NEIGHBOURHOOD-FOCUSED, PULP-BASED JOURNALISM, FREE & SERVING MCBURNEY PARK & SURROUNDING AREA

Issue Nine THE Spring 2022

THE SKELETON PRESS

MARKET SEASON

Xiaobing Shen's journey to farm life

Page 29

This long, difficult winter

By the time you read this, it will be March, but I'm writing this in late January. Another extreme cold warning is in effect, and the temperature outside is minus seventeen degrees Celsius – minus twenty-four with the wind chill. Yesterday, I bundled up my toddler son to head to the playground at the Memorial Centre. On our way home, he pointed out the tents – he loves tents – that have appeared in front of the arena over the last few months. I tried to explain to him that these weren't playthings, and the people there weren't camping, not exactly. But I struggled because, let's face it, there is no good reason for anyone to be forced to live in a tent in minus seventeen-degree weather.

As Doug Yearwood explains in this issue, "Housing is a human right," and our collective failure to provide housing for all demonstrates the inadequacy of market-oriented solutions in providing housing. This issue of *The Skeleton Press* highlights the urgency of the housing crisis and community-oriented solutions to it. Climate change means we can expect fewer days of extreme cold over the coming decades, but as Aric McBay points out in his article, "Extreme Weather," our summers will be hot – and heat is equally dangerous for those without adequate shelter. Community members have rallied to provide small-scale solutions for those without shelter, transforming, for example, the Manse at St. Andrews into a collective home ("A Manse Becomes a Home to Eight Homeless," by Jamie Swift). Such creative attempts to address the housing crisis are small examples of community coming together to address the crisis, a rallying that is likely to only become more necessary, especially, as Dawn Clarke writes, "Many people are just one employment lay-off, or one rent hike, away from homelessness."

On a lighter note, this issue also highlights our community's much-loved markets, market vendors, CSAs (Community Supported Agriculture), and gardens. Our cover features an illustration by Jon Claytor of Xiaobing Shen, owner of Long Road Eco Farm and purveyor of tasty steamed buns and dumplings. As we look forward to the spring thaw after a long, difficult winter, we hope the thought of browsing market stalls, eating fresh produce, and digging in the dirt provides some light to your days.

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

The Skeleton Press is interested in sharing more stories and would like to invite you to contribute by writing a letter to the editor.

SEND EMAIL TO:
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VIEW OR DOWNLOAD PAST ISSUES AT:
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ATTENTION WRITERS & ILLUSTRATORS

The Skeleton Press invites pitches for articles of relevance to the neighbourhood and welcomes both new and experienced writers. To pitch, send a short (max 150 word) statement of what you'd like to write about and a writing sample if you have one available. Most articles are limited to 800 words. We pay $0.30 a word ($240 per 800 word article). The theme for the next issue is "trees."

We also welcome new illustrators. If interested in being on our roster, please send us an expression of interest and samples of your work. We pay market rates for illustrations.

Send pitches and expressions of interest to: **skeletonpresseditor@gmail.com**.

If you would like to donate

to the Skeleton Park Arts Festival to help keep this newspaper in print, please visit our donation page at **CanadaHelps.org**

COVER ILLUSTRATION: Jon Claytor
ILLUSTRATED ICONS: Pierre Collet-Derby

MANDATE

The Skeleton Press was initiated by the Skeleton Park Arts Festival to create a free print publication that captures the vibrancy and diversity of the neighbourhood. We are interested in how print media can communicate and build relationships differently than digital publishing, and in how the act of consuming and distributing the physical object can build community. We hope copies of *The Skeleton Press* will be passed from hand to hand, sparking conversation with neighbours over the fence or at the corner store, and strengthening our sense of place and each other.

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Skeleton Park, Kingston Community House (99 York St.), The Elm Café (303 Montreal St.) Home Base Housing (540 Montreal St.), Novel Idea (156 Princess St.), Something Else Records (207 Wellingston St.), Kingston Community Health Centre (263 Weller Ave.), Kingston Community Credit Union (18 Market St.), Daughters General Store (63 John St.), Next Church (89 Colborne St.), BSE Skateboard Shop (225 Princess St.), Go Green Baby (293 Division St.) and Free Little Libraries in the Skeleton Park neighbourhood

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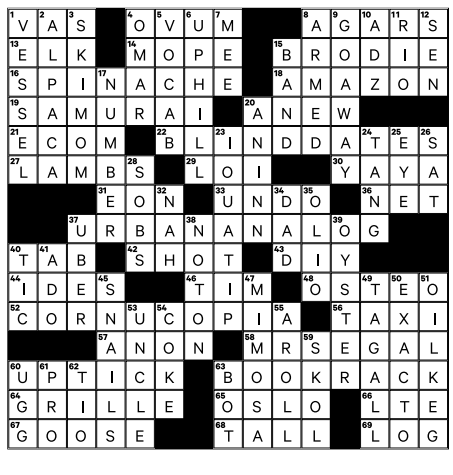


Who Gets to Decide the Fate of the Tannery Lands?

STORY BY **ROSEMARY THOMS**
ILLUSTRATION BY **TARA PELOW**

Until recently I knew very little about a Minister's Zoning Order (MZO). Like many people, I had heard of their increased use by Doug Ford's government to push through controversial developments, often on environmentally sensitive lands. Then I joined a local effort to try and protect an oak tree estimated to be more than two hundred years old, living near my home on the edge of the former Davis Tannery lands — lands that are viewed by some as derelict brownfields and by others as a beautiful urban forest and wetland rich in biodiversity and life.

It was while I was following discussions about Jay Patry's planning application to build a 1,500-unit housing complex with commercial spaces that I first heard the term MZO linked to these lands.

What is a Minister's Zoning Order? The tool has been part of the Ontario Planning Act for a number of years but has been rarely used, and usually only in cases of emergency. However, since Doug Ford's government came to power, MZOs have been granted by the province fifty-seven times (Toronto Star, December 1, 2021). This legislation allows the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing to zone land unilaterally, and to override local zoning bylaws and other provincial zoning guidelines.*

On September 21, 2021, City of Kingston staff brought to the mayor and members of city council Information Report Number 21-221. In this report, staff suggested three options that could be used to "facilitate the remediation and development of the tannery lands." One option listed was an MZO. This option, as City staff explain, "may be well-suited ... to the unique challenges of the site" — namely that present provincial guidelines do not "permit development and site alteration in a provincially significant wetland." At the same council meeting, Patry indicated that it is necessary to fill in part of the wetland to remediate the site and to achieve the density needed to make the project viable. If granted, an MZO would give Patry the zoning approval he needs to develop on part of the wetland. However, according to city staff, the developer "will still be required to obtain draft plan of subdivision approval and site plan control approval from the City prior to commencing any development..."

The MZO option has set off alarm bells in the minds of local citizen groups. Why?

> **During a time of escalating climate emergency, we need wise urban planning that looks at every planning application through the lens of climate adaptation and resilience**

They believe that MZOs are undemocratic. As an Ontario Nature blog written by Alan McNair suggests, the MZO process is "entirely hidden from public view — no public notice, no public meetings, no information provided and no right to appeal the approval". This means that many serious concerns raised by local citizens about this proposed development, including the clearcutting of 1,800 mature trees, the viability of Patry's remediation plan, and the impact on the turtles, birds and other wildlife, could simply be disregarded.

The Cataraqui Regional Conservation Authority (CRCA), which has been involved in the review of this planning application since 2014, has also raised many concerns. The CRCA has requested that the developer "demonstrate that the proposed remediation approach will not result in negative impacts to the ecological integrity and hydrologic function of the wetland". It also has concerns about flood risk, the placement of a boathouse, and encourages "a well-vegetated natural buffer for water quality protection, erosion protection and species habitat."

Thus far the developer has done little to address the CRCA's concerns. Normally, the CRCA would need to sign off on a planning application, indicating its requirements have been met. However, if an MZO is issued the CRCA requirements could be overridden.

On the fence by the former tannery lands, someone has posted:

"I am for development with
• Good urban planning
• Environmental sensitivity"

Agreed. In addition, during a time of escalating climate emergency, we need wise urban planning that looks at every planning application through the lens of climate adaptation and resilience. MZOs that expedite development over environmental and public concerns and the requirements of local conservation authorities are not good urban planning.

As of January 2022, the MZO option has not yet come as a motion to Kingston City Council. There are fears that it still could come. Local citizens need to take the time to send a loud and clear message to the mayor and city council members that they should vote NO to any request for an MZO to facilitate the development of the former tannery lands.

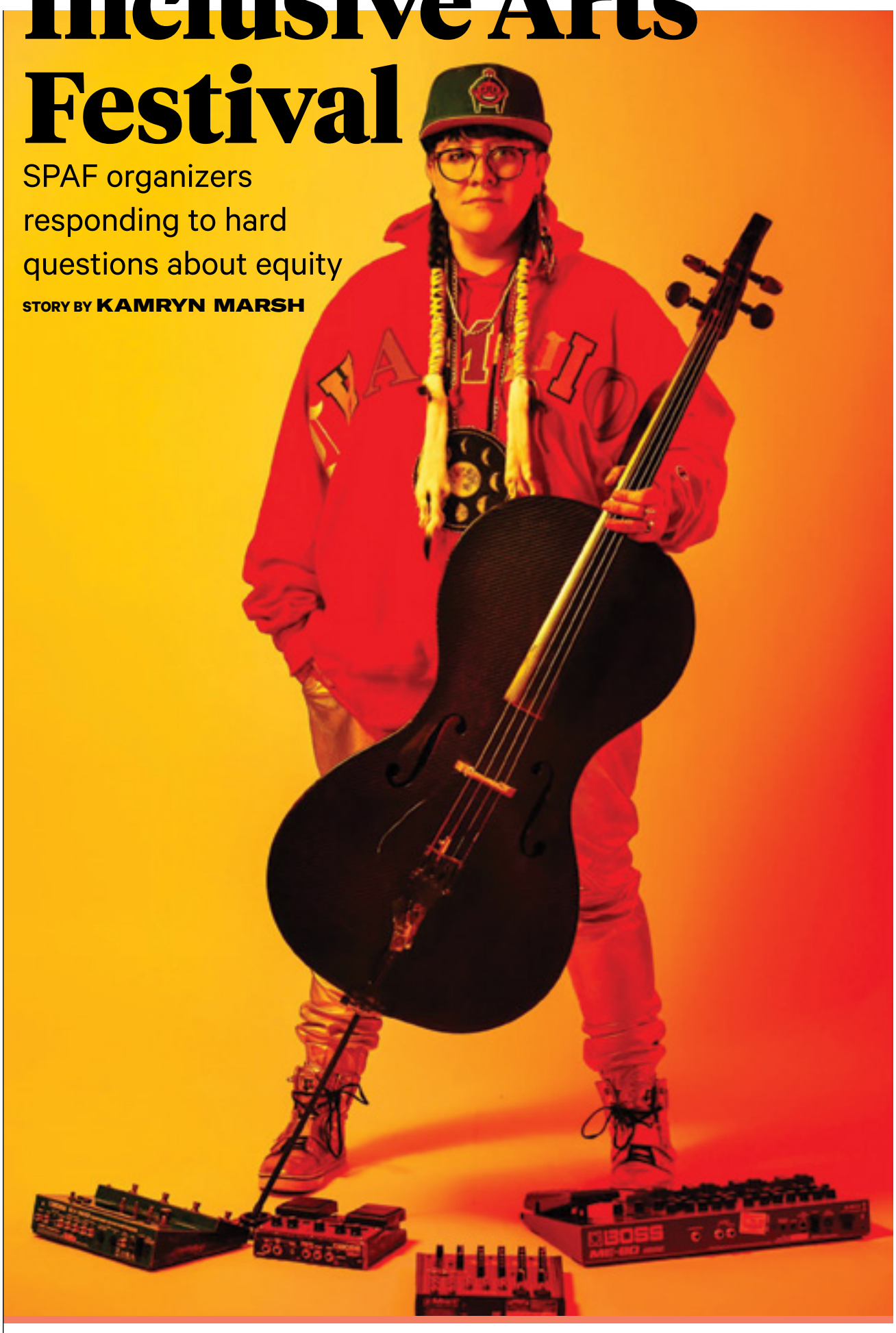
*Ontario Nature, MZOs, Youtube March 23, 2021)

ROSEMARY THOMS
Rosemary Thoms has lived in the Inner Harbour neighbourhood for almost thirty years. A favourite walk takes her along the K&P trail and by the oak tree. (See the Grandmother Oak Facebook page.)

How to Build an Open and Inclusive Arts Festival

SPAF organizers responding to hard questions about equity

STORY BY **KAMRYN MARSH**



Cris Derksen **PHOTO CREDIT:** Tanja Tiziana

Throughout 2021, the Skeleton Park Arts Festival pursued internal changes related to Indigenization, equity, and anti-oppression. Here, facilitator Kamryn Marsh (they/them) describes this process, starting with their own experience and why they were interested in doing this work with SPAF.

Since the summer of 2021, I have been working with SPAF staff and members of the board of directors to integrate anti-oppression, equity, and Indigenization into their organizational practices.

When I saw one of my favourite artists, Cris Derksen, perform on the stage at the Skeleton Park Arts Festival in 2018, I felt energized and hopeful. Cris Derksen is Indigenous from a Cree and Mennonite background. She weaves classical cello, electronic dance, and traditional Indigenous songs to create genre-defying music. While she played, Nimkii Osawamick electrified the stage with hoop dancing. Nimkii is an Anishinaabe singer, hoop dancer, and champion powwow dancer from Wikwemikong, an unceded reserve on Manitoulin Island.

By creating a free, public, multi-disciplinary arts festival, SPAF has done something incredible. But brilliant and captivating Indigenous performers such as Cris and Nimkii have been a rarity at SPAF. I also knew of many dancers, singers, musicians, and visual artists who lived in the Skeleton Park neighbourhood but who had never been featured in the festival. These skilled local artists and musicians were Black, Indigenous, and/or People of Colour (BIPOC), or people with disabilities, 2SLGBTQQIA+ folks, and tenants facing poverty and gentrification in the neighbourhood.

Marginalized musicians and performers are often overlooked and denied opportunities in the arts. Often, those most deserving of equity and opportunities don't receive them.

Free access has always been a cornerstone of SPAF, but a free festival can still perpetuate exclusion and elitism. SPAF Artistic Director, Greg Tilson, acknowledges that "throughout SPAF's 15+ year history, the organization has been guided mostly by white settler points of view and positions of power."

During the COVID-19 pandemic, social movements that have been fighting injustice for decades became mainstream. Black Lives Matter brought to light the systemic violence perpetrated by police forces across North America, violence that disproportionately affects BIPOC communities. The ongoing discovery of unmarked graves across so-called Canada has driven a conversation about the devastation of residential schools, colonialism, and genocide.

Many of us have been reflecting on how the harms of racism and colonialism are perpetuated in our local communities, and what we can do about it. With the pandemic forcing SPAF to pause their regularly scheduled programming, the organization also had more time to reflect on their processes.

"The Black Lives Matters protests of summer 2020 helped to jump-start this process," says SPAF Board member, Kristin Moriah. "There were so many discussions about how organizations could address structural racism that it seemed to prompt an awakening."

Around this time, brave community members brought to SPAF's attention hard questions about elitism, bias, and exclusion in the 2020 Next Door Public Art Exhibition (co-presented by Union Gallery).

"The specific community feedback called for a more inclusive selection and curation process," explains Tilson. "The concern that the community members expressed was that we were drawing from our own networks, instead of making more open calls for participation. When we do this, it can lead to the exclusion of already marginalized community members."

SPAF has since created a plan to better address these issues.

Tilson explains, "A decision was made by SPAF and Union Gallery to update our processes to create a more anti-racist framework and make our spaces, events, and organizations more equitable — to make sure we are building spaces and organizations that are open and inclusive and ensure BIPOC artists and community members have access to the arts."

Anti-oppression is essential in community arts. Anti-oppression includes principles, actions, and strategies that name, challenge, and transform multiple forms of oppression with the goal of producing equitable relations.

A FREE FESTIVAL CAN STILL PERPETUATE EXCLUSION AND ELITISM.

A key part of building equity is Indigenization: meaningful transformation of practices and structures that return power to Indigenous peoples and prioritize Indigenous ways of knowing and being without cultural appropriation. To centre Indigenization at SPAF, I planned to interview at least ten Indigenous community members and to prioritize their feedback for each phase of the project.

Key insights from the interviews conducted thus far include the following:

- Indigenization is a stand-alone issue and cannot be lumped under anti-oppression and equity.
- Mentoring initiatives and unique showcasing opportunities for Indigenous artists should be prioritized and well-funded.
- Building meaningful relationships with the diverse local urban Indigenous community will take time, courage, and humility. It is up to SPAF to ensure these relationships are genuine and specific, as opposed to transactional and exploitative.
- It is expected that SPAF will create (paid) positions of leadership where Indigenous peoples can enact real change in the organization.

Community relationships are an essential part of this process. The staff and Board of SPAF are eager to listen to and learn from other organizations and collectives engaged in anti-racism and anti-oppression activities. Recently, SPAF has partnered with organizations such as the Black Luck Collective, Roots & Wings, Queen's Black Graduate Caucus, and KEYS Immigrant Services. "As a result of building these new relationships, SPAF is enriching its programming in ways that welcome more people in meaningful ways," says Tilson.

Community feedback and interviews on Indigenization with Indigenous consultants inform each step of the process. In addition to shifting the culture of the organization, the SPAF Board is focused on developing specific processes, tools, and resources to help the organization integrate Indigenization, equity, and anti-oppression. Below are some highlights of the project:

- Curation Guidelines with a focus on equitable and diverse representation in curation, accessibility, and mentorship.
- A Volunteer Management Plan outlining equitable recruitment, selection, training, role assignment, and supervision of volunteers.
- Volunteer training resources on inter-cultural intelligence, accessibility, anti-oppression, and trauma-informed de-escalation.
- A summary of Indigenous consultants' recommendations and practices for working in good relationship with the urban Indigenous community of Ka'tarohkwi.
- A Communications strategy outlining equitable and accessible strategies for outreach, promotion, and messaging.
- Human resource guidelines incorporating equity, accessibility and accommodations, and intercultural intelligence.

SPAF Board member Marney McDiarmid captures the future of this work well: "I'm energized by the fact that we have been deeply examining how the organization functions. This isn't a matter to be addressed merely by including a few more BIPOC artists in the festival roster. Unraveling how the organization has perpetuated inequality is helping us to envision a different way of doing things, one that expands the festival's ability to be relevant to our communities and to these current times."

When I saw Cris and Nimkii perform, my skepticism about the festival alchemized into optimism. I saw a glimpse of what the festival could be: a place where artists and musicians could engage with urgent social issues through community arts, where marginalized artists and musicians are celebrated with equal prestige, and where art and music are acts of liberation. I believe SPAF can get there.

Acronyms

BIPOC – Black, Indigenous, People of Colour – is a term used to emphasize the experiences of racism faced by all these communities, while also highlighting the specific experiences of Black and Indigenous peoples due to the legacies of slavery and colonialism.

2SLGBTQQIA+ is an umbrella term that captures the following identities related to gender and sexual diversity: Two-Spirit, lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer, questioning, intersex and asexual people. The + may refer to HIV/AIDS positive people and acknowledges that there are many other sexual orientations and genders not captured in the acronym.

An Updated Version of the SPAF Vision, Mission, and Values Statements

VISION STATEMENT
Contributing to healthy, vibrant communities in Ka'tarohkwi / Kingston through celebration of arts and culture with social, racial, and environmental justice as our guide.

MISSION STATEMENT
SPAF is a grassroots community organization that engages in collective care by fostering diverse cultural activities that are free, collaborative, and accessible to all. We create opportunities for making art and being creative together. SPAF supports a sense of enjoyment and civic belonging for diverse communities in Ka'tarohkwi / Kingston, with a particular focus on the Skeleton Park neighbourhood.

VALUES STATEMENTS

Collective Care: SPAF values the power of the arts to contribute to the health, well-being, and expression of our community members. We strive toward empowerment and compassionate respect in our interactions with others. We prioritize group collaboration in decision-making and art-making.

Accessibility: SPAF is committed to free musical and cultural programming that is accessible to all regardless of income and other barriers.

Creativity and Joy: We believe in the power of making art and being creative together, solely for fun and enjoyment.

Environmentalism:
We are each caretakers of Skeleton Park, our neighbourhood, Ka'tarohkwi / Kingston, and the planet. SPAF is committed to practices of waste-free and leave-no-trace.

Anti-oppression and Equity: SPAF is committed to an ongoing process of naming, challenging, and transforming unequal power relations. This includes paying artists appropriately for their work.

Anti-racism: SPAF acknowledges racism and white supremacy have dire impacts on people in our community. We are committed to challenging racism and white supremacy in the organization and beyond.

Indigenization: We are committed to meaningful transformation of our practices that return power to Indigenous peoples and prioritize Indigenous ways of knowing and being. SPAF is committed to reconciliation and challenging cultural appropriation.

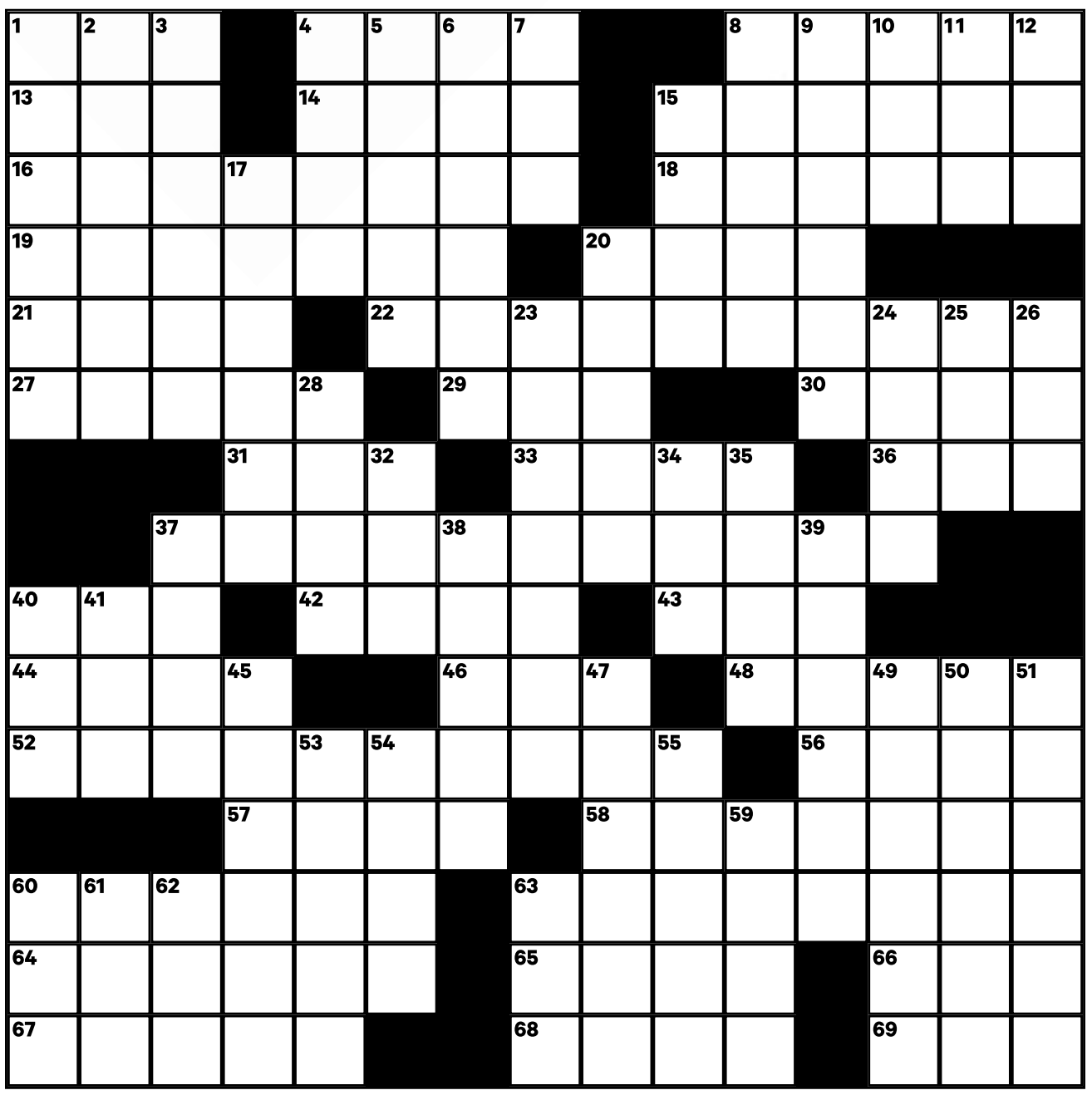
Accountability: We are committed to open, accessible communication between community members, artists, and the organization. We recognize the importance of feedback, evaluation, transparency, and relationship-building as key components of accountability.

KAMRYN MARSH (they/them) is a trainer, facilitator, activist, and youth worker in Kingston / Ka'tarohkwi. They identify as a settler (non-Indigenous), brown, queer, gender-fluid, middle-class, and someone living with a mental illness. They have lived as a tenant in rental properties in the Skeleton Park neighbourhood for eight years.

5 Servings a Day

Answers to the starred clues hide 5 servings of fruits and vegetables within them.

PUZZLE BY **LEA WESTLAKE** WHO THANKS THE FOLLOWING PUZZLERS:
HANNAH, MARLENE, ANNE, LUCAS, MARY, LESLIE, JONATHAN, STEVE, ANNE, AND HUW
ILLUSTRATIONS BY **SU SHEEDY**



ACROSS

1 _____ deferens
4 Female reproductive cell
8 Media for growing bacterial cultures
13 Moose-like animal
14 Be low-spirited
15 Thomas _____-Sangster of the Queen's Gambit
16 *What you get after a stationary bike class? (1-7)
18 Longest river in the world
19 Japanese warrior
20 Once more; again
21 Online business (abbr.)
22 *Fig relatives that cannot see love? (6-10)
27 Woolly babies
29 Law in french
30 The Stones urge youto get these out of yer system (sing.)
31 Long period of time
33 Reverse
36 Used in fishing and tennis
37 *Not digital in the city? (3-8)
40 Former diet cola
42 Hit me with your best _____
43 A weekend project? (abbr.)
44 15th day of March
46 Man of donut fame
48 Relating to bones
52 *Maize bumper crop (1-4)
56 Cab
57 Not identified by name (abbr.)
58 Local retired senator, formally
60 Small increase
63 *Found in a Louisiana library? (3-6)
64 Screen of metal bars
65 Nordic capital
66 4G mobile communications standard
67 Plump bird of Kingston craft fair fame
68 Opposite of short
69 Wood for a fire

DOWN

1 Hollow container
2 Llama relative
3 Parent on slopes?
4 Sharif in Lawrence ofArabia
5 Body of words (abbr.)
6 A kind of battle
7 Lunar impact crater
8 A kind of guard
9 "Get out of here!"
10 A cutting tool
11 Famous Brazilian city
12 Ottawa hockey player (abbr.)
15 Robbie Robertson et al (with 'the')
17 Quantity or amount
20 A country alternative to a hotel
23 Eg. of what to say when you forget to pay your server?
24 Orange juice crystals
25 Top part of needle
26 Day of the week related to a planet (abbr.)
28 Cries noisily
32 Casual negative
34 Eugene to Dan
35 Dish at Olivea's: Aglio _____
37 Taxi alternative
38 Off
39 Raw delicacy
40 Spasmodic habit
41 Much of this about nothing
45 Escargot
47 Champagne cocktail
49 Identifying everyone on social media?
50 A kind of knife
51 Barrel holding fossil fuel?
53 Your mom's brother
54 The real thing
55 Spell of great success (with 'on')
59 Nordic toast
60 Australian boot
61 Not amateur
62 Spanish for 53-down
63 Web robot

Find solutions on page 2

The Boy Who Loved Trains

Eric Gagnon's dioramas, photos, books, and blogs all celebrate the same childhood fascination

STORY BY **LAWRENCE SCANLAN**

ABOVE: A scale model of the Bailey Broom Factory on Rideau Street. **BELOW:** "the layout room" in Eric Gagnon's house, with the Woolen Mill and the National Grocer's Building in the background

I like trains
I like sad trains
I like trains that whisper your name
– Fred Eaglesmith, "I Like Trains"

When Eric Gagnon was a boy in the early 1970s, he would spend parts of every summer with relatives in Portage la Prairie, Manitoba, and occasionally his relations pulled strings to let him ride up front with the engineer on short-haul freight trains. He's now wishing he had done more of it.

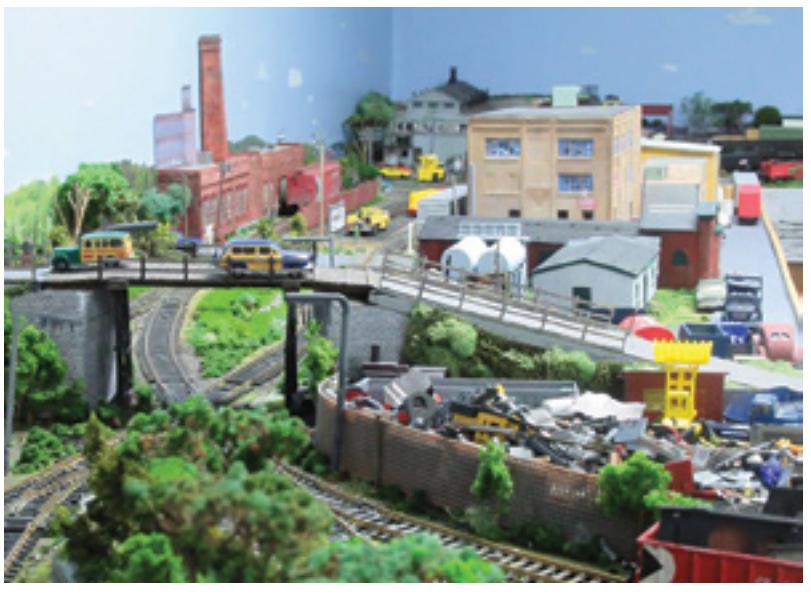
Gagnon expressed this regret after hearing a story I told him: At the Ottawa train station decades ago, I chanced across a friend then working as a Via Rail engineer. He was about to drive my train to Kingston and he invited me to ride up front with him. Every time we came to a railway crossing, I hit that yellow button and the whistle blew. Fleetingly, I was a boy again.

Eric Gagnon, now fifty-seven, never lost his passion for trains. "I started taking down train numbers at the age of twelve," he told me. He had become a trainspotter, recording the date, place, and other particulars of passing trains.

Since retiring from his job as a medical laboratory technologist at Kingston General Hospital in 2019, he has been creating dioramas – three-dimensional miniature scenes of Kingston's historic old town. A single four-foot-square tableau of the Swamp Ward, for example, features views of the Woolen Mill, the Broom Factory, and the old National Grocer's Building. Critical to each re-creation is the rail line that runs past, with a working model train an integral part of the scene.

Each diorama – requiring some thirty hours of designing and painting, cutting, and gluing – interlocks with another, and another, the whole thing occupying a space ten feet by eleven feet in what Gagnon calls "the layout room" in his west-end house. There he has created the old Kingston waterfront writ small, in all its busyness and commercial and industrial hum.

Because of COVID, I was unable to see the actual dioramas but I did see photographs of them in his books (especially *Stories on the Waterfront: A Curated Collection of Memories and Photos of Kingston Harbour*) and in the photos he sent me. Gagnon has peppered each diorama with vintage toy cars and trucks, and one-inch-tall workers – all plastic pieces purchased at hobby stores.



IN HIS WEST-END HOUSE, HE HAS CREATED THE OLD KINGSTON WATERFRONT WRIT SMALL, IN ALL ITS BUSYNESS, AND COMMERCIAL AND INDUSTRIAL HUM.

Gagnon has written eight books about trains, with a ninth about his train-obsessed childhood in the works. On the back of one book, *Smoke on the Waterfront: The Trains, Ships and Industries of Kingston Harbour*, is a photo taken in 1970 of the author at the old Kingston railway station on Montreal Street. He stands apart from the crowd, his gaze fixed on the passenger train easing into the station.

Gagnon's various blogs (tracksidetreasure.blogspot.com and hanleyspur.blogspot.com) celebrate the author's passion for historic architectural detail – but almost always linked to trains. "I blame Dad," he says. "My father lived in Westmount, not far from the Glen Yard [the Montreal train terminal] and he worked for a short time with Canadian Pacific. He was a great documenter. If he were still alive, he'd be doing blogs."

Gagnon has studied the psychology of collecting, and he believes that train nuts like him (locally they gather under the umbrella of a club called Associated Railroaders of Kingston) are embracing nostalgia – "reproducing in scale what we saw in our youth."

I was also curious to know whether any of his skills, fine-tuned in the laboratory, serve him as he manipulates and paints styrene plastic to construct his Lilliputian scenes. "Manual dexterity," he replies, "is important in this work. In tumour diagnosis, I was dealing with tissues five one-thousandths of a millimetre thick. Also, in the lab you have to be task-oriented and detail-oriented." His hobby is laborious and painstaking, but he sees the whole process as self-education and his enthusiasm never wanes. He is, dare I say it, having fun.

By chance, three years ago Gagnon stumbled on the work of George Lilley (1918-2003), a Kingston-born photographer. There are fifty thousand of his images in fifty-one boxes at the Queen's University archive: post-war Kingston streetscapes, train wrecks, fires, boat launches. "In that archive," says Gagnon, "I'm like a kid in a candy store."

His books are self-published (Kingston's own Allan Graphics capably handles the printing) and sold through the Internet or the Novel Idea bookstore. For every book he sells, one dollar goes to the Queen's University Archives Digitization Fund.

Eric Gagnon is a busy man with grandchildren to enjoy, endless research to pore over, and blogs and books to write. And every time he hears a train whistle he feels a little *frisson*. "A train whistle is like a compliment," he told me. "Always nice to hear, even when you're not going anywhere." Some would ban the whistles as just more unwanted noise, but were that to happen – and especially in a city such as Kingston, where visible history is a defining trait – an audible reminder of its past, something precious, will have been lost.

LAWRENCE SCANLAN is the author of twenty four books. His father worked for the Canadian National Railway, so Lawrence spent his early childhood living in a CN hotel in Nakina – 1,400 kilometres northwest of Kingston.

Extreme Weather

What does the climate emergency mean for Kingston's twenty-first century?

STORY BY **ARIC MCBAY**
ILLUSTRATION BY **CHANTAL ROUSSEAU**

The effects of extreme weather in Canada have become impossible to ignore. In 2021, British Columbia experienced a huge range of extreme weather events on an unprecedented scale. Record high temperatures and widespread forest fires caused the rapid destruction of towns such as Lytton, a predominantly Indigenous community. Dangerous smoke filled the atmosphere even in major cities, and thousands of social media posts showed night skies glowing an apocalyptic red.

The sustained heatwaves killed more than a billion sea creatures on the west coast, and more than six hundred people — especially those marginalized by poverty and colonialism — lost their lives. In autumn, the extreme heat and drought gave way to record-breaking rainfall. Mudslides blocked and destroyed major highways, stranding motorists and cutting Vancouver off from the Interior.

All this has taken place while the temperature of the Earth has risen by only a single degree Celsius from the pre-industrial average. And by the end of the twenty-first century, the Earth's temperature will rise by at least two degrees Celsius in even the best-case scenario. And short of a global economic and political transformation, we're facing a rise of as much as six degrees or even more.

EXTREME WEATHER AND KINGSTON

Eastern Ontario is not safe from the climate emergency or from extreme weather. In fact, Ontario is experiencing climate change at a rate of twice the global average. For every degree the planet warms, Ontario will warm by two degrees.

The Canadian Climate Atlas offers detailed projections of climate change on a city-by-city basis, combining the best and most accurate climate models available. In what is often referred to as the "business as usual" scenario, we can expect some dramatic changes in this century:

- **Extreme heat.** During a typical year in the twentieth century, Kingston experienced only five days with a temperature of over thirty degrees Celsius. We now experience about fifteen of these "Very Hot Days" per year.

  We can expect this to double again by 2050, with thirty Very Hot Days each year. By the end of this century, we will see more than seventy-five days each year when temperatures exceed thirty degrees Celsius.

- **A new season?** In other words, what used to be a short-lived heat wave could become a new season of dangerously hot weather. The length of the frost-free season will increase by about a month, with the last frost in spring coming about two weeks earlier, and the first frost in the fall coming about two weeks later. That will extend the growing season, but almost all the additional summer days will be extremely hot. That will be hard on humans, animals, plants, soil, forests, and wetlands.

- **Flooding and drought.** Instead of consistent rainfall, we'll see more heavy storms separated by periods of drought, a trend that farmers have already been observing. These extreme rainfall events are also much more likely to cause flooding that endangers humans and infrastructure.

- **The end of winter?** Climate models show that the number of "Winter Days" on which the temperature drops below fifteen degrees Celsius will drop from about thirty annually in the twentieth century to only two days each year by the end of this century. This might not sound so bad — at least if you're not a fan of snow or winter activities such as skating. But cold days have an important ecological function: cold winter days kill pests such as ticks. Warmer winters mean that insect-borne diseases — including tick-borne Lyme Disease — could become much more common.

The effects of this warming on human health could be severe. "Not only is the temperature going to get warmer, but more people are going to be affected," explains Ryan Ness, Adaptation Research Director at the Canadian Institute for Climate Choices. "Heat-related deaths will go up, the number of heat-related emergency room visits will go up." The effects will be worst for people who are socially or economically marginalized, especially unhoused people.

"It's often lower income earners who live in areas that are more prone to flooding," Ness notes. "If they're renters, they are at the mercy of their landlords to fix the damage, so they can often end up living in substandard conditions for quite some time."

Ness emphasizes: "In addition to the human impact, heat is really tough on infrastructure. Things like electrical transformers and asphalt roads break down more quickly when it's really hot. So the cost of repair and upkeep for infrastructure across the province will be increasing."

CLIMATE ACTION MUST BE QUICK AND COMPREHENSIVE. BUT IT MUST ALSO BE GUIDED BY A DEEP SENSE OF JUSTICE.

ARIC MCBAY is an organizer, organic farmer, and the author of six books. His first novel, *Kraken Calling*, a story of activists in a future wracked by climate change, is available this year from Seven Stories Press. www.aricmcbay.org

Julie Salter-Keane, the City of Kingston's Manager of Climate Leadership, says the City is planning for future risk as part of the recently unveiled Climate Leadership Plan, which follows on years of municipal effort. This includes a shift toward electric buses.

In addition to the goal of becoming carbon neutral by 2040, the City, says Salter-Keane, should take climate adaptation seriously. One of her key recommendations is for the City "to develop a climate lens that will be embedded into all of our municipal decision-making processes." That would affect everything from infrastructure to procurement to urban planning. That's important, as Ryan Ness explains, because the costs of repairing infrastructure almost always fall to municipalities, the level of government with the least ability to raise funds through taxes.

"We have built up our capital dollars to keep our infrastructure in good repair," Salter-Keane says, explaining that Kingston has been pro-active in maintaining infrastructure. "For example, trimming the trees to ensure that they're not near the power lines. So when we do have an ice storm, we don't lose our power as quickly as other municipalities may."

For Dan Hendry, a sustainability professional who has worked with many different regional institutions, local energy and food production are key. "One thing that worries me about extreme weather is that we need infrastructure here and the world is so globalized," Hendry says. "If there are more supply chain issues, if there's war," then people in Kingston might not be able to access essentials. Retrofits such as improved insulation are important. But critical solutions, Hendry says, include "re-localized energy, and re-localized food."

Annie Richard, a farmer and seed breeder at Kitchen Table Seed House on Wolfe Island, is already working to develop localized vegetable varieties that can cope with future weather. "Basically, we're selecting for the genes that are the most resilient," she says. Richard recognizes that climate change will make growing food harder, but is also working to breed crops that can endure future growing conditions. "We want to stress them out," she said of the test crops. "So you know, we won't irrigate them, we just let them survive or die. They have to battle the elements, and so that way, we're making sure that we're choosing the ones that withstand drought or thirty inches of rain."

"There's definitely a limit" to how much crops can change, Annie Richard says. "But I'll still do everything I can to have the plants adapt."

"We're now locked into a certain amount of climate change because of the emissions of the past," says Ryan Ness. But he underscores that "if we start building resilient infrastructure, building resilient communities, now we can persevere and prosper, even in a harsher climate." Fairness is key. "Don't leave anybody behind," Ryan Ness implores. "It really is often the most vulnerable people who are socially and economically marginalized already that will be most at risk." Climate action must be quick and comprehensive. But it must also be guided by a deep sense of justice. And to avoid the worst outcomes, we have to do whatever we can to cut emissions as quickly as possible. In Canada, that means addressing deep-seated inequalities.

In late 2021, at the same time B.C. motorists cut off by mudslides were being rescued by helicopter, the RCMP staged a militarized invasion of Wet'suwet'en territory to remove Indigenous people who oppose the construction of the Coastal GasLink Pipeline on their lands.

Fossil fuel projects in Canada — especially the most destructive projects such as tar sands development — continue to benefit from public and private investment. While low-income and Indigenous people suffer the worst effects of climate change, the federal government and affluent Canadians (often through their pensions or retirement savings) are literally invested in the destruction of our shared future. That's got to change, both through fossil fuel divestment and land-based action. Ko-ko Newell, a Two-Spirit Indigenous land-and-water protector who has organized demonstrations in Kingston, is now headed to Wet'suwet'en territory to help with the struggle there. For Newell, the single most important way to address the climate emergency is simple: "Stop building pipelines."

Ultimately, adaptation won't be possible if countries such as Canada continue to expand fossil fuel infrastructure, since the emissions from new oil pipelines will undermine the work we do locally. So Newell wants to see more settlers supporting Indigenous and Indigenous-led struggles, because local or regional climate action won't succeed otherwise: "You've definitely got to stop the pipelines."

Housing Is a Human Right

A closer look at Kingston's housing crisis

STORY BY **DOUG YEARWOOD**
ILLUSTRATION BY **FLORIANA EHNINGER-CUERVO**

It is no secret that Kingston is experiencing a housing crisis.

The explanation for why it exists depends on who you ask. Many people, such as Mayor Bryan Paterson, believe that a housing supply shortage is Kingston's biggest issue. Others, myself included, think that this market-oriented explanation is a skewed perspective: the crisis exists because housing in Kingston, as elsewhere, is not treated as a human right, but as a commodity that is bought and sold on the market.

Everyone has a right to adequate, affordable housing. This is not just my opinion, but something that the Canadian state has reaffirmed at various times and in different places, including through Article 25 of the United Nations' Declaration of Human Rights, which states that everyone has a right to adequate housing. In 2017, Prime Minister Justin Trudeau said, "Housing rights are human rights, and everyone deserves a safe and affordable place to call home... and one person on

the streets in Canada is too many." In 2019, the federal government passed the National Housing Strategy Act, which declared that housing is a fundamental human right, "essential to the inherent dignity and well-being" of people.

Despite all this, housing is treated as something that can be bought or sold—through either homeownership or the private ownership of rental units. This condition precludes many from living in adequate, affordable housing, and leads to many people in Kingston having their human rights violated.

It is helpful to think of the crisis as existing across four interrelated dimensions: homeownership, social housing, private rentals, and homelessness.

Home prices are quickly rising. As The Whig-Standard reported in October, townhome, condo, and detached home prices increased by more than twenty percent over the past year. Recent reports suggest that home prices will rise at least nine percent this year, with "out-of-town" buyers driving demand.

This is alarming, in part because there are signs that homeownership is increasingly a target of financial investment. The *Globe and Mail* reported in June 2021 that institutional investors account for one-fifth of all new home purchases in Canada.

With institutional investors having access to capital far beyond that of average workers, and with people taking on increasingly more debt in an uncertain labour market while attempting to secure more adequate housing—enriching financial institutions in the process— housing is increasingly treated more as an asset than as a human right.

Canadian Mortgage and Housing Corporation (CMHC) data reveals that between 1991 and 2011, homeownership rates in Kingston increased from roughly fifty-nine percent to sixty-seven percent. Between 2011 and 2016, however, homeownership rates dropped to about sixty-five percent, stemming from new mortgage market restrictions and labour market precarity in the wake of the financial crisis. This meant that, compared with 2011, there was an increased concentration of people finding housing in the private rental market, driving rent prices up.

Another dimension of the housing crisis in Kingston is the lack of rent-geared-to-income social housing.

Across Kingston and Frontenac County, the city funds and administers around 2,200 housing units. This includes 2,000 rent-geared-to-income housing units, including 957 with Kingston and Frontenac Housing Corporation (KFHC) and about 500 with private landlords through more than $3.5 million in rent supplement programs. The rent-geared-to-income and rent-supplement units in Kingston account for only three percent of all housing in the area, and the city admits this is about half the rate of national and provincial averages.

Social housing in Kingston has been in crisis for a long time. In 2004, Kingston had about 1,000 people on a centralized social housing waitlist. By 2010, just after the financial crisis, there were 1,133 applicants on the social housing waitlist. Ten years later, as of July 2021, there are 1,157. People wait years to be processed from the waitlist into social housing. As you can see, no headway has been made on this front.

More than 7,000 households in Kingston are in core housing need, meaning that they are living in housing where rent and utilities cost more than thirty percent of their monthly household income, or in housing that is in need of repairs. The lack of rent-geared-to-income social housing is exacerbating this problem significantly.

The lives of those in Kingston's social housing are also made more difficult because of poor management and neglect. Many of KFHC's social housing units are riddled with bed bugs. The Katarokwi (Kingston) Union of Tenants has noted that neglect, mismanagement, and the general lack of compassion requires a democratic overhaul of KFHC's operations.

In private rental housing, there are two basic crises. The first is the one that receives most media attention: the affordability crisis. While everybody knows rents have exploded, it's interesting to look at exactly how sharply they have increased over the last decade.

According to CMHC data, the median rent of Kingston's primary apartment units in 2008 was $790. By October 2020, the median rent was $1200, despite there being two thousand more apartment units and a higher vacancy rate. This pokes a hole in the theory that prices are simply driven by supply and demand. For low-income workers, especially those with disabilities whose income supplements do not keep up with the costs of housing, the housing crisis has been particularly acute.

The second crisis in private rental housing is the lack of democracy, which expresses itself in three ways: in ownership of rentals; in asymmetrical power relations in the home; and in a lack of legal representation.

Of Kingston's 14,500 primary rental units, approximately one-third are owned by just one company, Homestead Land Holdings Limited. There are also close to 14,000 secondary rental units operated mostly by smaller landlords. Those who own have a disproportionate say in who gets housing—and under which conditions— and who does not.

Tenants cannot evict their landlords, but their landlords can evict them. Many landlords fail to fulfill their maintenance duties. For example, Homestead's properties have a horrendous bed bug and pest problem, which is slowly coming to light, and it is the landlord's responsibility to deal with these problems in a systematic fashion.

There is also a lack of democracy at the Landlord and Tenant Board (LTB). Research shows that approximately ninety percent of cases at the LTB are filed by landlords, with seventy-five percent of cases being for non-payment of rent, meaning they are cases against tenants who did not have enough income to afford shelter, which is a human right. There are also other loopholes in landlord tenant law that landlords exploit to evict and remove tenants.

As a result of rising housing unaffordability and landlord negligence and harassment, homelessness and insecure housing arrangements are becoming more and more commonplace.

The United Way's Point in Time homeless count in 2021 revealed that there was a thirty-six percent increase in homelessness compared with three years ago. Other estimates give reason to believe that Kingston's homeless population is as high as four hundred people.

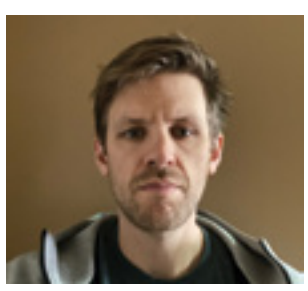
Homelessness became more visible in Kingston with the onset of COVID-19, when an encampment formed in Belle Park. Despite labour and community groups' protests, City Council decided to evict people in the encampment. With shelter spaces fully occupied, many are forced to live in hiding.

A report of the Integrated Care Hub (ICH) notes that their patrons — many of whom are homeless — regularly face harassment and threats. Many of the people who use the ICH are victims of chronic trauma, and the report states that "systemic discrimination is further stigmatizing," with many homeless people becoming more isolated and losing connections to family and friends in part because they have no stable place to live.

A presentation given to the City of Kingston's Housing and Homelessness Advisory Committee by OrgCode Consulting showed that the greatest challenge for Kingston's homeless community was that they cannot afford a place to rent.

The housing crisis has different dimensions and, despite housing being formally recognized as a human right, it is obvious it is not treated that way.

This is the first part of a two-part series. In the next issue, I will discuss the history of government policies that have worsened the crisis. I will also explain how the perceived housing shortage, believed by Mayor Paterson and others to be at the root of the problem, is a red herring which feeds into skewed logics about supply and demand, and that ultimately favours the rich and powerful.



DOUG YEARWOOD is a PhD candidate and Teaching Fellow in the Department of Political Studies at Queen's University. His research focuses on urban planning, gentrification, and other aspects of Canada's housing crisis. Doug is also one of the founding members of the Katarokwi (Kingston) Union of Tenants.

A Manse Becomes a Home to Eight People

"Transitional Housing." But transition to what?

STORY BY **JAMIE SWIFT** / PHOTOGRAPHY BY **AL BERGERON**

"It's an extraordinarily beautiful place," enthused Dawn Clarke, pausing to clean mold from a refrigerator. "I like the thought of beautiful places being offered to people with need, not just to people with means."

Dawn said she was glad to get the chance to spend nine hours each week helping to provide a home for a handful of men who might otherwise be on the streets, unhoused. That's because in January, the nineteenth-century limestone manse at St. Andrew's Presbyterian Church on Clergy Street, became home to a unique initiative to provide housing that's affordable and supportive. And dignified.

Once upon a time, St. Andrew's and its handsome manse were just outside town. By the 1840s Kingston was starting to creep up Princess Street to Barrie Street. The manse, well-described by local historian Brian Osborne as "substantial and commodious," was home to one of colonial Kingston's most important citizens — the minister at what used to be known as the "Scotch kirk."

Kingston's new residential shelter was designed by colonial-era architect George Browne, who passed a few busy years designing, among other notable buildings, City Hall, the S&R building, and Bellevue House.

"The St. Andrew's manse is one of Browne's finest buildings," said prominent Kingston architect Gerry Shoalts. "The original design, both inside and out, is largely intact. It's long been one of my favourite buildings in Kingston."

When I visited on a frigid January day, a high-pitched grinding noise echoed through the building as glaziers carefully repaired broken panes of the building's original casement windows. One study of Upper Canadian architecture highlighted the "serene rhythm" of the design and Browne's "skillful use of light and shade."

Bob Crawford is board chair of Ryandale Transitional Housing, the agency operating the house under a lease agreement with St. Andrew's. He was at pains to underscore the support from various institutions, including Sleep Country (mattresses, linens) and the United Way (important funding).

"A widower who's moving from his house has just donated a huge dining room table," enthused Mr. Crawford, the one-time associate dean at Queen's, as he cleaned the oven in the large kitchen. "The thing with getting nice stuff is that people tend to respond well when their setting is in good shape. If this place were ratty and run down, people would respond to that."

The manse project stands out not simply because the physical surroundings contrast so sharply to what our unhoused neighbours face in so many shelters. The principal sponsors, Ryandale and St. Andrew's, hope that the manse will prove to be a real home.

A home isn't a physical thing. Neither an elegant limestone building nor an empty house with a "for sale" sign out front. A real home doesn't have those fingertip quotation marks around the word. A home suggests a set of personal relationships.

"It's really nice to live together in community of a small size. Eight or fewer," said Mr. Crawford, who attends Bay Park Baptist Church. "People taking personal responsibility for the place they live."

Andrew Johnston is minister at St. Andrew's. He's a key manse project organizer, an understated, articulate leader who situates the manse project within his faith tradition.

"It isn't necessary to have a huge critical mass," he said, his mask emblazoned with the white diagonal cross of the Scottish saltire, otherwise known as the St. Andrew's Cross. "You just need a core circle of leadership and commitment. Activity becomes infectious. That's exactly what happened with the manse project."

The story of housing a few of the city's most fragile people in one of its most important old buildings began with the pandemic. St. Andrew's had long sponsored the Kingston Street Mission as well as a weekend meal program. The manse had been home to students who rented rooms at a concessionary rate. The Plague ended these initiatives. So the congregational leaders ("elders" in Presbyterian parlance) took the opportunity to undertake a review of its programs. After a year, the result was the deal with Ryandale.

"It enjoyed extremely widespread support within the congregation," said Dr. David Holland, a kidney specialist and chair of the review. "We felt that this was an extremely good fit. We're very excited to partner with Ryandale."

OPPOSITE, TOP: Kingston is famous for its many intact, nineteenth century buildings. The manse at St. Andrews Presbyterian Church is a limestone jewel.

OPPOSITE, BOTTOM: The church, committed to conservation, has carefully preserved the manse's splendid windows. The building's new use honours its built heritage.

THIS PAGE: Dawn Clarke and Bob Crawford during the final days of preparing the manse for its new occupants. At 17' by 22', the upstairs bedroom differs from the cramped quarters available to desperate people in many Kingston shelters.

Poor people get sicker, quicker than the rest of us. They die sooner, in part due to inadequate, overpriced shelter.

Dr. Holland explained that he has had no direct experience with projects like the manse repurposing. But he does understand how the chaos of lives shattered by poverty contributes to an erosion of health: "As a physician, I'm increasingly aware of the social determinants of health and how they affect people's physical and mental well-being."

That is, poor people get sicker, quicker than the rest of us. They die sooner, in part due to inadequate, overpriced shelter. It's long been a silent crisis in Kingston and everywhere else. Out of sight, out of mind. The Plague, together with the opioid tragedy, have recently brought things into razor-sharp focus. Indeed, the eminent novelist Robertson Davies, who set several books in Kingston, once described it as a place where the savage inequalities are "as sharp as you could cut them."

On a bright afternoon back in December, a ragged fellow was squatting in the sun across Clergy Street directly opposite St. Andrew's. He was rocking back and forth, leaning against a wall. He toppled over as I approached, the sole of his shoe coming away. It exposed his bare foot.

Pioneering nineteenth-century cell pathologist and physician-activist Rudolph Virchow is said to have coined the term "social murder" to describe the effects of capitalism on the poor. Last year British Medical Journal editor-in-chief Kamran Abbasi used that same term to describe the lack of attention to the social determinants of health that have made the pandemic that much worse.

The manse project represents a baby step in addressing a crucial problem related to the basic social determinant of health — shelter. The wait time for non-market — also called "affordable" or social — housing in Kingston is five to eight years for a one bedroom apartment. The manse is called "transitional" housing. Which begs an obvious question. Transition to what?

Bob Crawford offers a mirthless laugh as he describes the plight of manse residents with $390 monthly welfare shelter allowances if they try to come up with two-month (known as first-and-last) deposits for landlords renting tiny apartments that go for a minimum of $900. Such units are exceptionally rare.

"How does seven or eight at a time solve such a huge problem?" asked Mr. Crawford.

The municipal government has been lackadaisical with respect to affordable housing in Kingston, preferring to rely on the private sector and its stratospheric rents. People seeking apartments regard $1400 as a good deal for a one-bedroom.

Rev. Johnston explained that "Current government supports are inadequate for life in our city," adding that the manse initiative entails "a significant financial commitment by the congregation, but is also a significant act of solidarity and advocacy."

COVID, coupled with relentless solidarity and advocacy work by social justice activists and faith communities, has begun to nudge the city in a different direction.

Bruce Davis is a municipal point person for the City. His position as project manager for housing and social services meant that he could play an invaluable role in a team effort, getting the right people to the table when the manse project – first proposed in early 2021 – became stalled.

"There was a lot of creative thinking around how we could do this," said Mr. Davis, an entrepreneurial fellow who once ran a Princess Street bar not far from St. Andrew's.

There were thorny bureaucratic thickets to deal with. It can take years to get projects off the ground. Obtaining housing, fire safety, and by-law approvals can stall well-intentioned projects, but Mr. Davis managed to shepherd the project along. The province's pandemic emergency rules helped.

"We helped in a small way by co-ordinating things," he said, adding that he is optimistic about more small-scale housing initiatives. "The next one could be much easier."

Similarly modest shelter undertakings have unfolded of late. The former Oddfellows Hall on Concession Street, for example, and supportive housing for Indigenous people at a Lower Union Street site. "Because we did the St Andrew's project," said Davis, "it's been so much easier getting those things up and running."

The urgent need for non-market housing may finally be catching on in Kingston. Of course, it's one thing to watch those baby steps aimed at helping the poorest and most vulnerable — people struggling with mental health and addiction. It's quite another to take a great leap forward by taking advantage of federal housing funds (Ottawa now finally has a Housing Minister; Ahmed Hussen grew up in Toronto's Regent Park) to assist co-ops and non-profits build housing for the thousands of working class people living in unaffordable private-sector apartments.

The City's most significant effort, supported by the feds, has been its $10-million allocation towards ninety non-market units on Princess Street near Hillendale. It's in part a Kingston Co-operative Homes project. The co-op's adjoining townhouses — built before government turned its back on social housing — were long managed by outgoing city counsellor Rob Hutchison. Critics place the term "affordable" in inverted commas.

In discussing backing by other faith traditions — St. Mark's Lutheran has signed on to fund support for manse residents — Rev. Johnston's point that faith is infectious comes into play. It's a feeling that's "caught."

In the meantime, retired United Church minister and Skeleton Park resident Dawn Clarke is being accompanied by her frisky dog Joseph during her volunteer gig at the manse.

"If I'm here in any role, it would be as a neighbor," she said.

JAMIE SWIFT lives a short walk from Skeleton Park. He is the author of *Civil Society in Question* and co-author of *The Vimy Trap*, and, most recently, *The Case for Basic Income: Freedom, Security, Justice.*

A Home on Wheels

Tackling homelessness one sleeping cabin at a time

STORY BY **DAWN CLARKE**

The young man sat on a rock beside the hiking trail, slumped, with his face in his hands. Hard to tell what his state of mind might be. Despairing? Simmering with rage? Crazed with drugs?

Pedestrians were few on the tree-lined path. Each person who passed him scuttled by quickly, keeping their distance, with eyes averted. And, then, one woman, alone, stopped and squatted down on her heels and began to talk with the young man. She found out that he was slumped on the rock because of simple exhaustion. He had nowhere to sleep and had simply walked around all night in the cold.

The woman took action. She found the young man a bed at the Integrated Care Hub, and she accompanied him to that refuge, with a hand on his back. The woman was Chrystal Wilson.

In Kingston, if you speak to a homeless person, chances are that person will recognize the name Chrystal Wilson, unpaid Executive Director of the organization she founded, Our Livable Solutions (OLS).

Some Kingstonians first became aware of Wilson's social action when CBC Radio One broadcast an interview with her on Ontario Morning in 2020. At that time, Wilson was putting homeless individuals up in motels at her own expense. In response to that interview, total strangers emailed money to Wilson to help pay the motel bills of homeless people.

The homelessness crisis became blatantly obvious in 2020. COVID rules of social distancing meant that over-crowded shelters had to reduce their numbers. A tent city sprang up in the parking lot of Belle Park. Citizens debated about what should be done. Of course, there were the polarities of NIMBY-ism versus compassion, but that characterization is an over-simplification. In fact, very few people were really indifferent to the suffering the tent city represented. And very few people were indifferent to the fear of what a settlement of homeless people might mean to their own neighbourhoods.

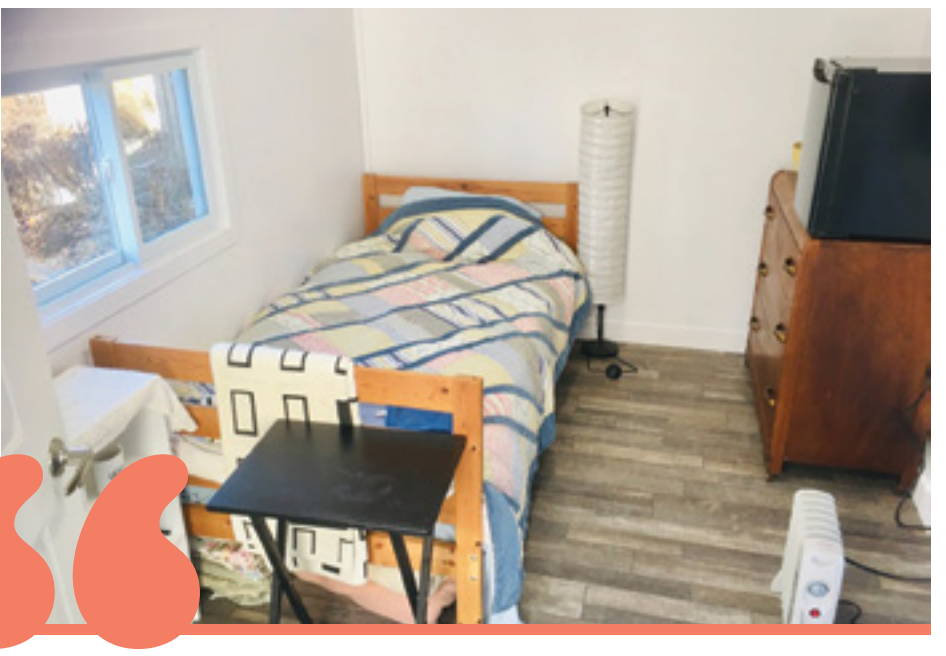
While the public debate raged, Wilson was talking with the residents of the tent city. What did they want? What did they need? What solution would actually work? And she researched experimental solutions, from Kitchener to Texas.

Wilson has also witnessed homelessness in a few people close to her. She learned that homelessness can happen to anyone; there is really no "us and them." Many people are just one employment lay-off, or one rent hike, away from homelessness. Many homeless people have a history of Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACE).

Caitlin Lloyd, a volunteer with OLS, gives one example. "Mike had worked most of his life as a stone mason, but when physical injuries prevented him from continuing to work, he found himself on the streets without a home." Lloyd continues, "When I became a parent at the age of eighteen and was raising my daughter on my own, I experienced a strong sense of social isolation and a lack of belonging. I also felt like a kind of faceless statistic. These are feelings that I imagine those who find themselves suddenly without a home might also experience."

Wilson's research convinced her that the most practicable project would be the construction and provision of fibreglass sleeping cabins, lockable single rooms with a heating unit and electrical outlets. In 2021, she commissioned the construction of a sample cabin, and, along with volunteers Bruce Lefebvre and Tish Flett, towed the cabin around Kingston on a trailer, giving people an opportunity to see what she was talking about. She petitioned Kingston City Council to allocate money for the construction of ten cabins. The negotiations were not easy or straightforward, but on January 13, 2022, Wilson was in possession of keys for the first six of the sleeping cabins located at the Portsmouth Olympic Harbour (POH) in Kingston, where a common room provides kitchen, laundry, and washroom facilities.

POH neighbours had mixed feelings about the installation of the cabins and their residents. There were critical voices, but there was also a strong sentiment of support. Nick Diamant, a retired gastroenterologist who lives nearby,



THE INITIATIVE CONTINUES TO MOVE AHEAD, ONE SOLUTION AMONG MANY TO A MULTI-FACETED PROBLEM.

countered skepticism with his compassionate offer of assistance to cabin residents. Other neighbours chimed in with offers of hot soup and welcome baskets.

When the cabins were nearing completion, OLS put out a call for volunteers. Dozens of individuals responded. Within a few hours, teams had volunteered to furnish all ten cabins.

The furnishing is homey: beds covered in home-made quilts, with bedside lamps. One thing that's crucially important to residents is that the cabins are toasty warm, heated by plug-in radiators.

As is the case with many projects in the time of COVID, there have been certain delays that are frustrating to all involved, but the initiative continues to move ahead, one solution among many to a multi-faceted problem.

The sleeping cabins are a pilot project and will be evaluated at the end of April 2022 with the assistance of Queen's Faculty of Health Sciences. Asked what she sees as the next step, Wilson hopes for the establishment of a community with varied accommodation, suited to the needs of individuals who would otherwise be homeless. As always, her vision is informed by her direct consultation with individuals, like that young man slumped on a rock.

DAWN CLARKE is a Skeleton Park neighbour, and a volunteer with Our Livable Solutions

Five Big Ideas to Ease the Plight of the Homeless—or at Least Keep Them Warm

STORY BY **LAWRENCE SCANLAN**
ILLUSTRATION BY **HAYDEN MAYNARD**

A friend jogging recently near Belle Park heard two sounds – the shrill siren of an ambulance drawn to a medical emergency inside a tent where a dog was howling pitifully over something happening to its owner. I sometimes walk my own dog there, behind The Hub on Montreal Street, where compassion and suffering daily trade blows. Where black plastic bags double as suitcases, shopping carts are moving vans, and tree branches are clotheslines.

As research for his book, *A Year of Living Generously: Dispatches from the Front Lines of Philanthropy*, **LAWRENCE SCANLAN** presented himself as a homeless man to various Toronto shelters – to see how clients were treated and whether they were full. But he has never spent the night in a shelter or in an inner-city tent. He has been lucky, so far.

One brutally cold afternoon an elderly woman passed me on that snowy trail – her ash-grey hair wild, her eyes wide, one leg propelling her forward, the other half-leg resting on her walker. "Nanny!" a young woman called to her from a tent. How did this grandmother lose her leg? Where was she heading with such purpose? And how did two generations of one family land in this twilight zone of stark contrasts? (Staff and clients at The Hub are subjected to drive-by insults and even death threats, and yet, learning of the tent dwellers' need for firewood, someone called a local radio station and voilà, firewood. Kingston's very own yin and yang.)

The woods behind The Hub has become a refuge for men and women with nowhere else to go and nowhere else to park their few possessions. I walk there and I am reminded of Kingston writer Joanne Page's wise counsel to me before I volunteered at Vinnie's. Do not, she said, assume, judge, accuse, or patronize. The Hub may not be a pretty place these days, but it is a pivotal one in reducing opioid overdoses and keeping its clients alive — almost all of whom have mental health issues and a history of trauma to the head. Those taking drugs to numb their physical pain and/or mental anguish typically started doing so at the age of twelve.

The number of homeless persons in the city may be two hundred, or is it four hundred? This we know: Kingston's Indigenous population counts for only eight percent of the total, but one in four shelter-users come from that small pool.

With shelters pinched by COVID protocols, the number of those sleeping outside – despite the abnormal cold — keeps growing. Welfare and disability cheques are no match for soaring rents, miniscule vacancy rates, and a dearth of social housing. Tents and makeshift tarp-and-plastic shelters have appeared in the Belle Park swampland and elsewhere.

Another friend, a retired fellow who lives comfortably, told me of his encounter outside the Memorial Centre one mid-winter morning. He had approached two people outside their tents. "What do you need?" he asked.

"An apartment?" the man replied. His name was Freddie, and his friend was Theresa. Freddie said the City was "kind enough" to let them tap into electricity. Kind enough? When I heard this I thought of the Leonard Cohen song, "Bird on a Wire," and its conflicting counsel: Don't ask for so much/Why not ask for more?

Theresa assured my friend she was warm enough despite the cold, that the heater inside her tent was safe. But is free electricity the best we can offer Theresa and Freddie? Put in their shoes, how many of us would keep their sense of humour, as Freddie has, or show such resilience, as Theresa does? My friend and his partner brought them groceries, along with a hoodie, blanket, and socks for another man shivering in a smaller tent nearby.

But it's all hit-and-miss. It's all shameful and unsettling and enraging. We can't manage simple bunks for our most vulnerable; we can't even keep them warm. Really? Really?

Here are five ideas on housing and warming vulnerable people.

1. HOUSE SHARING

"There is a program here [CanadaShare]," says a frontline youth worker, "that matches foreign students with older homeowners. The premise is that seniors could use help around the house, and, if they have space, why not make use of it? What if that matching program connected homeless youth with people who have space in their homes?" With proper vetting on both sides, and with help from agencies such as One Roof or Transitional Aged Youth (TAY) offering guidance and mentoring, "it could work."

2. HOTEL OR MOTEL ROOMS REPURPOSED AS HOUSING.

The Katarokwi (Kingston) Union of Tenants (KUT) told City Council last summer that retrofitted motel and hotel rooms could accommodate every homeless individual in the city. Mentioned were the Plaza Hotel and the Royal Tavern, although the latter has since been sold — to a Toronto developer.

3. DON'T LOOK AWAY.

If someone is living in a tent near you, ask what's needed. Exchange first names. Or contact The Hub (613 329-6417) and arrange a drop off. Some items are always needed: gloves, socks, underwear, toothbrushes and toothpaste, hair brushes, blankets, coats, and bottled water.

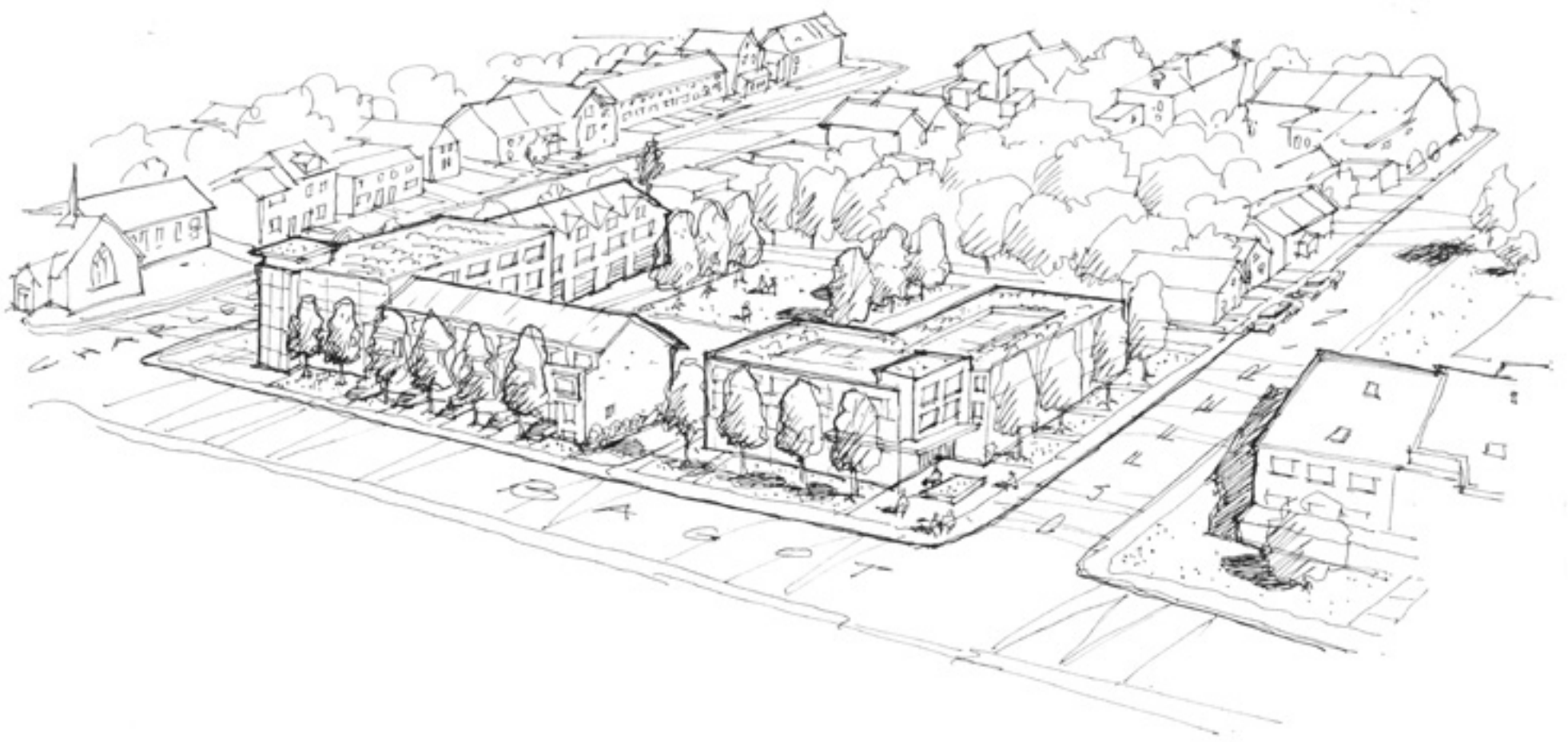
4. MAKE NO SMALL PLANS.

The homeless/housing crisis is felt nation-wide. So: overhaul the federal tax system, fairly tax corporations and the uber-rich, and introduce a Living Wage and Basic Income. In Ontario, hike welfare and disability payments cut thirty years ago.

Think big — but consider building small (300-square-foot), self-contained houses for the unhoused. The Social Planning Council (spckingstonanddistrict.org) has researched the "tiny home villages" concept.

5. ADOPT BEST PRACTICES.

Finland has dramatically reduced homelessness by making housing a guaranteed right. The un-housed are first housed, no strings attached, and then these men and women can begin addressing any other problems they may have. Twenty-five per cent of all new housing must be affordable, social housing. The key, Finns say, is political will. Elected officials of every stripe have agreed: all who want a roof overhead get one.



What Would Good Planning at 595 Bagot Street Look Like?

Not like the facility proposed by Saint Vincent de Paul

STORY AND ILLUSTRATION BY **JOHN WRIGHT**

Last spring, residents of the Inner Harbour Neighbourhood noticed a City of Kingston Planning sign at 595 Bagot Street, an empty lot, once the site of a No Frills grocery store. The sign gave advance notice of an August 2021 Planning Committee meeting, when the Saint Vincent de Paul Society would present a proposal for a new facility to replace the existing Stephen Street location. Their proposal requires an amendment to the legacy zoning that permitted a grocery store, but not food preparation; the new facility is being positioned as a "Community Centre." It would be considerably larger in size and operation than the old location, and would consist of a one-storey building with a parking lot and through lane for donation drop-off and loading. The program proposes a 120-seat dining hall that would increase meals from the 160 daily meals served now to 360 a day. There would also be a clothing and small goods store, meeting rooms, offices, and a Naloxone distribution centre.

The Saint Vincent de Paul Society's program description is aspirational, a "build it and they will come" approach that does not address why this location is a good choice. It does not identify partners, or set out staffing numbers or the operational implications of a facility that size. More distressing, I was left with the impression that this proposal is independent of any framework of social services and may be overlapping or missing needs altogether, as it does not position the proposed services in relation to the other existing nearby social service agencies that provide meals, clothing, counselling, and pharmacies with harm-reduction supplies.

At the August planning meeting, neighbourhood residents expressed concerns about the proposed facility that fell into two broad categories around the suitability of this location: the scale of the operation and the compatibility of land use and urban design.

In terms of scale, seating 120 people or more three times a day would attract large numbers of clients who may not have a place to go between meal times. The preliminary design sets the dining hall on the outside corner of the building, with an outdoor covered terrace that would become a gathering place to spend time or wait between meals. This may feel threatening to many people and even alienate many of the agency's existing clients. Additionally, the implications of food deliveries, combined with donation drop-offs, imply an increase in truck and car movement in a residential enclave.

Two of the cornerstones of good planning are the principles of compatibility and transition. Given the number of clients and vehicular activity, this facility would be better suited on a collector road or in a light industrial area – similar to where the Salvation Army, Food Bank, Goodway Thrift Store, and Lionhearts are all located. Furthermore, such statements as "This is where the need is," and "This is where our clients live," were misleading, or at best unsubstantiated. This proposed facility is incompatible with the existing residential makeup, which includes many young families, and a daycare and four schools within walking distance. Attracting clients numbering in the hundreds and their associated activity to 595 Bagot would result in an influx of people to the neighbourhood and likely discourage residential development of the vacant sites on the other side of the street.

In physical terms, urban design is evaluated in terms of scale, form, and character. A one-storey building with on-site parking is a low-density suburban form that does not meet those tests of compatibility. The proposed building is not only out of keeping with this medium-density, walkable neighbourhood, but would be wasteful of a prime redevelopment site. Given the housing crisis and the sustainability and intensification goals of the City of Kingston, this site would be much better used for housing. A well designed, medium-density combination of apartments and row-houses would work towards these stated goals and could include affordable units, some seniors or co-housing residences, as well as ground-oriented homes and even a small percentage of ground floors for services such as medical or dental offices.

More housing is needed and will have to be provided somewhere. Displacing that many units to a greenfield suburban location would not only underutilize the existing streets and utilities serving the site today, but require subsidizing construction of new roads and pipes in a location that is not well served by transit and is reliant on private vehicles.

Locating the proposed new facility in the light industrial lands just north of the Inner Harbour neighbourhood would be a more appropriate solution. It would free up both 595 Bagot and the adjacent vacant sites for housing, and in so doing, maintain demographic diversity and add vitality to the Inner Harbour Neighbourhood.

JOHN WRIGHT is a registered planner and landscape architect whose focus is urban design and public places. His art installations at the Elm Café and, last fall, on the pathway close to the Old Woolen Mill, may be known to neighbourhood residents. He lives in the Inner Harbour neighbourhood.

Bridging Generations, One Bead At a Time

STORY BY **ERIN JONES**

For Commanda Collective founders Taylor and Madison Fox, their beadwork journey is a way to honour and connect with their Anishinaabe (Ojibwe) ancestors. The sisters are inspired by their great-grandmother and forever matriarch, Susan Espaniel (m. Commanda). She crafted leather moccasins and mitts with intricately beaded patterns, at times doing so in defiance of the Indian Act, which then banned the use of bead items. Espaniel never taught her children to bead for fear of putting them at risk. "It was illegal at that time that she was beading," explains Madison. "[Beadwork] wasn't passed down, but it was always there."

Beading has also been a means of healing and of renewing intergenerational ties previously cut by histories of colonialism.

As Taylor explains, the beads came into the two sisters' lives at just the right time. After dreaming about beading designs, Taylor knew she had to learn how to implement them. With more time on their hands during the first wave of the pandemic, the Fox sisters taught themselves how to craft glass-bead-fringe earrings. Commanda Collective has been a way for the two women to honour the resiliency of their ancestors by creating "adornments as a gateway to healing."

For centuries, if not millennia, Indigenous Peoples have practised the craft of beadwork by making beads, creating jewellery, and embroidering clothing. Prior to European contact, Indigenous populations created their own beads from hair, quills, bone, stone, hoof, seeds, and other things found in nature with tools carved from stone or wood. The arrival of Europeans during colonialism introduced glass beads. One of the earliest goods to be traded, the small and brightly coloured beads made it easier for Indigenous craftspeople to create intricate and colourful pieces. Beadwork is much more than a hobby; it's a cultural practice done in ceremony – a collective connection by which to learn and share.

"It's kind of indescribable. I'm still in awe sometimes of the process," says Madison. "It's extremely meditative. We don't try to force it. The beads really do speak to us. There's been so many times where a collection has just not wanted to be made."

Beading, adds Taylor, gives you "the space to think and the silence to look at connections and patterns. One thing I would say we've learned is not to diminish trauma or experiences; know you're allowed to heal."

On their website, the sisters write that "Beading has catapulted our learning and connection. It has felt like a homecoming." Part of that healing has been using their beadwork to create a family archive through a series of earrings, each named after a family member. Taylor and Madison's great-grandmother, Susan, and many of her siblings were survivors of the Indian Residential School in Spanish River, Ontario. Their great-grandfather, James Espaniel, was an avid photographer whose collection of hundreds of images has been used by the sisters as part of their project.

CLOCKWISE FROM TOP: Susan Espaniel (great-grandmother of the sisters) with her beadwork; The Espaniel earring design; The Warrior earring design **(PHOTO CREDIT: ALYSSA BARDY)**; Madison and Taylor Fox

"We knew we were very lucky to have access to the photography," says Taylor. "A lot of Indigenous folks our age have no idea what their ancestors look like [so] that's extremely rare."

"We try to bring to life what we actually see and know to be true," she continues. "We put a lot of energy into writing the stories. We have to. We're not quite at the place in our world where you can just actually communicate through spirit."

Beadwork has brought the once distant Fox sisters closer than they could ever have imagined. Over the course of the pandemic the two have moved in together. "Our beading table is in the middle of our living room. It's such a safe zone," says Madison. Taylor and I have had such deep conversations. There's no judgement, we can just be open and honest with each other and ourselves."

Confronting intergenerational trauma through their art has not been easy work for the sisters, but they feel it's paramount for a collective future that fosters healing. "[We] have really acknowledged that healing a lot of this and facing it head on is part of our paths. It's something we've been doing for quite a few years, and purposefully, before we have children," says Taylor.

One of the questions frequently put to the Commanda Collective is whether a non-Indigenous person can respectfully wear their work. The response? Their work is for everyone, and wearing it is an act of "cultural appreciation."

"We actually love non-Indigenous folks to be wearing our stuff. That just helps tell the story. That's all we're trying to do, share a good message," affirms Taylor.

ERIN JONES is a freelance writer and library worker. When she's not typing or reading, you can find her making things with yarn and watching terrible reality-TV with her cat.

Shelter from the Storm

COVID conversations take to the street

STORY BY **ULRIKE BENDER**
PHOTOGRAPHY BY **CHRIS MINER**

To contribute to the conversation, use Instagram and Twitter hashtag #WhereFromHere.

After enduring two years of pandemic restrictions and uncertainty, we might well ask, "Where do we go from here?" Ask an artist, as the City of Kingston has done, and answers emerge.

Last year the City provided a sanctioned opportunity for artists in all disciplines to safely adapt to the current health situation. Art All Around, a public art initiative in collaboration with Kingston Transit, tapped into unconventional canvases: seventeen bus shelters sprinkled throughout the city. The goal, says Public Art Coordinator Taylor Norris, was to prioritize inclusion, diversity, equity, and access. To this end, with recommendations from local arts organizations, the City commissioned contemporary artists — many of them young and working under the radar in the visual and literary arts, film, music, theatre, and dance — to create works in response to the City's opening gambit in an ongoing conversation about COVID.

SET YOURSELF ADRIFT IN THE RIVER OF REALITY

(RIDEAU STREET AT RAGLAN)

As an artist on the autism spectrum, photographer William Carroll (Green Moth Photography) has embraced this period of pandemic restrictions and reduced stimulation, which has improved their quality of life. Their artwork addresses the idea of stillness, which many people currently interpret as stagnation. Change perspective and join me, is Carroll's message. "Take the time to see the things that are not necessarily nice, but are beautiful." Carroll approaches their art with accessibility in mind. In choosing the font for the text meandering through this photograph of what could be a landscape, but is in fact water at Chaffey's Locks, Carroll also wanted to address the issue of visual impairment. Forgotten Futurist, a sans serif typeface, was chosen for its readability and as a complement to Carroll's highly textured monochrome image.

WE ARE ALL SHELTER FOR EACH OTHER

(PARK STREET AT REGENT)

"Poetry doesn't reach a broad public," says award-winning author and poet Sadiqa de Meijer, a Swamp Ward resident who was thrilled to be involved in a community initiative combining the visual and the literary: "The pandemic has redirected us to be aware of those who are in need. We can't rely on large institutions." Her bus shelter piece reminds us that we don't have to feel powerless. Using found materials — ripped paper and letters cut from a book — she created a collage of clouds floating in a vast space hinting at the long road ahead of us. "Public art creates a little moment of time for a different consciousness to take hold. It takes us out of our routine to feel, dream and imagine."

RAISE AWARENESS OF PANDEMIC-INDUCED HURDLES FOR THE DEAF

(BAGOT STREET AT ORDNANCE)

"I listen with my eyes," says the first panel of the art piece by Elizabeth Morris, a Deaf actor, American Sign Language coach, and Deaf Community Consultant for theatre and film. Morris focussed on the huge challenge that masks present to people with hearing loss. To help her create the visuals for her response, she turned to her brother Alistair, who is profoundly Deaf and Autistic. He took photographs of Morris to illustrate her points. In two further panels she elaborates on the reality of deciphering the words of mask wearers and suggests straightforward solutions: wear a clear mask, write, text, or use sign language. To communicate with Morris I used email after inviting her, without thinking, to chat by phone. Thus the problem. Morris's overarching wish: we need to create a world that is inclusive and accessible.

ULRIKE BENDER is a former magazine art director, second-language teacher and, in her third iteration, a docent at Agnes and writer for the Kingston School of Art / Window Art Gallery web site.

JUST DON'T FORGET YOU'RE STILL GROWING

(BENSON STREET AT KINGSCOURT PLAZA)

Two artists living in the Skeleton Park neighbourhood had crossed paths but never worked together. Art All Around provided the impetus to do just that. Mo Horner, a theatre artist and Queen's PhD student in Cultural Studies, approached Grace Dixon, an interdisciplinary artist combining mixed media with graphic design, to collaborate in developing the visuals for an idea based on the concept of gardening. According to Horner, gardens are not only beautiful, they are also a human right. For this public art piece she and Dixon agreed on a tangible yet universal image to illustrate the cyclical magic of community gardens — from the rootedness of the earth, to human hands encouraging growth, to the cosmic forces operating on planet Earth. Tending to each other the way we tend gardens, especially at this time, involves reciprocity and optimism. Horner believes public art allows artists to provide a service and to unleash creativity, all without the entrepreneurial aspect of art making.

I'VE BEEN THINKING ABOUT IT A LOT LATELY

(KINGSCOURT AVENUE AT FIFTH)

All of us are stuck thinking about the pandemic, but few of us are thinking beyond ourselves. Eric Williams includes himself in this group and has created a cartoon image light-heartedly criticising our selfishness and inaction. His exaggerated character, bloated with opinion and explosive self-importance, has eyes popping and tongue lolling. Williams maintains that viewers don't have to absorb the meaning of the piece in their first viewing, but hopes they find it visually appealing. An illustrator and muralist as well as co-founder of the Dead On Collective, Williams has been attracted since childhood to the low-brow pop surrealism of graffiti art. In his work generally, he uses the vivid colours of this medium. "Public art," he says, "places visual culture front and centre and makes for a more vibrant, liveable and human community."

MUTUAL AID: ALL WE HAVE IS EACH OTHER

(DIVISION STREET AT FRASER)

Printmaker Jill Glatt, a member of the board of directors of the Skeleton Park Arts Festival (SPAF), viewed the City's prompt as too broad for a single person to address. She therefore approached members of Mutual Aid Katarokwi-Kingston (MAKK), whose goal of collectivity she admires. After online brainstorming, themes emerged that centred on housing, community gardens, and diversity. The resulting artwork presents aspects of an ideal version of Kingston: apartment dwellers interact with tent dwellers, people of colour, gardeners, and a wheelchair user. Co-created art, says Glatt, brings people together to develop empowerment, and community-based art can challenge the status quo.

COLLECTIVE IMAGINATION / EVERYONE INVOLVED

(BROCK STREET AT CLERGY)

Asked to contribute to Art All Around, Erin Ball, a circus artist and coach, immediately thought about her company, Kingston Circus Arts, which offers programming for all body shapes, but in particular for the Disability community. When Ball had both legs amputated below the knees in 2014, she found support in both her circus and her local community. The idea of collectivity firmly took hold, as did the certainty that we must learn from each other, especially by listening to under-represented communities. To create the visuals for the bus shelter project, Ball worked with artists Kayla MacLean, a Labrador Inuk then living in Kingston, and Luca Tucker, a Circus Arts member who identifies as a trans man. "Collective Imagination" comprises digitally created illustrations of people contorted — in a nod to circus movement — to fit the shape of each letter in the words. To stay true to diversity among the subjects, Ball and the artists collaborated with thirty-two individuals with personal stories involving movement, identity, and a connection to Ka'tarohkwi-Kingston. When I visited the bus shelter I was confronted with an unplanned addition to the collective: a graffiti artist had tagged the piece, being careful not to cover the images or words. Told about the tag, Ball was delighted.

TAKE THE TIME TO SEE THE THINGS THAT ARE NOT NECESSARILY NICE, BUT ARE BEAUTIFUL. WILLIAM CARROLL

Artists working in a range of disciplines respond to the question “Where do we go from here?” **CLOCKWISE FROM TOP LEFT:** William Carroll, Elizabeth Morris, Jill Glatt, Mariah Horner and Grace Dixon, Eric Williams, and Erin Ball with Kayla MacLean and Luca Tucker

Olumide Akinwumi's Long Journey from Southwestern Nigeria to North-end Kingston

Good communication is three-quarters of the job

STORY BY **MEREDITH DAULT** / PHOTOGRAPHY BY **AL BERGERON**

When he started as the pharmacy manager at the Rexall store at Montreal and Markland streets, Olumide Akinwumi got some pushback from his colleagues. "There was some discouragement about that area of Kingston," he recalls. "They said that part of the city is too wild." Undeterred, Akinwumi stepped into his new role with optimism. "All I was interested in was doing the job and getting to grow into the job," he says. "I wanted to do my best and make a success of it."

That was in 2015. Akinwumi has since grown to love his adopted neighbourhood and the people from all walks of life who frequent his pharmacy. He loves helping patients, solving problems, and answering questions. Akinwumi, who works five days a week, does everything from administering vaccines to overseeing the distribution of medications, along with the support of one full-time and two part-time pharmacy assistants. When he enjoys a day off, a pharmacist from another Rexall store steps in to relieve him.

Taking a deeply empathetic approach to his work, Akinwumi is committed to treating all his patients the same way no matter what challenges they might be facing, and says good communication is the most critical part of his job. "Once you can communicate with people at their level, any problem is three-quarters solved," he explains, no matter if he is helping someone understand why they have lost their drug coverage or supporting someone struggling with a mental health challenge. "We have been taught to be patient and show empathy, and to listen."

Born in Lagos, Nigeria, Akinwumi grew up in Ogun State in the southwestern part of the country. After earning his Bachelor of Pharmacy in Nigeria in 2002, he opened his own practice. Though it was doing well, he moved to Canada in 2010 seeking a better future for himself and the family he imagined. "I wanted my kids to grow up in a better, safer society where they could be everything they wanted to be," he says.

Though he now considers himself fully acclimatized to the Canadian winter, he remembers the shock of landing in Toronto in March. "When the weather hit my skin, it was like 'What have I done!'," Akinwumi exclaims. "I thought I was in a freezer." Two years later, after additional training at the University of Toronto where he learned what it took to succeed as a pharmacist in Canada, he passed his licensing exam.

Soon after, Akinwumi began working as a relief-pharmacist with Rexall, where he was largely focused on covering stores in eastern Ontario, including Belleville, Kingston, Ottawa, and in the Ottawa valley. "I loved Kingston the most out of all the cities I worked in," he explains. So, when the position at 240 Montreal Street became available, he applied. His wife and two children (both born in Canada and now aged seven and ten), moved to the city soon after. The family now owns a house in the Cataraqui neighbourhood near Bayridge Drive.

When he is not at work Akinwumi likes listening to many kinds of music and enjoys watching programs on YouTube, particularly those that connect him to his home country. He misses his friends and family, as well as a lively social life that involved lots of parties and events, including lavish weddings. "But home is not really stable," he says. "There are security issues back home. So, we'll see how things are in the next few years." In the meantime, he regularly connects with family, including three younger siblings, on WhatsApp.

Though life at the pharmacy has always been busy, Akinwumi says he is spending more time these days administering vaccines, both for COVID as well as the annual flu shot, all of which are booked online. "It's been an opportunity to contribute to helping minimize the impact of the pandemic ever since it started," he says. Akinwumi says he has had people come from as far away as Quebec and the United States for the jab.

Olumide Akinwumi at his workplace

In general, he says he enjoys working in the world of Canadian health care, which he describes as more efficient and patient-focused than what he experienced in Nigeria. "It's made me a better pharmacist," he explains. "Every day I seem to enjoy myself." As for the community's "wild" reputation, Akinwumi only laughs. "There are some beautiful people around this neighbourhood," he says. "Until you get to meet them, you don't know."

MEREDITH DAULT has lived in the Skeleton Park community since 2013. She and her dog, Maple, spend a lot of time walking very slowly through the neighbourhood.

The Memorial Centre

A Community Treasure Worth Fighting For

STORY BY **ANNE KERSHAW**

The Memorial Centre under construction
PHOTO COURTESY OF Queen's University Archives, George Lilley fonds V25.5 13-165

Stuart Crawford, about to turn one hundred years old, remembers when Kingston's Memorial Centre was just a gleam in his friend's eye.

He and Ken Reid, now deceased, were returning to Kingston after serving overseas in the Royal Canadian Air Force.

"We talked about it on the boat on the way home, what could we do as a memorial to remember our friends amd veterans," says Crawford.

With Reid as "a main instigator" in gaining local support and raising funds, the vision became reality when the Centre opened at the corner of York Street in 1951.

Crawford and Reid could never have imagined how the Centre's identity would evolve over the years, the local controversies over its future that would erupt from time to time, or now, more than seventy years later, what a vibrant and beloved destination it would become.

Designed as a community sports and entertainment hub, the Centre was intended as a "living memorial" in remembrance of Kingstonians who gave their lives in both World Wars and later the Korean War.

Today, along with its 3,300-seat arena, the Memorial Centre boasts an annual Kingston Fall Fair operated by the Kingston and District Agricultural Society, held over four days each September (cancelled in 2020 and reinvented in 2021); a year-round Sunday farmers' market that draws hundreds from across the city each week for its locally grown produce, and in the summer music and free yoga classes, and special events such as Mini-Octoberfest; a dog park that is the constant scene of joyously unleashed canines; and the city's only outdoor pool, an oasis of fun for families and visitors during hot summer months, which includes a twenty-five-metre lane pool, leisure pool, lazy river, and ten-metre winding water slide. The state-of-the-art aqua facility has one of the most efficient water filtration systems in the world.

Over the years, the Centre has served as everything from a venue for countless big-name performances (including Bob Dylan, Johnny Cash, k.d. lang, Harlem Globetrotters, and The Tragically Hip), a roller derby, and, most recently, in keeping with the times, a COVID-19 assessment centre.

Joan Bowie, co-chair of the Williamsville Community Association, who as a child took skating lessons at the Memorial Centre, as did her daughter, describes the Centre as a "true community hub" that draws people from across the city to its many offerings.

"You hear a lot these days in planning circles about the concept of a neighbourhood hub. In my view, the Memorial Centre embodies the true meaning of a community hub, although it doesn't sometimes get the recognition of some of the new glitzy sports centres for how valuable it is to people," says Bowie.

The north-end Centre has more than once been a source of local controversy. By the early 2000s, the aging building had deteriorated to the point that the Kingston Frontenacs had to cancel a game due to a leaky roof. But when a Mayor's Task Force under Harvey Rosen recommended that the building be torn down and the land sold for private development, Kingston residents fought back.

"The sale of the Memorial Centre and its green space was announced without public consultation," says local resident Jana Mills, who helped rally opposition to the selling of the public recreational space. In 2005, residents presented Council with a petition of more than 7,000 signatures of objectors from across the city. They successfully pressed the point that the Williamsville area of the city, with one of the highest population densities, had the least amount of park, recreational, and cultural space per capita.

"It was a great lesson for all Kingstonians, that people can oppose and stand up to what otherwise is thought of as a done deal," says Mills. "We made our point that this was not something that could just be disposed of."

Residents rose up in anger again in 2015 when they got wind that the City was considering handing part of the land to the Limestone District School Board for a new high school. Public pressure again resulted in a majority of city councillors opposing the idea.

Still, many continued to worry about the future of the Centre, especially with the construction of the premier new sports and entertainment venue downtown. Prior to the opening of the Leon's Centre in 2008, the Memorial Centre was home to the Kingston Frontenacs hockey team. The loss of such an important asset was concerning. But fate intervened when Queen's University demolished the Jock Harty Arena to make room for its new Queen's sport and recreation centre.

The university now turned to the Memorial Centre to serve as the permanent home of the Queen's Golden Gaels varsity hockey and figure skating teams, and Queen's intramural ice sports, along with the Church Athletic League of Kingston hockey teams.

"I'm told that they are busier now than they have ever been," says John Grenville, a local historian who has led two Jane's Walks (citizen-guided tours) of the Memorial Centre site.

In recent years, the City has demonstrated its interest in investing in the Memorial Centre's future, both by sustaining and enhancing existing core recreational and sports features, adding new recreational opportunities including a perimeter track, soft ball diamonds and playground areas, and beautifying the site with trees, benches, and fencing.

THE CITY HAS COME TO RECOGNIZE ITS VALUE AS A MULTI-PURPOSE NEIGHBOURHOOD OR COMMUNITY HUB WHERE PEOPLE AND GROUPS CAN MEET.

Grenville believes the Memorial Centre has a bright future. "The city has come to recognize its value as a multi-purpose neighbourhood or community hub where people and groups can meet."

In 2019, Kingston began seeking federal and provincial funding that would allow for a major renovation of the aging building and expand ice-rink capacity while further developing it as a versatile community hub with a rich history — a place where games are won and lost, area farmers proudly exhibit produce and husbandry, people buy and sell and mingle at the market, kids float the lazy river, dogs run free, and picnickers are a common sight.

ANNE KERSHAW, now retired, writes and paints free of deadline pressure. She was a reporter and editor for the *Kingston Whig-Standard* during the paper's heyday and later worked as director of communications and public affairs at Queen's. She has recently also become a cat person.

Build It, and They Will Come

The Open Voices Community Choir turns twenty

STORY BY **LINDA WILLIAMS**

Here's a question: What would happen if a few Skeleton Park neighbours got together – Tammy, Debbie, Silvana, Tacey, Sue, two Lindas, Catherine, Mary, Tim, Skot, David, Gerry, Stew, and, in an earlier time, Wayne, Marie, Chris, Tom, Debra, Zorba, Bill, and Doug?

Answer: A lot of exuberant singing from the group that would become the Open Voices Community Choir!

These were the neighbours who took to heart the underlying premise of Open Voices (OV) in 2002: that music could be made by anyone, shared without hesitation, and enjoyed for its own sake.

Since 1987, Andy Rush had been directing pick-up choirs at folk festivals such as the Blue Skies Music Festival and weekend choral events. He'd seen how choirs change people. "People who are in a strong singing community," he says, "have the energy to go out and to make the world a better place." He understood the benefits of amateur, participatory, do-it-yourself, vernacular culture, as distinct from high culture or passive mass consumer culture.

In September 2001, after an exhilarating "Community in Song" weekend, Andy and several participants were inspired to create a more consistent opportunity to sing. Leslie Saunders, Martin Kandler, Gord McDiarmid, and I shared Andy's ideas and energy to establish a new, non-auditioned, four-part community choir in Kingston.

The spark for the idea was that the choir would sing for pleasure, musical development, and the delight of others. It would aim for a high quality of choral music and support social interaction within the choir. It would reduce barriers for inclusion by offering musical education, transportation to rehearsals, free childcare, an accessible rehearsal space, and flexible fees. It would be volunteer driven and raise funds for community events to promote social awareness or action.

LINDA WILLIAMS lives in the Skeleton Park neighbourhood with her husband and poodle. She has been an enthusiastic member of Open Voices Community Choir for twenty years, and is forever grateful for how it has enriched her life.

The founding members held regular meetings – Bruce Downey and Roz Schwartz joined after the first few – to develop the vision, draft bylaws based on those of the Common Thread Community Choir in Toronto, and complete the provincial incorporation process as a not-for-profit organization.

The hope was that thirty people might attend the "first call" of interested singers. On January 9, 2002, despite a huge snow storm, and again on January 16, a total of 265 people completed applications to join the choir. They learned about the choir's goals and how it would operate with a strong volunteer base. Andy was introduced as the Founding Artistic Director and quickly had the packed Steelworkers Hall singing in four-part harmony. The spark had caught fire.

OV quickly had 110 committed singers. At first, membership was by lottery, to accommodate the demand. The structure was "flat," with total reliance on members to operate the choir. Volunteers set out chairs and sound equipment for rehearsals, served on the Music Committee, created and managed databases and the music library, served as section heads and sectional rehearsal leads, undertook the myriad concert details, brought food to the socials, produced newsletters, and more. Every contribution mattered.

The leadership team consisted of the artistic director, collaborative pianists Margot Smith and then Kim Duca, the house band of Craig Jones and Tim Aylesworth, and eventually an assistant conductor, Janice Dendy. A working board of directors supported Andy and ensured financial and operational stability. The choir made decisions based on practical principles such as Bruce Downey's suggestion: "Will doing this help us sing better?"

And sing this choir does! OV consistently brings joy, nurturance, empowerment, and healing to choir members, co-performers, and audiences. In addition to well-attended, twice-yearly concerts, the choir participates in community events in Skeleton Park and elsewhere. OV contributed to Hiroshima Day remembrances, the first-ever Skeleton Park Music Festival in 2006, and the flash-mob event in Market Square with The Gertrudes. It was part of the Outlaw Project in the 2016 Skeleton Park Halloween parade, several PeaceQuest events, and the Queen's Human Rights Arts Festival. And it sang and served lunch at Kingston Community Health Centres, where area residents were welcome to join OV in Rabble Singing. It's sung the national anthem at Kington Frontenacs games and rung in the New Year at K-Town Countdown events. The OV Outreach group cheered residents of Providence Manor, Rideaucrest, and a local Ongwanada home. OV has always put community at the heart of their activities.

Amazingly, Open Voices celebrated its twentieth year in January. It has become an important anchor in the Kingston arts scene, serving entertainment, social and educational needs, and supporting other Kingston musicians. Unfortunately, two years of singing and performing have been lost during the pandemic, and this is keenly felt at a time when everyone craves fun and connection.

OPPOSITE PAGE: OV Choir, Latin Heat concert January 2018 **(PHOTO CREDIT: CHRIS ROBART)**
ABOVE: Andy Rush, Artistic Director **(PHOTO CREDIT: CHRIS ROBART)**

How has OV maintained its momentum for two decades? Andy Rush is the choir's central pillar, providing vision, energy, and strong musical leadership. The FUN factor is huge. Andy welcomes experienced and first-time singers alike with unconditional assurances that they and their voices were "good enough" for OV. This increases members' musical and personal risk taking and their appreciation for the specialness of this choir. Andy keeps OV fresh through new members, a changing repertoire, talented guest artists, and changing venues.

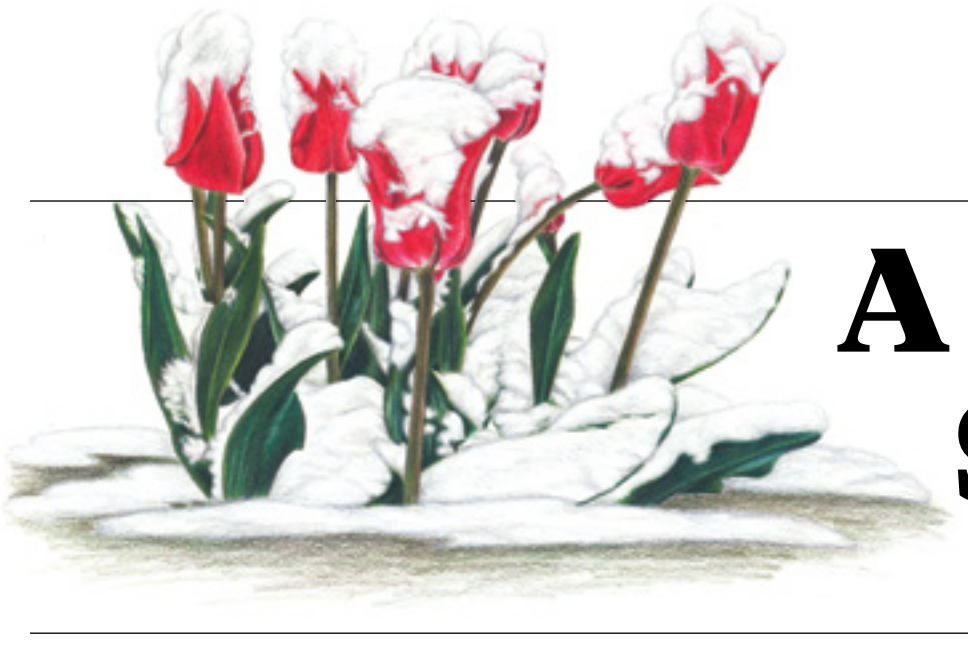
OV stays true to its original ideas, but it has also evolved. Members heavily invest their labour to ensure the choir functions smoothly, as lasting friendships develop. Rehearsals and post-concert coffee houses are safe places to learn and play. They reinforce the community aspect of OV. It was thrilling to sing with Jesse Winchester, Coco Love Alcorn, and other professional musicians. The large membership enables singers to "find their people," and couples enjoy the shared activity. There is a "feel good" aspect to the social outreach, through song or local charitable donations. The Board communicates regularly, even during the pandemic. Members want to give back, to the choir itself and ultimately to the Kingston community. As Gord McDiarmid notes, "There are so many who do so much to make it all happen. Singing opens your heart to bliss."

Opportunities for musical education by Andy or others keep interest high. Members feel privileged to attend educational workshops by Rajaton from Helsinki, or by Toronto's Suba and Dylan, or Vancouver's Brian Tate. Choralpalooza enabled local choirs to interact and showcase their work.

Concerts have been successful, some wildly so. As Andy says, "Concerts are always fun, often quirky, occasionally beautiful." Audiences are moved by the enthusiastic spirit of a large choir and the quality of singing by both professional artists and choir members. Many guest musicians are local. Georgette Fry and the Shout Sister Choir, Miss Emily, Darrell Bryan and St George's Children's Choir, Mauricio Montecinos, Night Sun, and others have raised the bar for OV and brought new audiences.

For two decades, OV has offered members and audiences joy through music. The choir demonstrates that singing together for the love of it can produce uplifting music, build relationships and add to Kingston's cultural landscape. Vernacular culture is alive and thriving. During these current times of plague, with isolation, illness and uncertainty, many of us yearn for the joy and sense of community that choral singing provides.

Stay tuned: OV will rise again!



A Celebration of Small Gardens

STORY BY **MELANIE DUGAN**
ILLUSTRATION BY **CAROLINE KWOK**

"A second marriage is the triumph of hope over experience."
– Samuel Johnson

Every autumn those of us who garden bury seeds, bulbs, and rhizomes in the earth hoping for a burst of spring blooms and forgetting — more likely willfully ignoring — the sub-zero temperatures of winter, the wind chill factor announced daily on weather stations, the walls of snow the city snowplow thoughtfully re-deposits into our carefully shovelled driveways.

And each year spring arrives, and the survivors of last year's horticultural efforts appear.

There are the rock star gardens — Les Jardins de Quatre-Vents in Charlevoix, Québéc, Butchart Gardens in Victoria, B.C. — that draw millions of visitors a year, but the gardens I find most interesting are the ones in the small front yards scattered around our neighbourhood. They are so varied, each one unique, the product of some stubborn individual's singular vision.

Up the street from where I live are two gardens, "side by each," as the Québécoise server once said, describing how she'd deliver the eggs and frites I'd ordered. The garden farthest away is the work of an expert. Geometrical precision is married with practicality, and almost every square centimetre bristles with edibles – tomatoes, garlic, onions, basil, beans, a fruit tree. Around the perimeter a few flowers are allowed. In the middle is a carefully-manicured lawn.

Beside it is a garden created by someone equally expert, but this yard is the antithesis of the first one, a free-for-all of shrubs, flowers, trees, and ferns. There are shadowy nooks and crannies that shelter unusual specimens, nothing edible to be harvested. Two distinct styles of garden, each equally beautiful.

The gardens I pass as I wander the neighbourhood are gifts from the people who plant them; they recognize that the flowers, when they finally bloom, may be picked by strangers, flattened by dogs, or munched by squirrels. All of us who put plants in the ground in Kingston know how it plays out: the excitement of seeing the first gold-green shoots, the increasing satisfaction as the plant grows larger, the swelling anticipation of flowers-to-be, and then, deflation when a raccoon digs up and tosses aside a bulb, for example, or a cold snap levels a stand of crocuses.

Each garden is a portrait of its maker: some designs are whimsical and playful, others carefully marshalled and organized, yet others random, rambunctious, and sprawling. But all of them — each frothy spill of white snow-in-summer, each burst of yellow forsythia, each flare of glowing tulips — announce winter's retreat and spring's arrival. Each one merits celebration.

MELANIE DUGAN is a writer who lives in Kingston. The author of four novels, she lived in Boston, Toronto, and London, England before settling in Kingston. She has an abiding interest in history.

New Tipi, Ceremonial Grounds at Elizabeth Fry

Opening event an experience of culture and community

STORY BY **SADIQA DE MEIJER**

Maddexx Davidson at the Tipi Ceremony **(PHOTO CREDIT: JENNIFER KEHOE)**

The first National Day for Truth and Reconciliation took place on September 30, in warm fall weather that feels distant as I write this on a day with a deep wind chill. One part of that morning, however, remains clear and vivid: the sight of a boy, perhaps ten or eleven years old, grass dancing at the opening ceremony for the newly raised tipi at Elizabeth Fry Kingston (EFK) on Charles Street.

Approximately seventy guests had arrived on the EFK grounds and were seated in distanced folding chairs. Those present included Laurel Claus-Johnson, of the Katarokwi Grandmothers' Council, Mark Gerretsen, MP for Kingston and the Islands, and City Councillor Jim Neill. A waning moon was in the sky. The tipi was a presence in front of us, about two stories tall and made of wooden poles and cotton canvas. Many attendees were wearing orange shirts; these were also handed out as gifts on arrival. While we waited for the opening of the Tipi and Ceremonial Grounds to begin, I listened in on conversations around me: "I wore this scarf because it looks Indigenous," one white woman said. Another said it was difficult to know how to help with what Indigenous people were facing. Someone had to be reminded not to photograph the sacred fire.

We were in territory meant to be governed by the Dish With One Spoon covenant. This was an agreement originally made in 1701 between the Anishinaabe, Mississauga, and Haudenosaunee peoples. The Dish represents the land — the Great Lakes region — and the Spoon symbolizes the people who live there and agree to peacefully share the responsibility of ensuring the Dish is never empty. Other nations, including settler ones, were later invited into this covenant. Clearly, the latter groups, to which I as an immigrant also belong, have profoundly betrayed the agreement. Current settler colonialism relies on the targeting of Indigenous peoples through the incarceration and child welfare systems; aggressive resource extraction; the failure to provide infrastructure and health care to Indigenous communities; and more.

On this Orange Shirt Day, everyone knew that the bodies of hundreds of children had recently been located at the former Kamloops Indian Residential School, and that there were bound to be more victims at other institutions. The so-called schools were not only genocidal in their disruption of cultural knowledge and love passing from grandparents and parents to children, but were deadly. Therefore, this gathering held complicated layers: it was a celebration, the culmination of sustained and meaningful work by both settler and Indigenous contributors, as well as an upstream effort by a group of nations existing within the persistently destructive systems of another; it was also laden with Indigenous people's grief.

When the presentations began, Yvonne Holland, President of the EFK Board of Directors, spoke of the intentions behind the tipi: to offer a safe, ceremonial healing space to Indigenous clients of EFK. Kanonhsyonne (Janice Hill), Assistant Vice President of Queen's University's Indigenous Initiatives and Reconciliation, explained that tipis are shaped like skirts, and are associated with the life-giving and sharing activities of women. Their structures are made both to shelter and to move — so that tribes could follow buffalo herds, or escape flooding, for example.

Knowledge Keepers Lorie Young and Broderick Gabriel also spoke. Young described a childhood experience of being caught in a car during a buffalo stampede. Some animals knocked against the vehicle, forcefully rocking it back and forth. She told us that tipis were designed to withstand those same impacts of stampeding animals. They were even known to stay anchored during tornadoes. Gabriel explained that their three central poles should be strong enough that a whole buffalo body could be suspended for skinning. The EFK tipi had a sign at each pole to explain its meaning: for example, the fourth pole signifies happiness, and encourages actions that will make the Indigenous person's ancestors happy.

The ceremony was followed by a shared feast. But before all that, there was the grass dance — this prepares the ground for ceremony by flattening the grasses, and so it preceded some of the other speakers and singers. The dancer was Maddexx Davidson. He was dancing to a song called "Wildflower," which had been gifted to him by elder Barbara Hooper, and is a call over the hills for the community's children to come home. The song is meant to warn them of danger. Maddexx, the lone child wearing regalia and following the sound of the drumming, was a profoundly stirring sight. But partway through the dance, he decided to stop — there was not enough space between the tipi and the audience for him to move safely and properly. I was impressed that, at his age, he had the discernment and self-possession to know what to do. His mother, Jennifer Kehoe, said afterwards that this was because of the strong traditional teachings that he had received.

SADIQA DE MEIJER lives in the neighbourhood and thinks the minimum wage should be a living wage. Her writing won a Governor General's Literary Award in 2021.

“I'M REALLY EXCITED BY THE CITY RECENTLY NAMING CREATIVE INDUSTRIES AS A PRIORITY SECTOR AND ALL THAT COULD ENTAIL.

Lights, Camera, Kingston

Meet Alex Jansen, the City's Film Commissioner

INTERVIEW BY **EMILY COPPELLA**

As Film Commissioner for the City of Kingston, Alex Jansen leads the development and growth of the film and media sector. Since launching the Kingston Film Office in 2018, he has developed a number of new initiatives, including local training opportunities and incentive programs, which have helped attract record levels of production. Jansen has produced award-winning films, video games, graphic novels, and interactive experiences. He is founder of the Kingston Canadian Film Festival and teaches part-time at Queen's in the Department of Film and Media.

EMILY COPPELLA: Some major productions hosted in Kingston since formation of the Film Office in 2018 include *DC's Titans* (Netflix), *Murdoch Mysteries* and *Star Trek: Discovery*. How did the last year look for the Kingston Film Office? What are you most proud of?

ALEX JANSEN: We returned from lockdown around mid-February 2021 into what ended up being our busiest year ever. All told, there was about $5 million in direct spending from production. About half of the production was at the Kingston Penitentiary, but we saw production throughout Kingston. There was a notable decline in smaller or local production, due largely to the very necessary but costly expenses tied to filming during COVID, but record levels of major production. Some of the notable productions this last year included the pilot for the new Amazon series, *Reacher*, three shooting blocks of Paramount's *Mayor of Kingstown* with Jeremy Renner and Diane Wiest, and the season finale for Dan Brown's *The Lost Symbol* on NBC Universal.

A definite highlight was a stretch in June when we had the *Mayor of Kingstown* at Kingston Penitentiary at the same time as both a two-episode run of *Murdoch Mysteries* shooting in a dozen locations throughout Kingston, and an end-to-end, low-budget feature filming entirely in the neighbouring Frontenac region. There were about 200 members of the community involved with productions in various capacities at that point, and it was really exciting to see that level and variety of activity, especially in a COVID year.

EC: How does being a resident of the Skeleton Park neighbourhood affect how you approach your professional work?

AJ: I think what makes Skeleton Park such a great neighborhood is the incredible sense of community, especially the strong arts community. There are so many creative people from such varied disciplines, all very supportive and open to collaboration. The Skeleton Park Arts Festival is an amazing example of that. Fostering that type of collaborative local arts community has been central to our efforts at the Film Office.

EC: *Mayor of Kingstown*, arguably one of the biggest productions to shoot here, generated an estimated $2 million through hotel accommodations alone this past summer. How else do Kingston film shoots boost the local economy?

AJ: *Mayor of Kingstown* is a great example of the broad economic impact production can have. We had thirty members of the community involved in junior crew roles and more than 150 involved as background performers, and that's on top of more than 300 visiting cast and crew all frequenting local restaurants and businesses.

There's also a lot of direct impact people don't necessarily immediately think of, everything from local equipment rentals, cleaners, painters, electricians, transportation, waste management, security, and so on. Meanwhile, Kingston Penitentiary had over $100,000 in repairs and upgrades.

EC: As an adjunct professor at Queen's, you've been able to connect students and community members to production opportunities here in Kingston – specifically through Netflix's *Locke & Key*. What has that experience been like?

AJ: We try to connect the local community to incoming productions as much as possible. There are restrictions on major productions, which are highly unionized and only certain roles are open to non-members. That said, we've recently begun developing a trial incentive program for non-union productions that shoot end-to-end locally with a half-million-dollar or greater budget and on-set training opportunities for area residents across meaningful roles.

And while we've seen a decrease in local production due to COVID, we've been able to connect some of our local production companies to opportunities on incoming productions, such as running camera on a Channel 4 series, a CBC documentary, and a recent commercial.

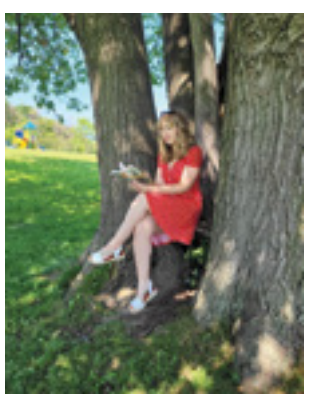
On top of regular local workshops, we've developed a trial Practicum course with Queen's Film and Media that we're hoping to expand to multiple community partners through an ongoing proposal with Skills Development Ontario.

EC: When you're juggling so many responsibilities, are there any neighbourhood locales you go to for a change of scenery?

AJ: COVID has been tough for enjoying a lot of usual neighbourhood haunts like the Elm Café. I've largely found myself enjoying the area outdoors, jogging the streets, walking the park, or having backyard drinks with friends during the lockdown. I'm grateful for the community. It might stretch the border too far, but I also try to get out to soccer at Caton's [Caton's Field, on Bagot Street] as much as possible in the summer.

EC: Looking back on all the major achievements by the Kingston Film Office, especially during the COVID-19 pandemic, what does the future of the office look like?

AJ: I'm really excited by the City recently naming Creative Industries as a priority sector and all that could entail. I think we'll continue to see record levels of major production, but we're also going to see a strong rebound of smaller and local production as COVID gets under control. And as we continue to develop local talent, infrastructure, and incentives, we'll be able to attract more end-to-end production that doesn't just come, shoot, and leave, but actually anchors itself here. I think we'll see continued growth in the foundation of an industry right here in Kingston.



EMILY COPPELLA is a writer and intersectional feminist completing her M.A. in English Language and Literature at Queen's University while working for Tourism Kingston. Her poetry has been published by Coven Editions, In/Words, and has placed second for the George Johnston Poetry Prize.

How the Closing of the Sleepless Goat Inspired My Next Chapter

Flying the "freak flag" in a closed café's honour

STORY BY **CHRISTINA AVERY**

"THE SLEEPLESS GOAT WAS A BEACON OF HOPE IN AN INCREASINGLY CORPORATE DOWNTOWN — AND WORLD.

Over its twenty-five years, The Sleepless Goat Café was a beacon of hope in an increasingly corporate downtown — and world. For those who never had the pleasure of lazy afternoons sipping fair trade coffee and people watching or of catching a live show or a slam poetry event before the Goat's closure, allow me to paint you a picture.

Everyone was welcome at The Goat. This was especially true if you were part of the 2SLGBTQIA+* community, if you were BIPOC (Black, Indigenous, People of Colour), or if you were unhoused or struggling with mental health issues. The Goat was a place for the "others." And if you consider yourself a "normie," you were welcome too. Warm vegan soup and fresh-baked bread were available for free to anyone who wanted them. A pay-it-forward board allowed you to leave a coffee or meal for the next person who could use it. The Goat had a place for children to play, board games, a library full of radical books, and gender-neutral bathrooms, way before the latter was on people's radars. I came in the first day I moved to Kingston from Texas — you wanna talk culture shock — for the city's best vegan food. Artists passed through, both in the seats and on the walls (one of my favourite exhibits was a travelling exhibit of works by incarcerated folks).

The Goat became a cooperative in 2000, shifting towards a non-hierarchical model where all workers had equal say in how the business operated. Workers were allowed, nay encouraged, to let their freak flag fly and were so incredibly, quirkily, themselves. The Goat was a magical place of first dates, of chance meetings, of running into everyone you've ever met in one place, and of warm, welcoming, you-definitely-belong-here community. And one day it had to close.

I don't know exactly when the end started, but I do know that when I started there, the café was already in massive debt. Then we were hit with some scary cease and desist letters due to illegal streaming, and we had to stop offering Wi-Fi. With no access to internet, many students and folks who went there to work stopped coming. We lost our liquor license, and much of the evening traffic dried up. The "big dig" saw big stretches of Princess Street dug up, blocking the flow of traffic for months. We had catastrophic building maintenance and repair issues that we couldn't afford to deal with. And the cost of rent and hydro alone was drowning us.

The closure of The Goat happened very abruptly. It was the end of an era.

One of the things The Sleepless Goat did for me was give me a chance. Before working there, I was a single mother who dreamt of working with food. When I heard that my most favourite place in the whole world was hiring, I knew there was nowhere I would rather spend my days. I was kindly given the hours I needed, and when I couldn't have my child in school or my childcare fell through, my kids got a booth and we carried on. (It wasn't all rainbows and butterflies — in a meeting about the café's imminent closure, my youngest binged on cinnamon rolls and vomited all over the basement. Adventures in parenting.) I learned how to work a line and in a kitchen, both of which I was horrible at, but they let me keep trying. I was given the freedom to run with my ideas, and I began to flex my creative muscles to fill gaps in the vegan food scene in Kingston. The Goat was also the setting for my first date and long courtship with my now husband, Rad, whom I met the day I got the job. He started as a customer but later became a worker, and the sparks began to fly.

Without The Goat, Kingston was without a vegan food haven (among many, many other things). Although Rad and I were freshly coupled and not yet thinking of much beyond smooching, we started getting requests from people looking for special food orders. When we were asked to do a wedding, teach a cooking class, and set up a booth for a vegetarian food festival in the same week, we figured it was time to come up with a name and think about being a real business. As soon as word got out, the floodgates opened. We got excited requests for in-home dinner parties for former Goat regulars, and jumped into planning plant-based Thanksgiving and Christmas meals. We booked weddings, festivals, and other events where there was a vegan-food void.

One of my long-time goals was encouraging local restaurants to provide vegan options, for the completely selfish reason of wanting to have something to eat at a restaurant. At our house one night, we wined and dined the chef of Atomica, Cass Mercier, and came up with a plan to introduce a full plant-based menu at her restaurant. After a sold-out opening night, the menu was a huge success, and we established ourselves as leaders in plant-based food. Later, Bayview Farm by Clark Day and AquaTerra both hired us to help refine and plan vegan options.

During this time, we went through big changes personally. Rad underwent a gender transition to male. This was a tender process to go through in the public eye, and we had to decide whether we wanted to share personal details of this journey. We decided that we were and always had been more than just a food brand, and sharing meant using our platform to educate and advocate for other transgender folks.

We've continued to be unabashedly open, queer, and vocal about trans issues, 2SLGBTQIA+ issues, feminism, human

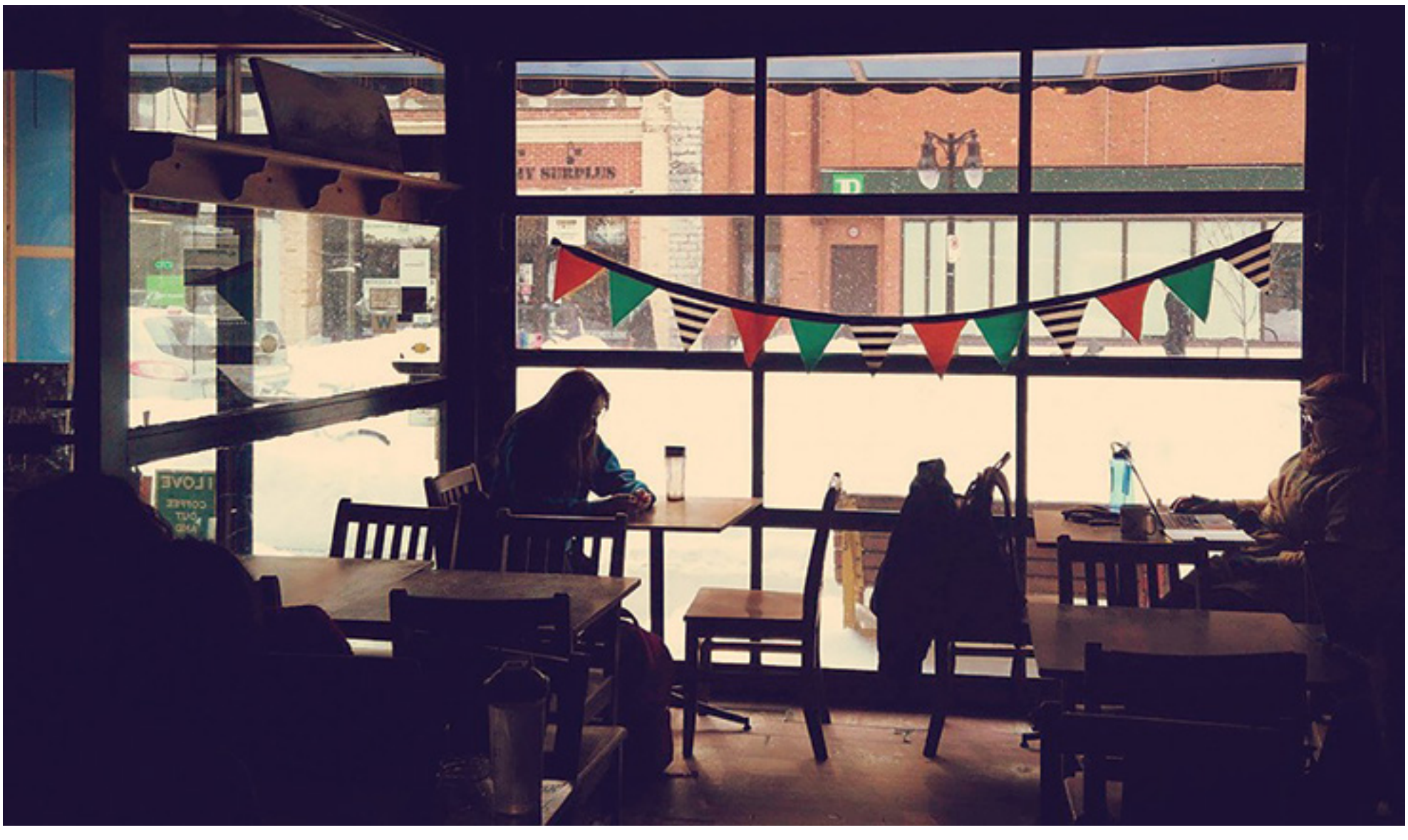
rights, environmental issues, and animal rights. Our opinions are not always popular, but we're here to make the world a better place for everyone, not just to sell burgers. We don't want to feed folks that are "phobes" of any sort, and we lose nothing by living authentically. This has amplified recently, as Rad is nearing the end of his pregnancy as a trans man. While the world isn't kind to folks living this experience, our customers, friends, and Kingston community have outshone even the harshest critics.

We try to carry on the memory of The Goat while providing the best vegan options in the city, and we hope to embody a spirit of kindness and welcome that the café was known for, especially for folks that feel "othered." We proudly fly our freak flag in its honour. We hope to encourage people to live authentically, take risks, and eat more plants because it helps other people and the world too. We hope to be more than a business, finding success while eschewing traditional capitalist ideals and being mindful of our environmental impacts.

Nothing can replace The Sleepless Goat. It was a brave and accountable space, a fun space, and a tasty space that meant so much to so many people, and it will live on in Kingston legend. We can't replicate it because of how many talented, caring, artistic, musical, creative, and hardworking folks worked there over its twenty-five-year run, and how they and the fine folks who filled its spaces contributed to its culture, kindness, and reputation. Just like the very best people, The Goat lives on in you and in me and will never truly be gone if we keep its spirit alive in ourselves and in our community.

*2SLGBTQIA+ stands for Two-Spirit, lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer, questioning, intersex, and asexual people. The + refers to HIV/AIDS positive people and those with sexual orientations and genders not captured by the acronym.

CHRISTINA AVERY is a local foodie, co-owner of Knifey Spooney, writer, and parent. She spends her time outside the kitchen eating sweets and fighting about social justice on the internet.



TOP: Inside the Goat on a snowy day **(PHOTO CREDIT: CHRISTINA AVERY)**; **BOTTOM LEFT:** The Skeleton Park Arts Festival after party outside the Goat in 2013 **(PHOTO CREDIT: JONATHAN BARTON)**; **BOTTOM RIGHT:** The storefront of the Sleepless Goat **(PHOTO CREDIT: CHRISTINA AVERY)**

Really, Really Free Veggie Markets

Direct action for food security and community

STORY BY **THE REALLY REALLY FREE MARKETS AND MUTUAL AID GARDENS ORGANIZING GROUP**

In response to the COVID-19 pandemic, we've seen all kinds of people spring into action to help each other out, just as they have in response to other crises that have temporarily disrupted our everyday lives. These grassroots initiatives are often categorized as "mutual aid," and draw on Indigenous and non/pre-western knowledge and ways of being.

It has been heartening to see so many caring and pro-social responses to the pandemic. But we need to aim to do more than help each other. Many efforts to address food insecurity fail to challenge the existing structures of the food system, or the underlying and unjust economic and political systems that emerged from settler-colonialism. Mutual Aid Katarokwi-Kingston (MAKK), formed in March 2020, seeks to use grassroots efforts to link real needs among people (such as the need for food) with an inherently politicized approach to get needs met over the long term. The Really, Really Free Veggie Markets and the Gardens Group originated from this MAKK structure.

Mutual aid efforts operate under the assumption that only the fundamental transformation of society can truly meet our needs, and aid is mobilized in service of that larger goal. Charity draws a stark distinction between helpless (and often sinning) recipients and benevolent, god-like do-gooders. For us, a mutual aid framework understands all people as part of a whole. We strive to collaborate with others to address food insecurity and undermine our dependence on a destructive corporate food system, and to work towards lives more worth living for all of us.

Rather than asking those in power for assistance, this project takes direct action, with immediate results that empower those involved.

The Gardens Group uses this approach in its efforts to address the lack of access to fresh vegetables and gardening spaces within the local community. We match folks with unused yards/garden space with neighbours who lack garden space but are committed to growing food. These collectively managed gardens grow food, herbs, and flowers, and those involved share skills and resources, and organize around members' interests and needs. Along with vegetables, we also aim to grow community, a feeling of togetherness where members can fully share the garden's space as well as its bounty. Participants have the opportunity to donate extra produce from their garden to the Really, Really Free Veggie Markets that run bimonthly pop-up markets around Kingston from June to October.

The Veggie Markets and Gardens are entirely voluntary initiatives. Rather than asking those in power for assistance, this project takes direct action, with immediate results that empower those involved. As the Indigenous Mutual Aid network, a collective hub of organizers from across Turtle Island, puts it: "Any time individuals and groups in our communities have taken direct action (not through politicians or indirect means) and supported others … this is what we call 'mutual aid.'"

During Really, Really Free Veggie Markets, we share fresh produce with others in the community, encouraging everyone to contribute what they can and take what they will. Two years into the pandemic, the Gardens Group has grown to over thirteen gardens and two collectively run farm plots. People work together to plant, grow, and harvest seedlings that have been either grown by volunteers or donated by local farmers who are also committed to nurturing people's self-reliance and growing equitable food access. The season starts with a plant swap and seed and seedling giveaway. People can bring their extra seedlings or pick up new seedlings for their own garden as well as potted veggies and herbs that they can grow on a balcony or in other small spaces. One of the most fulfilling things about the Really, Really Free Veggie markets is the exchange between participants — someone sharing a jar of salsa they made from the last market's tomatoes, a gardening or cooking tip, or young people riding off on their bikes with bunches of kale and salty political stickers to share with their family.

The COVID-19 virus continues to mutate and spread, driven by corporate pharmaceutical monopolies on vaccines, (among other vital medicines). Individualist and neglectful state policies, meanwhile, further erode social bonds and mental and emotional wellbeing. We saw food supply systems falter at the onset of the pandemic, and even when they function as they are designed, they still leave many hungry. When the power of food is usurped by corporations that put profits first, other considerations, like making sure our food is healthy and accessible and our means for acquiring it doesn't further harm the land, take a backseat to priorities held by corporate shareholders. How do we move beyond the immediate crisis and contribute to a truly transformed food system?

We hope more people will join the Gardens Group and the Really, Really Free Veggie Markets to grow, harvest, eat, and build community in 2022. Plans are underway for increased opportunities for people to seed-save, to grow seedlings, and to plant and harvest together. Ultimately, we seek to build transformative social relations based on dignity, care, and collective power.

THE REALLY, REALLY FREE MARKETS AND MUTUAL AID GARDENS ORGANIZING GROUP includes new and experienced gardeners, anarchists, queerdos, and veggie-lovers who share a deep sadness about the capitalist/colonial death-cult we live in, and envision possible, delicious, liberated futures.

Xiaobing Shen

Chinese Peasant Food at the Farmers' Market

STORY BY **DAVID PARKER**

Xiaobing Shen is a chef, farmer, and market vendor who specializes in making the tastiest Chinese peasant food I've ever eaten. I've been eating his dumplings and steamed buns for most of the time I've lived in Kingston.

I first met Shen in 2014 at a Wednesday afternoon market on Queen's campus. They had been living in the region for about a year. Shen and his partner at the time, Jonathan Davies, were soon selling their food and vegetables at the Memorial Centre Farmers' Market, and he continues to sell there today.

"I call this Chinese peasant food," Shen tells me. "It's a common type of street food everywhere in China. Every family in China knows how to make it. It's very flexible, you can use anything you have to make this type of food."

Over the years I have taken two cooking classes in Shen's kitchen. In 2015 my partner and I were leaving Kingston. Some friends came over to help us empty the apartment and load the van. Shen cooked the tastiest noodle soup for us, with hand-rolled noodles, freshly made right there on the counter, a simple broth, and a few farm-fresh veggies.

Shen says he learned his cooking techniques from his mother. "I don't think I was taught by anyone. My mom made this type of food quite often when I grew up, but she never taught me step by step.

"The first time I remember starting to make it," he said, "we were living in Munich," where he lived with Jonathan from 2007 to 2011. "We were getting wild vegetables from the English garden, wild garlic. We harvested some from the public park and decided to use them to make Chinese buns. That was the first time I started to make it on my own."

Due to a change in my job situation last year, I had the opportunity to work with Shen once a week on his farm (Long Road Eco Farm) north of Kingston near Harrowsmith, helping prepare the food that he sells every week at the Memorial Centre Farmers' Market.

Back in 2011-12, Shen and Davies were getting ready to quit their day jobs in Toronto, buy a farm, and move to the country to set up a home, a business, and a life. "It was a team decision," recalls Shen. "I couldn't have done it alone. When two people in a partnership share the workload, they also share the risk. It feels much easier. At that time we had shared views on farming and food so we made the decision.

"We were looking for something contrary to life in Toronto — so busy, and not really fulfilling. We were always travelling, living quite a materialistic life. We were interested in organic food, so we would go to farmers' markets to buy vegetables and meat. We just wanted a simpler lifestyle."

> **It's street food. Every family in China knows how to make it.**

The farm where Shen lives and works feels spacious, surrounded by tree cover, with a woodlot in the back. There are pigs, chickens, turkeys, and geese. In front of the house there's a vegetable patch and a former greenhouse whose cover was destroyed during inclement weather. In the back of the house Shen has built a greenhouse that feels like balmy summertime, even in winter. There was an old above-ground pool he emptied and filled with sand. The greenhouse frame was built around it, and the pool walls reflect heat onto the vegetable beds inside. At the centre of the former pool there stands a smaller greenhouse, which feels about twice as hot as the exterior one. Inside this one Shen rotates various vegetables, but there always seemed to be big healthy ginger plants whenever I visited.

It's hard to imagine Shen doing any other job — he seems built for it. At the same time, the farm is evidently a huge amount of work. The difficulty of the work must have payoffs other than monetary ones: the satisfaction of watching life grow all around you, and of harvesting some of that life for your own sustenance; to be so closely connected to the earth underneath you that nourishes plants, animals, and yourself.

I asked Shen what he liked most about his life. "Over the summers, when I can spend a few hours outside, just working alone. That's quite enjoyable. You are immersed into that simple task. It's very meditative."

Shen is a regular smiling face at the Memorial Centre Farmers' Market and has watched it grow over the years. "It's very important for every city to have a market like it. The vendors can make a living. There are smaller markets around this region but they are not able to sustain a business. The volume of customers at the Memorial Centre Farmers' Market is what's important, and it determines how many sales a business can get. I feel quite appreciative that we have a market at the Memorial Centre."

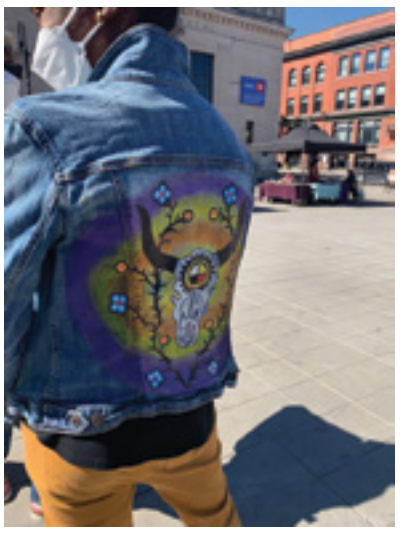
DAVID PARKER is a musician, artist, web developer, gardener, and father. He plays improvised music solo and in ensembles, and his latest release is called *Every Day Life*. He lives with his family right beside the Memorial Centre Farmers' Market.

Connecting Communities at the Indigenous Market

STORY BY **JENNIFER KEHOE**

The inaugural Katarowki Indigenous Market, held in Market Square on Sunday, September 19, 2021 and running on subsequent Sundays until the end of October, was so much more than Indigenous Peoples offering a variety of traditional pieces of artwork and food for sale. It was an intentional act of creating space for connection, teaching, healing, and gathering.

CLOCKWISE FROM TOP: VendorJudi Montgomery at her table; Metis singing duo ALPHA performing; Customers Karen and Kirsti Siltanen with their purchases of artwork from Rob Spade; Hand-painted jean jacket, crafted by W.C Creative **PHOTO CREDIT:** Jennifer Kehoe



When I was first approached by Riel Consulting to be the contact person for this event, I was hesitant due the amount of responsibility it would entail. To some this may have been just another event, but for me it was the opportunity for so much more. I accepted the honour of representing Riel Consulting, anticipating that over the six weeks the market was held we would begin to foster deeper relationships between the Indigenous community and the non-Indigenous community.

I actively seek ways to better understand the differences between Indigenous peoples and settlers/non-Indigenous peoples, and I believe such seeking can strengthen us. This is what ultimately led me to decide to accept the role to hold this very privileged space. Throughout the duration of the market, I witnessed first-hand the beauty that was awaiting each Sunday, a beauty that is almost impossible to describe. The vendors helped each other in various ways, from lending a hand while setting up, to watching each other's tents if a vendor had to step away, to directing customers to one another if a customer was looking for a particular item. These are just a few ways the vendors connected with each other in an organic and natural way, building a network of support. The customers were as varied as the vendors. Some were local Kingstonians, some were visiting from faraway places, having arrived by tour bus. Seeing the delight of the shoppers admiring the variety of unique handmade traditional pieces was wonderful.

There was no shortage of talent, teachings and blessings that were offered over the six weeks. Every Sunday from noon to 1 p.m. there was a scheduled presentation that was reflective of this territory, which is made up of various First Nations, Métis, and Inuit Peoples. In week one the market was opened in a good way by Maddexx Davidson, a ten-year-old Algonquin grass dancer. With love, light, and energy, he offered the gift of dance to warm the ground that we would be occupying, so we could gather in the best way possible. Weeks Two and Five offered singing and drumming from the ALPHA duo, consisting of Donna Lynn and Angel. Week Three featured Métis fiddle and dance (jig) from Candace Lloyd and Nicolas Delbaere-Sauchuk, and Week Four featured Whispering Winds singers Brodrick Gabriel and Lorie Young. Week Six included Métis sash teachings with Candace Lloyd.

Even though the scheduled presentations were structured in nature, the energy that each market day offered was absorbed into those who came to the market, and the square became a place of learning, acceptance, and understanding. The crowds became interactive with those who were offering their traditional gifts. With the round dance that formed each Sunday there was a sense of community that brought unity to all. Gentle smiles and nods were exchanged. You may not have been able to see them because we had to wear masks, but these smiles were felt by the heart. This was the essence of the Ka'tarohkwi Indigenous Market — a place to gather, learn new things, and support each other where each of us are at.

When the final Sunday arrived and the event had come to an end, it was time to close the Circle we had opened until we gathered again. We needed to honour that space with love, care, and respect. Some of the vendors and community members brought their drums, rattles, and voices to have an intertribal offering of song and dance. It was an absolutely perfect way to conclude powerful gatherings of youth, mentors, and community, and allowed all to share the positive and successful times they had shared — creating new relationships, healing broken ones, and deepening their own sense of self and community. My work was done, for now. I can only hope in the future to create more spaces like those I was blessed to be a part of building with the Ka'tarohkwi Indigenous Market.

Chi Miigwetch to The Skeleton Press for their interest in sharing my perspective of the inspiring moments of the Katarowki Indigenous Market. It's the beginning of a new journey we are embarking on together as we continue to walk gently on Mother Earth, leaving a good moccasin trail wherever we go.

Baamaapii

JENNIFER KEHOE is an Indigenous community member who attempts to foster and develop meaningful relationships between the Indigenous and non-Indigenous communities to bring us all to a better understanding of each other. She does an incredible amount of heart work to address the issue of food insecurity for our most vulnerable and marginalized populations.

Community Supported Agriculture: More Than Just Good Food!

To invest in a CSA is to invest in your community

STORY BY **AYLA FENTON**

WE NEED TO DEVELOP NEW ECONOMIC MODELS THAT PRIORITIZE SOLIDARITY, COMMUNITY, AND THE HEALTH OF BOTH PEOPLE AND THE PLANET.

In recent years you have probably heard lots about what is wrong with our food system. I have worked in local agriculture and the food sovereignty movement for ten years and I could easily fill this newspaper with essays about the inequities, injustices, and destruction caused by the capitalist food system.

More than four million Canadians are affected by food insecurity, and diet-related disease is one of the leading causes of death and disability. Industrialized food systems drive climate change, producing thirty per cent of greenhouse gas emissions worldwide. The capitalist drive for profit and the resulting lack of good management practices have in many cases lowered biodiversity, stimulated deforestation/desertification, and contaminated waterways. Food production in North America is increasingly reliant on the exploitation of racialized migrant labour and the displacement of traditional foodways, and the profits from food production are increasingly concentrated among a handful of transnational corporations rather than cycled through local communities. While food prices are rising, food workers' wages remain stagnant, farm debt is at an all-time high, and most farmers rely heavily on off-farm income to keep their farms afloat.

In short, this dominant model values profit over people, and consistently fails to deliver either food security or sustainable livelihoods for food producers. The average consumer struggles to make sense of this immensely complex system. So how can we change it?

Broadly speaking, we need to shift to an agro-ecological food system with shorter, transparent distribution chains — this means more direct marketing of whole foods between farmers and consumers. Local markets naturally encourage farmers to implement more sustainable and ecologically-sound practices because consumers care deeply about land management practices in their own backyards. We need to develop new economic models that prioritize solidarity, community, and the health of both people and the planet. Community Supported Agriculture (CSA) supports this necessary shift in food cultures.

The CSA model, as we know it, originated in the USA in the mid-1980s. In a CSA program customers pay their local farmer up-front at the beginning of the year, and then receive regular deliveries of food throughout the growing season. It's a win-win situation — customers receive a discount on the fresh, local food they are purchasing, and farmers receive a level of economic security that does not exist in conventional capitalist markets.

By receiving payment in the winter, before the growing season begins, the farmer starts the year with cash in the bank to purchase seeds and other supplies, and to cover labour costs. Agriculture has always been a high-risk industry, as yields — and profits — are highly dependent on uncontrollable forces such as weather and pest pressure. With CSA, the investment risks are not concentrated on the farmer alone, but distributed among the entire customer base. It is a model of economic solidarity, allowing farmers to invest in the land, in their workers, and in their communities.

Beyond providing a solution to the multiple food security and environmental issues society faces, CSAs are a delicious, fun, and affordable way to eat! When you receive your weekly or biweekly share of the harvest, you are getting the freshest, tastiest seasonal produce possible. As you learn to use new types of vegetables, your palate and culinary abilities will expand. Most farms provide their CSA members with descriptions of unfamiliar vegetables, offer recipe ideas, storage tips, and so on. And while there is a common misconception that local food is more expensive, CSAs are a very affordable way to increase your vegetable intake, as subscriptions can be anywhere from ten to twenty-five per cent cheaper than retail prices. Many farms also offer sliding-scale pricing or installment payment options to ensure financial accessibility.

Purchasing a CSA share is an excellent way to strengthen community ties and expand your social circle. I have worked on various local farms over the years, and it is always so much fun to connect with customers at the weekly CSA pickup or farmers market, and to see customers building relationships with each other. Many of the CSA farmers listed below are also highly active in the broader social justice and food sovereignty movements. Investing in a CSA is an investment in your community.

Have I convinced you yet? You can purchase a CSA share from any of the following farms, but hurry, as they sell out quickly.

ROOT RADICAL CSA: rootradicalrows.com
ROOTS DOWN ORGANIC FARM: rootsdown.ca
THE KITCHEN GARDEN: thekitchengarden.ca/csa
SALT OF THE EARTH FARM: saltofkingston.com
MAIN STREET URBAN FARM: mainstreeturbanfarm.ca
PATCHWORK GARDENS (Winter CSA only): patchworkgardens.ca
CHARLIE'S ACRES: charliesacres.ca
ROOTED OAK FARM: rootedoak.ca

AYLA FENTON is a first-generation farmer and the Urban Agriculture Organizer with Loving Spoonful. Loving Spoonful works to connect people with good food in Kingston and area through their Fresh Food Access, Community Kitchens, and Urban Agriculture programs. To learn more about their work, visit lovingspoonful.org.

Navigating the Pandemic

The Memorial Centre Farmers' Market rises to the challenge

STORY BY **EMMA BARKEN**

It's a funny premise really; you take a bunch of farmers — several of them selling more or less the same thing at more or less the same price. These same producers, who are selling side by side, govern the farmers' market and decide who gets a spot at the market and who doesn't. And these people are supposed to get along? It's a tall order, but it's been happening at the Memorial Centre Farmers' Market for the past ten years. Such co-operation is essential, in fact, to keeping the whole operation cohesive and stable.

Farmers' markets are typically born out of a desire to have a direct relationship between producers and customers. Sometimes that desire stems from a neighbourhood, sometimes from the producers, also known as vendors. In the case of the Memorial Centre Farmers' Market, which is technically run by the Farmers' Market Association of Kingston (FMAK), it was both — the Williamsville Community Association and a small group of farmers met out of a shared desire to start a market in the Williamsville neighbourhood, and the Memorial Centre was a logical spot.

It hasn't always been a perfect spot; it has its challenges. There was the Sunday in September 2021 when you could come to the Memorial Centre Farmers' Market, the Kingson Ribfest and Craft Beer event, go on rides at a midway, get your COVID vaccine, and take a shuttle to your advance polling station. While that's a ridiculous line-up, the market's strategy for years has been to make it a fun place to spend a Sunday: you can pick up your veggies after an outdoor yoga class, or grab churros and head to the dog park. How about decorating a zucchini and racing it down a wooden track at the Zucchini 500? Or showing off your lederhosen at mini-Oktoberfest?

"WHAT WE'VE GAINED IS A RENEWED UNDERSTANDING THAT WORKING TOGETHER CAN BENEFIT ALL."

But what happens when a fun place to go isn't in the cards, as we all discovered abruptly in March 2020? The Farmers' Market's value as an essential service came sharply into focus. It had a role to play getting food to people when supply chains were failing, and grocery stores were daunting places to go. Suddenly the Farmers' Market didn't seem so fun, and coming up with the next event wasn't the priority. Instead, figuring out how to make sure customers got their food safely and easily was the task at hand.

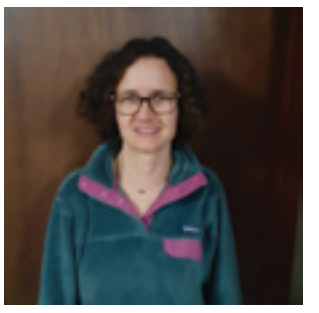
A central concern was ensuring that producers could continue to sell their goods and stay in business. After all, the main goals of the FMAK are to create an opportunity for local farmers to market their products and to build food security in Kingston. With more than forty vendors most years, the market's strength has always been the broad array of product offerings, and so the switch to an online store was no different. The focus had to be on accommodating the most vendors possible so they could stay in business despite the curveballs thrown our way through the pandemic.

The pivot from an in-person market to an online store happened in a week. Only one market day was missed. Those dark, early days were busy ones — many models were on the table. Would this be a delivery service? Would customers order online directly from vendors and pick up from each vendor?

The decision was to band together as much as possible: to offer a one-stop service where customers could shop for all products in one online store and receive all products in one bag or box. The vendors and a few dedicated volunteers took turns working on Sundays to pack orders and hand them to customers. In this model, vendors weren't just working side by side to sell their own products. They were packing each others' goods, gaining intimate knowledge of what each vendor was selling. Forget about competition. Vendors had to care about each others' products at a whole new level to make sure customers had an overall positive experience from the online market.

Two years later, the online store format has served its purpose very well — it has kept the goods flowing and it has been very consistent and stable. It has not been nearly as much fun. But it has brought into focus that while special events can help dress up the market, stripped down it's all about the vendors and their offerings.

Lacking in the online store is what we're all missing — the face-to-face contact, the incidental conversations, the connections, the community. While we've gotten to know customers by car make and model, and picked up some new customers along the way, it's not the same as the weekly "come for coffee, stay for lunch, take home dinner" mantra that's driven much of the market's planning. What we've gained is a renewed understanding of our place in the community, the essential role farmers' markets play in providing access to food, and that working together can benefit all.



EMMA BARKEN has been the Memorial Centre Farmers' Market Operations Manager since 2014. While's she helped many Kingstonians navigate the sending of e-Transfers since March 2020, she much prefers being part of the hubbub of a bustling market.

The Memorial Centre Farmers' Market winds along a path, creating a natural flow to pass by the various vendors. **PHOTO CREDIT:** Jolene Simko

The Pull of the Market

All fresh, all local, all good

STORY BY **MONIQUE LEE-VASSELL**

> EVERY PRODUCT SOLD IS MADE OR GROWN BY THE HANDS THAT SELL IT.

It's Sunday morning and you're making your way down to the mid-town farmers' market. Reusable bag in hand, you begin to peruse the stands, all gleaming with vegetables and fruits of every colour. The light reflected off the honey-coloured candles catches your eye. You hear the clang of beads and the buzz of the crowd. Your pre-established grocery list dissipates, and you are consumed by the vibrancy of all things fresh.

This rush is something many – buyers and sellers alike — look forward to each week. However, with COVID-19 restrictions ebbing and flowing, these visits have now been altered to an online order and in-person pick-up. Even so, the driving force behind the farmers' market remains: fresh and local products bring the community together.

In 2013, the population of local farmers in Kingston was growing and the space at the City Hall market was limited. And so the Memorial Centre Farmers' Market was born. Almost ten years later, Tim Lyon, urban farmer and one of the market's founding fathers, optimizes the use of city space by growing his produce in downtown Kingston, just kilometres from the market itself. Lyon's passion for urban farming stemmed from his interest in the agriculture practised in cities such as Tokyo and Melbourne. The possibility of growing fresh food in bustling downtown areas inspired Lyon to make use of open spaces here in Kingston, and that led to Main Street Urban Farm. Although our city space may not span as far and wide as most concrete jungles, the presence of his farm amid the many buildings shows us that we can grow fresh produce.

The main goal of Main Street Urban Farm is to grow food and take care of the earth in and around the city, while also giving our community fresh food to eat. In keeping with this ethos, the Memorial Centre Farmers' Market is one hundred per cent farmer-run, meaning every product sold is made or grown by the hands that sell it. The benefits are myriad. It is no secret that eating fresh contributes to our physical health, but eating foods grown in our own neighbourhood actually benefits our entire system. As Lyon puts it, "the food grown in your bioregion is the best for your biome [the species that live in your area]."

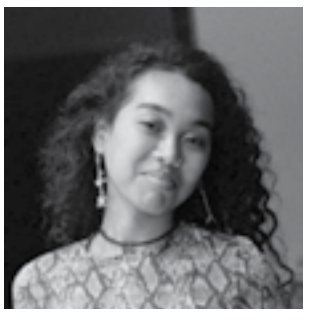
Additionally, it gives us, the eager buyers, a chance to get to know our farmers on a personal level. It is worthwhile finding out how the farmers are keeping, how the pandemic is altering their well-being, and how that alters the health of the land. We are all connected, shoppers and farmers alike. The Memorial Centre Farmers' Market reminds us of that, weaving us together through the food and land we all share. In a way, the market is its own little ecosystem. "Being involved in the food we eat is important, and it's something we've lost with distancing of food from ourselves," says Lyon.

Terry Hawco, one of the market's vendors from Winding Path Organic Farm (near Madoc), found his way into sourcing local foods after realizing that certain ingredients did not align with his body. He also did not know where exactly these products were coming from. Having developed health issues, he needed to understand each ingredient before consuming it. Hawco shares some nuggets of wisdom for those wanting to eat and shop locally: "Look for simple ingredients. Don't let your intolerance to gluten or lactose or any other food deter you from eating fresh, as there are many options available. For example, while those with lactose intolerance cannot eat mozzarella cheese, you can still eat cheddar and other hard white cheeses. You can also research many recipes specific to your diet."

Speaking of recipes, here are some of our farmers' family favourites featuring seasonal veggies: Hawco's delicious eggplant pasta sauce (sold for purchase by the jar) includes tomatoes, onions, garlic, and spices — all from his own garden. Sue, Hawco's wife, has been enjoying a warm potato and leek soup, the quintessential winter meal made with coconut cream and a perfect vegan option. And finally, Lyon's family has been indulging in his daughter's specialty: veggie stir fry. A wonderful mélange of seasonal vegetables, and incredibly easy to whip together, regardless of the season. Plus, a stir-fry is a fine dish in which to try out new finds from the farmers' market, such as kohlrabi, sunroot, and daikon radish.

Even though the stands aren't open for perusing, our presence as buyers is required to keep this ecosystem running. The online store is well stocked. As Lyon says, "The connection with the land, the farmers, and the food is what's most important."

TOP TO BOTTOM: Lyon and his family in their field on the farm **PHOTO CREDIT:** Garrett Elliott; Tomatoes at the market **PHOTO CREDIT:** Monique Lee-Vassell



MONIQUE LEE-VASSELL is a writer, poet, dancer, and all-around artist. She is currently at Queen's completing her Bachelor of Arts in English Literature. Following her degree, she plans to pursue her MA in Literature in the UK.

Wanted: Feedback on Policing in the City

Kingston Speaks Inclusion

STORY BY **KATE ARCHIBALD-CROSS**

What should community policing look like? A small team at Kingston Community Health Centres (KCHC) is leading a new and innovative project called Kingston Speaks Inclusion (KSI) and is hosting a series of consultations about how the Kingston Police (KP) can integrate more equitable and inclusive practices and policies, and build relationships in the community.

Last year, Constable Bryan McMillan (he/him), Equity Diversity and Inclusion Officer for the Kingston Police, reached out to Roger Romero (he/him), Manager of Youth Services at KCHC, to start a conversation. McMillan and Romero decided that while they could hire an external consulting firm to conduct the research, here was an opportunity to do something unique.

"KCH has a long history of supporting and responding to the needs of the community," says Romero. "This puts KCHC in a unique and powerful position to work and connect collaboratively with many diverse populations that are often overlooked in consultation processes."

Giselle Valarezo (she/her), Researcher for KSI, echoes Romero's sentiments. "KCHC is well-connected to equity-deserving communities, takes a community-based approach to its work, and has built trust and respect amongst equity-deserving communities across Kingston."

KCHC hired the core team of four KSI staff, and the project began in earnest in the fall of 2021.

First up was a series of five online "Community Connections." According to Valarezo, these meetings aimed to gather input from a wide range of people about the proposed research tools and methodology to enable KSI to conduct its consultations accessibly, safely, and transparently.

"Other consultation processes are very simple," adds Romero, "and we wanted this project to have a different pathway." In order to consider opportunities for and barriers to participation, talking to people with direct knowledge and experience with different populations was crucial, he adds, and more than twenty people participated in these sessions.

By spring, KSI will have moved on to formal consultations. These will be conducted in a variety of ways, says Romero, adding that he's saddened that COVID has changed things in this regard. "We envisioned getting out there and meeting with stakeholders where they're at, sharing meals and sharing conversations, but we will get out into the community however we safely can." The goal of the project is to have five hundred participants, but KSI hopes to surpass that and hear as many voices as possible.

These voices are likely to include some who are critical of the Kingston Police and the consultation process itself. One of the biggest challenges KSI faces is creating space for hard conversations, says Romero. But "in order to stay relevant and be responsive to the needs of community, you have to be vulnerable and listen to what people say, especially if it is difficult to hear. None of us is perfect, and we all need to be willing to grow based on community feedback."

Romero understands why there might be hesitancy or criticism, especially for those who have had challenging involvement with police, or who follow the many issues globally in policing and community interactions. "We can't ignore that relationships between the Kingston community and Kingston Police have been historically challenging, especially for equity-seeking populations, such as racialized people, Indigenous people, and a number of intersectionalities."

However, he says, "I truly hope the community sees this as an opportunity to give feedback in an honest way and try to build relationships, regardless of your opinions about the Kingston Police. This is a rare and unique chance to connect directly with senior decision makers in the organization."

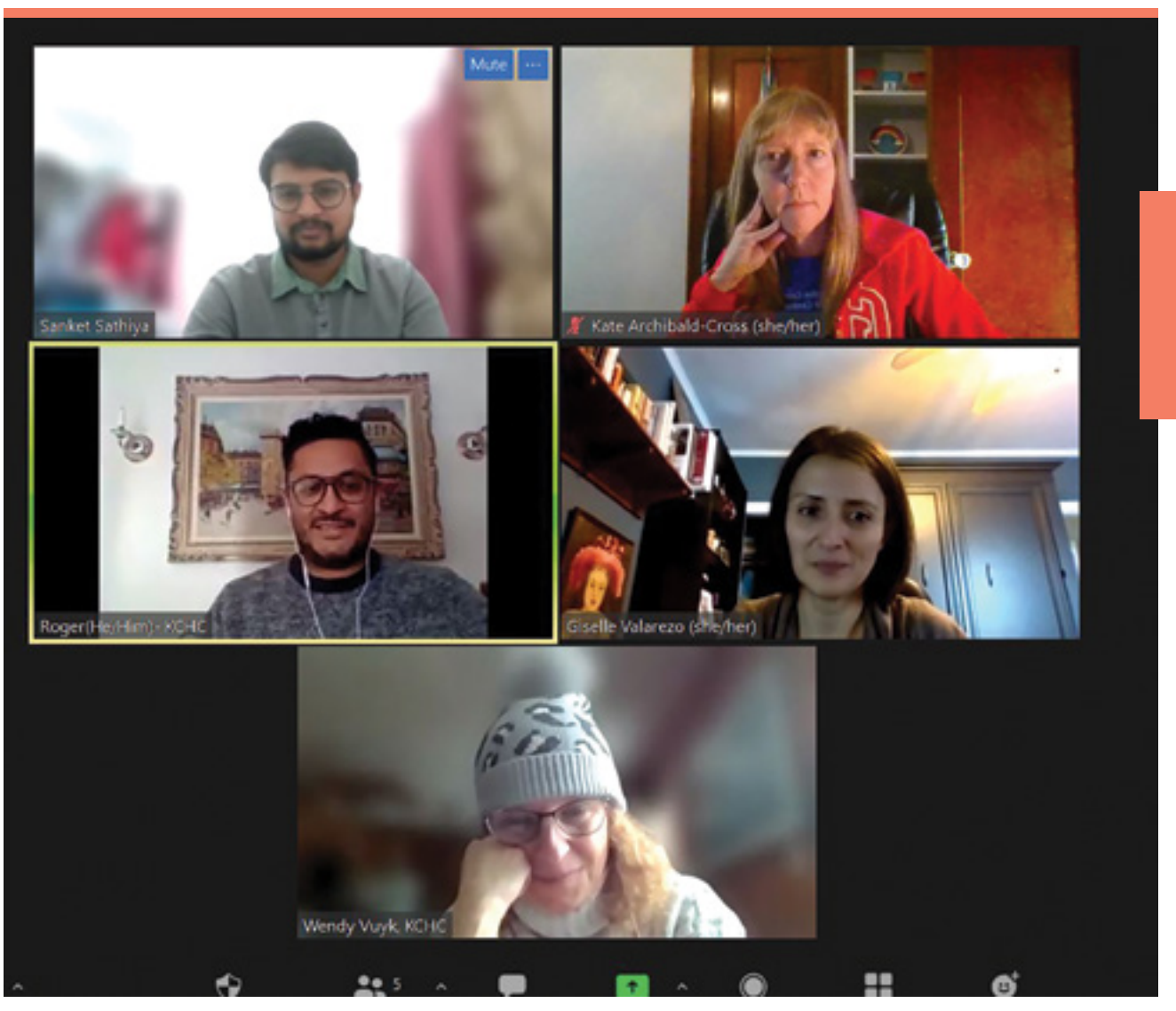
Valarezo emphasizes that "Kingston Police will be kept at arms-length when collecting feedback from community members. While Kingston Police is partially funding this project, KCHC wants to ensure that the KCHC KSI Project Team is leading the community consultation process." She adds that all identifying details will be removed from the data, and that KP will receive anonymized information.

One outcome this process is likely to recognize is that there is no end to the work that is needed. KSI will produce a final report with calls to action and associated outcome metrics for the Kingston Police, but everyone on the KSI team insisted that the process could not end there. "No-one wants this report to sit on a shelf somewhere collecting dust," says Romero.

Another outcome will be the creation of a Community Inclusion Council to work closely with the Chief of Police and senior leadership. Romero says this ensures "an ever-evolving conversation, and we are committed to staying at the table to ensure the report's recommendations are acted upon, and to share updates about this to the community."

"When the project was first starting," says Romero, "we looked for examples of this kind of project, and there wasn't anything. We are pioneers. I am really proud of our team for being brave and taking this on because it's the right thing to do, even though it is complex and difficult work. Because the team feels so strongly about the opportunity to create a better dialogue and make real change, this is a challenge that we are willing to face."

Team meeting of KSI staff **PHOTO CREDIT:** Kate Archibald-Cross



For more information on the project,

please email **Sanket Sathiya, KSI Community Facilitator,** at **sankets@kchc.ca** or go to **kchc.ca/weller-avenue/ksi/**

KATE ARCHIBALD-CROSS works in Communications at Kingston Community Health Centres and is part of the KSI team. She has lived in Kingston for most of her life, and is passionate about creating opportunities for dialogue, collaboration, community-building, and change.

The Kingston Hidden Artist Collective

The Kingston Hidden Artists Collective are exhibiting at The Elm Cafe (303 Montreal St) until June 2022.

Empowering houseless artists to create sustainable income

STORY BY **NICOLE DANIELS**

When endless problems weigh heavily, it's well worth turning to your community for renewed hope. This is a vital lesson I've learned in recent years. Where governments fail us, grassroots efforts, mutual aid, and gestures of care do not. One such example is the story of the Kingston Hidden Artist Collective (KHAC). The small local collective is working to support houseless and disadvantaged community members through direct action, with tangible results. Formed in August 2021 by Ali Sheikh and Mara Fraser, and later joined by Arhum Chaudhary, KHAC's mission is to "empower artists in disadvantaged situations by providing an easier path to sustainable, self-generated income."

The three aforementioned volunteers who oversee the collective obtain high-quality scans of KHAC artists' works in order to develop prints, t-shirts, and other merchandise for sale. The volunteers also facilitate sales of original artworks for higher prices than the artists might otherwise get through their websites and group exhibitions. Since its creation last summer, KHAC has held an exhibition at the Juniper Café and several pop-ups at Queen's University; received an Awesome Foundation micro-grant; developed a website and Instagram page; and generated revenue for their artist-members through artist fees and sales. They also have plans for upcoming exhibitions (including one at the Elm Café in March), new merchandise, and future collaborations. After covering basic costs such as materials and website fees, the remaining profit is returned to the artists.

KHAC currently represents five artists, with a few more on the way, and hopes to continue expanding the collective through referrals. The artists include, among others: Skott, a tattoo artist with an interest in pantheism and an adorable pup named Kon; Paul Plante (a.k.a. "Mr. Paul"), a multimedia artist and the author of multiple research papers; and Adam, a prolific Algonquin First Nations artist able to create from pure imagination.

Because they have developed personal relationships with these artists, the KHAC administrators have a deep understanding of the ways in which these individuals' disadvantages are compounded. One striking example: the fact that a mere change in weather can have devastating outcomes. If rain falls heavily and artists are outdoors with their belongings, artworks — especially those on paper — are quickly destroyed. Work in which these artists have invested time, money, and supplies can thus disappear with the sun. This is one problem KHAC helps to curb by providing storage space for the original artworks and giving them a life beyond the canvas through reproduction.

Sheikh observes that the artists are often victims of what he calls "a cycle of unfortunate circumstances, and they're more likely to run into difficulties because of their situations." But, he adds, "the artists are completely self-motivated, so we're just there to support them along the way." He and Plante

TOP TO BOTTOM: Skott, Infinite Struggle; Adam, Deepest on the Edge

both pursued Master's degrees in the same program at Queen's – proof, he says, that one or two negative events can set one person back and, especially if that person does not have a strong support network, creating a cascade of challenges. "It's much closer," Sheikh says, "than people realize." What KHAC seeks to do is provide some of that necessary support, and to use their own privileges — such as having a home where you can store artwork, or having easy access to technology — to tackle some of those barriers and help level the playing field.

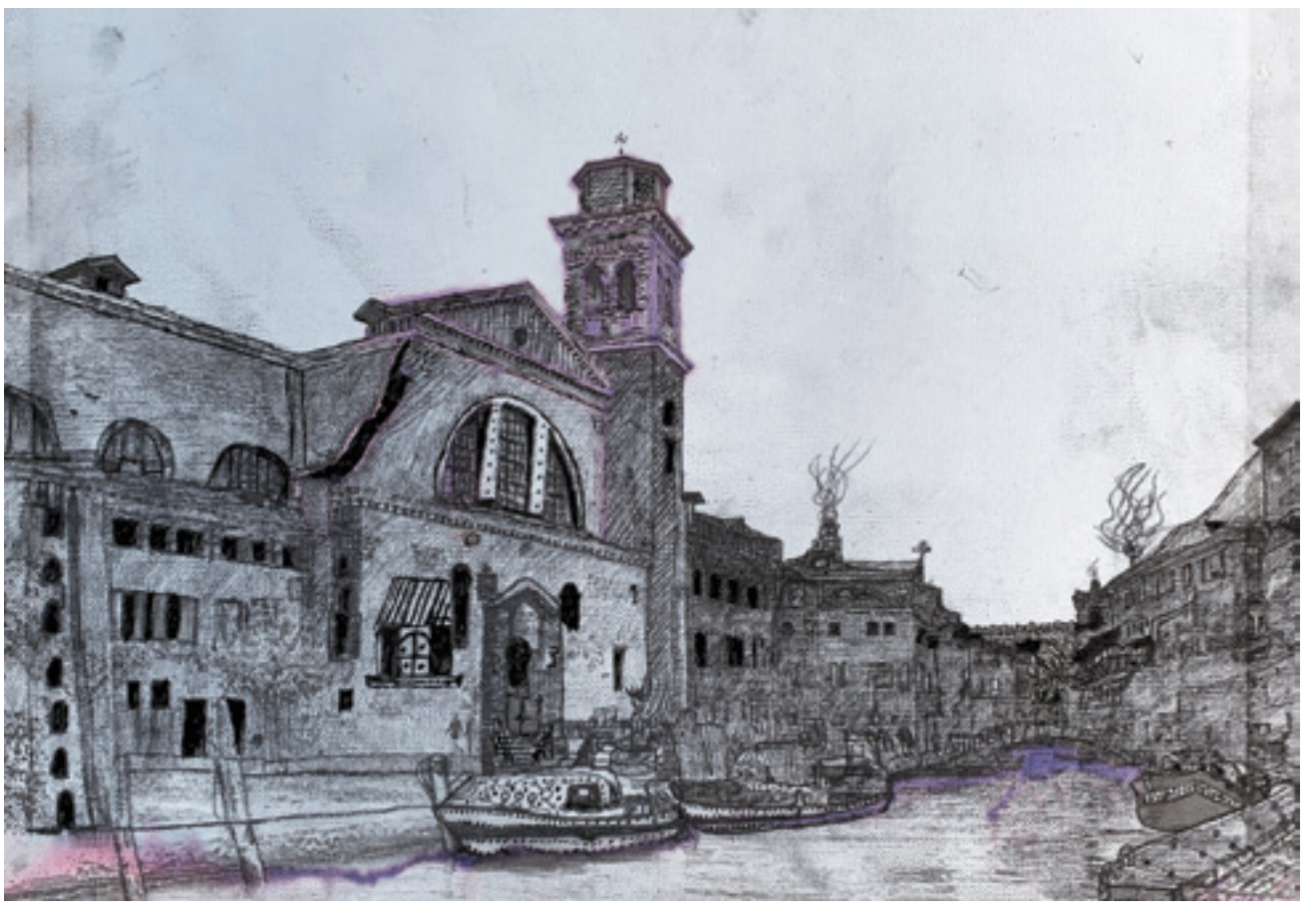
The profits KHAC artists earn enable them to reinvest in themselves, by purchasing art supplies, exploring more expensive mediums, or creating new ways of making money. Skott, for example, purchased a guitar so he can pursue music and create income by busking, and is saving up to buy etching supplies. Thus, the profits KHAC artists generate empower them to develop a cycle of sustainability and increased profits.

In addition to ensuring the collective's continued sustainability, one of KHAC's long-term goals is to create a stand-alone location where people can buy the artists' merchandise and prints. KHAC artists would be employed at the store and work as full-time artists. I would be proud to see that in my city.

The story of KHAC demonstrates how we can do better by our community through listening and direct action. Rather than ignoring the problem altogether, or offering what they assumed were the best solutions, Sheikh and Fraser got to know their houseless neighbours and acted to support them. Like many other crises, those of poverty and houselessness require strong, progressive leadership from our governments to be properly addressed. But that doesn't negate our individual responsibility as part of the problem, and doesn't excuse us from being part of the solution.

If you want to support KHAC, there are a number of needs to be addressed, including storage space for artwork; studio space for KHAC artists to work; paid exhibition opportunities; and funding and grant writing support. Visit KHAC's website to learn more about the artists, register for KHAC's newsletter, purchase artwork, or contact Ali Sheikh: www.khac.ca. Find them on Instagram at @khac___.

NICOLE DANIELS is an arts administrator and active member of the Ka'tarohkwi/Kingston arts community. Her employment experience includes the Skeleton Park Arts Festival, the Tett Centre for Creativity and Learning, the Kingston Arts Council, and Union Gallery. Her passion is centred on empowering and uplifting emerging artists through resource sharing and developing mentorship opportunities.



Tie a Yellow Ribbon ’Round the Old Oak Tree

STORY BY **LAURA CAMERON**

In recent months, the Grandmother Oak on River Street has been receiving a lot of community love and attention. Along with more than 1,800 mature trees, it faces destruction in a planned clear-cutting of the former tannery lands.

Although bylaws do exist to protect trees in Kingston, the City waived the bylaw for Jay Patry’s proposed development, along with the requirement to provide community benefits. On December 14, 2021, a ceremony to honour the old oak tree was held by Laurel Claus-Johnson, a member of the Katarokwi Grandmothers’ Council. In giving thanks for its life, a yellow ribbon was tied along the fence as an expression of love and respect as well as a commitment to honour life here in all its forms.

The oak’s roots reach into one of the planet’s “ribbons of life” (as the Canadian Wildlife Federation calls these buffers between land and water) on the shore of the Cataraqui River, providing essential space, shelter, food, and shade as well as reducing flood risk. Using the International Society of Arboriculture’s formula, the Grandmother Oak, measuring over one meter in diameter, is approximately 220 years old.

Tributes, poems, and science abstracts have been appearing on the fence by the oak for several months now. On the 27th of February, friends of the oak were saddened to report that everything had been torn away. New tributes are being posted and you can add yours, witness the ceremony, and learn more about how to help by visiting the Grandmother Oak’s Facebook page.

GRANDMOTHER OAK ON RIVER STREET:
facebook.com/profile.php?id=100076959134935

Film still of Grandmother Oak **(COURTESY OF NO CLEARCUTS KINGSTON)** and tributes to the approximately 220-year-old tree.