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Part 4 of 4

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From the **Publisher**

Dear readers, we have arrived at the conclusion of our 2016 editorial theme. This year we looked at being LGBTQ throughout the stages of life, and in this issue we enter our twilight years.

The narrative of the cover of this edition is a fitting one for the final chapter of our journey. Please allow me to explain.

Russell Alldread is living his twilight years. Many of us know Russel as his alter ego Michelle DuBarry. Michelle has entertained our community for many many many years; she has raised a lot of money for charities, and she has been Impress of The Imperial Court of Toronto twice. Michelle is also enjoying a new-found fame later in life, unseen to any queen in our local community. She was recently named a Guinness World Record holder for being the oldest performing drag queen, she has been honoured with an Ontario Senior Achievements Award, and she has won an INSPIRE Award for Lifetime Achievement.

Russell can simply decide that he has done enough, and just sit back and enjoy his twilight years. However, he cares too much about the community, so he dons the hair, makeup, and frocks, and gets out there to continue supporting. He also cares about himself, and intends to continue on living a happy life. We can't deny that there is a certain obsession in our community, and in society at large, with youth and beauty. If Michelle retires, what would that mean to Russell? Is he supposed to just disappear and go quietly? From many conversations I have had with him, that's the sad reality of how he feels and what he fears; people know Michelle, people love the shows and the dresses and performances, but not many people know or care as much about Russell. We shouldn't allow our heroes, or any person in the community, to feel invisible when they get older.

We personally love Michelle, but we equally love and respect Russell, and why should he not be remembered and acknowledged? That's why Russell, and not Michelle DuBarry, made our cover for this issue.

A little personal anecdote. As I write this piece I recall a memory from my early twenties. It was a



rainy evening and I was with a close friend on our way to see a movie. I had an umbrella with me, and at one point on our walk I used the umbrella as a cane, and declared (with a flare of course) that I couldn't wait for the day I would be an old man with a cane. I will have lived my life, and might be travelling the world on some cruise ship, or perhaps just sitting on a comfy chair watching the seasons out the window while reading a book. I honestly meant it at the time, although now I have decided that I love what I do too much, and will likely not retire until my last day.

My friend of course did not believe me. "Seriously you are okay with getting old?", he asked. I replied that of course I am. It is not something that we can help or change, it is a part of life that we had better respect, accept, and celebrate.

That dear readers is the message of this edition, which wraps up our 2016 journey. We looked at youth, at early adulthood, at midlife, and now the twilight years. Love yourself in every stage of life, live it up, and enjoy it.

Next year, 2017, is going to be a MEGA-BIG, HUMONGOUS, FANTASTIC year for PinkPlayMags. Our pint-sized yet much loved magazine celebrates its 10th birthday, and Canada celebrates its 150th anniversary. Be sure to "like" us at Facebook.com/PinkPlayMags, as we'll be sharing the theme and celebration plans soon.

From all of us to all of you, to your loved ones, families, partners, friends, pets, and our community, Happy Holidays, we LOVE you.

Antoine Elhashem
Publisher

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**Gay, Lesbian, Bi, Trans, Leather, and Queer
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Cover In Our Twilight Years

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From the **Editor**

Here we are, presenting our final issue in the stages of life series – In Our Twilight Years. It certainly has been a wonderful experience compiling the variety of articles that have made up these four issues. From our youth, to our retirement, and beyond, there's plenty of positive aspects at each stage of our lives, as has been told by all of our contributors throughout the year.

One writer in particular, Megan Hutton, has contributed to all four issues, providing an intimate look at her life from her youthful beginnings on the west coast of Canada, to her current busy lifestyle here in Toronto, that continues to be filled with a myriad of projects at the active age of 70. Speaking of youthful, our cover image features the vivacious Russell Alldread, a well-known Toronto legend known by his alter-ego persona, whom we have profiled in our “Looking Back” column.

Our second feature was written by Jerry Schaefer, a first time contributor to the magazine. He took a look at what resources LGBT elders have here in Toronto. Jerry also assisted with the overall production of this issue, acting as Associate Editor, as part of his work placement program with George Brown College. Our third feature is by Kelly Wilk, a long-time contributor, who also took a look at aging within the LGBT community, and some of the planning and precautions one must consider.

The “Hot Artist” spotlight is on the bodacious burlesque babe, Tanya Cheex, who has been twirling her tassels for many years to attentive audiences everywhere. The “Community Cornerstone” profile looks at the Senior Pride Network, a valuable wealth of information and outreach connections. As alluded to earlier, “Looking Back” spotlights Guinness World Records holder Michelle DuBarry,



still one of Toronto's most beloved drag queens at the youthful age of 85!

Our travel destination this issue spotlights Galicia, Spain, an area filled with nature, festivals, temperate weather, and Galician gastronomy. Caitlyn Holroyd writes her last “Winter in the City” for us, highlighting all the great winter events happening over the next couple of months. We wish Caitlyn all the best with her future pursuits, and stay tuned for our new contributor to make their debut in the spring. As always, Julie Antoinette gives us her “Winter Horoscopes”, and of course our Art Director, Mychol Scully, deserves accolades for the overall magazine layout. Mychol also took time away from his design duties to put some wonderful words of wisdom to paper for a special “From The Heart” column in this issue.

I'm so proud to have been able to work with all these fabulous individuals, as well as those who contributed to the previous three issues in this series. Read previous issues in our “Life Series” on Youth, Young Adults, and Midlife in the archive section of our website www.pinkplaymags.com.

Here's wishing our readers all the best in health and happiness for the coming year. Thanks for picking us up.

Bryen Dunn
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A Lesson in Planning... Don't

By Megan Hutton

I love life. The ups, downs, peaks and valleys. Simple pleasures. I love the sound of the rain, walking on a moonlit night in falling snow. I love Autumn and the beauty of the changing leaves.

In my youth, it was the anticipation of a future I was yet to discover. Even at this stage of life, I embrace all new possibilities. Adversity gave me strength and resilience. It also gave me the confidence to take everything in stride. There was loneliness and frustration along the way. As a closeted lesbian in an era with no community or support, I didn't know where I fit in. I knew the life I longed for was out there, but had no idea how to find it.

At times I felt sure I was born at the wrong time. My ideas and freedom-loving nature would have been a perfect fit in the worlds of Virginia Woolf, or Gertrude and Alice. I love the attitudes from those eras. Loving others wasn't so harshly judged, and it seems that long-time marriages and unions were more successful because of it.

I always had an innate sense that events would unfold for me when the time was right. After I spent years figuring out who I was, I realized the importance of my connections with others. Once I had mastered the confidence to love, receive love, and live with risk and the possibility of rejection, it became easier. All of those can still happen at any time, and I've learned nothing is a sure thing. I'm OK with that.

I went through my loner phase, in those early, pensive years. When I overcame my fear of closeness and learned to trust, I realized how close friendship and relationships were life-affirming and integral to my survival. A recent re-connection with my dear friend Gabby was an affirmation that we can't replace people. Gabby and I had one of those rare first-time meetings, where within minutes we knew there was a profound connection, and we would become friends. Life happens and we became disconnected for a period of time. That will not happen again, a promise we've made to each other.

While I treasure my connections with friends, time is one of my most valuable assets, and I'm more willing to let go of friends who are too busy.



If I am giving someone my precious time, I want it to be reciprocal, because it's an investment in this part of my journey. I'm not impressed by accomplishments, accolades or how people feel they are important to others. I value honesty, trust, and a reasonable connection. Life is busy. No one cares about every little detail of what you did in the end. How you treated people individually is your real legacy. I have an open heart (thanks, Mom), and I'm fortunate she taught me kindness throughout my life.

Relationships are never simple or as important as they are now. Finding, leaving or questioning—all part of the ever-evolving quest for a societal view of relationship nirvana. I've learned over the years that we can't change another person's history, experiences, beliefs or views. These all play an important role in how we relate to them, and how they relate to us. Some people choose to be distant because they fear intimacy and connection. Let it go. That's the journey they are on; it's not personal.

"We must allow everyone to show up just as they come." That revelation came from Joanne Morgan, one of the wisest and most spiritual

women I know. The new interest in proclaiming, "Spirituality" has become a panacea for many who are searching for the meaning to a life that is right in front of them.

Joanne is the true embodiment of a spiritual being. A former nun for over three decades, she just is. Her demeanor is humble, and she's the first to admit that she doesn't know everything. That's difficult to believe, looking into her piercing blue eyes which appear to contain centuries of knowledge. Her New Zealand accent is gentle and adds to the serenity I feel in her presence.

I access her wise words on a daily basis. Letting everyone show up as they are, and without judgment, is a powerful lesson. There is an old, old adage: "If you have to say who you is, you ain't." This says a lot about those who place too much importance on themselves. I would like to have just some of Joanne's qualities, when and if I ever grow up.

When the term bucket list surfaced, I didn't give it much thought. It seemed so far away and now it's much closer. Now I have a list of ten items and I ticked off two this year. A dear friend, Deb



Maybury, surprised me by putting music to one of my numerous song lyrics and recording it on her CD. An unexpected gift I truly treasure. My second bucket item is the short film I made with Deb, who is also my film partner. I know there are more to come and I still have the anticipation I had in my youth. My song, "Save The Best For Last," sums it all up.

The decade from sixty to seventy has brought me more happiness and contentment than I could have ever imagined. I met many new people, now very dear to me, in those later years—friends who, I am certain, will be with me for the remainder of this journey. Perhaps because most of my fears and expectations have been tempered by time and experience, I have discovered a wonderful freedom. Where I am is only a continuation of where I began. Nothing complicated. Of course, circumstances and choices alter our lives. Attitude is everything and the fear of living a full life can prevent us from embracing all of the love and beauty around us. That is gone.

Not everyone gets to be seventy. I think if we stopped assigning numbers to time spent, it would be beneficial. There are connotations that go with numbers. I love this age and life stage. I'm

not afraid to fail, risk or say "I don't know." The ego of youth, or even midlife, is gone. Like the Velveteen Rabbit, I am only interested in what is real and I want my legacy to be kindness.

As a writer and an observer of people, I find gifts in unexpected places. While waiting for a friend at St. Michael's Hospital recently, I met an elderly, disheveled man. He was sitting alone and made an attempt to begin a conversation with the two women across from him. "What day is Monday?" he asked. Those words would pique the interest of any writer. I sat by him. His life story was fascinating. He played trumpet at Woodbine to announce the races and he played honky-tonk piano in the Yukon. He told me his addiction to alcohol destroyed his life. When I told him I was a poet, he came to life and recited "The Cremation of Sam McGee" in its entirety. "The name's Edmond Pillar," he said when we parted, "but they call me 'Fast Eddy'." It's times like these that remind me of my privilege at this age, and I am very grateful. One of my favorite poems now is titled, "Fast Eddy."

As I've aged, my friendships have extended to people of all ages. My dear friend Julie (Antoinette) is thirty years younger, yet the minute we met



we knew there was a special connection. We are kindred spirits.

In my *Autumnplay* midlife piece, Vincente expressed concern that aging can be a loss of power. As long as we are surrounded by people who care about us, age can be empowering. All of that knowledge, awareness and life experiences! Some things in our lives change a lot, others very little. I was reading my poetry in coffee houses five decades ago, and I'm still doing that today.

Body image and aging? If you weren't overly concerned with your physical appearance in your youth, you probably won't be now. That was never important to me. My face is lined with the experience of someone with few regrets, who has sucked the marrow out of life and has no intention of stopping. Every line is the culmination of moments lived. Laughter, frowns, smiles and tears—all a part of me.

Nothing is as revealing as seeing your seventy-year-old self blown up on a large screen. In the film I made recently with Deb Maybury, I played the role of an older woman. If there was a hint of concern over my physical aging, it left

quickly. Seeing my image larger than life was very empowering.

I have stacks of poetry and short stories waiting to be published. Years' worth of day-books are a testament to how the mundane takes up time. There are numerous events crossed out that never happened. A lesson in planning. Don't. Take the day you're given and live it. Aging is better than I could have ever imagined.

In the early 1960's Megan spent five of her teenage years on her own. Through the solitude of those years she found life to be a great teacher. Today she is a Poet/Playwright/Short Story writer, and has published numerous articles on relationships. She read from the Anthology "Dyke words" at Toronto's first "Word on the Street", and she's currently working on a poetry collection and a short film.





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THE WISDOM OF THE AGED

A RESOURCE GUIDE FOR LGBT ELDERS

by Jerry Schaefer

I've lived a good life and I've accomplished a lot. I've Instagram-ed every brunch I've ever eaten. (Desserts, too.) I'm all caught up on my Netflix. And one day next January, I'll become smarter than the president of the United States.

As I get older I look forward to the simple pleasures of retirement: driving on the sidewalk and telling young people what to think. The way I see it, I'm only about one year away from throwing off the tyranny of having to wear pants all the time.

The point is, I have a dream, but I need solid, achievable goals to make it come true. What about you? Are you healthy and wealthy enough to live the life you want? To help make your dream a reality, we've compiled a list of some of the LGBT-friendly resources that seniors need to know about.

FINANCE

One of the first things you can do is recognize that you should be working with a financial advisor of some sort. For example, Elizabeth Hurly and Bernardine Perreira offer LGBT-friendly service

and know how to help those who are worried about their money.

“People are afraid to get a financial plan,” says Hurly, “because they think it’s going to be really daunting, however when we lead them through the process they actually feel a lot better, emotionally and security-wise.”

The second thing you should do, says Perreira, is to have good saving habits. “Are you maximizing your Retirement Savings Plan (RSP) and Tax Free Savings Accounts (TFSA)?” “A lot of people just put money into GICs,” says Hurly, “but with a TFSA you can grow that. You can own a blue-chip stock that pays both a dividend and has growth potential so you earn more, and when you take that money out you don’t have to pay tax on it either.”

What about issues of particular concern to seniors in the LGBT community? “There are those who have married,” Perreira begins, and others who are co-habiting that now fall under the same laws as those for heterosexual couples. So, it’s really a case of looking at whether you are single or in a relationship. One of the most important legal documents we feel any client needs to have is a will and a power of attorney.”

The two say a co-habitation agreement is also a must. Another consideration is taxes. “When couples co-habitate,” Perreira says, “they should be filing their taxes jointly. It’s a requirement, but it also allows for income splitting down the road through both pensions. It also allows them to set up spousal RSPs, so if one in the couple is a higher income earner than the other, they can contribute to their spouse’s RSP, which will help equalize the income stream. In addition, joint filing allows for **Canada Pension Plan (CPP)** survivor benefits, because if you’re not filing jointly and one spouse dies, then what recourse do you have to collect on CPP survivor benefits?”

Finally, if an assisted-care living situation is perhaps in your future, you have to plan for that as well. “The other thing we talk to clients about is long-term care insurance. Do you have enough in your nest egg to self-fund these long-term needs? If not, you’d be wise to start putting away

a little bit of money now to fund a long-term-care insurance policy that can help pay for these services down the road”, Perreira suggests.

Perreira Hurly Wealth Advisory at Raymond James Ltd <phwealthadvisory.com>

HEALTH

In terms of my health, what can I expect in the future? Well, based on my genetics, I’ll spend my final years as a problem gambler surrounded by bundles of old newspapers that I call, “my babies.” (Shout out to Uncle Phil!). If you want better than that, you better start taking your health care seriously.

“For LGBT seniors, it’s important to keep prevention in mind as a wise course of action,” says Devon MacFarlane, Director of **Rainbow Health Ontario**, a program at **Sherbourne Health Centre**. In other words, if it ain’t broke, don’t break it. What kind of things keep seniors healthy?

“One,” says MacFarlane, “is to get screened regularly, for colon and other cancers. Secondly, be vigilant about mental health and well-being, and speak to your doctor about any signs of dementia or Alzheimer’s. Lastly, stay connected to people around you, and be sure your family or chosen family are aware of your needs and how they can support you.”

So, make it a team effort. Don’t be shy about inviting someone to join you in age-appropriate exercise and make it a regular thing. That’s as much a part of healthy living as eating well.

On that front, Christina Tran, a Community Dietitian at **Sherbourne Health Centre’s Newcomer Health Team** suggests that, “For seniors, getting enough calcium and vitamin D is a priority. Also, if you find you have a decreased appetite, seeing a dietitian can help ensure your meals meet your nutritional needs.”

Find out more and access a wide range of resource material at <rainbowhealthontario.ca>



SOCIAL

Now, I've been blessed with excellent social skills. I currently have seventeen online arguments going on at the same time, but how much do I really know about my friends, "shutup-yousuck89" and "MagicalMysteryStain?"

Aging in the LGBT community is hard. Seniors are more likely to be single or living alone and less likely to have children. Social isolation is a big concern, as it impairs both physical and mental health.

As usual, it's **The 519** to the rescue! This excellent community centre always has something on the go for LGBT seniors. This fall, for example, the **Youth/Elders Project** put people at either end of life together to learn stagecraft, so they can present their stories on stage next summer at **Buddies in Bad Times**. As well, the **Women's Book Club** and **Men's Book Club** each have monthly meetings, and the **LGBT 50+ Drop-In** is open to everyone and meets once a week.

Rosalyn Forrester, who coordinates the Drop-In, describes it as "a weekly three-hour program where community members come, relax, make new friends, or just see friends they don't often have a chance to see otherwise." The Drop-In is largely social, but also educational. Guest speakers make short presentations on interesting and informative subjects suggested by the regulars.

Forrester says, "The Monday Drop-In also allows participants an opportunity to get one-on-one support needed, either just to talk about what is going on in their lives, or helping them fill out forms." Once a month, this group meets in the evening with the **Meal Trans** program, so — great company and great food. Forrester says, "It also serves as an inter-generational component that allows for a sharing of history and knowledge, along with community building."

If you have trouble getting out, the Phone Program will help you stay connected to the community. You'll get a call from someone at **The 519** who's glad to chat and fill you in on what's happening so you can plan your social calendar. That's right — if you just don't feel up to going out and being fabulous, you can literally phone it in!

Another popular program is **Singing Out**. No auditions are required to join. Why? Because they know you've been practising in the shower for years...and they can hear you...we all can. You're better than you think. Come out of the closet, karaoke queen, it's time to shine!

For even more, you can join the **Senior Pride Network** which focuses on health and social services. Don't miss **Tell It Like It Is: Lived Experiences of LGBT Elders**, an inter-generational community speaker series that showcases the voices of LGBTQ elders through the exploration of the following themes: Chosen Family; Aging and Disability; Aging as a Person of Colour; Trans and Aging; A Life of Activism.

All that info and more is available at <www.the519.org/programs/category/older-lgbtq>

Editor's Note: Find out more about the **Senior Pride Network** in our *Community Cornerstone* profile in this issue.

Jerry Schaefer is a Toronto actor and writer whose work has appeared on CBC radio and television. He also holds an Editing Certificate from George Brown College.



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GAY AND AWAY:

RETIREMENT & BEYOND

by Kelly Wilk

Secrets — a reality for the queer community worldwide for much of our history. Certainly we have historically been a private bunch, living outside of our authentic selves or just quietly as queer, to make peace with our orientation and live in relative peace as well. Fear of identification, exclusion, reprisal and abuse is a very cold reality.

The LGBTQ+ community has been at odds with itself in the face of homophobia, but when it comes to a certain time in a queer's life there are definite pluses to going public.

We all retire from the professional world and seek inclusion as part of an aging population. We require extensive care in nursing homes, medical institutions, hospitalization or palliative care. This is our future. This is my future and I have realized it's no good to avoid preparing for the one and only true eventuality of life. Despite my ample motivation, the reality of mortality does inspire hesitation. End of life can inspire fear, and so too can end-of-life care.

I loved the HBO film *If These Walls Could Talk 2*, but there was one segment that I have only ever watched once. You know the one. The scene where an exquisite but devastated Edith (Vanessa Redgrave) is in the waiting room of the hospital, when a nurse informs her that her "secret partner"



Abby (Marian Seldes) passed away in the night. No one thought to notify Abby's "friend." The trouble was not only that they felt their relationship had to go unacknowledged, but also that Edith was not seen for who she was and what she needed.

True, this film was set in 1961, but the case of the invisible elderly queer couple is not extinct. A retired lesbian friend of mine living in Colborne says that eastern Ontario has a large queer community that is widely dispersed, but well integrated. Fifteen years ago, she went to visit a friend of hers in Cobourg who lived with her partner in a nursing home, across the hall from her.

"One morning, my friend went to get her partner for breakfast and they said, 'Oh no, she died in the night' and they hadn't even come to get her. I was so outraged, but she didn't want me to do anything about it." This may have been typical for

the generation in their 80s at that point, as they did not disclose details about their relationship.

She also had a friend in Warkwarth, Ontario, a small town filled with gay business and artisans, whose older partner went into a nursing home. "There didn't seem to be any issue, as he was just accepted, and they did marry shortly before that." Also, her father was at the Toronto retirement home True Davidson Acres and she said "there were rainbow flags everywhere." When she told me it was out in the east end, I laughed and said, "Very convenient for me!"

There are universal concerns, as everyone queer and straight has the right to a place to retire, live the remainder of their life with their partner for as long as possible, and receive professional care, respect and dignity. Being queer or trans adds another aspect of vulnerability to retired or elderly individuals. I think it was G.I. Joe who said, "Knowing is half the battle," so that is the best place to start.

Basic rights are the key to self-advocacy. My partner Kara and I decided to get married, feeling like that would be a more secure legal footing. We used an unknown donor's sperm so my wife's name could go on the statement of live birth. However, in the little paper trail our relationship left behind, one of the most important things left undone was the will.

Unfortunately, I know a little about preparing for end-of-life care. We were 34 and 35, looking to start a marriage, a life, and a family. A will seemed like a faraway necessity. When Kara unexpectedly passed away in 2012, it did not matter that she was my wife or the (other) mother of my child, we did not have a record of her wishes. When there was an additional issue with life insurance, it left me to the financial graces of my family while I applied to become the executor of her estate, which took the standard six to eight months. Needless to say, all of my married cousins had their wills done immediately.

The retired individual from Cobourg did not choose to marry her partner, but as their lawyer stated, as long as you put everything in writing, it doesn't make a difference — except, I would hazard to say, when it comes to end-of-life care.

Do your will. Get financially connected. Assign power of attorney and an executor to make decisions. Be clear with your friends and family about your expectations. Be upfront and loud about the validity of your relationship, especially when life catches you off guard.

Preparing for end of life, or rather end-of-life legalities, is important, and so is knowing ahead of time where to position yourself near queer-positive services and healthcare. Plan to really live and enjoy a fabulous retirement, even when mobility and independence becomes an issue. Access to a queer-friendly community and culture, amenities, social opportunities, social assistance, housing, queer-positive health care, and alternative medicine - these are the necessities.

A knowledgeable lesbian friend of mine feels that hospitals in larger communities are more accepting. She said, "There was a big concern when Wellesley Hospital closed down and the AIDS patients were going to move down to St. Michael's Hospital, and some thought, 'Oh no', but if you talk to people, I don't think there was an issue." There certainly wasn't when my son was born there!

So, I am here in a city with a thriving LGBTQ+ community - looking at the rest of my life as a gay woman, as a parent who wants to work and travel, as a person who dots her I's and crosses her T's, and moves fearlessly forward knowing I have that safety net. Essentially, at every stage of life we must be seen, we must be heard and we must be notarized. Whether it is mid-life, retirement or extended care, uphold the slogan: "We are here, we are queer, get used to it."

Kelly Wilk appeared in *Beer and Butter Tarts Vol.1* by Stained Pages Press. She is an avid blogger on *The High Flying Adventures of Captain Grief* (www.captaingrief.com) and currently *The Ginger Menace* (www.pinkplaymags.com) and *Brave. Creative.Me.* (www.bravecreativeme.com).



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Galicia's Gastronomic Seaside Playground

by Bryen Dunn

The Galicia region of Spain is often overlooked for the more frequented tourist destinations of Madrid and Barcelona, however there are many surprises in order for those willing to venture off the beaten path.

The O Salnés area is located in the northwest of Spain, close to Portugal and Santiago de Compostela. This region is located in the warmest and most touristic area in the North West Iberian Peninsula.

The charming coastal city of Vigo is the gateway to the region, and has a storied history dating back to Medieval times. Today it's home to a population of some 300,000 inhabitants, with much of the commerce still being brought to the city by way of the large working port, as well as mega automobile manufacturer Citroen.

Recently, leisure tourism has started to grow, as travellers discover the laid-back and open atmosphere of this welcoming region. Vigo's ancient winding streets are filled with bars and restaurants around every corner, that are

frequented by both locals and visitors. As for dining, there are restaurants of all sorts scattered throughout the city, and the prices are considerably lower than in the much larger cities in Spain, and around the world. Take note though, that dinner doesn't usually begin until 9pm at the earliest.

The newer part of town has the main Príncipe and Urzaiz Streets, which are lined with the latest fashion shops. There's also several interesting museums, and even Roman ruins to be found just outside the centre of the city. The streets are also very safe to roam day or night, and same-sex couples are often seen walking hand-in-hand throughout the city. There's no gay village, but there are a handful of gay bars that seem to be clustered within a few blocks of each other.

There's also the sea to explore, and a day trip to Cies Islands is a definite must. There are regularly scheduled ferry departures, or private charters can be arranged as well. These islands offer plenty of beaches, hiking trails, restaurants, and even overnight camping for those so inclined. As for other accommodations back on the mainland, there are plenty to choose from, and again the



prices are considerably lower for what one would get elsewhere.

Galicia overlooks the Atlantic Ocean and the Cantabrian Sea, and its rich 2,000-year-old history is immediately apparent during a visit to this beautiful region. A visit to these lands in north-western Spain makes for a unique adventure packed with tradition, lush scenery and beautiful cities. Galicia blends the borders between land and sea, and both elements merge over 1,300 kilometres of coast, which is home to 772 beaches and their traditional estuaries, or rias, which are navigable year round. Galicia flows into the sea as both The Lower and Upper Rias melt into the landscape, creating an unparalleled site for water based activities.

Many to this region arrive or set off by foot, bike, or horseback along The Way of St. James, the most traditional, most popular and most celebrated walking route in Europe. For over one thousand years, the Way of St. James has offered millions of people from around the world a unique religious, spiritual and cultural experience. Pilgrims have been travelling to Santiago de Compostela, the capital of Galicia, since the 9th century, after the discovery of the remains of the apostle St. James.

Galicia is well known for its festivals, with gastronomic feasts featuring prominently, as well as several festivities linked to the sea, and many other unique celebrations that have been declared, National and International Tourist Interests. Among the most important Galician gastronomic events is the O Grove Shellfish Feast, a tradition for over half a century. It is the most noteworthy celebration of sea products in Spain, where diners from around the world congregate.

Another event is the Cambados Albariño Feast, with a 60-year tradition. It's acknowledged as one the best wine events in the country, featuring hundreds of wine offerings, music, and merriment. Albariño is considered one of the best white wines in the world, regularly winning international competitions. It has a fresh, mild taste with sufficient body, balanced acidity, ample harmonious nuances, and an elegant, pleasurable, complete aftertaste.

Galicia also boasts several mind and body healing options. The best example is La Toja Spa, which has 60°C therapeutic thermal water containing many different beneficial mineral salts. As well, The Talaso resort has sea water heated to 36°C,



and offers different marine based products that have curative and regenerative properties.

One of the best places in the region of O Salnés, the Gran Hotel Balneario de la Toja, is famous for its medicinal mineral waters and thermal club. Enjoy a hot spring tour with aromatic sea Jacuzzi, heated pool, steam room, ice fountain, Finnish sauna, and relaxation room with thermal chairs.

For those working up an appetite from their adventurous pursuits, there's plenty of food to be found. Galicia has a deep-rooted seafaring culture and is one of the main fish and shellfish producers on the planet, with a large part of this production being exported abroad. Galician cuisine is typically traditional, featuring fresh seafood dishes from the nearby waters, and the portions are generous. Local restaurants and bars offer over 80 varieties of salt water fish, half a dozen of fresh water fish and a wide selection of shellfish, such as spider crabs, lobsters, crayfish, scallops, oysters, shrimps, velvet crabs, mussels, brown crabs, barnacles, razor-shells, and more.

There are several Michelin starred restaurants in the region. Yayo Daporta is located in the town of Cambados, and was featured on the "Top Chef" television program. Another, Culler de Pau by Javier Ollerós, is located in the town of O Grove.

Spain Your Way is a local travel agency based in Vigo, and works directly with many local operators to coordinate unique and intimate travel experiences. Book their seven-day journey along the coast of Rias Baixas on a comfortable modern sailing boat, and experience some of Northern Spain's best gastronomy, wines, culture and sights, sailing to the regions of Rías de Arousa, Pontevedra and Vigo. Hundreds of beaches,

dozens of fishing villages and many marinas make Rias Baixas an astonishing place for sailing. A visit to the Atlantic Islands of Galicia National Park (Cíes, Ons, Sálvora, and Cortegada) is also included, arguably one of the most desired sailing routes along the Spanish coastline.

Another option for wine lovers could be four days spent discovering the secrets of two of the most important wine regions. First stop is to put on rubber boots and go clam-digging, before preparing an "empanada" with your own hands. Next, cruise the impressive Sil Canyons by private boat, and visit some of the most beautiful Pazos, home to the best wine producers of Albariño, Godello and Mencía. It's a great way to taste these delicious wines, learn about the local production methods, and wander among the expansive vineyards of these historic manor properties.

For those with limited time, book one of the many day tours offered to visit the largest estuary of Galicia, with its islands and islets of white sand and crystal clear waters. Discover how fishermen work in this unique estuary, enjoy Galician cuisine and taste Albariño wine in an amazing setting surrounded by vineyards and spectacular scenery. Guests have the opportunity to learn the "Art of Fishing", catching clams, razor clams, crabs, shrimp, mussels, and sardines. The day ends with a Galician cooking class, preparing "empanada" and other traditional dishes. Of course, this is accompanied by fine Albariño wines. Alternative itinerary options can include a visit to the Manolo Paz Museum Foundation, created by artist Manolo Paz to promote the study and knowledge of modern and contemporary art.



The perfect time to visit the Galicia region is in spring or fall, when the weather is warm and temperate, thus avoiding the heat and crowds of the summer months, or the damp winter months. Book now and discover Spain Your Way!

Featured Accommodations

La Quinta de San Amaro is a beautiful gay-owned villa, offering exquisite accommodations, outstanding views of the surrounding landscape, and a charming restaurant. Located within a tiny walled village, Meaño, this place is ideally situated to do day trips to the surrounding countryside, vineyards, and seaside. Business and life partners, Nacho and Julio, left their stressful lives behind in Madrid to open up a bit of paradise in Galicia. Today, this hidden gem is a spectacular find for visitors in the know, and is also popular with locals who frequently dine there. The property also often hosts special events, such as art exhibitions, fashion shows, and of course, wine tastings. www.quintadesanamaro.com/en

The Gran Hotel Nagari is the only 5-star property right in Vigo, and the rooms are all quite spacious and luxurious, as is to be expected. The property has an onsite spa and upper level thermal pool with an outdoor hot tub overlooking the harbour. There's also an onsite restaurant with outdoor sidewalk terrace, and a small cocktail bar. It's ideally situated within easy walking distance to all attractions. www.granhotelnagari.com/en

The Silken América de Vigo Hotel opened in 1957 and was recently fully refurbished to be more "boutique" in style. Each room is designed a bit differently, offering basic comfort with all the

needed amenities. There are also upper level rooms with outdoor balconies for a small additional charge, and two suites (New York and Paris) with full kitchen and separated living area that are perfect for entertaining guests. A large terrace offering great harbour views of the Ría de Vigo is open to all guests on the upper level. It's adjacent to the Mirador Cafe where the breakfast buffet is served, and also appetizers and drinks throughout the day and evening. There's also a lounge and cafe off the ground floor, adjacent reception. www.ru.hoteles-silken.com/hotels/americavigo

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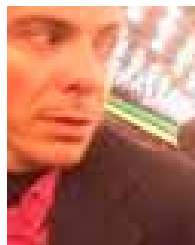
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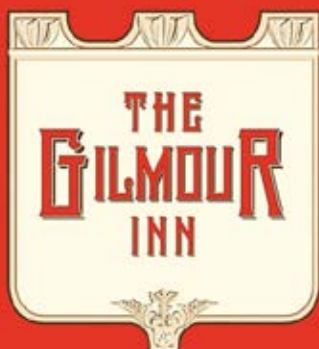
O'Salnés Tourism - www.osalnes.com/en

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Spain Your Way www.spainyourway.com

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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TANYA CHEEX

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by Aviva The Mirage

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Bend over Ladies and Gentlemen, she'll TAN-YA CHEEX!

Tanya staged her first "strip show" at the age of eight in her neighbours' backyard and hasn't put her clothes back on since. Founder and Artistic Director of Skin Tight Outta Sight since 1998 and the first inductee in The Canadian Burlesque Hall of Fame, Tanya likes mixing the sublime with the surreal, whether it's dancing with her puppet twin or twirling her tassels of fire.

She was voted one of the "Top 50 Burlesque Performers" in 2009 and recently voted one of the "Top 10 Canadian Burlesque Performers." Tanya has taken off her clothes in places all across Canada and throughout the USA, including The Calgary Stampede, New York City, Hollywood, Las Vegas, and even in the Mojave Desert. TV appearances include The Tom Green Show, Four Houses Canada, Ask Me Anything, and Storage Wars Canada.

She's currently producing two successful monthlies at The Bovine Sex Club with partners, Laura Desiree and Aviva The Mirage. We had Aviva The Mirage ask Tanya to share some of her dirty little secrets with our readers.

So, Tanya Cheex — what would your dream gig be?

When I die and I go to hell, I want to perform for a rogues' gallery of historical villains, scholars, libertines and political figures. It will be easy to do fire performance down there. Everybody's got a light!

What's the weirdest thing you've ever seen backstage?

My lover, through a mirror, on his knees servicing me — with only a thin sheet separating us from the audience. The MC later told the packed audience about it.

Name three things that influence you as a burlesque performer now and three that influenced you when you started.

When I first started out it was John Waters, Russ Meyer and old stag reels. Now I feel it's edgy haute couture,

like Mugler and McQueen, Chaos Magic, tossed with alcohol rage.

Would you rather perform in a bouncy castle or get on stage and realize that you had morphed into a Muppet?

I am full of too many punk rock spikes for the bouncy castle. I am always a combo of Oscar the Grouch, Miss Piggy and Animal.

Essential pre-gig and post-gig rituals?

Pre-gig warmup is what I call the "Matthew McConaughey warm up." You just strut around, stoned, loosening your limbs going, "Alright, alright, alright..." Post-gig ritual is first — line you some shots of Jack or tequila... probably punch Aviva... and then locate young boy flesh to violate.

Finally, if you could do a duet with anyone living or dead, who would it be and what would the act consist of?

Tough one. I don't know if this counts, but I have a thing for Gumby. So, a BDSM act with Gumby to the tune of "Green River" by CCR.

Upcoming Shows

Wham Bam! Rock n' Roll Decadence at the Bovine Sex Club, December 28

New Year's Eve Bash at the Shameful Tiki Room, December 31

www.skintightouttasight.com

www.greatcanadianburlesque.com

Aviva The Mirage is a gal of many trades, working alongside Tanya Cheex producing shows and performing as a dancer at many of her own events. She also DJ's awesome parties, is a freelance makeup artist, and works at a couple of cool retro retail shops in Toronto — Female Trouble Vintage and Doll Factory by Damzels.



PHOTO: Richard Evans

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— Felice Picano, author of *Like People in History* and *Nights at Rizzoli*

ENDGAME



*A thrilling recreation of Agatha Christie's classic whodunit, **And Then There Were None**. When Harvey Keill, ex-manager of notorious punk band the Ladykillers arranges a reunion gig on Shark Island, it appears the group's glory days are about to return. Rumour has it that Madonna, Bono, or possibly even the government owns the island, where a dark secret emerges that haunts the band and their guests, as one by one everybody falls prey to a mysterious fate.*

EXCERPT

The train rounded a corner and the whistle blew overhead in a high-pitched whine. Verna Temple checked her make-up in the compact mirror. She was nearing forty, but most people took her for a decade younger. She made a pert moue, pouting at her reflection. Those lips were something to behold. Full and ripe, like strawberries or as if they'd been stung by bees into a plump, round smoothness. Funny how she'd become such an old-fashioned sort of girl. Not at all what anyone would have predicted.

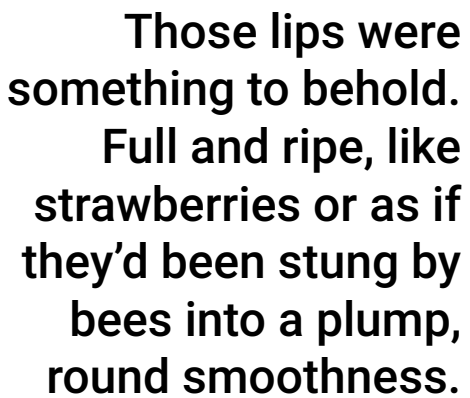
She picked up the magazine in her lap and turned the pages: Taylor Swift, Justin Bieber, Kate and William, Lady Gaga. She knew them all. The faces changed but the news was the same: betrayals, facelifts, marriages, babies, divorce. All the usual trash glittering at the bottom of the barrel.

The waters of Puget Sound twinkled up ahead. Verna watched the craggy hills approach. She hadn't been to the west coast since she was a child. The experience hadn't been so great. Nor were the memories. She had Bill and Audrey to thank for that. It had turned out to be another one of their drinking and arguing binges. Not much as parents went, that's for sure. Sometimes she wondered how they were, but she wondered less and less about them these days. Her brother had been a total shit, of course. But you don't speak ill of the dead, Verna reminded herself.

The past was past. And what you couldn't change, you put behind you. That was another thing Verna knew. She'd done plenty of putting behind her in her time. What you didn't like or couldn't live with, you could reinvent. That was her credo. From that poor, homely creature she'd once been had come the ultimate femme fatale: Marilyn Redux.

Since leaving home, her life had been a balancing act of sobering fact and startling fantasy, of harsh truths and the little white lies she told to make it through the day. She couldn't afford a slip, not even in the little things others took for granted: the stories about her mother and father, about her brother, even her work history. She rehearsed them carefully until she was exactly what and who she claimed. No more and no less. No ripple, no shimmer of doubt to mar the surface of the image she had so carefully built up all these years. If anyone looked for the person she'd once been, they would never find her.

Verna tucked her compact back in her purse and looked up. The woman sharing her compartment had got on somewhere south of Seattle, but she hadn't said a word past a quick hello. Verna studied the woman's plain features and sallow skin—nothing a little make-up



**Those lips were
something to behold.
Full and ripe, like
strawberries or as if
they'd been stung by
bees into a plump,
round smoothness.**

couldn't improve. Funny how some women couldn't be bothered to make the most of what they naturally had, Verna thought.

The woman turned and caught Verna watching. She smiled, but it didn't help her appearance. Verna knew the signs. The pallid, lifeless skin said she was some kind of user. Alcohol could do that after a few decades, but drugs would do it sooner, and this woman wasn't that old. Verna hadn't touched any sort of illegal substance since she was a teenager. She'd learned her lesson then—painfully so.

"You've got such beautiful hair," the other woman said, her voice a husky alto.

Verna melted a little. She wasn't one to be unfriendly. She smiled and crinkled her nose.

"Thanks," she said breathily, reaching up to her hair. "It's a lot of work."

"I know." The woman touched her own hair with a wan finger. "Too much work for me, though I've never been blessed in the looks department."

"Oh, sweetie!" Verna exclaimed. "Never say that about yourself. It's just not true." She smiled and crinkled again, as though to prove her sincerity. She took a good hard look at the woman. "Your hair, for instance. I can recommend a good conditioner and cream rinse that does wonders. I mean, look at me—colour for days, and I still have great shine." She batted her eyelashes. "As for the rest, well, a nip and tuck never hurt a body."

She smiled, but it didn't help her appearance. Verna knew the signs. The pallid, lifeless skin said she was some kind of user.

"You mean you...?"

Verna shrugged. "Just a little. To enhance the natural."

The woman looked a little shocked. "I've never really considered surgery. You see, I was—I mean, I am—a nurse and ... well, it's just not me."

Verna was fascinated by surgery and anything medical. "A nurse! How exciting. Do you get to sit in on operations?"

The woman shook her head sadly. "Not any more. I used to work in hospitals. Now I mostly work for private sources. I'm on my way to a new job, in fact. It's on a place called Shark Island."

The look on Verna's face was pure astonishment. "Why—I'm going to Shark Island, too."

"Are you? How peculiar."

Verna laughed suddenly. "That's amazing. I mean, to think we both ended up in the same compartment. Are you going for the reunion?"

“What reunion?”

“You mean you don’t know?” She brushed the comment aside. “Oh, it’s nothing. Just a band getting together again after quite a few years.”

The woman gave her a funny look. For a moment, Verna had an intuition. Then again, it was hard to say, especially with women. Wouldn’t it be ironic, she thought, if this woman hit on her?

“But why Shark Island? What will you do there?”

“I’ve been hired to do domestic work. I’ll only be using my medical expertise as required.”

“How fun!” Verna’s mind retreated to the rumours she’d heard. “Who hired you? I mean, is the island really owned by Bono?”

The woman laughed. “Oh, I don’t think so!”

Verna pressed a hand to her chest. “I’m sorry. It’s none of my business anyway. But surely you must have heard the rumours?”

The woman shook her head. “I hadn’t, to be honest. I—I’ve been out of touch. All I know is I was hired by some rich entrepreneur to work on his island for the summer.”

In fact, the offer had come completely out of the blue just when she’d needed it most. She wasn’t about to tell this glamour queen she’d been incarcerated as a guest of the government for the last eighteen months after borrowing a few painkillers from the hospital she’d worked at. Or that she’d lost her previous two jobs for exactly the same reason.

“My name is Sandra,” she said, pushing aside the dark thoughts.

“Verna,” the platinum blonde said enthusiastically, extending her hand.

“Good to meet you,” said Sandra.

“Likewise,” Verna said, crinkling her nose. “Well, Sandra. Whoever hired you, I predict it’s going to be a thrilling time for us all!”

She wasn’t about to tell this glamour queen she’d been incarcerated as a guest of the government for the last eighteen months...

Jeffrey Round is the author of nine novels, including the Lambda Award-winning *Lake on the Mountain*, and a poetry collection, *In the Museum of Leonardo da Vinci*. His first two books, *A Cage of Bones* and *The P-town Murders*, were listed on *AfterElton’s* Top 50 Greatest Gay Books. He is a founding member of the Naked Heart Festival of Words and lives in Toronto. JeffreyRound.com

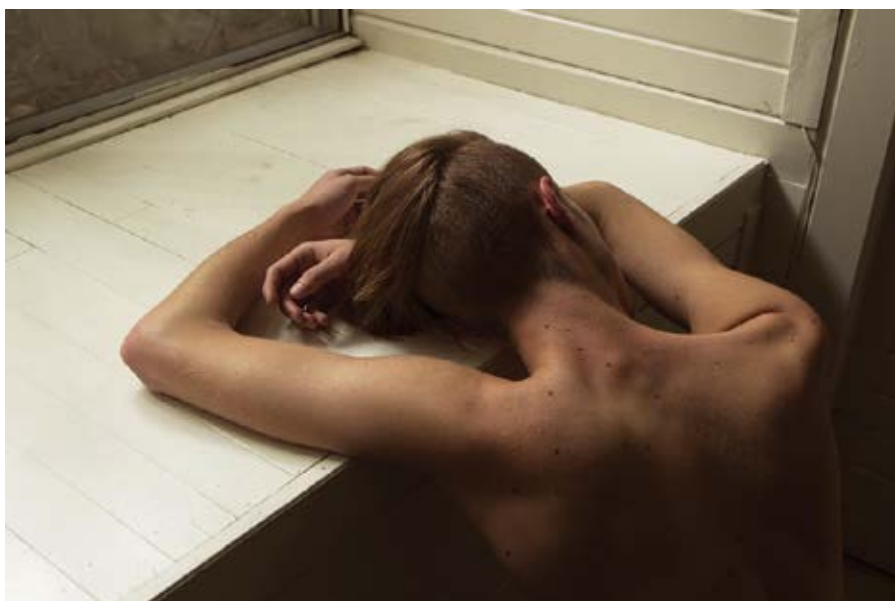
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Senior Pride Network (SPN) has a message for service providers across Ontario: “Expect Us!” LGBT people have made it clear that they need to be able to access appropriate services and remain out as they age. SPN is voicing these needs by advocating for LGBT awareness and inclusion in services for older adults.

The network started in 2002 by organizing forums, sharing information on LGBT-inclusive community resources, and creating a visibility poster about Older LGBT People being part of every community. **SPN** is intergenerational and comprised of individuals, organizations and community groups that share an interest and commitment to expanding programs and services for 50+ lesbian, gay, bisexual, trans and queer people in the City of Toronto and throughout Canada. Quarterly meetings provide an opportunity to share experiences and to work collaboratively on activities and projects, with representatives from over 25 organizations attending the meetings.

Past events include *Opening the Closet On Aging* (2011), *Rainbow Bridges Festival 2014: an Intergenerational LGBTTIQQ2SA Celebration*, and *Opening the Closet on Aging 2014: Wired to Connect*, a conference on inter-generational connectivity. In November, SPN presented its third annual *Time After Time* inter-generational dance fundraiser, *Queers in Wonderland*.

In April 2016, Senior Pride Network, in partnership with **The 519**, hosted “*What’s So Queer About Dying?*”, an intergenerational panel and community gathering to discuss end-of-life concerns and to explore this shared future in a supportive environment. Over 70 people attended the forum and in response SPN is hosting a workshop in January 2017 on *Advance Care Planning* and *Powers of Attorney*.

Community Cornerstone

by **Maureen Aslin**

Tell It Like It Is: Lived Experiences of LGBT Elders is a speakers’ series that SPN is collaborating with The 519 to produce, addressing the themes of Chosen Family, Aging and Disability, Aging as a Person of Colour, Trans and Aging, and A Life of Activism. The series runs until March 2017.

Great strides have been made to have LGBT seniors represented in policy and advisory groups for seniors. This year representatives from SPN have been added to the **Ontario Seniors’ Secretariat Liaison Committee**, **Egale National Seniors’ Advisory Council**, and SPN members are providing expertise to **VHA Home Health Care and Older Adult Centres’ Association of Ontario**.

Volunteers are the heart of SPN since it receives no regular funding. One SPN member says, “I’ve noticed that as I age I have become less visible to certain people. I’ve been called “dear” like I’m some nice little old lady, and hetero-normativity is more pervasive. I joined SPN to work to push back against those assumptions.”

SPN works closely with The 519 which has generously provided staff time, space, and in-kind support. Look to drop a toonie or two in the large glass cookie jar as you attend a SPN event or visit the SPN website to find out about upcoming events and how to support SPN’s work.

Making intergenerational connections is also a mandate of SPN. This fall SPN in collaboration with **Buddies in Bad Times Theatre** and The 519 launched the *Youth Elders Project* bringing together young and old to create a living document of our personal queer histories. The project will culminate in an original piece of theatre on Buddies Mainstage, directed by Evalyn Parry, May 30-Jun 4 2017.

Also, keep an eye out for a related Pride event. www.seniorpridenetwork.ca

Maureen Aslin is a member of the Advisory Committee of the Senior Pride Network.



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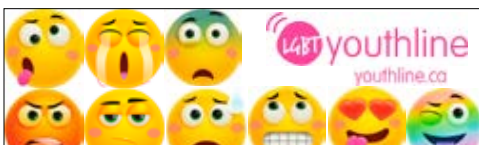
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WINTER IN THE CITY

by Caitlyn Holroyd

Another winter is upon us, and if the weather forecasters are correct, it's going to be a particularly grim one out there. Thankfully, Toronto has plenty of events that should help you forget about the ice and snow – or at least make it more tolerable over the next few months. There are those who enjoy the colder temperatures, though, and I've included a couple of events worth venturing outdoors for. Happy holidays and all the best for 2017!



WINTER FUN

Evergreen Winter Village

December 10-February 28

Evergreen Brick Works, 550 Bayview Avenue

www.evergreen.ca

FREE

Evergreen Brick Works is one of Toronto's most happening weekend destinations, and the winter months are no exception. From December through February, the site will be transforming into a winter wonderland filled with public markets, cozy campfires, and lots of outdoor activities. Enjoy foods from around the world at the Street Food Market, shop for local gifts at the Evergreen Garden Market and Etsy Holiday Makers Market, and take a spin around the outdoor skating rink.

TIP: Stay tuned to Evergreen's website for updates on new food, shopping, and winter programs taking place at the Winter Village after the holidays.



Ice Breakers

January 21-February 26

Queens Quay between Yonge and Bathurst Street

www.waterfrontbia.com

FREE

Created as a way to encourage Torontonians to explore the Waterfront during the colder months and spark dialogue among strangers, the inaugural Ice Breakers exhibition will bring five art installations to public locations along Queens Quay West. You'll find three-dimensional, faceted wooden hands; glowing boxes; camouflaged massing models; and more.

TIP: *The Waterfront is also home to some great restaurants. Stop by Pearl Harbourfront (207 Queens Quay W.) for authentic Chinese dim sum or Amsterdam BrewHouse (245 Queens Quay W.) for pub fare.*



ART & ENTERTAINMENT

What the Elf???

Until January 1

Second City, 51 Mercer Street

www.secondcity.com

TICKETS: \$15 plus tax for adults, \$12 plus tax for kids (12 and under)

What the Elf?!? is a musical extravaganza for people of all ages that pokes fun at holiday traditions, from flying reindeer to waiting in line for a picture with Santa Claus. It features hilarious improv, original songs by Jay McCarroll of electropop duo Brave Shores, and plenty of audience participation.

TIP: *Second City's holiday programming also includes the more adult-oriented Eat, Buy, Repeat: The Second City's Guide to the Holidays, a comedy celebrating the*

best (and worst) of the holiday season. It runs until January 6.

Yoga & Painting Workshop

January 15, 9:30-11 a.m. or 11:30-1 p.m.

Paintlounge East, 1173 Queen Street East

TICKETS: \$25 plus HST

What better way to kick-start your new year than with some yoga and freestyle painting? Tap into your physical, mental, and spiritual senses through a 45-minute yoga session led by instructor Lesley Halcro (make sure to bring your own mat), and then channel your creativity onto a 12x12" canvas.

TIP: *Paintlounge isn't just for adults! They also offer family and kids-oriented workshops at their East, West, and Markham locations, ranging from easy, moderate, and challenging.*

Toronto Design Offsite Festival

January 16-22

www.todesignoffsite.com

TICKETS: Most events and exhibitions are free, with the exception of the talks symposium (\$30) and festival party (\$8)

Now in its seventh year, Toronto Design Offsite Festival takes art and design out of the studio and into various public spaces across the city. The festival features over 100 events, exhibitions, and window installations — from a showcase on compact living to a glittery recreation of an archival photograph of circus elephants and walking tours.

TIP: *Celebrate the start of TO DO at the festival's kick-off party, taking place January 16 from 7-11 p.m. at Church of the Holy Trinity (19 Trinity Square). DJs Sigourney Beaver and Joe Blow will keep you dancing throughout the evening.*

Mystical Landscapes: Masterpieces from Monet, van Gogh, and more

Until January 29

Art Gallery of Ontario, 317 Dundas Street West

www.ago.net/mystical-landscapes

TICKETS: \$25 for adults, \$16.50 for students/youth, children free

Get up close and personal with some of the most iconic landscape paintings of all time and explore the mysticism behind them at this exhibition, presented in partnership with Musée d'Orsay in Paris. Mystical Landscape features over 100 works from 37 artists, including Claude Monet, Vincent van Gogh, Emily Carr, Paul Gauguin, Piet Mondrian,



Edvard Munch, Georgia O'Keeffe, and James McNeill Whistler.

TIP: *Want to avoid the crowds? The AGO tends to be busiest during weekday mornings and on the weekend, so plan to visit on a weekday afternoon or evening (they're open until 9 p.m. Wednesday through Friday).*



NEW YEAR'S EVE PARTIES

Under the Big Top

December 31, 6 p.m.

The Drake Hotel, 1150 Queen Street West

www.thedrakehotel.ca

TICKETS: \$25-125

Ring in 2017 by channeling your inner ring master at the Drake Hotel's circus-themed New Year's Eve party! The West Queen West hotspot will be offering three- and four-course dinners, an underground cocktail party, photobooth, tarot readings, DJs, and more across all three floors. Glass of bubbly included.

TIP: *The Drake will also bring the circus to their King West restaurant, Drake One Fifty. The NYE lineup there includes delicious eats, a tableside magician, and hoop performer.*

Chronologic

December 31, 10 p.m.

The Garrison, 1197 Dundas Street West

www.garrisontoronto.com

TICKETS: \$25 in advance from Rotate This, Soundscapes, and Ticketfly.com or \$30 at the door

If you've never been to a Chronologic party before, you're in for a treat (and a lot of dancing). Here's how it works: The Goin' Steady DJs spin the absolute best tracks from era

in chronological order, beginning in 1890 and culminating with the music of today.

TIP: *Fuel up before or after with eats from Junked Food Co., located across the street from The Garrison. Their smash bags and waffles are a must!*

FOOD & DRINK

Striker Sports Bar

31 St. Joseph Street

www.strikertoronto.com

(416) 929-9595

Toronto isn't lacking in sports bars, but none are quite like Striker. Dubbed as the city's first LGBT sports bar, Striker provides an inclusive and entertaining space for everyone to cheer on their team. Their menu includes sports bar staples like nachos, wings, and flatbread pizzas, along with an expansive beer and cocktail list. There are plenty of television screens too, ensuring you won't miss any of the action.

TIP: *Stop by for Happy Hour from 5-7 p.m. Monday through Friday! Specials include \$5 drinks, half-price wings (Wednesdays), and \$8.99 nachos (Fridays).*

Omaw

88 Ossington Avenue

<http://omaw.ca>

(416) 477-5450

Located in the heart of the Ossington strip, Omaw is a Southern-inspired restaurant by chef Matt Blondin (Acadia, Momofuku Daisho) and catering company The Food Dudes. The menu changes regularly but always offers creative takes on classic southern dishes like fried chicken, beef and pork ribs, and jambalaya.

TIP: *If you love surprises, you'll love Omaw's Sunday Suppers. For \$35 per person, the chefs will put together a menu for you.*

Caitlyn Holroyd is a news editor at the Torontobased sports app theScore and a contributor at SheDoesTheCity.com, where she compiles the hottest parties and events for the weekly Toronto Hit List. When she isn't writing, she enjoys travelling, attending concerts, and hanging out with her two cats. www.shedoesthecity.com/author/caitlyn-holroyd



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In the words of Bing the Bard, "Regrets, I've had a few. But then again, too few to mention." On those rare occasions when we find ourselves contemplating our return to Source, it seems that we share at least one fervent hope... to be remembered kindly by those we leave behind. While we might aspire to leave the world a better place than when we entered it, at a minimum we hope we didn't make it worse.

As a queer cis-male of the Pagan persuasion, entering my 60th year, I have had cause to consider what lies ahead. It's no secret that aging in the gay world is challenging. There's no shortage of editorials and opinion pieces chastising the hyper-active "cult of youth" among gay men.

Thousands of pages have been written lamenting the "invisibility" that age inflicts upon gay men as they pass through mid-life. By the time you hit sixty, many of the young denizens of the public and social spaces that we frequented in our youth now treat us like ghosts, invisible at best; subject to smirks, sneers and verbal insults at worst.

In part, this fetishistic worship of youth is understandable. Queers are embedded in our hetero-normative culture, which also puts young bodies (male and female) on a pedestal. In our predominantly patriarchal society, older men can sometimes compensate for the "sin" of being old by achieving material success. The stereotypes about sugar daddies and gold diggers are based on historical fact and social norms that go back a very long time.

Nevertheless, the prevailing attitude seems to be, "You can buy me a drink, but please don't clutter up the dance floor with your

wrinkly ass." It's entirely understandable that this situation, whether expressed explicitly or through subconscious behaviours, can lead many older gay men to express anger and frustration with the status quo. Others may experience mortal wounds to their self-esteem that drive them to retreat from social situations, becoming reclusive and isolated. This is particularly difficult, since in our youth we were (for the most part) extremely social creatures, always looking for the next social or sexual encounter, living it up and enjoying our days and nights.

Interestingly, lesbians are frequently spared these indignities. My lesbian friends often partner in relationships where there can be a decade or more between their calendar ages. Lesbians also seem less obsessed with hetero-normative standards of female beauty. This is a gross generalization, of course, but seems to hold true for many of the lesbians I know. Their partner's spiritual essence, intelligence, creativity, and a host of other personal attributes often seems to trump society's definition of female beauty.

Perhaps gay men have something to learn from these womyn. While lesbians are not immune to the self-esteem issues that plague so many people in our society, many of them seem to have risen to the

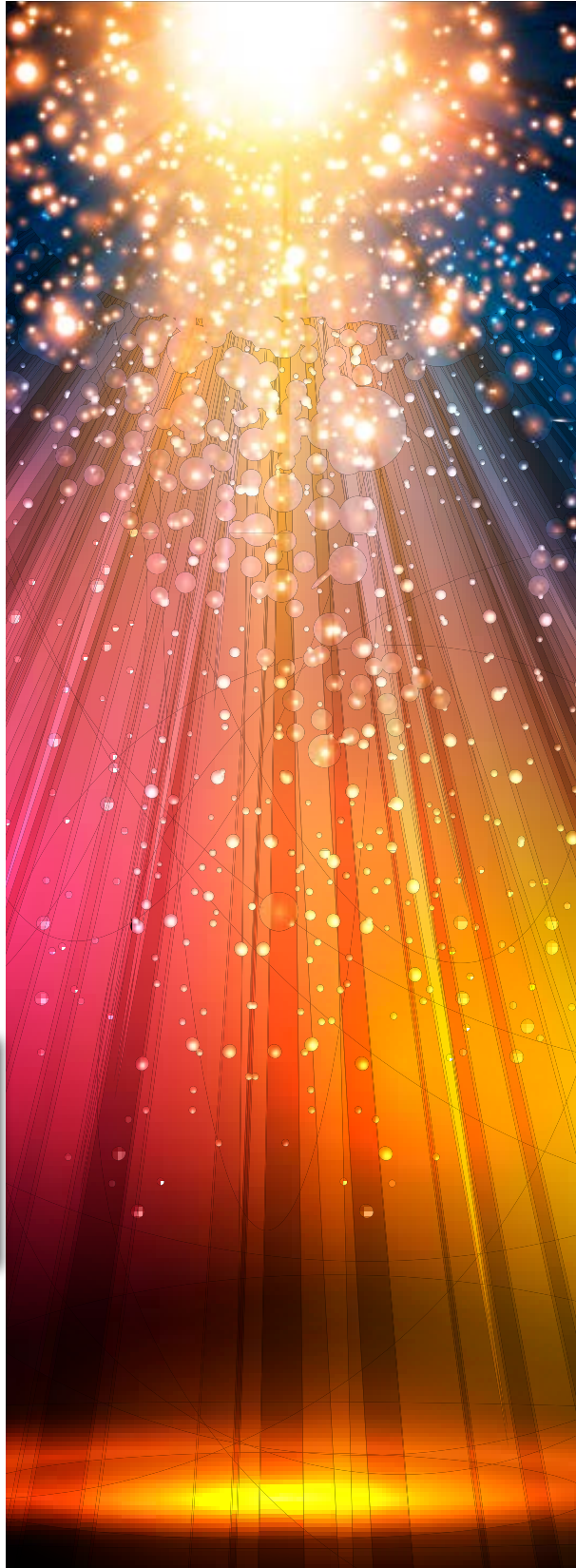
challenge, nurturing their own well-being through healthy introspection, focused attention on their emotional, social and psychological needs, and making space in their lives for opportunities to connect and communicate.

For myself, I have made joyous peace with my circumstances. I'm the father of four adult children who are the best allies any queer dad could hope for, an ex-wife who remains one of my very best friends, and a small group of gay male friends whose smiles light up my days (and occasionally my nights). My left hand is jealous, but my right hand takes me to breakfast!

One of the most powerful forces we can conjure in our lives is a combination of gratitude for what is and positive anticipation toward what is coming. I am grateful for the life I am living and I apply my creative energy to encouraging positive anticipation about the future.

For now, I am content. Should you see my wrinkly ass on the dance floor during the holidays, please take a moment to say hello. I might even buy you a drink!

Mychol Scully is Senior Art Director for INspired Media Inc. publications PinkPlayMags, theBUZZ, The LocalBiz Magazine, and The Pink Pages Directory. He is also the Webmaster for all of INspired Media's Internet properties. Mychol is available for thoughtful conversation or lascivious teasing anytime at mychol@mychol.com.





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Winter Horoscopes

Aries (March 21st – April 20th)

This season urges you to get plenty of rest and cocoon as much as possible. You are recovering from a very trying year. Your inner rooms are beckoning for your presence. As often as possible, take time to go within. Choose a place free of any over-stimulation. Take a candle-lit bath, pour a cup of tea and enjoy a little replenishing me-time.

Taurus (April 21st – May 21st)

Your career path will take a very definite turn over the winter months. The planets suggest that you focus on career matters and give personal or emotional matters a break for now. The key to securing your successful career transition will be your social skills, specifically your ability to address the interests of others.

Gemini (May 22nd – June 21st)

Do you recently feel that you'd like a vacation from your life, Gemini? This begs the question, "Why would we want a life that we would want a vacation from?" Vacation, to vacate, vacant. Your desire to have more space in your life is key. Something needs to be emptied out to make space for something else.

Cancer (June 22nd – July 22nd)

Examine the ways in which you've dealt with frustration in your life. This season will test your methods and beg a re-work. Do you hide away under your shell and hope the frustrating problem will disappear? Do you lash out irritably at loved ones or co-workers? How could you handle frustration differently? Count to ten...and breathe.

Leo (July 23rd – August 22nd)

Tis the season to be generous Leo! You've evaluated how hard you've worked this year and want to lavish your loved ones with the fruits of your labour. You know that this does not only come in the form of gifts. The gift of your time and loving presence is the most precious gift of all. It's the gift that keeps on giving.

Virgo (August 23rd – September 23rd)

This holiday season brings out worry around money and finances. Christmas shopping and perhaps some recent major purchases have weighed on your mind. Ever responsible and dutiful, you bring this attitude to your finances. Just remember, money is a form of energy exchange and is only useful once it is released. Live a little.

Libra (September 24th – October 23rd)

Someone is trying to persuade you in a forceful way to have you see things their way. If you sense this is happening, you would be wise to know that there is no need to argue or engage in a counter struggle. You are free to listen and move on with your own views, preferably unscathed. Having confidence in one's own position does not require others to change theirs. But you know this already.

Scorpio (October 24th – November 22nd)

You have happened upon a new subject of interest, perhaps while surfing the internet or in passing randomly. This new interest that you have stumbled upon has you completely fascinated. You border on obsession with researching and scouring sources for information. Follow where your search leads. This promises to be an enriching adventure.

Sagittarius (November 23rd - December 21st)

A personal situation arises where you find yourself seeking sound advice. An older person will assist you with some wisdom gained from past and vast experience. A piece of wisdom will come to you poetically expressed in the form of a cliché, which you are asked not to dismiss. There is a lot of truth to be found in clichés.

Capricorn (December 22nd – January 19th)

A project or move which you are keen to make happen requires the approval of "higher ups". Unfortunately, you will be met with a lot of power tripping in the process of obtaining permission to move forward with your vision. Do not engage. There is only one reason that power-trippers trip and that is lack of power. Keep making your preparations in secret because very soon, your idea will reach a sympathetic and truly powerful ear.

Aquarius (January 20th – February 19th)

Over the holidays, gatherings with friends and family will provide the perfect social settings to engage, talk and catch up. And if there is any sign that loves a good intellectual chat-up, it's yours, Aquarius. Be careful to keep your conversations free from talk about politics, religion or anything controversially charged as this may cause an unpleasant atmosphere. Tis the season to be jolly. Not brawl-y.

Pisces (February 20th – March 20th)

Oh the weather outside is frightful, but the fire is so delightful! This is your season for love and romance, Pisces. Whether it's the formation of a new relationship, or increasing intimacy with your loved one, you are turning a corner in your relationship sector. Do I hear Christmas engagement bells?

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. As above, so below.



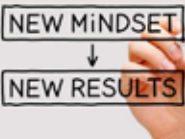


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Looking Back

by Vince Ciarlo

Michelle DuBarry (AKA *Russell Alldread*) has come a long way in life. Growing up in Bowmanville, Ontario, where his cousins dressed him in a strapless gown at the age of nine, he never thought she would be a global icon in the LGBT community in her 85th year. After a whirlwind year, that saw her receive a Guinness World Record as “World’s Oldest Drag Queen Performing” to being the first drag queen in Ontario’s history to receive an Ontario Seniors Award from the Lieutenant Governor, Michelle is still going strong. As an aging senior, she’s shown all of us that no matter what age you are, you have a purpose and can contribute to society.

How has drag changed over the years?

These days, every drag queen is an individual character. It’s wild and bizarre, unlike the 60s when we were female impersonators, honoring the icons of the day. I was involved with a group that would mount mini-Broadway shows. It was more theatrical. I learned the discipline and etiquette of showmanship and we had clever costume makers. I’ve always loved the stage.

What’s your secret to longevity?

I count my blessings every morning. I can only live one day at a time. Yesterday is gone and tomorrow isn’t here yet. I eat healthy. I love people and being around them. It’s my involvement in the community that keeps me active.

What are your thoughts on receiving the Guinness World Record?

It felt like a kick in the gut. It got me recognition, which I do appreciate. At 85, I could easily be forgotten. The Record helps a lot because I always get recognized and I am very much respected in the community. I’ve always had friends, but the title and the recognition that came with it increased the number of people who now know me and educates them on the persona that is Michelle.

Who are your favourite queens today?

There are so many names in the drag community and I love and admire them all. They are free to be who they are and they are respectful of my admiration of them at my age. Two particular ones that come to my mind are Carlotta Carlisle and



Michelle Ross. I’m currently working with drag queen D’Amanda Tension on Tuesday Nights at Pegasus where we call bingo together.

What are your thoughts on RuPaul?

RuPaul opened up the drag world to a whole lot of people through her work and has made many of them famous. I admire what she’s done by popularizing the drag world.

What is the most memorable moment in your career?

As I mentioned, now a lot of my time is spent working with TICOT, and I’ve been a member for a very long time. In addition to receiving a Guinness World Record and recently an Ontario Seniors Award, I received the Title of “Grand Ma Mere of Ontario” from Empress Nicole Murray Ramirez, Queen Mother I of the Americas and International Titular Head of State of The International Court System,. This is in recognition of my work over the last couple of decades. I previously held the title of Queen Mother of Ontario.

Michelle DuBarry can be seen daily walking around the Church-Wellesley Village. But you can see her perform every Tuesday at 10p.m. at Crews/Tangos and calling Bingo at Pegasus following her performance. You can also see her perform at TICOT events around the Village.

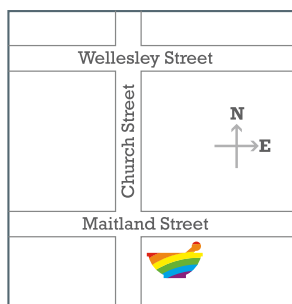
Vince J. Ciarlo is a Toronto-based communications consultant who has successfully promoted clients and events in a variety of industries, as well as a number of notable Canadian, American and international performing artists. He is also an advocate and avid volunteer in Toronto’s vibrant LGBT community. www.ciarlo.ca





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