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**Gay, Lesbian, Bi, Trans, Queer, Two-Spirit
Community Seasonal • Spring 2023
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Queering Tech

Gradient Spaces and Queer Tech: Supporting the 2SLGBTQIA+ Tech Community

Yesterday and Today's Queer Pioneers in Tech

**Also: Puerto Vallarta, A Tale of Two Princes, Kelly McMichael, Stratford Pride
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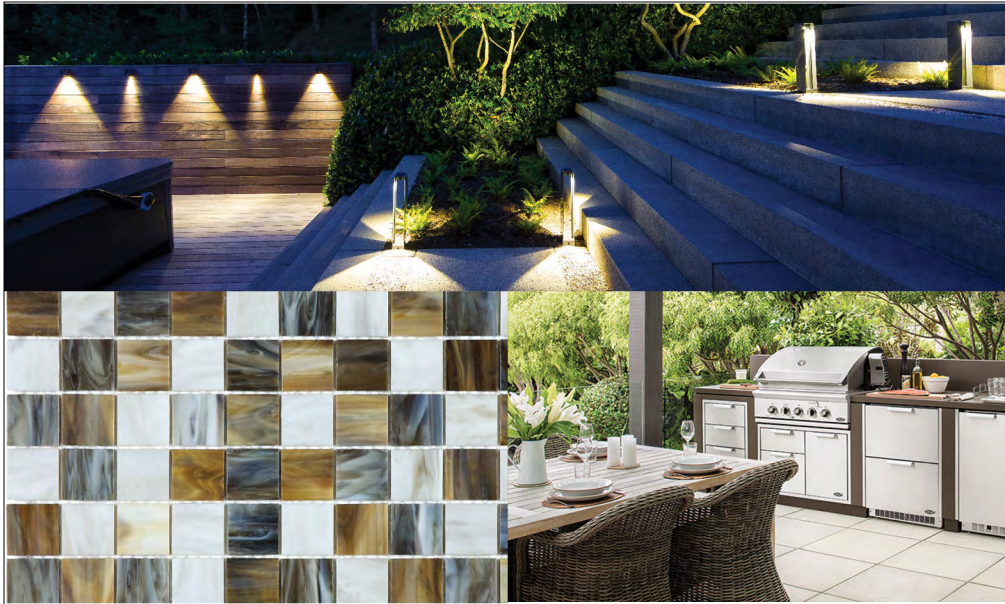
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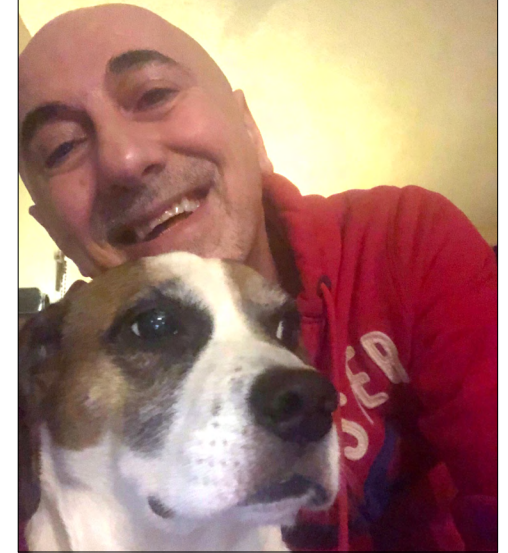
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From the **Publisher**



Welcome to our first edition of **PinkPlayMags in 2023.**

First to mention is that we are still in celebration mood. In December our little magazine that could reached a milestone in publishing in our queer community's local history. 15 years is a really big deal in queerdom, and we now are in the "longest published community magazines" club.

We start the year with a change, and change is always an opportunity for new and exciting things. After so many years (it feels like forever lol) our Editor-in-Chief Bryen Dunn has said goodbye to the role, but don't worry, he's not going anywhere, he is now in his new position as Online Content Manager.

Stepping into his editor's shoes is the wonderful Mel MacMullin, and so far, I have no complaints (lol), but it's still too early to know, so I will keep you posted (lol kidding, she is lovely). Mel has worked with us a for a while as a writer, we loved her work and her passion for community, so we invited her to take on

the helm of things, and we are very glad she accepted.

And we are off to a great start with this year's editorial theme.

Our community contribution to the world and society, over the centuries, are sometimes not widely acknowledged. So, for Mel's first year editorial theme, we decided to look at community contributions in a number of fields. Some were obvious choices like Performing Arts (HELLO. Coming summer 2023) and Fashion (DOUBLE HELLO. Coming winter 2023), and some not so much, like this Technology issue, and Architecture (Coming autumn 2023.)

I enjoy the benefits of technology and I enjoy reading about new innovations, but I don't have a science brain (I have a creative brain), so why don't we dive into this edition together and see what we can learn.

Happy Spring lovely readers.

Antoine Elhashem
Publisher

publisher@pinkplaymags.com

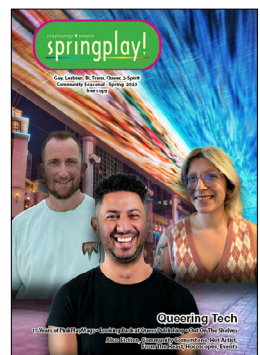
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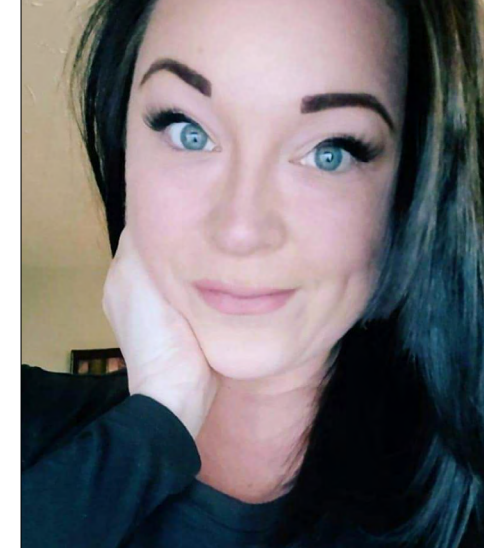
From the Editor

Hello Friends!

Ah, spring! It's the time of the year that signifies renewal and growth, reminding us that the world is full of opportunities and possibilities. An integral part of our ever-evolving world in this day and age is the prevalence of technology - now more than ever, the technology industry has influenced society to a point where it's tough to imagine our lives without it. In this issue, we focus on the contributions of queers who have advanced or are still working to advance technology in its various sectors.

In our first feature, **Gradient Spaces and QueerTech: Supporting the 2SLGBTQIA+ Community**, we sat down with the leaders behind non-profit organizations in Canada helping queer folk succeed in the world of technology through resources, mentorship, networking, and more. Queers are often underrepresented in this industry, and the initiatives these organizations are taking place emphasis on visibility and accessibility for the love of tech and for those who love tech.

Aaron Rothermund sheds light on the thought-leaders and masterminds who've worked to shape technology through the years in our second feature, **Yesterday and Today's Queer Pioneers in Tech**. Do you remember GeoCities? It was one of the very first social networking sites from the 90s, and the co-founder was a fellow queer, **David Bohnett**. It's important to educate ourselves on those who have created substantial technological developments that have paved the rainbow way



for other innovative techies. Our hats off to them!

If you're thinking of heading to somewhere hot and fun with plenty of sand and sun, consider **Puerto Vallarta** – read more on what to see and do at this popular gay-friendly destination in our travel section. Our Fiction piece is *A Tale of Two Princes* by **Eric Geron**, which tells the story of a closeted Crown Prince of Canada and an out-and-proud cowboy who were separated at birth. Sean Ban Beaton brings the scoop on indie musician **Kelly McMichael** in our *Hot Artist* column. And the spotlight for *Community Cornerstone* is on **Stratford Pride Community Centre**, an information and social hub serving LGBTQ+ residents and visitors.

Check out our quarterly horoscopes to find out what the season of new beginnings has in store for you in 2023, as well as our exciting compilation of *Spring in the City* event listings handpicked by our Events Editor, Sherry Sylvain. *From the Heart* by our Creative Director, Mychol Scully will be sure to leave you with insightful food for thought.

Happy reading!

Mel MacMullin
Editor-in-Chief
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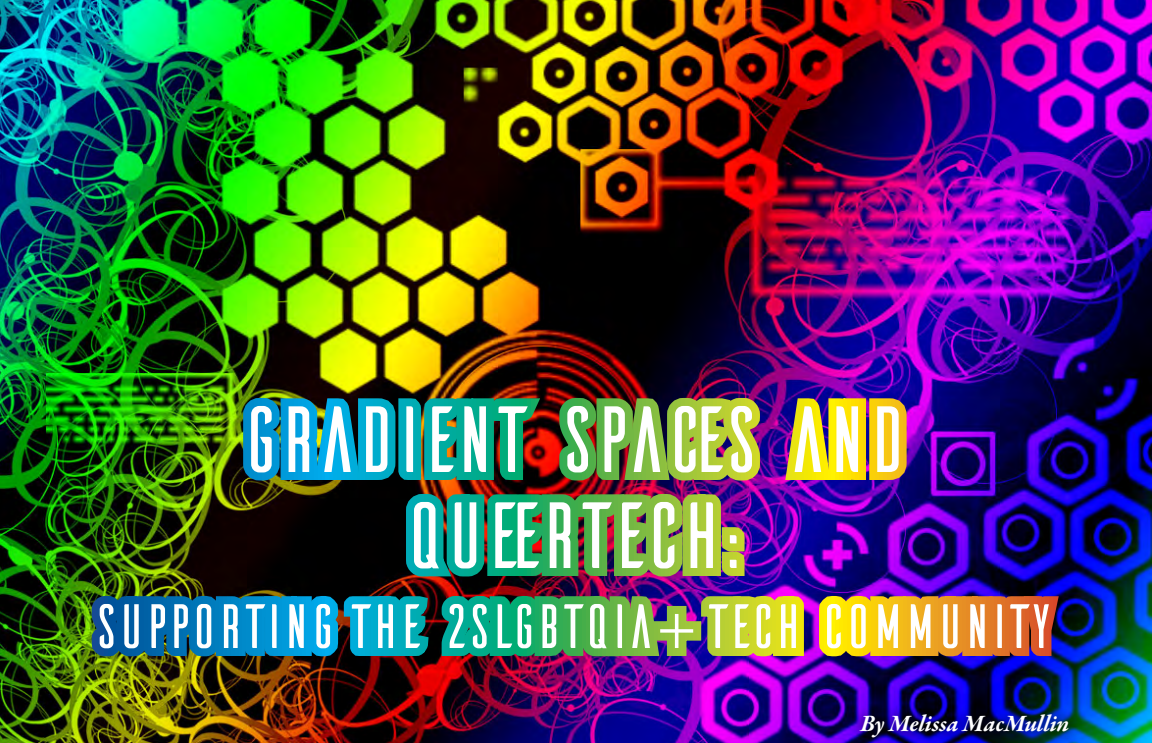
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Despite the fact that the tech industry is one of the most progressive and forward-thinking industries in the world, the technology industry has long been dominated by straight, white, cisgender men.

In recent years, the industry has seen a growing presence of queer people, who are making their mark in the tech world with the help of organizations such as *Gradient Spaces*, *QueerTech* and companies like *Dev Delivery*.

Queer people have been involved in the tech industry for decades, but their presence historically speaking has been largely invisible. This is beginning to change, however, as more queer people are coming out and making their voices heard as well as their abilities and contributions seen. Queer people are making their presence felt in a variety of ways;

they are founding tech companies, developing new technologies, and working in leadership roles. They are also advocating for greater diversity and inclusion in the tech industry and pushing for more equitable policies and practices.

The 2SLGBTQIA+ community has long been underrepresented in the technology industry but there's a shift taking place towards greater representation. Companies are really starting to recognize the importance of creating an inclusive environment for all employees regardless of their sexual orientation, gender identity or gender expression. Queer people are finally at the point where they're feeling more able to thrive in their own successes and confident enough to speak up for advocacy purposes – and that's thanks in part to helpful, and resourceful organizations that live behind the big tech companies, working towards the greater good.

One of the most visible examples of this shift is the increasing number of queer-focused tech conferences and events through queer-focused organizations aimed to give the community a "leg up." These events provide a platform for 2SLGBTQIA+ tech professionals to network, share ideas, and learn

from each other. They also provide a safe space for people to discuss their experiences in the industry and to advocate for greater representation. There are a growing number of these queer-focused tech organizations working tirelessly and steadily at making the industry not only more inclusive, but more accessible too through providing resources and mentorship.



QueerTech is one of the organizations tackling the tech ecosystem while breaking down barriers, creating spaces, and connecting communities to bring empowerment and support to the 2SLGBTQIA+ community across Canada and beyond. It started off as a tech professionals meet up group in Montreal, 2016 - fast forward two years later in 2018, *QueerTech* was born. "Queer representation is important on so many levels - by having more queer people, we can promote diversity in the workplace, and it's been shown that it leads to better business outcomes, and more innovation," shared co-founder and CEO of *QueerTech*, **Naoufel Testaouni**.

"Representation combats stereotypes which can lead to breaking down barriers and will help us address the systemic inequities that exist and have historically impacted marginalized queer communities. The second piece is creating role models in the industry - we need them to inspire young queer people to pursue careers in STEM and in tech, and also provide mentorship, support and guidance."

Their main priority and/or goal is to create opportunities for queer people to enter the tech space through skill development, their QT Conferences, QT Connect Café, Qareers talent networking, QT Access, QT Care (for mental, physical, and financial health) and more, as to advance themselves personally and professionally. Their founding pillar is

pride, and through their pride they work to educate companies on creating and fostering more inclusive, diverse workspaces. "One of the key things we've focused on is building a community first. We've done over 200 events around connecting the community," Testaouni expressed.

"Right now, we have a program called Qareers, it's a workforce development program helping the community advance in tech. Another initiative we're working on is called QT Access, it's a 9-week program where we work to build confidence and give them the tools and skills they need to apply to tech jobs. At the same time, we have our QT Conference which helps to bring the community together to create a sense of belonging, provide opportunities to upskill and rescale, and build professional development plans. We also work with tech companies to build their brand higher with the community and through collaboration as to raise awareness around particular challenges and barriers we face in Canada."



Gradient Spaces is another fairly new Canadian organization laser-focused on building a strong foundation for 2SLGBTQIA+ innovators to launch from through instilling resilience, fostering

connection, enabling innovation, providing opportunity, enforcing solidarity, bridging community, and relaying accessible tech industry learnings. “It’s really about a future being built by all of us,” Director of *Gradient Spaces*, **Alex Baccellieri** said proudly. “Our non-for-profit organization is committed to collective action and building affirmative generative, and spaces filled with joy and hope for 2SLGBTQIA+ people to grow and innovate together as a community.”

Formed by former *Venture Out* team members, *Gradient Spaces* was created in 2020 and its mission to support 2SLGBTQIA+ members of Canada’s startup ecosystem was made evident from the very beginning. “We provide resources and opportunities to assist people on a personal level and in a professional sense but also, we empower people to continue challenging the societal barriers that still exist today through carving intersectional spaces in tech.” Part of the support offered is through their job board which helps people find their next career in tech with companies who are committed to intersectionality inclusion.

Gradient Spaces launched their *Founder Program* in 2021, which incorporates educational sessions led by experts, and also provides mentorship opportunities with startup industry veterans, and the chance to pitch in front of an investor panel. “Our 3 month founder program supports up and coming entrepreneurs to develop, implement and execute compelling strategies,” said Baccellieri. “It also gives people the opportunity to network with investors from a visibility standpoint and to propel them down their path to success. Our decision to turn our support into a program was so that we could provide founders the ability to access the much-needed resources required to create their own business.”

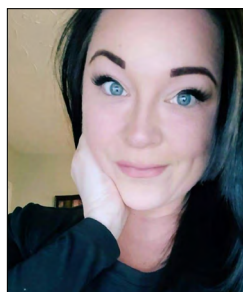
Founder of *Dev Delivery*, a tech company based in Europe, **Joe Andrzejewski** is a member of the queer community who has been working in software development for over 20 years. “I started in networking. When I as a kid, my mom would bring home old office equipment. I’d reassemble it and play around – this was pre-internet days.” Today, Andrzejewski builds development teams offshore and sells services to businesses in the USA, Canada, and Europe. “I’m happy building out my development company from the comfort of an island in the middle



Dev Delivery

of the Atlantic.” Due to the support from his family, friends, and network, he grew to love and flourish in the tech industry – this is why support for people who don’t always have close people in their circle to help them succeed is crucial, and that’s where organizations like *QueerTech* and *Gradient Spaces* come in, to help foster and encourage more people who will become “Joes” in the tech industry, and these “Joes” will create businesses which will employ more 2SLGBTQIA+ folk, and influence the scope of technology at large. “The tech industry isn’t only for techies. We hire project managers, writers, marketers, etc. Come! We need more people, and the opportunities are good.”

Melissa MacMullin is a freelance content writer and journalist for leading publications. A strong distinct queer Canadian voice with pride and purpose. Author. Screenwriter. Performer. Part-time adventurer.



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Yesterday and Today's Queer Pioneers in Tech

By Aaron Rothermund

Technology specialists are primarily concerned with the research, development, and practical use of electronics, software, computers, and artificial intelligence.

The tech sector connects users by building digital communities and managing social media platforms such as *Meta* (formerly *Facebook*), *YouTube*, and *WhatsApp*. This industry is one of the most sought-after areas for financial investment as specialists will often create new products, services and whole economies that have never existed before.

In the early stages of the Internet, computer users learned they could manufacture anonymous identities and act out these new roles in a safe way.

The LGBTQ2S+ community was quick to advance their digital presence and made several impressive contributions to virtual spaces where they could connect with other like-minded individuals, and access goods and services without fear of abuse.

One of the earliest trans tech specialists and pioneers was **Lynn Conway**, an intelligent individual who worked at *IBM* designing supercomputers in the 1960s. Then by the 1970s, she was designing computer chips at *Xerox*. “When I made the decision to have a gender correction, everybody told me I was terrible, I was going to end up dead or in an asylum someplace,” she writes. “But they were wrong. I’ve had a great life, I’m very happy, and I’ve managed to do some productive, important work.”

Martine Rothblatt co-created *Sirius XM Satellite Radio* in 1990, then founded the biotech company *United Therapeutics* in 1996. Rothblatt has been married to **Bina Aspen** for over 4 decades, and they went through Rothblatt’s gender transition as a loving unit. “I took a journey from male to female, so

if I hide that, I’m, like, just replicating the closet of my past with another closet of the future,” Rothblatt said. “That made no sense, and that’s why I’m open.”

David Bohnett co-founded *GeoCities* in 1994, which was one of the very first social networking websites. After he sold *GeoCities* to *Yahoo* in 1999, he then created the *David Bohnett Foundation*, that supports social justice issues and promotes activism. Through the foundation Bohnett donated over \$20 million to LGBTQ2S+ organizations, and established “*CyberCenters*” designed to give the marginalized communities easier access to the Internet.

Tim Cook worked for major players in the tech world such as *IBM*, *Compaq*, and *Intelligent Electronics* before joining *Apple* in 1998. By 2005, Cook would form critical deals with manufacturers on flash memory, the computer storage component that would form the basis for the iPhone and iPad. “[Being gay] has been tough and uncomfortable at times, but it has given me the confidence to be myself, to follow my own path, and to rise above adversity and bigotry,” Cook wrote in his coming-out essay. “It’s also given me the skin of a rhinoceros, which comes in handy when you’re the CEO of Apple.” One of the biggest contributions Cook has made to the tech industry was to create the infrastructure to own the entire production process including manufacturing the highly sought silicon. Under his guidance the innovative *Apple Watch* was developed and released in 2015, and the best-selling wireless *AirPods* were released in 2016. Recently Cook has shifted gears at *Apple* to focus on non-hardware items such as subscription services like *Apple Music*, *Apple News+*, and *Apple TV+*.

Arlan Hamilton is managing partner at *Backstage Capital*, a company she forged while experiencing homelessness in 2015. The firm solely invests in companies led by marginalized entrepreneurs; females, people of color, and LGBTQ2S+ individuals. She is known as the only queer Black woman to have built a venture capital starting at a deficit.

Ana Arriola-Kanada has worked in executive positions at *Meta*, *Samsung*, and *Sony*. As of February 2022, they became the general manager of design and research for *Microsoft* specializing in artificial intelligence. Arriola-Kanada’s work has recently included the research and design of the *Industrial*

Metaverse, and they’ve been working in human-centric and ethical design of products. Arriola-Kanada is a proud “Latine mother of the trans and non-binary experience,” and like they said at a recent press conference, “don’t be told how or what you should be doing in your life, you define it yourself.”

Ann Mei Chang became the CEO of *Candid* in 2021 and served as chief innovation officer for *Pete for America* (**Pete Buttigieg**’s groundbreaking Presidential campaign). Chang was previously chief innovation officer at the *U.S. Agency for International Development* (*USAID*), and she became the first executive director of the *US Global Development Lab*, an innovation hub that calls on Silicon Valley for global solutions. She also worked as a senior advisor for women and technology in the State Department, and as a product development engineer at *Apple*, *Intuit*, and *Google*. Chang says being a lesbian in the tech industry can be seen as beneficial because “you diffuse the sexual tension thing; you are working with young nerdy guys who aren’t sure how to deal with women. It made it a lot easier.”

LGBTQ2S+ folks often face barriers in achieving employment in the tech industry, which has led to massive underrepresentation in this ever-growing field. As the tech sector grows and evolves through research, experimentation, and innovation, it’s imperative for individuals on the gender and sexual spectrum to reach new heights within the tech world to ensure the production and consumption of goods and services are generated and disseminated as equitably as possible, and that the virtual world can remain a lucrative and safe space for everyone.

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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Puerto Vallarta

A gay oasis of art, food, nightlife, and so much more

By Bryen Dunn

Often attributed to the 1963 film shoot for *The Night of the Iguana*, starring Richard Burton, Puerto Vallarta morphed into one of Mexico's top tourist destinations, and one of its most gay-friendly as well, combining Old World charm with modern luxuries.

Barefoot Dining and Three-Dimensional Illusions

[Mar y Vino](#) (Sea and Wine) is one of the newest additions to the boardwalk, offering guests a unique barefoot dining experience where all tables and chairs sit within the water-filled terrace overlooking the ocean. It's the perfect spot for a sunset dinner, with

menu items that include delicious local fresh seafood, with an amazing wine selection and artisan cocktails.

The legendary [Daiquiri Dick's on the Beach](#) has been a dining destination for some 50 years, and recently it was reinvented by **Chris Diamond** and **Chef Wayne Elias**, Los Angeles restaurateurs and celebrity caterers, along with Creative Director and local business entrepreneur **Javier Jimenez**, and Chef de Cuisine **Martin Gonzalez**. The menu has been revamped, with a few of the standard classics remaining, and of course the daiquiris. Live entertainment takes place on the patio.



[Vallarta Food Tours](#) highlights off-the-beaten-path cultural excursions guided by local experts. The Original Downtown Tour offers the opportunity to sample the perfect mole, eat regional dishes like street tacos, fresh ceviche, succulent sweets, and much more. Not only will you discover hidden gems, you'll learn about the history of the area and the entrepreneurs behind each establishment.



[TiLT](#), a **Tracy Lee Stum** Museum PV is a recently opened new experience in Old Town, offering an opportunity for visitors to enter into a mesmerizing, interactive world of 3D anamorphic art murals. The artwork is created to be explored and experienced,

where one can step through surreal scenarios and revive their sense of wonder within a magical world. There's also an intimate lobby lounge that offers creative cocktails that are presented as artwork libations. There's also a weekly guided [Art Walk](#) to visit other galleries and exhibitions, or the [Art Map](#) allows individuals to explore at their leisure.

Marina Vallarta

While there are plenty of accommodation options located within Old Town and downtown, another overlooked option for visitors to stay is around Marina Vallarta. Located less than 10 minutes from the airport and 20 minutes from the hustle and bustle of downtown, this emerging enclave offers a more subdued vacation option. A must visit is the famous El Faro Lighthouse that has a quaint lounge at the top with incredible panoramic views that's the perfect setting for sunset.

Velas Resorts are Thrive As Nice

[Casa Velas](#) is an upscale adults-only all-inclusive boutique property located adjacent to an 18-hole world championship golf course, with an onsite fitness centre, spa and salon, and 80 spacious suites, some with private pools and a Jacuzzi. Relax at the pool with the swim up bar, take in one of the many daily activities, and dine at Emiliano, serving both Mexican and international cuisine. Guests also have access to dining and facilities at the nearby Velas Vallartas resort, and Tau Beach Club.



For those looking to take time out to focus on their career aspirations, perhaps the transformational retreat with career counsellor and life coach **Ruth Beltran** is just what's needed. The retreat takes place April 24-28, 2023, and is complimentary for guests staying at Casa Velas. If it's a more meditative retreat



you're looking for, then the ABJA Spa is your calling. It features spa treatments and therapies inspired by local Mexican traditions and international wellness trends, all designed to revitalize and relax your body and soul. Before leaving this magical oasis, indulge and book yourself in for a treatment such as the *Facial Diamond Energy Experience*.

[Velas Vallarta](#) is the much larger family-focused all-inclusive resort that's located ocean-side. It features several on-site dining options, multiple pools, daytime poolside activities, evening entertainment in the lobby lounge, and a new program allowing guests to learn about the local Huichol Indigenous culture through their equinox and solstice ceremonies, also known as peyote ritual or hikuri. Ceremony dates for 2023 are March 20, June 21, September 23, and December 22.

[Tau Beach Club](#) is a private casual ocean-side dining venue/beach club, complete with a jacuzzi, pool, and delectable dining options from an inspired local flavoured menu, accompanied by handcrafted cocktails and a premium selection of wines and liquors.

Plan Your Visit

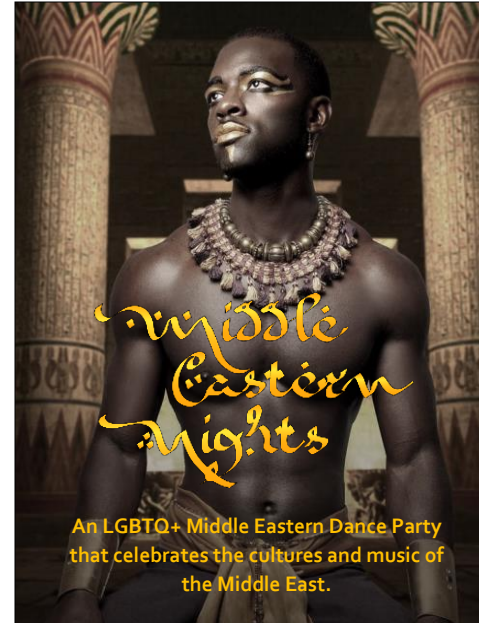
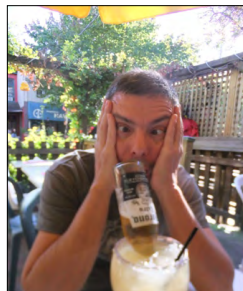
Most gay nightlife is located within the Zona Romantica, concentrated around Los Muertos

Beach and Olas Altas, easily identifiable by the crowds of revellers and year-round Pride flags. There are also many events taking place throughout the year, from Halloween parties and Day of the Dead commemorations, to Pride festivities and the religious Our Lady of Guadalupe festival. Finally, it would be amiss to also not mention the current production of Villains with Toronto's own multi-talented entertainer, **Miss Conception**, on stage until April 6, 2023, at [Palms Cabaret](#).

More Info

[Visit Vallarta](#) [Out and About PV](#) [Discovery Vallarta](#) [Airport Transfers](#)

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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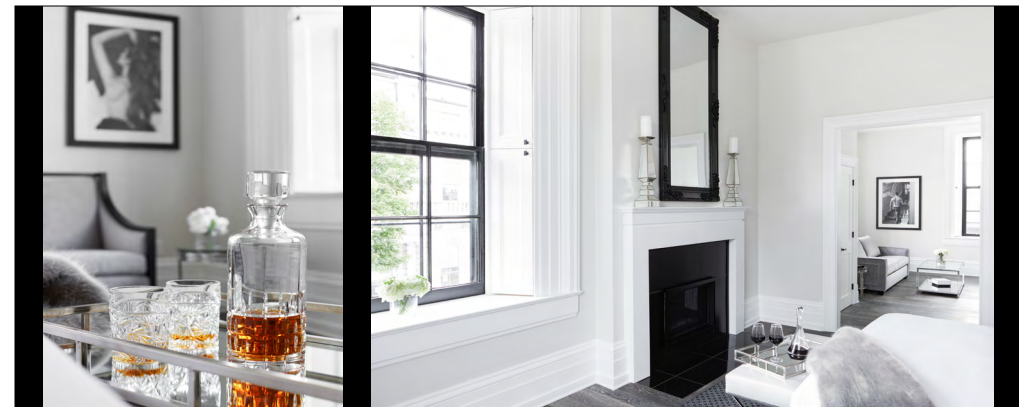
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Kelly McMichael

If you're familiar with the indie music scenes of Toronto or St. John's, you may already know Kelly McMichael.

Her numerous music projects include *Rouge*, *RENDERS*, *Kelly McMichael & The Gloss*, and her work with *Regina Gently/Gentleman Reg*, but with the 2021 release of her debut solo album *Waves*, she's been given a major boost of well-deserved recognition.

Her steady rise to success has ripened to a 2022 ECMA 'Best Rock Recording' win, a MusicNL 'Songwriter of the Year' award, and a Polaris Prize shortlisting (of which she is particularly proud of), all for an album she "honestly didn't think many people would hear beyond friends and family."

After relocating to Newfoundland in 2014, she settled into the St. John's music community and recorded some self-produced material, later signing with LHM Records and teaming up with producer/drummer *Jake Nicoll* to co-produce *Waves*. The album's lush production is particularly compelling, supporting McMichael's dynamic voice while exuding a refined character of its own. McMichael adds, "Jake is a special person to work with. I also had a heavy hand in it – I knew what I wanted production-wise, and I really like doing that stuff."

Self-described as 'thoughtful retro-inspired pop rock', the songs on *Waves* are catchy, and sophisticated.

Weaving through experiences with old friends, colleagues, and lovers, McMichael's honest lyrics expose a reverence for friendship, and a longing for connection. Her candidness allows us to see behind the 'powdered nose' of an industry pro, bringing a real human quality to this dreamy landscape.

The album bounces seamlessly between guitar-based tracks, and ones that are more synth driven. McMichael explains, "I purposefully use different [writing] techniques to make sure my songs have range and variation. Writing on guitar, piano, synths and beats, writing with just vocals and a loop pedal, writing sober, writing with some herbal assistance ..."

"I write as therapy, and to empower myself, but I also work hard at refining what I create to open it up and hopefully help others or share some wisdom. I hope to motivate people who have been underestimated, or [who are] quiet, to find their power and strength, and accept their differences and stand up for what's right."

Reflecting on her success in 2022, she says, "it has certainly put me in a position for major growth, and set me up for the reception of my next album, which is incredible to know there will be an audience for. It's a big win for the underdog and for my community in NL, and for my band, but I still have a long way to go to compete in this capitalistic, commercially-driven, algorithm-based, parasitic streaming platform/social media-dependant music industry."

For more about Kelly McMichael, head to her [Instagram](#) page or kellymcmichael.com, and be sure to check her out live at the [Dakota Tavern](#) in early June, date TBA soon.

Sean Ban Beaton is a music creator, performer, and sound editor in Toronto.



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From Toronto film maker Davina Hader comes the hopping, twerking, boozey music video

Fiction

I open the faceless alias Instagram account, aka Finsta, that I secretly made for myself—mostly to drool over slow-mo videos of people frosting cakes or pulling gooey, piping-hot cookies apart, and to read baking “top tips” from my favourite maître pâtissiers, or master pastry chef—Chef Pierre—who regularly unveils his latest innovative desserts at his culinary school in Paris that end up on the menu of his world-renowned bakery-café here in New York.

Of course, there are also the gay couple accounts I peruse, with varying arrays of cutesy, saccharine selfies. I want what they have.

As I scroll, I can't help daydreaming about going back to the break room, letting the cute guy pull me up onto one of those rickety little tables, his lips parting as we press against each other...

I can never tell a soul, let alone the world, about my petite secret.

I am absolutely certain that if I were to come out, the powers that be would find a way to strip me of my title. I can't let that happen. Do I sometimes wish I could have a normal life that allows me to settle down with a nice guy? Yes, I do. But not more than I want that crown. Besides, it would break my parents' hearts if their only son didn't succeed them on the throne.

Sure, my family has had their own fair share of secrets. Hell, here are more secrets than rules (and if you couldn't tell by now, we have a lot of rules). My Royal Family tree isn't with-out its rotten apples—or rotten maple leaves, to keep things on brand. But I may just be the worst. A blight, the one to

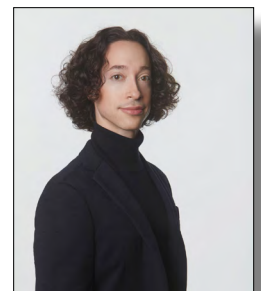


petrify the family tree so that not a single leaf remains clinging to its ancient branches.

It's bad enough that the Firm and current conservative government share a little-known penchant for wanting to streamline the Royal Family, meaning the three of us could be stripped of our titles at any moment.

Selfishly, abdicating the throne would alleviate me of the immense weight to remain in the closet. But I couldn't do that to my parents, even if I could find a good way out, and there isn't one—out of the closet or out of the monarchy. After the stunt I pulled at my last birthday, Mum and Dad have felt like the three of us are in danger of losing our position in Canada and being sent to live out the rest of our days in a drafty, forgotten castle in Cornwall.

Eric Geron is a #1 *New York Times* bestselling author including the *New York Times* bestselling *Descendants* under the name Rico Green. Learn more about Eric at EricGeron.com, Twitter, Instagram, TikTok, and Facebook @EricGeron



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Stratford, Ontario, is home to the world-famous [Stratford Festival](#), the largest repertory company in North America.

This beautiful small city of 34,000 full-time residents also boasts other, smaller seasonal theatre troupes, a symphony, art gallery, outdoor summer cinema, a summer music festival, and some exceptional restaurants and accommodations. Stratford has also been dubbed “Canada’s gayest small city.”

In July 2021, **Bruce Skeaff, Ian Middleton, and Steve Walters** recognized the need to address many shortcomings in the services provided to Stratford’s 2SLGBTQ+ community, from social opportunities to health and wellness resources and supports. They sent out a letter to 300 local businesses to ask if they could support such concerns; the response was a resounding, “Yes!” Within a few weeks, an online information hub went live. On June 4, 2022, a brick-and-mortar space became reality.

The [Stratford Pride Community Centre](#) serves people living in Stratford and Perth County, those who are planning to visit or looking for a welcoming place to call home. The SPCC works to advance its community as a progressive, inclusive, and welcoming place to live, work, visit or do business, and is a valuable resource for businesses and organizations wanting to learn how to be more 2SLGBTQ+positive in their interactions with clients, customers, and staff.

The centre features 2 meeting rooms for booking. The front room, with large windows overlooking the street, is 500 sq. ft., with seating for 11, a library of over 200 2SLGBTQ+ publications, and an electric fireplace. The rear space of the same size is accessible through a pair of solid oak doors and features a 42” TV screen featuring three boardroom-style tables, and seating for 22. These spaces are home to movie nights, guest speakers, author readings, yoga classes, art installations, and drag story time. A gender-neutral washroom and a kitchenette are easily accessed from either meeting room.

Although the centre is on the 2nd floor of a heritage building, and generally accessible by a staircase of 25 steps, a backdoor to the space connects to the Festival Square mall which allows elevator access between the hours of 9:00a.m. and 5:00p.m., with 4 steps at the connecting landing. Once inside, the space is predominantly handicap accessible. The centre is actively seeking donations and support for a lift or other device to make their space fully accessible.

The SPCC now organizes and operates, with the assistance of local businesses and the Festival Theatre, the *Stratford Winter Pride Festival*, which took place over the weekend of February 9 to 12 which had featured a comedy night, a drag night, a cabaret-style dinner show with some of the cast of the forthcoming Festival production of “*Rent*”, guest musicians/vocalists, followed by a dance after-party, and a Sunday morning faith service at a local church.

Having grown proudly and strongly in such a short time, the *Stratford Pride Community Centre* holds great promise for a stellar future as a beacon and example for creating a safe, welcoming, and enduring space to do work, live, or visit.

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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by Sherry Sylvain

Would you like to support community charities?

The Red Dress Ball - 6th Anniversary

April 22; 8:00 p.m.

Go all-out in your best red look and dance the night away to live music and drag performances. Since its inception, The Red Dress Ball Foundation has raised over \$215,000 in support of people living with or at risk of HIV/AIDS. All proceeds from this year's event will go towards supporting the Friends For Life Bike Rally, which is celebrating its 25th year.

Daniels Spectrum, 585 Dundas St. E., Toronto
www.thereddressball.ca

TICOT Charity Drag Bingo

April 26, May 14, June 11; 3:00 p.m. to 6:00 p.m.

Join The Imperial Court of Toronto for an afternoon of fun and friendship. Proceeds go to the Reign 36 Charities of Choice: Rainbow Railroad and The Toronto PWA Food Essentials Market.

Flash On Church, 463 Church St., Toronto
www.theimperialcourtoftoronto.com



What's happening in and around The Village?

Hump Night Honeys

Wednesdays; from 10:00 p.m.

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

Woody's, 467 Church St., Toronto
www.woodystoronto.com

Jock Night Thursdays

Thursdays; from 10:00 p.m.

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, with drink specials, prizes, and surprises. This is a "men only" space on the second floor, and not handicap accessible.

Cock Bar, 461 Church St., Second Floor, Toronto
www.flashonchurch.com

Impact Fridays

The last Friday of each month; 10:00 p.m.

Toronto's Icons, Legends, & Stars provide some of the best Drag entertainment Toronto has to offer.

Food & Beverage; Drag Show. Pay What You Can.
 Impact Lounge, 238 Parliament St., Toronto
www.instagram.com/impactlounge

VIDEODROME (Video Dance After Party)

March 24, May 12, June 16; 11:00 p.m.

Toronto's home of Pop, Hip Hop, Disco, Club, House and LGBT music videos mixed by DJ Relentless. NO COVER. Just you, the videos, and the dancefloor. Requests welcomed - if the DJ has it they'll work it into the mix.

Buddies In Bad Times, 12 Alexander St., Toronto

buddiesinbadtimes.com



Punchlines On Parliament

March 26, April 30, May 28, June 25; 8:00 p.m. to 9:30 p.m.

Enjoy affordable food and drinks as you watch a stand-up comedy show featuring comedians who have appeared on Just For Laughs, JFL Toronto, CBC Comedy, Sirius XM, and so much more.

Impact Lounge, 238 Parliament St., Toronto

www.instagram.com/impactlounge



Looking for fun with the queer-adjacent crowd?

Sibling Rivalry Live

March 29; 8:00 p.m.

A battle royale of lip-syncs, costume changes, and low blows between Drag Race Stars, Bob the Drag Queen, and Monet X Change - that you do not want to miss.

Elgin and Winter Garden Theatre, 189 Yonge St., Toronto

www.heritagetrust.on.ca/ewg/ewg-home



Kinky Boots

March 30 to April 2; Run Time: TBC

With a score by Cyndi Lauper and book/lyrics by Harvey Fierstein, Kinky Boots tells a huge-hearted tale of two people with nothing in common - or so they think. The exhilarating true story about a struggling shoe factory will lift your spirits to high-heeled heights.

The Rose Theatre, 1 Theatre Lane, Brampton

tickets.brampton.ca

Dragula Titans with The Boulet Brothers

April 20; 8:00 p.m.

At each show the Boulet Brother's will be joined by their newly crowned Supermonster, the Titan of all Titans. You never know which of your favourite ghouls you'll see along the way. Only the strongest fans will survive this thrilling, live experience.

Elgin and Winter Garden Theatre, 189 Yonge St., Toronto

www.elgintheater.com/events/boulet-brothers-dragula-titans



How do you feel about hanging with the str8 people?

Rock of Ages

February 23 to May 20

Rock of Ages, one of Broadway's longest running hit musicals, is exploding on this Toronto stage before embarking on its international tour. Featuring earworm 80's chartbusters from iconic and platinum-selling artists.

Elgin and Winter Garden Theatre, 189 Yonge St., Toronto

www.heritagetrust.on.ca/ewg/ewg-home

Fairview

March 4 to March 26

Canadian Stage, 26 Berkeley St., Toronto
The Frasier household is preparing for Grandma's birthday party but, while Beverly holds to her sanity by a thread, her sister can't be bothered to help, her brother is MIA, her husband doesn't seem to listen, and the party guests are more than unexpected.

Canadian Stage, 26 Berkeley St., Toronto

my.canadianstage.com/overview/8231

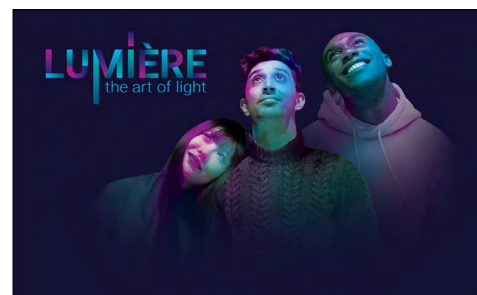
Lumière: The Art of Light

March 10 to May 7; dusk to 11:00 p.m.

Lumière encourages Ontario artists and creators to "illuminate" the park under a curatorial theme of "renewal", celebrating the change of seasons from winter to spring. Free Admission.

Trillium Park, Ontario Place, 955 Lakeshore Blvd. W., Toronto

ontarioplace.com/en/special_programs/lumiere



Maanomaa, My Brother

April 11 to April 30

When childhood friends Kwame and Will reunite in Ghana for the funeral of a loved one, they realize just how much has changed since the events that separated them 25 years earlier.

Canadian Stage, 26 Berkeley St., Toronto

my.canadianstage.com/overview/8295

Kellylee Evans and Jackie Richardson

April 13; 8:00 p.m.

Kellylee Evans sings Nina Simone and Jackie Richardson sings Abbey Lincoln, Salome Bey, and Diane Brooks.

Koerner Hall, 273 Bloor St. W., Toronto

www.rcmusic.com



New

April 25 to May 14

The year is 1970 and the arrival of a Bengali bride to a small university town shakes up a tight-knit group of Indian immigrants, including the husband she's never met. Tradition and counterculture collide for three women and their husbands as their perceptions of identity, sexuality, and the meaning of freedom are challenged by the spirit - and actions - of this fearless young woman.

Canadian Stage, 26 Berkeley St., Toronto

my.canadianstage.com/overview/8389

Star Wars: The Last Jedi—In Concert

May 11 to May 13

The Skywalker saga continues as the heroes of The Force Awakens join the galactic legends in an epic adventure that unlocks age-old mysteries of the Force and shocking revelations of the past. John Williams's Academy Award-nominated score comes to life as the Toronto Symphony Orchestra performs it live with the film.

Roy Thomson Hall, 60 Simcoe St., Toronto

www.tso.ca/concerts-and-events/events/star-wars-the-last-jedi-in-concert

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).



From The Heart



I'm old enough to remember the sound of a 9600 baud modem connecting my computer to a telephone line.

In the pre-Internet age, online communities were supported by bulletin board systems (BBSs) that were connected by regular phone lines. The host of the BBS would install multiple telephone lines and connect each one to a modem (modulator/demodulator). BBS guests would dial one of several phone numbers from their own modems to connect with the host's setup.

These were not regular telephone voice calls. They were digital connections that allowed you to type conversations with other BBS guests, much like group text chats happen now on our phones. Many had simple text-only interfaces that allowed guests to post comments and responses to categories of topics of interest to the community.

For queers at the time, some of these BBSs would be the first "safe spaces" to become available, where you could be yourself, ask questions, and chat about queer personal issues.

With names like *The Gay Blade*, and *GLIB Gay and Lesbian Information Bureau*, you could find their dial-up numbers listed in advertisements in the back of gay magazines and newsletters.

I have fond memories of chatting late into the night about everything under the sun (and moon), occasionally flirting, and generally experiencing something that felt like a digital home. Here was some validation that you were not alone in the world but had some connection to a larger community of like-minded individuals.

With the advent of the World Wide Web and access to the nascent Internet, BBSs slowly faded in popularity. In step with increasing social acceptance, queer online communities were able to step out of the shadows and develop into dependable online resources for queer information, entertainment and connection.

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.



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Spring Horoscopes

MARCH 2023 to MAY 2023

by Julie Antoinette

Aries (March 21 – April 20)

Newton's first law of motion says, "An object at rest stays at rest and an object in motion stays in motion with the same speed and in the same direction unless acted upon by an unbalanced force." You must apply this law to your current procrastination pattern. Try a systematic approach of tasks broken down into small and enjoyable increments to re-direct your momentum. The hardest part is starting.

Taurus (April 21 – May 21)

A new arrangement of your home is needed. You've stared at the same fixtures in the same positions for too long. Before you start rearranging, have a plan. Research Feng Shui principles to achieve the most advantageous flow of energy and function of furniture in a room. A properly arranged room may have a direct impact on how you feel.

Gemini (May 22 – June 21)

Money and finances concern you as you entertain worrying nightmares of future scarcity. Start small by adjusting your thinking and feelings around lack. With any purchase you make and every bill you pay, however small, say quietly to yourself, "I am rich". Let the feeling of that thought and all the reasons it is true sink in. Sometimes a 'fake it till you make it' attitude carries a little hidden magic.

Cancer (June 22 – July 22)

Recently, you took a trip down memory lane. Nostalgia filled your mind and heart and you considered the passage of time and the future unknowns. Sometimes we need to look back and heal before pivoting forward. The past is a foundation upon which the future is built. If repairs are in order, emotional or otherwise, tend to them now before moving on. It's time to wipe the proverbial 'karmic slate' clean before you step into the years that lay untarnished before you.

Leo (July 23 – August 22)

It's time to systematize yourself into a new order. Spring is here and your annual spring-cleaning routine has inspired you to shake things up a bit. You want a new look for your home, wardrobe and a new configuring of your surroundings. You must start with a vision. Get your measuring tape and sketchbook out. Behold, the blueprints for your footprints into your year ahead. Plan wisely.

Virgo (August 23 – September 23)

A new hobby has inspired you with many new creative ideas. Just as a painter chooses a subject, scene, colours, canvas and brushes with care and purpose, so do you also feel in the pre-contemplative stages of gathering knowledge and tools for designing your creation. This is a necessary step of the process. The next is to wipe your own slate clean and allow your creation to express itself using you as a (now well-prepared) channel. Now go be the whisperer.

Libra (September 24 – October 23)

Big decisions in a significant relationship are looming. Now is the time to consider your goals, values and vision, evaluate and gain perspective. Finally, find alignment within yourself on these precepts. The optimal decisions will then become apparent. Only then should you act.

Scorpio (October 24 – November 22)

Your unconscious tries to reach you with an important message through a song that haunts your headspace. Have you stopped to consider the lyrics more closely? Make a creative project of it. Create a scrapbook or collage or write a research essay. A treasure will be delivered to you from across the universe. A message in a bottle.

Sagittarius (November 23 - December 21)

For reasons long considered, you must break a long-lived habit. You have only to decide. "All big things come from small beginnings. The seed of every habit is a single, tiny decision." - James Clear, *Atomic Habits*. Until you decide, you will remain inhabited by your habit.

Capricorn (December 22 – January 19)

Weird dreams fill your consciousness. You wake up bewildered and wondering about your bizarre sleeping life. You must investigate. There are many dream interpretation methods available to explore. One is to place yourself in the shoes of each character or object in your dream and experience the events from each perspective. A picture will emerge that will leave you less bewildered.

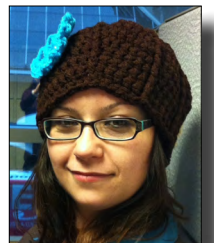
Aquarius (January 20 – February 19)

You consider yourself introspective, self-aware and dedicated to your inner growth. Many dark corners in your mind and heart have been brought to light, never to lurk in shadow again. It seems another dark corner has attracted the attention of your inner flashlight. You know exactly what to do. Your dedication to your inner growth is an example to many.

Pisces (February 20 – March 20)

How does self-sabotage work? It doesn't make any sense. Why would anyone willingly choose to sabotage themselves? Well, the reasons go deeper than ever could be detected at the surface. You must discover these reasons so you can, "Stop doing that sh*t," as Gary Bishop would announce to you in his book of the same title. Discover your pattern and just stop.

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.



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