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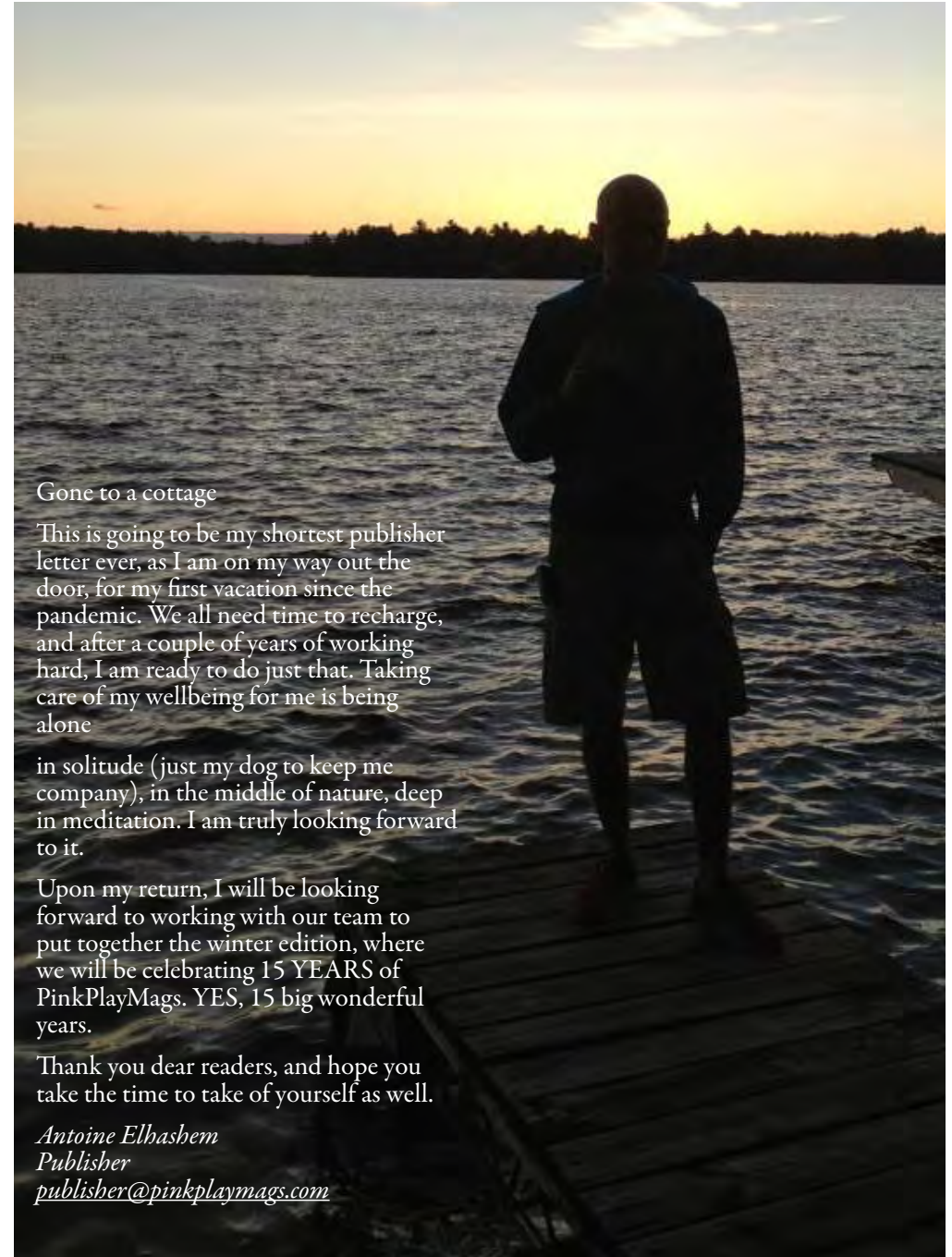
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From the **Publisher**



Gone to a cottage

This is going to be my shortest publisher letter ever, as I am on my way out the door, for my first vacation since the pandemic. We all need time to recharge, and after a couple of years of working hard, I am ready to do just that. Taking care of my wellbeing for me is being alone

in solitude (just my dog to keep me company), in the middle of nature, deep in meditation. I am truly looking forward to it.

Upon my return, I will be looking forward to working with our team to put together the winter edition, where we will be celebrating 15 YEARS of PinkPlayMags. YES, 15 big wonderful years.

Thank you dear readers, and hope you take the time to take of yourself as well.

Antoine Elhashem
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autumnplay!

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In this issue

- 06 **Queer Wellness: Be The Best You Can Be** – Aaron Rothermund
- 10 **Healing with Ayahuasca** – Melissa MacMullin
- 13 **LGBT Travellers Supplement**
- 14 **Canadian Health and Wellness Retreats** – Bryen Dunn
- 18 **Travel Trends**
- 20 **Women's Retreats and Travelling Solo**
- 22 **Wellness Tourism in Japan**
- 27 **Fiction: Young Mungo** – Douglas Stuart

Regular features

- 23 **In the City** – Sherry Sylvain
- 29 **Community Cornerstone: The Imperial Court of Toronto** – Sherry Sylvain
- 31 **Hot Artist: Gay Jesus** – Lucas Silveira
- 33 **From the Heart** – Mychol Scully
- 36 **Autumn Horoscopes** – Julie Antoinette

From the Editor



Greetings and salutations!

Aw, the crispness of fresh fall weather is in the air. The best season, in my opinion. In this issue we continue with our look at recharging, regenerating, and refocusing on ourselves, with the topic of, Wellness.

In this issue, Aaron Rothermund takes a look at the benefits of maintaining good health and well-being, offering his own tips and advice on how to achieve these goals and maintaining them. In our second feature, Melissa MacMullin took one for the team, and got really high so that she could tell us all about her euphoric experience.

Our *Fiction* piece is *When You Call My Name* by Tucker Shaw, a heartrending novel about two gay teens coming of age in New York City in 1990 at the height of the HIV/AIDS epidemic. Our *Hot Artist* profile is written by our new contributor, Lucas Silveira, who chatted with **Gay Jesus**, who brings their non-binary Latinx drag to the forefront. The *Community Cornerstone* column spotlights **The Imperial Court of Toronto**, expertly written

by Sherry Sylvain, who has personally been part of this great charity for many years.

Be sure to check our quarterly *Horoscopes*, and our *In The City* event listings compiled by our Events Editor, Sherry Sylvain. The always inspiring *From The Heart* column is written by Mychol Scully, our Creative Director, who also designs this publication for us. As well, we have our annual *Travel Supplement* that spotlights wellness retreats across Canada, the latest travel trends, women-only and solo travel, along with several unique healing techniques that are only found in Japan.

Stay tuned for our upcoming Winter issue that will be “*Looking Back*” at 15 years of **PinkPlayMags**, with a special feature on queer publishing, a return of some past contributors, a reflection on our past covers, and some congratulatory words from a wide variety of community members and clients.

Enjoy the read!

Bryen Dunn
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Queer Wellness

Be The Best You Can Be

By Aaron Rothermund



On our journey to holistic wellness, we often come to crossroads where we must carefully construct our identity to stand out or to blend in with our surroundings. These pivotal life moments can include: the bubbling brook of childhood, the dank swamp of puberty, and the glacial change from young adult to community elder.

Some people may run off and join the circus, graduate from post-secondary schools, or learn a skilled trade such as an electrician, carpenter, or sex-worker. A portion of these people may partner up, have a union ceremony, adopt pets and/or children, and may or may not be able to afford homes in this economy.

These choices usually require queer people to adjust the way we present ourselves to dress, move, speak, and behave in ways that will not attract negative attention, so that we can enjoy quality goods and

services, fair and just treatment, and/or access to equal employment opportunities.

Every so often it's important to check in to determine what parts of our public presentation are authentic and what has been created to protect ourselves. By weeding out our own assumptions of what others expect from us we can delve deeper into a better understanding of our overall wellness. This curiosity will tip over into other aspects of your life enriching your understanding of other people as well.

Most of your wellness journey can be influenced by practicing healthy habits daily to balance spiritual, emotional, intellectual, physical, environmental, occupational, and social factors in your life. Sounds like a mouthful, but if you aim for equilibrium, you can keep yourself in a healthy state.

You are a biological machine, which means you need to keep yourself in good shape. Our bodies run best with regular water intake, fresh oxygen, and plenty of vitamins and minerals. It may be beneficial to start a dedicated journal to track the healthy things you do for yourself, which can be as easy as daily yoga, Pilates, and/or meditation.

Try not to cut corners with meal preparation and nutritious cooking. Our nutritional health directly affects our mood and function, so make sure you are eating an obscene amount of vegetables (aim for dark green, but other colours also have their benefits), fruits (especially berries which have vitamins and antioxidants, bananas provide potassium and help with digestion, citrus fruits have vitamin C and also antibacterial qualities), and active cultural bacteria (like found in yogurt, kefir and kombucha help with stomach health which is directly connected to our brains.) Getting vitamin D (insert joke) is also necessary to our well-being, which means you can take a supplement or rub on some sunscreen (to prevent cell damage from ultraviolet radiation) and head to the beach.

Let's put a cap on all media, but especially social media. It may sound radical, but media is a platform retailers use to sell us things. The easiest ones to spot are commercials advertising consumable products, and steamy soap operas that are aimed at selling cleaning products to the vulnerable. Everything we see and read in the media poses a question, supplies some answers, and resolves in a message. Whether it's a fashion magazine supplying readers with the latest trends for the season, or an Instagram influencer

talking selfies while promoting the freewheeling lifestyle, there's a focus group working out the marketing kinks.

Even more than that, social media can contribute to our mental deterioration by increasing the user's fear, anxiety, loneliness, and jealousy. Social media has given us the platform to connect with people around the world, but it's also brought some of us dangerously close to self-destruction. The pressure to appear perfect in every post leads some people down a path of ego, which can make them harm themselves for approval including dangerous stunts, shocking challenges, or depriving themselves of sustenance to appear to have an ideal body.

Each post is carefully planned and produced, but much like reality TV, it's not based in a grounded reality. There's planning, writing, make-up, costumes, lighting technicians, sound recordists, make-up retouches, and post-production to carefully fabricate each moment. Striving for perfection sets yourself up for disappointment, because it does not exist in a tangible way. Aim for your best in that moment and try not to compare yourself to others. We are human and fundamentally flawed, but working toward your



personal best can be a healthy way to change our thinking.

Spend time developing your comprehension and communication skills. Turning something you consider a chore into a daily hobby takes dedicated practice. Take some time to figure out what you enjoy reading and what messages you're willing to process from the media you consume. A daily practice could include a morning newspaper, science fiction, celebrity biographies, romance novels, comics and/or graphic novels. The goal is to read as much as possible to develop connective patterns in our thinking, so we can take in and process more information. Reading out loud for a dedicated hour every day will strengthen your vocal health while building confidence in your public presentation skills.

Set yourself up for wellness success by prioritizing integrated health and fitness. Then go further to make a list of all the tasks and chores in your month. By tackling the earliest deadline, you can keep yourself on track in conjunction with the priority level of the projects on your list. Try to stay mindful in your daily wellness practices, including keeping track of sleep patterns, dietary intake, and exposure to exercise and nature. Then also remember

to take time to practice being kinder to yourself: give yourself a compliment, take yourself out to a restaurant, and if you play your cards right, maybe you'll get your happy ending (pun intended).

Once we take our integrated wellness into our own hands, we will be able to move forward authentically as ourselves. We won't be forced to present an idea of ourselves to hide from mockery, shame, or to appear bulletproof to variations of violence directed at us for living outside of the mainstream. Instead of comparing ourselves to others we can direct our energy into recognizing our own selves as complex and radiant beings of light and energy.

Aaron Rothermund is a freelance writer, theatre creator, and filmmaker. Aaron has worked on articles for The Courier, Culture Days, theBUZZ, and PinkPlayMags.



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Healing with Ayahuasca

It's Magical. It's Terrifying. It's a Life-Changing Ride

By Melissa MacMullin

I drank the first cup of the burnt raisin-tasting psychoactive brew and waited. Nothing. Two hours past. Still nothing. Took a second cup, 30 seconds later the temple turned purple. I went down. What happened next? I was not prepared.

Two months ago, I booked a solo trip to Joshua Tree, California. I heard it was the perfect place to get away from it all, focus on one's self, slow down, and simply reflect. The Joshua Tree itself symbolizes the strength and beauty that can arise from dysfunction—unknowingly we were about to have a lot in common.

It's been rumoured the land is riddled with energy vortexes, and I was in serious need of some out-of-this-dimension healing. Ready to get sucked in by

any vortex willing to take me, I was overworked, overwhelmed, and overextending myself. I rolled out the red carpet to crash and burn, and that I did. Hard.

Fast forward, I, a queer Canadian solo traveller in the Mojave Desert, was about to drink ayahuasca at a psychedelic ceremony. I wasn't looking to do it in the beginning, but I guess you can say it was looking to do me—err, I mean I felt summoned. I was researching activities to do while in town and I came across this Native American church offering healing through plant medicine. A-ha! I had to do it.

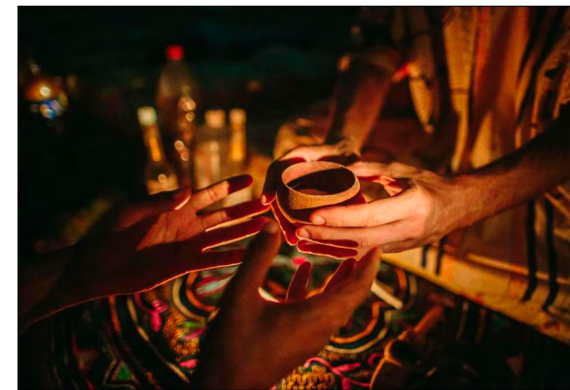
If you haven't heard of ayahuasca, it's a ceremonial psychoactive concoction indigenous to South America, used for thousands of years. The sacred beverage is made out of combining the MAO inhibiting Banisteriopsis caapi vine and the DMT attributes of the Psychotria viridis shrub.

Upon consumption it causes an altered state of consciousness with visual and auditory hallucinations. It's been proven to cure what ails the body and soul through an introspective process. Deep healing of that type comes with a price. First you might soil your pants or vomit. The rest? It depends on where the plant medicine wants to take you. It could be euphoric. It could be hell. It could be both.

Before I knew it the day to "sit in ceremony" had come. There would be ten of us, plus three guardians, and one medicine woman. I chose the moderate dose to start. I drank down the molasses-like tea and waited for it to kick in. Two hours past, I could hear vomiting and crying all around me. I was as sober as a clam. The bell rung, time for a second round. Requesting the deep dose, the guardian said, "I hope this takes you to where you need to go." I threw it back and within two hazy blinks the temple turned purple. I laid down on my sleeping bag and slipped into eccentric patterns of colours I've never seen before.

I tried fighting the visions. I kept thinking I made a big mistake and I needed to get back to Toronto. It was in seconds I realized there's no escaping, I couldn't turn back, I had to surrender. As soon as I let go, I felt the warmth of unconditional love and peace wash over me. Geometric shapes and painted faces of jungle animals like elephants and tigers appeared accompanied by bird sounds. I was still a bit scared, so I kept focusing on my breathing. I would try and touch my face and pillow to make sure I was alive. It was feeling a bit melty, but at least I wasn't dead.

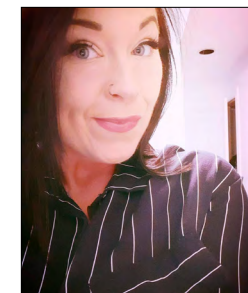
I was thrown into traumatic scenes from my childhood. I remember feeling the child version of myself curled up in a ball and sobbing, then I was released from that vision. Next, I was back in the hospital where my father passed away from cancer six years ago, and I got to ask him questions. Right after, I saw the pain of what my mother went through as a child. I instantly developed more compassion for her than ever before. Shortly after, I experienced dying ten times in ten different ways. I couldn't feel my body. I had become a particle of energy with no recollection of my life here on earth as I swirled around the universe. A huge dark ball kept growing inside of me until I couldn't hold it down any longer, I sat up and it felt like my jaw unhinged. A black



mass of accumulative negative energy flew out into a bucket. I fell back and instantly felt lighter.

I woke up the next morning, shocked I survived the night. I felt healed mentally, emotionally, physically and spiritually, freed from past traumatic experiences. I got a second lease on life, I was grateful to ayahuasca, and ready to live again. Due to a confidentiality agreement, I can't disclose the name of the temple I went to, but if interested, seek out a reputable place with an official shaman. There are many respected healing centres in North America, including Ontario, or you can go back to where ayahuasca began, back in Brazil, Peru, or Costa Rica.

Do your research and go forth at your own discretion. Happy healing, friends.



Melissa MacMullin is a freelance content writer and journalist for leading publications. A strong distinct queer Canadian voice with pride and purpose.



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Pullout Travel Supplement

LGBT Travellers



Canadian Wellness Retreats

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PLUS LGBTQ+ Travel Trends for 2023



Canadian Health and Wellness Retreats

By Bryen Dunn

Some of the world's best oases for health, wellness, and retreat are in Canada — from West Coast rainforest, prairie cities and quaint French-Canadian towns, to seaside Atlantic Canada and country estates in Ontario's rolling hills.

Book a revamp session at one of these top Canadian health havens for a post-summer recharge.

Soak castle-side in Banff

Scottish Baronial-style Fairmont Banff Springs is the celebrated castle in the Rockies, where you can soak in mineral hot springs overlooking Banff National Park (a 1.5 hour drive from Calgary) and recharge at the hotel's plush Willow Stream Spa.

Nature + R&R bliss in Quebec

It's all about clean living and connection to nature at Balnea, a modern mountainside sanctuary in Quebec's quaint Eastern Townships (2 hour drive from Montreal). Take in yoga, hiking, sophisticated

spa cuisine, a sweat lodge, Turkish bath and outdoor pools overlooking the lake, all set on a 400-acre reserve.

Laugh 'n lounge in small-town Ontario

Looking for an urban respite? Conversation and fun is central at English manor-style Ste. Anne's Spa, an elegant countryside all-inclusive resort set on 400 rolling acres just over an hour from Toronto, as are traditional treatments from hot stone massage and wellness classes to reiki and equine therapy.

Spa, surf + stormwatch on the Pacific

A romantic dinner out is one thing. A candlelit couple's massage, inspired by First Nations healing, in a cedar cabin perched on the churning Pacific, is quite another. Crashing waves, ancient rainforest and primo surfing are also why British Columbia's Wickaninnish Inn and Ancient Cedars Spa have made all global "bests" lists.

Golf, boat, shoot, recharge oceanside in Nova Scotia

Discerning golfers land on the exclusive Fox Harb'r Golf Resort & Spa's private airstrip for a week of luxury yachting, skeet shooting, and 18

championship holes along Nova Scotia's windswept Northumberland Strait, followed by a rejuvenating dose of deep tissue massage and Swiss cellulotherapy at Dol-ás-Spa.

Watch the Northern Lights from your Yukon hot tub

Your massage might just come with an aurora borealis light show at Northern Lights Resort and SPA, a rustic lodge in the Yukon wilderness outside Whitehorse. Don't miss the Finnish and infrared sauna and outdoor Jacuzzi for a front-row seat to this natural wonder.

Trek to fitness in British Columbia

Get fit, reduce your waistline and tap into vitality in a positive, holistic way at the idyllic Mountain Trek wellness retreat near Nelson (a short 1.5 hour flight from Vancouver), where bootcamp means yoga + Nordic trekking in the Alps-like Selkirk Mountains.

Spa country- or city-style in Quebec

Body and spirit are the focus at Quebec's acclaimed Spa Eastman with two locations: the woodsy Eastern Townships (a 2 hour drive from Montreal), for nature hikes, yoga, massage and Nordic baths, and stylish downtown Montreal, for urban R&R à la infrared sauna and igloo shower.

Dip, lounge, repeat al fresco in Ontario

Spend a day soaking Nordic-style at serene Scandinave Spa Blue Mountain, just outside of the alpine resort in Collingwood (a 2 hour drive from Toronto): Relax in a 25-acre indoor/outdoor Zen sanctuary with steam baths, hot pools, saunas, massage and hushed solariums with forest views.

Ocean healing on British Columbia's West Coast

Set on the Pacific shore near Victoria (a short ferry ride from Vancouver), Oak Bay Beach Hotel Spa channels West Coast style. This deluxe British Columbia boutique hotel offers seaside mineral baths with ocean views and custom seaweed treatments to recharge the body with micro-nutrients that promote healing.

Finnish thermal-therapy detox in urban Manitoba

Minutes from downtown Winnipeg, Manitoba and next to a golf course, Thermëa by Nordik Spa-Nature is an oasis for bliss: Enjoy Finnish-style eucalyptus and orange steam rooms, hammocks and massage, artful wellness fare, and signature outdoor hot and cold thermal pools in rustic-chic chalet style.

Lakeside body-and-mind balance in rural Ontario

Woodsy, down-to-earth Grail Springs Retreat set on Lake Spurr outside Toronto is about holistic transformation of mind, body, spirit, and emotional wellness. Expect daily meditation in the garden, yoga, juice cleanses, spiritual enrichment, traditional spa treatments and relaxed evenings in the hot tub.

Go Off The Grid in Desolation Sound

On a quiet, uninhabited island in the heart of Desolation Sound off British Columbia's Sunshine Coast, Cabana Desolation Eco Resort is an off-grid resort that uses the latest in conservation techniques that includes environmentally sensitive systems for water, renewable energy, solar powered lighting, sustainably harvested and recycled building materials, and locally grown and harvested foods.

Le Monastere des Augustines, Quebec City

This wellness sanctuary in Quebec seems to vibrate with the peaceful souls of the Augustine Sisters who resided here as far back as the 1600s. Steeped in history, this boutique hotel in the heart of Quebec City will help you disconnect from the real world as you enjoy delicious healthy meals, yoga classes and endless serenity. Indulge in a massage, then meet with a holistic health consultant to find out how to keep feeling your best once you leave.

Outdoor Yoga on Parliament Hill, Ottawa

There's no denying the healing power of water, and Ottawa is filled with activities that are centred around its waterways and more. If you're visiting during the fall season, enjoy a colourful boat cruise or paddle on the historic Rideau Canal, or experience a late season whitewater rafting adventure. In the winter, the canal transforms into an epic urban



skating rink that stretches over 10km long, making it the world's largest skating rink and a great way to see the nation's capital. After a fun-filled day, soak in the soothing waters at the Spa Nordik, offering a range of hot and cold pools, and an infinity pool that boasts breathtaking views of the Gatineau-Ottawa region.

Scandinave Spa Mont-Tremblant, Quebec

Quebec's Scandinave Spa Mont-Tremblant offers the ultimate hydrotherapy endorphin rush as you alternate between hot and cold treatments. Choose from Swedish, hot stone or Thai Yoga massages, or simply relax in the Zero Gravity Pavilion. There are other locations in Montreal, Quebec, Whistler, and Blue Mountain.

Cathedral Grove, MacMillan Provincial Park, BC

"Forest bathing" is a cross between hiking and meditating. The Japanese practice of shinrin-yoku (walking mindfully in the woods using all five senses), is scientifically proven to improve your mental and physical health. Guided forest bathing offers a very slow stroll through an ancient forest, where you'll be invited to interact with your natural surroundings using touch, sight and sound. Even the sense of taste is included, with a tea ceremony to complete the session, showcasing the edible plants of the forest, such as licorice root and lemon balm.

Skoki Lodge, Banff National Park, Alberta

Skoki Lodge is perched at the gateway to breathtaking mountain ridges, valleys, and crystal lakes, set high in the alpenes of Banff National Park. This backcountry lodge is only accessible by hiking or skiing the 20km trail from Lake Louise. While you lose yourself in the tranquility, top notch chefs hover over the wood-fire creating gastronomical masterpieces from local ingredients and seasonal fare. Think seafood chowder, Alberta beef, Canmore coffee, cheese, and wine.

Tagish Wilderness Lodge, Yukon Territories

Tagish Wilderness Lodge is the perfect place to reconnect with your bliss. With no road access, you'll arrive by dog sled or ski plane and be treated to crackling campfires, howling wolves, outdoor adventures, and, of course, the auspicious aurora borealis.

Fall colours on Smokey Mountain, Cape Breton Island, Nova Scotia

Nova Scotia during autumn is a feast for the senses. Take it slow as you cruise the Cabot Trail, a picturesque loop around the rolling hills of Cape Breton Island, surrounded by the shimmering Atlantic Ocean. Book into the Keltic Lodge on the cliffs of Middle Head Peninsula, and enjoy a facial or massage at the Spa at Keltic. Its panoramic views of Cape Smokey are guaranteed to nourish the spirit as you relax on the patio, sipping herbal tea.

Sparkling Hills Resort, Vernon, BC

Upon entering Sparkling Hill Resort, you are greeted by 3.5 million twinkling and shimmering Swarovski crystals. There are 48 different treatment rooms where you can choose from more than 100 different healing and pampering treatments, including its signature Cryo Cold Chamber. This bucket-list experience is known for its healing effects on neurological diseases and arthritis.

Bryen Dunn is a freelance journalist based in Toronto with a focus on tourism, lifestyle, entertainment and community issues. He has written several travel articles and has an extensive portfolio of celebrity interviews with musicians, actors and other public personalities.



Travel Trends

By Bryen Dunn

Expedia released its recent Travel Trends Report revealing new traveller priorities that are shaking up the status quo in 2022. Two-thirds of Canadians (61%) are planning to go big on their next trips with a new “no regrets” style of travel, which Expedia has dubbed the “GOAT” (Greatest of All Trips) mindset.

Among the top GOAT characteristics uncovered is that Canadian travellers are planning to be more present and live in the moment, immerse themselves in culture, splurge on experiences and seek out excitement, as they crave the feelings of contentment/mental well-being (41%), gratification (35%), and excitement/exhilaration (36%). Travellers are also preferring to go-with-the flow and forgo an itinerary (22%) to embrace the freedom to do whatever they want, whenever they want (29%).

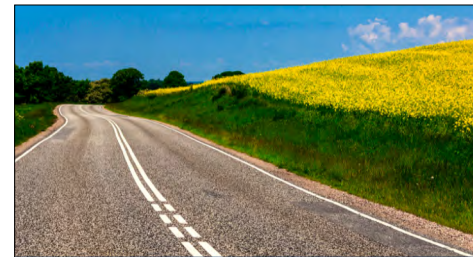
Over the next year, more than a third of travellers are more willing to treat themselves (36%) and prioritize their enjoyment and experiences over their budget. Travellers are also more willing to step outside their comfort zone (20%) and immerse themselves in a destination, culture, and experiences completely different to their own (25%). From embracing food they’ve never eaten before (37%) and experimenting with local delicacies (36%), to visiting a destination they never would have considered pre-pandemic (19%), staying with a local family instead of booking a hotel (13%) or seeking more rural, off-the-beaten track experiences (25%), travellers have a

new curiosity to learn something new and truly experience the world.

In 2022, travellers aren’t just craving new tastes and places, they’re also yearning for the feeling of being excited and exhilarated once again (36%), with nearly one in ten (6%) hoping to feel a sense of danger or riskiness on their next trip, and almost ten percent (9%) willing to try daring or high adrenaline activities and experiences. Additionally, when it comes to their next trip, one-quarter of travellers are most excited about doing things they would usually never do, including sleeping under the stars (15%), skinny-dipping (11%), or having a vacation romance (14%) on their next trip.

Well-being has become top priority, with 25 percent seeking trips to prioritize their mental health, nearly half (41%) searching for a sense of contentment and mental well-being, and one in five (23%) willing to spend less time on their devices to be more present. To reach this sense of contentment, more than a quarter of travellers (29%) also aim to spend more time in their destination to ensure they fully experience all it has to offer.

Bryen Dunn is a freelance journalist based in Toronto with a focus on tourism, lifestyle, entertainment and community issues. He has written several travel articles and has an extensive portfolio of celebrity interviews with musicians, actors and other public personalities.



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Women's Retreats and Travelling Solo

By Bryen Dunn

[Adora Winquist](#) is a [retreat specialist](#), modern World-Renowned Alchemist, aromatherapy expert, and author of [Detox, Nourish, Activate: Plant and Vibrational Medicine for Energy, Mood, and Love](#). She offers her advice on why it's important for women to experience retreats together.

Great Value

Retreats can offer incredible value and an intensive immersion for personal growth and transformation, that are delivered with the guidance of high calibre professionals.

Expand Your Comfort Zone

Research now shows that vulnerability offers us an incredible opportunity to expand outside our comfort zone. A group of individuals that start off as strangers, in a few short days can quickly become friends that last a lifetime and nourish us in the moments when life becomes challenging.

The Time is Now

If we let time and other individuals' expectations run our schedule, life quickly passes us by. Seize the moment and carve out experiences that will nourish and reset your body, mind and spirit, and quantum leap into your dreams and desires for authentic living.

Harness your Divine Feminine Power

Many of us have been raised to rely more on our masculine nature to get things done, advance in our chosen career path, and to be more analytical. Allow the feminine energy to rise within, and embrace your intuitive, mystical, sensual, creative, and receptive nature. There is power in a balanced form that brings harmony, understanding, and creative solutions for a sustainable future.

Women Need a Sisterhood

By coming together, aligned in our intentions to heal ourselves, we transform and elevate everything and

everyone around us. This is true sisterhood, where hearts and minds are joined to create benevolent change, and to naturally inspire and encourage all those around us to rise to the highest potential.

Join Andora on one of her upcoming retreats below:

[Mary Magdalene Retreat](#) in the South of France, Sept 19-27, 2022

[Divine Feminine Immersion](#) in Boone, North Carolina, Oct 27-30, 2022

Vacaya offers a variety of international LGBTQ+ tours that are of particular interest to solo travellers wanting to connect with others while exploring the globe. Below are three individuals who offer advice to those considering a solo adventure.

Connect With Community

Toni Alridge (27) says that travelling solo was the best decision she's ever made. She sought out an opportunity to be more in tune with her community through a travel experience. Her advice for solo travellers is that you'll find it easier to be open and bond with people when you're away from home.

Meet New People

Carter Wyatt (32) says he prefers solo travel so he can set his own schedule and be on his own timeline. He embraces it as an adventure of getting out and meeting new people. When travelling alone, he prefers going on a group tour because, after a week of shared travel experiences he leaves with many new friends.

Find Your Happy Spot

Armando Guardiola (52) finds that solo travel is at its best when everyone's on vacation, because that's when they are usually at their happiest. People are more willing and open to talk with you, exchange ideas, and share experiences together than they are when they're in the comforts of their hometown.

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Wellness Tourism in Japan

By Bryen Dunn

Japan is a destination known for mindfulness and meaningful experiences that can help travellers slow down, disconnect from technology, feed their spirits, build mental wellness, and commune with nature.

What's more, beyond the usual spas, outdoor activities and classes offered at most travel destinations, Japan is home to some unique practices steeped in local tradition, giving visitors both a genuine cultural experience and a way to improve their mental and physical well-being. Below are four authentically Japanese practices that every wellness traveller should experience when visiting Japan.

Shinrin-Yoku Forest Bathing

Although it's only recently become popular in the west, the Japanese practice of *shinrin-yoku* or "forest bathing" was introduced in the 1980s as an antidote to the country's increasingly urban, indoor lifestyle. The concept is simple: disconnect from technology, immerse yourself in nature, and engage your senses. Listen to the sounds of the forest, meditate as you mindfully stroll, breathe in the cool air, remain present and take in the calming atmosphere around you. Forest bathing has been shown to slow your heart rate and decrease depression, fatigue and anxiety. Walk through a tunnel of twisted evergreen branches in Yakushima (Island) National Park, stroll through 100-year-old red pines along the Ichimanpo-no-Mori Forest Bathing Trail, or even forest bathe via canoe on the Toyohira River. Learn more about forest bathing here.

Onsen Experiences

Relaxing in the thermal waters of an *onsen* (hot spring) is a quintessentially Japanese experience. Fed

by volcanic-heated water rich in minerals, *onsens* are [equal parts relaxing, healing and spiritual](#). There are literally thousands of hot spring towns and resorts throughout the country, and your *onsen* experience could be anything from soaking your feet in a public foot bath by the side of the road, to luxuriating in your own private bath at a five-star resort. Not interested in getting wet? Try a "[sand bath](#)" where you'll be buried in warm sand heated by the volcanic waters below. Learn more about experiencing *onsen* here.

Zen Meditation

You can build on your meditation skills by joining a session at Buddhist temples and retreats all throughout the country. In Zen Buddhism, meditation is practised to gain self-realization and enlightenment. Once only associated with monks and other religious devotees, meditation is now widely embraced by those who want to reap the well-documented health and wellness benefits, including managing anxiety and depression, and improving sleep quality. Join a *sesshin* group to learn how to incorporate aspects of Zen and the basics of *zazen* meditation into your life. Learn more about experiencing Zen meditation here.

Shojin Ry Ori – Spiritual Soul Food

For those who want to delve further into their spiritual side, a one- or two-night *shukubo* ([temple stay](#)) can offer a unique experience and respite from the hustle and bustle of travel. Known as *shojin ryori*, the meals at temples are simple and [vegetarian](#), focusing on natural, seasonal ingredients. Accompanied by rice, pickles, and a vegetable soup, every meal is based on the "rule of five" with five colours (black, white, green, yellow and red), and five tastes (sweet, salty, sour, bitter and umami). The result is food that is as beautiful as it is delicious and healthy.



AUTUMN IN THE CITY

by Sherry Sylvain

Hump Night Honeys

Wednesdays; from 10:00 p.m.

Woody's, 467 Church St., Toronto

Hosts Carlotta Carlisle and Katinka Kature welcome an array of special guest stars with DJ Chris Steinbach, and Toronto's sweetest staff.

Tip: This is always a fun and entertaining show, so be sure to carry a stash of tip money to show the entertainers how much you appreciate them.



Jock Night Thursdays

Thursdays; from 10:00 p.m.

Cock Bar, 461 Church St., Second Floor, Toronto

Join hostess Morgan James, everyone's second favourite drag queen, and the semi-clad (or less) men of Cock Bar for an evening of feisty fun and frivolity. Drink specials, prizes, and surprises.

Tip: This is a "men only" space on the second floor of Flash, and not handicap accessible. That said, for men who appreciate men, there is a bevy of beautiful boys and beverages available to alleviate your stresses.

Summer Sundays and Sunday Concert Series

Sundays from 4:00 p.m.

Windrush Estate Winery, 3100 Concession Rd. 3, Adjala, ON
Enjoy award-winning wines and hand-crafted charcuterie, and listen to outstanding entertainment on the terrace as weather permits, or in the Music Hall of the Chateau when weather is less favourable.

Tip: With wonderful, charming hosts, Marilyn Field and John Pennie, these afternoons are entertaining, fulfilling, and, if you're not careful, a little intoxicating. The views and company, alone, are worth the trip.

JFL Toronto

September 22 to October 1; various times

Various venues throughout Toronto

The festival is back and better than ever. On top of a ton of shows, there's also the acclaimed ComedyCON, a daytime series with In Conversations, podcasts, cast panels and more! You're getting an industry insider look into the business.

Tip: Review the website for the extensive selection of events and comedians available that will bust your gut, split your sides, or otherwise laugh your ass off.

**A Tribute to The Greatest Writers
Brampton Concert Band with Micah
Barnes & The Jazz Mechanics**

September 24; 8:00 p.m.

The Rose Theatre, 1 Theatre Lane, Brampton

Don't miss the Brampton Concert Band for a performance with the Jazz Mechanics and one of Canada's most beloved vocalists, chart-topping jazz artist Micah Barnes.

Tip: Tremendously talented jazz vocalist, Micah Barnes, always provides a wonderful, toe-tapping show.

**Jazz at Lincoln Center Orchestra with
Wynton Marsalis**

October 6; 8:00 p.m.

Massey Hall, 178 Victoria St., Toronto

With the world-renowned Jazz at Lincoln Center Orchestra, along with guest artists spanning genres and generations, Jazz at Lincoln Center produces thousands of performance, education, and broadcast events each season in its home in New York City, and around the world, for people of all ages.

Tip: Dress to impress at this beautifully and newly renovated Toronto landmark venue.



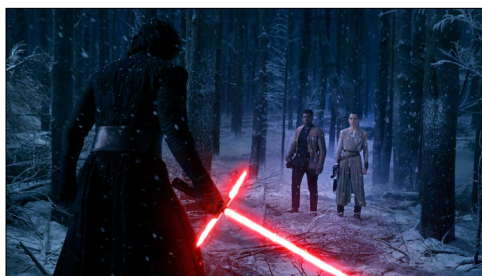
Star Wars: The Force Awakens—In Concert

October 6 to 9

Roy Thomson Hall, 60 Simcoe St., Toronto

The full score of the film is played live by the Toronto Symphony Orchestra, as you enjoy this epic installment in the Star Wars series on an over-sized screen.

Tip: No popcorn, snacks, or sodas during this movie, so you might want to eat beforehand.



**Joshua Weilerstein conducts the Royal
Conservatory Orchestra**

October 7; 8:00 p.m.

Koerner Hall, 273 Bloor St. W., Toronto

Conductor, Joshua Weilerstein, has been praised for his "intense, eloquently moving, and spectacularly knife-edge" performances, and now leads the Royal Conservatory Orchestra, an outstanding ensemble and one of the best training orchestras in North America.

Tip: This venue is renowned as one of North America's most beautiful and acoustically superb concert halls.

TICOT Drag Brunch

October 16, 30: noon to 3:00 p.m.

Church St. Garage, 477 Church St., Toronto

A drag brunch show with a twist! This is an open stage, so if you have a talent you wish to share, all are welcome. Please note that any tips that performers receive are donated to the charities of The Imperial Court of Toronto, Rainbow Railroad and PWA Food Programs.

Tip: Bring lots of tip money to help make change with change, as every dollar goes directly to the charities.

**Night at the Bronze: A Buffy The Vampire
Slayer Tribute Party**

October 28; two shows – see details on the website
Buddies In Bad Times, 12 Alexander St., Toronto

A live read through of one of Joss Whedon's most popular episodes from his most beloved show! A cast of comedians and actors read and sing-through the entire episode of "Once More With Feeling". Want to sing along? Lyrics will be provided. At 10pm, the night will turn into a dance party at "The Bronze".

Tip: Buffy will have all the stakes requires, so you don't need to bring one, but a high collar might not be a bad fashion choice.



Cinderella

November 3 to 13

The Rose Theatre, 1 Theatre Lane, Brampton

This lush production features incredible music, jaw-dropping transformations, and all the moments you love—the pumpkin, the glass slipper, the masked ball, and more—plus some surprising new twists! With a new book by Douglas Carter Beane, let yourself be transported back to your childhood as you rediscover some of Rodgers + Hammerstein's most beloved songs.

Tip: This is definitely a show for young and old alike. Bring the Boomers, the GenXers, the Millennials, and the GenZs.



An Evening With Nigella Lawson

November 23; 8:00 p.m.

Massey Hall, 178 Victoria St., Toronto

Nigella Lawson is an internationally renowned food writer and TV cook whose successful television programs have made her a household name around the world. In 1998 she published her first cookbook, How To Eat, The Pleasures and Principles of Good Food. She now has twelve bestselling books to her name, including her latest, Cook, Eat, Repeat: Ingredients, Recipes, and Stories.

Tip: The only ingredients you will need for this evening will be your enthusiasm, and maybe a note book to write down some wonderful culinary bon mots.

Women's Blues Revue 2022

November 25; 7:00 p.m.

Massey Hall, 178 Victoria St., Toronto

The Women's Blues Revue will be returning to the newly revitalized Massey Hall for its 35th year! Come together with blues lovers for an evening with some of Canada's finest blues musicians.

Tip: Prepare your ears for a feast of saucy blues and blues-inspired music.



**Sleeping Beauty by the State Ballet of
Ukraine**

December 5; 7:30 p.m.

The Rose Theatre, 1 Theatre Lane, Brampton

Don't miss the world's favorite masterpiece of classical ballet performed by the internationally acclaimed, The State Ballet Theatre of Ukraine, which returns to North America and Canada in the 2022/23 season for sparkling performances. A spectacle for all ages.

Tip: Wear your best blue and yellow outfit in support of Ukraine.



Events Editor, Sherry Sylvain is a transgender woman who has been working in the LGBTQ community for too many years to count (or admit to).



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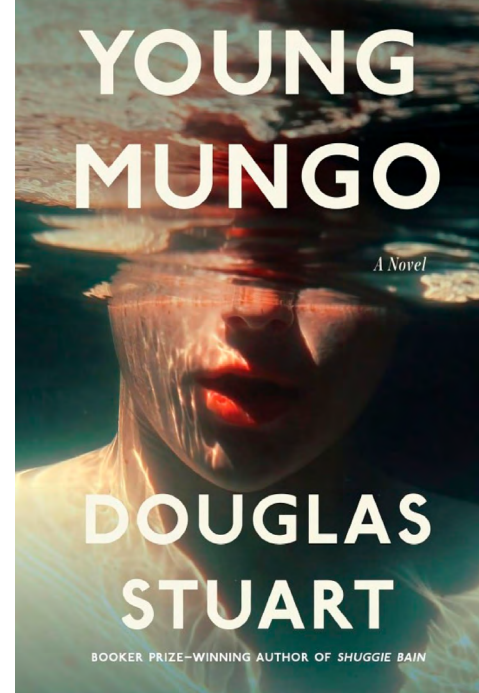
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From the Booker Prize-winning author of Shuggie Bain, Young Mungo is both a vivid portrayal of working-class life and the deeply moving story of the dangerous first love of two young men.

Young Mungo

Born under different stars, Protestant Mungo and Catholic James live in a hyper-masculine world. They are caught between two of Glasgow’s housing estates where young working-class men divide themselves along sectarian lines, and fight territorial battles for the sake of reputation. They should be sworn enemies if they’re to be seen as men at all, and yet they become best friends as they find a sanctuary in the dovecote that James has built for his prize racing pigeons. As they begin to fall in love, they dream of escaping the grey city, and Mungo must work hard to hide his true self from all those around him, especially from his elder brother Hamish, a local gang leader with a brutal reputation to uphold.

But the threat of discovery is constant and the punishment unspeakable. When Mungo’s

Fiction

mother sends him on a fishing trip to a loch in Western Scotland, with two strange men behind whose drunken banter lie murky pasts, he needs to summon all his inner strength and courage to get back to a place of safety, a place where he and James might still have a future.

Imbuing the everyday world of its characters with rich lyricism, Douglas Stuart’s Young Mungo is a gripping and revealing story about the meaning of masculinity, the push and pull of family, the violence faced by so many queer people, and the dangers of loving someone too much.

DOUGLAS STUART is a Scottish-American author. His New York Times-bestselling debut novel Shuggie Bain won the 2020 Booker Prize and the Sue Kaufman Prize from the American Academy of Arts and Letters. It was the winner of two British Book Awards, including Book of the Year, and was a finalist for the National Book Award, PEN/Hemingway Award, National Book Critics Circle John Leonard Prize, Kirkus Prize, as well as several other literary awards. Stuart’s writing has appeared in the New Yorker and Literary Hub.

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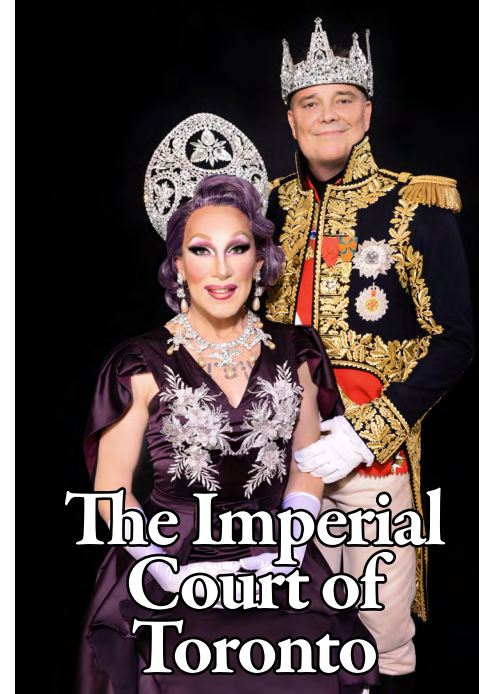
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The Imperial Court of Toronto (TICOT) is a not-for-profit LGBTQ2S+ social service organization focused on FUNdraising, meaning Friendship, Unity, and Nonsense. All members of the group are volunteers interested in supporting the community and represent every aspect of society.

This group is a local chapter of The International Court System, currently numbering standing at 72 chapters throughout Canada, The United States, and Mexico. Founded in San Francisco in 1965 by the late drag artist, **José Julio Sarria**, the Court system is focused on raising funds for local charities through various events. This year the organization is supporting PWA Food Programs, and Rainbow Railroad.

To date, TICOT had raised 27K for these charities in the fiscal year that ends October 2022, added to the more than 2M that has been donated to a variety of other local charities over the years. All these funds are the cumulative results of many small donations, such as performers donating all their tips from organized events. at events.

Each year, the community is invited to vote and elect the leaders of their local chapters to lead fundraising efforts for the coming year. The new leaders then choose individuals on whom they confer monarch

styled titles, in recognition of their past support. As the year progresses, more such titles are conferred on those who have substantially assisted in fundraising efforts, or who have won a competition for a title that requires them to undertake specific fundraising duties during the year.

The elected leaders in Toronto are currently **Emperor XXXV David Valois** and real-life partner, **Empress XXXV Rachele Valois**, who stated, "We consider it a great privilege to have been elected as representatives of an organization with a 35-year history of helping the 2SLGBTQ+ community in Toronto and beyond, and while it is a significant commitment of our time with events virtually every weekend, it is all for a great cause. Most of our events are 'open stage' where we welcome anyone from the community and allies to participate, adding their talent to the mix as we bring the FUN to Fundraising."

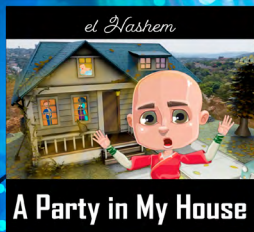
While they do a lot of events in Toronto, and despite having started their reign during COVID, they were still able to represent TICOT on the National and International stage, attending International Court System events in Connecticut, Kentucky, Buffalo, Hamilton, and London, with even more planned.

I personally have been a member of TICOT for just over 20 years, having held a selection of titles, both within Toronto and from various Courts across Canada and the United States. I've enjoyed a great deal of FUN fundraising and have made many lasting friendships throughout North America. If you are looking for a social environment with a purpose, I highly recommend attending a TICOT event to be entertained and support your community.

Events Editor, Sherry Sylvain is a transgender woman who has been working in the LGBTQ community for too many years to count (or admit to).



COMING NOVEMBER 2022



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Keeps Me Home (My Cowboy)



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Hot Artist

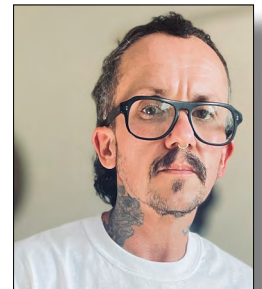


You are also a very outspoken Latinx queer with Colombian roots. How has your cultural heritage informed your artistic practice?

My culture continuously informs my artistic practice because it's something that informs all aspects of my life. It's a complicated thing to grow up knowing you're being granted privileges you wouldn't otherwise get in your home country, while also growing to understand the violence of genocide in Canada's history. It's also never lost on me that the country that grants me these privileges, was also actively supplying army tanks to my home country's government when they were using them to target and murder citizens who were protesting state violence. The impacts of war and colonialism have been at my doorstep since the day I was born, so conversations about religion and politics were always active in my home. The dissonance I experienced as someone growing up within and between cultures made me question structures of power and morality from a very young age and which now heavily appear in my work.

It also became important for me to ensure my culture lived in my work, because of the absolute lack of queer Latinx representation in media and in our drag scene. One of the things I'm most grateful for has been finding fellow queer Latine/x and BIPOC friendships. They've become my family and I love them beyond belief. Instagram @theirholiness

Lucas Silveira is best known as the frontman, singer/guitarist for Canadian rock outfit, [The Clikk](#), and for being the first out transgender man to be signed to a major label record deal. He is also the co-host of Vice Productions docuseries, [Shine True](#). Lucas continues to perform as a solo musician, having recently released a new album called, [The Goddamn Flowers](#).



Toronto's drag scene has graced us with many amazing performers, and one of our greatest shining stars is the amazing award-winning Heath Salazar, who is widely known by their drag name **Gay Jesus**. I caught up with them to dig a little deeper into their fabulousness.

What inspired Gay Jesus, and what was your intention in their creation?

The thing that initially inspired me to do drag was seeing drag kings perform at Zippers. I remember the first time I saw them I was enraptured. Gay Jesus came to me years later and was largely born out of me asking myself what drag was to me personally. That started as a question of gender presentation as a non-binary person, but then related to other aspects of my life like my identity as a Latinx person, my opinions in politics, my relationship to sensuality, and so much more. My intention in the initial inception of Gay Jesus was fundamentally disrupting the ideas of morality that are placed upon us in society as a means of control.

As someone who defines themselves as non-binary, what has your experience been like within the queer community as a drag performer?

It has been mixed, but also largely quite beautiful. There's no end to the discrimination I could speak to, but it truly doesn't hold a candle to the love I've been fortunate enough to experience from my community. That doesn't mean the bad stuff goes away, but it does mean that there's a lot more to queerness than our media would have us believe.



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by Mychol Scully

From The Heart

Wellness is a multi-dimensional state of being that encompasses our physical, mental and spiritual condition. The central aspect of wellness is your state of mind and self-awareness regarding your life in the world.

We're living in a media-saturated environment with an obsession for "wellness," but too often the references are intended to market a book, a supplement or a specific philosophy.

I'm not going to provide a checklist of "stuff to do" to support your physical, mental and spiritual well-being. Rather, what I'd like you to consider is the larger aspects of taking care of yourself and shoring up your place in the world.

There's no shortage of articles about diet and exercise to support your physical well-being. Likewise, we are surrounded by informational resources that address personal mental health through self-awareness and supporting the development of self-esteem, whether that's through affirmations or self-reflection.

Spiritual wellness is a slightly trickier topic, in that many people equate spirituality with commitment to religious doctrine. In fact, even atheists and agnostics can benefit from adopting a more spiritual attitude towards the world and our place in it. For example,

meditation does not require engagement with any religious belief system.

Yoga is a triple whammy of physical activity, mental relaxation and spiritual centeredness that can support us on all three fronts, leading to a more balanced life overall. Yoga also has the benefit of allowing you to start "light" with simple movements, less stressful poses, and gradual advancement within your comfort level at each step.

The point here is that the most important "first step" in your wellness journey can be a simple change to your attitude toward wellness itself. Rather than seeking out "magic formulae" in a rush to wellness, take some time to really think about your wellness goal. By cultivating an internal, centered approach to how you think and feel about wellness, you will find that next steps come more easily in a natural progression of discovery about your physical, mental and spiritual self.

Don't push the river... take some time to contemplate its flow and you may find that you arrive at your destination exactly when you should.

Mychol Scully is Senior Art Director for INspired Media publications PinkPlayMags, theBUZZ, The Local Biz Magazine, and The Pink Pages Directory. Mychol is available for thoughtful conversation or lascivious teasing any time at mychol@mychol.com.





FESTIVAL ACTIVITIES BLACK & BLUE 2022

AS OF AUGUST 9

THURSDAY October 6

VIP LAUNCH COCKTAIL with the COMMITTEE & PARTNERS at Normandie. **DJ DanYUL**

TWINKLE PARTY at Normandie: Disco-pop karaoke

FRIDAY October 7

VIP COCKTAIL of the CARNAVAL OF COLORS

BLACK & BLUE OFFICIAL LEATHER BALL at the LION D'OR

presented by BBCM in collaboration with Pitbull Events and District Party

DJ Ashley Gauthier and DJ Christopher Mortagua

SATURDAY October 8

HAPPY HOUR (5 to 10) 'UNIFORM' BLACK & BLUE at STUD

DISTRICT PARTY at CLUB SODA

presented by District Party in collaboration with BBCM and Pitbull Events

DJ Paskal Daze and DJ Aron

SUNDAY October 9 to MONDAY October 10

BLACK & BLUE Main event 360° at LA TOHU

from 10pm to 8am MONDAY, October 10, for the first time at the beautiful TOHU circular room, in collaboration with District Party and Pitbull Events
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(In alphabetical order) **DJ Alain Jackinsky, DJ Alain Vinet (St-Denis), DJ Ian Key,**

DJ Lady McCoy, DJ Luc Raymond, DJ Maus, DJ Stéfane Lippé,

DJ Stephan Grondin, DJ Steve Aries (St-Denis)

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Gym access at Club La Cité (3 day passes)

Black & Blue 2022 souvenir T-shirt & Carnival of Colors 2022 souvenir T-shirt

Free access to the McCord Museum

Some other benefits such as sauna passes, etc.

BLACK & BLUE

360°

NEW THIS YEAR:

MAIN EVENT AT LA TOHU

A multidisciplinary 360° circular concept with electronic music/guest DJs

Canadian Thanksgiving & Columbus Day Weekend

SUNDAY OCTOBER 9

from 10 p.m. to 8 a.m.

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Autumn Horoscopes

SEPTEMBER 2022 to NOVEMBER 2022

by Julie Antoinette

Aries (March 21 – April 20)

Colour therapy is really a thing. Next time you're in a bad mood, walk into your local craft store and stay awhile. Compare your mood when you leave and note any differences. Colour emits vibration and vibration affects our mood. If you don't buy anything, you're also financially ahead!

Taurus (April 21 – May 21)

Your life is changing in every way possible. Your job, family, body, home, any or all of the above could be undergoing a great transformation. Your attempts to maintain stability throughout this process are only making things worse. Transformation is messy. Ask any caterpillar. The results are breathtaking. Ask any butterfly.

Gemini (May 22 – June 21)

You are a free spirit. Sometimes you think relationships can ruin this. However, lately you're experiencing an uncomfortable loneliness in your freedom. The key is to know who you are, and never lose your sense of self to anyone for any reason. This way, you'll always show up genuinely for yourself and for others. Don't lose yourself in other people's thoughts about you. The worst prison is what other people think.

Cancer (June 22 – July 22)

You have an ever-evolving vision for what you'd like your home environment to feel like. In the past, you've entertained surrounding yourself with an abundance of your favorite things. Presently, you are leaning more toward minimalism. Space and simplicity are far more valuable commodities than the crowding of an abundance of stuff. Realize that the former sense of wanting abundance was really rooted in a sense of scarcity. Less really is more!

Leo (July 23 – August 22)

Your personal search for meaning seems to be settling comfortably into your career sector. You are no longer satisfied with trading the best hours of your day for a pay cheque. You don't have to leave your job. There is a solution. Collaborate with your work environment to find ways to add meaning. Only you know what this means and how it will look. It's worth a shot!

Virgo (August 23 – September 23)

Letting go is really about releasing control. Although you hate witnessing loved ones suffer, you must realize that it is not your role to block their suffering just to save yourself the pain of witnessing it. It is one of life's greatest teachers. In this way, you've made their suffering really about your own suffering. Let go of this concept that is rooted in an enmeshment with the paths of others. Remember the Prime Directive in Star Trek, "You may be present, but must not interfere."

Libra (September 24 – October 23)

You notice that life seems much lighter and in flow than ever before. Think back to a seemingly small decision you made a while ago. It has now resulted in this great change over time which you could not have foreseen. Never underestimate the powerful impact of small changes over time. After all, the journey of a thousand miles begins with one small step.

Scorpio (October 24 – November 22)

Do you often entertain catastrophic scenarios in your imagination? An early experience of feeling unsafe has primed you to be hyper-attuned when scanning any environment for threats at all times. Yes, this skill has helped you to survive, but now it's time to thrive as your safety is no longer in question. Have compassion for yourself. An early trauma is seeking resolution so you can move forward.

Sagittarius (November 23 - December 21)

You have a seemingly unattainable dream or goal that you deeply desire to accomplish. The secret to success with any goal is to take action only when you feel in alignment with your goal. Train yourself into this state by imagining already having completed your goal. This will close the gap between your perceptions and reality. As they say, perception is reality.

Capricorn (December 22 – January 19)

There is an area of your life where you try too hard because you see such little results. Consider that your forced efforts could be contributing to the blockage of flow in this area. It's as futile as trying hard to fall asleep or forcefully unfurl the petals of a flower before their time to bloom. Some things can only happen with letting go and allowing.

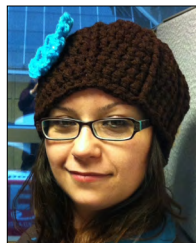
Aquarius (January 20 – February 19)

You are in dire need of an escape or change of scenery to break up the monotony of your daily routine. You've been craving giving a smash to the reset button. Take a weekend and book something out of the ordinary. As they say, a break is as good as a change!

Pisces (February 20 – March 20)

You are such a sentimental sign that any subtle nuance can cause you to get lost in the throes of nostalgia. Nostalgia comes from the Greek root meaning, "Pain from an old wound." Consider whether old wounds are meant to be re-lived repeatedly. Then consider the value of peaceful non-attachment.

Julie is a Sociology and Psychology graduate, a Psychotherapy Intern and a lifelong student of the psyche. She seeks to relay intuitive messages of guidance from the collective astrological archetypes.



I CHOSE TO
CONFIDE IN A FRIEND
GO TO THE HOSPITAL
CALL A HOTLINE
GET LEGAL ADVICE
GET COUNSELLING
CALL THE POLICE

If you or someone you know has been sexually assaulted, you have choices.

Find out what your choices are at
YOURCHOICE.TO



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Ontario

This project has been made possible by a grant from the Ministry of Community Safety and Correctional Services.

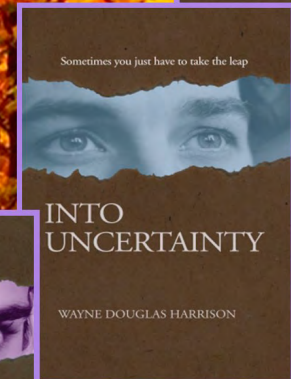
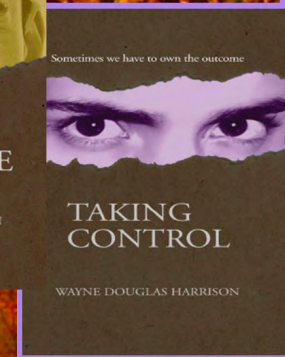
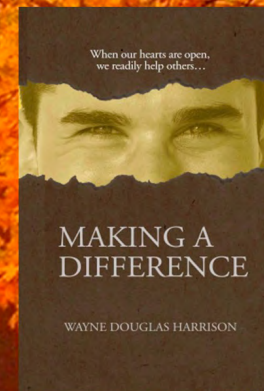
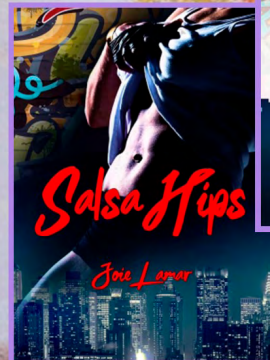
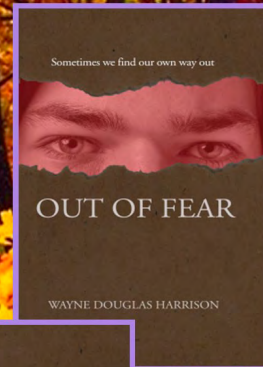
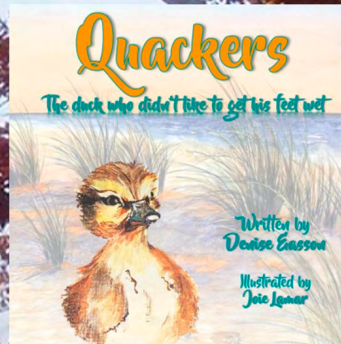


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