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FROM THE PUBLISHER



The colours of fall, Thanksgiving, Halloween, the soft chill in the air — these are all things I love about this time of year.

Welcome to autumnplay! and our “A Community Thanksgiving” edition.

Originally, I wanted to use my space in this issue to talk about my thoughts on the upcoming election and the candidates but when I read the great piece our guest editor Scott Dagostino did on the subject, I felt it was sufficient in shedding some light on the great men, women and trans people from our community running for office, and in helping you make a decision come October 25th.

Instead, I will, in the spirit of the theme of this edition, relay what I am thankful for.

I am thankful that I live in Canada. This wonderful country of ours embraced me the second I landed here with my family at the age of 19 and gave me so many opportunities. My dad hates it when I tease him and tell him that I would go to war for Canada before I would go to war for Lebanon, the beautiful country of my heritage where I have visited a few times in my life, or Kuwait, the country of my birth, which I loved and still remember fondly but where you are always considered a foreigner unless you are Kuwaiti by blood. What can I say? In Canada, I feel I belong.

I am thankful for the freedoms our LGBT

community has. I hope we will always remember that they weren't easy to achieve and that there are still a few people out there who would love to see those freedoms taken away from us.

I am thankful for our community. A community that I was in pain watching fall apart prior to Pride festivities, but was thrilled to see somehow pull together at the end. Isn't it great that we live in a country where everyone has the right to say what is on their mind?

I am thankful for having the good luck to wake up every day to work with some of the nicest and most talented people in the whole world (okay, maybe not the whole world but I have to say this to keep them happy because they're a vain full-of-themselves crew). Kidding aside, I am truly thankful to you guys.

I am thankful to you, our reader. You all have been so incredibly supportive and I hope we continue for many years to come to entertain you with our Pink Play Mags.

I am thankful that my journey in the last few years as a business owner has given me the chance to meet and know so many inspiring people: successful individuals, talented creatives and just all-around-awesome folks. This journey into entrepreneurship has been an incredible blessing on a personal level, a journey that had me learn so many new things and helped me break down many old patterns and discover much about myself. I am a better man because of it.

I believe success and happiness are out there to be found; you just have to start with being thankful. If you are in a challenging place, thankfulness is the first step you can take to changing your life into a happy one. Even when life isn't easy, I try to be thankful for the little blessings and I often find that things start to look better on their own.

Before I go, a thank you to our cover-man George Smitherman, someone I personally know and admire. Best of luck with the upcoming election, my friend.

Martha, the design of this issue is an ode to your 'Martha Stewart Living.' Thank you for the inspiration.

Happy Thanksgiving, everyone.

Antoine Elhashem
PUBLISHER

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A Community Thanksgiving

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At the head of our thanksgiving table:

Mayor Candidate George Smitherman

A special thank you to Michael and Keith for being the most amazing hosts. May your home always be filled with a lot to be thankful for.

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FROM OUR GUEST EDITOR



Whenever Jeff Harrison, the esteemed editor of this fine quarterly, complains that I'm late with my story, I like to cheerily quote the late, great Douglas Adams: "I love deadlines. I like the whooshing sound they make as they fly by." So imagine my horror when Jeff decided to take an issue off to work on his upcoming novel and turned autumnplay over to me. Suddenly, it was MY turn to chase down the other writers and with less time to do it! Yep, it's true: karma's a bitch.

But I hope the finished issue you're holding reflects that I had a ball putting this together. I loved taking a break from my regular queer news reporting elsewhere to talk about dinner party planning with Scott MacDonald, ponder mind/body healing with Shelley Harrison and listen in on Maggie Cassella and Steven Bereznai's fabulous banter. I asked Manny Machado if he could do something on "steampunk" (just because I could!) and he came back with an entire brass-and-leather home decor scheme. I loved being able to showcase writers I already admire (Joey Comeau! Zoe Whittall! Dale Smith!), while being introduced to Pink Play essentials Ricky Boudreau, Janet Collins and Lawrence Grecco.

Best of all, I got to team up once again with the feisty Karen Fulcher to take on the queer political scene and preview next month's election

in Toronto by sitting down with "Furious" George Smitherman. Why should I vote for him? Is he running against Rob Ford? Or David Miller? I wanted to find out, though I leave it with you to make up your own mind about the man who is still our best hope against the current frontrunner in the polls and potential disaster for our city. Whoops, was that an opinion? Of course it was. I think Rob Ford is a horrible choice for mayor of this city. I'm thankful that I'm free to say it, that it doesn't mean I hate the guy and that you are always free to disagree with me and say so.

The theme for this election-timed issue is "A Community Thanksgiving" and our genuinely warm-hearted publisher feared that all this talk of politics would interfere with that. I couldn't disagree with him more. Politics is *about* community. People say things like, "I don't follow politics" or "Why does the Pride parade have to be political?" as though it's a dirty word. It's not. Politics is about conversation.

People disagree. They fight. Even when they love each other. *Especially* when they love each other. During Pride Toronto's censorship struggle over Queers Against Israeli Apartheid this summer, many people hated the QuAIA group for "breaking up our community," but that was ridiculous since their members were part of our community. While some of us saw bickering amongst ourselves as the sign of a breakdown, I saw it as something like a Thanksgiving dinner. The family was gathering around the Pride table and QuAIA was like that cousin in university who shows up once a year to call you a murderer for eating meat and to lecture you on how many Iraqis had to die so you could drive your car there. You don't have to like her but she's still family.

In talking to the fabulous queer politicians in this issue, who may disagree on any number of issues, I was reminded all over again of how much I love our infinitely diverse community, from its elitist white gays right on up to its extraordinary transfolk. We can argue and bicker amongst ourselves but we'll always be connected.

Scott Dagostino
GUEST EDITOR

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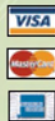
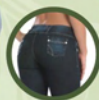
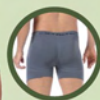
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Get OUT the Vote

by Scott Dagostino

A portrait of George Smitherman, a middle-aged man with a receding hairline, smiling at the camera. He is wearing a dark suit, a light blue shirt, and a purple and white striped tie. The background is a plain, light-colored wall.

Why some of
my best
municipal
representatives
are
GAY

Toronto's Oct. 25 municipal elections are soon upon us. Now, no one would suggest voting for someone solely because they're gay, lesbian, transgendered or queer, but having an out and proud voice in city government is never a bad idea for our community and, in this race, we have an unprecedented number of queer candidates, beginning with our coverguy:

As the Toronto mayoral election campaign heats up in these last few weeks, George Smitherman makes a surprising bargain: "What I'm offering to people is that, if you elect me, I'm going to restore a sense of pride to the city." Thanks to hacking-and-slashing frontrunner Rob Ford, there's been no shortage of talk of Toronto being "broken" or "corrupt"

but this may be the first time anyone has questioned the city's happiness.

"Lots of people are proud about different parts of the city," Smitherman explains, "They really like their neighbourhood or they really like the people but for the government of the city down at City Hall, the people who govern us and

lead us, I really think there's a sense that it's a bit mediocre overall."

Right after Labour Day, Smitherman announced a plan of spending and tax freezes, along with a 100-day line-by-line budget review. "The spending binge is over," he declared. "It's back to basics." Does that include a reference to all the bad press about outgoing councilor Kyle Rae's \$12,000 retirement party at the Rosewater Supper Club?

"It's a tough one for me because I went to that party," says Smitherman, "but as I walked there, I said to the two volunteers who were with me, 'Do not take a drink. Do not eat a canapé.'" Given that the food and drink was already paid for based on a guest list, however, I can't help but joke that this sounds a little like Bill Clinton not inhaling.

"Kyle Rae has been one of the best city councilors Toronto's had and he's done awesome things for our community and for neighbourhoods," Smitherman protests, "He's been great. But I would have been a lot more comfortable if we were all making those nice little sandwiches where you cut off the crusts and serving them at a goodbye party for Kyle at the newly renovated 519."

Rae insisted that the party was paid for out of a pre-approved communications budget, one he'd even previously paid into out of his own money, but Smitherman calls those budgets "outrageously generous" and vows to cut two million dollars from the cost of running City Hall. "It's a time of restraint," he says, "and when you've got an organization that spends \$11 billion a year, you better damn well make sure that its leaders are exercising proper restraint."

The frustration for Smitherman is that his frugal message is being eclipsed by the red-faced ravings of Rob Ford, vowing to cut even deeper. As this issue headed for press, the most recent Forum Research poll had Rob Ford in the lead with 34 percent of support, Smitherman in second with 22 percent.

In 1997, Smitherman was the campaign manager for Barbara Hall's mayoral campaign against the blustery, gaffe-prone Mel Lastman, who nevertheless beat the practical, sensible Hall. Is history repeating itself here?

"Don't diminish Mel Lastman too easily and don't give Rob Ford too much credit," warns Smitherman, "Remember that in that race, Mel Lastman had a track record of 20 years as mayor of North York and in that time, North York had emerged as a pretty good place... Rob Ford's been on council for ten years and what he's done adds up to squat. Diddly squat. Rob Ford's plan leads to one inevitable conclusion: Mike Harris-style cuts to the services that matter to people. He's promised a combination of revenue reductions and expenditure increases...it's the absence of a sensible fiscal plan. I wouldn't be surprised to see Sarah Palin campaigning for him."

Smitherman says Toronto is actually doing better than Ford and Rossi would have us believe. "Every year, Toronto projects itself as a basket case, using words like 'broke' or 'bankrupt,'" he explains, "but in the last seven years, the city has received a share of the gas tax from the federal government, a share of the gas tax from the provincial government, the provincial government has uploaded very substantial costs from the Harris downloading...I'm not pretending that everything's easy but relatively speaking, the diversification of revenue streams that feed into the city of Toronto's revenue picture is much better than it was."

All Toronto needs, Smitherman insists, is "some restraint and proper management...this is a big bit of the frustration that motivated me to run in the first place. I think it's time to hunker down, work within the revenue that has been identified, quit pretending that huge, vast amounts of money are going to fall from high heights and demonstrate that we can live within our means."

And if all that sounds like Smitherman's leaning rightward, he isn't worried.

"Part of why we chose purple as a campaign colour – even though I've been a Liberal – is that I want to restore the nature of consensus government to City Hall, and the ones who have used the factional model the most at City Hall for decades are the NDP. They are the most likely to caucus and [outgoing mayor David] Miller has created an inside-out situation where he knows his voting block and if you're on the outside of it, you're on the outside of it. Mel Lastman was much more effective, actually, at working across the aisle and across the philosophical spectrum of City Hall. Jack Layton, Olivia Chow and Joe Pantalone are all examples of people, obviously NDPers, that Mel Lastman put to very good use."

Smitherman calls his overall approach "tough love" but reserves a small bit for himself, publicly owning up to mistakes with past drug use and the e-Health spending debacle under his watch as Ontario Minister of Health.

"I'm a known commodity," he says and part of that includes being gay and out. "I think people have come to know me for so much more than my sexual orientation, but overall, I am who I am, as that great song goes, and I never seek to hide it or disguise it in any way. I think that part of my brand is authenticity. It doesn't mean you love me but more likely than not, I'm gonna give it to you straight up. I think that people appreciate it more often than not."



KEITH COLE, running for mayor of Toronto

George Smitherman may be way ahead in the polls but Keith Cole's run is not some jokey protest campaign.

"Let's talk openly about public health," he says,

"We need to stop being afraid of dealing with health issues that affect us all." Cole says Toronto cares about art, bicycles and civic engagement and his campaign was born from "a desire to 'Bring Back Gay' and stop conservative puritans everywhere. 'Queer'

equals 'greatness' in everything I do and everything we do as a community. Being queer has a big impact and it is all good, baby!"

"All the bad stuff that has happened to our city and its gay/lesbian/trans community will only make us stronger. We must realize by now that we cannot let these things happen again and we must keep our eyes and ears open and keep on fighting the good fight." In the race for the top spot, Cole surprises by identifying just a bit with Rob Ford. "We are fellow criminals and large-mouthed big guys," he laughs, "Very different but unafraid to speak!"

But for all his powers, the mayor is also one vote on a city council of 44. Among the candidates, we have several fabulous options:



ENZA ANDERSON, running for city council Ward 27, Toronto Centre - Rosedale

"Running for mayor in 2000," says Anderson, "I learned three valuable lessons: you can't beat

Mel Lastman, career politicians like to waste money, and politics affects every aspect of our lives. Our political system in Toronto needs to be more connected and more responsive to the people it serves." She points to the \$12,000 outgoing councilor Kyle Rae spent on his goodbye party: "It seems like a minor issue until you consider the principles it represents."

"Toronto proclaims itself as a diverse city with a diverse city council. It's time to put those words into action." As a transwoman, Anderson says, "I'm the best candidate because I've already withstood more than any other councillor has ever had to – simply to live as an ordinary citizen in our city. This is an incredible set of character strengths, I promise you. What exactly would I be afraid of? Who would intimidate me? Why would I back down on an issue, just because of opposition?"



**KEVIN BEAULIEU, running for city council
Ward 18, Davenport**

"People in Ward 18 have been working hard to improve their neighborhoods," says

Beaulieu, "I want to stand up for better local public services that will support them." As a former assistant to outgoing councillor Adam Giambrone, he says, "I have a lot of relevant experience helping people out at City Hall when they needed access." He promises "improved engagement with City Hall, better transportation (including transit, cycling and pedestrian infrastructure) and being prepared for the interest from developers that rising property values will inevitably bring."

Being gay in a largely Portuguese area, Beaulieu says, "I put a lot of faith in Ward 18 residents' respect for diversity and our sense of fairness. Voters will choose a councillor based on how well we connect with residents and share their values. I'm confident that together, we will continue to challenge bigotry in all its forms where we find it; we'll continue to build community to counter isolation and fear; and we will celebrate our contributions to our city and our neighbourhoods."



**KEN CHAN, running for city council
Ward 27, Toronto Centre - Rosedale**

"Toronto is fabulous," says Chan, back from working as a mayoral advisor in

London, UK. "I've said it time and time again – there is so much that needs to be done to elevate Toronto on the world stage. I want to bring a new sense of leadership to city hall and make Toronto's government work for us again." As mayor, Chan says he'll "tackle gridlock by bringing in a comprehensive transportation strategy and modernizing the TTC, invest in programs that make Toronto more livable, sustainable and affordable; and show respect for tax dollars through

responsible fiscal management at city hall."

"I believe in integrity, compassion and common sense in politics," Chan says, "I once served as an openly gay police officer and my philosophy then is one that I still hold today: stick to the core of your principles, work hard and people will respect you for who you are and for what you can do."



**Michael Erickson, running for city council
Ward 14, Parkdale - High Park**

"It seems to me that a whole set of crucial issues in my neighbourhood and in my

city have been neglected or even abandoned by city council," says Erickson, "so I am stepping up to offer people some much needed change. As a high school teacher, I tend to prioritize the needs of children and youth. I think it's time to be honest about our failures and face the future with hope and practical solutions." Erickson says his constituents care most about effective transit, a responsive city government and a commitment to social justice.

With "the second highest concentration of LGBTQ people in Toronto in it," says Erickson, "Parkdale, Roncesvalles and The Junction have a long history of social justice activism, of celebrating differences, of inclusive community, of welcoming freaks, families, artists, activists, entrepreneurs and dreamers. Being queer here just makes me a typical neighbour." And, he adds, "I think being queer is a gift. It has allowed me to understand how oppression works as well as connecting me to a larger, historical movement for liberation. And we have the best parties!"



**Susan Gapka, running for city council
Ward 27, Toronto Centre - Rosedale**

In 2006, while working as a community organizer, says Gapka, "residents

and community members were expressing a growing discontent with the long-time city councillor Kyle Rae so I reviewed the election records and discovered that, in 2000, Rae was acclaimed and that no candidate had challenged in consecutive elections." Gapka decided to run in Ward 27 because, she says, "we must both protect the long-term economic prosperity for local businessness and provide opportunities for residents from disadvantaged backgrounds; low-income, homeless, underhoused, sex workers, cannabis users, disabled, racialized, etc."

"If elected, I would be the first out trans person elected to public office in Canada," Gapka says, "yet I insist on focusing on the important issues that face our residents on a daily basis. For me, we are at a moment which requires strong, effective leadership which understands how to reach out across our diverse communities and seek out solutions which benefit all of our communities, not just some of us."



CHRIS MOISE, running for Toronto District School Board trustee District 14, Toronto Centre - Rosedale

"I felt compelled to enter the race when I heard the TDSB was closing local schools to balance the school budget," says Moise, "Closing schools in urban neighbourhoods is a recipe to repeat the pattern we have seen in so many American inner cities. Once schools are gone, young families leave." To voters without kids, he says, "the public school system belongs to us all, we all pay in, it raises and teaches values to our neighbours and citizens."

"I am running on issues both the community and I care about, not as a queer candidate," says Moise, "My partner and I want a strong educational system in place so when we do decide to extend our family, we can walk our child to a local school down the street." That being said, however, "a progressive queer

voice on the school board will ensure that our concerns are addressed everywhere, not just in one or two alternative schools. I want to move away from the idea of tolerance to acceptance. Education is the key."



KRISTYN WONG-TAM, running for city council Ward 27, Toronto Centre - Rosedale

"I have dedicated my life to community advocacy and public service," says Wong-Tam, "My political

beliefs are steeped in Buddhist values and I have been taught at an early age to strive for social justice and to alleviate the suffering of others. My personal goal is to reconnect the residents to city hall and to encourage civic participation in all key decisions that affect local governance." She pledges to "modernize the TTC and reduce road congestion, create more affordable and sustainable housing options, and improve fiscal accountability and transparency by engaging residents."

"My queer activism spreads over two decades and has been recorded in a NFB documentary and couple of books; along with my co-founding of the Church-Wellesley Village BIA and the Church & Wellesley Residents Association, this places me as the candidate with the deepest grassroots community connections and the best choice to represent Ward 27's queer community," says Wong-Tam. "It's clear that the queer community is not monolithic and linear in its composition and political vision. It is as diverse as any other group and, as such, we will have to learn to respect differences and learn to work together."

Scott Dagostino is a freelance writer in Toronto who survived the Mel Lastman era and sure as hell doesn't want a meaner, dumber version of it now. On Oct. 25th, please get out and vote!



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We've come a long way, baby!

by Karen Fulcher



How involved are you in politics?

Certainly one's political "involvement" can be any number of ways: armchair activism, merry debates over martinis, community meetings, protest marches, campaigns for a political seat or simply one more vote during an election.

I know I am faulty in thinking that if you are queer, you are more likely to be politically active and that you align your politics with the left, but my argument goes like this: we have oppression in common (experiencing it in our own lives or aware of it in those of others) and as the left aims to create a more equal society, what better place to be on the political opinion spectrum? Except that there are as many political opinions as there are unique lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgendered, transsexual and queer identified people.

What causes people to form their various political opinions? Bill Freeman of www.votetoronto.ca writes

about political "fault lines," dividing ideologies that shape political debate. In particular, Freeman analyzes Toronto's history and concludes that social class and the suburb/downtown divide inform the political climate of today.

From a queer perspective, what historical political fault lines inform our community? What issues brought queer people into the political arena in Canada?

Remember when queer political action was called "the Gay Agenda?" In the early 1990s, a backlash had formed against queer demands for civil rights. The term is still sometimes used to politically comment on social policy that supports LGBTTQ rights but there's been no shortage of queer politicians who evolved from this social activism.

20 Queer Political Firsts in Canada

This is not a comprehensive list of all LGBTQ politicians throughout Canadian history but a sampling of political “first timers.”



Charlotte Elizabeth Whitton

was the first female mayor of a major city, Ottawa, and first elected in 1951. She is famous for the

quotation, “Whatever women do, they must do twice as well as men to be thought half as good. Luckily, this is not difficult.” She was made an Officer of the Order of Canada in 1967 and, 24 years after her death in 1975, the National Archives of Canada publicly released the last of Whitton’s papers, honouring her request to leave them unread until 1999. The papers contained letters between Whitton and Margaret Grier confirming their love relationship.



Robert Douglas Cook

was the first openly gay person to run for political office in Canada. In the 1979 provincial

election in British Columbia, Cook ran as the only candidate of the Gay Alliance Toward Equality, a gay civil rights group.



Svend Robinson

was the longest-serving British Columbia MP of his time, in office from 1979 to 2004, and he came

out in 1988. Among his many accomplishments in office, he was active on HIV/AIDS issues from the early 1980s and worked his entire career to promote cultural diversity, human rights and environmental issues. Robinson successfully worked to add “sexual orientation” in hate crimes legislation in 2004 but sadly, his political career ended that same year when he was charged with theft of over \$5,000 for stealing a ring at an auction.



George Hislop

was the first openly gay candidate for a municipal office in Canada (Toronto City Council, 1980),

as well as the first openly gay candidate for any political office in Ontario (second only in Canada to R.D. Cook). Hislop’s political career emerged directly from social activism. In 1971, he organized the first Canadian gay rights demonstration on Parliament Hill. He ran in the 1981 provincial election as an independent



candidate in protest against the Toronto bathhouse raids that year and he was one of several gay activists who launched a class action lawsuit against the federal government to include retroactive same-sex Canada Pension Plan benefits to deaths prior to 1998. Hislop received a number of awards and recognition for his political activism, including a park named after him in Toronto’s Church and Wellesley neighbourhood.

Raymond Blain was the first openly gay candidate to be elected to public office in Canada. Elected in 1986, he represented the Saint-Jacques district at Montreal City Hall. He died of AIDS-related complications in 1992 at age 41 and has a park named in his

honour, Parc Raymond-Blain.

Helen Kennedy successfully ran for East York city council in 1988. Her campaign was the first in Canada to provide campaign literature on tape for the blind. In April 2007, she was named executive director of Egale Canada, the first woman to head this national organization committed to advancing equality and justice for lesbian, gay, bisexual and trans-identified people and their families.

Douglas Wilson was the first openly gay candidate to be nominated by a major political party to stand for Parliament in the 1988 election. During his campaign, he tested HIV-positive and became an AIDS activist until he died in 1992 at the age of 42. The University of Saskatchewan’s student union now grants the annual Doug Wilson Award to students who have excelled in advancing queer rights on campus.

Kyle Rae became the Toronto’s first openly gay Toronto City councillor in 1991. Prior to his political career, he was the executive director of Toronto’s 519 Community Centre and, during his time on council, Rae was a champion for Buddies in Bad Times theatre, Nuit Blanche and the Canadian Gay and Lesbian Archives. He was sued by members of the Toronto Police in 2002 for calling them “rogue cops” after their earlier raid on a lesbian bathhouse event.



Michael Phair was the first openly gay elected politician in the province of Alberta. He served on Edmonton City Council from 1992 until 2007.

Jamie Lee Hamilton was the first openly transgender person ever to run for political office in Canada. She ran for Vancouver City Council in 1996. Hamilton worked in the sex trade, transitioned to female, and became a strident advocate of trans community, sex trade workers, aboriginal peoples and people living in poverty in Vancouver. Reflective of our communities' sometimes eccentric self-expression, Hamilton has a promotional political jingle that plays when you visit her website www.queenoftheparks.com.



Glen Murray was the first openly gay mayor of a large North American city (Winnipeg) in 1998 and is now MPP for Toronto Centre in 2010. His political career grew out of his activism in human rights and community healthcare and, this August, he became Ontario's Minister of Research and Innovation.



Jim Rondeau became the first openly gay member of the Manitoba legislature in 1999. He was behind the 2003 Manitoba

ban on smoking in indoor public places and workplaces and a vocal supporter of legalizing same-sex marriage in Canada. Though reluctant at first, he announced in 2004 fully government funded abortions at Jane's Clinic.

George Smitherman became the first openly gay Member of Provincial Parliament in Ontario, elected in 1999. As you read in the preceding story, he is now running for mayor of Toronto.

Tim Stevenson was the first openly gay provincial cabinet minister in Canada. Before his political career, he worked with the Black Liberation Gay and Lesbian Movement and other social justice organizations. He was the first openly gay person to be ordained by the United Church in 1992 and when gay marriage became legalized in British Columbia, Stevenson performed the first legal gay weddings in the province. Unfortunately, Stevenson sparked controversy after pleading guilty to impaired driving in 2007, and after another incident involving an open mike embarrassment posted on YouTube this summer, but he has continued his political career as an elected council member of Vancouver's City Council.

Agnes Maltais became the first out lesbian member of the National Assembly when she came out to an audience at Laval University in 2003. She has been a political activist since 1976 and has declared that, "openly gay politicians want to be known for their competence, not just for being gay."



Kathleen Wynne became Ontario's first openly lesbian cabinet minister when she

was promoted to Minister of Education in 2006. Before her provincial political career, she served as a public school trustee and endured right-wing attacks labeling her an "extremist lesbian." She nonetheless helped pass a measure encouraging public schools to purchase teaching materials that included gay and lesbian parents and she continues her equity work today.

Bill Siksay became the first openly gay man to be elected to Canada's House of Commons in 2004 (previous members had come out after they were elected). Before he began his political career, he was in a program to become ordained as a minister in the United Church of Christ. He ultimately did not complete the program but, by coming out during the process, he helped start the debate in the church about allowing gay and lesbian clergy.



Nancy Ruth became Canada's first openly lesbian Ontario Senator in 2006. Prior to this assignment, she was a social activist and philanthropist and worked for women's constitutional rights. Ever controversial and colourful, Ruth supported anti-child-pornography legislation ambiguous and broad enough to concern gay rights activists about censorship. She was responsible for the widely mocked idea earlier this year to change the lyrics of "O Canada" to be more gender inclusive. Most infamously, she told women's health groups preparing to protest the G8 meetings over abortion rights, "Shut the fuck up on this issue... Canada is still a country with free and accessible abortion...Don't

make this an election issue.”

Micheline Anne Hélène Montreuil is a lawyer and, in 2007, the first transgendered person in history to be nominated as an electoral candidate by a major political party in Canada (though she was then dropped by the NDP as quickly). Montreuil aligns herself with the political left and posts on her website that the issues she is interested in include the fight against poverty, social measures, a minimum wage increase, health-care accessibility and overcrowding in emergency rooms.



And finally, only two years ago, **Jenn McGinn** became the first openly lesbian Members of the Legislative Assembly to serve in the British Columbian Legislature. She comes from a banking background and prior to this assignment, she worked with a number of community organizations, one of which was the annual Stonewall Festival.

Have done all we need to do here in Canada? Have we arrived?

So What Now?

It seems that historically, the LGBT political fault-lines run along human rights, same-sex benefits/marriage, our presence and expression in religion, the environment, our heritage, aboriginal peoples' rights, sex-trade workers, safe and inclusive schools, accessible and comprehensive healthcare and more.

In the States, the debate about legalizing same-sex marriage

rages on. Recognizing the importance of LGBTQ voices in politics, the Gay and Lesbian Victory Fund was established to provide strategic, technical and financial support to openly gay and lesbian candidates and officials across the states. It's easy to rise up when there is a specific issue glaring at you.

But in Canada, now that we have gained marriage rights, some feel there isn't anything left to fight for. Not so, says Egale Canada (Equality for Gays And Lesbians Everywhere). Egale is now focused on three issues: the Safe Schools campaign, the "Stop Murder Music" campaign and the queering of black history awards programs.

Egale Canada was founded in 1986 to "advance equality for Canadian lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgendered people and their families by carrying out political action to lobby for more equitable laws for LGBT people; intervening in legal cases that have an impact on human rights and equality; increasing public education and awareness by providing information to individuals, groups and media."

Closer to home, Queer Ontario define their 'feature issues' from a list of 31 causes, including Arts and Culture (specifically an emphasis on queer culture), the inclusion of Gender Identity in the Ontario Human Rights Code and poverty/employment issues.

Becoming politically active stems from the causes you stand for. What do you passionately debate at dinner parties? What personally affects your life and your ability to get access to the same things other people have access to? What about your friends or acquaintances? What are they missing out on?

For a little self-analysis, try the series of questions on www.politicalcompass.org. It is a great little analysis of where you fit on the economic right or left line and includes a social

dimension as well. Are you Authoritarian? Libertarian? And exactly how extreme are your views? The results chart you in comparison to the likes of Stalin, Gandhi, Friedman and Thatcher! There is even a comparison chart of Canada's political parties in the analysis so you can see how you compare with the parties' political positions.

Learn more about the causes that interest you. Find out what groups are working to further these causes and decide what you have time to do and whether you can join in. Or find out who shares your point of view and help them with their political campaign. You can also consider giving time or money as an expression of your political activism.

Make your views known. Be open to debate and discussion, especially on social media. Consumer research company GfK (Growth from Knowledge) reported that "Twitter users are 209% more likely to have written something that has been published, 142% more likely to participate in environmental groups/causes, 141% more likely to be an active member of any group that tries to influence public policy or government, and 103% more likely to have attended a political rally, speech or protest in the last 12 months."

We have a rich history of active LGBTTQ politicians and politics. Pay attention to the gains made, support maintaining those gains, work towards helping others achieve them. This is a part of what living in a fair, democratic and just society means. Don't let the others do all the work, choose how you can get involved and get busy!

Karen Fulcher took her political compass test and found, unsurprisingly, that her friends are quite similar. In the quest to expand her views, she is willing to meet with the other side.

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Your Ultimate Thanksgiving Party

By Scott MacDonald

You've decided to throw a party, a little Thanksgiving soiree, for you and a few of your friends. Don't panic. There are numerous ways to make the evening fun for your guests and, most importantly, for yourself. It is your party after all.



Here are 20 simple steps to the perfect Thanksgiving party:

1. First and foremost, accept your limitations. You're not Martha Stewart and your friends and family know that. Don't go overboard. Keep things simple. If you live in a bachelor apartment, it's unlikely you'll be able to pull off a seated dinner for twelve. I wouldn't even attempt it (ACTUALLY, if you live in a bachelor apartment, it's unlikely you'd pull off a standing-room-only party for twelve, but I digress). Let's say

you live in a one-bedroom condo. A seated dinner for twelve is still pretty tight but a buffet-style party is more than manageable. If you have a house, your options are greater and more varied in regards to the size and type of party you are capable of throwing. Your condo-dwelling friends will be envious (score one for you!) and the party hasn't even started yet.

2. There are four basic styles of party that you could consider:

A Plated Dinner. This is a restaurant-style dinner and the biggest budget-buster on the list. It will almost certainly require the use of a caterer or catering staff. If you attempt to do this on your own, you're likely to end up working during the whole event and unable to enjoy yourself. I do not recommend a plated dinner on a tight budget.

A Seated Dinner. This is a traditional family dinner with all the food in the center of the table, just like Mom used to do it. Nothing says Thanksgiving like, "Pass the gravy, please." If you have the space, this is an excellent, if traditional, way to entertain.

A Buffet Dinner. This is a pretty cheap and effortless way to entertain. Set up a table that allows people to graze throughout the evening at their leisure. A buffet affords you the time to mingle with your guests. Use smaller plate sizes to reduce portions and save you some cash. You could even coordinate with some of your guests to bring a dish for the buffet, taking a bit of pressure off of you.

A Passed Hors D'Oeuvre Party. This one is a bit of a budget buster as well. It almost

certainly requires catering staff if you don't want to spend the whole night in the kitchen preparing the bite-sized hors d'oeuvres. Inevitably, one of your guests will get stuck with a tray of food to pass around and no one wants to go to a party and end up as the help.

3.

Plan your budget. It's great if you have the funds to call a caterer but let's face it, most of us don't. Be realistic about your budget and try to stick to it once you've decided on your finances. This is Thanksgiving, remember - you're supposed to be grateful for what you have, not go into debt or overspend to get what you don't.

4.

After figuring out your size, budget and type of party, make a list of all the things you will need; plates, knives, forks, napkins, glassware, etc. I know it sounds silly but make sure you have enough of each item. If you have twelve guests and eleven forks, that will suck for one of your guests. "Here's your turkey - and a spoon," might be a funny conversation starter with some of your guests but they'll still end up eating turkey with a spoon.

5.

Maybe there are some things that you just don't have and don't want to purchase. There are a number of rental companies in the city that can

provide you with the missing pieces for your dining table or maybe even the table itself. Rental companies offer anything from cutlery, glassware and table linens to banquet tables, chairs and ovens. Most have an online catalogue for your convenience and they'll deliver to your home and pick it all up the following day. I recommend Chair-Man Mills, Higgins Event Rentals or Exclusive Affair Rentals.

6.

The secret to any good party is the preparation. Thinking ahead will save you a lot of time and effort once the party gets underway. Prepare as many items the day - or days - before as possible. This will not only lighten your workload the day of the party but it will also allow you to keep your kitchen cleaner and reduce the amount of heat in your home during the party. Finish your shopping the day before your party. Kensington market and Chinatown are great places to pick up produce and bulk items to save on your budget and put you in the mood for all the bounty you're supposed to be thankful for.

7.

If you are on a tight budget, pasta as a main dish is a great way to keep your costs down yet feed everyone. Serve it with a salad, roasted vegetables, breads or anything else you might want to include on your buffet.

TURKEY CASSEROLE

Cook Time: 25 minutes

Ingredients:

- 6 cups thinly sliced carrots
- 4 cups thinly sliced celery
- 1 1/3 cups chopped onion
- 8 tablespoons olive oil
- 4 cloves garlic minced
- 8 to 12 cups cubed cooked turkey
- 4 cans diced tomatoes, undrained
- 4 large cans tomato sauce
- 4 cups dry white wine or chicken broth
- 1 cup chopped fresh parsley
- 2 teaspoons basil
- 2 teaspoons salt
- 1 teaspoon pepper
- 12 cups uncooked ziti or similar pasta, cooked and drained



Directions:

1. In a large skillet over medium-low heat, sauté carrots, celery and onion in the oil until tender, but not browned.

2. Add minced garlic and sauté 1 minute longer.

3. Add turkey, tomatoes, tomato sauce, wine or broth, parsley, basil, salt and pepper.

4. Simmer, uncovered, for 20 minutes.

5. Toss hot cooked ziti with the hot sauce.

Serves 12

8.

Just like the menu for food, your bar menu should be thought out ahead of time. BYOB might be just fine if you're on a tight budget but if you've decided to splurge and supply the alcohol, here are some things you will need:

- Lemons and limes
- ICE (people always forget this one)
- Ice bucket and tongs
- Corkscrew
- Shot glass (if you're that type)
- Martini/cocktail shaker

9.

You know your guests' drinking habits, so try to anticipate what they will need. Don't buy wine! Wine is great, don't get me wrong, but it's far more expensive than spirits. A bottle of vodka will go a lot further than a bottle of wine but you probably knew that already. Set up your bar in such a way that guests can help themselves. Serve them their first drink and show them where everything is to make their own after that.

A basic bar rail could include:

- Vodka
- Gin
- Rum
- Rye/whiskey
- Tequila (optional)
- Vermouth (optional)
- Mixes: tonic, club soda, lemon/lime soda, cola, ginger ale, orange juice, cranberry juice and one exotic juice like pomegranate.

10.

Remember, not all your guests might drink alcohol. Provide a bowl of punch as an alternative beverage. Punch is great because you can prepare it ahead of time and store it in the fridge for use as needed. Here's a great one I've used before:

CRANBERRY PUNCH

Ingredients:

- 2 - 1.89L bottles of cranberry juice, chilled
- 1 - 355ml can frozen pineapple juice, thawed
- 1 - 355ml can frozen orange juice concentrate,

thawed

- 2 - 1.89L bottles of lemon-lime soda
- 6 to 8 lemon slices.

Directions:

1. Pour cranberry juice into punch bowl, then add the two frozen concentrates and stir well.

2. Add the soda and float the lemon slices on top.

3. Float some whole cranberries on top as well.

11.

If you have it in your budget to hire serving staff (and let's face it, who wouldn't want to do that?), having extra help will make your entire evening more enjoyable for you, freeing up time to spend with your guests. They'll even take care of a good deal of the clean-up.

I recommend the Daniel Gagne Event Staffing Agency or Core Event Staffing.

12.

Mother Nature can help decorate your place on a



budget. Take the time to gather wild flowers or autumn leaves in the day or two before your party. Be careful not to place anything poisonous on your buffet table. Death is never a good ice-breaker at a party.

13.

Candles are a great way to set the mood but make sure they are contained within a votive or candle holder and a safe distance from flammables. Keep candles to the back of your bar or buffet so guests don't burn themselves when reaching over to take something.

14.

You can use household items to create dramatic flair on your buffet table. Use big bowls or pots under the table linens for placing platters. This is a pretty easy way to give height to a table. Make sure they're good and steady, and if they're not, see step 19! Vases work great for holding breads, cookies or other extras on your table. Be creative.

15.

When your guests arrive, have a special cocktail to welcome them. Ask other guests to help you make and serve it. This is a great way for guests to meet each other and become comfortable with helping themselves at the bar. I've never been to a party with Margaritas that wasn't a great success so, in honour of that, here is a great Margarita recipe:

CRANBERRY MARGARITAS

Ingredients

- 3/4 cup tequila
- 1/2 cup Grand Marnier
- 3/4 cup lime juice (fresh)
- 1 1/4 cup cranberry juice
- 1/2 cup sugar
- 1 1/2 cup frozen berries (fresh and rinsed)
- Salt

Directions:

1. Rub the rim of the cocktail glass with some lime juice and then dip it in some salt.
2. Pour the remaining lime in the glass, add the tequila and shake with ice.
3. Next, mix the remaining contents in a blender and pour in the glass, over the ice.
4. Top with some soda water, garnish with mint leaves and serve.

16.

You're throwing a party, not a funeral, so make sure you have a pleasant, upbeat music selection. But you're not throwing a circuit party either, so keep the dance beats quiet enough for guests to mingle and chat comfortably.

17.

Serve food in an appropriate time - within 40 minutes to an hour of guests' arrival. Your guests probably didn't eat before coming to your party and there's nothing worse than being hungry and waiting for dinner.



18.

Don't try to control the party. Your guests are here to have a good time. Let things flow organically and allow for mistakes to happen. It's okay that you have imperfections, we all do. Imperfections are charming and allow for a bit of laughter among friends.

19.

Don't throw a fit or overreact if someone spills a drink or drops a plate. Accidents happen and making your guests feel guilty is not conducive to having a good time. Clean it up quickly and get back to the party. You can give the area a good scrubbing later after everyone has left.

20.

And finally - enjoy! Relax, have a good time and be thankful for your family and friends.

Scott MacDonald has an Advanced Diploma in Graphic Design from George Brown College and has studied acting with The Studio on The Drive in Vancouver and is presently studying with Second City Toronto.

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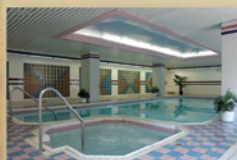
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A VISIT TO

Ottawa

By Dale Smith

Nestled between the two massive centres of gravity that are Toronto and Montreal, Ottawa is a centre of its own particular heft and weight that should never be overlooked. Sure, the two bigger centres may have more shopping or bigger party scenes but they can't match Ottawa for its charm and its more relaxed pace of life.

Let's get it out in the open first off – Ottawa is not exactly a nightlife city, if that's what you're after. Yes, fun can be had in our quaint little club scene, especially if you're new in town, but it shouldn't be your primary motivator.

What Ottawa does have to offer is a sense of history. As the capital of Canada for over 150 years (yes, longer than we've been a unified country), it contains the national institutions that make this country what it is. The centre of our country's political life is here and indeed so much of our national culture and history as well.

The best and brightest all gravitate here, to this centre of national life, and there is an unmistakable frisson

in the air. Everyone who comes here is focused on some issue that they're passionate about. This gives Ottawa a critical mass of interesting people. Add to that the easy bilingual character of the city (largely free of the linguistic politics of Montreal), which lends an added charm to who you just might meet here.

Ottawa features the unparalleled beauty of the Gothic Revival masterpiece that is the Centre Block, dominating Parliament Hill. It's the feeling of gravitas that emanates from these buildings at the centre of our national life. There is a tangible sense of power that seeps from the stones, disabusing us of the oft-held notion that we are a young country still finding its way in the world. No, Canada is a well-established country and at the centre of that is Ottawa.

But what does that mean for someone coming to visit? A stay in Ottawa is a way of connecting with the country, with its history and its significance. It's also a chance to spend some time in a uniquely beautiful part of Canada. And coming in the fall means





A Day at the Museums

As the nation's capital, Ottawa is home to some spectacular museums that contain our national collections. Most of these you won't want to miss. There are also museums for a variety of tastes and interests, each of which can provide you with a full day's viewing.

The National Gallery is an iconic structure, the glass tower rising in behind Parliament Hill. Not only does it display one of the most definitive collections of Canadian art dating back to the First Nations, the building itself is a bright and spacious architectural marvel. From the atrium under the glass tower, to the church reconstructed inside, the Gallery is a necessary destination.

This fall, the Gallery is showcasing "Global Citizen: The Architecture of Moshe Safdie," the works of Carl Beam and "It Is What It Is," a showcase of recent Canadian art acquisitions.

Across the river is the Museum of Civilization, which details Canadian and First Nations history as rotating exhibitions. Back on the Ottawa side of the river, in LeBreton *flats* to the west of downtown, is the Canadian War Museum, which details our military history.

The Museum of Nature has just reopened after a six-year renovation process which not only restored the Gothic Revival building but reconstructed the tower that was torn down in 1915 as the spectacular glass feature called the Queen's Lantern.

not only missing all of the summer humidity, but also taking in some of the most vibrant colours imaginable.

There are a variety of ways to see the city – and indeed the region – which will give you a taste of what Ottawa has to offer.





A Day in the City and Surrounding Regions

There are a few different ways to see the city itself, from walking tours to transit, but there is also a spectacular dedicated bike path system through the river valley and the surroundings, which connects a lot of the landmarks on both sides of the river. As well, there are paths all the way along the Rideau Canal to Dow's Lake.

Areas of the city worth exploring are the trendier neighbourhoods such as the Glebe or Westboro and the neighbouring Wellington West. Each has a number of unique shops and restaurants. There is also the historic Market, which hosts some of the best restaurants in the city.

Another way to see the natural landscape around Ottawa is to take a drive to Gatineau Park, where the fall colours are spectacular. While there, it's worthwhile to stop in at the McKenzie-King Estate to see the spectacular ruins there – but best to avoid the tearoom. On the way back from the Park, detour through Old Chelsea and stop by the Nordik Spa – a relaxation spa complete with hot and cold hydrotherapy.

A Day of Canadiana

One of the best walking tours to take in the city is along the Wellington and Sussex Drive portions of Confederation Boulevard. This affords visitors the best sense of the historical and national landmarks – not to mention that, in the autumn, it's a beautiful walk.

Starting at the Park of the Provinces at the corner of Wellington and Bay, you immediately see the National Library and Archives building and, heading east, the Art Deco Supreme Court building with the bronze statues of Truth and Justice along the steps. Continuing along, the Gothic Revival Justice and Confederation

buildings stand, and across the street, the late neo-classical Bank of Canada building, enveloped in a steel-and-glass building.

From here you arrive at Parliament Hill. The Victorian High Gothic-style East and West Block buildings frame the iconic Centre Block and it's worthwhile to explore the grounds themselves, behind the buildings. If you can join a tour, visit inside the Centre Block as well. Not only are the interiors gorgeous but the Library of Parliament is a must-see – one of the most stunningly beautiful indoor spaces you will ever discover.

Further east are the Ottawa locks – the end of the Rideau Canal, where it meets with the Ottawa River – and turning at the Chateau Laurier, there is the Tudor-Gothic Connaught Building on one side and Major's Hill Park on the other. Passing the National Gallery, you can visit the Royal Canadian Mint – another Tudor-Gothic style building – a treat for any coin collectors out there.

Further along, you'll pass the Sphinx-like Lester B. Pearson building, the International-style Old City Hall and the gorgeous Rideau



Falls. At the end of Sussex is the iconic 24 Sussex Drive – residence of the Prime Minister – and Rideau Hall, where the Governor General resides. The grounds and especially the gardens of Rideau Hall are spectacularly beautiful in the fall and while the adapted-Florentine style of the Rideau Hall's façade is worth a look, it's also well worth doing a tour inside.

The Gay Scene (such as it is)

If Ottawa has one major struggle, it's building a bigger gay scene. It's sadly true that a significant portion of Ottawa's gay population heads to either Toronto or Montreal on the weekends. It is one of the most significant stumbling blocks to Ottawa developing its own particular scene in any sufficient capacity. But while Ottawa's nascent gay village along Bank Street will take all of five minutes to visit, it's a friendly spot for a coffee and you're more likely to find gay or lesbian couples holding hands on the street here than anywhere else in the city.

Your choice of gay nightlife consists of the Lookout in the Market (boys' night on Thursdays, lesbians on Fridays and drag shows on Saturdays); the Edge on Sparks Street (primarily a student-populated nightclub where the average age is 20); Swizzles (a



basement on Queen Street which has karaoke on some nights and go-go boys on others); and the Centretown Pub, which skews a little older and more relaxed, with leather nights on certain Saturdays. It also has a dance floor on the second level on weekends.

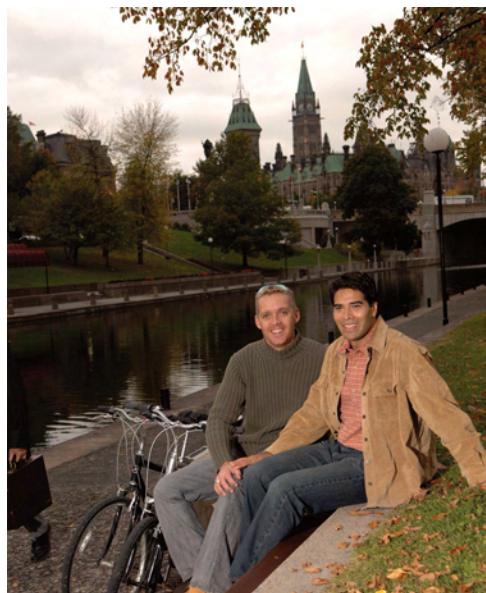
There are a few other bars that hold gay-ish or "bias free" nights, such as Mercury Lounge in the Market on Wednesdays, but again, one tends to find the crowds to be especially student-oriented. For pretty much any Ottawa club, it's not worth heading out before 11pm because they really don't get busy before midnight. There are a few exceptions, such as the Centretown Pub patio on a Sunday afternoon, but that doesn't count as nightlife.

It's very true, however, that Ottawa has a reputation for being a great dinner party city – and how could it not be when you're surrounded by so many interesting people who are active and engaged in issues that they care about?

Rest assured – a trip to Ottawa will never be boring and you'll come away with a renewed sense of Canadian history and culture. But remember to look beneath the surface, get to know some of the people, and you'll find that you'll come away with something far more priceless and unexpected.

Dale Smith is a freelance journalist in Ottawa. He is the Political Editor of *Outlooks* magazine, blogs about federal politics for Xtra and his brilliant Parliament commentary can be found at gallerynotes.blogspot.com. Despite such genius, however, he enjoys the music of Sugababes. Go figure.

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Our Opinion...

STEVEN AND MAGGIE'S PERSONAL HEROES

Steven Bereznai: When it comes to my personal heroes, I know I'm supposed to say something cheesy like "my dad" so I'm going to say...my dad! I came out to my mom in my first year of university and she told me not to tell my dad right away. I said okay and went back to school. Two days later, I get a call in my dorm room and it's my dad. He said, "Your mom tells me you're gay and I love you and nothing's changed. Just focus on doing well at school." That was pretty much it and it totally made him my hero because that's when I knew things really had not changed. Doing well at school was still the most important thing for him and I love him for that.

Maggie Cassella: Well, as usual, Steve, you go and piss on the high road by saying 'your dad.' One of these days, I'm going to go first in this column (note: I don't actually like going first on this thing). Not to get in a pissing match over supportive parents but my folks are A HUNDRED AND SEVENTY FIVE between them and, at the end of the last conversation I had with my dad a couple of days ago, I said I loved him and he said he loved me and he went on to say, "I love your girlfriend - I mean your WIFE - too." As if I would have ever corrected him? He corrected himself! And my mom is the bees' knees. Did I mention my folks are A HUNDRED AND SEVENTY FIVE between them? Yeah, so

we're both raising the glass to folks who are heroes for being clear thinkers, regardless of the era they grew up in.

As for non-relatives, my heroes are anyone working on the front lines in the worst possible scenarios of human suffering, trying to take care of the poorest and the weakest without any regard for their effing bank accounts, material shit or personal gain but rather the satisfaction of helping the rest of the living beings on this planet survive.

Uh-oh. Too heavy?

SB: SO heavy! In high school, I was deeply influenced by Rachel Carson's book *Silent Spring*. She discovered that the widespread use of DDT was wiping out whole bird populations. She gave me a real awareness of how our actions can have huge and unintended consequences.

MC: In high school, I was deeply influenced by POT! My biology teacher (let's just call her Miss Booth) was a total pothead and helped influence my love of the lovely



and we have one!

by Maggie Cassella and Steven Bereznai



herb that influenced me to become the deep thinker I am today. At least in the recesses of my mind or what's left of it.

SB: [laughs] I can honestly say I did not see that coming! In high school, I had a mad crush on this guy who we can call Devon. He was absolutely dreamy

and, as far as I know, totally straight. I ran into him recently and he's doing quite well in acting, which as you know is a pretty tough slog. Hearing about the risks he took has inspired me to devote more time on the kind of writing I love, such as a sequel to my book *Queeroes* and a kid's picture book I'm working on for Christmas (shameless plugs!). Come to think of it, you're a bit of an inspiration to me too, for the same reasons.

MC: What the what? I'm more like a perspiration than an inspiration! C'mon, Beranzi, you've published your own book; I co-wrote someone else's. I have at least two books in me but I can't get past writing this column with you once every couple of months and writing endless TV pitches for people who...wait! Okay, this is no

joke, I was just inspired by being treated like a piece of dirt by some executive at a Canadian TV network last week (rhymes with "Mantest"). I have pitched at US networks like Showtime, Oxygen, Bravo and SyFy and never been treated with anything but kindness and respect. But this woman, the head of a wee specialty channel in Canada, was so rude to me, it took my breath away.

I do believe that both she and you have now inspired me to sit down and start that book. I will then sell the piss out of it but be sure to save one copy to give to the lovely lady when I pass her as she descends the career ladder. No one that miserable can maintain a height for very long. I am also inspired by that experience to ensure I always treat people with respect. Funny how someone else's rude behaviour can inspire you try to never be that person. Inspiration found in even the crappy experiences.

On that note, I'm off to start chapter one...

Maggie Cassella is a current events commentator, actor, writer, producer, and founder of the We're Funny That Way™ queer comedy festival, now in its 14th year.

Steven Bereznai is the author of the super hero novel *Queeroes*, and the dating bible *Gay and Single... Forever?*. His anthology contributions include *Second Person Queer*, *I Like It Like That*, and *Best Gay Love Stories 2010*. He can be reached online through his website www.stevenbereznai.com.

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Hot Artist

Zoe Whittall

By Janet Collins



"I was always encouraged

to be inventive and write and play," says novelist and poet Zoe Whittall, who grew up without a television on a sheep farm in small-town Québec. Her ear for dialogue, she admits, comes from occasionally eavesdropping when out in public (what else is there to do on the subway?) and each of Whittall's three novels – *Bottle Rocket Hearts*, *Holding Still for as Long as Possible* and *The Middle Ground* – demonstrate her innate ability to make you feel like a fly on the wall. You can't help but feel that the people she writes about are someone you know, used to know in a past life, would love to get to know or are happy you don't know. They exist on the page yet you feel like they could just as easily be in your kitchen making a sandwich.

Whittall gives equal care to their surroundings and the story's location, whether it be the Plateau area of Montréal, Parkdale in Toronto or rural-town anywhere. She got her first taste of big-city life at age 13 when she moved to Montréal and in 1997, Whittall ventured to Toronto for what she thought was a limited stint as a housesitter but now finds she's still here, sharing

Hot Artist Zoe Whittall



a home with her partner and three cats.

She attributes her writing career in part to similar luck and happenstance. While taking a course at George Brown, shortly after arriving in Toronto, her teacher had a small press and asked the young author if she had a manuscript. “I said yes even though I probably only had about half,” Whittall admits. What would become her first novel, *Bottle Rocket Hearts*, began as a book of short stories. When the publisher noticed how much she loved one particular story, she asked Whittall to expand on it. It was, she says, “a really unintimidating way to get into a novel.”

The lack of a plan worked — that first novel was met with critical acclaim and named a Best Book of the Year by *The Globe and Mail*, describing Whittall as, “the cockiest, brashest, funniest, toughest, most life-affirming, elegant, scruffy, no-holds-barred writer to emerge from Montréal since Mordecai Richler.” Since then, Whittall has authored three books of poetry, three novels and contributed to several anthologies.

Whittall has no set formula for her writing — for each work, she tackles a new process. For *Bottle Rocket Hearts*, she had the dialogue down but found her story “very interior...not a lot of action” so she worked that in afterwards. For *Holding Still*, she decided, “Okay, I’m going to be very strategic about it and map it all out. At the end of the process, it didn’t turn out anything like the map but the map helped me start.”

Of all the critical acclaim she has garnered for her writing, what carries the most weight with Whittall is feedback from her readers. She recently visited a high school outside Stratford

to attend a book club meeting featuring *Holding Still*. “It’s cool to be in a school where kids don’t care if there are queer or transgendered characters,” Whittall says, “They really enjoyed it.” That this acceptance was found in a rural area some three hours from Toronto was “thrilling.”

For more feedback, Whittall is a big proponent of Twitter. “It’s addictive,” she says, “and a really good way to network.” It might sound hip and plugged-in but no, she laughs, “I’m trying not to be a Luddite. I would get an iPad because it’s so pretty and I’m addicted to everything Apple... but I prefer real books. I don’t actually own much of anything of worth but I do own a lot of books. The idea of e-books kind of scares me in a way because it’s not the same reading experience for me. I already read on screen too much.” Still, she concedes, “I do find the idea very appealing for travel...but I don’t want to sit around and read one in my living room. I already have too much technology in my life.”

But she may wind up buying a Blu-ray player, as both *Bottle Rocket Hearts* and *Holding Still for as Long as Possible* have been optioned for film versions.

Whittall is currently co-writing the scripts and says, “It’s been hard to let go of things because the movie can’t have the same narrative trajectory as the book.” The adaptations, she says, “have been challenging but really interesting.” She’s also at work on another book, this one compiled of funny short stories about people in transition, provisionally entitled *We Might be the Worst People on Earth* and presumably inspired by conversations on the subway. Hopefully, it will be available soon — in hardcover, paperback or e-book.

Janet Collins is a freelance writer who was born in Windsor, grew up in Mississauga but had the good sense in to live and work in Toronto with her little pug (who does not work... at all).

As a result of meeting Zoe, she’s checking out the wealth of offerings from small Canadian press publishers.

Photos courtesy of Joe Whittall

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What if we could blend our modern 21st century technologies with Victorian aesthetics, living a life that looks old-fashioned yet speaks to the future? In the fictional world of “steampunk,” our main power source is steam, not electricity, and people live in a space that’s both futuristic and Victorian/Edwardian, operating vehicles and gadgets engineered in brass, wood and leather, with gears, rivets and steampipes. It’s a style that began in the 19th century and is most famously embodied in the works of Jules Verne (“20,000 Leagues Under the Sea”) and H.G. Wells (“The Time Machine”) but became its own genre after the late 1980s, when author K.W. Jeter humorously riffed on the futuristic “cyberpunk” label and created “steampunk” to describe a group of stories set in the Victorian period. The steampunk aesthetic has since been found in numerous films like “Brazil,” “The City of Lost Children,” Tim Burton’s “Alice in Wonderland” and “The League of Extraordinary Gentlemen.”

Although the style originated

The Secret Style of *Steampunk*

by Manny Machado



from science fiction, it's evolved into a real-world culture and, for some like Lee Ann Farruga, a way of life. She discovered the style two years ago through her husband Patrick and a friend and says she had a revelation "that is something I have always loved. I didn't know it had a name!" She founded Steampunk Canada as a place for devotees to meet through book signings, message boards and art conventions. Since the foundation of the group, Farruga has been campaigning to make the style more accessible to all Canadians.

"It is a wonderful genre for bringing out one's creative side," says Farruga. She and her husband have been slowly restoring their 1899 home back to its Victorian aesthetic and even a recently purchased trailer is getting a new interior as a rolling gentleman's club (as seen online at victorianboler.blogspot.com). Steampunk design is environmentally friendly, as the vast majority of makers and artists use recycled parts to create something new and lavishly anachronistic. They make fantastic, beautiful art out of old clocks, gas lamps, goggles, helmets, compasses and small machines.

Farruga's vision of an ideal home would include brass or copper (the metal or the colour), Victorian or Edwardian elements (depending on the desired look), striped fabric ruffles for a boudoir, with apothecary jars and antique mirrors (think burlesque or circus but with Moulin Rouge style). For a gentleman's room: dark woods, brass lamps, a globe and books.

Taking inspiration from the elements that make up this very unique style and transferring



them into design elements for the home, as Farruga has, is not quite as challenging as it might appear. The very nature of the genre stems from the Victorian era and designer showrooms like Restoration Hardware or Pottery Barn have long been known for their more traditional designs. By incorporating iconic components like clocks, gears and brass trinkets, the style of steampunk can be easily phased into even the most modern settings.

As a basic rule of thumb, I always inform my clients that when decorating their homes, the largest furnishings (such as sofas, beds and dining tables) should stay neutral, in order to be easily integrated or modified based on the style the homeowner is currently passionate about. With

that in mind, the process of incorporating different design elements, such as steampunk, becomes less of a challenge. By specifically focusing on the requirements that make up the function of a room, we can have a little fun.

Living room

- Coffee tables and side tables can make a great statement about the style of the room; go bold with recycled items like old factory carts with exposed wheels or gears and steamer trunks with brass accents.
- Floor and table lamps made of brass, nickel and other solid metals bring old world charm to the most austere interiors.
- Hardcover books can be stored in rustic library



console or hutch adds a functional and decorative element to your dining set. Allow enough room for guests to get around the table, a fair rule of thumb is about 20- 30" of space between back of chair and furniture or walls.

- This would be a great area for a Grandfather clock.

Committing to a style means doing some research to plan how elaborate your design will be. Websites, books and magazines are a great source for ideas. Visiting showrooms and speaking to the experts is a definitive step to making sure the process goes smoothly and within your budget and timeline. Great design does not have to cost a fortune. With a little patience and a lot of creativity, you'll be able to create a space that is not only inviting but also makes a statement about who you are.

Steampunk enthusiasts embody a culture that perceptually only exists in science fiction but their commitment to the culture brings it from the realm of imagination into reality. Whether you incorporate steampunk into your next decorative makeover or not, take note of their boldness and believe in your own personal style.

For more ideas and resources, visit www.steampunkcanada.ca

Manny Machado has been working in the design industry since 2004. Renowned for his diversity and broad range of styles, he has transformed some of the most impossible spaces into inspiring and comfortable homes. For more information on how to transform your interior, visit www.mannymachado.com

Photos courtesy of Steampunk Canada and Manny Manchado

storage systems or bookcases decorated with themed trinkets and gadgets, like old clocks, goggles, gears and compasses.

- Hide your media components in an antique armoire or remove some shelves from a bookcase and integrate your TV inside the storage configuration.
- Large antique or sepia-toned old world maps, framed or hanging from a rod, are a unique cost-effective wall hanging and conversation piece.

Bedroom

- Sleigh beds, four-poster and traditional models of bed frames lend themselves well to the steampunk aesthetic; contemporary versions in rod iron or metal also accommodate the style.
- Select a wall color that you can live with. This is especially important in the bedroom as it will dramatically affect your sleep and relaxation. I would suggest a lighter wall color to contrast the introduction of rich wood tones and dark metals.
- Vintage pharmacy tables, small trunks or chests are easily transformed into unique nightstands. Look for pieces that afford you a fair amount of storage and utility

for your nighttime pleasures.

- Victorian, Rococo and Renaissance period dressers and commodes are a true find for any collector. Some sanding and a coat of paint or varnish can bring most archaic pieces back to life.
- Metal and iron light fixtures such as chandeliers or lanterns are easily acquired at most retail chains.
- Opt for accessories that fit within the theme of your design: old clocks instead of digital and picture frames or images that look like they might belong to a bygone era. Customize your own pictures by printing them in sepia tones as opposed to rich colors and hanging them above a bed in a gallery composition of pictures instead of a traditional headboard.

Dining Room

- Define the dining area with a large Persian or antique themed rug. To know what size rug to purchase, make sure that when you pull out the chairs (approximately 24" away from table), they still remain on the rug.
- A dramatic chandelier hung 36" from the top of the table will take the design from drab to fab.
- Bearing in mind the space available to you, an antique

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I know the way

Fiction by Joey Comeau

In the morning, I try not to look at myself in the mirror. I brush my teeth, spit in the sink and then wipe my face. No need for a mirror. Clay goes in to brush his teeth and he kisses me on the cheek as we pass. He trails his hand over my stomach. The telephone is ringing and it's probably my mother again. Nobody else calls this early.

"Arthur, did you know a witch becomes more powerful when she goes through menopause?" she says.

"Good morning, mom." I say. "I'm just getting ready for work."

"There are two times in a woman's life when she has this huge surge of power. Puberty and menopause," my mother says.

"Is that your mother?" Clay calls from the other room.

"Clay says hi," I tell her.

"Tell her I say hi," Clay says. He comes into the kitchen, wearing his uniform already. I don't put my uniform on until I get to work. I don't like leaving the house in it, even though nobody will see me.

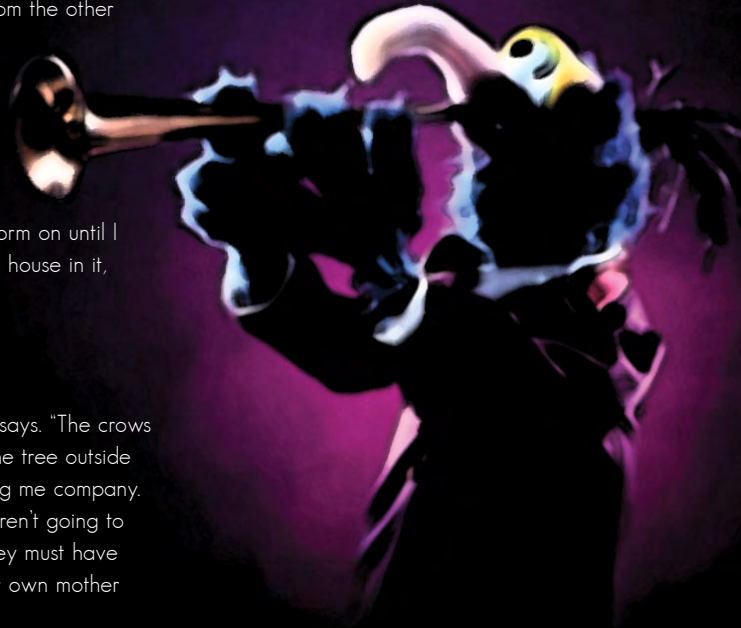
"She says hi back," I tell him.

"Tell him I say hi back," my mother says. "The crows around here have been sitting in the tree outside my bathroom. They've been keeping me company. They must have heard that you weren't going to be coming down for Christmas. They must have realized that you'd be leaving your own mother alone for the holidays."

"We are coming down for Thanksgiving," I tell her.

"One week is not Thanksgiving."

"Tell her I got to handcuff somebody!" Clay says. He takes the phone from me. "I got to handcuff someone!" he says. "It was my first time. A big drunk guy, too. He had a little fold-out nail file that he was waving at the blackjack dealer like a knife. I got to fill out a police report and everything." I pour myself a glass of water and listen to Clay tell my mother the story. I know that my mother sounds just as excited on the other end of the phone. They could talk for hours, if you let them.



I should just tell him. I love you. I should just say it, all matter of fact. I point at the clock and Clay holds up his finger. One second.

"Okay," he says. "Okay. Okay, I'll talk to you soon." He hands me back the phone.

"I don't like these mountains, Arthur."

"You have a beautiful view, mom. That's why you got that apartment in the first place." I tell her. "I have to go. I love you."

"I love you, too," she says. "Call me later, I'll tell you about my new friend. I knew those dance classes were a good idea. Clay was right. It's about time, too. I was starting to forget that they even made cocks that weren't silicone."

"I have to go, mom."

At work, I change into my uniform and pass Wallace on the stairs up to the floor. For days, I've been sexually harassing him. Blowing kisses at him, commenting about his ass. He's made a few homophobic jokes lately and I don't know how else to respond to something like that. I don't want to get angry. What does getting angry solve? Here comes Wallace. I keep my face deadly serious, until we are right beside one another, and then I wink. He stops.

"Arthur, listen," he says. "I know you're just joking around but people might start getting the wrong idea. We used to have a guy here who made jokes like that and we joked for a while before I found out that he was actually homosexual." Wallace lowers his voice for this last part.

"Oh, I didn't mean to give anyone the wrong idea," I say and Wallace looks relieved. "I really do like to have sex

with men. I thought you did, too." This last part is too much. I know it even as I'm saying it. The expression on his face changes to startled and then angry almost immediately and before I can backtrack or laugh it off, Wallace has shoved me. It takes me off-guard and I try to grab the railing of the stairs. He's got a disgusted look on his face and then my head cracks against a step.

Wallace doesn't say anything as I pull myself up with the railing. He looks horrified now, though. Especially when I put my hand to my head and it comes away with blood.

"Oh fuck, are you okay?" Wallace says but I'm already on my feet and pushing past him to the bathroom. I close the door. Lock it. There's a bit of blood on my hand but it's just a scrape. I don't know what to do with myself. There's a garbage can there and I kick it as hard as I can. The side caves in and then pops right back to its shape. I put my hand to my head again and there's nothing. No more blood. I'm fine. What am I supposed to do? Why is there no other door in here? I keep thinking, this is getting out of hand. But it already is out of hand, isn't it?

When I finally come out of the bathroom, Wallace still looks terrified.

"I didn't mean to do that," Wallace says and his voice is quiet, like it was when he said the word homosexual. "I think you're a good guy, Arthur. You know I didn't mean to do that, don't you? I overreacted, that's all." I just stand there in the hall, looking at him. Shelly comes out of the break room and walks between us. Wallace smiles at her like nothing's wrong. "Morning, Shelly," he says. And when she's gone, he says, "I love this job. I know you think this company is stupid and shitty but I'm good at this. I'm thirty-five



years old and this is the first job I've had where I wake up in the morning and feel good about what I do. I sell computers and I'm good at it. They made me manager.



I've never been a manager before. I love this job."

And I can see that.

I know that he's just trying

to save his ass here. He pushed me

down the stairs and now

he's worried that I'll rat him out, that he'll lose his job. But he always seems happy to be here. He's always cheerful, always smiling, even when he's dealing with an angry customer. He's always got a joke. He loves this job. He really does and I don't know what to do. I'm sore and angry but I'm not seriously hurt.

If I report him, he'll get fired. And I guess that'll make me feel better, except I know that he'll start to actually hate gays then. You take away the one thing that makes somebody happy and you're the bad guy. It doesn't matter if he deserves it. Nobody believes they deserve it. I report Wallace and Wallace has his life ruined by a gay.

And if I don't report him? Look at how terrified he is. His face is practically white. I'm surprised his teeth aren't chattering. He's not a bad guy. I don't know him very well but I can't bring myself to see him as just evil. He's stupid. He's stupid and he pushed me down the stairs and threw away his whole career. This office supply store is his career and he pushed it down the stairs and my head is sore and I'm angry and he's put me in this fucking situation where I want to let him off the hook. Where I want to save him from himself.

"I won't say anything," I tell him. He looks so

relieved that I half expect him to hug me. "I'm going home for the day though. I have a headache." He starts nodding even before I finish my sentence.

"Of course, of course," he says. "Thanks, Arthur." He holds his hand out for me to shake and it takes me off-guard. I shake his hand and immediately regret it. "Take the day off," he says.

Halfway across the parking lot, I realize that I left my regular clothes back in my locker but there's no way I'm going back. I don't even know if I'm angry anymore. I don't know whether this is my own fault for goading him. I can't tell what I'm feeling. There are tears on my cheek and my hands are in fists and I want to just kick in every window along this street. I'm supposed to meet Clay for lunch, then point out Wallace so he can make a pass at him, but instead I get on a bus and I go home.

At home, I take off my uniform and I put it in the garbage. I sit down in front of the television in my underwear to watch *The Muppet Show*. *The Muppet Show* always makes me feel better. It's hard to hold onto real-world problems when you're watching something so fantastic.

You can tell a lot about a person based on who their favourite Muppet is, I think. Clay likes Animal. He likes how wild



Animal is. Thrashing at the drums. Chained to the wall but always pulling against those chains. Always rocking out as hard as possible. I think that's what Clay wants to be and that's more interesting than who someone is, sometimes. Nothing can calm Animal's simple enthusiasm for bashing those drums.

My favourite Muppet is Gonzo. I love how crazy he looks, first of all, especially in the first season of the show. He's all purple and blue, with that long nose curved downward. I love how completely he devotes himself to his useless, insane performances. He's like Animal that way. He loves what he does, no matter how completely weird and baffling it is. Plus he looks like he's made out of garbage and he dates chickens! So. There's that.

His song from *The Muppet Movie* has so many perfect, brilliant lines about being an outsider and trying to find a connection to something, anything.

*There's not a word yet,
for old friends who've just met.*

And,

*I've never been there,
but I know the way.*

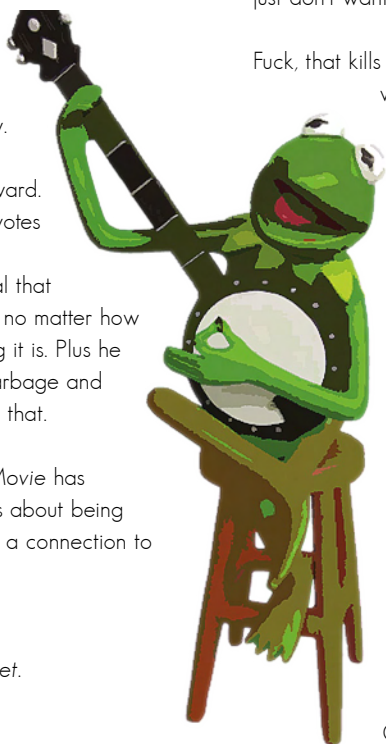
So, yeah. Gonzo is my favourite Muppet. No contest. Like all the best Muppets, there's a sadness to him but he's not particularly sad himself. He's plucky! He's optimistic and enthusiastic. The sadness comes from this underlying sense of longing. Once in a while, that longing comes to the surface.

There's a scene in a later season, where Gonzo is leaving *The Muppet Show* for a career in

Bollywood, and he's up on stage singing that Frank Sinatra song, *My Way*. He breaks down crying at the end, with his back to the audience, and Kermit comes out and asks him what's wrong. Gonzo says he's upset about leaving so Kermit tells him, "But this is your dream! This is what you always wanted!" and Gonzo says, "I want to go there. I just don't want to leave here."

Fuck, that kills me. I want to go there. I just don't want to leave here. It comes in the middle of the show, out of nowhere. That's where the sketch ends, too. Kermit turns to the audience and says something like, I guess we'd better leave him alone. And then on with the variety show. The singing vegetables. The dancing cheeses!

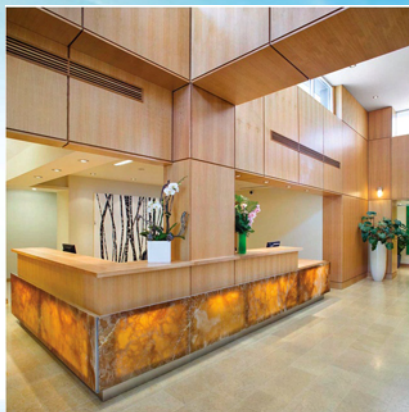
By the time Clay gets home, I'm smiling and cooking dinner, singing to myself. I haven't forgotten about Wallace, or today, but I don't need to think about them right now either. I feel good about having thrown my uniform in the garbage. I don't ever have to go back. Tomorrow morning, I'll wake up and start looking for a new job. I'll wake Clay up early, maybe I'll feel more like having morning sex. It'll be good. I feel optimistic. I cook dinner for the two of us and afterward, I pull Clay into the shower with me.



Joey Comeau is the author of the novel 'One Bloody Thing After Another' (recently serialized in the *National Post*) and, with photographer Emily Horne, the webcomic 'A Softer World.' He is a firm believer in the idea that if you can't be a good example, you have an obligation to be a horrible warning.

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Autumn *in the City*

by Ricky Boudreau

It's that time of year again where the weather is cooler and the clothes get heavier. All the more reason to find ways to take them off! Well, perhaps that comes a little later, once we have actually battened down the hatches. We're coming up to the time of year when we start burrowing, getting ready for the annual winter hibernation period. We begin packing the freezer with homemade goodies that make dinner easy (simply defrost or pop right into the oven) while we maximize the last of the nice weather. We can still go out for a blade or bike ride and hang out with friends on patios.

As the weather becomes drier, more crisp, and the sun sets sooner but still holds its power, it's also not a bad idea to make sure you are taking care of your skin. Being a makeup artist, I've seen all kinds and let's face it: the smoother your skin is, the younger and more vivacious you look. What's important is exfoliation, moisturizing and sunscreen. What I love to do is use just a dollop of a really sheer foundation or concealer and mix it into my moisturizer. *Voila!* Instant smoothness and dewy complexion. This will help when you want to continue doing outdoorsy things, like skating and window shopping. Our city still has lots to offer. Toronto's changing and so is what it has in store for us. Be an explorer, hold on to your sense of adventure and start creating those amazing memories that will last a lifetime.



FOOD

Chilean Wine and Food Festival

Tuesday, October 5, 7-9:30pm

Royal Ontario Museum

100 Queens Park

Peter F Bronfman Hall, 2nd level

\$65

www.winesofchile.ca

Whether you are a wine connoisseur or just love the taste of it, this is worth checking out. There will be approximately 150 wines from 30 wineries that are bringing their deliciousness to Canada, some of them for the first time. The festival will take place in a relaxed atmosphere where the wines and Chilean food are sampled. The tasting will be happening from 7-9:30pm and there will be a selection of red and white varietals.

TIP: The \$65 fee covers all of your food and wine tasting. I wouldn't drive to this event!

Eat to The Beat

Roy Thompson Hall

Tuesday, October 5th, 7-10pm

\$150

www.eattothebeat.ca

Eat to the Beat brings in over 60 female chefs including, from the Food Network, Anna Olsen of 'Sugar' and 'Fresh' with Anna Olsen' and Lynn Crawford of 'Restaurant Makeover' and 'Pitchin' In.' A wonderful evening filled with great food and all for a good cause, supporting Willow Breast Cancer Support Canada on its 15th anniversary.

TIP: Registration closes at 11:59pm on October 4th.

CULTURE

Scotiabank Nuit Blanche

Saturday, October 2, 6:57pm

- sunrise

FREE

Downtown: various locations

www.scotiabanknuitblanche.ca

If you've never experienced Nuit Blanche, you have been missing out. Three entire areas of the city give themselves over to all kinds of amazing art forms — everything from performance art to exhibitions and creative programs. It's the most incredible free, all-night, contemporary art event. This 5th annual night is an absolute must-see and must-experience.

TIP: Make it a big night out with friends and start with drinks, then map out what you want to see ahead of time so you have a plan.

42nd Semi-Annual Toronto Book Fair and Paper Show

Sunday, October 31, 9:30am-

4pm

St. Lawrence Market

92 Front St. East

\$5

www.heritageantiqueshows.com

Book lovers abound here. There are numerous antiquarian booksellers from both Ontario and Quebec who will be offering books that are no longer in print, as well as children's books and all kinds of fun stuff. Escapism is a necessary part of life and there is nothing like a lazy afternoon of losing oneself in a good book.

TIP: Don't forget an eco-friendly bag to carry all of your purchases in. Books are a great idea for stocking stuffers as well.



FASHION

LG Fashion Week

October 18 – 23

Heritage Court

100 Prince's Blvd.

Exhibition Place

www.lgfashionweek.ca

416.922.3322

Hello fashion lovers. If you've never attended a fashion week before, why not check out the one in your very own backyard? Granted, it isn't New York, Paris or Milan but we Canadians are pretty talented. Just look at Dan and Dean Caten, homegrown twins who created the fantastic fashion house of Dsquared. We love them!

TIP: Bring something to write down info on shows and designers that you fall in love with.



Behind the Scenes With Canada's Top Fashion Designers

Integral House, Rosedale
Tuesday, November 9th, 6pm
\$100 (includes refreshments)
www.fashionincubator.com
416-971-7117

This first annual fundraiser takes place at an award-winning home in Rosedale with a concert hall, floor-to-ceiling windows, five stories and 18,000 square feet! Sounds like an incredible venue for designers David Dixon, Lucian Matis and Joeffer Caoc to showcase their Spring 2011 collections, as well as sharing their challenges and inspiration.

TIP: Bring a notepad as you may want to jot down some of the items you see for purchase (the fundraiser is for the Fashion Incubator).

HALLOWEEN

Halloweek

October 24 - 31

FREE

www.halloweek.ca

A week of fun leading up to a costume-filled extravaganza taking place on Church Street. Tons of eye candy and plenty to see and do. Stages with entertainment and contests too. Don your most creative costume and WERK! Who said Halloween is only for kids? There's candy and costumes and fun for all.

TIP: MAC can help out with painting your face (or body, for that matter).

The Bat Cave is Back!

Royal Ontario Museum

100 Queen's Park

(Avenue and Bloor)

\$24

www.rom.on.ca

To the Bat Cave! It has been completely renovated and redone as a 1700-square-foot gallery with over 800 models that include animatronics to thrill and chill. This is a totally immersive and educational experience that ends with the bats fleeing the cave en masse!

TIP: A great first date thing: you may have them hanging all over you.

Halloween Fetish Ball "Devils Night"

The Opera House

735 Queen St. East

\$20 advance - \$25 at the door

Buy at Northbound - 586 Yonge

St. or Subspace Dungeon Studio

- 7 Fraser Ave. 2B

With its dresscode of fetishwear and/or 'erotic' Halloween costumes halloween costumes dresscode, if you love dressing up and showing off, this night is up your alley. There will be performances at 12:30am and again at 1am. Sounds ghoulishly delightful!

TIP: Get tickets early as this night sells out quickly.

Party Time!

Your Place

October 30 or 31

Halloween is such a fun time of year, especially for us gays. We love any excuse to have a party and to dress up. I remember dressing in my Mom's clothes and having my first drag night. Host a fabulous themed party and have your favorite peeps over to share in the festivities. You can make punch and all kinds of fun treats that you can find online, especially at www.marthastewart.com/halloween.

TIP: Buy some pumpkins and have a pumpkin carving contest; you will be amazed at how talented your friends really are.





LIVE ENTERTAINMENT

Howard Jones

The Mod Club

October 12th, 8pm (doors open 7pm)

\$32.50

www.ticketweb.ca

Take a step back in time and relive the 80s with Howard Jones and his hits 'Things Can Only Get Better', 'No One is To Blame', 'What Is Love' and more. It's been over 15 years since Toronto has heard his synthesizer sound.

TIP: Don't forget to bring your camera!

So You Think You Can Dance Tour

Tuesday, October 19, 7:30pm
(Date and time subject to change)

Air Canada Centre

Starting at \$47

www.vividseats.com/theatre

Who wouldn't want to watch hot young men and women dancing around on stage in really tight costumes and sometimes next to nothing? Watch the contestants from this season perform numbers ranging from Hip-Hop to Ballroom, Broadway to

Contemporary, live on stage. They really are amazing.

TIP: Bring a niece or nephew with you so you don't feel like a geek going on your own. You can also check out ticketmaster.com for tix.

Kiss Me Kate

Until November 6

Stratford Shakespeare Festival
Festival Theatre

55 Queen Street, Stratford, ON
Starting at \$50

www.stratfordfestival.ca

If you are a Cole Porter fan, then I would go see this production. If you have never gone to see a musical, this would be a great one to start with. With classics like 'So in Love' and 'Too Darn Hot,' you will definitely be singing along and tapping your feet. It's also a great way to get out of the city and do something completely not routine.

TIP: The show has a running time of 2 hours and 20 minutes. Stratford is approximately a 2 hour drive from Toronto. Download some Cole Porter ahead of time and familiarize yourself with his music.

6th Annual Toronto Sketch Comedy Festival

November 1 - 7

Ticket and venue info are available on the web site.

www.torontosketchfest.com

Here it is again, time to laugh your pants off. Hey, that doesn't sound bad at all! Better yet, take someone along and have them take them off for you later. There are over 200 artists performing over six nights. Fun, fun, fun.

TIP: An evening full of laughter

is better than an evening without one!

FAMILY

The Santa Claus Parade

Sunday, November 21

12:30pm

FREE

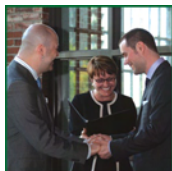
www.thesantaclausparade.ca

This will be the 106th annual Santa Claus Parade in Toronto. I remember being a part of it as a kid. It was an amazing experience. If you have nieces or nephews, this would be really fun for them to get involved in. You and the family could really make a day of it. Thousands turn out along the streets to be a part of the festivities, as it is one of the largest and longest-running children's parade in the world. Who knew?

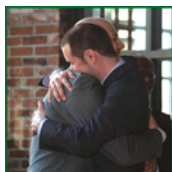
TIP: The parade route starts at Bloor and Christie, runs over to University then south to Dundas, west to Yonge and then south again to Front and then west again to finish at Church St (phew!).

Ricky Boudreau blossomed as a true social butterfly while traveling the world as a professional figure skater for 15 years. He loves the gift of gab and discovering great parties in the city. With a flair for culture, great food, simplicity and beauty, Ricky spends his time creatively as a trainer for MAC Cosmetics and has helped artists like Kreesha Turner, Deborah Cox and Dame Shirley Bassey look gorgeous. Heard of something fabulous or a new hot spot? Email him at inthechity@pinkplaymags.com. Need makeup for an event or party? Send Ricky an email at rickyrocoo@hotmail.com.

Photos by Tony Fong



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From the *Heart*

by Shelley Harrison

Gratitude

Gratitude is an act of recognition.

When we feel thankful, it stops us for a moment and allows us to recollect all that we have been given already. This act of humility is anything but cool. It doesn't smack of leadership or success or wealth or fame or 'bling.' But it is an essential quality of our human nature that balances our soul. If we and the world are a combination of two polarities – the typified masculine and feminine sides (or active and receptive, if we want to remove the gender label) – gratitude is the receptive half of the equation, the counterpoint to achieving.

Offering our gratitude allows us to rest in abundance. It draws us down into a state of humility, closer to the ground. Humility is not a wildly popular personality

trait these days but I urge you to try it anyway. Opening to gratefulness and humility shifts our energy field, our spirit, into a place of opening and permeability. It is in this state that what we truly seek and what seeks us can begin to be absorbed and finally nourish us. It seems like an act of giving but it is truly an act of allowing ourselves to be filled with what has already been given to us.

How does one make gratitude a practice? It is more than just saying "thank you" in a polite manner. We can make it an act of prayer. Prayer is a loaded word for some of us, yes, but what is it really? It is a two-way conversation between you and something bigger than you. Name it what you will: your higher self, God, Goddess, spirit, nameless mystery

From the Heart *Gratitude*

or “whatever-it-is-that-I-sense-is-making-the-real-plans-in-the-universe.” There are two sides to prayer: please and thank you. Whether you are formally sitting down to have a conversation with the big Kahuna or unconsciously doing it through your daily actions and words, take notice if you are saying “please” a lot more than “thank you.”

It’s a big revelation to see just how much we do have. Taking things for granted is a gesture of unconsciousness. Notice if you have a safe warm bed to lie down in every night. Notice if you were fed today. Was it really good food? Notice all the people in your life. Notice the abundance that arrived in one day. The more we step outside our Western sense of entitlement, the more we can be truly amazed by how much we have. I often find myself in a yoga class at the studio where I teach, standing among all the other well-employed, middle-class, middle-aged folk, recognizing how lucky I am to have the luxury to be there. I think of so many in the world who do not have such privilege. This awareness wakes me up and allows me to truly soak in the experience as something that is filling me in a good way, rather than just one more thing on the to-do list.

Some people and situations in our life are hard to feel grateful for. Our conditioned reaction to our own suffering is to resist, resent and react. The practice of gratitude can help our responses evolve into something more useful. Our reactions can be a choice. We can choose wisdom or woe. The woeful choice is to act like a victim and feel hard done by, fueling our own bitterness. This might make us feel powerful, righteous and satisfied for a while but ultimately it drags us down. The wise choice is to raise ourselves up to a place of surrender and trust in a higher will – which includes our own higher will – that has chosen to learn certain lessons in this life that can only be delivered through particular situations and interactions. Challenges transmute us into wiser beings. You can think of it as character

building but it is really generating stamina in our soul.

It’s not easy to offer gratitude for a tough situation. Try an affirmation like this:

“Okay, I don’t like this. In fact, this hurts a lot. But I am going to choose to trust and believe there is something bigger going on here that I can’t see right now. I may not understand it. Let me turn it over to a higher power and ask to be shown the way through, a way that is humble, courageous and filled with grace.”

It’s a fine balance to honour our grief, anger or pain and yet continue to make the wise choice of gratitude. When we do, we lift up to a higher perspective where our soul can take over and find meaning and purpose to the challenges in our life. Real wealth begins when we start to experience life this way.

Shelley A. Harrison is an Energy Healer in Ottawa. She graduated from the Barbara Brennan School of Healing 4-year professional training and has been working in private practice for 10 years. She visits Toronto regularly to see clients and visit her brother, Jeff, the editor of this magazine. You can write Shelley at fromtheheart@inspiredcreative.ca or visit her at www.doveheart.ca.



Autumn Horoscopes

by Lawrence Grecco

LIBRA (Sept 23-Oct 22)

Saturn is traveling through your sign and forever changing who you are by asking you to get serious and work just a bit harder. There is also a subtle but substantial transformation taking place in your home and career lives.

SCORPIO (Oct 23-Nov 21)

It's the perfect time to work behind the scenes and find your own personal version of paradise. Rest, recharge your batteries and take advantage of how intuitive and creative you are as you prepare for 2011.

SAGITTARIUS (Nov 22-Dec 21)

Some unexpected changes on the home front provide adventure and intrigue. Your romantic life is dreamy and starry-eyed so keep your feet on the ground lest your beating heart take over completely.

CAPRICORN (Dec 22-Jan 19)

During this pivotal period, you're reaching new heights and possibilities in life and your career in particular is undergoing a strong transformation. Stay surrounded by friends as you climb your way to the top.

AQUARIUS (Jan 20-Feb 18)

This is a highly spiritual and philosophical time in your life in which you are inspired to be a true student of life. Much energy is being expended at your job but you're truly admired and appreciated for what you're doing.

PISCES (Feb 19-Mar 20)

Practical matters are on your mind as the universe asks you to balance what you have, what you need and what you want. This goes for your finances and your personal assets so use this time to cultivate talents and abilities.

ARIES (Mar 21-Apr 19)

Exciting changes are brewing under the surface. It's all about partnerships—your significant other needs you more than ever but if you're single, consider what you want and need in a romantic partnership.

TAURUS (Apr 20-May 20)

This is a very auspicious time for you to start a new health regimen of some kind. The decisions you make now will have a particularly long-term impact so take advantage of this energy.

GEMINI (May 21-Jun 20)

Creatively, romantically, physically—you are at an all-time high. There is an element of luck on your side with career matters so take full advantage of that.

CANCER (Jun 21-Jul 22)

Your career and public persona is undergoing a profound change, affecting your home life, your outlook and your relationships. You'll have to leave home a little more than usual but the payoff will be worth it!

LEO (Jul 23-Aug 22)

You'll delve more deeply into yourself, your history and your family tree in order to better understand yourself. Your brain is demanding to be nourished with books, news, the internet so keep feeding it!

VIRGO (Aug 23-Sept 22)

Focus on the practical as well as personal. Getting a handle on finances will bring you much-needed peace of mind. Little by little, you're taking a leap of faith that will open you up more deeply to others.

Lawrence Grecco is a professional astrologer and Zen Life Coach in New York City. He is also a Buddhist seminary student and a member of the board of directors of the National Council of Geocosmic Research, NYC chapter. He is available for personal or telephone readings and can be reached at 212-989-3456, lawrence.grecco@gmail.com or visit his web site at www.zenrising.com.

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Looking Back

Thanksgiving – Buddhist style

In this day and age, many people have lost touch with old forms of community – whether they be one’s church, one’s family, one’s neighborhood or one’s place of work – and our community now may often be a group on the Internet with shared interests or a local food co-op. Regardless of how the “type” of community has changed, it still plays an important role in our daily, human interactions – giving us meaning and connection in our lives.

The Buddhist teachings centre around three basic tenets:

- To follow the example of the awakened human being, the Buddha. With his example, we too can awaken ourselves and all other sentient beings to their full potential of wisdom and compassion.
- To study and meditate on the Dharma, his teachings. We have to DO it, not just think about what he said.
- To both take and give support and guidance to and from the *sangha* (community) of fellow practitioners.

This third one, our *sangha* or community, is the one that a lot of Buddhists find the hardest to relate to. It is where the rubber meets the road because the most important point in developing a healthy community is in cultivating a culture of kindness

that includes all. The word *sangha* can be translated as those who follow virtue. This includes, on a daily basis, contemplating and reflecting on compassion, generosity and how we can actually provide them in our life.

In our Shambhala community, we believe that everyone

has basic goodness. By basic goodness, we mean that every human being has a basic nature of goodness that contains tremendous gentleness and appreciation. Through meditation practice, we tune into this unconditional healthiness. In our community, everyone has a role to play: our view is to appreciate, respect and include everyone.

ON THANKFULNESS

Here are three Buddhist contemplations that help one to develop thankfulness:

- Be grateful to everyone.
- Consider the preciousness of human life.
- Remember that everyone has at one time nurtured us.

If one contemplates these thoroughly, one develops incredible appreciation and empathy for first oneself and then others. We have more appreciation and thankfulness for every moment of our human life and the inspiration to not waste it in daydreams.

SHAMBHALA BUDDHIST MEAL CHANT

By generosity, one has power over difficulties and obstacles.

By generosity, one is free from enemies. Generosity is the transcendent friend.

Therefore, generosity is said to be essential.

Generosity is the ornament of the world.

Through generosity, one turns back from the lower realms [suffering].

Generosity is the stairway to the higher realms [freedom from suffering].

Generosity is the virtue that produces peace.



Madeline Conacher, meditation teacher
Toronto Shambhala Meditation Centre
toronto.shambhala.org



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