

# youth mind



the expression issue

Youth Mind is a quarterly magazine that is published by OLDF Inc., Toronto, ON Canada.

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Youth Mind is published quarterly, online.

# for the youth by the youth

Youth Mind is an online magazine made for the youth, by the youth. Our editors and contributors aim to cover content that we believe young people care about.

Whether it's school, the job market, the environment or social justice, we know that these areas affect—and will continue to affect—our demographic the most.

For this reason we wanted to cover such content with the utmost respect and attention that it deserves.

We hope that Youth Mind will inform, motivate and empower the young people of today.

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## Letter from the Editor

Hello,

The birds are chirping, the flowers are blooming, the snow is melting. Okay, maybe that isn't actually happening yet, it is only March in Ontario after all. But the season changed to spring just the other day and we are well on our way to warmer weather and brighter skies. I've been gazing out the window watching the clouds float by as I write this letter, and it reminded me of a time I was cloud watching with my sister many, many years ago.

Looking up at the big fluffy clouds, my sister pointed to one and said it was definitely a car. I remember following her pointing finger up to the sky and couldn't find a car anywhere in sight. Instead, I saw a dragon setting a house on fire. We were both gazing up at the exact same cloud, yet saw two drastically different images unfold.

We may have only been kids back then, but it taught me a very interesting lesson. No matter what it is you're looking at, everyone is going to view it differently. Everyone has their own unique perspective, sees the world in their own distinct version and finds their own ways to convey their thoughts and feelings.

And that brings me to the basis of what this magazine is all about, so, without further ado, welcome to *Youth Mind's* spring edition, *The Expression Issue*. I would like to thank *Youth Mind's* talented reporter, Rebecca Benitez-Berona, who worked on the fall and winter magazines and had the brilliant idea for this issue's theme.

Originally, this was going to be the arts and expression issue, and as you'll be able to see from the articles, there's a clear reason as to why. Expression and art are intrinsically tied together, you can't really have one without the other. Art is a facet to express ourselves; our thoughts and feelings and the ways in which we view the world.

As Rebecca noted, the arts field is also one filled with many prejudices. The number of people I know who decided not to follow a career they were passionate about, or go to school to pursue their dreams, just because it was in the arts field, is astounding. So many people give up on their

passions, or push them to the side, because they don't think that there is room for dream jobs in the "real world" or they feel that they won't produce a steady income.

I hope that this issue of *Youth Mind* will help people see that you don't have to sacrifice happiness for stability. It might mean taking on more than one job to combine what you love with a job that offers benefits (p. 16) or keeping up with your passions through hobbies (p. 28) but there are always ways to ensure you can do what you love, what makes you, you, without compromising in other aspects of life.

But that isn't the only message this issue is trying to convey, because art is just one of the many ways that individuals use to express themselves. It's interesting to me that when you look up synonyms for "expression," almost all the words are synonymous for "speaking" or "voicing." But expressing oneself is so much more than that, and for some, those words aren't synonymous with how they express themselves at all (p. 10).

So, if there's one major takeaway from the spring issue, I hope you all see the importance of self-expression. It is our identity and a symbol of our individualism. It helps us express emotions we may be grappling with, it pushes us to be ourselves in the truest sense of the word. You might find the best way to express yourself through art, through music, through fashion, or, like me, through writing.

Find the ways that work best for you; the possibilities are endless.

**Sincerely,**



**Emma Siegel**



## Land Acknowledgement

Youth Mind Magazine acknowledges the Indigenous land on which we work that has been inhabited by Indigenous peoples since the beginning.

As settlers, we're grateful for the opportunity to meet here and we thank all the generations of people who have taken care of this land — for thousands of years.

Long before today, there have been Indigenous peoples who have been the stewards of this place.

We wish to acknowledge the traditional territory of many nations including the Mississaugas of the Credit, the Anishnabeg, the Chippewa, the Haudenosaunee and the Wendat peoples and is now home to many diverse First Nations, Inuit and Métis peoples. We also acknowledge that Toronto is covered by Treaty 13 with the Mississaugas of the Credit. We recognize and deeply appreciate their historic connection to this place.

We also recognize the contributions of Métis, Inuit, and other Indigenous peoples have made, both in shaping and strengthening this community in particular, and our province and country as a whole.

As settlers, this recognition of the contributions and historic importance of Indigenous peoples must also be clearly and overtly connected to our collective commitment to make the promise and the challenge of Truth and Reconciliation real in our communities, and in particular to bring justice for murdered and missing Indigenous women and girls across our country.

# The Expression Issue

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# Choking on your own words

As the conversation around anxiety grows, is it time to introduce alternatives to traditional oral presentations?

Written by OLIVIA MATHESON-MOWERS



Photo courtesy of FAUXELS (PEXELS)

**I CAN STILL REMEMBER** the last presentation I ever did in high school.

It was for grade 10 English. The assignment required an analysis followed by a 15-minute presentation in front of the class.

Up until that point, this was the longest presentation of my academic career. I rehearsed in front of my mirror until my lips were dry. I rewrote it several times to take out difficult words. I did breathing exercises. I did everything I could think of.

The presentation would've still followed the same trajectory even if I had rehearsed for a lifetime—my body shaking as I stood up in front of the class and sputtered the words out.

I received a C- on the presentation and the comments attached stated, “You swallow your words.” I wasn’t swallowing my words, I was choking on them.

When I tried to voice my anxiety to my teacher and offered to do more written assignments, she firmly told me, “Lots of people get nervous doing presentations, I can’t give you special privileges. You just have to get over it.”

In the end, I couldn’t bring myself to do any more presentations and I flunked the class.

The experience left me feeling guilty and ashamed. I continuously wondered if I should’ve taken my teacher’s advice and “just get over it.”

In recent years, it’s become increasingly apparent that many students are struggling with anxiety. In a [study](#) conducted by the Journal of Developmental and Behavioural Paediatrics, it was found that anxiety is increasing at a faster rate than depression as the leading mental health issue affecting teenagers.

While presentations may not be the root of anxiety disorders, they can definitely amplify them.

Abi Sellathurai, a graduate student at the University of Toronto, remembers the overwhelming anxiety that would fill her whenever she had an upcoming presentation. Leading up to the presentation, she would perform poorly on tests and assignments for other classes and would even lose sleep.

Similarly to my experience in high school, she recalls incidents when she took failing grades over presenting.

“I don’t regret it,” she says. “The anxiety over doing an oral presentation wasn’t worth losing focus on my other commitments.”

There has been a long-standing belief that presentations can enhance oral communication skills, which has been identified as one of the [key professional traits](#) that hiring managers seek out. Other advocates for presentations believe that it can be a form of exposure therapy that creates habituation and can build self-efficacy by pushing people to step out of their comfort zones.

There is research to support this claim—a [study](#) published in Communication Education found that students who participated within a fundamentals of communication course reported lower levels of public speaking anxiety following the conclusion of the course. But is it a one size fits all approach?

Cossette Massa, a recent graduate of Ryerson University, has facilitated multiple professional panels at numerous conventions. While she believes that it can be beneficial to push people out of their comfort zones, it has to be done in a healthy way and should never result in aggravating an already existing anxiety disorder.

“A presentation can seem like a small thing, but it can have lasting, negative rippling effects in students,” Massa says.

It’s a belief that Sellathurai echoes. She points out that ultimately, you can only be pushed so many times out of your comfort zone to face the same fear.

“It doesn’t seem fair,” she says. “If you’ve already given it so many tries, then you know that you don’t enjoy it and it only produces constant anxiety.”

Catharine Violante, who recently completed a bachelor of education at York University, highlights that with the modern age, the definition of communication has transformed drastically. The introduction of multiple technological tools has created many opportunities for students to achieve their academic goals without relying on traditional oral presentations.

Massa suggests that one technological solution students could employ is pre-recording their presentation. This could lessen some of the pressure of speaking in front of a large audience but still gives the student the opportunity to share their work.

Violante also acknowledges that there needs to be an increase in awareness around social and generalized anxiety disorders—especially in the classroom.

“I think the fact that students would rather take a failing grade [over presenting] should be a huge wake-up call,” she says.

In terms of the overall curriculum structure, Violante says that while there is serious work that needs to be done, some evolutions are already transpiring at the classroom level.

**“A presentation can seem like a small thing, but it can have lasting, negative rippling effects in students”**

“Teachers are allowed to provide accommodations without modifying the curriculum,” she says. “These can include various support resources and alternative assignments that still fulfil the curriculum-level learning goals.”

Sellathurai recalls that instead of traditional oral presentations, one of her teachers during her senior year of high school gave students the option of making art projects, writing a story, designing web pages or producing

short films. She says she enjoyed the freedom it gave her to build her communication skills within the medium she felt most comfortable with.

It’s an approach that needs to be more widely adopted by educators teaching with the modern era, Sellathurao says, as the conversation around anxiety and other mental health struggles continue to grow.

While I never did any more presentations while I was in high school, I was able to later facilitate seminars while earning my masters in English. No, I didn’t outgrow my fears but I did outgrow letting unsupportive teachers stifle my voice.

When I reached out to my professors with my concerns, I was met with compassion and accommodations which gave me the courage to lead discussions with my peers through the use of handouts and visual aids—all while remaining safely tucked away in my comfort zone. ♦

# Setting sights on bigger dreams

An aspiring filmmaker talks thesis projects, side hustles and career goals

Written by ALYSSA BRAVO



Photo courtesy of GREYSON BARIT

**FROM A QUAIN DORM ROOM** in Oakville, Ont., 21-year-old Varshaa Raguraaman maintains the dream she has had since she was a young artist and visual storyteller in high school: one day getting to work for The Walt Disney Company.

“I combined all of my passions and I was like, ‘You know [who] does all of these things really well? Disney,’” she says. “That’s the goal, to work there at some point.”

In the meantime, she has been keeping busy in her fourth and final year of studies as a film and television student at Sheridan College. Her schedule hasn’t allowed much time for her to return home, as she says it has been quite hectic trying to juggle three thesis films, a side project, commission work as well as trying to avoid getting burnt out.

“They’re big combinative film projects where you make crews of 20 to 30 people, film in the fall semester and then post production, editing and stuff is the next semester,” she says.

Recently, Raguraaman’s day-to-day life has consisted of heading to the studio, having meetings with directors, reading scripts, storyboarding and even creating mood boards for each different film (“we love Pinterest!” she says).

Raguraaman works as cinematographer on all three thesis projects, but also serves as the director of photography on the first project, the “gaffer” (the chief lighting technician) on the second and camera operator on the third.

The first project, Raguraaman says, is the one she is looking forward to the most. Titled *Cross Sect Inn*, she describes it as a “planning of a murder” set in a cross section of a hotel and follows a pair of people seeking revenge on a politician who they suspect had killed their father.

“We’re filming each hotel room head-on and then in post production, we’re gonna use visual effects to put these rooms next to each other to make it look like a hotel,” she says. “It’s been so fun and I’m so excited for the finished product.”

Outside of school thesis films, Raguraaman also partakes in creative projects separate from assignments. This includes her collaboration with a group of young artists working on a fan webcomic based on the Nickelodeon animated show *Avatar*:

*The Last Airbender*, titled *The Tale of Runa*.

“We have two artists and we came up with a storyline and divided that into 12 chapters. There are six writers, so each of us are doing two chapters,” she says. “It’s coming along. It’s so fun to see all the stuff that we’ve done. We’re like, ‘We wrote that! We made this story!’”

Even with the time commitments that come with working on several projects at once, Raguraaman also does commission work on the side.

Her first venture into commission work began in high school, where she sold artwork at annual art shows. Since she began studying film, she has tackled independent projects such as music videos and infographics for social media.

She has even been commissioned by friends to create paintings for their home decor.

**“Generally, when people of colour are growing up, they aren’t encouraged to go into the arts. So the fact that I had made it that far, getting into an arts program that’s predominantly full of white people, was a huge deal to me”**

With the constant hustle and bustle of her everyday life, Raguraaman admits that she has gotten quite homesick. She originally hails from Scarborough, in the eastern part of Toronto. According to her, she misses being surrounded by diverse groups of people.

“It hits you differently here in Oakville. Nobody’s on the same wavelength as me,” she says. “It was kind of like, ‘Oh my god, I’m the only brown person in my entire program!’ So it was hard for me at first.”

Still, she was adamant about going into a field that she was passionate about, regardless of what she felt could have held her back.

“Generally, when people of colour are growing up, they aren’t encouraged to go into the arts. So the fact that I had made it that far, getting into an arts program that’s predominantly full of white people, was a huge deal to me,” she says. “I was the one who bit the bullet and said to myself I was going to do it anyway.”

As she holds onto her Disney dreams and reflects on her identity as a woman of colour in the arts, Raguraaman hopes that one day more racialized people will be represented in the artistic workforce.

“The struggling artist trials are very true. But once you get a job, you will keep getting jobs. That’s just how it goes,” she says. “It works out for some people, and it doesn’t work out for some people, but you’re never gonna know if you don’t try.” ♦

# Follow the music

Five career options for aspiring musicians that you might not know about

Written by BRITTANY STUCKLESS

Illustration by MEAGHAN FLOKSTRA

**THERE ARE SEVERAL STEPS** to determining a career path, including reflecting on your passions and learning what nurtures them. One common interest among people is music and it's important to discuss all of the options available in this field.

Earning money in the music industry can be done through careers outside of being a performer. Many jobs in music require musical ability, yet other skills are just as critical. These include organizational, technical and administrative capabilities. If this piques your interest, here are some musical jobs to think about:

## Music director

Music directing involves overseeing and organizing music programs for places like churches, concert halls and other venues. Music directors usually have musical abilities and can play instruments. They use these talents to direct other employees and volunteers.

Kye Andrews, a 27-year-old music director at Toronto's Forest Grove United Church, got the position by starting as a volunteer for the music program and then working his way up.

"I was interning with the former music director. I kind of stuck to the previous music director like glue, actually," Andrews says. "I tried to soak up as much of what was going on around there as possible for a number of years."

While Andrews got the position by volunteering his musical talents and making himself an integral part of the program, some music director jobs may require a bachelor's or master's degree.

Music directors must ensure all musical performances run smoothly. This includes overseeing the progress of other singers and musicians. Andrews also stresses the importance of being good with people.

"Excellent people skills and administrative skills help me run everything," he says. "It's not only with musicians and colleagues too, but the patrons of the church."

Becoming a music director may be a great choice for musical multitaskers, people who enjoy teaching and those who love to oversee the steps to making a performance come to life.

## Piano tuner

This is a great career choice for those fascinated by the inner workings of this staple instrument. A piano tuner makes house calls and service calls to organizations, venues and other establishments.

[Careers in Music](#) notes that some piano tuners are trained to help with other repairs and services in addition to tuning, such as replacing broken parts. Piano tuners generally have to travel for their profession, as pianos are heavy and difficult to transport.

Leela Khurana lives in Toronto and has been a piano tuner for many years. Becoming a piano tuner can involve schooling from an

institution and an apprenticeship. Some piano tuners are self-taught or take shorter courses. Khurana chose to enrol in a program.

"I did the piano technology certification program at the University of Western Ontario in London; it was one of the top two programs in North America. Sadly, the program folded in 2014," she says.

Khurana enjoys the flexibility of her schedule, meeting interesting people and the fact that every piano is unique.

"I love being my own boss, it's a lot of work but the rewards are definitely worth it," she says. "There's never a dull moment in the world of piano tuning!"

Andrews' career as a music director at Forest Grove requires tuning services from a piano like Khurana.

"I practice piano to continue my musical education and expertise and to get away from old habits of sticking with guitar," Andrews says. "The piano is directly related to my work as a music director so I need a good tuner."

## Audio engineer

Audio engineers will always be essential in the music industry. Many people thrive behind the scenes and enjoy the science behind music, making it a fulfilling and practical career path.

There are countless schooling options for aspiring audio engineers, especially in Ontario. Some include The Ontario Institute of Audio Recording Technology, Fanshawe College and Metalworks Institute.

Other examples include Douglas College in Vancouver and College of the North Atlantic

which has various locations in Atlantic Canada. Recording Arts Canada also offers online learning. Audio engineer schooling usually lasts around two years; however, some programs may be shorter.

There are plenty of career options in the world of audio engineering. [9Guiders](#) highlights everything from research and development audio engineers, wireless microphone engineers, system engineers and studio sound engineers.

## Music teacher

While it's a well-known career choice, many people may not be aware of the different ways you can teach music in a classroom.

According to [Masters Education](#), music teachers can teach students both the fundamentals and history of music.

Music teachers are often a source of inspiration for young people to discover their interests and career goals for the first time. Becoming a music teacher is also a great way to consistently play music while instructing others.

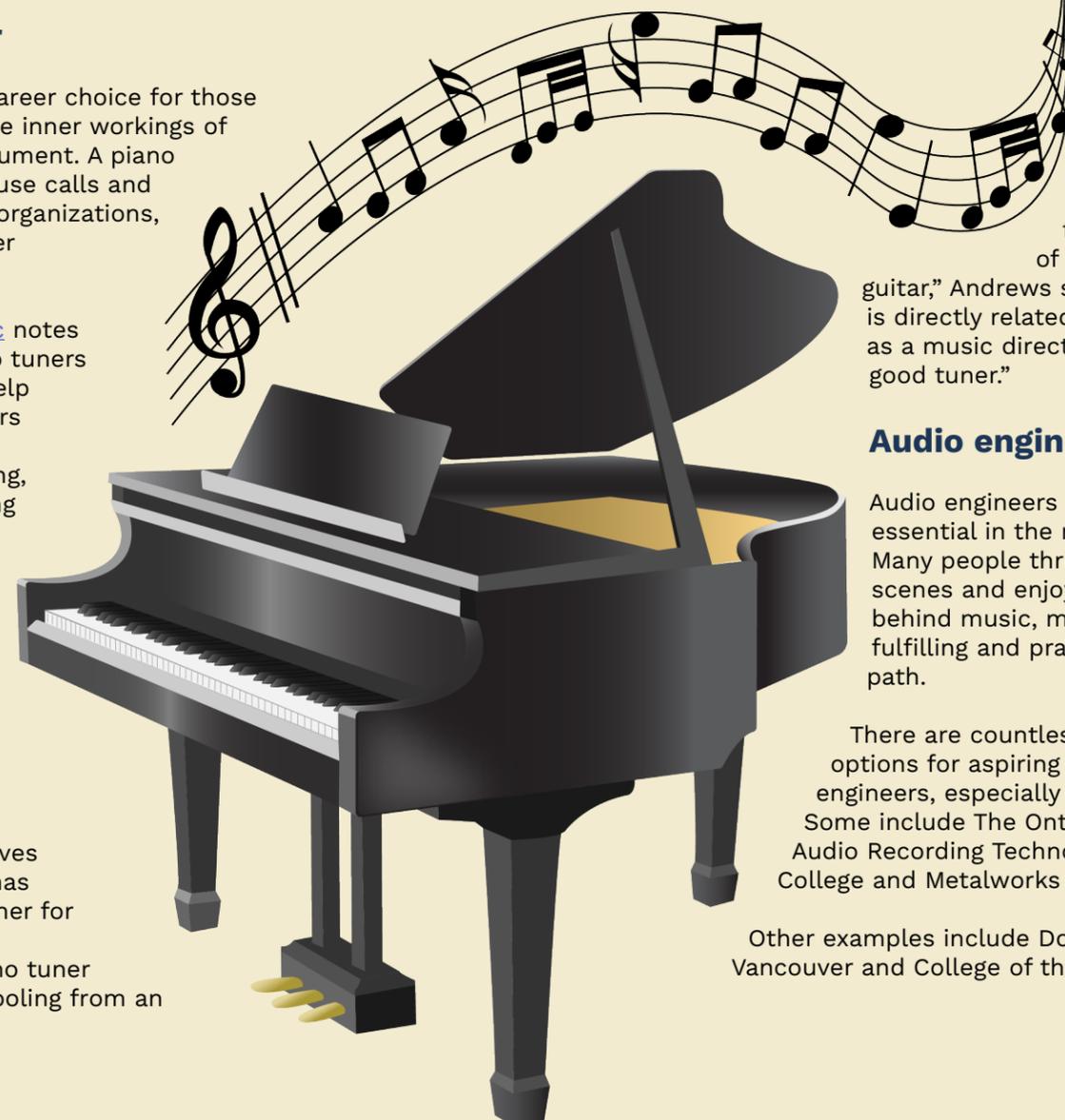
To work in a school in Canada, music teachers must earn a bachelor's degree followed by teaching certification. For example, teachers in Ontario must obtain certification from the [Ontario College of Teachers](#). Teaching requirements vary depending on the province, so it's important to do your research.

## Concert and event promoter

Post-secondary education isn't for everyone when they finish high school. Sometimes, diving headfirst into your career path and learning through experience is a more appealing route.

Becoming a concert promoter doesn't require post-secondary education, although a bachelor's degree in marketing can be helpful. Furthermore, people with a sales and customer service history may have an advantage by having experience interacting with the public.

The career of a concert or event promoter involves figuring out the music niche you'd like to promote. This career also includes networking, developing marketing and branding strategies and researching your target audience. [Indeed's career guide](#) explains even more job duties about this role. ♦



# Passion jobs versus healthcare benefits



Whether it's taking on multiple jobs or declining work, some artists must arrange ways to attain affordable healthcare

Written by BRITTANY STUCKLESS  
Illustration by MEAGHAN FLOKSTRA

**IN CANADA, MANY SERVICES** like vision care, dental care and pain management like physiotherapy are not covered by provincial insurance plans. This is also the case for prescription drug coverage.

Some people need help with extra healthcare costs more than others. For example, people who require medications may need assistance with costs, as well as someone in need of frequent dental work and vision care.

This has led to some Canadian artists taking on two or even three jobs to fulfil different needs. One job may be an artistic “passion job” that brings joy and a sense of purpose, while other jobs may be imperative to gain access to healthcare coverage.

## Workplace benefits

Katherine Andrews, an up-and-coming tattoo artist living in downtown Toronto, balances her time tattooing with a full-time job at Loblaws where she stocks shelves overnight. Andrews says that she would love for her passion to be her primary job.

“The thought of being a full-time tattoo artist sounds great,” she says. However, she currently maintains a full-time job at Loblaws to take care of her health with their Manulife benefits package. Andrews mentions using her benefits for crucial services, like regular eye tests.

She also uses the benefits to avoid high dental costs. “I definitely need benefits to get my teeth fixed, cavities filled and for cleanings,” she says.

Andrews notes the struggle for young people to find jobs with benefits. “I think it’s hard to come across a job that is entry-level with decent benefits,” she says.

If Andrews left her job at Loblaws, it would mean losing the benefits package. It would also require Andrews to lose the income she needs while she broadens her artistic abilities. “Staying at Loblaws will always be tempting,” she says. “It’s crucial to stay as I continue on my art path.”

## Sacrificing jobs for healthcare

Juggling passion jobs and other full-time work can affect healthcare access in other ways.

Grace Thompson is an actor and playwright located in Toronto. While her acting and writing don’t provide consistent pay, she says she loves her second job as a public speaking instructor for kids. In contrast to Andrews, Thompson notes that she doesn’t have healthcare benefits and relies on [Ontario’s Trillium Drug Program](#), which provides help to low income people in need of prescription drug coverage.

Thompson suffers from adult-onset Still’s disease, a rare form of inflammatory arthritis. If she were to pay out of pocket for her medication, Actemra, she would have to shell out close to \$700 a month. As a result, she ensures she qualifies for the Trillium Drug Program and has to strategically plan how much income she earns to continue to do so.

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**“If I get successful, I would have to start paying out of pocket for this medication that allows me to live, basically”**

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To qualify for the Trillium Drug Program, Ontarians need to earn below a certain amount every year. Crossing this income threshold even slightly could be the difference between paying nothing or paying a high amount for prescription drugs, and such is the case for Thompson. “Without the Trillium, it’s close to \$10,000 a year,” she says.

Thompson also says that becoming more financially successful with acting and writing would mean she no longer qualifies for the program. If she were to earn over the threshold, the extra income might not be worth it as it would go towards paying for medication.

“I worry about that all the time,” she says. “If I get successful, I would have to start paying out of pocket for this medication that allows me to live, basically.”



For Thompson and other actors, there are limited choices when it comes to extended healthcare. Many actors work freelance and have sporadic schedules, which can make it difficult to hold down a full-time job with benefits.

Thompson notes that there are actors unions that offer benefits, specifically a union called the Alliance of Canadian Cinema, Television and Radio Artists ([ACTRA](#)), which provides representation for Canadian actors. [The Actra Fraternal Benefit Society](#) is a not-for-profit insurance company offering healthcare coverage to ACTRA members.

Thompson considered this option and weighed the pros and cons of joining a union but was stopped short by the cost, as unions require fee payments. This includes a \$1600 initiation fee, which is a large sum to pay upfront. For now, she feels reliant on the Trillium Drug Program.

While this option works for her, it also constrains her ability to find success in the industry she is passionate about.

“Let’s say I got a commercial gig. It’s a double-edged sword,” she says. “It’s extra income, but it may take me over the income limit to qualify for free medication.”

Although this constraint is tough and Thompson’s health is of utmost importance, she feels secure with her career path.

“I wouldn’t give it up, I love it,” she says. “Teaching is sustainable. The after-school programs mean I have the daytime to myself, so I’m very much able to do my art.”

Thompson also weighs the pros and cons of building her acting portfolio and her Trillium Drug Program eligibility. While she has to choose her acting jobs carefully, she won’t let her illness stand in the way of doing what she loves. ♦

# Safe places to fall apart

The link between community art projects and wellbeing

Written by AMY FOURNIER

Illustration by AISHARJA CHOWDHURY



**BEIGE TOTE BAGS** with the print “mental health over everything” lined the table outside of the entrance of the Centre for Addiction and Mental Health’s auditorium on the night of Nov. 1, 2021.

Guests arriving to see Rosa Laborde’s *True*—a play about the traumatic effects that alcoholism and domestic violence can have on a family—were offered self-care bags that included resources such as tissues, a note pad, pen, a bag of stress relief tea and a stone engraved with the word “hope.”

*True* is one of the many pieces involved in Rendezvous with Madness Festival (RVWM)—an annual event that shines a light on mental health through art installations, educational workshops, film screenings and live performances. Audience members are informed before each performance or screening that active listeners would be on-site in case anyone needed to step out due to the heavy topics that some of the pieces covered.

## Expressive arts and mental health

The COVID-19 pandemic took a toll on both the physical and mental health of many people. Research found that during the lockdown, people turned to creative activities including home and art crafts, language activities, fine arts and music performing arts.

There is a growing body of evidence to show that engaging in arts-based activities such as painting, drawing, writing, dance and music have profound positive health impacts on stress levels, emotions, social cohesion and behaviours.

As many people continue to grapple with the traumatic effects of the pandemic, the arts may be a form of mental refuge and personal fulfilment. Combining the therapeutic benefits of art-making with a collaborative setting can further enhance connection, foster social change and promote inclusive dialogues.

## Coping with trauma, collectively

Alexandra Caprara, an MFA student in disciplinary arts and research at Simon Fraser University, has been heavily involved in the arts community over the past five years.

“You are always going to be a better artist when you work collaboratively,” Caprara said. “The inspiration and exchange of energy you get when you’re working with someone who is passionate about the same idea—that process is so magical and inspiring to me.”

One study examined the positive benefits that community art initiatives had on survivors from an earthquake that occurred in Nepal in 2015. After much loss, destruction and trauma, community art initiatives provided relief, support and healing to those consuming and creating art.

Caprara said that for her, “art is a place to put big feelings.” In October 2020, Caprara along with her co-collaborator showcased their art installation, ThreadBare, at RVWM festival. ThreadBare was created with the intention to give voice to survivors of sexual and domestic violence.

The process of creating ThreadBare involved receiving anonymous submissions and clothing from survivors who wanted to share their story. Once submissions were received, Caprara stitched the text into the pieces of clothing which would then be displayed as part of the installation. “Some of the pieces that we got were very hopeful and heartwarming and other ones were a little bit triggering,” said Caprara.

However, putting together all the pieces into one collective was a really powerful experience for

not only Caprara but many of the contributors and viewers as well. “We’d get emails all the time of people thanking us for giving them the space to talk about stuff like that,” Caprara said.

On top of the physical tactile aspect of the installation, there was also a sound system that was hooked up and would play piano notes whenever someone used the hashtag #MeToo on Twitter.

## Breaking barriers and increasing accessibility

Cultivating a sense of belonging is at the heart of Art Starts—a nonprofit organization that provides art programs and mentorships to underserved communities in the GTA. Nicole Peña, program director at Art Starts, said that there are many privileges that marginalized communities are excluded from when it comes to engaging in the arts community.

Families from low-income households may not have access to attend “highbrow” art spaces and events and therefore may not even know that they exist. “We have a project right now called the Inclusion project and we’re trying to talk about how a lot of people

are not included in certain dialogues—The Opera Company, the Toronto Symphony, The AGO,” said Peña.

In fall 2021, Art Starts partnered with North York Harvest to paint shipping containers for a food bank in order to raise awareness and open conversations about food scarcity, farming and sustainable living. “We had music, everyone seemed to bond together, I saw them hanging out and I think that it was a cool kind of environment because we were actually working with professional artists,” she said.

Joining a community art group is a great way to meet new people, participate in dialogue around social issues and even learn a new skill. Whether someone practices art at an intermediate level or is a beginner, getting involved allows individuals to support one another and themselves. ♦

“art is a big place to put big feelings”



## Expressing eco-conscious messages through art

As environmental concerns rise, artists pursue alternative options to create artwork

Written by ALYSSA BRAVO

**AS THE SAYING GOES**, “art is subjective.” While this is true, there is something universal about environmental art and the message this artistic practice projects: to protect nature and the planet.

According to [a blog post](#) by sustainable energy company Iberdrola, environmental art and recycled art is not new. Artistic movements such as pop art utilized recycled materials from comic strips and advertisements. Additionally, Pablo Picasso and George Braque famously created collages out of old newspapers and magazines.

For many artists, the need to express environmental concerns is usually born out of a lifelong passion for nature.

### Flipping the narrative

Toronto-based artist [John Notten](#) grew up with a penchant for exploring the outdoors. As a child, he would often go on camping trips with his family in the wilderness of southern Ontario’s Algonquin Park and Killarney Provincial Park. When he started a family of his own, he made sure that his children would have the same experiences as he did.

“I think that this connection with nature has really translated sort of seamlessly into my art,” he says. “And I don’t really do that in a conscious way. I don’t sit down and think, ‘So what am I interested in? Oh yeah, I love to camp, so I’m going to make some art about camping!’ It just seems like a very fluid thing for me.”

Throughout his career Notten has created several sculptures and art installations, many of which overtly translate messages about environmental issues. Among his most recent pieces of work is *Plant it Forward*, which was first installed on King Street East in Toronto in 2020.

Notten had been commissioned to create a piece based on the circular economy philosophy, which is a system that strives to eliminate waste and promote the continual use of resources. With this in mind, he created *Plant it Forward* out of materials that had already been used, such as wood harvested from Toronto’s Distillery District.

“You know that they came from the Distillery District because when I cut them, I could smell the whiskey. For 150 years, whiskey sloshed on those beams,”

he says. “And I just love that as I worked with the material, it was a reminder that this did have quite a history before it ever got into my hands.”

After the exhibition portion of *Plant it Forward* was completed, Notten was able to donate the materials from the project to FoodShare Toronto, an organization dedicated to battling poverty and hunger. FoodShare then repurposed the wood to use in their produce gardens.

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## “As an art maker, I have to know what my impact on the world is”

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In 2021, Notten tackled other projects that encapsulated the message of being environmentally conscious. One of these projects was *Over Floe*, a set of sculptures exhibited at Ontario Place consisting of floating “icebergs” resembling buildings. Each “iceberg” was made from styrofoam salvaged from a demolition site.

Notten also created a sculpture called *Flipping the Canoe*, set to be installed in Toronto’s Todmorden Mills in 2022. According to him, both the piece itself and its installation location speaks to the anticolonialism statement he hopes to articulate.

“I think most people think of the canoe as being this iconic Canadian symbol of the wilderness and of recreation and leisure, cottaging and camping. It’s such a romantic object,” he says. “When this device was appropriated by colonial settlers, it did lead to incredible resource extraction that continues today at the expense of lots of things—the environment, the displacement of Indigenous people.”

### From one artist to another

Notten suggests that all artists should be mindful of the materials they use, particularly if they wish to incorporate eco-friendly practices in their work.

“As an art maker, I have to know what my impact on the world is,” he says. “When you’re using oil paint, acrylic paint or gouache, or you’re building something with lumber, consider where that lumber is coming

from and what is the source of the material. That may require you to do a little extra research.”

Patricia Tagulinao, 20, is a full-time education student at York University. She also dabbles in art during her downtime, having grown up painting and drawing. According to her, using recycled materials can be a good way to save money when on a tight budget, especially for students like herself.

“As an artist, I think it’s our duty to give new life to old things, whether it be actual ideas or real material things, and find the beauty in things that surround us,” she says. “Recycling is a good method to do that.”

Tagulinao believes in the impact that art can have on bigger communities and that artists can help to bring attention to greater causes.

“Seeing as our planet is dying so rapidly because of human beings, I think as artists we can help spread awareness with our work and make people feel and react, inspire them to make changes in their lives to better the environment,” she says.

Notten also notes the responsibility that artists carry no matter what medium they choose to pursue: to spread messages to a wider audience.

“I think that people who are creative have an incredible opportunity to share their ideas about the environment. Every discipline—whether it be writing, filmmaking, painting, drawing, sculpture—all kind of exist, because there is a public to receive them,” he says.

However, Notten says he believes that those who don’t consider themselves artists still aren’t “off the hook.”

“If you’re not a creator, maybe you’re just really good with social media and you can get messages out,” he says. “Or maybe you’re just a really great fundraiser, or maybe you can make a sign and you can walk and march. Everybody has the responsibility.” ♦

**“As an artist, I think it’s our duty to give new life to old things, whether it be actual ideas or real material things, and find the beauty in things that surround us”**



Photo courtesy of JOHN NOTTEN

# No time for second-guessing

Activists urge youth to speak out on climate change, regardless of experience

Written by ANEESH CHATTERJEE

**“THIS IS YOUR FUTURE.** You are allowed to raise the alarm on this.”

Aliénor Rougeot, program manager for climate and energy at Environmental Defence, encourages future generations to embrace the urgency of the climate crisis—even if they feel ill-equipped to speak on the subject.

Acknowledging a certain apprehension that youth may hold in expressing their views on a matter so complex, Rougeot—who was [featured](#) in an earlier *Youth Mind* issue—reassures that the climate activism movement is one of collaborative support. She says that the movement is not one in infancy; there are experienced people to help those just starting out.

Fridays for Future Toronto, a branch of the global youth-led movement, organized the Global Week for Future climate strikes in September 2019. Having been involved in the coordination of these protests, Rougeot recalls the lesser-known pillars of support who reached out to her and facilitated the movement, such as parents, grandparents and retired people.

“Just concerned people who thought that this youth movement would be the beginning of something big,” she says.

Rougeot isn’t alone in encouraging youth to step up. Manvi Bhalla, founder of the non-profit Shake Up the Establishment and current climate policy lead at the University of British Columbia Climate Hub, says that everyone has their own battles to fight and their own contributions to make. People, especially youth, should do what they are able to for climate change action.

Bhalla reminds today’s youth of their significance in the way their future plays out and the simplicity of getting started and doing one’s best to move

forward, no matter where they begin.

“Find your place, get involved, grow and keep growing,” says Bhalla. “You are part of the ecosystem of change.”

The idea of every contribution being important in its own right is especially relevant to the youth-led climate change movement. The people roaring down the streets in September two years back were diverse in more ways than one, Rougeot says.

According to Rougeot, while there were some drawn to activism distinctly because they could afford to devote their time to attending protests, others who felt strongly about the crisis came from a range of socioeconomic standings.

Rougeot acknowledges that some found it easier to be heavily involved in climate advocacy because they had some degree of financial security and could devote time to the initiative that wasn’t spent earning a paycheck.

“I think, mechanically, the reason we have so many people from—at least comfortable families—is

because none of them have to have a job outside of school,” she says.

This should not be a deterrent for people who may want to be involved, but aren’t able to organize and coordinate action themselves. As Bhalla reminds coming generations, every contribution, no matter how small, grants strength to the movement.

Marginalized populations, disadvantaged economically or through some measure of discrimination, are a key consideration in Rougeot’s take on how climate change advocacy should be constructed.

Economic systems, corporate incentives and policy implementation—systems that propagate climate change and prevent a shift to an environmentally-conscious economy—are inherently exploitative of certain groups, Rougeot says.

In order to fully address climate change, these issues should be a part of the conversation. “If we want to create a lasting solution to climate change, we also have to talk about racial justice and Indigenous sovereignty,” Rougeot says.

On the matter of whether youth activists are more inclined to consider the urgency of climate change than governing policy-makers of older demographics, Bhalla points out that the comparison is irrelevant.

The state of the climate crisis is beyond debates of who does it better, both kinds of people are required to make change—which is only possible when collaborative initiatives take place.

“Every conversation is an opportunity to learn,” Bhalla says. She reinforces the reality that people concerned about climate change don’t have to be from a singular age demographic and will come together and work together when needed.

Bhalla says that people who are actively involved in climate activism no longer concern themselves with pointing fingers, shifting blame or ducking responsibility for someone else to handle.

“We’re not delegating anymore,” she says. “We’re past that stage.” ♦



Illustration by AISHARJA CHOWDHURY



# Crafting the way to success

Whether it be knitting, writing or gardening, creative outlets can be beneficial to one's career

Written by BRITTANY STUCKLESS

Photo courtesy of PIXABABY (PEXELS)

**IT'S NO SURPRISE** that hobbies are a critical component of a fulfilling life. When it comes to creative pastimes, career-oriented people sometimes need time to de-stress and find it beneficial to focus on craft-based projects.

Forbes notes that creative hobbies can improve mental health and cognitive function and Indeed says that developing creative thinking during downtime can help people “consider situations from innovative perspectives” in the workplace.

All of these benefits combined can help someone become successful in their main career path, even if the career isn't in the arts.

Joshua Goodman, a psychotherapist located in Ottawa, says that having creative outlets is essential to him. Playing music and working on a fantasy novel are ways he performs self-care, which helps him achieve the relaxed mindset he needs to connect with clients.

“Writing and music are forms of self-care,” Goodman says. “Those activities help me stay balanced and composed as I work with my clients in therapy.”

He also discusses how writing a novel helps him relieve stress and work through problems he has

experienced, which then makes him better equipped to help others.

“Writing my novel has helped me to process much of my own traumatic experience and metabolize those negative events in a way that has allowed me to fuel the empathy I have for my clients,” he says.

De-stressing through creative outlets can help people in other fields as well. Walter Mackey is an insurance adjuster who enjoys crocheting and knitting in his spare time. He says his hobbies are both therapeutic and important ways he copes with pressure from his fast-paced job, allowing him to be more successful and relaxed at work.

“Since my job is usually so stressful, being able to pick up a craft project and unwind while also watching a new design or garment or stuffed toy come to life before me is always a really rewarding experience,” he says.

He adds that crocheting gives him a sense of calm. “Meticulously repeating certain stitches and movements and following written patterns feels very therapeutic to me.”

Mackey notes that the repetition of patterns in crocheting and knitting help him when his job

becomes stressful. “Following a pattern and staying ‘on track’ when my workday throws me ‘off the tracks’ is a way for me to manage my stress personally.”

Praising the correlation between creativity and stress relief is a sentiment that Goodman agrees with.

“I'd argue that my creative outlets are essential to managing my stress,” he says. At times, being stressed can signal to Goodman that he needs to take time for his hobbies.

“I don't concretely schedule in any creative time,” he says. “I often allow my feelings to guide when I stretch my creative muscles, which is usually around two hours a week.”

Another way creative outlets can help someone perform better at work is by stimulating innovative thinking patterns, which can help with problem-solving.

Holly Wells, a marketing professional, enjoys getting creative with regular home decor projects, gardening and cooking.

“Having a creative outlet in your spare time can encourage more creative thinking and ways of

approaching things in general,” she says.

Wells believes creativity helps spark her ability to tackle work problems, almost as if being creative helps her practice reasoning and brainstorming.

“From a working sense, that may manifest into new ways of solving a problem or different ways of doing things that are more productive and enjoyable,” she says.

She also thinks that it's possible to become overwhelmed with work thoughts and problems without a creative outlet, making it difficult to see things clearly and perform tasks.

Hobbies also don't necessarily mean sacrificing productivity. It's possible to achieve a lot while de-stressing. Being a productive person doesn't just include being effective at work.

“Being creative massively helps me with my stress management because my creative hobbies allow me to switch off and feel productive at the same time,” Wells says. “I value creative productivity very much, especially gardening and re-potting my plants!” ♦

## Blurred lines

While some see graffiti as art, others only see vandalism

Written by OLIVIA MATHESON-MOWERS

Illustration by MEAGHAN FLOKSTRA

**WHENEVER LONG-TIME** North York resident Cindy Luong passes by one of the many decorated graffiti pockets that can be found within Toronto-based neighbourhoods, she feels a sense of warmth.

“I see graffiti as a form of personal expression,” she says. “It brings me lots of happiness to see how someone can take a blank canvas, such as the side of a building, and create something that speaks to them and to others as well.”

Luong’s opinions represent one half of the continuous debate surrounding graffiti and whether it should be classified as art or as vandalism. While some like Luong can appreciate the artistic merit within graffiti, others paint it in a more negative light.

The [official website for the City of Toronto](#) states that graffiti can promote a belief that community laws protecting property can be disregarded, which can subsequently manifest in a sense of disrespect for property and result in an increase in crime.

Sustainable Thinking and Expression on Public Space (STEPS) Public Art is a cultural organization that works to foster inclusivity within urban communities through public art installations and creative placemaking. Alexis Kane Speer, executive director of STEPS, says part of the division stems from the fact that graffiti is an umbrella term that is often utilized to talk about anything that is painted or applied within a public realm—with or without permission.

She views graffiti as a spectrum, one that contains street art and murals but can also include tagging and activist intervention. She also highlights that while STEPS Public Art does not promote graffiti vandalism, there is a long and important history embedded within graffiti that needs to be included within discussions around the topic.

“Graffiti and the idea of tagging has come from mostly marginalized communities where people were taking and applying their name onto a space to say ‘I was here,’ when they weren’t being heard otherwise,” she says. “I think it’s

important to acknowledge that that’s where all of street art has come from.”

Certain sectors within Toronto that encompass previous hotspots for unsanctioned graffiti have been reclassified as culturally significant. One example is Graffiti Alley, located within the city’s Fashion District, which has long been regarded as one of the best showcases of Toronto graffiti culture.

It also demonstrates the activism embedded within graffiti, a notable example being the 2020 mural project, “Paint the City Black.” This was a collective artistic initiative to show support for the Black Lives Matter Movement by memorializing George Floyd, Breonna Taylor, Regis Korchinski-Paquet and other victims of police brutality.

In 2011, after a lengthy battle with the city, the Queen Street West Business Improvement Association officially designated the area as holding municipal significance. This also inspired the creation of StreetARToronto, a program that works to secure funding and approval for street art.

It was an important moment for graffiti as it acknowledged its immense contribution within the cultural development of urban spaces, Kane Speer notes.

“If we think of cities 50 years ago and what it would be like to walk down the street in comparison to cities today, I would say there’s quite a significant cultural shift that has happened as a result of street art in the way we experience a Canadian city,” she says.

Luong also says she appreciates graffiti’s impact on the cultural evolution within Toronto, which is why she ultimately believes that there isn’t a clear way to differentiate between street art and graffiti because they both promote cultural, artistic and community engagement.

“Art is an outlet for people to express their inner emotions—graffiti is no different,” Luong says. “There is raw emotion immersed within every spray of the artist’s can—it’s just on a building instead of hanging in a gallery.” ♦





# Taboos around tattoos

While younger generations are more open to body art, many still face cultural and traditional barriers

Written by ALYSSA BRAVO

**SHARON NG WAS 18 WHEN SHE GOT HER** first tattoo: a small rose on her inner ankle. She has since added two more pieces to her collection—a butterfly on her outer ankle and a Chinese dragon on her back. Unlike her first tattoo, these ones hold close personal significance to her.

“The butterfly represents my childhood memories and swimming. Butterfly was my favourite stroke,” she says. “I was born in the year of the dragon and I’m Chinese, so that’s what the dragon stands for.”

Ng recognizes the cultural barrier between her Chinese upbringing and getting permanently inked, so she strategically had her tattoos placed where they would be less visible.

“My Chinese parents used to be against tattoos and they still probably are, but they accepted me for getting them,” she says. “I think they’re more worried about what society would think of me, so I explained to them that I got them at the location on my body for a reason.”

According to [a 2012 study](#), 22 per cent of Canadians have at least one tattoo on their body, while 11 per cent have multiple tattoos. The same survey also says that tattoos are popular among young people like Ng, with those aged 18 to 34 more likely to have a tattoo versus those aged 35 and up.

Ng advises those wanting to get a tattoo to bear in mind several aspects: think about the image’s placement, not to permeate anything offensive and consider that facing criticism is inevitable.

Lawyer Peter McLellan says in [a 2016 Mondaq article](#) that employers are legally allowed to choose not to hire someone based on visible tattoos. In fact, there are no laws that prohibit employers from discriminating against anyone with body art or piercings. The only exception is when the tattoos or piercings are linked to the individual’s ethnic or cultural background.

“It’s gonna be hard, but there will always be someone that judges you or stigmatises you,” Ng says. “You can’t

Photo courtesy of LUCAS LENZI (UNSPLOSH)

## “It’s gonna be hard, but there will always be someone that judges you or stigmatises you”

control society, so seek support if it gets bad or try not to be surprised if someone negatively points it out. It happens.”

The University of Waterloo’s Healing Tattoos is a research project that began with the purpose of analyzing the healing meanings behind tattoos on their wearers. For example, people would often choose to get tattooed as a permanent memorial for a passed loved one. Other times, people would choose to get a tattoo to remember the struggles they have overcome, such as self-harm or cancer.

Jin Sol Kim, a PhD candidate at the University of Waterloo and a collaborator on Healing Tattoos, describes having interviewed a tattoo artist who had been asked by a young woman to cover up her stretch marks.

“He said, ‘You know, I never really thought about this particular tattoo as a healing tattoo until this very moment,’” she says. “So with that process, it’s kind of like you’re taking control over your body. You’re taking something that you thought was ugly and you’re revisioning that right on your body.”

Susan Cadell, a professor of social work and the principal investigator of Healing Tattoos, recalls speaking to a couple who had gotten tattooed in honour of their son, who had passed away in a car accident 15 years before.

“The very first one that the father got was identical to the tattoo that his son got,” she says. “It was

hugely meaningful to that family in ways; in part because it kind of repaired and made them feel better about giving their son a hard time getting his tattoo.”

Cadell proposes that there could be a bigger reason behind the young generation’s fascination with tattoos.

“I think the big thing is that it’s people who are willing to challenge stereotypes [behind tattoos] and the older one gets, sometimes the harder that is to do,” says Cadell. “The younger generation is more willing to challenge that particular stigma.”

Kim highlights the key role in which social media plays in the popularity of body art.

“I think it’s connected to the speed at which they have exposure to de-stigmatization,” says Kim. “The younger generations are just so much more connected and so much more logged on to these spaces where they are able to see these images come up. They’re easily distributed and circulated right amongst their peer groups.”

Ng suggests that tattoos are one of the many ways people can express their individuality and self-identity.

“Besides the fact that they look cool, tattoos are art and it’s art that’s on us forever,” she says. “It’s something unique for ourselves.” ♦



## SAFE AND STRONG - GENDER-BASED VIOLENCE RESEARCH PROJECT FINDINGS

77.8%

of Participants who experienced gender violence in the workplace did not report their situation to anyone.

16.6%

of participants reported the incident to their employer.

5.6%

reported to their work union.

95.5%

of surveyed participants who experienced gender violence in their home or community, did not report the incident to the police.

**When asking participants if they would say COVID-19 has made things better, worse or the same for women, girls, & gender-diverse individuals where Gender based violence is concerned:**

46.9%

Unsure

53.1%

Worse

0%

Better

**Many participants expressed hesitancy towards mental health services and supports giving adequate, effective care to the black community and feels that racism is embedded in the healthcare community.**



## Celebrating heritage through art

Traditional Indigenous practices such as beadwork are helping youth connect with their culture

Written by AMY FOURNIER

Photo courtesy of PORTAGE COLLEGE

**IN AUGUST 2021**, Sabrina Fontaine, a 25-year-old artist from London, Ont., opened her online store [Miskomin Manidoomin](#). Fontaine, who is currently residing on the COM: Chippewa of the Thames, Oneida Nation of the Thames and Munsee-Delaware Nation, says that her store name roughly translates to Raspberry Spirit Beads.

While art has always been a part of her life, she has not been very public with it until recently. “I’ve always been kind of shy and private about it,” says Fontaine. “This year with COVID-19 I kind of just decided, you know what, I’ve been doing art my whole life, so let’s put it out there.”

Fontaine says that when she was first exposed to beading, she was a little upset that she didn’t grow up with it. However, she realized that if she didn’t start now she would only continue to be upset. “The more that I learn about my own culture, the more that I want to be a part of it and beading really does feel like being a part of that in whatever capacity I can,” she says.

### Tracing back to the past

Ruby Sweetman, teacher of native arts and culture at Portage College located in Lac La Biche, Alta., says that the earliest form of artwork was hide tanning and quill work to make footwear and clothing. “Mostly everything that Indigenous people do is essential for life,” says Sweetman.

Beading [first began](#) roughly 8,000 years before Europeans came to Canada and was used as decoration for Moccasins and Mukluks. Sweetman says that beads were made out of shells, bones, antlers, horns, bear or wolf claws and wood or seeds from plants. “Everything is based on what Mother Earth has to offer Indigenous people and we try to use whatever we can from nature,” she says.

The support that Fontaine receives from the online bead community—a network of other local Indigenous artists who make and sell their beadwork—motivates her to continue practicing.

She also draws inspiration from the work of other Indigenous artists that she follows on Instagram such as Amy Jackson and Chief Lady Bird.

Fontaine explains that artwork by Indigenous people differ depending on the area that they are from and that it is important to create opportunities for youth to learn about their roots—whether that be through exposure or education. “It’s honestly really interesting when you look into it because a piece from Coast Salish is going to look extremely different than a piece from Navajo Nation,” she says. “Both are Indigenous but both are extremely different art styles.”

**“Everything is based on what Mother Earth has to offer Indigenous people and we try to use whatever we can from nature”**

### Keeping customs alive

According to Sweetman, passing down traditional skills and knowledge such as hand sewing, quill work and beading is important when it comes to preserving culture. Due to settler colonialism and the impact of residential schools, many Indigenous

folk never had the opportunity to engage in these practices.

Today, there is a growing number of Indigenous artists who are creating and selling their work using Etsy and social media platforms. “I think I’ve seen beaders as young as 14 that are creating pages and posting their stuff and it’s just fantastic to see,” says Fontaine.

Even as the beading community grows, it is important to acknowledge that there are still many young Indigenous artists who may not have the same access to resources as others.

“The most important thing that I want to get across to people, especially young native people, is that if they feel disconnected with their community, there’s a reason for that,” Fontaine says. “It’s not their fault if they don’t have access to ceremony or they don’t have access to friendship centres or traditional things and that it doesn’t make them any less Indigenous.” ♦

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- The Newcomer
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## Capitalizing on creation

Why working in the arts industry may come at a cost

Written by AMY FOURNIER

Photo courtesy of FRANKIE CORDOBA (UNSPLASH)

**IN FEBRUARY 2020**, tickets to the Immersive Van Gogh Exhibit Toronto were made available to purchase for \$39.99. Located at 1 Yonge St., digital art projections of some of Van Gogh's most famous paintings such as *Starry Night* and *Sunflowers* were cast upon the 600,000 cubic feet during the 35-minute experience that was offered to guests. The event was so successful that it was brought back to Toronto in 2021.

Vincent Van Gogh was a perfect example of the “starving artist.” Throughout Van Gogh's life as a painter, he suffered mentally, physically and financially. His work was unknown until March 1901 when 71 of Van Gogh's paintings were displayed in Paris—11 years after his death.

Even 100 years later with the acceleration of social media and digital technologies, financial insecurity still plagues the lives of many artists today.

According to [data](#) from the Canadian Association for the Performing Arts, the arts industry took one of the hardest hits during the COVID-19 pandemic with one in four artists reported to have lost their job. As a result, many working artists were forced to reconsider their professions.

Networking and gaining professional connections and experiences in college helped Andrea Sobczak, a 3D animation modeller, find work in her field.

“It definitely feels like you need to know the right people and have a piece of paper just to say something, just to make your way in because otherwise you're not valued as much,” says Sobczak.

Latika Singh, a communications graduate from York University, says that the arts are an integral part of her being and ability to express herself—but she would rather not work in the commercial art industry. “I keep seeing people making it on Instagram, making it in society, but hardly making it for themselves,” she says.

There is a fine line between creating art and creating content, according to Singh, who prefers to view being an artist as more of a lifestyle than a job. “When you create art it's just coming from you,” she says. “It's not commission based, it's nothing, it's just coming from you, because you want to do it.”

As with many professions, working artists can suffer from burnout and may find that what they once

loved to do no longer brings them joy. “I find a lot of my coworkers, or people I've met who are artists, if they're doing the same thing over and over as their job they kind of almost lose their passion for what they initially wanted to do with it,” says Sobczak.

Lack of time is an impediment when it comes to pursuing other creative endeavours according to both Singh and Sobczak. “I make my own designs and try to come up with my own stories. My boyfriend and I have created a storyline to make a short film from. Now we're trying to make it into a video game,” says Sobczak. “There's not enough time in the day to actually sit down and do it.”

Singh finds enjoyment and personal fulfillment in activities such as dance, photography and writing, but due to financial constraints she spends most of her time and energy working as a social media specialist.

Fortunately, the many socioeconomic benefits of the arts and culture industry are being recognized by more and more people internationally. A 2016 UK [report](#) concluded that cultural engagement helps in shaping more reflective, empathetic individuals. Countries such as Ireland have made huge strides in terms of providing support for artists,

including a plan for universal basic income outlined in [The Arts and Culture Recovery Taskforce](#).

Universal basic income takes into consideration the precarious nature of the field and people's need for financial security. Similar to how the Canadian Emergency Response Benefit (CERB) provided applicants with a basic income of \$2000 a month during the height of the COVID-19 pandemic, universal basic income would provide guaranteed regular income to all artists.

In June 2021, the Canada Council for the Arts received a \$500 million federal government investment to relaunch the arts, culture, heritage and sports sectors and to resume their public activities after COVID-19. However, many working artists and arts organizations in Canada still rely on a mixture of public, private and earned revenue which can be difficult for individual artists to navigate in a post-pandemic and ever-changing society. ♦

**“I keep seeing people making it on Instagram, making it in society, but hardly making it for themselves”**

## Three tips for selling your art or creative service

Until more countries get on board with universal basic income, there are still ways to make profit as an artist without compromising the personal value of your work

### 1. Use social media mindfully

Instagram can be an incredible platform for artists to showcase and sell their work, as well as gain critical feedback from others. Unfortunately, it can also hinder originality.

Knowing your own limits when it comes to using social media—and logging off if necessary—is important.

### 2. Apply for grants

If you have a specific project in mind or are working with a collective group of other artists, it may be worthwhile to scope out some of the government funded grants that are available to artists.

Grants and strategic funds are administered to individual artists, groups and arts organizations, as well as the prizes and fellowships regularly awarded by the [Canada Council for the Arts](#).

[The Ontario Arts Council](#) also offers various grants that artists can apply for, including specific grants for “new generation” artists between the ages of 18-30.

### 3. Find your niche

There are plenty of specific jobs in the arts industry that require specific skills. You can be a director, an animator or a storyboard artist, among many other careers.

“You don't have to think you have to paint an amazing portrait to be an artist,” says Sobczak. “People need to know that there's other ways to be an artist. Not just one dead set way.”

# The market price of freedom

The benefits of learning about financial stability sooner rather than later

Written by ANEESH CHATTERJEE

**STUDENT LOANS, MORTGAGE** prices and insurance payments tally up to a significant sacrifice made to remain a functioning member of society.

Amid all this, young people entering adulthood may be forced to choose between what they want and what they need. In an economy that is continually shifting and changing, finance experts advise people to start young when it comes to learning about money.

“Financial knowledge is financial freedom,” says Ariana Masse, chief marketing officer at PennyDrops. Created by two McGill University students in 2015, PennyDrops offers personal finance courses and guidance to young people ranging from high school into post-secondary. Their extensive programs cover personal budgeting, credit cards, loans and taxes, investing and stock trading.

Barry Choi, a self-taught investor and founder of Money We Have, says that there is a division of career focus and passionate self-actualization. Choi says that the rising costs of living, especially in metropolitan areas, has made it increasingly difficult for people to have a financial safety cushion.

“Managing to save even ten per cent of your income for retirement may not be enough these days, especially if you live in the Greater Toronto or Vancouver areas,” he says. “Not only are you trying to save for retirement, but immediate needs such as your cost of living, especially related to housing—there’s not much money left over.”

Choosing between a lucrative career and a passionate one can be a struggle when it comes

to searching for a job. Choi took the passionate approach and received an education in television broadcasting.

He says that his choice to go this route was driven by personal interest, not money.

“It was a passionate thing,” he says. “When I was in high school, I wasn’t thinking about career growth, income—things like that.” Nonetheless, Choi became versed in the complex field of finance during his initial career in broadcasting when he began to balance his full-time job while learning about finance.

Resources like Money We Have and PennyDrops are driven by the goal to teach people the basic concepts of financial literacy. While maintaining financial stability in an ever-changing economy, Choi outlines the importance and growing accessibility of self-teaching resources.

“There’s never been more educational tools available,” Choi says. “If you read just one book about personal finance, you probably know more about money than 70 per cent of the Canadian population.”

The driving point of education is shared by Masse. “Youth should strive to learn as much as possible,” she says.

In the decision of choosing careers that might compromise one’s passions, Masse maintains that, “money is important, but it’s also important to prioritize your happiness.” ♦



Photo courtesy of MAITREE RIMTHONG (PEXELS)

# On longing, whirlwind and enchantment

A photo essay on Kensington Market's *Living in Technicolour* event showcase

Written by AMY FOURNIER

Photos by JERICK COLLANTES

1. **Longing:** the recognition of what could or what would have been if the circumstances were different.
2. **Whirlwind:** the intensity of emotions and inner chaos that was felt when everything came to a standstill.
3. **Enchantment:** finding the delight in the motion, murmurings and the unknown.

## LIVING IN TECHNICOLOUR WAS AN EVENT

showcase that explored senses, emotions and feelings associated with grasping the new realities that we live in. Longing, whirlwind and enchantment were the main themes of the show and each artist involved represented one or all of the themes throughout their work.

Kensington Kreamers provided a grant to the *Living in Technicolour* collective to support the businesses, artists and performers in the community.

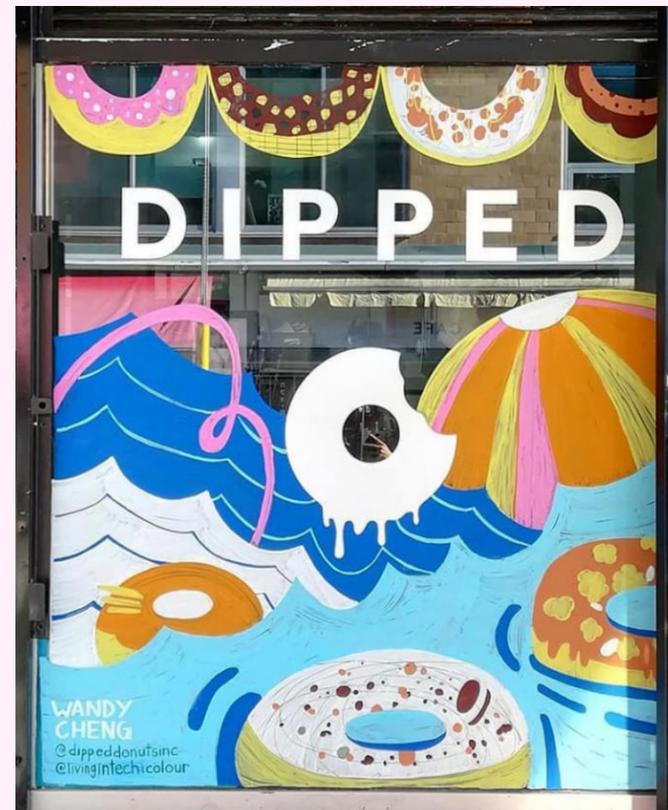
The event was brought to life by Ira Famarin, Maria Saleh, Abby Ho and Cathleen Calica on Sept. 18, 2021 and included music, art installations and performances to honour the resiliency of store owners in Toronto's Kensington Market throughout

the financial fluctuations of the COVID-19 pandemic and lockdowns.

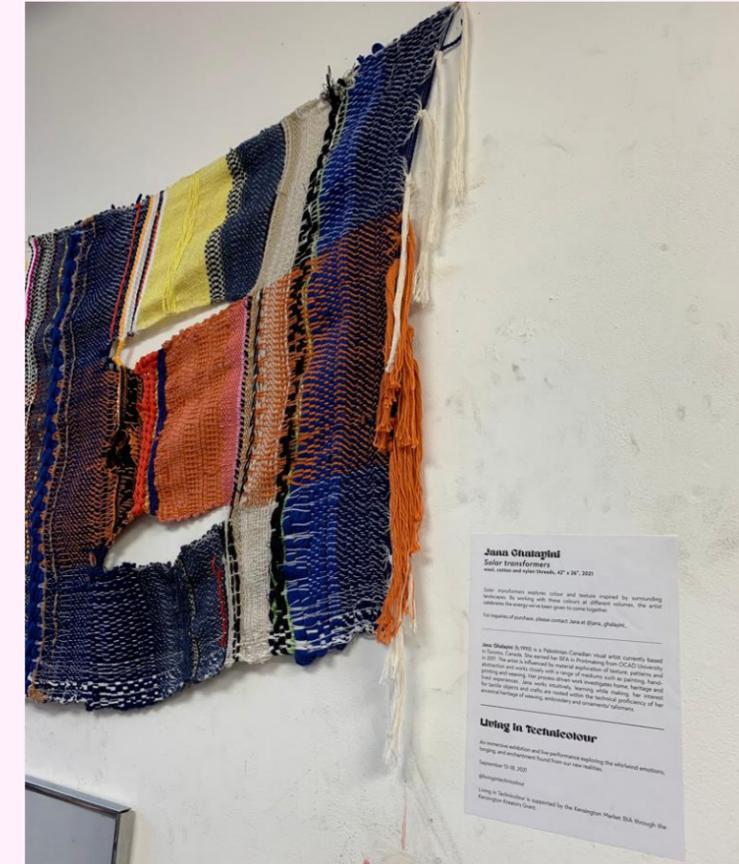
"As an organizer, despite the setbacks that the pandemic created, it was so joyful to see everyone gathered in the same room again and coming together for the first time in a very long time," says Ira Famarin.

Emerging artists and performers from Toronto were paired with small businesses to create an experimental and alternative lifeworld where art is as much of a necessity as a grocery store.

*Living in Technicolour* is living in the moment and embracing the current situation as it is.



Dipped Donuts was a mural drawn by hand with Posca paint markers by Wandy Cheng. Situated outside of the high-quality sweets shop on Baldwin Street, this creation expanded from the theme of enchantment and highlights the energy and vitality of Kensington Market during the summertime.



Solar Transformers was a tactile piece woven by Jana Ghalayini and inspired by Vintage Outlaw, a 1990's based clothing outlet on Augusta Ave. Working with the colours at different volumes, the artist celebrates the energy of coming together.

Dancing Days is the one of the oldest clothing stores in the market, located on Kensington Ave. Upon entering the store, Jasmine Hawamdeh was immediately reminded of Palestination embroidery.



Dahlia World's music showcase consists of four members: Sakako, Nefe, Emily Schlutz and Maya Gabriel. This group keeps community and compassion at its core.

## How do you express yourself?

A photo essay on street fashion

Written and photographed by NICOLE BOTELHO SIMAO

**WHILE WALKING THE STREETS OF THE GTA** you will see an array of styles that individuals use to express themselves. This photo essay is a collection of photos taken over the course of two weeks. Each photo, different from the rest,

explores each individual's aesthetic and how they differ from each other. The purpose of this photo essay is to acknowledge the various ways people choose to express themselves through fashion while appreciating it at the same time.



Shqdel releases energy through her visual, sonic and lyrical offerings and embodies longing, whirlwind and enchantment. Through melodic word-play and run-on sentences, Shqdel shares her internal dialogue and external observations through what she calls "sonic scribbles."



Sarah Itamah is best described for her versatility in the music sphere. She is a rapper, lyricist and singer whose whirlwind tunes fuse classic sounds with new and modern twists.



Ebbie expresses his love for fashion with his African print jacket. The jacket was made by Jennifer S. Henry, a local designer in Brampton. The brown beanie matching his brown sweater complements his puffer jacket. Ebbie was in the midst of setting up his shop when this photo was taken. You may have seen him in Kensington Market selling North Side Of The Map apparel. "My brand kinda started as a hobby then grew from there. It was really all about a new perspective of the Canadian experience."



Maddie Dean is seen sporting a vintage 8-ball jacket, a bold statement piece with bright colours. This photo was taken in Kensington market where you will find an abundance of vintage clothing.



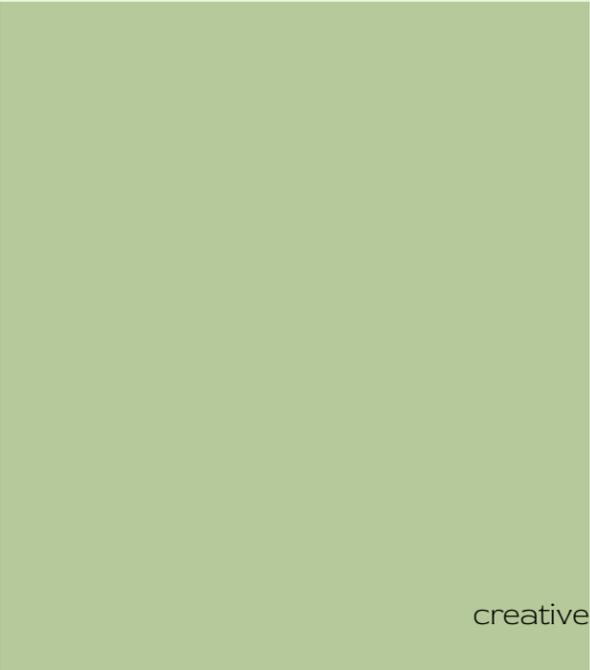
Tyler Mitchell often expresses himself through his upcycled thrifted clothing which he adds his own touches to. Elbee (the yellow heart) is a character Mitchell created. Keeping in mind how much clothing ends up in landfills, he often buys his clothing from second-hand stores and transforms his pieces by adding his signature Elbee character to cover up a stain or hole.



Mahdi Shami and his pup Stitch were walking the streets of Toronto after grabbing a quick lunch to go. Both Shami and Stitch show off their street style with Stitch in his grey and black tracksuit while Shami sports a black marbled style Supreme jacket with black and yellow baroque printed pants. Tying the outfit together are his black Nike Air Forces.



Heather Mclean knew she was going to go walk a trail so she decided to put on a practical yet cute outfit and sport her favourite colour with her purple sweater. When Mclean isn't on a walk, her outfit will most likely include some sort of fashion piece that allows her to express her love for Disney.





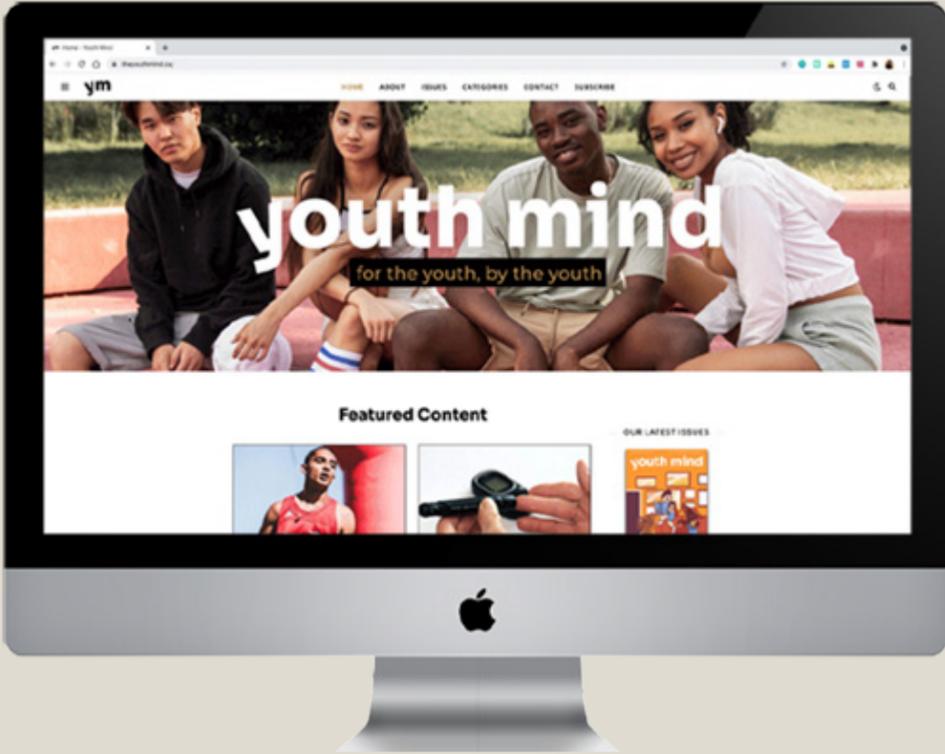
Kevin Vu caught my eye from a mile away with his vibrant red hair. Despite red having the usual association of being loud and eccentric, Kevin was calm and patient. I learned that he has a creative side as well. Kevin is a dancer and photographer, who as you can see, uses his hair to portray his self-expression.



Michael Fraser was browsing through his Instagram feed when I stopped him. Fraser's style was effortless with his use of an earthy brown palette to create the perfect one-tone outfit. He is dressed comfy yet fashionable. His clothing is simple and minimalistic, showing that we do not need to have branding or fancy patterns on our clothing to make us look stylish.



Check out our Youth Mind official website for more articles!



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