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1 i k e n e s s

m a g a z i n e

l e s s o n s t o l e a r n

Low Entropy is headquartered in Kwikwetlem First Nation Territory of the Coast Salish people, and in the shared territory of the sə́lilwətaʔt təməxʷ, xʷməθkʷəy̓əm, Stz'uminus, Qayqayt and S'ólh Téméxw nations.

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Low Entropy Personnel:

Vanessa Wideski - Executive Director
Shazia Saif - Magazine Coordinator
Breanne Chan - Graphic Designer
Mandy Cummings - Blog Program Coordinator
Simon Cheung - Editor

About Low Entropy: Founded in 2015, the Low Entropy Foundation is home to free programs and events that focus on personal and community growth through empowerment, authenticity and meaningful interpersonal connections.

Contact Information:
#310-2540 Shaughnessy St.
Port Coquitlam, BC
V3C 3W4, Canada
(604) 469-0226
info@lowentropy.org

Interested in writing for *Likeness*? Email shazia@lowentropy.org to be added to the mailing list.

Foreword

Some people might call them “teachable moments.”

Whatever life has lined up for you — or if you’re less inclined toward ideas of fate, whatever you and others create from life — these packets of experiences can contain educational materials that help you grow. Flourish, even.

Or not.

Sometimes it feels like it takes an awful lot of the same kind of experience to teach us very simple things, doesn’t it? How do we feel about that? Worse about ourselves?

Perhaps. But perhaps entertain this thought: that every lesson that you may need to learn is an override of some lesson you learned before to cope with, or deal with, or manage something else. Of course things get confusing. Of course you want to take measured steps. You don’t want to throw out the baby with the bathwater, after all.

This month is real simple: our writers share lessons learned. Or not. And if they haven’t . . . if we haven’t . . . that is absolutely fine. We are still, and will always be, grateful that you are here.



Editor, Low Entropy

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**ALICE
PLAVINS
MCGEE** Alice Plavins McGee is a Toronto-based artist whose work explores the relations between experiences of gender, dissociation, neurodiversity and space. She works primarily with pen and marker drawings, as well as acrylic paintings, generative digital work and photography.

Views Drawing 6: What I Stare At In Between My Girlfriends, 2023, 7" x10", Alcohol based markers and pen on bristol board

Alice Plavins McGee

Views is a series of perspectival illustrations of spaces which have profound meaning to Alice. Her work echoes Jessica Dunn Rovinelli's *So Pretty* (2019), a film which utilises disinterested and dissociated framing effects to reject the intrusive cis gaze. Alice's choice of framing is highly intentional, as the composition roughly equates to a view she has spent a large amount of time looking at. These spaces are quotidian and banal, dissociative and depressive, and/or sites of impactful experiences of love and gender affirmation. Views plays with a duality

of the interior as both a nearly irrelevant and quotidian space, but also as a mechanism which fundamentally constitutes reality. *What I Stare At In Between My Girlfriends* fixates on colour and lighting, leaving the detail of the drawing to melt into the dark. The drawing explicitly utilises a dissociative aesthetic, and displays gender-full objects such as an Ikea shark and a leather collar. The pink lighting is indicative of the intimacy and connection felt in the drawing.

Winter Kept Me From Writing

Neema Ejercito

Winter kept me from writing
She held me at gunpoint
Pinned me to the bed
Barked that if I wrote she'd shoot
Froze my eyes open
As she iced page after page
of drafts. "They're just drafts,"
she spat, "Your 'creative' rejects,
Your bad writing, your,
and I'm using
YOUR words here, 'hacked and slashed' —"
"But I haven't gotten to the
good part yet! There's no —"
She laughed. You'd think laughter
would at least be warm. But Winter's
is a snowstorm.
And the more I stayed in bed
I let her pin me down.
No longer struggled.
The words that kept me awake,
burning with ideas,
I let Winter snuff them out.
What's the use?
I let her have her way.
I'm not going to show this to anyone.
The day I accepted defeat.
Because there's been too many of these.
One I'm not proud to say, among many.

NEEMA EJERCITO Neema Ejercito is a professional writer, director and creative writing mentor. Her 3D edutainment series for beginning readers, *AlphaBesties*, is showing in YouTube Japan and Prairie Kids. When she's not writing or mentoring, she manages her household with her very supportive husband and three children.

ANNA MALIKARJUNAN Anna writes from her love for the natural world, lessons from her personal journey and gratitude for the presence of sages and teachers. Originally from South India, Montreal has been her home for the past two decades.

The Art of Self-Care

Anna Mallikarjunan

This past decade brought some undesirable acquaintances into my life. They came uninvited, like cascades of misfortune. I try to avoid naming things, as it becomes an abstraction or an escape from the facts. But to name a few, I met with serious illness, trauma, depression and debilitating physical pain, though not necessarily in that order. I presently live with chronic health conditions, and the quest to uncover the source of my suffering is an ongoing process. Some causes were easy to discern and eliminate, but the deeper, more ingrained ones took many grueling years; they still visit me from time to time. Most of us are conditioned by our past experiences, traditions and firmly held beliefs. These make up the many layers of the "me," which vary from person to person and can take decades of patient learning and relearning to uncover. This kind of learning is from moment to moment and has no end, but it can only begin when self-condemnation and self-justification end. It involves being able to see ourselves without being swayed by what we see, without being elated or dejected. If we can look without interpreting what we see, a devilishly difficult thing to do, we may be lucky to enter the world of self-love and a different dimension of creativity. Self-love and self-care are overused terms these days, misinterpreted and misunderstood in myriad ways. To love oneself wisely is an outcome of ma-



turity, but that wisdom is elusive, and its presence is not always easy to recognize.

The voyage of self-knowledge has many unexpected turns, yet it also brings rewarding revelations. And like many, I seem to have chosen the long, scenic route, through majestic hills and lonely valleys, across sparkling streams and starless skies. This insatiable appetite for experience can sometimes render us confused and ungrounded. And at such times, we can be grateful for traditions and systems founded on wisdom and universal principles. The rich traditions of the Indigenous peoples of this land came from a profound, abiding connection to the earth. The ancient Indians explored human consciousness and existence more deeply than many other cul-

Photo by
Daniel Plan

tures. One system to emerge from this exploration is Ayurveda. It is one of the earliest systems of holistic medicine, food and well-being. It has tremendous depth and accuracy and, to this day, is sought worldwide as an alternative system of medicine and guide for daily diet, nutrition and lifestyle. For many years, I meandered through treatments for my chronic illness. Each treatment either worsened my condition or introduced a new set of complications. Unable to travel far due to physical constraints, I was lucky to find remedies inspired by the principles of Ayurveda. After working with a practitioner, reading books by well-known experts and enduring many rounds of trial and error,

I began to see the truth of the system,

founded in its integrity and compassionate guidelines. Self-love and self-care are at the heart of Ayurveda.

I am an amateur in the field of Ayurveda and have no professional credibility, but my experiments and observations have proved beneficial, at least to myself. And that is where I think self-love begins — by taking care of our bodies and minds, not to bring about some ideal, non-existent state of perfection, but to recognize their tendencies and to be patient with their inconsistencies. The foundation of the system of Ayurveda is the three *doshas* — Vata, Pitta and Kapha, which constitute the elements that make up every individual's body-mind.

Vata (like wind): dry, cold, light, mobile, sensitive, restless, pain, spiritual

Pitta (like fire): hot, oily, light, intense, fluid, competitive, irritable, intelligent

Kapha (like water): cool, oily, heavy, stable, dense, sweet, complacent, calm, lazy

List referenced from: “*Ayurveda: A Life in Balance*” by Maya Tiwari

Each person has a combination of these doshas, with one more dominant than the others, but sometimes, an equal proportion of two or even all three. These doshas both guide and dictate the tendencies and characteristics of the body-mind. In this writing, I share a lighter side of Ayurveda, for I think being able to smile at oneself is a vital signpost on the road to self-love. So I present with great affection for this science, caricatures of the elements of Ayurveda. If you do know your constitution, I urge you to fasten your self-deprecation belt. Otherwise, it may be a bumpy ride!

The **Vata**-dominant person often wonders why they've chosen a human form. Others are left puzzled by the ethereal world they inhabit, where they are entirely at home with the sky, mountains and trees. They are innovative and create new activities regularly, sharing them happily. They adapt quickly to new situations and have a light, joyful presence. But they never stick to one thing for too long, so they can irritate people who expect stability and constancy. As they are naturally light and swift, they need the least physical exercise but end up getting the most. And if they know what's good for them, which they often don't, they stay away from stressful occupations. Food, however, is the one thing about which every self-respecting Vata person is very organized. A Vata person often plans three or four meals in advance, not to mention the odd snack. Being of a mobile and sensitive body-mind, people of this dosha suffer from insecurity and fear. Spirituality provides a comfortable refuge, their ease with formlessness contrasting with their physical nature of chaos and restlessness!

Pitta-dominant people love the drama of being a person. Nature, for many of them, is a backdrop of human life. They'll take all the good and the bitter in their stride but often waver between their motives of altruism and control. They live to support, love, provide and lead. You'll find them heading big organizations, supporting families and running marathons and restaurants. They have incredible intellect and travel widely. They constantly look for stimulating work, but benefit greatly from routine tasks. Pitta is fire, and fire needs fuel to keep burning. The Pitta person is a foodie who loves experimenting, cooking and feeding others. They have excellent taste and can be relied on to prepare hearty as well as sophisticated meals. They are relentless in their quests, whether material, social or spiritual, using their intellect and innate drive for action. They strive tirelessly and battle circumstances with panache, and they tend to be helpful to large communities through their humanitarian activities.

A **Kapha**-dominant person's primary relationship is with themselves. They are entirely comfortable in the solitude of their own company. But they also have enduring, amicable relationships. They are stable, loving, steady, calm and obstinate, which can exasperate others. But that doesn't bother them, which makes them even more endearingly exasperating! They make good public speakers and like slow and steady work. In stressful situations, they bring calm by refusing to kowtow to their restless Pitta and Vata

comrades. They can binge-watch or read for hours and then promptly take a nap without the slightest feeling of guilt. They don't think much about food; nevertheless, they are healthy, strong individuals. They are patient in their pursuits and radiate peace and goodness. But they must work hard to uncover the deeper layers of their personality, often hidden from them in the guise of stability and composure.

The focus of Ayurveda is holistic; its purpose is to maintain balance, a balance unique to each person. Undoubtedly, the knowledge of our constitution, or *prakriti*, is beneficial in daily living. But there are many sagacious routes in this vast landscape of life. One

thing they have in common is that they all bring us to the importance of self-knowledge as the key to transformation. This knowledge is not an accumulation, but a gentle, innocent and loving exploration. It starts anew at every moment and is unconstrained by the notion of an outcome. There is no success or failure, only learning.

“ To love oneself wisely is an outcome of maturity, but that wisdom is elusive, and its presence is not always easy to recognize.”

CASSANDRA
DI LALLA

Cassandra Di Lalla lives life purposefully. She enjoys reading, writing and mental health initiatives. She's an animal lover for life and an innovative individual always finding new ways to create.

Habit forming

Cassandra Di Lalla

You cannot change the way a person thinks, feels, or does
If it's been the same throughout their lives
Without any disruptions or interruptions
From those in their surroundings

It's impossible to inspire change in those
Who feel entitled, empowered, or those who are enthralled
in their ego
Or the ones who don't feel enlightened
By the magnitude of an end result

You cannot change a person's choices and decisions
If there's never been a shift in their perception
Or if there's never been a reason
For them to experience life-altering avenues

The only realization that hits these individuals is
The fact that our lives have been uncomfortably altered
By their lack of will to better themselves, and though they're
too late
They finally notice a change in the air they're breathing

... Because of the effect their boldness had on their quality
of life's natural filtration system

You cannot make things vanish
If they're a regular visitor in your everyday life
Forcing you to accept the habit they made you form
Thus earning themselves the term "force of habit"

But when do those "forces of habits"
Become abuse of power?
Following suit because they're used to it
Or doing so because of their need to take charge

You can flip the switch on and off at your leisure
But that doesn't mean that there will always be light
Emitting from the bulb or even enough energy
From the circuitry

... Sometimes, lights go dim or they die out but they once
did serve a purpose ...

It's wishful thinking on our part to hold on to that seed of
hope
Simply because we feel we can wave a magic wand
And have people be the dream version
Of our make-believe reality



Photo by Daniela Izotenko

**BALREET
SIDHU**

I moved to Canada in 2018. It was in 10th grade while at Convent of Jesus & Mary in Shimla, India that my teacher, Ms. Kamini Singh, encouraged me to write for the school magazine. That never happened, but in hindsight, that verbal encouragement paid off today. We are all worthy and deserving.

Lessons learned

Balreet Sidhu

On Sunday, March 12, 2023, daylight saving time starts, and the first day of spring is almost here. For some, it might be the time to plan summer adventures. For others, it is the time to say goodbye to the winter blues. You can spot green buds on trees as you take a walk, they will soon be blooming. The summer holds a lot of promise, with wildflowers up in the mountains, rare wildlife sightings in the sea or on land, golfing, and festivals in the O's: Ottawa and Ontario.

For me, it is a good time to reflect on some inspiration drawn from experiences and some lessons learned before I return to work. It seems as if I have arrived, having traversed oceans, so to speak. It is also a good place and time to quote Bram Stoker for literature lovers: "I have crossed oceans of time to find you."

1. Tweaking a Rumi quote: *Yesterday I was wise, so I changed myself and my mindset. Today I am wiser, so I am also accepting the imperfect me.*

2. *Life's uncertainty is certain. Gratitude and acceptance are great allies in the hardest times.*

3. *A change of attitude, direction or perception can help you get out of a rut, and trust the magic of new beginnings.*

4. *Express yourself, freely yet graciously.*

5. *Things you cannot change or control: people unless they want to, seasons unless they pass and the mind's many reasons unless you win the war.*

6. *Don't settle for someone who is okay with hurting your heart.*

7. *Change.*

Reinvent yourself or push yourself to go where you have never been and watch your fortune change. Start inside, shatter the walls of the mind and liberate yourself.

You and only you hold the power to take that first simple step. Give yourself the respect you deserve and be true to yourself. Even as you are not permanent, why the excuses and problems? Be the example!

Thank you for reading. Love, light and peace.

diminuendo

Gurleen Kaur Bajwa

Photo by
Kelly Sik-
kema



Act I: Brio

Jared had played piano exactly eight days past his sixth birthday to the month past his eighteenth.

Not a day more and not a day less.

It had become apparent quite early on to his parents that his progression or skill wasn't necessarily natural. Perhaps if they had been less loving and kind and adoring they wouldn't have noticed nor cared. But unfortunately for Jared, they were all these things, so by ten he was, as proclaimed between the pages of the Sunday paper, a prodigy.

He'd always played with a certain ease. It was probably what made him stand out. Not an enjoyment of his craft, nor worry and stress as he chased perfection, but rather . . . boredom. Looking downright careless as his fingers danced over the ebony keys, and they answered to his whims. Arrogant, ungrateful and very talented.

A truly horrible sequence of qualities.

On that winter day, lost between the files of his memory, there had only been three people in the en-

tire theatre. His hands hadn't faltered for a second in uncertainty, as though every piece, even one he'd never seen before, was second nature to him.

The resounding silence was replaced by a slow clapping,

as he looked around to the stricken professor standing behind him.

"Was that the first time you've played Rachmaninoff's *Prelude in G minor*?"

"Yes sir." His tone could have been considered disrespectful. No doubt of his ability nor care for the opinion of the man in front of him. On the contrary, his gaze was almost . . . taunting.

"You're still in high school." Wonderment.

Jared looked over to the audience, to see Ryan sitting there alone.

There was a pause of a few seconds, his expression indescribable, before he got up. His lone standing ovation echoing around the walls.

...

"I'm performing after you at the Gala."

Jared's response was a snort, letting Ryan's words fly over his head, meaningless. Their footsteps echoed in the lonely hall.

"MacDowell?"

"Hey." Ryan said, affronted.

"I'm joking."

Ryan didn't respond this time,

something tight in the air.

Act II: Mesto

Ironically, Jared did not recall exactly how it happened. One would *think* something so significant and life-altering would stick in his memory forever like an annoying piece of taffy. Yet, he remembered nothing of the incident itself.

However the day itself, for some reason unimportant and insignificant, was vividly clear. As if he subconsciously had determined to remember only normalcy.

A completely normal stumbling for the alarm clock followed by the regular freezing morning shower. The ten-minute walk filled with the usual small, snappy conversation with his sister. They met Ryan at the bus stop, and they sat comfortably side by side in their regular seats. The radio played *Let Me Out*, and he tapped his fingers rhythmically on the windowsill as Ryan noted it was going to rain today.

After school, his sister went home, as he practiced in the empty classroom six doors down from the library, without focusing, and the piano teacher criticized him for being cocky. As always, Jared laughed him off, giving a cheeky response he couldn't recall anymore. Ryan sat on the floor, his legs crossed, and his headphones in, slowly tapping a pencil against his music sheet, his eyes tracing the page without really reading.

His memory grows blurred

right as he stepped outside the school gates.

He does remember Ryan had forgotten his jacket, so he'd trudged back up the muddy path toward the school.

There were four or maybe five of them. His ego would prefer to say there were about a dozen. Right outside the music room as if they'd been waiting for him. Some pushing and shoving ensued, and a few yells drowning each other out. The reason escapes him now. Was there a reason at all?

There is, however, the vivid image of the metal bat, leaning against the heavily graphitized wall of the south wing of the school. It gleamed in the fading light as a hand wrapped around the hilt.

More than the pain that went up his arm into his shoulder, and more than falling onto his left crushed knee, Jared felt the gut-wrenching scream ripped from his lungs only as the bloodied wrists and fingers twisted back in an unsightly manner, as the metal met them. In some ironic and painful fate, as he lay there, his ruined hands were outstretched directly in front of him. The rain continued to fall against the window glass, as though the heavens too cried, yet forsook him.

...

He swam in and out of consciousness over the days that followed.

At first, he had a glimpse of rainy wet pavement, accompanied by yelling and an ear-splitting siren, followed by someone shaking his shoulder vigorously. A sharp pinch, then a sudden drowsiness that drowned out the faint crying of a woman among chaos. His sister now insistently denied she cried that day.

The next time, there was absolute silence so contrary to the last time that it frightened him.

His breathing felt strangely shallow and difficult, which he found out afterwards was because he'd broken two ribs. He had to blink a few times, trying to drive away the blur at the edge of his vision, like shaking an old Polaroid photograph to bring it into focus.

Beside his bed, were the only two sources of color in the otherwise whitewashed room. The first was a wincingly bright green sweater, one much too large for his sister's thin figure. It made her seem strangely frail and innocent, very much unlike her. Red hair splayed out across the white sheets, as she sat half-falling off her chair, asleep at his bedside, her breath rising and falling steadily, and her brow creased in what looked like worry.

She looked so alone and scared, that out of some buried instinct Jared reached out for her. Yet, **something felt strange.**

He closed his eyes, and opened them again, then, in dread, he followed her arm down to her clasped hand around his wrist. He swallowed and tried to move his finger, and only after a few tries was able to jerk it in an unnatural manner. He looked at them. Turned thin from the years and now refused him.

He let my head fall back on the pillow, and stared up at the ceiling, feeling a silent hot tear fall down his cheek.

Jacob never came.

Act III: Pesante

The tsunami warning was issued the Friday before his twenty-fourth birthday.

It was so stormy and windy that one would think it would discourage people from setting a foot outside. Yet, from the moment the open sign had been flipped, the coffee shop was swarmed with hastily closing colorful umbrellas set against the dreary background in the pelting rain.

Jared watched the students particularly, rushing about in the storm, while he complacently filed out orders. They always made him whimsical, even if he'd never been interested in anything enough to spend four years poring over books about it. But still.

A life in another life that he might have lived.

He caught a glimpse at the television blaring in the corner loudly.

The anchor's voice was muffled, and the screen flashed to show an overhead view of a grand theatre, with arching doorways, and a brightly lit stage upon which a solo piano sat. Immediately, even though the sound was faint, and the television badly tuned, he could pick out the notes, and his mind ran ahead out of habit, and fingers drummed against his thigh briefly. His eyes flickered to the screen again as it changed to show the interview.

It paused momentarily on the image of Ryan Godfrey.

He watched for a moment, just enough for the pang of jealousy to die out complacently.

Jared looked away. The bustle of the store let him lose himself in its melody, rhythmic and hypnotizing.

hatred

Neema Ejercito

A cento of H. G. Wells' The Shape of Things to Come

Hate-drenched brains
 Flowers that open in a rain of filth
 American . . . individualist phrases & precautions
[businessperson] refuses to change & get out of the way
 British . . . imperialist assumptions
imperialist administration
 Russian . . . false psychology & harsh [Marxist] jargon
doctrinaire party [person]

Feast of horror
 Suffered & . . . gone
 Humiliation & quickening of the military mind
 Belligerent science, multiplicity of its own inventions
 Dismay & torment [humankind]
 Spread ill health & hate
 Demoralize & *destroy* industrial life
 Loosen every bond that hold [people] together
 No vision of the world as a whole *at all*

Here frightful explosives
 There stores of disgusting disease germs
 Fantastically murderous gas
 First breath under the smacks of an unforgiving world
 [We] permitted [Hitler/Trump/Duterte/Bolsonaro/Putin] to seize power & shatter [our] republic
 stifle public discussion
 destroy [our] liberties
 Instinctive hostilities, spasmodic impulses
Knee-jerk reactions

Gratified . . . spite with bad news & malicious gossip
 Morbid, infectious [but] preventable relapse
 Prone . . . [to] loss of rational control
 Chronic condition of vindictive disapproval
 Nursing of resentment
 Search for reprisals & revenges
 Grudges them happiness
 The bitter unconsoling mockery
 The tremulous triumph of smearing

The hated object

CRISTINA CRESCENZO

My name is Cristina Crescenzo and I love to write. Low Entropy is a great organization that lets me do that with topics I am interested in while I am still trying to figure things out. Above all, I just hope my writing connects with someone and that I continue spreading positivity and awareness of mental health and the disabled community.

My Grandma Taught Me

Cristina Crescenzo

Photo by UnSplash

In moments when I am feeling down and I don't feel like I have grown at all as a person, I like to go back to the start and try to remember the times when I was learning and accomplishing the most basic things, granted often a little later than most. For instance, I didn't learn to walk till I was four, I didn't learn to swim in the deep end of the pool till I was nine and I couldn't tie my shoes till I was 13. However, I can't afford to be too upset at my disability and the fact that it caused a hitch in my development, because though those milestones took me a while to reach,

I got to them eventually, and that's the important thing.

In addition to reminiscing on the lessons I have learned by myself, I also take the time to think about the important pieces of wisdom that were given to me by the people I care about most and have stuck by me.

I happen to have come across some old voice memos on my phone labeled "Wisdom," with four different recordings. I would like to think that I made these recordings because subconsciously I knew that I



would need them for a day when I was frustrated with my life. Thus, when I pressed play on the first memo, the voice that came over the speaker was my grandmother's. She is a strong woman whom I have always loved and admired, one reason being her "I won't let anybody walk over me" attitude. As the years pass, I find myself wanting to cherish her and the time we have together even more than before. I want to make sure that every memory, and the words that live inside each one, stay ingrained in my brain forever. Therefore, I want to share a bit of

“some bridges don't mend once they've been burned, so there is no point in continuing to breathe in the smoke.”

the important advice that she has given me and that I will hold on to for the rest of my life.

One lesson I learned was that there are some relationships you have to move on from, even if it is hard to do, especially when you're young and you want to cling to the happy memories and the feelings you felt at the time. They don't matter anymore if all that you do in the end is hurt each other and cause pain. It's just a fact of life that some bridges don't mend once they've been burned, so there is no point in continuing to breathe in the smoke. As a result, I can learn to appreciate and respect my worth by ridding myself of toxicity in the form of a person, despite the memories we made together that linger to this day. I can take it a step further by taking responsibility for my actions, but also by letting go of the guilt and forgiving myself.

At the end of the day, life and our relationships with others is a learning process and it doesn't automatically make me a bad person because some of the choices I made were selfish and cost me a connection to someone I genuinely cared a lot about.

Another important thing to mention is that you are not always guaranteed closure in your life, and that's why it is so important to forgive yourself for the mistakes you made along the way, because not everyone will forgive you, which is a hard but necessary lesson to learn in youth.

In short, though some old feelings and flashes of moments may bubble up to the surface at times, I know in part due to my grandma's words that I should no longer dwell in the past and keep myself from moving forward, because if I don't start I may never become not just person I want to be, but someone who ultimately makes my grandma proud as well. So thank you grams for the constant support. I'll love you till the end of time.

Regret for thankless- ness

Kathy Woudzia

Lessons learned
Stomach churned
What is left
Is not the best

Lost my daughter
God I fought for her
Lost my brother
To name another

20 years of marriage lost
Happy years was the cost
Didn't appreciate what I had
Days go by now feeling sad

I had family, I had friends
All to meet those thankful ends
Life went by so very fast
Now I ruminate about the past

Diagnosed late with bipolar
Now the depression is the controller
Illness made it so that such
Dealing with family was far too much

So I pushed my friends and family away
Luckily some came back to stay
Still I find myself alone
Sitting in an empty home

KATHY WOUZIA Kathy Woudzia is a mother of four children (one deceased) and three grandchildren, the loves of her life. She is passionate about her family, activities with her dog, fitness, reading, drawing and, most of all, writing poetry and short stories. Kathy has a profound interest in mental health and the destigmatization of it.

Manic I had aspirations
I was going to save the nations
Love enveloped me for the world
My daughter, my inspiration, my first baby girl

Now I sit here in depression
What I feel is deep regression
Still have hope that things will change
Thankfulness is not out of range

Thankfulness is evanescent
Fleeting, never realized I was at the crescent
I was lucky, taken care of
Now alone with only God above

Appreciate the things that are small
You'll regret it when you don't have them at all
Start all over, that's the hard part
I don't know if I have it in my heart

Find new purpose, find new thanks
Don't compare, don't give them ranks
Stop comparing to the past
Start a new life so hope can last



Photo by Stian Vesterinen

Land and Legend: Why you should visit Haida Gwaii in April

Norman Galimski

This archipelago is a mix of geologic wonder and myth. In fact, they're often one and the same, from Taaw Tldáaw to the legendary Golden Spruce and countless others.

For the aspiring adventurer, Haida Gwaii can be a wondrous and raw experience of enduring nature. This is best experienced in April.

Not your weekend getaway

Getting to the isolated islands is not easy — even if you hail from somewhere relatively nearby.

From Vancouver, it's a 1,500-kilometre drive just to reach the ferry terminal in Prince Rupert. Then you still have to cross the Hecate Strait — an infamous 80-kilometre span of shallow sea separating the isles from the rest of the world.

If it's not the distance that deters you, it might be mother nature. A typical day and a stormy day are synonymous.

It won't be smooth sailing

Setting sail on the MV Northern Adventure, the waters surrounding the Port of Prince Rupert were tame.

It's April 2, 2022 and a monotone-grey sky with a persistent drizzle sends us off.

As the ferry made its complimentary loop around the harbour, the more seasoned passengers staked their claims to nostalgic nooks and comfy corners. Those

in the know to the unpredictability of the crossing headed to their rented cabins and into bed.

As we floated between the countless fringe of islands of the Northwest, the transition from the protected coastal waters to the Hecate was a physical experience for both passengers and crew.

A rollercoaster of inertia from the ship's motion was felt inside everyone's stomach. The ferry's stern-to-bow vertical movement was also strikingly evident. Looking out the stern windows, a portrait of black ink-coloured clouds filled the sky to then quickly and rhythmically fall into a crackling torrent of white foam.

Five-metre swells exploded against the hull below.

Nervous laughter rippled throughout the passenger decks. Even the regulars were feeling uneasy.

The ship rocked side-to-side, each sway gifting a view of the swirling jade-green depths beneath, beckoning those who stared into it to come closer.

Then the ship's speakers cut the eerie silence with an electric crackle. The voice of a man introducing himself as the captain spoke.

Everyone hushed and listened closely.

"Just please remain seated and, uh, try not to move around until we get to calmer seas," he said.

A storm had hit the region several hours earlier than forecasted by Environment Canada, the captain ex-

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Norman
Galinski



plained, and due to an abundance of caution, the vessel would be turning back to shelter behind the coastal islands until the storm passed.

He would provide an update in two hours.

One woman, a sitting councillor of Old Massett, struck up a conversation with me as we both sat by the window absorbed the force of nature we were experiencing.

She told me about the “old days” of this crossing and how she had once been stuck on the ferry for three days.

“Good thing I booked a cabin,” she laughed.

A short six hours later, the system finally passed and we were given the go-ahead to cross the Hecate.

While calmer, a persistent deep swell kept some passengers on edge as the ship traversed the sea and finally arrived just after midnight at Skidegate Landing.

Land and Legend

For legend-seekers and nature-lovers, Haida Gwaii goes the extra mile.

Snow-capped mountains, dewy meadows, cool wet rainforest, dusty sand dunes, muddy bogs, endless beaches, rivers and ocean — these isolated islands have it all.

It’s all a part of the Haida’s history, culture and legends and should be treated as a relic. Taken all in, enjoyed, and then left the way you find it.

Driving up Highway 16, you’ll zip by many a small and delightful wonder. If you don’t keep a sharp eye out, you’ll miss them.

Some are just out of sight of the pavement, while others require you to strap on your rainboots and race to beat the tide before it leaves you stranded several kilometres down the beach.

The latter can be found tucked behind the town of Tlell at the southern edge of Naikoon Provincial Park.

If you brave the turning of the tides, you can stroll through the forest, out onto the muddy beach trail and toward sandy cliffs to find laying, just out of reach of dry land, the shipwreck of the Pesuta.

This lonely wooden skeleton marks the beginning for those who come to journey the more than 100

kilometres of beach and forest trails of Naikoon Provincial Park.

Sleep to the sound of waves

On the opposite end of the park, on its north coast, lies Agate Beach.

As Highway 16 ends, the pavement disappears and my blue Honda Civic SI rolls onto the dirt road. It’s April, so it’s more like a supple and slippery mud, similar to wet potter’s clay, which repeatedly gives way to camouflaged pot holes only visible at the last moment.

However, after traversing the tricky track and observing the comically surprised looks from locals seeing a vehicle that has no right being there, my car arrived at Agate Campground.

Rolling up to the shoreline, I stepped out of my car and onto the edge of the world.

Looking north, straight out across the dark sapphire sea, are the peaks of Alaska. With a slight tilt of your head westward, you’ll get lost across the endless Pacific.

It’s a sensational sight.

Sitting on the edge of the beach, separated by only driftwood, the view punches me in the face with a stunning vista of cold sea squeezing itself between southern Alaska and myself.

Strolling down the beach are all types of minerals, including the beach’s namesake, agate. It’s a translucent rock with a slightly white tint you can find in abundance along the beaches of Haida Gwaii.

They’re “the diamonds nobody wants,” a passing local explained.

Proudly standing where the beach ends is Taaw Tldáaw (Tow Hill). An ancient volcano half-cleaved away by glaciers and relentless waves, it now looks over Haida Gwaii and its sister islands to the north.

It’s the site of an old, but living, Haida legend. To this day, when the tide is right, you can still witness what remains of the myth.

It was exactly the kind of place I was looking for — a perfect place to fall asleep with no one around to share it with.

I was completely exposed and immersed in the elements.

As I bundled myself into my makeshift bed in the passenger seat of my Civic, I watched the sky melt away to an acrylic-red sunset and then dozed off as an armada of stars guided me to unconsciousness with the helping hand of a steady whispering wind.

Wake to the sound of the wind

I woke up from a less-than-perfect sleep.

The gentle wind had turned into a hard front during the night. I had woken up with a pit in my stomach, fearing I had made a grave error.

I was completely exposed and immersed in the elements.

However, I made it through the pitch-black night with an ungraceful and panicked effort to move my car, and only shelter, behind a thin line of trees as a wind-break.

It was a lesson learned at the right time.

As morning came, the wind had opened up the skies and the warmth began to extract the moisture from the surrounding rainforest. Beams of sublime sunlight pierced glowing columns of light through the rich air for half the day as I hiked through the forest.

Shelter from the storm



A responsible sense of urgency took over, but April is for adventuring. So a hotel was still out of the

question. After all, all the campsites are free in the off-season on Haida Gwaii. I just needed to find the opposite version of Agate Campground and hope a tree didn't fall on me in my sleep.

So, before sundown I drove back down to the southern end of Naikoon Provincial Park and headed for Misty Meadows.

It's a perfect location for adventure-seekers looking to shelter from storms. It's enclosed by a protective pine forest, yet only a few minutes walk from the shore.

The preparation paid off and the dense pines muffled the thrashing winds and protected me from the storm, which hit in the middle of the night.

Stronger storms often last well into the next day. So, for those eager to witness nature's wraith, Haida Gwaii is the place to be.

You'll see how the scale of the winds can morph the sea into a torrent and how all the birds come out to fly playfully over the edge of the dangerous crashing waves for it to then all blow gently away to open and sunny skies once again as if it never happened.

It sounds like your next adventure waiting to happen.

NORMAN GALIMSKI

Norman Galimski is a multimedia storyteller who aims to tell the story of people and places often overlooked and unseen through photos, film and words. He is currently based in Vancouver B.C. and can be reached at normangalimski@gmail.com, [@Norman_Galimski](https://www.instagram.com/Norman_Galimski) on social media and at normangalimski.com.

