

Stories

poetry, prose, and personal reflection

Vol. 11 — August 2022



*And the best way to know who we are
is often to find out how others see us.*

~ Paulo Coelho

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Publisher

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Stories is published monthly, on the first day of each month. Submissions are due on the 25th of the month preceding the month of publication.

Please submit by email, as a Word doc attachment. Please do not send PDFs. If you are including photos/illustrations to accompany your submission, please put a placeholder in your word doc, indicating where each graphic is to be placed, and send the graphics themselves as JPEG attachments. Please do not embed graphics in your word doc.

First-time writers for *Stories* are asked to send a brief (two to three sentence) bio with their submission.

Because of difficulties with some articles sent in the body of emails, we cannot accept submissions in this format. Please send a word doc attachment.

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Publisher's Ponderings



I am writing this piece in the midst of loud hammering, surrounded by box after box of laminate flooring, and displaced items from various rooms in my house. Ahh ... home renovations!

I have always joked with people that I should not be left alone to my own devices, to sit in solitude ... because it is then that I start to really think! "I could do this ..." "I could do that ..." There is no end to the ideas that seem to flow effortlessly, adding more items to an already over-extended To Do list.

Don't get me wrong ... I am by no means complaining. I do like being busy, and I love what I have the privilege of doing every day, through One Thousand Trees.

The home renovations have been in the back of my mind for several years now. Deck refinishing, powder room redecorating, kitchen backsplash, and replacing all carpeting with laminate. What a MASSIVE job!! I am extremely fortunate to have found someone willing to work around me, and my furniture and other belongings, going room by room, and deck board by deck board! The decks are stunning, and I already see that the floors are going to be just as beautiful, when it's all done.

As items are removed, room by room, I have taken the opportunity of being very mindful, and determining what to keep and what to give away, and how best to store/organize it all, so as to contribute to my own sense of peace, and enable me to work in as efficient a manner as I can.

It felt so good to give away several boxes of clothing to The Clothing Closet, Guelph's distribution centre of free clothing, and I am looking forward to dropping off three cartons of books for the Friends of Guelph Public Library's book sale, which takes place this October.

I am using this renovation time not only to purge, clean and organize, but also to reflect on what is most important to me. What matters. And I can't help looking at the whole process metaphorically... knowing that, after the initial disarray and chaos, there will be peace and beauty, and a clear path ahead, on which I can continue doing what I love.

Lisa



Seeing Ourselves

Kelly-Anne Whalen

Am I the mother of the clever ones, the wife of the capable one, the daughter of the timeless ones, the sister of the funny ones, the cousin of the kind ones, the friend of the true ones? Am I the woman who chooses to keep dreaming even in a world so full of nightmares?

Am I the woman with hands forever soiled with ink, earth and flour, dutifully tending to my chores while my soul roams free? Am I the lady with a head full of music, poetry and inappropriate one-liners, seen walking the fields with her loyal shepherd by her side? The harried mother – late to pick up her children, but so very happy to see them?

Am I the little blonde girl with bouncing curls, formed by her mother's warm hands, shy smile and twinkling eyes? Am I the creative energy, a little chaotic, but here to spread the abundance of light and love I've been given? Am I the old soul, the wild child, the hard worker, the emotional one, the laughter through tears kind, the country in her walk kind, the graceful grit, the sometimes too quick to react, the always searching for truth, the one who is forever being tested because she came here to learn and will never back down from a meaningful fight? The over-sharer, the first to texter, the never on timer, the a little too loud talker, the forget your birthday but remember your favourite cookie and will bake it for you on a random Tuesday-er?

Am I the girl afraid she'll never be loved or the woman who loves so hard and so sure, who faces her fears, heals her old wounds and strives to never wound another? The woman who uses her words to form connections, to drive out the loneliness; who shares her poetry in the hopes of brightening a day, balming a cracked heart, enlivening a tired soul? The one who shares it all: the good and the bad, the truth and the unfair stories we tell ourselves, the beautiful and the not so much, so that others will know and

understand that they too are whole and well and doing just fine? The poet whose first book signing and poetry reading showed her that the woman she has bravely and authentically presented to the world, the parts of herself that she has cultivated and willingly shared, have been lovingly seen and wildly accepted? The local author who has made her people proud just by being so openly herself?

I am the one who made the choice to take what my pen scribbled on paper and turn it into a book with wings that will carry it Heaven knows where, with arms that will hold you up, hug you when you need it and give you a little push when you're dragging your feet. A book that can carry my light and my story into homes I've never stepped foot in. A book full of love and truth.

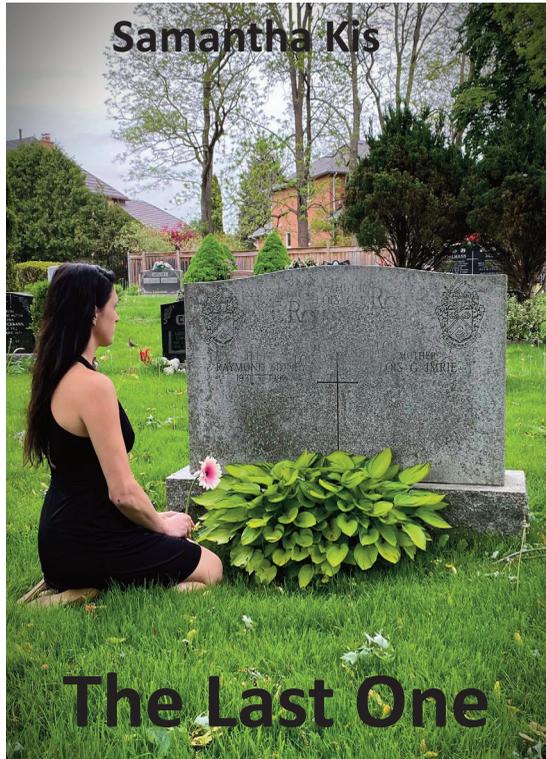
That's the power of knowing ourselves and the legacy we want to leave. That's the power of connection and community. That's the power of words. And that's the power of allowing ourselves to be seen.

* * *

My Writer-Heart

Arlene Davies-Fuhr

as darkness settles round me
liminal light emerges.
night prepares
to welcome day.
silhouettes of maples
dance with the breeze
that tickles their branches.
out of shadows
bird bath, inukshuk,
lavender, take shape
to keep me company.
the embracing darkness,
the murmuring wind,
expand the horizon
of my writer-heart.



The Story Behind the Story

The Last One, by Samantha Kis

This story is one that has lived inside of me for a long time, the characters developing and growing in real time with me. Intimate partner violence is an incredibly sensitive topic, which people often shy away from. However, just because it occurs behind closed doors doesn't mean it isn't happening. Through the lives of the characters, I was hoping to bring a new light to what people consider to be intimate partner violence.

For five years I worked as a youth addictions counselor; I started off as a caseworker on the female unit. I worked my last year as an 'aftercare worker,' providing community support to the residents who had completed their residential treatment program. Amongst the female residents there was always a common theme; almost each young woman had experienced intimate partner violence, though many of them were unable to identify this.

I remember one night I was watching a movie with the female residents; it was some cookie cutter 'rom-com' film. The lights were low, the girls had pop and ships, I was sitting at the table trying to complete my paperwork in the dim light coming from the television. The movie was at a part where the boyfriend and girlfriend were getting ready for bed. The girlfriend crawls under the covers, while the boyfriend gives a cheeky smile and slides closer to her. The girlfriend tells him that they won't be having sex that night, then rolls over and goes to sleep.

While the majority of the girls laughed out loud at the boyfriend's disappointed face, I heard a small voice to my right say quietly, "You can do that?" My body froze and I fought the bile that threatened to come up. This young girl had just realized that a person was allowed to say "no" to sex, and that the other person was supposed to respect that. That was the moment a fire lit inside of me, and I knew that I wanted to fight for those women who either didn't know they could say no, or tried and weren't heard.

Although *The Last One* is a story of heartbreak, pain, fear and suffering, it is also a story of love, family, strength and perseverance.

* * *

Is Life Passing You By?

Bill Brubacher

What if you woke up one morning feeling lost, wondering what you were doing with your life and where were you going? Questioning if your life was passing you by...

This probably happens to a lot of us. The question is, what do we do with that feeling – those questions? Well, every day of our lives we wake up to that same choice, whether we're aware of it or not. And I'd be willing to bet, the answer is mostly always the same, and you know what that is.

Do we embrace it and say with conviction, “Ok – today is the day. I’m going to change my life in some way”? Or, do we think, “Oh, it’s that annoying thought back again! I wish it would leave me alone!”?



In simple terms the choice is between letting life live us, or taking charge of our life and making our own decisions (to the extent we can). There’s one exception ... when life has made that choice for us, either by getting us fired, giving us an illness, involving us in an accident or in some way ‘catching up to us’ critically/ negatively. Happens to us all, doesn’t it?

In the first case above, we call it “going with the flow,” possibly thinking there may be benefits. If we let life make our decisions, we don’t have to think so hard, and maybe it will do a better job than we would do. The problem with that kind of thinking is that life doesn’t really owe us anything; nothing in fact, because life doesn’t work like that. Think of it this way: what could we ever do for life to earn or justify special treatment from it?

We might also believe by letting life live us (not challenging it), we then have life to blame, not ourselves, if anything goes wrong. And a sign of that is when we say, for example, “I’ve got no luck” or “I never had a chance.” The old “woulda – coulda – shoulda” rational putting the outcome on something we had no control over. But is life really a lottery? A game of chance? It is, when we don’t engage our choice in our life’s decisions.

So it seems the first choice is the easiest in terms of what is required of us; namely, nothing or little, other than just going along, hoping for the best. Unfortunately life is never a sure thing. It’s not always the ‘best bet.’ There are risks which we often minimize by thinking we’ll deal with them either later or if and when they arise.

Clearly this is an avoidance philosophy, living like a turtle under its own shell, thinking it will protect us, especially if we move slowly enough and don’t make any waves. We can’t be blamed if we don’t do anything. It’s the story of many ‘un-lived’ lives, lived as much as possible safely – keeping our heads down. However, let’s not forget, none of us really get a ‘pass’ through life, by living this way. We still have responsibilities which we are accountable for, like families to raise, money to make, reputations to protect, happiness to pursue. All of these do better when we’re engaged in the process rather than preoccupied or distracted.

So what’s the other choice? Oh yes, it’s to wake up in the morning as a leader, a decision maker. Each of us, in our own way, can choose to exercise more decisions than many of us do, to the extent we are willing to take charge of our life. Even small choices can have big consequences.

I believe many of us are afraid to dream. We’re afraid of failure, what others will think, how we will be judged. So we remain invisible in the huge ‘pack’ of humanity. We don’t assume we can captain our own ship. But a ship is simply a vessel, and some are ocean liners and others are canoes. You see, size doesn’t matter – it’s freedom to make one’s own decisions that makes the difference.

We’re told those who are happiest are those who feel they have a say, or options in their lives rather than live lives of “quiet desperation” – dictated by life. How much control do you have – or are you taking in your life? How much of life is living you and how much are you living life?

(continued on page 5)

MONTH IN Review



A PRACTICAL GUIDE TO SHEEP DAIRYING



Eric and Elisabeth Bzikot



Above: Hot Off the Press - *A Practical Guide to Sheep Dairying*, by Eric and Elisabeth Bzikot. It was wonderful to be able to personally deliver their books, and check out their farm!

Below: Kelly-Anne Whalen, at her very successful book signing for her poetry anthology, *A Wild Hallelujah*, published last month.



We get up every morning with a choice that we make mostly unconsciously, which in many cases is to let life live us. In other words, there's too much else to think about: distraction, preoccupation.

What if we woke up tomorrow morning and instead of stepping aside and letting life 'drive' us, we decided to take life for a ride instead? We got behind the wheel of our life – sat in the driver's seat? Ever wonder how that might feel and where that might take you?



Well, if you've never tried, you'll never know. And maybe you've deprived yourself of the adventure of a lifetime, of doing something different and amazing for yourself.

Now it doesn't have to be wild. After all, you don't jump in a car for the first time, and depress the gas pedal to see if you can go from 0 to 60 in 30 seconds. That could be both dangerous and disastrous unless, of course, you are one of those incredibly lucky people. But why risk it? What are your chances?

So what's the alternative? Well, as with anything that's new, requiring some courage, we go slowly at first and maybe 'drive' to the end of the driveway a few times – get the feel of it. Then down the street a few times.... And in time, who knows where you'll be going?

That's what I call 'living life' rather than letting life 'drive/live you.' They say that if you're not going forward, you're going backward. Maybe that's true. Alternatively, if you're neither going forward nor backward, you're standing still. And standing still is a lot like standing on one leg. You can do it for a while, but then your leg gets tired, gives out and you fall over.

So maybe it's time to revisit where you're going in life, and see if life is passing you by. Are you missing opportunities of being more aware of the decisions you can make, and of making more choices that can affect your life in a positive manner?

If you're ready to make a change, then this piece is about getting a head-start on tomorrow's question. Like doing a bit of homework in preparation for tomorrow's life tests.

Since this is August, and next month is already September and we get back to some kind of steady routine (like it or not), maybe now is the time you might want to consider your alternatives – your choices. There's a big one that comes up every day.

Question: Is life passing you by? What kind of life do you want to live? Are your goals yours – or life's? If you wish to take your life back, then the first step is always just that, and always the most important, because that's the one – the real one, and that takes courage.

Begin with clearing your mind of any limitations. They are there to scare you off – to prevent you from taking some control of your life in order to live a better life. It's your ego, afraid you might discover you own strength and break free of its control. You might enjoy being in the driver's seat.

And where do you start? Well, it all starts by being aware of the times you let others make decisions. Go easy on yourself. It will take a little time. When you see opportunities to make a choice or give a decision. Do it! And do it. And do it. It'll get easier the more

you do it. You'll gradually get over your fear and it will feel good for a change. Start small.

When you're ready, move on to choosing what changes you'd like to make in your life. Again, start with small changes, small steps – and watch them grow! Again you'll feel good – then better all the time.

Remember, it's never too late to start! Never! No matter your age, your circumstances, your condition. This September can be the first of the rest of your life. It only takes one new choice to change your life. So when you get up tomorrow morning, what will it be, a shiny new life waiting for you to drive away in, or the same car as was in your driveway yesterday?

Are you going to let life pass you by? It's your choice... Go for it! And if it works out, please let me know how good you feel, would you? I'm betting on you!

* * *

A Letter to My Saboteurs

Francine Houston

My dear beleaguered saboteurs,

First and foremost, I wish to say thank you. I know that this letter finds you in fine fettle. I apologize for not writing to you each individually, but as I know that you share everything, I thought this would be beneficial. I promise you that I will address you all in turn, as we move forward.

I know that you have all worked in concert all these years. You have worked hard to keep me safe. For that I am grateful. You have allowed me to stay out of danger, avoiding conflict when it would have gotten me hurt. You have given me the tools to be aware of other people's moods and biases so that I do not share those parts of myself that are most tender, and would have been damaged in the sharing. Thank you.

I am aware that your perspective has been to protect and provide me with a safe place, always. It was, for so long, important to be hidden.

I am grateful for those of you who have kept me going: those of you who made sure that I achieved, in spite of the work done by others of you to interrupt my mental will.

Thank you for giving me a spirit of curiosity. Exploring and expanding and experiencing the world has been amazing! I recognize that this has allowed me to see things and do things I might not have otherwise had the courage to try.

Dear one, the one who looks after the fine details: you have my blessings. You have given me the capacity to get the details right. With your input I have been able to create some beautiful art, and have learning to be careful and precise.

To my friend who lies mostly quiet: you are the manager, the one who prefers to be in charge, but you often don't take a seat at the table. You often show up at inopportune times, but I know that, when your presence is felt, you feel that danger is imminent. In those moments you have formulated and executed plans that have kept me from what might have been bodily harm.

I am so indebted to you all. In teams, and individually, you have created systems that you felt were necessary to keep things in my life flowing, and to keep me mostly out of harm's way.

Now, my loves, I am here to make a heartfelt request. I am asking you to please take on new roles. I recognize that you have created this parliament, and many coalitions over time. I am requesting that, rather than trying to keep me safe from what you have seen as old threats, you now support me, in similar coalitions, but with the purpose of propelling me forward toward our Higher Purpose.

At this point in our lives, we must shift into doing what we made a commitment to do before we came back onto this plane this time around, or we may run out of time. We all know that the roles that you have been enacting are now obsolete. I ask for your support in doing different, in doing better, now that we know better.

I know you will not leave, that you are an integral part of who I am. I ask, nay implore, you: elevate us, rather than keeping us hidden. Share your wisdom and insights. I need your tools. I simply need them to create something more elevated, more rarefied. I am in awe. I know that we can do this.

* * *

Mysterious Goddess

Deb Speck

My winged lady under glass
Purples, pinks, blues, greens and yellow
Your face is hidden from me
I want to know if you approve
A white light surrounds you
Creating a space from the dark rays
Of grey and green mixed with blue
Your arms and breasts in green and white
Suggesting a difference there
Possibly even a safe place to lie
Your purple and pink feathers keeping me warm
Could I hide in your flowing skirt
Is that a storm I see beyond
Are you in fact breaking it up
With your sheer force of goodness



Gnomes of the Round Mushroom

Sandra Wilson

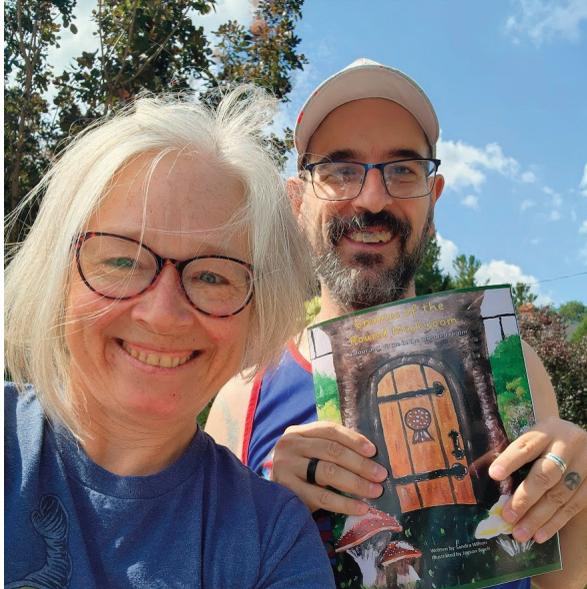
Jayson Tench and I are friends and painting buddies. When Jayson started developing a series of gnome character paintings for a show he was going to sell at, I thought it would be fun to develop characters together, with him painting them as gnomes and me writing a little story about them. It didn't take long for *Gnomes of the Round Mushroom* to get started! We were inspired by the Knights of the Round Table who took an oath of chivalry. Knights were seen as virtuous defenders of good, and Jayson and I have designed gnomes that focus on a specific characteristic to help make their realm a place of kindness, acceptance and good.

Gnomes of the Round Mushroom features stories and art of virtuous gnomes that live in the wooded realm. Each gnome story focuses on a particular characteristic, a virtue, that not only makes them a great character, but can build great character in kids too. Both Jayson and I feel strongly about inspiring kids to learn what they can do to make the world a better place, and through this book, we offer thoughts and ideas to help them do that!

Jayson, who was born with Cerebral Palsy, has faced many challenges throughout his life. By creating these characters, he wants to help kids develop core values by connecting with the gnomes. He also wants to show the world that while one is physically disabled, one can be *artly abled*. His paintings were the inspiration behind the stories, and he even created gnome characters of myself, the writer, and himself, the illustrator. With the addition of a draw your own gnome page he hopes to inspire kids to try some art too!

I have worked with children for many years and have even written books with classrooms of kids. I encourage people to have conversations with kids to not only show them that their voice is important but also to help them learn and grow. With the

characteristics described in the gnome stories I hope kids can understand, in a fun way, what it takes to create a world of tolerance, love, kindness and acceptance. This book, like many of my other books, can get everyone talking about these characteristics and more.



Gnomes of the Round Mushroom is available now through Amazon, or my website, www.quiteacharacter.ca.

* * *

Has a Butterfly Ever Kissed Your Nose?

Lisa Browning

I read a book one day, that talked about how people can make things appear just by thinking about them. It seemed like magic to me, so I decided to try an experiment.

For the first part of my experiment, I thought about green cars. Sure enough, I saw green cars everywhere. There were big green cars and little green

cars. Lime green cars and dark green mini cars. Ugly green cars and pretty green cars. All kinds of green cars were everywhere I looked.

Hmm, I thought. Maybe it really is magic!

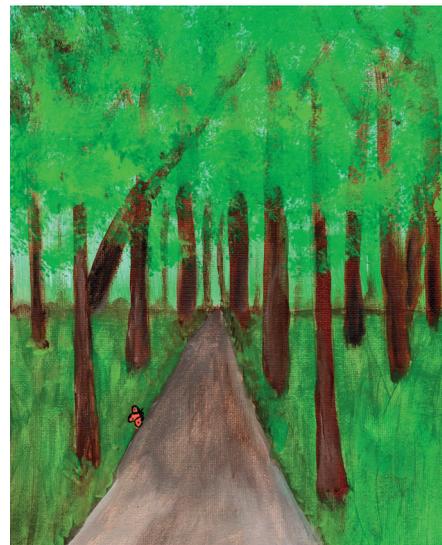
I decided to try something else. This time, I picked something I really love butterflies! I love butterflies because they are symbols of hope and joy. And they are beautiful, and they make me smile.

So for the second part of my experiment, I thought and I thought and I thought about butterflies.

After I started thinking about butterflies, the first house I saw had a huge metal butterfly attached to the brick!

Later that day, I took a walk on a trail through some trees. It is my favourite trail, and I walk there a lot. And I know that magic often happens on the trail, among the trees.

All of a sudden, a butterfly landed on the path, right in front of me! It waited there until it was sure that I had seen it. Then, it flew about ten feet ahead of me on the trail, and landed again. As soon as I caught up to it, the butterfly flew another ten feet ahead of me, and landed on the trail again.



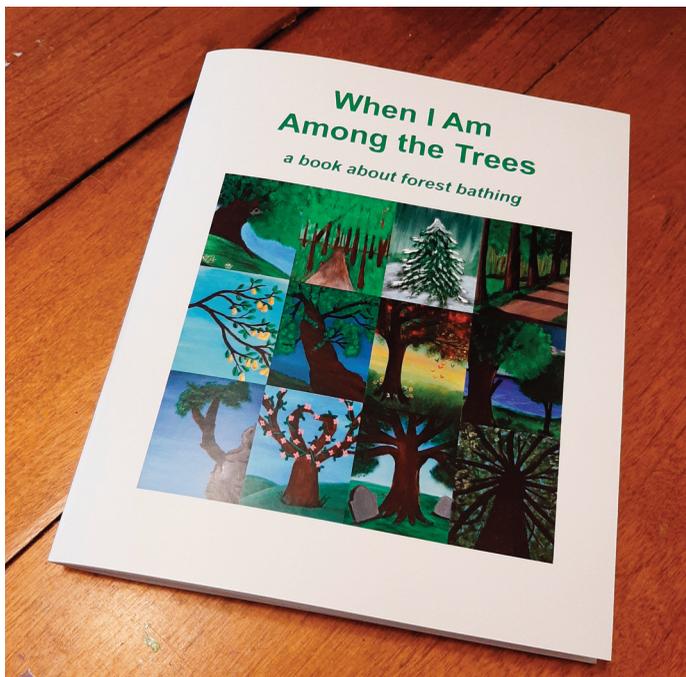
This went on until I reached the end of the trail. It was amazing! My experiment was a success!

When I got to the end of the trail, I was sad to see the butterfly leave. It had been so much fun walking along the trail with my beautiful new friend.

As I turned to go back along the trail to my house, everything seemed to get really quiet and still, and I felt really peaceful. And then, all of a sudden, my friend the butterfly flew back down from on top of the trees. She flew right in front of my face, and she lightly kissed me on the nose. I knew that she was giving me a message, and I knew that she wanted me to know that she loved me.

Even if a butterfly has never kissed your nose, whenever you see one, always remember that you are loved too. My friend the butterfly wants you to know that, and so do I!

This story is one of the 12 stories included in When I Am Among the Trees, a collection of children's stories about the benefits of forest bathing, and being out in nature. Available at www.ottbookstore.com or The Bookshelf in Guelph.

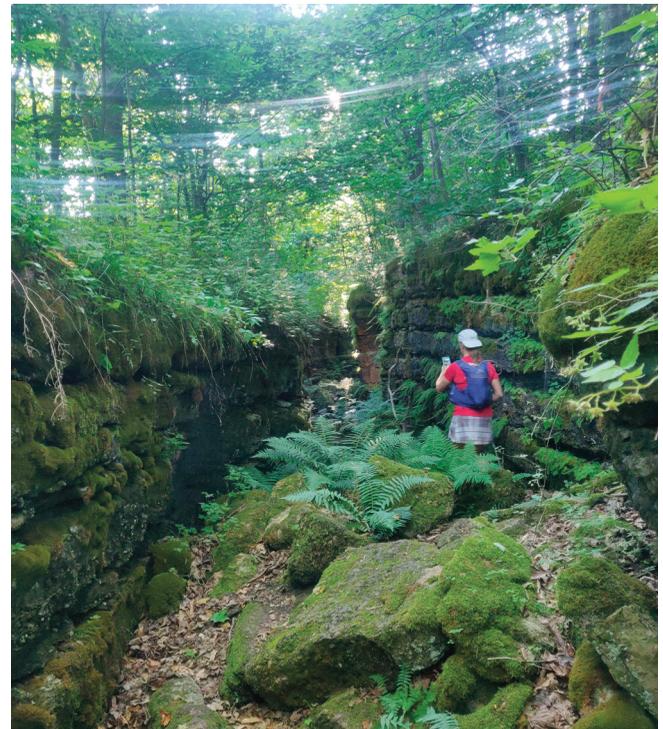


Bruce Trail, End to End (Conclusion)

Clay Williams

In early June 2021, my good friend Debbie and I decided that we would hike the full length of the Bruce Trail, all 900+ km, by doing day hikes on weekends throughout the coming year. This is the last chapter in our adventures on and off the trail.

We were on the Bruce trail for more than half of the weekends in the past year, and as we approached the busy summer months we eventually ran out of weekends that were not already booked with family events and races. To finish off the few kilometres of the trail, we decided to take shorter hikes during a few weekday evenings instead of sticking to weekends. If we hadn't hiked in the evenings, we would have had to wait until late September to finish, and we just wanted desperately to get it done. We hiked our way in 30 km or 40 km long stitches on weekends from Beaver Valley westward toward the Bruce Peninsula, and then the final piece of the Niagara section in shorter evening hikes.



Stories: poetry, prose, and personal reflection

On June 5th we went about 38 km just west of Beaver Valley. It was the day after I ran a 50 km race so my legs were pretty tired and I could feel it on every downhill section that we found. It was nice to be out of the Beaver Valley area with its long climbs and descents. Then July 4th was my first day back to the trail after an eleven day motorcycle road trip, and I hadn't done any hiking or running during the trip. A friend named Grant met us in Durham, and joined us for the 40k hike that day. We were on the trail that was a little closer to Owen Sound, and the trail had far fewer big hills, but the terrain was getting a lot more rocky and difficult to walk on at a decent pace. It was a primer for what was about to come.



The next few hiking days seem like a whirlwind. On July 9th we drove up to Cape Croker on the Bruce Peninsula and spent the next two days hiking 109 km southward toward Owen Sound. We would hike 25k, took a break, shuffle the cars to the next section, then repeat. We tried to get a few hours of sleep during the

night, but weren't very successful. I guess we learned a few things about sleeping in cars. On July 17th, exactly a year after we started our quest, we finished the last of the trail in the Owen Sound area. Of all of the sections of the Bruce Trail that we hiked over the past year, the Owen Sound area has the most rugged, rock-strewn, mosquito and deer fly-infested, beautiful, discouraging, dangerous trails.



We spent a lot of time in the area climbing over large broken rocks in areas where it looks like the rock is slowly breaking away from the face of the escarpment, and tumbling down hill in super slow motion. There were dozens of places where we stepped over crevices whose bottoms disappeared into blackness. Every time I stepped over one of those gaps I would tell myself not to look down, but couldn't stop my reflexes from making me look down. I would have a sudden sinking feeling accompanied by a reflexive sharp inhale, then move on. There were places where we squeezed between the rocks in spaces only slightly wider than my shoulders. There were sections of trekking through chest high grass and undergrowth, being eaten alive by DEET-resistant deer flies. We were VERY happy and exhausted when we finished that area.



We started doing evening hikes over the last few days of July in the Niagara section between Grimsby and Queenston Heights. Compared to Owen Sound, it was beautiful. There were far fewer areas of rough terrain, and over the last three outings we actually ran a lot of the trail. We were surprised on two occasions by deer that we got really close to before they trotted and bounced away. On the very last day, we had a 12 km section to hike on a warm summer evening. We ran almost all of it, rather than walking, spurred on by the anticipation of the finish. On Day 32, July 26th, 2022, we completed the end-to-end hike of the Bruce Trail! Debbie's mom and dad, as well as her husband and her daughter met us at the Southern Terminus; a stone cairn marking the southern end of the Bruce Trail.

Before I started my first Canal Pursuit for Mental Health run to Ottawa in 2015, I asked people to sign a Canadian flag if they or someone they know is struggling with depression, anxiety or any mood disorder, and I promised to carry that flag the full distance of the run as a symbol that they don't have to carry their burdens alone. I've had the honour of carrying that flag up onto Parliament Hill seven years in a row, and I carried it all the time we were on the Bruce Trail.



Since I'm a numbers person, and so is Debbie, I have been keeping track of "the numbers" since the start of our adventure. Here's a bullet list:

- We hiked on 32 days, although one was 23-1/4 hours long and another consisted of 25 hours on our feet in a 34 hour weekend (we had a nap).
- More than half of the weekends in the past year we were hiking.
- We hiked on nine Bruce Trail sections, consisting of 42 individual maps in the guidebook..
- There were only five days when we didn't complete all of the main trails on a map.
- We hiked for 214 hours. If it were non-stop, that would be about 9 days.
- We burned roughly 220,000 calories, equivalent to 106 pounds of bacon.
- We ate gummy bears, barbecue peanuts, trail mix, lamb burgers in marinara, rice Krispie squares and bacon bagels. Warmed up after the cold hikes with hot soup and stew, and cooled off after the hot ones with ginger ale and ice babies.

- We saw forest floors carpeted in ferns, hills strewn with trilliums, several deer, a porcupine, a couple of live racoons, a couple of dead racoons, lots of squirrels and chipmunks, and a cute little baby skunk.
- There were over 16,000 metres of elevation gain. For comparison, Mount Everest is 8,848.86 m above sea level, with the summit roughly 6,000 m above the first base camp.
- Based on the official maps, we hiked 888 KM, but my GPS tracked us at 941 km.
- We hiked in all four seasons, with temperatures ranging from -25° to +29°C, rain, fog, sun, hip-deep snow, slippery mud and parched cracked dirt.
- The dark side of taking in all of the breathtaking views, moss-covered stones and cliff edges: we drove about 13,700 km to get to our start and end points, likely burned around 110 litres of gas and spent about 171 hours sitting in cars.



Happiness

Colleen Heighington

Happiness is ... waking up each morning
And being thankful for each new day ...
Trying to do our very best
Regardless of what may come our way ...

Happiness is ... looking all around and seeing
The many small blessings found everywhere ...
Like smelling a bouquet of fresh cut flowers
Is like ... a breath of fresh air ...

Happiness is ... loving your family and friends
And knowing that you are loved too ...
Forgiving one another where there is conflict
Will always be the right thing to do ...

Happiness is ... knowing that there is always
someone with you
Especially when trials and tribulations come your
way ...

Always remember to go to Him in prayer
He will see things through ... each and every day ...

But mostly Happiness is ... knowing that this
someone is God, our Heavenly Father
Who loves and cares for us so ...
And by trusting Him each day and night
God is our Happiness for all of our tomorrows!!!!!!



I've ordered our end-to-end badges, and I'm looking forward to the next adventure, for me a 750 km relay run to Ottawa in August and a 100 mile race in September, for Debbie a few of the "14ers" in Colorado in August then rim-to-rim in the Grand Canyon in October.

* * *

Guess Who's Back In Town??!?

S.O.S.
Stories On Stage



Do you have a story to tell?

Lisa Browning, Admin & Promo
lisa@onethousandtrees.com

Rob Osburn, MC & Production
rob@bnrmediagroup.ca

www.storiesonstage.ca
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S.O.S.
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Your Hosts: Lisa & Rob



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Kis**

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To Feminist*



**Barb
Lustgarten
Evoy**

Crafting a Healthier Life Lens



**Bob
McCabe**

What A Gift!



**Kat
O'Brien**

Reclaiming My Magick



**Tanya
Olsen**

*You Fall, You Learn,
You Get Back Up*



**Bob
MacLean**

*Musical
Guest*

Tickets available at: www.storiesonstage.ca

This Month's Contributors

Bill Brubacher

Bill is a long-time resident of the Region of Waterloo, a former successful business entrepreneur and an internationally published author of 15 national bestselling books. He is a Certified Bereavement Specialist, and a Certified Conflict Coach/ Elder Mediator, helping seniors and their families through difficult time through Caregivers Oasis, Pathfinder Canada, and Heart and Soul Bereavement for Seniors. Bill has recently authored a new book about his amazing life's journey. His book, *Against the Odds*, is a ten-year testament to his incredible emotional, spiritual and mental tenacity as he fought to reinvent himself after experiencing tremendous loss. His model and message are an inspiration to all who struggle to survive in the face of defeat. His latest book, *The Secret Pond*, is a classic love story fantasy about the shared journey of a young boy and an unusual stranger finding healing from grief and loss at a mystical pond in the midst of an ancient magical forest. For more information about his books go to <https://legacypress.ca/> or contact Bill at billbrubacher@gmail.com.

Arlene Davies-Fuhr

Arlene is retired and resides in Guelph. She has been a lay-minister in the United and Mennonite churches, a college English instructor, and an ESL teacher. She has published a workbook on the Psalms and has edited a book of essays. She has travelled widely and currently enjoys playing the ukulele and the mountain dulcimer.

Colleen Heighington

Colleen is happily married to a wonderful husband named Ken. They have been blessed with three beautiful children, and four terrific grandsons. She enjoys reading, writing stories and poetry, and she keeps fit by walking 3 to 4 kilometres every day. Her summers are spent at their trailer in Orillia, and she really enjoys the time she spends with family and friends. She has been a volunteer with Hospice Wellington since 2015.

Francine Houston

Francine is a transformational intuitive, animal lover and fibre artist. She spends her time writing, doing fibre arts, and supporting animals and their human companions in transitional times.

Samantha Kis

Samantha lives in Guelph ON, with her fiancé, four cats and hamster. She has a diploma in Child and Youth Work, and spent five years working as an adolescent mental health and addictions counselor, before deciding to pursue a bachelor's degree in psychology at the University of Guelph. This is Samantha's first novel, which she says will be the first of many.

Deb Speck

Deb started journaling as a teenager to deal with her family life, which led to poetry and memoirs. After Deb retired, she joined a creative writing group through the seniors group in Fergus and they put together 50 word stories jointly in a book called "Stories to Chew On." Deb hopes to write some stories about the fascinating ancestors that she found in her family tree.

Kelly-Anne Whalen

Kelly-Anne has been writing since she was a little girl. Words have always enchanted her; taught her who she is, where she is going and who she is meant to be when she gets there. This, her first book of poetry, takes the broken pieces we all share, the truths and the trials, and offers up a wild, hopeful prayer of peace, gratitude and authentic beauty. She makes a life in rural Ontario with her wildly capable husband, their three kind, creative and charismatic children, an assortment of furry and feathered critters and an ever-growing collection of magical moments and charming memories.

Clay Williams

Clay is a 61-year-old Manitoba-born father of two living in Elmira Ontario with his wife of 40 years. He manages the Engineering Department of a manufacturing company in Kitchener and has worked in Northern Ontario, Germany and South Carolina. Clay is an avid distance runner, having run dozens of marathons and longer runs, and creator of the Canal Pursuit for Mental Health, a 785 km run along two of Canada's longest canals as well as The Monarch Ultra, a 4300 km run following the migration path of Monarch Butterflies.

Sandra Wilson

Sandra is a children's author, educator and illustrator who lives Ontario, Canada. With her writing she hopes to empower and inspire children and help get the conversation started on topics that can make a difference in the life of a child. She believes compassion and understanding are key concepts to learn to create a better world. And stories are a powerful tool to help teach these concepts to children.

**STAY SAFE
STAY HAPPY
KEEP WRITING!**

**Deadline for submissions for September is
Thursday, August 25.**

Here's a focus quote to inspire you ...

The scariest moment is always just before you start.
— Stephen King

