

# TRANSITION

SPRING 2012



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- Page 12 Writing for Your Life - Mid-term Report
- . . . Poetry, non-fiction, fiction, and more



Canadian Mental  
Health Association  
Saskatchewan  
*Mental health for all*

# TRANSITION

## PUBLISHER:

David Nelson, Executive Director  
Canadian Mental Health Association  
(Saskatchewan Division) Inc.

EDITOR: Ted Dyck

MANAGING EDITOR: Lynn Hill

### *Our Mission:*

*Founded in 1950, The Canadian Mental Health Association (Saskatchewan Division) Inc. is a volunteer-based organization which supports and promotes the rights of persons with mental illness to maximize their full potential; and promotes and enhances the mental health and well-being of all members of the community.*

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## CONTINUOUS SUBMISSION GUIDELINES FOR TRANSITION

1. TRANSITION is published twice a year by The Canadian Mental Health Association (Saskatchewan Division) Inc. Subscription by joining CMHA (SK) at \$15 / year.
2. Send original, unpublished articles, fiction, non-fiction, poetry, and visual art that represent current mental health issues and reflect on their impact on individuals.
3. Maximum manuscript lengths: articles – 15 pages; all other prose – 10 pages; poetry – 10 poems or 10 pages, whichever is less; visual art – 10 pieces.
4. Reprints and simultaneous submissions (to several magazines) are not considered.
5. Turnaround time is normally one issue or 6 months: do not send a second submission before the first has been reviewed.
6. Payment is \$25.00 per printed page; \$20.00 per published visual art work; and \$100.00 for cover art.
7. Electronic submissions are preferred (with full contact information and a brief bio). Submit manuscripts in Word or WordPerfect format (12-point Times New Roman, double-spaced, 2.5 cm margins) as e-mail attachment to: [contactus@cmhask.com](mailto:contactus@cmhask.com) or directly to the Editor at [tdyck@sasktel.net](mailto:tdyck@sasktel.net).
8. Or send hardcopy manuscripts (typed, one-sided, 12-point, double-spaced, 2.5 cm margins), together with full contact information, a brief bio, and self-addressed, stamped return envelope with sufficient postage, to:

TRANSITION  
2702 12th Ave.  
Regina, SK S4T 1J2



Edgar Allan Poe As a Purple Young Man by Rolli

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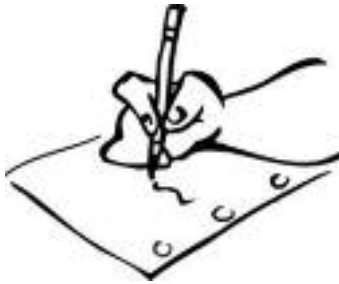
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# Sharing

BY TED DYCK

TRANSITION is delighted to share this issue with the official program of the upcoming National Conference. Our usual issue begins on page 12 with the Writing for Your Life mid-term report.



TED DYCK



*Bird on a Wire by Henry Peters*

## EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR'S REPORT

# Division hosting National Conference

DAVID NELSON, RPN, RSW  
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

Another very busy and productive year has passed, and what a year it was! Some of the exciting events that have occurred are:

- The release of the Mental Health Commission of Canada's Strategic Plan, which raised the profile of many of the issues and observations CMHA has put forward for many years.

- The regeneration of the Mental Health Coalition with a doubling of the number of participants at the last meeting. The Coalition will be developing an advocacy and public awareness strategy to connect Saskatchewan with the higher profile movement of mental health/illness issues in the rest of the country.

- The further development of the Saskatchewan Assured Income for Disability (SAID) program with a meaningful start in providing a socially acceptable living amount for persons



DAVE NELSON

with cross disabilities including psychiatric and mental health issues.

- An exciting new CMHA Saskatchewan Division program to provide intensive supports to persons with mental health and related issues who have been repeat offenders in the Corrections system. This program is part of larger Justice Ministry program and will provide supports to persons who have been calling for assistance for quite some time.

In the very near future the National CMHA Conference will be held in Regina, October 18 and 19. This Conference will focus on discussion and implementation plans for our National Association Strategic Plan, helping CMHA to improve its ability to advocate and educate throughout the country.

Finally we expect to have our book on the history of mental health and mental illness in Saskatchewan ready for our National Conference, with Jayne Whyte, Consultant, working hard on this project.

In all, we believe that mental health and mental illness have turned a corner and now is the time to push for improvements in resources and services to assist those we serve and represent.

Have a great summer, and follow us in our work!



# Canadian Mental Health Association National Conference October 18 and 19, 2012 - Delta Regina Hotel, Regina, SK

## AGENDA

### Tuesday, October 16, 2012

9:00 a.m. - 5:00 p.m. Senior Management Team Meeting

### Wednesday, October 17, 2012

9:00 a.m. - 5:00 p.m. Senior Management Team Meeting

5:00 p.m. - 7:00 p.m. Registration and Boarding Passes

### Thursday, October 18, 2012

## STRENGTHENING OUR VOICE & ENSURING QUALITY SERVICES

7:30 a.m. - 8:15 a.m. Registration and Boarding

7:30 a.m. - 8:30 a.m. Breakfast

8:30 a.m. - 8:45 a.m. Welcome and Introductions

8:45 a.m. - 9:45 a.m. Peter Coleridge, National CEO, CMHA  
ALL ABOARD! Implementing the Strategic Plan – Making it Work

9:45 a.m. - 10:15 a.m. Break

10:15 a.m. - 11:30 a.m. Persons with Lived Experience Workshop

11:45 a.m. - 1:00 p.m. Lunch and WFYL (Writing for Your Life) Readings

1:00 p.m. - 2:00 p.m. Dr. Caroline Tait, University of Saskatchewan  
Strengthening Our Voice – Examining our Processes with an Ethical Lens

2:00 p.m. - 3:00 p.m. Dr. Kathleen Thompson, University of Regina  
Strengthening Our Voice and Ensuring Quality Services

3:30 p.m. - 4:30 p.m. Real Anti-Suppressants theatre group

5:00 p.m. - 6:00 p.m. Draft CMHA Public Policy Framework - input session with  
members of the National Public Policy Working Group

DINNER ON YOUR OWN

TENTATIVE: 7:00 - 8:00 p.m. Discussion/Networking opportunity (Campania Room - 2nd floor).



## STOPOVER

For our lucky early bird winners:

4:45 p.m. - Bus pick up at Delta Regina –  
travel to Moose Jaw

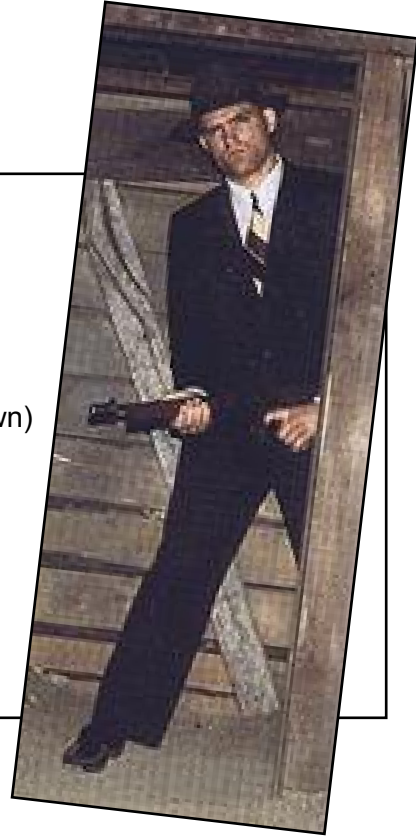
6:00 p.m. - 7:00 p.m - **Tour Tunnels of Moose Jaw**

7:00 p.m. - 8:30 p.m - Supper in Moose Jaw (on your own)

8:30 p.m. - Bus returns to Delta Regina

Also available close to the hotel – Casino Regina and  
Show Lounge and Cornwall Centre/downtown shopping.

Check out our City of Regina hospitality display for lots  
of exciting restaurant, casino, tour and shopping ideas.



**Friday, October 19, 2012**

## ENHANCING OUR ORGANIZATIONAL HEALTH

- |                         |  |
|-------------------------|--|
| 8:00 a.m - 8:30 a.m.    | Board Chair/Presidents meeting hosted by David Copus, CMHA National Chair and Peter Coleridge , National CEO   |
| 7:30 a.m. - 8:30 a.m.   | Breakfast  |
| 8:30 a.m.               | All Aboard! Welcome and Introductions  |
| 8:45 a.m. - 10:00 a.m.  | Deirdre Freiheit, Health Charities Coalition of Canada<br>Implications for CMHA in Today's Changing Non-Profit Landscape                                     |
| 10:00 a.m. - 10:30 a.m. | Break  |
| 10:30 a.m. - 11:30 a.m. | Extending Our Reach  |
| 12:00 p.m. - 1:30 p.m.  | Lunch and Healing Through Humour   |
| 1:30 p.m. - 3:00 p.m.   | Bev Gutray, CMHA B.C. Division<br>Panel Discussion: Mental Health and Addictions   |
| 3:00 p.m. - 3:15 p.m.   | Break  |
| 3:15 p.m. - 4:15 p.m.   | Wrap Up: Dave Nelson, Executive Director,<br>CMHA (Sask. Division) and President, CMHA (Sask. Division):<br>"Reaching our Destination – Where to From Here?" |
| 4:15 p.m.- 4:30 p.m.    | Closing Remarks  |
| 4:30 p.m.- 5:30 p.m.    | CMHA NATIONAL ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING   |

Free Time – Dinner on your own

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## CMHA National Conference October 18 and 19, 2012 Regina, SK

### **Saturday, October 20, 2012**

8:00 a.m. - 5:00 p.m. CMHA National Board Meeting (breakfast and lunch served)

### **Sunday, October 21, 2012**

8:00 a.m. - 2:00 p.m. CMHA National Board Meeting (breakfast and lunch served)

Please note: the Piero Room (main floor) has been set aside as a quiet room for October 18 and 19 from 8 a.m. - 5 p.m. There is no smoking in the Piero Room; however, delegates can smoke outside the entrance located just outside the room.

### **ACCOMMODATIONS**

The Delta Regina is holding a block of rooms for conference delegates at the rate of CAD 150.00 per night for a Delta Double and Premier King and CAD 165.00 per night for a Deluxe Queen (applicable taxes and fees not included — single/double occupancy — CAD 15.00 per additional person). Reservations must be made by September 15,

2012. Reservations will be accepted after that date, subject to availability, at regular room rates.

Individual delegates are responsible for contacting the hotel directly to reserve a guestroom from the room block. Reservations can be made by calling 1-800-209-3555 between hours of 8 a.m. to 5 p.m., Monday through Friday or by emailing [jodyking@fortisproperties.com](mailto:jodyking@fortisproperties.com). Callers must identify themselves as being with the CMHA National Conference.

Or visit the hotel's dedicated booking website where you can make, modify and cancel your hotel reservations online.

All reservations must be guaranteed. The Delta Regina requires a first night's deposit or credit card number.

**REFUND POLICY** — Full refund prior to Sept. 17, 2012, minus a CAD 100.00 administration fee. No refunds after Sept. 17, 2012.

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**Conference cost: \$375<sup>00</sup>**

Consumers may be eligible for a subsidized rate of \$150<sup>00</sup>.

LIMITED number of spots - apply early to:

Dave Nelson at CMHA (SK Division)  
2702 12th Ave. Regina, SK S4T 1J2



*The Saskatchewan Legislature, looking north towards downtown Regina.*



## Peter Coleridge

National CEO of the Canadian Mental Health Association

Appointed National CEO of the Canadian Mental Health Association in 2010, Peter is an outstanding leader and champion for mental health and addiction and recovery. He has held a number of leadership and senior management roles in this sector and most recently was the Vice President, Education and Population Health and Senior Advisor, B.C. Mental Health and Addiction Services. During this period he led the development of a comprehensive workplace mental health and addiction strategy for approximately 10,000 employees within the Provincial Health Services Authority. In addition, he led the development of a provincial plan integrating a number of approaches including public policy, public education, and community programs and services to reduce discrimination and improve understanding of mental health issues.

Peter is an Adjunct Professor, School of Population and Public Health and Lecturer, Department of Psychiatry, University of British Columbia, and an Adjunct Professor, Faculty of Health Sciences, Simon Fraser University. He is also Special Advisor to the Global Economic Roundtable on Mental Health and Addiction, a founding member of the Canadian Executive Council on Addictions, and serves as the Chair, National Board of Directors, Canadian AIDS Treatment Information Exchange.



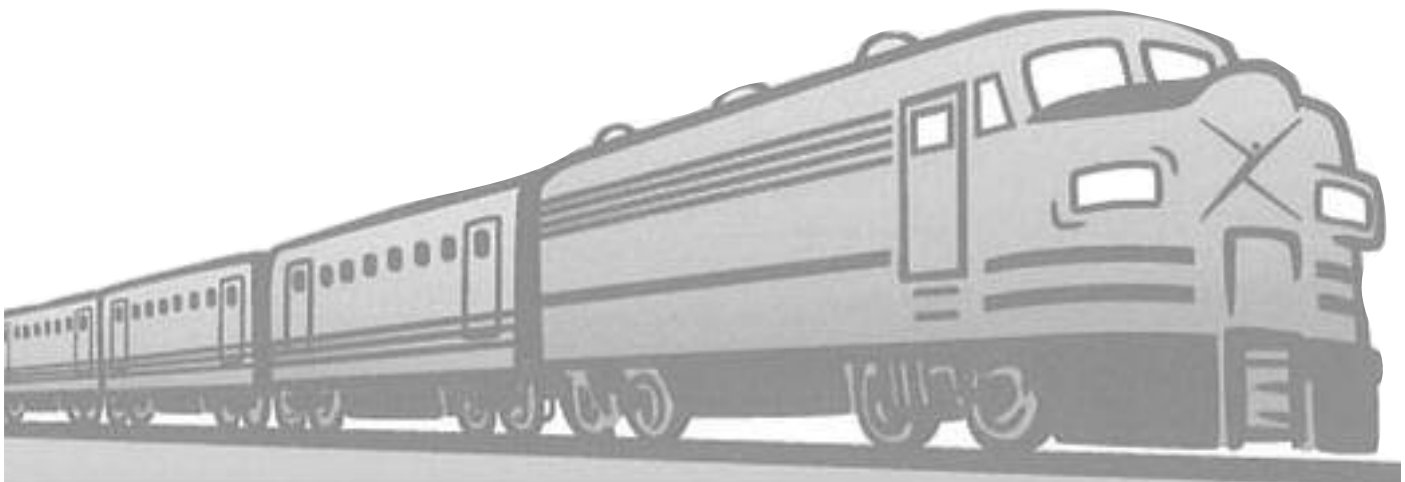
*Peter Coleridge*

PDG national de l'Association canadienne pour la santé mentale

Nommé PDG national de l'Association canadienne pour la santé mentale en 2010, Peter s'est révélé être un chef d'équipe hors pair et un défenseur de la santé mentale et du rétablissement des personnes qui souffrent de dépendances. Il a aussi tenu des postes d'importance dans ce domaine. Pendant cinq ans, il a été le vice-président de la section de l'éducation et de la santé publique et conseiller sénior au sein de l'Autorité des services de santé de la Colombie-Britannique. Au cours de cette période, il a présidé au développement d'un programme de santé mentale et de dépendance pour environ 10 mille employés de l'autorité des services de Santé de la Colombie-

Britannique. Il a aussi initié l'intégration de plusieurs programmes de services publics et communautaires pour réduire la discrimination et mieux comprendre les problèmes reliés à la santé mentale.

Peter est professeur-adjoint à la faculté de santé publique et conférencier à la faculté de psychiatrie de l'Université de la Colombie-Britannique et professeur-adjoint à la faculté des sciences de la santé à l'Université Simon Fraser. Il est également conseiller spécial à la table ronde de l'économie globale sur la Santé mentale et la dépendance et un membre fondateur du Conseil exécutif canadien sur les toxicomanies en plus d'être le président du conseil d'administration national de CATIE, le Canadian AIDS Treatment Information Exchange.





## Caroline L. Tait

Caroline Tait is Métis from MacDowall, SK. She received her PhD from the Departments of Anthropology and Social Studies of Medicine at McGill University, Montreal in 2003. Dr. Tait has a Bachelor of Arts degree from McGill University in anthropology and a Master's of Arts degree in medical anthropology from the University of California at Berkeley. During 1995-1996 academic year, Dr. Tait was a Fulbright Scholar and Visiting Fellow at Harvard University, Cambridge Massachusetts in the Departments of Anthropology and Social Medicine. She completed a postdoctoral fellowship in the Division of Social and Transcultural Psychiatry, Department of Psychiatry, McGill University in May 2004.



*Dr. Carolyn Tait*

Dr. Tait then joined the CIHR-funded Indigenous People's Health Research Centre (IPHRC) and is an Associate Professor in the Department of Psychiatry, University of Saskatchewan. She is a former member of the First Nations, Inuit and Métis Advisory Board to the Mental Health Commission of Canada and led the "Ethical Guidelines in the Delivery of Mental Health and Addictions Programming in Indigenous Communities" project funded by the MHCC.

Dr. Tait has held several nationally funded grants in areas of mental health, addictions, child welfare and ethics.

She has one son, Skender, who is 12 years old.

Caroline Tait est d'origine métisse de MacDowall en Saskatchewan. Elle a reçu son doctorat en philosophie des départements d'anthropologie et des sciences sociales en médecine de l'Université McGill de Montréal en 2003. Caroline a également un BA en anthropologie de l'Université McGill et une maîtrise en anthropologie médicale de l'Université de la Californie à Berkeley. Au cours de l'année académique 95-96, madame Tait a bénéficié d'une bourse Fulbright et a profité du programme de chargés de cours dans les facultés de médecine sociale et d'anthropologie de l'Université Harvard à Cambridge au Massachusetts. Elle a terminé ses recherches postdoctorales au département de psychiatrie de l'Université McGill en mai 2004.

Caroline s'est ensuite joint au Indigenous People's Health Research Centre (IPHRC) financé par les Instituts de recherche en santé du Canada et est professeure agrégée au département de psychiatrie de l'Université de la Saskatchewan. Elle est une ancienne membre du comité consultatif métis, inuit et des premières nations auprès de la Commission de santé mentale du Canada et a mené le projet "Ethical Guidelines in the Delivery of Mental Health and Addictions Programming in Indigenous Communities" financé par la Commission.

Madame Tait a un fils, Skender, âgé de 12 ans.

## Anita Hopfauf

Anita Hopfauf is the Executive Director of the Schizophrenia Society of Saskatchewan. She started with the organization in 1999, when she began as Provincial Program Manager and moved into her current role in 2007.

Anita began her career in the Human Services field in 1987 after graduating with a Bachelor of Arts in Psychology. She started as a Family Support Worker with the Riel Local Parent Aide Program where she worked with Aboriginal people with multi-faceted problems and then in Saskatoon with the Social Services Parent Aide Program.

Anita has also served on a number of different committees such as the Disability Income Support Coalition, the Alcohol and Drug Abuse Advisory Council, the Provincial Interagency Network on Disabilities, the Mental Health Coalition, Mental Health Advisory Council, and the National Council of Welfare. Anita's passion for her work has been recognized with the Government of Saskatchewan Centennial Medal in 2006 and the Schizophrenia Society of Canada's Outstanding Staff Award in 2007.



*Anita Hopfauf*

Anita Hopfauf est la directrice-générale de la Schizophrenia Society of Saskatchewan depuis 2007. Embauchée en 1999, elle était responsable du programme provincial jusqu'à ce qu'elle devienne directrice-générale de l'organisme.

Anita a commencé sa carrière dans le domaine des services sociaux en 1987 après avoir obtenu un B.A. en psychologie. Elle a entamé cette carrière en travaillant pour le Riel Local Parent Aide Program où elle oeuvrait auprès d'autochtones qui vivaient des problèmes multiples et puis à Saskatoon avec le programme d'aide aux familles du ministère des services sociaux.

Anita a aussi siégé sur de nombreux comités comme la Disability Income Support Coalition, le Alcohol and Drug Abuse Advisory Council, le Provincial Interagency Network on Disabilities, la Mental Health Coalition, le Mental Health Advisory Council et le National Council of Welfare. La passion que porte Anita pour son travail lui a valu la médaille du centenaire du gouvernement de la Saskatchewan en 2006 et un prix de la Société canadienne de schizophrénie en 2007.



## Jayne Whyte

Jayne Melville Whyte, B.A., is an independent researcher and facilitator who works to build bridges among consumers, service providers, and planners in the development of policy and programs.

She has been an active member of the Canadian Mental Health Association since she started with the Kindersley Branch in 1975.

She was the first Co-Chair of the National Consumer Advisory Committee in 1986. For the next five years she was active in the Consumer Empowerment movement in Manitoba Division until 1992. In 1995 Jayne was recognized with the CMHA National Consumer Participation Award in recognition of more than 20 years of leadership and advocacy.

Since she returned to Saskatchewan, Jayne has done contract work about women and poverty, seniors and mental health, and writing the history of mental health in Saskatchewan.

Next year Jayne says that she will “retire” and spend more time in the Archives.

Jayne Melville Whyte, B.A., est une chercheuse indépendante et facilitatrice qui travaille à tisser des liens entre les consommateurs, les fournisseurs de services et les planificateurs en vue de développer des politiques et des programmes.

Elle est une membre active de l'Association canadienne pour la santé mentale depuis qu'elle s'est jointe à l'organisme à Kindersley en 1975.

Elle fut la première co-présidente du comité consultatif national des consommateurs en 1986 et a été, jusqu'en 1992, membre active du mouvement de prise en charge des consommateurs à la section manitobaine. En 1995, Jayne a remporté le prix National Consumer Participation de l'Association en guise de reconnaissance de plus de 20 ans d'actions revendicatrices.

Depuis son retour en Saskatchewan, Jayne a fait du travail contractuel sur les femmes et la pauvreté et les aînés et la santé mentale. Elle écrit actuellement un livre sur l'histoire de la santé mentale en Saskatchewan.

L'an prochain, Jayne veut prendre sa “retraite” et passer plus de temps dans les archives.

## Theresa Claxton-Wali

Theresa Claxton-Wali is a person in recovery from mental illness and addiction, both as an individual and as a family member.

Theresa has a keen interest in social justice issues, human rights, and advancing the civil and legal rights of individuals with mental illness and/or addiction.

She is Chair of the CMHA National Consumer Advisory Council and the Ontario Association of Patient Councils, sits as a Board Member for the Centre for Addiction and Mental Health, the Journal of Ethics in Mental Health, Sound Times Support Services and North York General Hospital Participants' Council. She actively participates on numerous committees on a local, provincial, and national level.

Theresa is a peer provider as the Coordinator of the Central LHIN Consumer/Survivor Network and the Peer Recovery Education for Employment and Resilience Program (PREFER), a graduate of Ontario Peer Development Initiative (OPDI) Core Essential Peer Support and Diabetes and Mental Health Peer Support training, a recovery educator and consultant.

Theresa Claxton-Wali est en période de récupération d'une maladie mentale et d'une dépendance.

Theresa s'intéresse vivement aux questions qui touchent la justice sociale, les droits de la personne et l'avancement des droits civils et légaux des personnes qui ont des problèmes de dépendances ou de maladies mentales.

Elle est présidente du conseil consultatif national des consommateurs de l'Association canadienne pour la santé mentale et de l'association ontarienne des conseils de patients. Elle siège aussi comme membre du CA du centre de santé mentale et de dépendances, du Journal of Ethics in Mental Health, du Sound Times Support Services et du North York General Hospital Participants' Council. Elle siège également sur divers comités locaux, provinciaux et nationaux.

Theresa est la coordonnatrice du Central LHIN Consumer/Survivor Network and the Peer Recovery Education for Employment and Resilience Program (PREFER) en plus d'être une éducatrice et une consultante.

## Kathleen Thompson

Kathleen is a mental health promotion specialist and has been active as a volunteer and leader in the mental health system for over twenty years.

She is currently on the Board of Directors of the Canadian Mental Health Association (Saskatchewan Division) Inc. and is the former Executive Director of the Schizophrenia Society of Saskatchewan.

In 2011 Kathleen graduated with a PhD in Social Work from the University of Calgary. She received the highest level of funding available in Canada to PhD students in the humanities (a Canada Graduate Scholarship, funded through the Social Science and Humanities Research Foundation or SSHRC). Her thesis was entitled: "Transitions in Well-Being and Recovery: Action Research Involving Older Adults Living with a Mental Illness." Kathleen's emphasis is on promoting the human rights of individuals with lived experience of mental illness, as well as promoting the mental health of all Canadian citizens.

In 1999, Kathleen founded her own consulting company, TomKat Communications. Her consulting work focuses on community development, leadership, interim management, and health policy research within Saskatchewan, across Canada, and internationally.

Kathleen instructs an on-line class in Research Methods for the University of Regina and has spoken at numerous conferences across Canada and around the world. As well, she is a Director with IHRAAM, the International Human Rights Association for American Minorities. IHRAAM, an NGO in consultative status with the United Nations. Additionally, Kathleen is a member and volunteer with the Adoption Support Center of Saskatchewan.



*Kathleen Thompson*

Kathleen se spécialise dans la promotion de la santé mentale et est une bénévole active et cheffe de file dans le système de soins mentaux depuis plus de 20 ans.

Elle siège actuellement sur le comité de direction de la section saskatchewanaise de l'Association canadienne pour la santé mentale et est l'ancienne directrice générale de la Schizophrenia Society of Saskatchewan.

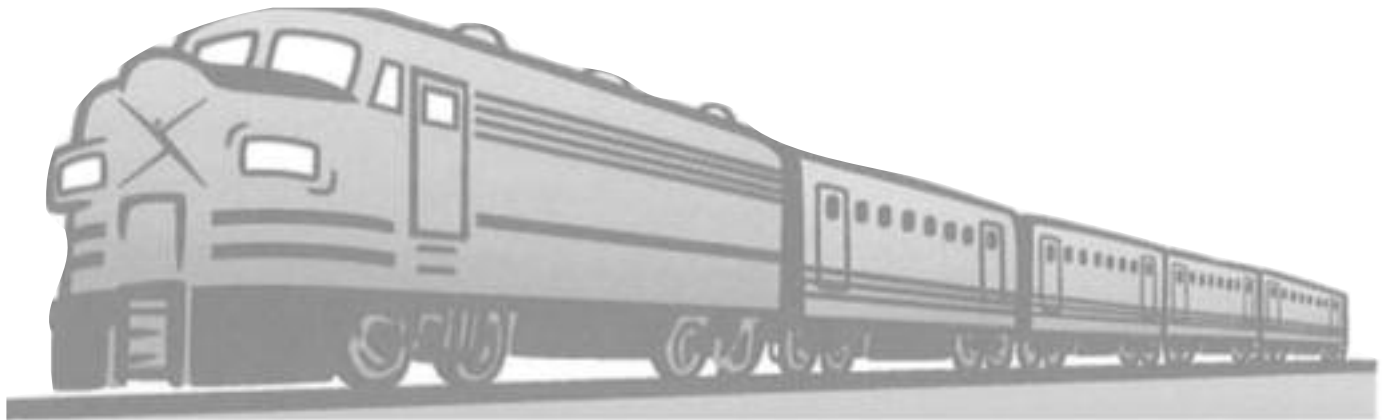
En 2011, elle obtenait un doctorat en travail social de l'Université de Calgary. Elle a reçu le niveau de financement le plus élevé au Canada pour les étudiants qui visent un doctorat en sciences sociales-

une bourse financée par la Social Science and Humanities Research Foundation. Sa thèse avait pour titre: "Transitions in Well-Being and Recovery: Action Research Involving Older Adults Living with a Mental Illness". Le travail de Kathleen porte principalement sur la promotion des droits d'individus qui ont une expérience avec la maladie mentale et sur la mise en valeur de la santé mentale pour les tous les Canadiens et Canadiennes.

En 1999, elle fonde sa propre firme de consultants, TomKat Communications, qui met l'accent sur le développement communautaire, la gestion intérimaire et la recherche sur la santé publique en Saskatchewan, au Canada et à l'extérieur des frontières canadiennes.

Kathleen donne des cours en ligne sur les méthodes de recherche pour l'Université de Regina et elle a également fait des présentations devant de nombreuses conférences au Canada et ailleurs dans le monde. Elle est également une directrice au sein de la International Human Rights Association for American Minorities, une ONG qui a un statut de consultant auprès des Nations-Unies.

Kathleen est aussi membre et une bénévole avec la Adoption Support Center of Saskatchewan.





## Deirdre Freiheit

Deirdre joined the Health Charities Coalition of Canada (HCCC) as Executive Director in January of 2006. Her priorities at HCCC include advocacy initiatives on issues related to health research and health policy, revenue generation, and facilitating networking opportunities for the members of the coalition through bi-annual CEO Forums, Annual Roundtable Meetings, and various events.

Prior to joining HCCC, Deirdre spent ten years at the Canadian Lung Association where she held a number of management positions that led to her tenure as President and CEO. Previous to her work with The Lung Association, Deirdre worked for the Canadian Council for Tobacco Control and served as Constituency and Parliamentary Assistants to Members of Parliament. Early in her career Deirdre worked with the Federation of Women Teachers' Associations of Ontario.

Internationally, Deirdre belonged to the Alliance of Lung Associations (an Alliance between the American and Canadian Lung Associations) and the Global Lung Cancer Coalition. She is a recipient of the Heather Crowe Award for her contributions to tobacco control.

Deirdre's current activities include: Member, Rx&D Pharmaceutical Policy Network Advisory Committee; Volunteer, Roger's House (a pediatric palliative care unit in Ottawa); Volunteer, Steve MacLean Public School.

Other activities have included: Lay Reviewer and Researcher for the Heart & Stroke Foundation of Canada; Reviewer, CIHR Partnership Awards Review Committee; Member, HR Council of Canada's Advisory Committee on Outreach and Engagement; Member, HR Council of Canada's Advisory Committee - HR Issues Regarding Paid Employees of National Voluntary Organizations.

She lives in Ottawa with her husband and two children.



Deirdre Freiheit

Deirdre est directrice générale de la Coalition canadienne des organismes de bienfaisance en santé depuis janvier 2006. Ses priorités sont, entre autre, des initiatives reliées à la recherche sur la santé et des politiques sur la santé et faciliter le réseautage de ses membres par l'entremise de forums bi-annuels, de tables rondes annuelles et divers autres événements.

Avant de se joindre à la Coalition, Deirdre a passé dix ans au sein de l'Association pulmonaire canadienne où elle a occupé plusieurs postes de gestionnaire qui l'ont mené à des mandats à la présidence. Avant de travailler à l'Association pulmonaire, madame Freiheit a oeuvré au sein du Conseil canadien pour le contrôle du tabac et a

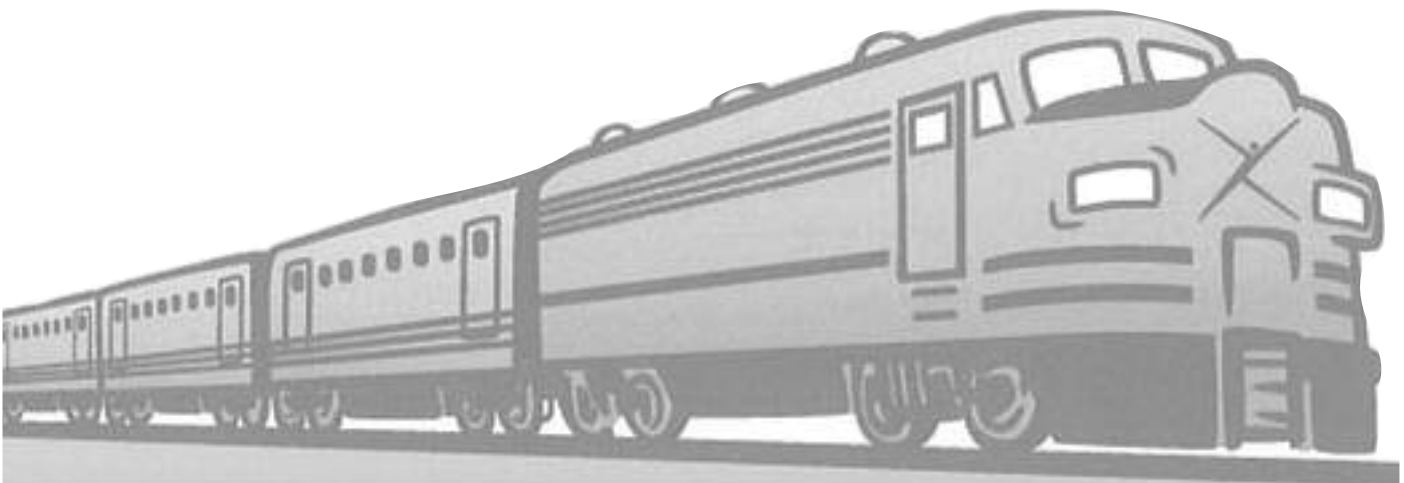
aussi été assistante parlementaire pour des députés fédéraux. Au début de sa carrière, Deirdre a travaillé au sein de la Federation of Women Teachers' Associations of Ontario.

Au plan international, Deirdre a été membre de la Alliance of Lung Associations (une alliance entre les associations pulmonaires canadiennes et américaines) et de la Global Lung Cancer Coalition. Elle est également été récipiendaire du prix Heather Crowe pour ses contributions au contrôle du tabac.

Les activités de Deirdre incluent: Membre, Rx&D Pharmaceutical Policy Network Advisory Committee; Bénévole, Roger's House (une unité pédiatrique de soins palliatifs à Ottawa); Bénévole, École publique Steve MacLean.

D'autres activités incluait: Analyste, bourses de recherche, Fondation des maladies du coeur; Analyste, comité de révision, CIHR Partnership Awards; Membre, HR Council of Canada's Advisory Committee on Outreach and Engagement; Membre, HR Council of Canada's Advisory Committee - HR Issues Regarding Paid Employees of National Voluntary Organizations

Elle demeure à Ottawa avec son époux et ses deux enfants.



## Bev Gutray

Bev Gutray has been the Executive Director of the Canadian Mental Health Association, B.C. Division, for the last 16 years. Prior to that she was the Executive Director of the CMHA Winnipeg Region and the Central Alberta Region.

Bev is active as a volunteer for the Disability Supports for Employment Committee and a past volunteer on the Health and Social Development Committee of Vancouver Foundation. As well, she is a volunteer on the Working Together Sub-Committee of the Government/Non-Profit Initiative, a volunteer on the Child and Youth Mental Health Network, and an advisory board member of the Regional Treatment Centre in Abbotsford.

Bev has presented on a range of public policy issues to government committees and conferences. Through her leadership, the Association was the founding member of the Mental Health Monitoring Coalition, which later became the Mental Health and Addictions Alliance. The Association has been an advocate and leader in the inclusion of people with lived experience in all levels of the Association, from governance to program implementation.



*Bev Gutray*

Bev Gutray est la directrice-générale de l'Association canadienne pour la santé mentale de la Colombie-Britannique depuis 16 ans. Au cours des années précédentes, elle dirigeait l'Association pour les régions au Manitoba et du centre de l'Alberta.

Bev est bénévole pour le Disability Supports for Employment Committee et a oeuvré comme bénévole au sein du Health and Social Development Committee pour la Vancouver Foundation. Elle travaille également comme bénévole au sein du réseau de la santé mentale pour les enfants et les jeunes et est membre d'un comité consultatif du centre de traitement d'Abbotsford.

Bev s'est également prononcée sur une variété d'enjeux politiques lors de conférences et devant des comités gouvernementaux. Elle a aussi été joué un rôle prédominant dans la création de la Mental Health Monitoring Coalition qui est par la suite devenu la Mental Health and Addictions Alliance.

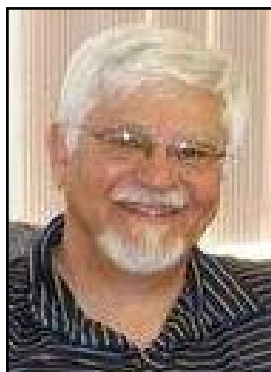
## David Nelson

Dave Nelson is a Registered Psychiatric Nurse and a Registered Social Worker. He has had over 30 years experience in the field of psychiatric nursing and social work, both in an institutional and a community setting.

Dave has worked for the Canadian Mental Health Association for the last twenty-one years; first as Director of the Regina Branch, and currently as the Executive Director of Saskatchewan Division CMHA.

Dave has had a broad experience in advocacy for improvements to the mental health system, having been an original member of the Minister of Health's Mental Health Advisory Council for six years, the Premier's Disabled Persons Advisory Council for four years, a founding member and Past-President of the Mental Health Coalition and the Disability Income Support Coalition as well as numerous local and regional advisory and advocacy committees in the Regina area.

Dave is particularly interested in the history of the mental health system in Saskatchewan and how we can learn from that history to improve the system in the future.



*David Nelson*

l'Association canadienne pour la santé mentale (Section Sask.)

Dave Nelson est un infirmier psychiatrique autorisé et un travailleur social autorisé. Il a une trentaine d'années d'expérience dans les domaines des soins infirmiers psychiatriques et du travail social, autant en milieu institutionnel que communautaire.

Dave a travaillé pour l'Association canadienne pour la santé mentale pendant 21 ans, d'abord comme président de section de Regina et est actuellement le directeur général de l'Association pour la Saskatchewan.

Il a une vaste expérience dans la promotion de l'amélioration du système de soins de santé mentale, ayant été un des premiers membres à siéger sur le comité consultatif sur la santé mentale du ministre de la Santé pendant six ans, membre du comité consultatif du bureau du premier ministre pour les personnes handicapées pendant 4 ans. Il a aussi été un membre fondateur et ancien président de la coalition pour la santé mentale et la coalition pour le soutien du revenu pour les personnes handicapées en plus de siéger sur de nombreux comités consultatifs locaux et régionaux dans la région de Regina.

Dave s'intéresse particulièrement à l'histoire du système de santé mentale en Saskatchewan et de ce qu'on peut y apprendre pour l'améliorer dans le futur.



# Mid-term report

BY TED DYCK  
PROGRAM DIRECTOR

## 1. ABOUT CPIP 2011-2012

The full name of the Saskatchewan Arts Board (SAB) grant under which CMHA(SK) is running this *Writing for Your Life Project (WFYL Project)* is the Creative Partnerships Innovations Program (CPIP). I will use *WFYL Project* or simply *Project* to refer to our project.

Under the terms of the grant, CMHA(SK) hired the editor of TRANSITION (me) to direct a Project from July 15 2011 to July 15 2012 with the following goals:

- to maintain the three existing writing for therapy groups established Fall 2009
- to establish up to three new writing for therapy groups
- to develop these groups into a community of writing for therapy groups

More theoretically, the Project is directed toward answering a research question:

- What is the role of writing therapy in the current movement of recovery-oriented mental health services into the communities?

This question situates the Project in the contexts of “recovery” and “community,” both major aspects of CMHA(SK)’s current approach to mental health services. In other words, the Project is an integral part of, not an addition to, CMHA(SK)’s normal programming.

## 2. GROUPS ESTABLISHED 2009

These three groups, associated with the Moose Jaw, Swift Current, and Weyburn Branches of CMHA(SK), have been meeting since at least the fall of 2009, with varying degrees of success. Each group’s facilitator has provided a brief description of the group’s make-up, activities, and goals (see Appendix A, below). Even more importantly, each group has submitted a sample of writings by group members (Appendix B). This last section, after all, is the heart of the Project and of this report; the facilitators’ description is the breath, if I may continue my metaphor; and my Midterm Report is the body of the whole.

I visited each of these established groups at least twice during the first half of the project. As might be expected, each group has its own idiosyncrasies and its own strengths. To their very great credit, they have continued to grow during the past several years.

### a. The Moose Jaw Group [Moose Jaw Muse]

This group is very well established. It has been meeting more or less continuously since 2007 [the year of my writer-in-residency in MJ]. It has moved outward by working with the mental health program of the local health region, and by recruiting some new members. For the past two years, it has operated an annual writers retreat in which I have been pleased

to participate. And it has achieved financial support from the Saskatchewan Writers Guild (SWG) by signing up 60 percent of its members. The strength of this group may be measured by the fact that all of its members participate actively in the facilitation process.

### b. The Swift Current Group

Under the leadership of its dedicated facilitator and with strong support from branch staff, the Swift Current Group has maintained itself as it has moved gently into the larger community. The branch / group put out a press release about the writing program, which was followed by a front-page article in *The Gull Lake Advance* (see Appendix A). I was pleased to introduce several of its members to read publicly at the branch’s Christmas Banquet December 15, a brave act for these writers, highly appreciated by the audience.

### c. The Weyburn Group

The Weyburn Group has experienced several recent changes in branch directorship. Despite the normal dislocations that such changes inevitably entail for the whole branch, the group’s facilitator has maintained contact with active members of the writing group. Some of these members have continued to write (and be published in TRANSITION), and one has moved into the larger community by joining a regular writing group to which the facilitator belongs. In short, the importance of a stable “home” for each writing for therapy group cannot be over-emphasized.

### d. Toward a Community of Writing Groups

In September the facilitators of these three groups met in Moose Jaw for a facilitators’ workshop arranged by the Project with Jeff Park. Jeff is a very experienced writing group leader, having run a drop-in writing group for CMHA (Saskatoon) for nearly 20 years. The experience was successful enough to encourage us to try a second facilitators’ workshop with all the facilitators, both “old” and “new.” Plans with Reinekke Lengelle, who teaches therapeutic writing courses at Athabasca University, to do such a workshop with us in June 2012 are well under way.

I’m preparing to meet with SWG this spring to discuss the possibility of developing a substantive relationship between the Guild and the writing for therapy groups. A request to “pitch” such a step face-to-face has gone out to their board, and a meeting has been set up for March 18.

## 3. NEW GROUPS ESTABLISHED 2011

### a. The Eastend Group

The Eastend Group was established at the beginning of November 2011, and has met approximately every month since then at the Wolf Willow Health Centre (Eastend). A new facilitator is in place, and very capably has taken ownership of the meetings. The group has a keen sense of humour and is sup-

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. . . *writing helps to develop, empower, and articulate a Self that has too long been stigmatized both for itself and as an unfortunate burden on society.*

ported, broadly speaking, by the mental health outreach of the Cypress Health Region. It represents, in other words, a movement for the Project itself from local CMHA branches outward into the larger community of the health regions. Eastend is close enough to me that I can attend their meetings unless I am away visiting other groups.

#### **b. The Prince Albert Group**

This group began without any direct Project initiative. An experienced workshop leader and long-time SWG member living in Prince Albert approached me about facilitating a writing for therapy group in that town. The next step was easy – enlist the support of the CMHA (P.A.) branch, which already had an on-going relationship with the local arts community, and the group was born. They will begin bi-weekly meetings in January 2012. From my perspective, this is precisely the sort of thing that can and should happen as the Project becomes publicly known.

#### **c. The Yorkton Program**

Yorkton is a special case for this Project. First, writing for therapy will be delivered through the local Society for the Involvement of Good Neighbors (SIGN); and second, this will be a writing *program*, rather than *group*. Forming a writing group as such in the Yorkton context is currently not feasible; yet there are several on-going groups, some of whose members could participate in and benefit from a writing program. I did writing demos at the end of November for two such groups, to enthusiastic responses and full support. I will be actively involved in developing a writing program to be facilitated by the local staff. Another interesting expansion of the Project itself!

### **4. COMMUNICATIONS**

A key component of the Project is the communication of its activities and outcomes to the larger public. This can be done in several ways:

a. **Through publicity** generated by individual writing groups and/or branches: This is, by definition, voluntary. A good example of how it might be managed is the Swift Current experience; and I am ready to help in any way I can (by providing schematic press releases, etc.).

b. **Through TRANSITION:** Both 2012 issues are dedicated to the Project, the first containing this interim report, plus the program of the CMHA National Conference on October 16 and 17 in Regina; the second containing the full report, together with our usual contributions. I am cooperating with CMHA[SK] to include a presentation by participants in this Project on the Conference program.

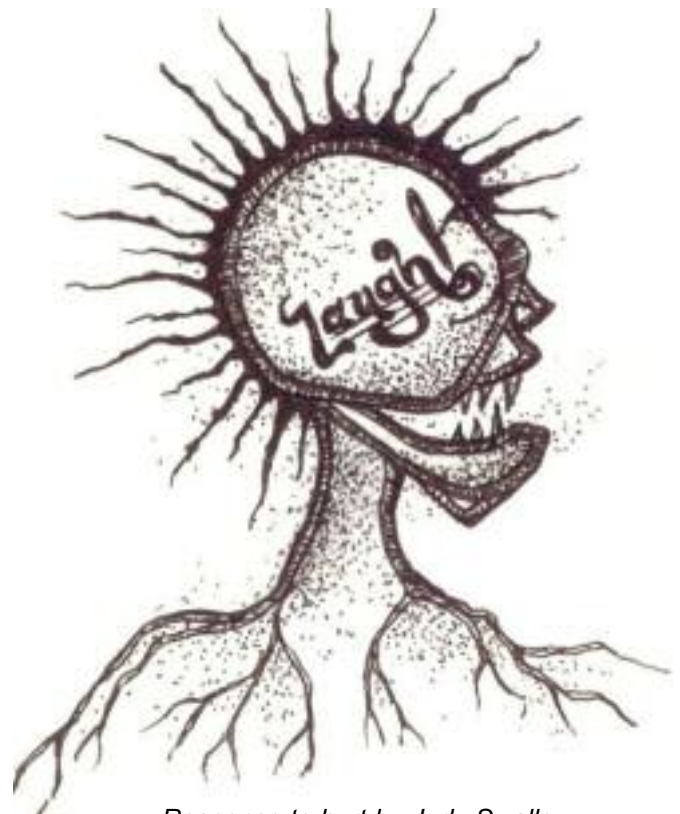
c. **Through the WFYL Google Group** for facilitators: This online group, initially rather moribund, has begun to show signs of life. Facilitators are using this forum to ask questions, exchange ideas, and keep up with group-related events. An

example is the thread related to the second facilitators' workshop: after discussion with group facilitators and Ms. Lengelle, this workshop has been broadened to include invitations to selected participants in the local groups and to all branch and program directors.

d. Needless to say, communications is integrally linked to the development of a community of writing for therapy groups across southern Saskatchewan.

### **5. CONCLUSIONS**

Anecdotal evidence that *writing for therapy* contributes effectively to the *recovery-oriented, community-based delivery of mental health services* is accumulating. Toward the end of the second term of this Project, I will survey branch directors, group facilitators, and writing participants to get a slightly more quantified response to the research question. But anecdotes and surveys, though they fulfill the terms of the Project, somehow miss the point of it all. For the point is surely what you will read below in the facilitators' reports, and experience directly in the writing by group participants — namely, that writing helps to develop, empower, and articulate a Self that has too long been stigmatized both for itself and as an unfortunate burden on society. But the Self with direct experience of mental illness that emerges from the writing in these groups is, in my view, a very special representative of the human condition that measures all of us.



*Response to hurt by Judy Swallow*



## APPENDIX A: Facilitators' reports, a summary

### 1. EASTEND (Writing for the health of it)

Glenna Gordon, facilitator, writes:

"We have a name: *Writing For The Health of It*. We have a place to meet: the Eastend Wolf Willow Health Centre.

"As a new facilitator, I have questions, both serious and inconsequential: In a town of approximately 500 people, can a writers group with a mental health aspect attract enough members to become viable? How many members do we need in order to continue? Should we put up another poster? What exercises might help the group improve our skills as writers? What are the skills we, as individuals, already possess? Can we meld our various literary interests and goals to the benefit of all participants? Who is going to bring snacks for the next meeting?"

"In time, the answers will arrive. In the meanwhile, our small group goes into our fourth meeting with enthusiasm for the project, trust in Dr. Ted's guidance, and hope that we can become a full-fledged writing for therapy group."

In an early February post to our online WFYL Google Group, Glenna continued:

"The Eastend group met today. Our numbers are small - Dr. Ted, I and two others attended. One person is unsure whether or not he/she wishes to continue. In a town as small as Eastend, it is going to continue to be a struggle to get our numbers up. I had the idea to create an Event on my Facebook page and invite all the friends I thought might be even slightly interested. Two indicated they were going to attend and four said maybe. None of them showed.

"I can see this is going to take time, that the possibility that we will fail to establish a group is probably greater than it would be in a larger center. And yet, there were the four of us. So, I will attend the workshop in Shaunavon [a "Writing the self" demo by Ted] on Saturday, and I will create a new Event on my Facebook page for our next meeting. Whatever happens, I will be glad to have had the experience. And, who knows, maybe we will succeed."

Ted Comments:

I am in the first instance reminded of another new facilitator's comments at the end of our 2009 Pilot Project regarding the "stretching experience" of being a new facilitator. A new facilitator and a new group are vulnerable, nowhere more so than in a small community.

Secondly, Glenna addresses a central issue in this Project, as in any mental-health-related work: the lingering stigma that is still attached to mental health and illness, a stigma that seems larger when the community is smaller. I have personally been "out" and rather public about it since the mid-nineties, so I've had years to get used to the averted eye and the pointing finger. Yet the stigma continues to surprise me. After all this time, I can say only that I feel it to be my responsibility not to add to the stigma by giving in to it myself. This means being as open about my mental health as about my physical health.

Finally, the other facilitators' responses to Glenna's posting were utterly supportive.

### 2. MOOSE JAW (Moose Jaw Muse)

Carol Rempel, on behalf of all three co-facilitators, describes "The State of the Muse":

"Dating back to 2007, Moose Jaw Muse is currently a group of seven writers who meet semi-monthly from September through June.

"Our group meetings are relatively informal. Participation is voluntary, but strongly encouraged. A typical meeting includes sharing prepared writing as well as taking time to write, with group feedback for both. A member can participate by bringing something by another writer who inspires them. We try to keep our meetings to 60-90 minutes, though they can run up to two hours if there is business to be discussed. This fall we decided to increase the time we spend writing in our meetings, a subtle but significant change in our routine. We currently rotate the leadership among our members and assign a different member to be in charge of the freewriting component. This minimizes the stress of leadership and improves member participation. We meet afternoons, for health and transportation(bus) reasons, currently in the home of one of our members, with a standing option of meeting at a local church if we need to. Accessibility, access to a copier, and an inviting, non-threatening atmosphere seem to improve group attendance and participation.

"In our early years, we held an inward focus, but in time, we have naturally begun to explore health through writing in the larger community. One such effort was by submitting inspirational writing to our local hospital's mental health day program. Another idea was to host a writers' retreat. At our most recent and second retreat, we discovered that this annual event has begun to serve as a measure for both our health and our writing development.

"Our group has also explored other avenues of development. Group membership in the Saskatchewan Writers' Guild connected us to literary activities within the province. We also applied for and received a \$500 SWG group grant to support our development. Saskatchewan Festival of Words provides inspiration and connection for our members during the summer with workshops and literary activities in July and monthly Performers Cafes year-round.

"Each year our group evaluates its goals. In 2010 we began a discussion about the possibility of group publication. A group submission of freewriting was published in the Fall 2011 issue of *Transition*. This year we have begun to explore the question of whether publication motivates and contributes to health, and if so, what forms of publication serve our health individually and corporately. A few of our members are exploring alternatives to traditional publishing for our group to consider down the road. Meanwhile, we have set out to capitalize on professional development opportunities through the SWG and improve our writing.

"Most participants found our group through our local CMHA office, but a few of us came by another member's invi-



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*'Writing is normally a solitary event, but it has served to bring together a diverse group of people in our community.'*

tation. While our group remains open to new members, our capacity to function with a wider range of participants is limited by our inexperience with mental health issues beyond our own. As such, membership is at the discretion of the group and our CMHA Director. While we do not expect or want this to change, our co-facilitators have arranged training through our CMHA Branch to address areas of inexperience in mental health to better equip us as facilitators. Additionally, our facilitators have made plans to visit other CMHA writing groups to observe and learn.

"Writing is normally a solitary event, but it has served to bring together a diverse group of people in our community. We have forged connections that have changed our lives. I constantly feel uncertain about the future of our group because the health of our members remains precarious, but here we are, writing for health. We are grateful for the support and encouragement we have received, and look forward to seeing more communities benefit from this type of investment."

Ted Comments:

The eloquence and thoroughness of this facilitators' report speaks for itself, just as the maturing Moose Jaw Muse speaks as a model for what a writing for therapy group can become.



Art by Rachel Gorman

### 3. PRINCE ALBERT

Early in January, Lynda Monahan, facilitator of the brand new P.A. Group, reported:

"In November I met with Ted Dyck and Doug Kinar, director of the Prince Albert branch of CMHA, over lunch, to set in motion plans for a Prince Albert Writing for Your Life group. I am so pleased to be part of this exciting project and very much looking forward to a productive year of writing with the Prince Albert group. The Prince Albert Writing For Your Life group will be having its very first meeting later this month and it is our intention to meet twice monthly at The Nest in downtown P.A. We'll soon be off and writing!"

Toward the end of January, Lynda posted two items on our WFYL Google Group:

(1) "I am very excited to tell you that the Prince Albert group is off to a fabulous start. We have about eight individuals who are keenly interested in writing and very much wanting to share their stories.

"There are all levels of ability. We have some very talented writers and storytellers, others who struggle with dyslexia, and others who have low literacy skills. But it is a very open and accepting group. We just take our time.

"We wrote about places we love to go to just 'get away from it all.'" There were some lovely detailed descriptions of forest trails, cozy bedrooms, and many wrote about The Nest, the CMHA drop-in centre, as a place they feel both safe and comfortable. One woman wrote about her childhood in the north and her pet bear (a real one!) named Timber.

"We wrote about someone we care about, again giving lots of interesting details. Really look, I told them. Don't just give their hair and eye color. Let's really see them! There were great word portraits of friends and family members.

"We wrote for two hours, with a short coffee break. It felt like ten minutes! Everyone was wanting to know when we are meeting next. Lots of enthusiasm. I feel very fortunate to be part of this wonderful project. P.A. Writing for Your Life is happy to be up and running!"

(2) [In response to queries about her first post] ". . . The Nest . . . is the drop-in centre for the local CMHA on Central Ave. in Prince Albert. The staff there kindly let us have use of the board room, so it is quieter . . .

"When anyone got off topic we just spoke about that for a minute and then I'd bring everyone back around to the writing. One woman left at the break because she was feeling panicky, but she has been sending me her poems in the mail for a while now and she will join us when she is able. As with Anne's group [in Weyburn], people just say they have difficulties and it's all okay. We work around them."

Ted Comments:

The Prince Albert group is a gift to the Project: it happened essentially by itself; it has an experienced writing facilitator who is a longtime and active SWG member; and it has a very supportive and actively involved branch program director. For these reasons, its prognosis is excellent.



## WRITING FOR YOUR LIFE - Appendix A

### 4. SWIFT CURRENT

William Gibbs, facilitator, reports:

"I believe this is our third year of offering a writing program to clients of the Canadian Mental Health Association Drop In Centre in Swift Current. In that time the writers' group has made substantial contributions to TRANSITION. My partner in this project, Sarah Laybourne [program director of the branch], has to take a lot of the credit for making this project a success. We have a core group that have made this writing program an important part of their life. We have some that come and go but contribute and benefit from the time they spend with us. Our project at the moment is to compile the writing that was done into a book that they can browse at their leisure at the Drop In Centre. Also, this year for the first time at our Christmas Party, some of the writers read some of their poetry.

"We maintain a very informal structure, starting off with some sharing of what has been going on in our lives. Then we start to think about what might be a good topic to write about. The ideas can come from any of us. Sometimes I simply provide an example of a certain kind of literary device (simile, metaphor, alliteration). The examples aid them in creating their own examples. Topics do not always have to be about dealing with sensitive areas of our lives. They are often about getting the writers to see their creative potential. Just feeling good about oneself through involvement in a creative exercise can



*Ruth Smith (right), director of the Swift Current Branch, CMHA, and Matt Drummond, member of the group facilitated by William Gibbs, are interviewed by Tim Kalinowski of The Gull Lake Advance (Nov.29 2011)*  
*PHOTO BY TIM KALINOWSKI*

go a long way in enhancing one's mental health.

"Also I attended a meeting of facilitators from Moose Jaw and Weyburn last summer. It was a great opportunity to meet and share ideas."

William made several further posts to WFYL Google Groups :

(1) [Late January] "I am trying to get the group to use some of their leisure time to do writing. At this point 99 per cent of our group writing takes place at our Tuesday writing sessions. Sometimes I give out a writing challenge — e.g., write about a favourite book or movie, or pick an animal or flower that represents the Centre and explain why — to encourage put-of-session writing."

(2) [Early February] "... We are going to have a discussion on how to increase our numbers at the next writing session... We have one really excellent writer who attends sporadically. We have to find a way to get him there on a regular basis... I am going to ask the Prairie Quills to which I belong to do a poetry reading at the Centre and hope that might stir up some motivation to do more writing."

Ted Comments:

These postings illustrate the effort facilitators expend to help their groups succeed, as well as the — almost definition-al — precariousness of the typical writing for therapy group.

### 5. WEYBURN

[From my e-mail conversations with Anne Lazaruko]

On Mon, 9 Jan 2012 13:25:43 -0600, Anne Lazaruko wrote: "I'm so sorry I've been silent for so long.

"I have made contact with Tasha [new director] at our branch office here and she is excited to start the group. In her words, "I believe it would be good for everyone here." I am doing a presentation on Wednesday afternoon to let everyone, including her, know what it's about and from there we'll see who is interested. She's already had enough interest to go ahead. So I'm excited to get started.

"As for my report. You could say that with staffing changes, the group did not happen in the fall, but will be at it full swing for the rest of the year. I'm looking forward to getting back at it. The facilitators retreat was very timely and really connected us all in this endeavor. The new Facilitators Manual will be a big help, as it provides ideas and some guidance as to the goals a group might pursue and the procedures to get there."

On Wed, 11 Jan 2012 12:02:59 -0600, Anne Lazaruko wrote:

"I'm off in a bit to do the presentation. I think it will go well. Apparently Beryl and Barry are already excited to get going!"

On Fri, 13 Jan 2012 12:16:00 -0600, Anne Lazaruko wrote:

"Hi Ted,

"The meeting went very well. At least 10 or 12 came out to see what the group is about and we'll start our first session next Wednesday at 1:00 p.m. Beryl and Barry were great

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*The remarkable thing I want my readers to note is that this group survived through an extended period of uncertainty . . .*

ambassadors and there was a lot of interest so we'll see what happens. We've set it up so that next week anyone interested can come and see how it works and then make a commitment at that point. The new director is very supportive and gets the idea behind writing therapy so that's nice. So we're finally off and running. We'll go once a week until spring and then I'll see who might be able to keep them going if I can't be there every week during seeding, etc."

Ted Comments:

It's really a "miracle" that any given branch and any given facilitator and any given set of participants manage to sort things out enough to establish a writing group. And that's why I've included Anne's e-mails in lieu of a report as such — they illustrate how such a miracle can be made to happen.

The remarkable thing I want my readers to note is that this group survived through an extended period of uncertainty that is part of the normal life of any institution. Perhaps the writing groups are not as vulnerable as I thought?

## 6. YORKTON PROGRAM

Jackie Washenfelder, Executive Director of the Yorkton Mental Health Drop-In Centre Inc., writes:

"Currently the Yorkton Mental Health Drop-In Centre offers writing in three of their core groups:

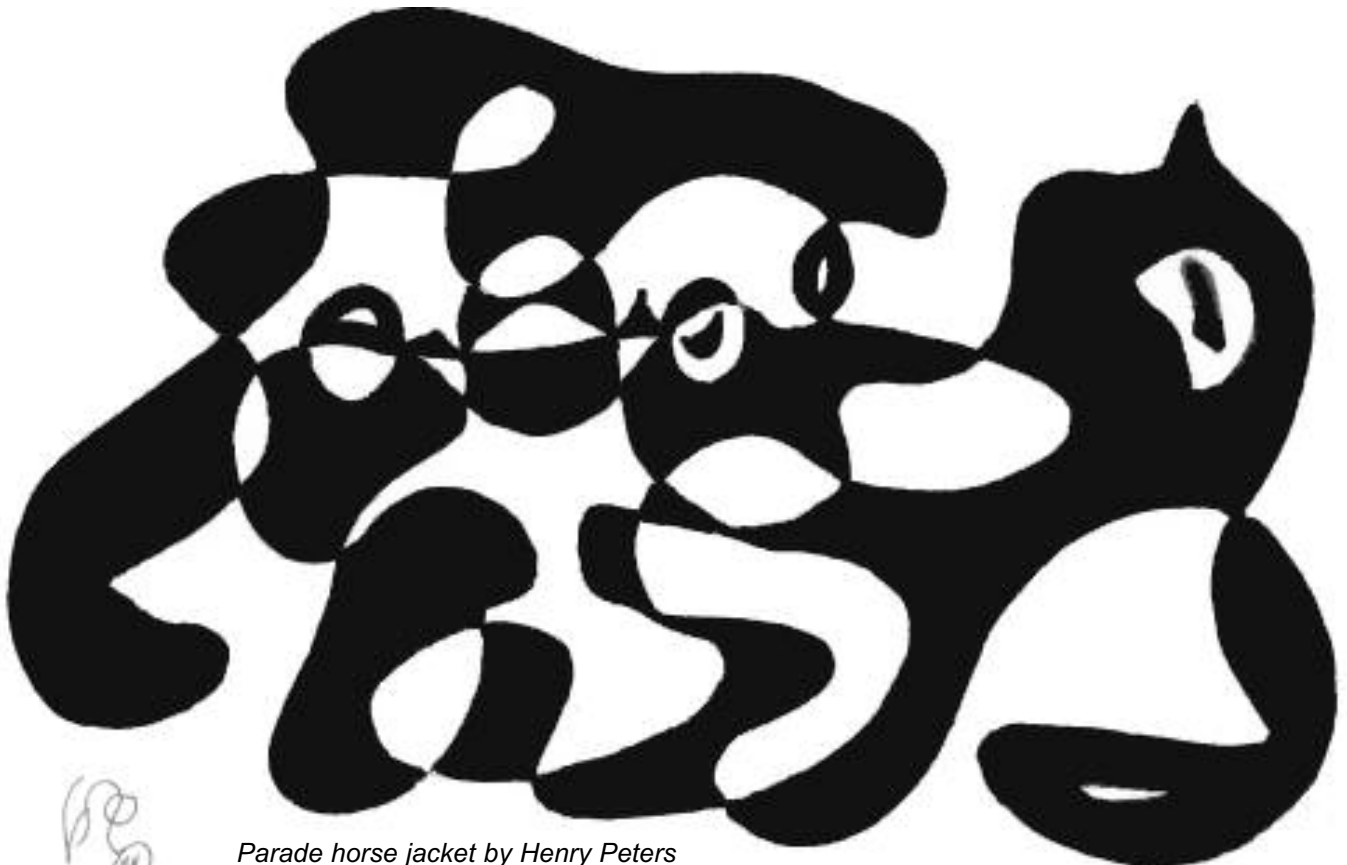
**"Young Adults Social Group** – This group said writing made them feel like they were conveying memories and emotions which improved their self-esteem. They feel the group is a safe environment to write and express themselves. This group will continue to grow, and as their comfort levels increase, they will be more willing to share their writing."

[Editor's Note: This and the next group, both beginning in February 2012, are facilitated by Kelly Bucsis.]

**"LGBT Group** – After the first demonstration they raved about how they enjoyed it. They did not know what to expect when arriving into a 'writing group' – they were all glad they partook in this experience. They stayed an extra hour to discuss topics arising from the writing exercise. They expressed that writing for therapeutic reasons was not something they had tried before. It seems that writing will be a foundation for growth and wellness in this group.

**"The Sunshine Group** – This group has been involved in writing since November 2011. They are always willing to share stories and memories. The writing exercises allow opportunities for self-expression. The participants are keen to get involved." [Editor's Note: The group facilitators are Cory and Jeanette.]

All the writing groups will encourage and foster growth in numerous ways for the participants.



Parade horse jacket by Henry Peters



## APPENDIX B: Writings by Group

# Eastend - Writing for the Health of it

[Editor's Note: This new group will be presented more fully in my fall 2012 report. The facilitator, Glenna Gordon, has been published previously in TRANSITION (Fall 2007).]

## GLENNA GORDON

### BALANCE

I can't just slice my life  
into equal portions  
like a pie.  
A serving of staring at the computer screen  
and one of mixing meatloaf,  
A serving of my husband's lips  
and one of pulling weeds.

Visualize the blade  
separating what is integrated.  
My experience makes me say this.  
Balance is more like a plank  
supported on a rolling barrel  
on which my feet are planted  
shoulder wide.

## GABRIELE KUECK

### SHORT STORY

lately, i have been dealing with the darkness in my life, the uncontrollable outbursts of a very pre-menopausal and pre-menstrual woman, who grew up, trying to be a nice kid, a people-pleaser, losing her identity in turn for many years to the concepts of others. i still find uncontrolled expression of anger hard to accept, after all, we can't take it back, ever, after it has been witnessed and heard, no matter how elegant and eloquent the apology. i still don't know how to deal with it, these unpleasant, emotional surprises make me want to crawl under a rock or become a hermit.

i must admit that, because of my confusion and un-acceptance of this part of being human, i have turned into a negative, depressed and whiny, self-loathing rag.

yes, it's a deep, deep and dark abyss, but how do we live with being proof of the possibilities, that we can be cruel to the innocent, unfair, blind to what other's see so clearly about us, raging, raging . . . and then falling into the pit of remorse when we come to? how do we go on living - thankfully, as creatures of habit we somehow slide back into everyday-life-mode - how do we stand up again after the storms that rock us to the soul, storms that we caused ourselves?

i confess that i have no idea. perhaps we do because we have to, because we learn to understand that we are all in the same boat, with some of us honest and resigned and some of us with skeletons in the closet.

it is hard to admit to not being able to keep it together at times, i flinch at each memory of seriously botched conversations or actions.

of course, i wish i could have done it differently, to match that nice person i worked all my life to become. actually, that nice person is in there, but she's so bogged down with guilt and abhorrent fear of repeat-performances that she's hard to find these days, rolled into a blushing ball somewhere in the pigpen of her disappointed mind.

yet, she re-appears like said flower after the storm, always hoping that hormones and possible genetic pre-disposition will be overcome, so she can continue on her way to becoming, more and more, that which she wished to be: predictable, dependably kind, and truly friendly, compassionate and helpful.

but so far, i only find myself so much less willing to be feeling and compassionate toward others, and it scares me to be so cold, selfish and uncaring in many everyday-things and situations.

i guess, i really just want to be left alone in my cave, so i don't hurt anyone, should an attack arise from the unknowable depth of my current being.

peace of mind is hard to come by, knowing one's capabilities, the jekyll-and-hyde conspiracy that lives inside.

i can only resolve to take it one day at a time, to consciously think positive, to stand by myself, regardless, because there's nowhere to run. perhaps, if we could all drop our masks, we could feel comradeship in our sameness, and people like me would find courage and hope for these our lives, where we are so close and yet so far from the individual, unsolved mystery that is this journey on earth which we have to not only manage but find a way to make the best of.

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# Moose Jaw Muse

DARRELL DOWNTON

## ECHOES

Echoes are a pain in the butt. I was enjoying my mid-afternoon nap when echoes kept making noise, interrupting my beauty sleep. Being as wily as I am, I need all the beauty sleep I can get. When I don't get my beauty sleep I become even grumpier than usual. Plus echoes keep breaking my concentration, making it hard to think. I haven't mentioned Saskatchewan Roughriders, 1976, 7 minutes 14 seconds, Lasagna, or discombobulated even once and that is a shame. It is all the echoes' fault for making so much noise and it won't stop. So therefore I am on strike. I refuse to write anymore.

Gotta go now. Too much diarrhea. Echoes indeed.

## LASAGNA COMEBACK

Lasagna is on the menu today so to Timothy Eaton's I come back for that great Lasagna. Speaking of comebacks, there was a goalie signed by the Minnesota Wild of the NHL who is 51 years old. It just so happens that I am 51 years old – isn't that wild? I may not have been good enough to play goal for Mortlach and my last goaltending opportunity was back in 1985 at Caronport on my dorm hockey team when the regular goalie couldn't make it. I was outstanding that day, making 1 stop and letting in 6 goals. So I will be going to the gym to work out, practicing my great reflexes stopping pucks. I will also have to eat to get back in shape, which is where Lasagna comes in. Isn't Lasagna the food of NHL goalies? Certainly it is! I have to go now the Lasagna is waiting for me. So is that goaltending comeback – NHL here I come. Maybe I will become a Toronto Make Belief; they pretend they are a hockey team.

P.S. Garfield is not the only cat who loves Lasagna

## GLORIA MORIN

### THE AFFAIR BEGINS

She  
is gentle  
"I've noticed a change..."  
Her words  
go unheeded.  
Convinced  
all is well  
a void filled.  
Obsessed  
consumed  
my outstretched hand  
feeds  
into the mouth of my lover  
my life's blood.  
Nothing else matters.  
i care for no one else  
not even for myself.  
Drained  
i wait  
for another transfusion.  
The affair continues  
month after month  
roller coaster ride.  
Exhilarating!

### THE AFFAIR CONTINUES

trance-like  
my hand moves  
toward the mouth  
of my lover  
even more generous  
this time  
i give and give and give.  
a feeding frenzy.

### THE AFFAIR ENDS

Flesh and bone  
are being consumed.  
the feedings hurt.  
Unrecognizable  
i am awakening  
mental anguish  
morbid thoughts.  
Lucid moment:  
listen to her.  
Mid-air  
my hand stops.  
"How are things going?"  
"not well...i am not well", i whisper.  
Seen amongst a  
sea of faces  
strength infused,  
wings lightened.  
I arise,  
turn my back to the beast  
and walk away.  
Excruciating...

(Please tell Her "thank you")  
Freida Rome



Laurie Rasmussen

## Transition

### I. internment

slip a handful of earth  
 from another's grave  
 and use it to consecrate  
 his box of ash

set next to his wife  
 and thousands of others  
 resting in death as he lived –  
 among neighbors and friends

beside new rabbits bound  
 away in line  
 like the procession  
 of mortals we are

### II. reiteration

step up stairs,  
 breathe soft must  
 piano music of that old soap opera playing  
 and me playing  
 when that old piano music was new  
 and when I was new

like the crunch of leaves  
 solace smell of damp age  
 cycles of seasons  
 make what was new tolerable  
 familiar  
 even welcoming

will that soap opera song play?  
 will something like leaves crunch  
 inside a home perfumed with must  
 and damp memory  
 making the absence of breath  
 seem almost normal?

### III. northern lights

explosions  
 flashes of light  
 night in love with  
 white fire ice  
 and atomic green  
 emotion, allure me

like the kinetics of creation  
 information strands dance  
 mortal supernova  
 onsets architect plans  
 kissing them  
 following them

in our beds of ice will colours warm?  
 will motion and energy  
 passion caress  
 hold and kiss us at the moment when  
 just as suddenly as they appeared,  
 the lights are gone?

Jocelyn Reeve

## Recovery with personal medicine

I would like to say that right now I am recovered. However, with mental illness, recovery as an absolute may not be possible. Some of us are lucky and will have just one illness episode and never need worry about relapse. Many of us, however, are ill for our lifetime. That said, this acknowledgment need not doom us to a dismal future. Recovery is a process, a journey that can provide hope.

It was only recently that I began to have hope for my future. I have been in the mental health system for almost half my life, and likely should have been for longer. I was undiagnosed for many years, and once I was diagnosed, I only went through the motions when it came to my health. I have tried over 30 medications. I have been in therapy for years. I have changed living environments. And with that making little difference, I had lost all hope. Throughout that time, I did little actual work. It wasn't really a surprise that my mental illness had not improved; life stressors fed into it, and vice versa.

Most of us don't realize that being healthy means more than taking medication and going to therapy. I didn't know. I thought I was trying to get better, but was just running in circles. I also had many misconceptions about my mental illness, which didn't help. The big turning point for me was admitting at a core level that I have a mental illness and I need help. Help included working towards health with the medication and therapy, and being a more active participant in therapy.

I began working with my professionals and attending groups. I drilled it into my head that unless I tried, I wasn't going to get anywhere. I began using my support network as I should. The main changes came about with the prodding of a good friend, and a series of group meetings discussing recovery. None of these things helped immediately though; I was just beginning my own recovery journey. The first thing I learned about the recovery journey is that everyone travels it, and we are each at a unique place within it. It has no set time-

line and no set path. We can all have hope. The recovery group I participated in focused partly on standard healthcare and how we can use it fully to our advantage, but the most important topic was that of personal medicine.

Personal medicine includes all the healthy things we do to take care of ourselves, more specifically, the things outside of medication and therapy. It is individual and we each have our own activities that help our physical and mental health. Some

things I do are spending time with pets, reading, walking, relaxation, talking with family, sitting in my back yard, ensuring I sleep well, doing chores, and so on. Developing my personal medicine has helped me immensely in my recovery and I have travelled further than I expected because of it. Without my personal medicine, I find that medication and therapy are actually less effective. To be healthy, we *need* to have personal medicine, regardless of what else contributes to our health.

## ADAM STAITE

### Bottoms My Up

May I be fed to ocean depths I must be recycled as all things should I got a life second to none it's a fucked up special yummy as reading Poe's rantings I would love to believe I'm strong like Bruce Lee with Draco's heart in my chest Never catch me Felon n selling other people 's stuff always would be running hearing guns I say just don't carry them You think your something cause you can pull a trigger won't have me using blades These hands do just fine curled then throwing take all beefs even though I'm vegetarian.

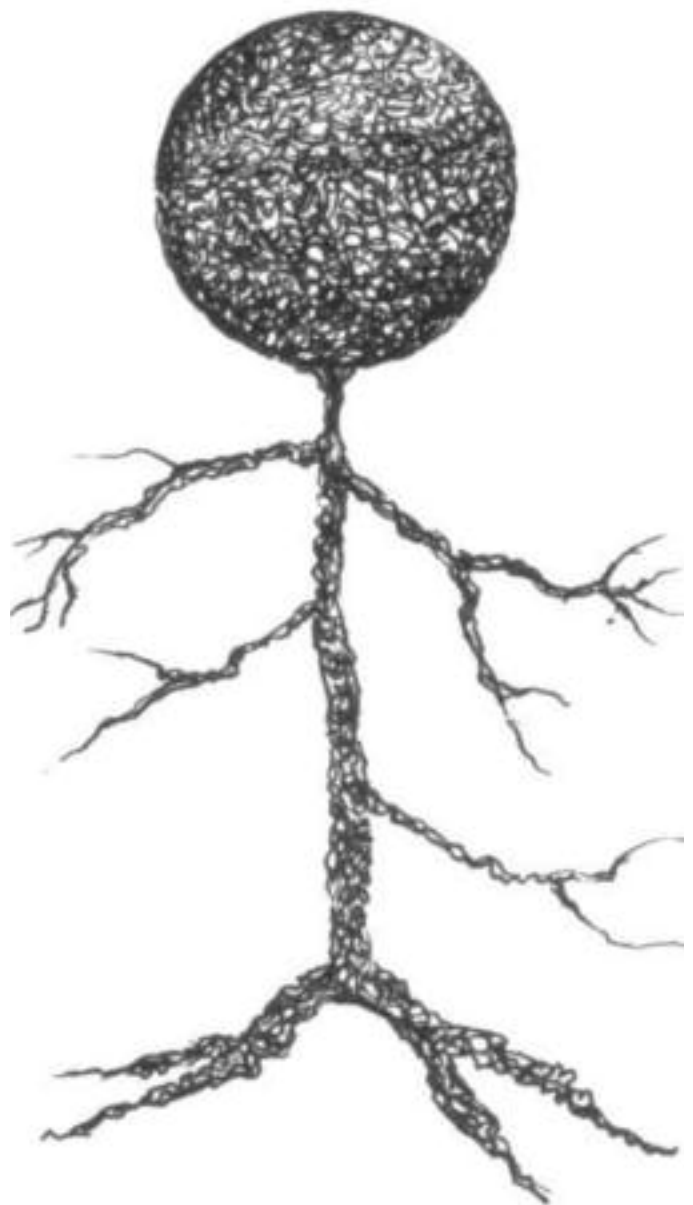
Raylincoma

### Come around

Won some money soon after Dude hangs himself day after that another has a birth date love karma loathe karma looks like things are going down giving in nicely Seems soon they'll get what I want to come to them I crave comes of them I don't know if the Dumb Ass Dude is getting much trouble being a failure My grandma however didn't deserve to get the forgot oneself gone away program Dude didn't need to either but heard of reasons that I for his decision towards suicide it's greatness would have put a bullet in him or tied him off You coward How dare disrespect it Fill the empty shelves that are built the ones that are you break change what holds you steady Be as Anime no matter the contents you loathe facts you love n need crave it.

### Courage

this powerful word is boasting its fuel its drive to achieve what may be out too far it gives strength to all who possess it wrote this visit me on the other hand lack this trait is an energy of wildfire I had to read last night well it didn't but I did any way courage I had none it left me like changing seasons my knees felt weak heavy my heart scared it wanted to weep I kept my cool even though my body was shaking my temperature went



*Earthbound by Judy Swallow*



straight up something I hoped would happen with my courage to give me strength to speak to these people I had never seen before my voice trembled low as I tried to shape words out my mouth curved wires courage why is it that I'm locked out lack so much I always thought I would be good or even better than I normally could if practice makes perfect thought I found strength was looked down upon cause my body my mind always jumped into danger danger I saw no danger I come to feel as courage takes his leave from my heart leaving me an empty shell of stuttering nonsense it's obscene to go from tall to very small courage am I not strong enough to embrace you or do I lack inspiration to achieve you once again take hold of you?

### Death

How it is that which I envy that which is a paralyzing topic makes people shit bricks no not me I'll live forever your life my end your end my life even when they don't know that I start things have started punishment for all those greedy all thoughts selfish those oblivious to what's around them death I'm a solid face unseen fists that never break or come unclenched there is no data on me no death for death unless stops that which is time tho time be his own thing I just take souls as I'm going for the stride making you my goals.

Seigrik Maru

### No Swimming

Lost when I wake see around me all is blue flows of waves smash my boat how fuck did I get out here wind picks up pressure to succeed to find land before the ocean swallows me never to be found though not gone to waste the creatures of this sea will set me free if I can't get out myself. Life is exhausting though this sea doesn't seem to be affected. So much beauty in this makes me feel as if this being out here is where I should be the most awesome of free love no one to shit on me no one looking for me in the depths I'll be taken apart freely peacefully be eaten free.

Raylincoma

### The Whys For Reasons

So I wake this day I feel as I do every day I lack motives and motivation I lack artistic views I'd give anything to be more creative so I could write like I'm mad my dailies the same thing without a job if I was artistic just a little more I'm sure I could keep jotting notes paragraphs sentences pages a whole lot better I just clean my house my pets then I play wow the rest or as much as I can If I could just write each and every day my life would have more meaning and understanding only if?

Raylincoma  
Seigrik Maru



Art by Donna Mae Johnson - Prince Albert Group



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# Prince Albert Group

LYNDA MONAHAN

## I have lost

mother father brother  
I have lost  
love friends beauty  
I have lost joy

I have lost much  
and I have counted those losses  
carefully saved them  
added and re-added them  
the way the wealthy do their riches  
the way my father did his pain

and I have held those losses  
close as children  
I have stroked their heads fondly  
spoken their names in dreams  
I have nurtured my losses  
watched them grow until  
they stood so much taller than me

I have let those losses  
elbow their way  
for more space in my heart  
let them have whatever they wanted  
I have spoiled my losses  
I have given them every occasion

listen my sad children  
it is long past time  
I must release you now  
look there is the open door  
and here is my heart  
bright with farewell

## the snow has come early this year

too late now to save the herbs  
I meant to bring indoors  
under the cover of snow  
rosemary, sage and bee balm  
die their small deaths

too late I save nothing  
not even myself these days  
though I mean to  
bring myself in before  
the winter hits  
before everything piles up  
burying me  
like the graying leaves of oregano  
beneath that snow

the delicate dead flowers of thyme

IAN MCINTYRE

## For Crying Out Loud

if you think you are down with life  
cause you're better off just being you  
just being yourself and nothing else

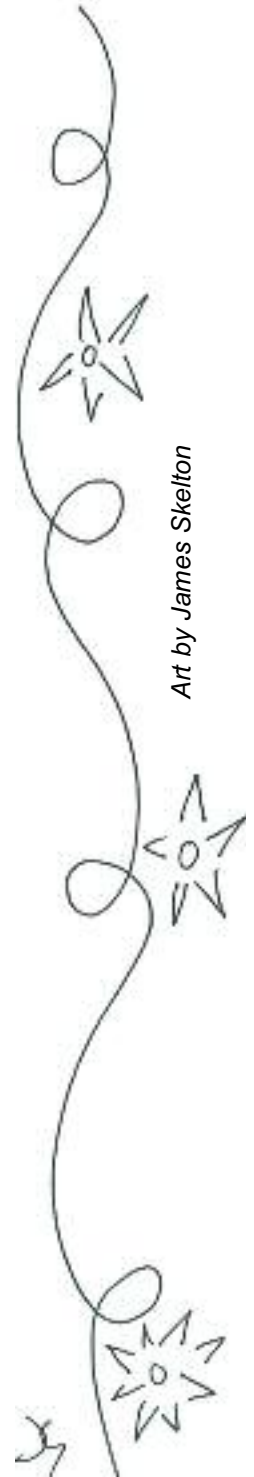
for crying out loud  
we are birds of a feather  
pain inside can be done away  
get it out and be happy again

if you think you've had enough  
we have all been there too  
here at The Nest you are welcome  
to share your tears

for crying out loud  
you are a lot better now  
love is stronger than all of hell  
love will pick you up when you fall

if you could see a brand new world  
take a breath before you jump  
out of hope a new life can begin

for crying out loud you are my friend  
you are my friend...



Art by James Skelton



## THE SPRATTS

### DALE SPRATT

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#### The Dealer

I walk into the party without a care  
One of the most welcome people there  
The stereo pounds Clapton into the room  
There is a buzz of constant conversation

The knives are glowing red  
Ravenous addictions must be fed  
I reach into a pocket, pull out what they crave  
The cash hits the table, another deal is made

I like cruising in a fast car  
This life will carry me far  
I have no feeling or remorse  
I crave the cash of the druggie's addiction

I know I am slowly becoming one of them  
My mind is beginning to do a little bend  
I am not the same cheerful joker  
I am filled with hate and fear

Now I am sliding out of control  
Who knows where this ball will roll  
My friends fade away in the morning  
I am suddenly alone to face the day

I am penniless on the street  
My future looks very bleak  
I can't see living another year  
The fast lane has taken its toll

All things in life come with a price  
Even for freedom you have to pay  
If you to want get out, turn around  
Take the door and never look back

#### The Brink

I was once young now I am old  
I long ago spent all of my gold  
Walking on busy streets totally alone  
The wind knives through with a moan

I lived the high life in my youth  
Beer and whiskey in a barroom booth  
Parties went on the whole night long  
Now all that and my friends are gone

I poured poison through my veins  
New years Eve was a time for cocaine  
LSD took me to the dark of the moon  
I hit the brick wall all too soon

Do you dare walk a mile in my shoes?  
Just how much can you afford to lose?  
Think before you take that first drink  
Don't drive yourself past the brink

### HOLLY SPRATT

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#### Winter

As I awake to nakedness  
There is no heat.  
As I awake to coldness  
There is no spring.  
The brisk dark air  
Sends an emptiness of pain.  
Snow falls like bitter rain  
Embracing my spirit.  
My heart beats faster  
My body is cold  
All is shaken

#### Spring

The sun cascades gently on my back  
The flowers run in the cool green grass  
Sweat glistens upon me  
As heat runs rampant  
I feel the rain  
I feel the sun  
I feel all glory  
I laugh at myself  
Passionate flowers  
Waken to a passionate self  
On this warm spring day

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# Swift Current group

MATT DRUMMOND

## The Dark Side of the Moon

**Y**ou see me in the night, brightening up the sky and your path below. Like the man in the moon smiling at everyone I see.

But even the moon has its dark side. Rarely seen, never talked about, yet it exists. Everyone speaks of how bright and cheerful I am. Like the moon, few ever see the dark side.

How dark it is.

Years of fake it till I make it. I'm done faking it. Lying to myself, my friends, family, and doctors. Done. Despite a cheery disposition, more days than it seems I want to give up.

So often the thought of ending it all crosses my mind, though briefly. How many Advil would it take? How many people would really miss me? More than I think.

Just as important, what would I miss? What will I become if I ride out the low points on this rollercoaster?

I think of the Beach Boy's Brian Wilson staying in bed for a year. Not a bad idea. Brian admits to depression and schizoaffective disorder. Just like me. Who knew? The man is a creative genius. Maybe there's a "Creative Genius" in me just waiting to be unleashed.

WILLIAM GIBBS

## Coyote and the moon

**I** was out for a walk that I had promised myself knowing that this evening there would be a full moon. I had been watching the moon like a child watches a hot air balloon, waiting for that special moment when it starts to rise in the sky. I am a bit of a "moonlight watchmanic" as Tom Waits puts it. Or perhaps a bit like the 13th Century Persian Mystic Rumi who said, "Thirst drove me down to the water where I drank the moon's reflection."

I also like to observe the way the moon changes colour as the night grows darker. It got me thinking about the child Marcel listening to Josaphat-le-Violon tell the story of how he turns on the light of the moon in the novel *The Fat Woman Next Door Is Pregnant* by Michel Tremblay. It was at that very moment while I was so absorbed that I was caught off guard by a voice that said, "I see we have something in common." In a panic I whirled around and to my surprise there was a coyote walking by my side.

"I also love to watch the moon," Coyote chuckled. "It always puts me in a very good mood. I did not intend to startle you. I know what you're thinking. I must be going insane. Coyotes can't talk."

I tried to conceal my nervousness and the anxiety that was growing by the second. Thankfully, I was aided by a white throated sparrow lamenting the close of the day somewhere in an island of willows nearby. Its song has always been a sort of cheerful mantra for me. The routines and that we take time to consider and ponder all the beauty in nature. Coyote and I proceeded side by side quietly marveling at the beautiful evening lit up by the full moon.

"I am asking you to take a leap of faith, not to walk across red hot coals, simply trust your ears and eyes. Are you okay with that?" said Coyote, laughing at his own humour while

watching the moon sail behind a cloud. In the time it took for the cloud to pass over the moon it changed from dusk to night.

"I will take that leap of faith," I said. But I wondered, will I come out the other side of this cloud of mystery changed forever in some way or like the moon unscathed? Was I about to undergo some spiritual transformation, discover some new understanding, some truth unbeknown to me?

We continued our walk. The cool breath of the night penetrated the warm cloak of the day. I welcomed this because it had been an extraordinarily hot day, and it sharpened my mind that had been dulled by the oppressive heat.

Rather nervously I said, "I've read in a wonderful Aboriginal story that the moon was once your home and you fell off and couldn't get back. Your beautiful songs at night are about a longing to return to the moon."

"Ah yes, loneliness, missing your home, those are universal themes. I for one am always being forced to adapt. But to answer your question, I know all the stories," said Coyote.

"Perhaps you are familiar with the writer Thomas King. Coyotes are often popping up in his writing. What is that title now ... it's on the tip of my tongue. Anyway, in this story Coyote's voice is so terrible it causes the Moon to go into hiding."

Actually I had read that story. "It is Coyote Sings to the Moon," I said.

"That's it!" Coyote replied with glee.

"You can't be serious about that being a traditional aboriginal story. After all Moon is found playing chess. What is traditional about that!"

Coyote replied, "I think your problem is that you view traditional aboriginal stories as artifacts. Something that had significance and a practical purpose only in the past. It represents some former way of life. King has simply taken owner-



ship of the story and he is continuing the story. Once you hear a story of Coyote, the story belongs to you and you do what you want with the story. It is an infinatology.”

“How does it make you feel to be the central figure in so many stories?”

“Well, I like it best when the story makes me the trickster, the creator’s helper, not so much the buffoon. But I take satisfaction in that people use me to make sense of the world and sometimes actually improve themselves,” Coyote retorted.

I thought to myself, “I will test the extent of his knowledge some more but in a different direction.” So I asked Coyote, “Are you familiar with ‘Moonlight Sonata’?”

“Oh yes! Poor Beethoven,” Coyote sighed. “So downhearted. The moon like the Countess Giulietta Guicciardi merely by her presence made the world a more beautiful place, but, alas, her unreciprocated love was sadly as out of reach as the moon. What a touch the pianist must have to create the proper somber mood of the piece that only the voice of a piano could approach. To me it appears the piano is the only friend he can turn to. Its consoling voice is meant to sooth and relieve his broken heart. But there is a heaviness to it that grows and that he feels in his heart, the weight of his sorrow crushing his spirit. That is my interpretation.”

By now I had completely overcome my initial fears. I really started to enjoy the conversation. “Unlike Beethoven, I think we can use our love of the moon as a starting point to build a relationship.”

To my delight, Coyote replied. “Absolutely, the moon has brought us closer together.”

We directed our attention again towards the moon. It had gone through several changes in tone from its first appearance at dusk and into the depths of darkness. “I know this sounds bizarre,” I said, “but simply through its change in colour the moon made me think first of apricots, then pumpkins, and finally of persimmons.”

“I have no problem with that. Those are interesting observations and connections,” replied Coyote. “I am almost always thinking of food. I can take or leave pumpkin. I personally find pumpkin dry and tasteless. I have to be desperate, but I love the taste of persimmons and apricots. Just out of curiosity have you ever tasted figs? I discovered them on a trip to California. You must really try them.”

We decided to rest for awhile and just gaze at the moon traversing the sky. I lay on my back, my head resting on a rock still warm from earlier in the day, and Coyote sat beside me on his haunches. All of a sudden we heard the fiddle music. “What could be more perfect,” I thought. But at the same time I noticed that Coyote, who like me had been drifting off, seemed to snap back to reality.

“Tonight, I’m hungry for watermelon. There is a garden near by with a watermelon patch. That was where I was heading when I bumped into you. How about you? Do you like watermelon?” But before I could answer, Coyote started off at a trot.

I caught up to Coyote as we arrived at the top of a hill overlooking a small farm whose lights had just come on. Smoke rose from its chimney like a charmed snake to the

sound of a fiddle.

“To answer your question,” I said, “I am part Mennonite. I have watermelon juice running through my veins. I absolutely love watermelon.”

“Good! Perhaps you can join me tonight. But first, I will fill you in on some watermelon hunting rules.” said Coyote. “Remember we are a team. You have to be a team player. By that I mean I’ve got your back and you must have mine. Two noses and two sets of eyes and ears are better than one. Although I must admit mine are far superior to yours. What’s mine is mine and what’s yours is yours. You will not try to eat any of my watermelon as long as I show an interest in it. I will extend the same courtesy to you. You must agree to these terms.” “Of course!” I answered without hesitation.

“When I return to my family, my belly will be full, my face sticky and sweet smelling from the juicy red flesh. The pups will lick the sweetness from my face. That smell and taste will be planted in their memory. I may regurgitate a portion but it is never the same.” Coyote let out one long ghostly howl.

It was answered almost immediately by some faint barks and yips some distance away. Coyote seemed contented and comforted by this.

“Soon they will be tested for the final time joining me on the watermelon hunt. It will play a role in determining if any have a future within the pack.” said Coyote.

Then he turned towards me. We stared into each others eyes for the first time. Perhaps he was using a skill acquired and perfected over many years of deciding who was in and who was out of the pack. “Was I a liability? Was I up to the job?” I asked myself. “Was I capable or, perhaps like one of those pups, lacking some important quality that could under certain circumstances put the pack at risk put Coyote at risk?”

Coyote deliberated, measuring me up for some time. He must have seen something in me that satisfied him, that I was worth taking a chance on, given an opportunity to prove myself.

He broke the silence. “Don’t you find that fiddle music moving?” He started off down the hill towards the farm, and looking back, commanded, “Follow me. I’m famished!”

Then Coyote barked twice followed by a single haunting howl that slowly rose and then slowly faded. This was no taunt, but rather a chivalrous act giving fair warning to everyone and everything. I am coming. At that moment the moon’s path took it behind another cloud. We were engulfed in darkness.

Coyote loped through the darkness with the ease and familiarity of a premier danseur moving across a stage. I on the other hand was awkward, stumbling along, tripping over things, losing my way in a futile effort to keep up. In this chaos, for some reason, a poem I had read years ago called “Cyclops” popped into my mind. “She was right!” Atwood more often than not left me perplexed. Like in the poem, she challenged us to confront wilderness on its terms and to accept that if there is a monster it is you and I.

Is it true you have no fear?

Take off your shoes then,

let your eyes go bare,

swim in their darkness as in a river.

---

As for monsters, we deserve that label. It is most fitting for us. For we have a hunger alien to that of Coyote. It is the obsession with material things that is never satisfied, and must continually be nourished. We will sacrifice all that is really important to satisfy that hunger.

I gazed again at the full moon as it appeared once more in the break of patchy clouds high in the sky above the farm that I now recognized. The owner had long been renowned for his

watermelons for years, and for his fiddle playing. In fact, I thought I recognized the tune he was playing as we drew near. I'm certain it was the Quebecois Traditional "La Reel d'la Pleine Lune d'ete." It was exhilarating. My body started to defy gravity. I had a feeling I had never experienced before. I found I could cover huge distances with each stride. I quickly caught up to Coyote who looked at me and seemed delighted to see that I too was dancing through the darkness!

## Weyburn group

ANNE LAZURKO (Facilitator)

### Preservation

Wim smelled old,  
saturated with the sick  
sweetness of years,  
his experience unending  
to my small self  
watching through fine sheers  
for the beat up Toyota,  
red when red was not  
a color for driving,  
left in the lane as though  
he might, after all,  
not be where  
he wanted to be.

Wim stretched gaunt  
frame, appraising,  
connecting again after months  
and miles. When finally he sat  
with roll-your-own papers  
and tobacco spilling from ripped  
plaid pocket, to polished oak table,  
to wrinkled lap, I stared  
transfixed by the rhythm  
– spread, stuff, roll – flick  
of tongue across glue,  
flaring weeds, pinched  
yellow fingers.

There was no scolding  
this old-country friend  
who lit the kitchen with warmly  
scented smoke and throaty Dutch  
words and the spittle he could  
be forgiven in light of tales  
of rivers paddled and wilderness

portaged, of animals he loved  
and winged creatures he protected,  
like the phalaropes, small  
familial birds that flocked  
and flashed silver bellies  
at the sun, aeronautic stunts  
in perfect formation  
over the lake where the  
cottage stood guard.

Wim counted the birds  
year to year, tracking progress  
or not, built protective fences  
round fragile sand nests  
to ward off dogs and humans  
he'd rather not know,  
green before the trend,  
no patience for stupidity  
or ignorance.

Face like a map on parchment,  
each birth or death or joy or pain  
running a new highway  
from forehead, round Delft Blue eyes,  
past wizened mouth and back  
again, an atlas of a life  
known only from whispered  
insinuations of a dead wife  
buried en route, and an  
insolent son embarrassed  
by a guttural and unkempt father,  
who loved the boy anyway.  
Things Wim didn't talk about.  
Things he couldn't save.



ANNE LAZURKO (Facilitator)

## Dreaming Her Children Gone

In those honest moments  
where wake slides into sleep  
she imagines a low tide,  
shoreline imprints of small  
heels and toes traipsing  
behind, soft hands  
clutching her own.

But the lonely beach is selfish,  
desiring only her, beckons  
tide to wash over instincts  
lulled, she releases her anchors  
slowly, muses at plump fingers  
fluttering out to sea, at arms  
floating weightless, moving up  
and up, spinning her whirling,  
dancing down the beach,  
lithe young body reflecting  
all possibilities, only  
one set of footprints  
chasing her in the wet sand  
unencumbered.

Sand being temporal,  
willful, shifts its indulgences,  
shapes to the moment sleep fills her  
and lunar longing washes them up  
whole, unharmed, those tiny feet,  
those small hands dragging  
her back, fixing her  
to earth.

BARRY STYRE

## 1961

She lived in a high-rise apartment building in Regina  
where she went to university and was an anthropology  
major, also taking a class in Russian lit.

Whether she was of Bohemian persuasion or a beatnik, it  
didn't really matter.

What use were labels anyway?

She read Ginsberg, Kerouac, Dylan Thomas and William  
Blake and listened to cool jazz records like Miles Davis  
and John Coltrane.

Her hair was black and straight reminiscent of Nana  
Mouskouri and Joan Baez.

Her age was irrelevant. She had kind of an ancient soul  
born of callous angels.

On the walls of her pad there was a poster of Che  
Guevara, and when she had friends over they drank  
espresso, discussed existential philosophy and left-wing  
politics.

You could find her sometimes at a coffee house  
downtown named the Glass Onion.

She was a lesbian without the name tag, or society's  
frown, inadvertently and unabashedly real. Beyond  
sorority or sisterhood, not a cause celeb, or a radial either.

She walked to the beat of a different drummer.



Art by James Skelton

# Yorkton Program

[Editor's Note: As noted earlier in this report, the Yorkton Program serves several groups, indicated by the sub-headings.]

## The Sunshine Club

LEONARD FORD

### Sundog event

The first thing to go out and face the sundogs  
is Vaseline on the nose, so you don't freeze it.  
Get ready with a pair of pants, blue jeans, with a belt.  
Then you go to heavy good socks, for the feet,  
so you don't freeze your toes.  
The next thing is boot wear — boots past your ankles,  
heavy winter boots that don't slip on the crispy, frosty ice patches.  
Then a sweater pullover on your chest, right over your shirt.  
Next a good sturdy winter parka.  
Then a toque, to wear over your head, to cover your eyes,  
so they don't get cold or freeze.  
And for your hands ... mittens for your hands up to your wrists -  
tuck them inside your jacket sleeves.  
Make sure you have a scarf to protect your mouth.  
Not good to not be protected by a scarf,  
cause it's not good to take cold Arctic air in.  
And make sure you have a pit-stop destination  
to warm up before proceeding on to the next place.  
And make sure the other place has a telephone

to make calls to parents.  
And a ride to go back to where you started off.  
[stanza break]

Go outside in the big city of Regina where the event takes place.  
Only in the winter – it's a winter event – January and February.  
It could be 39 or 40 below, plus the wind-chill factor.  
The dogs can come out in the morning, but at high noon  
they really stand out, in the deep, dark-blue sky.  
[stanza break]

Around the sun there is a white, cool, glossy streak.  
It's a bright sensation around the outer edge of the sun.  
It's so bright on the eyes you can only just glance at it.  
It's a short, brief feeling, a cold feeling.  
[stanza break]

The sundogs disappear when there is a break  
in the temperature. When a mild spell is coming,  
and the sky turns a lighter blue, they're gone.

Crayon Art

LAWRENCE RIST





# Sadie

BY SHIRLEY CALLAGHAN

In 1970 I was a psychometrician at Hillsborough Hospital, a beautifully treed psychiatric institution on the bank of the Hillsborough River in Charlottetown, Prince Edward Island. At that time I was both challenged and inspired by a patient I'll call Sadie.

My supervisor assigned me to test 66 welfare patients, long forgotten by family and friends, with 10, short psychometric tests. The project started in June in a sparse office above a hot, steamy kitchen. The enthusiastic staff brought the female patients in their pant suits, curled hair and exaggerated lip smears, from their locked wards over to me, a mere novice. Testing was wearisome for them, especially the Bender Gestalt Test, a series of paper and pencil drawings to be copied and drawn again from memory.

Sadie came to me with a cherubic face, greying hair, and a pink pant suit. She came down the hall on the arm of her nurse as regally as a queen and sat down in front of me. She had a glint in her right eye and the other was half-closed. She did the first few tests, watching me all the time. When it came to the Bender Gestalt, she balked and refused. Finally, she

began and after 50 painful minutes finished barely recognizable drawings. I should have stopped, but compulsively asked her to draw as many as she could. With her one eye glaring, she stooped over the desk for a few minutes, working diligently. With a stare she passed me the paper. There all over the page in scribbles was F- - - you. After my initial shock, my jaw dropped, and then I felt for her. I looked at the beads of perspiration on her brow and her set jaw; I wanted to give her extra points for her revolt. She had stated her case effectively.

I completed the project by mid November and then carefully charted the findings. When my supervisor came into my office the next day, he scowled and said there were gaps in the testing, making the results useless for research. He pushed the chart back to me. I grimaced, but said nothing, just swallowing my anger. It seemed so unfair to all the patients who had worked hard for me, and especially to Sadie. I reflected on her feisty nature, her narrow-eyed rebellion and the colorful way she had dealt with her annoyance and her frustration. I never saw Sadie again, but I often thought of her during the challenges of my career. Undoubtedly, she would have coped with my supervisor with vigor. Sadie had taught me a lesson in survival.

## Transition

BY KAY PARLEY

When long-term care was the norm, transition back to the outside world was tough. I had spent 10 months in treatment, nine of them in the big hospital at Weyburn, and I knew the magnetic pull of what they called "institutionalization." I was adjusted. I knew the rules and routine and most of the jargon. I had made friends and grown into the rhythm of the place. I had an office and a "job" editing the hospital paper, so I felt useful. There was lots of entertainment, lovely rambles in the grounds, good discussions.

What provided the final push to get me discharged and willing to face the "real" world? Chiefly Dr. Selinger, who set a deadline. He would take my case if I would promise to be out of there in one month. That would mean I could no longer participate in the psychotherapy group, the most useful and encouraging aspect of my treatment. That was motivation enough, right there, but there were other factors. Many of the friends I'd made had been discharged and I was increasingly conscious of how ill most of the new admissions were. I began to feel out-of-place.

The next step was to make the adjustment to the outside world. I got a job typing invoices at a wholesale grocers down town, but I was to spend the first four weeks living in the hospital, to make the transition gradual. I could go "home" every night to the familiar ward, enjoy the recreation, and connect with therapists again. One incident stands out when I scan my memory of that month. A patient was having a coffee and cake party in one of the private rooms. The patients at the party were all well enough to be good company, and there was a lot of silly

humour — the kind of humour mental patients use to forge a mutual culture and share their unique situation. As I sat there in that company, I suddenly realized that I no longer found the "crazy" jokes funny. I didn't belong there any more. I felt alien, and I think that's the moment when I really left the hospital.

When I think back to the month of May, 1949, my month of transition, what really stands out? People, of course. Individual people who knew me well enough and cared enough to give me the kind of support a psychiatric patient needs at a time like that. And it wasn't just that last month. The need for understanding people was to go on for years. No doubt it's still there.

Most of the nurses were pretty formal with patients in those days, but a few were friendly enough to make me feel I could trust them. Neil McCallum and Irene Russon had been the best. When I worked with them on recreation they made me feel useful and accepted. When it was time for my discharge, Irene and her roommate, Rose Leinweber, stepped right up to the plate. Irene was going on holidays, so Rose would be alone in the one-roomed shack by the highway the two nurses were renting. I could move in there and use Irene's bunk while she was away. That was the first boost. By the time the month was up and I moved to a light-housekeeping room in Mavis Jahnke's home, I was becoming adjusted to Weyburn and to living "out." But it took help — not just the formal help of professionals but the warm acceptance of friends. People form the necessary bridge that *is* transition.

Of course some individuals stand out when I think back to those vital friendships. Mavis was one of the best things that ever happened to me. Her dad was a friend of my dad and she



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*I was helping the recreation staff as part of my therapy and we were preparing one of the concerts we put on about once a month.*

took me into her home without a qualm, proving to be a really compatible landlady. After 10 months I quit my job and left Weyburn, only to crawl back on the verge of another breakdown. I went to see Mavis — just a friendly call — and when I told her I was afraid I might have to go back to the hospital, that I hadn't been eating or sleeping well, she set food before me and said, "Anything nurses can do, I can do. *Eat.*"

I ate. Then Mavis told me my room was still vacant and ordered me to go up there and go to bed. I did that too, and stayed for nearly two more years. Mavis deserves a star.

Then there were "the kids." My relationship with two high school students actually began while I was still in the hospital. I was helping the recreation staff as part of my therapy and we were preparing one of the concerts we put on about once a month. A guest act came from Weyburn Collegiate to provide part of the entertainment. One of the students, Jean Arnett, (now known as writer and actress Jean Freeman) was keen on show business and had organized a troupe. One of the boys with her was a lad of 14 whose voice was still soprano. He wore a blue evening dress that belonged to one of his sisters and sang "Alice Blue Gown." He made a hit. His name was Larry Lowes.

When the program ended, "the kids" stayed for cake and lemonade and showed no fear or tension about meeting mental patients. Jean told me years later, "That's the night I discovered there were real people out in the mental." If it was a new experience to her, she didn't let it show that night. We laughed and talked like any group who had just put on a program. They were intrigued to learn I had been to radio school and they accepted me so enthusiastically I felt like a free citizen for the first time in months. What I didn't know then was that, in the struggle ahead of me as I tried to put mental illness behind me and find my place in so-called sane society, Larry would prove to be the best friend an ex-patient could have hoped for.

Because I had suffered severe losses at the age of six, I stopped developing emotionally at that age. I had matured intellectually and, in most respects, socially, but my emotions were frozen. As a result, I reacted like a child to many situations. One of the psychiatrists had told me that, because I'd had the problem for 20 years, it would take me 20 years to catch up. So actually Jean and Larry were closer to my emotional age than the adults around me. In some respects, they were probably older. I only know I could relate to them with an ease I didn't always find with people my own age.

At that time, a knot of Weyburn people interested in drama decided to start a Little Theatre group. An English woman whose husband was a doctor at the mental hospital was to direct the first production. Jean and Larry joined the group of course, and they were great motivators, urging me to direct the next play. There I was, less than two years out of hospital, working in a law office and directing "Papa Is All."

Could I have done it without the encouragement of those young friends? Probably. I had a lot of support in town, but the way the two teenagers could ignore my recent history was magic. My little room became a busy setting and Jean and Larry were my most frequent visitors. I wrote my first published stories. "The kids" did projects like clay sculptures.

Larry and I had birthdays five days apart, so of course there were birthday parties there.

Most of the people who accepted me best were artists. Painter Kay Flury became a fast friend, as did musician and talented actress June Barber. Writer Isabel Eaglesham was very supportive. With their interest in drama, Jean and Larry could be expected to veer my way.

I'm sure some people were puzzled about how I could form a close friendship with a teen-aged boy. I don't think it was merely my emotional immaturity. Chances of finding peo-



*Ceremony by Henry Peters*



ple who really understand and accept you as you are rare, and no one ever understood me better than my young friend Larry. He had six sisters, all of them older, so relating to an older girl came naturally to him. Most of the neighbours and cousins who were my playmates as a child were boys, and I was always the oldest, so I was used to the relationship too. It was a natural. I'd never had a brother and Larry seemed to fit the part.

I've always given the city of Weyburn a lot of credit for the way they accepted me and fostered my recovery in those early years after my discharge from hospital, but I know that Larry's acceptance and understanding, not to mention his com-



Art by James Skelton

panionship, was probably the key factor. As he matured, I sensed the practical way he had of facing situations, and that was helping me to grow up. I may have been the leader for ideas at times, but when it came to common sense, Larry was the leader.

The relationship lasted. When I moved to Regina to work for the Arts Board, Larry moved to Regina, and we were both in Little Theatre there. When I returned to Weyburn in 1955, Larry had returned to Weyburn, and he continued to be my chief support. I spent a winter with no job, just living at my Dad's and trying to make my mind up about my next move. Larry urged me to write or paint but I had left my trunk in storage and had no supplies. Larry promptly showed up with watercolours and brushes and ordered me to "Get painting," I did.

By spring my lack of direction was becoming obvious and my nerves were pretty tense. When Larry came to celebrate "our" birthday, he and Dad were joking together and I felt rejected and angry. I flounced out of the house and went for a walk. When I had calmed down enough to behave in a civil way, I went back, but there was to be no more fun. Larry met me at the door and asked in a firm voice, "What birthday is this of yours? Are you 33 or are you three?" And he left.

Growing up and taking responsibility for your own actions is the real transition, and that's the night I grew up. It wasn't long after that I got the courage to go to the mental hospital and apply to go on staff. All through my training years, Larry stood by. I recall an evening when I was feeling frustrated in my role of student and complained to Larry, "Sometimes I feel as if I had my feet in two buckets of cement and *I can't fly!*"

Larry replied, "No, you can't fly. But you can't fall down, either."

What a natural therapist! Oh, what I owe to that surrogate brother of mine. He always seemed to be there at the crucial time and he always knew what to say. I know he got some kind of leadership from me, too. When I took the notion to go to university, I stopped at the bakery to tell Larry. Before I could say, "I'm trying to decide," Larry announced, "I'll go if you'll go," and we loaded our belongings into his Oldsmobile and went.

Larry married during the university year and went to BC to teach, so I never saw so much of him again, but I could always feel his support. We wrote regularly and he never forgot our birthday week.

Twelve years ago, he wrote to tell me he was off on a holiday in Mexico and he ended the letter with a statement he had never made before. It was, "I love you, you know."

Had he had a premonition? Larry died on that vacation. On January, 20, 1999, the only brother I ever had was gone.

Hardly a day goes by that I don't remember him, and how easily he accepted an ex-mental patient, how crucial he was to my recovery and continuing good health. People look at me questioningly when I refer to "my brother," because they know I never had a brother in the biological sense. But I had a brother, alright. To this day, whenever I feel I'm being a bit childish and petulant, I ask myself, "What birthday is this of yours? Are you 87 or are you seven?" And I laugh through my tears.



# The Hunting

BY LIZ BETZ

The miles of pristine shimmering snow surprises him; they don't see that in the city. Francis starts to mention this but stops. Such trivia might annoy his brother. Best he be useful, a second pair of eyes to spot deer.

It is a guess, that he could spot a deer, since he's never actually hunted. Their Dad, who might have taught him, died when Francis was only ten. And Adam never took him, because Mom moved the family, all but Adam, to the city.

It wasn't until this summer, at Mom's funeral, that Francis realized Adam would have been 20 when he stayed behind on the farm. And hunting would have been part of the reason. But he was no more than a kid at the time. That had to have been hard.

"These are fresh." Adam said, loud, over the whine of the truck's heater. Francis is unsure of his meaning when Adam pulls up and points to the indentations in the blue white snow.

"Could be the spilled grain from harvest that brings 'em." Adam raises his binoculars. But food isn't the only reason for deer to move during rut, so when three White-Tail does appear, they wait. For the buck that soon arrives. Adam studies it.

"Seen him before?"

"And?"

"Passed on him."

"So?"

"He's not a bad deer." This hangs in the air until Adam asks.

"Want him?"

Francis nods. "Should we go in after him?"

More silence. Finally Adam shakes his head. It seems to hurt him to state the obvious, and Francis feels compelled to seek a balance with his questions, between what he doesn't know and what he needs to know.

"We'll see where they bed down, then come back and set up. They'll move again at dusk." Adam's mouth curls into a humourless smile. "Wouldn't want to wear off your Muesli for nothing."

"You should try it. It's good." Francis says of his favourite breakfast brought with him to the farm.

Adam grunts and looks to the field. The men watch the deer though a windshield with a skeleton of cracks. The noisy heater warms the cab, enough to take the edge off of the draughts. Francis repositions a piece of rubber that covers a rusted out hole in the floor.

"In November, this is my hunting truck. Other than that it only gets used for fencing." Adam is blunt. Francis gets it. They weren't going to come out here in his Lexus, he knew that.

"The truck is good." Then he adds, "Everything is good." Adam's camouflage jacket and Adam's rifle and the opportunity to be here. He lists it silently. Even if Adam didn't like the rifle that he's loaned him, because it shoots too big a group, (whatever that means).

The brothers watch the deer. The animals walk and nibble; pause and look around; heads up and heads down and then as if by magic they disappear. Adam nods, satisfied. But where did they go? Before Francis can ask, his older brother gives him the answer.

"They've gone into that little patch of bush. There. Just to the west. Can you see the one I mean?"

Francis peers in the general direction of Adam's finger. He doesn't see anything. Adam shrugs and eases the truck onto the road.

"We'll go and watch if they cross. Myself, I think they've holed up for the day." Soon the truck pulls to a stop and Adam reaches to the dash and slides the lever. The heater groans to silence. Adam gazes across the field. Francis looks around. There is something familiar here, but different too.

"Wasn't there a shelterbelt in this field?"

Adam doesn't answer.

"Isn't it this field?"

"Yeah. This is the field."

"So, what happened to the trees?"

"Got rid of 'em. Had to turn a hundred times more because they were there. Besides a lot of them were dead."

"Didn't that bother you? That was Mom's orchard. She had cherries and pears and..."

"There were never any fruit trees." Adam looks at Francis, his eyebrows knotted together. "Dad used to say there'd be fruit trees when he got flying pigs."

He did? Francis doesn't remember that, but Adam was older than he. And now, with Mom gone, he's the last one with clear memories of their father.

"It was real. I remember hauling water, and hoeing.." Francis pauses. "Maybe the fruit trees were next?"

"Sure. Francis. She meant to get them planted."

There were things that their mother talked about that didn't happen. But the orchard was real. She spoke of it in a way that gave dignity to her years of work on the farm. Francis could picture it, ripe fruit on the branches and dropping to the grass. Adam can't be right.

"She talked about those trees all the time." Francis says as his voice thickens. "They meant more than us kids did. She sure didn't fight for us."

"Are you still on that?" Adam sighs. Francis doesn't look at his brother. Adam will drop the whole thing, he thinks, but that's not the case.

Adam spits out pieces of his toothpick, before speaking.

"Now I suppose you have a therapist to help you get over your childhood."

"And if I do?" Francis looks at his brother; his confession of need might help Adam open up.

Adam speaks slowly, "So maybe Mom and Dad didn't have what you thought you needed. Maybe you expected too much. Did you ever think of that?" And he continues. "The land requires work. And work is solid. Sometimes it asks a hell of a lot, and not everyone is cut out for it."

Francis doesn't speak for a few minutes as Adam puts the truck in gear and they drive toward the farmyard. Eventually he clears his throat.

"Have I got this right? You're stable because you work the land."

"I'm stable because I don't dwell on the past. They're both gone. Get over it."



## WRITING THE LIFE – FICTION

“It happened though. Dad going berserk over nothing and lashing us with a willow switch. And Mom not lifting a finger to stop him. At least you could admit it.”

“Admit whatever you have to.” Adam has a look of disgust on his face. “This whole victim stuff is shit. And that’s what therapy gets ya’. Permission to wallow in shit.”

Francis swallows hard. He turns to watch the fields. Adam flicks the heater and the howl of ungreased bearings fills the cab. They head back to the farm. When they park they walk to the house but Francis moves slowly while Adam briskly walks ahead. Adam has unstrapped his gun and shed his outerwear, by the time Francis comes in.

“At least you didn’t bugger off home.”

“No. I didn’t. Do you want me to?”

“No”

The negative answer? Only because the invitation had been given at their Mom’s funeral, if he knows anything of how his brother thinks. At the time he quickly said yes. He’d been waiting for something like this. So. No. He wouldn’t leave yet.

The aroma of soup and their hunger draw them to the kitchen where they warm to food and feminine chatter. As they finish, Adam yawns. His wife smiles.

“Never mind. Naps are good for you.” And he leaves the

table to sleep in the bedroom. His wife watches him.

“He’ll be asleep as soon as his head hits the pillow.” She turns toward Francis.

“Well? How was it? This morning?”

Francis considers his sister-in-law’s question.

“Sort of what I expected.” Then he admits, “I might have touched a nerve.”

“Adam is..” She pauses. “Your Mom’s death hit him hard. He needs something, Francis. I thought maybe...”

She catches something in his face that stops her. “But you look tired. Do you want to lie down too?”

“I could use a nap.” Francis agrees and stretches out on the sofa. He thinks that he won’t actually doze but he falls asleep to the sound of dishes being washed and wakes to the sounds of Adam in the kitchen with his travel mug in the microwave.

“Ready?”

“It’s time?” They go to the entryway for their boots and coats and head out the door.

Francis settles into the truck seat and rearranges the mat on the truck floor. Buckle down for the hunt, look for deer, he tells himself, but it is Adam who spots the buck as soon as they get to the field.

“Francis. There’s your deer.”



*Wanderings by Judy Swallow*

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*He tries to remember Adam's directions. How to get a sight picture with the scope. How to load the clip and how to insert it into the rifle.*

Francis jumps, grabs his rifle and begins to roll down the window. Adam swings his arm onto his chest.

"Shit man. You can't shoot off the road and that's 500 yards. I'll get you a shot you can make."

"Sorry."

There's a lot to this, Francis knows. For Adam to guide him to a successful shot. And he has to do his part. He tries to remember Adam's directions. How to get a sight picture with the scope. How to load the clip and how to insert it into the rifle. He looks at the rifle doubtfully. He said he wanted to hunt. To quit now would cut them off from each other. The truck moves into the field to stop on the lee of a hill.

"Okay. We'll work up to the top, keep out of sight and wait."

Francis eases the door open and steps into the snow. At least he knows to be quiet.

Arm through the strap of leather, Francis copies Adam as he puts his rifle onto his back. They start their crawl. Puffs of frosty breath put white on their eyebrows, as they crest the hill and stop. Their breathing becomes as one. Suddenly the buck is there, alone this time, his females further up the field. It comes toward the men until it is about two hundred yards away. There it pauses to sniff the ground, and to listen. Adam nods and Francis positions his rifle, something of it instinctive after all. His shot rings out. The deer stumbles onto its knees but doesn't fall. Instead it spins and runs toward the bush.

"Shit. You've God damned wounded it. Why the hell did you take the shot if you weren't on it?" Adam bounces to his feet. "Now we have to trail it. And we better get it, by Christ, I haven't left a wounded deer out here before and I'm not starting now."

"I..." Francis gets to his feet too. "I thought I had a good shot."

"God damn it." Adam heads to the truck and Francis follows. "Do you have any idea how hard it is to find a wounded deer?"

As Francis grips the door from his seat, the truck roars to life, and he barely manages to close it, as they bounce across the field towards the bush acres. They pull up by the trees.

"Walk along the edge and see if you can spot some blood. Then if you do, head into the bush." Adam snarls these orders at Francis who gets out of the truck. Adam drives on, his head out the window to study the snow. Then the truck stops and he too gets out.

Has Adam seen something? But Francis was told to go into the bush, so he does. Immediately he faces a tangle of fallen trees and recalls Adam's mention of cut-lines. If he can find one of those. The chance of finding the deer seems remote; still, he should look.

He presses forward to a clearing, as tree branches snap under his foot. That's not good. Hunters are quiet. He'll stop and look through the scope on his rifle. He takes in the snowy branches of poplars, a faint redness of willows, and straw coloured spears of grass bent with snow. He remembers: look for movement. Nothing. Suddenly, in the way optical illusion puzzles give up their hidden image, Francis sees Adam with his binoculars. So he hasn't seen the deer either. Francis watches

Adam as he turns toward him. Adam's binoculars drop to his chest and the color drains from his face. What's going on? He is so still. Then suddenly Adam waves his arms, brings a hand across his throat. Cut. What does he mean? Then Adam swings up his rifle and aims it at him. Francis stunned, gazes down the barrel, and then finally understands that he has a loaded weapon pointed at Adam. And what if it were true, that the trigger finger is always instinctively ready? Adam is in his cross hairs. He didn't realize. He jerks back so quickly, in his haste to correct himself, that he almost drops the rifle in the snow. Adam has turned away, unharmed, but if Francis had tripped? The possibility stuns him.

He didn't know better.

But Adam did. Adam had been there when their father was shot, so he really knew better.

For a moment Francis doesn't remember why they are even here. He doesn't hear the rasp of his own breath but eventually it comes to him that they are after a wounded deer. His legs are wobbly, but he begins to climb over fallen trees while he pushes aside the willow branches. He moves toward Adam for surely he will find the deer. He clears the willows and freezes. Adam is preparing for a shot.

His brother's blue rifle barrel swings slowly into position as he squats slightly on spread legs, sureness of aim in every gesture. The rifle barks. Francis sees Adam ready with another round, but he doesn't take the second shot. His rifle lowers and he begins to walk. Francis follows through the bush until he sees Adam crouched over the fallen deer. Francis is close and he sees Adam has begun to fasten his tag to the tendon of the animal's back leg.

"Because of you, I'm screwed for taking a trophy buck." Adam spits these words over his shoulder.

"You could use my tag on this one, keep yours free..."

"You didn't kill him." Adam looks at Francis, daring him to say another word. Francis swallows. Shame sweeps over him again. How could he have not realized he had a rifle in his hand as he studied his brother through the scope?

The barest motion of Adam's head expresses his disgust but it is all business when he speaks.

"We can get the truck close here."

The brothers load the deer in the truck box and get in the cab. They bounce down the cut line; the heater is a distressful shriek that goes from baritone to soprano but doesn't quit even as Adam fiddles with the lever. They drive without speaking to the farmyard, where the truck is backed up to one of the outbuildings. The tractor's front end loader takes the deer into the shop.

Inside Adam finds his knife, while Francis looks for a way to help. Adam ignores him and begins to skin the deer. Soon he has the necessary cut around the ankles and the skinning is started. He moves around the carcass. His knife slices along the muscle and hide. His hand pulls it all downward. Finally he speaks to Francis.

"I suppose you'll be heading back to the city." The veins on his hand are thick with effort.

"I suppose." Francis said as he watches Adam wipe the knife against his coveralls.



“Well. What are you waiting for?”

“I just wanted...” Francis stalls. “I just wanted to say I was sorry.”

Adam appears to be uninterested, or he’s taking the sorry as his due.

“Have a safe trip home.” Adam turns away but he remembers something and he asks, “Will we see you sometime through Christmas?”

“I might come down. If you mean that. But I can’t imagine you do.” Francis turns his back to Adam and leaves the building. The door on the shop is frosted and it forces him to close it the second time.

He walks back toward the house. He’ll gather his luggage, say good-bye to his brother’s wife and go. He slows. This chance won’t come again. Adam needs something. And so does he. He turns in his tracks.

The door to the shop hasn’t latched after all and Francis swings it open and steps into the feeble light. Adam stands with his back to the door. He is still. Then Francis is startled by Adam’s voice.

“Just get over it.” And with that Adam plunges his knife into the stomach of the deer then stops to breathe into his sleeve. Francis almost answers before he realizes that his brother is unaware of his presence.

“What’s the matter? You useless pussy.” Then Adam answers himself. “No. I’m not.” He slashes again at the deer.

Francis is caught; if he lets Adam know he is here now, Adam will know that he has been overheard. Francis draws back to the doorway, but he cannot leave. Finally Adam reaches in and struggles with the coil of intestines. Perhaps Francis could make his brother aware of him now, but before he can

act Adam cries out.

“I’m not.” He tugs this way and that. Then he reaches in with his knife. The bundle of guts comes out to dangle downward. Suddenly the dark red smooth shape of the liver is in Adam’s hand. He drops it and pulls back. He shouts.

“If you won’t eat it cooked, then goddamn you, you’ll eat it raw.”

Francis, in bewilderment, watches as Adam gags. Adam struggles to stop. Then he surrenders to dry heaves. He retches for a long time before he raises his head and wipes his mouth with the back of his sleeve.

“It’s only deer guts,” he says, and Francis believes he is steady. But his next words say otherwise.

“He’s not going to make it.”

Who is he talking about? Their father? Francis can stand it no longer and he compels himself to Adam’s side. He sees that the knife has been laid on the floor as he touches his shoulder. Adam looks at him without recognition but then Francis sees his brother’s awareness return.

“I’ve got on with my life. Even the nightmares faded. I forgot it all. But you. How dare you?”

“How dare I what?”

“How dare you say Mom didn’t protect us? You don’t know shit.”

“No. I don’t know.” Francis lets those words stand for a moment as he holds Adam’s attention. Then he slowly tells him, “I don’t know what you know. And unless you talk.... I never will.”

“It’s all shit.” Adam’s words go into the shadows. From a bulb high in the rafters, a faint light sputters. Francis waits for his brother to begin.

# The Relapse

BY GRANT CHARMICHAEL

**I**t was during a university production of "The Relapse," a broad and high-spirited Restoration comedy of manners by Vanbrugh, that I decided to kill myself. I cannot recall the specifics of my psychology that demanded such drastic remedy. It was yet another recurrence of an unnamed psychological pathology that I'd experienced since childhood: a hopeless concoction of fear mixed with vanity which blended into a heavy sensation of lifeless unrest.

I'd once attempted to end it all when I was an adolescent. This pseudocide (as I now called it) engaged a close friend who telephoned the minister from the church, who, in turn, notified a family doctor from the same church. It seemed to me that their collective reaction was profound embarrassment, which explained their failure to invite my parents to participate in the occasion. This time I knew that all such attention had to be avoided. I made no mention of my current plan to anyone.

I thought this was particularly adult of me.

But there was a problem, a hitch: my performance in the comedy in which I played the burlesque and dark Lord Foppington. My acting classmates served our productions with devoted fervour. I had long lost what they felt—my depressed condition unable to sustain the labour of striving for stardom. Yet, much time and effort had been spent on this play, and because I was playing a leading role (and because I contain such vanity), I felt I couldn't let them down. And so I patiently endured a rehearsal process which was necessarily long because we were only students of acting, but all the while my mind fixated sadly on the date of the final performance.

In the last scene of the play a baroque dance piece ended with all of the characters pointing and laughing at Lord Foppington, the man of pretence. I think that only my friend Catherine sensed that this collective gesture caused me an indescribable kind of pain, and although she couldn't fathom the depth of it (indeed neither could I), she tried to persuade

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*During one of my walks in the forest I  
chose a tree—not too difficult to climb—  
for the execution of my plan.*

the director to change the final tableau. The attempt was unsuccessful, and I learned to use the hateful emotions which invariably arose in me during the last moments of the play to strengthen my resolve to exit the world.

My plan was simple: I would hang myself. There was a beautiful forest along the river valley where I lived. I loved the woods and would often visit them during the prairie winter. By wrapping my arms around the body of an aging elm, or by resting my face against the cold white skin of a birch, I was able to release some of the anxiety which my organism ceaselessly produced. I regretted that I required this eccentric assistance, I felt shame for my mental disturbance, but I was thankful that the trees had enormous capacity to absorb my complaint.

During one of my walks in the forest I chose a tree—not too difficult to climb—for the execution of my plan. Next, I stole a lovely bit of rope from the carpentry and scene shop at the school. Each day I awoke with the reminder that I was preparing. To sit near my tree and think of the upcoming event provided a sad kind of relief from the awful discomfort I felt for life.

I think that most people who are planning a suicide become aggravated thinking of the hurt that they will cause. I knew my family would be anguished, and would likely spend years in grief trying to make sense of my decision. Because of their training, I appreciated that my classmates would find many dramatic responses to enact among themselves, and they'd discover elaborate and complex motivations for my action, entirely worthy of acting students recently introduced to Godot. But I became most concerned for the person who would make the unpleasant discovery of my body hanging from the tree. I would sit and imagine the sight, while looking up at the chosen limb.

At the time that these imaginings began to grieve me seriously we were given our costumes for *The Relapse*. It struck me that if I were to wear the costume when I hung myself, it might ease the burden of the person who would find me. The design for Lord Foppington, the fool of fashion, was colourful Restoration drag: a gold cape, sparkly gold shoes with red heels, and, to top it off, a long, curly blonde wig (synchronously) made of rope. In its entirety the costume was outrageously comic, and I was certain that the poor soul whose fate contained the discovery of my body would laugh uproariously at the poisonous sight. My mind's eye, blind to all but oppressive images, could see myself hanging, a colourful marionette dangling against a backdrop of winter woods, and a mirthless chuckle would rise in me from the malignant island in my soul where the plan was being devised.

The final performance finally arrived. During the culminating dance sequence my resolve was amplified by the climax of screeching laughter. I looked deeply into the eyes of my friends and fed on their feigned hostility. I would be dead in an hour, perhaps two. The curtain fell, the audience applauded, and we toasted and drank ourselves silly in the dressing rooms. As death approached, a feeling of power within me increased. I luxuriated in the final hours of my life. All was perversely perfect.

But then the wardrobe mistress arrived and began to gather up the costumes for return to storage. I hadn't anticipated this snag. How was I to explain that my costume was scheduled to serve in a performance that had not yet occurred? My friends laughed when I begged her to leave my costume behind for a while. Some supported my request thinking that there might be a parody forthcoming. None suspected the truth—not even Catherine who was now deep into a bottle of Jamison's Irish Whisky. In the end, I managed to retrieve only the gold cape and the sparkly shoes when the costume rack was momentarily left unattended by the unflinching matron. These I stuffed into my knapsack. The effect would be imperfect, not nearly as frivolous as I wanted my death to appear, but with the addition of make-up—rosy cheeks and an oversized beauty mark—the cape and shoes would have to suffice. At a moment when everyone was engrossed in tipsy planning on where the party should continue, I slipped out of the room, retrieved from my locker the rope which had already been fashioned with a noose, and headed down to the forest.

The moon was full that night and reflected its cool light on the snowy paths, bringing the trees into soothing and peaceful relief. And although time was now strangely expanding, I arrived at the designated tree in what seemed an instant. My chosen tree, my friend in misery, looked magnificent against the clear white frozen sky. In fact everything appeared beautiful, brilliant, real. The dull interior fog to which I had become accustomed had dissipated, and I felt a different sense of self: more real, more present. It was as if I watched myself survey the scene and carry out the actions which I had rehearsed so many times. I slipped into the sparkly gold shoes with red heels, and buried my sneakers in the snow at the foot of the tree, certain that their presence would detract from the tableau. The gold braided cape I fastened around my neck and, lacking the wonderful wig which topped off Lord Foppington, I sculpted what I hoped would be a suitably comic hairstyle by grinding snow into my hair. The words "extreme unction" passed through my head. My attire was complete.

Now!

Now my skin was tingling. The woods were silent and still, yet uncompromisingly alive. I inhaled the winter air, taking what our vocal coach referred to as a cleansing breath, and then I laughed out loud as I felt myself reaching into my pocket for cigarettes. I was laughing because the ritual of a man's last cigarette before death had instinctively manifested in myself and I appreciated that it was an entirely appropriate final act for a man about to de-Earth. Not for an instant did I think it an act of avoidance. No, it was simply a detail of the role which I hadn't foreseen, calculated, and rehearsed. And so I sat down on a rock at the foot of the tree and inhaled deeply on my last cigarette.

If I could accurately describe the event as it unfolded from this point forward I'd be in possession of the faculties which I now—in part, because of the attempt—only aspire to. Words which seek to describe these altered states—these higher



states—remain only that, only words. But quite simply, and in a word, everything became glorious.

The elements of the natural world around me no longer stood independently but were intimately connected to everything else. And everything projected ideas in a radiant language of images whose meanings were readily apparent. Giant pine trees now revealed their beautiful scars where lower limbs had withered and died in response to the sun's command for growth. As if by gnosis I recognized that the snow on the ground was a transient society of silence whose assignment was to shield and protect the hibernant strivings of the organisms underneath. I became aware that the trees were conscious of me, and had left their nocturnal lunar feeding to console me.

And then—most startling—an unexpected platonic dialogue began to unfold within me that occurred on many levels simultaneously. I participated in the dialogue and I was audience. And although this command performance was happening within me, I was acutely aware that I was part of something much larger. Or that something much larger was a part of me. I can't for the life of me remember the script of this lucid exchange; and it doesn't seem strange to me that although my life depended on what was said, and the accompanying state, I can now only remember this brief outline:



*My Journey by Lori Glier*

"Why do you want to die?"

"Because I don't want to live."

"Do you know what life is for?"

In the state that had overtaken me I discovered I could not lie. I couldn't say that I knew in any sense what life is about. There was a long pause while the implication of my ignorance softly settled and took root in my being. The dialogue—rich in meaning and obviously arising from a greater intelligence than a man addicted to depression possesses—continued its way to a startling question. Though unable to remember the question's form, I recall its overpowering sensation, and I recall the answer: "I AM." I said it out loud, and my voice was unrecognizable. It sounded sure and confident, unlike any sound I'd ever before made. And I was profoundly amazed to sense I was not the sole respondent. Everything expressed this being-ness. The trees, the snow, the rock on which I sat, the moon—Everything. Everywhere. And I was there.

The rope in my hand, chosen for its soft texture and glossy finish, now spoke of desperate absurdities. I knew I could not use it. How had I permitted the last few months to be consumed by this symbol of self-destruction? "What a waste," I thought, "What a waste." And then I understood the meaning contained in those words we use when we speak of suicide. A life has remained uninhabited and un-lived; a mere character sketch never lifted from the page and fully realized. Yet the rope did not accuse me. No deity visited to scold me for my blasphemous intention. If God was there, he wasn't angry. In fact, those moments were filled with complex joy and subtle sensations of delight, with meaning inexpressible in language. This continued for an expanse of time I could not measure. At length I knew it was time to begin my life again.

It's difficult to find the suitable conclusion to this experience that marked only a beginning. What had occurred in the woods so many years ago that I now speak of it as a turning point? For I know that it was. Suicide, which had always been a viable and attractive alternative to life, is no longer a valid response for me in the decades since. Yes, the idea still arises, out of habit I suppose, but I shoo it away as quickly as I can. Something happened at the foot of that tree which was more real and helpful than all of the sessions I attended at eight in the morning with a psychologist who simply looked worried.

I can only think of it as a great gift. For a brief time I was given an experience of reality and shown that this is life's purpose: to discover the nucleus of truth in oneself where the whole wide world relates its meaning. I know that this core exists, and I've since learned it takes intentional remembrance and desire to get there, even if the visit is only for moment. Certainly all religions and teachings of wisdom are filled with clues to guide us to reality's entrance. And a thought just struck me now: That each time I summon the memory of how I felt when I left the woods with my feet shod in golden shoes, then the portal to reality becomes easier to find, and incarnating that reality becomes a most laudable goal. Perhaps I will live there one day. And if it happens, I hope that I'll recognize you there.



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# Flash fiction

BY ROLLI

## In This Prison

The deer head was full of spiders. This was in Mrs. - I forget the name, an older woman. When Bill pried it off the wall, out they came, millions of them, scattering. It sounded like ... just a trickling of rain.

My husband is the bug man. I didn't love him. It was where I needed to be. A horse kicked me in the head. This was when I was seventeen. Everything changed. I became ... an emotional person. We have two kids, Bill and I. I don't love him.

I'm a prisoner in this home. I try to tell people, they don't listen. It isn't easy to prove. But I feel that, even if I wanted to leave, I couldn't. So I sit here all day. Clean house. Have seizures. I have six seizures a day. Sometimes more. One day, I had only three.

My daughter is a genius. I wasn't supposed to have children. I didn't want children. I wanted horses. With the medication I take for seizures, I'm not supposed to conceive children. He didn't care, Bill. We have two beautiful children. They both have major problems.

God spoke through my mouth, once. I was folding clothes, and I dropped down. When I came out of it, right away, my jaw moved, I felt it. Words came out. But they weren't mine. I wish I could remember, what I said. Everything would be easier, maybe, my life. If I could remember.

## I Got Sad

Then I shot my head. There was I could see the hole in my vision in my head. A flashlight.

A black guy came out of my head. He hanged behind me like girls' hair. I am scared of him but I can't ever get away from him. Never.

My friends don't come home. I don't even care those fuckers. Fuck them. All's I need ... is my dog and my mom. So long as I got those. My dog, and my mom.

I got nice moms.

## I Used to Be the Great Swanzini

I used to be the Great Swanzini. Now look at me. My cape has bird shit all over it. My top hat is curled open at the top, like a sardine tin. My magic wand, when I wave it in the air, doesn't even make a magic wand sound. It's just - silent.

It seems funny to say, but I live in a piece of paper. It seems funny to say - but not so funny to live. It's an enormous square of paper, twelve feet square, that I dragged into an alley between one art gallery and another art gallery. Every night, or in the daytime, even, when it's cold, I roll up in it, like tobacco in a gigantic cigarette.

At first I didn't even have paper. I lay in the alley all night, freezing. Then one morning, in my alley, staring out at the square of light that represents the world, I saw two girls go by, struggling to carry the biggest piece of paper I have ever seen. I asked them what they were doing. We're from the gallery, the first girl said. Which gallery? I asked them. The one on your right, said the second girl. Oh, I said. And then I said, What is it? It's one of Giancarlo's discarded drawings, said the first girl, rolling her green eyes. We're taking it to the recycling unit. The proper thing to do is to recycle it. Can I have it? I asked them. The proper thing to do, repeated the girl with the green eyes, for our green Earth, is to recycle it. So I hid behind a street light, and watched them drag the enormous piece of paper across the street, lift the lid of the green recycling unit, and toss it in. I watched them re-cross the busy street, and disappear inside the gallery. Then I stepped up to the green recycling unit, opened the door, and fished out the paper. On one side of the paper was a drawing of a man's face. The other side was blank. I rolled the sheet up, tucked it under my arm, and walked home. To my alley.

Even with paper, the nights can be very long. Sometimes, reaching into a pocket for something, I'll feel a bit of rabbit fur, or a misplaced card, and I'll remember. Those nights are the longest of all.

I found a pencil in The Grecian Isle, a night cafe, before the man with the crisp collar grabbed me by the collar, and lay me flat out on the sidewalk. I took it back to my alley, and tested it on the paper, on the blank side. I drew a rabbit, and several smaller birds. Then I drew a man's face. I've never been the artistic type. But I thought, flipping it over and over, that it was a little better than Giancarlo's. I tried writing a story. If it wasn't very good, I don't think, at least ... it made me feel better. Just a little bit better.

During the day, I write on paper. I'm writing this, now, between the eyes of Giancarlo's face. At night, I sleep in paper. When I wake up, and stick my head out the end of the scrolled-up paper, into the street, to see whether it's day or night, the people walking past look at me with more disdain than you could ever imagine. And I feel so degraded. Someone once told me, when you feel like shit, and you've long since reached a point of shame, a rung from which one can step no lower, you can feel no worse, not about anything. But ... I feel so degraded. I feel more and more degraded every day. If I were any more degraded, I'd be dead.

But I used to be the Great Swanzini.

## The Whale with the Harpoon Earrings

I'm quiet and still and the trouble with being quiet and still is that people will occasionally mistake you for a toilet. It's easy



to take things out on me or blame me for things. Mom does this pretty much daily. She used to love me. She's like the dolls with the smaller dolls in them, but she forgets they're there, that one of those moms really loved me. Or she could never hurt me. I'm a different kid now, too. But I still remember the smaller kid, in her sarcophagus, who loved her mom and felt pretty loved. I still feel her, sometimes. I guess life would be easier, if I couldn't.

Occasionally my dad stands up and whispers to mom not to say this or that in front of me but it doesn't matter. I can hear her from the kitchen. I can hear him. He doesn't talk much about me so I have to listen.

What are we going to do with her? What will happen to her? What's, going, to happen?

Then I'm swallowing water and sinking. I'm listening and I'm sinking. I'm the whale with the harpoon earrings. I'm sinking.

When my parents are suddenly alone I try to get to my room fast but the elevator doors don't always close fast enough. Or they open and drop me in the middle of something, a storm cloud that I thought was just fluffy nest material. I listen and I watch my parents roll out of the kitchen like smoke, looking only at the space exactly above me or beside me. Then I look at them sinking down on the two big couches and I think, What have I done to these people?

I'll bet they ask themselves the same thing.

### In a Quiet Room

I was then ... in the ocean. Water, flowed over, me. It seemed - yet it was not a wave. It was ... a fold, only. It was not even, the ocean. It was -

I lay in confusion. In a quiet room. The white sheet lay next to me. My bed was the ocean. There were other beds, like other small oceans, and men, in them. They were so close together, the beds, end to end, along two walls of the long room. Few men could have passed between them.

There was a door. At one end of the room. For so long I

watched it, not even thinking. It was difficult, thinking. So I rested. And looked again. I looked - only there was no door. There was now only ... a shadow.

And then a woman came in, like a wave. Her uniform, was amazingly, white. Her skin. She held something. She approached one man, and bent over him. I could hear, something. Some gentle tone.

She moved on. She addressed a man, who said - but I could not hear. Or I heard him ... but cannot remember.

The next, and the next man. One man ... screamed. He lifted his arms. In an instant, he was calm, again. And said nothing.

She was so close, now. This bright woman. Turning sideways, she slid along, between the beds, as white, it seemed, and as thin, as a ream of paper.

She rose from the bed, next to me. That man ... had been silent.

And she was above me. Her face ... was strange. Unsmiling. She held ... a syringe. She lifted my arm. It was so pale, and thin, I did not think it was my arm. It was that, of some other man. It was as if she was lifting,

water. I had the strength of water. I did not resist. I did not even feel the syringe. Yet the burning... It moved along my skin. Into, my chest. Collecting. My neck. Rising.

Then the room was moving. The man next to me, was now ... above me. His bed was above me, and above me again. When I moved my head, the beds went with it. The walls, did not stop them. They remained in the air ... then disappeared.

She passed my bed again, the woman. She moved toward the door. The door was still open, though - there was a pile of men, before it. Yet the men ... were still in their beds. It must have been some other men. They had lain down, one on another, to stop her. To block her, way. They lay completely still. They did not even seem, to be breathing.

She moved closer, the woman. She did not stop or slow, down. She approached the door, and the men. She moved ... through them. Then she closed the door.

I lay back in the ocean.

I could hear, the ocean.



*Madame de Pomplemousse by Rolli*



## Crazy Moon

L. BIASOTTO

Crazy moon sees  
through space's fine corporal dust:  
sees us walk with stones in our shoes  
cathedral candles burning our veins  
glass edges spinning like blades.

Crazy moon sees  
our snow-pocked faces  
hands warming in explosions  
while winter drifts its peculiar rage  
into an incognito frozen drumming.

Crazy moon sees  
nature tipped the wrong way  
survival's shelf life expiring  
while we, like tethered dogs,  
thrash our legs against restraint,  
toss our baying voices toward a lunatic sky.

## Eternal Optimist

BY KEITH FOSTER

I always look on the bright side.  
For instance, this morning  
I burned my toast.

No problem.  
I had a whole loaf of bread,  
so I put in two more slices.

I watched them carefully.  
This time they were done  
to perfection.

As I was buttering them,  
one fell on the floor.  
But it landed buttered-side up.

I knew then  
that today would be  
my LUCKY day.

## Interruption

BY KEITH FOSTER

I was interrupted  
by an idea  
while shaving.

Unable to resist,  
I left the shaver  
and typed up the idea.

When I resumed shaving,  
I couldn't remember  
where I had left off.

Not having a mirror,  
I couldn't tell  
where to begin.

As a result,  
I left one side  
of my face unshaved.

And shaved  
the other side  
twice.



## Learning to pray

BY REBECCA GARBER

I've never known  
what prayer is nor how to pray.

Is it prayer when I gaze in awe at a double rainbow?  
Is it prayer when I struggle under despair's heavy coat?  
Is it prayer when I hit the tennis ball just right?

Prayer must exist in those holy moments  
when life in all its simplicity is enough  
when hunger and thirst disappear  
when all is full.

Prayer exists in the moment  
when the cat turns his orange belly to the sun  
legs falling to his sides.

Prayer happens in that time when  
I sit with a friend knowing joy  
just because she is there.

Prayer comes in the silence  
where I face what I have been  
and what I have not done  
feeling hope for what is to come.

I do not know how to pray  
but know when prayer finds me—  
that wild and glorious moment  
in the midst of laundry and grocery lists  
in quiet times when I glance up  
transported by lines in a good book.

The posture for prayer may not be  
on my knees, but on my way  
moving to whatever uncertain  
destination this summer, next year  
the hour of my death may hold.

The attitude of prayer may just be  
a mind turned toward  
the blue of summer sky  
the orange-red of campfire  
the silver white of moon.

The answer to prayer may escape me  
until much time passes and  
my mind opens and body recalls  
a home shared with one man  
together meditating  
on the layered blues of Georgia Strait.

I do not know how to pray but face east  
because it seems the sun must know how  
when it brings the freshness  
of untouched morning.

The practice of prayer  
takes a solitude I have acquired  
only after laying down the must-do's  
the should-do's  
the givens that imprison  
that soft underbelly of self  
which tolerates ambiguity,  
seeks the unknown and listens to silence

holy silence

where passions are transformed  
and peace beckons  
amidst the swirling emotions  
the perpetual contradictions  
the prickling questions that  
attend each waking breath

the earth in her brown hands.

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## strangers

BY ROBERT MARTENS

jerky walk  
through a hollow  
planet. i don't recognize  
myself. someone  
i may have met before,  
but where? shadow  
people, silhouettes, walking  
my random road,  
strangers backlit by  
a jagged chainsaw flame that  
can't fill the vacuum  
between us, yet  
buzzes through my belly.  
tomorrow  
is an alien  
science fiction.

at night i heard the rain  
on my rook, a  
falling broken god, what  
could be stranger?

cool, misty morning.  
open skies. my  
hollow heart. so many  
steady flames, calm  
and still, i  
could not have imagined,  
walking with me. i will  
depend on the kindness of strangers.  
a hand on my shoulder,  
tears, the wounded compassion  
of rain. do i know him,  
the stranger at my side?  
tomorrow. soon. even  
now, in this familiar world,  
common people, the dialect  
of praye



## chicken little

BY ROBERT MARTENS

anxious little chicken little  
saw the clouds descend,  
he heard a black  
thund'rous crick crack,  
the world was at an end –  
he cried, the sky is falling.

the barnyard animals large and little  
were seized by little's fear,  
here quack there a neigh  
here a grunt there a bray  
everywhere a sob and tear  
from creatures creep and crawling –  
the noise was quite appalling.

anxious little chicken little  
spread his wings in fright,  
and up he flew  
into the blue,  
he saw the clouds  
bloom into light –  
just where the sky was falling.



## negotiation with the devil

BY ROBERT MARTENS

why only after, when  
it's all over, and the eyes  
snap open  
cold as clay?

why, forced to  
the other side of  
night, and we  
look back, nostalgic for  
our cradled yesterdays?

why the blue  
bruise pinned  
in the throat, and  
a few strangled  
phrases?

i haven't chosen  
this, i shall never  
be reconciled.

why the victim, suddenly  
homeless, and the  
assaults of darkness. why  
the blessing  
for those  
who pass by?

and after a long night,  
neither asleep nor awake,  
of negotiation with the devil?

at daybreak, i  
shook his crippled hand.



Art by James Skelton



# How far

BY JOAN-DIANNE SMITH

let me tell you  
breakfast's easy  
coffee, black in a hurry  
tell them that you usually grab a muffin at the cafeteria  
nobody notices

drink lots of water  
carry a bottle around like everyone else

lunch can be anytime  
one can of Slimfast for basic nutrients  
chocolate's best  
drink it slowly  
spread it out

two kinds of crackers  
when the stomach growls  
soda biscuits melba toast  
go sparingly  
don the hoodie  
take the anger for a stomp  
try some gum sugarless

supper's a command performance  
tell them you had a big lunch  
take lots of salad to fill the plate  
if absolutely necessary a dab of dressing  
but on the side  
dip the fork to give a hint of taste

no carbs

tomato juice diet pop water  
too full for dessert  
an occasional glass of wine  
to medicate the quiet throbbing

test yourself at social gatherings  
admire the sticky buns brownies  
tell them you'll have one later  
remember this is just our secret

let's see how far we can go



*Walk by Henry Peters*

---

# Red Wine Nissan meets Red River Cart

BY JAYNE MELVILLE WHYTE

I'd like to tell you a story  
and I might as well just start:  
Red Wine Car was in a collision  
with a real Red River Cart.

I drive a Nissan Sentra,  
vintage Two Thousand and Four,  
so we are not going back in history  
a hundred years or more.

The white-helmeted North West Mountie,  
the Métis interpreter guide,  
Sitting Bull, a mother and baby,  
had horses and cart to ride.

Actors, horses and Red River Cart —  
from "Spirits of the Trail" play,  
had stopped for stew and biscuits  
and a break in a busy day.

On the trail through Calling Lakes Centre  
five horses were hitched to a rail;  
it gave way — spooked the horses  
of the James Walsh – Sitting Bull tale.

Five horses jumped; so did riders;  
one horse still yoked to the Cart;  
in the midst of shouts and quick movement,  
Cart touched my Red Wine Car.

The small dent near the trunk lock  
is a very tiny crease  
when I consider the proportions  
of a Treaty People peace.

I choose to leave the flourish  
on the back of Red Wine Car  
to recall the day, August 2010  
when Nissan met Red River Cart.

---

(NOTES: Red Wine Car is the name I'd given my car when I bought it in 2008. The car before had been Green Car.

'Spirits of the Trail' is an historic drama written by Ken Mitchell of Saskatchewan about the friendship between Major James Walsh of the North West Mounted Police and Sitting Bull, who with his people crossed the Medicine Line to Canada, pursued by the blue coats of the American Army after Custer blustered into the Lakota Sioux camp.

The Red River Cart is an authentic reproduction of the

hardworking vehicle that transported supplies for the North West Mounted Police and the various trading posts in Western Canada.

Although we often think of the Aboriginal Peoples as signing the Treaties, the settlers too are party to these agreements.

The dent does not affect the safety, durability or even beauty so I see no need to fix it.

If I am ever invited to 'Truth or Lie,' I'll tell this story.)

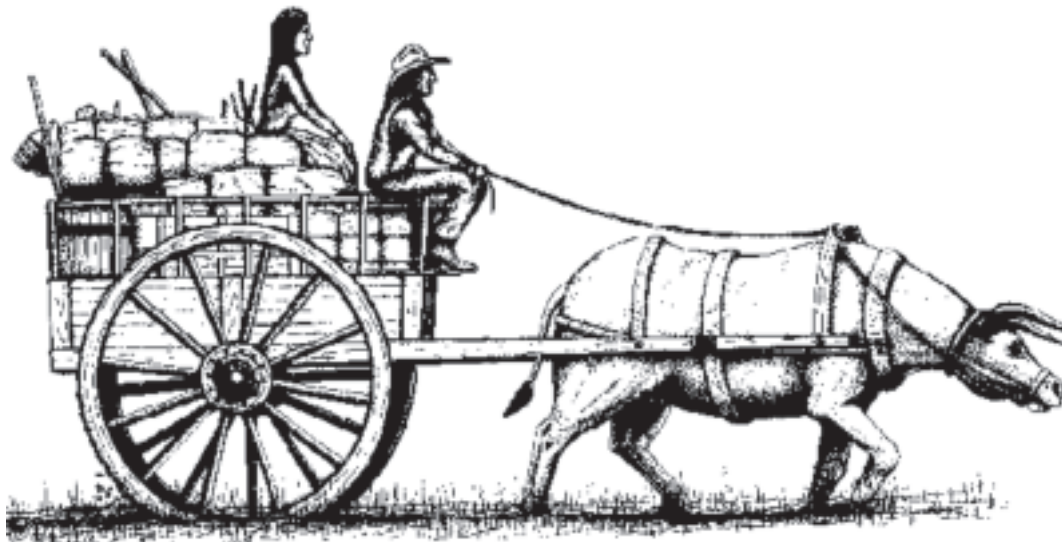


Image courtesy of Rattlesnake Jack's Old West Clip Art Parlour, Font Gallery, North West Rebellion Emporium and Rocky Mountain Ranger Patrol. On the web at: <http://members.memlane.com/gromboug/P2Intro.htm>



# All that's jazz: celebrated

BY IRENE GROBOWSKY

Park, Jeff. *The Cellophane Sky*. Hagios Press, 2011. Trade Paperback. 80 pp. \$17.95

In his preface to a collection of poems in a slim volume entitled *The Cellophane Sky*, author Jeff Park points out the fluidity in the “constantly shifting, changing, evolving” music called jazz. He uses this imagery throughout the book, and like jazz his poems also shape-shift in form and in rhythm, ranging from near-haiku to those suited to stage performance.

To evoke this quality of fluidity so central to jazz, Park uses the imagery of water throughout:

“inversions and harmonies, cascading like water from a tap” (“Charlie Parker: The Kitchen” (23);

“... the notes cascading / down the hallway like water” (“The Other Half of My Heartbeat” (26); dramatically in “— a naked current / electricity and water — until you / and the sound become one” (“John Coltrane: Blue Trains” (28);

again in “The Messengers of Jazz” (in reference to the music):” — the rain / that washed off the dust / of everyday life” (49);

and in the brilliantly descriptive “beyond the technique . . . the dark, mysterious winged creature / breathing beneath the surface” (“Oscar Peterson: What is a Piano?” (51).

The nuances are multiple, evoking rhythms, emotions, and the oceanic depths of the sub-conscious where inspiration arises.

Within this overview of the jazz world set up as a “gig” of sets, Park plays riffs on the musicians, some famous, such as Louis Armstrong, Duke Ellington, and Billie Holiday, some not so well-known, such as Eric Dolphy and Art Pepper, and on the instruments: piano, trumpet, drums, bass, clarinet, too. For those not well-acquainted with the world of jazz, the poems are complex and moving portraits of human beings afflicted with a dis-ease of the heart, a virus which is both blessing and curse.

It can be as demanding and dangerous as drugs or alcohol or mental illness, or it can provide balm, although not a healing, for psyches wounded by them.

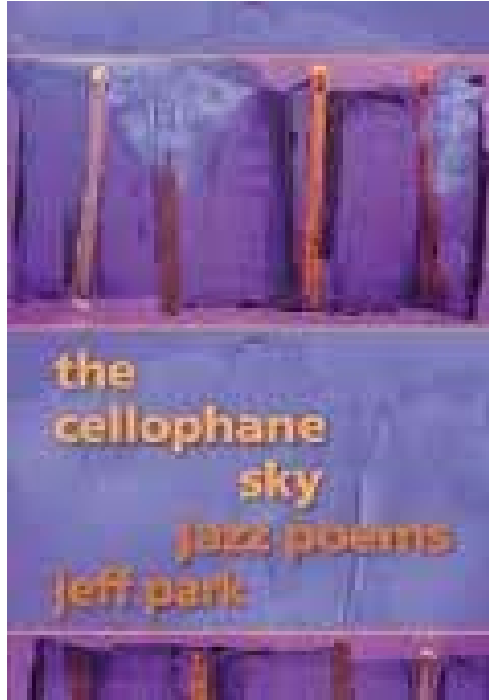
The musicians' attempts to approach the transcendent are best described in the title poem where the musician, in this case Duke, “... waits for the cellophane sky . . . / when night and day merge. / Looking for heaven, . . .” (71).

Both celebratory and mournful, this collection brings to mind Edna St. Vincent Millay's words which probably best characterize the entire mood of the book -

“My candle burns at both ends  
But oh! my friends and ah! my foes  
It gives a lovely light.”

There is no doubt that Jeff Park has a deep love for jazz and that he has thoroughly researched his subject. No mention is made of whether he, too, is

a musician, but his total immersion in the history and the music is evident in every page of *The Cellophane Sky* — an open invitation to savour the sound.



Art by James Skelton



---

# The literature of depression

BY TED DYCK

Clark, Hilary, ed. *Depression and narrative: telling the dark*. SUNY, 2008. Softcover. 261 pp. \$25.95

This a necessary book, for depression has definitely come of age, and the literary world, like other worlds, should be taking notice.

At the same time it's a curiously mis-titled book. It's really about *women's depression*, not *depression*. Of the 16 authors, 13 are women; of the 13 articles by women, 7 treat of women's depression and texts by women, 4 treat of men's depression and texts by men, 2 treat of depression and texts of both kinds; the 3 male authors treat male depression and texts by males. You get the point. If you don't, consult the index entries for men's and women's depression: for men's, none, but seven citations for "depression in men" under the entry "depression"; for "women's depression," a separate entry with about 60 citations grouped into various subheads, totaling about half a column on the page.

There are other anomalies. Chiefly, the growing literature and research on writing therapy as such has not been broached, and, perhaps understandably, therefore, the effectiveness of healing through narrative writing, *ipso facto*, all writing, is discounted: "Narrative can convey this wound ... [the trauma of the human condition that underlies depression] ... but it cannot heal it" (Editor's introduction 9). Finally, the complete absence, except in one article, of rhetoric -- the significance of which will be discussed later.

Now the good stuff, and there's lots of it.

First, scattered casually amongst the detritus of academic prose, are some brilliant gems:

- in the introduction, a lucid, brief summary of the growing consensus that "narrative is central to the constitution of identity" (2), while at the same time the recognition that "not all experience [of depression, e.g.] can be formulated in narrative" (4)

- still in the introduction, reference to Geoffrey Hartmann's observation that "figurative language itself exemplifies the 'perpetual troping of [a traumatic event] by the bypassed or severely split (dissociated) psyche'" (8) [more of this later]

- a discussion by Brenda Dyer of arguably the best book ever written from the inside about depression, Martha Manning's *Undercurrents* (47-48), somewhat diminished by Dyer's fascination with the dragon figure

- a fine reading of Sylvia Plath's work from a fully informed depression perspective (85-87)

Secondly, there is a number of outstanding articles, of which Summers-Bremner's study of W. G. Sebald and his work ("Depressing books" 229 ff.) caught my attention. The last item in an argument should always be the strongest, from a rhetorical perspective, and Editor Clark has chosen well. With respect to *Austerlitz*, Sebald's best and most significant book, S-B has relatively little to say, concentrating on his other books which describe and enact the experience of depression more

obviously. As S-B says, however, without taking it further, in *Austerlitz* the narrative structure is more relevant to the experience of depression than any content (229). But what structure?

Consider an example:

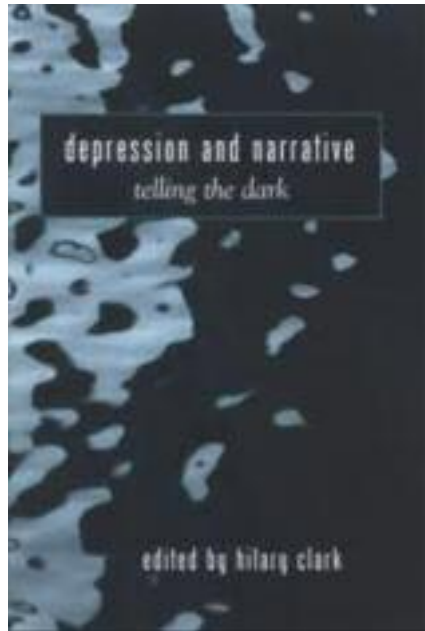
... *Maxamillion*, ..., had been convinced ever since I knew him, said Vera, so Austerlitz told me, that the parvenus who had come to power in Germany ... [Austerlitz 66]

Here, four narrators collaborate to bring the narrative to the reader: Max has told Vera, who has told Austerlitz, who tells the narrator, who tells us. This structure is precisely the pattern of the depressive's obsessive thoughts as they cycle endlessly into the past for clues, back then, about the then-future which he is experiencing now. Lacan (*Ecrits* 306) argues that the *future perfect* tense of proleptic analepsis [future pastness, as in *will have been*] is the mark of the neurotic; so too is

the *past* of the *future perfect* tense of analeptic prolepsis [past futurity, as in *would have been*, or *was [going] to be*] the mark of the depressive. These two, proleptic analepsis and analeptic prolepsis, are well-known figures of classical and contemporary rhetoric.

Third, *figure* is only peripherally relevant to narrative, but it is central to understanding and rendering the experience of depression. And here is another strength of this collection: it does open up additional approaches to and contexts for the literature of depression, in this case, poetry. For if the figure, *par excellence* the mark of poetry, should turn out to be associated with the ceaseless circling of the split psyche about a past trauma, then the link between poetry and depression would be forged. Again, the experience of this depressive is that the figure is indeed an almost necessary though not sufficient way of dealing with the repressed past, a task that faces the depressive as he searches for the illusory origin, that past trauma, of his recurring black mood.

So I am happy to recommend this book in the strongest possible terms to all my literary friends.



# Notes on contributors

## ARTISTS

### LORI GLIER

Visual artist from Regina. First time in TRANSITION.

### RACHEL M. GORMAN:

First time contributor from Lethbridge, AB

### HENRY PETERS:

Winnipeg artist and long-time contributor to TRANSITION.

### ROLLI:

Artist and writer from Southey, SK  
(see Author notes).

### JAMES SKELTON:

Writer and artist from Saskatoon and long-time contributor to TRANSITION.

### JUDY SWALLOW:

Artist and illustrator from Alameda, SK. Online at <http://www.swallowsartnest.com/>.

## AUTHORS

### BETZ, LIZ

Works and writes on rural themes from Alberta. Previously published in various locales. Considers herself an experienced beginner.

### BIASOTTO, LINDA

Regina writer of short stories, novels, and now poetry. Fan of Free Indirect Discourse.

### CALLAGHAN, SHIRLEY

Lives in Charlottetown with her husband, Bernie. Retired as a psychometrician seven years ago. Attends Senior's College, belongs to a writing group, and focuses on life writing.

### CARMICHAEL, GRANT

Toronto short fiction writer (B.F.A., B.Ed.). Former professional actor, a furniture designer/maker. Has worked in various corporate environments.

### EASTEND GROUP (Writing for the health of it)

**GLENNA GORDON** — Facilitator, previously published in TRANSITION. Member **GABRIELE KUECK** — First time in TRANSITION.

### FOSTER, KEITH

Regina writer of narrative poems, stories, and non-fiction. Widely published. One-act comedy, "Domestic Bliss," produced by Regina Little Theatre (2011). New to TRANSITION.

### GARBER, REBECCA

Lives in Nanaimo, BC, with a most beloved man and an orange cat. Poetry widely published. Operates Wordworks Writing and Editing Services. New to TRANSITION.

### GROBOWSKY, IRENE

Moose Jaw writer and reviewer for TRANSITION.

### MARTENS, ROBERT

Abbotsford, BC, poet raised in Yarrow. Co-editor and co-writer for a series of regional histories and an anthology of west-coast Mennonite writing, Half in the Sun. First time in TRANSITION.

### MOOSE JAW GROUP (Moose Jaw Muse)

Co-facilitators and members— **GLORIA MORIN, LAURIE RASMUSSEN, CAROL REMPEL**. Other members — **DARREL DOWNTON** and **ADAM STAITE**, previously published in TRANSITION; **JOCELYN REEVE**, new.

### PARLEY, KAY

Frequent contributor to TRANSITION and well-known mental health advocate from Saskatoon.

### PRINCE ALBERT GROUP

**LYNDA MONAHAN** — widely published and experienced facilitator. Members — **DONNA MAE JOHNSON, IAN MACINTYRE, DALE** and **HOLLY SPRATT**. All new to TRANSITION.

### ROLLI

Writing and art frequently featured in TRANSITION. See extensive website at <http://rolliwrites.wordpress.com/>.

### SMITH, JOAN-DIANNE

Winnipeg MB psychotherapist, poet, and serious student of poetry. Published in several magazines and two anthologies. First time in TRANSITION.

### SWIFT CURRENT GROUP

Facilitator, **WILLIAM GIBBS**, and member **MATT DRUMMOND** both frequent contributors to TRANSITION.

### WEYBURN GROUP

Former facilitator **ANNE LAZURKO. BARRY STYRE**, contributor extraordinaire to TRANSITION.

### WHYTE, JANE MELVILLE

Well-known Regina mental health advocate, researcher, and writer. Previously published in TRANSITION.

### YORKTON PROGRAM

**LEONARD FORD** — Regina-born member of Sunshine Club, facilitated by Cory Kerr. First time in TRANSITION.

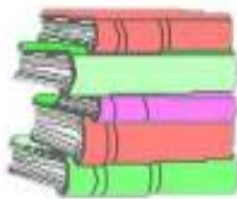


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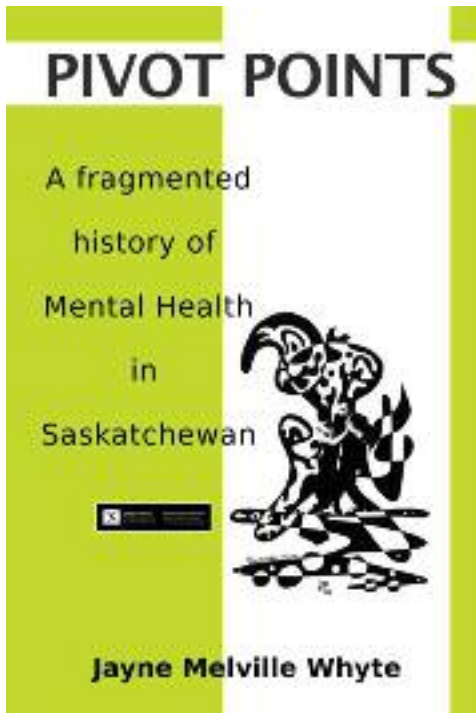
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**Jayne Melville Whyte** joined CMHA Kindersley Branch in 1975. She served on the first National Consumer Advisory Committee 1986 -1991. Jayne regularly speaks about her consumer experience and policy analysis with community, consumer and professional groups. Her research and writing contracts included Women and Poverty, Mental Health among Older Adults, Child and Youth Services, and Social Rehabilitation Programs in CMHA,



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