance. We were then introduced to Candoco Dance Company, a flagship organization recognized for its commitment to quality and diversity. Their focus was wholly on high-quality integrative dance for both disabled and non-disabled dancers.

It was while watching this piece that our class engaged in a conversation about what it meant to see disabled dancers performing on stage. The most common response was how incredible it was to see the plethora of different movement that was created by utilizing their unique physical approaches. We also discussed how often we were told not to stare at someone who was different. Here was a group of individuals inviting us to see more than their disability. To observe them fully and take in every detail of their bodies and the movement they are able to share with us. This attitude took away that barrier of seeing them as different; they are just dancers. That moment captured my heart.

“Difference is our means and our method.” Lucy Bennett (of the Vampire Diaries)



Lucy leading *All Bodies Dance*

I completed my BA in dance and performing arts at Bird College Conservatoire of Dance and Theatre Performance, London, England. During this time, we were lucky enough to work with the artistic director of the *Stop Gap Dance Company*. Upon graduation, I spent two years working for Jean Ann Ryan Productions before settling in Kelowna. I naturally gravitated towards the Rotary Centre for the Arts. Whenever our schedules aligned, I worked pro bono for a local group, *Access Resources*, which supports adults with more severe disabilities by offering dance classes. These were by far my favourite classes to teach; seeing my students navigate dance, be chal-

lenged and have fun was beyond rewarding. However, there wasn't the funding to create an ongoing class and I didn't have the means to create a not-for-profit of my own. Over the course of my time with the RCA, I would often hold conversations with the program coordinator, asking if she might have insight into creating programming that filled that void in my teaching life. She worked her magic, and managed to bring Sarah Lapp and her partner Naomi Brandt of *All Bodies Dance Vancouver* to Kelowna for a residency in 2016. I was the in-house dance facilitator for the week and was fortunate to work alongside them on what would turn out to be the beginning of *All Bodies Kelowna*.

"There is a vitality, a life force, an energy, a quickening, that is translated through you into action, and because there is only one of you in all time, this expression is unique." Martha Graham

Lucy Hazelwood studied all aspects of Dance and Performing Arts, including theory, and gained a 2:1 BA Hons degree, validated by the University of Greenwich. After graduating, Lucy went on to work with Jean Ann Ryan Productions, amongst many companies, as Dance Captain in and around the United States. Now in beautiful Kelowna, Lucy has created Luki Studios, Luki Dance Productions, and On Pointe Dance Co, and operates Army of Sass Kelowna, all with the viewpoint of establishing a thriving dance community in the Okanagan and providing dance performance opportunities to those who may not otherwise get them. Lucy also continues to teach, choreograph and direct throughout North America. She often performs with the professional performance element of Luki Dance Productions at various events throughout B.C. and Alberta.

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Eat. Sleep. Dance.

Army of Sass Kelowna

Sergeant of Sass/Licencee

Website: www.armyofsass.com/kelowna

Facebook: www.facebook.com/pages/ARMY-of-SASS-Kelowna

<http://allbodiesdance.ca/about.html>

HEALING THE SELF

THROUGH CREATIVE DREAMWORK

Penn Kemp



(photo by Molly Miksa)

Dreams present wisdom in the form of symbols. They are signposts suggesting how we can grow, heal and manifest the teachings they offer for both life and art. For 50 years, I've written down my dreams and pondered their significance in daily life. Having collected so much material, I've learned to discriminate and differentiate the kind of dreams by sorting them into categories like useful, garbage, archetypal or healing. I file them under some fifty topics, such as "Loss," "Visionary" and "Anxiety." What a field of possibility these collections present when read by subject matter!

Dreams fascinate me. They are pointers to dimensions beyond conscious thought. By definition alone, they reach beyond the personal. Subjects come and go, connections arise and themes appear and reappear of their own accord. I don't know how such clusters of meaning occur. They have their own defined narrative structure that doesn't necessarily translate into creative work the next day. In themselves, though, they are such gifts of specific, personal creativity. My hope is that they also connect to other readers and are useful beyond the self.

Ah, but *how* can their appeal reach other people? How can dreams be translated into art? As a poet, I'm always thinking about writing. That concern comes to life nightly. I have cinched some vivid dreams into poems when they feel especially symbolic, but the worried result often feels contrived or too personal. The poem becomes a straitjacket, compressing the immensity of the dream experience. The form is restricted by its fixed visual imperative.

For a poem of mine to succeed, it must follow the ground rule of the ear; sound directs the new poem and leads me to the next line. If only I were a painter, like my father! I jest, because the dream visions are too intense to attempt to replicate directly. They do not lend themselves to such reduction. I'm left with trying to articulate their essence on the page.

One way is to transcribe the dreams into clusters, thematically, to see how they hang together, whether meaning arises from a batch strung linearly over time. Here, for example, is a sequence of bird-themed dreams from recent weeks. I've chosen birds as subject for this *essai* because they symbolize freedom and flight.

April 15, 2019: *Travelling with S. from Vancouver up to her home in northern B.C., we head from soft spring coastal sunshine into the mountains' black thunder cloud high above. The sky flashes with exhilarating lightning streaks as in a Zuni painting. It's so dark I can't see one step ahead along the wooden boardwalk, but S.*



Jim Kemp's painting of his sleeping daughter Penn

knows the way well and I follow her closely. Once in her isolated village, I see a side of Haida life with S. that I would never have experienced as a tourist. In a nearby open garage, we meet two small boys, her distant cousins; everyone is related here. The kids greet us with stoned grins; they are already broken, lost and hopeless at the age of eight. S. tells me they are giddy on the gasoline that they are chewing like bubble gum until it froths in their mouth. Sadly, we leave the boys to their stupor.

S.'s women's group is gathering in a ritual healing circle at the front of the main hall. Before joining them in ceremony, she hands me a huge eagle feather. "It's fresh," she announces, meaning that it's fresh off an eagle. She tells me it's an honour to be first to connect so closely to the bird. "It will be yours once you give it back," she continues. I don't understand this gnomic remark until a woman in torn and ragged red plaid and braids asks for the feather. She already clasps a collection of four or five black tail feathers to her chest. After I hand it over, I feel eagle energy enter my body as the power of intention it displays as predator. Its extraordinary focus is my own now. As the woman hurriedly leaves the hall, S. joins me to say that the woman is rumoured to be a thief. But I was right to give her the feather and claim its power internally.

S. lives near a large reserve. Though she has Indigenous blood, she doesn't participate in ceremony. This dream turns out to be precognitive. This afternoon, I settle down for a nap, listening to the audio book read by Elaine Pagels, *Why Religion?: A Personal Story*. Today I hear her take on the poem, "Thunder, Perfect Mind." I hear the mountain rumble. I am reminded that when Susan McCaslin and I were doing a workshop on peace, a friend from Nanaimo gave me an eagle feather. I take it now from my altar and sweep it gratefully through my aura as a clearing, a reminder of focus. Energy rushes through my body. The dream has done its work.

Birds are often the free flight of spirit linking heaven and earth. In the next dream, for example, I'm presented with a choice of bird to emulate, rather than a gift to acknowledge. As such, a common anxiety dream becomes something more in that it shows me where to expand. The worried ego is invited to embrace the freedom of... purple! As this second dream demonstrates:

April 27, 2019: *I've gone out of the apartment without my key, without a top into the bright spring sun. I'm heading down the road to my school, which is packed with students. The university board is bristling with posters. Banners everywhere celebrate the grand opening of term. At least now I can don a paper poster to cover my breasts so I won't be stared at, even though going topless is legal in Ontario.*

*A young woman greets me by name. She asks what kind of bird I'd like to be. I look at the list and choose Swamp Hen, because I'm curious: it's the bird I know least about. It will be least likely to be picked by others. She stamps the back of my hand with the purple emblem. Processing my admission, the young man at the desk, mishearing, thinks I've chosen 'Heron.' "Heron? That's too common!" he remarks. When I correct him, he remarks, "Oh, Swamp Hen, the South American chicken." I don't know where the Swamp Hen originates. I just think such a choice will allow me to write a short story along the lines of Penelope Lively's *The Purple Swamp**

By showing, not telling, dreams present all kinds of solutions if we pay attention. They indicate areas in which we can grow and what needs healing in ourselves. They inspire art through their boundless, surprising and often delightful creativity.

Hen. *Lost, I'm looking for the office to find out my grades from last term, and where my classes are.*

I understand. Henceforth, let me step out boldly, naked, into brightness, like Blake's *Dream of Albion*, formerly called *Glad Day*: I need to remember the freedom of dream reality: no need for keys or dresses. Remembering would alleviate all this anxiety about rules. I needn't be lost or overwhelmed. I can change realities any time.

Waking up in the night after an anxiety dream like this, I can ask my subconscious for help in the next dream, and fall back to sleep... May the dream itself clear the worries it has suggested are still problematic in my life. Wakened to my self, I let the dream do its work.

My friend Honor has to import everything, including bird seed, to her Salish Sea island. Out back, we spread corn for the gathering red hens, a daily ritual. Two women friends come to witness the scene, along with several cats, though Honor is worried such a number of observers, animal and human, will frighten the chickens. "How synchronous!" I remark. "I've just been writing a story about swamp hens!" Honor's friend picks up the reference: "Ah, Penelope Lively's The Purple Swamp Hen and Other Stories." I'm impressed she knows the book. Perhaps we'll be friends. I've come here to write so Honor shows me to my small retreat cabin in the forest. Lovely! Meanwhile, she asks me nothing about my work but goes on to describe her life here.

Here I'll keep Honor's name intact, as it represents the quality as well as the person... and she happens to be a Jungian analyst whose insights I respect. These two examples from my night life illustrate ways I can change.

Lively wrote *The Purple Swamp Hen and Other Stories*. Today, I look up the Purple swamphen on video from India (recorded by Ragoo Rao). A very fine and elegant bird with brilliant plumage: I can emulate her! Sure, I'll be that rare waterfowl, *Porphyrio porphyrio*. When I was a red-haired youngster, I was not allowed to wear purple... or pink or red, colours that would clash, in my mother's opinion. Seven decades later, purple becomes me. "When I grow old, I shall wear purple."

By showing, not telling, dreams present all kinds of solutions if we pay attention. They indicate areas in which we can grow and what needs healing in ourselves. They inspire art through their boundless, surprising and often delightful creativity. Dreams contribute to healing and the art we make, through symbols that are both personal and archetypal. Purple, for instance, is the last colour of the spectrum, and the richest; as a cloth it was once worn only by royalty. For me, purple is created from the balance between calm, spacious blue and fiery red energy. It holds the balance of opposites, and surely that's an attribute of sage-ing.

Penn Kemp, poet, performer and playwright, has been lauded as a trailblazer, "a poetic El Nino," and a "one-woman literary industry." A keen participant in Canada's cultural life, she was London's inaugural Poet Laureate. Her 2018 books of poetry are *Local Heroes* (Insomniac) and *Fox Haunts* (Aeolus House). Forthcoming is *River Revery* (Insomniac Press, 2019). See www.pennkemp.weebly.com.

THEURGICAL DREAMING AND PRIMAL YIP

A POEM AND A REFLECTION



Susan McCaslin

Everyone dreams, rotating continuously between states of waking and sleeping, even those who don't often remember their dreams. When sleep-deprived, our immune systems become compromised and we can become unbalanced, even seriously ill. I've often marvelled at our commonality with non-human creatures like dogs, who will spin their paws as if running and make growly sounds during their dream time. Over the decades I've kept records of many of my dreams in journals and notebooks, some of which have led to the composition of poems. Through this process I've noticed that certain intensely vivid dreams, ones Carl Jung would call "archetypal," remain embedded in my body, psyche and spirit. Such dreams seem vision-

"Song of the Empathetic Beast"

Life on earth is more like a verb. It repairs, maintains, re-creates, and outdoes itself. –

Lynn Margulis

1

a luminous fox
brown, white, and amber
huddles in our dog's fur

night wind summons her
eyes to the moon
where her howls erupt as music

wilding our domesticity

2

Oak Bay beach where I walk
is skin holding my skin

holding foot nerves
that no longer sign their signals as before

yet on the night after the night she died
my small tri-coloured Penny curled

at my feet at the foot of the bed
where she had curled before

still sniffing and crooning
she with her wisdom neurons

nosed deep past skin and bone
to lick the numbness from my feet

cell to cell microbial touch
in the mystery of her sweet black nose

her laving tongue
where she keened at my feet

her sea-rifled song –
song of the empathetic beast

3

my husband and I wade in a Cariboo lake
within his dream. A whirl, a break in clouds
he points skyward, dark spots, soon a flock
a troop, Bald eagles ride in vector-shape
(like geese, but eagles flocking in a V?)
circling fierceness makes us cower like mice
two leaders plummet, yet no talons tear
instead their feathery cape of wings wraps
round

our heads, our shoulders, lost in soft
embrace
such gentleness, the strange largesse of
power
weeks later Penny slaughtered by a truck
our daughter's car totaled, house
vandalized
we wonder how this emissary dream
held precognition, consolation – awe

4

in the old photo, hunched
at our red canoe's prow

Penny rides. A red patch
gleams at the back of her neck

small as a copper coin then –
soon to grow full span

she gazes across
Young Lake in the Cariboo

where taunting loons
draw from her throat

her own primal yip



Our dog Penny

ary, timeless and more qualitatively “real” than everyday experience. They beckon to be re-entered, revealing new depths long after they occur. Some seem “prophetic,” not in the sense of predicting the future, but of anticipating aspects of ourselves of which we are not aware. The encounters with our dog Penny captured in the opening poem linger in my psyche because they brought healing and regeneration.

When discussing with friend and fellow-poet Penn Kemp the connection of dreams and healing, the word “theurgy” popped into my mind. The word is linked to ancient shamanic, Hermetic and Neoplatonic traditions, its etymology suggesting not only healing, but magic, ritual and divinity. Scientific studies indicate that dogs were domesticated about 32,000 years ago. Images of animals appear in early cave art from 8000-4000 BCE in France, Spain, Indonesia and elsewhere in the world, proving animals have long been significant presences in humanity’s lives and dreams. There are theories that our evolutionary development is tied to the domestication of dogs, who have cohabited with us as co-operative hunters and companions from earliest times.

In Indigenous cultures around the world, animals are both divine and earthly presences, companions, creators, tricksters, relatives, cosmically and mythologically interconnected with humans in orally transmitted stories. One thinks of how in the Haida myths Raven liberates humans from a clamshell, or how Dogfish Woman (a small shark) transitions between the human and non-human worlds.

Dogs and other domesticated animals are vitally important because they meet us at the borderland between the domestic and the wild. For me, dogs are liminal connectors to earthiness through their heightened sense of smell. They get us out of our heads and into the natural world. They can become teachers through their deep loyalty, capacity to love and be loved. I recall the touching story in *The Odyssey* of how Odysseus’ faithful dog Argos is the first living being to recognize Odysseus disguised as a beggar when he returns home to Ithaca after 20 years of wandering. Unable to lift himself up because of his advanced age, Argos wags his tail and dies, as if having stayed alive so long just to say goodbye to his human friend.

In “Song of the Empathetic Beast,” I wrote about our dog Penny, a mini-Australian Shepherd, who was my constant companion for five years. Three years ago, she leapt out of our car on a late-night return home, slipped from our grasp to impulsively chase a squirrel on the other side of our street, and was struck by a truck, dying instantly before our eyes. We were deeply traumatized immediately and long afterwards by her brutal death. However, a few nights after the accident, I dreamed Penny came to the foot of my bed



Penny leaping for a frisbee on a frozen lake in the Cariboo

and licked my feet in a gesture of concern and reassurance, as if to let me know she was alive and well but ready to move on.

I will always remember her spirit.

In 2010, I was diagnosed with a neurological condition called small-fibre peripheral neuropathy, which causes numbness and tingling in one's extremities, but is not generally disabling or life-threatening. My father died of ALS (Lou Gehrig's) at exactly the same age I had attained when I first noticed the neurological symptoms. Because dad's uncle and my mother's cousin died from the same disorder, I feared I might have inherited the family disease. Instead, numbness and tingling became the "new normal," but I find myself able to tune out the symptoms most of the time, walk normally, do yoga, and carry on pretty much as before.

In the encounter with Penny, she seemed as real and tangible as she did when in the flesh. She nosed directly to the very spots on my feet most affected and began licking them gently as if to offer healing. Since then, the symptoms have not diminished, but my fears are greatly minimized. Whenever I think of Penny, I relive her poignant farewell and feel her blessing.

The third section of the elegy for Penny is based on a powerful dream my husband shared with me several weeks before Penny was killed. In a mysterious way, it later seemed premonitory. In the dream a flock of apparently warrior-like eagles descended on us while we were wading at the edge of a lake in the Cariboo region of B.C. Instead of attacking, they hovered above us, gently covering our heads with their wings as if to offer concern and nurturance. Later it occurred to us that the dream might have been given to prepare us for three successive disasters: the loss of Penny, our daughter's minor car accident (from which she emerged unscathed), and a house break-in. Luckily, our house alarm sounded and the thieves got away with only a few trinkets. It seems to us these events could not have been prevented, but the trauma from them was partly mitigated through a reassurance based on the dreams that love is present in and through suffering and loss. The succession of dreams brought healing into our grieving process.

Carl Jung places great importance on the mysterious, awe-inspiring states into which dreams can induct us, and argues that opening to the numinous can bring healing and integration. In addition to consolation at Penny's loss, and the experience of what I believe to have been her "real" presence, the dream suggested that death is a mystery. We don't know

Penny enjoying alpine meadows at Mount Baker



through our linear reasoning if and how our individuality morphs and changes after death, or whether who we think we are has continuity with the selves or beings or life forms we have been or might become. We have hints, suggestions, fears, hopes and profound intuitions that the universe is much more diversely unified than we know. I, for one, have a deep inner “gnosis” or experiential, intuitive knowing that consciousness survives death, but have given up on building a theological system of belief. Emily Dickinson expresses this state best when she says, “I dwell in possibility.”

These dreams and others convinced me that our spirit dog was not merely an aspect of my own psyche, but that a vital communion between Penny’s individuality (her innermost essence) and ours somehow took place. We are, after all, not so different from the creatures with whom our lives are intertwined. This delicate interconnection between humans and other creatures explains why the extinction of species affects our human capacity to thrive as well. Biodiversity and exchange are our means of survival, whether in this life or beyond the boundaries of the known.

Susan McCaslin is the author of fifteen volumes of poetry, including her most recent, *Into the Open: Poems New and Selected* (Inanna, 2017). She has recently collaborated with J.S. Porter on a volume of creative nonfiction, *Superabundantly Alive: Thomas Merton’s Dance with the Feminine* (Wood Lake, 2018). Susan taught at Douglas College, New Westminster B.C., in the English and Creative Writing departments for 23 years. She has published a memoir about the contemplative life, *Into the Mystic: My Years with Olga* (Inanna, 2014). In 2012, she initiated the Han Shan Poetry Project in a successful effort to save a rainforest near her home along the Fraser River outside Fort Langley, B.C. Susan can be found wandering along the river with her dog Rosie in the presence of Douglas firs, hemlocks and cedars. www.susanmccaslin.ca

A MOTHER OBSERVES

THE ART IN EYE THERAPY

Heather Borojevic



I've noticed that art has been allocated a few misconceptions on the role it plays in society. Many believe it is relegated to a select few or serves no purpose but to please the eye and add beauty to the home. However, as I delve deeper into the practice of making, I have also come to understand that art benefits us in a more complex fashion than that of a superficial visual ascetic. Making art encourages a whole new level of communicating thoughts and emotions, and allows the individual better emotional and psychological understanding and awareness. Through my daughter I discovered there are also actual physical health benefits. I knew that, when I immerse myself in the creative process, an unusual and amazing change happens, which causes my mental, emotional and physical health to start aligning. To my delight, earlier this year I discovered how my creative habit had secretly been helping my own child when we were not even aware she needed it.

In January we took our daughter to the optometrist. She does wear glasses, and we knew she had a seeing impairment that is not just something a simple prescription can fix. We were very familiar with the whole procedure of an eye exam, but it was surprising and a little worrying when the optometrist we currently use started doing tests outside of the normal assessment. It was, however, a wonderful thing that she did. She discovered that our daughter has an eye disability more severe than being near-sighted. We were referred to a specialist who found two eye disabilities, but fortunately assessed that they could be corrected with therapy, not surgery. Our daughter has convergence insufficiency, which does not allow your eyes to work together when looking at objects (mostly near ones). It can cause one eye to turn outwards when the other eye is looking inward; this causes double, blurred or haloed vision. Our daughter's eyes naturally rest facing outward, more so than the average person's. In addition, she has oculomotor dysfunction or "ocular motility dysfunction," which is underdevelopment in one or more visual skills. Her problems are multiple: she has trouble with pursuit – being able to have the eyes follow a moving target accurately; fixation – the skill to hold the eye steady without losing the gaze of the target; and saccadic – which allows the eyes to correctly jump from one target to the other. Can you imagine looking through her eyes onto a blurred world (even with glasses), and then suffering the inability to adjust her sight when switching from near to far visuals?

After the initial shock of finding this out, we had a plethora of questions, but the ones we were most curious about were: How did this get missed for

One of my daughter's first images





Top: Another early one

Above: Robot, from a small squiggly line she drew just after the start of her eye therapy

so long with her being tested so constantly, and what can we do actively to help her work with these disadvantages? The optometrist was very honest and openly stated that education is changing on how we approach eye tests. There is more information now than in previous times; older optometrists are not educated the same way as current optometrists are. Additionally, the majority of optometrists are only testing for more common disabilities such as near- or farsightedness and lazy eyes. Basic testing of the eyes does not always catch the lesser known disabilities unless specifically triggered. One in three children is affected by these uncommon disabilities, which translate into harder times in life.

Fortunately, our daughter's problems were caught by our optometrist, because her husband is a therapy optometrist and insisted that she should test every child she assesses. We are also fortunate that our child was already naturally doing activities that both stimulate and develop her eye dexterity and vision amalgamation. She loved to make art and what she loved to do – drawing, painting and animation – were just what she needed to do. To do these things, one has to develop hand and eye coordination and inner eye muscle dexterity, in order to replicate an image from the page to the screen, and vice versa. She was also building and retraining her eyes to coalesce images by the sheer act of drawing on a page. Experimental, creative, original drawing helps a child to pull two images together to become one. The drawer must observe and correct any discrepancies, and in our daughter's case allow her to develop endurance to maintain a singular image in her mind for long periods. What a happy discovery it was to realise she was already slowly correcting and compensating for her disabilities, while delighting in what she created.

We were encouraged by learning that her creativity was such a benefit, but dismayed that, while it helped her through optometrist tests and medical checkups with only mild signs of issues, she was still placing in the low average of child development with her reading, writing and sports. She was passing everything, but not tapping into her full potential. After hearing this, we thought, "What kind of results could potentially happen for her if her art skills could be integrated into these other areas?" How can we maximize her correction so that she can blossom into her full potential? It turns out she is able to correct almost all her disability with eye therapy, amplified by art-making.

We started eye therapy as soon as possible, and have gone through 15 sessions augmented by countless hours of drawing, jewellery, painting and animation. Her disabilities are almost 100 per cent corrected. Still, the greatest benefit has been in her confidence to approach new activities. She is becoming more positive and extraverted, and completes tasks with greater ease. Things that used to take hours can be done in minutes. The eye therapy reprogrammed her eyes and brain to help them work together, while the art has made sure they spoke the same language. To correct her convergence insufficiency she had to create images by connecting dots and having to focus.



Top: While listening to jazz

Above: She loves making digital characters. Meet Luna the Fox.

This focus was also necessary as she drew images of creatures in her head upon a page or screen. In the therapy she has a computer program that helps correct her fixation, pursuit and saccadic limitations; at home, she also does computer programs, for fun, or animations that amplify their effect. This diligence has helped her realize she is so much better at things she has always shied away from. Sport suddenly seems a strong skill, and reading and writing have dramatically improved.

One day she shocked me with a written story of hers, which I thought was a real book she had signed out from the library. A rich and wonderful world has burst out from her inner talents to grace art books, sketch pads, loose papers and canvases wherever she goes. Art has played a massive role in her ability to cope, grow and communicate. It is, by far, her favourite choice of activity. The speed of her growth towards her true potential is great to see, even more so with the actual observation and measurable assessments of the optometrist to prove the effects of therapy. It is very comforting to know she was intuitive enough to develop a skill that helped her express herself, but was also helping her on a physical level. Who would have guessed art was her secret friend helping to such a degree as to allow vision disabilities to go unnoticed for over a decade? I know, and yet I did not know, until after this experience and reflection. How did I not catch on sooner? Certainly the experience has been a very awareness provoking perspective on how much more valuable a role art can play in contributing to society's health and well-being. So little do we know about the potential health benefits of art in bettering mental, physical and emotional health. Surely, current society is ready to explore how the arts can be integrated into our overall health care. I know, for this family, art has become a large influence on our overall health. Creativity is a valued skill integrated into our home and our lives, and most certainly we have become richer for it. I hope to sow the seeds of more awareness towards art having a greater role in our culture's well being, both for individuals and society.

MY HEALING JOURNEY

and HOW ART HAS AFFECTED It

Janine Braacx



In the beginning of February of this year, I underwent a complete hip replacement. This was the first surgery I've received in my life. I was excited to get a new hip, as I knew it would enable me to experience better mobility with less pain. However, I did not expect the anxiety that kicked in during recovery when I experienced much discomfort and fear for what could happen if...

It was a blessing that I was able to stay with my sister and I didn't have to stay alone in my own home for the first week. I was able to let go of my anxieties, but it was difficult to do any activities such as reading or art. By the second week, however, when I was back in my own home, I was ready to read, and decided to explore the arts. My decision allowed my focus to be turned away from all the emotions I was experiencing and, I believe, caused my healing process to accelerate. Knitting also became a fun project for me; thanks to a good friend I was given balls of yarn she no longer needed. Working with my hands brought me pleasure.

As time progressed I decided to attend HeART Fit, a drop-in art group at the Rotary Centre for the Arts in my community of Kelowna. The program emphasizes creating a

supportive environment for those interested in creating personal well-being through making art, however they define that for themselves. The group's motto is "Relax Into Art"; we strive to gain self-awareness by allowing surprises. When I read the leader's intentions from week to week, I realize that art can be what you want it to be.

I looked for books from the library on a variety of techniques, and tried to teach myself something about painting and drawing. One collection of books gave me the greatest joy, as it was all about doing art from how you feel at the moment. It doesn't have to look like a Van Gogh or Monet, but can be a simple sketch. Even though I was still learning from famous artists and their techniques, I realized how I could utilize their methods and have satisfying results because of how making something made me feel in the process of engaging in the medium. I came to appreciate that what my art looks like to others is not the most important thing.

One day I decided to play around with shapes cut out of construction paper. I had no idea what I was going to make, but after laying a few of my cut-outs on the paper I realized I was making a person holding a straw bag. One leg was much skinnier than the other, and it dawned on me that this person was me after my surgery. The muscles in the surgery side were weak, therefore the leg was thinner.

As I continue to give myself space and time to draw, I am also becoming more aware of what feeds my soul. I am very thankful that I have committed my time to HeART Fit and to the enjoyment of interaction with the people in this group. The way they approach art encourages me to be honest with how I am feeling and to understand that I never need to be embarrassed with the art that I am choosing to make. I am truly enjoying bringing art into my healing.

Left: Could this be me?

Right: Design is fun

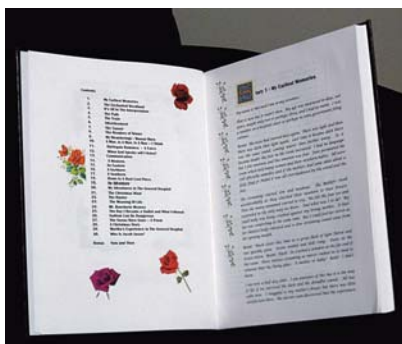




CHANGE, GROWTH, CONFIDENCE AND QUALITY

PERSONAL INSIGHTS

Mel Kazinoff



Mel's book of short stories

It's hard to believe how time has flown. I remember my first visit to this infant group. They had been going for only two or three weeks, and the focus was on publishing. I had already self-published my first novel and I really wasn't very interested, but it was about writing and really close to home, so I thought I'd check it out. Over the next few months we discussed publishing in its many forms and had speakers sharing their experiences, but the discussion was running out of steam and the interest started to turn to just writing and listening. After all, you can't publish what you haven't written.

Sharing our writing, hopes, dreams, blocks and frustrations was a bonding process that led me to greater confidence and improved my writing skills. I published two more books and, most importantly of all, I made true friendships. This was a group like no other I have ever been a part of. There were amazing, brilliant people, sharing, encouraging, pushing towards excellence, as I tried to accept nothing less of myself. I wrote a sequel to my original novel – something I swore I wouldn't do. The excuses I made to myself were scattered to the four winds by this "pushy" group of friends. And so the sequel was written and launched. Then came my third book. It was a love project, a book of more than thirty short stories, written work decorated with visual art. Again my "friends" pushed me into its creation.

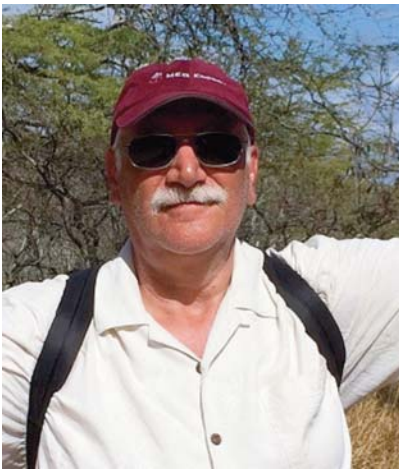
Our weekly meetings may be the focus, but we have picnics, dinner gatherings, field trips, book launches and more. My life is changed, enhanced and enlarged. I have an intimate group of friends, some of whom are extra special to me. I bless the day I decided to walk through that meeting room door into this creative life I had previously only dreamed of.

Enough about me. What have some of the other members got to say for themselves? How is our writing group contributing to their sense of well-being?

Donna Bird is our Maggie Thatcher, our Iron Lady. She keeps us on the path, meeting after meeting. Unlike Maggie, Donna is loved by us all. Her stories keep us intrigued until the last line, when she throws a curve nobody is expecting. Keep us guessing, Donna.

"As I struggled to respond to what changes Westbank Writers' Group has made to my life, I realized that I have to practise what we preach in Group – just start writing and it will come.

"Our little group started just over two years ago with the main objective



Top: Donna Bird

Above: Orest Protch

to self-publish. Although we still share publishing experiences, we seem to have changed lanes and become more about the journey of writing. We are not a group that teaches how to write. We are all active writers, all writing in our own unique ways, and we provide feedback – honest, constructive and heartfelt. We share. We laugh. We amaze each other. And sometimes there are tears.

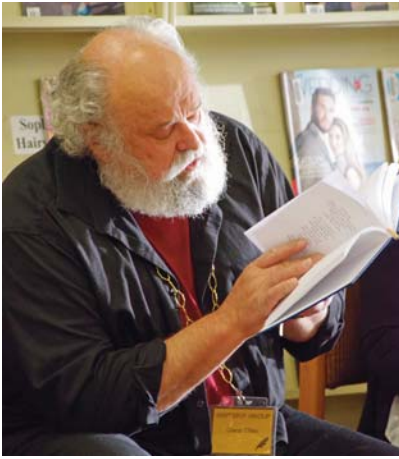
“We have members that come and stay for years, while others come for a while then we never see them again. Some are writing novels, while others write poetry, memoirs, humour, short stories and scientific theories, and some even try screen-writing. Our members are from all walks of life, education levels, work histories and backgrounds. Most of my fellow writers are people that I never would have established relationships with outside of the group. And now, after opening ourselves up by sharing our writing, we have become more than co-members of a group – we have become friends. It’s hard not to be friends with someone that you’ve opened your soul to. It’s hard not to trust because we all have shared hurts, histories, theories, dreams, disappointments, vulnerabilities and victories.

“Some of us have already published multiple books. Others, like me, are still working on pieces that we may one day publish (or not). There are no judgments for those who write for the sake of writing without having the goal of publishing. We don’t care that you may only be writing your memoirs for your family. We still help each other along whatever path their journey is taking them. A few of our members have been working on their writing for years. Some have just started the writing experience. Others have been journalizing for the fun of it, only to realize that this too is writing. We have members come who are cocoons at first, afraid to become butterflies, and then totally amaze us and themselves with their wings.

“So, what has this group done for me? How has belonging affected me? It’s been amazing. It’s been enriching. It’s been a whole new world of learning, friendships, and discovering another side of me that was always there, but never before exposed. This group shares things that may never go beyond our little circle. We have become trusting of people who were once total strangers. I may move on one day and leave this motley gang, but they will be with me forever. That is what belonging to the Westbank Writers’ Group has done for me.”

Orest Protch is a newer member of our group. He has become a fount of knowledge about many things: magazine writing, use of computer programs as aids, the value of photographs and so much more.

“Synergy is a word that has the same basic meaning regardless if it is used in the context of a team or group working for a company, a sports team or a group of two or more people that meet regularly to work through issues. But how does it fit into a writers’ group where the members may have different ideas or goals when it comes to why they write or for what end? How can there be synergy when there is no set goal to achieve, no set outcome desired or any set defined purpose? In order to answer this it may be easier to define



Glenn Olien

achievable synergy for a writers' group in terms of motivation and validation. The motivational aspect comes into play as I sit and listen to what others are presenting to the group through their weekly readings. A reading can be a short story, a poem or part of documenting an ongoing family history or journal. In any given week I may walk away with an idea on what I can add to my own creative writing topics. If the presenters that week have asked for feedback, I may hear some ideas on improvement that I may or may not agree with, but that is for me alone to decide. Can the comments be applied to any of my own current projects?

"The validation part of the synergy is quite easy to define. A person who wants to read to the group what they have written may simply want to get approval that yes, what they have written is of interest to others – perhaps not to everyone, but at least to some. Some may write because they want to get published, some may want to self-publish, some may write to document their family history, and some may write for no one, but for those in the writers' group. Each of these reasons gives personal validation. I write because I want to leave a legacy that yes, I was once alive, and here is the proof in written form somewhere in a magazine or a book, or maybe even as a reference to one of my writings in someone else's writings. Through any of these ways my work will exist on a bookshelf in someone's home or in a library, and that presence may outlive the Internet.

"Regardless of the motivational or validation reasons, I leave each weekly meeting in a positive mood, knowing that I have just shared two hours with a group of people who have a love for the written word, and a love for sharing a written idea. It is so easy to forget that, in some parts of the world, people are prosecuted or may even give up their lives for trying to do what any writers' group does in a free society.

"Just by having read these first few articles, aren't you amazed by what this group means to our members? And we aren't done yet!"

Glenn Olien is the super brain of our group, as you will soon see. He is a genius trying to understand even more. He's also the gentle giant guiding and aiding, encouraging and praising. Einstein may have had a head of unruly hair but Glenn beats him. He has an unruly beard too.

"For years I have been interested in exploring the fractal nature of human potential to change the future. The Westbank Writers' Group has done more for me than to increase my potential for completing and publishing the next book in my series on this topic. Belonging to the right support group can be an important part of the fractal structure of my potential. The group has been a more compatible structure for me than other writing groups, because its underlying structure is more in accord with the structure of other parts of my potential. One of the most beautiful things about fractal structures is that one small change to one part of the structure can have the "butterfly effect," changing the other parts and the whole. While the Writers' Group is just a small part of my whole, it has changed many other aspects of my life. It has boosted my overall potential to bring about other desired events in my life.



Top: Lorraine Robinson



Above: Hélène Bonvie

The more I understand about the form and function of the fractal nature of my own potential, the better I am at taking action to bring about a better future for myself and others.

“The not so beautiful and confusing part of fractal structures is their ability to also create the “elephant effect.” This happens when a great effort is made to bring about a desired future event, but nothing sustainable happens. Sometimes things can get even worse after great efforts are made to change.”

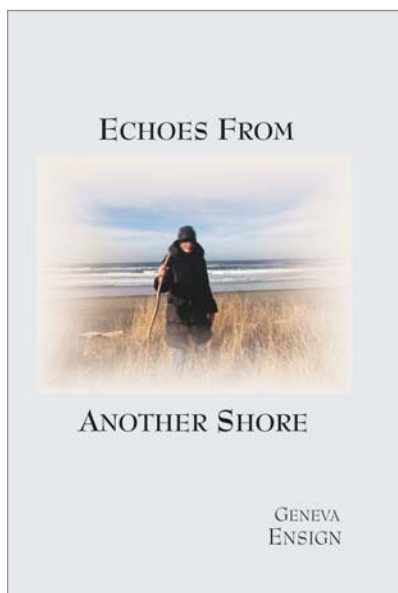
Purely by chance, and not design, our group is, primarily, retired seniors. And Lorraine Robinson wins the gold medal, I believe. But age is just a number. In her writing she is bold, serious, funny and daring. She never ceases to amaze.

“How fortunate to be a member of the West Kelowna Writers’ Group, held each Thursday at the Regional Library. This offers me an opportunity to read my writing and receive positive feedback that will augment my offerings. A valuable component to becoming a member in a group of writers is a sense of belonging. This sense is an important part of life for me. As most writers know, one writes within the confines of one’s own physical and psychological world. To commiserate with like-minded people is a bonus of being in a group. The atmosphere is non-judgmental and welcoming to new members, whether you are beginning a journey with a first book or a tenth book! Or no book. It’s comforting to know that one can share accomplishments with others. You may be struggling with rhythm to your poetry, or read something written 20 years ago that has come to life in your writer’s heart. I am thankful to know there is a ‘place’ where writers’ thoughts and wonderings can be discussed. Happily there is a niche where fledgling stories can be tested and read to others, that offers a sense of belonging and is comforting.”

Hélène Bonvie is also one of our newer members. Now the insecure mouse of Day One is becoming more confident and taking on challenges that most of us wouldn’t even dare. For her one aim was to conquer poetry, and she wondered where to start tackling probably the hardest poetic form – the Shakespearean sonnet. We suggested: study, understand and give it a try; then, nail it. Now there is no more timid mouse here.

“Reading, writing and painting had always been part of my life. A few months after my husband embarked on his eternal journey in 2002, I became involved in various activities with the Senior Citizens Centre. More recently, I joined this writing group. Meeting weekly at our local library, the group offers and sponsors a multitude of positive ways to connect with others. I had never dreamed that one day I’d be sitting around a table of local, published writers, sharing thoughts and advice, and enjoying good laughs and sometimes some sad moments. There is no pressure and lots of encouragement. We are so fortunate. I believe that every one of us can be an influence in our very own lives and our community.

“Personally, writing is providing me with immense opportunities for



better physical and mental health, because one affects the other. The group has given me the opportunity to age positively in a graceful and acceptable manner. For me, writing is a tremendous and important form of expression. Our table of writers is also Sage-ing. I'm learning and I have the opportunity to proudly participate in publications and events of local and national interests. My two recent works of art are poems, one of which is a sonnet in a Shakespearean style. I could never have done this without the support of the people in this group."

The last submission is from Geneva Ensign, our loving mother. She was one of two who started the group and has babied us along, even though she has now relinquished that lead role. As with all loving children, we too have supported Geneva on her journey, as she has published two amazing books and is heading, helter skelter, towards number three. Yeah mom!

"The excitement of being an author is still new, alive and well! I just brought home the second printing of my book of free-verse poetry, *Echoes From Another Shore*, and I have sold most of the first print-run. It is very satisfying to "have to" order batch #2 and to get a tour of B.C.

The Bindery is where I learned how a book is bound. The softcover binding (called "perfect binding") is an automated process, while hardcover binding is much more hands-on. So much to learn, individually and as a group. Looking back two-plus years to when we first posted a notice in the Westbank Library asking who was interested in belonging to a self-publishing group, it has been quite a journey. Since that time, and with the help and encouragement of group members, I have published two books: *Community Healing: A Transcultural Model* and *Echoes From Another Shore*, which is a book of free-verse poetry. As you can see, even my brother's cat likes the one on *Community Healing*!

"In the process, I have made good friends – really good friends. When we were brave enough to "get real" with what we wrote, and then when we were brave enough to share our creations with those "strangers" sitting around the conference table, "magic" seemed to happen. Laughter and tears bonded us together, creativity soared and productivity happened. We are all being transformed in the process – strangers no longer."

And there you have it. Hold on. Our meeting starts in half an hour and I'm not dressed yet.



Top left: Geneva Ensign
Top right: *Echoes From Another Shore*
Above: The cat loves it

TAKING TIME

FOR ART IN THE OKANAGAN

Suzanne Chavarie



In keeping with my commitment to experience ways to truly connect with a deeper understanding of truths in reconciliation, I attended a few events happening in the Kelowna area. This past June twenty-first, National Indigenous Peoples Day, was marked by the unveiling of the Chief Charlie Swkncut monument, the Ki-low-Na Friendship Society's Turtle Island Festival, and the opening, at the Kelowna Art Gallery, of the exhibition *Her Body Will Remember*.

As I arrived on the lawn in front of Kelowna's Visitor Centre, a large group was gathered for the unveiling of the Chief Charlie Swkncut monument, a commissioned statue by artist Crystal Przybille. As I listened to the different speakers, I felt a sense of pride in how we pull together as communities, recognizing the past while talking openly, publicly, acknowledging historical injustices. Honouring Chief Swkncut with this statue was a step in building solid relationships for a better future together.

The monument was a community collaboration between the City of Kelowna and the West Bank First Nation to commemorate the legacy of this great chief and recognize the importance of Reconciliation, namely that we live, work and play on the unceded territory of the Syilx People. "That would be my great-great-grandfather and that would be on my father's side," recalled Chief Lindley, as she spoke from the podium. She shared that she treats every day like *Indigenous Day* but today, this Friday, was a day to celebrate. To celebrate, all attendees received gifts of canned, sustainably harvested Okanagan Select Sockeye Salmon and a bookmark with beautiful beads attached to it, and the history of Chief Swkncut written on the back (www.sncewips.com).

Next I walked over to Leon Avenue in the downtown core to the Ki-Low-Na Friendship Society, where the street celebration called "Turtle Island Festival" was happening. Instantly on arrival I felt welcomed and joined in, listening to the music, visiting artist booths, watching young children dance and enjoying a tasty fresh piece of bannock.

To wrap up my day of celebrating, I headed over to the Kelowna Art Gallery on Water Street, with the big red 'ART' sign out front, for the opening reception of the show *Her Body Will Remember*, featuring works by Indigenous artists Mariel Belanger, Tsm Igharas and Tiffany Shaw-Collinge.

The show's curator, Erin Sutherland, led a talk-and-tour, while giving some great insight on the exhibition. In her write-up for the show, Sutherland said, "This exhibition seeks to make visible the processes of making, and the innovative technologies used in those processes. It explores the ways in which the knowledges inherent in producing materials by hand are passed

Chief Swkncut





Top left: Sculptor Crystal Przybille, left, with former Chief Roxanne Lindley, right

Top right: Back of bookmark

Above *Moon Lodge*. Artist Mariel Belanger in her installation *tuktnix* at the opening reception for *Her Body Will Remember*, on view at the Kelowna Art Gallery. Photo: Glenna Turnbull Photography



down and held in the body. Drawing on practices and technologies translated between kin, and those that are self-taught, this exhibition makes space for three artists ... to investigate the intersection of technology and memory.”

During the opening reception Belanger, Igharas and Shaw-Collinge each shared their visions for their individual works and the processes used in creating them. Mariel Belanger invited us to enter her *Moon Lodge*. This was of her first moon lodge. She said the piece gave her a chance to explore

how cultural identity is rebuilt through engagement in oral history and the performance of Indigenous knowledge. “The others don’t know: these places need us Sqilx’W as much as we need them, because we are of this land, doing as the land instructed us to do.”

As I caught my reflection in the window glass of the Gallery, I caught my smile, full of gratitude for having the privilege to live here on these lands.

In keeping my eye out for *Art in the Okanagan*, I chose to attend or take part in some other exciting exhibitions and events. Here’s a snippet of a few of those I enjoyed!

From Lochs to Lakes: Mary Smith McCulloch’s Creative Legacy

For a small gallery, Lake Country Public Art Gallery, located at 10356 Bottom Wood Lake Road, Lake Country B.C., has amazing top quality exhibitions.

I had the pleasure of attending the opening reception for *From Lochs to Lakes: Mary Smith McCulloch’s Creative Legacy*. The show brought “together 19 former students who studied under Mary at either Okanagan College, Okanagan College University or University of British Columbia Okanagan and have continued their art practice” (<https://www.lakecountryartgallery.ca/exhibitions>). At the start of the reception, a bagpiper led the way, filling the air with lovely music as Mary Smith McCulloch, with partner Jack, entered the Gallery.

It was so exciting to see so many Okanagan artists coming together to celebrate the pulse of the Okanagan arts community all in one gallery! One of the artists who contributed to the exhibition, Christian Nicolay, commented, “I have several long-term ongoing projects that remind me of many of my lovely conversations with Mary – breaking the rules and remembering to play.”

Earlier this spring I volunteered at the Lake Country Gallery’s *Cat Café*, a fundraising event for the Okanagan Humane Society, a huge success that



Top: Mary, centre

Above: Drawing at Cat Cafe

Below: Artist Lance Nicholls. You can find him on Instagram 'peaceofartcreations.'

With a group of other teachers, I received this gift of Lance's art. He used a plank of apple wood and Ocean Blue Resin to create this amazing piece. His work is so beautiful that it took my breath away.

combined Art & Kitten adoption. Attendees supported the Gallery and the Humane Society by purchasing merchandise, making a donation or making an adoption.

Gallery curator Wanda Lock shared that the gallery can be used for much more than art. "The role of a public art gallery is not to just hang artwork on walls, but also to talk about current issues, politics and social issues, and it seemed like a natural fit to bring in the Humane Society for an event like this, and branch out and repurpose the gallery for others."

Journey – An Intimate Evening With Lawrence Hill

Lawrence Hill is author of the recently released book *The Illegal*. He is the only author to win the Canada Reads competition twice. On May 27 I attended this intimate evening with Lawrence Hill, who used his presence here in Kelowna to raise funds for the local *Central Okanagan Refugee Committee*, which currently sponsors families from Syria, Yemen and Burundi, giving financial assistance for their resettlement. As I sat in a pew at a local church, I listened to him share from his work and offer us his reflections on treatment of migrants. His thought-provoking style brought new insight.

Lunchbox series at the Kelowna Art Gallery

This is a recurring event that captures my interest. This talk by Deanna Kent and Neil Hooson (snazzycappers.com) is an Okanagan success story. The duo shared the trek from idea to a three-book deal, with a peek inside the secret world of rewrites, redraws, rejections and rejoicing. They gave an honest glimpse into what they called their messy, marvellous journey of the Snazzy Cat Cappers book series, published by Imprint, MacMillan Publishing USA. They're very passionate about experience and design, digital and physical, and you can hear them @Deannaandneil or at snazzycappers.com.



IT'S ABOUT THE CONNECTION

Ruth O'Doherty, Mike and Cindy Snedden



Lantern Folk Roots Music Society (formerly the Kelowna Folk Club) has been producing house concerts since 2011. We put our toe in gingerly at first and, because it was so rewarding, a few years later we jumped in with both feet. House concerts are rapidly becoming one of the most popular venues for both the artists as well as the audience. Rob Lutes, winner, 2018 Canadian Folk Music Awards Contemporary Singer of the Year, who has appeared at our Lantern concerts, praises the quality of house venues.

"House concerts have become a staple for many touring artists. When I tour, I usually do at least a couple and sometimes more, depending on the region and what the tour schedule looks like. I will often fill open dates between bigger venues or concert series with house concerts in smaller communities, and they often end up being some of my favourite shows.

"With such an intimate setting, you have a very close connection with your audience. There are no veils. Audiences tend to be very open and into the evening's music. It can be really exciting and rewarding to play in these types of rooms."

Dan Mangan is another artist who is so impressed with the value of house concerts that he has started his own house concert business, setting up tours for himself and other artists.

These shows are delivered by professional touring artists who have spent a lifetime learning their trade. As the music business has been going through major changes, the old models just don't work any more. In a search for new audiences, many well established artists began looking at house concerts as a source of income. It turns out that the expenses are low, and they can often be done on a week night to fit in with a tour playing larger venues and clubs that may only be interested in a weekend gig. The hosts do not take a cut of any merchandise that they sell, as is the case in many venues; artists get put up for free and are treated to at least a dinner on the night of the show. The standard \$20.00 admission can be well worth it as, in addition to the free night's accommodation, they are paid. Touring is a difficult life, and a home cooked meal and a little interaction with a family can be a welcome respite.

While house concerts support the artists' ability to make a living, they also make music accessible on a grass roots level, and they connect people who share a love for music. These concerts are a social engine that builds community. They provide a kaleidoscope of experiences for hosts, performers and audiences, who join together in an engaging musical adventure where everyone benefits.

Chris Carmichael





Left: Stephan Fearing

Right: Tiller Folly, outdoor house concert



Deciding to develop *Lantern Folk Roots Music Society* has been an enriching personal experience. My husband and I are lovers of folk music, but we realized that with concert tickets becoming so expensive, in addition to service fees, parking and more, we could be spending a large chunk of money for our musical experience. At a house concert, attendees can enjoy full-time professional musicians of great

calibre in a safe environment with fellow music fans. We have made friends, and our involvement as hosts has allowed us to converse with the musicians and get to know them on a deeper level. If you have never attended a house concert, you should really try it; you can find many different genres of music, enjoy a magical musical evening and get to meet the artists on your own terms. As hosts we feel great satisfaction in knowing that we are contributing to everyone's experience. It's about feeling the connection of community.

When we first joined, the Kelowna Folk Club was doing traditional hall concerts, but those venues were just not working for the group as it evolved. I had been to house concerts in the past and read a lot about them and how the concept was becoming so much more popular with both the fans and the artists. The Kelowna Folk Club decided to try out house concerts and they are now the staple of the society.

Ruth O'Doherty has been in the music business since 2004, mostly in marketing and promotions. Prior to then she was mostly involved as a volunteer in musical theatre in the Lower Mainland, working with *Royal City Musical Theatre* and *Theatre Under the Stars*. "I started by making costumes for a production that our daughter was cast in, and progressed through most of the positions, including props, stage manager and, finally, producer." In 2009 she and musician husband Mike joined what was then the Kelowna Folk Club. As the club started attracting more people from other parts of the valley, it was suggested that the name Kelowna Folk Club was exclusive rather than inclusive. That began a several-year process to find a new name, and eventually the organization came up with the symbol of the lantern as welcoming, hence its new name: *Lantern Folk Roots Music Society*. <http://lanternfolk.ca/> Visit the site and sign up to hear about upcoming concerts.

SNEDDEN HOUSE CONCERTS

On a night in May of 2010 we showed up at the designated address with our two boys, ages 13 and 17. Our family was visiting in Calgary and looking for something to do when we read a Facebook post about this event called a house concert and a potluck. It had sounded exotic and interesting. With some crackers and cheese in hand we rang the doorbell, and one of our boys, feeling awkward, said, "Wait, do we *know* these people?"



Mike & Cindy Snedden

“Nope.” Suddenly I felt awkward too. But the host put us at ease immediately. He graciously invited us into the dining room to add our contribution to the potluck table, and introduced us to a few people before disappearing to take care of other hosting duties. His house was comfortable and filled with interesting art and antiques to inspire connection and conversation. We enjoyed a lovely dinner around a coffee table, getting to know a few other attendees.

Then came the music. Our boys were transfixed by the concert – just Martin Kerr and his guitar. Martin has a lot of very touching songs that our boys, given their ages at the time, would generally not have been susceptible to. But in the intimate setting of a living room, live and in person, you are not just connecting with the music. you are connecting with another heart. This kind of connection

takes some skill beyond the ability to play and sing. When the musician has that skill? It’s magic. He got our boys.

At the time we attended the Martin Kerr concert we had already purchased a house in Kelowna, but had not yet moved here. We were pleasantly surprised on arrival to realize that this house would work *great* for house concerts. Wouldn’t that be a neat way to meet people in our new city? We are pretty experienced at hosting potluck events, so the thing we had to learn to get our house concert adventure off the ground was how to find musicians. A brief Internet search put us in touch with Home Routes <https://www.homeroutes.ca>, and soon we found ourselves part of the “Salmonberry Circuit,” with Shari Ulrich as our first performer in February 2011.

One of the funny things is that after 43 concerts we still don’t know half (or more sometimes) of the audience members that attend. So as people start to arrive we are very much aware of that experience we had back in 2010. It’s great what good sports people are, and how open they are to the magic of the thing, and to doing their part to make it awesome. We may not know all the people who show up to the house concert, but we *do* know that the magic is real. One of the hardest things is to try to describe the experience afterwards for someone who wasn’t there. It’s the kind of thing you have to write a song about. Maybe someday we will. We’ve had much more than our fair share of inspiration from some of the top songwriters in North America. That’s still amazing to us. We are super grateful that there are musicians who are dedicating their time to perfecting the art of expressing the beauty and challenges of being human through music.

Cindy Snedden is a mechanical engineer and Executive Director of PEMAC www.pemac.org.

Mike Snedden is the former principal of Rose Valley Elementary School and currently a professional house husband. Both are amateur bluegrass musicians who are beneficiaries and supporters of the Summerland Bluegrass Society www.summerlandbluegrass.com. They perform around town from time to time as part of “Dry Creek Road.”

Snedden House Concerts www.sneddenhouseconcerts.com

IT FELT LIKE MAGIC



Gillian Hynes

As a young girl I endured the loss of a family member with whom I was very close. It was my first experience with death and a very traumatic time for me. I entered a deep depression. My parents tried to console me, educate me on the nature of the life and death process, and did their best to cheer me up, but their attempts failed. Finally, my mother made an appointment for me to see a psychologist. I was given a relaxation tape of techniques to listen to at home at night before bed or when the grief became too unbearable. The voice on the tape was so calm and soothing. It asked me to imagine the big blue sky with white fluffy clouds, the bright rays from the sun heating my face as I felt the cool bed of green grass beneath my body where I lay. With my eyes closed I was to breathe the scents in the air that surrounded me, and to let my body go, become heavy, and make my impression on the earth. This experience painted a picture in my mind, and I became inspired to paint.

With a blank canvas in front of me, I began to transfer my emotions and sorrow. I played with the different mediums, colours and textures, all of which played a role in helping me to express the way I was feeling. I soon began to create and bring to life all that consumed me. It felt like magic. The expression I was experiencing was just the release of which I was so in need. I began to unburden my mind of the thoughts that devoured me. I used all of my senses with my work and sometimes painted with my fingers; the tactile part of me felt pacified. The more time I spent painting, the better I began to feel, and I noticed the colours progressed from darker shades to lighter ones. My mind was growing more clear. It seemed I had found a way to deal with my grief. Soon I was no longer withdrawn with family and friends, and I truly began to understand and accept the death of my loved one.

I continue to paint and create; I consider this the therapy time in my day. For me, I have found creating with my hands to be the perfect solution to expressing myself during my healing moments without using my voice. I see beauty and inspiration everywhere. Painting softens the coarseness of life for me, and it will always be my way to escape, cope and deal with everyday stress.

Feeling the magic for myself has made me want to share what I've discovered about the strong connection between art and healing. The body and mind are so affected by each other. You have likely heard that when one is depressed it can have a physical effect. A person may lose interest in activities that they once found enjoyable, such as hiking, cooking or even reading a book; they may not want to be social, wanting to stay at home and be alone. In the same manner, when one has a physical ailment that disrupts



The Ties That Bind

Introducing art into long-term care facilities and mental health programs, for example, whether it be music, painting or gardening, could prove to be a helpful way for dealing with a variety of life issues, and an alternative method for patients to express confined emotions.

everyday life, whether it be cancer, an autoimmune disease or a joint replacement for example, this can play a role in the well-being and health of the mind, sometimes resulting in depression.

I have now worked as a nurse in health care for many years. With my own eyes I have seen the positive effects of art therapy on many patients in different contexts, and feel that art therapy would prove beneficial to people with many different issues. Art therapy can aid in diagnosing, analysis and healing, and ultimately help a patient arrive at a place where that individual can be his or her best self.

After working with dementia patients, I see relevance with my belief that there is a direct correlation between art therapy and healing, and I have read studies confirming this. I had patients with vascular dementia, Alzheimer's disease, Lewy body dementia, Parkinson's-related dementia, mixed dementia, and more. These patients mostly did not recognize their own families, nor were they capable of carrying a conversation that made sense. Some patients didn't know their own names, and some never spoke at all, while others were full of fury and rage. It was difficult to manage a unit with all these different presentations of symptoms, until we saw the benefits of exposing them to music.

One day a week on Tuesdays, a young man would come to the unit and play his guitar and sing songs from the 1940s and 1950s. From the very first time, I was amazed to witness the effect the music had upon my patients. Each and every one of them would sit still in their chairs with a calmness that came over them, and they would listen so intently to the music from their past. I could hear some of the patients humming the familiar tunes, and before I knew it they were singing each word from the songs they once knew so well. I was elated with what I was experiencing in that moment. My dementia patients were calm and happy, and once a week they had the opportunity to be their best selves. Introducing art into long-term care facilities and mental health programs, for example, whether it be music, painting or gardening, could prove to be a helpful way for dealing with a variety of life issues, and an alternative method for patients to express confined emotions.

A friend of mine was a great theater and film actress. Acting had always been her greatest passion in life. One day eight years ago, she received the news that she had breast cancer. She refused to let this news dampen her spirit. She did what she had to do, receiving all the necessary treatments: surgery, chemotherapy, radiation and a vast number of medications to treat the cancer and the side effects of the medications. Through all of this she continued to act. She always made time to spend with her friends and family and to continue life as she had always known it with her spirit intact. My friend's prognosis was not good, and the illness eventually progressed to

By incorporating art therapy into our medical facilities, we can introduce patients to activities that would be highly beneficial for emotional growth, healing and overall wellness.

stage 4, or metastatic cancer. She remained in stage 4 for two years as she continued to live her life to the fullest, stating, “I will continue to make the best of every single day for as long as I am alive.” That is exactly what she did. My dear friend remained her happy spirited self up until two days before she went into the hospital. She passed away peacefully the very next day. She was a firm believer that her positivity and zest for life enabled her to remain her best self throughout the course of her disease. I also believe that her attitude and passion for her art played a huge role in fighting her illness.

Throughout my career, my belief that making art in its many expressions is a form of healing has been reinforced. For those consumed by anger – from any of a variety of sources, such as PTSD (post traumatic stress disorder), child abuse, physical, mental or emotional abuse – some release is a deep need. Gardening may be a way to place their strife and suffering into creating something beautiful. Taking their minds off their stresses and allowing themselves to feel worthy can bring a sense of peace, letting go of their anger can help them find acceptance and forgiveness. We may look at visual art, dance, pottery, glassblowing and so many other art forms as ways to express oneself, feel release and begin self-healing. By incorporating art therapy into our medical facilities, we can introduce patients to activities that would be highly beneficial for emotional growth, healing and overall wellness.

Gillian Hynes is a nurse, mother, craftsperson, storyteller and a lover of cooking. She is known for her positivity, compassion, art in all its forms, sense of humour and her love of coffee.

Gillian has been working as a travel nurse for approximately seven years, working mainly with indigenous peoples throughout Canada. She loves to immerse herself into their culture, giving her an understanding of their ways.

Gillian was born and raised in a small town, surrounded by a large number of extended family. She has many stories stored away in her memory, giving her the incentive to write and paint.

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.