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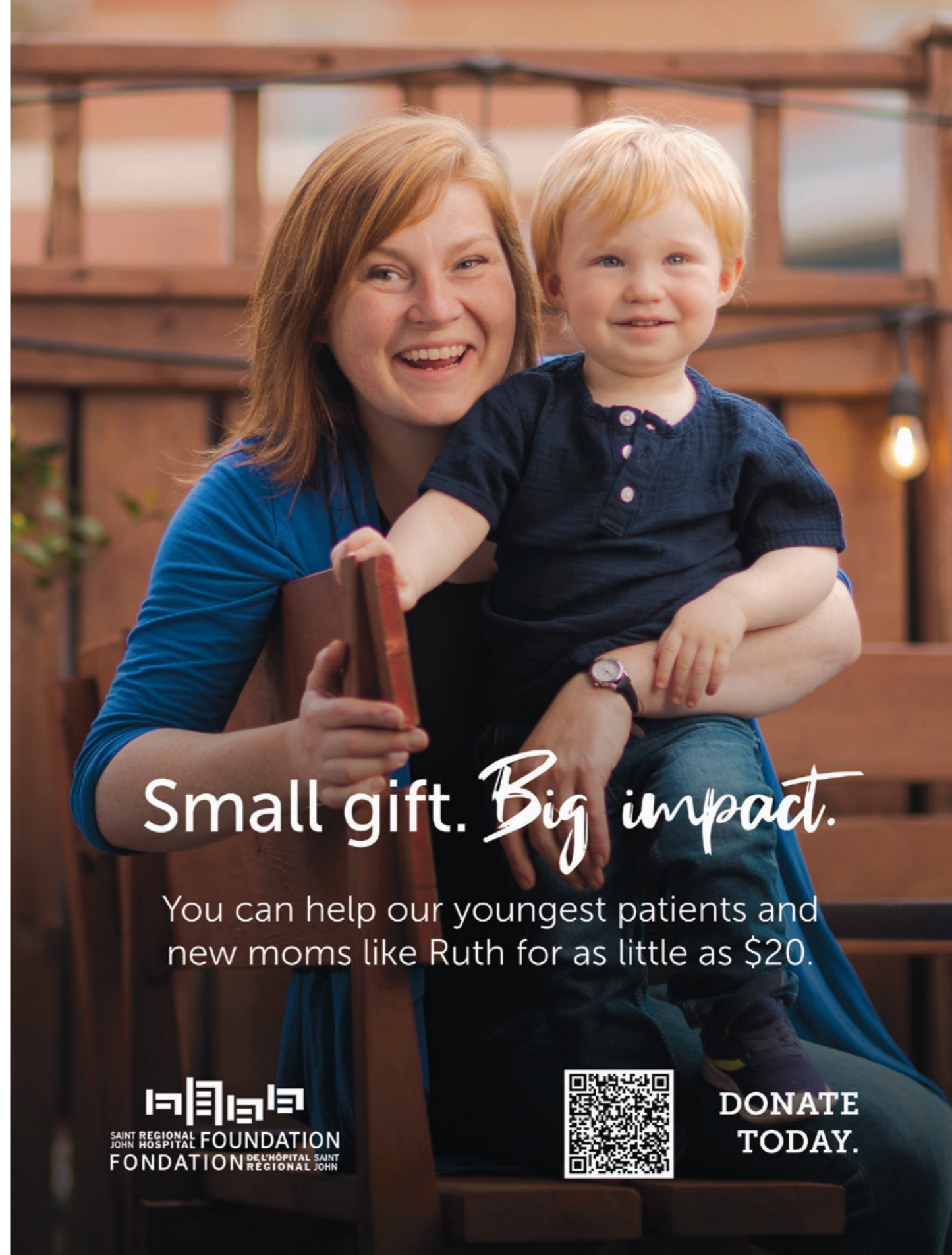
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EDIT MAGAZINE | VOLUME 26

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## [E] A LETTER FROM THE EDITOR

On Wednesday, June 28, we revealed in our free monthly digital magazine [EDIT]ION that Michelle Obama is coming to Halifax, Nova Scotia, to celebrate 75 years of the Nova Scotia Co-operative Council. If you haven't signed up for [EDIT]ION yet, you can do so here: [maritimeedit.com](http://maritimeedit.com).



We at Edit Media are extremely proud to be the exclusive media partner for this incredible event, which is taking place at the Scotiabank Centre in Halifax on October 18 before a capacity crowd that will include more than 3,000 deserving bright minds. Under the Diversity Delegation, these tickets will be given at no cost to deserving future leaders so they can make connections, be inspired, and be motivated to build the region they are already envisioning for us all.

The evening at the Scotiabank Centre is poised to captivate hearts and minds in a uniquely special way, and in-person events have always been the bedrock of who we are at Edit Media. We hope you will join us at [EDIT]'s Rothesay Yule at Rothesay Netherwood School on November 12 in support of the Saint John Regional Hospital Foundation. Or any of my upcoming tour dates that celebrate the 10 years I have spent living in Canada. I am performing in British Columbia, Quebec, New Brunswick, Nova Scotia and Nunavut this season. Each show is tailored to the town or city with no two the same – ultimately a celebration of this great country that I am so proud to call home.

In this bumper issue, Jennifer Wood reports on the prestigious Strathbutler Award, which was established by

Sheila Hugh Mackay in 1991 to recognize artists who have achieved personal excellence in any field of visual art and are deemed by an independent jury to have made significant contributions to New Brunswick. (I was a judge on the panel last year.) One of the largest cash awards in Canada, the Strathbutler is currently valued at \$25,000, and receiving it propels a recipient to the forefront of the art world. To date, three Strathbutler recipients (Peter Powning, potter, Brigitte Clavette, sculptor, and Anna Torma, fibre artist) later received the coveted Governor General's Award.



Culture Correspondent Thandiwe McCarthy and award-winning photographer (and Londoner turned New Brunswicker!) Gary Weekes visited Rob Reese at Royal Barbershop in Fredericton. As Thandiwe says, "In a world plagued by digital distractions and multiple disasters, it's no wonder more people are struggling with their mental health. Thankfully, in the growing space of men's health, the barbershop is quietly at the vanguard. It provides a strong space for men to build and respect soft skills, which is why I chose to interview Rob Reese. The conversation flowed naturally – it didn't take long for us to fire jokes at each other and laugh as we set up for the interview and photos. Wisdom was shared and, as an entrepreneur myself, I look forward to building my relationship with someone as successful and humble as Rob Reese."

Gary Weekes agrees: "We pick incredible individuals to feature in [EDIT], not just for their success in the role of the businessperson, but what they bring and contribute to others, above and beyond their day to day. Working endlessly to uplift all and to give back to others is a staple of what Rob does; the comfort he exudes "on camera" is the reflection of what he displays in life!"

In short, this volume, like every other, is a celebration of where we are and of those who create, inspire and uplift.

I hope to see you soon.

Best wishes

James Mullinger  
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# So impatient

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# CONTRIBUTORS [E]



JUDY WITYSZYN

Judy was raised on the Kingston Peninsula, New Brunswick and left at 18 to study journalism at Carleton University in Ottawa. She began her career with IBM and was transferred to Whitby, Ontario, where she maintained her “down East” problem-solver approach, strong work ethic and sense of humour. Judy returned to Saint John in 2019, and she is enjoying a new career with the client-services team at Commercial Properties. For this issue, she writes about the lifesaving work of the amazing women at Sophia Recovery Centre, where she is a board member.



LINDSAY VAUTOUR

[EDIT]’s award-winning Art Director has designed every page of 26 volumes of the magazine. Lindsay graduated from the New Brunswick College of Craft and Design in 2004 with a diploma in graphic arts. Throughout her career she has worked on numerous projects including consumer hospitality, event branding and illustrating a children’s book. She has also designed a new tour poster for James Mullinger every year for a decade. Mullinger says, “Quite simply, Lindsay is the best at what she does. Always surprising, exciting, inventive, she is one of the greatest artists I have ever worked with.”



RYAN WILLIAMS

A photographer and videographer based out of Halifax, Nova Scotia, Ryan is the founder of Unbound Media Inc., which offers a wide range of services to help businesses and entrepreneurs thrive in the digital age, including photography, videography, and social-media management and strategy. Be sure to check out Unbound’s epic-in-scope film for Edit Media about Salt + Ash restaurant on the Halifax waterfront. Ryan photographed El Jones for Volume 17 of [EDIT], and for this issue he photographed his friend, the media master who is Alyse Hand.



ALEXANDER HACKETT

Alexander is a writer, musician and translator from Quebec’s Eastern Townships. His journalism and fiction have been published in English and French in the *Toronto Star*, Montreal’s *La Presse* and *Le Devoir*, *Northwest Review*, *The Montréal Review* and *Yolk* literary journal. After graduating with a degree in literature and philosophy from University of King’s College in 1998, he worked as a teacher in Gambia, West Africa, and later in Mexico City. He then completed a master’s in international relations at the School of Oriental and African Studies in London, England. His latest album, *North Country Psychic Girls*, was released in 2017 and is available on all platforms.



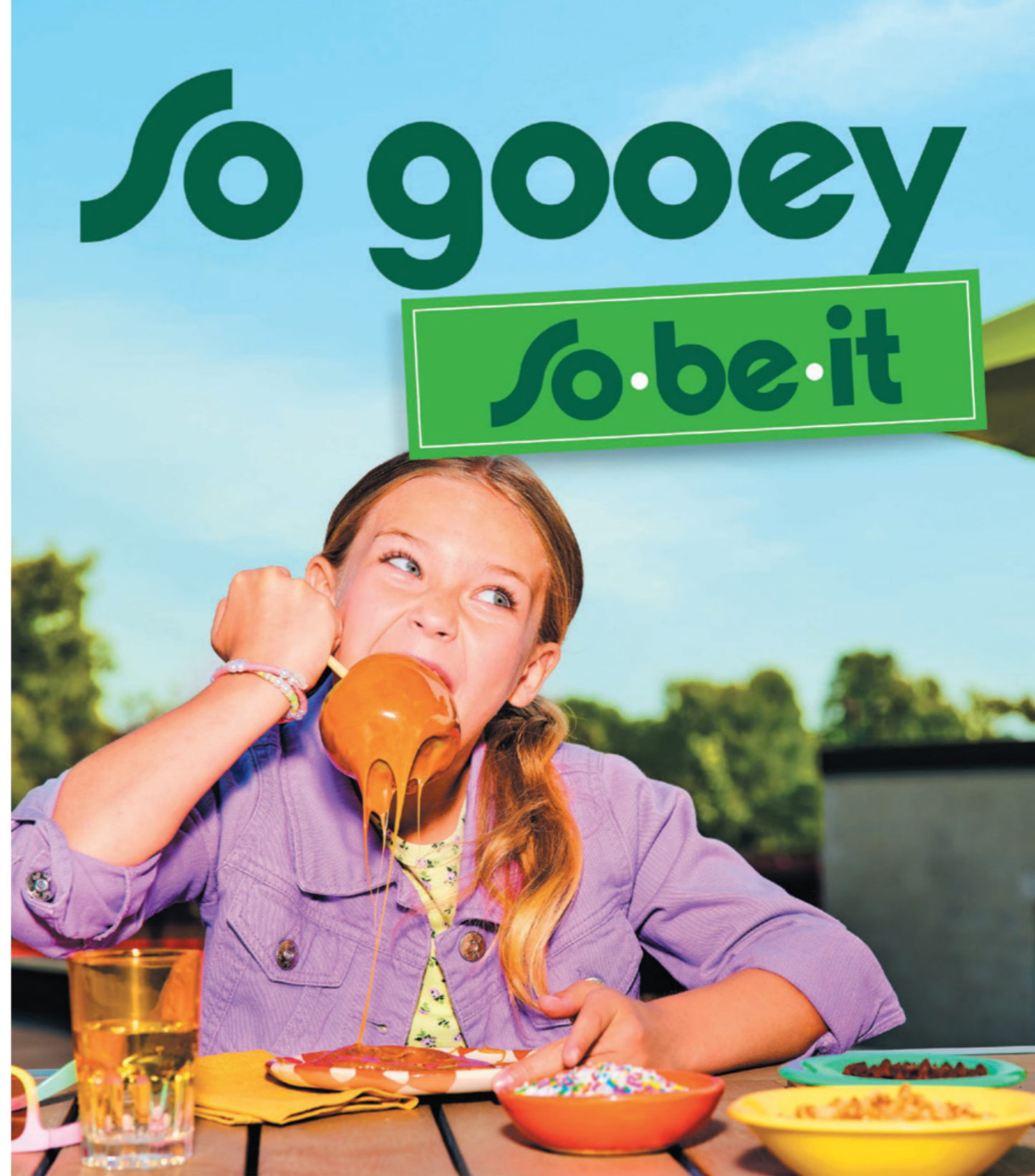
ELIZABETH WHITTEN

Elizabeth is a journalist based in St. John’s, Newfoundland and Labrador, where she writes about municipal politics, arts, health care and tech. When she’s not chasing her next story, she’s cuddling with her dog, Otto, and reading a good book. She currently works for CBC Newfoundland and Labrador, and her work has appeared in *Newfoundland Quarterly* and *East Coast Living*. Her debut book, *Off Panel: A History of NL Comix*, was released in September 2023 through Engen Books. It traces the evolution of the local comic-book scene, starting in the late 1970s when two teenagers created the first comic book, through the decades to today’s artists.



THANDIWE MCCARTHY

[EDIT]’s Culture Correspondent is a writer, spoken-word poet, and seventh-generation Black Canadian. The co-founder of the New Brunswick Black Artists Alliance, he helped republish the history book titled *The Blacks of New Brunswick*. He studied at Holland College in Charlottetown, and then graduated from the University of New Brunswick in kinesiology. He is the author of *Social Oblivion: Raised Black in Canada*, a national bestseller. His poetry has been published in *AfriCANthology: Perspectives of Black Canadian Poets*. For this volume of [EDIT], McCarthy interviewed local legend Rob Reese, owner/operator of the Royal Barbershop in Fredericton.



Family life can be messy. So be it with everything you need to enjoy even the stickiest of situations.  
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# THE KING ON QUEEN STREET

BY THANDIWE MCCARTHY  
PHOTOGRAPHY BY GARY WEEKES



Thandiwe McCarthy interviews Rob Reese at Royal Barbourshop, Fredericton, NB

*There is a place men rarely go  
To heal the mind and calm their woes.  
Across the clock it never stops, this endless  
Uncertainty.*

*But what if there was such a place.  
Around the corner, hidden away.  
Where boys and men could go find peace  
Among the sharpest blades.*

*There's something real to sounds of steel.  
To bare one's neck to an artist's skill.  
A forge that shaves egos away  
And moulds a gentle man.*

*There's strength at both sides of the chair.  
A power with every word that's shared.  
Through practice, care and discipline  
Two warriors are born.*

In a world plagued by digital distractions and multiple disasters, it's no wonder more people are struggling with their mental health. There is a demographic that seems to reject self-care as important to personal development. Men have long had the "sleep when I'm dead" mentality when it comes to health and wellness.

Thankfully, in the growing space of men's health, the barbershop is quietly at the vanguard. Providing a strong space for men to build and respect soft skills. This is why I chose to interview Rob Reese, a Black entrepreneur and owner/operator of the Royal Barbershop in Fredericton, New Brunswick. He has always been fascinated with the barbershop ever since his father took him to one as a boy.

"Every man and boy needs to try the barbershop once, and I guarantee when you do, you'll be hooked. It's the smell of the barbershop when you walk in the door; it's the sound the straight razor makes on your face, the warmth of the hot towel, it's a complete experience."

It's easy to see that Rob Reese cares. About himself, his family and the community he serves. After selling his successful business in Las Vegas, Rob knew he wanted to start a barbershop and even went to school for it. The only choice was where. He chose New Brunswick.



Rob Reese at Royal Barbourshop, Fredericton, NB



Royal Barbourshop Tobacco Vanilla Beard Butter

“As a business owner, they really open doors for you. I spent seventeen years in the bar and entertainment industry, being successful in an incredibly competitive market. Yet things that would have taken me years to get in Las Vegas happen in weeks here. The New Brunswick government has been supportive.”

After seven years of success managing the Royal Barbershop, now with two locations, Reese’s drive and passion led him to organize Fredericton’s first barbershop convention. It was at this convention that he was voted in as director of the New Brunswick Registered Barbers’ Association, a group of over 500 barbers around New Brunswick. Reese plans to dedicate his leadership to raising the profile and importance of barbershops in Canada:

“It’s time to organize the barber industry and put it (at) the forefront of the health-care conversation. We’ve been left out of the market but, as we get more products and a little more organized, we’ll level the playing field.”

At the convention, I interviewed Kevin LeBeouf, owner of Educated Beards, who discussed the importance of the barber chair and the responsibilities of the barber behind it. That they have a duty to infuse those who sit in their chair with knowledge on how to better take care of themselves. To help those men who may be ignorant or anxious about the benefits of taking their self-care more seriously.

Hard work puts calluses on more than just the hands of men; it hardens their emotions. Yes, when you’re in the middle of a job, thinking about anything else won’t get the work done sooner or better. No one’s saying to not take work seriously. Everyone benefits from that. I’m merely suggesting that, when work is finished, and you’ve walked into the space you call home, you put just as much effort into yourself. Body, mind and soul.

Blisters need to be addressed. Miserable moments need to be shared and hopefully laughed about with friends. You need to practise beliefs that help you. Swap out “I’ll sleep when I’m dead” for “health is wealth,” and watch how drastically your life changes. Reese hears this story often at his business: “As a man you work hard all day, but when you get home, you want to feel good. It’s very important for men to take care of themselves.”

And if you don’t know how to start taking yourself more seriously than your work, just make a trip to your local barbershop. Sharing your neck and lived experience with the person carefully carving out your best features will only make you stronger. And not just physically but mentally and spiritually as well. There’s a practice of trust and vulnerability that’s being strengthened every time a man sits down in that chair.

Reese agrees there’s something healing about barbershops.

“It’s just the feeling when you go into a barbershop. You maybe kinda feel down a little bit; you need a haircut; you need a shave. You go in and talk to people. Speaking to your barber, it lets guys open up. So they walk out with a new haircut and a shave, feeling like a brand new man. Like a weight’s been lifted, you know?”

As a proud customer of the Royal Barbershop, I couldn’t agree more. It means something to see someone work just as hard on his business as he does on advocating for the entire industry. Advocating for men to work harder on their health.

Now that he is the director of the New Brunswick Registered Barbers’ Association, Rob Reese has become more than just the king on Queen Street. He has become the king of inspiring men to care. And to that I say, “Long live the king!”

*royalbarbershop.ca*

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Photograph by James Wilson





Jane Doucet photographed by Nicola Davison

James Mullinger meets  
critically acclaimed author  
**Jane Doucet**

Halifax-based author Jane Doucet is a seasoned journalist who has written for such leading publications as *Chatelaine* and *Canadian Living*. She had never planned to write fiction, but when she looked for a lighthearted novel about motherhood indecision that didn't end with "She had a baby and lived happily ever after," she was shocked that she couldn't find one. That's when she got the idea to try writing one herself. In 2017, she self-published her debut novel, *The Pregnant Pause*, which was shortlisted for a 2018 Whistler Independent Book Award. In 2021, Vagrant Press, the fiction imprint of Nimbus Publishing, published her second novel, *Fishnets & Fantasies*, to rave reviews and a swelling fan base.

Jane's third novel, *Lost & Found in Lunenburg*, lands this fall. A spectacularly entertaining and moving story of grief, love, loss, sex and family, it is the essential read of the season. Fans will be delighted that protagonist Rose Ainsworth from *The Pregnant Pause* is back, a character so affable and warm and multi-layered that she is reminiscent of Austen's greatest heroines. Doucet weaves a story so vivid and intrin-

sically Nova Scotian while dissecting universal themes — she is a true master of her craft. [EDIT]'s Editor-in-Chief James Mullinger met with her to learn more.

**[EDIT]:** You have built up an incredibly loyal and loving fanbase after just two books, and *Lost & Found in Lunenburg* is eagerly awaited. Do you feel more pressure writing now that there is an expectation than you did when writing your debut *The Pregnant Pause*?

**JANE DOUCET:** Heck, yes. Massive, soul-crushing pressure! But seriously, when I self-published *The Pregnant Pause* in 2017, I was an unknown first-time author. The biggest pressure was what I put on myself. I placed those books in a handful of Halifax-area bookstores, so of course I wanted them to sell, and I worked hard to promote them. Because *The Pregnant Pause* is about motherhood indecision, I knew it would have a niche readership. I wanted my second novel's theme to have broader appeal, so I chose... sex, of course! *Fishnets & Fantasies* hit the mark — so much so that it has been optioned for television (fingers crossed). And although *Lost & Found in Lunenburg's* themes are love and loss, its tone is as lighthearted as my previous novels, so I hope readers will enjoy it too.

**[EDIT]:** Your novels are read globally but are deep-rooted in the Maritimes, with much love given to specific places in and around Lunenburg. Why is this important to you, and what do locals say to you about it when you meet them?

**JANE:** It's important that the settings of my novels are authentic. That's the journalist in me. So I've chosen places I know well and can travel to easily for research purposes. Lunenburg is one of my favourite Nova Scotia towns to visit and only an hour's drive from home, so that was an easy choice. Plus, I knew a regional setting would appeal to my publisher.

The feedback from people living in or near Lunenburg, or those who have visited Nova Scotia's scenic South Shore, has been overwhelmingly positive. People love to read about real places they know. Two readers told me they went on a pilgrimage to Lunenburg to locate all of the places that I mentioned in *Fishnets & Fantasies* after they read it. Another one told me he drove around the town imagining where the sex shop would be. That's pretty cool.

**[EDIT]:** Rose is back, as are many of your most loved characters from *Fishnets & Fantasies*. Are you creating a Doucet literary universe?

**JANE:** Ha, it would appear so, wouldn't it? But that certainly wasn't my intention when I wrote *The Pregnant Pause*.



Jane Doucet at an author event at Open Book Coffee in Halifax, NS, June 2023 | Photograph by David Wimsett



In fact, I never planned to write one novel, let alone three. But I keep getting these pesky ideas that won't leave me alone. They're an itch I can't stop scratching, like literary hives (antihistamines don't help — I've tried).

When I was writing *Fishnets & Fantasies*, the idea for *Lost & Found* popped into my head, mostly to appease the readers who had asked for a sequel to *The Pregnant Pause*. I thought it would be fun to take some characters from my first two books into my third one, creating a series of sorts. I wasn't sure I could do it, though. It will be up to readers to decide if I've pulled it off.

**[EDIT]:** What do you love most about being a novelist in Nova Scotia?

**JANE:** Easy answer! The close-knit, supportive community of published and emerging authors who are members of the Writers' Federation of Nova Scotia. They are my tribe, and I've met many of them both in person and virtually at events, through social media and in Zoom workshops. I've never been part of a writing group — I'm a lone wolf in that

respect — but I love connecting with writers in other ways. Also, the proximity to nature and the ocean continually replenishes my creative juices.

**[EDIT]:** What is next for you?

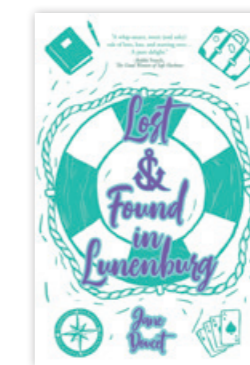
**JANE:** I'd like to take up soap-making or have a holiday in Crete, but I've started writing a fourth novel, a cozy mystery, that will feature a couple of characters from my previous novels. So until that's done, I have to put new pursuits on hold. My challenge is finding the time, energy and motivation to turn my attention to the manuscript on top of my freelance-journalism workload.

**[EDIT]:** What advice would you give to budding writers struggling to complete or indeed start their first book?

**JANE:** Bum in chair, fingers on keyboard — go! Just do it. Also, join a writers' group or society, which are wonderful resources. Don't have anything in your area? Start one yourself. There are plenty of online writing workshops available for every type of genre too.

**[EDIT]:** Sex and scandal were deftly and hilariously handled in *Fishnets*, and death is dealt with sensitively but also humorously in *Lost & Found*. How do you manage to handle controversial and sensitive subjects so delicately and heartwarmingly?

**JANE:** Gosh, beats me, but thanks for the compliment. It's true that my themes are serious: motherhood indecision (*The Pregnant Pause*), aging and sex (*Fishnets & Fantasies*), love and loss (*Lost & Found in Lunenburg*). Above all, I try to write a book I'd like to read myself, on topics that interest me in a way that will make me laugh. I strive to be respectful, and my talented Vagrant Press editor, Whitney Moran, raises the red flag if she feels I've ventured too far into the insensitivity zone. My goal is always to write a book I'll enjoy writing and reading, then hope it finds a like-minded audience.



*Lost & Found in Lunenburg* by Jane Doucet is published by Vagrant Press on October 3, 2023, at \$22.95. nimbus.ca



by Jennifer Wood  
**THE ESSENTIAL EDIT**

**Atlantic Balloon Fiesta**  
 Sussex, NB | September 7–10

Hot-air balloons of every shade take to the skies of Sussex and the surrounding area during the Atlantic Balloon Fiesta. Take a balloon ride, visit the car show or the craft fair and huge indoor market, or bring the kids to the amusement rides during Atlantic Canada's most colourful festival.  
[atlanticballoonfiesta.ca](http://atlanticballoonfiesta.ca)

**Harvest Music Festival**  
 Fredericton, NB | September 12–17

Get funky and dance the night away. This lively event features both internationally renowned musicians and up-and-coming artists in multiple venues all over the capital city. This year's incredible lineup features Daniel Lanois, Dianna Greenleaf, David Myles, Rory Block, Big Sugar and many more. There is something for every music lover at the Harvest Music Festival.  
[harvestmusicfest.ca](http://harvestmusicfest.ca)

**Prince Edward Island International Shellfish Festival**  
 Charlottetown, PEI | September 14–17

Set against the stunning backdrop of Prince Edward Island, known for its pristine waters and abundant shellfish, the festival brings together the freshest shellfish, top culinary talent, and East Coast entertainment featuring Fabulously Rich, Shanneyganock, Honey I'm Home and Signal Hill. A signature event as part of the PEI Fall Flavours Festival, the shellfish festival continues to put Prince Edward Island on the culinary map by showcasing Indigenous foods and PEI food experiences and by creating new opportunities to present the Island's shellfish and agricultural products.  
[peishellfish.com](http://peishellfish.com)

**St. John's International CircusFest**  
 St. John's, NL | September 21–24

The sixth annual St. John's International CircusFest (SJICF) features brand new innovative performances, interactive industry panels, inspiring keynote speakers and engaging professional workshops. SJICF partners with world-renowned artists and contemporary circus companies from Quebec and Europe to dazzle and entertain local audiences of all ages, while also connecting circus professionals.  
[stjohnscircusfest.com](http://stjohnscircusfest.com)

**Deep Roots Music Festival**  
 Wolfville, NS | September 22–24

Volunteers with Deep Roots Music Cooperative are looking forward to offering a weekend jam-packed with great music. The festival brings an eclectic blend of up-and-coming talent, alongside tried-and-true performers to their many stages. Be sure to catch David Myles Trio, David Celia and Zuffelo, Freya Milliken and Jenn Grant.  
[deeprootsmusic.ca](http://deeprootsmusic.ca)

**Maud Lewis Paint Night – Three Black Cats**  
 Yarmouth, NS | September 27

Everyone is an artist at the Art Gallery of Nova Scotia Western Branch's adult paint night. Join artist Tootsie Emin for a fun evening at the gallery, as she guides you through making a painting that is inspired by Maud Lewis's *Three Black Cats*, one you'll be proud to take home at the end of the evening. Drinks are available for purchase. All materials provided – everything you need to create a one-of-a-kind painting.  
[agns.ca](http://agns.ca)



**Jessica Rhaye and The Ramshackle Parade**  
 PEI, Nova Scotia and New Brunswick | September 28–October 21

Celebrate the release of Jessica Rhaye and The Ramshackle Parade's second album *Sunshine Baby*. Rhaye, a New Brunswick-based singer-songwriter, expands her reach as a lyricist and vocalist with a set of alternately personal and observational songs that are intimate and cinematic in scope. The result is a beautiful and powerful album, one that telegraphs the joy and depth of connection that these musicians have found in working together. The evening will also feature cuts from their critically acclaimed 2019 album *Just Like a Woman – Songs of Bob Dylan*, which has generated millions of views on YouTube and praise from fans worldwide. Imagine the band performing live true to the recording style of Dylan's earlier music in the days of *The Basement Tapes*.  
[jessicarhaye.com](http://jessicarhaye.com)

**The Doobie Brothers**  
 Halifax and Moncton | October 13 and 14

Selling nearly 50 million albums worldwide, The Doobie Brothers have had five top-10 singles, 16 top-40 hits, three multi-platinum albums, seven platinum albums, 14 gold albums and a rare diamond record for *Best of the Doobies* (1976). Their collection of timeless hits are once again played by the artists who wrote them, providing fans the rare opportunity to see these rock-and-roll legends performing their full catalogue of songs on stage.  
[scotiabank-centre.com](http://scotiabank-centre.com) | [avenircentre.com](http://avenircentre.com)

**Celtic Colours International Festival**  
 Cape Breton, NS | October 6–14

The 27th Celtic Colours presents 49 concerts, including 12 matinees, in 35 communities around Cape Breton Island. This annual celebration of Cape Breton's culture and traditions through music, song and dance takes place in long-standing Celtic Colours venues like the historic Savoy Theatre in Glace Bay, the iconic Fortress of Louisbourg National Historic Site and the state-of-the-art Strathspey Performing Arts Centre in Mabou, as well as in some of the Island's most beautiful churches and an array of schools and community, parish and fire halls. Can't attend? No problem. Select concerts are livestreamed for those who are unable to attend in person.  
[celtic-colours.com](http://celtic-colours.com)

**Paranormal Symposium**  
 Halifax, NS | October 7

The theme of the inaugural Halifax Paranormal Symposium, held at the Halifax Tower Hotel & Conference Centre, is "real case files/studies/experiences." This interdisciplinary event showcases field-investigation case studies or personal experiences on topics like parapsychology, mind-matter interaction, survival of consciousness after death, hauntings, ghosts, poltergeists, unidentified flying objects and religious parapsychology. Guest speakers include Kim Moser from Eastlink's *Haunted*; Dr. Richard Gallagher, MD; cryptozoologist Loren Coleman (Bigfoot and other undiscovered creatures); and Nova Scotia's UFO investigator, Chris Styles.  
[pripri.net/halifax-paranormal-symposium](http://pripri.net/halifax-paranormal-symposium)

**Nova Scotia Music Week**  
 Yarmouth, NS | November 2–5

Now in its 26th year, Nova Scotia Music Week and Music Nova Scotia bring together artists, fans and music industry professionals from across Nova Scotia and around the globe to experience the best talent the province has to offer! This year's roster includes Electric Spoonful, Cassie and Maggie, Shay Pitts and Slice.  
[nsmw.ca](http://nsmw.ca)

**Colin James**  
 Charlottetown, PEI | October 3

Get ready for an unforgettable night at Confederation Centre of the Arts as the stage welcomes renowned Canadian blues artist Colin James. This multi-platinum-selling artist has blazed trails in the music industry for over three decades, cementing his name in the annals of blues history with his soulful tunes and mesmerizing guitar skills. Mark your calendar for a night filled with mesmerizing blues rhythms and soulful storytelling. Come and witness this living legend in action because when he takes the stage, it's not just a concert, it's an experience.  
[confederationcentre.com](http://confederationcentre.com)

**Fogo Island Arts Week**  
 Joe Batt's Arm, NL | October 4–14

The Fogo Island Arts Week offers a densely rich program of stimulating events, highlighting local talent, and creating networking opportunities for artists, curators, patrons and members of the public to gather and celebrate the dynamic contemporary art practices and offerings on Fogo Island.  
[fogoislandarts.ca](http://fogoislandarts.ca)



**James Mullinger: 10 Years in Canada**  
 Nova Scotia and New Brunswick | September–October

Back by popular demand! [EDIT] co-founder James Mullinger's tour show at Halifax's beautiful Neptune Theatre sold out in record time, so an extra date has been added and tickets are on sale now. It's the award-winning British (and now Canadian) comedian's 10th year living in Canada. After publishing his bestselling memoir, *Brit Happens: Living The Canadian Dream*; appearing on CBC's *The Debaters* multiple times; and creating and starring in New Brunswick's first-ever sitcom, *Brit Out Of Water*, he is back on the road with a full-length stand-up show sharing what he has learned about this special place over the past decade. Irreverent, honest, unpredictable but always hilarious. Be prepared to laugh and to feel inspired and uplifted.  
[neptunetheatre.ca](http://neptunetheatre.ca) | [jamesmullinger.com](http://jamesmullinger.com)

**Jeremy Dutcher – The Motewolonuwok ᓄᓐᓄᓐᓄᓐᓄᓐᓄᓐ Tour**  
 Charlottetown, PEI | November 15

Five years after rising to international acclaim with his seminal award-winning album *Wolastoqiyik Lintuwakonawa*, Jeremy Dutcher returns to the stage with a new band and pivotal new music. On the *Motewolonuwok* tour, Dutcher invites audiences to be transformed by music that is more personal and intimate than ever, all the while pushing the boundaries of his unique sonic landscape.  
[confederationcentre.com](http://confederationcentre.com)



**Weljesi**  
 St. John's, NL | Until January 2, 2024

*Weljesi* marks the first major survey of Jerry Evans' iconic prints, paintings, projections and video portraiture. One of Newfoundland and Labrador's most significant and beloved visual artists, Evans has been dedicated to the preservation, reclamation and continued growth of Indigenous communities across this province for more than 30 years. His deep respect for his heritage and community and his constantly evolving, engaging contemporary practice are fundamental to the art history of Newfoundland and Labrador and the rest of Canada. Questioning the very format of the traditional retrospective, this exhibition is rooted in Indigenous concepts of cyclical time, storytelling and beauty. It reveals how Evans' works are in constant movement as they align with his expanding Indigenous worldviews and act as a focal point for life and community.  
[therooms.ca](http://therooms.ca)

**Rothesay Yule**  
 Rothesay, NB | November 12

[EDIT]'s European Christmas market is back! Taking place at the top of the hill at Rothesay Netherwood School, it's the family Christmas event of the season. In support of the Saint John Regional Hospital Foundation, tickets are on sale now.  
[rothesayyule.com](http://rothesayyule.com)



**ROTHESAY YULE**  
 CHRISTMAS MARKET



# SERGE FORWARD

by Alexander Hackett

Take an ex-ambulance driver and paramedic, give him a successful career as a rock-and-roll wild man, add a deep streak of social activism, a background in humanitarian work, and training as a carpenter, and you get a true original.

Serge Brideau is the kind of old-school Renaissance man and hyphenate who could only have sprung from a unique and tightly-knit place: in his case, Tracadie-Sheila on the Acadian Peninsula of New Brunswick.

As a founding member of the French-language prog-psych-funk outfit, Les Hôtesses d'Hilaire, Brideau has toured hard with his merry band of misfits since 2011, releasing four full-length albums, one EP (extended play) and two live albums along the way. Oh, and there's an 18-person theatrical rock opera in there too. Slackers, they are not.

Their latest album, *Pas l'temps d'naïser*, released in May 2022, offers up an intoxicating stew of sleazy grooves, dirty synths, chunky 1970s guitar riffs and playful madness, all sung in Acadian French. Kaleidoscopic in its breadth, it's a multi-headed beast. Early Funkadelic albums come to mind, if they have been put in a genre-blender with generous helpings of Frank Zappa, King Crimson prog and Beck-style sound pastiche.

Brideau's onstage persona mixes humour, creativity and fearlessness with social critique. Often dressed like a cross between an Acadian cult leader and a cosmic wizard, he's never been the kind of person to dilute his artistry or his views. There is a refreshing purity here. And self-deprecation comes with the territory. As he told a CBC reporter after Les Hôtesses picked up two East Coast Music Awards in 2017, "A three-hundred-fifty-pound man with a beard wearing a dress always puts a smile on your face."

"We've been very lucky to do what we love the way we love doing it, and just having people show up to see us play," he tells me, tired and pensive after a hard day's carpentry work — a trade he recently returned to after COVID-19 brought touring to a halt across the country. "We've played about eight hun-

dred shows so far, toured Europe, Australia, Louisiana, all over Canada up to the Yukon. I've lived out my teenage dream, and the ride lasted all the way up until COVID, pretty much."

Brideau and Les Hôtesses d'Hilaire first came to prominence as part of a new wave of Acadian musicians and bands who started getting noticed in the late aughts and incorporated a wide variety of influences into their sounds. When I ask him about the recent explosion of creativity in Acadian music which has seen the likes of Lisa Leblanc, chiac hip-hop mutants Radio Radio, Les Hay Babies and P'tit Belliveau rack up success in Canada, France and beyond, the talk turns to notions of cultural hybridity and history.

At a time when many fear for the future resilience of Acadian culture, can this repurposing of hip-hop, funk, punk and other influences be considered a survival tactic for a new generation?

"That modern Acadian sound, for me, comes from being a francophone in North America," he says. "It's special growing up here, in these little pockets where no one speaks English. There's something resilient there, but the different influences reflect us being on the American continent. We're a small community of colonizers who got colonized, and I think it's poetic to represent your culture and fight for your language."

And the humour?

"As Acadians we don't take ourselves too seriously. It's in our DNA. Our history in New Brunswick hasn't been easy. And maybe because of that history we try to see the funny side of things. There's something almost a bit Irish about that... You look at society and you think, "We're intelligent beings who don't always act very intelligently, and it's absurd."

Which is not to say he doesn't worry about the future. As a member of the Société de l'Acadie du Nouveau-Brunswick, Brideau has been involved in fighting for Acadian representation in New Brunswick, and he feels a profound duty to protect his heritage.

"In the sixties and seventies, it was a real fight; there was an

effervescence. We had an Acadian premier, (Louis) Robichaud, and he made New Brunswick an officially bilingual province with the Official Languages Act in 1969. And now it's like some people forgot. A right can become a privilege if you don't hang on to it, you know?"

Many New Brunswickers may first have heard of Serge Brideau through his activism and outspoken political opinions. Brideau and Les Hôtesses have been involved in the anti-shale-gas movement since 2014, donating one dollar of every CD they sold (when people still bought CDs, he laughs) to the cause. Brideau again made headlines in 2019 during a National Acadian Day concert when he criticized Premier Blaine Higgs, who was in attendance, for his positions on bilingualism and the environment.

"I'm an environmentalist at heart," he explains. "And I've always had strong opinions. I have a little bit of spotlight because I'm a singer, so I've used that. You know, a few families and companies run this province, and the laws and procedures favour them, to the detriment of the public good. A lot of things need to be addressed in the public space."

Unlike a lot of people with strong opinions, though, Brideau walks the walk. At age 25, he worked for the Gambia Red Cross Society in West Africa, and during the pandemic he

volunteered at a nursing home for the elderly. Last spring, Brideau made the jump into politics and ran for the Green Party during a by-election in Bathurst East-Nepisiguit-Saint Isidore. He came in second to the Liberal Party's Susan Holt, having tripled the Green Party's vote in the riding. He is considering running again in 2024.

"My whole thing with going into politics is I was born a good communicator, and I try to use that for the greater good. You gotta try, right? If I can't do it as a politician, then I'll do it as a carpenter, building houses for people who don't have access to affordable housing, something like that... I've been very fortunate in life."

Now based in Edmundston, the recently engaged Brideau plans to focus on carpentry for the foreseeable future. He admits that he's been enjoying the more conventional domestic life after a crazy decade.

"I'm just really happy right now, man. I've had my ups and downs in life, so I don't take anything for granted. I have wonderful friends and a wonderful life partner. Happiness is a state of mind, y'know?"

[leshotessesdhilaire.com](https://www.facebook.com/leshotessesdhilaire.com)

Facebook and Instagram: @leshotessesdhilaire

Photograph: Marc-André Belliveau

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# Farmhouse Vegetables

Cooking from the ground up  
with Chef Michael Smith

Photographs by Al Douglas



Chef Michael Smith in Souris, PE

## POTATO GNOCCHI, NUTMEG SPINACH SAUCE, AND ORACH SALAD

Serves 4 as a vegetable main or 6 as a side

### NUTMEG SPINACH SAUCE

2 tablespoons (30 mL) butter  
1 yellow onion, diced  
4 garlic cloves, finely grated with a microplane or finely minced  
½ teaspoon (2 mL) ground nutmeg  
½ teaspoon (2 mL) sea salt  
Freshly ground pepper  
½ cup (125 mL) water  
10 ounces (280 g) baby spinach

### POTATO GNOCCHI

4 large russet or Yukon Gold potatoes (about 2 pounds/ 900 g), peeled and quartered  
2 cups (500 mL) all-purpose flour, divided  
2 eggs, whisked  
1 teaspoon (5 mL) sea salt  
Freshly ground pepper  
4 tablespoons (60 mL) butter

### SALAD TANGLE

A handful of fresh orach leaves or baby spinach (2 ounces/57 g or so)  
A handful of orach sprouts or other savoury, snappy fresh microgreens (broccoli, kale, radish, turnip, or cress)

A new cookbook from Chef Michael Smith is always a cause for culinary celebration, and *Farmhouse Vegetables* published by Penguin Random House on September 26 is no exception. Exclusively for [EDIT], Chef Michael has selected three of his favourites from this stunning collection of mouth-watering recipes, compelling essays, and sumptuous food and landscape photography by [EDIT] fave Al Douglas that celebrates his journey farming and cooking his own organic vegetables. Whether leaning into eating more vegetables or looking to add more diversity into your protein-heavy diet, you'll find unique, flavour-packed recipes where vegetables are always the headliner.

**Gnocchi** are easily made deliciously chewy dumplings that are part mashed potato, part pasta. They're particularly tasty simply browned and crisped in butter. Tender spinach is puréed into a bright green sauce scented with fragrant nutmeg. Orach is an ancient vegetable with a savoury mineral flavour like spinach and chard. Its microgreens and tender leaves pair beautifully with earthy potatoes.

#### Make the Nutmeg Spinach Sauce

Melt the butter in a medium saucepan over medium heat. Stir in the onion, cover, and cook, stirring frequently, until soft and fragrant but not browning, 10 minutes or so. Stir in the garlic, nutmeg, salt, and pepper and continue cooking for a minute. Add the water and spinach and cook, stirring constantly, just until bright green and wilted, only a minute or two. Transfer to a high-speed blender and carefully purée until smooth. (Hot liquids are dangerous—they can violently erupt. For safety, drape a kitchen towel over the blender, start slowly, then gradually increase the speed.)

Return the sauce to the pot and reserve at room temperature. Bring to a simmer just before serving.

#### Make the Potato Gnocchi

Place the potatoes in a large pot and cover with salted water. Bring to a boil over medium-high heat and cook until tender, 15 minutes or so. Drain the potatoes, rinse the pot, fill with hot water, and return to a simmer. Pass the potatoes through a ricer or food mill fitted with its finest disc into a large bowl and let cool until no longer steaming, 15 minutes or so. Sprinkle in 1 1/2 cups

CONTINUED ON PAGE 24 >

(375 mL) of the flour. Add the eggs, salt, and pepper. With a sturdy wooden spoon, vigorously stir the mixture into a rough dough.

Measure the remaining 1/2 cup (125 mL) flour onto a work surface. Lightly flour your hands, reserving some flour to the side. Turn out the dough and lightly sprinkle with some of the reserved flour. Knead for a minute until a smooth dough emerges. Divide the dough into 4 equal pieces. Dust 1 piece of dough with flour and roll into a long, even rope about 1 inch (2.5 cm) thick. Repeat with the remaining 3 pieces. Cut each rope into 1-inch (2.5 cm) pieces. You should have 32 or so gnocchi.

Bring the simmering water to a boil over medium-high heat. Working quickly, immediately transfer the gnocchi to the boiling water. Cook, stirring gently, until all the gnocchi are floating and cooked through, 3 to 4 minutes. Remove from the heat.

Melt the butter in a large non-stick skillet over medium-high heat. With a skimmer or slotted spoon, lift the cooked gnocchi

from the water, draining thoroughly, and transfer to the melted butter. Without stirring, patiently cook the gnocchi until just one side is thoroughly browned and crispy.

Serve on a pool of warm spinach sauce with a tangle of fresh orach leaves and orach sprouts.



We grow many things well on our farm, but sweet potatoes are not one of them—our growing season is too short. So instead, we rely on farmers in much warmer climates to do it for us. Nonetheless they are a nutritional powerhouse, and one of my favourite vegetables. Baking is my preferred way to cook them. We do grow lots of fragrant cilantro, and through life-cycle harvesting we enjoy its aromatic leaves, green coriander seeds, and lacy white flowers. The pesto brings together lots of citrusy cilantro leaves and bright balancing flavours in a tasty condiment ready to complete a deliciously baked sweet potato.

## MAPLE-SPICED SWEET POTATO CILANTRO CASHEW PESTO

Serves 4 as a vegetable main or 8 as a side

### CILANTRO CASHEW PESTO

1 large bunch of fresh cilantro leaves and tender stems, any flowers and a few tender stems reserved for garnish  
1 cup (250 mL) unsalted roasted cashews  
4 garlic cloves, sliced  
1/2 cup (125 mL) extra-virgin canola or olive oil  
Zest and juice of 1 lemon  
4 ounces (115 g) Parmigiano-Reggiano cheese, grated  
1/2 teaspoon (2 mL) sea salt

### MAPLE-SPICED SWEET POTATO

2 large sweet potatoes, unpeeled, sliced in half lengthwise (cut each potato into 4 wedges for smaller side portions)  
1 tablespoon (15 mL) vegetable oil, olive oil, or reserved animal fat  
Sea salt  
Freshly ground pepper  
1/4 cup (60 mL) pure maple syrup  
1 tablespoon (15 mL) fennel seeds  
1 tablespoon (15 mL) green coriander seeds

### Make the Cilantro Cashew Pesto

Measure the cilantro, cashews, garlic, canola oil, lemon zest and juice, cheese, and salt into a food processor. Purée until a smooth, bright paste emerges, scraping down the sides a few times along the way. Reserve or transfer to a resealable container and refrigerate for up to 5 days.

### Make the Maple-Spiced Sweet Potato

Preheat the oven to 350 F (180 C). Turn on the convection fan if you have one. Line a baking sheet with a silicone baking mat or parchment paper.

Use the point of a small sharp knife to lightly score the surface of the sweet potatoes in a diamond pattern, making cuts 1/2 inch (1 cm) deep at 1/2-inch (1 cm) intervals. (For smaller side portions, no need to score the wedges.) Arrange the sweet potatoes cut side up on the prepared baking sheet and lightly oil the tops. Season with salt and pepper. Bake for 45 minutes. Carefully brush the potatoes with maple syrup and evenly sprinkle with the fennel seeds and coriander seeds. Continue baking until glazed and tender, 15 minutes or so more. Serve with a generous dollop of cilantro cashew pesto on top. Garnish with cilantro flowers, if any, and a few tender stems.





## BUTTERNUT SQUASH PIE PUMPKIN SEED CRUST, BOURBON CREAM

Makes one 9 or 10-inch pie, enough for 8 generous slices

### PUMPKIN SEED CRUST

2 ½ cups (625 mL) raw pumpkin seeds  
½ cup (125 mL) white sugar  
½ cup (125 mL) butter, melted  
Pinch of sea salt

### BUTTERNUT SQUASH FILLING

1 large butternut squash, peeled, halved lengthwise, and seeds removed  
2 tablespoons (30 mL) butter, melted  
1 ½ cups (375 mL) heavy (35%) cream  
½ cup (125 mL) firmly packed brown sugar  
2 eggs  
2 teaspoons (10 mL) cinnamon  
1 teaspoon (5 mL) ground ginger  
½ teaspoon (2 mL) ground nutmeg  
¼ teaspoon (1 mL) ground allspice  
¼ teaspoon (1 mL) ground cloves

### BOURBON CREAM

2 cups (500 mL) heavy (35%) cream  
2 tablespoons (30 mL) white sugar  
2 tablespoons (30 mL) of your favourite bourbon or other spirit  
½ teaspoon (2 mL) pure vanilla extract  
3 or 4 squash blossoms, thinly sliced, for garnish

You can easily make a pumpkin pie with a butternut squash instead of a pumpkin because it's all about the spice blend anyway. That is, unless you roast the squash first to concentrate the flavours before gently baking the squash purée in a delicious spiced custard. As homage, ground pumpkin seeds are bound with sugar and butter into a crispy, crunchy crust. Bourbon elevates simple whipped cream to harmonize with the fragrant pumpkin spices.

#### Make the Pumpkin Seed Crust

Measure the pumpkin seeds, white sugar, butter, and salt into a food processor. Grind into coarse crumbs, forming an even dough. Transfer the mixture to a 9 or 10-inch (23 or 25 cm) non-stick pie plate and evenly press across the bottom and up the sides. Top with a similar pie plate and press firmly to form an even pie crust. Perforate the crust with a fork 8 times in an even pattern. (The holes keep it from bubbling and shrinking.) Bake until lightly browned and fragrant, 20 minutes or so. Remove from the oven and reserve until needed. Keep the oven on. Wipe out the food processor.


#### Make the Butternut Squash Filling and Bake

Place the butternut squash halves cut side up on a baking sheet. Brush with melted butter and bake until soft and lightly browned, 1 hour or so. Remove from the oven and rest until cool.

Transfer the baked squash to a food processor and purée until smooth, scraping down the sides once or twice. Add the cream, brown sugar, eggs, cinnamon, ginger, nutmeg, allspice, and cloves. Process until smooth, scraping down the sides once or twice.

Transfer the purée to the pie crust, smoothing the surface evenly. Bake until the filling is firm, 45 minutes or so. Remove from the oven and rest until completely cool.

#### Make the Bourbon Cream

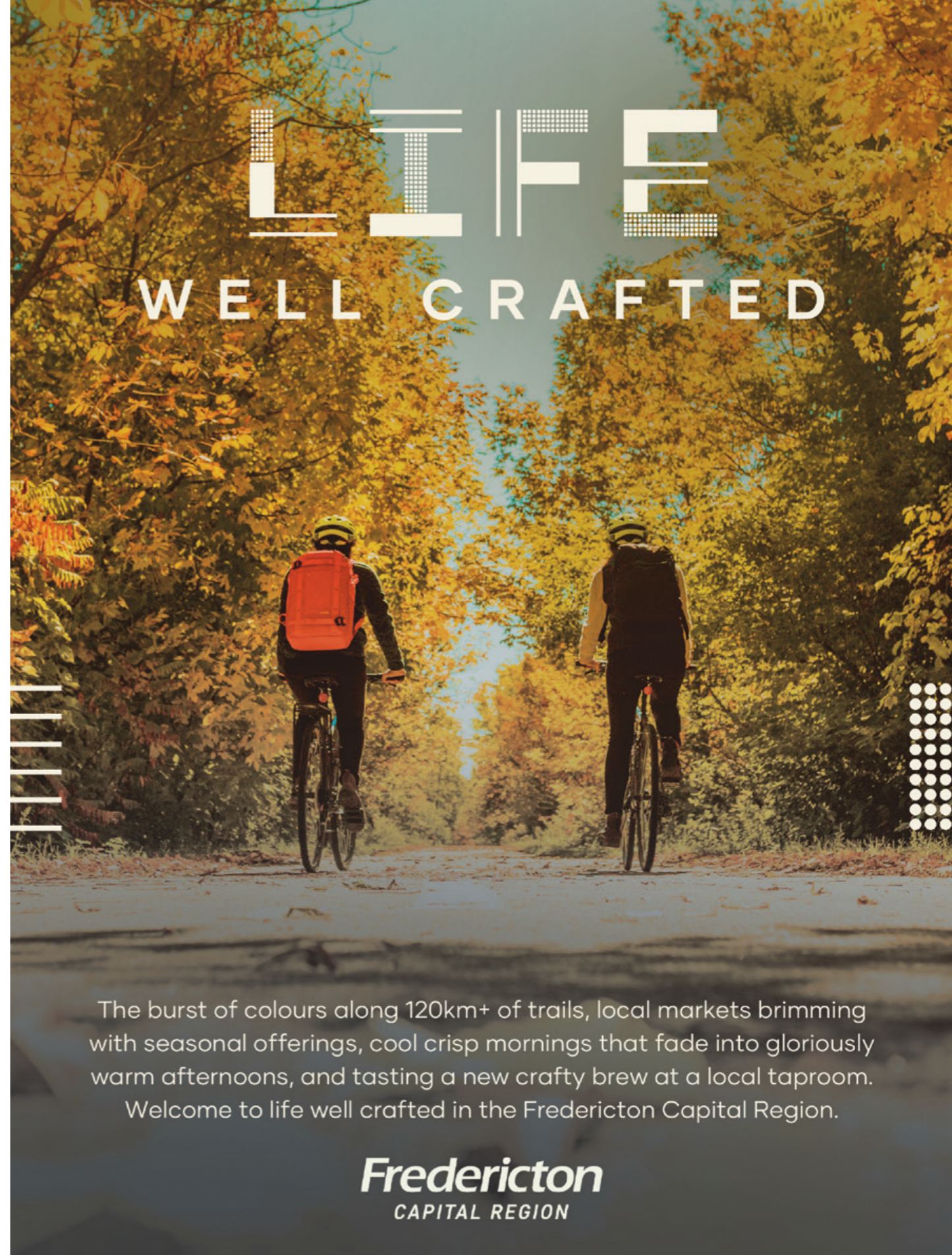
Combine the cream, sugar, bourbon, and vanilla and whip until thick. Slice the cooled pie and serve with generous dollops of whipped bourbon cream and a scattering of thinly sliced squash blossoms. 



*Farmhouse Vegetables* by Michael Smith is published by Penguin Random House on September 26

[penguinrandomhouse.ca](http://penguinrandomhouse.ca)

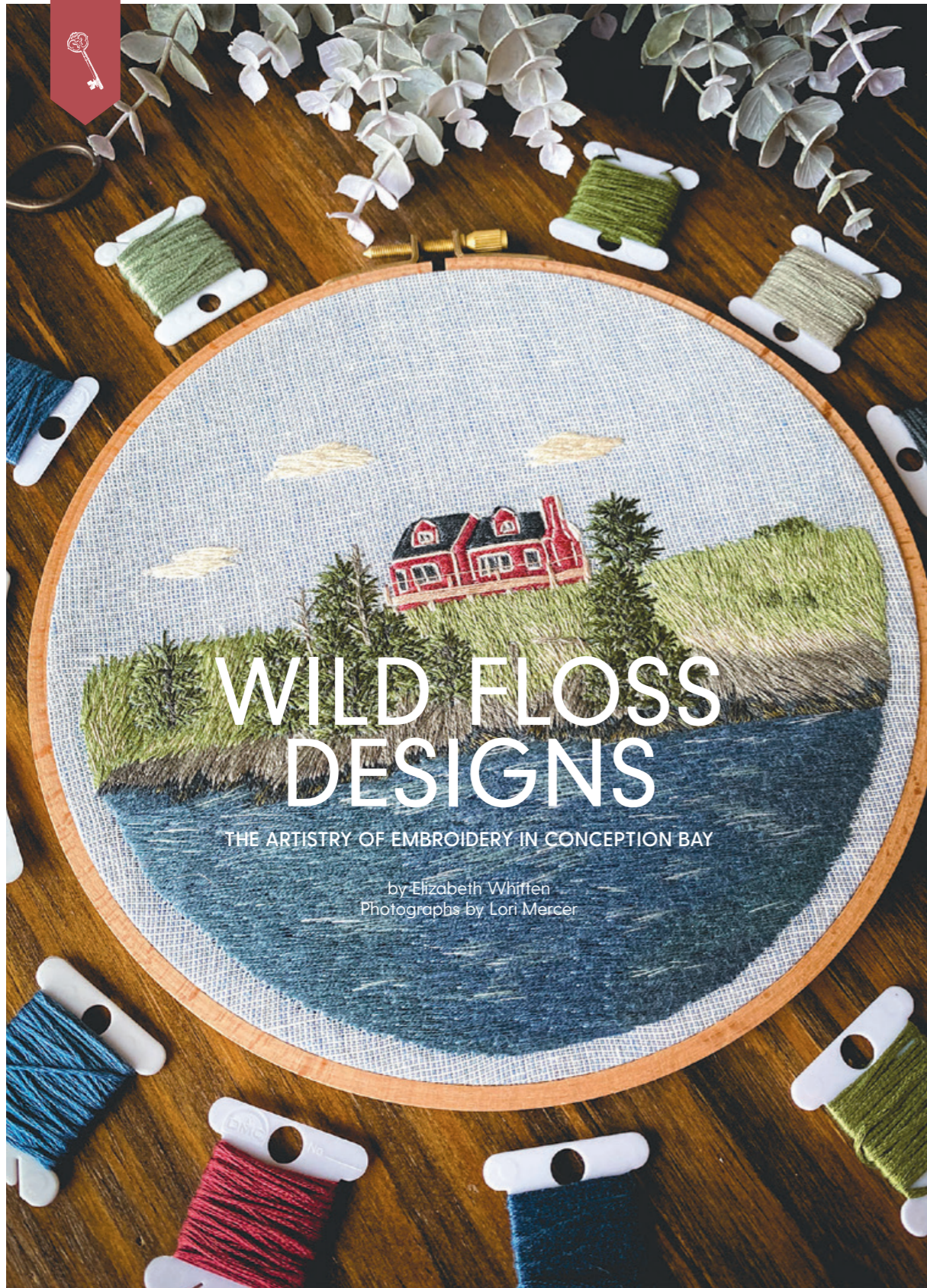
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When it came to a hobby that would hold her attention, Lori Mercer found embroidery almost by accident two years ago. Now, under the name Wild Floss Designs she sells her creations from her home in Conception Bay South, Newfoundland and Labrador. Drawing on the natural world for inspiration, she stitches pieces of artwork that feature landscapes, marine life and florals in abundance.

So far, her favourite piece has been a turquoise-beaded jellyfish set against a deep blue background that incorporates wires. It looks as if the jellyfish has been caught mid-stroke in the water, with tentacles almost coming off the backing, which gives the piece a three-dimensional effect.

Another figure she depicts regularly is the lupin, a flower that is plentiful in the summer months. She makes them by repeatedly stitching rows of string until a shape emerges. Floss — or thread — in colours like pink, purple and blue create the individual petals, with green for the stems.

“I take a little sketchbook everywhere ’cause my plan is to get more into landscape design. So if I’m out around on a hike or whatever, I’ll just take my book and sketch. One day, I pulled over on the side of the road and just drew a place,” Mercer tells [EDIT]. From there, she scans the sketch and traces the pattern onto the fabric, which is framed by a hoop. The next step is to pick out the thread colours to see what works together. “Then it’s just stitching away at it. I usually change things as I’m going, based on how it looks. It’s the same thing with painting. Certain stitches might look better in certain areas. But that’s the process,” she says.

The time Mercer puts into designing her pieces and then embroidering them has clearly paid off. Scrolling through her Instagram account, viewers can see a gallery of how she’s developed her craft in a short amount of time from very simple patterns to intricate three-dimensional images that employ beads and stumpwork (in which stitched figures are raised off from the surface to create a 3D effect). She says, “It’s really what you put into it. The more you practise the better you get at it.”

“You don’t need much to get started with embroidery,” she explains. “You only need a hoop, fabric, your floss, a needle and a pair of scissors. So that’s the nice part: you can literally throw it in a bag and take it wherever.” Embroidery’s versatility is also a draw, she says, adding that a variety of materials, like beads, can be incorporated: “You can really do anything. And really, just the fact





**FOR MERCER, EMBROIDERY IS BOTH THERAPEUTIC AND REPETITIVE: “I CAN CREATE A HOOP AND SIT DOWN AND DO IT IN A COUPLE OF HOURS. SO BEING ABLE TO SEE IT GO FROM START TO FINISH. IT’S ALMOST LIKE INSTANT GRATIFICATION.”**

that it’s an inexpensive craft, and you can pick it up and take it wherever you go.”

Mercer even takes her embroidery bag with her in the car: “I take it everywhere. I’m sure there’s a lady in the CBS (Conception Bay South) Tim Hortons who laughs every morning because my husband is driving to work and I’m stitching in the passenger seat!” she laughs.

A self-described “hobby hopper,” Mercer says she had tried all sorts of crafts before finally coming across embroidering. “My brain goes a mile a minute, so I was looking for something to help me focus and relax.” Unlike the other crafts she had tried her hand at, embroidery stuck.

The year 2021 was a busy time in her life. She was renovating her house, and she was also in school full-time and had a young daughter. She says she needed something to relax with that wouldn’t break the bank. “I went to (a craft store), picked up a hoop, and it must have been at the house forever before I finally decided to sit down one day and pick it up. And my brain went completely silent. It was a good fit. And it kind of exploded from there. I’ve stitched every single day.”

Her first piece was a square rainbow, which she calls “horrible,” adding that at the time she had no idea how to draw a pattern. “If anyone looked at it now, they’d be like ‘Huh?’” Despite that, she still has the piece tucked away somewhere in her home.

For Mercer, embroidery is both therapeutic and repetitive, “I can create a hoop and sit down and do it in a couple of hours. So being able to see it go from start to finish. It’s almost like instant gratification. That’s something that (has) worked for me really well.”

Mercer is self-taught, watching online videos and then figuring out what worked through trial and error. She’s also drawing inspiration from painting and how paint is layered on a canvas, which she now incorporates into stitching. There’s always room to grow in embroidery, she says. When she first started crafting, she loved using the simple satin stitch — “you stitch one stitch side by side” — and she thought she’d use that basic technique forever. “I’m laughing now because, yeah, I’m incorporating beads and stumpwork and that sort of thing. So it’s funny to look back. That’s the part I enjoy about it, that there’s constantly room to grow, and there’s always something new that you can do with it, which is a nice part.” For instance, she’s been able to use different coloured beads as blueberries, cloudberry and raspberries.

The Wild Floss Designs Instagram account, which at last count had almost two thousand followers, was started to share her cre-

ations and to connect with fellow crafters, who responded with enthusiasm at her progress, she says. Some even reached out, inquiring about purchasing pieces. A friend asked if she would think about selling her artwork. “And I said, ‘No, I think I just want to do it for me.’ At the time I was gifting most of my pieces to friends and family or anybody who wanted them.” At that time, Mercer says, she wasn’t ready to make the leap to monetizing her hobby, “but I just decided to roll with it and here we are.”

Her hobby turned into a business in January of 2022. Then, the owner of A Little Cup of Sea, a beach-hut rental in Colliers, contacted her about getting a piece and then shared it on social media, which signalled a turning point for Mercer. “Everything went crazy after that. I think it went from two orders to having a wait-list up until June or July of that year. So it kind of blew up overnight so I thought hey I might as well try and go with it and see what happens. And that’s been my stance on it all along,” she recalls.

Besides the artwork and necklaces that she’s inspired to make and sell online, she also takes commissions, and wait times for these are now measured in months. That includes a design consultation with the client about what they want, which may include a photo she can use as a reference. She’s stitched happy scenes, like a family gathering in front of a home and a triumphant fisherman holding up his catch. “Everything is more of a photo recreation. People want the places that are their happy places. Or their parents’ cabin and that sort of thing. So it’s more attached to their good feelings. And pets! But I haven’t moved into that because it’s a whole other level of stitching, I think,” says Mercer. These days she can work 40 hours on a piece, which amounts to a full-time job.

The complexity of these requested pieces has also steadily increased, she’s noticed. So far, she also hasn’t gotten into detailed facial features for people, but that could be something she’d tackle down the road.

These days, it’s the commissioned pieces that take up the most time. Mercer is considering slowing down that side of Wild Floss Designs so she can make more pieces to sell. “I’d like to open a bit of an online shop because people keep asking if there’s any ready-made hoops, but so far everything’s just been made custom.” She has plans to grow Wild Floss Designs, taking wholesale orders, creating embroidery kits, and hosting workshops to teach others the craft.

Despite turning her hobby into a bustling side business, she says that the craft still relaxes her and is her go-to happy place. “I love it,” she laughs. “My poor family, I think they’re so sick of hearing about it, but they’re so supportive. ‘Cause everyday there’s something new I want to try. So I still love it. And it’s nice to be able to create pieces that people get, and people write to me and say, ‘Oh my, I gave this hoop of the cabin to my dad, and he cried.’ It’s nice to be able to do that for other people.”



So far, Wild Floss Designs hasn’t turned into a chore — “Knock on wood!” It is still something that Mercer is passionate about pursuing: “I enjoy it too much to think of it as work.” 

Facebook: *Wild Floss Designs*  
Instagram: @wildflossdesigns





# Saving Lives through Empowerment

Candace Carnahan, Safety Motivational Speaker and Culture Change Agent

by Jennifer Wood | Photograph by James Ingram

**In a world where hasty decisions and workplace incidents can have life-altering consequences, motivational speaker Candace Carnahan emerges as a beacon of hope and resilience. At the age of 21, the (then) university student experienced a traumatic workplace incident that cost her a leg and nearly claimed her life. However, instead of submitting to defeat, she transformed the experience into a powerful, necessary and timely voice for change.**

Today Carnahan is a renowned motivational speaker, empowerment advocate and culture-change agent who captivates audiences with her thought-provoking, emotional and humorous storytelling. With pizzazz and confidence, she addresses both small and multinational corporations and serves as a keynote speaker at conferences and symposiums. To date, her impactful

message (which can be livestreamed or delivered in person or on demand) has reached nearly one million people, and esteemed companies like Amazon, Exxon Mobil, Procter & Gamble, Alabama Power and Irving Oil have sought her guidance. Adding to her impressive lineup of engagements, Carnahan was chosen as the keynote speaker at the 23rd World Congress on Safety and Health at Work in Sydney, Australia, being held November 27–30. Nearly 20 years into her international career, she continues to enhance her message and widen her audience. Her latest venture, Step Up Your Safety for Youth, targets a different demographic — young adults on the cusp of entering the workforce.

When Carnahan's incident happened in the final weeks of her summer employment at a pulp and paper mill in Miramichi, New Brunswick, in 1999, she quickly realized the profound effect it had on not only herself but also her family, colleagues and the surrounding community. By carefully examining the factors that contributed to the event, she was able to gain a deeper understanding of a workplace environment characterized by toler-





Candace gets speaking requests from around the world. In 2017 she keynoted the Safety in Action conference in Melbourne, and this year she returns to Australia to open the World Congress on Safety and Health at Work in Sydney.

ance of unsafe practices. Knowing first-hand that pointing fingers does not make limbs grow back, Candace acknowledges the role she played on that fateful day and uses her experience to encourage her audience to take a lead role in the decisions they make. “Safety training in any workplace can only be as effective as the rules and culture that (are) adhered to on the front line,” says Carnahan. “This idea reaches beyond the workplace — employing a ‘do as I say, not as I do’ is an entirely ineffective way of teaching.”

Those who attend her engagements can expect the opposite

Workplace and conference keynotes make up a large part of Candace's speaking work. Here she takes the stage at a workplace safety conference in Quebec.

of a ho-hum safety speech. Instead, they leave feeling empowered and motivated to protect and advocate for themselves and each other both on and off the job. Her mantra, “If you see something, say something!” strikes a chord with her audience as she reminds them to check in with their co-workers and to view safety as an opportunity, not just an obligation, an approach that works toward people returning home to their loved ones each day: “Candace’s message of safety, not only in workplace but in life, was both powerful and inspiring,” says Jenny Van Kleef of Healthshare NSW in Australia. “She has a wonderful way of engaging with her audience that empowers them to internalize her call to action, ‘See Something. Say Something!’ and truly make a difference. An hour with Candace can change an organization’s safety culture in a way that no safety campaign could ever do. It’s one of the best investments any organization can make.”

To widen the reach of her transformative message, Carnahan has developed Step Up Your Safety for Youth, which reaches high-school students at an age when they may be entering the workforce. Even if they have yet to experience their first job,

“

There are many reasons why young people don’t use their voices or trust their gut when it’s telling them to think twice,” explains Carnahan. “Fear of insulting someone who is older or sounding like they don’t know what they are doing are just (two) reasons. We need to educate and empower our youth to speak up when they have something to say.”

learning how to advocate for themselves, becoming more comfortable with hearing their own voice, and understanding that what they say matters are paramount in protecting their physical and psychological safety in any environment. Safety training and practices for lower-level jobs in a workplace may be lacking, and Carnahan demonstrates why and how youth can advocate for themselves in a new and unfamiliar place.

“There are many reasons why young people don’t use their voices or trust their gut when it’s telling them to think twice,” explains Carnahan. “Fear of insulting someone who is older or sounding like they don’t know what they are doing are just (two) reasons. We need to educate and empower our youth to speak up when they have something to say.”

Teens are notoriously soft-wired to make rash decisions without consideration of the consequences. Whether it be driving too fast, bullying or pressuring others (in person or through social media), texting while driving, driving under the influence, or



Candace leads her signature cheer during a high school presentation in New Brunswick: “If you see something, say something!”

engaging in other impulsive behaviours, Carnahan is there to remind youth that all of the tiny decisions they make each day have the potential to impact their lives in a big way, either positively or negatively, and the choice is theirs. And because these powerful messages and reminders are delivered by a neutral party with a story of life-changing consequences, her message isn’t lost on her younger audiences, as it could be when delivered by parents or teachers.

Carnahan is pleased that Step Up Your Safety for Youth will be distributed widely in Saskatchewan by Service Hospitality (a non-profit employer-funded safety association). Service Hospitality has worked with Carnahan from the beginning as a supporter and founding sponsor of the program. She has also partnered with the Ontario Teachers’ Federation and is planning to pilot the program with interested teachers in Ontario. And in New Brunswick, she has been in discussions with WorkSafe NB and the Department of Education, seeking to offer the program to all students in the province. While concrete details are still in development, she remains optimistic that Step Up Your Safety for Youth will roll out in schools throughout the country in the coming months.

Whether attendees take in one of Carnahan’s speaking engagements as an employer, an employee or a young student, her message of resilience and empowerment resonates in a unique way. No one can tell a story quite like Candace Carnahan does: she has audience members in tears, in fits of laughter, and in deep contemplation about the decisions they make each day.

[candacecarnahan.com](http://candacecarnahan.com)

Facebook: [@candacecarnahanmotivationalspeaking](https://www.facebook.com/candacecarnahanmotivationalspeaking)

Instagram: [@sharingstorieschanginglives](https://www.instagram.com/sharingstorieschanginglives)



# SOPHIA RECOVERY CENTRE

## CREATING NEW CHAPTERS

BY JUDY WITYSZYN

In the living room at Sophia Recovery Centre in Saint John, New Brunswick, a young woman named Crystal settles back into the large navy-blue sectional sofa and sips a steaming coffee as she shares her memory of the first time she visited the centre. “From the moment I stepped through the door, I felt welcome and accepted. Over the next several months, I met with Angela for peer support and Margot for counselling, and felt an instant connection with both of them. With their guidance, I have been able to be honest with myself and make positive changes in my life. The whole Sophia community has given me such an amazing sense of belonging.”

Sophia Recovery Centre is a non-residential community centre providing continuing-care programs for women who are seeking to take their lives back from the wide-ranging impacts of addiction. The centre encompasses a well-rounded team of professionals and peer-support specialists who are available to support women. The main centre is located in uptown Saint John, with satellite sites in St. Stephen and Rothesay.

[EDIT]’s Judy Wityszyn spoke with Lynn Nagle, board president, and Julie Atkinson, executive director, to discuss the centre’s 15th anniversary and some exciting plans.

**[EDIT]: This is a special year for Sophia Recovery Centre. Can you share a bit about this?**

**JULIE ATKINSON:** The centre was originally started by Sisters Arleen Brawley and Mary Beth McCurdy (Sisters of Charity of Immaculate Conception) in 2008. The women were bold visionaries who saw a need for community-based support for women seeking recovery. They single-handedly rallied a donation to start the centre.

Sister Mary Beth tells a story about the day the centre opened on Hazen Street in Saint John. The first visitor to ring the doorbell was a woman carrying a contribution of a delicious loaf of banana bread. The doorbell has never

stopped ringing, and each new guest has found connection in a beautiful and expanding community of shared support and wisdom.

**LYNN NAGLE:** On our 15th anniversary, I think about all that we have to celebrate, anticipate and contemplate. We are celebrating our history and our founders. We are also celebrating our current staff, volunteers, board and committee members; our donors, funders and the community at large. We appreciate all that they have done and have given to make Sophia a key ingredient in women’s successful recovery. And... we’re also looking forward to a very significant move, one that will ensure Sophia can continue to provide recovery support for women for the next 15 years and beyond.

**[EDIT]: Sounds exciting. Can you expand on the move and some of the other important things needed to provide effective services and support for an ever-increasing challenge?**

**JULIE:** During the pandemic, we weren’t sure what the future held for Sophia — how could we possibly continue to help women recover while COVID-19 was exacerbating risk factors for substance-use disorder and disrupting our established strategies for delivering essential support? But, at the same time, the pandemic years also ushered in significant new awareness of risky and harmful substance use and other mental-health challenges in our community. This juxtaposition of challenge and opportunity triggered all kinds of new learning and change at Sophia. It renewed our commitment to supporting the women in Saint John and surrounding areas and our vision for support across New Brunswick.

Our strategic plan for 2021 to 2025 calls for growth through greater reach and inclusion. The vision we wrote to go with this plan speaks of all women discovering empowerment, community and support. But it is much easier to voice a call for inclusion than it is to realize it in practice. We have found that we can only make progress towards this vision by exploring new ideas and implementing change. Moving towards greater inclusion at Sophia has required stretching “everything, everywhere, all at once,” to quote the title of the Oscar-winning film. An evolving knowledge base about the complexity of addiction is helping us respond more sensitively to the diversity of women’s lived experiences.

**LYNN:** We also recognized that achieving greater reach would mean we would need to find more



[EDIT]’s Judy Wityszyn interviews executive director Julie Atkinson about the plans for the new centre

physical space to house our operations. We undertook an intensive search for the right property in Saint John and, after two years, we finally found one. We’re excited about delivering on our vision for compassionate, holistic care with the additional capacity.

**[EDIT]: Thank you for arranging for us to meet in your new space today. Tell me about your plans for this building.**

**LYNN:** We’re thrilled that, with the community’s support, we were able to complete the purchase of this property on Metcalf Street in Saint John’s north end. Previously, the building functioned as part retail storefront and part warehouse/factory. We’re planning to make use of every inch of its 3,600 square feet but, as you can see, it will need a complete renovation.

**JULIE:** Before we even found a building, we knew we wanted to adopt a collaborative approach to designing a new centre, drawing on the knowledge of our front-line staff and the lived experience of our clients. Once we had confirmation of



The upper floor includes ample space to accommodate the organization's burgeoning administrative work, board and staff meetings.

solutions based on only one perspective, they can be ineffective. By involving everyone, we can design a space that meets the needs of all who are involved in the process of giving and receiving recovery support.

**JULIE:** Some of the specific recommendations that came from our meetings with the All In team included the need to create a space that invokes feelings of homeliness, comfort and nurturing. That essential aspect of our centre was first established by our founders at the Hazen Street location, and we would never want it to change! We also identified a need to create a usable outdoor space and specified that the building should be accessible for people with disabilities and mobility limitations. The design includes small meeting rooms for counselling sessions and larger community spaces for group programs. It provides cozy nooks for reading and journaling, a welcoming kitchen for coffee and chats, and a spacious living room where women can connect and support each other. The entrance of the centre also emerged in our discussions with the All In team as a particularly critical element. Many of the women we support comment on the significance of those first few moments at the door. Understanding that privacy and a feeling of welcome are both paramount, we spent a lot of time designing an entrance area that would help women immediately feel that Sophia provides safety, compassion and an authentic sense of belonging.

**[EDIT]:** Can you tell us more about the team that will deliver the services you are envisioning in this wonderful new space?

**JULIE:** Our staff reflects a carefully planned balance of lived and learned experience. Women who have experienced the impact of addiction themselves are the foundation. Over the past few years, we have added team members from nursing, social-work and licensed-therapy backgrounds. We have augmented our peer staffing base with family-support and Indigenous programming specialists. These new program areas are allowing more women to find connection and community at Sophia. Holly, our social-and-wellness-program coordinator is looking forward to taking specialized horticultural-therapy training this year so that she'll be all set to make full use of our green space when we move into the new location.

**LYNN:** We also continue to benefit from the various talents and experience of the board of directors. Our board committees launched just one year ago, (and) each committee developed a substantive workplan and delivered on several key areas of focus. The new building will have meeting rooms to accommodate all of this important and ongoing work.



**[EDIT]:** With all of this work and growth, what would you say makes Sophia Recovery Centre unique from other support organizations?

**LYNN:** Sophia fills a critical gap in the continuum of care for women and their families. For women coming from a residential rehab or detox program, the need for continued support is essential. Sophia's approach empowers women to find their purpose and their voice through goal-focused pathways that lead to sustained recovery and wellness.

**JULIE:** The integration of peer support with counselling and evidence-based group programs offers a powerful combination that allows women with lived experience of addiction to offer support and guidance to help others with various stages of recovery. One of our guests recently wrote about her experience at Sophia and explained the importance of connection with others really nicely:

"When I first walked in the doors at Sophia in late December 2022, I had several years of sobriety from alcohol but little recovery. I was on a leave of absence from my job. I arrived with an extensive amount of trauma, grief and deep pain from my childhood and life in addiction. I felt so alone. Although I was alcohol-free, I was not getting to the core of my addiction issues or healing the trauma and pain that caused me to drink in the first place. I knew I would finally have to face everything to get well. The programs at the Sophia Recovery Centre were an amazing gift. I participated in group work, meditation and art classes as well as

one-on-one counselling. I have made several new bonds and friendships with so many other women. Now, I'm back to work and healing more each day. Sophia has helped me completely turn around my life and build a more positive one."

**[EDIT]:** That's a beautiful and inspiring testimonial. Where do you go from here?

**LYNN:** Fundraising is obviously at the core for maintaining operations. We will hold our third Sunny Side Up Breakfast in Saint John and another in Charlotte County in October. Event and table sponsors are welcome as well as individual attendees.

For our new home, to date we have realized seventy-five percent of our \$1.5 million capital-campaign goal, including a provincial-government funding grant, but we need one hundred percent of the funding to ensure the project can be completed as planned. Securing the balance of funds will be essential before the renovation project can even begin — our fundraising continues. We anticipate the support of our community to achieve our fundraising goal in the very near future.

**JULIE:** We cannot assume our established beliefs and practices are sufficient. We must embrace complexity and always be open to learning. Just as our community is coming together to help us "raise the roof" of a new facility in Saint John, I hope we can all continue to engage in positive and constructive dialogue about how to best help women recover. 🙌

To support Sophia Recovery Centre, please visit:  
[sophiarecoverycentre.com](http://sophiarecoverycentre.com)

# So tricky

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## ST. JOHN'S DIVELE INN

EXPERIENCE. EXPLORE. STAY. GATHER.

BY JENNIFER WOOD  
PHOTOGRAPHS BY JANE BROKENSHERE





Dvele's moody lobby and common areas feature furniture and accessories from SAM Design

Dvele, a boutique-style inn nestled in the heart of historic St. John's, Newfoundland and Labrador, is the latest venture by Susan Drover, the visionary behind SAM Design, a full-service design studio and retail showroom. Combining heritage charm with curated modern style, Dvele offers a unique and intimate stay experience like no other. The meticulously restored Queen Anne Revival mansion invites guests to linger, unwind and embrace a cocoon-like ambience. From thoughtfully designed spaces and sensory indulgences to personalized services and exclusive events, the inn promises a memorable escape where every detail has been carefully pondered. And if guests leave Dvele pining for its furnishings, linens, pillows, light fixtures and other features, they are welcome to order their favourite items directly from SAM Design.



The inn's heritage details have been lovingly restored and paired with modern furnishings, lighting and accessories.



The intimate library space is filled with titles from Susan Drover's personal collection. The space also doubles as a sort of speakeasy, offering a daily afternoon cocktail and a space for guests to unwind.



Dvele's main-floor suite features furniture from SAM Design, including Canadian brands Trica, Gus\* Modern, EQ3 and more.

The inn's name is as thoughtful as its design. Drover explains that "d'vele" means "to linger, which is what we hope our guests will do when they stay with us. Linger, dwell, stay a while — take their time, go slow and relax in their own fashion."

Constructed in the late 1800s for a prominent family, Dvele lives in a stately mansion in the well-known (and well-loved) Georgetown area. It has been completely restored while keeping the guest's travel experience top of mind. Dvele boasts premium access to the best of St. John's: patrons can easily explore the city's charm, green spaces and business core, with many popular destinations within walking distance. Nearby attractions, such as Bannerman Park, The Rooms, and world-renowned restaurants like Terre and Portage, offer opportunities to savour local cuisine and enjoy the vibrant atmosphere of the city.

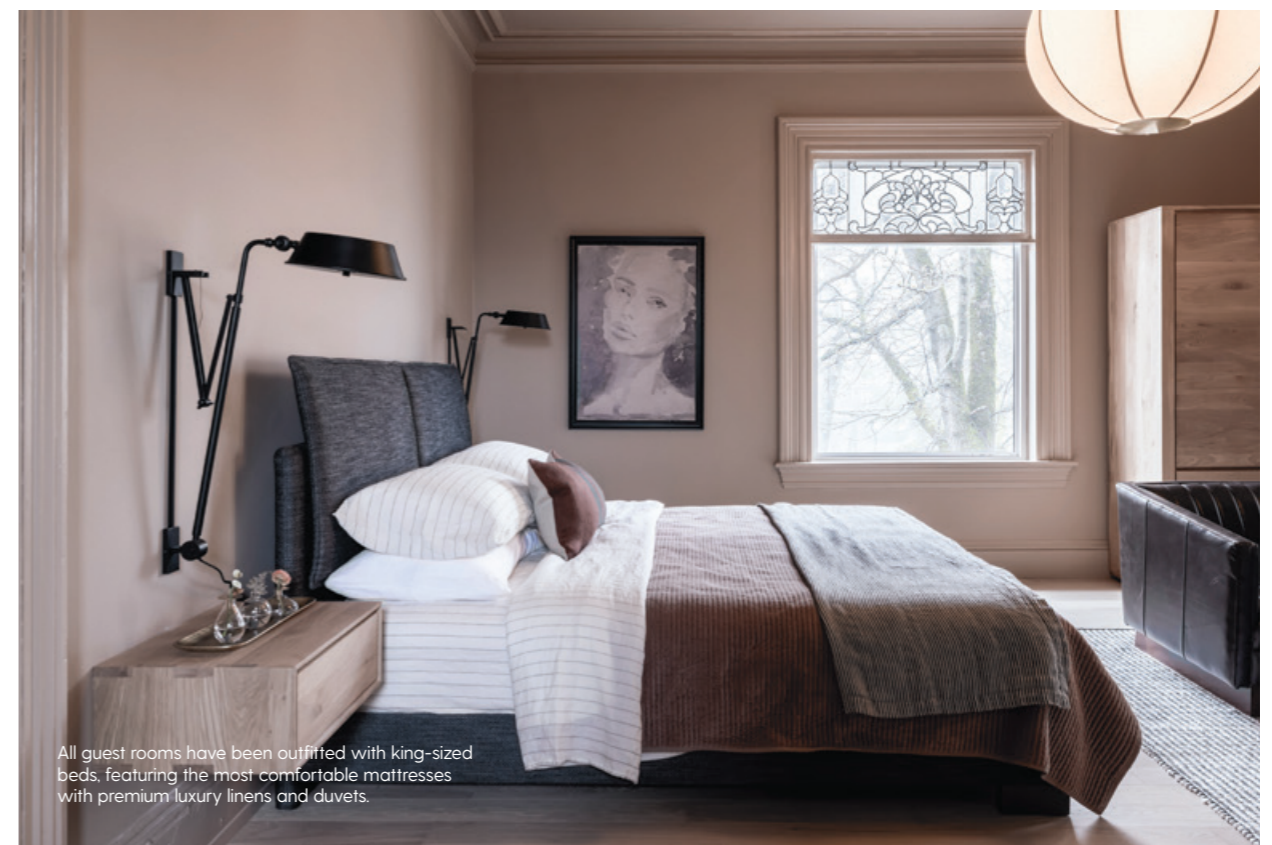
Dvele reflects Drover's passion for blending old with modern and is inspired by her experiences in European cities known for impeccably integrating heritage with current aesthetics. Unlike her other properties, Dvele boasts a distinct absence of white paint, instead embracing rich, moody colours that create a seductive



A favourite among guests, this second-floor guest room features a welcoming soft hue, bringing a modern touch to the room's original mouldings.



Dvele's suites feature a sitting area and dedicated workspace.



All guest rooms have been outfitted with king-sized beds, featuring the most comfortable mattresses with premium luxury linens and duvets.

EXCURSIONS



See, feel, smell, touch, and taste – Dvele has taken the time to consider the details, both big and small, that provide the most sensory-pleasing stay possible.



The intimate upstairs lounge is perfect for small after-hours guest gatherings.

and peaceful atmosphere. The inn couples a comfortable, thoughtful experience with a sensory journey. From luxurious bath products featuring local brand East Coast Glow to premium linens, cozy pillows and personalized scents from Yorabode, every element has been carefully selected. The furnishings, lighting and accessories add to the eclectic feel, while the art collection showcases Drover's personal touch and her keen eye for detail. A senior member from Germain Hotel Group who recently stayed at the inn announced, "There's no doubt that Dvele will soon be all over Condé Nast."

The inn is also available to host special celebrations, from intimate dinners to weddings and corporate retreats. With spaces designed for entertaining, such as the private dining room and smaller common rooms, guests



can host memorable events in a setting that projects style and elegance. The entire inn is also available to book for larger gatherings, ensuring a seamless and exclusive experience for guests. A recent guest raved: "We were fortunate to experience Dvele for a surprise date night before its official opening. From the moment we arrived, the character and exquisite interior design left us in awe. Marie, the innkeeper, welcomed us warmly, and the complimentary wine upon arrival set the tone for an exceptional evening. The warm and inviting rooms and common areas provided the perfect backdrop for relaxation. We were enchanted by the attention to detail and the sophisticated breakfast box waiting for us in the morning. If you're looking for a place to unwind and indulge in a night of comfort and tranquility, you must visit Dvele, created by the visionary team at SAM Design."

Whether guests experience Dvele for a day or a week, the inn promises an exceptional experience of elegance, premium service, relaxation and comfort that will have them returning time and time again. [S]

Dvele Inn, 26 Monkstown Road, St. John's, NL  
dwellbysam.ca  
Instagram: @dwellbysam

# So ambitious

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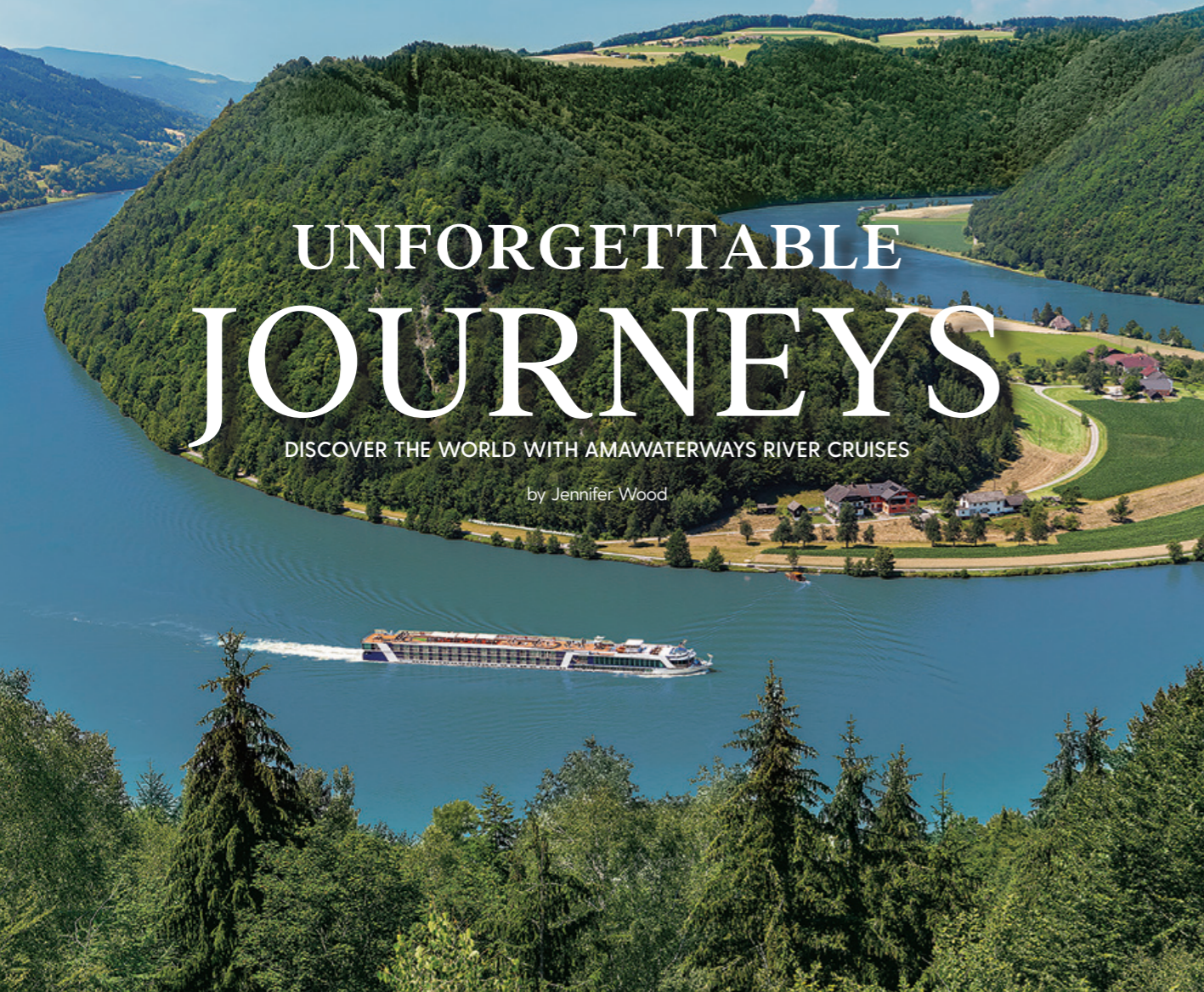
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# UNFORGETTABLE JOURNEYS

DISCOVER THE WORLD WITH AMAWATERWAYS RIVER CRUISES

by Jennifer Wood



AmaWaterways is a leading river cruise line dedicated to crafting luxury, immersive journeys along the world's most picturesque waterways in Europe, Vietnam and Cambodia, Egypt and other countries in Africa. The company offers sailors an exquisite blend of comfort, elegance and cultural exploration, coupled with delectable meals and world-class service on board. AmaWaterways was born from a passionate vision to create an unparalleled guest experience, and CAA travel advisors can offer a first-hand perspective when assisting guests with their package choice. The premium river cruise company continues to expand the breadth of their routes while adding to their impressive fleet of vessels, each of which allows close access to ports of call not accessible to traditional cruise ships.



Through their partnership with AmaWaterways, CAA Atlantic and its passionate advisors are delighted to share their experiences and offer guidance to both new and seasoned AmaWaterways sailors. Many of the company's advisors have sailed multiple itineraries and delight in offering tips on how to best prepare for a voyage and make the most of its features. Whether it's knowing what to pack, choosing between the numerous daily excursions, or exploring the onboard offerings and amenities like exercise classes, massages, the hair and aesthetic salon, or special guest speakers, CAA's experienced professionals are determined to ensure a seamless voyage.

Ellen Wood and June Chow from Halifax explain: "When we wanted to take our first river cruise, CAA Atlantic travel advisor Nadine Doucet recommended AmaWaterways. It was a great choice — we are now about to embark on our fourth cruise with the company. River cruising is a wonderful, relaxing way to see Europe, and the boats are intimate, allowing you to get to know fellow travellers. Thirty of our shipmates on the Duoro cruise were from the Maritimes: we've been able to see them after the cruise, and they have become friends. We had two excellent CAA escorts, Leslie McInnis and John Belliveau; they ensured that everyone had a fantastic time. They were pros at dealing with the hiccups that can happen when guiding thirty people throughout two countries. We will travel with CAA Atlantic and AmaWaterways again for convenience, value and remarkable travel memories."

*Magna on the Danube*, a seven-day cruise that visits ports of call in Austria, Germany and Hungary and sails from Budapest to Vilshofen, remains one of the company's most popular itineraries. The vessel *AmaMagna* is twice the width of a traditional river cruise vessel and features a Zen Wellness Studio, five bars, a heated sundeck pool and whirlpool, and four unique restaurants. The gentle, meandering cruise lets wine and song carry sailors along the melodious Danube — a muse for musicians, artists, and poets for centuries. The premium cruise invites its sailors to explore Prague, Vienna and Budapest, magnificent capital cities with storybook architecture and the tales to match. Guests visit Salzburg, the setting for the beloved film classic, *The Sound of Music*, complete with a stop in Mondsee, home of the famed Basilica St. Michael, where the movie's wedding scene was filmed. Indulging in the flavours of the region, from delicate, apricot-scented wines in Austria's Wachau Valley to hearty beer at a traditional Bavarian Oktoberfest in Vilshofen, is a favourite feature of the voyage. Each bend and twist in the river boast new surprises waiting for discovery.

To manage customer demand for quaint, luxury river cruises, the company continues to build upon its impressive fleet. The *AmaDablia*, sailing Egypt's Nile River, is their newest addition.



The luxury vessel is an inviting 72-passenger ship offering 36 standard staterooms, including 16 magnificent suites with a wealth of amenities that surprise and delight travellers, including a heated sundeck swimming pool and bar, The Chef's Al Fresco Restaurant, hair and nail salon and two massage rooms. Happy guests marvel at scenic Nile River views in luxury and enjoy regionally inspired entertainment while savouring the flavours of both local and western cuisine on board.

AmaWaterways continues to be a leading name in the luxury river cruise industry, captivating travellers with exceptional itineraries, award-winning ships, and meticulous attention to detail. The unparalleled customer service provided by CAA Atlantic begins with a phone call, online chat or in-person visit at one of their seven locations across Atlantic Canada.

CAA exclusive member benefits include savings up to \$720 on all sailings and more! Book with your CAA travel advisor through Fall 2023 to take advantage of 20% cruise savings on your 2023 or 2024 Europe or Mekong river cruise. Offer subject to change.  
amawaterways.ca



CAA Travel: 1-800-561-8807  
atlantic.caa.ca



# Beyond the NEWSROOM

BY HEATHER MACLEAN REID | PHOTOGRAPH BY RYAN WILLIAMS

**From a career in broadcasting to building an in-demand business, journalist, household name and now consultant Alyse Hand has turned her passion for storytelling into a successful career working with global clients in media-coaching. She chats with [EDIT]'s Contributing Editor, Heather MacLean Reid, on her new role as senior consultant with Iris Communications and how she uses her expertise to get her clients covered.**

It happened without my noticing. It was so effortless that it wasn't until afterward that I realized what had happened, and I smiled. And beforehand, I'll admit, I was a little nervous. Alyse Hand is a broadcast journalist and communications professional with 16 years of experience, so I had to be on my game with thoughtful, intelligent questions for a good interview.

She appeared virtually from her home office in Halifax, Nova Scotia, poised and polished, putting me at ease by jumping in with some icebreakers. Suddenly, I was answering a series of questions and telling her everything about myself: where I'm from, where I went to school, my career path, how I met my husband, all about our kids and places I've lived, where I've travelled, what life is like in Rothesay, New Brunswick, and everything else under the sun. She asked excellent questions, listened carefully, and kept the conversation moving.

Alyse Hand had, subtly and very naturally, interviewed me. Our conversation flowed comfortably and easily, and I did ask her some questions of my own. It felt like catching up with an old friend over tea. Except we had just met.



Alyse hosts *Makeover Monday* on CTV Atlantic, Halifax, NS, 2017

Because she is an experienced communicator who has worked as a reporter, news anchor and host with CTV Atlantic and Global News, and she's the kind of person one gravitates toward confiding in, Hand skillfully takes the wheel. Lately, that has meant steering her career in a purposeful new direction by leaving broadcast journalism behind and offering her expertise in harnessing the power of the media with her company, ON-Q Communications, as well as in her new role with Iris Communications.

Alyse has trained clients from various sectors, including education, health and wellness, marketing and communications, and tourism and hospitality, how to cultivate relationships with media, feel confident and in control during interviews, and get their message out to the masses. She has offered media training, on-air presentation coaching, and emcee and hosting services.

Alyse Hand may be warm and approachable but, make no mistake, the questions she poses in her on-air coaching sessions are strategic, pointed and likely a little painful for clients as she prepares them to sit in the hot seat across from a dogged, zealous reporter looking for answers. "Being prepared and remembering that you have important information that the audience needs or wants to know can go a long way in helping ease those pre-interview jitters," she says.

During our scintillating conversation, she tells me about sharing important news and Maritime stories, offers tips and tricks for delivering an exceptional interview that ensures a message lands, and describes how she'd spend a perfect day in Canada's Ocean Playground.



Alyse and co-host Paul Brothers interview Jonathan Torrens on *Global News Morning*, 2019



Alyse interviews Paul Hill of Hill's Jamaican Jerk and Maritime Foods on *CTV Morning Live*, 2016

Photograph: Nicole Lapierre

**[EDIT]:** How has living, learning and working in Halifax influenced your career path and the new journey you are on?

**ALYSE HAND:** I was born here, I studied here, I work here, and I live here. As a Maritimer, I am incredibly proud of the tremendous growth Halifax, and other parts of Atlantic Canada, have experienced over the past decade or so. It's an exciting time to work and live in this part of the world. I was extremely fortunate to have connected with people from all walks of life in my career as a broadcaster. Through those connections, I have built long-lasting relationships that have helped me in these early stages of consulting. As a reporter, I developed a deep knowledge of our region's political, economic and cultural landscape, which helps inform my media training. I use that insight to help companies connect with their target market and share their stories.

**[EDIT]:** What is one of your best interviews or most memorable guests? Something that makes you smile or laugh when you think about it or a story that you know had a meaningful impact?

**ALYSE:** Although I have interviewed many celebrities and public figures, the interviews that stand out the most for me are (with) those individuals who inspire others by sharing their hardships. I interviewed a young man who lives in Nova Scotia with a brain injury (he was in a near-fatal car accident as a child), and now, in his adult life, he shares his story and speaks to people from around the region about brain health. Another one of my most memorable interviews was with a local woman who lives with schizophrenia. She bravely shared her experience living with a severe mental-health disorder and her journey to learning how to manage it. She recently earned a master's degree in counselling psychology and opened a virtual mental-health-counselling practice. Talk about inspiring!



Alyse interviews Pamela Glode Desrochers, executive director of the Mi'kmaw Native Friendship Society on *CTV Morning Live*, 2016

Photograph: CTV Atlantic

**[EDIT]:** What made you realize there was a need you could fill in the market for media training and on-air coaching?

**ALYSE:** The market research I did made my decision to pursue consulting a no-brainer. I had many people reaching out to me while I was still in the news industry, asking if I could help them with on-air coaching or media training. Halifax is also growing at an incredible pace and, although traditional media may be on the decline, digital and non-traditional media are growing exponentially. Many businesses and organizations are hungry for knowledge on leveraging all forms of media to increase sales and position themselves as valuable contributors to the community or the economy. I also discovered that few former journalists and broadcasters are entering the media-training space in the Atlantic market, so I felt I could help fill that gap.

**[EDIT]:** What did it feel like to step away from your role as an anchor to start consulting? Is there anything about consulting that has surprised you so far?

**ALYSE:** Starting a business, and then joining Iris Communications as a consultant, were equally as exciting as they were terrifying! When I started my business, I quickly realized you need a solid understanding of accounting, marketing, analytics, SEO, etc. — unless you hire someone to do that for you! Do your market research and prepare a business plan before you launch your business. What has surprised me so far? How incredibly supportive the entrepreneurial community is in this region! I am touched by how many business owners have offered to grab coffee with me and let me pick their brains or connect me with one of their clients or contacts. It's an extremely collaborative and tight-knit community, and I appreciate everyone who offered to help me in those early days of entrepreneurship. Although my entrepreneurial journey was short-lived, I learned so much as a solopreneur. I'm thrilled that many of my clients will continue to work with me and the Iris team in my new agency role. And now they will get the added benefit of also collaborating with the incredible team of communications professionals I work with!

**[EDIT]:** What is something about working with the media that many people don't know or don't expect?

**ALYSE:** It's not at all as easy (and, dare I say, glamorous?) as it might look! There is no makeup artist or



Alyse conducting an interview for the six-part series *Makeover Monday* on CTV Atlantic, 2017



Alyse interviews UNICEF Goodwill Ambassador Solange Tuyishime Keita on *Global News Morning*, 2020

stylist, and most broadcasters in the Atlantic region don't have a team of writers and producers behind them. For most of my career as a reporter, anchor and host, I arranged interviews with my guests, coordinated all aspects of the interview, wrote the script and prepared questions, conducted the interview, and even rolled my own teleprompter! Glamorous? Not exactly. Rewarding? Extremely.

**[EDIT]: Without giving too much away, could you share one trick or something to remember when someone is being interviewed?**

**ALYSE:** There are so many tips and tricks, but what usually resonates with my clients is when I remind them that they are the subject-matter expert on what they're being interviewed about. It may seem obvious, but there's something about getting in front of a camera that often causes people to forget this. You're more in control of the interview than you might think. Being prepared and remembering that you

have important information that the audience needs/wants to know can go a long way in helping ease those pre-interview jitters.

**[EDIT]: Was there a piece of advice along the way — about working on either side of the camera — that stuck with you? From an industry pro, a professor, a colleague, or a guest or client?**

**ALYSE:** A former colleague once told me to be confident but humble. Simple advice, but I've seen many newcomers to the news industry disregard it. Leverage the experience of those with more experience than you, and demonstrate your gratitude for their teachings, even if it's just grabbing them a coffee or sending them a quick thank-you note. I also received advice in my teens to "not drop the ball." Keep a calendar and write down all your commitments.

**[EDIT]: What has been your best emcee or hosting gig so far?**

**ALYSE:** I recently emceed an International Women's Day breakfast for the Centre for Women in Business. The room was filled to the brim with five hundred incredible women (and men). The event was set up like a live-audience talk show, and I interviewed three established local female entrepreneurs. It was by far the most inspiring, empowering and invigorating event I've ever participated in!

Photograph: Nicole Lapierre

**[EDIT]: Who is someone you admire?**

**ALYSE:** Nancy Regan! Before I started in television, *Live at 5* was always on at home. I was always so impressed by Nancy's talent and professionalism. Ironically, I didn't meet Nancy until I left the television industry. I connected with her in the early days of launching ON-Q Communications, and we became fast friends. I was so impressed by her! She is real. She is supportive. And she is hilarious! Her energy is incredible. I admire her openness about her personal challenges, which she shares in her book *From Showing Off to Showing Up: An Imposter's Journey from Perfect to Present*. We both spent many years in front of the camera, so it's wonderful to connect with someone who shares that experience.

**[EDIT]: Can you describe a perfect day in Halifax? What does that look like for you?**

**ALYSE:** It's a Saturday in August in the city. I wake up, grab a Gruyère croissant at LF Bakery, pop over to The Nook (Espresso Bar and Lounge) for a coffee — two cream, one sugar — then it's off to Conrad's Beach in Lawrencetown. I'd grab Lebanese or Greek food for lunch, get a run in at Point Pleasant Park, and then see friends in the evening for patio beers overlooking the harbour.

**[EDIT]: Tell me about your exciting new role with Iris Communications?**

**ALYSE:** I recently accepted a senior consultant position with Iris Communications, a leading independent strategic-communication, government-relations and public-advocacy firm based in Halifax. The role is the perfect fit for me as I will be handling media outreach, training, and preparation for a variety of public- and private-sector clients. I'm thrilled to work alongside Iris's talented team of marketing and communications professionals, and I look forward to having a meaningful impact on the agency's local, national and international clients. 📍

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# IN THE STUDIO WITH DENIS DUQUETTE

CAPTURING MOMENTS, CREATING UPROAR

BY JENNIFER WOOD



Denis directing a Home Hardware campaign, Moncton, NB, 2022

With an innate talent for capturing authentic moments and a relentless commitment to his work, Denis Duquette, born in Moncton, New Brunswick, has established himself as a renowned portrait, commercial, editorial, hair and beauty photographer with a roster of clients that includes Lululemon, Cavendish Farms and Rogers.

To add to his brand, the entrepreneur recently co-founded Uproar, a video-production company co-led by gifted cinematographer and editor Austin Doiron. With the help of a team of seven, they have produced marketing material for Atlantic Lottery, Usva Spa and Joico Canada, to name a few. Duquette has achieved this level of success thanks, in large part, to a supportive community of family and friends, including his parents and his wife, Sarah, who requested only one thing from him when he was establishing his business: a Saturday-night date.

Duquette's work with [EDIT] is extensive and began with the genesis of the magazine. He has photographed four covers, including those featuring internationally celebrated chef Matty Matheson (Volume 8), actor Amybeth McNulty (*Anne with an E*, Volume 10) and Dr. Chadwick Williams (Volume 14). For the last-mentioned cover, he won a top prize at the Atlantic Journalism Awards in 2021.

Duquette's rise to become a celebrated photographer and co-founder of Uproar is as impressive as his portfolio. Standing at a towering six feet six inches, he was a gifted athlete growing up who showed remarkable promise in basketball: he received scholarship offers to universities in exchange for a place on their courts.

"I turned them down so that I could attend Mount Allison, which was closer to home." Duquette tells [EDIT] from his expansive studio in the heart of Moncton. "I was not a stellar student by any stretch, and Mount A allowed me to attend part-time first semester because my grades were poor. Without the eleven-month grind I had been experiencing with basketball, I had a lot of time on my hands, so I picked up a camera."

With the support of arts and photography professor Thaddeus Holownia, Duquette worked on his photography whenever he could, developing film in the university's darkroom until the wee hours of the morning. His career began to take off while he was working at Ivan's Camera in Moncton. There, he was immersed in the world of film production at a time when digital photography was getting started. He dedicated himself to learning all he could.



Clockwise from top left:  
 Mikayla, New Glasgow, 2021  
 Moncton Magic campaign, NB, 2019  
 On location in Los Angeles, CA, 2023  
 Maggie, Moncton, NB, 2019  
 Jon Black, Moncton, NB, 2017  
 Fabiola, Moncton, NB, 2021  
 Tuxy campaign, Quebec, 2020



Dust Studio, Los Angeles, CA, 2023



Hannah, Moncton, NB, 2017

In 2010, he was able to leave his basement studio behind, moving into a one-thousand-square-foot space on Main Street in Moncton. Over the past two years, and with the creation of Uproar, the space has expanded to 2,800 square feet, allowing for designated offices and an enhanced studio space.

Uproar started as a team of three and has grown to a team of seven full-time employees in two and a half short years (a director/photographer, videographer/editor, editor, editor/ animator, production manager and photographer), with employees from Moncton, Rogersville, Saint-Quentin and Fredericton (via Toronto). Always on the lookout for new talent, one of the joys of Uproar is how they have succeeded in attracting local talent home from Toronto and elsewhere. Duquette's photography company and Uproar merged recently, and they are constantly bringing in more clients. "The creative industry is known for burning people out and, when we started Uproar, we were very intentional in making sure that our people only work forty hours a week and no more," Duquette reveals. "And that they are given time off whenever they need it for personal reasons. Our company culture is centred around great work, collaboration between the whole team and solid work/life balance."

While working at Ivan's and attending university, Duquette took whatever business came his way. He captured everything from weddings to birthday parties and, with his other commitments, he was eventually stretched too thin. He left Mount Allison just short of obtaining a bachelor's degree: his talent was garnering industry clout, and word of mouth was spreading quickly. He hasn't looked back.

At that time, he was working non-stop in his dark basement, which had an unforgiving seven-foot ceiling. "I had to move the washing machine around to make room to set up my equipment. I bought an umbrella to assist with lighting to only realize I couldn't open it because the ceilings were too low. But I didn't notice the space's limitations — I was too busy trying to make a living."

Sarah and he married in 2009 and, soon after, she convinced him to take a risk and make a full-time go at establishing his business. She accepted the inevitable time commitment required to build his name and also the pull that would take him in many directions. She asked for one night a week to spend together, and it was too generous an offer to refuse. The freedom and support she provided is not lost on Duquette, and he credits her selflessness to this day.



One of Duquette's strengths as a photographer is his ability to connect quickly and genuinely with people. His easy nature and interest in his subjects and clients put them at ease from the get-go.

He understands that capturing true moments requires creating a comfortable place where people can be themselves. This personal touch, which seems effortless to Duquette, is the result of years of research and careful consideration.

"Making people feel less vulnerable quickly has been one of the hardest and most interesting components of my work. Sure, some of my clients grew up with cameras, and they know how to pose, they know their angles, and that's great. But I understand and sympathize with the camera-shy people, and I have read countless books on the psychology of photography to make them feel at ease quickly. Ensuring they are relaxed is the only way I will get the best, most authentic portrait of who they are. Sometimes all I have is fifteen minutes with a subject to



Denis shoots campaigns, billboard, posters and magazine covers for clients globally

build their comfort with me and the camera and nail a shot. In this time, I am creating a bond, while managing all the technical aspects of my work. If I am working on a commercial campaign, add their expectations to the list. It's best described as organized, intimate chaos, and I love it."

Denis Duquette's story is that of following one's passion, taking risks, and committing to an unwavering dedication to establishing a career in the arts. He entered photography a struggling student and, instead of earning a degree in an unrelated field, he has opted to establish one, then two, successful ventures in his home province. His ability to shoot captivating and genuine moments from behind the lens is legendary, thanks in large part to his ease with his colleagues, subjects and growing client list. And while his work with a camera has taken him as far afield as Morocco, Iceland and throughout the United States and Canada, he has gained enough popularity to keep him busy closer to home.

"I still travel for work, but it's not like earlier in my career when I was in Toronto once a month," he says. "We have enough work here to keep us incredibly busy, and for that I am grateful. It's been the most amazing journey. Thirteen years in, I am thrilled to be working from home, doing what I love, and working with people I admire and respect."

[E]

denisduquette.ca  
uproarproductions.com



# HONOURING ARTISTIC EXCELLENCE IN NEW BRUNSWICK

THE SHEILA HUGH MACKAY FOUNDATION

BY JENNIFER WOOD

The Sheila Hugh Mackay Foundation (SHMF) is a treasure for the arts community of New Brunswick. The people who serve the foundation, which was established by late art lover and patron Sheila Hugh Mackay, work tirelessly to assist and support artists and arts organizations by promoting and encouraging art and fine craft in the province.



Sheila Hugh MacKay in 1996

“At SHMF we work with artists at all levels of their careers,” says Kathryn McCarroll, the foundation’s executive director. “We also work with a wide variety of art organizations through our grant programs. Our financial endowments and advocacy aim to propel the evolution of individual careers and the growth of arts organizations in New Brunswick.”

A gifted artist, Mackay’s mediums included quilting, embroidery and fibre sculpture. Her dedication to the arts community in New Brunswick was unwavering. After working in marketing, advertising and financial management in Toronto and London, she returned to her home province in the early 1980s. Her commitment to the arts led her to serve as a director of various art organizations, including *ArtsAtlantic* magazine, the Canadian Crafts Council (now the Canadian Crafts Federation), the New Brunswick Crafts Council and the Embroiderers’ Association of Canada. Mackay established SHMF in 1987, and in 2004 it received the New Brunswick Arts Foundation’s inaugural philanthropy award. The following year, Mackay was honoured with the prestigious Prix Éloizes – Soutien



Five Cats by Gerard Collins (Strathbutler winner, 2001)





Clockwise from top left:  
*Treading Water* by Ann Manuel (Marie Hélène Allain Fellowship Award, 2016)  
*People Waiting* by John Hooper (Strathbutler winner, 1991)  
*South Africa* by Freeman Patterson (Strathbutler winner, 1997)  
*36 visages de femmes* by Hermenegilde Chiasson (Strathbutler winner, 2017)  
*Lithospermum Period Chair Detail* by Susan Vida Judah (Strathbutler winner, 2013)  
*Communion* by Brigitte Clavette (Strathbutler winner, 2006)

aux arts by the Association acadienne des artistes professionnel.le.s du Nouveau-Brunswick. Before her passing in 2004, Mackay generously endowed SHMF with financial resources to continue her lifelong passion for the arts.

“Sheila Hugh Mackay’s philanthropy transformed the visual arts in New Brunswick,” says Peter Larocque, lead curator at the New Brunswick Museum. Larocque assisted Mackay with the establishment of the SHMF. “In addition to raising the profile of the high-quality fine art and fine craft being produced here to a national level, her efforts engendered a renewed vigour and professionalism to the creative community.”

The principles underlying SHMF’s career development programs revolve around fostering expertise, encouraging exploration and promoting innovation. In addition to traditional scholarships and residencies, SHMF offers innovative coaching opportunities. The Margaret Woodson Nea Mentorship program is rooted in the belief that cultivating mentorship relationships among individuals, whether in formal or informal settings, presents exclusive prospects for aspiring artists to advance their professional careers.

“The mentorship program was pivotal in the development of my work,” says award-winning New Brunswick artist, visual-arts educator and arts advocate Ann Manuel. Manuel has worked for over 30 years in communities across Canada, the United Kingdom, Europe, Asia and the United States, and has taught visual arts at all levels from high school to college. Her multimedia art presents themes of physical geography, relationships, identity and spirituality. Her printmaking practice has led to working in a variety of printmaking studios, including the Edinburgh Print Makers Society in Scotland, Chulalongkorn University in Bangkok (where she was an award winner in the Bangkok Printmaking Show), Malaspina Printmakers in Vancouver, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, and Sunbury Shores Print Studio in Saint Andrews, New Brunswick. “I had the privilege of being mentored by well-known and respected sculptor Marie Hélène Allain.” Following high school, Allain had joined the convent of the Religious of Our Lady of the Sacred Heart, where she successfully completed her novitiate. Fortunately for the art world, her religious community encouraged her to cultivate her talents in the realm of visual arts. To date, she has participated in more than 50 exhibitions, among which more than 20 solo shows and travelling exhibitions in Canada, France, Italy and the United States. “Marie Hélène’s guidance, advice,

presence and the quiet way she shows her strength in her work and day-to-day life continue to have an impact on my life and work. Beyond mentorship, I gained a friend.”

In 2023, painter Bonny Hill from Sussex, New Brunswick, received the SHMF’s prestigious Margaret Woodson Nea Mentorship Award, recognizing her exceptional collaboration with Phyllis Webstad from Williams Lake, British Columbia. Hill has an established career of creating impactful public installations that address significant social and environmental issues. Deeply moved by the disturbing revelations surrounding Canada’s residential schools, Hill actively sought ways to contribute to the national movement of peace and reconciliation. For this purpose, she chose Phyllis Webstad, whose personal story inspired the nationally recognized Orange Shirt Day and the Every Child Matters movement, to be her mentor and storyteller.

“It is a privilege, as a non-Indigenous artist, to work with Phyllis Webstad on my journey of understanding and respecting the cultural history of the Indigenous Peoples,” says Hill. “My work in public art aims to support the spirit of truth and reconciliation.” Webstad adds, “I really enjoyed the New Brunswick project and look forward to working closely with Bonny in the future, getting this work into many more communities as a way of honouring survivors.”

One of SHMF’s most recognized endeavours is the biennial Strathbutler Award. Established by Mackay in 1991, the award recognizes artists working in any medium who have achieved personal excellence in any field of visual art and who are deemed by independent juries to have made significant contributions to the province of New Brunswick. One of the largest cash awards in Canada, the Strathbutler is currently valued at \$25,000, and receiving it propels recipients to the forefront of the art world: To date, three Strathbutler recipients have later received the coveted Governor General’s Award: Peter Powning (potter), Brigitte Clavette (sculptor) and Anna Torma (fibre artist). The SHMF proudly showcases works by Strathbutler recipients in a permanent collection at the New Brunswick Museum.

Strathbutler is named after Strathnaver, the ancestral home of the Mackay family, and represents Mackay’s desire to serve the arts community. It is symbolized by an iconic art piece, *Manu Forte*, designed by Brigitte Clavette, a nationally acclaimed silversmith and the 2006 Strathbutler recipient. Clavette takes great care



Clockwise from top left:  
*Saint John Harbour* by Herzl Kashetsky (Strathbutler winner, 2011)  
*Sculptured Rocker* by Bruce Gray (Strathbutler winner, 2019)  
*A Garden Diary* by Anna Torma (Strathbutler winner, 2008)  
*First Steps* by Paul Mathieson (Strathbutler winner, 2015)

to pay homage to each recipient by personalizing it, using non-ferrous metals like copper and sterling silver.

Globally acclaimed nature photographer and writer Freeman Patterson (see Volume 2 of [EDIT]) received the Strathbutler in 1997. Throughout his career, which has spanned six decades, the Shampers Bluff, New Brunswick, native has left an indelible mark on the photographic medium. He has amassed numerous accolades and has earned the profound respect of photographers and environmentalists worldwide. His numerous published works, travelling exhibitions, and highly sought-after workshops have led to honorary doctorates, inclusion in prominent international



**For some artists the award bolsters much-needed visibility, and for others, it serves as a lasting testament to the impact they have made throughout their careers in the arts.**

collections, and a prestigious lifetime achievement award from the North American Nature Photography Association.

“Receiving the Strathbutler is a tremendous affirmation for an artist by his or her community, and recognition of that kind doesn’t get much better than that,” says Patterson. The Strathbutler was presented personally to Patterson by Mackay, accompanied by one of her notoriously unique poems. “For some artists, the award bolsters much-needed visibility and, for others, it serves as a lasting testament to the impact they have made throughout their careers in the arts. The money helps too!”

Celebrated sculptor André LaPointe was awarded the Strathbutler in 2005. For nearly four decades, LaPointe served as professor in the visual-arts department at Université de Moncton and continues to leave a significant impact on the artistic community and the environmental sculpture scene in

the region. His installation, titled *André LaPointe: Parcours*, is on display at Fredericton’s Beaverbrook Art Gallery until September 25, 2023.

The ongoing work of SHMF is a testament to the vision and generosity of Sheila Mackay. Generations of artists, at all stages of their career, have been supported through scholarships, mentorships, awards, and bursaries. Annual grant programs sustain the evolution of New Brunswick art centres and associations, galleries, museums, colleges and artist-run centres. Crucially, her legacy is a living force that nurtures creativity and shines a light on the importance of art in our lives. [E]

See a fall issue of [EDIT]ION for more information about the life and works of the 2023 recipient of the Strathbutler Award and its gala evening. [sheilahughmackay.ca](http://sheilahughmackay.ca)

## THE STRATHBUTLER AWARD

A LEGACY OF EXCELLENCE IN NEW BRUNSWICK VISUAL ARTS

The Strathbutler Award is a biennial award of \$25,000 that recognizes visual artists of all media who have achieved excellence in their fields while having made a substantial contribution over a significant period of time in the province of New Brunswick. Since 1991, Sheila Hugh Mackay Foundation has recognised exceptional New Brunswick artists with this distinction based on the deliberations of an independent jury of qualified experts in visual arts.

- |      |   |      |   |
|------|---|------|---|
| 1991 | JOHN HOOPER   <i>Sculptor</i>           | 2004 | JANICE WRIGHT CHENEY   <i>Multi-media</i>       |
| 1992 | TOM SMITH   <i>Potter</i>               | 2005 | ANDRÉ LAPOINTE   <i>Sculptor</i>                |
| 1993 | PETER POWNING   <i>Potter</i>           | 2006 | BRIGITTE CLAVETTE   <i>Metalsmith</i>           |
| 1994 | KATHY HOOPER   <i>Painter</i>           | 2007 | DAN STEEVES   <i>Printmaker</i>                 |
| 1995 | NEL OUDEMANS   <i>Weaver</i>            | 2008 | ANNA TORMA   <i>Fibre Artist</i>                |
| 1996 | MARIE HÉLÈNE ALLAIN   <i>Sculptor</i>   | 2009 | DAVID UMHOLTZ   <i>Printmaker</i>               |
| 1997 | FREEMAN PATTERSON   <i>Photographer</i> | 2010 | LINDA RAE DORNAN   <i>Multi-media</i>           |
| 1998 | ROMÉO SAVOIE   <i>Painter</i>           | 2011 | HERZL KASHETSKY   <i>Painter</i>                |
| 1999 | SUZANNE HILL   <i>Painter</i>           | 2013 | SUSAN VIDA JUDAH   <i>Weaver</i>                |
| 2000 | RICK BURNS   <i>Painter</i>             | 2015 | PAUL MATHIESON   <i>Painter</i>                 |
| 2001 | GERALD COLLINS   <i>Painter</i>         | 2017 | HERMÉNÉGILDE CHIASSON   <i>Multi-media</i>      |
| 2002 | GORDON DUNPHY   <i>Wood Turner</i>      | 2019 | BRUCE GRAY   <i>Furniture Maker/Multi-media</i> |
| 2003 | THADDEUS HOLOWNIA   <i>Photographer</i> | 2021 | MATHIEU LÉGER   <i>Multi-media</i>              |

To support SHMF and their work visit [sheilahughmackay.ca/scholarships/](http://sheilahughmackay.ca/scholarships/)

# THE MURALISTS

*of San Miguel de Allende*

by Matt George | Photographs by Mark Hemmings and James Wilson

New Brunswick is a great place to be an artist. Many artists were born in the Picture Province, and they have based themselves there for long and illustrious careers while travelling the world. In recent years, artists of all persuasions (painters, photographers, writers and comedians, to name but a few) have been moving there, attracted by its creative stimulus. Over the past half a century, several of those artists have formed a bond with San Miguel de Allende, a colonial-era city in Mexico's central highlands celebrated for its baroque Spanish architecture and thriving arts scene of Atlantic Canadians. Exclusively for [EDIT], Matt George investigates with photographers Mark Hemmings and James Wilson.



Palacio de Bellas Artes | Photograph by Mark Hemmings

At night, seven stories above Mexico City, Centro Histórico. The famous Palacio de Bellas Artes. Its spire caged in scaffolding. Renovations of some kind. Jacarandas only just in bloom (they wanted cherry blossom but got jacarandas). The park is full. Everyone on foot. It smells sweet-and-sour. A combination of smog, sunset and metropolis. Twenty-three million people. The high-brow condos of the nuevo riche push the smaller, concrete homes into the foothills that surround it. The feeling of an infinite fish-bowl. I am not in New Brunswick anymore. Not even close. This isn't Halifax. It's not Charlottetown. And it certainly isn't St. John's. This is Mexico City. The one and only.

Down in the Palacio, I finally see what this story is about. I can feel it for the first time.

Standing in its main room, looking up at the work of one of Mexico's tres grandes, muralist Diego Rivera, I'm transported to a different time. I can see Fred Ross, one of New Brunswick's treasured artists visiting Rivera, and I can see how the latter would go on to mentor the former: the inception of a life-long friendship and mentorship. Fred

Ross would later become known as "Canada's Mexican muralist," and generations of Maritime artists would flock to Mexico, seeking the same inspiration that he found in its stone walls and busy streets.

But I was, in fact, not in Mexico for Mexico City. At least not in any literal sense of the term "there." I was there for the mountains "and that vast space — that Mexican landscape — squalid and lush and primal and majestic" (Paul Theroux). I was there for San Miguel de Allende, in tow of two of New Brunswick's famous photographers.

“

In seconds I had stepped into a foreign country - the aroma and sizzle of street food, the strumming of guitars, the joshing of hawkers.” (Paul Theroux)

## MEXICO CITY - 48 HOURS EARLIER

At midnight, from 30,000 feet, Mexico City is an ocean of light against a dark facade of rugged mountains. I'm aboard Air Canada 995, in seat 23F, trying to get a grip on the city's enormity. Trying to take the measure of it all, like I've taken the measure of other great cities before it. I can't somehow, and it unnerves me.

Lights in the foothills to the east, directly below. A sea of light to the west, as far as west goes. Scale that boggles the mind. Twenty-three million people, all scurrying about doing the human work that humans do. It isn't the in-your-face-go-f---yourself huge of New York City. It's unending sprawl that gives the illusion of a region more than a city. In many ways it is.

I step out of Terminal 2 five minutes after 1:00 a.m. At home, in the southeastern coastal region of New Brunswick, it would be cool and quiet, and the air would be salty. Quiet doesn't seem to exist here, and the air is unique, like it is anywhere. Sometimes it's the heat. Sometimes it's the smog. Sometimes it's the altitude. In Mexico City, it's a combination of them all, infused with the unique sensory assaults of Mexico's largest metropolis and one of the world's great cities.

I start here because I need to know Mexico, and it's impossible to know Mexico without knowing Mexico City. The problem is, like other remarkable cities (New York again), you could spend a lifetime trying to know Mexico City without ever scratching the surface.

The average age in Mexico is 29 — the youthful fabric of a strong, resilient, diverse, complicated people. Famous equally for their artists and their fighters (figure that one out). Frida Kahlo and Julio César Chávez both make complete sense to me as two of the many faces of Mexico: the artist and the warrior.

The former, Frida Kahlo, Diego Rivera, José Clemente Orozco, David Alfaro Siqueiros, and famous works like *Self-Portrait with Thorn Necklace and Hummingbird*. The latter, Julio César Chávez, El León de Culiacán, pummeling Greg Haugen in front of 132,000 people



Matt George at Cumpanio. San Miguel de Allende, Mexico  
Photograph by Mark Hemmings

at the famous Azteca Stadium, fighting for Mexican pride and their rightful place in professional boxing's storied history. Two truths, one country.

I decide it isn't possible to know Mexico City. Not really. Not as an outsider anyway. Naturally, every city and every place evolve over time. Your ability to know that place, much less judge that place for its beauty and its flaws, comes only with time. It comes only with experience.

Books are the closest we can get because they let us go the deepest, but even then you don't feel it. You can't taste the gorditas at San Miguel's Tuesday market. You don't know how crisp the air is at sunrise when Mexico City's (many) endurance athletes hit the historic district. You don't know what the croissant de almendra at Cumpanio tastes like.



San Miguel de Allende | Photograph by Mark Hemmings

Like all things meaningful, "the country eludes the generalizer and summarizer; it is too big, too complex, too diverse in its geography and culture, too messy and multilingual" (Paul Theroux).

Other writers have tried, and failed, to accurately capture it. Many of them. Scour the pantheon of great writers, and all but a few have never been to Mexico. Maybe because, in Mexico, there is so much to say. "Mexico has been lucky in the eminence of its visiting writers, and though they all see something different, Mexico invariably represents for them the exotic, the colorful, the primitive, the unknowable" (Paul Theroux).

Theroux tried again. "Mexico is not a country. Mexico is a world, too much of a mundo to be wholly graspable, but so different from state to state in extreme independence of culture and temperament and cuisine, and in every other aspect of peculiar Mexicanismo, it is a perfect example of thatness."

Jack Kerouac tried. "We had finally found the magic land at the end of the road, and we never dreamed the extent of the magic."



Aldama Street | Photograph by Mark Hemmings

Rebecca West tried and put together a series of short pieces that managed to be “sometimes spirited and insightful.”

Graham Greene tried and came away with an “almost pathological hatred” of the place. Something that strikes me as bordering on impossible. I blame Graham entirely.

Mexico City bleeds northwest, east of Michoacán and west of Hidalgo, paving the way to our true destination: San Miguel de Allende, in the Bajío Mountains of Guanajuato state. A pilgrimage that some of New Brunswick’s most esteemed artists have made since the early years of the Second World War.

I intend to find out why.

### SCENIUS

Allow me a slight digression. Not just any old, time-wasting digression but an important one.

All of my work starts with a question. I come across something that piques my curiosity and that, inevitably, leads to more questions. I find stories within those questions and weave them together like so many strands of DNA.

The question I encountered here and now was rather obvious: Why have some of the most treasured artists in New Brunswick’s history travelled to, lived in and died in San Miguel de Allende? And why, almost a century later, have two well-known New Brunswick photographers who have been teaching photography in San Miguel for almost 20 years



invited me to share their beloved Casa Obraje?

Curiously, I found my answer in the stone walls of The Eagle and Child, a small, obscure pub on the outskirts of Oxford. In an idea. The idea of “scenius.”

This pub, I’ve come to discover, contains magic. It isn’t an entirely explainable magic — no true magic is — but I won’t be the first to have tried.

“Patrons of The Eagle and Child wrote three of the five best-selling fantasy series of all time within an eighteen-year period — *The Lord of the Rings*, *The Hobbit* and *The Chronicles of Narnia*. It is here, on Tuesday mornings, that C. S. Lewis, J. R. R. Tolkien and other members of the Inklings of Oxford met to read, discuss and critique each other’s work” (Packy McCormick, *Not Boring*).

Tuesday mornings in Oxford were so important to Tolkien that he dedicated the first edition of *The Lord of the Rings* to his time there: “What I owe to them all is incalculable.”

The Eagle and Child played host to a magically productive time, in a magically productive place, among a group of magically productive people. It played host to a scenius — the phonetic combination of the words “scene” and “genius.”

Brian Eno, a giant of music history and the person who coined the term, has argued that moments of collective genius have started with “very fertile scenes involving lots and lots of people — some of them artists, some of them collectors, some of them curators, thinkers, theorists, people who were fashionable and knew what the hip things were — all sorts of people who created a kind of ecology of talent.”

The recipe for scenius, insofar as there can be one, is simple. According to technology writer Packy McCormick, change needs to be in the air as a result of a catalyzing event, smart, talented people need to be motivated by a shared mission audacious enough to keep them interested for a long period, governments need to be friendly to progress, the right mix of people from a variety of backgrounds need to be in the same place at the same time.

I believe there was, and is, a San Miguel scenius that includes three generations of Maritime artists and that will continue with a fourth.

### SAN MIGUEL DE ALLENDE

Born in 1909 in Chicago, Stirling Dickinson was an American artist who spent much of his life in San Miguel de Allende, beginning in 1937 when he was just 27 years old. Dickinson was wayward after graduating from Princeton University and, finding himself 170 miles northwest of Mexico City, stepped off the train at dawn in a landlocked town in the Bajío Mountains. He was immediately captured, curiously, by the quality of San Miguel’s light.

“He was dropped off at the town’s leafy main square, El Jardín. It was dawn, and the trees were erupting with the songs



James Wilson and Mark Hemmings in the Escuela de Bellas Artes, San Miguel de Allende | Photograph by Matt George

of a thousand birds. The first rays of the sun glowed over mountain ridges to the east. ‘There was just enough light for me to see the parish church sticking out of the mist,’ Dickinson would later recall. ‘I thought, My God, what a sight! What a place! I said to myself at that moment, I’m going to stay here!’” (Jonathan Kandell, *Smithsonian Magazine*).

That town square was, as it happens, where I found myself with James Wilson and Mark Hemmings, two of New Brunswick’s most respected artists, discussing the unique delegation of Maritime creatives that would later make San Miguel home, among “the refuge of artists” from all over the world.

Dickinson is credited with being the one most responsible for this creative collective. After serving with U.S. naval intelligence during the Second World War, he returned to San Miguel, recruiting hundreds of others to do the same in the optimism of a post-war world. “They had the GI Bill and they liked the ambience here and the good weather” (Paul Theroux).

Although being only an amateur painter himself, he became the director of the Escuela Universitaria de Bellas Artes, an art institute that he had co-founded in an old convent. Walking within the stone walls of the

former convent with me now, Wilson and Hemmings talk animatedly about the mural in the refectory, painted by one of Mexico’s most cherished muralists, David Alfaro Siqueiros.

Siqueiros himself taught mural painting at the Escuela de Bellas Artes in 1948 and was one-third of Mexico’s los tres grandes (José Clemente Orozco and Diego Rivera make up the other two-thirds). For cultural context, saying the words Siqueiros, Orozco and Rivera in Mexico is the equivalent of saying Bocuse, la mère Brazier, Troisgros and Carême in France.

The gravitational pull of the famous muralists of San Miguel, and the footsteps laid by Stirling Dickinson and the American GIs, inspired the first generation of New Brunswick artists to make the pilgrimage to San Miguel and, often, to stay for many years.

The first were Ted Campbell and his wife, Rosamond Campbell, the latter being buried many years later in a local cemetery in the summer of 2013. If Stirling Dickinson was the inaugural inspiration for American artists to make the Mexican pilgrimage, Ted Campbell was the inspirational force in New Brunswick for a creative collective that would go on to include Miller Brittain, Jack Humphrey and Fred Ross. The latter, New Brunswick’s

Mexican Muralist, after having been mentored by Diego Rivera, would go on to mentor the next generation at home, and to be someone whom I happened to be with in San Miguel these many years later.

### JAMES WILSON

It was his 16th year coming to Mexico. “Can you believe that?” he asked with a twinkle in his youthful eye, his voice echoing up and off the walls of Casa Obraje’s inner courtyard.

James Wilson first arrived in San Miguel in 1994, agreeing, perhaps reluctantly, to a long road trip from Saint John with a friend who was a filmmaker. Much like Stirling Dickinson and Fred Ross before him, he was immediately captivated by the special quality of the light: “It had this sense of humanity about it.” He believed it would make the perfect setting for a photography workshop — allowing other aspiring creatives to see the unique light, colour and photographic opportunities that only San Miguel provides.

Although it was more than a decade before Martin would return, he and Mark Hemmings have been teaching photo workshops in San Miguel for 16 years and counting, bringing hundreds of photographers from New Brunswick and around the world to this unique town nestled in the Bajío Mountains.

Inspiration though is only true insofar as what it’s used for. How did San Miguel de Allende influence the evolution of Wilson’s career in fine art photography in the Maritimes?

The name Wilson in the documented history of photography in New Brunswick carries 136 years’ worth of weight. In 1939, Lewis Wilson, James Wilson’s father, then only 23 years old, bought the Erb photography business. Started in 1877 by Isaac Erb and then later run by his son, John, the studio on 13 Charlotte Street in Saint John was a hub for industrial and commercial photography. When Lewis Wilson purchased the business from John Erb’s widow, his ambition was to include photo finishing, framing and art sales, among other ventures.

James Wilson got his start in photography working for his father in this very studio, but he too was creatively ambitious. Although he learned the family business of photography as it was at the time, his true passion was fine art photography. Wilson, like painter Miller Brittain before him, went to New York City, a hub of the photographic world, to study and hone his artistic craft. He was captivated by the possibility of landscapes, light, nature and the enduring humanity that natural-light portraiture and street photography would allow.



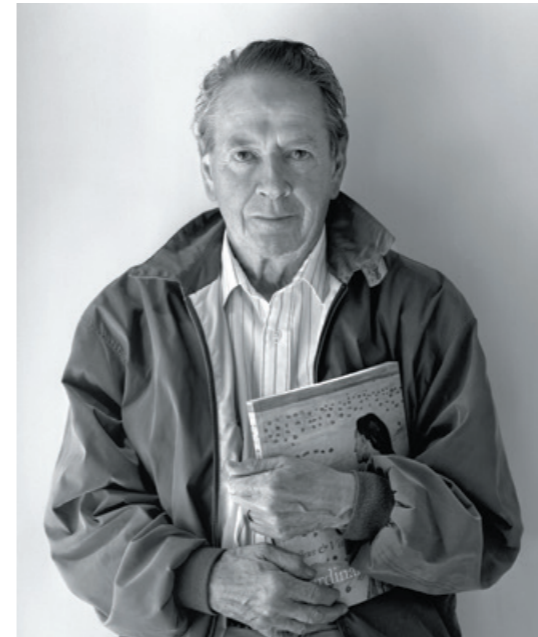
Portrait of an Unknown Woman in San Miguel de Allende  
Photograph by James Wilson



Bloomfield Ridge, Bloomfield, New Brunswick  
Photograph by James Wilson

Many years later, Wilson built a new studio, on the fringe of Norton Shore Road, at the edge of the Kennebecasis River, dedicated to fine art photography and, unsurprisingly, to light. I stood with James below the north-facing window, reminiscing on how it had been designed specifically for natural-light portraiture. Those portraits now line the pages of a beautiful hardcover book, *Social Studies*, that catalogues a travelling exhibition of large black-and-white prints, the result of 25 years of craft. Portraits from this series appear in the National Gallery of Canada’s collection, and Wilson’s landscapes are now hung on the walls of embassies around the world, most recently at the Canadian embassy in Paris.

Like his mentor Fred Ross before him, James Wilson inspired the next generation of New Brunswick’s artists to fall in love with Mexico, to fall in love with the storied history of San Miguel de Allende, and to bring that inspiration home to the Maritimes. There is no one who has carried that tradition quite like Mark Hemmings.



Portrait of Fred Ross | Photograph by James Wilson

### MARK HEMMING

Like everything does, the photography industry has evolved. The fundamentals are the same: light, humanity and a keen eye, but the technical details have changed. Film soon became digital, digital soon became social, and now social is dealing with the rise of artificial intelligence.

There are few humans alive with the technical understanding of photography that Mark Hemmings has. The word “mastery” comes to mind. I don’t use that word lightly. Beautiful things matter to me in a semi-obsessive way. It’s the same word Eric Clapton used when asked to describe John Mayer’s proficiency on the guitar. He had mastered the instrument. That’s Mark Hemmings, although his instruments are light and a lens.

Like all masters, his desire to capture good images borders on the obsessive. It’s more of a compulsion than a vocation. As it should be. That’s what it takes. That is what mastery of craft demands, and it’s what Mark found in San Miguel de Allende.

I wasn’t there with Mark to take great photos. Not really. I enjoy the pursuit, but my real love is words. Shaping and framing language in the same way that Mark Hemmings and James Wilson shape photographs. But if I was going to tell this story well, I needed to see the story as it really was. To understand and to know how Hemmings thought about photography and why it means what it means to him.



Lepreau Falls, New Brunswick | Photograph by Mark Hemmings

Travelling the streets of San Miguel with Hemmings on foot, often just before the sun rose, I found myself almost annoyed by his psychopathy of pursuit. It meant being bandied about, at a pace well beyond my typical saunter, hell-bent on pouring as much into a day of photography as possible. Seeing the world with him is simply bearing witness to complete adherence to craft, unsurprising given his early inspiration from and love of Japan. Hemmings carries with him an understanding that, above all else, the thing to do is to make great work. To hear the demand of your art and to respond with fortitude, consistency and courage.

In the famed Cumpanio café in the heart of San Miguel, I leaned to my left and showed him an image I was particularly proud of. I asked him what he would do to it: “How would you make this perfect?” It’s a question that thousands of photographers have asked him across 20-something countries over the course of more than 25 years. To my dismay, there were exactly five things I had missed. Luckily, his understanding of photography hardware is eclipsed only by his mastery of software, in this case, Adobe’s Lightroom. At blinding speed, imagining incorrectly that I was following and could replicate it, Mark adjusted my wayward amateurism. The result?

Perfection.

Hemmings has never shied away from the technical evolution of photography. Even when faced with the transition from film to digital early in his career, he doubled down on evolving his ability as the future was then demanding. His work as a professional photographer in the Maritimes has



Quaco Head, St. Martins, NB | Photograph by Mark Hemmings

since diverged into two paths, commercial and creative. The latter, an obsession with natural features like New Brunswick's waterfalls, exploring new technologies like generative art, using artificial intelligence tools, leveraging social media daily to tell a great story, and educating through his art.

On the commercial side, Mark teaches photography all over the world, in destinations much like San Miguel de Allende that have a light and humanity totally their own. You can just as easily find Mark in the mountains of Japan as in the rural streets of Ireland, or Spain, or Greece. Always with a camera. Always with a calm determination. Always moving swiftly and with purpose. Always with the goal of making something beautiful.

### CONCLUSION

It is, I imagine, normal for the traveller's feelings of Mexico to be complicated. It's a complicated place with a fiercely proud and complicated people.

Paul Theroux had begun his travels in Mexico "in a mood of dejection and self-pity, feeling shunned, overlooked, ignored, rejected" and left with a feeling of hope. "I was uplifted, smiling, when I set off for home, my hand on my heart, promising to return."

It is, by any stretch, a welcoming place. Not in the same theatrical politeness you'll find in the Maritime provinces, but with a calm acceptance of the fact that you're there and that you're different. Mexicans make it clear that they have things to do beyond serving your too eager smile. Rightfully so.

I was grateful to experience San Miguel de Allende with two of New Brunswick's most cherished photographers. To understand why it meant so much to Ted and Rosamond Campbell, Miller Brittain, Jack Humphrey, Fred Ross, James Wilson and Mark Hemmings. To know that a connection between people and place three generations deep will inevitably continue with a fourth. To have understood the San Miguel scenius and the pull of Mexico for those with a creative soul.

"One of the great thrills of travel is to know the satisfaction of arrival, and to find oneself among friends" (Paul Theroux).

For the generations of Maritime artists before, and all generations hence, the only thing to do is start.

Arrieros somos y en el camino andamos – All of us are mule drivers, headed down the road. [E]

Subscribe to the [EDIT] YouTube channel to watch Edit Media's exclusive documentary film, directed by Mark Hemmings and hosted by Matt George



# WHAT I KNOW ABOUT Mental Health

BY ETHAN ASH



Photographs: Mark Burnett, Tyler Warren Ellis

From working within mental-health services in the United Kingdom, I have found that mental health is not a "one size fits all," there is no "one hundred percent one hundred percent of the time," and unfortunately there is no "magic pill." Poor mental health, or even brief decline in mood, can result in, at times, the most negative and undesirable outcomes. Fluctuations in mental health can be more difficult to manage than changes in physical health: put simply, if your body perceives pain, it usually compensates for this, for example, with a limp. Taking acetaminophen for a headache in the hope of lessening its severity is straightforward: in a basic sense, your work is done.

Conversely, when we struggle with our mental health, there is no "quick fix": the brain does not compensate easily. At times, due to defence mechanisms and previous experiences, it may perceive benign stimuli as a threat and flood the body with hormones to enable "fight or flight," causing a cascade of effects resulting in heightened levels of anxiety, stress and fear. While these sensations rarely last, the more frequently they occur the more intense they can become, causing a seemingly perpetual state of anxiety with a myriad of physical and mental implications. By distracting this complex bidirectional, physiological/psychological reaction, music and/or laughter can allow the brain to orientate to the reality of the situation. "You're fine. You're safe. There is no threat."

That was all a bit intense, wasn't it?

Personally, I am biased. Biased because I believe that music and laughter are two of the best ways to improve your mood and well-being. I am a professional musician who sometimes performs alongside one of his greatest friends, a comedian. I am biased, but be patient, read on, and it will make sense.

Firstly, music. You can find music wherever you look and, while music is a universal and cross-cultural expression that is formed through different modalities, it can be difficult to define explicitly. For example, the voice, which most people use every day for conversation or otherwise, is the instrument of singers. Equally, tapping rhythmically (or not) on a table to produce some type of percussive sound is arguably the foundation of drumming. Researchers have found that music and expression through sound (whether considered music or not) benefit well-being, mental health and cognition.

Music activates emotional, reward and memory areas of the brain, invoking emotions and changing mood depending on the genre, the preferences of the listener and the memories associated with both. Music can alleviate stress, agitation, distress and symptoms of anxiety in the short term. A recent study conducted in a psychiatric-inpatient setting used music rather than medication (as needed) to alleviate distress. It noted that less medication was needed to manage agitation and anxiety, helping to reduce distress in arguably a highly distressing environment. Music even benefits those who struggle with neurodegenerative conditions. I implore you to watch a short video of the late neurologist Oliver Sacks showing the effect of placing headphones on an elderly man with dementia. I challenge you not to be emotionally moved and enthralled by the simplicity and beauty of the interaction.

Secondly, laughter. Laughter is also a universal and global expression. A complex utterance utilized across varying emotional modalities including happiness, amusement, joy, sadness, anger and grief. Laughter not only occurs in social situations as an aid to guiding and facilitating the flow of conversation and the establishment of relationships but also as a coping mechanism in times of distress, adversity and tragedy.

Both music and laughter are non-invasive, non-pharmacological, low risk and highly accessible. And both enhance physical health by reducing stress, cortisol levels and blood pressure. Moreover, they help to improve mood and lessen symptoms of depression, anxiety and negative emotions. In a basic sense, laughter increases your body and brain's "happy hormones" as an effective "hack" to improvements in well-being, and music can distract and reorientate that tricky, threat-seeking brain to the reality of the situation.

Laughter and music have few contraindications. For most people, however, the use of antidepressants and other psychotropic interventions comes with side effects: a cruel twist. If you were to break your leg, you would not welcome a kick from the doctor as a potential first line of treatment and

a following kick for up to four to six weeks. Of course, there is a role for medications in the complex balance and pursuit of manageable and better mental health; however, laughter and music can be viewed as your free prescription, one that has few to no side effects and requires no waiting for it to be beneficial or therapeutic.

Unlike psychological intervention, which takes time and hard work and, like medication, may not be the correct intervention, laughter and music can be instantaneous and effective. Psychology and therapy can be retraumatizing and destabilizing — again, a metaphorical kick in your broken leg — while laughter and music are rarely, if ever, either of these. Of course, like medication, there is a role for psychological input and therapy in the complex balance and pursuit of manageable and better mental health, but using laughter and listening to music needs no professional training or costly insurance.

Now, it's important to be pragmatic, nuanced and critical. A large amount of my work in mental health is within crisis. Crisis is a short-term, acute and usually highly distressing high-risk environment. It is imperative to use or access psychological input, therapy and/or medications when appropriate. The management of individual mental health is... *individual*. People should not be shamed or caused to feel guilt for the use of medication, psychology or both to manage their mental health. You don't feel shame taking acetaminophen for a headache. Laughter, music and other supplementary therapies and interventions are more readily available and are effective in alleviating acute or short-term distress. It is important to appreciate when short-term strategies or interventions can be beneficial in managing mental health and when it is appropriate to access professional intervention (family doctor, psychologist, psychiatrist, therapist) for continuing support that improves quality of life.

Overall, just like physical health, mental health fluctuates. At times, all we can do is sit with the uncomfortable until it becomes comfortable or a little more bearable. It's difficult to be "stuck in your head," feeling that you're with neighbours you didn't invite. Nevertheless, I always believe things get better. I feel we only really become aware of poor mental health when it becomes poor. Sounds stupid, right? What I mean is that we rarely acknowledge when we are doing well, when we are happy, and when things aren't as difficult. We only become aware of decline in our mental health when it is threatening, distressing, worrying and sometimes painful.

Using the headache analogy, we only really notice a headache when we have one. If headaches were not a regular occurrence, it would be strange to announce "I don't have a headache." We notice a headache because



Ethan Ash tours Atlantic Canada every summer

it hurts but acknowledge that most of the time it will dissipate, and we can carry on.

I honestly feel that mental health is similar but also believe it can be harder. We argue with ourselves internally: "I don't feel good. I'm a failure. I'm weak. I *should* do this, I *have* to do this, I *must* do this." Sound familiar? The brain at times can be critical, a tricky little liar that we tend to listen to: we would rarely stand for someone saying these things to our face. All of us can take a certain amount of stress, some more than others, but even the most resilient of us eventually must take a step back. We would give ourselves time if we had a broken leg, but with mental health we attempt to push through until, inevitably, something gives.

It is important not to pathologize normal responses to adverse experiences and to understand that changes and decline in our mental health are temporary. The bad rarely lasts. Of course, sometimes it feels like forever, but it isn't. Understanding different ways to manage those changes or to support recovery is relevant, whether an acute, short-term strategy or indeed a long-term intervention. Small steps are more achievable, manageable and realistic, and choosing which small step, strategy or support is up to you. You are in charge. You are the boss. I rarely promise things,

but I promise that, when it feels impossibly difficult, it is still temporary and will improve.

Now, give yourself some credit, put on your favourite song or comedy, and take a minute to breathe. [E](#)

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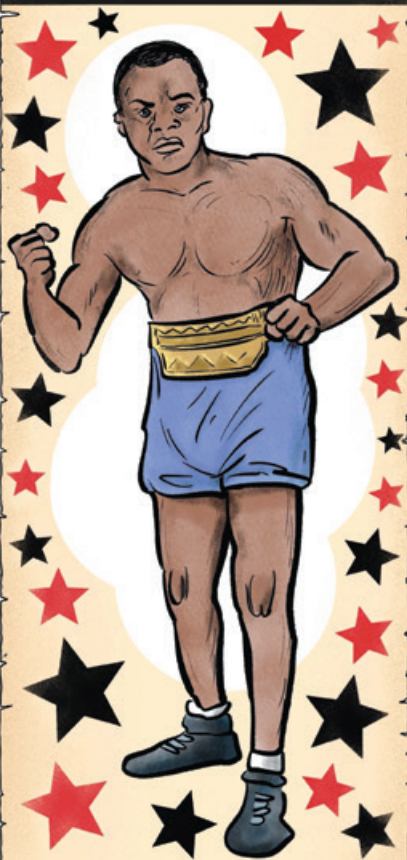
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*Alive Inside: A Story of Music & Memory – Featurette*

Several successful summer tours of the Maritimes have made British singer-songwriter Ethan Ash a familiar face in East Coast Canada. He has several hundred gigs in his CV, including a number across the Maritimes: Harvest Jazz & Blues Festival, Halifax Urban Folk Festival, KIRA Amphitheatre and Imperial Theatre. He has supported major stars like Ed Sheeran, Passenger and Grammy Award-winning songwriter Amy Wadge and has had extensive radio play on national and international stations. When not touring, Ash works as a mental-health professional in crisis mental-health services at a hospital in the United Kingdom. With a bachelor's degree in psychology and a master's in pediatric neuropsychology among his qualifications and a background in neuroscientific research, he is well-informed both academically and through personal experience to speak on mental health. An inspiring keynote speaker, he has delivered his uplifting presentation to teachers, students and to corporate audiences. He is now taking bookings for 2024.



# SAM LANGFORD



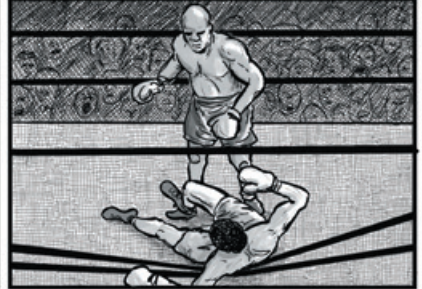
AN ILLUSTRATED  
HISTORY  
BY  
BRANDON  
HICKS

Sam Langford, one of the greatest boxers to ever live, was born in Weymouth Falls, Nova Scotia, in 1886.

Fleeing an abusive home, Langford took odd jobs throughout his youth, working as a logger, a ship attendant and an ox driver. He lost a farming job in New Hampshire for fighting the other workers, early evidence of what was to be his true calling.



At 15, Langford found work as a janitor for the Lenox Athletic Club in Massachusetts. His first professional fight occurred one year later in 1902. He won in a knockout victory.

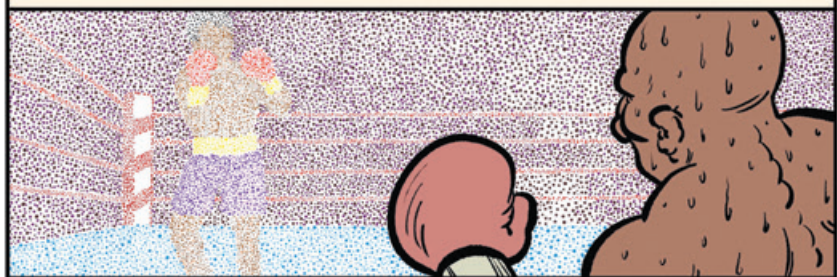


Langford's short stature (1.7 meters) and compact frame made him one of the sport's heaviest hitters but difficult to place in a weight division. He once went 15 rounds with lightweight champion Joe Gans and won, but was denied the title after he weighed in just over the 135-pound limit.

Similarly, heavyweight legend Jack Johnson denied "the little smoke" a shot at his title, stating, "I'm the first Black champion, and I'm going to be the last."



Langford would continue to fight, despite the social and racial barriers that stood in the way of a title shot. He was partially blinded during a fight in 1917, and his condition worsened over the last eight years of his career. When he won the Mexican heavyweight title in 1923, Langford needed handlers to lead him to the ring. ★★★★★★★★★★★★★★★★★★



His career came to an end in 1926 when he discovered during a fight that he could no longer see his opponent. He retired with an astonishing 168 wins, 117 wins by knockout, 37 draws, 48 no decisions, 3 no contests and 38 losses. Some historians consider the official record a conservative estimate.

In 1944, journalist Al Lumley located Langford at a tenement in Harlem, New York, totally broke and completely blind.



Through Lumley's efforts, fans helped to pay for both eye surgery and a trust fund that provided a monthly stipend.

In 1955, Langford was the first non-champion to be honoured by Canada's Sports Hall of Fame.



He died in 1956.