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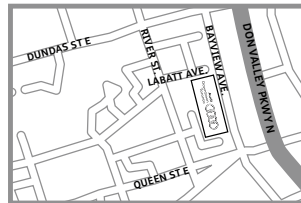
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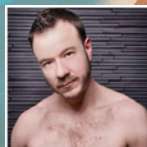
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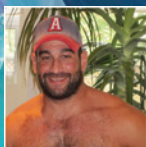
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From the Publisher

Another September has finally arrived and, for the students among you, it marks the beginning of another term of study. For everyone else, let this September be a chance to reflect on your own education: its ups, its downs, its successes and its failures. Education can be difficult to define. According to the standard Oxford Dictionary it is the process of receiving or giving systematic instruction. However, any successful person will tell you that education is not necessarily garnered from reading textbooks or attending schools. Life experience and the influence of people closest to us can be as much, if not more, of an education than anything learned in an institution. On the other hand, having a little book knowledge doesn't hurt either.

At least it doesn't hurt for long. I can't deny that I am happy to have left the all-night study sessions and lengthy essays behind me with diploma in hand. I was fortunate enough to complete my post-secondary education in Toronto. I studied Creative Advertising & Broadcasting at Seneca College and loved every minute of it. It's funny to look back and think about how much my career has diverged from what I studied, but I guess that is the education of life—things are rarely what you predict they will be. Still, the opportunity to open my mind and learn how to achieve something was by no means wasted. Knowledge and skill are always essential ingredients in becoming successful. It goes without saying that I would not be the publisher you all know (and hopefully love) without the benefit of an education.

Spending my life traveling and living in a variety of places has also been an education, of sorts. You can't get an understanding of the way the world works from a book, and so you need to learn it through life experience. Being exposed to so many different ways of life has taught me many of the skills I use in publishing and management every day. Having a broader understanding of the world can show you a range of potential you wouldn't otherwise get to see. Another big part of my life schooling has been pop culture and film and have acted as inspiration for many PinkPlayMags themes of the past.

Of course, I guess I have to credit my parents with a portion of my education as well. They taught me valuable lessons such as: how to cross the road, how to tie my shoes, and how to rob a bank. I jest. Both my parents have been reserves of wisdom for me throughout my life, and have encouraged my learning and my success.

I welcome you to The Education Issue of *autumnplay!* 2011!



Antoine Elhashem

autumnplay!

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From the Editor

Editor

I had the great honour of attending the tribute to Jack Layton and was overwhelmed at the powerful words, heartfelt emotions and the sheer number of people that crowded in and around Roy Thomson Hall to pay their final respects. Jack Layton was a man of integrity, honesty and no small amount of wisdom. He taught a lot of Canadians a very basic, but very important, lesson: respect and really listen to your fellow Canadians. It's a lesson well learned.

Despite all the bullying I faced in school, right from Grade 2 until the year I graduated on to college, I enjoyed school most of the time. The classroom was my sanctuary where I got to discover new and exciting things, learn about the history of our country, the nature of our planet and the worlds of imagination tucked between the covers of a good storybook. If ever my grades were low, Mom always asked me if it was my teacher I was not getting along with, because when I did like my teacher my marks were high and my desire to learn endless. But often as I sat at my desk staring out the window, I knew there was more to life than a classroom. The one cautionary comment on all my report cards was that I was a dreamer and my head was always stuck in the clouds. Should that be a caution? Not to dream too much?

A good teacher imparts an eagerness to learn and a desire for that learning to never end. A good education trains your mind to know that there are no limits, only plateaus of knowledge where you can rest for a while savouring what you know, before readying yourself to leap off toward the next pinnacle of understanding. Technology—for me at least—has been like an all-you-can-eat buffet and I can never get enough learning from it. I can only imagine what access to that kind of limitless knowledge is like for kids these days—the world is so vast and yet immediately at your fingertips. Karen shows us (Page 12) that these days, if you can imagine a possible career, there is someone out there doing it and chances are, with a little bit of research, you can discover how to grow up to become that.

Like all of life's journeys though, the road is not always smooth. There are bumps along the way and sometimes we get lost or feel alone, no matter how big and readily

accessible the world is; maybe we feel overwhelmed *because* the world is so vast and immediately on the other side of our computer or TV screens. Your average news station thrives on the doom and gloom of the day and bullying hasn't disappeared—in fact there is a whole new kind of bully, the cyber-bully. Sometimes it's a challenge to face your day, especially when you feel helpless to affect any positive change. But here's the thing: education—and technology for that matter—is a tool, and those who know how to make the best use of these powerful tools can accomplish a great many things. The pen, or keyboard for that matter, has always been mightier than the sword.

Leanne Iskander proves that if you know your rights (Page 62), then you can abolish bullying beyond just the classroom. Scott reveals (Page 19) that teachers are on our side and students are determined to see that "It Gets Better." I, myself, am privileged to get the inside scoop (Page 27) on what it takes to become a Human Book on loan from Toronto Public Libraries. The Human Library is a brilliant rediscovery of 'old fashioned' storytelling around the fire, re-imagined in a modern way and a shining example of how vital our libraries are to the very cultural fabric of our cities.

When we are faced with the ignorance of people in power like the Fords and the Harpers, the wielding of an educated mind is a powerful tool indeed. Never forget, public ignorance is the government's best friend. I think Anne Marie Aikins, whom I spoke to at the Metro Reference Library, summed it up best: "Change happens one person at a time." A pearl of wisdom I believe Jack Layton was well versed in.

Jeffrey Harrison





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Six Ways from Sunday





Finding a New Path

by Karen Fulcher

Remember the flight attendant, Steven Slater, who infamously quit his job? He gained instant fans because at some point, most of us have fantasized about such a dramatic exit from our current daily grind. Although, exiting your job without a plan probably isn't a good idea unless you have amazing, one-of-a-kind, much sought after skills or experience. Still, thinking about what you *could* be doing instead of what you *are* doing is a fun fantasy to indulge in.

Better yet, if the calling keeps calling, perhaps it is time to act. Making plans for changing jobs (or starting out for that matter) can be daunting. You'll need to imagine yourself in the setting, doing the work and living off the pay cheque. If you can't imagine what it would be like, find someone who does the job you are considering and ask them about it.

But what do you research, if you have no calling?

Think about what your interests are: what kinds of things do you enjoy doing or have a knack for? You might discover some little gem that you can polish into a career. The old saying, "Do what you love and the money will come" rings true for the optimists. For the pessimists, test out some of the things you like by committing to the activities more in your spare time. Can you imagine doing this day in and out? Would people pay you to do it?

Career advisors note that there seems to be a spike in inquiries about a particular job when a television show highlighting the job becomes popular. *Grey's Anatomy* equaled a spike in health-related inquiries; *CSI*—an increase in crime investigation related jobs; *Hell's Kitchen*—more cooking school inquiries. Be curious. Curiosity can help you uncover an interest you weren't aware of before and possibly a job you never considered.

Don't forget to check out the job prospects and average wages. You can look up jobs through the federal government's Working in Canada (www.workingincanada.gc.ca). They have job descriptions, postings and average wages for jobs and locations. There are Provincial resources that can help you, if you qualify. Second Career (www.secondcareerontario.com) can help you pay for retraining if you've been laid off, are unemployed (or working in a interim job) and are seeking retraining for a job that is in demand.

Now the following featured jobs may not qualify for government funding, but they are fun and interesting career choices that some have taken and perhaps one will inspire you to journey the road less travelled.

For the last few years there has been alarm in the news about disappearing bees. People have steadily become more aware that the predicament of bees directly relates to the health of people. Bees are the workers that make sure the variety of food we eat actually grows.

Recently, the news has turned hopeful, however. Cities might just be bees' saving grace! The variety of flowers and plants that people grow in the city help bees. It

makes good sense that there has been an increase of urban beekeepers.

I spoke to Mylee Nordin, a beekeeper with the Toronto Beekeepers Cooperative (www.torontobees.ca), who won the 2011 Toronto Green Award for their work in the local food category.

Nordin told me beekeeping is "seasonal work: spring, summer and fall—as well as a day job. Bees are most active when we are." She works on the roof of the Royal York Hotel caring for six hives. Part of her job is to give introduction sessions to people. "The numbers of participants have grown from 30-40 to 100s and I think it has to do with more awareness of the plight of bees."

Nordin recommends you learn how to take care of bees before you make the leap. "Find a beekeeper to learn from. Talk to honey sellers at farmers' markets. Starting with a few hives and working up to 100-150 hives located on a number of farmers' fields could translate into a supportive income over time," Nordin told me.

I asked her what kind of people become beekeepers. "Beekeepers are a most diverse group of people," she responded. She told me that young hipsters in New York are taking up the job and that you'll find a mix of just about everyone. She also let me know there are a number of supports available. For example, The Beekeeping Association offers insurance programs, and the government offers financial aid, especially if you are a new business owner. She warns though that you'll lose a number of bees due to diseases and thus need to consider that before jumping into the beekeeping life.

Perhaps a nine-to-five job is exactly what you *don't* want. How about not traditionally working at all? Instead, exchange your labour for room and board! There are programs for a variety of interests like Art Corps (artcorp.org), an artist-based volunteer travel and work program, or United Nations (www.unv.org) and CUSO (www.cuso-vso.org) placements are needed in areas of the world that require help.



There are numerous opportunities to work at retreats, yoga or Buddhist centres, or ashrams all over the world in exchange for food, access to the facilities, classes or meditation experiences. The Omega Institute in New York state and the Kripalu Center in Massachusetts offer programs and Work Away (www.workaway.info) and Help Exchange (www.helpx.net) offer listings from all over the world.

Steadfastly a city folk and like a little edge in your life? How about becoming a tattoo artist? Don't base your opinion of the craft from the reality show, *TLC's Tattoo School* because it is being heavily criticized by a number of tattoo artists who say it is impossible to learn the art in two weeks like the show implies.

If you have drawing talent, aren't deterred by causing pain or by the sight of blood and are interested in this industry, the traditional way to learn is through apprenticeship. Although there are schools you can attend to get to get the basics (and are only two weeks long and cost over \$3,000), you should have, as a minimum, certification in cross contamination and blood borne pathogens to protect yourself and your clients. There are no regulations for tattoo artists at the time of writing, but that doesn't mean potential clients won't educate themselves and look for certification from a reputable source before they book a tattoo.

If you can see yourself proving yourself to a Master tattoo artist by paying the artist, committing to grunt work while observing, asking questions and biding your time until you can handle the tattoo gun, this could be the work for you. Apprenticeships can vary from months to years depending on whom you apprentice with. It is a long haul but worth the investment because according to Pew Research who did a study in 2006, one in three Americans aged 18-25 have a tattoo. Unfortunately, I couldn't find statistics for Canadians but just take a look around you! I'd make a bet that the statistics are quite high in the LGBTQ populations and according to the over 1,800 members (just under 80 are female) of inked-up.com, a site for queer body mod fans, there are more

than a few tattoo enthusiasts out there.

Perhaps the blood red you like comes in a beautiful glass? How about becoming a Sommelier? Think it is an exclusive man's world? Not so—Canada's first female Master Sommelier, Ms. Jennifer Huether, was recently announced. You can learn the craft at school and the Canadian Association of Professional Sommeliers (www.capsontario.ca) lists partnered schools.

I asked a friend who has been thinking about leaving his job to pursue this interest full time. Joel Dupuis told me that he has been studying and collecting wine for about three years now. "You have to start as a wine steward and grow relationships with good chefs. It will take time. And if you really want to be serious about your understanding of wine, you should be able to travel to the places the grapes grow."

Dupuis believes being a good Sommelier is about having a friendly attitude towards diners. "You should be trying to match the diner's tastes with the food and the wine, not trying to push the most expensive wine." Being a sought after Sommelier is likely a life-long pursuit, which includes a who-you-know approach, so if you aren't good at networking, keep your wine loving as a hobby!

Recently a colleague of mine decided to leave his





job in communications to become an organic farmer. Kyle Mackenzie announced that although he liked Toronto, he yearned to get his “hands in some dirt” and given that he grew up in a small town, it wasn’t hard to accept that this would work for him.

I have also engaged in a daydream of living off the land in some kind of cooperative off-the-grid farm (yes, I have strong hippy tendencies) and enjoying an especially useful situation when the “end times” happen (wink).

I have another friend, Michelle Threndyle, who has an actual veggie farm outside of the city where she goes to grow the most amazing, lush produce (I know, I’ve seen the pictures on Facebook!) She has treated me to the organic garlic, tomatoes and zucchini she grew.

Threndyle started out as an artist and a painter. When she developed allergies to the paint, she simply changed her

love for gardening into
a viable business
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u r b a n
gardens.



From there, she found that she loved to spend more and more time at the farm. “You have to be creative,” Threndyle advises. “This is the only way you can make it farming and make a living these days. Farming is a lifestyle that is in your blood. You’ve got to love the hard work, the simplicity of living in balance with the land and the ability to learn from your failures and successes.” She is now considering moving full time to the farm and attending school for an electrician program during the winters.

If leaving the city and digging in the soil is the right path for you, there are a number of ways to do it. For a little gig on the land, you can join the organization, World Wide Opportunities on Organic Farms (www.wwwoof.ca). You could choose to try it out and if it sticks, you could actually tour around learning, working and living on farms all over the world.

Good Work Canada offers up opportunity listings for free (www.goodworkcanada.ca) and Canadian Organic Growers (www.cog.ca) is another great source. Mackenzie and his partner selected their placement and chatted with the farmers on the phone to make sure it was a good fit before he quit his job and moved out to British Columbia to do it.

As far as schools go, in Ontario you can go to The Ontario Agricultural College (OAC) of the University of Guelph for degrees and diplomas in agriculture and horticulture. But before you decide to jump in, there really is no other way to learn the sustainable techniques of organic farming than to just get out there and do it!

If you already know this is the life for you, buying a farm is a big commitment. There is help out there though. Farm Centre (www.farmcentre.com) offers a first time farmer’s scholarship, mentoring opportunities not just for the work, but also for the management of farming. If you’re a guy, aren’t partnered and want to be, there are social networking sites like www.gayfarmercentral.com so don’t worry about feeling isolated.

If you are a little more inclined to the other

kind of dirt, the Canadian Security Intelligence Service (CSIS) has ongoing recruitment for surveillance agents. You need a college diploma, be able to work a flexible schedule and have initiative, motivation and discretion, deal with high levels of stress and have a driver's license with two years experience driving according to the job description. With a salary range \$55,120 to \$67,060 per year, not a bad career choice.

I wonder if that's what the guys I randomly see parked on the street with sunglasses and

notebooks are doing? I would ask for an interview, but I suspect I wouldn't be granted one!

So there you have it. I hope one or two of these jobs has sparked some thoughts and ideas about what you could be doing instead of daydreaming at your desk.

Karen Fulcher has changed her career direction in three major ways over the last 20 years and is not willing to give up the variety just yet.

Back to School!

If school is a part of your plans, consider whether it offers a queer-friendly environment. Here is a list of questions to think about care of the UK organization, Stonewall.

Does the school:

- 1 Have a harassment policy that specifically mentions sexual orientation?
- 2 Train staff on LGBT issues, and make the training mandatory?
- 3 Have an LGBT staff network? If staff feel comfortable about being open, so will students.
- 4 Have a strong LGBT student society?
- 5 Make sure information on LGBT issues is widely available?
- 6 Organize specific events for LGBT students?
- 7 Make LGBT counselling available?
- 8 Consult LGBT students?
- 9 Offer LGBT student targeted careers advice?

Although there isn't a way to really assess the environment of a school unless you spend some time there, the following is a list of some queer-friendly universities in Ontario based on their online presence:

Brock University:
www.brocku.ca/human-rights/positive-space

Carleton University:
www.cusaonline.com/glbtt

Lakehead University:
pride.lusu.ca

McMaster University:
www.msumcmaster.ca/servicesandbusiness/qsc.htm

Queen's University:
www.queensu.ca/positivespace

Ryerson:
www.ryerson.ca/equity/positivespace/helpful_links.html

Trent University:
www.trentqueercollective.tk/

University of Guelph:
www.uoguelph.ca/~outline

Universities of Toronto/Mississauga/Scarborough:
www.sgdo.utoronto.ca

University of Windsor:
www.uwindsor.ca/ooc

University of Waterloo:
knowyourglow.ca

University of Western:
pridewestern.ca/interim

Wilfred Laurier:
waterloo.mylaurier.ca/rainbow/info/home.htm

York University:
www.tblgay.yfs.ca

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High School Confidential



$1+1=3?$

by Scott Dagostino

A Catholic high school in the northern Alberta oil-sands hub of Fort McMurray seems like Canada's least likely place to find a vocal advocate for gay rights, but teacher and author Patricia Marie Budd has been supportive of her LGBT students for nearly two decades now. "The gay kids come to me and let me know that they're gay because I think I'm one of the few who just accepts them for who they are," she says. "I don't try to change them."

Patricia's latest novel has the alarming title *Hell Hounds of High School* and is billed as "an honest and sometimes shocking look into the classroom to find solutions to our schools' problems," which she says includes systemic homophobia. She's witnessed students endure "relentless abuse" at the hands of their peers and heard fellow teachers console students coming to them in tears, hoping for advice on how to change. "Well, of course they want to change when the level of prejudice is so great," Patricia fumes, "More and more teenagers are increasingly less terrified to profess their sexuality, but when they do, the backlash is intense."





thanks to her ongoing determination in trying to start a “gay/straight alliance” discussion group at St. Joseph’s College, chronicled by *Xtra!* reporter Andrea Houston. Leanne was honoured as the Inspire Awards 2011 LGBTQ Youth of the Year and awarded a spot as co-Grand Marshall in the Pride parade for her efforts. She faced some flak from homophobic students throughout, but says it was nothing she hadn’t endured already.

“I was outed in grade seven,” Leanne says. “I lost most of my friends because they thought that if they were seen hanging out with me, people would accuse them of being gay too. I got a lot of comments like, ‘Eww, she’s looking at me,’ in the hallways and change rooms.” High school, she says, was oddly easier, since the whispers moved online. “I got a few hateful anonymous comments,” she says, “They were pretty bad. One of them was, ‘I hope your parents find out and slaughter you.’”

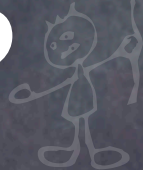
While the kind of physical abuse Patricia Budd has witnessed of course still happens, it’s this kind of online bullying that’s mostly experienced by teens today. Oliver Mathias, a grade 11 student at St. Francis

Sure, one could argue, that’s Alberta but elsewhere, even here in liberal Toronto, teachers have noted such incidents of anti-gay bullying continuing for years until the oft-resulting suicides reached a horrifying peak in the US last September, with five suicides in one month. Suddenly, major news organizations were discussing the issue, Ellen Degeneres was urging her large daytime TV audience to get involved and sex-advice columnist Dan Savage created the wildly successful “It Gets Better” campaign to speak directly to kids at risk.

As that campaign hits its first anniversary, teenagers are now speaking for themselves about their high



“ Kids are just scared of ” the unknown



school experiences, needs and goals. Some are still in classes, others are recently graduated; some are vocal activists, others are still not out to their parents; but all are stepping up to demand a more inclusive curriculum, more staff support and student discussion groups to combat intolerance. Students and teachers from within both school boards agree that, yes, it is getting better but creating true safe space for queer kids in our schools will continue to be a struggle.

Sixteen-year-old Leanne Iskander became an unofficial spokesperson for LGBT teens this year,

Xavier in Mississauga, says he too was attacked anonymously on Facebook and Formspring, though he also once had his locker vandalized. That said, however, Oliver insists his school is a “welcoming environment.” If anything, he says the problem might be some students’ attempts at support: “People make my sexuality a big deal. I had this one girl try to befriend me just because she wanted a gay best friend. Then there was this other student who would talk about my sexuality all the time. Like, every single moment we saw each other.”

Queers!

"Kids are just scared of the unknown," says Rob, an alias for a Catholic school student who says, "I'm not out to everyone, only a few close friends that I've told my sexuality to." Keeping his secret, he says, "I had to deal with people talking behind my back a lot but due to the fact that I was fairly popular, no one really wanted to confront me about my sexuality." Rob praises many of his teachers for being supportive but says they're given no tools to educate the majority of students ignorant about not just queer issues, but sexuality in general. "Teachers were clearly not trained to talk about sex-ed in the first place."

Leanne agrees, saying, "They spend more time teaching about the Catholic Church's view on sex than they do actually teaching about sex."

Sex education in the schools became a front-page topic in April, when religious conservatives rose up against a proposed new curriculum that introduced guidelines for discussing various sexual topics in slightly earlier grades. Though the Ministry of Education stressed that all information would be delivered in an age-appropriate manner, Christian and Muslim groups threatened to pull their kids out of school and even issue a constitutional challenge. Within days, Premier Dalton McGuinty scrapped the entire plan.

Adam Smith, a teacher at a junior public school, is among many who were left frustrated. "It was disappointing," he says, "but an election is on its way and McGuinty is a politician." Smith says in some areas, there was little choice but to fold. "Toronto has enclaves, people with similar belief systems all living in one neighbourhood. If you're teaching at a predominantly Muslim school or a predominantly born-again school, you're not going to read [kids' book about gay penguins] *And Tango Makes Three*."

Smith points out that part of Ontario's education act states that all people need to be represented in the curriculum. To parents who take umbrage, he says, "Look, you may have an issue with it but little Tommy over there has two mommies and I'm not going to let his school year go by without him seeing something in a storybook, or whatever, that he can relate to and see himself in."

Nineteen-year-old Ricky Rodrigues was a student at Bishop Marrocco/Thomas Merton Catholic Secondary School and, like most of the other students interviewed here, he says the verbal bullying he endured peaked at the end of elementary school, before he even entered high school. Smith is not surprised. "It all starts in elementary school, as far as I'm concerned," he says. "At six years old, they already have ideas about all this. We have to teach them these values when they're young because if they don't have them then, whatever prejudices they have will carry through."



alone



As the Toronto District School Board is discovering, however, the opposition to Smith's ideas is very strong. In August, trustee John Del Grande introduced a set of amendments to ensure that "the denominational aspect of Catholic schools" trumps any government policy. "For our school board," Del Grande told *The Globe & Mail*, "the reason why we exist is to provide a Catholic-based education. With that, there's certain morals and values and underpins that come with educating those students."

Watching from Alberta, Patricia Budd is blunt about what those "underpins" are. She describes one particular staff meeting held to discuss the needs of LGBT students as "very positive but the central message (which I found offensive) was, 'Love the sinner, hate the sin.'" The irony of this "warped mentality," she says, "is that the majority of Christians all have sex before marriage," but it's only the queer students who are taught that "the way they live is wrong," based on church doctrine that calls a homosexual person "intrinsically disordered." Worse yet, she says, "It's all very insidious because it's not something that's said directly or taught in a classroom."

At his Catholic school, Ricky Rodrigues worked to create a GSA but found that same 'insidious' opposition. "At first, everyone (the principal, chaplain, and other teachers) were on board with the idea," he says, "but when we began to do outreach, things quickly changed. We weren't allowed to screen queer films for the student body...and when we wanted to

mark the International Day Against Homophobia and Transphobia (May 17) with a day of workshops, we were thrown numerous obstacles."

Would more openly gay teachers help? "I find it hard to believe that in a 20-year career, I have never worked with an openly gay teacher," Patricia says. There's a reason for that, says a Catholic high-school teacher in Toronto we'll call Larry, who once went to the Ontario Human Rights Board to learn if Catholic schools could actually fire a teacher for being gay. "They didn't have a straight answer," he says, "because the Supreme Court has never ruled if religious rights can trump equality rights. I don't think they have ever clarified this in the years since my visit. Therefore, gay teachers in the Catholic system live under a 'chilling effect' where rights are not defined well, so to stay safe, you must stay in the closet from administration and most of your colleagues."

Larry investigated all this after he himself was the target of bullying. "When I was in my second year of teaching, a student called me a faggot and told me not to stand so close to him. I sent him to the VP but very little was done. I think one detention was given. I became very angry with the VP, believing this was far too light, but it was all excuses."

If queer Catholic high school teachers can't even protect themselves, how can they protect their students? "I don't work for the Catholic board for a reason," says Adam Smith, but he too notes that while students can actually be suspended for such name-calling in the Toronto public board, it's rarely enforced to that degree.

"I find I hear 'fag,' 'queer' and 'homo' a lot and people don't try to hide it," says Oshawa public school student Nathan Rhodes-Truppe, who says it's not just Catholic schools with all the issues. "As much as I'd like to think things have gotten better," he says, "I don't believe it's as much as people would like to think. I have received support from friends but I find there are many people that participate in trying to bully me." He did, however, have teachers who helped him to



homo

create a gay/straight alliance club at his school and praises them, if not the lessons. "I think the education system in general is very... heterosexually based," he says, "I have not learned much, if anything, about any other sexualities, any genders, other than male or female, or anything that falls under the blanket term of 'trans.'"

Andrew Mok is a recent graduate of the private boys' school Royal St. George's College and even within his "very inclusive" school, homosexuality remains "a very touchy subject. It just goes to show that youth in our society are still very uneducated about sexuality in general."

"It took me a number of years to come to terms with being bisexual," says Lisa, a graduate of a public school in London, Ontario, "My biggest fear was that people would not believe me and would think I was confused, looking for attention, or assumed that I was slutty and dated a whole bunch of people." The teachers were very accepting, Lisa says, but in her classes, "gender identity, same-sex relationships or safe lesbian sex were never addressed."



Clare Nobbs, Program Coordinator for Community Programs at the Supporting Our Youth program run from the Sherbourne Health Centre. SOY hosts Alphabet Soup, a Tuesday evening drop-in group specifically for youth under 20, and Clare says, "We do get a lot of calls from guidance counsellors and administrators...Despite all the policies and the stuff in the press and celebrities on the TV, the high schools can still be a very dangerous place." She insists that queer students and teachers have had to go it alone for too long: "I feel strongly that until straight teachers feel equally responsible for challenging homophobic and trans-phobic oppression, it will not be a safe place."

“There is no right or wrong
way to come out”

What such omissions do is limit the discussions that can bring students together. While a closeted classmate of Leanne's calling herself Tegan thrills at how "there is a unique bond among queer students, just on the knowledge that they are and have been facing the same struggles you have," their fellow student Rob says, "I don't feel like I relate to their struggles and issues all that much. I think sexuality isn't even something worth talking about to anyone but who you're sleeping with; it's just so unimportant to me."

"There is no right or wrong way to come out," says

While she applauds anyone creating a GSA, Clare is concerned that, "without policies and training to go with it, it's kind of a setup...We've had kids coming down for Alphabet Soup who said they couldn't go to their gay/straight alliance meetings because the teacher insisted on keeping the door open. He thought it made the space welcoming but it actually targeted the students."

While activist and educator Tim McCaskell's book *Race To Equity* details the Toronto District School Board's Equity Department's long efforts to combat racism, sexism and homophobia in its schools, Clare says recent years have seen the birth of exciting new



resources and partnerships. She's on the board of the Unity Conference, a one-day gathering in November of Toronto-and-surrounding-regions queer students and teachers. The first in 2005 had a few dozen students; last year's event at the 519 Community Centre had over 300. "It's about capacity building, information sharing and support," Clare says, "We feel that it's key in supporting high school kids and we're thrilled to be a part of it."

More recently, the TDSB now has a dedicated Gender-Based Violence Prevention Office, independent events like teacher Michael Erickson's Converge queer creativity conference have popped up and, of course, the Triangle Program's alternative school remains a lifeline for queer students most at risk until the day of a truly safe and equitable education system.

"There is change coming," says Adam Smith, "but I understand that kids may not feel as supported because it happens slowly. When I was in high school 20 years ago, there was nothing quiet about the bullying, but in five years from now, I think, it will be better than it is now."

Even now, says Leanne, "I've heard from most of my grade 11 friends that there are only one or two homophobic people in their grade. They definitely give me hope that things are getting better for us."

Scott Dagostino is a Toronto-based freelance writer, still discovering new things about this city and its culture and he only moved here from Hamilton!

PFLAG: Inspiring Change

With the rise of email, text messaging, Facebook and Twitter, a telephone support hotline might seem like a quaint leftover from a less open time, but Parents and Friends of Lesbians and Gays (PFLAG) has committed to expanding their toll-free support phoneline to run 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. Volunteers are usually a parent of someone who is lesbian, gay, bisexual or transgendered and they know better than anyone the huge leap of faith taken by that first-time caller who asks, "My daughter is a lesbian—what do I do?" or "I think I'm gay—how do I tell my parents?"

As the school term begins, the PFLAG phones ring with calls from college and university students who have come to Toronto and want to come out, high-school students and their parents, teachers and guidance counsellors all looking for information, and even calls from elementary schools. The need for support is widespread and PFLAG volunteers are there for you at 1-888-530-6777

To bolster this already important service, PFLAG Canada has launched a provocative new ad campaign that aims to have people from the Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender and Ally (LGBTQA) community, sharing their personal journeys of coming out and conveying the importance of supportive personal connections. A QR code, that funky black box you see everywhere these days, will lead to videos featuring 14 inspiring personal stories from well known members from the LGBTQA community, including Rex Harrington, former principal dancer with the National Ballet and Terry Edward Briceland, sewing specialist for HGTV's *Divine Design*.

Following the QR codes will give users access to the complete series of videos on stories.pflagcanada.ca, with the intent for the campaign to grow, encouraging users to upload their own stories and connect to the videos created by their friends and family.

Providing local support in nearly 80 communities nationwide, PFLAG Canada is there when it seems no-one else is. Inspire Change at www.pflagcanada.ca.



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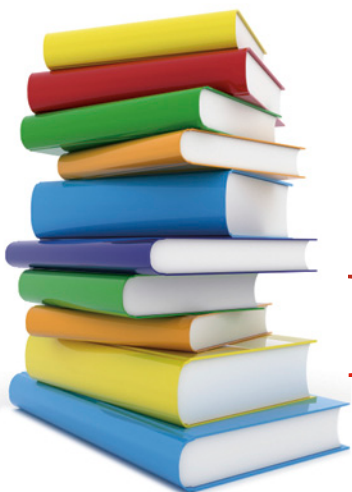
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The Human LIBRARY

by Jeff Harrison

Last year around this time, as the humid summer faded into the cool weather of September and everyone headed back to school, Antoine and I were trading ideas for the following year's issues and he suggested we do a feature on the Human Library. I'd never heard of one before, but admitted to being intrigued. As a writer I love a good book. I love getting lost in the pages, swept away by the author's characters, caught up in the drama of their lives, whether it's in a world just like mine, or someplace fantastically different. While I love an intricate plot, for me it's always the people in these stories that capture and hold my attention. So as I learned more about how the Human Library's books were actually a collection of people, all with their own unique stories, I was hooked! How did one *become* a book? I'd never conceived of such an idea, but now that I'd learned it was possible, it would be a dream come true to fulfill this desire.

Anne Marie Aikins, once a freelance news reporter focusing on urban planning, and now Manager of Corporate Communications at the Toronto Reference Library, was one of the key organizers who realized Toronto's first Human Library last year. "It was, as we understand, the biggest in the world and the only time a Human Library was hosted in multiple locations," Aikins declares. "We had five branches hosting them at the same

time. We tried to spread them across Toronto, by having them in each area of the city. We had a total of 60 'books'. It was *very* successful." In fact, it was so hugely successful, Aikins is eagerly planning their second this year on Saturday November 5, from 12pm to 5pm.

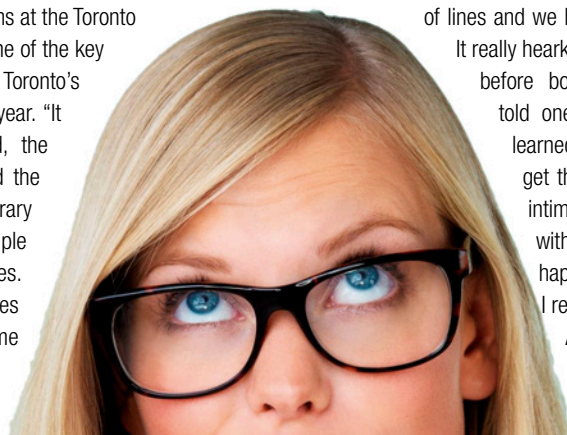
In 1993, after a friend was stabbed one night while out partying in Copenhagen, a group of youths formed a non-governmental movement called "Stop the Violence." Their goal was to raise awareness by using peer group education to mobilize youth against violence. In 2000, Stop the Violence was encouraged by then festival director, Leif Skov, to organize an event for the Roskilde Festival that would encourage dialogue and build relations among visitors. Thus, the very first Human Library was realized.

"It was hosted so that people could sit with other people from other walks of life, from other cultures and from other backgrounds to have one-on-one conversations with the goal to break stereotypes,"

elaborates Aikins. "We still follow along those kinds of lines and we have broadened it as well.

It really hearkens back to centuries ago, before books, when stories were told one-on-one. That's how we learned from one another. You get this very personal story, an intimate opportunity to share with each other. Change happens one person at a time, I really believe that."

A strong advocate for





“ Once the human books have been selected, they attend a training session for a few hours where they learn how to be a good book. ”

literacy in everyone no matter class, race or cultural difference, Aikins understands the power of storytelling and how everyone has one to tell, no matter who we are. “Because these events are new and interesting, even if you don’t ever go to the Human Library and take out a ‘book’, you may read about these people in the media. For the most part, these are ordinary people that have really interesting stories to tell. We didn’t want to get celebrities in here for this—we read about celebrities every day, we know them. We wanted to get people with really fascinating lives and from different walks of life and diverse backgrounds,” she says.

Last year they aimed high and pulled it off, so this year looks to be all about refining the process. “We are downscaling just a little bit. We’ll be hosting it in four branches this year instead of five and we’re going to go for about 40 ‘books’, just because we really did bite off more than we should have last year,” Aikins says with a laugh. “In addition to our Human Library day this year, we are working with Settlement Services Ontario who will be hosting a couple of days that highlight what they have to offer. As part of this, they are going to have a special collection of ‘books’ who will all be newcomers to Canada who can speak to other newcomers.” I was pleasantly surprised to learn that when people immigrate to Toronto from another country, often the very first place they’ll go to is a library. Libraries are not only for books, but vital for connecting people to all the services that a city has to offer. Some of Toronto’s busiest branches have Settlement Services working directly out of them.

Last year, Toronto’s collection included: a woman who was blind, a man living with HIV, a quadriplegic reporter and a young man with Downs Syndrome. So who can be a human book and how does one go about becoming one? “Pretty much anyone can become a book,” Aikins says. “You need to be able to tell your story, because that’s important, and not everyone is good at doing interviews or answering questions in front of other people, so that’s something we need to learn. Not everyone who came to the training last year became a book.”

So as long as you don’t mind sitting down and talking to someone about yourself and you have an interesting story to tell, then chances are you could become a human book. There’s an application you can fill out online to get the process started. The TPL looks for a variety of books along given themes and likes to be sure they can go to one of the four hosting branches. This year’s Human Libraries will be at: North York Central in the north end of the city, Toronto Reference downtown, Cedarbrae in Scarborough and Richview in the west end.

Once the human books have been selected, they attend a training session for a few hours where they learn how to be a good book. “We want this to be a really positive experience for the books as well as for the borrower,” Aikins says. “Sometimes the books might be asked an offensive question—we haven’t had it happen yet, but we like to be prepared for it. People often don’t realize that they believe stereotypes about people, so we want the book to learn some skills and have some tools to be able to deal with that. We also put in safeguards—

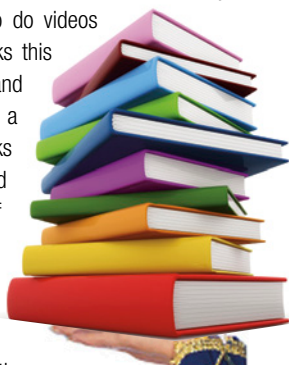
there's always staff there, if needed. We talk about what to expect as a book: the media interest, how to keep a conversation going and how to get as much information across in your allotted half-an-hour. We've also developed some material for the borrower, so they're not just sitting there with no idea what to ask. We provide some sample questions that will keep the conversation going. For the most part last year, we had to end the conversations because the time was up."

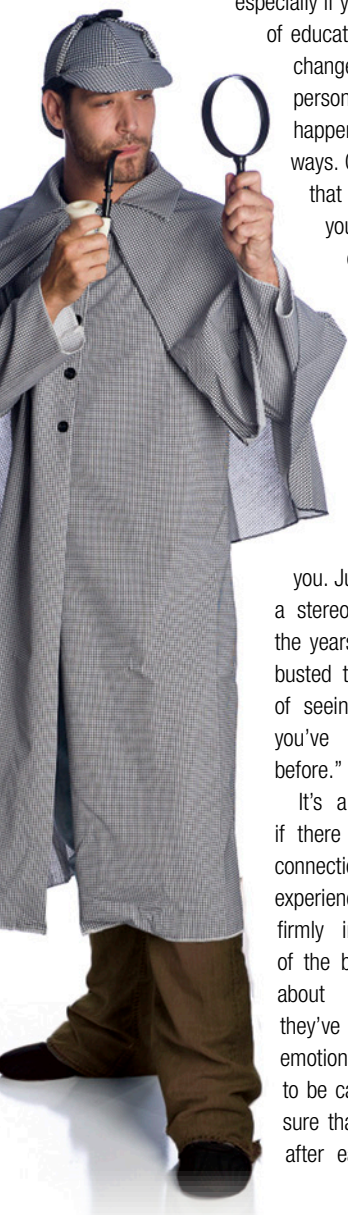
This year, there will be a detailed website set up (www.torontopubliclibrary.ca/human-library) that will have a picture of the person and their 'book jacket' with their bio, so people get to see who is available to be borrowed, and a teaser of what their story is about. "We're going to do videos of interviews with books this year," adds Aikins, "and we're going to do a preview event two weeks before for media and for people as well. So if you are too shy to take one out, you can come to that event and we'll have a media celebrity 'borrow' these 'books' so you can see how it works and learn from our different books."

Once the training session is done the books are ready to be put on the shelf for the day, all set to be loaned out. "We had books say it was the most fun they've had and have asked to come back, but we're trying to have a completely new collection this year," says Aikins. "Last year's books had so much fun they made friendships. We found last year that the best way to do this was to make it like you are all in a coffee shop—set up right in the library. We didn't want to put the books and borrowers in a quiet room with the door closed. That's too intimidating and conversations are harder to get going. That's why we meet in coffee shops and bars—all that background noise just makes

it all work better. The other problem with being in a room alone is we want to build in the safeguard that if you can't get out of a conversation, or the conversation is going bad, you can put your hand up and someone can come over and help you. After your session is over the book can retire to the quiet of the green room and debrief with the other books and staff that are there."

Library cards are free if you live, work or go to school in Toronto—otherwise there is a small fee to pay. But what happens to the books that nobody borrows? "That's one of the fears that every single book has," Aikins says, laughing. "What if I sit there like a lost journal that nobody wants? Do I just get put in the recycling bin? That has yet to happen—everyone got checked out last year. We set it up so two weeks ahead of time you can put people on hold. Some surprised me last year how popular they were. We had a Buddhist monk, who I thought was a cool





book, but I couldn't believe how many people wanted to borrow him—we turned more people away from him than any other."

So as a borrower, what can one expect to learn from a human book? "Oh gosh," exclaims Aikins,

"especially if you are thinking in terms of education, I really believe that change does happen one person at a time and education happens in a lot of different ways. Often the best moments that happen are where you—not to go too Oprah on you—get those light bulb moments.

What I think is so cool about this is you experience the educational part of this as opposed to someone just telling you, this is the way it is. So it really stays with you. Just like you've absorbed a stereotype gradually through the years, that view gets slowly busted through this experience of seeing a person in a way you've never thought about before."

It's a well held belief that if there is a strong emotional connection to a lesson, the experience is written more firmly in our minds. "Some of the books that we get, talk about significant challenges they've had in their lives, very emotional stories, so we like to be careful of that and make sure that we do our debriefing after each borrowing session

to make sure everyone is doing okay," Aikins says. "We also like to make sure that our borrowers are reminded that our books are human beings. Each one is allowed to say, 'That's getting a little personal.' Our books have their boundaries set about what they want to talk about. Last year we had a man with HIV and there were certain parts of his story he didn't want to talk about, so he was prepared with an answer for when someone asked him about something that was off limits. But, you still have to be enough of an open book that people will get what they are looking for." Props to how open minded Aikins and the TPL are, because when I commended them on being brave about a possibly controversial subject, she replied, "We didn't even think about that, this is Toronto, after all."

On the wish list is to eventually make available a permanent collection that can be borrowed throughout the year. "We haven't incorporated human books into our regular collection, yet. So you can't come in any time and take one out. That doesn't mean though, that we may not have a permanent collection in the future."

I love books, so becoming one is really a dream come true. The Fords and their campaign to prune the city of its "lieberries" is a crime. As it stands, the Toronto Public Library is scrambling to cut their budget by 10%. They are currently trying to reach that goal by finding efficiencies that don't impact services, so that they don't have to look at reducing hours or closing branches. "In the meantime, we are continuing to provide excellent services in 98 branches," Aikins states proudly. So what are you waiting for? Get a library card back in your wallet and come and borrow me, or one of my fellow books—we'd love to share our stories with you.

Jeff Harrison has been Editor-in-Chief of Pink Play Mags since its rebranding and fresh launch in the summer of 2007. A Toronto based freelance writer and editor by trade, he has been avidly pursuing the profession of the pen for fourteen years, with his work being published locally in *Xtra!*, *Eye Weekly* and *fab magazine*, electronically on gayguidetoronto.com and internationally in *Instinct* magazine. He is currently neck deep in vampires writing his first novel..



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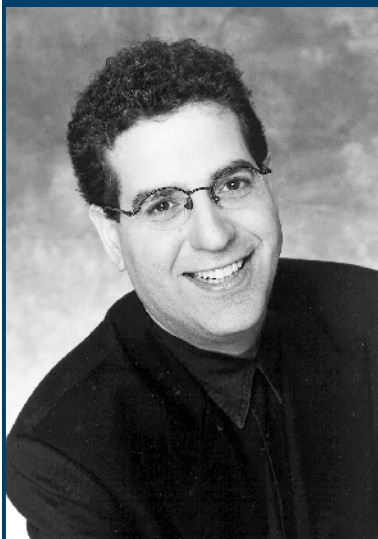
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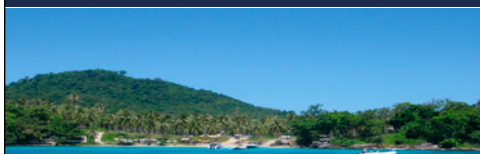


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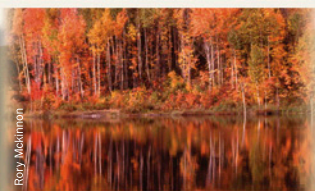
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Touring Our Vast Queer Past

by Bryen Dunn

I typically associate travelling with an educational experience. Whether it's exploring an area of my own city, or traipsing around some faraway land, I always return having discovered something new. I typically prefer the more self-guided approach, doing research, grabbing a map and seeing what may follow. However, there are times when a guided tour might be a better idea. There are plenty of general historical walks to be found, but what about history with a queer slant? I decided to delve in and discover the pink past of a few cities around the world.

Beginning with my home base of Toronto, I met up with Mathew MacLean to go on one of his new Toronto Queer Walking Tours. We start conveniently outside of the Wellesley Street subway station, where he's waiting with his clipboard in hand and sporting his tour logo t-shirt. From there we begin our 90-minute stroll through Toronto's gay history. Starting at the Glad Day Bookstore, we then pass the Gay and Lesbian Archives, the 519 Community Centre, go down Church Street, and over to Mutual Street, the site of the infamous bathhouse raids of the 1980s. MacLean just started his tours at the beginning of this summer, so he's as eager to listen as he is to speak. While still in development, he's open to personalizing individual tours based on specific interests. MacLean was most enthusiastic and knowledgeable about Toronto's bathhouse raids, Canada's equivalent of the Stonewall riots in the United States.





Stonewall is an obvious reference point for anyone taking a queer history tour in New York City. Townhouse Tours is run by Harry Matthews, who claims his walkabouts are the story of his life. "A lot of my material comes from personal experience. I've lived in

the city for 40 years, read widely on its history, and taken scores of tours. I've turned my fascination with the city into a business," he boasts. He offers three different itineraries, covering the West Village, East Village, and Brooklyn Heights. Stops include Stonewall, as well as sites associated with Gore Vidal, Djuna Barnes, Edward Albee, Lorraine Hansbury and Harvey Fierstein.

There's always a great interest in Stonewall and

related events. "When the State Liquor Authority refused to grant licenses to openly gay businesses, the bars were run by the mob. Gay people were in effect members of a special club, with our own bars, restaurants, and social occasions. Fifty years ago, we felt like we were part of a secret society. Today we can get married by the Mayor," chuckles Matthews.

Seth Kamil, of Big Onion Walking Tours, offers 'Before Stonewall', which looks at the many facets of lesbian and gay history pre-1968 Stonewall, by tracing the development of Greenwich Village by the bohemian writers and artists from the 1920s to the 1950s. Stops include The Stonewall Inn, The Duplex, and various sites associated with Bayard Rustin, Willa Cather, Eleanor Roosevelt, and Audre Lorde.

New Orleans is also well known as a gay-friendly party destination, but how did it garner this notoriety? Launched late last year, the Gay History Trail is a self-guided walking tour that was added to the Navigaytour guide book. This is a city of legends and locals, so the best way to discover things is by walking and talking. Highlights include Tennessee Williams' and Truman Capote's former homes, the Hotel Monteleone Carousel bar where both writers were known to frequent, Cafe Lafitte in Exile (oldest gay bar in the US), along with other memorable buildings, parks, and landmarks. This is a go at your own pace tour that can be done in a couple hours,



over the course of a day, or several days. In addition to the printed guides, the Navigaytour guide is also available as an online flipbook and mobile application.

The Gay Key West Trolley Tour gives a queer angle to the typical tourist sight-seeing. Hop on the rainbow-decorated trolley any Saturday morning, and spend 75 minutes discovering the rich gay and lesbian history of this southern most city in mainland United States. Since the early 1940s, Key West has been a haven for gay residents. Operated by the Key West Business Guild, it's actually the only gay and lesbian trolley tour in the United States. "We were concerned that Key West's rich gay history was being lost, so we felt it was important to do something that would keep that piece of our history alive," says Director, Steve Smith. Guests will also be brought up to the present to find out what's hot and happening.

The tour covers everything from Mallory Square to the AIDS Memorial, the Hemingway House to Tennessee Williams' home. Visit the art gallery once owned by Richard Heyman (the city's first gay mayor), hear stories about Broadway legend Jerry Herman and literary great Elizabeth Bishop, as well as gain insight on playwright James Kirkwood, fashion designer Calvin Klein, and travel entrepreneur Hanns Ebensten. The tours also include a gay twist on historic Key West sites like the original Pan Am Ticket office, which is now a restaurant once owned by actress Kelly McGillis, who recently married her longtime girlfriend whom she met in Key West.

Over on the west coast there's obviously well-known San Francisco, which many have considered the queer capital of the United States. The LGBT Historical Society and the new LGBT History Museum don't currently offer any guided tours, but they do offer a map that was developed as a guide to the queer historic spots of the famed Castro District. The Museum opened at the beginning of 2011 and is the first LGBT history museum in the United States, displaying artifacts and archives that reflect fascinating stories spanning nearly a century. The debut exhibition, 'Our Vast Queer Past: Celebrating San Francisco's LGBT History', continues in the main gallery until the end of the year. Several rotating exhibitions are planned, as well as exclusive online exhibitions.

For those seeking a more personal guided experience, Cruisin' the Castro Walking Tours has been around since 1989. "I've professionally escorted tour groups around the world and lived in the Castro neighborhood, so this is both a personal and professional interest to me," owner Kathy Amendola explains. Her Historical Tour and the Harvey Milk Tour are both regularly offered throughout the week.



The Historical Tour is about two-and-a-half hours and discovers places such as Harvey Milk Plaza, Pink Triangle Memorial Park, the original site of AIDS Quilt Names Project, the Hope for World Cure Mural, Twin Peaks Tavern and Castro Theatre. The Harvey Milk Tour is offered Wednesday only, and is specifically focused on the life and times of the slain gay and civil rights leader.

Further north up the coast in Seattle, Michael Brown offers guided tours that he sees many younger locals taking to find out more about the past of their own city. They run about 90 minutes encompassing the old red-light district of Seattle, known as Pioneer Square. Brown points out that from the 1930s through to the 1970s, Pioneer Square was the place of "vice" in the city, which included gay bars. The itinerary covers a wide variety of sites, including bars, taverns, bathhouses, meeting places, restaurants and a public park. Of the over 200 defining moments in Seattle's LGBT history, some topics discussed include the increasing visibility of queers in Seattle *before* Stonewall, how gay bar owners helped to bring down a corrupt police payoff system, victories for gay rights and how women faced both homophobia and patriarchy in the city.

Brown's colleague Larry Knopp also adds, "A variety of political and social organizations are also discussed, all of which are important, and many if not most of which came together in 1978 to defeat the anti-gay Initiative 13. In my opinion, 1978 and the Initiative 13 campaign are absolutely critical moments in Seattle's LGBT history. Seattle was the first city in the country to overwhelmingly defeat an anti-gay initiative at the ballot box. Unfortunately it was overshadowed by the narrower defeat of the statewide anti-gay Briggs Initiative in California on the same day."

For those leaving the continent, there's no gayer destination than progressive Holland. Not only was it the first nation to legalize same-sex marriage in 2001, they also have one of the gay-friendliest cities, Amsterdam. Arianne van der Ven gave her first tour



tour used to operate three times a week, but now she only does it upon request, typically for a minimum of six individuals who have a special interest in gay history.

Finally, Berlin has started a new tour this year following the footsteps of queer literary legend Christopher Isherwood. This circular one-hour tour visits the neighbourhoods Isherwood lived in during his time in Berlin, and where he wrote his famous *Berlin Stories*. The walk includes readings, and takes in the sites he wrote about and the cafes, bars and clubs he frequented upon his arrival in 1929. There's also mention of the current gay district, Schoppenstube, the oldest gay bar in Berlin, and other queer historical anecdotes. The same company also has a tour called Lilac Nights, discovering the vibrant lesbian social scene of the late 1920s.

Although so much has changed in such a short span, even since the new millennium, it's important to remember the past and reflect on those queers that have paved the path to where we are today. It seems this thirst for queer history is being met by entrepreneurs willing to deliver. There have always been, and will always be struggles to be had, along with victories to be celebrated. Today will soon be documented in future historical tours, so my suggestion is to travel in the present while discovering the past. Happy trails!

Bryen Dunn is a freelance journalist based in Toronto with a focus on tourism, lifestyle, entertainment and community issues. He has written several travel articles and has an extensive portfolio of celebrity interviews with musicians, actors and other public personalities. He's willing to take on any assignments of interest, attend parties with free booze, listen to rants, and travel the world in search of the great unknown. He's eager to discover the new, remember the past, and look into the future.

of the city back in 1994. It follows the tale of a 1663 gay couple from the church they first cruised at, the bridge they first had sex under, onto prison and city hall, and finally their execution. She quotes the Napoleonic Code in 1804 as a defining moment in Dutch history. "This was the first law that was explicitly about equality between people, and the first that did not criminalize homosexuals per se, as there was no mention of homosexuality in this law and hence no explicit discrimination," she affirms. The

Navigaytour (www.navigaytour.com) also produces guides for Philadelphia, Washington, Los Angeles, San Diego, Chicago and Pittsburgh, and within the last two years a Gay Historical Trail has been added to both Philadelphia and Chicago. Washington will be coming in the following year. People can also register on the website to post reviews, photos, videos and blog posts.

Toronto: www.torontoqueerwalkingtours.com; www.clga.ca

New York: www.townhousetours.com; www.bigonion.com

New Orleans: www.neworleansonline.com/neworleans/glb/; www.neworleansgaytravel.com/

Key West: www.keywestbusinessguild.org; www.gaykeywestfl.com

San Francisco: www.glbthistory.org; www.cruisinthecastro.com

Seattle: www.home.earthlink.net/~ruthpett/lgbthistorynw/

Amsterdam: ariannevandervan@cs.com

Berlin: www.10777tours.com; www.schwulesmuseum.de

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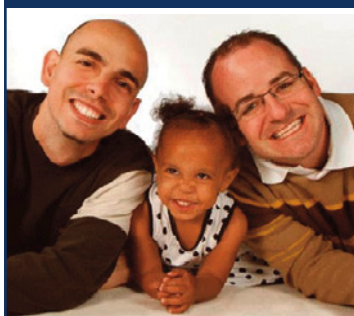
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Our Opinion...



Steven Bereznai: When I was a nerdy grade schooler (as opposed to a nerdy adult who's picked up a couple of social skills along the way) I was all about book smarts. Books I understood, and could master, and enjoy in the quiet and controlled privacy of my mind. But as I got older, I found books were preparing me less and less for the reality of the big wide world.

Melissa Benner: On the contrary, I've found books have prepared me well for the real world. How would I have survived fifteen without reading *Sweet Valley High*? I'm inclined to agree that school doesn't always mean a pass in the game of life. What academia does provide, however, is a foundation for thinking. If life is all about boinking and bar-hopping, books don't matter. Get into the workplace and wider social issues, and that changes. There's a reason people fought for public education: those in power wield the pens.

SB: Well, I was a huge fan of *Are You There God, It's Me Margaret*, which my classmates informed me was a girl's book. That definitely taught me something about keeping certain things hidden. And when it came time to join the swim team I will forever be grateful to *Swim 30 Laps in 30 Days*. However, these were books I picked up outside of the classroom, especially the latter, to tackle a specific challenge.

So yes, school taught me how to learn, but it was non-scholastic books that taught me how to teach myself.

MB: So we agree that school allows for that important prepping of the mind! However, while self-taught is a great byproduct, it will never negate the magical elixir of a good group of people and some guidance. Students have found my erotica workshops quite handy. And even the "disciplined halls of academia" now offer non-traditional. You can take "The Phallus" at Occidental, "Queer Musicology" at UCLA, Floral Design at Sheridan, Bellydancing at George Brown, and "Thanatology (Death Studies): A Practical Approach" at Centennial. Sign me up!

SB: Melissa, where do I sign up for this erotica workshop??? I do go for continuing education opportunities (especially ones like that), and I am glad to have had the schooling that I've had, but I have learned so much more from being out there "doing it." Interpret that as you will. I have been a working journalist for more than 10 years now, with three books out, and no journalism degree. The courses I have taken in writing have paled compared to the real world experience of the CBC, amazing mentors at local Toronto magazines, and having great book editors.

and we have one!

by Steven Bereznai and Melissa Benner

This issue's topic: *Who is the Better Educator? The Wonderful Chaos of Life, or the Disciplined Halls of Academia?*

MB: Just "doing it" has worked out well for you, Mr. Bereznai. Those are some impressive laurels, even though you never actually got a B.J. I can relate: I didn't attend teachers college, yet work as an educator, teaching diverse subjects to all ages. My work has helped me see that education can be flexible, multi-mediated, participatory, and creative. Kinda like the best parts of life! So, how about we trade one of your real-world books for one of my disciplined erotica workshops? Then we can call it even, Steven.

SB: That is a total deal! And I should be careful with dissing the education system too much. My Mom is a retired teacher, which brings up a story that is both for and against my argument. My grade two teacher explained to my Mom back in the day that the reason I couldn't read was because I was "off in Never, Never Land." Mom was furious (in my teacher's defence she was totally right. I still like to spend time with Peter and the gang). Anyway, as a teacher on leave my Mom took it upon herself to teach me to read. Bear in mind I was in French Immersion, and my Mom didn't even read French, but she still taught me to. So again the education system did not serve me as well as it should have, but that one amazing teacher--my Mom--made a huge difference, and put me ahead of my class.

MB: Glad you got a flying pass, despite some obstacles. Admittedly, I had my own run-ins with the school system. It started with concealing novels in my math textbooks in grade 2 and ended with drinking shots before math class in grade ten. (Guess who almost failed math?) All of this I mostly *hid* from my Mother. My stay-in-school optimism emerged in later years, and has been going strong since, accompanied by a healthy dose of life experience. In sum, it seems learning happens in multiple ways: whether through novels (I loved Judy Blume too), "The Phallus" course, DIYing, or drinking before algebra lessons.

SB: So that's what's been missing from my formal education. Shots!

Melissa Benner is an educator, writer and community organizer living in Toronto. She may not be a mathematician, but she wears her bookworm status with pride.

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: MARC ELLIS

by Sherry Hucklebridge

Music has long been a cultural keystone in our society. Whether you listen to the radio on the way to work, play your iPod at the gym, or take in live concerts, chances are you have a place in your life for the muse, Euterpe.

However, no one has a more intimate relationship with the medium of sound and silence than musicians and composers. Toronto composer Marc Ellis' life long affair with music began in childhood. "I was fortunate enough to take private piano lessons from the second grade and I pursued that through all of elementary and high school. I took to it like a fish in water," he recalls.

After studying at York University, where he majored in music composition, Ellis began his career as a music teacher. His own musical education was conducted in the Suzuki method, which focuses on learning through listening. "Music is auditory," he discloses about why he uses the approach when teaching his own students, "and I think you need to understand music from an audible perspective first. If students can hear the music and understand it, then when they go home and practice on their own, they are able to correct themselves because they know how the piece should sound." Ellis believes that "a good teacher with a good education and

passion, teaches kids that if you pursue this, and you take the time to practice diligently, you are going to acquire an amazing skill set that you will be able to enjoy for the rest of your life.”

On top of teaching, Ellis has already released several independent albums, which can be found on Myspace, which showcase his intense, emotional style. “I believe that music should trigger your heart and inspire you. I’ve always been drawn to music that makes me feel something or lets me transcend from one state of being into another. I like to take the listener on a journey,” he explains. In the future, Ellis hopes to go on tour to share his music with a wider audience. For now, he is focused on writing music and preparing to audition for *Canada’s Got Talent* in September.

Ellis draws inspiration from a diverse number of sources, ranging from the works of Rachmaninoff, Chopin, and Beethoven, to movies, television, and even conversations. Contemporary music has also influenced him, as he reveals himself a huge fan of a Jan Arden. “I love her stage presence. She is able to make you laugh out loud with her personal stories, but as soon as she hits the guitar and starts singing, you’re taken to another perspective where you have this heart wrenching, emotional, beautiful music. I’ve always found that juxtaposition of laughing to almost tearing up a really inspiring artistic attribute to have.”

When composing music, Ellis focuses on providing the listener with a unique emotional experience. He takes a similar approach to writing music. He remarks that, “You need to move out of yourself and put yourself into a different position and imagine what kind of emotions you would be feeling there. Then you can take that emotion and put it into musical content that somebody else can relate to. To a certain extent, it is like being an author: you put yourself in the position of a character. I often find myself writing a lot of music that I don’t have a personal experience linked to, but I put myself

in a creative position, with eyes that can see into a different mindset,” he says. It is a sensation he tries to communicate to listeners with his compositions.

Producer David Foster has also been a big source of inspiration for Ellis. “He was in town and he was actually conducting an interview,” Ellis relates of his meeting with the Grammy award winner. “I asked him what words of wisdom he had for someone hoping to pursue a career in music. He asked if I was a pianist, and invited me up on stage with him to play one of my compositions. I was floored. So I did and at the end he said that he loved the piece and that he wished he could steal the idea. It was a pretty amazing experience to have

David Foster, who is friends with *everybody* in the industry, say that he wanted to steal your idea.” Foster also gave Ellis a piece of advice which he relies on to this day: “Keep it simple.”

Ellis’ own advice for aspiring musicians is: “Be realistic; it’s a tough industry. Network with as many people as you possibly can, because it’s not something you are going to be able to do on your own. You need to believe in yourself because there is going to be a lot of people that are going to try and knock you down. Practice hard and learn how to play as many different genres as you can. The great thing about today’s modern society is that, with iTunes and Myspace, there are so many platforms to get your music out there, but you also have to perform and be heard to get those people to check you out and get a buzz going. Just work at it every day and don’t let fears and insecurities hold you back from what you innately can achieve. Just go for it!”

To learn more about Marc Ellis and listen to his compositions, visit: www.myspace.com/marcellis123.

Sherry Hucklebridge is currently a student at the University of Toronto and is the new Editor-in-Chief of Durham’s *The Local Biz Magazine*.

Photography by Deryk Angstenberger





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Urban Spaces



A large percentage Toronto's downtown population, like most major cities, lives in some sort of small space or another. Condos, lofts, apartments and town homes cover our skyline from Lakeshore to Forest Hill and beyond. Residential towers and low rise buildings serve one purpose: to fit as many of us into the city as possible. Your needs, like comfort and convenience, well that's left up to you.

Design 101

by Manny Machado

For the past several years I've excelled at informing and educating city dwellers on how to get the most out of their urban spaces. So, let me share with you seven basic steps every homeowner should know before you buy, in hopes that you will see the value in your own homes and make educated decisions on how you choose to live in your personal environment.

You're Number One

You are the key element in your design. Before you buy a single piece of furniture or look at a colour sample, ask yourself these important questions: How do I want to live in my space? What do I like to spend my time doing? When, and in what room, do I like to spend most of my time at home? These answers are uniquely yours and will give you a clue as to what type of environment you want to create for yourself. Narrowing down your choices to specifically zero in on your personal needs can save you not only time, but hundreds of dollars. Seeing your answers clearly will also help you prioritize your desires, allowing you to effectively generate a budget that not only makes sense to you, but also has the greatest value to your life.

Budget

According to StatCan analysis, you should be spending less than 30% of your annual income on your home. Making a realistic budget will keep you clear of any pitfalls when making furnishing and decorative selections. Allocate enough of your budget to get your wish list completed in an appropriate amount of time, ensuring that your main living requirements are met. When formulating your budget, take into consideration that you will need to keep a reserve fund of approximately 10% of your total budget to cover any unexpected costs. I assure you, setting this money aside will not only save your project, but also save your sanity when you need it the most.

Layout

Measure every square inch of your home—that includes all available floor space, the height of your walls, bulkheads, windows, closets, hallways, columns, stairs and any other dimension that is unique to your home. In order to formulate an effective layout, you need to know the skeletal structure of your space. The sales floor plan given to you by the building developer is not enough to make an accurate assessment. If you are purchasing a pre-constructed home, request the architectural plan of your unit whenever possible in order to get the builder's true measurements.

You can make your own floor plan or use the services of a Designer or Decorator to generate a dimensionally correct layout. If you are on a tight budget and design services are not an option, the cost for producing a layout is minimal and it will save you time and money.



Light Sources and Fixtures

Lighting is very important, especially in small spaces. You need to understand where your light is coming from. What direction do you face and do you have natural daylight or is it mainly artificial? Do you have too much daylight, as most glass towers do, and thus require appropriate blinds and shades that not only filter sunlight, but also reduce heat? These decisions can have a huge impact on your monthly hydro bill. It's important to find out if blinds are standard in your unit and if so, what types are installed.

Request a lighting and electrical plan when you purchase, as you'll want to know what fixtures are standard and where they are installed. This is where your own layout is important; perhaps you've decided to allocate the dining area to a different spot than that of the builder's floor plan. Moving electrical boxes post construction is very costly and when dealing with exposed concrete ceilings, it can not only be messy, but sometimes impossible. Keep in mind, that some areas have no overhead fixtures in their specifications.

Kitchens, Bathrooms and Storage

In most cases, these areas are a fixed element in a floor plan, allowing for some flexibility in regards to style or finish, but none to functionality. The pre-installed cabinetry in your utility rooms has been selected for a general downtown demographic, so be prepared that it may need to be tweaked for you. Chefs, cooks and foodies, may need some alterations or upgrades to their



food preparation and storage areas. Some great kitchen add-ons like, rolling racks, dividers and pantry systems can be found locally in retail hardware stores and trade suppliers like Richlieu Hardware (www.richelieu.com).

The experts all agree that kitchens and bathrooms sell homes; I'd like to add that closets also close the deal. Having a properly designed storage solution isn't just something the ladies dream of. I can attest that many men also like to have their wardrobe properly in place. You've got a choice of closet suppliers that range from affordable to high end. Based on your dream list and budget you should be able find one that is suited for you. I recommend Kwikkloset (www.kwikkloset.com) for an efficient and reasonable solution.

Furnishings and Finishes

Finally the step everyone wants to get to: choosing furniture and colours. You'll do yourself a disservice if you skipped steps 1 to 5, as it'll make your choices here much easier once you have a concept of how much you can afford and what you need. For example, once you have an organizational plan for your closet, you may not need a dresser in your bedroom, freeing your available floor space for a reading or lounge area.

I've mentioned upgrades for cooks, but perhaps you're a social host. How do you entertain large groups in a small setting? Modular and multipurpose furniture will allow you the freedom of movement and create environments that are tailored to your needs. Sectionals, ottomans, benches, sofas, and chairs are just some of the options that can create unique space saving surroundings. My own collection of wall beds has been designed for people who want to have a dual purpose sleeping and living area, without sacrificing style, comfort or budget. The Soho model with sectional and the Plateau 3-seater sofa option offer 72 style configurations and have key features like storage, lighting and functionality integrated within their basic design. For more information you can visit my website www.mannymachado.com and click on wall beds.

Choosing a paint colour is a much easier process once

you are familiar with the amount and type of light that exists in your home. The type of bulbs your fixtures use will affect your choices; therefore, I suggest putting a swatch of your preferred hue on your walls before you paint. Pick a variety of spots, areas that get lots of light and those that get less, to get a better sense of the colour output. Cooler hues (slate, blue, metallic grey, crisp white, grass green) visually recede, making a space appear more spacious, while warmer colours (beige, brown, stone grey, cream) advance, creating a cozier atmosphere.

Accents and Accessories

A no fail way of selecting your accent colours is consulting a colour wheel and picking the complimentary hue of your primary paint selection. To inject your space with a little bit of interest, you can use finishing touches like throw pillows, rugs, art and window dressings to bring your style to life.

Texture and pattern in the form of sculptural pieces, organic shapes and branches are a favourite trend that re-occur year after year. Spending a minimal amount on these pieces will allow you to change the look as your style evolves. Hanging framed photographs in an intentional design is an inspiring way for you to feel connected to your home, because as I stated in step one, you are the key to making your dream home a reality.

Compile all your information into one convenient carryall that includes your priorities and wish list, along with your budget, floor plan and furniture layout. Take print outs and photographs of the items you are looking for, with all accurate dimensions in order to be 100% sure they will fit in your space when you find them. Keep an open mind when shopping and spend your money wisely. The basic design formula to remember is form follows function. Take the time to understand your space and you're guaranteed to have a home you'll enjoy for years.

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 revolutionize your interiors, visit him at www.mannymachado.com.

Photography by Manny Machado



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In Tune

A woman with long, wavy hair is sitting cross-legged on a light-colored surface. She is holding an acoustic guitar vertically, with her left hand on the neck and her right hand near the body. She is looking directly at the camera with a neutral expression. The background is a solid, light color.

Fiction by Liz Bugg

I held her close against me and increased the tension on her G-string with my left hand. At the same time I slipped the index finger of my right hand under its taut surface and plucked it just enough to excite a vibration that resonated through her shapely body and into the depths of mine.

The door burst open, and a red-faced young man in a business suit scoured the room with panic-stricken eyes. They came to rest on me. "Am I late?" he gasped.

I took a deep breath on his behalf before answering. "If you're here for the guitar class, no. In fact, you're early." I leaned my beloved Takamine against the piano, before crossing the music room to greet my first student of the new term. "I'm Sam Steadman, the teacher." I extended my hand.

My quiet time had evaporated with his arrival, so I wedged open the door and made myself ready for the onslaught of aspiring musicians. The first night of adult classes at the community college was always like a zoo, where the keeper had accidentally left open all the cages. I expected that over the course of the evening, people would be wandering in, looking for their classes in belly dancing or flower arranging.

By the time I'd spread out the music on the desk and put my name and some instructions on the blackboard, my little classroom was full. Before me sat fifteen men of varying ages. Some were dressed in suits, some in jeans. One guy even wore a kilt. The guitars they held were just as diverse. They ranged from second-hand store relics to shiny new acoustics. The term was shaping up to be its usual uneventful self.

If any of the men were surprised at being presented with a female guitar teacher, they didn't show it. Maybe my tight jeans and the fire tattoo that runs the length of my right forearm did something to legitimize me in their eyes. Who knows, as long as my mystique, or credibility, or whatever you want to call it remained intact.

I'd just finished explaining to them how to tune the guitar, and I was circulating in a teacherly fashion, when something in the still-open doorway caught my eye. I did a double take, and then had to pick up my jaw from the shoulder of the student I was assisting. When I blinked, the vision didn't

disappear, but I still couldn't believe what I was seeing.

The room grew silent, as all the men joined me in reverential awe, at least that's what I thought they must have been feeling. Maybe they were just stunned by my reaction. Whatever their excuses were, *my* only excuse was lust, and I was speechless because of it. Although my tongue had ceased to function, my sweat glands had gone into overdrive, and my heart was trying to explode through my white cotton T-shirt.

I gave myself an internal slap on the face, and managed to weave my way through the bodies and music stands toward the latecomer. The closer I got, the more stunning she appeared to be. Dark waves framed a Snow White face and fell to her shoulders. Her body was round

"When I blinked, the vision didn't disappear, but I still couldn't believe what I was seeing."

in all the right places, but it looked as if she took it for granted. She exposed nothing but her shape underneath a high-necked blouse and peasant skirt. She wasn't very old; I'd put her at about twenty-one.

"Hi." I finally found my voice. "Come on in. I'll get you a chair."

I knew she was there for my class, because she was clutching a brand new guitar case.

I grabbed a chair from behind the teacher's desk, the only padded seat in the room, and found a spare music stand in the corner. I placed both of them at the front of the class. If she had any objection to sitting there, she would have to arrive earlier in future.

I checked the attendance sheet, but couldn't find a name that looked as if it might be hers. When I glanced up, she had the yellow registration sheet clasped between her lightly lacquered fingertips, and offered it to me with a knock-your-pants-off smile. The term was certainly looking up, and I hadn't even managed to get everyone in tune yet.

I scrawled her name and phone number on the bottom of the class list—Miranda—a beautiful name for a beautiful lady. As I handed the sheet back to

her, she gazed up at me through her thick lashes, and my pounding heart fell into my crotch.

"Take out your guitar, and I'll be back to help you in a minute," I croaked.

She did as I instructed.

I made my way around the room, adjusting the tuning on the men's guitars and demonstrating some fingering exercises, but all the while I kept an eye on Miranda. I was putting off the inevitable. Eventually I would have to go and help her, but what would be helpful to me, was if I regained control of myself first. The last thing I wanted to do was look foolish in front of a brand new class over some woman who was probably straight anyway.

I could see that she was just sitting there waiting for me. Everyone else was tuned up and making a cacophony of dissonant twangs, as they followed my instructions with diligence.

I filled my lungs with air, heavy with musky concentration. I adjusted the buckle on my belt, and I approached my executioner.

"Just to speed things up I'll tune it for you and demonstrate how it's done at the same time." Wow, I'd actually managed to complete a coherent sentence. Maybe it wouldn't be so bad after all.

I knelt in front of her. She pushed her guitar toward me, practically taking out my eye with one of the tuning pegs.

"Oh, sorry," she said.

I was back to square one, undone by her voice this time. I would have been able to function better if she'd knocked my whole head off with her miscalculated movement. I had to keep control, keep her from talking.

Before I could begin my explanation of how to proceed with the tuning, however, she continued. "I'm such a klutz. I'm probably not going to be very good at this. Playing the guitar I mean. But it's something I've always wanted to do." She smiled that smile again.

"Well, you've come to the right place." Oh my

God, did I actually say that? Yes I did, and what's worse, it sounded as if I were flirting with her. I had to get out of this, and fast.

Once again she cut off my instructions. "Yes I have, haven't I?" Her voice had dropped about an octave, and this time there was no mistaking what was going through her mind.

My goal now was to somehow get through the evening. It was bad enough, when I only had to worry about myself. Now there was no telling what *she* might do.

I hustled through my demonstration and returned the guitar to her enticing lap. I took great care not to make eye contact, so I had no idea whether or not she understood what I was trying to teach her.

For the next hour I did my best to conduct a coherent and productive class. There were the usual problems with thumb positions and pressure on the strings, but fortunately all my students were

raw beginners, and they knew it—no three chord prima donnas. Just as well, since I was a zombie. No matter where I was in the room, or what I was doing, my mind and certain other parts of my body were completely focused on Miranda.

Although I was still doing my best to avoid eye contact, she took every opportunity to smile at me and flutter her eyelashes. Either she really was a klutz, or she was doing it on purpose, I didn't know, but whichever it was, I finally had to do something about the way she was strangling her guitar.

First I gave her verbal suggestions, but then she held it like a time bomb. Her positioning improved only slightly, when I showed her how to hold it, but I knew she wouldn't be able to play effectively for any period of time. There was only one thing left to try, and I had the distinct feeling that she was aware of this. I went around behind her chair, leaned over and placed my arms and hands over hers, forcing them into the correct position.

Magnolia scent, and our skin in contact. My forearm was not the only part of my body that was

"Her voice had dropped about an octave, and this time there was no mistaking what was going through her mind."

in flames.

She turned her head toward me so that her lips almost brushed my ear, and she whispered, "You're such a good teacher. I know I'm going to learn a lot from you."

I froze. Not daring to look, I tightened my hand over hers.

I somehow made it through the final half hour of the class, wanting it to be over and not wanting it to be over. What to do. I had never been in this position before. She was my student, but this wasn't like a real school situation, and we were both adults. I knew what I wanted to do; I wanted to ask her out for a drink, and then take her home and screw her senseless.

As it turned out, I didn't have to make a decision.

The class ended. People packed up and left, but when I turned around from cleaning off the blackboard, she was still sitting there, holding her guitar in the perfect position, smiling the biggest come-on I'd ever seen.

"I could use some more attention, if you have the time," she purred.

I locked the classroom door. "There are some techniques you may find interesting." I levelled my tone to let her know I intended to be in control. "Playing an instrument involves the whole body." Our eyes locked, as I moved toward her. "Give me your guitar. You won't be needing it."

She obeyed me without question. After all, I was the teacher. I then took her hand and pulled her to her feet. I was tempted to kiss her, but I was enjoying the anticipation too much. So was she. I could feel her pulse through the palm of her hand, and it was racing just like mine.

I led her to an instrument room connected to the classroom.

"It's dark."

"I know the way."

Once we were both over the threshold, I closed the door. The only light seeped under it, but I could smell her location—magnolia now mixed with her own scent. It excited me to know she was only inches away, waiting for me to make beautiful music with her. My mind laughed at my corny cliché.

Having more important things to do, I didn't spend long musing. I found her shoulders easily in the darkness, and pushed her back against the closest wall. I let my hands explore her face, before I leaned in for the first kiss. The wait had been worthwhile. Her lips parted, inviting my tongue to dance with hers.

I continued to kiss her, sometimes deeply, sometimes delicately, or disengaging from her mouth altogether, so that I could navigate her face and neck with my soft lips and hard teeth.

My eyes had become accustomed to the darkness and I could see, not just feel, how she had been responding to my bites and licks. Her head was tilted back against the wall, mouth open and eyes rolling, as if she were about to pass out.

I knew she was ready, and I knew I couldn't wait.

Miranda started to speak, urging me on, but I had something else in mind. I swung her body farther back into the crowded chamber. With my next movement I pushed her down onto her back. She was too surprised to object, and soon realized what I had planned for her. She was now lying on top of the set of kettledrums, her body on one, with her legs dangling off the edge, and her head on the other. It may not have been the most comfortable position she'd been in, but I was about to make sure it was the most memorable.

By now she was groaning and calling my name, begging me to put her out of her misery. I was only too happy to oblige, the copper of the drums clanging against each other, until I collapsed exhausted across her damp and quivering body.

I tidied up after Miranda left the music room.

Sandra, the night custodian, was pushing her mop down the polished hallway as I was locking the door. She stopped and leaned on the long handle. "Good first class?" She winked.

"You could say that," I said, and stuffed Miranda's g-string farther into the pocket of my damp jeans.

Liz Bugg is the award-winning author of *Red Rover*, the first book in the Toronto-based Calli Barnow Mystery Series. Insomniac Press will publish the second in the series in the spring of 2012. Liz lives in Toronto, and when not writing, she spends her time teaching and acting. Visit her website: lizbugg.com.



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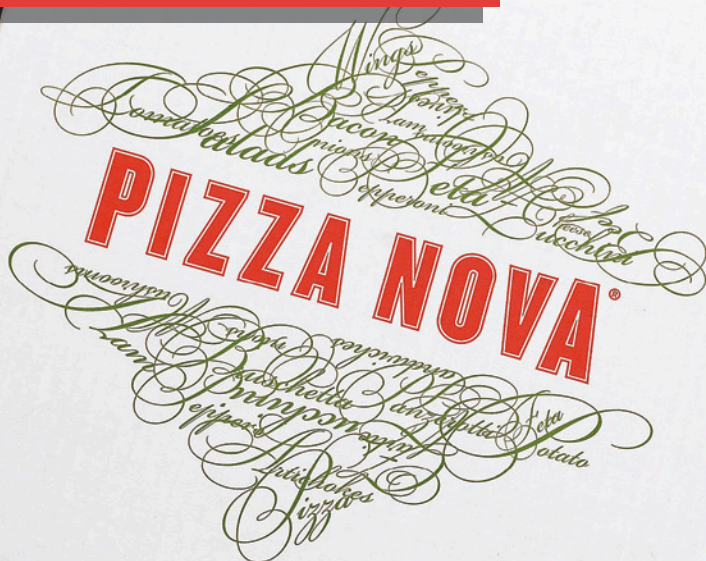
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"I gotta go back, back, back to school again....whoa whoa, I gotta go, back to school ooooo oooooo...again."

by Ricky Boudreau

That song is from *Grease 2* with Michelle Pfeiffer. Not as great as the first movie, but I still loved it. If there were students in my high school that looked like Maxwell Caulfield, then I may never have left. Parents everywhere are cheering as their little devils are all getting ready to head back into the classroom. School is something I took for granted, especially when growing up. It's not until you're older that you realize how important an education is, but also that you can always go back and brush up or learn something new.

With this being the "education" issue, I am going to broaden your horizons and list things here that are a little more geared towards learning something new. Soon we will all be hibernating and I like to think of the fall and winter as the seasons of the year that you can take on different projects than in the summer, like a class of some sort. I certainly don't mind being inside when the weather starts to cool and we are anticipating the first snow.

I have chosen the kinds of things that you tell yourself you'd one day like to do. In a perfect world, I would have time to do them all. I guess I can, it's just going take some time. It's just a matter of picking something and starting

there, as one thing always leads to another.

Some I would still like to do myself, like attend a culinary school; as I don't have that kind of time to commit, I am going to talk about cooking classes. We can all benefit from learning to create some new meals and staple recipes that we end up using again and again. I have always wanted to learn how to speak another language, so I will tell you where you can do that too. I'm also pretty sporty, so what about something that's going to keep you active through the months of hibernation. My ideal is that I endure the next spring thaw and enter next summer with a brand new body...a girl can dream! Let's face it, it takes a lot of self motivation. Not always the easiest thing to do. Why are we so good at talking ourselves *out* of doing things? Well, I am anyway. Maybe I'll take a class to learn to improve my writing...hmmmm, yes, I will direct you to places where you can learn how. One of my fantasies is to learn how to sing, I've always wanted to be able to belt out tunes in the shower a la, Deborah Cox or Whitney. Looks like I've got some good places to start off with and remember, as I said earlier, one thing will lead to another...



1, 2 CHA CHA CHA

Dance has always been a great way to express yourself as well as an amazing workout while having fun at the same time. It has become even more popular with shows like *So You Think You Can Dance*. I do have to say, that Canadian dancers have better technique and are overall more talented than our American counterparts. If you are a beginner, or even at more of an advanced level, check out these following places that will not only have you taping your feet, but really shaking your booty.

Toronto Dance Salsa

www.torontodancesalsa.ca

Prices start at \$117 + HST

3 locations

Empress Walk

5095 Yonge St. 2nd floor – between Finch and

Sheppard

Venice Fitness Club

393 King St. W – at King and Spadina

Eastminster United Church

310 Danforth Ave. – Danforth and Chester

Salsa is the most popular Latin street dance. It has its roots in Cuba and Puerto Rico, and really evolved in New York City in the '60s. Since then, it has grown to become one of the most widely known forms of social dancing today. At Toronto Dance Salsa, Canada's largest dance school with over 5,000 students every year, they specialize in turning "two left feet" into seasoned "Salseros" and "Salseras."

TIP: if you have previous salsa experience, they offer complimentary assessments to determine the appropriate level and lesson plan for you.

Byfield Dance Experience

819 Yonge St. – across from MTV/Masonic Temple

416.917.1169

www.shawnbyfield.com

Shawn Byfield is an amazingly talented dancer. I used to work with him at Canada's Wonderland. He now has his own dance studio and will teach you how to tap dance, at which he is truly incredible. Or, he can school you in some serious swag a la Hip Hop.

TIP: I love this: Shawn offers a monthly pass for \$99 + HST and you can take as many classes as you want to. Such a great deal!

City Dance Corps

489 Queen St. W – 3rd floor

416.260.2356

www.citydancecorps.com

At City Dance Corps they offer a wide variety of classes for all ages. They have professional instructors that can teach you a myriad of moves: tap, breakdance, salsa, hip hop, argentine tango, zumba, house, flexibility, power barre, contemporary, jazz and ballet. They offer 2 weeks of unlimited drop in classes for \$40 for new members.

TIP: A great way to stay fit, bring a friend and get hooked on something good for you.

DO-RE-ME

Art Nefsky's Showoffs

8 Wellesley St. E – Suite 908

\$50 - \$1400 depending on the package

416.781.4044

www.showoffstudio.ca

Art Nefsky has been helping people and performers get over their "stage fright" for years. He specializes in turning wallflowers into confident and extroverted performers. He helps beginner singers, corporate speakers, theatrical professionals and non-performers prepare for a one time spotlight event. Sounds like some great help.

TIP: You can contact Showoffs for a free trial class, which assesses your vocal ability, goals and purpose for seeking training.

Elaine Overholt

Big Voice Studios

863 Broadview Ave. – 2nd floor

\$80 - \$120 / hr

416.466.1816

www.elaineoverholt.com

Talk about a celebrity in her own right, Elaine Overholt has worked with almost everyone. She trained Richard Gere, Catherine Zeta-Jones and Renee Zellweger for the movie Chicago. She has also worked with Ellen DeGeneres,

John Travolta and the casts of many musicals, both here in Toronto and in New York. The instructors that work at her studio can also help you with public speaking as well. Unleash your inner Diva!

TIP: For your first vocal lesson, you are asked to not only be committed, but bring a piece of music to sing, any genre, as well as the sheet music or a CD backing track.

SAUTÉ, FRAPPÉ, FRICASSÉE

The Good Egg

267 Augusta Ave.

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416.593.4663

www.goodegg.ca

The Good Egg offers general interest classes as well as cooking classes. They range in price from \$75 – \$100. Keep a look out for “How to Host a Dinner Party” with *Star* columnist Corey Mintz.

TIP: Their classes are small and sell out quickly, like the *Knife Skills* class, so get the jump on signing up.

Great Cooks

401 Bay St.

Simpson Tower – 8th floor

\$110 + HST per person

416.861.4333

www.greatcooks.ca

Located on the 8th floor of the Bay on Queen Street, this newly renovated space boasts everything you need to learn how to cook. They offer a variety of classes from basics to more advanced. Classes are 3 hours in length and they host about 4 to 5 classes per month depending on demand. The classes take place on weekday evenings and make a great gift idea.

TIP: They specialize in corporate events—what a fantastic team building workshop. They can accommodate a minimum of 10 people and up to approximately 80.



SPORTY SPICE

Toronto School of Circus Arts

#8 – 75 Carl Hall Road – Downsview Park

Starting at \$25 cash for a drop-in trapeze class, up to \$745 + HST depending on package

416.935.0037

www.torontocircus.com

If you've ever had a dream to become a “Flying Wallenda,” here's your chance. The Toronto School of Circus Arts offers classes in trampoline, flying trapeze, aerial arts, acrobatics and Chinese pole.

TIP: Such a unique way to learn something new, have fun and get into shape over the winter months.

SWIMMING

Various locations throughout Toronto

www.toronto.ca/parks/prd/swimming/reg/learn

Google “swimming lessons Toronto”

I know one thing for sure, and that's everyone should know how to swim, and if you don't, why not learn? It's a definite life lesson that could really save yours or someone else's life. For those of you who are scared of the water or have just never learned, I highly recommend swimming lessons. I haven't listed anything here as it really is about you doing some research to see what pools are in your area and what works into your schedule. There are many pools throughout the city so get searching. You will be better prepared for next summer with your new aquatic skills.



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www.hansacanada.com

The Hansa Language Centre is one of the largest and most established language schools in Canada. They offer a huge variety of classes like: French, Portuguese, German, Italian and Spanish to Mandarin, Korean, Russian and Arabic.

TIP: Check out their website for class schedules and prices. Learning another language is another great life skill.

University of Toronto

School of Continuing Studies

St. George Campus

416.978.2400

www.utoronto.ca/language

It's never too late to go back to school and if you've always wanted to go to university, here's your chance. The University of Toronto offers continuing studies in languages, with classes starting at \$395 for eight. They are twice a week and two-and-a-half hours in length, so you can be done with a level in a month.

TIP: It's never too late to teach an old poodle new tricks!

The Humber School for Writers

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\$2,900

416.675.6622 ext. 3448 ask for Antanas Sileika

www.creativeandperformingarts.humber.ca/writers

This unique correspondence program in creative writing offers aspiring writers the rare opportunity to work on

completing a novel, collection of short stories, or volume of poetry. Each writer is paired one-on-one with one of the school's distinguished faculty—all of whom are published writers. The program is 30 weeks and offers intimate feedback via regular and electronic mail and a closed private web lounge. You work at your own pace with the end goal of having a finished collective work by the end of the course. Realize your publishing dream.

TIP: With three separate enrolment times during the year, you can pick an autumn cabin retreat, a winter hibernation of creative fulfillment, or a summer cottage writer's vacation.

Last Tip...

As far as life skills go, if you are female and don't really know how to apply makeup, it's okay. Get yourself to the nearest MAC store and book a lesson with one of the artists. An hour session is \$110 and you will leave knowing how to do a basic application. This will most certainly help you with job interviews, events and dating! You will also receive 20% off in-store products for the following month. Go on, what are you waiting for?

Have fun educating yourselves and I will see you all soon...

~Ricky

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 the gab and discovering great events in the city. With an appreciation for culture, great food and beauty, Ricky spends his time very creatively as a professional make-up artist for MAC Pro cosmetics. He has helped artists like Deborah Cox and Dame Shirley Bassey look gorgeous. Hear of a new hot spot? Email him at inthecity@pinkplaymags.com

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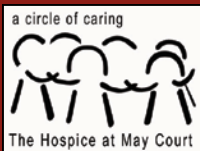
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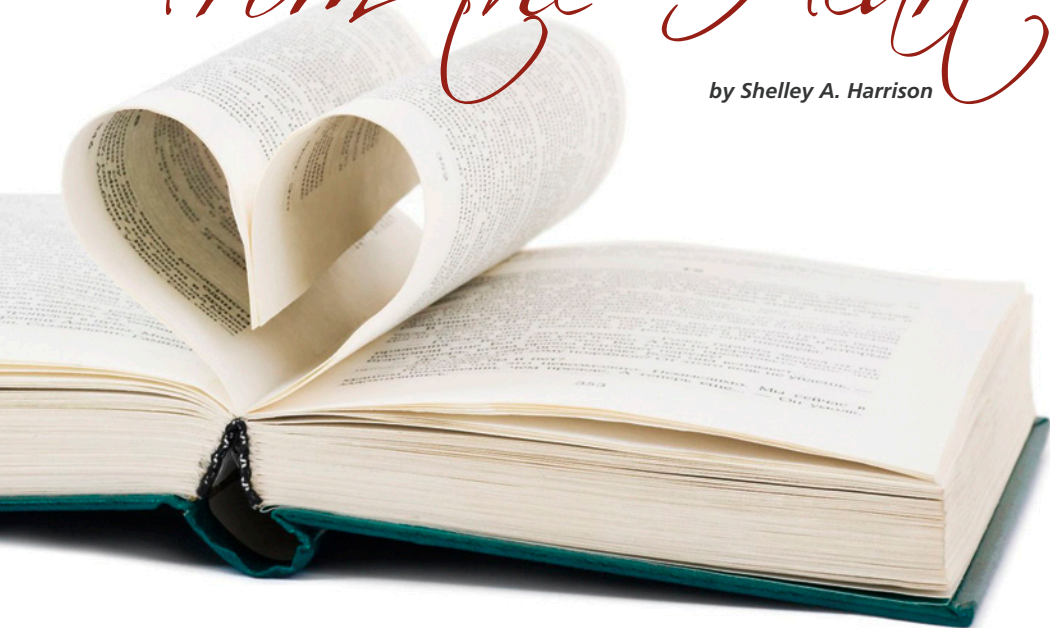
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From the Heart

by Shelley A. Harrison



Education of the Heart

I went on a road trip this July with my brother Jeff, your fabu editor here at PinkPlayMags. We had a 10 hour drive to New Brunswick, so I picked up some educational CD's to pass the time. We always found ourselves pressing pause to discuss the concepts present. I have a passion for medical intuitive Caroline Myss' recordings, and have gotten my brother hooked on her too. As I perused the shelf at a bookstore, about to purchase a 4 CD set by Caroline, another one jumped into my hand. I felt a strong intuitive hit (Caroline would be proud I was following her guidance!) that I needed to buy this particular CD set. It was a daunting 8 discs long, called *Hold Me Tight: 7 Conversations for a Lifetime of Love*—a reading of the book of the same title by author Dr. Sue Johnson. Dr. Sue is a professor and couples therapy expert who developed

a revolutionary way of working with people called Emotionally Focused Therapy (EFT). One smart lady, and a Canadian too.

As we listened to the book, we were taken by her powerful insights about intimate relationships and our deep human need for emotional bonding that flies in the face of our culture's emphasis on independence, individualism, and the resulting isolation many of us live with. In the words of enlightened Indian guru Amma Bhagavan, "Life is relationship." (www.onenessuniversity.org) Our affluent and media soaked culture places such great emphasis on the education of our minds, and the power of knowledge, that what our heart knows, or doesn't know, about how to be in relationship is undervalued.

The heart is the centre of knowledge primary to

our success. Listening to our heart voice is an art that requires intention and practice. For the most part, especially in our educational system, we are taught to make decisions with our mind, evaluating, weighing and sifting. We do not get much encouragement to hear or follow our longings.

In modern psychology, the term Emotional Intelligence, popularized by Daniel Coleman's book of the same title, is used to describe the way our heart voice navigates the way through the emotional-intuitive landscape of our lives. Both how to be in relationship, and how to unfold the guidance for our life's purpose, require the voice of heart to be in the lead, and our rational mind to take a back seat. Ever try working in a career you *decided* was a lucrative choice, but had no passion for? These two basic areas of fulfillment: deep relationship with a partner or other loved ones, and a meaningful way to work in and contribute to our world, are motivated by desire, not logic. I might add a third, often neglected area that nourishes us as spirit infused humans, and requires a heart connection as well: the way we relate to and commune with our own experience of the Divine.

How do our hearts learn? Let me offer my perspective as an energy healer in my observations of energy-consciousness interactions in our auras. We are in constant interchange, or withdrawal from interchange on the energy level. This happens three distinct ways through the aura: 1) harmonic induction, which is how we resonate with one another through the frequencies of consciousness in our fields; 2) bioplasmic streamers, with which we send out emotionally charged energy to touch another's field; and 3) relational cords, which allow us to directly connect energy lines out of our chakra's into another's same chakra.

As we practice sharing ourselves through relating from birth to death (and beyond!) we receive feedback about our attempts to connect, love, and commune. Bad feedback hurts, and wounds us, leaving us with impressions about how unsafe it is to relate. Good feedback enhances both people's energy fields, filling us with good feelings and positive beliefs about our loving. Unfortunately, once wounded, our hurts can remain installed in our energy patterning, pushed into our unconscious. We tend to recreate these same dynamics over and over in an attempt to make them conscious and to heal. This reenactment is the cause of great suffering for

us. This is where an energy healer trained to work with relational cords (visit me at www.doveheart.ca/services_energy_healing_more.html#relational for deeper insight), a great couple therapist like Dr. Sue, or a deep healing relationship with the Divine, can come to the rescue.

Sometimes we manage to work things out through repeated experience, learning and growing, often with the help of great friends who help us talk, evolve, and mirror our behaviors back to us. As we resolve old hurts, we grow in our capacity to both give and receive love. We begin to trust our heart more, and our emotional satisfaction expands as we allow ourselves to be guided by this deep wisdom.

Let me give you a few tips for discerning between the voice of your heart, and the rational voice of the mind. Let's call it homework.

"The language of the Heart is the feeling of being compelled. The language of the mind is the feeling of compulsion. Compulsion is, 'You need to do this or else.' The language of feeling compelled is, 'I don't know why, I just need to do this.' (Grandfather Fire, *Heard Around the Fire*, page 6.)

The mind voice is fear based—it makes decisions based on the fear of loss, or the desire for gain in order to avoid loss. The heart speaks from its deep connection to the flow of life, and has a more intuitive ring to it.

Learning to listen to our heart voice is an art. It requires us to quiet the constant chatter and calculating of the mind. Practices such as meditation, listening to nature, drumming, art, gardening, yoga, exercise, prayer, or other such inward focused activities, help us to access our heart voice. Allowing your smart heart—the centre of your connection to everything, including the deep wisdom in your soul, and the all-knowing capacity of the Divine, to lead the way—is the best educational investment you will ever make.

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@pinkplaymags.com or visit her at www.doveheart.ca.



Autumn Horoscopes

by Micki Lee

ARIES (Mar 21-Apr 19)

October: Reflect and be ready.

November: Don't worry about the task you can't complete.

December: You will be in the mood to retreat.

TAURUS (Apr 20-May 20)

October: Set up a new budget before you spend too much.

November: Dinner with a friend or sibling can restore good feelings and bring rousing support.

December: Too much of anything will be your downfall.

GEMINI (May 21-Jun 20)

October: Sidestep confrontations and avoid competitions.

November: To make it worth your while, you mustn't go over budget.

December: Renovate or simply change your living space.

CANCER (Jun 21-Jul 22)

October: Dinner with a companion restores harmony.

November: Say what's on your mind.

December: The better you feel about who you are, the more you will accomplish.

LEO (Jul 23-Aug 22)

October: Avoid direct confrontations.

November: A proposal may not live up to its promises.

December: Emotional encounters will change your life, allowing you greater freedom to explore.

VIRGO (Aug 23-Sep 22)

October: New friendships will turn into long-lasting relationships.

November: Nurturing friends and a caring partner bring aid.

December: You will discover valuable information if you network.

Libra (Sep 23 - Oct 22)

October: Indulge in your favourite form of escape.

November: Listen carefully and contribute what you can.

December: Love is on the rise.

Scorpio (Oct 23 - Nov 21)

October: Keep tabs on your money and your possessions.

November: Focus on physical activities and getting into shape.

December: The mood shifts to pleasure, play, romance and children.

Sagittarius (Nov 23 - Dec 21)

October: Set up a way to show your skills and promote your talents.

November: Step into the spotlight and show everyone what you have to offer.

December: Look for adventure and you will find it.

Capricorn (Dec 24 - Jan 19)

October: The mood of forgiveness is in the air.

November: You don't have to be the one to make changes.

December: Emotional encounters will change your life.

Aquarius (Jan 20 - Feb 18)

October: Shopping can be a productive.

November: Watch your ankles this month. Ouch!

December: Find time to relax, you are going to need it.

Pisces (Feb 19 - Mar 20)

October: Getting caught up in emotions will affect decisions you make.

November: Dinner with a friend or an evening with a loved one heals a problem.

December: Enhance your sensitivities positively.

Micki Lee is a business woman from Oshawa who uses the stars as a guide for her daily life.

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(Left to right) Umi Shahid, Ziad Ferzli, and Wayne Benoit



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[day]

why compromise...

[night]

when you can have it all.

A composite image showing two different configurations of a wallbed. On the left, labeled '[day]', the wallbed is folded down into a sofa configuration with a light-colored cushion and a red throw pillow. On the right, labeled '[night]', the wallbed is fully extended into a bed configuration with a white sheet and a red headboard. Both configurations are set against a dark wall with a patterned rug and a small table.

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Leanne Iskander

I found that the kids at our school never really had a sense of community, they never really had anywhere to go and there wasn't anything about queer people in the curriculum, so I felt like we needed a safe place. It was really upsetting when I found out our Gay/Straight Alliance was denied at school because I wasn't expecting that. I would have thought that it would have been discrimination for them to say no. We already had a bunch of students who were really excited about the creation of a GSA, so after it was denied, we decided that we didn't want to take no for an answer. We wanted to change people's minds.

We started a Facebook group to keep track of the members and to help decide what we wanted to do next, and then *Xtra!* found out about it. After talking to them, a whole bunch of newspapers picked our story up. It was a real surprise because I didn't expect people to care as much as they did. When this first hit the media, there was a lot more bullying from the other students, they immediately treated us worse and we weren't expecting that. But once we got a group of students who were really supportive, a lot of that stopped. Bullying for queer youth has always been an issue and I think a lot of it still goes unreported. So it's important to have support, so you know that if you are being bullied there are 50 of us who will stand up for you and understand what you're going through. That's why a GSA is needed.

Eventually, the bishops and trustees came up with a memorandum that allowed LGBT groups, but they were to be strictly anti-bullying groups, which is what we ended up having until the end of the school year,

last year. So we didn't get the name we wanted for our group. They were adamant that we couldn't have a GSA. Even when we had our anti-bullying group and we treated it as our Gay/Straight Alliance group, we couldn't call it that.

We really want to push for it to be named a GSA because we feel it's really important. It needed to have a name that reflected the purpose of the group so that students in need of its support would know where to go. The group has to be student run as well; it can't be run by the chaplain and have them saying homophobic things, because that's not a support group.

It's been amazing to see how many people do care. All the media attention is worth it and we were really able to get the word out about the need for GSAs in Catholic schools by marching in the Pride parade this year as well.

I really don't think the School Board can do anything to us, so we have nothing to lose. We're legally obligated to be in school, so the school should serve us and give us the support we need. You just have to know that you're right. If you know your rights and you have a good support group, then you can't be intimidated. If you want change, then try and make it happen.

Leanne Iskander attends St. Joseph's Catholic Secondary School in Mississauga, where she continues to struggle to have her GSA officially recognized. She was 2011's most honoured dyke, "unofficial" youth grand marshal and named Inspire Awards 2011 LGBTQ Youth of the Year.



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