

THE JOURNAL OF Creative Aging

# SAGE-ING

with Creative Spirit, Grace & Gratitude



A PUBLICATION OF  
THE OKANAGAN INSTITUTE

NUMBER 34, FALL 2020

EDITED BY KAREN CLOSE

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# The Journal of Creative Aging

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## SAGE-ING WITH CREATIVE SPIRIT, GRACE & GRATITUDE

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Cover image by Jude Clarke

### FROM THE EDITOR

Our belief that creativity connects us to each other and propels civilization forward is unyielding. Covid has given the world time to reflect together, and this gift is leading to many creative realisations. I'm reminded of an Erma Bombeck quote:

"When I stand before God at the end of my life, I would hope that I would not have a single bit of talent left, that I could say, 'I used everything you gave me.'"

"Creativity is always trying to find you," Elizabeth Gilbert advises.

As we continue to experience the evolving normal of life in the times of Covid, we need to be perceptive to what is calling to us. Collectively, I believe we need to find the pARTS we need to survive. This year Canada's Culture Days – September 25 to October 25 <https://culturedays.ca> – will take a stronger online presence. The days

are an invitation to find "*Unexpected Intersections* and new avenues of discovery, learning, and expression." We are asked to pay attention to what we are inspired by and how we can share our perspectives. I heard this theme as an invitation for all to embrace *Sage-ing With Creative Spirit*. Exploring new avenues and sharing the enthusiasm these adventures bring is how we sage.

We are proud that the Journal continues to be a unique online site for storytellers who have discovered the rich bounty within. FEENY WOOD. RETREAT. REFLECT. RESTORE: A CALL TO RETURN by Lesley-Anne Evans explains how being led from within and sharing brings enrichment for herself and guests to the natural splendour of Feeny Wood. Bill Dobie in THE TWO RAVENS relates the excitement of discovering a pART of his ancestry when he opened to the call of creative spirit. Recognizing the innate guidance of ancestral

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heritage is important as we age. With time to write and reflect on AN INSPIRED LIFE, retired paediatric cardiac surgeon Jacques LeBlanc gained a deeper appreciation for how his father's imagination and creativity in his business influenced Jacques's own surgical career. In CREATIVITY AND HEALTH: AN ARTIST'S STORY Jude Clarke reviews how intimately her creative spirit and her experience of illness intertwine to bring a release from the grip of illness's gravity. In UNEXPECTED TRANSFORMATION Leila Naderi Neverland shares how the call of creativity can be hard to discern at first, but becomes most informative and surprising with contemplation and reflection.

Please enjoy this issue and be attentive to the inner nudges that might have emerged in these quieter times. Pay attention to the pARTS parts you need to survive. Explore, enjoy and share all of you. By building new practices of storytelling, we give ourselves an opportunity to draw ever closer in our shared human experience.

– 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, 2020**
- Email the article and photographs to [karensageing@gmail.com](mailto: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

# CREATIVITY AND HEALTH

## AN ARTIST'S STORY



### Jude Clarke

*And now this is happening. The forest is thinning, the world becoming a lighter place, still. The wolf senses it first. Then she sees it through the branches: a small triangle of cyan. There, now. The lake. It has never looked a more hopeful blue.*

– from *The Language of Water* by Jude Clarke, 2002

There are millions of people in the world living with chronic illnesses, and many among them are artists who choose to define themselves foremost as artists rather than an ill person who makes art. There is solace and intrigue in the act of creating, and, although many may not speak of the toll medical challenges can take on artistic output, they still work hard and against great odds to navigate and sustain both their well-being and their creative lives. It is a constant and continuous struggle.

I am an artist, and I have been living with the chronic illness systemic lupus since the age of twenty-one. Just last month, while preparing a new series of mixed media paintings, I reached the milestone of government-defined ‘old age.’ My age and the global pandemic have coincided to make me pause and think about a life well-lived and the new challenges of staying safe and creative while Covid-19 affects the entire world. There is something in my condition and my story that seems to me a microcosm for the isolation and distance a lot of people must contend with now, and that is why I want to talk about it a little. I also want to acknowledge the general impact of creativity on health, illness and aging, and to describe how art-making can be an antidote to the manifestations of chronic illness as well as to the constraints of ‘social distancing’ and safety protocols necessary to contain and avoid spreading the virus to others, and from contacting it yourself.

The quote that introduces this piece includes the words “blue,” “lake,” and “lighter.” To give you some context, these words describe my personal exit from illness and the interruption of my artistic practice as well as my re-entry into health and creativity. Both involve a long and winding road rife with detours, setbacks, isolation and the eventual arrival at the hoped-for destination.

In 2002, at the end of my eighth lupus flare, I painted a work that I named *Grace*. I hung onto that painting and have now been studying it in order to write this article. Figuratively, the abstract shapes in the painting combine with line to express movement and the dislodgement of representational landforms from the pull of Earth’s gravity. Symbolically, these shapes and lines also represent a release from the grip of illness’s gravity or seriousness.

**I am an artist, and I have been living with the chronic illness systemic lupus since the age of twenty-one.**



Top: Grace, mixed media

Above: Detail of larger painting, mixed media

I completed *Grace* on a warm summer day after months of tolerating an unnaturally revved-up metabolism, caused by the immunology medications prescribed to combat my body attacking itself. After I had recovered from the consequent depression I experienced while these same medications were slowly withdrawn, I finally resurfaced and painted what I consider to be one of my most intuitively happy and important paintings. When I look at the painting now, I feel that it is full of gratitude and I recognize this is the reason I have never considered selling it. It reveals a mystery at the heart of my life: that my own creativity can be a powerful healing process and a statement all by itself.

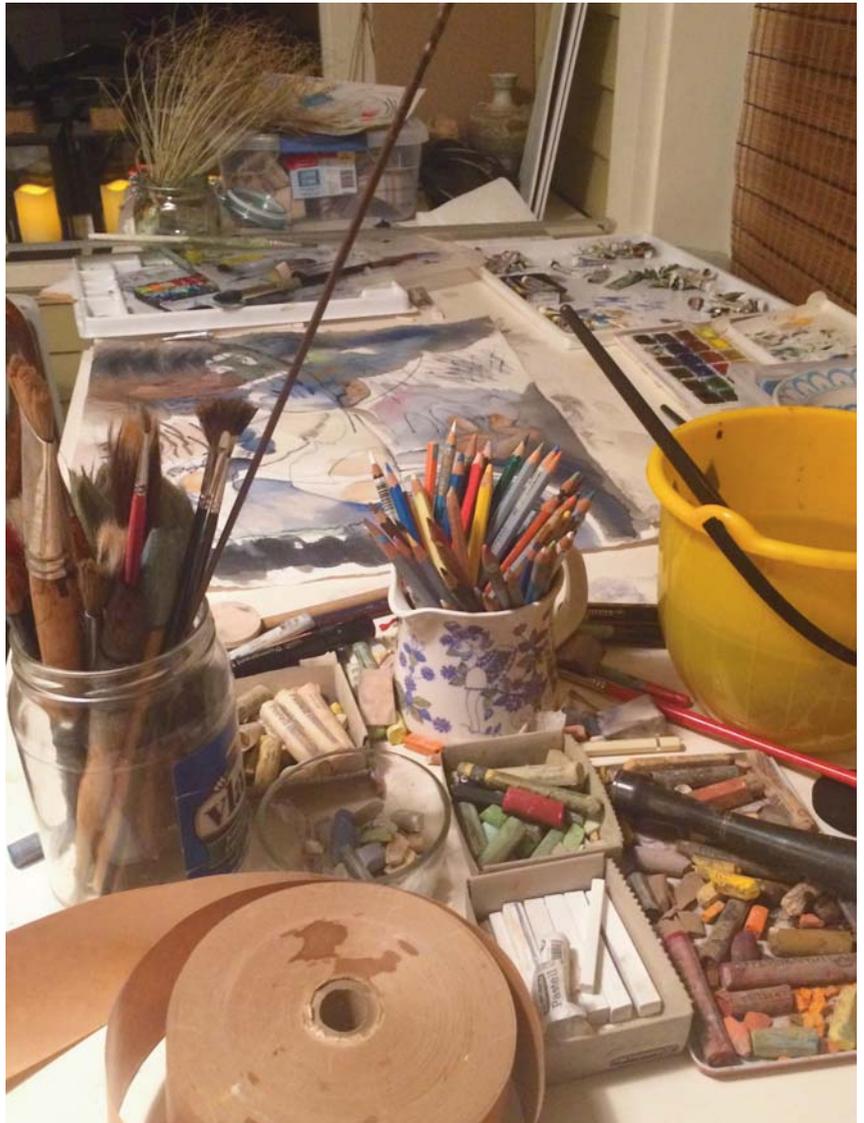
I didn't know when I was a child and starting formal art lessons that, years later, the act of moving line across paper and overlaying watercolour, conte and soft pastel would become a saving grace, while at other times a fruitless activity of frustration. As a six-year-old child, I climbed the stairs of a downtown gas station in Vernon, BC, and entered Ms. Jesse Topham Brown's teaching studio. It was filled with paints, easels, drawing pencils and graphite, clay, a kiln, glazes, coloured glass, pastels and endless stacks of various papers. It was the world I had begged my mother for, a place that was at once intimidating and thrilling, where we were taught formal aspects of

art that would give me an early appreciation for my rigorous training at a university in British Columbia, an artist-run art school in Toronto, and eventually another university in Saskatchewan.

Ms. Brown told my mother she would take me on probation, as she had never taught so young a student, and I was warned that I was not there to "muck about," which I could do on any given day at home. Fortunately, I passed the probationary period and continued with Ms. Brown for six consecutive years until I was twelve years old. She instilled a discipline in me that I carried into my adult life as an artist – one I would say added to many other experiences, teaching me the patience to bear and wait out the long months of illness during each lupus flare.

If I entered my studio during a flare, my charged-up, steroid-induced metabolism would often produce nothing of merit, and I would rip apart and toss the work into the studio bin. I could not calm my mind and body down nor find a focus to begin painting. At other times, I sometimes could paint, mostly in the middle of the night and near the end of a flare. These times,

Jude's studio



**Daily walks, the mood of the landscape and my own moods were composed intuitively in several series of paintings.**

including all the years between lupus flare-ups, and now in the eighteen years without disease activity, were a blessing – joyous experiences filled with light, peacefulness, excitement and challenge ... nary a sign of illness within my body or in the air of the studio. All illness would seem to have fallen off the face of the earth.

Throughout the years that the lupus was not active, I painted to produce several exhibitions of work that explored relationships between sky, land and water, abstracted and informed by peripheral vision. Daily walks, the mood of the landscape and my own moods were composed intuitively in several series of paintings that followed different themes and ideas.

When I paint, I begin with black conte lines, progress to washes of watercolour, build shape and form, and then apply soft pastel over the paint. I then use sponges and brushes to remove areas, as well as add, change shapes, direction, and sometimes overall composition. This practice continues for hours until the painting feels complete and right. Optionally, the paper is taken to the sink or bathtub to be soaked and washed down completely,



Untitled, mixed media

**At sixty-five, I can look back on my life and be grateful for the act of making art.**

leaving only conte lines and the faint stains of permanent pigment. From this process, the skeleton of the original composition remains on the surface of the paper giving me the same starting point so that I can begin again in a new and sometimes entirely different direction.

Now in 2020, at sixty-five, I can look back on my life and be grateful for the act of making art. I have worked hard and acquired skills and an understanding of the complexities of art and illness as they inform each other and as they exist as separate entities. At a young age, I asked for the opportunity to learn about and to make art, and later by circumstance was given a life in art. In my 20s, I was diagnosed with a capricious, chronic disease that doctors, medications and my own

will could not control but could only temper and contain to delay certain damages to my body. I have always been determined to push through each health setback. I have been blessed with the will to come back again and again, made stronger by the love between my husband and me and the life we've made together.

In 2020, the pandemic has thrown us all into kinds of self-imposed isolation. It is familiar territory to me and to so many others. Those who have loved ones who are at risk and/or are immunocompromised themselves hope that everyone will follow the protocols that infectious disease specialists have set. Everyone is experiencing less freedom to socialize and to enjoy the world out there, but it is a small price to pay until an effective and safe vaccine is developed.

Now is exactly the right time to be or become creative, to do those things we have been putting off or delaying or believing we "just can't do." So many possibilities are available in so many areas of art, whether on-line, outside in small groups or as solitary practice. This is a moment in history, apart from the multiple stresses of a global pandemic, that presents the time to pause and reflect and move forward.

**Jude Clarke** is an artist living in Vernon, BC. She has previously worked as the Art Education Coordinator at the Vernon Public Art Gallery, taught art and creative writing workshops to children, teens and adults, and has exhibited her work in art galleries in Vernon, Vancouver and Strasbourg. Her book about being an artist while living with systemic lupus, *The Language of Water*, was published by Thistle-down Press in 2002. Jude is currently preparing a new series of paintings.

# AN INSPIRED LIFE



## Jacques G. LeBlanc

If you wait for inspiration, you may wait all your life, because it does not come as an order. The inspiration must come through the capacity of creating, of imagining – a capacity we all have within us, at different levels. When I was younger, and through most of my adult life, I did not talk about creativity, but about my interest in thinking outside the box, innovating if you will. My understanding of creativity came later in retirement, in working with my wife.

When I was 15 years of age, I wanted to follow in the footsteps of the renowned French architect, Le Corbusier. I had found an article detailing his work in one of my mother's French magazines. I was fascinated by this new language of architectural design, building with clear lines and creating new geometric forms. I searched his books at the library to continue my understanding of his work in designing city and industrial spaces, incorporating green spaces and walking areas. In the summer, I was working at my father's company, and I learned some basic industrial design working with the technicians of the design department. My choice was made, I was going to be an architect. The classes in my first year of architecture were about theory, mathematics, geometry, design and graphic configuration, exploration of spaces, and more. It was not the beautiful idea I had about creating and designing buildings. Of course, one needs to learn the ropes, but I was impatient.

In the early summer after my first year, I read a book and I still do not know where I found it or bought it. I remember the title in red characters, no illustrations, and the parchment paper with uneven borders. The author was describing the suffering of humanity around the world. It was raw, but appealed to a new chord in me, a desire to heal. This newly awakened interest was really different from designing, but perhaps associated with my lack of understanding about creativity and its deep connection with caring. I switched from architecture to medicine, and added a few extra courses to catch up. All was well.

In the healthcare system, we sometimes learn through difficulty, failure and even death; creativity is fueled by innovation and the development of new techniques and therapies. The principal difference between creativity, innovation and invention is objectivity. Creativity frees the spirit to design new ideas; innovation transforms systems already existing, while invention is the process of creating new concepts. Innovation and invention are measurable, mostly commercially viable and reproducible, but creativity is not.

During my 35-year career as a pediatric cardiac surgeon, I participated in the innovation of new techniques, always looking to improve the care of

**My understanding of creativity came later in retirement.**

infants and children and saving lives. The case of Zoe (name changed) is unique. She was only four months old, had Down's syndrome and was diagnosed with a severe cardiac malformation. I operated on her to repair her cardiac defect and it went very well. Then, four days later, she developed severe heart failure, and we found that some tiny stitches inside her heart had broken through. We maximized ventilation, medications and feeding, but she was not getting better. I convinced my colleagues and the parents that the only option was to replace her tiny valve with a mechanical valve. Two problems arose: the smallest mechanical valve available on the market was still big for her small heart, and such an operation had not been done on a 4.5 kg baby. My talent for innovating or thinking outside the box kicked in. I decided that I could sew the new valve in an oblique angle inside the heart, allowing room for the smallest mechanical valve to function properly. My solution worked very well, and Zoe went home three weeks later. In fact, she came back at four- and thirteen-years old to replace her valve for larger ones. Each time my first innovative technique was used. She is still well.

I was coming out of the operating room one day, when the general surgeon next door needed some help with bleeding following a liver resection. I gave him a hand, and after the case I had a discussion with him and proposed using the heart-lung machine to help resect the liver and control the bleeding. Such an approach had never been done before. I was adding the complexity of using the heart-lung machine with opening the sternum and arresting the heart. I felt confident in my approach and was convinced that the bleeding difficulty would be less, and therefore surgical results would be improved. After all the protocols were in place, we did eight liver resections in children with great results and patient recovery, until new techniques came along.

This principle of conjugating surgical approaches, using my experience in one area with another, also proved useful when the orthopedic specialist in back surgery asked my opinion about reaching the lower aspect of the cervical spine, but from the front, as he had a very complex upper back and neck malformation to repair. I reviewed the anatomy of the neck and proposed a new surgical approach through the right lateral aspect of the neck that would allow him to reach the anterior lower cervical spine. The correction of this young patient's severe neck deformity was a success, and several more patients have had a neck correction using this technique until new equipment arrived. That innovation is always followed by further development is the essence of progress in medicine, all for better patient care.

If I reflect upon my creativity today in relation to my work as a pediatric cardiac surgeon, I realize I did not invent anything. I did innovate on previous techniques to get out of a difficult situation and to improve patient care. My father, in his field, was my role model for inventing. He invented industrial equipment in the early 50s and 60s. I always heard him say that no problem was too big or insurmountable and a solution could always be found. If an obstacle was in front of him, it was not the occasion to stop, but to look for

**This principle of conjugating surgical approaches, using my experience in one area with another, also proved useful.**

**My soul, my creativity,  
my spirit and my  
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themselves through my  
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children's hearts.**

an opportunity to solve. He believed that a door closing was another one opening, allowing him to bring in his determination, his imagination and his creativity. His approach fashioned my surgical career and personality. Today, I can realize that my innate creativity manifested in my forward thinking about surgical techniques. My soul, my creativity, my spirit and my intelligence expressed themselves through my hand's skills in my profession of mending children's hearts.

If I had not applied what I call thinking outside the box in these difficult situations, combined with the lessons on innovation learned from my father, it is very possible that occasions to help and save lives would have been missed. A lack of ingenuity and over-emphasis on established rules can impede progress.

I thank Covid-19 for allowing me time to reflect. While this pandemic has challenged our needs for social interaction, I found time to question my priorities. I have opened or liberated my creative spirit and, with that, I have 'reviewed' myself. In practical ways this pandemic has allowed me to focus on my writing and the expansion of exploring myself.

**Jacques LeBlanc** has been a paediatric and adult cardiovascular and thoracic surgeon at B.C. Children's Hospital in Vancouver. He retired eight years ago after 35 years of practice and found himself looking to understand and develop his interests beyond the practice of medicine. In doing so, Jacques realized that he had a lot to give back to his profession in the way of experience as a doctor, a teacher, a student of life, a husband and a human being seeking wellness in this rapidly changing world.

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# THE TWO RAVENS

## Bill Dobie



**As he played, the people noticed high above a raven circling around the village, but when he stopped the raven would disappear.**

This is a story of a boy who never met his grandmother except in dreams. Within the story you will see how the native flute came to be.

Long ago, while flying around looking for food, Raven became tired and decided he should rest for a while. He spotted a dead branch sticking out of a spruce tree below and felt this would be a good branch on which to rest. From there he could see the forest floor and watch for food. While he rested a woodpecker landed on the branch and began pecking holes, looking for bugs. Raven noticed that, when the wind blew through the holes, it made beautiful sounds. The more holes the woodpecker made, the more beautiful sounds came from the branch. Raven thought how wonderful it would be if he could sing, but alas all Raven could do was squawk. As the beautiful sounds continued coming from the branch, Raven drifted off to sleep. He dreamed of when he was a young raven and how he would fly beside his grandmother as she sang beautiful songs to him. He dreamed of how he could not sing, but how beautiful his grandmother's songs were. And so he dreamed and dreamed. While he was fast asleep the sky began to darken. The thunder began to roar and the lightning cracked above the treetops. And then CRACK, a bolt of lightning struck the branch Raven was on. Still sound asleep, dreaming of his grandmother's beautiful songs, Raven and the branch fell crashing to the ground in flames, landing with the force of a thousand lightning bolts. The branch and Raven became one. There in the forest they lay. Through the summers, the falls, the winters and the springs they lay unnoticed until, one winter's day, a young boy out checking his traps noticed this unusual branch. It was as if a raven's image was burned into the branch, and there were signs a woodpecker had pecked holes into it. The boy picked up the branch and blew into the end. Out came a beautiful sound. The young boy wondered, "What was this singing stick? What did it mean?" He decided he must take it to the elders in his village to find the answer. When he showed the burned branch to the elders, they told him it was a message. He had been chosen to bring the songs of the raven to the people. He must play the songs of the raven. So, he began to play. As he played, the people noticed high above a raven circling around the village, but when he stopped the raven would disappear. When the boy started again, as if by magic the raven would be seen again circling the village. As time went on, they would say there were two ravens.

The End.

*Tawnshi!* (from the language of Michif, a mixture of Cree and Métis French. *Tawnshi* means "hello")

A man who doesn't know where he came from could surely not know where he is going. I always knew I was aboriginal, but to what extent was not



Top: Raven flute. I made this flute with the *Two Ravens* story in mind.

Middle: Pekisko flute. I made this flute from a branch I took from the bottom of Pekisko Creek three years ago while I was fishing there

Above: The branch before turning it into Pekisko

realized until late in my life. I grew up in southern Alberta between the prairies and the foothills, in an area called Pekisko (standing for “rolling foothills” in the Blackfoot Cree language). I spent many days fishing on Pekisko Creek with my father and brother. We did not know we were Métis in those early years. Like most small-town kids, I spent my early years building this or that. So, at 68, it is not unreasonable to think I would be still building things today. It is, however, unreasonable to think I would be building flutes.

My journey to find the path that came before me started in what was called Bresaylor, Saskatchewan. The more I researched my past, as far back as that grandmother I never met, the more incredible things I would discover about life as a Métis. I learned the Métis people had their own language, called Michif. The more I discovered, the more I wanted to be part of this culture that holds dearly its closeness to Mother Earth. I learned about great leaders like Poundmaker. I grew up hearing my dad mention Poundmaker many times, as his family’s farm was close to Poundmaker Reserve in Saskatchewan. I learned more about the ways of the indigenous people and how close to the earth they lived. I learned of Métis people of the Red River Settlement who travelled west, eventually settling in Bresaylor. My grandmother was one of these people; she was born on the way to Bresaylor in 1881. The name Bresaylor came to be from three of the families that made that long journey from the Red River settlement: Bremners, Sayers and Taylor. Another great find to help me on my journey was the discovery of a Métis author, educator and speaker David Bouchard. After reading his book *The Seven Sacred Teachings*, it was as if a road map through life had been given to me, just 60 years late.

At that time I had yet to begin making Native American style flutes (NAF). After seeing a NAF in one of David’s posts, I knew I had to build one. As luck or good fortune would have it, the first instrument I built worked. Thus began my passion of building flutes of this style. I, no different than others, have developed my own unique style. Now, after only five years behind me, I watch how my style grows along with me. I prefer making branch flutes and using few electrical tools in the process. Splitting a branch can offer numerous challenges, but is very satisfying when successful. The art work I put on my flutes is done mostly with a wood burner, hand painted or completed with carving. The branch I’ve selected is gouged out to a size that will produce the sound I hope for, and the length of the flute determines the fundamental key the instrument is tuned to. Each branch has a unique shape, which can offer many challenges when tuning the flute. Most of my flutes are five-hole flutes tuned to a minor pentatonic scale. I now also make six-hole flutes tuned to a major pentatonic scale.

After speaking with David Bouchard to tell him I had seen his flute and have since begun making them, he was kind enough to introduce me to a flute maker named Stephen Rensink, of Makwa Flutes. Stephen’s flutes are an inspiration. They are beautifully designed and all with wonderful sounds.



Top: Splitting a branch  
Middle: Carving design and shape  
Above: My finished flutes

So now I have a mentor who is always there to answer my silly questions. As time passes, the more flutes I make the more I find answers to my questions within the flute I am making at that time. Thus, a journey that was to search for my past has led me on a journey to my future. When I hear people say, "I'm too old to start that," I say "Maybe, but you are never too old to prove yourself wrong." Now that I have started from the beginning, it has become very clear as to where I am going.

Some may wonder why I mentioned the Seven Sacred Teachings with such high praise. I have learned from them. One of the teachings is of wisdom, taught by the beaver: "Do not live based on what you wish you were. Live on what you are. If you have been given the gift of song then sing. If yours is the gift of dance then dance."

Pictured are three bamboo flutes and one bamboo ocarina. My bamboo flutes were made in Thailand. There are also two branch flutes. One is Cherry and the other Poplar.

All branch flutes are made from fallen branches. I wouldn't appreciate having someone come along and cut one of my limbs off.

As the sun rises in the east, beginning a new day, I am humbled at its power and the gift of life, and the opportunities that lie ahead.

*Marsee* (Michif word for "thank you").

**Bill Dobie** was born in High River, Alberta, to a French-Canadian mother and Métis (Scottish/Cree) father. Now retired, Bill lives in Snowden, Sask. In 1973 he moved to B.C., where he worked as a logger on Vancouver Island before retraining as a structural draftsman. After 16 years working as a draftsman, he moved into teaching drafting at Vancouver Community College, the school from which he had graduated. He has travelled through Europe, Asia and Southeast Asia, experiencing such mythical places as Greece, Turkey, Afghanistan, India, Nepal and Thailand. The highlight of those travels was a six-week trek up Mount Everest. The Nepalese call the mountain Sagarmatha, while the Tibetans call her Chomolungma, which means Mother Goddess. For Bill it was a life changer. In 2013 he moved to Saskatchewan on a journey to find his past. His home will always be the rolling foothills of Alberta, and he continues to fish such streams as Willow, Stimpsons, Highwood and, of course, his favourite, Pekisko Creek. He tries to spend as much time in nature as he can and prefers rural living. His hope is that mankind will become more environmentally user-friendly and that racism will be seen only in history books.

# THE ART IN LETTER WRITING

## Antoinette VouÛte Roeder



The only person who still writes me an actual letter is my 89-year old Uncle Aldo in The Netherlands. It is a contemplative practice for him, so he says, and helps him order his thoughts and reflect on them. My uncle uses lined notebook paper. A retired biology professor, he writes in block letters. My long hand is a scribble compared with his.

I spent the first ten years of my life in The Netherlands before my family immigrated to the States. In post-war Holland we actually had mail service twice a day and on Saturdays. I can still hear the thud of mail as it was pushed through the slot in the door and fell on the coco mat. Obviously, in order to receive mail, one had to write letters, and it seems I loved writing them from an early age.

A few years ago, an old Dutch friend and long-time correspondent died very suddenly. Among his things his daughters found the vast correspondence he and I had shared since I was a child of about seven. Remarkably, Robbie had saved all my letters, neatly encased in plastic folders, and though I did not get them all back, I received a large chunk of them. Such a treasure trove. Though we lived not far from one another, I wrote him innocuous notes, oddly self-confident for such a youngster. Most often written on decorated stationery with a little picture of a rabbit or a kitten in an upper corner, my very large letters did not leave room for many words on a page.

Receiving this package of my old letters was a strangely moving experience. Here was my child self and my growing up self, my early history, raw and uncensored. There were letters I had written after we had immigrated to New Mexico as well, a difficult time in our family life. I poured my heart out in my letters; I was so unhappy in that alien society. We had left behind our entire extended family, aunts, uncles and cousins. Letters I wrote in my mother tongue made me feel I still belonged to that trusted circle in my home country.

I loved all the appurtenances of writing: the paper, its texture, weight and colour; the pens, fountain or ballpoint, how they felt in the hand. On one of my birthdays I had asked for a red pen and pencil set. It came in a little box lined with satin, made by Sheaffers or perhaps it was Parker. The set made me feel important, as if my propensity for writing had been recognized. Later I received my own stationery with my name and address printed at centre top. That felt very professional. I was a writer of letters, someone to contend with, someone who had a place in the world.

The letters





My mother's desk

## My Mother's Pen

Tucked in the back of a cracked drawer  
in my mom's old mahogany desk  
I found a fat little fountain pen,  
dark blue and shimmery  
with a pretty gold decorated band.

It has an old-fashioned plunger  
that sucks up the ink,  
just about enough to write  
a paragraph or two.  
I can't wait to try it.  
Will I see  
springing from its nib  
my mother's large clear script?

I say a prayer,  
invoke her blessing,  
as I begin to write.  
Out come my squashed  
low-hunkering letters  
vowels flattened or filled in,  
"t's" and "l's" as short as an "r."

My mother's pen  
is not magic  
but it is my mother's.  
That is all that counts.

In the late '50s and early '60s, every town had a paper and stationery store. Ours was called *The Paper Mill*, and carried art supplies as well as offering printing services. My mother painted and frequently bought her supplies there. I loved to accompany her, loved the smell, loved seeing all the different grades and textures, weights and colours of open stock stationery. They also carried boxed stationery, decorated with pictures or an abstract design. I liked those too, but I tended to prefer large blank sheets, cream-coloured, with matching envelopes. After all, it was the writing that I took very seriously, and little pictures and designs struck me as frivolous.

Letters have been a lifeline at various times in my life. When at 17 I left home to go to university, I could expect a letter from my mother several times a week. I never lived at home again. When I moved with my husband and family to Canada, the letters from my mother followed us faithfully. They were always written on blue stationery in her large, clear, flowing handwriting using blue ink. Her letters touched on everyday things, no deeply reflective or philosophical epistles, just homey news that kept me apprised of my parents' lives. I saved reams and reams of my mother's letters until parts of Edmonton were flooded in 2004 in a fierce storm. Our house was badly hit, and my box of letters stored downstairs got soaked. I simply couldn't throw all those letters away. I remember sitting on the back step, patiently unfolding many letters and letting the sun dry them out.

My mother developed Parkinson's disease when I was pregnant with our second child. Gradually her handwriting deteriorated to the point that she was forced to start typing instead. She had always written at her old mahogany desk, but her typewriter was too big and cumbersome for it. She started writing at a large table in her studio, at a table which had actually been made for her sewing projects. Because of its height she had to perch on a stool and share the table with her appointment calendar, sewing, correspondence, and other odds and ends.

Upon my mother's death in 1993, having lived with Parkinson's for some 25 years, her writing desk came to me. I don't know whether she meant for me to have it or my dad wanted to honour the writer in both his wife and his daughter. In any case, it meant a trip from Alberta to New Mexico, where we picked up a small U-haul trailer and pulled the desk and a few other things across the continent. It is probably an antique by now, this desk made of mahogany, with a lid that opens up and becomes the writing surface. The lid has a green felt insert not unlike a billiard table, which provides a semi-soft surface ideal for writing. The desk features eight pigeon holes flanking a tiny cupboard with a lock and key in it, two small drawers, and an open space beneath them that holds stationery and envelopes. It is a wonderful design with loads of storage space. My knees rest against four large drawers beneath, which, when I first received the desk, were filled with treasures. I found there

## Letters are delightful glimpses into the lives of others that texting cannot replace.

**Antoinette Voûte Roeder** has worn a few hats during her life, including that of piano teacher, spiritual director and retreat facilitator. Writing poetry has become a sacred practice for her, because it takes her so deeply within. As will be apparent from the article above, she has always loved writing and became serious about sharing her writing in the early 1990s. Since then she has had the privilege of being published in journals, chapbooks, anthologies and books. Her latest volume of poetry is called *The Space Between* and is available on Amazon. At the moment she is preparing a very small book of poems about the great blue heron.

The joys of Antoinette's life include her husband and children and one grandson, her piano, reading, knitting, nature, listening to people's stories, bringing people together for writing and sharing. An ardent environmentalist, she and her husband contribute to several environmental organizations.

Antoinette can be reached at [a.roeder@telus.net](mailto:a.roeder@telus.net).

my mother's last few appointment calendars, purchased from the Metropolitan Museum of Art, whose entries were sparse and more like a diary. In addition, there were a number of framed photographs that had stood on top of her desk and, above all, some old correspondence of hers with *her* mother, my granny, during World War II, when my granny lived in England and letters could only be sent via the Red Cross. Totally unexpected was a set of typewritten poems authored by my mother and unknown to any of the rest of the family.

The desk is somewhat beat-up, having survived an initial move across the Atlantic and numerous moves since. It could probably be refinished, but who would tackle that detailed, persnickety work of sanding and staining all those cubbyholes?

Over the years my own letters have evolved to email on a computer, though I still like to write cards on special occasions. These cards are either made with my husband's photographs or by artistic friends. Though email is more or less given to short missives, I have a few correspondents to whom I write quite long letters and who respond accordingly. In this busy-busy-hurry-hurry age, it is a treat to receive a letter of a leisurely nature, such as one I might receive from my Irish friends in Victoria. He writes about walks he has taken, concerts he attends, exhibitions of art he has visited. His wife writes about books she has read, knitting projects she has taken on, a family history she is compiling. These letters are delightful glimpses into the lives of others that texting cannot replace. Above all, letters are a medium of self revelation, intimate in nature. They may be a window on the soul, the nearest thing to authenticity we might experience in another. We confide to paper what we might hesitate to speak.

Letters make fascinating reading and many, many people have left their letters to archives. My husband and I are reading through the letters written between composer Johannes Brahms and pianist Clara Schumann. Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart wrote wonderful letters to his father Leopold. Vincent van Gogh wrote to his brother Theo often. Rainer Maria Rilke, Jane Austen, Gerard Manley Hopkins, Thomas Merton were all prodigious letter writers. Some letters are literature, some are poetry, many are history.

I've lived to see the typewriter be replaced by the computer, to note that handwriting isn't even taught anymore. Do I miss writing on lovely paper with a beautiful, tactile pen? Well, I'm doing precisely that right now. Everything I write that is of a creative nature, I first write it in long hand. Feeling my hand on paper is the most intimate, direct and personal medium for my thoughts. So it is with my poetry as well. Once I put a poem on the computer it becomes more public, more official.

Will anyone besides my now gone friend Robbie save my letters? I doubt it. But the very writing of these letters through the years has been conducive to other modes of my writing, which have included diaries, journals, essays, short stories and poetry. These letters have prepared and "lubricated" that writing muscle that has been my close friend over a lifetime.

# UNEXPECTED TRANSFORMATION



Photo by local artist Ana Eries Luyben

Leila Neverland performs at Fireside Festival 2019. Photo by Ryan Donn

## Leila Neverland

Imagine a cave painting in the hues of crushed rock, pigment applied by coarse and soft-haired brushes. Now imagine a mural on the wall of a downtown alley, spray painted with cans of synthetic full-spectrum colours. The cave painting and the alleyway mural are both similar expressions of life according to each respective cultural and historical context. Not one is lesser, nor is the other more. Both acts of creation make the viewer feel and reflect no matter the era. This is the timeless nature of creativity.

As an artist and a mother, I am a timeless vessel for creation. I offer creative guidance to the contents of my vessel, much like creativity offers guidance to the expression of life's unexpected intersections. My creativity continues to flourish through the wildest intersection to date. But first I thought it had disappeared entirely.

March 15, 2020, I was forced to relinquish my livelihood, my business and the commoditization of my performance art as the cancellations for my pre-booked year started rolling in. I couldn't play the piano without bursting into tears when it was confirmed that all was coming to a halt. The subsequent creative outpour, however, was thick, and because of it I renewed trust in my choices, my art's integrity and inherent wisdom, and my ability to embrace what my art really means to me outside of its commoditization.

I was born Leila Naderi into a Persian and Jewish household. I was raised between Toronto, the Florida Keys and Texas, and currently reside in British Columbia with my two homeschooled kids. I watched the Berlin Wall fall on the live evening news as a child and lived through 9/11 in Texas. This puts me at 35 years strong. From a young age, I always wanted the Wife of Frankenstein's streaks of wisdom in my wild curly hair, and I will not deny an unexpected giddiness at the arrival of my first two white ones.

Amidst these early months of the Neo-Roaring 20s, it is still hard to let go of what could have been. Out of nowhere I went from a touring artist to a homebody, from hotels to my own bed, from restaurants to home-cooking. I was going hard for almost four consecutive years and transformed out of seek-





Scene from *Transcending Orbit* in which the stage transforms to full colour as the protagonist finds her way. Photo by Freebird Visuals

### Out of nowhere I went from a touring artist to a homebody/

ing social assistance to being able to afford organic cheese. And then there I stood early this spring, in silent stillness and reverence of all that is life. I asked myself: “What is this new narrative? Where in time is this new context? What is the root of my artistic expression?”

My art inspires people to feel and reflect, but never before had my lyrics been the focus of my listeners’ commentary and conversation. I often post snippets of my new songs on the privately-owned social media services I use. I used to hear about the ambiance I create in live performance and how my really humongous voice doesn’t seem to fit my 5 foot 1 inch stature. Now, out of nowhere, listeners and lookers from all over are commenting about the relevance of my songs’ lyrics to their respective present life experiences. I was reminded by a few colleagues of a show I co-created almost a decade ago, called *Transcending Orbit*.

The show is an activist demonstration that follows the journey of one woman as she discovers herself and a new economy amidst a futuristic, crumbling capitalist empire ruled by Miss Whip, a crazed dominatrix. A few cast members messaged me respectively about weird similarities between the current state of affairs and the show’s narrative. To my surprise, my narrative became almost eerily clairvoyant, so I dug deeper into my more recent tunes in search of wisdom and guidance. I wrote the following lines three years ago in a song called *Only Love Remains*:

When the world comes tumbling down,  
 what will be left on this cold ground?  
 Will we make sound?  
 When the coming of the rains,  
 washes away all of our chains,  
 only love remains. Only love remains.

And here are some lyrics I wrote last October, from a song called *Rage*:

**Nobody  
should ever succumb  
to the fears of many  
nor the taunts of one.  
The rage in me  
spreads beyond my  
being.  
It's the light worth  
fighting for.  
It's the light worth  
seeing.**

No human  
not a single one  
should be left behind to come undone.  
No people  
of any place  
should be cast aside or effortlessly defaced.  
No child  
should be forced to live  
where someone takes and no-one gives.  
Nobody  
should ever succumb  
to the fears of many nor the taunts of one.  
The rage in me  
spreads beyond my being.  
It's the light worth fighting for.  
It's the light worth seeing.  
We've had enough  
this much is clear.  
Will we just let \$%#& go on year, after year?  
Let's stand together in solitude  
so we may rest in gratitude  
for what we have and what we feel.  
All corners of the Earth combine  
no matter the place,  
no matter the time.  
Flippin' the page. Seein' the sage  
when the women start to rage.

Or, even creepier, here's an excerpt of a song I wrote in the middle of this wintery January called *Halfway to Beethoven*:

I can see the distance creepin'  
I can see the change come.  
I can see the distance sneakin'  
far away from everyone.  
I hear the birds callin'  
I can sense them in my sleep.  
I can try to find the moment  
when the world falls asleep.  
I can try to find the answers  
but in my quest I will fail,  
cuz if I look outside of me,  
I might find a wishing well.

In May, *Every Single Day* tumbled out. Here are the first couple of verses.

It's time that we be quiet  
so that we can hear.  
It's time that we sit in reverence.  
Never seen the air so clear.  
You can try to take our kids' dreams away,  
but they're stronger than us;

they gonna make it their way  
 just like we did,  
 and they'll take only what they need  
 and they'll give and give  
 until they don't take anything at all  
 because they find the wisdom  
 deep within us all.  
 You can try to take away our dreams  
 but life isn't always what it seems.

This is the second verse of my newest little song-poem I expressed and recorded a week before the end of August. It's called *How Small*:

I been looking outside  
 since the day the airplanes died  
 and I know the void betwixt hasn't moved  
 anywhere at all.  
 We just got lost in the fall  
 of every illusion,  
 and all the masks have been torn off.  
 And I guess I'll just keep playin' my song  
 about love and equality. Beyond what's right and wrong.  
 Take it or leave it.  
 Scorn or believe it.  
 We all got a right,  
 we all got a right to carry on.  
 I want,  
 I want nothing at all.  
 I hope  
 we can remember how small we are.

**When the engines stopped running and quietude befell our globalized Western economic civilization, we all woke up in silence for the first time since the railway. The bears did too, and I continue to ponder the sound we all might make going forward.**

My expression is pointing me towards my inner sage for the first time, and it's empowering. I feel like there's nothing left out there for me right now. I just listen to my inner whispers and sit down at my piano and drift through my music. I play it for my neighbour's corn fields, I jam alongside the warm breezy wind chime, and I record with the yellow finch's call wafting in through the sunshine's warmth. Shows are happening, here and there.

When the engines stopped running and quietude befell our globalized Western economic civilization, we all woke up in silence for the first time since the railway. The bears did too, and I continue to ponder the sound we all might make going forward. This unexpected intersection renewed my trust in myself, my fearless authenticity, and gave me the space to remember what my art is outside of its commoditization.

Creativity is so fundamentally human. We literally are expressions of life itself. We are living, sentient creation. By nourishing the space and time creation needs, we can lean on ourselves to understand and process the pinnacles of life's tremendous changes. The juxtaposition of my old ways with these new ways, my old poetry with my today's narrative, this present silence and our previous loudness, they are all welcome and powerful experiences, offering fodder for expression.



Leila's old trio, Mountain Sound. Photo by Chelsea McEvoy

before kissing my forehead goodnight: “Meet you at the intersection, baby. Then we’ll decide which way to go.”

You might be able to take the performer off the stage, but you can’t take the art out of the performer. For the pure love of creativity, my successful trio Mountain Sound and I started playing together again, busking on the beach and boardwalk, offering art to passersby. I will continue to proceed quietly, watching, listening, writing, documenting. I am filled with openness and gratitude for every unexpected result of this particular intersection. I am betwixt the liminal space towards which my late father always used to lead me,

Mother, artist and storyteller, **Leila Neverland** is an Okanagan-based collaborative community activist who facilitates the creation of original narratives through song, theatre, and film. Her art is as much the ambiance she creates in live performance as it is her narratives themselves. Her humongous voice soars over her music as she offers audiences timely poetry, futurist paradigms and compelling emotive expression. She is currently working on a new album, a collection of artist interviews for a book on contemporary performance art theory, and a few music videos. To find out more please visit: <http://www.leilaneverland.com> “I’ve seen a lot of live shows come through here, and you were the best I’ve seen in a long time.” Director, The Dream Café, Penticton, 2019

# COLLABORATING

## : INTERCONNECTING: RESPONDING



### Penn Kemp

*The Feathered Moon* is a collection of poems that emerged out of dream into a new kind of collaboration.

What, in this time of pandemic, of climate change, do we want from a poem? What is of use? What poem wants to come through? What kind of poem changes us? What do we want to write? In ongoing conversation over several years, Harold Rhenisch and I have discussed the nature of poetry in contemporary Canadian literature. We have been searching for a vernacular that would allow the poem to come through the oracular voice rather than the subjective voices that prevail these days – voices that held little interest for us. We are intrigued by what lay beyond personal significance.

“Make it new,” said Ezra Pound. The poems in *The Feathered Moon* do; they are a response to an unparalleled time of pandemic and climate crisis together. The new can be terrifying. The unknown is limitless cosmos, seemingly formless, beyond. The new threatens to engulf the very mind that we have been trained to cherish in the Western tradition. For me, dreams map a way, in pegged buoys of imagery, to comprehend what’s happening. Poetry gives form to disparate images and floating feelings, and eases the sense of dread that the unknown might incite.

Our process was complex. If a dream felt true to Earth and her archetypes, I wrote it up as prose and sent it to Harold, aka Puck. He then enjoined his human mask to translate the dream into poetry, puckishly. The editing back and forth would then commence, until we were both satisfied that the poem lived on its own. Through a conversation of drafts, expanding and contracting in turn with delight and discovery, two lives and two voices became one, until the poets who had started all this (Harold and I) were no longer present. The poems began living on their own, calling their own characters out of a very human realm beyond conscious intent.

“Penn and Puck explored various forms – visual poetry, sound poetry, chant, drone, lyric, narrative, Old Norse, Celtic and Egyptian myth – to find words that would allow the poem to come into human social life through an oracular voice. Intrigued by what lay beyond personal meaning, the poets wanted to speak together as musicians do. The social isolation of the current pandemic allowed them to reconnect with Earth in her life beyond the Anthropocene, across the airwaves. From Vernon, BC, to London, ON, and back, from the speaking mouth to cosmos, proved to be not far at all. The process was simple, in the end. Puck lived. Penn dreamed. Taylor Swift found her way in, with a whole flock of birds, and became daughter, the Nausicaa who washed Odysseus clean as he washed ashore out of storm. The poets followed the bread crumbs down whatever path they pointed. Keeping

**What, in this time of pandemic, of climate change, do we want from a poem?**

**What was fascinating about the project was how the poems fit together to tell a strange story that felt directed from some other realm.**

true to dream language, the poems transcribed the literal: for example, Swift the celebrity metamorphoses into a highly aerial bird.”

What was fascinating about the project was how the poems fit together to tell a strange story that felt directed from some other realm than our conscious selves. What surprised us in this collection was the unexpected cosmological element that seemed to drive the poems. *The Feathered Moon* rose from its origin in dream to poems of episodic adventure, a kind of picaresque pilgrimage.

Sample from *Feathered Moon* script

Whoever is not speaking could do the sound effects.

### **The Day I Forgot to Breathe and Became a New Moon**

*Breathing, rasping.*

Penn: When I breathe in, I'm on Thalassa,  
the teardrop Moon,  
staying with members of my tidal order

Harold: in a crowded flat  
run by two seamen who know no English.

*No no no. Yes!*

P: The windows glow all night—  
eyes in the sky's mascara.

*glow low glow*

H: Anne Bonny, who has been here for, like, ages,  
suggests

P: we pick some of the mountains  
on our side of Sunrise

H: to make gunpowder  
for a raid on the dark side of respectability.

*Pow!*

P: She's always been my favourite pirate.  
I tell her about carbon dioxide snow.  
She says,

H: "Oh."

P: Everything is so new here  
in this half-broken isolation.

H: At dinner, my attempts at speaking fish  
using calculations of propulsion velocities  
on my linen napkin are laughable.

*ish pulse fish pulse*

P: Even when the seamen point out simple objects like a door, *A door?*  
I think they mean a net.

H: "Yes,"

P: they say,

H: "we mean a net."

P: Ah. Clearly, I have spent too much time with Galileo,

*Star Cluster* photo by Harold Renisch



H: raiding for water on Mars.

P: Anne asks if I'd like her to shoot him point blank. *Shooooo!*

"No thanks," I say, "but a view  
would be wonderful, and flying fish, *Fish...*  
if it's not too much to ask."

H: It's not too much to ask.

"For Harold and Penn, the poem is not necessarily complete on the page. After a combined century of work, and sixty books between them (thirty each!), poetry still needs to surprise us. We come from an oral tradition where the poem is spoken, chanted ... heard. So now we are experimenting with lifting the poem off the page into sound, into voice, perhaps into music."

The Journal is proud to introduce this 'new voice' of creative spirit by these two established writers responding to unexpected times. Both are frequent contributors to our publication, and it is exciting to share this new collaboration.

**Penn Kemp**, poet, performer and playwright, has been lauded as a trailblazer, "a poetic El Niño," 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). In 2019 she released *River Revery* (Insomniac Press). See [www.pennkemp.weebly.com](http://www.pennkemp.weebly.com). Ishra Blanca dances as the ancient Egyptian goddess Isis in my sound opera, HELWA!

**Harold Rhenisch** started writing poetry when he was 15, under the dramatist Bill Greenland. From 1976-1980 he studied Creative Writing at the University of Victoria. From 1981-1992 Rhenisch's poetry explored the land on which he lives and where he grew up in an immigrant culture, developing orchards and vineyards in the fertile Okanagan Valley. His new book, *The Tree Whisperer*, is forthcoming from Gaspereau Press, Fall 2021.

**poetry still needs to  
surprise us.**

# THE ART OF FRIENDS



## Patricia Keeney

“I, and many of my friends over 70, are actively involved in the arts, often collaboratively. The combination of female friendship, creativity and ageing is the subject of this poem.”

I know them best, these lifelong friends  
in their late incarnations  
long after children and men.

Melissa of the sad song  
falling line dropped  
like a plunged hook  
from sky to sea

letting the sharpness  
ferret and grab, tug at her  
never looking down  
never taking dark  
bird eyes and streaming hair off  
the far horizon, a dance  
of flute and drum.

The foreign feast she craves  
waiting for her, always  
out of reach  
and only now admitting  
her joy in the going  
knowing it can never be

except in dream, ringing  
the bell of herself, soaring  
from sight and sound  
making music with those  
who can

finally free of the lie  
living in the flight she takes  
after soap opera and self-delusion  
hovering in new air

feather-tipped, quick  
as a hummingbird  
aerodynamic miracle  
a fin around the globe

a streak of beginnings.

Tough and tender  
Katia finds herself  
in paint  
white birch  
and blue lake, the burn  
of autumn leaves  
rosy colour storming  
rough water.

All the ferocious fighting  
and loving alive in this  
without pain.

A personal mirror pulsing with light.  
Fine bones fleeing up, sunk  
firmly in mulch, her nature  
buried and free.

And AH sunflower  
boldness on a stalk  
gold with an earthy heart  
her own *tournesol*  
back up.

Azure islands in mist and fading light  
she sits magnanimous among her scenes  
face forward, a sheen of satisfaction  
rounding her out, in age, the flaxen hair  
of a careless child

that says: here

I am.

\*

Marti, poet princess  
a flare of hair  
the fate that crowns her  
writing into and out of love

**Female friendship,  
creativity and ageing is  
the subject of this  
poem.**

flying underwater swimming through stars	landing me back at Simcoe sculpted white watching the huts rise way out on cloudy snow feathered pink, stained purple packed and pale
moonwalk and sunburst	
partnered with desire tethered to the dialogue of love	fishing with the icemen far and coldly down
where I glimpse her other lives. Tantalizing, this new Niagara grand expanse of lake spilling south walking through the house (past Italian rococo gothic with grapes) into waves and sky	the only way I've left to go  *  meeting them all in deep space where the words hold us
girl-shaped pure light	up.

**Patricia Keeney** is an award-winning poet, novelist, theatre and literary critic. The author of ten books of poetry and two novels, Keeney's books have been translated and published in French, Spanish, Bulgarian, Chinese and Hindi while her *Selected Poems* (Oberon) carries an introduction by the distinguished Russian poet Yevgeny Yevtushenko. Keeney continues her critical work for national and international journals.

Her latest poetry volume, *Orpheus in Our World* (NeoPoiesis) as an exercise in poetic archeology connecting the earliest and rarely translated Greek hymns with a post-modern theatrical dialogue. Keeney's latest novel brings her longstanding theatre knowledge into play. Based on the life of a Ugandan actor with Africa's most experimental theatre company, Abafumi, *One Man Dancing* (Inanna) is a story of politics and art set on the world stage.

Her novel-in-progress, *Emptiness and Angels* is a feminist satire, a Biblical mystery and a spiritual search involving a modern female academic, a nineteenth century nun and Mary the mother of Jesus who all meet in a time-travelling tale of mystery, adventure and quest.

A longtime professor of Literature and Creative Writing at Toronto's York University, Keeney has also taught and lectured extensively in Europe, Africa and Asia.

See Patricia Keeney's website: <http://www.Wapitiwords.ca>

# THE CALL

## NATURE & NURTURE IN THE SHAPING OF A VOCATION

### Susan McCaslin



**I could imagine the tiny rooms, the well-crafted furniture, the cozy scenes of domestic life inside a tree.**

When I turned 73 this year, I found myself reflecting on the question of how both “nature and nurture” led to my calling as a writer, a poet.

Certainly, the conditions of my upbringing played a prominent role, through exposure to storytelling and the power of words.

At the end of World War II, my mom and dad (Phyllis and Donald McCaslin) lived with Grandma and Grandad Thomas (Myrtle & Carl Thomas) in Indianapolis, Indiana, until they saved enough money to take out a mortgage on a house. I was born in 1947 and lived in my parents’ first home north of the city till I was about four. Then we moved to our new home around the time my brother John was born in 1952.

Our grandparents had purchased a home two doors down from us on the same street, so I saw a lot of them when I was a child. Grandma Myrtle, as we called her, bought me my first record player, along with records of Mother Goose songs. Grandma’s father had Irish roots, so she was born Myrtle McKinney and retained an Irish vivacity and sense of magic. She told stories she made up on the spot about “the wee people” living in the roots and branches of trees, elaborating with so much detail about the Celtic world of faery that it seemed totally real to me. I could imagine the tiny rooms, the well-crafted furniture, the cozy scenes of domestic life inside a tree, and wanted to become small enough to visit, if not live in such enchanted spaces. Sometimes when we went on family vacations with our grandparents, I would snuggle beside grandma in the back seat of our ’55 Chevy, detecting the smell of peppermint chewing gum emanating from inside her purse. Sometimes she would offer me a stick of the delectable gum, and sometimes, if I squirmed and wiggled too much, asking too many times, “When do we get there?”, she would reach over and give me a light pinch on the arm or leg. I came to associate her with both delight and mild punishment. However, her laughter and sense of humour made up for everything, as she kept us all entertained with her constant chatter, amusing stories and witty quips.

Myrtle’s sister, my Great-Aunt Lois, who also lived in Indianapolis, had been a schoolteacher and was married to my Uncle Lew (his last name was Lewis). After Lew died, Aunt Lois needed to size down, so she stored her ample collection of books in our basement. Some of them were kept in my bedroom, as they were anthologies of children’s literature, beginning with nursery rhymes, myths and fairy tales, but proceeding on to the classics, such as excerpts from Homer and poems by Tennyson and John Greenleaf Whittier. She also stored an antique wardrobe in our basement with an oblong mirror and carved drawers. Later, when I read C.S. Lewis’ *The Lion,*



Top: Within the commonplace  
Above: Within the natural world

*the Witch and the Wardrobe*, where children enter the magical world of Narnia through a wardrobe, I recalled how magical that old wardrobe full of books had seemed to me as a child. I used to lean into the mirror, hoping it would give way and admit me into something like Alice's Wonderland in Lewis Carroll's *Through the Looking Glass*. Both Grandma Thomas and Aunt Lois hinted about the existence of parallel worlds. I was a dreamy child who had a palpable sense of other dimensions within the commonplace and the everyday. Going to see Disney's version of *Alice in Wonderland* only intensified my longings for places elsewhere but near, which my father pointed out were more vitally present in the natural world, in a flower, or a tree, than in a film.

In part because of Grandma's stories and Aunt Lois's books, I became an avid reader before starting school. Neither of my parents was a reader. My dad was a mechanical engineer with a practical bent, and my mother read nothing but magazines like *Reader's Digest*. My brother took little interest in books other than *The Hardy Boys* mysteries for a brief time.

Yet I was the kind of kid who would get caught reading far past my bedtime with a flashlight or poor lighting. My dad used to warn, "You're going to ruin your eyes!" And my mother would say, "Suzy always has her nose in a book!" It was true. My father noticed that, even when driving through cornfields and lovely landscapes, I would be reading rather than looking out the window. In school, I was first in my class in reading, but far down the ladder in math. In kindergarten and first grade, I felt left out and often shy, partly because I couldn't read the words the teachers wrote on the blackboard. In third grade, my dad discovered I was quite nearsighted. After getting glasses, my life at school improved, but when first homing in on the lines and wrinkles on people's faces, I was disappointed that the world wasn't as soft and impressionistic as I had believed.

The more I read, the more I wanted to emulate what superb writers like Emily Dickinson and William Blake could do with the balance between words and silences. I wanted not only to be transported by the musicality of language, but to be a receiver who might transport both myself and others to liminal places where anything might happen. Where do the words and images come from and where do they go? How is it they move through us, enlarging us, rewriting us and our lives? Because of a Grade 7 English teacher who encouraged my incipient gift for writing, I determined to become a poet at the age of 12. Despite my many flawed and imperfect efforts, this calling has remained central to my life to this day, providing both meaning and purpose.

In the end, I sense I somehow brought this desire to participate in the musical dance of words with me, perhaps from another life, perhaps from times in other lives when I didn't have the opportunity to cultivate the life of a writer, or from some mysterious place that I still call the soul. I was fortunate and very privileged to be able to retire at age 60 from decades of teaching English and Creative Writing to devote myself entirely to poetry.

Though “life is short and the craft is long,” as Hippocrates said, the moment of ecstasy, when the words flow in and through one’s being, makes living a joyous adventure. The following poem is about a childhood experience of literal singing, which I now translate as being “poemed,” a state where a creative, worded, musical flow punctuated by silences pours through one’s being. It expresses something of what the process of writing poetry is like for me at this stage in my life.

### Who Am I?

conscientious and impulsive  
child singing arias in an apple tree

transparent apples gathered in my lap  
russet and green

bough-born  
cosmos-thrown

constricted & flourishing  
enthroned in a place of crossed limbs

startled looking around  
curious fearful bold

singing unheard hymns to unseen hosts  
from inside a tree

**Being “poemed,” a state where a creative, worded, musical flow punctuated by silences pours through one’s being.**

**Susan McCaslin** is an established poet from Fort Langley, BC, who has published fifteen volumes of poetry, including her most recent, *Into the Open: Poems New and Selected* (Inanna, 2017). She has recently published a volume of creative non-fiction with fellow poet J.S. Porter, *Superabundantly Alive: Thomas Merton’s Dance with the Feminine* (Wood Lake, 2018).  
[www.susanmccaslin.ca](http://www.susanmccaslin.ca)

# FEENY WOOD.

## RETREAT. REFLECT. RESTORE: A CALL TO RETURN

**Lesley-Anne Evans**

### REMEMBERING WHO I WAS

I am awakened as though from a deep sleep as I look through an album of childhood photographs, several weeks ago. I find a Kodachrome of my brother and me on my grandparents' two acres in Brantford, Ontario. We stand under an apple tree. My brother clutches apples to his chest, and I reach up as though to pick a ripe red delicious. I believe my father is behind the camera, but it could be my grandfather.

The light in the photograph is warm and watery, as is my memory. I look to be about eight years old. I feel an immediate connection to this place and time. I contemplate my childhood self, consider who I am now and what I remember of who I was. A thought occurs to me: "No wonder I longed for Feeny Wood."

Why do I seek to make sense? Is what I experience as an "awakening" to something new actually present but just outside my conscious view?

Christopher Alexander, in his book *The Timeless Way of Building*, says of the design process, "We are searching for some kind of harmony between two intangibles: a form which we have not yet designed and a context which we cannot properly describe." Alexander suggests that "People are deeply nourished by the process of creating wholeness."

Can our true self – the self we recognize as a child — help guide us towards wholeness?

Looking back at the child I was offers me clues. I recognize how a sense of place/context, along with creative practice/process, informs my decisions, dreams, longings. I wonder if life is a response to a call to return to ourselves, to replicate what creates the best and most true version of us?

My husband echoes these thoughts as he experiences Feeny Wood in a way that reminds him of happy childhood days at his camp in Thunder Bay, Ontario. It is all so curious.

### A MOVE TO A WOOD

In November 2018, my husband Bob and I pack up 18 years of life – a home in a family neighbourhood in the Kelowna suburbs where we raised our three children – and move up country. We purchase a house on a few acres in Southeast Kelowna and take a leap of faith. Eighteen months earlier I returned from a pilgrimage in Scotland with a relentless idea. It required change – breathing room. When I shared my idea with my husband, he smiled and said, "I guess we are moving."

And we do! The move – agony and ecstasy – is documented in a list I keep to remember the serendipitous details. I write eight months of "morn-



Top: Photo by Gianni Vidotto  
<https://portraitsofheartist.wordpress.com>  
 Above: A childhood image of the author and her brother



Top: Coyote passes through Feeny Wood  
 Middle A peaceful moment in the coolness of the Courtyard Garden  
 Above: Springtime brings abundant wildflowers

ing pages” where I vent, balk, complain and question everything. Yet a sense of right direction won’t go away. A vision that something wonderful is waiting if we just keep on the path and sacred texts like sign posts guide us: “Stand at the crossroads and look; ask for the ancient paths, ask where the good way is, and walk in it, and you will find rest for your souls” (Jeremiah 6:16).

We persist, and almost two years later now we are creating a new life at Feeny Wood. Hardly a day goes by without Bob saying, “Did I tell you I love living here?” And I smile, and say, “Yes you did – me too.”

### A VISION, BECOMING

We settle into our new home and begin to work out next steps. In spring of 2019, we discuss, design, cost and consider siting our prayer hut. We walk the land. We take in views, breezes, sounds, the sense of privacy for each potential location. We agree on a space that feels right – a small plateau surrounded by seven fir trees.

Add Christopher – the hard-working son of a local contractor, who digs a 450-foot ditch, carefully, gently winding down through the wood to the building site.

Add Kim – our electrician, who lays 450 feet of electrical conduit so Bothy guests will have light, a cup of tea, a fan.

Add Dave – a carpenter friend-of-a-friend, who, with my design sketches in hand, orders supplies, then hauls cartloads of building materials down the slope into the wood. For six weeks we collaborate and work out the details, and the prayer hut – Bothy – emerges.

Add my brother Joel – graphic designer, who guides me in the birthing of our name, logo, branding and website: [www.feenywood.ca](http://www.feenywood.ca).

As we take each tangible step towards realizing our vision, Feeny Wood becomes more integrated within us. Putting words to ideas does that. Building things does that too. We design and install a courtyard garden. We keep taking steps.

On June 1, 2020, our first guest arrives for five mornings of retreat in the Bothy. She writes in our guestbook: “Everything at Feeny Wood is saturated with beauty and meaning that draws the spirit into restful reflection and renewal. The hosts are the definition of hospitality. I will come back time and time again. Thank you so much for providing this space for me!”

### WHAT IS FEENY WOOD?

Our response to a call and vision brought us to a small acreage of Okanagan woodland and meadow, a new home and life, and to the creation and facilitation of a contemplative Christian retreat. We call this place Feeny Wood.

Feeny Wood is an away space to realign priorities and make room for your soul. We invite you to pause in nature’s beauty and reconnect with Creator. You can rest, wander, pray, write, read, sketch and linger for a few



Top: The Bothy at Feeny Wood

Middle: Feeny Wood is rich in fauna and flora

Above: Conversations about creativity and spirit at the big table

hours or for a full day of spiritual refreshment. The Bothy, our modern prayer hut nestled in The Wood, is available for times of retreat. You may request spiritual direction or choose a self-guided retreat.

Our lush courtyard garden with seating and a fountain is a shady, calming refuge. We imagine a contemplative pathway through The Wood, with art installations and a meadow labyrinth still to come.

Hosted and facilitated group gatherings create meaningful conversations in the good company of others. A lively book talk, a movie night, a Sunday supper or a creative workshop are all ways you can join with others to explore what it means to answer the divine creative call.

Our invitation is – come as you are.

## I BECOME MORE OF WHO I AM

Feeny Wood is the place I arrive as a spiritual pilgrim carrying a hopeful invitation for others to join me. I sense I am drawn here over a lifetime by numerous inklings, clues and multilayered arrangements of places, people and experiences – bringing me to now. Now is where I continue to seek who I am called to be as I continue to seek the sacred presence.

A gift Kodachrome photo of my brother and I under the apple tree a reminder of the tangible presence and love of the Divine outside any doctrine or creed. I recall my grandparents' rural home where each songbird and each bloom is a holy celebration. I remember spaces where I am alone, silent. I recall invitations to explore, investigate, waking to the possibility of wonder all around me. I remember making jam, fishing trips, loading hay into the wagon, fireflies – the awe of it all.

Perhaps I arrive at Feeny Wood in answer to a resounding call to return to what is most true and beautiful in me from the time I was young – to rediscover silence, solitude, spirit, creativity and nature's holiness. Then, as I pick up pieces of what I did not know I'd forgotten along the way, I offer Feeny Wood for the sake of others – a gift of gratitude and joy.

I know this – here in the beauty, practising poetry and facilitating spiritual and creative experiences, I am becoming more whole. There is a sense at Feeny Wood of being close to mystery that I cannot, nor do I want to, fully explain in words. "Coincidence is the term used to describe two events which unexpectedly occur together in a way that makes one wonder if this is chance and simple happenstance, or is there a hand." John Terpstra, *Skin Boat: Acts of Faith and Other Navigation*.

**Lesley-Anne** is a creative instigator and has facilitated numerous artistic and spiritual initiatives with community partners. Feeny Wood's experiential offerings are augmented by Lesley-Anne's attention to detail and desire to serve. Lesley-Anne is a Belfast-born published poet, amateur photographer and mentor. Her grandfather's words, "Would you look at that," continue to inform her life.

# ALOHA IN KELOWNA



## Bruce Spencer

My given name is Bruce Howard Kealalani Spencer. In my culture, the Aloha greeting is more than just a word. You may have heard it spoken in reference to my homeland, Hawai'i. On the surface, the most familiar meaning would be "hello and goodbye." In fact, it defines LOVE and all that is grand in our universe.

I've lived in the Okanagan for nearly a decade and am grateful for this opportunity to experience life on this side of the mighty Pacific Ocean. As a native of Hawai'i, I often get asked, "Why did you leave Hawai'i to live here?" For me it is a very complex question indeed.

I am very grateful for the days of my youth and being able to learn so much about our heritage from my ancestors, and for living in our paradise. Much has changed over the past 20-30 years or so in my homeland, but what hasn't changed is the ALOHA, which is eternal in all who are connected to our Islands. I am very fortunate to have been exposed to the music of our islands, growing up surrounded by many talented musicians. I remember at an early age listening to the elders sing and play instruments of every kind, especially the ukulele. Feeling their energy made me feel that playing that instrument is what I wanted to do.

As I grew older, I was able to find friends and relatives to share music with, and to embark on my own musical journey. Then my path took a sudden twist. I came to the Okanagan. After a fateful night of merriment at Duke's on the beach of Waikiki, where our group played and sang, I met a lovely woman to whom I was drawn. After introductions, she said she was from Canada, Kelowna to be specific. I replied, "Kelowna? Isn't that where Big White is?" The rest is history. After a couple of years of dating, I packed my bags and said "Aloha" to my island home. Not long after I arrived, we married and our new journey began.

Being an immigrant to this new land, I had to navigate the long and arduous process of integrating into the Canadian Immigration system. Because I was on a marriage visa, I was not able to be employed. On every visit I was sternly warned, "NO REMUNERATION OF ANY KIND." What was I to do while awaiting the long immigration process? I got the local phone book and called every local care home in our area and offered to share my music. I was well received, and that became my way of sharing my gift with those in care homes, many of whom have given so much to society and shaped our world today. I went to these homes on a regular basis for the 18 months that it took in order to become a permanent resident. In that time, I met many seniors in many care homes who were visibly touched by my musical offerings. The feeling I get from playing my songs is immeasurable. I especially enjoy seeing how, for many, my songs seem to take them back to a long-forgotten time, perhaps when all that mattered was ALOHA.



Sharing Aloha

**Bruce Spencer** grew up breathing ukulele music in Hawai'i. "In my family, everybody plays. My mother is in her 80s and still performs." Bruce moved to Kelowna in 2011 and began ukulele music in Kelowna through his group, called Kelowna Ukes of Aloha. Spencer now teaches ukulele and can be reached at <http://www.ukulelebruce.com>.

# COVIDIAN DAYS

## THEATRE OF ADJUSTMENT

### Neil Cadger



**It's a strange time, and we all have stories of disappointment, insight, solitude and/or unrelenting intimacy.**

I keep coming back to the beginning of this piece. And then I adjust the beginning. This may be because the middle now shifts disturbingly from day to day and the end is obviously beyond adjusting. It's a strange time, and we all have stories of disappointment, insight, solitude and/or unrelenting intimacy. This is still in the middle.

I am still asking myself how I ended up teaching and creating toy theatre in my basement, and how I fell in love with the machine. I founded the *Living Things International Arts Festival* in 2017 to bring to my community of Kelowna celebrated, contemporary live art (theatre, dance, music) that delights, challenges and physically excites us; art that focuses our attention on the present moment; that engages and reflects on our times – inevitably involving politics, environmental activism and other cultural currents. Live art is time-based art, and necessarily a response to the 'times.' We're in a room with people whose lives are here and now, with all the distractions, yet we have to connect. The essential work of live performers is always attached to a sense of electrifying or magnetic presence. Audience and performers have to be there.

But is there any 'there' here now? What is our relationship to this time in this land? Where are we in this present moment?

My observation is that we are in a deeply and critically problematic time. In my community, we occupy the unceded, traditional territory of the Syilx and Okanagan peoples, and real estate is our main economic driver. We're gambling with land that isn't ours – according to our own terms. This strikes me as a fundamental problem and the source of much distress. But the problem is deep. Whether we are Christian or not, the dominant settler culture, following biblical lines, positions humans as exceptional beings with dominion over everything else. We appear to believe that God gave it all to us. We don't need to consider what the earth might want from us, or what the water might need us to do, because the 'inanimate' world doesn't have desires, and anyway, we are stewards of the environment (somehow *in* nature but categorically different) and we know best. Human exceptionalism, the colonial project, appears to be reaching an endgame as we look around and realize there's nowhere left to colonize and we're destroying our immediate environment.

So, I thought (for reasons I will try to explain) that what we need is a festival of object theatre, puppetry and performing objects, where the core proposal is the public animation of the inanimate; where we gather to witness artists who, in the spirit of play, find life in objects. We exercise our collective



Object theatre

**We are not exceptional,  
and there is life in  
everything**

imagination and recognize agency and desire in an object or puppet. We imagine together, and habitual boundaries separating the human and non-human world become porous – we empathize with the inanimate. It’s a game. That, in any case, would be my understanding of Marshall McLuhan’s “The medium is the message.” Regardless of what the characters might do or say, the message is this: we are not exceptional, and there is life in everything. This practice won’t save us from ourselves, but it might help us to see our interdependence with the non-human world, and cultivate a sense of humility and respect. This is a ritual practice. The more we practise the better we get. For me, it’s a small glimmer of hope; as an experience, it’s a pleasure.

The first impact the virus had on me was in Montreal at the Festival de Castelrier – an international festival of marionettes, puppets and object theatre. I was there, as artistic director of the Living Things Festival, to see new work and connect with presenters from around the world. The Shanghai Puppet Theatre’s shadow play *Mulan*, with a large cast and live music, was the headliner, but they were from Wuhan and couldn’t come. We watched a video of *Mulan* in the Théâtre Outremont. It was numbing. A video can’t replace a live performance and, although I realized that there was no other choice and blamed no one, I felt cheated. The body is inconvenient and the machinic phylum is ever so accommodating. But I saw some extraordinary work, met many artists and started planning the 2021 Living Things line-up.

I returned from Montreal and saw my plans collapse in chronological

**Toy theatre is a 19th century social practice involving cut-out characters and miniature replicas of classical theatres.**

order: a dance production in New Brunswick in April; a conference in Calgary in May; a dance and music project in Kelowna in June and July. Plans for Living Things in January were gradually postponed or cancelled. All planning felt like speculative fiction. Everything I do brings people together in risk-filled rooms: my teaching, my art practice – my social world.

As the dominoes continued to fall, like most of us I lost track of days. I was online all the time trying to salvage something. My affection for public art felt increasingly transgressive; the pressure to adhere to strict rules in public was annoying and the guardians (medical experts) were about 75 per cent of my immediate family. The shift to online everything and social isolation made me feel like a child who doesn't want to go to bed and won't eat his kale. Then my department head asked me to teach an online studio theatre course in July. What?

I knew I had to do something immediately if I hoped to continue creating and teaching and decided to teach toy theatre – something I've experimented with but never taught. Toy theatre is a 19<sup>th</sup> century social practice involving cut-out characters and miniature replicas of classical theatres. My wife was out of town, so I started playing with cardboard boxes in my kitchen. With a laptop computer positioned directly opposite the toy theatre, it was possible to create intriguing imagery and a deceptive sense of scale. When we see something on the screen that looks like a theatre, we assume it's life-sized until we catch a glimpse of a finger or we see the machinery behind the illusion. And the game is always about illusion.

The dishes piled up and got mixed in with paper, glue guns, fabric and flashlights...so I moved everything into a spare bedroom. Then I realized I was going to be doing this for an undetermined length of time and emptied my unfinished basement, painted the floor and installed a studio of sorts.

I'm astonished. I'm in my basement all the time now with my computer. It's actually possible to just continue. The rules of theatre still apply in the imaginary toy theatre space we create online. If someone or something enters upstage we look; the rhythms of entrances and exits, the power of light to draw our attention – it's captivating. The only thing missing of course is other people. We do it alone now, which appears to offer us more power, but actually just makes us buy more stuff. The experience I've created reminds me of various dystopian plot lines involving THE MACHINE. So, it's disturbing, but at the same time it feels inevitable and therefore pointless to resist. There is life in everything.

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<http://www.innerfishperformance.ca/>

Respectfully acknowledging that we live and work in the unceded, ancestral territory of the Syilx people

# HEARTS IN NORTHWEST BC

## Cynthia McCreery



Photo by Danny McCreery

The Skeena Salmon Arts Festival Society started initiating public art projects in 2018, with the vision to celebrate salmon through art. Salmon are the reason many of us live, work and play in the Skeena Watershed of northwestern British Columbia – they inspire and sustain us. They are an important part of the local economies for both settler and indigenous cultures on the traditional unceded territories in the Skeena region.

The Skeena Salmon Art Show began in Terrace in its first year, and then expanded to include Smithers in 2019. The Arts Fest, led by founder Dave Gordon, hoped to include Hazelton on the list of galleries participating in the 2020 show. Then COVID came into our lives. But, if there is something I have learned about working with Dave, it's that he never gives up when he is passionate about something, and this show was no exception. By the end of May, plan B was in full swing.

The planning committee decided to present the show as an auction of heart-shaped art. Wooden hearts were cut, distributed to artists, and we waited for the results. On July 15 the hearts arrived in all their glory. We were in wonder at the beauty and creativity in our little northern communities and at how readily everyone had come together artists and community members alike. The hearts gave voice to our shared spirit, speaking to themes of salmon, salmon ecosystems, connection to place, and the care and compassion happening during this challenging time. The shows were set up as simultaneous auctions and installed both online and in the galleries. All three locations, on Tsimshian (Terrace), Wet'suwet'en (Smithers) and Gitksan (Hazelton) territories, would participate.

Hearts





Exhibition Close-up. Exhibition photos by Devin Mould

If we thought the response from the artists was inspiring, we weren't prepared for the response from community members bidding on the hearts as soon as the auctions went live. It was heartwarming to see how ready people were to continue to support our northern artists and art galleries.

At the opening in Hazelton at the Misty Rivers Arts Centre, Chief Nikateen (Frances Sampson) welcomed us to Gitksan Territory and spoke about how caring for our salmon and rivers is to care for the people too. The original vision of the Arts Fest was to portray salmon through art. It was born out of a desire to highlight the significance of salmon to all of us, but it was only the beginning. The

show became so much more than we ever could have hoped. The art became a way to connect without hugging, to communicate without speaking, and to be a support without dropping by with a casserole. It was one way to express, in a very difficult time, our care for one another.

**Cynthia D. McCreery** was born and raised on unceded Gitksan territory where she also raised her son. She studied Art History at the University of Victoria, and worked for the YVR Art Program for five years. She recently graduated as an Expressive Arts Therapist from Langara College, and moved home to Hazelton where she is the Administrator for Misty Rivers Community Arts Council.

You can find her on her blog: <http://www.littlecityarts.ca>.

# SAGE-ING WITH CREATIVE SPIRIT, GRACE & GRATITUDE

## The Journal of Creative Aging

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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.