

THE JOURNAL OF Creative Aging

SAGE-ING

with Creative Spirit, Grace & Gratitude



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KNOW YOURSELF. BE YOURSELF.
LOVE YOURSELF. SHARE YOURSELF.
ONLINE AT www.sageing.ca

FROM THE EDITORS

As the Journal moves into its second decade of publication, we seek to reflect the rich diversity of this third millennium. On the pages we uplift and strengthen our voice by sharing stories and inviting response. We have a newly expressed manifesto, as seen on our back cover. We are eager to engage with you along the many trails that celebrate creative aging. Integral to our belief is trusting that all creators need to feel "community", to know that we are connected to others on similar journeys, where the vulnerability and tenderness of our heARTS inspires us to reap the wisdom of Sage-ing With Creative Spirit.

To that end, we encourage you to make a connection with the author of a story that particularly moved you, or evoked deeper reflection or questions. In most cases, contact information is provided at the end of each story with the author's bio note. Too, please send us an email to let us know how the issue "landed" for you, and what further thinking or action it inspired. Finally, we'd love to receive your story and read your words on the Journal's pages.

– Karen Close and Katharine Weinmann

Finding meaning and fulfillment in the honest meeting of ourselves as aging beings, in relationship with ourselves, each other and the planet, is a choice you make when you fill your awareness, your curiosity and your imagination with the intention to bring light into every moment. For this issue we invited contributors to share how this intention has evolved for them through the years. The responses you will read are contemplations of evolving challenge, meaning and gratitude along the trails of lives well lived.

We begin this issue with AND THEN; seventy five year old, retired creative writing professor, Lynn R. Szabo proudly proclaims, "And then – you are old." The

momentum is set for a reading journey along the trail of honest encountering of oneself as antidote to challenges. In EVOLUTION OF A MAKER Barbara English shares the power of self portrait puppetry with positive results for engaged seniors. In SEEING MOMENTS OF ME IN THE MOMENT retired nurse, Susan Leblanc, shares her own experience of mask making and how enlightening that making can be to one's well being. Ron Bradley with Ray Lault describe their sculpture making process as a personal response to climate change, and need your input to their DELICATE BALANCE to continue spreading the word.

As we age, we often discover new frames of reference entering our perceptions and altering our states. Katharine Weinmann in A CREATIVE'S WAY OF WALKING THE CAMINO DE SANTIAGO invites us to consider our life as a pilgrimage. Furthering this notion, in A PILGRIM SOUL Robert MacDonald shares how as a creative pilgrim, his imagination is bringing new light to his life enjoyment. To be a creative pilgrim of your very own inner wisdom uplifts and gives significant value.

"You use a glass mirror to see your face; you use works of art to see your soul." As a creative pilgrim George Bernard Shaw guided us into the twentieth century adding the advice that, "We don't stop playing because we grow old; we grow old because we stop playing. Maya Angelou reminds us, "You can't use up creativity, the more you use the more you have."

Please hear the call of these great voices and those writing on our pages; join your creative voice to the movement of *Sage-ing With Creative Spirit, Grace and Gratitude*. Often the creative pilgrimage requires a leap of faith which arouses an emerging gratitude and breathing room for the spirit. **In our next issue we invite you to imagine how your creative pilgrimage manifests into an expression of gratitude. Creative expression is a transformation of the external given in a moment into a personal perception of that moment. It is nourished by a trusting of yourself, and the deep gratitude that brings.**

HOW TO SUBMIT

The theme to consider for our next issue will be in the FROM THE EDITORS in each issue. Your story is to be original, related to creativity in any of its many forms, as a path to gaining self awareness and wisdom, and/or the act of harvesting your life's wisdom as a legacy for future generations.

Please attach it as a word document (.doc) – not a PDF - to enable editing, using calibri font, 14 pt, 1.5 spacing. 500 – 1500 word maximum (use word count).

Please attach 3-4 photos, separately, including: Your headshot, 2-3 photos related to your article. All photos should be numbered, given a caption, and attached in high resolution jpg. format. 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 a brief bio note, written in the third person (one or two short paragraphs of up to 200 words). Your bio will be placed at the end of your article and is intended 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. Please include your preferred contact information, including email, website, blog address – whatever you want included in the publication. In your cover email, please share how you found your way to submitting to Sage-ing. Please email your article and photographs to Karen Close at karensageing@gmail.com and Katharine Weinmann at panache@interbaun.com

Quarterly issues of The Journal go online around a solstice or equinox: March, June, September, and December. We need to receive your intention of submitting an article by the first day of the preceding month or earlier. **Your complete submission is required by the first day of the month preceding publication.**

WHO WE ARE

Karen Close, Editor, taught English and Visual Arts for 30 years. Retirement in 1995 gave her the opportunity to meet vibrant senior



Canadian artists and to hear their stories. Indigenous cultures teach us, "All Elders have medicine—physical, emotional, musical, story. Let's give our unique medicine to the world." In 2011, believing in the medicine inherent in creative expression, Karen began editing the free online arts and aging journal *Sage-ing With Creative Spirit, Grace and Gratitude*. She is the author of two books. *Unfinished Women: Seeds From My Friendship With Reva Brooks* and *The Spirit of Kelowna: A Celebration of Art and Community* profiles a community art project in Kelowna, BC. In January, 2015 Woodlake Publishing released *Creative Aging: Stories from the Pages of the Journal Sage-ing With Creative Spirit, Grace and Gratitude*. Karen is the recipient of the 2016 City of Kelowna *Honour In The Arts* award.



Katharine Weinmann, Co-Editor, is a writer of poetry and contemplative creative non-fiction. She shares the beauty in her imperfect, some-

times broken, mostly well-lived and much-loved life in her weekly blog, *A Wabi Sabi Life*, a celebration of life unfolding in all its mess and mystery, grit and grace. awabisabilife.ca Katharine has been published in the global online *Abbey of the Arts* blog, *The Poets Corner* in Maine, USA, the online *Canadian Company of Pilgrims*, Edmonton Public Library's *Capital City Press Anthology (V.2)* and Off Topic Publishing's *Wayward & Upward Stories and Poems*. She wrote the poetry and forward for the upcoming anthology, *Weaving a Tapestry of Hope Through Alberta's Educational System*.

Johanna Beyers, Copy Editor, is a poet and mixed media artist. She began her career as a marine paleontologist, and holds a PhD in environmental policy



and a Master's of Social Work. She is a certified sandplay therapist. Johanna is the author of *Sandbar Islands* (The Caitlin Press, 1988) and *Wearing my Feathered Hat* (Wind Oak & Dove, 2013). Her work has been published in *The Capilano Review*, *Sage-ing*, *Room of One's Own*, *CV2*, *Waves*, and elsewhere. She has been copy-editor for *Sage-ing* since 2018.



Robert MacDonald, Designer and Publisher, has lived by his wits, some hard work, and a good lashing of luck. Almost completely unschooled, he has,

over several decades, invented identities as graphic artist, typographer, printer, community activist, publisher, information architect, program director, programmer, and designer. He hasn't finished with inventions. Having spent most of his life thoroughly urbanized (Toronto, New York, San Francisco, Vancouver) he is now nestled into the grasslands and orchards of the Okanagan valley. He finds profound solace in the virgin wilderness upland from his habits. His works have appeared in the journals *Kosmos*, *Image*, *Sage-ing*, and more, and he has chapbooks: *Dead Drop* and *Headwinds*, with more anticipated. He is transcribing several decades of writings from notebook to manuscript, and is otherwise biding his time.

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Cover image: *Some puppet projects*
by Barbara English

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AND THEN –

Lynn R. Szabo



You look into the eyes of the person standing next to you in your reflection.

And then – you are old. Yes, one fine May Saturday when you go to the hairdresser for your blowout and on to the Central Gourmet market for your black olives, farm-fresh eggs, underripe strawberries and week’s supply of almonds, you look in the mirror behind the carefully laid-out produce section and your eyes meet those of the person next to you. Despite your just-coiffed hair and your quite perfectly applied makeup and nail polish, appropriately muted, all attended to for the appearance of youthful vibrancy, you see yourself filling your basket so full that you have no chance of packing your own grocery bag and carrying it to the car. You see your little frame, its petite feet in schoolgirl runners and black tights, your body covered in a fine plaid tunic, and your completely impractical but stylish giant grey satchel. Like a little girl training to be a gymnast, your reach is just short as you try to grasp the swing trapeze. You look into the eyes of the person standing next to you in your reflection and, for the first time, you see yourself as the woman that everyone else sees.

I no longer need to fear getting old, I see. I am old! Grateful that I refused any alterations to my body other than hair dye and the necessary repairs to keep me running, I see the acquisition of wrinkles sculpted into my parchment-thin skin so easily vulnerable to the melanoma cancer that runs in my family. I ponder the importance of the lip liner that will not allow the melting of lipstick into the creases above, the necessity of taking time to select matching accessories. I feel the gaze of those waiting their turn at the till and, unlike the Queen in Snow White, I see myself in what they see. I. Am. Old. This revealing moment arrives just days before my 75th birthday, in time for me to celebrate the truth of my age.

When others try to diminish the reality of my reaching this stage of drooping dewlap and dormant hair follicles, I try to reassure them that I am just fine. I need no consolation or affirmation. I just need a hand when things start to drop from my basket. And then, I go to the till and I meet the eyes of the man who owns the market, and in their light and losses, I see what he sees – an old woman. I am sure of it. He almost caresses the red apples and strokes the asparagus spears as he packs my careful choices into the cloth bag I offer. He smiles in honour of the tenacity it has taken to reach my age, for he is just a few years behind me and still venerates our elder years. When I need more bags than I have brought, he quickly reaches for a strong-handled paper shopping bag and asks, “Will you be alright carrying these?”

“Oh yes, I will,” I reply. My walker has a shelf for just such purposes. And in that moment of caring, I begin to feel the edge of my insecurities cut away from my trembling hands and unsteady gait. The car awaits me just beyond the door and, if careful, I can navigate the distance. But my mind remains

Grey Satchel





Top: Birthday celebration

Above: More celebrating

I am seventy-five and still full of hopes and prospects for future joys.

absorbed in the recognition of my frailty. I think of my gerontologist friend and her dedication to the “frail elderly” population and realize that I am now one of her demographics of care, to be studied and assessed. To be waited for in long lineups. To lie in hallways in Emergency Rooms because of careless falls. To be discussed in hushed-tone family meetings about where to be housed, how to be addressed, and ushered on. I think of the enormous caregiving and life-and-death decisions that became mine when my parents reached their own advanced years, when age and behaviour reverted into a pre-adolescent stage of unpredictability, insensitivity to danger and capricious wilfulness around their well-being. I think of the

immense need to practise dignity and respect for myself in the hopes of staving off the worst of such moments in my own aging journey.

I think of how proud I have always been about the age I have been. I have retained a child’s forthright honesty about it. I hear myself saying at thirty, “If life brings me no more than what I currently have, I will die happy.” I had mostly recovered from the sudden, tragic death of my only and younger sister some years earlier and was euphoric that I could again feel joy. Little did I realize that happiness does not necessarily beget happiness, that life can subtract even more easily than it can add. My catastrophic divorce would bring much more loss to me than “conscious uncoupling” could ever imply. I could not foresee that the health that I relied on would decline into a litany of deficits, which now seem to open and close every conversation I have with my peers. (I refer to it as the ‘organ recital’ and am known to ask if we should listen to it as a prelude or postlude as we head into the rehearsal of how we are doing.)

I neglected to consider the rites of passage whose road we must all go down in one lane or another: the ill health of adult children, the toll of job layoffs, the loss of the family home, the departure of both parents within a year, the anonymity of retirement, and the slow but sure attrition of friends to death and its forerunners. And I could not have known, in my myopia, of others that would come without harbinger or premonition: the loss of my mobility in a pedestrian accident one lonely night in winter as I stayed late to lecture at the university campus; my son-in-law’s shocking cancer diagnosis after a routine appendectomy; my daughter’s life-threatening battle with a misunderstood illness. Nothing beyond the ordinary crags and chasms of human experience, but completely extraordinary to me. And them.

And yet, today I once again experience that same temper of happiness as I did on my thirtieth birthday. I am seventy-five and still full of hopes and prospects for future joys. My children are currently well; my body is temporarily recovered from the serious and painful complications of my accident; life without my parents has become life with their wisdom still nearby; the anonymity of retirement is now my personal pleasure; and my life is rich in



Mentoring those on their life journey

Such wisdom can be thought of as what the heart and mind hold on deposit, to be withdrawn when needed.

a personal-mentoring avocation. Each week, I connect with former students and young career professionals, as well as peer-elders, to chat about their lives' journeys. Some of them want sage advice about academic life and career pitfalls; others need support as women who are entering the "sandwich generation" – attending to their own children while trying to participate in their parents' care in their elder years. And some are friends who hope to find some consolation and help in learning about my own experience of life's troubles and concerns, joys and pleasures. I learn more from all these encounters than I could possibly offer in return, but such reciprocity is one of the most precious of my life's gifts, of which there have been many among its shadowed passages.

I recently heard the phrase, "crystallized intelligence." On seeking out its meanings, I realize that it refers to the wisdom that comes from learned experience, from the valuable reflection and engagement we can glean from what life has taught us. I hear it in the voice of my forty-something daughter who has had both husband and sister profoundly ill at the same time as her mother has become permanently disabled, all in ways that require immediate and long-term support even as she is at the helm of a business organization full of global demands. Such wisdom can be thought of as what the heart and mind hold on deposit, to be withdrawn when needed for ourselves and others. It resides in our neuron-pathways, our memories, our failures and successes and all else in the trajectory of our lives' lanes and avenues, rich veins of gold in the tapestry of our existence. I encourage others to pan for it even as I do, because, when found, it is as significant as the meaning of life itself.

When I see my reflection in a mirror these days, I see what others see. I am frail; I am unsteady and often unsafe. I should expect more loss. In spite of all this, most days I find happiness in looking back to see that I have travelled this far, still joyful, content and intact. Mary Oliver's lines from her last will and testament, "When Death Comes," give me the mantra by which I start the day and head once again to the hairdresser and the Central Gourmet to keep body and soul together for another week: "... all my life / I was a bride married to amazement. / I was the bridegroom taking the world into my arms." And yes, I am old.

For most of the fifty years of her professional life, **Lynn Szabo** taught English Literature and Creative Writing at college and university in both Ottawa and Vancouver. Teaching was her dream job! She lectured, researched, travelled, presented, wrote and published, her aging black satchel relentlessly at her side, full of papers to grade and books to be read. In the effort, Lynn became a devoted scholar of the American contemplative solitary, Thomas Merton, editing the first fully comprehensive selection of his poetry, *In the Dark Before Dawn*. And she still reads and ponders his work daily. She lives in downtown Vancouver with her two daughters and son-in-law nearby and she often teases about terrorizing her neighbourhood in her power wheelchair; but she is really both gentle and passionate. She is a spiritual director and personal mentor in her retirement and continues to be mesmerized by life and its puzzling mysteries.

THE CAMINO DE SANTIAGO

LIFE IS ABOUT CREATING YOURSELF

Katharine Weinmann

“And the road is plenty wide and welcoming, speaking out to all, This is the perfect place, this is the right time, this is where wish becomes possible.” Susan Frybort, “On the Road of Great Wonder,” in Hope is a Traveler, 2015

I am home from five weeks of walking. In May, on roads – up and down the hilly tiled streets of Lisbon and Porto; the wooden boardwalks edging mile-long expanses of northern Portugal’s golden sand beaches; tarmac in urban centres and highways; quiet cobblestone village alleys; stone roads, at least two thousand years old, rutted from Roman carts; sandy trails through eucalyptus groves. Each one the perfect place, the right time where my wish



Santiago de Compostela

ULTREIA

Katharine Weinmann

For twenty years I’ve held the dream of walking.

A dream that waxes and wanes
with health and age
with moons and perspective.
Motes of magic moving
along the haunting chords of
Schroer’s violin.

To satisfy the curiosity of those who ask
and me who’s at home with paradox and
ambivalence

I say I’m an aspirant
that in a way
I walk every day
the way.

But last year
walking every week for thirteen
in a covid camino made for home
safely spaced through the river valley
golden with trembling aspen and tamarack
glistening jewel-like in morning mist and rain
vermillion with low lying willow
burgundy like wine from plum, cherry and
apple

black and white still life buried in the
blizzard’s snow
the commitment to venture forth
regardless of weather
alone and together
with camera held in hand, trekking pole in
the other
the cooling embers of that two decades’
dream
erupted hot as I met myself and glimpsed
into
how, and now who me.

And this year,
following the same weekly routes
though now in reverse
still the shimmer and the heat
though now made more urgent with
time passing, travel frozen.

A plan in the making
path and vistas in the shaping
a yes on an eastern horizon
of an ocean miles away.

*Originally published in the Canadian
Company of Pilgrims December 2021
newsletter.*



Beach boardwalk

I need to take my time to notice, to observe, to photograph, to hum a tune, sing a made-in-the-moment, soon-to-be-forgotten melody.

to walk my Camino to Santiago de Compostela became possible.

A dream held for more than twenty years – when I first read Shirley MacLaine’s *The Camino* (2000) – one that waxed and waned but was re-ignited when I walked my local, pandemic inspired “Camino de Edmonton” in our renowned river valley, for thirteen consecutive Saturdays in autumn 2020 and 2021. It was then I learned that my way of walking is to “saunter,” that I need to take my time to notice, to observe, to photograph, to hum a tune, sing a made-in-the-moment, soon-to-be-forgotten melody. I enjoy conversation, and have had some delightful, edifying ones. And then what I notice – the shiny and the shimmer, the magic that suddenly catches my eye and speaks to my heart – shifts my attention.

In taking the more serious step to plan a long distance “saunter” to Santiago, I worked with Portugal Green Walks to create a bespoke “easy” Portuguese Coastal Camino, altering the typical 11-14 stage program to a 20-day itinerary with an average 10-18 km per stage – accommodations booked, bags portered and breakfast served – giving me ample time to take in the vistas and villages along the way, viscerally making me gasp with delight and settling any Covid concerns. I’d be meeting people, savouring the food and culture, with time for writing, photography, painting... walking mostly alone and occasionally together with a companion who is “simpatico” in this way of wanting a more immersive, esthetic experience. I loved that I’d be “living local with love,” investing in Portugal and her people post-pandemic.

Going with Gratitude

“When you leave home, you are a stranger, and a stranger is always feared. That is why the wise traveler carries gifts. To make a peace offering at every stop of a pilgrimage is to recognize the sacred nature of the journey with a deep personal purpose.” Phil Cousineau, *The Art of Pilgrimage* (1998)

Apart from myriad details, and the hours and energy involved in planning and preparing for this first post-pandemic international trip – researching equipment and resources; designing my packing systems for easy access; “rehearsing” during my Saturday Camino walks; ensuring all Covid protocols for three countries were followed – I made sure to reserve time the week before departure for two vivifying activities: embellishing with washi tape the pages of my travel journal and preparing tokens of gratitude to gift people along the Way, to enact and realize my “sole (only)-sole (foot)-soul” purpose. I had discovered an assortment of bronzed metal maple leaves – what could be more Canadian! – golden elm leaves and other small tokens in my craft kit, which I wrapped in colourful tissue and sealed with floral stickers, making for little lightweight packets. Giving them out along the Way brought many moments of sweet surprise and joy.



Carrying Wonder

“With each honorable step moving forward, watching life unfold with marvel, as beings simply being, they walk upon this pathway of great wonder.” Susan Frybort, “On the Road of Great Wonder,” in *Hope is a Traveler* (2015)

I carried wonder with me.

Heeding the advice of theologian-poet John O’Donohue to make a journey a sacred thing by ensuring to bless my going forth, I emailed my three elder “heart sisters” to ask for their blessing. One, practised in shamanic arts, gave me the gift of journeying for an “elemental” who would accompany me

throughout. Named “Wonder” and embodying the form of a young speckled fawn, “she” attracted that essence in the poetry I serendipitously found for my journal and in the myriad experiences along the Way, where each day was an unfolding of magnificent beauty: alleyways abundant with roses; stone walls covered in fragrant jasmine; eucalyptus forests dappled with sunlight, their scent wafting in the rising heat; sea and surf in every shade of blue pounding on golden beaches and rocky shores; skies heavy with sodden grey clouds rolling down mountains bringing veils of rain; fresh briny sweet seafood, simply prepared, drenched in olive oil and smoky paprika; local wines that complemented the local cuisine; and the ubiquitous *cafe con leche*.

Simply stated, when I left Canada in early May to realize this twenty-year dream, I, as Peter Coffman wrote in *Camino* (2017), would be walking “because I knew others who had gone, and the experience filled them with wonder.”



Top: Foggy threshold
Above: Forest path

Where each day was an unfolding of magnificent beauty.

Crossing Thresholds

“A threshold is not a simple boundary; it is a frontier that divides two different territories, rhythms, and atmospheres. Indeed, it is a lovely testimony to the fullness and integrity of an experience or a stage of life that it intensifies toward the end into a real frontier that cannot be crossed without the heart being passionately engaged and woken up.....listen inward with complete attention until you hear the inner voice calling you forward. The time has come to cross.” John O’Donohue, *To Bless the Space Between Us* (2008)

A week after arriving in Portugal, having used time in Lisbon and Porto to acclimatize and tour, I woke to pea-soup fog and cold temperatures after a week of sunshine, azure skies and blistering heat. Bypassing Porto’s urban centre, we were delivered by taxi about 20 minutes north to the beach and boardwalk at Labruge. While I could hear the surf, I couldn’t see the ocean for the fog. True to a pilgrimage’s start, how perfect those fog-enshrouded sights, sounds and feelings of this first stage. I was crossing a threshold into



Baiona coast

Getting back in touch with and staying present to what is sacred in one's self.

the liminal, sacred space. My unconscious must have grokked the significance because, after a few steps down the boardwalk, I returned to the beginning to make a photo of that first Camino marker. Yes, after years of dreaming and months of earnest effort and preparation, my time had come to cross.

And there would be other thresholds crossed. Given my intention to be present with gratitude and appreciation, I couldn't disconnect from life, people and the world around me. The paradoxical gift is that the weight of the inevitable ordeals kept me present in my body, on the path, in my life and in the world I inhabit. Many mornings I'd be awakened early with powerful dreams seeded by the previous day's events and the "loosening" created by walking kilometers by and in the elements. Deserving of my attention, I'd be preoccupied and silent during breakfast and as I walked, working through to their wisdom. An introvert's paradise where, for 250 of the 280 kilometers, I walked in silence, in love with the ambient sounds.

Living One's Commitment

"For many women, going on a sacred journey means getting back in touch with what is sacred in the earth." – Joan Marler in *The Art of Pilgrimage* (1998)

Yes, and I would add getting back in touch with and staying present to what is sacred in one's self – one's needs, one's knowing, one's intuition, one's commitment to one's life.

Thinking back to a particularly long stage with my earned blisters throbbing, I took myself to dinner, finally rested enough to eat. It's an evening that stays with me, deep within my heart and mind and belly. Not only because it so simply and deliciously satisfied my knowing and need for a good, hot meal after a long day of walking face first in the elements, but also because I was tended to with such simple love and kindness, in the most fundamental ways, by the women in that restaurant. Even now, I'm moved to tears ... what it gave me ... how it sustained me. I had stayed present to my need, my knowing and my intuition to venture into an empty café, to be warmly welcomed by the hostess who filled my goblet near to overflowing, while the women in the kitchen prepared my dinner.

As well, there was that stretch of coast to Baiona – one of the most beautiful stages – where I'd made the decision to walk off route, heeding input from a younger woman's knowing, trusting intuition and the simple logic that by keeping the ocean to our left we wouldn't get too far off. Pausing



Arriving in Santiago de Compostela

Mindful intention, as an act of gratitude, became and continues to be a profound expression of my creative life force.

now and then to take in the magnificence and take a photo, I found myself thinking about what it means to make a commitment, particularly to one's self—often the most difficult one to make, particularly for women. Remembering the commitment I had made to the Camino the moment I had said “yes” last December, I realized it and my commitment to my life were steps in the same dance. That when I followed its sacred choreography, the more my joy. And that this joy was palpable... it flowed, attracted and was contagious to those open to catching it. As the quote in my journal for that day affirmed: *“Once we believe in ourselves, we can risk curiosity, wonder, spontaneous delight, or any experience that reveals the human spirit.”* (e.e. cummings)

Becoming More Myself

“Aging is no accident. It is necessary to the human condition, intended by the soul. We become more characteristic of who we are simply by lasting into later years; the older we become, the more our true natures emerge. Thus, the final years have a very important purpose: the fulfilment and confirmation of one's character.” – James Hillman

Making this walk, as a woman in her seventh decade, how I held, nurtured and realized this dream within a container of heartfelt commitment and mindful intention, as an act of gratitude, became and continues to be a profound expression of my creative life force. While not as spry, fit nor strong as I was twenty years ago, I brought instead the maturity, self-knowledge and wisdom gained from years of attending to my inner life.

The seventeenth-century Japanese poet Basho, renowned master of haiku, devoted his adult life to writing poetry and walking pilgrimages. Contained within that poetic form's seventeen syllables, he synthesized the art of pilgrimage's skill of observation, soul of attention and heart of intention. Writing about my Camino is my attempt to echo that of Basho: by making the ineffable conscious and evident through my words and photos, making what another poet, James Wright, calls *“the language of the present moment,”* I am becoming more myself with every step taken in the Camino that is my life.

Writing poetry and contemplative creative non-fiction, and co-editor of our Journal, **Katharine Weinmann** shares the beauty in her imperfect, sometimes broken, mostly well-lived and much-loved life in her weekly blog, *A Wabi Sabi Life*, a celebration of life unfolding in all its mess and mystery, grit and grace. awabisabilife.ca

EVOLUTION OF A MAKER



Barbara English

A kitchen table filled with art supplies, full access to my mom’s sewing machine and careful lessons from my dad on how to use the power tools in his workshop provided me with an abundance of inspiration to make stuff. I was especially drawn to puppets and, as a teenager, dreamed of running off to England to join the production team of Jim Henson’s Muppet Show. But life took me in a different direction, from working in a bank to teaching full time as a special education teacher. Although creative art projects were always present in my lesson planning, I no longer played with art or made my own stuff.

This all changed In the winter of 2019 when a diagnosis of moderate to severe depression focused my attention on the important role creativity can play in one’s mental health and well-being. I taught myself how to knit. It settled my monkey mind and kept me present. I began taking classes at Red Deer College Summer Series, what I like to call my “art camp for adults,” and I connected with a community of makers and artists who began sharing resources and mentorship. Now art has become something I look forward to doing every day. I also found my way back to puppetry.

In June 2019, W.P. Puppet Theatre Society (WPTS) was having a workshop titled VIEW from the Inside: Courage Journey, a self-portrait-based puppet program that I thought looked very intriguing, and I wanted to find out if they needed facilitators to teach it. I called up Wendy Passmore-Godfrey, the artistic/executive director and founder, to gather more information, and she said, “Let’s chat. We are developing the program further and could use your skills and experience as an educator.”

Space to create



Even prior to the pandemic, WPTS was interested in developing an online course for VIEW that could be delivered over Zoom. With COVID lockdowns, this became a priority, especially for seniors and other adults isolated at home with no way of connecting with others. With the financial support of a New Horizons for Seniors grant, we developed an eight-session program where people connected online over Zoom to create a self-portrait puppet. It is a multifaceted program that involves art making, journaling, storytelling, drama and puppetry, and you do not need prior art skills to participate or have success.

Participants receive a kit of basic art supplies in



the mail, including a blank mask form, and each week we present a different skill or aspect of the puppet to work on. Between each class, participants work independently at home to reflect on their life and create their art piece. The outside of the puppet represents the ‘public face,’ the inside the ‘private face’; attachments connect to the world and memories. The course culminates with celebratory ‘performative reflections.’ Through the creation, exhibition and performance of a self-portrait-based puppet, participants develop community, foster resiliency and gain a voice for their stories.

Since 2016, when the idea for VIEW was first imagined by Wendy Passmore-Godfrey (BFA) and Allan Rosales (BA,MA), the program has been delivered in person to over 500 individuals and online to over 150 people. It has resonated with a diverse range of participants and has received the ATB Financial Healing through the Arts Award. We have collected hundreds of stories about the positive benefits people experienced through creativity and self-reflection. As well we have witnessed the results first-hand. In 2022, with funding from the Rozsa Foundation, we embarked on a research project with The Sheridan Centre for Elder Research to examine the benefits of the VIEW program for the cognitive, social and emotional well-being of older adults. The findings confirmed far-ranging benefits, including high overall enjoyment of the program, increased insight into their own abilities, increased confidence in art-making and creativity abilities, improved mental health and well-being, and new social connections.

We then asked, “Where do we go from here? How do we share this award-winning program with more people?” In the fall of 2021 we connected with Dr. Sienna Caspar from the University of Lethbridge, Faculty of Health Sciences. She was developing a new course for the Therapeutic Recreation Program in applied therapeutic methods and was intrigued by our work. With another grant from New Horizons for Seniors, we began creating a VIEW Facilitator Training Course for helping professionals. This self-directed, e-learning course, to be available in January 2023, will enable those people working in the fields of therapeutic recreation, art therapy, play therapy, drama therapy, nursing, education, social work or psychology to take the VIEW training and then deliver it to their clients. Through the creation of this training course we have found a way to share our knowledge and expertise with a wider audience and to mentor more people to provide an award-winning, research-informed art program.

Everyone who takes the VIEW Facilitator Training Course is required to make their own self-portrait puppet and do a performative reflection. *Shut the Monkey* is a puppet I created while leading the program.



Top: Some puppet projects
Middle: *Shut the Monkey*, outside
Above: *Shut the Monkey*, inside

My reflection: “Shut the Monkey!”

I have this noisy and rather annoying voice in my head that I have been trying to silence lately. I call it my monkey mind and it can be very critical about my art work. When I summon up the courage to call myself an artist, my monkey mind shouts back at me, “Fake, imposter, you’re just playing a role, stop winging it!”

Yet, deep down I know this monkey is mistaken and wrong. I AM a creative person, a maker, a curious soul, always learning, discovering, exploring and challenging myself. I am reminded of a quote my mom, an accomplished artist, had hanging in her studio: “Art is simply one of those things we must do so that our spirit continues to grow.”

If you write, you are a writer, if you make art, you are an artist. We are the creators of our existence. Why would I not pursue something that makes me feel alive, that brings me great joy and satisfaction, that calms my mind and elevates my soul?

It’s time to shut up the monkey once and for all, and to remember the freedom I felt as a child when I would pull out the paints and get lost in the process of creating something, anything ...

It’s time to:

- Felt some flowers
- Play with ink
- Knit a sweater
- Make some bound books
- Lose myself in the creative process

I am Barb and I am an artist!

Barb English is an artist, educator and workshop facilitator for WP Puppet Theatre. Her primary areas of creative expression involve fiber arts, paper arts, mask making and puppetry. She enjoys playing with a variety of materials and engages in a regular art practice as a way to promote positive mental health and wellness.

If you would like to learn how to facilitate or make your own self-portrait puppet, the training and two online courses will be offered in January 2023. You can find more information on our website: www.wppuppet.com, or email me at barb.english@wppuppet.com. If you live in Calgary, I invite you to come down to the Central Library and see an art show of puppets from previous participants, on display until December 31, 2022.

“Art is simply one of those things we must do so that our spirit continues to grow.”

SEEING MOMENTS OF ME IN THE MOMENT

Susan LeBlanc



I spent a fair amount of time developing the titles for my latest paintings in preparation for participating in an art crawl. The titles were more in a form of Haiku, not strictly following the rules, but rather allowing the structure to give form to incomplete thoughts and understandings, at once clear and then not.

I titled the collection *Moments of Me in the Moment*. The colours, markings and patterns collectively reflected and represented Me in any given moment over my life. In creating these expressions of my SELF (Soul Evolving Love Form), I recognized various faces, portraits if you will, of me, and I began to create masks using simple paper-mâché forms from the dollar store. I painted the masks using the same intuitive technique as I use on canvas. I found this approach a more personal expression of me that went beyond my limited thinking and understanding of the moment, allowing expression through a deeply felt sense of my SELF yearning to “get out!” Creating the masks pushed me into a depth of allowance and acceptance needed to further – to expand into – a sense of SELF that is timeless, uncertain and influential in ways I cannot control.

I can, however, control the pacing of my explorations and come to terms with or digest my SELF discoveries, and this slow process of change is evident in the passage of years in which I have been painting intuitively. As I look over my past works, the discoveries within my SELF are wide-ranging. My attention is drawn to images/patterns with dense emotions: pain, suffering, victimization, unworthiness, marginalization. They are emotions that I may not have felt strongly myself, but I recognize them within our society as a general condition driving behaviour and choices for many. That can have great impact. I had not fully appreciated these emotions as a part of me, and that this had become an unseen form of resistance to my own sense of well-being.

In his work, Gabor Maté suggests that dense emotions, trauma, sufferings, are “pathways” to unlock more illuminating states of consciousness and deeper understandings of the self. Ignoring and dismissing trauma is at the root of dis-ease and illness. While I do not believe that we need to have experienced trauma ourselves, I do believe that working through our difficult emotions, not getting rid of them but softening and integrating them into our sense of SELF, enhances our whole being and reduces dis-ease and illness.

When I experience an emotion that has been tucked away in the recesses

Mask





Top: I like the mask and painting together as a reflection of Me

Above: Anguish squeezing life out of Me

of my mind, I now allow myself to observe the influence it is having. I acknowledge my SELF and then paint it out. My painting is not meant to be juried or artistically worthy. It is meant to allow full expression of all aspects of me and to make connections that expand my understanding of my SELF, how I operate in the world. This deeper knowledge can inform my future choices so that I create from a place of wholeness, more conscious of everything and everyone around me.

It has taken many years of engaging my creative energy through intuitive or spontaneous process painting to be able to paint out an emotion fully. It is an iterative and full-circle process, giving an emotion attention and regard for how it has served me.

Anquish squeezing life out of Me is my dive into the despair, confusion and anger I felt as a teenager and see now in my nieces and nephews regarding the state of humanity and our planet. I had pushed away the despair, the anguish I felt then, disconnecting from a part of my SELF that was painful, only to realize decades later that despair was fuelling dis-ease in myself and many around me. Exploring such despair or any emotion is a gateway to healing. “Loving up” the difficult emotions associated

with self-limiting beliefs is healing by creating a sense of cohesion and wholeness – Well-Being.

As I reflect on my painting process – its inherent invitations, challenges and gifts – I realize that our continued existence may well depend on the work we do within ourselves to heal and create a sense of wholeness and oneness. This then elevates our ability to connect with each other, with nature and the planet in relationships built on compassion, collaboration and coexistence, so that we all may thrive together in the times ahead. Seeing how the moments of me connect to the biggest moments of life gives me a confidence that together we all will.

Susan LeBlanc initially trained as a nurse, completing her BScN at the University of British Columbia in 1986 and a Master’s of Health Sciences at McMaster University in 1990. She found a deep love in caring for adults and children undergoing treatment for cancer, and this formed the basis of her educational studies and work experience for over 20 years. Laterally, Susan began an ongoing exploration into her own creativity through the art of intuitive painting, or what Susan now calls The Art of Becoming. This has been a journey into the deeper reaches of her soul, which has nourished her heart and opened her being to creative potential. Susan’s journey has shown her the importance of recognizing and developing the creativity that dwells within each of us and how that creativity can be central to our sense of well-being. leblancsusan01@gmail.com

COMPASSION CREATES

Clasina van Bommel and Karen Close



A drive to “do the right thing” according to the dictates of her heart.

“You never know what’s possible until you go beyond it to the impossible.”

Those words have been the mantra of Clasina van Bommel since she left her abusive home in the Netherlands at the age of 16. Despite having left school in Grade 7, she was determined to be proud of herself, to be caring of others and to achieve. She decided she was going to learn four languages and reached her goal by working as a nanny in England, Germany and Switzerland, and eventually as a Club Med tour guide in France. In 1975 she emigrated to Canada, persisting in an often hostile environment to found the Vancouver Trolley Company and several additional successful businesses. Unyielding persistence and a drive to “do the right thing” according to the dictates of her heart created her path in business, and later, with clear intention, she created the Compassion in Action Fund in conjunction with the Vancouver Foundation. Her fund is dedicated to supporting the most vulnerable women and children from urban centres in B.C. “The Fund is about me using my own experiences to provide others with the help to meet life’s basic needs,” she explains. Clasina is a force, a woman who deeply understands that we can invent new scenarios as frequently as they are needed, for ourselves and for others.

After selling her businesses Clasina turned her creative energy first to writing, then to sculpture, and most recently to painting.

Each step became a journey into self and a deepening knowing that as we act on what shows up in our lives we find purpose and joy. Writing began when a dear friend presented her with a shoebox of letters she had received from Clasina over the years. “You have something to say that you need to write down for others,” her friend explained.

“Once I began transcribing the letters that told of my experiences, I became absorbed, working and reworking to find the right words to communicate the meaning I was discovering. I wrote for four months, in four languages, back and forth, over and over my words, then I edited my words for another four years. Publishers wanted changes. I knew I had said my truth and so I self published *Eating Sugarcane: A Spiritual Journey*. Through my association with the Elizabeth Fry Society the book was distributed in women’s prisons, and I have received many heartfelt letters from readers. The pleasure I got from writing made me begin to explore other creative activities. Engaging my creativity allows me to explore myself and make discoveries with which I can reach out and give people belief in themselves and in what they can do if they want to achieve their goals badly enough.

“I decided to take a sculpture course at my local college. First, I did wood



carving with a First Nations instructor. He focused on making us feel good about what we did – everything was great, and that made me push even harder to be good. I'd get up in the middle of the night as though I'd been called by the piece and my need to respond to it. I loved carving, but I didn't want to copy First Nations' work, and so I moved on to carving in stone. When a piece would chip off accidentally, I didn't worry. I just responded by going where the stone



wanted to. I felt that the stone and I were in league with each other as I developed a carving. I then moved on to do metal sculptures, at first small works and then larger pieces. With these I discovered I could really connect with people. I had made a bright yellow piece that I entered into a public art exhibition in a park in Nanaimo. One day I was walking by and I saw this little girl playing on my sculpture. How perfect, I thought! She was so uninhibited and loved sliding down on it. She was exploring herself. This idea that I could create pieces that people could interact with and see themselves in new ways was very appealing.

“Interacting with people through my art is liberating for me and for those who relate to it. Another piece I did is of two structures that can function as chairs if people choose to sit on them. The angle causes their bellies to bulge out, and they relax. One of the structures is black and the other is a bright orangish pink. The colours give each piece a very different energy. I have sat nearby and watched people. I can see the different attitudes apparent in their postures depending on which structure they choose to sit on. There is energy in colours that we are unconsciously affected by.



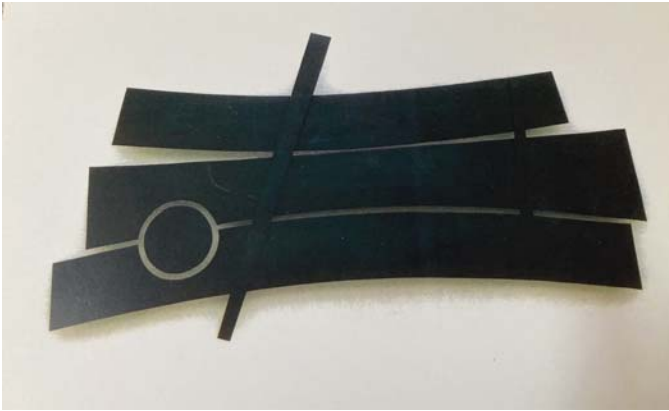
I remember that back in the beginning one of the first carvings I did was with cement. We were given a cardboard box to fill with cement, and were then to carve the cement block. I worked with my usual persistence and will power. As I completed the piece I looked at it and got a great start: I'd carved a prison. My writing had shown me that what I create can have messages for me, and yes my life was becoming a prison. And so I changed my circumstances. I have remembered that lesson. A year and a half ago, in my 76th year, I decided to buy a house where I can have a studio. It has large walls, which I intend to cover with my paintings. I felt a bit of guilt at the indulgence, but then, as my friends reminded me, everything I have will go to my Compassion in Action Fund. The real estate market has been a good investment over this past year, and I love the pleasure my house has brought me. When I sell my art I give the profits to the fund. I feel myself being actualised by making art. Painting has opened me to a whole new adventure.”

Many years ago during therapy Clasina had discovered that often a huge wall can exist between logical thinking and emotions. The trauma of her early life had taught her to find survival by closing off her feelings, but she wanted to move beyond that numbness. Surviving a traumatic experience in

Top: *Chaos*

Middle: *Spring*

Above: My recent works



Top: *Life Stages*

Middle: Three large panels

Above: *What goes Around Comes Around*

her kayak showed her the power of letting go and yielding to a stronger force, “something my brain was not able to understand,” but her creative urges might.

The panels in *Life Stages* represent the three stages of life. “First, childhood, with its earnestness to learn, explore and rebel against rules and customs. Then adulthood, trying to put into practice what we have learned, and seeking purpose, stability and security. Lastly maturity, the exploration of spirituality and letting go of life’s and our own expectations and demands. Sculpting gave me an extra, gentle push to expand my creative horizons and opened the door to a new place of self awareness.” Now in her mature years, Clasina is ready to explore painting. The large walls of her new home still beckon.

“Painting has opened me to a whole new adventure. I like abstraction. It allows one to create their own experience, to go where their heart and mind take them, rather than being constrained by recreating a perceived reality. I want to paint large works, to be absorbed by the process of painting. I want to allow myself to relax into my core, that unyielding persistence and a drive to do what I believe to be the right thing according to the dictates of my heart.” She remembers that just prior to selling *The Vancouver Trolley Company* she had taken an imaginary journey and saw herself as a painter. “I was painting on a massive canvas day and night, not knowing what time it was ... I was obsessed with and focused on painting,” Clasina wrote in *Eating Sugarcane*. “Sculpting had become more than an art form to express myself: the finished piece became an expression of myself,” per-

haps of the “True Self,” she speculated – the indestructible, waiting in our imaginations to be revealed. Those “massive canvases” are waiting for Clasina.

“When I do find the true happiness that resides inside of me, my heart overflows,” (from *Eating Sugarcane*). Clasina hears the words of her mentor Amma, the spiritual leader Mata Amritanandamay: “When the heart flows over, you automatically start to give.”

Compassion creates.

THE DELICATE BALANCE

Ron Bradley with Ray Laultt



There is a need for a grassroots response to global warming and the resulting climate change.

How is extreme weather affecting you? What are you willing to do about it?

Our world is changing. We are being forced to change. Life is at risk.

Abnormal weather events are becoming more frequent, more severe and of longer duration. The planet is being exposed to weather situations seldom, if ever, seen before or recorded in the history of humanity.

There is a need for a grassroots response to global warming and the resulting climate change. A larger and more diverse response is needed. Our lifestyle is affecting the climate. Individual and community voices must be added to the conversation and the actions directed at the climate crisis. We can all be part of the solution.

As seniors, we and the *SAGE-ING* readers (both individually and collectively) are well positioned to be key players. Our life experiences have shaped and strengthened our resilience and persistence. Our knowledge, skills, and attitudes align with success. We have managed lifestyle changes. We have the wisdom to plan, initiate, support and sustain change. Our credibility is recognized in the greater community.

Our story below gives insight into how a sculpture, started as a personal reflection on the state of the planet, blossomed into a small but dedicated team, and ultimately grew into a community. It is a story of diversity and inclusion, fuelled by the motivation to inspire others to participate. Our story is an invitation to *SAGE-ING* readers to join in taking personal action against global warming and climate change.

Early in March 2020 as the world became focused on COVID 19, I (Ron) concluded global warming presented a much greater threat to humankind than I had previously realized. I began to wonder, "What can I do to contribute to the slowing/ reversal of global warming and climate change?" "How can I influence a grassroots response?" I settled on creating a sculpture that could serve as a story starter. I wanted my project to represent a balanced and sustainable ecosystem. I hoped individuals would bring personal experiences to the piece and create their own climate story. This creative venture would give the viewer the opportunity to speculate about the delicate balance existing in the environment and to consider future actions.

My father was a woodcarver. Carving was a natural fit for me. I envisioned the power and energy of the sculpture growing as individuals brought their stories to the work. I researched, reflected and sketched creatures and geological features from the land, sea, air and human ecosystems. The vision included using a variety of scales and profiles to provide depth and emphasis. A balanced ecosystem would be represented by a



Top left: On April 30, 2021, the first cut to the log was made

Top right: Ray and Ron working on shaping the carving

Above: The finished log resting in the crib ready to be moved

The carving team became a reality. I became we.

sculpture ‘in the round.’ Current science would be central to the carving. I sought opinions, suggestions and support. This process of ‘thinking out loud’ created an opportunity for collaboration. I consolidated ideas and integrated new thoughts and suggestions. The project was growing, evolving and adapting as I received input from friends, relatives and the reality of ever-changing scientific information.

“We don’t sell logs. We buy logs, mill them into lumber and then sell them to you,” was the constant reply I encountered as I searched where to purchase a log. While I received enthusiastic support for the project and sometimes a referral to another segment of the forestry industry, never an offer to sell a log. The break came when my neighbour posted a call for a log on a social network site. I had been scouring British Columbia, but, ironically, it was a company down the highway in Canmore, Alberta, that was the source of the log.

March 24, 2021, was a day for celebration. The 5.3 meters (17.4 foot), 726.5 kilogram (1600 lb.) cedar log arrived at 12:30 pm. The owner of Black Dog Character Log delivered the log to my home in Edmonton, a four-hour drive from Canmore. An assembled team of seven rolled it onto the custom-built crib. Our venture began.

My good friend and former colleague, Ray Lauth, expressed his desire to capture the project from beginning to end, resulting in the production and publication of a video. Ray also indicated a desire to be an integral part of the work of creating the sculpture. The carving team became a reality. I became we. The team continued to grow as the need and interest expanded. We established a journal to document our work daily and to assist with personal reflections.

The size, depth and detail required for carving and the nature of the grain dictated the types of tools needed to achieve specific outcomes. Knives, chisels, rasps, files and sandpaper were appropriate for fine detail and to access difficult areas. The remaining work was done with electric tools: drills, sanders, saws and angle grinders. A shop vac and a leaf blower were used to clear work areas and during the cleanup process. Safety gear was a constant.



The log in position ready to be raised onto its stand

Using colour, we achieved adding vibrancy to the sculpture. Customized coloured stains – water based and environmentally friendly – were created to capture the energy, excitement and engagement of nature. The choice of colours reflects the positive tensions existing in the delicate balance of a healthy and sustainable ecosystem.

After five months and over 400 hours of carving and staining, we wheeled the finished piece to a position beside a custom-made stand in my backyard. On the morning of October 3, 2021, the sculpture was raised by a team of eight individuals aided by a picker truck. The team was encouraged and supported by a group of eleven cheerleaders. The sculpture was attached to the stand, the wings of the eagle were inserted at the pinnacle of the piece and a celebration commenced. The raising of the carving introduced a

natural pause and a shift in focus.

Our next goal became creating a grassroots response to global warming and climate change. We redirected our energy to imagining and designing future actions to support an expanding ripple effect within the community; identifying a wider public audience; and creating a communication plan. Greater input was an essential component in each conversation. Lessons learned were identified to support future teams and projects. Over five months of conversation, observation and reflection, key themes and lessons emerged. We discovered:

- it is all about the network. Social connections give substance and credibility to the work as it can proceed at a higher level and beyond conventional boundaries.
- the need to be clear and confident about goals or outcomes. They must be understood, engaging and defensible. Processes can be open and flexible to change depending on the changing context.
- pausing, waiting or “letting it sit for a while” can lead to greater understanding and accelerate the achievement of the end point.
- some decisions are unforgiving and can never be reversed.
- it is essential to keep sharp and focused – mentally, physically and instrumentally.
- the realization of “you have never done this before” is a good reason to start.

The realization of “you have never done this before” is a good reason to start.

The production of the video (link below) was a major trip of discovery. When we embarked on this project, we had little previous experience with video production. We wanted to tell not only the story of the planning and carving



The log is now in its final position

of the log but also to include content that would clarify our thought processes and describe how the vision evolved as we advanced farther and farther into the process. Starting with hundreds of pictures and hours of video, part of the challenge was how to convey the vital parts of the story while trying to control the overall length.

The next chapter in this story is yet to be written. We want your help. The circle of involvement and collaboration must be expanded to increase the energy and action. We are issuing an invitation to all SAGE-ING readers to join a larger team and become part of the ripple effect in combatting climate change.

Our goal is to distribute the video and allow it to be viewed as a stand-alone production. With that in mind, we ask for your input concerning how to best achieve this. We would appreciate your comments and ideas regarding:

- How do we introduce the video from within the production to describe the presentation, its purpose and its challenge to the viewer?
- What parts of the video production need modification regarding overall length and length of individual sections?
- Where else do we publish to share the message?
- What are the components of an effective communication plan?
- What other observations/ideas/insights do you have?

Please comment in the YouTube video or send your comments via email, and/or express your desire to be involved in an online discussion group through the email: delicatebalance2021@gmail.com

Thank you.

Link:

<https://drive.google.com/file/d/1jC4JPrYSgDGIX0U30ZcRdaZVp2qKU4VW/view?usp=sharing>

If the link for either the video or the email doesn't work, please copy and paste it into your web browser.

From early adolescence, through seven career changes, **Ron Bradley** has demonstrated effective leadership – invitational, responsive to data and grounded in community. His behaviour reflects integrity, strong principles, collaboration, respect and a commitment to action. Valuing diversity, inclusivity, individuality, learning, loyalty, optimism and success for all, his actions are sincere, serious and strong, and innovative. He recognizes the value of time, commitment and the emergence of chaos. He searches for consensus but is noted for making the difficult but right decisions. Ron and Pat are proud parents. He is a proud Canadian.

Through **Ray Lutt**'s professional life as a semi-professional photographer, printer, teacher, reservist and school district computer consultant he has been innovative and interested in seeking new knowledge. His leadership skills have been demonstrated in all his endeavours. He has always been drawn to the outdoors: camping both in summer and winter and extended backcountry canoe trips with his son as well as working with young people in Air Cadets on winter exercises. He values integrity, honesty, humility and creativity. Ray and Lorri, his wife of 42 years, are proud Canadians and proud parents.

CREATING A FIRM FOUNDATION

Lisa Abbott Moore



Creative (artistic) expression has long been the foundation of how we teach, learn, communicate and heal. Our ancestors began telling stories by vocalizing, gesturing and making early cave drawings. We know the arts are uniquely suited to communicate concepts, thoughts, ideas and emotions and actively engage the maker's senses. I want to share my story with others to demonstrate how the arts have affected all areas of my life.

I grew up in the Deep South as an adopted only child. I lived a block from the Gulf of Mexico, and some of my earliest memories were of collecting small chunks of clay to create sculptures. As an adopted and only child, I often felt like an outsider. My adoptive parents were dark-haired with olive skin, contrasting my blonde hair and fair skin. It seemed to have been the start of this notion, "Hey, one of these things is not like the other." My childhood survival was based on my relationship with my best friend David and "making stuff."

Because both of us shared powerful imaginations, we would craft pretend houses out of raked leaves and stay outdoors, catching frogs, swimming and pretending to be animals. I was calm when creating and disconnected when unable to access these gifts of playing and creating. Even as early as kindergarten, I recall becoming upset when my oven crafts broke, or I did not get my spot painting at the easels. These early memories were salient threads woven into my artistic tapestry; these lived experiences became the start of my journey to using creative practices for wisdom, strength and connection, paving the road to using art to express deep

David and I



emotions and ideas. So many things have transpired in my lifetime, and it would be impossible and pointless to reiterate them all. There was chaos in my home growing up, with ample dysfunction. I escaped into my *Child Craft Encyclopedias*, the favourite being "Make and Do."

Unfortunately, my creative expressions were not appreciated, and I began to hide this aspect of myself. I started to lose parts of my soul. My life was peppered with many other demons, including substance abuse, frequent death and loss, living through numerous hurricanes, and chronic post traumatic stress disorder. What was my solution? I began to take charge and commenced therapeutic interven-



Aphasia Centre

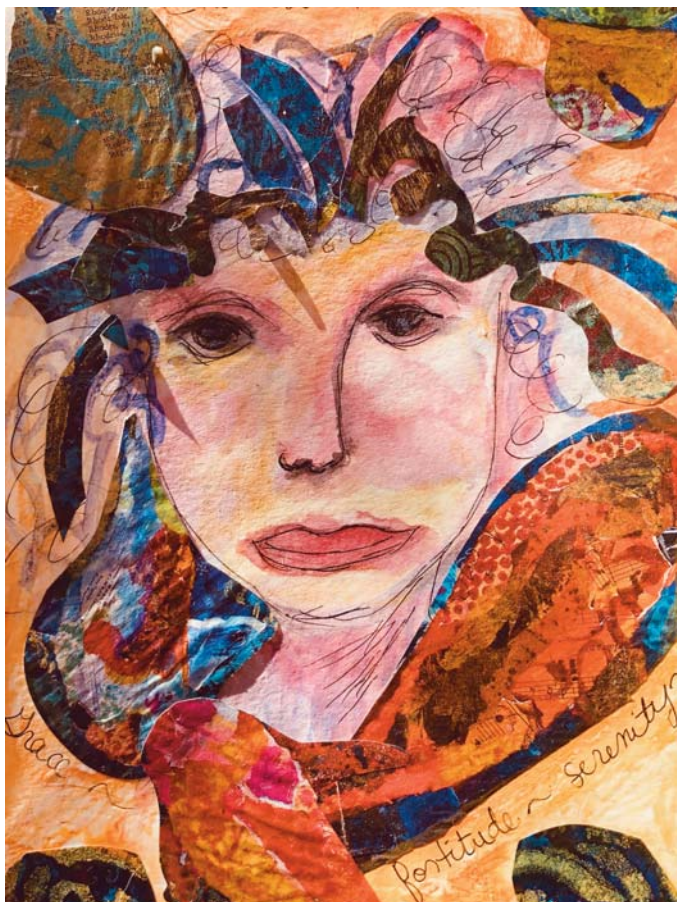
Whenever I create, I am whole.

tion, sobriety, meditation and prayer. I have trained in theatre, choral singing, voice, cello, quilting, dance, felting, jewelry making, drawing, illustration, poetry, photography, stained glass, tole painting, a two-year art school instruction, and numerous classes over the years. I fully engaged my creative spirit. Whenever I create, I am whole. It is that simple. I sincerely believe that my life experiences using the arts to heal have built a strong foundation for pursuing my overall well-being.

As I became stronger, I continued to use my art to explore the personal, professional and spiritual parts of myself that hid from plain view. Initially, I attempted to create inner alchemy by allowing my art to change the perspective on how I relate and connect to the world. Painting and felting calmed my mind and deepened the connection to my own true wants, desires and current reality. It facilitated a deeper mind-body connection that allowed me to heal and use art as a purely spiritual practice. As I became more aware of myself, it became apparent that I needed to incorporate art into every aspect of my life. To me, it is like a bit of magic. I believe that partaking in any act with intention creates a lovely celebration ritual that alerts the universe that we are aligning with source energy; it sends a message that we are calling for guidance or expressing gratitude. I once felted a hat holding a prayer of intention for someone the entire time.

It is not surprising that my professional life included helping others to communicate and connect to the world. I am a dual-certified speech-language pathologist (US and Canadian) and have worked with a wide range of ages, from infants in Neonatal Intensive Care units to an elder of 105 years. There was never a time I did not use creative practices in my sessions, although I was not fully aware of this until eight years into my career. For example, I discovered it is almost impossible to engage children in therapy without art. Thematic, art-based activities, including drawing, visualizing and verbalizing, barrier games, poetry and music, entered every session. The use of puppetry was a way to help the child have a buddy while attempting to pronounce the “s” sound or learn how to make a new friend. Most of my adolescent clients were from at-risk populations, including those with psychiatric diagnoses and the homeless. Using art in a group as a modality for social skills-learning was paramount in teaching turn-taking, patience, describing, requesting help and polite language. In nursing homes, I used knitting, needlework, finger painting and song to support my goals in communication therapy. Speech language pathologists use augmentative picture cards, notebooks and devices where communication relies solely on pictures. Art lessons at the Aphasia Centre in Ottawa maximized the communication of the participants who were non-verbal.

My professional experience includes advocacy and public speaking on using the arts in healthcare. My practice in the arts intersects my previous professional, personal, volunteer and spiritual experience and fuels my



advocacy for arts and healing. My artistic process is grounded in storytelling and often starts with intention or a fleeting thought or idea. I use photography, collage and mark-making to create my first layer, which is usually a “brain dump” and releases negative energy. When I have expressed my intention fully, I begin processing – layering and adding texture until I have re-created and transmuted my negative emotions and thoughts into something beautiful. Creating allows me to focus on solutions as opposed to problems.

The World Health Organization states, “Health is a state of complete physical, mental, and social well-being and not merely the absence of disease or infirmity.” The WHO endorses the use of arts in its global work on health promotion and communication (Skills in Health Research Collective (AHRC) <https://www.concordia.ca/content/concordia/en/finearts/creative-arts-therapies/research/ahrc.html>; accessed Sept 19th, 2022). Closer to home, I think of art as my best friend, who is there with me to experience life’s roller coaster ride that can often get scary. ‘My friend Art’ helps me to ride the waves and to share with the world how art makes the world a better place. I invite

you to ride the waves with me at ArtfullySpeaking.ca. Please reach out to me if you want to know more about how I use the arts for health and communication.



Top: Collage

Above: *Who Am I?* Mixed media on panel, acrylic and CWM, a hint of myself dancing in the wind, trying to be invisible

Lisa Abbott Moore CCC/SLP & SLP-C has been in practice as a speech language pathologist for 30 years, and a visual artist since the age of three. As an adult she is an arts and health advocate and primarily a mixed media visual artist. She uses storytelling, illustration and photography as tools to create layered and textured pieces. Lisa feels an essential aspect of her work is making the underpainting, which includes mark-making, poetry and intentional themes. As a kinesthetic artist, she enjoys moving with her work to capture the essence of each brush stroke. She uses bold colours and intensity to demonstrate the mood in her pieces. Lisa has incorporated her love of art into her work with clients with communication disorders and is passionate about serving youth in marginalized populations. You can reach Lisa at: <https://artfullyspeaking.ca/> or 613-759-2055.

CYCLING THE PATH OF POETRY

Susan McCaslin



Looking back on my early childhood until my current age of seventy-five, I've come to realize I have been on the poetry path most of my life. From before I could read, I was delighted by nursery rhymes and fairy tales, which my parents and grandmother sung or read to me. Poetry remains a constant source of energy, giving meaning and purpose to my life.

Over the decades I have defined myself as a poet of the mythopoetic imagination. By this I mean that the kind of poetry I most value unites intuition, emotions, reason, instincts, and activism through musicality, imagery, storytelling, structure, and silences. It draws on words and sounds that speak beyond words while holding the power to awaken and transform consciousness. It unites people in times of peril and suffering as well as joy and celebration.

For me, when a poetic phrase, rhythm, image, or line arrives, it seems to flow not merely from concepts but a place of wonder and awe. Poetry often surprises by taking me in different directions than I was expecting. There is a sense of otherness in the poetic process that is simultaneously a deepening into my innermost core. Sometimes it feels as if the poems are writing me rather than vice versa. I cannot command such moments of inspiration but strive to remain open to them and re-enter them again and again during the writing process.

My commitment to the poetry path also involves a dedication to craft, a struggle with language, including periods when the Muse doesn't seem to be at my disposal. Yet these times of simply being, attending to daily life and waiting are integral to the poetic process. Poetry draws on words and sounds

to speak beyond words. It holds paradoxes, providing entrance into mystery, the zone of the unspeakable that desires to be spoken.

My love of poetry and wish to emulate the writers that enchanted me came to the foreground in Grade 7 at the age of 12. A keen desire to be a poet crystalized due to an English teacher, Mr. Lemieux, who after reading one of my early rhymed and metered poems suggested I had a gift and invited me to assume the role of literary editor of the student newspaper. At that time the paper was run off a mimeograph machine, stapled together and distributed in the hallways. Being an introvert, I worked on my poetry column alone rather than with a team, choosing

Susan reading in the Blaauw Eco Forest
(photo by Catherine Owen)





Lee M. Johnson, Susan's dissertation advisor at UBC, scholar, poet, and amateur astronomer (photo by Mark Haddock)

Always the poet inside me was foregrounded in my consciousness.

among the submissions of my fellow students and including a few poems of my own.

Years later, while attending university as an undergraduate and afterwards as a graduate student, several of my English professors became respected poetry mentors as well. Poet-scholar Robin Blaser at SFU interacted with my poems, which I regularly shared with him. Then, during my times as first a sessional lecturer (1977-79) and later as a PhD student in English at UBC (1980-1984), English professors Dr. Craig Miller and my dissertation advisor Dr. Lee M. Johnson encouraged me to continue with my poetry as well as my

academic writing. Lee especially conveyed the dynamic relationship between form and content. My MA thesis on Edgar Allan Poe and PhD dissertation on the Welsh poet Vernon Watkins nourished my poetic development, so I began to see myself, like my mentors, as both a poet and scholar. Yet always the poet inside me was foregrounded in my consciousness.

In the Fall of 1969 when I began graduate studies in the English Department at Simon Fraser University, a friend of mine introduced me to a contemporary mystic living along the Burrard Inlet in Port Moody. My memoir, *Into the Mystic: My Years with Olga* (Inanna Publications, 2014), details the journey of my friendship with the remarkable Canadian mystic Mary Olga Park (1891-1985), whose fonds my husband and I donated to the Rare Books and Special Collections at UBC in 2017. I see Olga's work and mine as interrelated, since Mrs. Park was my spiritual mentor from 1969 until her death in 1985. She too wrote poetry and encouraged me on the poetry path. Her writings and mine share a common focus on the mystical and esoteric streams of Christianity as well as entrances into global, non-dogmatic, non-dualistic forms of spirituality outside creeds, doctrines and rigid belief systems.

While organizing my files during Covid, I had the opportunity to reread my poetry, journals and unpublished writings with an eye towards identifying their central themes. Through this process, it became clear that my trajectory has been a steady evolution from a focus on the mystical and esoteric streams of Christianity (Western figures like William Blake, Julian of Norwich and Teresa of Avila) to a more inter-spiritual and global perspective on poetry of the sacred. As an undergraduate I took courses in Tibetan Buddhism as well as Chinese and Japanese literature in translation. From there I went on to investigate Taoism, Hinduism and Zen Buddhism.

Though I have always been attuned to the beauty of the natural world, because of my marriage to a nature-loving environmentalist I have come in recent decades to attend to nature even more closely. On my regular walks, I give more of my attention to particular trees, plants and birds – the holy in the present. As a result, many of my poems have moved to a more Gaia or



Tiger swallowtail butterfly and geraniums in Susan's garden (photo by Mark Haddock)

In the writing of poems, uncertainty, questioning, curiosity and openness are vital.

ing on Han Shan, a poet from ancient China, who was said to have scrawled poems on rocks and trees. I solicited poets throughout Canada and other parts of the world to submit tree poems. We didn't scrawl on trees but draped their trunks and branches with poems gently tied with ribbons. This project, as well as the reports of wildlife biologists, presentations at Township meetings and the contributions of musicians and visual artists, drew public attention to the imminent sale and logging of the forest. I organized "poetry in the park" events and drew high school and university students in to support the efforts with their art. The ultimate success of the campaign came when a generous woman, Ann Blaauw, stepped forward to purchase the forest in memory of her late husband. The groundswell of public support confirmed my hope that the arts and poetry matter in the world.

In the writing of poems, uncertainty, questioning, curiosity and openness are vital. We "live and move and have our being" in a *mysterium* we cannot fully fathom through the lens of our "small" or egoic selves, but in which we may participate. My intuition as a poet is that love is stronger than hate and death, and that Spirit is a wellspring of endless love that abides within us and wishes to access us, especially when we open ourselves to the beauty and regenerative powers of the world in which we live.

Building a rigid belief system about what may or may not lie "beyond" our linear knowing isn't essential. Wisdom teachers of the most profound mystical traditions emphasize the ineffable, humility, compassion, love, our commonality with other humans and creatures in every form.

What keeps me cycling on the poetry path are experiences of how poetry

earth-centred perspective that values species and life forms from trees, to stones to galaxies. Often my poems aspire to evoke the unity of microcosm and macrocosm, the infinitely small and infinitely large.

A further factor tied to my expanding ecological focus has been my realization of the need for poetry to address the social and political issues of this time. My desire to respect the beauty and value of forests and well-being of the planet became a call to unite contemplation and action. Between 2012 and 2013 my love of poetry conjoined with a successful community effort to save a threatened rainforest near our home. The forest was in imminent danger of being sold off to developers by the Township of Langley. My contribution was to initiate "The Han Shan Poetry Project," drawing

is suggestive, full of surprises, opening hearts, minds and imaginations to ever-expanding possibilities.

Cosmos

When composing multiple drafts of poems
sometimes

fragments join partners
in quantum galliards

lines vibrate
near far

a shimmering
sways

in a flicker
of hello

from where we are wildly
composed discomposed

re-composed

**Poetry is suggestive,
full of surprises,
opening hearts, minds
and imaginations
to ever-expanding
possibilities.**

Susan McCaslin is a B.C. poet residing outside Fort Langley who has published sixteen volumes of poetry including her most recent, *Heart Work* (Ekstasis Editions, 2020). She has edited two poetry anthologies and written a memoir, a volume of essays and a work of creative non-fiction. Susan did her PhD in English Literature at UBC and taught English and Creative Writing at Douglas College in New Westminster for 23 years. She initiated the Han Shan Poetry Project in 2012, which drew on poetry to help save an endangered forest in Glen Valley near her home on the ancestral lands of the Kwantlen First Nation. www.susanmccaslin.ca

WOMEN GATHER FOR CREATIVE RETREAT

Lorelei Fiset and Destanne Norris

“We have both spent a lifetime honing our creative skills and now find an eagerness emerging out of all we have discovered, calling us to share our joy with others.” Destanne and Lorelei

Whenever women gather, they are sure to discover commonalities and shared interests. And that was certainly true at the *Women’s Creative Life Retreat*, which was held recently at the Vance Creek Hotel and Conference Centre and generously sponsored by Destination Silver Star. Since winter had not yet set in, there was no snow on the ground; still, the conversation naturally turned to skiing. Throughout the day, as the comfort level with each other grew, the women learned they shared other life experiences, including death, divorce, re-locations and changes in careers. Therefore, it was not unexpected that the participants expressed their enthusiasm for staying in touch with each other after the day, or that one participant said it had been “such a beautiful holistic balance of so much creative flow.”

The event we two North Okanagan women envisioned is exactly the retreat we would like to attend. It would be only one day, so as not to create

stress from being away from families, and would be filled with all our favourite ways of being creative: yoga, meditation, writing, painting and planning for the future. Although we first discussed our ideas prior to COVID-19, the need to provide collective relief and connection to women through exploring their creativity became even more compelling after the pandemic. Silver Star Mountain Resort, with its closeness to Vernon, quiet beauty and full conference facilities at its Vance Creek Hotel and Conference Centre was chosen for the setting.

Destanne, a renowned artist and award-winning memoir author, and Lorelei, a certified Retirement Coach, yoga instructor and professional writer, took turns leading the women through segments of the day. After brief introductions among the 10 women in attendance, who were between 33 and 85 years old, the group moved on to their mats.

The room was dimly lit, soft music played and essential oil was diffused for the gentle flow yoga prac-

Below: The group with Destanne, centre left, and Lorelei to her right with burgundy scarf

Bottom: Group (with a change of photographers)





Top: Yoga together
Above: The painting group

Each person to tap into their individuality.

tice. This was followed by free writing in participants' complimentary journals. The women said that the journalizing helped them to set their intentions for the day, to release their concerns and settle in to get the most out of their time in this shared experience with others.

A brief introduction to various types of writing – diaries, journalizing, memoir and fiction – was presented. Lorelei and Destanne shared some of their favourite writing prompts and practices, and this gave each an opportunity to speak a little about their own personal experiences as well. This activity was met with gratitude: one participant wrote, “Thank you for sharing your life journey with us in order to inspire and assist us all to fall in love with our own unique journeys here.” Then the women were given extensive writing time on their own in a space they could settle into anywhere in the retreat centre.

A breakfast bar with healthy refreshments and a table of resources, including books, oracle cards and examples of Destanne and Lorelei's personal works, encouraged the women to move around, share quiet conversations and feel inspired to begin their own creative expression.

Lunch was catered and enjoyed around a large table, inspiring lively conversation and excitement about the afternoon, for which the women themselves selected either life-planning exercises with Lorelei or painting with Destanne.

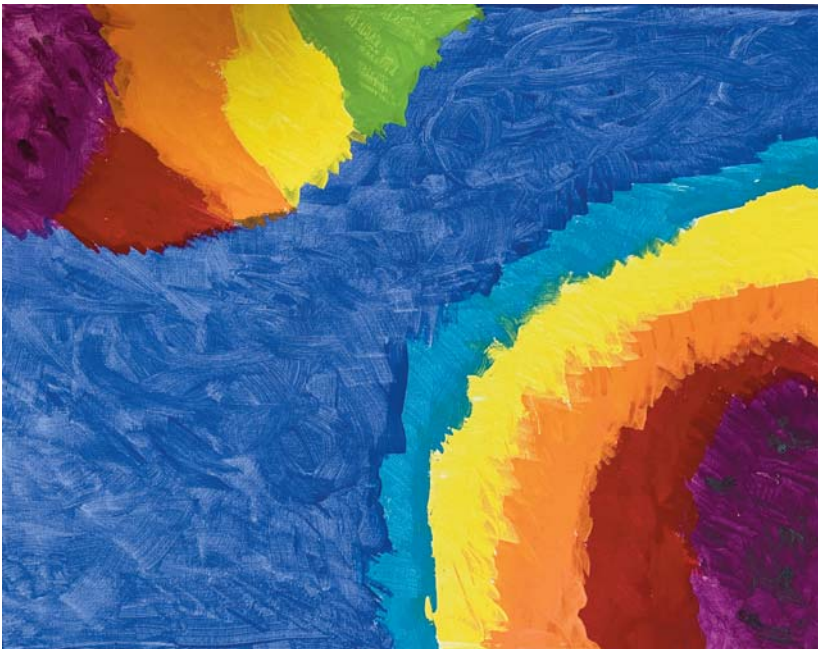
To transition from a talkative lunch hour and in preparation for the afternoon sessions, it was time for a short meditation. Destanne spoke about the power of a mindfulness and meditation practice to develop awareness and to help quieten the mind, among its many other benefits. Others contributed their thoughts and experiences with meditation, before each person found a comfortable position and was guided through a short, recorded meditation from Tara Brach, PhD, psychologist, author and teacher of meditation, who offers her work freely online. After meditation, with all of us feeling a little more centred, we were ready for the planning and painting to begin.

For the painting session Destanne purposefully did not inform the women prior to the event about the type of painting they would be doing, other than that they would be working in acrylic paint. In fitting with the theme of the retreat on self-exploration and discovery, Destanne chose to guide the women in intuitive painting. The premise of the intuitive painting approach is for each person to tap into their individuality and creativity



Top: *Black Walnut Glory*, by Kelly Sheret.
Acrylic on paper 8.5" x 11"

Above: *Happy Times*, by Lisa Exely. Acrylic
on canvas 11" x 14"



without attachment to a predetermined direction, technique, outcome, or even meaning. In addition, Destanne encouraged each participant to be as free of judgement – positive or negative – as they could be.

Destanne began the session by discussing this concept, with the addition of some readings, and introduced the art materials and painting supports that were available for each person to choose to use. From that point on, Destanne only acted as a guide as the women picked their acrylic colours, brushes, paper and/or canvas. Each of them courageously dived in and began to work.

It is an act of courage to be open to what might be a calling from within to be explored using a new, somewhat unfamiliar, visual language in paint. When we played with paint as young children, we didn't seem to have the same cautious attitude or fears as many of us do once we've matured and left those early days of painting and self-expression behind us.

What Destanne witnessed as she continuously circumnavigated the work table and assisted the women as needed, was a sense of calm and focus as they were intent on their own ideas and processes taking shape. Moreover, though there was no goal to produce a finished painting, what they had made by the

end of the session was inspiring – each woman granted permission for their creations *to be seen* and shared.

In the retirement-planning session, some of the women were already retired. This is quite normal, explained Lorelei who has been a certified Life Options™ Retirement Coach since 2014 and owns Retirement Dreams coaching business. Many retirees begin to question their purpose and wonder what is next after a year or two of retirement. Prior to the retreat the women had completed an online questionnaire and received a personalized assessment providing a holistic view of six life arenas: career and work, health and wellness, finances and insurance, family and relationships, leisure, and social and personal development.



Embrace, by Tekarra Brown. Acrylic on canvas panel 12" x 9"

A day where we all were transformed in some way.

The power of words
in all of their forms,
Be it written, spoken, imagined;
Transforms.

Yes! It was a day where we all were transformed in some way – by our thoughts, words, creative expressions and self-discoveries, and by being with each other and having fun, in community. As facilitators, we both felt growth in our skills.

“I felt grateful for the easy connection with everyone who shared only a desire to explore their own paths and to spend time together. I realize my facilitation is informed by trusting the wisdom of the women to give and receive as they breathe on the mat.” Lorelei

“I learned by observing that, although I love to share and am comfortable being open and transparent, this is not easy for many women (or people, in general). I’m grateful to know, even more now, how vital it is to create a confidential space for others to feel safe and comfortable. I realize I must be

In the two-hour session at the retreat, the women were given a 160+ page guidebook, completed some worksheets, wrote in their journals, shared stories and made personal resolutions. The purpose of the session was to help participants become ready for a life adventure unlike what has come before. Many want change and dream of finding better alignment with themselves and meaning that can be deeply satisfying. Retirement is a time of transition and provides a wonderful opportunity for creatively expressing oneself.

We invited the women to gather in a circle at the conclusion of the painting and retirement sessions to share whatever they wished with the group before wrapping up the day with a social hour. With eyes all aglow and softened faces, each woman took turns expressing what she found had been meaningful to her. Tammy Porisky’s poem “Word Magic,” written and read during the writing period, brought a warm round of applause, as each of us could relate in our sharing circle, especially to her stanza:



Retirement-planning session

“I realize I must be sensitive, compassionate, respectful and supportive with what arises within each person and what they choose to express or not.” – Destanne

sensitive, compassionate, respectful and supportive with what arises within each person and what they choose to express or not.” Destanne

At the closing of the retreat, the most common request was that they’d like it to be a two-day retreat and that they would like to come together again. That declaration was extremely gratifying and rewarding to us as we are already planning another retreat in 2023.

In the words of participant Linda Klym, “This retreat is for all ages. Retirement is a journey, not a destination. It is a new beginning, not an ending. It should not be feared. It is an adventure that should be embraced with mind, spirit and body.”

If you’re interested in learning more about the next event, we would love to hear from you. You’ll find more information on our website CreativeLifeRetreats.com where you can also subscribe to our newsletter and be notified directly.

To learn more about us, please visit our sites: www.destannenorris.com and <https://loreleifiset.com>

A PILGRIM SOUL

Robert MacDonald

Few men have waited so long to have their love requited as the Irish poet William Butler Yeats.

In the National Library of Ireland in Dublin is a notebook given to Yeats in early 1908 by Maude Gonne, the beautiful, brainy feminist Irish revolutionary and object of Yeats's infatuation across five decades, the muse for his poetry of yearning and his willing partner in what they together called a mystical marriage. As far as actual marriage, Gonne became expert at wielding the "no" weapon that plunged deeply into Yeats' heart.

Bound in white vellum, the notebook served as their metaphysical marital bed. Yeats used it to keep track of their shared fixation with the occult and each other. One morning in July 1908 Gonne wrote from Paris to report that she had been seized by a vision. "I had such a wonderful experience last night that I must know at once if it affected you & how?" she wrote. "At a quarter of 11 last night I put on this body & thought strongly of you & desired to go to you."

Yeats taped the letter into the notebook. Now, a century later, that book is on display and every syllable – every comma-deprived sentence, every curve in her script, every ampersand – is legible. Next to the display case the entire notebook has been digitally reincarnated. With the stroke of a finger on a touch screen, a visitor can flip through pages written 100 years ago and summon an image of this letter, or any other entry. If needed, Gonne's handwriting can be deciphered on a pop-up screen that types out her fevered scrawl.

At their centre was Gonne, whom Yeats met in 1889, when, as he wrote, "the troubling of my life began." With her in mind for the lead role, he composed a play, "The Countess Kathleen." It took him 10 years. "The play

With the stroke of a finger on a touch screen, a visitor can flip through pages written 100 years ago.

Maude Gonne



The ordinary brush strokes of life glow in their links to Yeats's art.

was performed at the opening of the Irish Literary Theatre in 1899," the exhibition notes. "Maud Gonne refused to take part in it."

Unknown to Yeats, Gonne had an affair with a French journalist and secretly gave birth to a boy, who died at the age of 2. She returned with her lover to the child's tomb to conceive again, believing that reincarnation would bring back the lost son.

The ordinary brush strokes of life glow in their links to Yeats's art. She kissed him on the lips for the first time in 1899, then immediately confessed the truth about the affair and the children she had told the world were adopted. Their friendship survived her regular refusals to marry him, but he was devastated after she took another nationalist, Major John MacBride, for her husband. When that marriage went bad, Yeats comforted her. They apparently were physically intimate near the end of 1908, but she ended it a few months later.

In 1916, at 51 and still a bachelor, he consulted an astrologist, then turned again to Gonne with an offer of marriage. She declined. With her permission he proposed to her 22-year-old daughter, Iseult, who had been conceived at her brother's grave. She too said no.

Yeats eventually married Georgina Hyde Lees, whom he called George, in 1917, when she was 25 and he was 52. They had two children. At last, his Maud obsession seemed to ebb, nearly 30 years after they first met. His love life remained a tangle. Late in life he had a vasectomy, believed at the time to improve men's potency. He charged ahead with a dizzying series of affairs, and on his death in January 1939, both his wife and his last lover stood vigil at his bed.

Until nearly the end of his days he and Gonne kept an eye on each other. In 1938 he wrote about her frequent appearances at political funerals, seeing her as a "dark tomb-haunter," so transformed from the light, gentle woman of his memory.

Almost from the beginning she had been a figure of memory. In the opening pages of the 1908 notebook he looked backward: "She said something that blotted away the recent past & brought all back to the spiritual marriage of 1898. She believed that this bond is to be recreated & to be the means of spiritual illumination between us. It is to be a bond of the spirit only."

Maude Gonne died alone. But the love she inspired is preserved in Yeats's great poems of romantic yearning.

I love the intense Irish sentiment of Yeats, especially in this poem.

I can see in my mind, every time I read it, the woman reaching up to her bookshelf and taking down the thin volume of poetry and turning to this well-worn page, and thinking about her lost love, and her lost youth.

I can clearly see how engagingly beautiful she must have been, and so full of life, and still is in a different way, and how her "pilgrim

WHEN YOU ARE OLD

William Butler Yeats, 1893

When you are old and grey and full of sleep,
And nodding by the fire, take down this book,
And slowly read, and dream of the soft look
Your eyes had once, and of their shadows deep;

How many loved your moments of glad grace,
And loved your beauty with love false or true,
But one man loved the pilgrim soul in you,
And loved the sorrows of your changing face;

And bending down beside the glowing bars,
Murmur, a little sadly, how Love fled
And paced upon the mountains overhead
And hid his face amid a crowd of stars.

I prevailed. I became a creative pilgrim, and travelled many roads.

soul” must have stirred the hearts of men and driven them away at the same time.

I can also see her bend down beside the fireplace, and hear her words as she grieves softly for the love that died, and see what the poet sees in the awful sadness that crosses her face again – as her lover must have seen long ago. I want to believe that he clung her to him in those moments when the darkness came into her, and that he still does somehow as he wanders among the mountains and stars.

And I feel tears start to well up, and my heart constrict, to imagine her alone with such powerful, daunting dreams and memories, and I want to reach out to her, touch her soft warm arm and give her some measure of comfort.

But the poem is over, and she is gone.

The troubling of life can begin when you fall in love, and then fail in love.

I was once in and out of love in that way, felt the tragedy that troubles the unrequited. I don’t know how I survived the negation, how I stumbled on into a future bereft of hope, or how I withstood the roar of failure.

Nevertheless, I prevailed. I became a creative pilgrim, and travelled many roads.

I am old now, and like Maude I sometimes squander the possibilities of memory. I seek warmth beside the fire, feel the companionship of ideas, spend many hours in the pursuit of creating in paint and with words, and dream that the end of this world will be a soft embrace.

Robert MacDonald has lived by his wits, some hard work and a good lashing of luck. Almost completely unschooled, he has, over several decades, invented identities as graphic artist, typographer, printer, community activist, publisher, information architect, program director, programmer and designer. He hasn’t finished with inventions. Having spent most of his life thoroughly urbanized (Toronto, New York, San Francisco, Vancouver) he is now nestled into the grasslands and orchards of the Okanagan valley. He finds profound solace in the virgin wilderness upland from his habits. His works have appeared in the journals *Kosmos*, *Image*, *Sage-ing*, and more, and he has chapbooks: *Dead Drop* and *Hardwinds*, with more anticipated. He is transcribing several decades of writings from notebook to manuscript, and is otherwise biding his time. H

The Voices of Creative Aging

CREATIVE AGING is a powerful new social and cultural movement that is stirring the imaginations of communities and people everywhere.

This is the first book to document the movement.

Often called Sage-ing, Creative Aging takes many forms: academic, social and personal. It includes festivals, conferences, classes, group sessions and individual creative pursuits. The Journal Sage-ing With Creative Spirit, Grace and Gratitude was founded by the Okanagan Institute in 2011 to honour the transformational power of creativity. Intended as an initiative for collaboration and sharing, the Journal presents the opportunity for the free exchange of wisdom gleaned from creative engagement.

Sage-ing is about seeking – satisfying inner gnawing and transforming it to knowing and action. Aging can be alchemy when one allows the realisation that to Know Thyself and contribute that

knowing to our culture is indeed one of life's highest purposes. That knowing brings the gratitude, grace and integrity that a life deserves. The creative journey into self is a strong aid to health and wellbeing

for the individual and to our culture. Creative Aging brings together more than 50 essays and galleries of images that showcase the power of the imagination expressed and enjoyed.

CREATIVE AGING

STORIES FROM THE PAGES OF THE JOURNAL
SAGE-ING WITH CREATIVE
SPIRIT, GRACE AND GRATITUDE
EDITED BY
Karen Close and Carolyn Cowan



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Our Manifesto

This journal (and our associated website) is about you, and the possibility of you creating the next chapter in the book of your life.

You're familiar with how the other chapters worked: early, childhood, teenage, tempest, tragedy, trial, temptation, partnering, breaking, birthing, making, solving, earning, learning, building, growing, mentoring, celebrating, wising up, and ending up here after all that.

The road of life goes on from where you now find yourself, you're still on it, and the vistas that open before you promise more and maybe better rewards, but only if you engage in the possibilities.

You now get to decide if this next chapter will be a rich and fulfilling one for you, or only the last.

Rather than fading into that good night, might we offer an alternative?

Creative aging is a powerful social and cultural movement that has stirred the imaginations of many communities and people. Also referred to as sage-ing, creative aging takes many forms, and elevates people in many ways.

Most importantly, creative aging encourages and facilitates individual and collective creative pursuits, including writing, crafting, painting, dancing, and an almost unlimited number of other ways to express your creative energy.

It encourages you to find your inner artist, to discover the opportunity to celebrate and elevate, to make the most of the wisdom you've accumulated through the lessons of your life. It pleads for you to speak the truths you've learned, to share your wisdom, to be wise, to sage.

Creative aging helps you discover the source of wellness, which is in your spirit, your will to be, to be well, to share your gift, to explore, to create, to be whole.

Creative aging encourages you to engage with your inner life, to experience the grace of knowledge, to express gratitude for your gifts, and to share them with others on the same journey. By doing so, you open the door to the creative person that lives inside you, the insights you possess, the lessons you can learn through your experience, the discoveries you can share with fellow creators, and the wisdom you can gift to future generations.

Sage-ing: The Journal of Creative Aging exists to help you document your creative pursuits with care and integrity, to honour your truth. It's time for you to join us. Tell your story, make your next chapter.