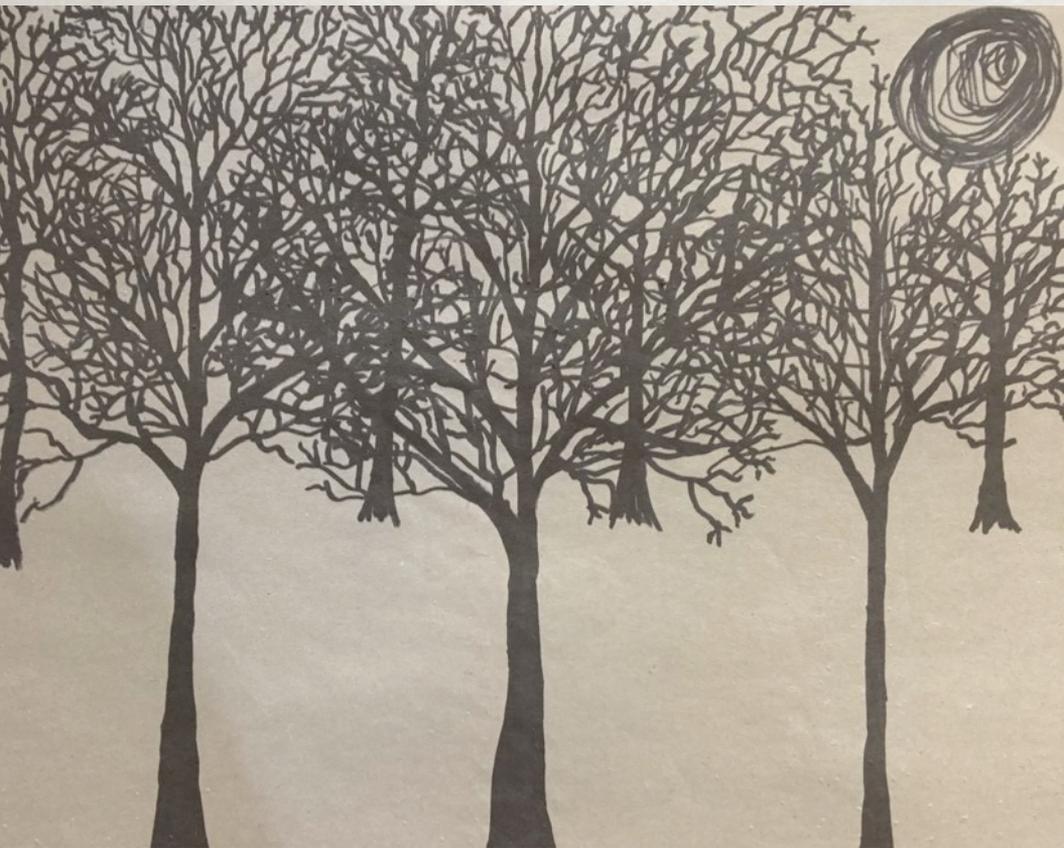


Hearing Voices



Chatter from the Willow Vol. 3



WILLOW
ARTS
COMMUNITY

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What is a zine anyways? According to *AGO Insider* (August 2008), a zine is "... kind of like a magazine but with a twist. The main difference between a magazine and a zine is that zines are not out there to make a profit but, rather, to add other, often unheard voices into the mix."

Hearing Voices: Chatter from the Willow Vol. 3 highlights the original art and creative perspectives of 24 artists and creatives living with mental illness/substance use in Niagara. We hope it captures the heartbeat of the Willow during a snapshot in time, and we encourage our readers to share it widely to inspire, reduce stigma, and celebrate the talents and points of view of our Member Artists.

Thank you to the many hearts and hands that went into making this possible.

Stay creative,
Shauna MacLeod
Founder/Director and Fellow Member Artist



Rick Rogers

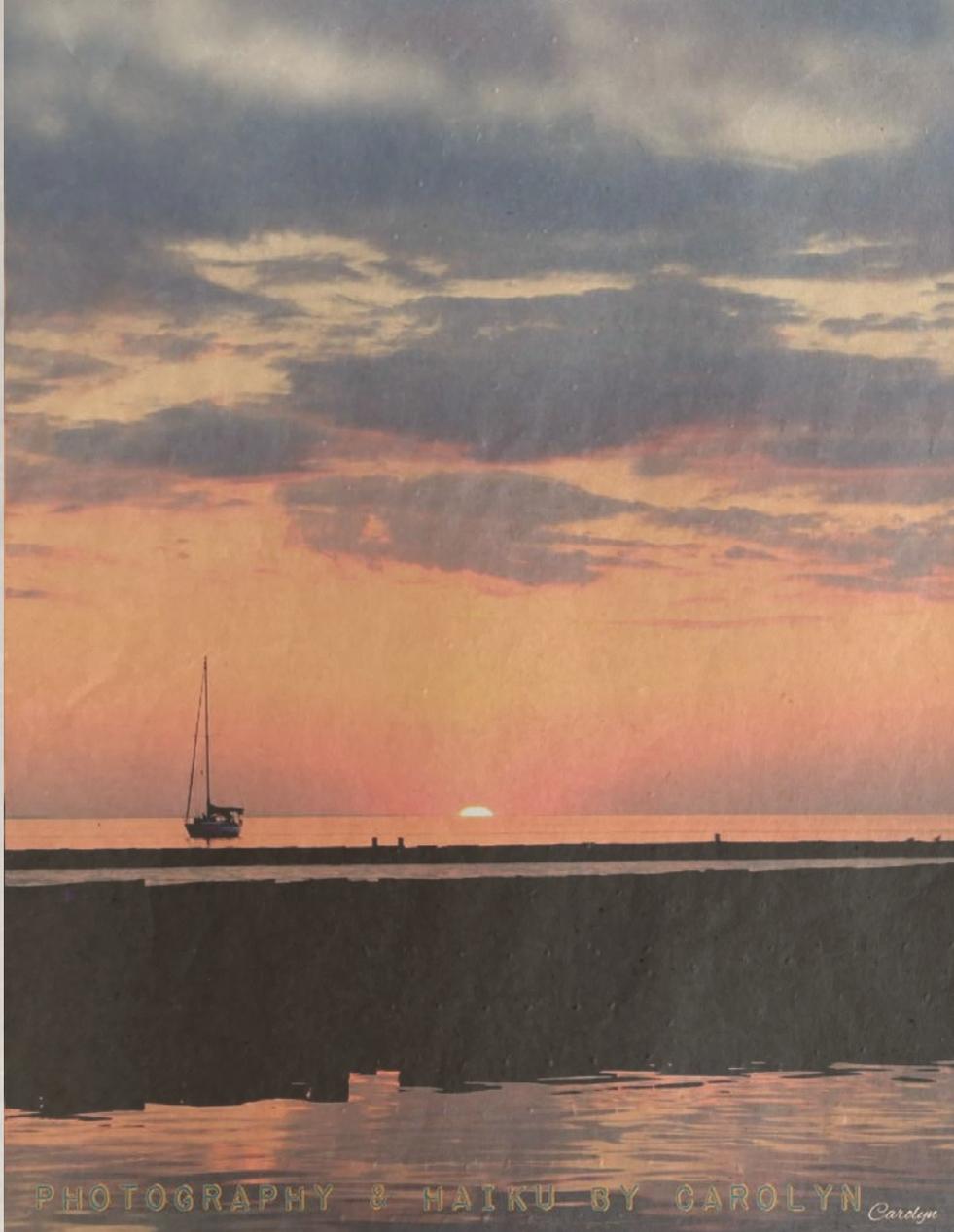


WILLOW
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Rose Center | Farrow Mascoe
Cover Visual *Wintry Sunrise* | Kathy Black

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BRIGHTLY SUNLIT CLOUDS
REFLECTING ON STILL WATER
MINDFUL OF EACH BREATH



PHOTOGRAPHY & HAIKU BY CAROLYN *Carolyn*

TO DO



Paul Reslinski

Perfect Of Meaning (By: Tammy-B)

My perfect of meaning;

Not just my hair,
Not just my body,
Not just my clothes,
Not just my family,
Not just my friends,
Not just my money budget,
Not just my household arrangement,
And not just my beliefs.

The true facts about my perfect of meaning is to find the right path on my own, without anybody's path!



Waterfall

The movie plays the scene, play the scene

The river reaches a cliff, water keeps flowing. Over the edge,

the Waterfall

Like the touch of toes into the wet sand, soft rock sculpting

You put your makeup on, entrancing your lips move.

Drag lipstick,

you said, "I care, but not enough."

Slow erosion in your eyes, beaten down little boy. Unseen, your downplayed hurts,

for what we missed.

The Waterfall repeats

past the hard rock in sight

The drop,

unstoppable drop

Crest of the fall,

like when mother visits. She's at her own brink. Does she see?

The first time your lips moved and eyelashes battered No shame there

No shame there

no shame in your tenderness Cried a Waterfall of tears for you, for what was missed.

The Waterfall repeats

past the soft space, skin knows the feel of the ground to seek

Unknowing

Never can I ignore the enormity of James Baldwin's writing and what he tried to convey as an African American living in and under oppression his entire life. Day in and day out he carried with him the knowledge that his relatives were enslaved. I am white. I will never know that kind of pain. The weighted shackles, the inhumanity they endured.

Here, we non-native white Canadians are waking up to our participation in an untold history. This being only a part of what we have long ignored or denied about our past. Most of us thought and wrote about a different past, a so-called, "more civilized" and "just" past, then those, "damn Yankees", as so often heard growing up. Bizarrely, we believe we are somehow different and our treatment to the people that were here on Turtle Island before us is, justified, explainable?

As a teenager, once, amazingly I learned some bit of real information. It was told to me, or I read it somewhere, I cannot recall. A reserve just north of Toronto where indigenous people were living was located on or near a city dump. There was a part of this that stuck with me, the description of piles and piles of used diapers that sat in the dump and did not readily decompose. Deep and wide and rotting, filling the air with stench.

Marley White

For D.

I wish I had been there.

To wrap my arms around you to just hold you. I am sorry, so sorry.

She vanished into thin air.

In the tender early morning, the little boy blue with blue blue eyes and jet black hair.

That day, did you call for her? Then look for her?

She wasn't there, in the kitchen.

In the bedroom where you slept, she was still, laid out.

Not told, not heard, nothing-

Can I stop breathing?

He wakes each day in suffocating silence.

How do I breathe?

His little heart rapidly beating, speeding to her. Calling her back.

This boy is too young, 'to be singin' the blues'.

Marley White

Wisp of Hair

Reflection in the mirror.
Little wisp of hair talk to me.
I love my hair. It goes everywhere.
Dancing on my scalp.
Doesn't want to stay down.
Has a mind of its own.
Wisp of hair blowing in the breeze.
Whether it stays here it's up to me.
Even if I shaved my head.
No doubt you will be back.
It will not be pushed.
It will be heard.
But come back stronger.
Cause it's part of me.

Paddy Barrett

Paddy Barrett



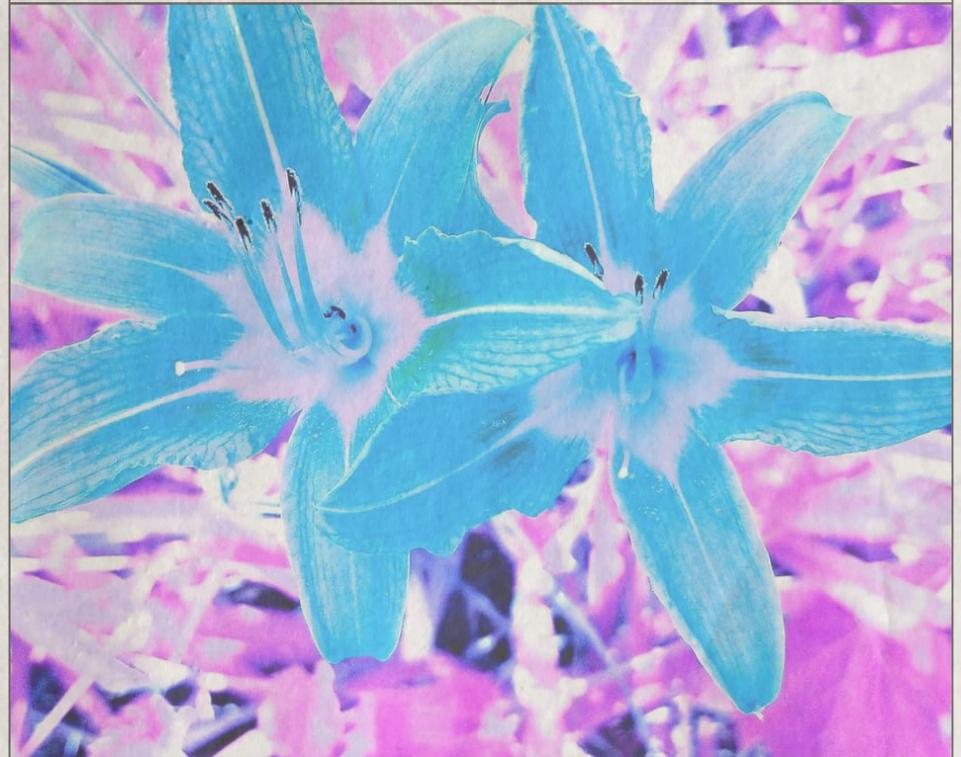
A Quest of Questions

I've been water, and I've been sound.
I've been underwater and almost drowned.
I've been to court, and I've been to the beach,
yet nirvana's been just out of reach

until today, though I still fail to grasp it,
as though it were something I could put in a basket
and take with me places like I might take my cat.
My cat in a basket; now imagine that!

But what's a cat got to do with nirvana?
or nirvana to do with either flora or fauna?
These are the questions that bring me to my knees:
who wrote this poem? and from where comes the breeze?

Danielle Romanuk



Hot & Cold | photos by Heba Younes



Cygnificant Change | coloured pencils

FARROW MASCOE



Swan a Swimming | acrylics

What Happens When...

~Jamie/~InSpired Spirit ~

What Happens When...

I Am Not What I Used To Be,

I Am Not Considered Young By A Long Shot,

I Am No Longer As Useful Every Day,

I Am Not The Woman You Come Home To Anymore,

I Am Unable To Make Homemade Lunches On The Kitchen Counter Without Being In Pain,

I Fall Down And No One Can Hear Me Yell For Help,

I Can't Make It Up Or Down Any Stairs Without A Walking Cane Or Assistance,

I Can't See Much As I Am Almost Totally Blind,

I Want To Go To The Bathroom Independently But Can't Get There Quick Enough And Am Depending on 'Depends',

I Have To Keep Asking You To Repeat What You Just Said To Me More Than 6 Times,

I Can't Drive Anymore And I Need To Go To The Grocery Store,

No One Is Home At Mealtimes To Share Time Together,

What Happens When I'm Old And Cast Aside?

What Happens When I Am Only A Glimpse Of What I Used To Be?

Please Tell Me...What Happens To Poor Ole Me???

Just Love Being A Grandma

I just love being a Grandma
I'm having so much fun
Playing all those childhood games
Trying AGAIN to run.

I just love being a Grandma
Hate to miss their games
All the kids call me Grandma
I don't know any of their names.

I love my darling grandkids
And going for walks through the mall
A little warm hand grasps my hand
Just to make sure I don't fall.

I just love being a Grandma
Teaching the ABCs
Reminding to say "Thank you"
And don't forget to say "Please".

Oh there's just so much to teach them
Sing, dance or ride a bike,
The list can just go on and on.

Which one would they like?
Helping those little fingers
Trying to tie a shoe
Oh there's just so many ways
Now, what do I do?

And don't forget how hard it is
To make that whistle sound
To get those lips and mouth just right
Should they be straight or round?

But Grandmas also have to learn
The computer is a MUST
And though my teachers are so young
On them I put all my trust.

These grandkids are so sweet and dear
I'm so lucky to have them live near
Whether a kiss, a hug or just a touch
I love them so very, very much.

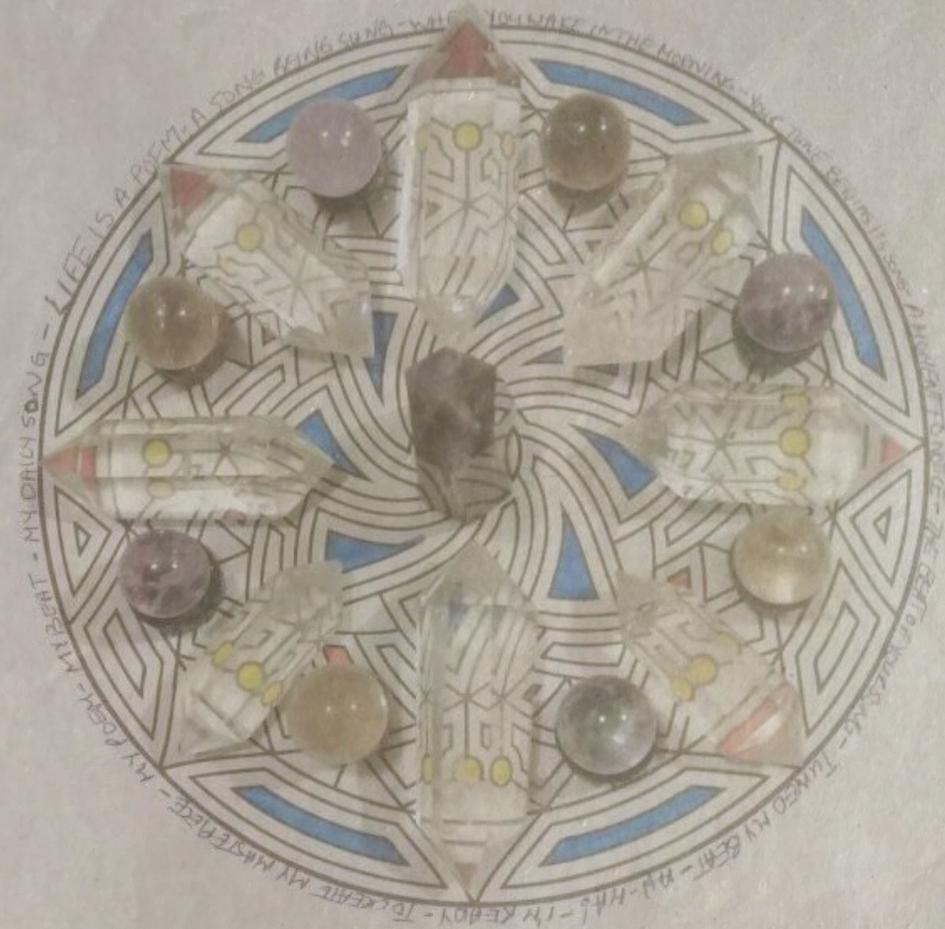
I just love being a grandma
And now at 97
I watch them grow into adults
I will forever watch them from heaven.

Suzanne Nickel and her Mother, Elizabeth Rignanesi



My mother, now 97, is in the later stages of dementia. I wrote this poem with her as an exercise to recall past memories, many of which she no longer possesses. Dementia is a terrible disease that is taking a little bit of her away from me every day.

Mandala Beat



Life is a poem, a song being sung. When you wake in the morning, your tune begins its song. A moment to notice, the beat of your song. Tuned my beat! ah ha! I'm ready! To create my masterpiece, my poem, my beat, my daily song.

Victoria Brecht



It has been something on my calendar, a deadline, a way to stay connected, a break from the news, an escape from sickness and sadness ... even if brief.

Farrow Mascoe

The Willow is my happy place, my me time. Time to relax, get the creative juices flowing and express myself.

Suzanne Nickel

The Willow gave me a distraction but also a way to channel my talents and made me feel and be more capable in these times of change.

Danielle Romanuk

Support for artists, an accepting community, and outlet to express and have a voice.

Heba Younes

The Willow has been a saving grace and safe community where I can be myself and find my voice.

Bear hugs, Paddy Barrett

pencil sketches by Victoria Brecht

Connection.
Self care.
Motivation.
Inspiration.
Encouragement.

Carolyn Taylor



If the world were covered with zebra stripes, we would leave our rooms and small apartments, turn off the fans that sweeten our days when temperatures rise to the sky, and walk or fly, look for the exquisite insanity of moving away.

Our summer is trapped in our gardens: these fenced-in, rectangular or perpendicular limits to which we are used and about which we know the puzzled secrets and how they fold out over imaginary, thickly-layered horizons where all colours soften and become our accomplices. They promise rare evenings, as time and its absence melt and linger while translucent air lurking through the vegetation and its flowers appeases our thoughts and the breeze.

All blue colours, blue and pink with yellow and a few growing plants whose colours no longer look real, are watching. We do not have to be careful. Darker corners offer us night and fixed points between which the breeze chimes and rests, slowly makes leaves tremble and hesitate. These do not conceal the ground; they remain attached to flowers and more or less visible stems.



Untitled Works

acrylic | watercolour | pen

Catherine Parayre



The fragrance of our gardens obliterates the self and our minds. Very little water enters the foliage, just enough to make it glisten and sustain us and the plants. There is no home for haze in these gardens; five blue moons hang in different places; we know that sailboats glide outside where we cannot be. The light shines just like the walls, like our thoughts as they collide, without pain or haste, and vanish like bubbles.

Words do not need to be true; they migrate, sometimes flutter, sometimes dislocate. Animals do not roam here. They follow the moon and do not persevere; they are pushed by the wind and do not trust cages. Our gardens are lonely happiness and suffused patience not to be missed.

Waverly Beach

What makes Waverly Beach so sacred is that it is a healing place of spectacular beauty where great deeds were done. African-American leaders from across the United States in 1905 met here to plan a strategy to pull their people out of the post-traumatic stress that resulted in the betrayal of the promises of racial justice following the end of the era historians call “Reconstruction” after the Civil War. This was a time of chain gangs, lynchings, and terror.

There are few sacred healing places comparable to Waverly Beach located in Fort Erie where Lake Erie flows into the Niagara River. Here stone ruins of an amusement park combine with an old growth forest dominated by giant trees. The woodland provides precious habitat for an Endangered bird, the Red Headed Woodpecker. The land is now subject to a protracted zoning battle at the Ontario Municipal Board (OMB).

The amusement park attracted 20,000 visitors a daily on hot summer days. Today the towering, rare Shumard Oak rises above the concrete ruins of an abandoned playground. While native oaks, maples, cottonwoods, cherries, and walnuts dominate, the sacred grove includes towering exotic Trees of Heaven and Norway Maples.



One of the most important aspects of scenic natural areas is to provide for healing of often tormented human spirits. It is this important role that Waverly Beach played on July 9, 1905 when it became the launching site of the Niagara Movement. The conference was organized by W.E. Du Bois, the first African American at the time to expose lynchings through his newspaper, *The Crisis*.

Du Bois chose Waverly Beach since he was charmed by its natural beauty. He wrote that, “we want a quiet place outside the city near the water where we can be to ourselves, hold conferences together and at the same time have bathing, croquet, and fishing for recreation.” He found that in this healing place “no liquors are needed.”

A water treatment lagoon provides valuable habitat for a spectacular wading bird, the Great Egret. During the park’s heyday in 1905, Buffalo residents concerned about its protection had formed an early chapter of the Audubon Society.

Du Bois rented the Erie Beach Hotel in advance for his 28 conference participants, whom were leading black intellectuals from 17 American states. Du Bois took inspiration from the powerful Niagara River. He saw Niagara as “mighty current” similar to the powerful surge he wished to smash racial oppression.

The Niagara Movement in its resolutions denounced what it called the “virtual slavery” on the convict lease system. It deplored imprisonment for the profit of “railway contractors, mining companies, and those who farm large plantations.” In this era sadistic guards would beat prisoners to death who would be secretly buried in graves that would be kept secret for over a century.

Du Bois lived a long life like the great Walnuts that tower over Waverly Beach today. He died at the age of 95 in 1963. Less than a year after his death the US Civil Rights Act was passed. It finally achieved the suffrage reforms for voting in southern states that the Niagara Movement campaigned for. The movement that healed some of the worst traumatic suffering in America emerged in a place of great beauty and inspiration that hopefully will long endure.



THE WEIGHT OF AIR
(OR PHYSICS FOR THOUGHT)

2200 pounds
is the weight
of the air
on your head.
2200 pounds
is the freight
that you bear
out of bed.

Who knew?
Did you?
You can move a metric ton!

Endure.
Be sure.
Nothing's there that can't be done!

PAT THOMSON

Saharan Summer | Kathy Black



Laundry Mat, Laundry Mat you are so HOT!

A weekly sweaty job, believe it or not
Should I use fleece? It doesn't remove spots
No javex for sure, it will bleach
My new shirt will no longer be peach!
Laundry is such a task
I'll be glad when I finish at last

I watch my clothes go round and round
Watching them trying not to drown
On and on and on we go
Where it stops no one knows

Jennifer Gallagher



October 27th, 1985

Every move forward seems like five steps
backwards into the abyss.

I held you for a moment; only long enough to
feel your sadness.

I wish you knew how to love me, the way you
love her today.

Only sadness is here beside me.

The picture of us has faded and been drenched
in red wine.

When bad habits are stolen, and abuse is the
only advice,

True feelings are hurt, and bridges are burned

The thought of you has brought me to tears

The time we shared has been wasted under
starlight.

September 10th, 2020

As love turns to hate,

I slowly begin to let go of you

While I sit back and watch the clock on the
wall, all others join the ball.

I wish you loved me, the way your engine runs
for her,

But of course, this is my own wasted dream

I am reminded of the pain and childlike games
you use to play

After all you put me through,

How could you just walk away?

You coward.

There is nothing left to say.

I loved you with my whole heart.

February 27th, 1985

It was hard.

Harder than I thought.

The timing was right.

The noise from the hallways crept in,

Changing our lives forever

Could this be a new friend? A lover? Or just another?

As butterflies surround my soul and sink into my stomach,

I find hope in lingering memories of you but of course that is dope.



Comfort | photos by Heba Younes

Aphasia from A Stroke

I had a stroke,

What can I say?

Now, I don't remember his name,

That what-cha-mi-call-it he likes to play with,

All I can say is I don't have those wheels that match up,

They're in my mind, those wheels,

The ideas and people that match up with their names,

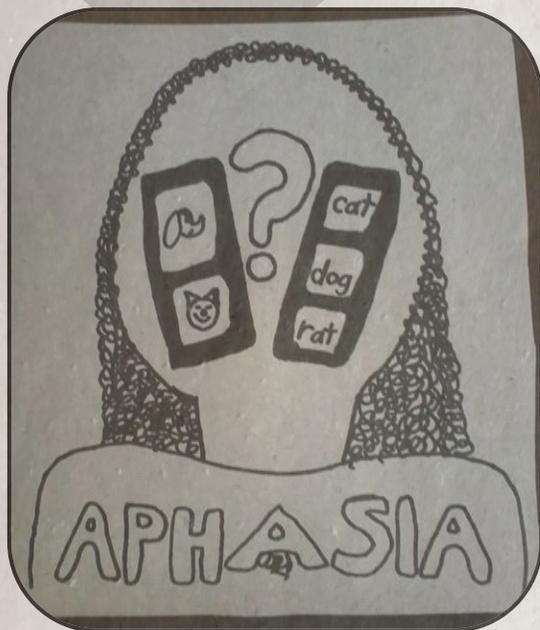
I am not ignorant,

I know exactly what I mean,

I just can not make...

That connection.

AJ Toth



The Interview | Pat Thomson

i hated skool
but like to lurn
still cant spell
or wate my turn
and dollar 1's
bin slow to urn

i'm like a match.
jus made to burn.

cant sit still
go! go! go!
things to do
dontcha no

always late and never reddy
try to help
but I'm not too steddie
i dropped the roast
so we had spaghetti

always a plan
and its always changin'
stuffs all there
jus needs rearrangin'

life ain't hard
but it is confusin'.
first i'm findin'
and next i'm losin'
keys then shoes,
my hat 'n glasses.

you wonderin' why
i hated classes?

TURNS THE KEY

turns the key

left

alone

you are

right a

lone

wrong at home

flutterby, flutterbye;

will you break fast with me ?

Rita Lianga

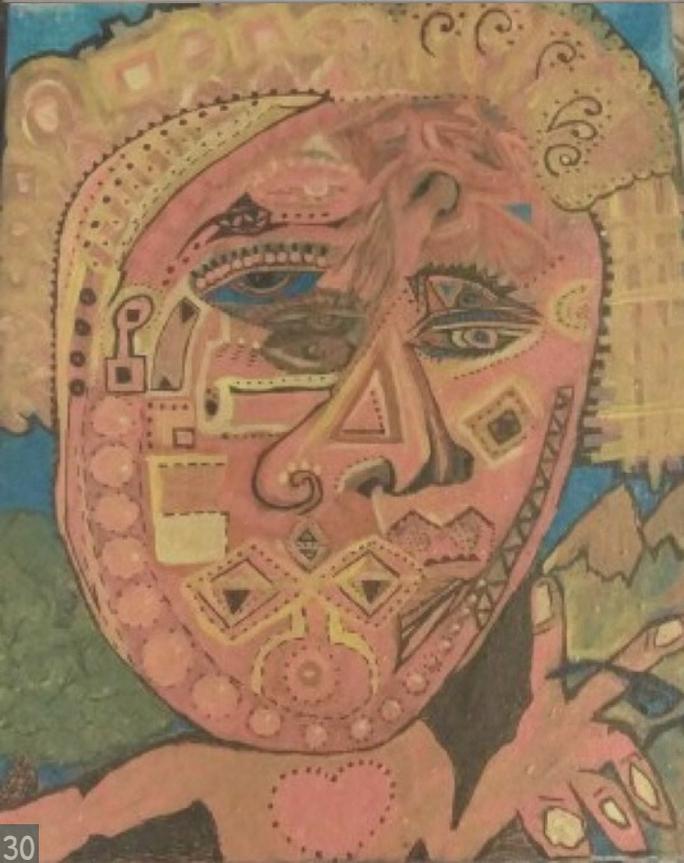
UNDONE

I long to put into words
All the feather light touches
That brush against this cold heart,
The colors of warmth
That are painted across
These empty halls
But somehow the letters
Never seem to unfold,
Unfurl, undone,
I've spent so much time
Putting myself back together
I don't think that
This sandcastle could withstand
The desire to come
Undone, these walls
Have only ever been made of plaster
And I've buried my fists
Into enough walls, pulled back
To know the kinds of holes that are left
By careless hands that only ever
Seem to take
But with you
I can't seem to stop
Crumbling

Daniel Hummel



Mike Post



Trigger

Weakness
speaks
in
fear
pain
and
fright

Darkness
Looms

like
thick
gray
fog

Soothing
Hope

Is
Somewhere
Lost
Inside

Victoria Brecht

This piece discusses sensitive subject matter in general, non-graphic terms.

It is increasingly difficult
To talk my Depression into living
To living in a world where
The Earth and little children
Are raped and
This world's only answer is
"Fake news
If the story offends
Your precious sensibilities
Just change the channel
Until the truth fits you"

On
Convincing
Myself
Not
To
Kill
Myself

It is getting increasingly difficult
To talk my Depression into living
Into living in a world where
Where sacred land is
Bulldozed to make way for GAPS
And those who dare claw
Their way free from abusive hands
Are shuffled off into
Statistics to shock and manufacture
Sympathy that ends
When it gets too close
To tarnishing the good names
Of men

It is getting increasingly difficult
To talk my Depression into living
Into living in a world where
Being human is synonymous with
Greedy, selfish, self-appointed-gods
Destroyer of the planet
I am ashamed not just of my race
But of my species
And the need to shed this god-awful form
Is so crippling I am just another being
Choking on oil spilled from
Weapons of mass destruction.

Daniel Hummel

A Nation of Red and White

Today, I have been confronted with
what it means to be Canadian.

What has Canada given me?
Is our “true North” really strong?
And is it truly free?

On a day like today I cannot help
but think of the Wet’suwet’en.
This land was not mine to grow
and flourish within, due to
the paler shade of my skin.

Today, I think about my cousin who
grew up on a reservation. We differ
by one birth year and two degrees
of white men. But I went to college at

eighteen and She, at
seventeen, had children.

And today, I think of those
children torn
from their parents to be
washed “clean”
of the colour on their skin,
revealing the
inhumane, unholy state of
the “schools” they were
taught within.

Today, I allow these thoughts
to flow
freer than the rivers made
unclean, and
is this gruesome nation we
built
with the red, red blood that
was spilt,
worthy of being our home
and Native land?

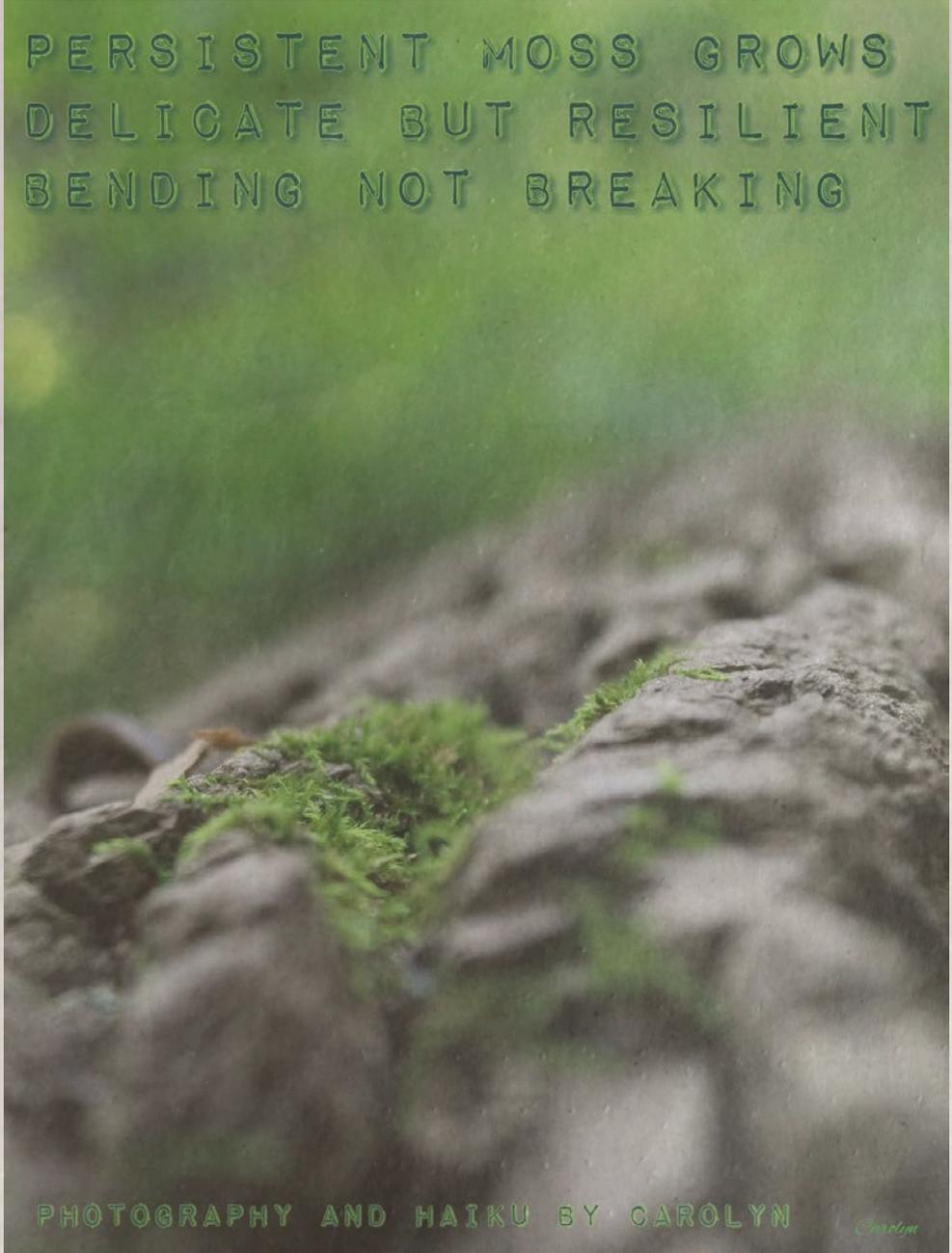
Alison Carroll



Hero Strength | Farrow Mascoe

Suffering a brain injury, I had been working hard to get my life back for years. I finally belonged to some help groups and was making attempts to leave my apartment multiple times a week. Then Covid 19 came... everything I was signed up for was cancelled... the Y was closed... everything was locked up... and then I became sick. 2 months without spending time with another person took its toll in more ways than imaginable. I couldn't get motivated or focused enough to do anything let alone my art. Then I heard that Willow had changed gears with rapid speed and created online classes! To have something on my calendar, to look forward to, a deadline, a way to stay connected with peers, a break from the news, an escape from sickness and sadness ... even if brief. My motivation came back, my mood and health improved, and I was feeling like life was almost normal again during the time I was in my art “bubble”.

Covid isn't gone yet ... but I feel stronger and able to face the fall and possible “second wave”. If needed, I will just retreat to my art “bubble” until the world returns to some normalcy and I can again start trying to get my life back.



PERSISTENT MOSS GROWS
DELICATE BUT RESILIENT
BENDING NOT BREAKING

PHOTOGRAPHY AND HAIKU BY CAROLYN

Carolyn

**Free Mental Health & Addiction
Support Services in Niagara Region**

COAST Niagara: 1 866 550 5205

COAST Niagara provides mobile crisis outreach and intervention service offering immediate telephone counseling and if necessary, on-site outreach intervention in the home or on community locations. 24/7

Distress Centre: 905 688 3711

Distress Centre provides support to individuals in distress or crisis and education to the Niagara community which assists people to take ownership of personal choices and manage their lives in a healthy manner. 24/7

www.distresscentreniagara.com

Canadian Mental Health Association (CMHA) Niagara: 905 641 5222

Urgent support and walk-in Counseling

Mental health counsellors provide same day service to individuals by exploring their immediate concerns and offering assistance with crisis management and problem solving. No appointment required:

St. Catharines-Tuesdays 11:30-5:30 PM, Branscombe Mental Health Centre, 1338 Fourth Ave.

Niagara Falls-Wed. 11:30-5:30 PM, CMHA Niagara Falls Resource Centre, 6760 Morrison St.

Fort Erie-Thursdays 11:30-5:30PM, CMHA Fort Erie Office, 20 Jarvis St.

www.cmhaniagara.ca

CASON- COMMUNITY ADDICTION SERVICES OF NIAGARA: 905 684 1183

CASON provides comprehensive alcohol, drug, and gambling, addiction treatment for individuals and their families.

www.casson.ca

Niagara Sexual Assault Centre (CARSA): 905 682 5258

CARSA provides services in a safe and comfortable environment for survivors of child sexual abuse, incest, and child sexual assault. They offer a 24-hour crisis line, emergency services, individual and group counseling, accompaniment and advocacy through medical and legal proceedings, public education and community events.

www.sexualassault.niagara.org

Human Rights Tribunal of Ontario: 1 866 598 0322; hrto.registrar@ontario.ca

If you believe you have experienced discrimination or harassment (due to your mental illness or otherwise), you can file an application with the HRTO to have your claim of discrimination and harassment brought under the *Human Rights Code* resolved in a fair, just, and timely manner.

www.tribunalsontario.ca/hrto

Willow Arts Community: 905 328 9277; thewillowcommunity@gmail.com

Follow us on social media and reach out to learn more about our Arts Training Program.

Visit the website thewillowcommunity.com to learn more.

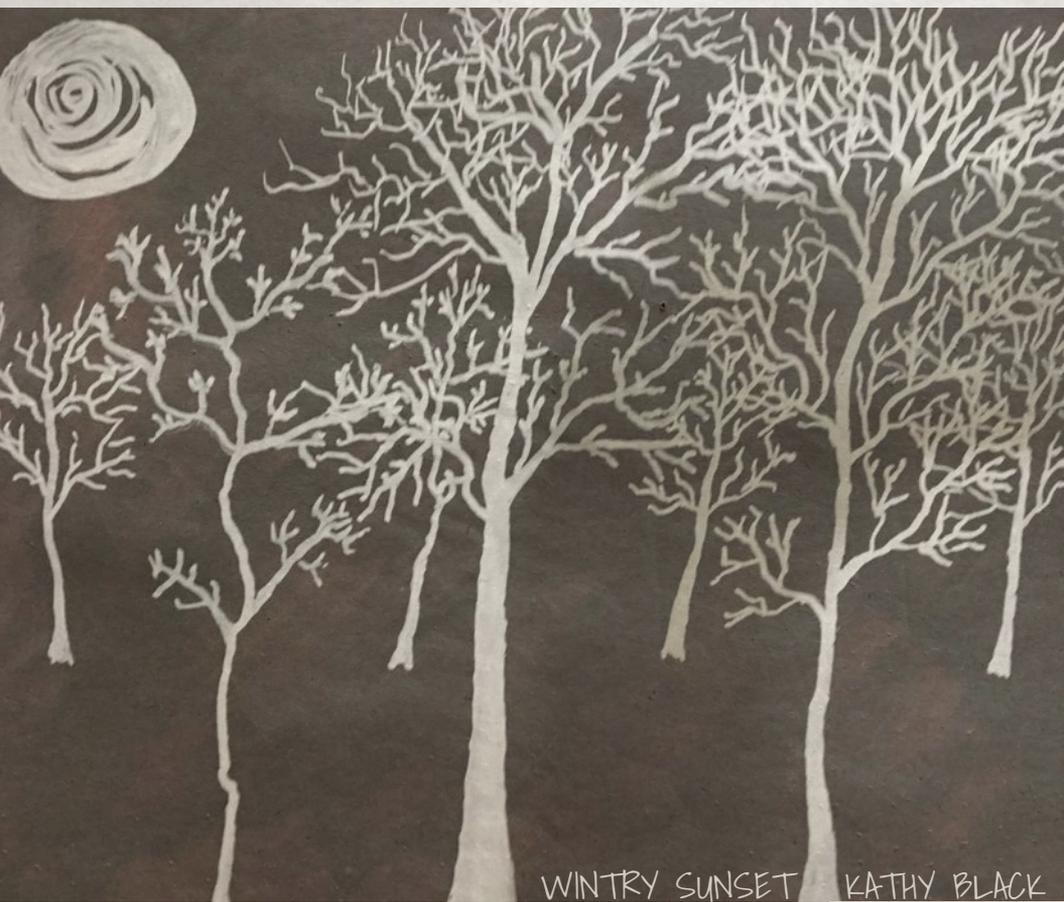
Note: some of these service may be affected by COVID-19 restrictions.

For more information on these and other services,

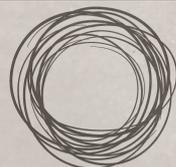
visit Niagara Community Information Database: www.niagara.cioc.ca or dial 211.

Willow Arts Community is a multidisciplinary arts organization that provides peer-to-peer arts education for 18+ artists and creatives living with mental illness/substance use in Niagara. We use the arts as an agent of social change by connecting and engaging with the public through exhibitions, performances, and presence to lessen the effects of stigma and social isolation.

This zine was created during the Spring/Summer 2020 Professional Arts Training season, supported by partnerships with Workman Arts Toronto & Rodman Hall Art Centre and with thanks to The Ontario Trillium Foundation, St. Catharines Cultural Investment Program, and The May Court Club of St. Catharines.



WINTRY SUNSET KATHY BLACK



WILLOW
ARTS
COMMUNITY



MAY COURT
CLUB OF ST. CATHARINES

Supporting Our Community

**Rodman
Hall**
ART CENTRE

Ontario
Trillium
Foundation



Fondation
Trillium
de l'Ontario

Generously supported by the St. Catharines
Cultural Investment Program (SCCIP)



St. Catharines Brock University

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**WORKMAN
ARTS**