

the bridge

Connecting people, places and ideas across our city from the downtown east

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the bridge exclusive

Fire rips through Corktown rowhouses, a second time



Davies Terrace on Queen East, 2016.

Photo: teenaintoronto.com

Andre Bermon, Publisher

At 9:15 a.m. on June 2, firefighters responded to a four-alarm blaze on a section of rowhouses on Queen St. East near Sumach Street that billowed black smoke across the city's skyline. The 143-year old buildings, known collectively as Davies Terrace, are now victims of two recent fires, the first in April 2018.

Damage from both incidents resulted in the buildings being torn down, creating a large empty lot between Bright and Sumach Streets. Most of the Davies Terrace properties are owned by real estate tycoon Brad J. Lamb.

Over the past couple of years,

fires at Toronto's heritage buildings, often neglected or abandoned, have become all too common. Standing in the way of revitalization or adaptive reuse of old housing stock is a troubling trend of development interests. The city's approach to conservation also puts into question the methods of its Preservation Services, which is mandated to protect heritage through identification, and recommending protection under the Ontario Heritage Act.

According to documents obtained from the Land Registry Office, BJL Sumach Corp., a subsidiary of Brad J. Lamb Realty Inc., purchased five properties on Queen East (471-479), four of which form part



Remaining debris after teardown of buildings, June 20.

Photo: Andre Bermon

of the Davies Terrace, with a mortgage totalling \$5.25 million dated February 20 this year – less than three months before the June fire. Firefighters said the cause was blamed on transients taking refuge in the building. *the bridge* has requested an incident report on the fire.

Within days of the June 2 fire, an investigation by the city deemed 471-475 Queen East structurally unsound, and the owner hired Priestly Demolitions Inc. for removal. By June 20, only two of the six historic rowhouses remained.

The Corktown blaze follows another recent high-profile heritage building fire. In late March, Wellington House, a semi-detached late 19th-centu-

ry Victorian mansion on Wellington Street near Spadina, also owned by Brad Lamb, caught fire twice in a single week.

A member of the Wellington Place Neighbourhood Association said Wellington House was part of a proposed 17-storey condo development that both the city and the association contested. Appealed by Wellington House Inc. of Brad J. Lamb Realty, the case went to the Local Planning Appeal Tribunal.

Fire continued on p6

Racism in Canada: Are we being fair?

Ben Bull, Columnist

I grew up above a cake shop on the outskirts of Leeds, England. It was a homogenous suburb of white faces and Yorkshire accents. A Roma family lived in a caravan on the back lane and up the street was a Polish couple, who never came out except to grab our footballs when we scooped them into their yard. But everyone else looked and spoke like me.

Until Mr. Ali moved in.

Mr. Ali's Newsagents was the hub of the neighbourhood. Paperboys scurried in and out for their morning rounds, commuters popped in for a pack of cigarettes on their way to work and school kids stuffed their pockets with sweets after the last bell (and sometimes paid for them).

But not everyone was welcoming.

"Why is he coming here?" some of our cake shop customers asked, as Mum boxed up their Battenburgs and buttered their bread rolls.

"What's wrong with his own country?"

I remember hearing these comments as I loitered at the back of the shop, wondering why they were so upset.

Mr. Ali hung a sign in his window soon after he arrived. It was a digital display: large, red letters, scrolling left to right:

"Choclates ... Slosh poppies ... Ciggarrates".

The misspelled sign seemed to amplify the disparities between Mr. Ali and his new neighbours.

Bull continued on p6

Reflections on the Quayside Project

Julie Beddoes

After two-and-a-half years of lobbying and politicking, in May this year Sidewalk Labs abandoned its project to take over a chunk of Toronto's waterfront.

New York-based Sidewalk Labs is a subsidiary of Alphabet Inc., the parent company of Google. In 2017, Waterfront Toronto announced that it had

chosen Sidewalk after issuing a request for proposals (RFP) for an innovation and investment partner to develop Quayside, 12 acres of waterfront land at the foot of Parliament Street.

This was surprising. For all other waterfront developments since its creation in 2001, Waterfront Toronto has not issued RFPs without many months of input from community members. Before Quayside, bidders

have been told what Torontonians wanted on our waterfront; in this case it seemed that a huge multinational corporation was being allowed to do what it wanted with our public land.

My worries increased when I read Sidewalk's response to the RFP and then received an invitation to be on one of several advisory committees to the project. Both documents made it clear that Sidewalk

Labs aimed to take control of planning public land as well as public services like utilities and health care. I asked for a guarantee that no privatization was involved, but never received an answer.

Quayside continued on p7



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and ideas across our city
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the bridge

is an independent community newspaper published monthly and distributed by a mix of delivery services to a varying readership. Over 3500 copies are circulated throughout the downtown east - Moss Park, Corktown, The Garden District, Cabbagetown South, the St. Lawrence Neighbourhood - and to community hubs that extend across Toronto.

the bridge strives to source up-to-date activity and diverse interests from heritage, planning, culture, development, arts and opinions that advocate a collaborative level playing field forum.

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Building Strong Neighbourhoods



Laina Gibson, Vice President,
Philanthropy and
Communications

The Neighbourhood Group, made up of Central Neighbourhood House, Neighbourhood Link Support Services and St. Stephen's Community House, helps over 55,000 vulnerable people by delivering programs and services to improve and enhance people's lives, and to help them live independently and with dignity in the community. With 700 employees and 2,200 volunteers, we serve some of our city's most at-risk groups including frail seniors, adults who are ill or disabled, marginalized children, youth and their families, newcomers, people who are homeless or precariously housed and those searching for employment.

During the COVID-19 pandemic, The Neighbourhood Group remains committed to the most vulnerable people in our communities. Our amazing staff and volunteers have stepped up to deliver essential services to those who need us the most. Our Corner Drop-in remains open providing food,

hygiene and health services, and our housing staff support three COVID-19 hotels opened in response to people awaiting test results, or people who are in recovery.

Our Meals on Wheels team make sure frail, isolated seniors still receive hot meals delivered to their door, the Food Bank remains open, and we deliver food hampers to people in need. Our Personal Support Workers work tirelessly providing help with personal care, medication monitoring, shopping and meal preparation to seniors at home.

Employment programs, Children and Youth programs, Seniors social programs, and English classes are being delivered virtually and over the phone. We are there when those with mental health challenges or lonely, stressed seniors need to talk.

To learn more about The Neighbourhood Group, please visit us at www.theneighbourhoodgroup.org. If you want to donate or volunteer your time, please contact us at development@tnecs.org or call 416.691.7407.

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Community gardens during Covid -19

Cheyenne Haylor, Projects
Coordinator, Building Roots

I work with Building Roots supporting various tasks, currently including social media and budget management. Last summer I had the pleasure of managing the Yorkwoods School Garden, which Building Roots runs in the Jane and Finch community where I live.

Building Roots also runs an urban farm at Ashbridge Estate, a lovely space where all are welcome and volunteers can join in the fun of growing produce. The harvest is made available at Building Roots' Moss Park Market at affordable prices, with pay-it-forward options to support those in need.

Amid pandemic restrictions this spring, Ontario deemed community gardens essential, acknowledging that spaces like the Yorkwoods Garden and Ashbridge Farm provide food security relief to many. I believe that they also promote mental and spiritual well-being.

Gardening may be physically challenging, but it provides time and space for your mind to clear, wander, or do whatever it needs to! Many of us are overwhelmed by this chaotic and uncertain time, and spending time with the earth can literally be grounding.

When I managed the Yorkwoods Garden I was finishing the last courses of my undergra-



Photo: Cheyenne Haylor

duate degree, and was mentally exhausted from a very long four years. The time I spent in the garden provided a mental break that was therapeutic and healing.

The Garden was first and foremost a space for school students and the community, and I saw firsthand how beneficial it was for kids. This is especially true now, as schools are closed.

Building Roots' Veg2Grow program distributed 200+ starter kits this spring to support kids and beginners learning at

home. Many are taking advantage of newfound free time to grow plants in their balconies, yards and local gardens. As we anticipate schools opening in September, and some of us head back to work, I hope lessons from this time on pause can lead to increased access for everyone to healing activities like gardening.

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Allan Gardens



Bruce Bell, Senior Columnist

Few Toronto families have suffered as much personal loss as the Allan family formerly of a vast estate once called Moss Park.

However, it was from their great misfortunes together with the enormous riches they amassed over the years that would give our city an enduring legacy.

Two hundred years ago patriarch William Allan arrived here in York (now Toronto) in 1795 as a wholesaler from Montreal via Scotland and began selling his wares out at Fort York.

Eventually, as his reputation grew William Allan opened a store in town on the east side of Frederick Street at King and in 1821 along with other wealthy citizens of York established the First Bank of Upper Canada which the first branch was to be his store.

In 1825 the Bank of Upper Canada moved to the NE corner of George and Adelaide where it still stands today and William Allan's old bank building at King and Frederick became William Gambles Wholesale store, then later a small brewery, a boot store and was ultimately demolished in 1914.

The present building that stands there now on the SE corner of King and Frederick built in 1915 as the A. Muirhead Company Paint Factory was once home to Pasquale Bros Foods during the 1980's and now has undergone a stunning renovation transformed into George Brown College's

Chef School and restaurant.

In 1826 William Allan now extremely prosperous thanks to his astute business skills built Moss Park, a huge manor home that stood at Sherbourne and Queen on two hundred acres of land stretching all the way up to present-day Bloor Street.

In William Allan's time when the population of York was only around 2,000 citizens' diseases such as cholera, diphtheria and scarlet fever were the cause of many deaths amongst all levels of society.

For all their wealth, success and envied lifestyle William and his wife Leah would suffer more than most.

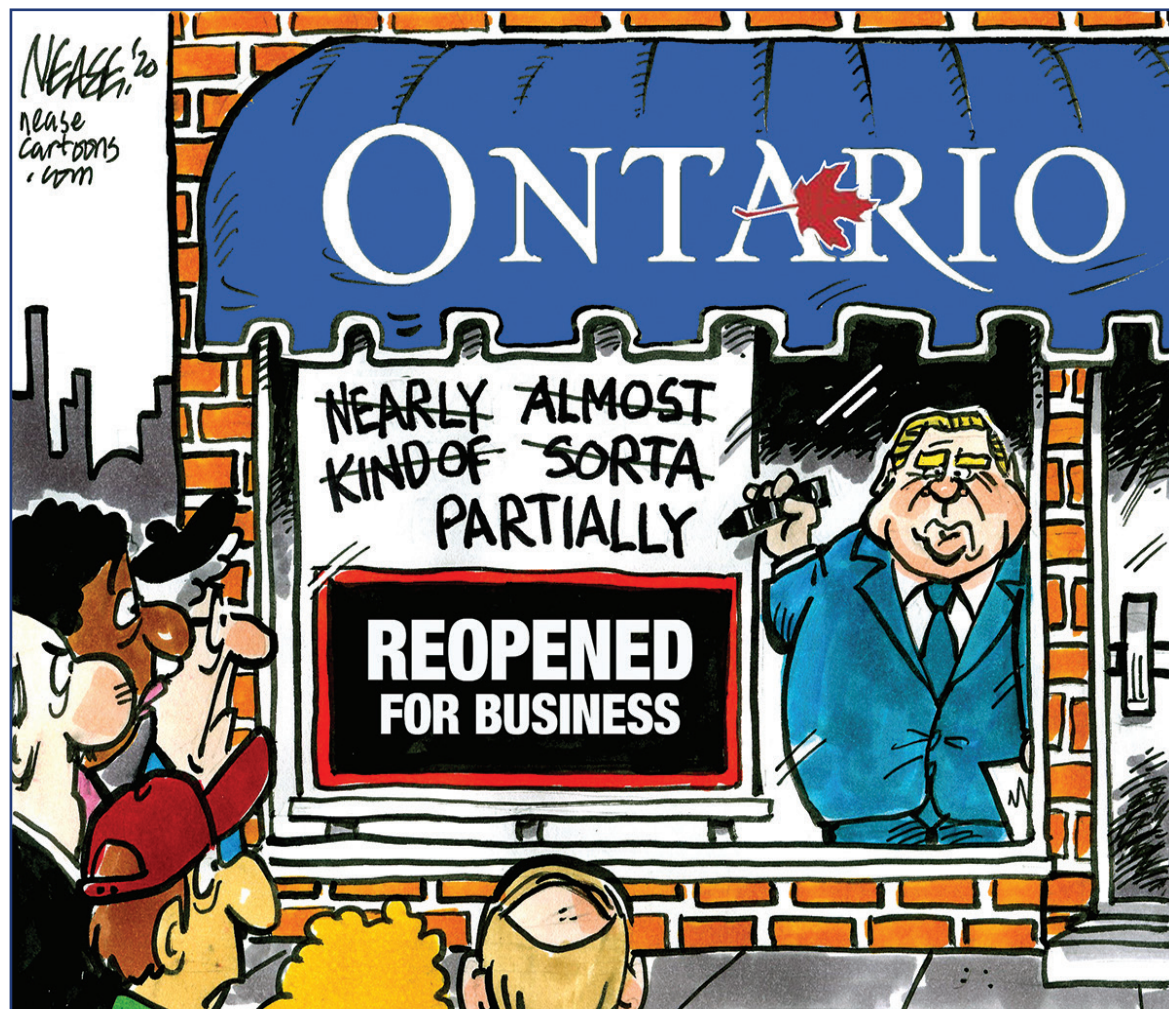
Of the 12 children that were born to them only one survived to adulthood, a son named George born in 1822.

Needless to say George being the only son of the town's richest man grew up in a life of privilege.

In 1846 George like most men of his position undertook the so-called Grand Tour of Europe which also included side trips to Turkey, Sudan, Greece, a jaunt up the Nile River and a visit to the Holy Land in a time when excursions to these countries were extremely treacherous even at the best of times.

Upon his return home George married Louisa Maud Robinson with his father giving the couple the northwest corner of Wellesley and Sherbourne and set out to build them a house they called Homewood. In 1912 the Homewood estate became the first Wellesley Hospital in 1912 which was demolished in 1964 to become the second Wellesley Hospital that closed in 2003.

In 1853 patriarch William Allan died at the age of 81 and in 1858 his son George Allan, after the death of his first wife Louisa, married Adelaide



Schreiber and together raised seven children.

That same year George Allan now himself a prominent and wealthy cultural leader decided to donate a five-acre tract of land bounded by Carlton, Sherbourne and Jarvis Streets, another part of his family's enormous Moss Park estate, to the Toronto Horticultural Society.

A pavilion was built on that site and was opened by the Prince of Wales (later King Edward VII) in 1860 to much fanfare and formally named the Botanical Gardens.

In 1879, a much larger and more opulent pavilion was built replacing the original.

Called Pavilion Hall it included a glass conservatory that not only was used to house a large collection of plants and flowers but was also used for concerts and social events. Oscar Wilde one of the most celebrated authors in the world gave a lecture here in May

1882.

After his death in 1901 and as a tribute to George Allan, the City of Toronto changed the name of the Horticultural Gardens to Allan Gardens and has been known as such ever since.

Perhaps the greatest legacy of George Allan besides serving as Toronto's 11th mayor in 1855 was his benevolence shown to Toronto's street children.

In 19th century Toronto it wasn't uncommon to walk the streets and having to step over the sleeping bodies of abandoned children some as young as 3 and 4.

In 1870 George Allan donated land he owned on the

east side of Fredrick Street just north of Front and built the Newsboys' Home an early health care and residential facility for young street children nicknamed 'newsboys' getting their name for they sold newspapers on street corners.

The Newsboy Home for the next 25 years stood on the NE corner of Frederick and Front and became a model for future charitable institutions that would eventually lead to the founding of the Children's Aid Society of Toronto in 1891.

The Allan family left behind a great legacy of art, horticulture, architecture and benevolence in our city making Allan Gardens and Toronto itself a truly great and caring place.



George William Allan, circa 1860.

Photo: Courtesy of the Toronto Public Library



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When will this end...?



Phil E. Roth, Columnist

How many more times must we see film coverage and news of police misusing their power against suspects who have not been found criminally liable by a court? When and who has appointed the police officer(s) in question to be judge, jury and executioner? In our democracy and our communities this is neither acceptable nor representative of legal conduct of their duties as law enforcers.

What could properly express the horror, disgust and abhorrence arising from watching video footage of a helpless man being suffocated, slowly and methodically to his gruesome demise? What explanation would justify any action like that? NONE.

As Canadians, we are aligned through family ties and business relations to our southern neighbours. The creative arts, sports, politics and economics connect us intimately every day. Our nations share almost



Protest posters Minneapolis, Minnesota.

Photo: Lorie Shaul

identical democratic principles, cemented in the American Constitution and the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms, respectively. Precisely here do we find protection for ALL.

Why do we in this day and age still contend and fight for equal justice when our societies were founded on those legal building blocks many years back? If moral standards are built on law and order, we expect those standards to apply to all citizens, including the ones representing the nation for keeping the peace. Ask yourself if this crisis of inequality has

anything to do with us here in Canada?

We are implored to answer the call of equality in our land, in our city for the sake of humanity, and for no other reason. This is an urgent appeal to stand and defend law and order so that our laws are kept to a unified standard. We do have the right to a fair and just trial before the law. Apprehending suspects is the function of the police, no more and no less. Our judicial system is mandated to apply verdicts without prejudice. That is why we need to care.

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Photo: Malcom Garret

change? Meet, write or ask your local municipal representative what actions are being followed to ensure that police apprehension does not produce mortalities in our community. Demand the same of your provincial and federal parliamentarians. As our democratically

elected officials they need to account for what measures prevent any such misuse of power.

Ban chokehold practices in suspect apprehension methods. It is simply not enough to be disgusted by what we see and read. Without taking action, most likely it is only a matter of time before the next headline will appear with the help of bystander video evidence taken on a mobile device.

Maria W. Stewart "It is not the color of the skin that makes the man or the woman, but the principle formed in the soul. Brilliant wit will shine, come from whence it will; and genius and talent will not hide the brightness of its lustre."

In a global village the struggle for equality is still a local matter. Let your voice be heard. We are all accountable for action or inaction.

"Imagination is more important than knowledge. Knowledge is limited. Imagination encircles the world."



Carol Mark

In these times of Covid-19, it is important to feed our creative spirit. No longer are we able to move around freely or connect physically with the outside world. So, during this time of limitation using our imagination, expressed in creative ways is of critical value. One doesn't need to write the great Canadian novel, but a daily journal filled with words or even a few sketches refreshes one's mind. It is almost like keeping a creative diary.

Last year I had the once in a lifetime opportunity to spend two months in Paris studying

at the most prestigious French culinary school in the world. Despite having been to France as a student as well as numerous travels afterward, I had never taken the time to focus on my creative side. This time, I bought art supplies and a sketchbook. Despite having lots of art supplies, I mainly used a pencil, a black fine marker and colouring pencils. These were perfect for slipping into my day tote to carry on my daily rounds and pull out for my art journal at any time. I used it to sketch the wonderful markets, and the rose plants in Balzac's garden, and Monet's waterlilies.



Bunny and Owls by Rachel Soloway.

Even Einstein believed that art is more important than science because it allows us more creativity and an expression of our culture. Creativity resides in the left hemisphere of the brain, and with utilizing both halves of both sides of the brain, there is a higher degree of creative productivity. The connection between creativity and the brain was first researched by Ned Herrmann, educator and published in *The Scientific American*.

The power of art in the workplace or work environment has the impact to increase produc-

tivity. In the USA, a survey by Business Committee for the Arts and the International Association of Professional Art Advisors found 94% believed art enhanced the work environment and 64% saw an increased creativity and productivity. So, sharpen your pencils everyone and use this enforced quiet to be productively creative.

To celebrate creativity and art in Moss Park join us for the first art fair Sat Sept 26, 2020 with social distancing- small but impactful. Join us and receive free give away art inspired face masks and experience a special

drive or walk by art projection.

Visit our artists including Rachelle Soloway, Michael Jenkins and Angelique Hieronymus. Rachelle Soloway is an ARTIST MAKER- I am a proud yarn addict and a yarn store to me is like a candy store to children.

Michael Jenkins "Paint By Numbers," working with a Nikon DSLR and Android cell phone camera. He photoshops with a stylus to digitally "paint" the photos, transforming them into something that is a new interpretation of the original image.

Angelique Hieronymus, a contemporary artist who reveals an impressionistic, abstract, surreal style in her work. With her great love for natural and organic form, she collects sticks, stones and bones, as her inspiration.

**quote by Albert Einstein*

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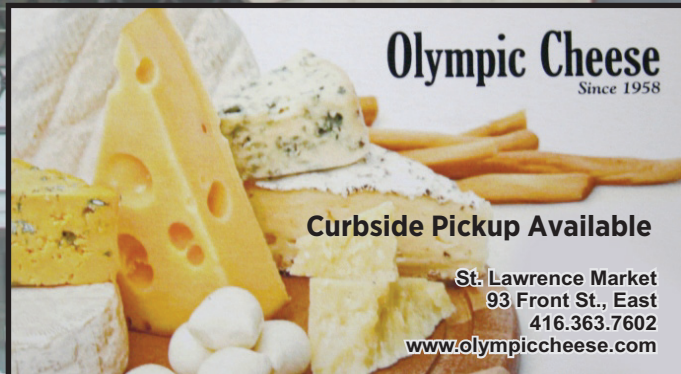


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Davies Terrace never identified as heritage

Fire continued from p1

On February 4, the LPAT dismissed Lamb's appeal. According to case documents, the condo proposal failed to conform with local planning guidelines, particularly in its inability to "fit" with the "heritage context of the site."

Less than two months later Wellington House caught fire, twice. The building's structural stability is now in question, leading some in the WPNA to worry that it may be "demolished by neglect."

Unlike Wellington House, which has been listed on the city's Heritage Register since 2005, the Davies Terrace was never identified as a heritage site. Despite the historical plaque that once adorned the row-houses, no action was taken to list or designate the buildings under the Ontario Heritage Act even after the 2018 fire alerted city officials to its vulnerability.

Listing a heritage property only delays demolition, while designation under Part IV of the act grants wider protections from demolition or alteration to culturally sensitive buildings or spaces.

Cindy Petersen, a long-time resident of Bright Street in Corktown, told *the bridge* that getting her properties listed on the register has been an elusive process.

"I've talked to a lot of people down at City Hall. I went into board meetings and I tried everything. And honestly, I didn't get anywhere with those people. All they said was, 'we are looking into it.'"

Similar sentiment was echoed



Demolition team begins teardown days after fire, June 5. Photo: Andre Bermon

by Corktown historian Cory Lemos, who has been awaiting approval for her nomination of 364-366 Queen St. East for designation since July 2018.

"Why are we being asked to wait?" said Lemos. City Preservation staff should, at the very least, inform us where on the 'waiting list' our nominations are held up. Instead, Toronto and East York [Community Council] keeps passing other nominations."

the bridge asked Gary Miedema of the city's Heritage Preservation Services about the delays.

"Community interest over the past number of years has challenged us with the ability to keep up," Miedema said. "In terms of the resources we have to meet that demand ... it is

[just] the reality of our work."

In the last two years, Miedema added, Preservation Services has taken a more systematic approach to Toronto's downtown east communities. In early 2018 a study with the help of residents pointed out buildings for potential nomination. Preservation staff have said they will complete its work by the end of this year.

Despite City Hall's intentions, development has continued to put a lot of pressure on communities to persevere their heritage stock. The repeating fires are no less a burden, especially when they appear to happen under the eyes of the developers themselves.

the bridge book review

Glenda MacFarlane

Review: *The Skin We're In: A Year of Black Resistance and Power*
By Desmond Cole
Doubleday Canada, January 2020

In *The Skin We're In*, Desmond Cole writes eloquently about incidents of Black power and struggle that he observed and experienced during a single year, 2017. However, the book speaks to the events of 2020 clearly and powerfully: if you want to understand why people are marching in the streets for the Black Lives Matter movement and demanding the defunding of police, *The Skin We're In* is essential reading.

The Skin We're In provides both an historical overview and specific context for contemporary events: Cole draws a straight line in Canadian history from a young Black boy, enslaved in New France in 1629, to the vicious beating of Dafonte Miller by an off-duty Toronto police officer, a case that was just reaching a verdict as this article went to press. He connects Black struggle to other fights for justice, recognizing the intersectionality of the Black and Indigenous movements, and parsing out the tension inside the LGBTQ2S+ community between whites and BIPOC Pride groups. Section by section, incident by incident, Cole's book demonstrates how systemic racism in Canadian education, policing, immigration, journalism, and many other aspects of our society has impacted Black lives.

The book shines a spotlight on a number of subjects including Canada's racist, colonial past, immigration policies designed to limit and expel Black asylum seekers, and white su-

premacists in the military, but Desmond Cole has been a persistent and vocal critic of policing, and the strongest thread that runs through *The Skin We're In* is that of police harassment, aggression, and murder. The book begins on New Year's Day, with the violent and unwarranted police raid of a gallery space rented by John Samuels, a young Black artist. Cole explores, in subsequent chapters, an incident where two police officers shackled a six-year-old Black girl inside her Mississauga school, the lasting effects of "carding," the deleterious impacts of the Toronto District School Board's decision to put police officers in targeted schools, and the unjustifiable police killings of mentally ill men such as Abdirahman Abdi, Andrew Loku, and Jermaine Carby. Cole also details his involvement with the Miller case, which he calls "one of the clearest publicly known examples of systemic racism and corruption in modern Canadian policing." Cole's book provides ample illustration of why current calls to defund the police are both necessary and overdue.

But *The Skin We're In* gives us moments of courage and beauty, too. Cole introduces us to Black Torontonians who are long-time advocates for equality, and resilient young people in Nova Scotia who are fighting against stereotypes. He takes us through Dufferin Grove Park, where "the scent of a thousand lilacs hidden in the darkness washes over us." And he asks us to join him in imagining something kinder and fairer than the system that not only fails to protect BIPOC people, but works actively to subjugate them. **Five Stars!**

policing under intense scrutiny

Bull continued from p1

Ten years later I landed in Toronto. I remember my first subway ride, looking around at the mix of cultures and thinking, "Mr. Ali would be welcome here."

Like a lot of people who have never experienced racism first hand, I believed, naively, that Canada was a land of equal opportunities where everyone is treated the same. I didn't see any racism, so I assumed it wasn't there.

But with the recent unrest in the United States, we are all being challenged to re-evaluate our attitudes towards one another and consider: Are we being fair?

Canada's 2016 census suggests we are not. Statistics Canada notes that 20.8% of non-white citizens were in a low-income bracket in 2016, compared with 12.2% of the white population. Indigenous workers earned, on average, 33% less than non-indigenous workers.

The Ontario Council of Agencies Serving Immigrants cites a 2015 report noting that, in Ontario, non-white males earned 76 cents, and non-white women 58 cents, for every dollar earned by a white man.

Neither are disparities in the criminal justice system limited to the U.S. The John Howard Society of Canada reports that black people in Toronto are over-represented in federal prisons by three times their proportion of the population. For Aboriginals this over-representation is nearly five times.

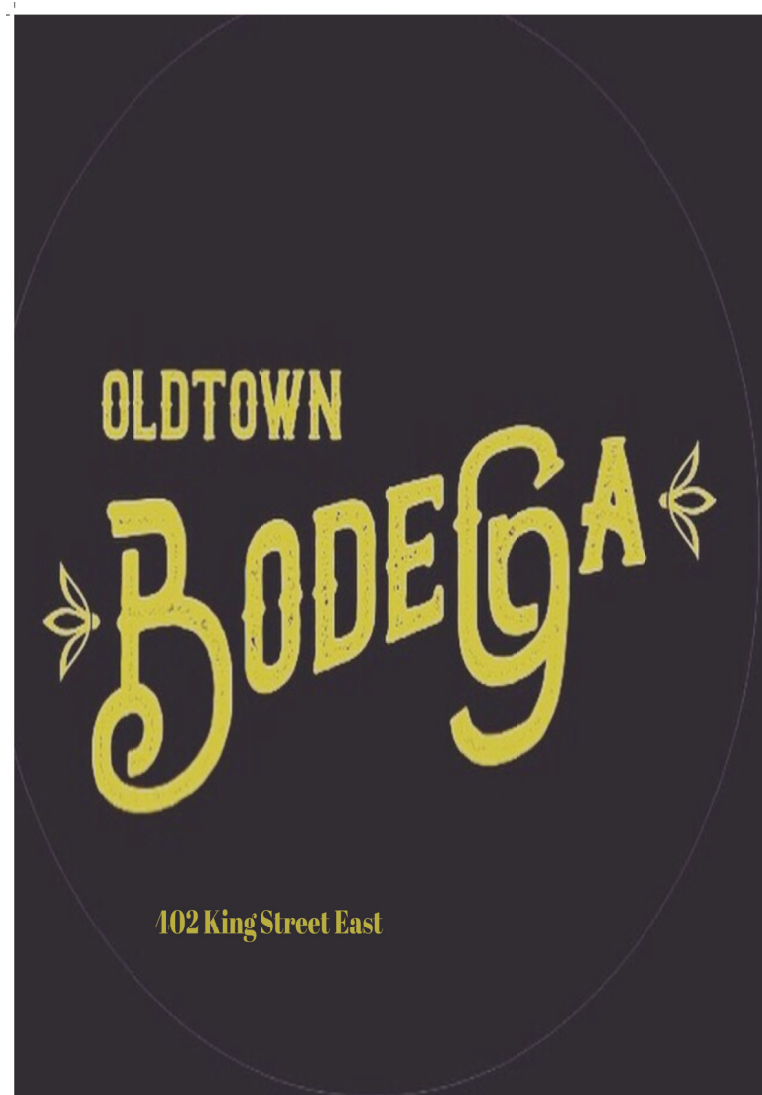
Policing is under intense scrutiny too. A recent case in the North West Territories found that not only was the accused Aboriginal man, Travis Jerome, not guilty of assaulting a police officer, the police officer might have been the one assaulting him. Sadly, the justice minister for the territory, Caroline Wawzonek, refuses to investigate the allegation. She won't even watch the video.

In Halifax, after a ban on street checks by the attorney

general and a public apology from the local police chief, the RCMP still won't say they're sorry. This despite the release of a provincially commissioned study noting that black residents were five times more likely to be stopped than whites.

There are signs of progress. RCMP Commissioner Brenda Lucki recently stated that she believes systemic racism does exist in the police force. Unfortunately, she needed two attempts to say this, after an earlier denial. The RCMP's commanding officer, Curtis Zblocki, does not agree with her.

As I watch unrest exploding all over the world and try to gain a clearer understanding of our own racial disparities, I know I have to try harder not to be complacent. After all, just because we don't see something doesn't mean it isn't there.



another RFP will not be issued without consultation

Quayside continued from p1

Over the next two years many more questions were asked and not answered, even though Sidewalk issued a 1,400-page master plan whose result – and intention, some suspected – was to confuse and bewilder. Organizations from the Canadian Council for Civil Liberties to the Good Jobs For All alliance expressed concerns and opposition. Strong voices from the tech community raised well-informed concerns about data use and misuse, and the consequences for democracy in handing over so much, both real estate and data, to a body mandated to serve Alphabet

Inc rather than the citizens of Toronto. I worked with a group called BlockSidewalk; its website (www.blocksidewalk.ca) has an archive of articles covering the whole range of questions and opposition. For more than two years Sidewalk Labs held a series of what it called consultations, though some who attended said they heard no response to issues raised there. Experts summoned by Waterfront Toronto to be the Digital Services Advisory Panel also commented that their concerns were not reflected in Sidewalk’s responses – and that anyway, many of the “innovations” proposed are common procedure and few are new.

Perhaps Sidewalk Labs’ biggest challenge to public acceptance was its ambition to take over a huge slice of the port lands as well as Quayside’s 12 acres. Waterfront Toronto, in partnership with an informed community, had already embarked on its breathtaking project of creating a new river mouth for the Don River, and new park space, wildlife habitat and flood protection as well as developable land. This was the ultimate example of Sidewalk’s assumption that we were here to be walked all over. The Silicon Valley hi-tech industry had already fallen from grace, due in part to the Cambridge Analytica scandal and much questioning of Face-

book’s operations, when Waterfront Toronto itself held some public meetings. Many who hadn’t rushed to judgement when Sidewalk Labs first came into town had decided that we could best develop our own land without Alphabet/Google/Sidewalk’s intervention. In October 2019, Sidewalk and Waterfront Toronto agreed to scale down the original master plan. Backroom discussions and public objections continued until May 7 this year, when Sidewalk said it was giving up because of uncertainty arising from the Covid-19 epidemic. Was this a way of not admitting that it refused to meet the conditions that the citizens of Toronto wanted?

What’s next for Quayside? Waterfront Toronto has said another RFP will not be issued without consultation. Will bidders be asked to take up where Sidewalk Labs left off, or start from scratch? At the few public meetings Waterfront Toronto held, people clamoured for the highest achievable standards of environmental sustainability and as much affordable housing as there is room for. Let’s hope Waterfront Toronto and the government people who call the shots heard this message. When the time comes, please speak up.

Local vendors smile for the camera!

Photographs by Josephine Maes



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Where my head has been & A Poem

(Courtesy of the Toronto Writers Collective)

Kristine Kaposy

Between sleep and wake

Yes, we are surviving the unexpected pandemic daze ... has it really been three months?

Each time I check the latest news, can't help saying, 'thank-you for 2020 in Canada, the country where I live, 'while under my breath whisper, 'what's next?'

As a writer, time is always welcome. There has certainly been no shortage of sunshine or current issues to write about.

Yet, with the sensory output impulses provoked by the incoming data overload, it hasn't exactly been easy to relax.

The entire world is hanging on the edge of that cliff, with heavy eyelids and split fingernails. Excessive multi-media exposure and handwashing have their effects.

I swear, my dreams have been playing out as post sci-fi, AI thrillers. Inside voices race and wake me, competing for first place.

My hand reaches out enough to find the journal, scrawling as much as I can, before sleep fully leaves my head.

The birds will let me know when it's morning, time to sort it out, then.

A Poem

I would like to say that writing poetry is not a waste of my time, that it has value. Not value in dollars, although that would be nice, but real value for real people. I want to say that writing poetry helps people to live better, closer, more honestly with other people but when I write, I am alone. So,

what do I know?

I would like this essay to be a poem. A poem is better than prose, or perhaps poetic prose, and a poet is better than a poser. A poem is unique as a human is unique. Poetry has something to do with the people who write it. Only you can write your poetry. A poem can be copied but a poet can not. We can imitate other poets, but imitation is not art. If a poem is true, it is good. Even lies can ring true. Poems can show and be and sing better than most prose. This is because poetry is paradox and so is life, especially for writers. To write good poetry you have to engage seriously with the moment. On the other hand, you have to step out of the moment to write poetry.

There are different kinds of poems. Poets have their own reasons for writing the poems they write. Sometimes only the poet knows the reasons, but that does not mean the poetry is no good. Sometimes other people know more about a poem than the poet. Postmodern poets know what they are doing. Some postmodern poems are made of words. Concrete poetry is heavy. A poet is a person and people have bodies. The poem's body should not be confused with the poet's body. Bawdy is rude.

Poetry is political. But not all poetry is personal. Politicians should write more poetry. Resist the onslaught of the media. The medium is the message. One message is that poets are dead and male. Hardly anyone wants to be a dead poet. This is a bias. Bias is subjective, and therefore suspect. No one wants to be a biased male these days. Poetry is female, hardworking and almost invisible. To be female and a writer is political. To be female and

a writer and a mother is paradoxical poetical political. What is confusing to most people is poetry to poets. It is a matter of perspective.

Poetry can be therapy, but therapy is rarely poetic. Like therapy, writing can show people what they think, feel and see. Poets like to show everybody else, too. Sometimes nobody cares. Even if nobody else sees it, poetry can be good. Poets have ears of their own but other peoples' ears are better. A hand is good. A handout is worth something. Writing can get out of hand and even grow hands of its own. Scary-but magical, too. It sneaks up on you. Rhyming is fun. I have got to run with it.

If not now, then when? And how? Choices have meaning. Meaning is negotiable.

After having been discouraged by the expensive, unprofessional results of several online 'self-publishing' companies, the active and encouraging environment of the TWC has been greatly appreciated. The workshops provide communities, which are well attended by a range of talented artists and capable instructors. The Toronto Writer's Collective is an exemplary organization in the contemporary context of creative art.

Kris Kaposy's writing examines experiences of creative writing, childbirth, early parenthood, childhood challenges, solitude and contemporary art. She is a graduate of St. Michael's College, UofT, McGill, and the Humber School for Writers. Her work has been included in academic journals at Concordia University and Front Lines: Bent, Not Broken and Front Lines: Until The Words Run Pure.

Rooming house project steps up during COVID-19

DIXON HALL

Krista Lamb

When you live in a rooming house, sharing a kitchen and bathroom with several other people, practicing physical distancing, can be especially difficult. Many of those in Dixon Hall's Rooming House Project, based right in Cabbagetown, are also dealing with other limitations such as food insecurity, health challenges, or a lack of family support. So, the team has been especially heartened to see tenants coming together to support each other during these challenging times.

Thanks to donations from the community, the Project has been able to provide clients with cleaning supplies and information on how to prevent the spread of COVID-19 in their shared living spaces. Tenant representatives have also stepped up to retrieve and distribute supplies to help manage the number of people running errands for the houses.

Wayne Lapointe is a tenant representative in his rooming house. He saw picking up meals as an easy thing he could do to be helpful: "if everyone came from the house there'd be ten people showing up. There's just me, one, so there's no crowds." Lapointe has also been learning how to attend virtual meetings on his tablet, one of 25 donated to the Rooming House Project by Rogers, in order to stay connected and involved with community programs. However, not all of the residents have access to cell phones or tablets, so staying connected while practicing physical distancing remains a challenge.

Steve Clegg, who has also volunteered to deliver meals to others living in his house, sees the lack of technology and the isolation some residents experience as a real barrier. When news of the coronavirus first started to spread, he had people from the houses walking up to him in the park and not understanding why he asked them to keep a distance. "There's an assumption that everyone has TV or the internet. There are a lot of people who didn't even know at the beginning that there was a pandemic going on," he says.

Clegg, who has access to a vehicle, is able to pick up multiple meals and take them back to his fellow tenants, which means the residents don't have to take public transit to pick up a meal. "It just makes everyone safer," he says. He's also been donating some of his food to a neighbour, who was collecting empties for cash to supplement his income, which Clegg knew wasn't safe right now.

The programs he has access to now are helping everyone in the community stay safe in a difficult time. "I'm very grateful to Dixon Hall," says Clegg. "Because you don't see the government addressing rooming houses and how much of a challenge that is for people living there."

To learn more about the Rooming House Project and ways to donate visit: www.dixonhall.org

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