

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

Sage-ing owes much gratitude to the new and past contributors in this issue addressing how they 'cultivate' creative expression in their works. We open with wisdom of experience as poet, performer and playwright Penn Kemp shares from her years with ENCOUNTERING THE OTHER. Our second piece welcomes new-time contributor Nasta Martyn in MY LITTLE 'TEKST': Cultivating Me. Nasta comes from Russia, and we are delighted to see the reach of our Journal. SAFE-GUARDS TO MY HOLISTIC WELL-BEING is a delightful sharing of painting, song and poetry by Katerina Fretwell. BEYOND BODILY BENEFITS: Creativity in Surgery, by Jacques G. LeBlanc, presents a new perspective on creativity. THINKING WITH PAPER: The Joy of Sketchbooks presents Susan Burnham Neilson's lifelong practice and belief in how "Human inventiveness connects us all with endless possibilities for creative outlets." THE HANDS HAVE IT: A Meditation on Creativity presents our publisher Robert MacDonald as he reflects on AI for cultivating creative practice. In EXERCISE AS A PREREQUISITE TO CREATIVITY Sue Diewert speaks to the emerging belief in the mutual importance of physical and creative wellness as we age. From his personal outlook of being neurodivergent and queer, in CREATIVITY IS NURTURED BY INCLUSION psychotherapist Peter Cashorali invites readers to consider new perspectives. Ellen Lewinberg, in CONNECTIVITY AND CREATIVITY, delightfully shares a varied life path to her most recent creative activity and the joy she is cultivating in her venture into writing children's stories. FINDING JOY IN CREATIVITY by editor Laura David shares the new delight she has found after being inspired by Brene Brown, "Cultivate creativity by letting go of comparison, embracing originality and finding joy in the creative

process." Reflecting on her poem ON THE HIGH WIRE, Lolla Devindisch shares IGNITING MY BEING through daring. HARVESTING WISDOM is editor Karen Close's intimate willingness to commune with her spontaneous works. Our final article, EMBRACING CHANGE, by Patricia Keeney, is a call-out to all of us: "Change that alters my perspective – both personal and political – releases images, an emotional and intellectual road map I cannot resist."

The delight of creative expression is that it encourages deeper reflection by tapping into the wisdom of the unconscious mind. **As we move towards the winter solstice please consider our suggested theme, the dark night of the soul.**

"The dark night of the soul is a journey into light, a journey from darkness into the strength and hidden resources of your soul."

– Caroline Myss

Enjoy the further discoveries of sharing your story:

"How do I know what I think unless I write it down?"

– novelist E.M. Forster

Sharing your story can also be a cathartic experience. Furthermore, what is personal can be universal, and we all find resonance as personal stories are shared and we learn from each other's wisdom.

"Human connections are deeply nurtured in the field of shared story."

– Jean Houston, scholar and philosopher

– Karen Close and Laura David

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

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.



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.

Laura David (Foster), Assistant Editor,

Artist Laura David (Foster), MPS, CCC, formerly a registered art therapist and clinical counsellor (with Foster Art and Wellness in Edmonton/Kelowna) is now retired and enjoying life as a grandmother. She has worked therapeutically with individuals and groups in various organizations, but now has chosen to return to her first love: to focus on her own work as an artist. She has developed a passion for the healing power of art that stems from her lived experience of mental health issues, recovery, spirituality, and creating and teaching art. She pursued this passion by completing a Master of Psychotherapy and Spirituality degree at St. Stephen’s College with an Art Therapy specialization. Laura agrees, “Feeling is the power that drives art” (1991, David Milne).



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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ENCOUNTERING THE OTHER

Penn Kemp



Inspiration in Irises. Photo by Luc Julian

“How do you, whether in writing, painting or other arts, cultivate the creativity in your work?”

I’m grateful to *Sage-ing* for the opportunity to engage in questions such as the editor quarterly asks. These queries on the nature of creativity go to source and provoke response. They lead me into unknown ground I am delighted to explore. Creativity for me has its source in encounters with ‘the Other.’ Such inspiration takes many forms: the uncanny, the familiar, an iris, a beloved writer, my familiar dead. Any sort of communication that engages my attention fully will absorb the I in dialogue with the not-I.

How does a poem come into being? Sometimes, poetry emerges from language itself. Encounters with the Other: I look at the word encounter and wonder what counter, count has to do with meaning: the history of its etymology adds depth to my experience of the word. Or take the word ‘creative’: if you shift the c in ‘creative’, the new word reactive pops up as “re act if”. The anagram suggests the complexity of the creative process that includes resistance and procrastination: reactivity.

Puns plan a roll, homonyms pipe up, so that drum roll conjures a role and we’re away to the races in associative power. Phrases spring to mind, leapfrogging from lily pad to lily pad in a stream of connective tissue. At issue, issuing forth. See what I mean? A stream not of consciousness but of what lies behind, below consciousness. It’s a physiological state, more easily achieved if the spine is straight and the breath is full and deep.

All the senses open in order to draw in, draw on the mystery. In a widening of the eyes, vision includes the peripheral. Skin is another sense organ, as is proprioception, the sensory awareness of the body from the inside. This active waiting suggests a receptivity that is not passive, a power that is all potential. I enter a state of wholeness. My entire attention has no object but is ready to pounce, ready for chance.

How to articulate that which has never been articulated? Make ready. Prepare the widest receptive space. It is only when I enter that state of being that I am able to write what is new. When I am fully in presence, the flood gates open so that words pour through. I am present to the moment, and the moment contains times past, present, future, and possible shifts.

Alert, my eyes at their periphery are neither focused nor unfocused, but slightly wider than they would habitually be, as if to let in unknown possibilities. My ears are perked, listening to the unheard. Everything is potential, is conceivable. When the bud-

Left: Cover of *What Springs to Mind*

Right: *River Revery* cover

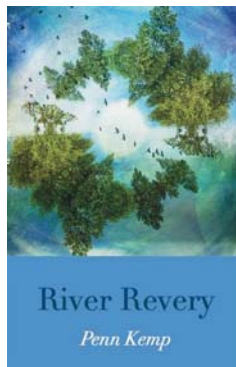
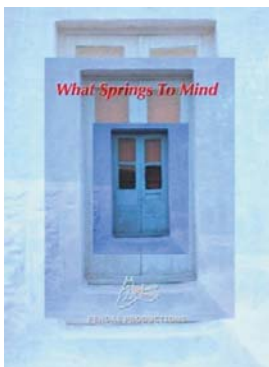




Photo and animation by Mary McDonald

Poet, performer and playwright **Penn Kemp** has been celebrated as a trailblazer since her first publication of poetry by Coach House (1972), a “poetic El Niño”, and a “one-woman literary industry”. The League of Canadian Poets has honoured her with the Inaugural Lifetime Achievement Award (2025), as Spoken Word Artist of the year (2015), a foremother of Canadian Poetry and Life Member. Penn has long been a keen participant/activist in Canada’s cultural life, with more than thirty books of poetry, prose and drama; seven plays and ten CDs produced as well as award-winning videopoems. New collections in 2025 are available on <https://www.silverbowpublishing.com/ordinary-moving> and <https://abovegroundpress.blogspot.com/2025/02/new-from-aboveground-press-lives-of.html>. Updates are on www.pennkemp.weebly.com, <https://www.facebook.com/pennkemp/> and www.pennkemp.wordpress.com. Follow Penn on www.pennkemp.substack.com, Instagram ([pennkemp](https://www.instagram.com/pennkemp)), [facebook.com.pennkempopoet](https://www.facebook.com/pennkempopoet), X. For her sound poetry, check out <https://angrystarlings.bandcamp.com/album/incrementally>, <https://soundcloud.com/penn-kemp> and www.canpoetry.library.utoronto.ca/kemp.

ding poem is true, tiny hairs at the nape of neck stand to attention, receiving information before words are formed, in a tingling of anticipation.

Let her rip. One word leads to another. This Fall, I am revising and expanding my book on creativity, *What Springs to Mind* (Pendas Productions), for presentation as an e-book. The multiple doors on the cover suggests openings; the blues denote expansiveness, as in ocean or sky, a space where everything is possible.

Here’s a poem that illustrates the process of preparing the ground for magic to arrive: “All day I have made ready”. It’s from my collection, *River Revery* (Insomniac Press).

All Hallows’ E’en

for Ian

While you were still embattled,
I dreamed you were wandering
in pyjamas out back, looking for
a way through, the way on or out.
Your sister tells me your intention
was to walk toward the mountains
as many are doing these days, for
your cancer is a journey, not a war.
Now you breathe ever more slowly.
You take a breath in and then, your
sister says, you don’t breathe out.
The sky widens to receive you.
Stars embrace your ascent on
Samhain, fire festival. A wheel
of planets sings you free.

Your timing is impeccable but then
you always were on time. Now
you slip away a little after mid-
night on All Hallows’ Eve
when the veil between realms
parts slightly to reveal more
dimensions than we guessed,
making it easy for you to return
when you wish, when we attend.
All day I have made ready
celebrating the fall
of leaves, celebrating sky,

blue against orange maples.
Not knowing it was your time
but feeling transition, a final
transformation, Ian, this E’en.

This evening I stroll by the water
through woods ghost-lit by light pollution
spread like fog. I meditate on limestone
blocks left by a bobcat’s improvement.
Medway Creek ripples by, reflecting light.
Behind me, a tree shakes. A form emerges
out of stillness, solidifies into a familiar
presence, strong and still. You are here.

A buck rubs his antlers against the maple,
shearing his velvet, a rack of three tines.
He freezes as I turn round and stands,
a statue, while we regard one another.
When at last I rise, his silhouette
dissolves with the white flag of his tail.
His musk fills the glen. His absence lingers.
We’ve never seen a buck around here.
What has called you back after cancer
ate you down past bone? You belong here
once a year, rubbing against rough bark
sloughing the sore velvet of old skin.
These woods are your domain, not dark nor
deep. They’re a fringe of flood plain by the creek.
You have no more miles before you sleep
past time.

Another poem from source is “Wishing Well” text and animation by Mary MacDonaldis also from *River Revery*. It’s up as text and animation on <https://riverrevery.ca/text-of-river-revery/wish->

MY LITTLE 'TEKST'

Cultivating Me

Nasta Martyn



Perhaps my story should begin with the croaking of crows; they are the ones who often wake you up in the morning, flying in the sky like homeless wanderers. I remember some old film from the nineteen-twenties, telling about a boy living in India... Now such stories are of less interest to the society in which I live, the desire for external gloss has destroyed something internally.

When doubts overcome you, look at the dark crows, they can inspire you. Once I thought that painting a picture is too difficult and I just couldn't start painting. Touching a snowy sheet of paper was daunting, so I came to graphics, used what can be remade, reformed, renamed, and also collage. Without even gluing, I arrange objects in a certain order and start drawing what is missing: arms, legs, a head and many feathers, as if a person is a bird that is tied to the earth, like a stone. I draw eyes and ears, noses, and then glue collages, and I think that the black background colour is one of the best. It is like in a mosaic: you can imagine almost illegible silhouettes. My collages are fantasies – dreams. I never make an initial composition; rather I cut the details to put together a puzzle, and then another plot emerges from that. The poster with the dove was originally titled *Strength*. Then I thought that I could do something else and added a dove in the centre from which the little hands of children reach out. The poster was exhibited at the international poster exhibition in Singapore.

How did I come to collage? After drawing graphics at work, at lunch I began to make collages. I like that collages can be made with found objects

Left: *Belarus_Irina_Tall_Girl and Jazz*

Right: *Girl With A Red Bandage*, dedicated to the Gypsies (Romani), living in Europe, their history and their people



on a trip or on the street, where there is no opportunity to draw for a longer time or you have forgotten your sketchbook. Then I just went to courses where you could glue and made 15 pieces in three hours (!), leaving another ten unpasted. Then there were several more courses and I found I could freely create something. That's how I learned to work with collage. In 2025, I was sent a silver prize and a special jury prize from China for the poster *The Man Who Wanted to Have Wings*.

I also want to fly – take a brush in my hands and fly. I remember a picture by



Top left: *We Are All the Same, But We Are All Similar*. Poster dedicated to the Gypsies
 Top middle: *Me and My Friend*
 Top right: *Irina Tall Poland I am and I am*
 Above: *Irina Tall Poland I am*

Brueghel the Elder, where against the background of a landscape an inconspicuous young man falling into the water is depicted. I often draw in two colours, black and white. It's probably too simple, but I like to draw with a gel pen, intricate patterns, birds and pegasi and also people with wings.

In 2022, I wrote a series where I turned chess pieces into different creatures: a siren and fish with human eyes. This project was taken to more than 15 exhibitions, it was published in several magazines and is probably my small success. *The Game of Chess* is the second large series of graphic sheets. Probably, it still continues in my other series *Ghosts*. I imagine sometimes that the snow is blacker than the night, and you sneak like a cat so as not to be seen until somewhere a door creaks quietly, half-locked and lonely. Perhaps this imagining is the song of someone's soul. You look at everything alone and see that only those who could did nothing. [I'm not getting this last sentence] The past is erased and you forget it as if nothing happened.

I get up early at four or five in the morning. I'm probably an old woman, but still I want to write and create. I want to say something joyful, as the sun shines brightly through the window, breaking into yellow crystals on the light wall. But for some reason, which I continue to explore, sadness is the refrain of my work.

Nasta Martyn is an artist, graphic artist, illustrator. She graduated from the State Academy of Slavic Cultures with a degree in art, and also has a bachelor's degree in design. Nasta's first personal exhibition, titled *My Soul Is Like A Wild Hawk* (2002), was held at the museum of Maxim Bagdanovich in Minsk, Belarus. In her works, she raises themes of ecology and anti-war, devoting a series of works to the Chernobyl disaster in 2005. The first big series she drew was *The Red Book*, dedicated to rare and endangered species of animals and birds. Her works draw various fantastic creatures: unicorns, animals with human faces. She especially likes the image of a man-bird she calls *Siren*. In 2020, she took part in Pozna Art Week. Her work has been published in magazines: *Gupsophila*, *Harpy Hybrid Review*, *Little Literary Living Room* and others. In 2022, a short story was included in the collection *The 50 Best Short Stories*, and her poem was published in the collection of poetry, *The Wonders of Winter*.

<https://www.instagram.com/nasta.martyn33?igsh=YzljYTk1ODg3Zg==100>

MY HOLISTIC WELL-BEING



Katerina Fretwell

Self-expression via various arts connects me to my heart and soul. Until I healed from childhood trauma, my poems were intellectual rather than heartfelt. I even dreamt of poems as red-gold fish out of water, dry and desiccated. In childhood, I relieved grief, fear and rage by pounding on the piano. Alcoholism and its abusive by-products, cancer and deaths wreaked havoc in my birth family and on our mental health. To this day, when I want to weep, whether in sorrow or joy, I play poignant music on the ivories.

Currently, I cultivate creativity primarily through poems and paintings, following where these genres lead me, being open to discovery, which informs me of what I'm feeling and thinking. In wrapping my head around the rise of dictatorships, worsening climate crises, personal concern and the widening wealth gap, it is the arts that offer the release of strong emotions and sometimes surprising solutions. At readings and in print, I find minds like mine.

"What A World" is the eponymous poem for my book *What A World*, which addresses topical concerns and won third prize in The Golden Grassroots Chapbook contest. My cover art, *Tariffs Fly Away*, confronts the U.S. president's desire to annex Canada. One of my manikin series defies the pandemic.

I still play piano, primarily Cole Porter and Carlos Jobim's music, to ventilate strong emotion. I even composed "Song of Samhain" to honour my Wiccan ritual at Halloween.

However, poetry and art are my go-to choices for self-expression. Voicing my spirituality, concerns, joys (the emotional and topical gamut) of my individual point of view safeguards my mental health and holistic well-being. Activism and humour also inhabit my expression such as "This Blessing", a poem that hasn't found a manuscript yet.

Another unaffiliated poem offers a wry witty take on aging, now that I am 81, gloriously older than most of my birth family: *Aging is a Full-Time Job*.

What A World

Here I sit, aging white widow,
in my flowered bower of bliss,
lunching on salmon, salad, tap water –
while billions get barely enough.

Balanced meals energize my swims, my art
particularizes my space – imagine, squeezed
into tents, moms and tots die from flu,
vaccines as rare as my sterling silverware.

One flush and my waste drains out –
imagine in refugee camps, grannies are forced
to hold the urge for acres and forced to squat
over a rancid hole – one latrine per thousands.

I rejoice in chats, cuddles, cat, chocolate,
and mask up without fearing bullets,
disappeared kin, or life sundered
into Before and After.

Scarcity and greed boil our climate
and buy oil patch billionaires a free ride.
But I vote with my card and feet
for compassion in action – so all can join equally.

This Blessing ...

seeds you with hope
reassured that your friend, age 60,
didn't choke to death. Instead, Debbie gazed
sadly at Paul, leaned into him
with her last breath, a peaceful passing.

seeds you with hope
relieved that your friend, age 76,
died in harmony with what is,
Judy laughing in art group
over egg salad sandwiches.

seeds you with hope
reconciled that your friend, age 72,
is ready to end the brain tumour's
agonizing takeover,
Claudia's magic tree stories
delighting children long after she's gone
to the overarching oak in the sky.

seeds you with hope
that friendship's five senses live
in memories just a synapse away,
beckoning you into new cozies,
love-ships ruling old growth forests,
sunflowers paddling for sunlight.
Yes, cedars and these giant blooms commune.

Katherina Fretwell, poet-artist, published two books of her poetry and art in 2024, choreographing the role of nature in her life: *Familiar and Forgiveness* (Ace of Swords) and *Holy in My Nature* (Silver Bow Publishing). Fretwell has poems in several anthologies: *Woman Life Freedom*, *Poems in Response to Peril*, *Voices Unbound*, *Outlying Voices*, *Cannery Row* and online journals *Devour* and *Sola Poeta*. Her chapbook *What A World* won third prize in the Golden Grassroots Chapbook Contest, 2025



Aging is a Full-Time Job

Is it my teeth or chest to go under the lens today –
(or is it tomorrow?)

Yousuf Karsh, eat your heart out, my body's immortalized
(longer than a paparazzi-captured smile.)

Teeth, lungs, heart, eyes, ears, goitre, kidneys –
how's it feel to have sex appeal? Star power (snap, snap)?

Gel slicks, camera clicks (don't mimic
Mom's lungs, aunt's goitre, cousin's heart).

The probe roves over me
(I will away dark masses, white frights, foreign pests).

Between trips to medical, renal, cardio clinics,
life labs, naturopath (luckily all close by),

I squeeze in personal trainer twice weekly
to boost brittle bones (luckily I can pay the price),

swimming twice, trekking thrice per week.
Controlling treats, (I schmooze healthy food),

savour family and friends,
sleep (a 'cattus-interruptus') magic eight.

With gratitude for the magnitude of actions
I ask of my (80 year-old-) body,

my neocortex explodes joy – and explores
what a (longevity) blue zone requires.

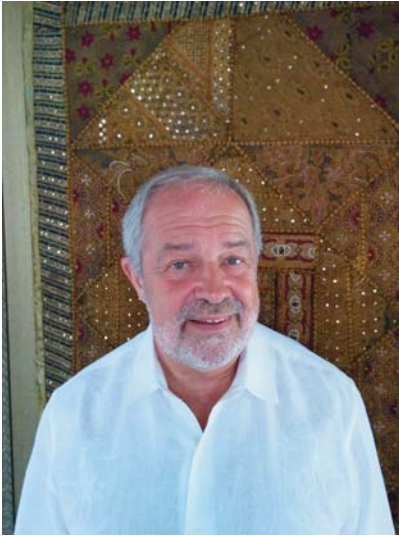
Left: *Tariffs Fly Away*

Right: *Covid Can't Stop Art*

BEYOND BODILY BENEFITS

Creativity in Surgery

Jacques G. LeBlanc, MD, FRSC



Although we are all human beings, each of us is unique. Our variations may be visible, but distinct elements underpin who we are in essence; they are our hopes, our dreams, our productivity and our desire to belong. These four elements are inspiration, insight, application and integration.

- Inspiration is the process of being mentally stimulated. It is to do and feel something, especially something creative.

- Insight is the ability to gain an accurate and deep intuitive understanding of others or objects.

- Application is using our talents to make this world a better place. It is taking our acquired knowledge and applying it in constructive ways in our lives.

- Integration is the process of combining beliefs, experiences and behaviours. When all are in harmony, a person will find unity, wholeness and purpose.

In this article, I will explore how to embrace creativity to transform circumstances, leading to innovation. I came to understand the value of creativity late in life. It was brought to light because of my writing. In my medical profession, I wrote recommendations and reports. More recently, creative writing has become a new life experience.

In cardiac surgery, new techniques evolved between 1955 and 1970 through the work of the iconic pioneers of this medical field. During that time, heart-lung machines, pacemakers, postoperative antibiotics, postoperative ventilators and various cardiac drugs gradually became familiar. New medical and surgical treatments to pediatric and adult cardiac disease were also developed.

According to the Oxford and Merriam-Webster dictionaries, a pioneer is “one who is first or among the earliest in a field, a person who helps create or develop new ideas, who is among the first to research an area of knowledge, and widely known and acknowledged especially for distinctive work.” Is that not the definition of creativity?

This ability is traditionally associated with the arts, music, theatre, writing and, to a lesser degree, science. In the last few decades, the word “creativity” has become commonplace. It is widely used for various human activities, including casual conversations, politics, mundane financial transactions and strategic planning in major corporations’ boardrooms. While the definition of creativity is intuitive, it is not necessarily simple. In practical terms, it is the ability or power to create something useful that has not

While the definition of creativity is intuitive, it is not necessarily simple.

During my years of surgical practice, my creativity expressed itself in my surgical innovations in the operating theatre.

Surgeons must be innovative and come up with new ways to achieve their surgical objectives.

previously existed. It is distinguished by its originality, expressiveness and imagination. The significant amount of literature generated by creativity is a testament to its importance as a subject for scholarly analysis and debate. The fact that there are currently over 300 books with the title “creativity” is a clear demonstration of the multifaceted and expansive nature of this subject.

It is crucial to distinguish between creativity and innovation, as they are often used in the same context. The main distinction between them and invention is in their focus. The mental step of identifying something new that may be possible is when we realize and implement our creative thoughts. The cardiac pioneers’ primary objective was to cure both pediatric and adult cardiac diseases, for example. It was not so much about creativity as it was about saving lives.

In retirement, while writing about self-actualization and my profession, I realized that, during my years of surgical practice, my creativity expressed itself in my surgical innovations in the operating theatre. Problem-solving and decision-making were about caring for and saving children’s lives. It is a subtle difference yet an important one.

How did creativity work for me? Was it an integral part of my surgical work? Although I did not invent anything like the pioneers, I did innovate. I take pride in my ability to think outside the box, engage in lateral thinking and solve innovative problems. In hindsight, it appears that it was a part of my daily surgical work in multiple ways. Here are some examples:

“An orthopedic colleague was struggling to access the low cervical spine from the front for repair. Using my problem-solving skills and thinking outside the box, I designed a surgical approach from the right side of the neck, mobilizing muscles, arteries and nerves to expose the lower cervical spine. It made his repair easier, and we did eight cases with this approach.”

“I operated on a little girl weighing five kilograms to close a hole in her heart and repair a leaky valve. A week later, her valve repair was leaking again as the tissues were friable, and she remained on the ventilator in heart failure. Despite maximum medical treatment and feeding, she was not growing. A surgical option had to be found, using my ‘thinking outside the box’ and experience. Replacing a valve on a 5-kg baby with a mechanical valve had not been done because companies do not make very small valves. But I called a representative and was able to get a small 17 mm valve. After looking at the anatomy of the heart carefully, I decided to insert the valve obliquely in the upper chamber of the heart, in such a position to allow the valve to work. It was a success, the girl’s heart failure disappeared, and she went home three weeks later. Since then, I replaced her valve at 4 and 12 years of age using a similar technique.”

Surgical procedures do not always go according to plan. Unexpected changes in anatomy, bleeding or equipment malfunctions may occur. Surgeons must be innovative and come up with new ways to achieve their surgical objectives.

Creative teaching methods, such as virtual reality simulations and 3D-printed models of organs, help train future surgeons and educate patients.

Creativity in surgery, as I have come to understand, is not just artistic flair – it is applied critical thinking, innovation in the face of challenges, and the constant pursuit of better outcomes.

Creative thinking is necessary to design new instruments, modify old ones and collaborate with engineers to build novel surgical solutions. Surgeons are instrumental in the development of many groundbreaking surgical techniques, such as minimally invasive surgery (laparoscopy), which revolutionized recovery time and outcomes.

Robotic surgery is pushing precision to new levels. Flap reconstructions in plastic surgery require artistic planning for both function and aesthetics. Creative teaching methods, such as virtual reality simulations and 3D-printed models of organs, help train future surgeons and educate patients. Our progress will be furthered with the use of artificial intelligence as a creative tool.

Through my research, I gained a deeper understanding of the ramifications of creativity. In the field of surgery, it is a powerful and often underappreciated aspect because surgery is rooted in precise techniques, evidence-based protocols and standardized procedures. To perform surgery, one must be adaptable, innovative in technique, develop devices and tools, and solve problems. Through cross-disciplinary applications, education and communication, creativity can be further enhanced.

I do understand now that creativity is a much broader aspect of our human nature. During my training, that feeling did not occur to me. I listened to the pioneers, read about innovations. Later, I conducted research to improve my surgical knowledge and experience for the benefit of my patients.

Creativity in surgery, as I have come to understand, is not just artistic flair – it is applied critical thinking, innovation in the face of challenges, and the constant pursuit of better outcomes. The focus is on patient well-being while bridging science and art. Regrettably, the medical field has become more protocolized and is plagued by medico-legal issues. I am unsure if creativity is understood in the same manner anymore.

“To save a life is a triumph. To lose one is a tragedy. But to stand with a patient at the edge of life, to fight beside them with everything you have — that is the calling.”

– Anonymous surgeon

THINKING WITH PAPER

The Joy of Sketchbooks

Susan Burnham Neilson



What is a pleasant daily routine that can magically help us cultivate creativity in our work?

There are many ways to explore and communicate our responses to the world around us. Painters might work out ideas with colours and shapes while poets think in words. Wherever we find personal expression, it contributes to our well-being.

“If I could say it in words there would be no reason to paint.” – Georgia O’Keefe

Human inventiveness connects us all with endless possibilities for creative outlets.

But where do we begin exploring ideas?

Thoughts, emotions, images and tiny threads of connection often emerge and develop through hands-on creative explorations: beginning with simple sparks of curiosity.

Whatever our interests, simply jotting notes or sketches on pieces of paper can be good starting points. Bind these papers together and we have a treasured sketchbook or folder that can hold key reminders of memories and inspirations.

Why sketch or Journal?

You don’t need to be an artist, and you don’t need a specific end goal to enjoy having a daily sketchbook or journal practice. Mindful sketchbook experiences can help any of us follow curiosity as a process of discovery and reflection. Sketchbooks can be truly wonderful companions.

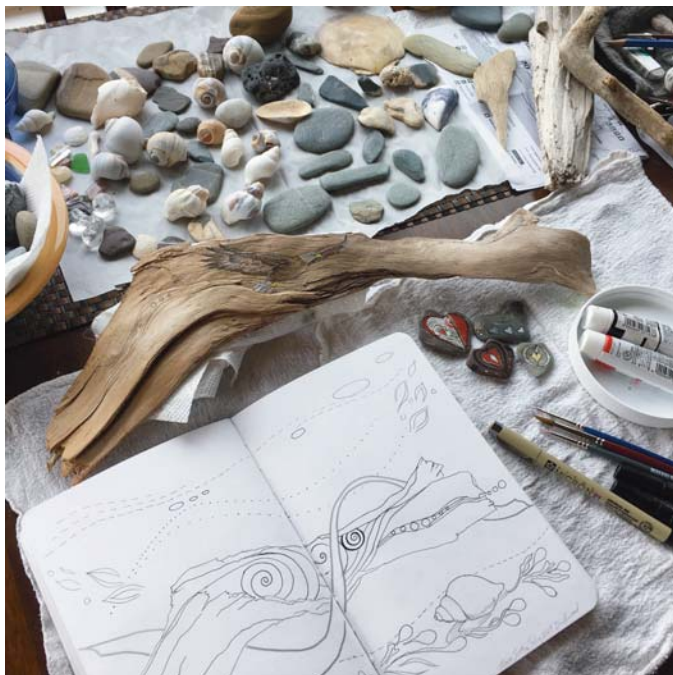
Even the Sparrow”



My own practice

I don’t think of the sketchbook as a place to make specific plans for paintings. A lot of what happens in a painting depends on the process with the paints themselves. However, the sketchbooks are often places to daydream or focus quietly, almost accidentally finding early seeds of ideas. My sketchbook is usually private, just for me.

I have always loved sketchbooks, even as a child. For many years I used them the most when I was travelling. However, in time I realized just how valuable they could also be for simple pauses in routine every day, not just for



special travel or outings. They are perfect tools for celebrating even ordinary moments at home. There is something wonderful about having a treasured notebook always close at hand.

“Practice the joy of using our talents where they fall easily ...” – Julia Cameron

Easy? Easy can mean a lot of things, including making choices to follow your truest interests. First though, let’s consider a more literal interpretation. Make it physically easy and accessible, with tools ready to use anytime, anywhere. A habit is easy to enjoy regularly if you can pick up the tools and put them back down again when free moments fit into your day. A sketchbook is like a private diary. Contents can be as simple or as complicated as you want them to be, as long as you enjoy what you are doing. Nobody else even needs to look at these pages!



Top: “Driftwood Pebbles”
Above: “Wandering Line”

STARTING OR REFRESHING YOUR SKETCHBOOK PRACTICE

1. Choose a sketchbook you love – one that feels good to pick up, that contains paper you like. You could even make a nice cover for it if you would enjoy that.
2. Make a simple kit with a few basic tools that you love to draw and write with. (I have examples of my own kits in a recent blog on my website, but often just a pen and booklet are all you need!)
3. Decide on a time of day when you could promise twenty minutes as a gift to yourself for sketching or Journaling. Be specific and commit to the start time, a

place and a finish time. Habits are established most effectively if they start small but repeat regularly.

TRUST THE PROCESS

Consider leaving inhibitions behind and simply put pen, crayon, marker or brush to paper. Enjoy! Self-criticism just gets in the way, so try to reframe reflections to focus on noticing the parts you DO like – what marks, what colours, what contrasts, what combinations . . . What caught your attention?

THE FIRST PAGE

Break the ice and go ahead to set the tone. Do you want it to be playful? . . . for quiet reflection? . . . or for simple records of thoughts? Do you even need to start with the very front page? Ask “What if . . .?”

Maybe you could pierce an opening, make a fold or torn edge to reveal the second page, or maybe you could just start on the second page and come

THE HANDS HAVE IT

A Meditation on Creativity

Robert MacDonald

“Art is not difficult because it wishes to be difficult, but because it wishes to be art. However much the writer might long to be, in his work, simple, honest, and straightforward, these virtues are no longer available to him. He discovers that in being simple, honest, and straightforward, nothing much happens: he speaks the speakable, whereas what we are looking for is the as-yet unspeakable, the as-yet unspoken.” – Donald Barthelme

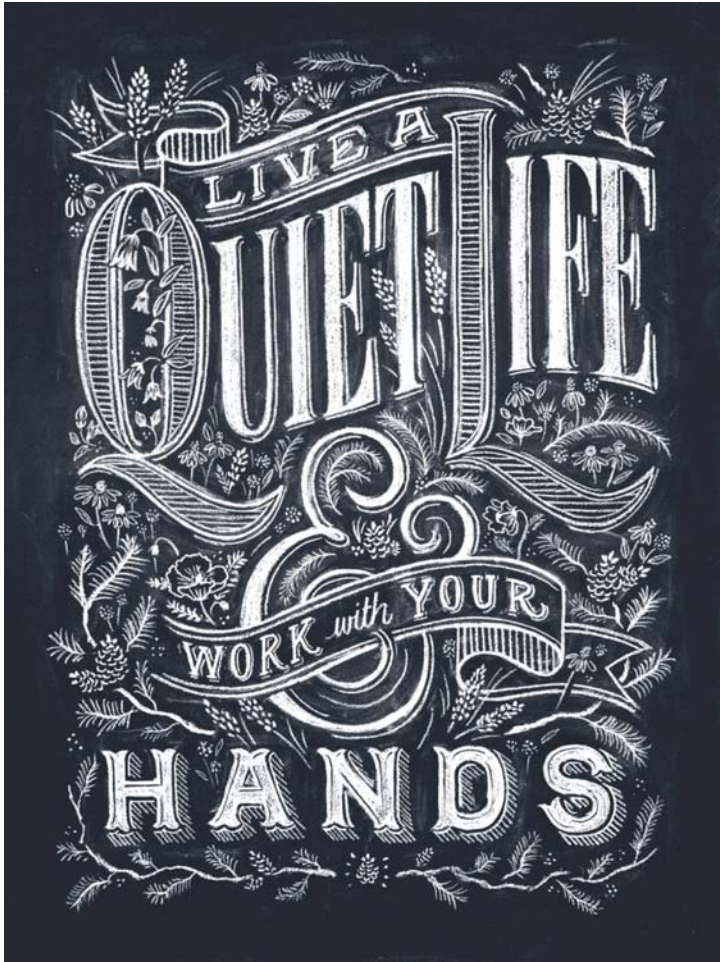
On one wall of my dining room there is a framed poster created by the talented lettering artist Dana Tanamachi. It’s a limited edition reproduction of her chalk drawing with the words “Live a quiet life, and work with your hands” surrounded by scrolls and dingbats. It was inspired by Thessalonians 4:11, which in the King James version states “aspire to lead a quiet life, to mind your own business, and to work with your own hands.” It’s simple, direct, with the pure energy of creative expression, and I love having it in a prominent place in my home to remind me of what’s always proven important and inspiring to me in my professional and personal life.

Most mornings I glance over to it as I head out to my backyard studio and my gardens, one each front and back. The poster lifts my spirits, and it inspires me to remember that the creative work I do needs my hands to be at the centre of my practice. Whether it’s painting, collaging, gardening, working on my professional design and publishing projects, writing, or whatever else tickles and forges my creative fancy, my hands are always there, at the point of engagement. They steer and guide my creative efforts, they force my attention, they enable the inner and outer work and workings, they keep my attention focussed and surefooted, they make the impossible possible, they solve the problems, they bring my efforts home, no matter how difficult or convoluted. They ensure that, in addition to my familial and spiritual blessings, I have a good and rewarding life.

A lot of clever and insightful people have spent a good deal of time thinking and writing about the root and source of creativity and how each of us can encourage the spark of inspiration to inform and elevate our lives and work.

For Virginia Woolf, it meant having *A Room Of One’s Own* (the title of her best-known work of non-fiction): a space that afforded a certain independence and freedom of thought, not least as a woman in the early decades of the 20th century. Throughout the book, Woolf pays particular attention to not just the social constraints on women’s lives but the material ones. This is why

The creative work I do needs my hands to be at the centre of my practice.



Of finding our own place of possibility and boundless creativity, where we can create culture,

the line that provides her essay with its title – “a woman must have money and a room of her own if she is to write fiction” – is central to her thesis. She adds an epiphany: “Let us simmer over our incalculable cauldron, our enthralling confusion, our hotch-potch of impulses, our perpetual miracle –for the soul throws up wonders every second. Movement and change are the essence of our being; rigidity is death; conformity is death: let us say what comes into our heads, repeat ourselves, contradict ourselves, fling out the wildest nonsense, and follow the most fantastic fancies without caring what the world does or thinks or says.”

I too have a room of my own, a backyard studio with all the fixings: couch for contemplation, TV for when contemplation doesn’t work, a table for meetings and for sorting seeds out, a workstation for my computers and other tech gear, filing cabinets for saving and storing things, and bookshelves for my library. Every available wall space is covered in artworks that either I made or has significance for me. The door is a large window with panes, with large window panes on both sides, through which I look out

onto my vegetable garden.

For Emma Warren, music journalist and author of *Make Some Space* and *Dance Your Way Home*, it is about the importance of communal, physical spaces, of finding our own place of possibility and boundless creativity, where we can create culture, in each and every one of its forms and formulations, if we apply enough resourceful energy.

I’ve spent much of my life in collaborative engagement, as part of teams of people engaged in pursuit of a wide variety of goals: social, commercial and creative. At their most successful these teams provide a depth of personal satisfaction that I find hard to achieve in solo endeavours. I love the friction, the warp and weft of working together to achieve and common goal without sacrificing integrity.

We thus have two very different notions of creative spaces: one stemming from contemplative solitude; the other born of the genuine connections that can only be found in social spaces and interactions. But the contradictions don’t end there. The places I’m talking about can be physical, mental or metaphorical. People often talk about being in the right space in order to be at their most creative. Maybe Virginia Woolf’s room could be a state of mind as much as an attic room? Some interpret it in a very literal sense. If we convince ourselves that we could create only if we have somewhere

Voices in My Head

"All that is solid melts into air."

– Karl Marx

I stand in the corner because
those sad memories hovering

I stand where I used to stand
when a bus pulled over for me

I stand beside the dim highway
my thumb heading northward

I stand in a dank cellar where
ghosts don't stand a chance

...

I write calculations of distance
that might distinguish me

I write wrongs that undertake
to mind what I might otherwise

I write elaborate differences
that constantly threaten me

I write the right way as I follow
a high way that once traivaled

...

I make of mind the trajectory
between here and far horizon

I make the heavy tools I need
for the elements of good will

I make what I can of difficulty
to savour the just desserts

I make towards the road end
with the loads that carry me

...

special in which to work, we'll never get there. We can rent a co-working space, make sure we've got all the right equipment, go on a long walk for inspiration, but there's no substitute for just getting on with it.

My advice to all aspiring writers, artists, crafters and creators, no matter what age, is simple: scrawl your ideas on a napkin, keep a journal or buy a tin whistle or mouth harp, take a pocket knife to a hunk of wood if you want, but just start. Just sit down or stand up, and get down or up to it, deliver. Make something, make it now.

Graham Greene insisted: write 300 words a day, every day. That's it. It doesn't matter if they're the worst 300 words ever committed to paper or screen. Simply by the act of writing, you are creating. Once you've committed to those words, you have made something out of nothing. You can tear it to bits afterwards, or throw it into the garbage, but by making the act of creativity a part of your daily routine, you have started the creative journey, and if you stick to it you will find yourself somewhere close to magic, to satisfaction, to joy, to enlightenment even.

The only thing we need to create a work of art is a pencil and a scrap of paper. Of course, there's a bit more to it than that. The craft, dedication and routine all help, but that doesn't explain the mystery and the magic.

There's been a lot of talk around this particular aspect of the creative process recently thanks to the onslaught of AI. To paint AI or any other technology as the enemy is to fall into an obvious and reductive cliché. Celebrating and promoting human ingenuity doesn't need to be incompatible with embracing technology: it's what we do with it that counts. It's just another tool, just as pencils, paint brushes, scissors, violins, pens, guitars, computers and the Internet are tools. They are not creative in and of themselves, they need humans to make the creative things happen, they need the spark that only human imagination inspires, they need the urge to express – the crucible of life, they need the impossible reach and reward of magic. Only humans can do magic.

Imagine a grizzled craftsman, working from a renovated shepherd's hut in the remote countryside. He creates works of wood using the raw material that the landscape offers up to him, and includes the processes of nature in his methodology. He selects local wood produced from windfall that he then shapes into various forms – sometimes purely sculptural, other times for practical use in the home as chairs and tables. As well as carving from the wood he collects, he also often singses them with fire before plunging them into pond water, utilizing all the available elements to achieve his final vision.

The most convincing argument for the use of AI in creative projects is that it is a shortcut. Instead of wasting precious wood, the craftsman feeds ideas into an AI program, sees what it comes up with, and then expands his designs accordingly. It is just like sketching – the 21st century equivalent of a sketch on a notepad, which may eventually lead to a masterpiece.

Creativity often involves a lot of pain, doubt and frustration. The appeal of AI for some people is that it can erase a lot of that – it will do the dreary bits,

I sing in the brackish bathtub
while rubbing the blisters clean

I sing along with sad songs to
remember roads down which

I sing what prayers to forgive
to forget to remember which

I sing to signal and signify
what's left for celebrations

...

I practise the elementals
with an eye to easy elevation

I practise what the wise preach
while holding my counsel

I practise the high notes
while traversing the low roads

I practise just as long enough
to know the last difference

...

I still remember the silence
dust roads heading into desert

I still my heart to understand
the depth of vast indifference

I still wait near the last forest
to leave fingerprints in tinder

I still can't walk the same
high way as forgiving as ever

take on the heavy lifting, it will make the early goings easier, it will provide a spark. But that's exactly the wrong attitude for those wanting to use it to the best of its potential. Feed your ideas, hopes and expectations into the machine by all means, but be prepared and willing to interrogate what it spits back out at you. Use it like a new tube of paint, like a writing prompt, like a tentative new dance step, like a fugitive music chord. Use it as a stepping-stone for a fresh and exciting exploration into discovery, for expressing your true spirit, your soul. Find inspiration, not answers or solutions. Let it open the door into your possibilities.

Deliberating over the process and the tools, worrying about the obstacles that present themselves the farther down the path we go are the things that make us human. Ever since humans first used tools to help them in the creative process, they have always embraced, and feared, the new and different.

We can't claim to have all the answers, but we have some good questions. And in our exploration of the places and spaces where ideas form, we share the thoughts of some very clever and very inspirational people.

Creativity should be touched by hands, shaped by inspiration and worried about by ideas. Beyond that, we should use all the help we can get, be open to challenge and exploration, make what we can of what we have available to us, and not be afraid of failure.

Make a good life, work with your hands. Good advice.

EXERCISE AS A PREREQUISITE TO CREATIVITY



Sue Diewert

As a woman in my mid-sixties, I am remarkably familiar with all the adages about attempting to age gracefully. Motion is lotion, use it or lose it, get fit, don't quit, and the list goes on! I often struggle to find the motivation to exercise, but I always feel more energized afterward and find it much easier to access my creative side. Regular exercise is key to spurring me on when I write, paint or collage.

Recently, on the encouragement of a friend who is a published poet, I signed up for a *Poetry Postcard Fest* through the Cascadia Poetics Lab. The fest founder, Paul Nelson, began the event in 2007. He calls it an annual fifty-six-day self-guided workshop in spontaneous composition and community building. On July 4th I received a list of 32 participants, myself included, and the idea is to write a new poem on a postcard, almost daily, and by August 31st to have sent a poem to everyone on the list. I too will begin receiving poetry postcards.

Drafting a new poem each day is a big task, and I have found the pictures on the postcards to be one of my main inspirations. Many postcards I send are from our recent trip to Tahiti, which has helped me feel into the poems. I make a first attempt, then leave it for a while and return to reread it and make some adjustments. Often sleeping on it helps too. When I signed up, I asked my husband if he could help me with the project and, fortunately, he agreed. If I am stuck, I pass my draft over to him and see if he can offer a suggestion. Here is today's poem on a postcard with a close-up of bright pink Tipanie flowers:

As mentioned earlier, exercise is one of the ways I cultivate and express my creativity. I have been a skater since the age of three and have had the good fortune of performing in two professional ice shows, one based in North America and the other in Europe. Although the routines in the ice show were choreographed with defined steps and hand movements, performers used the opportunity to express individuality through their choice of makeup, facial expressions and costume styling.

In 1997 at the age of 38 I learned to play hockey. This brought a new on-ice challenge that has been such a gift as I age. In 2018, because of the persistent efforts of several female advocates, women's hockey was officially added to the program of the 55+ B.C. Games. My teammates and I are deeply grateful for their efforts. To stay in shape and keep playing hockey I knew I had to play more than once a year in the 55+ Games. Enter the Comox Valley

Beauty Full

Flowering year round
Delicate pink petals curling
Could be white, yellow or red
Veins of life exposed

Tourists visit year round
Leis laid around their necks
Lush fragrant flowers
Leave a lingering sweet aroma

Medicinal properties used year round
Helping people live longer lives?
Polynesians believe the flower symbolizes
Immortality
Year round and round and round...



Top: Tahiti post card of Tipanie flowers
 Middle: Dancing on ice
 Above: Playing hockey

Oldtimers 70+ Men's hockey group. They have graciously welcomed a handful of us older women to play with them, since our numbers are insufficient to create a league of our own.

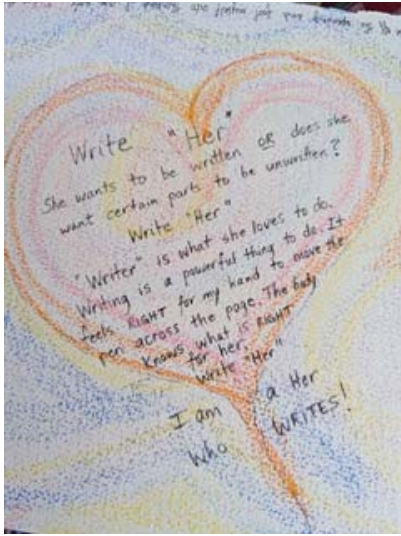
Creativity is an integral part of hockey. As the play develops, there is an intuitive sense of where the puck is likely to go. The puck carrier and their teammates know where to be without any verbal communication. As one of my mentors, Father David Bauer, used to say, "Master technique, but let the spirit prevail." Playing hockey twice a week allows me to keep active in a fun and encouraging atmosphere. The men are great at helping us improve on the finer points of the game! Teasing and comradery make the experience social as well as physical.

In semi-retirement I have continued to work part-time as a child therapist. My main counselling modality is play and sandplay therapy. I find working with children is another way I maintain a connection to my creative and playful self. Children are spontaneous and uninhibited in their play, and they seem able to access something deep inside of themselves when they create a sandplay picture. Working with these creative young artists reminds me of the need to relinquish the fantasy of control. My own childhood home was filled with a great deal of tension and communication breakdowns. While there are times when I wish it were different, I realize now that my lived experience allows me to access emotions that might have remained unreachable without them.

This past May I participated in an art and writing retreat called "Listen", which took place in Ochre Pit Cove, Newfoundland and Labrador. My sister-in-law and I took advantage of this unique opportunity as we knew the exceptional leaders from a similar retreat two years earlier. Retreats such as these offer a helpful way to cultivate fresh ideas, while providing a renewed sense of creativity and an affirmation that creative expression is essential for the soul.

Our two leaders, Christina Wells (<http://christinagwells.com>) and Katrina Grabner (<http://katrinagrabner.com>) gently led us in open-ended, always optional activities that allowed us to explore our creative nature and write about it in ways that drew out our deeper selves. Writing activities included free as well as prompted writing exercises that tapped into childhood memories and sensory-rich experiences. Art endeavours offered the use of different mediums with guidelines but no rules. The focus was always on the impact of the activity on you and how it helped you learn more about yourself.

One misty morning we gathered at the beach to do a group installation. Working silently, we co-created a spiral made up of found things, including natural items and human-caused waste. As we collected and placed our items, surrounded by the coastal sounds, sights and smells, it felt as if we were part of something luminous. The retreat was capped off by an incredible "poetry walk" experience at the home of artist Marlene Creates in Portugal Cove. We ventured through her property and stopped at various locations as



Top: Write "Her"

Above: Spiral installation

she read a poem that was inspired by the site. Overall, it was an impactful time that tapped into our creative depths and unearthed a wealth of new possibilities.

Recently I read Anne Lamott's book, *Bird by Bird*, which outlines activities and ideas to help those who want to write. I enjoyed her humorous and honest stories about her own struggles to write, as well as the challenges writers face in maintaining perseverance and quieting the inner critic. Cultivating creativity requires commitment, patience, trust in the process, an openness to what emerges and maybe a hockey game before getting started! Whether it be my feet gliding across the ice, my hands smoothing out the sand, or picking up a paint brush or pen and making a mark on paper, all these activities deliver a sense of release and remind me of the universal benefits of consistent efforts at self-expression. Although many life experiences have underscored my small role as part of a greater whole, I have also experienced a genuine sense of connection to the mysterious something that extends far beyond my individual perspective.

Sue Diewert has been a lifelong rink rat and recently retired after 28 years as a school counsellor. Since that time, she has continued to work part-time in private practice. Sue is a Registered Clinical Counsellor with BCACC and a Certified member of the Canadian Association for Sandplay Therapy (CAST) and the International Society for Sandplay Therapy (ISST). She feels fortunate to have found a balance in her semi-retirement with a little work, a little hockey (trying to keep active) and a lot of fun creating, travelling and hanging out with her husband, Ron.

CREATIVITY IS NURTURED BY INCLUSION

Peter Cashorali



I identify as neurodivergent and queer.

Neurodivergence is one way of saying that not everybody's brain works the same way. While there are diagnoses within this spectrum, let's imagine that the criteria for a diagnosis are called symptoms, and symptom is often a value judgment. If a behaviour, a perception, mood or thought isn't causing problems for you, or you have adapted to it so successfully that it acts as a benefit, is it best described as a symptom? I intend this as food for thought, not as a rhetorical question.

Here's an image to support conceptualization of diversity in this regard. Picture a territory, country, with heavily populated urban areas surrounded by more thinly populated areas. These cities include the metropolitan area of autism with all of its suburbs grading out into the countryside, as well as other more sharply bordered cities like ADHD and Tourette's syndrome, among others. People like me occur in outlying areas – same general territory but with milder or less clustered perceptions and behaviours.

My presentation includes deficits in reading nonverbal social cues, hyperfocus on rules, so that I often overshoot the mark, and deficits in implicitly understanding group norms. I don't enjoy going to parties because I can't quite grasp how to do what the other guests are doing, including engaging in and maintaining casual conversation. When much younger I noticed that I had some confusion in reading and differentiating the arousal of desire from that of hostility. In general I avoid entering the social environment when tired as I can find the incoming information overstimulating and confusing.

My work as a therapist lets me make use of these ways of being. I ask people what meaning they make of their and others' behaviours; what meaning there is in their silence; what their understanding is of such phrases as "I love you." Incidentally, the phrase has widely variant meanings among its users, from "I feel sad, will you hold me" to "I'm busy right now, can this wait." Oddly, being a therapist also allows me to claim who I am rather than trying to mask it. When my client is neurodivergent, sometimes we notice how fatiguing it is constantly to conceal who you are and to act like someone else, and how that fatigue can be associated with depression.

In sessions I sometimes make use of the trope of being from another galaxy – definitely humanoid, but unfamiliar with Earth experiences like love or guilt or shame, so could you tell me what these are and how you know

Of finding our own place of possibility and boundless creativity, where we can create culture.

Photos

My friend showed me photographs
 Of his friend. The first a boy,
 Wholesome teen who shone like milk,
 Loved by a wealthy older man,
 1960s, rescued from
 The hospital where he'd been sent
 For being queer. Next photo
 No trace of the boy. A full man
 Gazed at distance, being seen,
 Hero of gay liberation,
 Robert Redford lookalike
 With a 70s moustache,
 Just a bit impatient, knowing
 Pleasure was near for the finding.
 In the next one he was gone
 As if he'd never seen the day.
 A man frowned from middle life,
 Features weighted, serious
 About his art, portraiture
 His specialty, including
 A series of his older
 Partner passing out of life.
 Last of all a bird-thin elder
 Who completely took his place,
 Precise and a little fussy,
 Sharp-eyed over halfmoon glasses.
 My friend put the photos back.
 "Well, that's Don," he said, then died
 Thirty years ago this fall.
 I've had other friends since then
 Though none was ever him come back.
 We disappear so someone else
 Gets to sample fresh arrival,
 Somebody who isn't us,
 The art of such practice that we
 Let ourselves go completely.

When I was 45 I Saw a Film of Old People Having Sex

Sometimes during intercourse
 I notice that I've gotten old—
 Pollen scattered years ago—
 And certainly don't look adroit
 In the movements that I make,
 Tracking pleasure where it runs
 A little ways ahead of me,
 But really don't have time to wait
 Until I'm twenty-three again
 And so for my husband's sake,
 And he for mine, the two of us
 Let go of how we look from space
 And clasp each other's dancing dust.

when you're experiencing them?

I'm 71 and I notice in my own experience that my satisfaction in life has increased as I've accepted different aspects of myself. I bring this value to the different forms my work takes as I meet with different clients. And no, I don't do the same work with any two people, because no two people are the same, perhaps because no two people are the same person. If all of us are the same, competition goes up along with anxiety, and the quality of life plummets. If there are many different ways in which to be human we're able to devote our energies to meeting our current circumstances more successfully and changing them for the better. Change begins with acceptance of the situation, not rejection.

This understanding nurtures my creativity. I write in a journal and write poetry. I go for walks and notice what's around. With my husband and family we go hiking to waterfalls in the woods around Portland. I notice that the lines of Canada geese passing overhead are like sentences, that the waterfall seems to be a single white word. I go to museums and look at arrowheads and mid-20th-century art.

I analyze my dreams as the second thing I do each day, the first being to make coffee. I notice, I make a practice of noticing as some people make meditation or prayer a practice. I lead what seems to be a contemplative life. I contemplate objects and observe previously unconscious associations coming to awareness and I write them down. The process takes time. I take time.

I notice, as a friend is showing me random photographs of his friend, how the person in the photographs is following his own aging process so faithfully that it's more like watching someone reincarnate again and again. I notice that past events, which at the time felt catastrophic and I know can never happen again, are still able to evoke that feeling for events that may or may not ever happen, and I notice that it is a true feeling, but not accurate information.

I noticed that when I turned 30 – 30! – it seemed as if life was over. I've noticed that if I'm able to embrace my own ridiculous nature – 30! Come on! – it lets me embrace experience more wholeheartedly.

Do you need to have an intact ego to be creative? If you're Picasso or Wagner, yes. If you're Nijinski or Van Gogh, no. I notice that for me it's more a middle ground – I don't notice as well if I'm all puffed up and all that, but exploration with hallucinogens suggests I don't transmit the things I notice when my ego's deconstructed, (although I do find it useful to leave the window open so the breeze can blow the curtains.)

When I was in my mid-20s I was mentored by American poet, editor, actor and literary magazine publisher Leland Hickman. One of his lines from *Great Slave Lake Suite* is "& poem, I am going to be to you what a man wd[sic] be to a man who wd love him: I swear." I believe that the respect we pay to something larger than ourselves, whether we define that as our religion or our Higher Power, as in 12-step or Jung's idea of the Self, is returned. Creative

Getting Past

I barely remember
taking my shirt off
to call a passing
jogger to sex

I dimly remember
each leaf on the sidewalk
telling me all of
the good time was past

I still remember
wrestling doom
to pry the rest
of life from its grip

I remember
the garden this morning
the pale blue delphinium
bloomed to its tip

Song

I dreamed my middle disappeared
And in the space where I had been
A glass of water on a sill
And no one there to block the view

And everything that happened once
Happened once so many times
And everything about to be
Had always been about to be

And the ending when it came
To put the end to everything
Was always true as true as true
And did again again again

Old Crow

Life has sworn to kick your ass.
A good laugh turns life into food.
Yes, some flight feathers are missing
But you still fly pretty good.

energy, libido, joy, might be that answering voice.

In fairy tales you know when you're getting close to this something because the animals start talking and the tree with the gold fruit or the fountain of the water of life appears.

Other ways to cultivate the creative might be: go into recovery; love and take care of and mourn the death of someone you love without stinting or distraction; go out at night and find the constellations; observe miracles without questioning them; read books that don't make sense to you from cover to cover; pay attention to your mistakes, not to learn from them but to see what they want to show you; visit cemeteries. Once, making just such a visit, I met 'the Daughter of the Mysterious Lady in Black'. The original Lady in Black, heavily veiled, a Hollywood legend, brought flowers to Rudolph Valentino's tomb for many years on the anniversary of his death. The woman who introduced herself to me as her daughter showed me Valentino's tomb, and she continued to observe the tradition on her mother's behalf. She also taught me that a person's love is stronger than their own death. Although perhaps you already knew this?

Peter Cashorali is a neurodivergent queer psychotherapist, formerly working in HIV/AIDS and community mental health, currently in private practice in Portland and Los Angeles.

CONNECTIVITY AND CREATIVITY



Ellen Lewinberg

When I think of creativity, I think of people who have found a niche in life and who have a wonderful time exploring it and developing it. I think first of writers and artists, but also of scientists and innovators – anyone who uses their capabilities to expand upon their area of interest and has fun doing it.

My decision to go into a helping profession was coloured by an early life that was fairly difficult. It was a time when boy children were everything and girl children were secondary. That, and a few other incidents, resulted in my cutting myself off from my feelings. It was much easier to be “normal” than let my feelings out and be creative.

During most of my life, I would not have considered myself a creative person. I studied to be a social worker, got a job and earned a living. I did not feel I was being creative. I was reacting to the situation I was in. Being creative came much, much later in life, quite out of the blue.

After practising as a social worker for a few years and then moving from South Africa to Paris, to London, to Canada, to the United States and back to Canada, I began training as a psychoanalyst. Over time, I graduated in both adult and child psychoanalysis. In addition to helping others, I think this was an attempt to reconnect with my feelings. I had wonderful teachers and mentors who encouraged me to write about the cases I was seeing. They said that I had a unique, innovative and creative way of working, but I didn’t seem to have the capacity to put words to paper in a creative way.

I wrote a few articles that I presented at conferences and that were published in journals. The process was like pulling teeth. I hated it and eventually stopped writing.

My creativity at that time went into working with my patients, and organizing and creating organizations related to practitioners of child psychoanalysis and a new adult psychoanalytic training program. I also went to art classes, which I enjoyed. However, I was never able to continue sketching and painting outside of a class.

I have always been a voracious reader. In my spare time from my psychoanalytic reading and practice, I read extensively about alternative medicine, shamanism, spirituality, plants and gardens. These areas have always been of interest to me and, you might say, my niche. I loved creating gardens and did so each time I moved into a new house or condominium. There were many moves.

A health crisis in 2002 changed everything. I swore that I would never again go through the kind of medical treatments that I did then, and started looking for alternatives.

I began working with shamans, both in Canada and South Africa. They had me do a number of rituals and attend drumming circles in order to learn how to “journey”. Journeying is a practice involving altered states of consciousness, often induced by rhythmic drumming, to explore non-ordinary realities for guidance, healing and personal growth. I read anything I could find on shamanism and made the decision to stop working as a psychoanalyst. Finally, I trained in reiki and bioenergy healing, and even did some training in shamanism and mediumship.

During the bioenergy training, we were taught that everything is energy and everything is connected. From my years training and practising as a psychoanalyst, I had, of course, learned about the unconscious and about psychologist Carl Jung; Jung’s ideas about the collective unconscious. Suddenly, these ideas took on new meaning and I began reading even more widely.

I read Pierre Teilhard de Chardin, a French Jesuit priest, scientist, paleontologist, philosopher, mystic and teacher. He developed an evolutionary vision of our planetary future, starting with a sphere of life and continuing to a sphere of mind, which he called the noosphere. To my mind, the noosphere fits with Jung’s ideas of a collective unconscious.

Yes, everything connects, even in the books I read. In his work on morphic resonance, scientist Rupert Sheldrake describes a theory that proposes that memory is inherent in nature. Similar patterns influence subsequent ones across time and space. He also did a series of experiments where dog owners were sent out for a day to a destination they had no idea about until after they had left the house and then were told to go home. Once these humans had been given the instruction to go home, their pets would immediately go and wait by the door. This demonstrated connections the dogs could make, beyond time and space.

Then, when I read Masaru Emoto’s work on water, I realized that water responded to us humans as well. Emoto showed that water responds to feelings, to words and to music. Taking his ideas even further, Veda Austin demonstrates that water responds to questions.

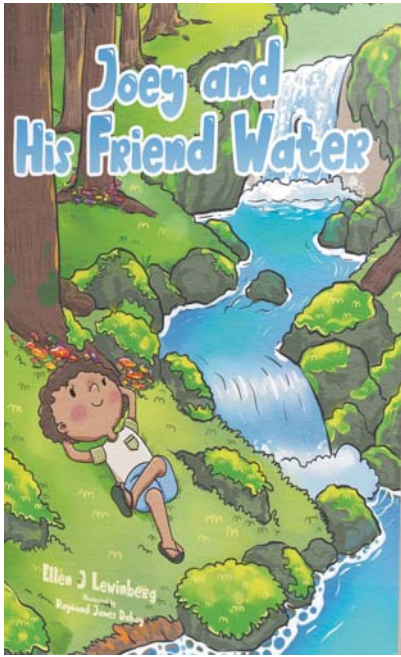
Paul Stamets, in his book *Mycelium Running: How Mushrooms Can Help Save the World*, describes how microscopic cells, called mycelium, whose fruit is mushrooms, recycle plant and animal debris and create new soil. Mycelium can decompose toxic waste and pollutants and generally enhance the health of our forests and gardens.

Entangled life: How Fungi Make our Worlds, Change our Minds and Shape our Futures by Merlin Sheldrake examines fungi and shows how these extraordinary organisms, and our relationship to them, are changing our understanding of how life works.

More recently, I’ve been reading the writings of Diana Beresford-Kroeger on the gifts that trees bestow on us when we walk through a forest. In her book, *To Speak for the Trees: My Life’s Journey from Ancient Celtic Wisdom to a Healing Vision of the Forest*, Beresford-Kroeger describes the wonderful

Journeying is a practice involving altered states of consciousness, often induced by rhythmic drumming, to explore non-ordinary realities for guidance, healing and personal growth.

(Masaru) Emoto showed that water responds to feelings, to words and to music.



Above left: Cover, *Joey and His Friend Water*

Above right: "Joey Daydreaming about a Dandelion." Illustration from *Joey and His Friend Water*

Below left: "Giraffe Leaving Tree." Illustration from *Bettie Talks to Plants: Joey talks to Water*

Below right: "Betty Arriving at Aunt Alice's." Illustration from *Bettie Talks to Plants: Joey talks to Water*

All illustrations are by Raymund James Dakay.



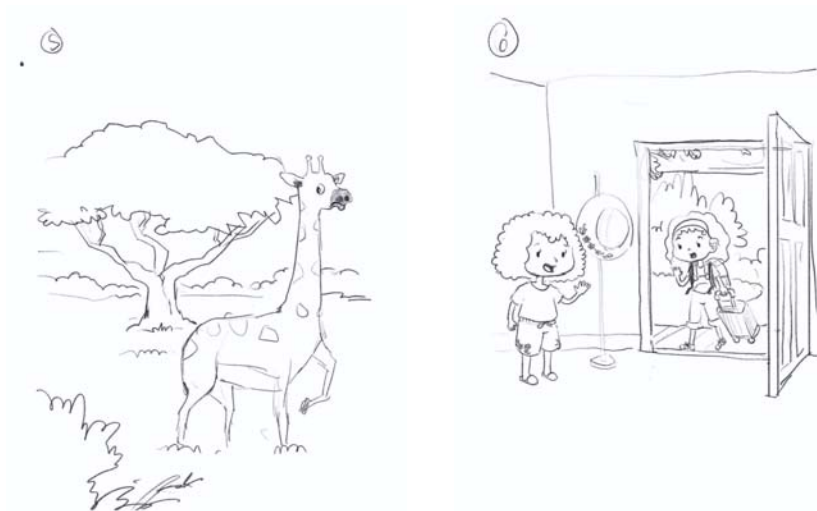
through underground networks of roots and mycelium by which trees communicate their vitality and vulnerabilities. Their communal lives are not that different from our own.

I continued my reading in books like *Braiding Sweetgrass*, *Indigenous Wisdom*, *Scientific Knowledge and the Teachings of Plants*, by Robin Wall Kimmerer. For Kimmerer, ecological consciousness needs us to acknowledge our reciprocal relationship with the rest of the living world. Only then will we be able to hear the language of other beings and begin to live in harmony.

All of these books and many more inspired and excited me and confirmed that everything is connected and functions as a whole. I discovered that books in these areas are available to adults but not to children. Only *Braiding Sweetgrass* was adapted to a version for young adults in 2022. It occurred to me that, in this troubled materialistic world that we live in, children need to

healing gifts we receive from the trees. The aerosols that trees release carry a great wealth of antibiotics and other healing substances, which benefit all creatures that walk in the forests. Beresford-Kroeger puts forward the idea that planting trees can actively regulate the atmosphere, the oceans and the climate.

The concept of mother trees described by Suzanne Simard in her book, *Finding the Mother Tree: Discovering the Wisdom of the Forest*, shows us that trees are not simply a source of timber. They are social, cooperative creatures connected



I had found my niche, was excited about it and, beyond that, was having fun. I was finally being creative in a truer sense.

I feel that rather than humans having a special place on the earth, we are just another creature among many. We need to learn to share with all aspects of creation.

learn about new and exciting discoveries and about alternative thinking, since they are going to be the ones living with our legacy.

I have two children and five stepchildren and now my husband and I are blessed with 14 grandchildren. I felt inspired to create fun stories about our oneness with nature for children to read, about nature's importance to humans, and began thinking about writing! One afternoon, I sat down to put some ideas down on paper, just to see what might happen. I wrote *Joey and His Friend Water* in an afternoon (see Issue 52, p. 33, "Influenced by the Kontomble")! I had found my niche, was excited about it and, beyond that, was having fun. I was finally being creative in a truer sense. Inspired by the concepts that inform bioenergy and our connection to nature, it led me to write a second book, *Bettie Talks to Plants: Joey talks to Water*.

Our relationship to the earth, its rivers and mountains and its creatures, needs to be completely rethought. Books like "*Is a river Alive?*" by Robert Macfarlane keep expanding my world, giving me the space to imagine a new way of living with the earth. These ideas are beginning to gel into an even broader understanding. I feel that rather than humans having a special place on the earth, we are just another creature among many. We need to learn to share with all aspects of creation. I feel my creativity at work again and a third book for children is on its way.

Ellen Lewinberg was born in Johannesburg, South Africa, and is a graduate in Social Work from Witwatersrand University. She also has a master's degree in Social Work from the London School of Economics. Ellen has trained as both a child and adult psychoanalyst, and worked in the field for over 30 years. She is currently practising as a bioenergy healer in Toronto.

Ellen has a keen interest in nature and the world around us, and in sharing it with young people and their families.

FINDING JOY IN CREATIVITY

Laura David

As this summer has passed, I have been contemplating the question, how do I cultivate creativity in my art? I found the key for me is finding joy in the process, and, based on my own experience, I can not emphasize this enough. I love the following quote, which came to mind from a favourite book, Brene Brown's *The Gifts of Imperfection*.

“Cultivate creativity by letting go of comparison, embracing originality, and finding joy in the creative process.”

I highly recommend the book to any fellow perfectionists who have not yet read it (and I trust that like me you know who you are). Its wisdom is liberating. Each chapter is another guidepost to letting go. The chapter on letting go of comparison and cultivating creativity is particularly liberating.

Do not think for a second that you're not creative; we are all creative beings. “There's no such thing as creative people and non-creative people,” says Brene Brown. There are only people who use their creativity and people who don't, she goes on to state.

But how do we do this? How do we not get trapped in comparison rather than find originality and feel creative in our own right as artists? By embracing the act of making art – just by practice, and doing art. If you are a painter, maybe start by scribbling or doodling on a sheet of paper with paint. Just by being in this expressive process, you are cultivating creativity. A writer may begin by just journalizing thoughts as they come to mind. In 1992, *The Artist's Way* author Julia Cameron recommended writing “the daily pages”, a valuable practice that some are rediscovering. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=lTGxmgk7eNc>. A musician may begin by just playing around improvising, strumming on a guitar; a chef might mess around in a kitchen exploring mixes of flavour. The key is to enjoy. By the act of creating you will cultivate your creativity.

Brene Brown's words encourage me to cultivate creativity, and I hope they will do the same for our readers:

“Unused creativity isn't benign. It lives within us until it's expressed, neglected to death, or suffocated by resentment and fear.”

I find having a direction in my art is helpful in cultivating my creativity and finding joy in it. My direction currently is in expressive florals. This approach has shown up again and again (moving from abstract expressive generally to expressive florals specifically). I appreciate the freedom in this approach to florals, embracing imperfection. Rather than chasing realism, I'm chasing this freedom of spontaneity, flow and energy. That's the unique

**The key is to enjoy.
By the act of creating
you will cultivate your
creativity.**



Fireweed, Hope and Resilience

The looseness allows the artist to capture motion and movement, and in turn gives the artwork its own voice, portraying its emotion and energy, which brings joy.

quality of this approach of painting; the looseness allows the artist to capture motion and movement, and in turn gives the artwork its own voice, portraying its emotion and energy, which brings joy.

Additionally, I am working on the theme of resilience in nature, and this specific direction also emerged on its own. The irony is that at the same time I was struggling to find resilience in my own life as I responded to the struggles with health issues that my family and I have faced lately. For example, this summer I came down with shingles. This was painful to endure, as anyone who has had it knows. I recommend if you're 60 or over, talk to your doctor and look into getting a vaccination for it. Needless to say, my hope in my resilience and recovery from the nasty effects of this virus was fairly intense.

Resilience is a universal phenomenon; it is in all of nature. As I see the devastation across our nation by the wildfires, which I find so disheartening, I have found hope in seeing the gradual renewal of the forests. I have especially enjoyed the appearance of the fireweed, the wild flowers that are some of the first signs of resilience and the forests healing themselves after devastation. One day this inspired me to paint fireweeds; it stirred something deep inside me as it symbolized the hope we all have for healing, rejuvenation and transformation.

The devastation that grieves me in the aftermath of the forest fires is present in my painting *Fireweed, Hope and Resilience*. Grief is a difficult emotion, and I felt the expression of it as I painted the layers of the background. Paradoxically, the celebration and joy in the resilience I feel in the fireweed, for the forests and for all of nature was expressed in the joy and freedom I felt as I painted the fireweed in the foreground. For me my painting aligns with the grief and the hope I've been feeling in my own life, and the ability to express both emotions in my art was cathartic. This brings to mind the work of Lisa Lipsett, *Beauty Muse: Painting in Communion with Nature*, and her words: "We deepen our connection to nature's beauty when we create. We are nature."

Resiliency is what can give us all hope as we are faced with struggles of many kinds. As I age I am finding that I am experiencing subtle difficulties that I find I need to accept and embrace; ironically, that has helped me to overcome my perfectionism. What I find comforting as I age is hope in the resilience of the brain in the form of neuroplasticity. Discoveries are now showing the ability of the nervous system to reorganize its structure, functions or connections after injuries, such as a stroke and trauma. There is the hope in the ability of the body, mind and spirit to be resilient and heal itself, with the help of medicine, community, compassion and creativity. It is especially encouraging and hopeful to learn that regular engagement with

Being able to cultivate creativity in my art has been a lot about being resilient, getting past the stumbling blocks like procrastination, finding some direction and somehow finding a way to have joy in just doing it.

creative arts promotes neuroplasticity. Scientists are finding evidence that this is crucial for cognitive functioning and resilience against age-related cognitive decline.

I felt a strong resonance when I discovered that someone else has felt hope in nature's resilience after wildfires in the fireweed. BCAA has used this as a symbol in fundraising, and you can find more info on their website. The photo they use of fireweed after forest fires is quite poignant. They write, "Together let's make BC more Resilient. The BCAA Fireweed Pin was created to help our province defend against wildfires, with 100% of proceeds supporting wildfire recovery efforts across the province."

Website: <https://www.bcaa.com/community/protecting-our-province/fireweed>

For me, being able to cultivate creativity in my art has been a lot about being resilient, getting past the stumbling blocks like procrastination, finding some direction and somehow finding a way to have joy in just doing it. Like our B.C. forests, which I know will find rejuvenation; I know that as I embrace the freedom of expression I am evolving and growing as an artist.

IGNITING MY BEING



Lolla Devindisch

Often, when I write a poem, it is as though I am in a dream – not knowing its meaning. On later reflection, I am embraced by a mood, an emotion or an overpowering need to understand and surrender to my soul's longing. Life without creative expression leads me to a place of shadows. Where once dance illuminated my path, the opportunity and ability to share that joy has dimmed. So, I turn to words, hoping their music and rhythm will touch the hearts of others. Although this poem is not as elusive as some, it reminds me that movement has always ignited my being.

ON THE HIGH WIRE

When I saw the ladder on the cliff face below,
I had to find out how steep, how high.
I had to resist the urge to scramble down,
place my foot on the top rung,
feel the exhilaration of danger.
I had to stand face to face
with my six-year-old self
to wrestle desire with restraint.

When I saw the rope hanging above the lake
I wanted to lean from the tree
grasp it in my hands
and swing like Tarzan out over the water.
I wanted to leap and let go
down into silvery depths.
I wanted to feel my skin thrill with the chill of it.

Yesterday I sank into the safety of sanity.
I did not descend the sheer ladder
nor step into the boat waiting at the shore.
I did not embrace the tree calling me to its branches,
nor hang by my feet to reach the rope
tempting me with potential.
Poised on the high wire between youth and old age,
I did not risk my life.

Today my heart aches with longing,
crushed by the weight of wisdom.
But my soul remembers how it is
to live without fear,
remembers the freedom of abandon,
remembers that one day ...
one day I will leap and let go.

Lolla Devindisch has been a dancer all her life, both professionally and simply for pleasure. She received her training at the Royal Academy of Dance in London and went on to teach and perform internationally. She has lived on Salt Spring Island, B.C., since 1981 as part of the ever-growing artistic community where she contributes to the island's creative life as a dancer, choreographer, producer and writer of poetry, fiction and nonfiction. Lolla's work is greatly influenced by her experience in the dance world and as a spiritual seeker.

Her collection of poetry, published in 2011, is titled *A Whisper in the Palm of my Hand: Poems in Search of the Sacred*. Her chapbook, *A Dance of Pelicans*, was published in 2016. Published in 2022, the memoir, *A Dancer's Pilgrimage*, tells of her journey as a dancer and world traveller to find her true home.

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HARVESTING

Karen Close

If we are only focused on the reality of the conscious mind and the accepted norms of our culture we deny ourselves the joy of knowing all of who we are.

I am always looking, wondering, seeing anew and feeding my inner mind, my imagination to see if and how what I've seeded might later turn up in my paintings. I'm beginning to realise that whatever I've seen, thought or experienced might soon be lost to my conscious mind but is speaking to my deeper self. Why and when these buried moments re-emerge is the mystery of our lives. It is a mystery each of us can explore through spontaneous creative expression. One just has to be willing to be open and 'allow' them to emerge. If we are only focused on the reality of the conscious mind and the accepted norms of our culture we deny ourselves the joy of knowing all of who we are. As I age I find joy and wisdom in allowing the unconscious to speak.

When this totally unexpected imagery arises in my paintings I've come to believe these are gifts from my inner self, my soul helping me to know more deeply the essence of me. As I advance in age I've become more attuned to this 'surfacing' of my unconscious mind and believe this is the gift of ageing. The pieces of yourself start to come together and guide one to understand and manifest to their full potential. For me this happens most readily when surprises emerge and invite me to explore them. The process of dialoguing with my works brings me great satisfaction and gratitude.

Recently a fellow painter and I have been exploring approaches which help us open our hearts. Often surprise imagery appears in our works. We have developed an exercise that many are finding helpful. As I was recovering from a totally unexpected mild heart attack I was employing this process/exercise which we had developed. When we sit down to begin we write the sentence: "In this moment I am feeling" You write down about five words or short expressions to describe your emotions and then you put them aside. On a blank piece of paper you use a white crayon to write the words on the surface in any size or direction, you then take a permanent pencil or marker and draw lines that, to you, represent each of your emotions. Again in any size or direction. These lines and words become the framework from which you proceed. Where lines intersect there might be sharp corners that you can choose to soften, bringing more flow and harmony to your design. Softening these intersections invites more arbitrary choices. When this stage feels complete and you're ready to move forward, work with water-soluble media, which adapt and reform easily, to evolve and enhance your design, but leaving the initial structure unchanged. At this stage it is very important to try to respond from what your heart sees (your third eye), free from your conscious mind. Feel the directions emerge into your hand. This process of allowing can take time and much practice to master. The term "third eye" refers to a mystical and symbolic concept representing perception beyond



Liberty Leading the People

I chose Eugene Delacroix's work *Liberty Leading the People*. It was an intuitive choice and I didn't know why.

The painting is renowned for its symbolic representation of social classes united in the fight for liberty.

ordinary sight and intuition. It is often associated with the pineal gland in the brain and is linked to spiritual awakening and enlightenment in various traditions. Especially in Eastern spiritual practices, the third eye refers to the gate that leads to the inner realms and spaces of higher consciousness. Turn the design around and work on it from all directions. Lose control of what is emerging as you work. Working on wet and spraying water aids in the process of releasing.

As I began this day of painting after my heart attack, I recorded my emotions: questioning, hopeful, eager, apprehensive, determined. As I looked I realised these were common feelings for me – ones I live with. I considered, however, that 'questioning' stood out most strongly to me. Yes, I have always been questioning, curious but searching with my conscious mind. I know I am passionate about being creative, but maybe not as much with the big decisions in my life. I began to work with my drawing. Eager to inform myself from all perspectives, I had read what Louise Hay, strongly heralded for her book *You Can Heal Your Life*, says about heart attacks. She describes the root cause as "squeezing all the joy out of the heart" in favour of achievement and recognition. Had I been doing that? Yes. I knew for much of my life I have wished for greater external enthusiasm for my passionate beliefs, convinced of the need for our culture to embrace creative wellness as much as we do physical fitness.

I recalled an incident over 40 years ago when I was doing my fine arts degree. We were studying composition and structure and were asked to choose a painting that had strong appeal for us and analyze the composition. I chose Eugene Delacroix's work *Liberty Leading the People*. It was an intuitive choice and I didn't know why. I knew it had a strong triangular structure and knew the triangle is often considered to represent perfection, strength and stability due to its structural integrity. At the time I wondered why the work had appealed to me but really didn't consider further. A decade later, I recall saying to a friend that I'd spent too long being guided by the words "tell me what you want me to do and I will do it perfectly." My life was comfortable, but I was filled with a sense of lacking and could be accused of not feeling enough gratitude for what I have. I also knew I'd never really stopped to consider what I most deeply wanted. It was time to end my teaching career and venture out to explore myself and my ideas.

A few times I recall telling the story of my identification with *Liberty Leading the People*, a powerful allegorical depiction of the July Revolution in France. It portrays Liberty, a robust woman personifying freedom, leading diverse groups of revolutionaries over a barricade amidst the chaos of battle. The painting is renowned for its symbolic representation of social classes united in the fight for liberty. In the painting, Liberty is not a literal person but rather an allegorical representation of freedom, personified by a strong, bare-breasted woman. The painting embodies the Romantic movement, emphasizing emotion, individualism and the power of nature and human passion, a passion I have come to believe in even more stridently over the years. But



Does this symbolize leading with uncovered feminine values of the heart?

still I question, “How do we balance freedom with the responsibilities we owe each other as members of society?” For me that has been a struggle, often evoking feelings of guilt.

As I was completing my drawing my eyes were totally focused on the marks I was making. I turned my page frequently and I spritzed water on any marks that intrigued me. Water is the medium of liberty when you work with water-soluble media.

One perspective immediately resonated with me. I saw the pink face in the upper left quadrant. I shared my work with a couple of friends familiar with my attraction to *Liberty Leading the People*. They urged me to look more closely. It wasn't until this second study that I saw 'my' new image of *Liberty Leading the People*. There is no triangular structure, no hint of its symbolism. Instead there is a strong sense of joy and of forward movement. Why is the focus on what the figure forcefully holds in her hand, and what is she holding? HER values? The one bared left breast is clear. Does this symbolize leading with uncovered feminine values of the heart? The right leg is striding forward, but the left, what is often thought of as our more feminine side, is standing strong, balanced by a totem-like structure. Researching totems further encouraged me. Totems of Life are spirits who are focused on protection, growth and healing. They expect their followers to have overcome obstacles through perseverance and wisdom. Their followers stand back up, bandage their wounds and continue forward. They serve as examples to others, guiding, nurturing and teaching. These are roles I embrace. I felt the words that inspired my design directing me.

I know many would dismiss this 'exercise' as being like seeing images in clouds. One's imagination inspires both, but the difference when you see things in your own works is that they have arisen from your own unconscious. Dialoguing with one's images is an exercise advised by Carl Jung as one 'individuates'. As I looked further at my totem I realised its structure is built of rectangular structures from the initial permanent structure in my design, but the corners, paralleling my choices, have been softened. I remember a dear friend, attuned to my level of frustration, had once given me two pairs of rose-coloured glasses. I understood what she was saying – that perhaps I should soften my perceptions – yet I never put them on. My drawing exercise harvested new personal understanding patiently waiting in my unconscious mind to be reexamined, and, I hope, thoughts to consider for healing. Of course there are no guarantees of healing, but there are none with my medications either.

I was quick to notice that pinks dominate in my design. Pink symbolizes love, romance and the creative feminine spirit. To heal after a heart attack Louise Hay suggests repeating the mantra: “Joy, Joy, Joy. I lovingly allow joy to flow through my mind and body and experience.” I readily return to reflecting on my image seeing it as an expression of my personal mantra moving forward.

EMBRACING CHANGE



Patricia Keeney

What inspires me to write? Change. Major or Minor. Change that stirs me. Surprises me. Perplexes me. Excites me. Angers me. Saddens me. Change that alters my perspective – both personal and political – releases images, an emotional and intellectual road map I cannot resist.

I live in a heritage house near Jackson's Point on Lake Simcoe, Ontario. Here is a poem I found hiding in full sight beside an old outbuilding that I pass regularly. You will recognize its first line from "The Red Wheelbarrow" by William Carlos Williams.

The poem reminded me how small the distance is between object and image. Present and past. The world hums with interconnection, but we often have to be jolted into seeing it.

Language is a shape-shifter, changing us as we change it. Volatile and tricky. Treacherous and wise. Still on home turf, not very far from "Wheel and Flower," my longtime gardener offered me some insight into the difference made by words.

Wheel and Flower

so much depends
upon a tiger lily

bright inclination
on a long green stem

beside the old wagon wheel
whirling worlds off its still rim

orange loving grey
petals wanting wood

now

then

Tiger Lily



Language Lesson 2022

He rattles across grass, sunhat flapping,

Tom, the gardener, rides away
from my window. I watch his back
retreating, full of humour and question
jutting, wheeling, hunched for each trough
in the turf. Weathered gramps, blossom-savvy
multi-partnered like us and still flinging around

had asked our opinion as writers and profs:
what about these nonbinary kids
isn't that what they call it?
How he didn't have words
for his stepdaughter's friend
garbed and made up to embrace
all the genders we know
and those yet to come.

So impressed by this vision and jauntily drunk
he joked in the middle of family good cheer
what do we call THAT? IT?

And stepped on a landmine.

Fury and tears for want of a word.

For want of a pronoun that fits
the whole spectrum rushing and leaping
flying and swimming acrobats all
flipping into and out of.

A grammar of change.

For want of a language
allowing us room to invent
our new being.

A failure of language
to meet human reaching
let the reality live in its care

begun long before
we could speak.



Tipping Over Capri

Capri

Look at us in red and mauve
tipping over Capri, the sea beating us
goddess blue, green rock pulsing
white flecks safely at anchor
the mighty pine a feathery fantasy.

It was all about saviours and love
birds in endless flocking translation.
We were rescuing each other.
A tale feather, a tremble of the head
tiny claws clamped on air
pellet eyes aimed up, chests
pressed for thickness in flight
joints tried for tension and ease
wingspan measured, a million
tiny fans motoring wind.

Will we migrate?
Will we ever fly far enough
to weather it all?

Wearing gems of stolen time
on every inch of our bodies
we turn wild at a rocky shore
take a bus to nowhere, Isola Sacra
we call it and bite with our stony teeth
into seething sea.

Today



Friends and their artistic quests have given me poems. This one happened in Capri at the launch of a children's book by my Swedish friend that I helped translate and that features the island's role as a research station for migrating birds. In the poem birds and women share a journey.

Cultures other than my own have often changed my perspective. Here is part of a poem from my time in Iran some years ago in which, among other experiences and revelations, I struggle with the wearing of a hijab.

Out of Iran

Suddenly Tehran. Gripping the neck. Flattening hair. Strangling. Pulling. Tugging. Fidgeting.
A bounding woman bound.

I am so wrong...here. Who is wrong? What is right? Here.

At the bazaar with Mirza. Snaky halls, scented stalls, robes and hands. Long gauzy scarf. Old Persia woven in. Attempting fashion. Collapsing like a tent in hot wind. Silky black square slip/slides off the curling novice nun I never was. Gentle scarf seller smiles indulgently.

-I can't keep it on.

-Takes time.

Shamed by black eyed lush-lipped beauties, cloth coyly draped to hide shape because god is a man. Standing in the hotel lobby trying to neutralize colour, cover flesh, annihilate flair. Aware it is not the men who look. It is the women whose disguise I compromise. Who get arrested for high stepping leather boots.

Hair clips amuse them, tracking wayward waves. Mirza lends soft hued pashminas to settle me. -No you don't need the hijab. That's professional.

The professional women of Iran.

Six hundred years ago, a woman played dulcimer. Rich brown curls tumbling down. Resplendent in velvet rose and stitched pearl, she makes a music I can't hear.

Mirza drives below mountains of snow between creamy concrete boxes in rows. Sun sparkled. Quiet and close, her own snug plot rises on narrow stairs windowed all the way up. Small, her place creates space, opening unexpectedly. A bed in the wall. Couch and desk and sweets with lime. Wedding photos. Satin and lace. Another self, mincing in strappy sandals, hair swept up. Diaphanous sundress clinging.

From past to present. Clinging.

Jars and cups and painted vessels full of wine. None for us. Nor closeness of the face. Nor languid touch where blossoms blow and latticed wind through fluted terrace goes. Nor pointing painted toes. Nor feeling all the fabrics of design against soft skin, nature's every outline coloured in.

Paradise then. Persian garden of delights.

Yesterday was hers. Today is what she has.

Love is a powerful force of change. Both when it is new and when it is old. One is changed by love as it is changes. Here is a poem celebrating mature love.

Poem for a Birthday

You walk away
and something breaks
that always connected us
some sturdy mariner's rope
finally frayed to spinster's thread
snapping at a frown.

We're too old and tired
to keep repairing
but always ready
to swing at each other
landing punches every time.

We practice the perverse like pros
deliberately misinterpreting
the words of our love
assuming silence is subtext

foreigners in the very language
we forged.

How can we have taken so long
to learn so little? Children
and grandchildren watch us
seeking sign
convinced we've found the secret
when all we really do
is go on

waving and drowning.

You have saved my life
so often and I, yours.
Do we resent each other for this
take on the guilt of the survivor?

How are we still here
torpedoing ourselves out of the water
time and time again?
Do we fight better than we love?
Is it the same?

Hours away from the venerable age
in fulsome June, under a full moon, I feel
light and air upon me, noise
your noise, an old animal call
I must follow.

Catapulted roughly
up this evolutionary arc
from the womb of single self
our big green leaf spikes
the silver night.

Nature, often an inspiration in its myriad forms, is even more so when one encounters it in another country or culture. Such was the case with a year spent in Provence living close to a little village in the middle of a cherry orchard. It stays with me like a capsule landing after splashdown.

Re-Entry

What I miss is clear
connecting us, direct and nakedly there
a mystery of body twisting into dune
riding breakers to the pitched point.

The way it was a whole year out, year off.
Unplugged and generating
our own electricity.
You and I wearing the stars
weaving light-headed under
complex elaborations – owl's hoot
wild beast's snort, amphibian cronk and slurp
in swampy places stirred by night.

How sane it was to fill our days
with hot green hills and cool red wine
feel the grip of vine on furnace stone
finger foetal clusters green and hard
the promise of their juices in our smiles.
How smart to know exactly where and when
a breeze would rise and watch
the leaves configure.

We soothed ourselves
in sturdy winter orchards, stroking polished stems.
Traced slick needles for their shine.
Crunched yellow gravel in a spell of blue
learning the Midas art.

Light that turned slant leaves to coin.
White cloud released in sudden billows
from the weather maker's cauldron

we walked
stony village history
lambent in amber and blossom
raised our glass, a fountain's careless
spurt
falling gently into fern where the
church
– old Roman in a mossy yard
hypnotized by sun and moon –
lay down the days in tree time.

Stretched our shadows long before the
sun
took hazy leave and vapourized the
valley blank.

Felt colour in the hills' deep closing.
Softly sang our labyrinthine ways to
sleep
where, even now we meet, familiar and
strange
never failing to recognize

the miracle.

The creative miracle is of course change...and what we make of it.

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*Sturdy Winter
Orchards*

The Journal of Creative Aging

SAGE-ING

WITH CREATIVE SPIRIT,
GRACE & GRATITUDE

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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.