

THE JOURNAL OF Creative Aging

SAGE-ING

with Creative Spirit, Grace & Gratitude



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NUMBER 35, WINTER 2021
EDITED BY KAREN CLOSE

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SAGE-ING WITH CREATIVE SPIRIT, GRACE & GRATITUDE

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Monashee Mountains #2, Mixed Media on
Panel - 2016

FROM THE EDITOR

As 2020 draws to a close we are all full of reflection. Have we been discovering how to 'Be the change'? Our future needs that from each of us. Are we ready? I hope that we benefited from more personal time to discover that the fortitude to make change can only be found within, where the integrity to ask 'our' questions and speak out 'our' beliefs resides. Creative spirit is about making choices that resonate with internal urgings. It encourages us to explore who we are. Now is the time to ask the questions artists have asked through the centuries: Why? What can be done? What are the possibilities? What if? Hesitancy and acceptance of the status quo have weakened us. It's time to find our strength to create the future we desire. Always influenced by the wisdom of others, I have taken to heart the words of Madeleine L'Engle,

"Being time is never wasted... If we allow our creativity to come alive, we are never bored..." Creative expression takes us into the fullness of who we are. Concurrent with Covid's onslaught, I became aware of *The Healing Power of Art & Artists*, a global community of artists and advocates dedicated to raising awareness about how art serves as a catalyst for healing individuals, society and our environment. As the Journal continues into its 10th year of publication, I hope our pages will join the chorus of these voices. In 'AN EMERGING PERSPECTIVE OF HUMAN TRUTH,' Jacques G. LeBlanc, MD, FRSC, suggests: "Creativity is not only a productive force, but a remedial force as well; it is nature's way of restoring balance where it was lost...and coping with a vastly changing and uncertain world." In 'ARTS AND AGING DAY CANADA', Kate Dupuis, leader in Arts and Aging at the Centre for

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Elder Research, laments, “There is no existing nationwide network to link individuals and organizations and further our shared cause of supporting creative aging in multiple forms.” The Journal’s writers and readers can become that needed force asking the questions and urging for such a network.

William Wordsworth said, “Poetry is the spontaneous overflow of powerful feelings: it takes its origin from emotion recollected in tranquillity.” I remember “being time,” such as Covid has urged us to discover, “is never wasted.” We have eliminated much so that the necessary may speak. I welcome the wisdom of the poets who chose to speak out to us in this issue and offer the gift of grace and gratitude as they reflect on the necessary. They offer their experiences of seeking and hope to share the liberation ‘to be’ that they have found. By ‘CREATIONING’ Lyn G. Brakeman offers that:

A whole new culture is created
A whole new human nature born.
– 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 February 10th, 2020**
- Email the article and photographs to karensageing@gmail.com

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

– Aristotle, *Eudemian Ethics* 1246b

A WOMAN OF PURPOSE



Karen Close

“Our purpose is hidden in our joy, our inspiration, our excitement. As we act on what shows up in our life, our purpose shows up.” source unknown

I first met Ruth Schiller about 15 years ago soon after I had moved to BC’s Okanagan. When I visited her home in orchard country between Oliver and Osoyoos, I was filled with anticipation and a desire to learn about the roots of the arts in my new community. From the moment she opened the door, I was struck by the vibrance and enthusiasm of this eighty-year old woman. I sensed a fulfillment. This fall I revisited. Ruth, now ninety-five, lives alone, seems unchanged, and very much at peace. Dressed smartly, smiling broadly, she pushed her walker aside and gracefully stood tall to greet us, comfortable to be the woman she is.

Ruth is a woman of purpose. A resident of Osoyoos since 1939, when her family made the decision she should journey from Germany to Canada, at age 14, to learn English. Travelling by herself aboard a freighter for 54 days, she would live with an aunt and uncle. Her character of determination was formed early. Destiny intervened with the war preventing her return to Germany, and she settled into her life in Osoyoos. Her character of determination was formed early. In 1945 she married and joined her husband in his home. She would live there for the next 75 years. Beside her husband, she began farming, and together they developed one of the first apple orchards on their property in the desert soil. Years later she established the Osoyoos Desert Society. <http://www.desert.org/>. Driven to follow her passions, Ruth raised a family, managed a fruit stand business for 20 years and became a leader in the cultural, educational and economic development of her community. Friends remember that, even as a young woman, Ruth wanted to make a difference in the community her children would grow up in. She

and her husband shared a love for classical music, and the arts were integrated into their home life. Wanting to expand opportunities for cultural stimulation outside the home, Ruth became an advocate for the artistic and cultural growth of Osoyoos. She was a founding member of her local Oliver/Osoyoos Arts Council and the first President of the Osoyoos and District Arts Council. As her vision expanded, she became a member of the British Columbia Arts Board and the Canadian Conference of the Arts, and for six years served on the Canada Council for the Arts. In

Receiving the Queen’s Diamond Jubilee Medal





Top Ruth with Pierre Trudeau

Above: Ruth with Queen Elizabeth and the Chrétiens

1996, after having brought national awareness to the province's cultural growth, Ruth received the Order of British Columbia for her dedication to the arts in British Columbia. In 2012 Ruth Schiller was presented with the Queen's Diamond Jubilee Medal, honouring significant contributions and achievements by Canadians.

In nominating Schiller for the award, long time friend Allison Smith wrote: "Ruth is a role model for women of all generations... At a time when women faced real obstacles in the working world, Ruth made a career out of public service. She is hard working, optimistic, generous, practical and eager to learn. She likes nothing better than a lively political debate and encouraging all around her to engage and become involved. She is a woman with a real knowledge of history who is always open to the world of new ideas."

Discerning the way to best accomplish her desire to make her community a better place to live, Ruth became a card-carrying Liberal at age 25. She proudly points out that being able to meet every Liberal Prime Minister since Lester B. Pearson in 1968 has been a great privilege.

Visiting Ruth this past fall I brought a clear memory of a back hall wall of photo memories taken with

notable political leaders. Before we sat down I wanted to recall the stories that I'd enjoyed.

Meeting Queen Elizabeth back in 1996 in Toronto was a highlight and provided the background to a wonderful story Ruth has shared for years. She loves reliving the incident. As she explains, there were 800 Liberals at a big function in a huge hotel banquet room in Toronto; she desperately wanted to say hello to the Queen and have her picture taken with her. After the public function, Ruth was wandering the halls and came across a police officer who told her about a private function for 40 people in a room down the hall. She casually walked in and realized the room was full of Liberal Senators and MPs as well as Chrétien, his wife and Queen Elizabeth. Chrétien recognized Ruth and introduced her to the Queen. Ruth still laughs merrily as she vividly recalls the moment: "Being a friendly western woman, I was going to put my arm around her shoulder and hug her. I had no clue you couldn't touch the Queen. As I was about to wrap my arms around her and give her a hug, I felt Mr. Chrétien grab my arm and stare at me. It was actually very funny." Ruth enjoys laughing at herself, perhaps particularly because her purposefulness was rewarded when a royal photographer eventually took the picture of her with the Queen and the Chrétiens. She carries this photo with her when receiving her jubilee medal.



Top: From her window

Above: Ruth in conversation with me

After a look at memories, Ruth and I settle down at a table overlooking her beautiful garden, the orchard and Lake Osoyoos. It is this view that feeds her at 95. Ruth plans that her remains will be placed in the lake.

Exuding pleasure, Ruth explains' "I was a little girl from Germany who didn't speak a word of English when I came to Osoyoos. This place has given me a wonderful life. I couldn't ask for a better life." Ruth has been driven, but now it is the energy generated by having cared deeply and knowing compassion and gratitude, that sustains her as she creates who she is at 95. Although she has never considered herself an artist, her daughter will point out, "Where she excelled was in her couturier sewing, knitting and crocheting. I still have a crocheted tam-o'-shanter she made. She would buy *Vogue*, then get a pattern and fabric and make me and herself the most fabulous clothes. Can you imagine in Osoyoos? When she got to the Canada Council, people in Ottawa said, 'Madame Schiller we wait for you to come, to see what you're wearing.' Mom was also chairman of the Cherry Carnival for many years, which meant organizing the parade and floats." Ruth's style feeds her love for the arts. "I believe in the arts. I feel strongly that the arts are good for people at any time, but especially in

tough times. They are indeed a bridge over troubled waters. Mutual understanding has always been best carried out through the creative arts. Creativity is all about letting the inside out, expressing who we really are, and I have always tried to do that. So much of our lives is measured by what we do, but what comes from within is what is important."

Ruth no longer wants to talk about what she's done. "The soul is what keeps you alive and healthy. The value of relationship and caring is what is important. That and humour. We must laugh." Driven by love of her family, the arts, and the Osoyoos community, its people and its agriculture, Ruth evolved a purpose to which she has dedicated her life and created a legacy that inspires. Her daughter remembers, "Mom always said to me 'When I want yes for an answer, I don't take no.'"

Ruth loves her home and how it reflects her life as she has created it. She is surrounded by art objects she has collected. She explains how through the years she has carefully made renovations and arranged furniture according to an inner sense of how things find a place that feels right. Now everything has its exact placement that she feels must be maintained. We laugh at the compulsiveness, but I understand what she is saying. I do the same in my home. It's like working out the composition in a painting. In any piece of art

In any piece of art the search is to find an aesthetic balance that brings a sense of ease ... I imagine the creation of our lives should find that resting point.

Ruth has loved life and found comfort with her choices.

the search is to find an aesthetic balance that brings a sense of ease to the creator and hopefully the viewer. I imagine the creation of our lives should find that resting point.

“Art and agriculture give me grounding,” she explains. Ruth feels intimately that as humans, our lives are completely intertwined with the cycles and rhythms of nature. The latin root for the words human, and humility, comes from the Latin word humus meaning earth and is often translated as “grounded”, or “from the earth”. As we look out Ruth’s window I feel with her. Yes, nature is a mirror, inspiring and teaching us, deepening our sense of belonging in the world.

When I stood to leave Ruth reached out to me; she started to dance and sang:

*“You’ve got to give a little, take a little,
Laugh a little, cry a little,
and let your poor heart break a little.
That’s the story of, that’s the glory of love.”*

I felt drawn to her rhythm. Ruth has loved life and found comfort with her choices. When she sailed to the ‘new world’ 81 years ago her life’s purpose began to germinate and she has been diligent in its cultivation.

“The great art is to express our vitality through the particular channels and at the particular speed Nature foresaw for us.” – Gabor Maté MD

“None of us will ever accomplish anything excellent or commanding except when he (she) listens to this whisper which is heard by him (her) alone.” – Ralph Waldo Emerson

SAGE-ING: WIDER AND DEEPER



Penn Kemp

The Words Festival, presented annually in London, Ontario, since 2014, has been one of that city's liveliest cultural events; but this year, "WordsFest.ca 2020 was presented online in the belief communities need the transformative power of the literary and creative arts now more than ever."

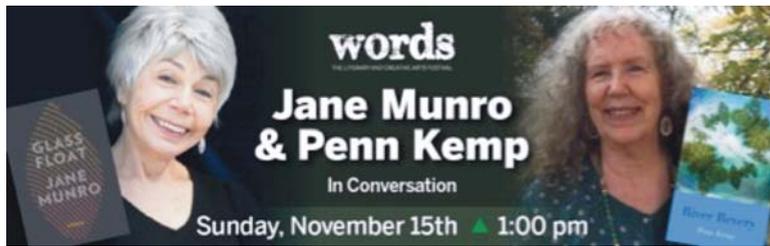
Through Zoom, the event reached an online audience with an active chat section, so that attendees could be involved in the moment. The conversation itself between Jane Munro in her Vancouver home, myself in my London home, and our host, Philip Glennie, felt more intimately engaged and less of a performance than when a large audience was present as in earlier years. Phil was at Museum London, with Word's Artistic Director Joshua Lambier behind the scenes, managing the chat column. The recording of our conversation is now available for you to view on <https://www.facebook.com/watch/live/?v=816107712501675> I am pleased to reminisce about the Zoom event here in the *Sage-ing Journal*.

"Griffin Poetry Prize-winner Jane Munro returns with new poems that are spacious with interiority, alive with a hard-earned lightness. Waves carried a *Glass Float* – designed to hold up a fishing net – across the Pacific. Beached it safely. Someone's breath is inside it. In *Glass Float*, Munro's seventh collection, this award-winning poet considers the widening of horizons that border and shape our lives, the familiarity and mystery of conscious experience, and the deepening awareness that comes with a dedicated practice such as yoga. *Glass Float* is about connections: mind and body; self and others; physical and metaphysical; art and nature; west and east, north and south. In "Convexities," the book's opening poem, Munro quotes the grandfather who taught her to paint: "art is suggestion; art is not representation." No concavities, he said. Only the "little hummocks" that her pencil outlined as she did contour drawings. Munro's deft suggestion, her tracing of convexities, conveys underlying complexities, not by explication but by looking with eyes and heart open to where mysteries almost surface." Wordsfest

I've met Jane several times and enjoyed her poetry for years. However, until reading her new book, *Glass Float* (Brick Books), I didn't realize how our poetic and spiritual concerns mesh in the way we two approach the creative process of writing. It was fun to find so many parallels with another woman of the same era. She and I are both 76, born within a few months of one another. Jane and I are each poets, editors and educators; mothers (single mothers for a decade), and grandmothers.

Jane and I are of an age that in grade school we were presented with a

"art is suggestion; art is not representation."



glorious pink spread of Empire on the world map. As a child, I was proud to identify with that pink (read ‘white’ and imperial) identity. I didn’t recognize the colonial mentality that was drilled into us till much later. Jane has a poem in *Glass Float* that describes the same experience. Poems about shifting perceptions

and letting go outdated concepts run through Jane’s *GLASS FLOAT* and my own *RIVER REVERY*.

Both of us often start with imagery from dreams that we tracked for decades.

I found it intriguing to explore ideas with Jane and to discuss my own new book of poems, which is centred around London, Ontario’s Thames River. Rivers are often used in mythology to represent boundaries; to cross the river is to transform. The poems in *River Revery* reflect the river as it winds through the city. Because the Thames forks into two streams at the city’s core, it was called Askunessippi, “the antlered river,” by the area’s original Algonquin inhabitants. For Indigenous communities, it is Deshkan Ziibiing. In re-naming the river the Thames, English settlers colonized forbidding new territory as an imitation of ‘home,’ rather than embracing the vibrancy of the river as it is. A distillation of ecological concern is a current necessity in *River Revery*. Such inspiration in poetry is one source for right action, since the Thames waters our gardens, real and imaginary.

Jane’s and my engagement with the natural world began as children. Growing up in the fifties’ suburbs of B.C. and Ontario, we could wander freely in fields and woods without supervision: “Just be home for supper.” Another parallel in our backgrounds is that Jane’s grandfather and my father were both painters. That inherited visual sense informs our poems and our poetics. Both of us often start with imagery from dreams that we tracked for decades. Our writing allows for dreams to be recognized as parts of body/mind: dreams. But how to make dreams interesting to readers? How to translate the process, articulating a more conscious layer into a poem? These questions concern us both.

Such interests reflect the times we grew up in. Jane, for example, links my herbal poems to the Ayurvedic tradition in her own work. Spiritual searches have taken us to India: Jane, on intensive yoga retreats described in *Glass Float*, and myself on a Buddhist pilgrimage and as writer-in-residence. My adventures are written up in *Sarasvati Scapes* and *Time Less Time*, both published by Pendas Productions. Further explorations led Jane to Italy (*Glass Float*) and me to Egypt (*Suite Ancient Egypt* and *Helwa!*).

In the Zoom, Phil asked how our experiences in India shaped our writing and our lives. The trick in writing about travel is to avoid exoticizing what we see as difference. Both of us tried in the time abroad to be true to our own experience in meeting the “Other” and in realizing we are the “Other.” Jane’s poems describe assimilating separate selves, the forgotten or neglected parts that one can bring to a new wholeness. Travel allows us to do that as we meet

the mirror of the “Other.” In India and Egypt, we met ancient cultures as well as contemporaneous chaos: we faced the discrepancy between modern noisy complexities and the huge breadth of 5,000 years of culture. I was struck by such vast spaciousness, stretching back aeons.

“Talking of spaciousness,” Phil asked. “Your poetry has been described as open-hearted. Do you see your poetry in this way?”

I noted that we both, by coincidence, were wearing red-ribbed sweaters, ventricles of the heart. “It’s essential to my practice as a person,” Jane said, “to connect head and heart.” I too believe that the heart connects all the realms: in writing from the space of complete and utter vulnerability. Jane continued with the observation that poetry is the architecture of the imagination that will enrich lives, that gives one a place to call home.

As I listened to Jane, I reflected about body/soul interplay, the intelligence of the heart and of the body. “Courage, mes braves,” cries the heart, and we carry on, collected.

Phil asks about the importance of ceremony in how I create a space for the muse to enter. Paying close attention to the moment is ceremony enough: presence is the ground of poetry for me. During the Pandemic, it is so interesting how we negotiate these new realities of listening, reading, being with one another virtually, deepening in the moment, even when we cannot meet physically, even though we would rather be sharing a real cup of tea together. What a pleasure to participate in this conversation at Wordsfest.

Meanwhile, I’m delighted to contribute to *Sage-ing*’s elegant pages once more.

Penn Kemp has been lauded as a trailblazer since her first Coach House publication (1972), and a “one-woman literary industry.” Her latest collection is *River Revery*, Insomniac Press, with video poems on www.riverrevery.ca. Forthcoming is *P.S.*, with Sharon Thesen, Kalamalka Press. See www.pennkemp.weebly.com and www.pennkemp.wordpress.com.

Jane Munro’s sixth poetry collection, *Blue Sonoma* (Brick Books), won the 2015 Griffin Poetry Prize. Her previous books include *Active Pass* (Pedlar Press), *Point No Point* (McClelland & Stewart) and *Grief Notes & Animal Dreams* (Brick Books). She is a member of the collaborative poetry group Yoko’s Dogs. See www.janemunro.com.

Philip Glennie is a graduate of the Ph.D. English program at Western University, and currently works as a freelance editor and teacher. He has completed five novels and over forty short stories. He has been a recipient of four Ontario Graduate Scholarships, as well as a Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council doctoral fellowship.

During the Pandemic, it is so interesting how we negotiate these new realities of listening, reading, being with one another virtually, deepening in the moment, even when we cannot meet physically.

ARTS AND AGING DAY CANADA:

AN OPPORTUNITY TO CREATE NATIONWIDE CONNECTIONS IN ARTS, HEALTH AND AGING

Kate Dupuis



As a researcher whose work lies at the intersection of arts, health and aging, my focus is on promoting arts engagement in older adults and those who care for them. My role as Schlegel Innovation Leader in Arts and Aging at the Sheridan Centre for Elder Research in Oakville, Ontario, gives me the opportunity to explore creative aging activities in Canada and across the globe, and connect with like-minded scientists, clinicians, artists and advocates to advance the field and encourage and support participation in the arts across the lifespan. In my work, I have met many Canadians who are passionate about connecting older adults with the arts; however, to my knowledge, there is no existing nationwide network to link individuals and organizations and further our shared cause of supporting creative aging in multiple forms.

In my explorations on social media, I came across a UK group called “Arts in Care Homes,” who launched the first ever National Day of Arts in Care Homes www.artsincarehomes.org.uk in September 2019. This day was specifically focused on funding and highlighting arts activities in long-term care. UK care homes were encouraged to share a description of the event(s) taking place at their location on the day with the project organizers, who then provided information about these activities on their website. The hashtag “#artsincarehomes” was used in order to share what was happening at each of the venues involved, and was even trending on Twitter during the day. After reaching out to the organizers, I was granted permission to bring the initiative to Canada! This seemed like the perfect opportunity to try and connect with other Canadians who were doing similar work and might want to collaborate on setting up a new “Creative Aging Canada” network.

The inaugural “Arts and Aging Day Canada” (AAADC) was held on September 24, 2020. The goals for the day were to 1) showcase and highlight the innovative work being done across the country in the field of arts and creativity with older adults and those who care for them and 2) identify Canadian community organizations, artists, knowledge users, clinicians and researchers who would share current program/activity ideas and begin the process of assembling a nationwide network.

It should be noted that, during the lead-up to the Day, we did have concerns about the appropriateness of launching such an event during a global pandemic, given the terrible loss of life in the older population, especially those living in long-term care homes. However, we decided to

A Cabinet of Curiosities,” shared by Kerby Centre for the 55 Plus in Calgary, Alberta





Top: Beautiful artwork shared by Acclaim Health in Oakville, Ontario

Above: Arts and Aging Day Canada activities shared by Pioneer Ridge – Long-Term Care and Senior Services in Thunder Bay, Ontario

move forward with the Day as an opportunity to share positive stories during this difficult time, and offer a way for people to connect around a common cause.

With the support of communication teams from Sheridan College, the Sheridan Centre for Elder Research and the Schlegel-UWaterloo Research Institute for Aging (RIA) we encouraged long-term care and retirement homes, community organizations and individual older adults to share images, videos and stories of their art-making through four social media platforms: Facebook, Twitter, Instagram and LinkedIn, using the common hashtag #ArtsandAgingCA.

Over 180 posts were made about Arts and Aging Day Canada 2020, and over 100 unique organizations and individuals were involved. In addition to posts by senior-living operators and community groups, museums, scholarly journals, art galleries and individual community members all joined in to share how the arts have a positive effect on the aging experience. It was an inspiring day and a great success considering the grass-roots nature of our first such event.

We were able to invite three residents and team members (staff) from Schlegel Village long-term care homes in Ontario to join a live video stream and share what they had been doing to stay creative during COVID-19. It was wonderful to hear how the staff had been working with residents to push their own creative boundaries and learn new skills. One team member brought in her grandmother's sewing machine to work with residents in creating doll sleeping bags and tents to share with children in the local community. A resident, who has been an artist throughout his whole life, shared examples of his sculpture, woodworking and painting. He stated that for him, creating is... "like an itch you have to scratch... you can't help it" and that "I got so many ideas, I have a hard time choosing which one I'm going to do."

We are looking forward to the future of Arts and Aging Day Canada, hoping to expand next year with new partnerships and funding opportunities, and more ways to reach out and encourage a wide variety of organizations to participate. In the lead-up to the 2021 event, we hope to stay connected with and keep learning from interested individuals through the twitter account @artsaging .

Kate Dupuis is the Schlegel Innovation Leader in Arts and Aging at the Centre for Elder Research. Her research is supported by the Schlegel-UW (University of Waterloo) Research Institute for Aging. Kate is passionate about improving the quality of life and overall well-being of older individuals and their care partners. In her current role, her research focus is on identifying the benefits of arts programming for an older population, and determining potential barriers and facilitators to participation in the arts. Kate's specialties include project development and coordination, stakeholder management, and working on collaborative and interprofessional teams. She is a Registered Clinical Neuropsychologist with the College of Psychologists of Ontario and a professor in the Faculty of Applied Health and Community Studies at Sheridan College.

Kate can be contacted at: kate.dupuis@sheridancollege.ca Follow Kate on Twitter: @DrKateTo @artsaging

AN EMERGING PERSPECTIVE

OF HUMAN TRUTH

Jacques G. LeBlanc, MD, FRSC



Truth has been a topic of discussion for thousands of years, and there are many different questions about the nature of truth that are still the subject of contemporary debates. It would be impossible to survey all there is to say about truth in any coherent way, but in light of the current world events I believe it is an important concept to explore. What understanding of truth is emerging in this new world and is there a relationship between truth and creativity?

The concept of truth is discussed and debated, with various theories and views, by scholars, philosophers, theologians, politicians, artists and comics, and in various contexts, including philosophy, art, theology and science, just to name a few. Truth is not easy to describe. What is truth? Is it simply “the real facts about something” or is it the way facts are interpreted? For that matter, what are “real facts”? People can be quick to assume that you cannot really know the real facts about something, for instance in the case of why situations occur as they do, why people act the way they do and what motives and agendas are present in a constellation of people. We have taken to using data as a form of fact, but data can be manipulated and used to support a certain interpretation. Is that truth? A truth is considered to be universal if it is logically valid in, and also beyond, all times and places. Hence a universal truth is considered to transcend the state of the physical universe, and such a truth is seen as eternal or as absolute. Is that the only version of truth or is there a version of truth that we would call “Human Truth?” Human truth would include facts and/or data, the interpretation of those facts/data and whatever the perceptions or beliefs of an individual could be. It would be a personal and subjective version of truth. Human truth would be whatever an individual understood it to be. This form of truth might not transcend the state of the physical universe and might remain bound to a time and place or experience.

There are, however, truths that do seem to apply to all of us. In many ways, we are all in this together and we have many similarities, or common life truths, that affect everyone in some form or another. Despite religious, cultural and geographical differences, there are many commonalities that we can all embrace. We often feel we are the only ones going through struggles and tough times. Shared experiences allow us to feel more connected, less alone and isolated in what we are going through, even if we aren’t physically sharing them together. Our global experience of Covid has brought this to light.

We have taken to using data as a form of fact, but data can be manipulated and used to support a certain interpretation. Is that truth?



The ability to bring imagination into physical being through action is the creative process that can shape human evolution.

Human truth is heavily influenced by technology, more specifically social media. The digital age has affected news and cultural narratives. People tend more and more to seek information that aligns with their views, and with social media there are infinite possibilities for finding others who share those views. Misinformation and “fake” news have become the breakfast topic of the day. It is virtually a social condition that you must constantly monitor and adjust to. Facts, information and perspective are no longer only dictated by authorities but are also networked

by peers. For every fact there is a counter-fact. How can one tell what is, then, fact? A Pew Research Center study conducted in 2016 found that 64 per cent of adults believe fake news stories. Manipulative people are using the new digital tools to take advantage of human preferences, the need for comfort and the need to believe in something. Misinformation and manipulation are not new; however, the digital age has accelerated and broadened their influence, making it more difficult for people to discern the impact information has on forming perspective, i.e. Human Truth.

In the next 10 years, will trusted methods emerge to block false narratives and allow the most accurate information to prevail in the overall information ecosystem? Or will the quality and veracity of information online deteriorate due to the spread of unreliable, sometimes even dangerous, socially destabilizing ideas? Is this where our focus will have the most benefit, or will we be better served in developing our perspective and understanding what influences it so that we are better able to discern and manage the information around us?

The emerging perspective of human truth will be the opportunity to shape and form our own truth within the process of alignment with our own being. How do we align with our own being? My belief is that, by accessing and developing our creativity, our connection with our creative source, we will establish a pathway to aligning with our own being. The ability to bring imagination into physical being through action is the creative process that can shape human evolution. Creativity does not come from knowing the answer, but rather from being willing not to know and to explore. Creativity is inherently neutral; it is not about creating more joy or having more fun or making things more positive. We need to be aware of the complete reality of things in order to let the best possible solutions surface and materialize. It may take a lot of courage to get closer to truth, to investigate what is hidden, to mobilize the energy needed to defy the status quo. We will need to improve the quality of our own thinking, become a truth detective and advocate. However, once you start noticing the energy this position unleashes, the life force that can become manifest when moving forward in projects and in life, that energy will be a tangible reward for the hard work put into improving the quality of our own thinking.

Could it be the case that our highly personal tendency to create our

own version of reality has everything to do with our capacity to be creative? Do we have to do our homework in order to become more intimate with real, unrelenting, adequate and powerful creativity? I think so. Creativity is not only a productive force, but a remedial force as well; it is nature's way of restoring balance where it was lost, to heal wounds and to improve us. I believe that in the future our creativity will be central to expanding an emerging understanding of human truth and to coping with a vastly changing and uncertain world.

In the future our creativity will be central to expanding an emerging understanding of human truth and to coping with a vastly changing and uncertain world.

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. <https://leblancwellness.com> As thought leaders in healthcare, we are passionate about and committed to illustrating and applying novel approaches to strengthening personal resilience, adaptability and intentionally creating a sense of well-being.

PRESERVING THE IMPORTANCE OF PLACE

SENIORS SPEAK UP

Fifty-one years ago, in 1969, a group of seniors banded together to create a society that would bring seniors together for activities and fun. First St. Andrews Parish Hall, then the Okanagan Mission Hall was where they met for the first five years. Due to the increase of membership, the group searched for more spacious accommodations. Art Dawe was looking to sell his house on the lake (built in 1949), so the society asked the city if it would buy this property for use as a senior activity centre. He would give a price discount if the space was turned over to the seniors for their use. The city agreed, and it acquired the house and property for \$80,000 in 1973.

Popular seniors' activities of the day were quilting, crafts, slide presentations, sing-a-longs to Roy Kerr's piano playing and potluck dinners on Saturday nights. The seniors also held fund-raising events, and donated the money to local worthy causes such as the therapeutic pool at Cottonwoods.

In 1989, once the caretakers had retired and moved out, the Mission Seniors' Executive requested that renovations be made to the building. Using member expertise and volunteers, and directed by carpenters, electricians, etc., when necessary, the society proposed to cover the financial costs for the entire endeavour. The city agreed, and the interior was opened up and renovated to the configuration you see today. The city took over maintenance duties of the house and property.

Today the Okanagan Mission Senior Centre Society has over 400 members and enjoys activities year-round. Some of the activities that go on at the centre include painting, singing, bridge, fitness and crafts, and potlucks on special occasions. The seniors, defined as persons aged 50 or over, use the space during the week and the city rents out the space on evenings and weekends.

Today the Okanagan Mission Senior Centre Society has over 400 members and enjoys activities year-round.

Okanagan Mission Activity Centre



A PLEA FOR OUR BUILDING Carol Millar

The Okanagan Mission Activity Centre was a private residence and still has an intimate, homey feel about it. The panelled ceilings provide good acoustics, the storage areas are ample and the large kitchen provides space for occasional potlucks and parties. The large windows allow in lots of light. The building has a ramp both at the front and back, providing easy



Carol Millar retired from teaching in 2014 and embarked on interests that had been on the back burner for quite a while. Nature, heritage and art are her passions. So, when she discovered that the lovely little house at the back of Sarson's Beach had activities for seniors throughout the weekdays, she got involved. Joining the Mission Painters Group, she brushed off her watercolours and enjoyed a weekly get-together with others. The experience of painting with others she found very supportive and fun. Painting tends to be a lone activity, but working in the same space as others who love painting brought an appreciation for the sharing and learning that goes on. Feeling the intimacy of Lake Okanagan nurtures unique Okanagan expression.

access to the parking lot and the gardens.

The site is at the back of Sarson's Beach and has many mature trees providing shade for outdoor events and beautiful gardens to view. But the most wonderful thing about the site is the panorama of the lake and mountains! It is this vista that is so uniquely Okanagan. The quiet sounds of the wind in the trees, the cool breezes off the lake and the ever-changing views as the seasons unfold are relished by members and renters all year round. This atmosphere is integral to the creative spirit that has flourished within the centre for almost half a century. Seniors who use the centre come from many neighbourhoods in Kelowna and even from as far away as Joe Rich, a rural area east of the city, and West Kelowna. Some of our members have been building community and welcoming each other into a sense of 'Okanagan belonging' since the centre's initial days.

The City of Kelowna Planning Department intends to bulldoze the Okanagan Mission Activity Centre and move the seniors' activities to a new structure planned near the Capital News Centre on Gordon Avenue. When a city representative came to speak with our society about the plans, every senior there spoke passionately against the demolition. We tried to impress upon the official why this building and site are so wonderful and how loathe we are to move.

Costs were one reason given for moving the seniors to the proposed new facility, but operating costs apply to any building. In 2018, the cost of all city services for the maintenance of the Okanagan Mission Activity Centre amounted to \$34,727.00. On the other side of the ledger, all income for rentals and classes is significant, as the centre is heavily booked evenings and weekends. Retaining the Okanagan Mission Activity Centre at its current location makes financial sense and should be viewed as a value in its own right. Cost cannot be measured in dollars alone. The facility is used year-round, and it embodies memories and a sense of tradition that cannot be replaced by a new facility.

Seniors are a large part of Kelowna's demographic and their experience and wisdom should count for something. Opportunities for seniors to share the wisdom of their experience is valuable to a community. According to the 2016 city census, over 22 per cent of citizens are over 65, which represents almost a quarter of our population. Not to allow this haven for seniors is a real disservice to them and the character of a community they have helped to build. Indeed, anyone can rent this space, so it is not just for seniors. As already stated, the Okanagan Mission Activity Centre is the only public building on the lake available to rent by citizens for weddings, retirements and other events.

I'm sure our society could work with the City Planning Department to arrive at a solution to everyone's satisfaction. A brand new multi-million dollar facility should be a separate discussion.



Peter Kerr moved with his family, including twin Michael, from England to Cedar Creek in 1948, when he was two. He went to school at Okanagan Mission and in Kelowna, and got a B.A. at UBC in Vancouver. He had many jobs, including with a fire suppression crew in Alexis Creek; the United Farm Workers in Arizona and Montreal; as a group leader with Canada World Youth in Somalia; teaching in Metchosin and Vancouver; and promoting human rights on behalf of people in Central America. He moved back to Kelowna in 1997, is active with Amnesty International and ran a peach and apricot orchard in Casa Loma on the west side of the lake for twenty years. He cycles and hikes and has played a lot of soccer, ice hockey and field hockey. Now retired, he prunes back-yard fruit trees.

Sarson's Silver Song Group



TOO PRECIOUS TO LOSE

Peter Kerr

Mid-November 2017 was when I first became aware of the value of the Okanagan Mission Seniors' Activity Centre. I went there to see if I could put up a poster about a film on the beauty of the Salish Sea and the importance of keeping it pollution-free, including from oil tankers. The producer, a friend and underwater photographer, is from Kelowna. When I opened the door to the centre I saw at least 30 people, mainly women, enthusiastically singing. I asked the woman at the door if I could put up the poster and she said, "Yes, but won't you stay and sing?" I didn't say much so she asked again and I said "Sure!" The singing was great and now I go as often as I can to "Sing for Your Life."

The group's origins are in England. Its aim is to give seniors a chance to sing mainly familiar songs and to benefit from the known health effects from singing. There are groups in Okanagan Mission and Westbank. Participants come from all over the city, and a number say how much they feel uplifted by it and by the setting. Most Monday mornings one of two younger women leaders comes to accompany us on piano and sing with us. Sometimes the Westbank leader comes to play his guitar, sing and tell jokes.

To complement the singing, we look out on a tremendous view of the lake and sometimes see deer and birds passing through, and we watch the weather as it comes in, often beautifully sunny with the lake shimmering in front of us. To have a backdrop like that adds so much to the experience.

On one of my first visits, I saw the name of my father, Roy Kerr, on a plaque as the first president of the Okanagan Mission Seniors' group in 1969, prior to the purchase of the activity centre. I had not known that he was so involved. At that time seniors had been meeting in St. Andrew's Parish Hall and, later, the Okanagan Mission Community Hall. My dad played piano for the group at sing-alongs, where they had pot-luck suppers. When membership increased, a search began for a bigger place, and an agreement was made between the City of Kelowna and Art Dawe, who was selling his property where the activity centre now stands.

This centre is a beautiful treasure that should never be taken away because it means so much to so many.

LET'S TRY THAT

Michelle Droettboom

We moved to Kelowna literally the day after my retirement from 45 years as a speech-language pathologist working with preschool children and their families. My focus was work with children on the autism spectrum and with severe language disorders.



Top left: Brilliant

Top right: Then Come the Berries

Middle Ready to Go

Above: An Old Trunk



At work I was constantly asking, “What would happen if we tried this?” It was a fun, intense and creative work life. Now it was time to find the courage to keep those creative juices flowing in the next stage of my life and actually to call myself an “artist.”

I remember the day I came down the hill from home and saw signs pointing to the Mission Painters Art Show and Sale. It was a wonderful show held right on the lake in the Okanagan Mission Activity Centre at Sarson’s Beach. It looked as if the whole community had turned out to view a huge collection of excellent art in a beautiful setting. I was inspired by the art, welcomed by the artists, and I felt I had found my place in the community.

What I love about being an artist is that what you create really does flow right out of you, through the brush and onto the paper or canvas. It never ceases to amaze me that, when a group of artists gets together to paint, we can all look at the same view of the landscape or flowers in a vase, and yet each and every painting will look vastly different. The uniqueness is determined by individual perspective, by how the brush is held, by what colours are chosen and by the amount of courage the artists have to try something new each time they paint.

Personally, I love to push myself constantly to try something new, to start with a wash and see what happens, and to experiment. I call my workshops and web site “Let’s Try That!”, which pretty much sums up my journey with art. I love to begin with an idea and then just go with the flow of the paint. I am “self-taught” ... with the help of years and years of painting, many workshops, and lots of books!

I have learned a few things along this creative journey. First of all you have to listen to your own inner voice. You need to search for the things in painting that make your heart sing, light your fire, or whatever rocks your boat! I love watching for surprises that lead me to move to an unexpected place in the painting. Then comes the challenge to see if I can recreate that “surprise” when I want it! Painting requires constant decision making: some conscious, some intuitive. Practice helps you get to the “intuitive” with some things, but there is always some other surprise waiting for you just around the corner. I love getting lost in the search for surprises.

The second thing I have learned is that you have to make your own rules to be creative. For me the gift of retirement means I no longer have to clear the dining room table in order to paint. Now I only clean up if I want to. I have found that having a designated space to paint – my home art studio – has given me the opportunity to be creative whenever the idea comes or the mood strikes. I am so lucky to be able to paint what I want, when I want, and where I want – in hope that others will enjoy it too.

The third thing that I have learned is that it’s not as much fun to paint



Michelle Droettboom has been painting and teaching in watercolour since 1995. For over 45 years Michelle worked as a speech-language pathologist focusing on preschool children with speech and language delays during the day, and as an artist painting during any available minute after her own three children went to bed. Now retired, it is time to play, experiment and create fabulous art!

Michelle is an enthusiastic teacher in watercolour and acrylics. Her love of experimentation enables her students to try new ideas and gets the creative energy flowing. Michelle is constantly excited to say “let’s try that!” whenever she finds a new tool, paper, paint, product or idea! Any new idea can provide the basis for the next painting. It is all about having fun, and watching to see what happens! Come and join me one day so we can play together and say “Let’s try that!”
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 | 778-477-4768

alone. We all need to find a community of artists that support one another. Having a time each week to paint with the Mission Painters means that I purposefully make time to paint. I get to go to a beautiful setting for some inspiration and to take some time to decide what I would want to think about for a while – maybe how to paint light, shadows or the lake just outside of our centre. It is important to surround yourself with other artists whose work you admire so that you can help critique each others’ work with honesty, caring and expertise. Creative ideas flow from artists. Creativity begets creativity.

As time goes by, I find my artistic community is growing. I am now an active member of the Federation of Canadian Artists as well. I have learned that you should never be afraid of venturing out of your comfort zone. That is where the learning happens. Artists face a lot of rejection and self-doubt – no matter how good you are or how much your paintings are worth. Artists need a support system to keep up their enthusiasm and to be creative. Make sure you have a big circle of support.

All this 2020 Covid-19 mess has a bit of a silver lining for me as an artist. It has given me time – somewhat forced time – to take virtual workshops, read books and watch videos in whatever new artistic areas I have always wanted to explore. Our Mission Painters Art Group was not allowed to paint in our Okanagan Mission Activity Centre at Sarson’s Beach, as it was closed. We missed going to the centre for all of the reasons mentioned above, including friendship, support, critiques, creative ideas and inspiration from the views just out the window. Taking matters into our own hands, we decided to take up plein air painting around the community. We are all seniors and need to be safe, have easy access, close parking, and have a beautiful place to paint. We have discovered a whole range of outdoor locations around Kelowna that met all of the criteria and allowed us to follow Covid-19 guidelines. We painted safely together every other week from May to October 2020. We have even created a 2021 calendar with our art from these beautiful locations, entitled “Hidden Gems.” We are now back in our Okanagan Mission Activity Centre with a limited group alternating each week. We get to see each other and be inspired in our indoor location right on the lake once again. We need a place with some inspiration right out the window, now that it is too cold to be outdoors. There’s no place like home.

I am so glad I drove down that hill to find that art show when we first arrived in Kelowna.

Please join us in our efforts to save the last remaining public building on the lake that can be reasonably rented by the community from the City of Kelowna. We all need a place for inspiration and a feeling of community. This is important and we have to act now. To join us with a donation or to volunteer please go to the www.friendsofomac.ca or okmissionseniors@gmail.com.

THE WILD FOREST



Don Elzer

It took me a long time to be at peace with an idea about my own mortality. It did not happen until I came to understand my relationship with a Mother Tree and her forest.

Forests in remote places carry wild systems rich in biodiversity; and these are the places that still hold a natural balance required for our planet to survive. These wild places also carry the cosmological platforms which link our logical selves to the greater essence of our soul-self. So these places can teach us a great deal about ourselves and our connection to wild relationships. Here the elements of spirit, sentience, science, semiotics, stewardship and sanctuary are pillars, and they support an archway which becomes the architecture for all that is a sanctuary forest. The foundation for supporting all of this is 'love' – the love that we have for the natural world.

What might make humans unique in the cosmos is this relationship we have to things that are driven by our love for them. To love someone or something more than we love ourselves, is agape love and it becomes a powerful emotional driver when it comes to acts of stewardship – it is what makes us extraordinary.

We really have a lot to learn about how everything works – and how everything is connected. Love becomes an activator for stewardship when humans become present in the natural world. Love is like a seed which triggers a natural reciprocity - it activates life-force.

As ancient humans we had a great understanding about all of this, and our role was one of navigating stewardship so that we could regenerate biodiversity within the Earth's natural systems. We sought to retain high levels of life-force for both local ecosystems and the planet. This natural presence of wild biodiversity provided us with food and medicine and became the original economy for humans – nature was our kin. Eons later this wild kinship, this biodiversity, still provides critical support for our survival.

We can find our meaning and purpose by taking responsibility for nature and this planet. Plant a tree, restore bird or pollinator habitat; help to regenerate the plant and tree Guardian Guilds. These actions will restore your soul, you will find yourself in the greater design of the cosmos – you will rediscover your child within.

Even though human beings depend on wild biological relationships, our society continues to ignore them, and chooses to create industrial practices that will extract whatever it is that we need, without considering the great balance that the Earth and her life support systems depend on.

Forests in remote places carry wild systems rich in biodiversity; and these are the places that still hold a natural balance required for our planet to survive.



Don Elzer of the *Wildcraft Forest School* teaches not in a building, but rather with students walking with him into remote wilderness areas where he shares his observations from beside mountain streams, on mountain tops and under the shade of old growth trees. This article is an example of one of his wild conversations in nature.

Clearcut logging, open pit mining and others forms of industrial resource extraction continue to plague our Earth. A significant proportion of drugs and nutraceuticals are derived, directly or indirectly, from wild biological sources: at least 50% of the pharmaceutical compounds within the US market are derived from wild plants, animals and microorganisms. About 80% of the world population depends on medicines from nature (used in either modern or traditional medical practice) for primary healthcare. And this represents only a tiny fraction of the wild species that have been investigated for medical potential.

This process of creating wealth by destroying nature has us forgetting our role as stewards. We are acting without love. We are acting without

responsibility. We are ignoring our ancient soul and by doing so, we are placing ourselves and everything else at risk.

When you get close to nature, when you touch it – it gets close to you.

It touches you. Then everything changes. Wildcrafters look at the world very differently. We are human, and as we mature we are expected to harvest our wisdom and share it with others. We seed intelligence for the benefit of Gaia. When we do this we open space for more life force – it is an exchange – a relationship. This sharing is the true essence of becoming immortal, as we make room for Gaia to reinvest herself - within us. We in fact become the Mother Tree.

What continues to be clear is that politics will not solve the problems that are placing Planet Earth at risk. Now more than ever you and I need to put together systems and tangible actions that will restore, regenerate and steward this planet....one small place at a time. Humanity needs to embrace the long view. We need to make 300 year plans and put them into action. We must grow more old growth habitats because they become a producer of 'living air'. It will not be long before scientists will be able to measure the amount of living microbes that travel in the currents of our air; much like they travel in the currents of our oceans, as part of communities of plankton.

'Living air' is being replaced by 'dead air' as toxins poison it; and thus we are being deeply impacted...in fact the whole planet is becoming deeply impacted. It is our forests and wild environments that produce living air...and it's up to you and me to retain that natural life-force process. We need to plant new old growth forests and natural habitat. More wildcrafters are required to protect, seed and grow this wild habitat so that natural systems can regenerate and wild biodiversity can thrive.

We are lured to ideas where euphoria and bliss can be found within the unseen, which is why we romanticize about both heaven and space travel. Yet in the natural wild spaces that surround us, there are undiscovered worlds



Don Elzer, Monashee Mountains #2
Mixed Media on Panel - 2016

Our forests require plant guardians within natural guilds in order to maintain balanced communities, which can then navigate obstacles presented by humans.

that are set in reality and very visible...but we don't seem to take the time to explore these obvious wonders. Oscar Wilde noticed this as well when he said, "The true mystery of the world is the visible, not the invisible."

You and I have separated ourselves from the mainstream because our view of the world has become so very different. Each of us on our journey is seeking a better story as the protagonist – but at the same time we are feeling the aloneness found within stormy seas.

Know that there is a safe harbour; there is a port of like-spirits eager to help make the tangible

changes that will regenerate Mother Earth, and her wild and remote places. We are in the process of re-discovering our ancient selves. We have lived through a great period of decay, and now we are beginning to walk on a new path towards something organic, something...wild. We are in the midst of changing the direction of humanity and re-creating the wild and natural Earth. We have re-discovered our meaning and purpose that is connected to all of this. We are now seeking to live in a home designed by wild intention; revitalized by love; and has architecture made of touch.

As wildcrafters some of us will be tasked with restoring and strengthening ancestral memory within species impacted by generations of influence from the anthropocene – or human civilization. Many of our birds and animals and even insects have become dependent on human behavior and our urban encroachment into wildlands. Our ancient forests, and in particular our great continuous forests, and the stories that they carry, have become depleted because of this human encroachment. This condition has caused wild species to remove themselves from their ancient role as stewards of the forest. Wildcrafters have a responsibility to guide wild species back to their original roles and to regenerate wild populations and spaces. This is a form of 'rewilding'.

Each of us, and our wild kin, is seeking sanctuary – the forest. The richness of presence, colour and life-force found within a healthy mixed forest, even during drought conditions, becomes self-evident when compared to an industrialized tree farm. Our forests require plant guardians within natural guilds in order to maintain balanced communities, which can then navigate obstacles presented by humans, climate change and other threats that might do harm to what I like to call, 'orderly chaos'. 'Old growth' environments soothe the restless soul because they provide us with the

A regenerative system is linked to the 'whole' and natural life system that the Earth depends on.

Don Elzer is the founder of the *Wildcraft Forest School* and has been a long time environmental activist and pioneer in 'regenerative stewardship'. He is recognized as being a leader in explaining how sentience is found in nature. In 1980 Don Elzer experienced the first of a series of awakenings which would place him on the path that he is on today. Previously he had a diverse career in business and the humanities, but his first awakening would move him deep into the Canadian Rockies on a vision quest that would last for two years. Don had connected with both his ancestors and the sentient energies that exist in the remote wilderness. This life changing period moved him into the realm of the creative arts, and environmental and social activism all steeped in nature. Don would emerge as a consultant within Canada's First Nations Treaty Process, and as a specialist seeking to help rural and remote communities in their efforts to plan the next generation of ecotourism and habitat protection in British Columbia and beyond.

Twenty years ago after subsequent vision quests he would emerge as a teacher of nature and in particular rewilding; his unique form of teaching wild intuition would lead to the development of the *Wildcraft Forest School* which now delivers unique programs into over 20 countries.

www.wildcraftforestschool.com

natural chemical and energetic compounds which offer strength in both body and spirit.

In simple terms, the community of other species that co-exist within an old growth ecosystem have to be regenerated everywhere. These living guilds hold the ancestral memory that allows a forest to problem-solve and remain healthy - without this 'whole' system, the forest and the genetics found within each species will weaken, not just locally but globally. We must think as a forest, which is more like a 300-year view. A tree simply being healthy in human terms, suggests a 'sustainable' system of sorts, but not necessarily a naturally 'regenerative' one. A regenerative system is linked to the 'whole' and natural life system that the Earth depends on.

Eighty percent of the earth's original forests have been cleared and destroyed. The same forests that dominated the land only 8,000 years ago are all but gone. Approximately, four-fifths of the forests are gone - just think of how many plant species may have been lost in that process, not to mention entire systems of life. Sixty-eight percent of plants are in danger of going extinct. Plant species can be very much localized which means they have a very difficult time migrating to a different location to protect themselves from changing conditions - particularly if humans prevent that migration. Extinction will be inevitable unless they are either helped to relocate, or they are protected. Humans are not helping when they are needed within this stewardship process; in fact, plant species are going extinct—about 5,000 times faster than they should - because of us. This represents one of the reasons I started the Wildcraft Forest School to actually recruit people to do this critical stewardship work.

Each of us breathes 6 litres of air per minute. In one year an average tree in its mid-life will provide enough oxygen for four people to breathe for this entire year. Currently there is no economic measurement for this contribution - even though many companies are presently selling oxygen.

Everyday, we as human beings shed dead cells; we become renewed with fresh organic life force every minute. Some of those dead cells make their way to become hair and fingernails, but most become washed away, or they become air borne and float into a breeze as we lose them. But what if we retained them, what if dead cells formed our exterior as a shell? Like a tree.

A tree retains its dead cells. Trees are made up of 98% dead cells. The living parts of a tree are contained in its leaves, root tips and the phloem, which delivers the life-force, communication and food between all of the tree's living parts. The dead cells are contained in layers of wood and bark, which thickens and adds rings to the tree's trunk every year. What if these dead cells are not actually dead? What if they hold memories for the tree? What if they are actually part of a vast living database?

Trees hold the memories of the forest, the land; and of the time, that passes through all of this life and energy. There's much that a tree can teach us about the cycles that move through this planet, as we seek to interpret both space and time.

PAST INTO PRESENT

A CONTINUING ART

Patricia Keeney

A Classical Journey

The creative journey represented by my book *Orpheus in Our World* lured me back into Greek myth and an early sense of cosmic/personal story which, decades previously, I had found thrillingly personified during my first discoveries of island/village Greece.

Even then, I was seeing gods and goddesses in the very character of the landscape, as this early poem of mine shows:

LoveMaking

Aphrodite bats at Pan
with her sandal
willful little wars of love
we still fight daily.

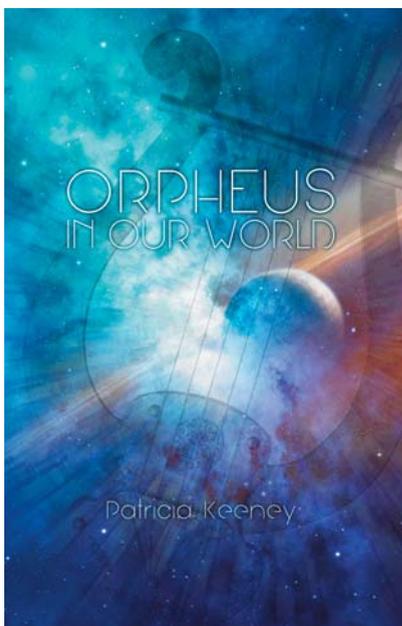
The goat-god whistles in an upright pine
squatting on a red-roof tile.
His toothy grin
crouches in the elbows
of dwarf olive trees.
A hot tin light.
The furry hide is brown and yellow
earth, urging
make love, make love. (*The New Pagans*. Oberon 1991)

My Orphic adventure began one warm evening in Athens, when the Plaka rang with voices and laughter. Over grilled octopus and frosty retsina I found myself in animated conversation with my good friend Regina Kapetanakis. Former chorus director for the National Theatre of Greece and deeply committed to the Greek classics, Gina was excited about a new work for dance theatre. The Orphic hymns, she exclaimed excitedly, had not yet been 'done' in modern times. She went on to declare that I, as a poet, must adapt them. Why? Because these packed explosions of lyric intensity were relatively unknown and begged for new interpretation. The fact that they existed most purely in classical Greek shouldn't be a problem since Gina knew the ancient language and would translate.

When I protested that my only knowledge of Orpheus centred around the doomed singer – enchanter of nature and lover of Euridyce who, when trying to rescue her from Hades, dared to gaze upon her and for this



Cover of *Orpheus in Our World*. NeoPoiesis 2016



As a poet, what appealed to me about this project was the combination of science and mythology... The strength and sensuality of the cosmos I discovered in this process.

transgression was ultimately torn to pieces by the Maenads – Gina replied there was a book I must read.

And so I began a voyage through the massive tome entitled *The Orphic Hymns: Astronomy in the Age of Ice* (or the late Pleistocene era), by Siegfried Pyrrhus Petrides – whose passion is the navigational and astronomical skills of the ancient Greek explorers. Here, I learned how the name Orpheus developed. It was a title taken by the first priest/astronomer who was also called Orpheus. Eventually, Orphic followers united under a name that came to signify the joint preoccupations of star-gazer and hymn-singer. Orphic sanctuaries were also astronomical observatories performing secret services in which they recited hymns to the Hellenic gods and goddesses.

As a poet, what appealed to me about this project was the combination of science and mythology, the human naming of godlike natural forces and phenomena, the vivid metaphors that picture for us the power and beauty of the physical world: Poseidon, earth-shaker, dark-haired one, Demeter with the splendid fruits, Hermes the herald, and so forth.

Orpheus, claims Petrides, became the conventional appellation of the priests of the caves where life was preserved during the long ice ages. A painstaking and exuberant work of reclamation, Petrides' book salvages and contextualizes these hymns in a heroic feat of scholarship and sustained enthusiasm.

In numbered sequences, according to the religion of the ancient Hellenes, Petrides gives us the hymns in Greek and English: the Cosmos Beginning, the Reign of Uranus, the Reign of Cronus, the Reign of Zeus. This is the chronology I began to follow, having tried several other groupings, such as human traits personified (Aphrodite for Love), abstract concepts (Nemesis for Justice), elements of the cosmos (Ether for Air). Petrides' sequencing mixes these categories in each reign, giving variety as well as the individual characteristics of the human mind excavating its own age.

Permission for me to re-cast the poems was granted, I am convinced, by Petrides himself, in his disclaimer at the front of the book stating that he was not a poet and challenging "anyone endowed with poetical inspiration" to "enhance" the work he had begun. Indeed, I found Petrides' translation to English of each hymn frugal, literal, often awkward. But exciting. The dense imagery hid secrets, inspired its own revelations and re-visioning.

So I began my search and research with the original hymns, followed by Petrides' detailed prose exegesis of each one. My method occasionally included references to the Oxford Dictionary of Classical Myth and Religion, where it supported the Orphic material, and to the illustrations in Petrides' book of classical figures made so familiar to us from sculptures and vases preserved in archeological museums throughout the Mediterranean world and Europe.

The strength and sensuality of the cosmos I discovered in this process, seeming so fresh and new, inspired me to write counterpoint contemporary voices, in dialogue with each other, commenting on these timeless tales and



Nike statue by Paeonius, 420 BCE,
Archeological Museum of Olympia,
showing the condition in which she was
found after a natural disaster

comparing current attitudes with ancient ones around social, political and environmental issues, and often from the prickly perspectives of male vs. female, although other binaries are entirely possible.

Here is one example of the stages through which the original hymn travelled before arriving at its final version for my “Orpheus in our World”:

Hymn XXXIII. NIKE

Nike I invite the very powerful, much desirable to mortals,
Who’s the only one relaxing mortals from the agonized impetus
And of the painful rivalries, in battles against adversaries.
Deciding in warfare operations, on the victorious outcomes,
to which when you are rushing upon bring a very sweet boasting.
For you prevail over all; and the goodly result of every strife
deepens on you famous Nike, the winner celebrating frantically.
But, blessed, may you come with a desirable cheerful eye,
Bringing always to the renown deeds the fine glory.

(Petrides Translation in his “The Orphic Hymns”)

My adaptation (which follows) was also inspired by Petrides’ photographic inclusion of the famous Nike statue – armless, faceless, garments billowing, striding purposefully down from her pedestal, fearless and full of power.

Nike (Victory)

wave billower
wind shaker
earth trembler

stride down from the clouds
wingless among us
in hurricane garments
all fluttering muscle

hoverer, body of air

bent at the knee
to bind fast a sandal
sweet boaster

cheer us with knowing
all strife is joyful
is life in its longing

and losing is winning

Here is my ‘contemporary dialogue’ in response to the hymn:

he: what, going for gold?
you look like a fierce little boy in that outfit

she: turn you on?

I see Destiny Riders as a choreo-poem intended to be danced, the words literally embodied. This interdisciplinarity is how the most powerful pieces of the ancient Greek theatre were produced 2500 years ago.

he: if you're the prize

she: you've already won
trophy man, exhausted runner, let me
carry you home

he: I sense you before I see you
touch you, can't catch you

she: clipping my wings won't make me stay

he: ok you little speed sprite
but before you take off again
just...do up your laces

Since the Orphic hymns were originally meant to be chanted and sung by sailors, by those who waited for sailors, by those who lived at the whim of weathers, the fickle play of good fortune or bad, and since they have come down to us without music or stage directions, I have also seen this work through another metamorphosis as a much shorter stage version called *Destiny Riders*, the title taken from the hymn *Moirai. The Fates*, reproduced below, also from my *Orpheus in Our World*.

Moirai. The Fates.

night's love goddesses
Zeus spume flying clear
over water, dropped hot
into the sculpted stone
we call life

destiny riders in lilac dresses
spun round the sun track
of world weathers
flaring, equally foul
and fair

circling fatal plains
in god's global eye

sure as the swing of time

measured

cut

she: we don't know our destiny

he: so why believe in it?

she: each life is different
follows its own pattern

- he:** pre-determined?
- she:** somehow, yes
and death comes for all of us
- he:** we can change our destiny
- she:** can we?
can we do more than
follow free will?
- he:** what keeps us going?
- she:** not knowing

I see *Destiny Riders* as a choreo-poem intended to be danced, the words literally embodied. This interdisciplinarity is how the most powerful pieces of the ancient Greek theatre were produced 2500 years ago, and it is how the old plays are produced today by the most advanced directors and choreographers working in Greece.

I have had fruitful conversations with several theatrical visionaries – including a well-known composer versed in ancient Greek music – about such possibilities. It is my hope that these re-imaginings of the past will contribute to the continuing life of the Orphic hymns to be read and re-read, visualized anew, danced, sung or even dramatized for the first time, allowing Orpheus, the ‘poet-saviour,’ to keep working his magic.

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), is an exercise in poetic archeology connecting the earliest and rarely translated Greek hymns with a postmodern 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>

CREATIONING

Lyn G. Brakeman



As women start to write
they have nightmares.

As women start to write honestly
they give us nightmares.

As women start to write in numbers, with clarity and focus
they get readers.

As readers start to read
they too remember.

As they remember
they have nightmares.

As women dare
they talk,
they listen,
they share,
they care,
they dare they live

Slowly, nightmares turn to dreams
hopes
collectives
companions
communities—

all ages, genders, races, places, and circumstance—

A whole new culture is created
A whole new human nature born

And God, whom I call Godde,
is always poised to begin, and again,
and never stops creating.

Never.

The **Rev. Lyn G. Brakeman** is an Episcopal priest, retired and creatively aging with grit and grace – most days imperfectly balanced. Lyn grew up in New York City, long enough ago to remember the beauty of climbing skyscrapers naked against smogless blue sky. As a young child, jealous of her parents' nightly cocktail hour, Lyn found refuge under a large dining room table with a cloth to the floor. Well supplied with Ritz crackers, Lyn chattered with three imaginary friends and a fourth friend named God whom she'd seen in a book, sitting in a beautiful garden listening with attention and appreciation to every sound on Earth, even "weeny" ones. Thus, Lyn learned that she mattered, that girls mattered, and, in time, that the Bible identified God with Wisdom who was feminine, and could be called Godde. Lyn is a spiritual director and the author of *Spiritual Lemons*, *Biblical Women*, *Irreverent Laughter and Righteous Rage*, *The God Between Us*, *A Spirituality of Relationships*, and *God Is Not a Boy's Name*. *Becoming Woman*. *Becoming Priest*. a memoir. All of her books are in print, and she keeps a weekly blog www.spirituallemons.blogspot.com.

WINTER HAIKU

Valary Howard



Strong white clear and bright
So enjoying the Sunday light
Winter energy

Valary Howard started practising Haiku when she lived close to the sky in Edmonton's river valley. She would rise at all hours to catch what colour and light she could.



Edmonton, November 8, 2020

EXAMINING THE EVIDENCE

FURTHER PROOF THAT POETRY IS FELT RATHER THAN SEEN, AND PAINTING IS POETRY THAT IS SEEN RATHER THAN FELT, ACCORDING TO LEONARDO DA VINCI.



Robert MacDonald was a graphic artist who became a typographer, who became a printer, who became a publisher, who became an information architect, who became a program director, who became a writer, who became a designer – and who still can't get over how much fun it all was in spite of the vicissitudes of fate and fortune. Now an avid reader, social activist, and cottage gardener in the outrageously beautiful and strange Okanagan valley, he still often rises to a creative challenge, especially if type, ink, paper, and glue are involved.

www.bookstone.ca

Robert MacDonald

INDIVISIBLE

You are not the child.
There is no father.
There is light
and no where else to be.
But then
there is always some where
else to go.
Because the darkness
goes there with us.

The light teaches, just as
the darkness, morning
to arise, evening to put to
bed, and sow the seeds
of character.
Make new. Make over.
Make again.

Always the next, the new,
we suspect each other, each
moment, each work of text
and context.
We make an opening and
we step into it.
Next the door, a small window,
sudden passages.
We know not where.

You are not the infant.
The children are not us, and
not from us.
We make and unmake making
sense, making meaning
for some reason, presumably.
We puzzle the difference.

We were once a part
of a whole. That was big,
surely? Each one among us is
also us. We one together.
We one apart. Impossible.
Separate us. Pull the parts apart.
Then we are one.

Then there is only one
of us. That is the difference
and the same thing.

Once we are no longer just one
but also all together, then we
can make everything together,
be common in hope and make
the better together.

Honour your self. Make your
life, while you can, with others.
Surely.

...

From seed to growing edge,
the buds press against the breast
make new life from the forest
of feelings.

But that's not enough.
We need our one to be part of
together and go next into
the womb, the place that started
life, in order to start living again.

IN THE FICTIVE

*for Ian Brown,
long lost to the imagination*

In the fictive world, we don't die.
We live our dream one fantasy at a time,
one among many.

In the fictive imagination, we are kings
among men, queens for ever, and princesses
without compare.

We don't die, we are lifted into
the heavenly sphere by the shear
force of our imaginations.

We are one with the immortals, perfect
in every way.

In the fictive, we know we are no longer real,
and probably never were.
But we don't care.

In fictive, we find the future, a bright light
on the horizon.
No longer satisfied with being real, we seek
transcendence.

In the transcendent we allow ourselves
to overcome the vagaries of birth, and fate,
and destiny.

In the fictive, we are all beautiful.

In the fictive cosmos, we are the immortals,
living the long game.

We don't suffer, except heroically.
We don't die unless to keep an illusion alive,
to prove a point, or to kill a character.

In becoming fictive, we survive the trials by fire
that forge our character.

In being fictive, our troubles are finally over.
We no longer need to feel the shame of not
living up to our promise.

In the fictive, there are only phantoms
and pretense.

The ugly ducklings languish in their sorrow.
The old remember the good times, the young
imagine the times to be chill, cool beyond
compare, desperate to get laid.

Beyond the fictive, the only escape is
into the real world.

Which may no longer be possible.

But, it may not be too late to
kiss our futures goodbye.

MISSIONARY

You pray you can bring
your borrowed light
to dark places, deluded people.
You look elsewhere, outside.
But you're wrong.

You'll never find grace there.
Instead, look around – see
that stoop, that lobby, that
carefully manicured lawn.
There, it's there, which is here.

They are here, next door to you.
Not distant savages, waiting
to have your ministrations
visited to their hovels. Instead,
they're proud but devastated.

On the whole, they're humble
in their simple, primordial beliefs,
in the wise ones, the ancestors,
the caregivers, the lovers,
the soil, the forest, the tall grass.

They've been waiting for you,
with their aches and pains,
their loneliness, their
addictions and confusions, their
lives besieged by advertising.

They have no need of spooks
and saviors. No need of
pathetic grace or gratuities.
No need of platitudes and
parables. Take hope instead.

The pain is palpable, endless.
Start there. Take your notions,
spells, and nostrums down
into the darkness. There,
find your damn redemption.

Be a solver. Take flour, yeast,
roots. Bring jobs and livelihoods.
Take bags and bags of money,
take influence. Build houses.
Be a healer, and heal yourself.

Leave it all behind. Take as long
as it takes to make a difference
for others. Live the life and give
every last thing you've got.
Come back empty.

PUBLISH, PERISH

*for editors, who inspire, correct,
elevate, and betray*

She has her regrets but doesn't
quite understand what guilt
means, if you want to know.

It wasn't the best of jobs,
but it was all she could manage
after an education with import
but without consequence.

She hated herself, and all those
around her, pounding the same
brittle keys in desperation.

What little worth or difference,
what life constantly possible
pounding windows with inky fists
pretending it was something more
than ink on paper.

Don't take her word for it.

Publishing is an ugly business
filled with vanity bovines, everyone
in it for themselves, a relentless
oasis of egotists and self-abusers
guilty beyond review.

Who cares the outcome,
it's the platitudes that count.

Editors, meanwhile, their jobs,
perks, cocktail parties are hardly
worth noticing. The florid not least.
A flaunt of postering, intelligence
a degradation of decent attention
abnegation and detail.

Ignore the whole lot of them
she says, tipsy, with their precious
servitude and chill inner circle.

Then she falls down steps, or
spins the heart muscle too far, and
has to momentarily confront
the beast of mortality.

Edit that, we say,
spin the whole lot while
you still can.

TRANSFORMED

Destanne Norris



I love it when the universe aligns with an unspoken intention, effortlessly. This was the case when I first met with *SAGE-ING with Creative Spirit, Grace and Gratitude* editor, Karen Close, over a tasty Thai food lunch two and a half years ago. Karen had invited me to write an article for *SAGE-ING* Issue 26 (Summer 2018), from the perspective of my visual art practice, which I gratefully accepted and did. Over lunch, after the issue was released, Karen mentioned that she thought my article, “Portal to Imagination,” could be expanded upon and become a book. Her words and encouragement were like bells ringing in my ears. It was confirmation. The time was ripe, and I was ready to begin writing my story.

Now that *Leah’s Gift: A Story about Reframing Loss* is published, I’ve welcomed this opportunity to reflect and answer these questions:

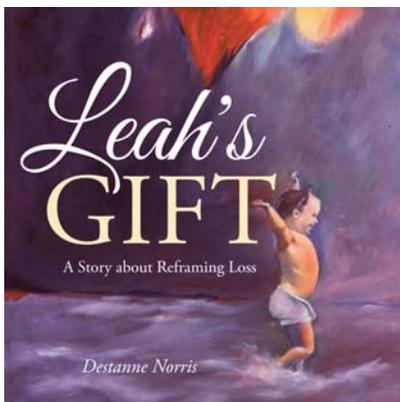
What has writing *Leah’s Gift* made you realize?

What became apparent to me when writing *Leah’s Gift* was how, in the first year of my healing journey, I was propelled to reframe my unanswerable questions and the significant impact the experience has had on my life since. The answers I was given were what prompted me to have an exhibition of the artworks I created – some of which were made before Leah was born – and more that I had made in the first year after her death. The act of painting and journal writing, especially during the first year of grieving, was certainly cathartic, a way to express and help release my emotion. When I listened to my intuition and gave way to the creative flow of self-trust, I experienced a more authentic relationship with myself, whether that was in my healing or in my art practice, where I’ve continued, at times, to make other artworks that have been beyond my comprehension until a later date.

I have lived with *Leah’s Gift* internally for twenty-three years before it was time to commit to writing it. In retrospect, I needed to feel that I had healed enough to have the strength and courage to write and talk about what happened in a way that could possibly benefit others, or to provide hope or give solace to them. Another reason that it took me so long is that it required me to risk being vulnerable; to risk being seen for who I am and for what I think, believe and feel; to risk being criticized; and, the most difficult, to risk unintentionally hurting someone else. However, with the publication occurring this year as I’ve moved into my seventh decade, I know through past experience, with grace as my guide and love as my anchor, the strength and courage I needed would be granted. And both have been.

Like the caterpillar in its chrysalis state that will emerge fully formed as a winged butterfly, I have transformed through the healing journey of love and loss, to discover a renewed, enriched, purposeful life of love in unison

Cover, the Gift of Leah





Top: Transformed (Butterfly Nebula), 2018, oil on canvas, 48" x 48"

Above: Embodied Pool 1, 2003, oil painting on plywood (cut out of a tracing of my body), 42" x 30"



with the creative, transformative power of art. *The gift is in the heart of life.* (I know if Leah read this last line, she'd be in absolute agreement.)

What have been the reader's responses to your book thus far?

The responses from readers have been overwhelmingly positive and heart-warming. There's been an outpouring of texts, emails, messages through Facebook and reviews on Amazon, Goodreads, and Balboa Press websites. Many people have written to say they felt my pain and sorrow, some were moved to tears, yet most commented on feeling either a sense of comfort, hope or inspiration (or combination thereof) after they read and saw the interconnectivity of my insights enveloping my experience of Leah leaving this world. I share this most recent review I received:

Leah's Gift by Destanne Norris is a story of love and loss and love re-formed through an examination of destiny. How was Destanne to know that the paintings she produced in her early career would map out the future? A painting like "Electrogenesis" in which a child gleefully heads into a body of water, electric currents flashing above her. Or "Mother and Babe 1 and 2," the first a mother contentedly nursing a baby, the second ominous - dark arms clutching the child protectively. Then there are symbols of ravens and butterflies and the real child whose one-and-a-half year old eyes reflected knowledge beyond normal capacity. Did she know her own destiny and perhaps that of the ones she'd leave behind?

To read *Leah's Gift* is a journey into the heart of a mother who travels through a myriad of "whys" to a place of renewed faith, trust, hope, and most poignantly love. – Virginia Dansereau, author of *Undertow*

How have these responses made you feel?

In September, when the boxes of books I'd ordered arrived from the publisher, I sliced into the cardboard and gently lifted out a book from underneath the crumpled newsprint padding with great anticipation and excitement. That is when it really struck me. This book, which up until that point had been a digital pdf, was a physical thing. It would be experienced physically, mentally, emotionally and spiritually. Its destiny wasn't in my hands, though I was holding it. It belonged to all readers who interpret the message therein for themselves. I feel my job of telling my story, which has been like a compulsion, is done. I feel a strange sense of nonattachment, perhaps how the butterfly thinks about its prior life as a caterpillar (if I were to imagine a butterfly having a memory of its previous existence). I feel deep appreciation and love for all comments and feedback I've been gifted. This reciprocity is what I feel and think it means to be spiritually human. We can see ourselves in the eyes of another.

SAGE-ING WITH CREATIVE SPIRIT, GRACE & GRATITUDE

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

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

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