

ONE THOUSAND TREES



SEPTEMBER 2015

ONE THOUSAND TREES
FACILITATING WELLNESS
THROUGH CONNECTION, CREATIVITY, AND COMMUNITY SERVICE

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REGULAR COLUMNISTS
California Dreaming -- Sherie Cunningham
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THIS MONTH'S CONTRIBUTORS



Jennifer Annett **Volunteer Profile**

Jennifer is a graduate of the Honours Bachelor of Outdoor Recreation, Parks and Tourism program at Lakehead University (2001). By day she is a Facilitator of Community & Voluntary Sector Investment with the United Way of Cambridge and North Dumfries' Volunteer Centre. She helps local agencies with volunteer recruitment, recognition, promotion and program funding. By night she is a mother of two; she has a dog named Daisy, loves the outdoors and has been a lifelong volunteer.



Sherie Cunningham **California Dreaming**

Sherie is accomplished in many ways. She is an active member of "The Writers Café", "The Write Practice" and "Poets and Writers" groups. When she takes a break from writing, you'll find her working on her own custom designed jewelry, taking long walks along San Diego Bay, or engrossed in photography. She has four children and four grandchildren ... so far. She has made her home in San Diego for forty-five years.



Pegi Evers **The Story Behind the Story**

Pegi is a visual artist, writer and cultural visionary. Author of *Ancient Spirit Rising: Reclaiming Your Roots & Restoring Earth Community*, she examines cultural appropriation, the interface between Turtle Island First Nations and the Settler Society, rejecting Empire, social justice work, cultural reclamation, earth rights, sacred land and the holistic principles of sustainable living. She lives in the countryside on the outskirts of Peterborough, Ontario. Visit her website at www.stonecirclepress.com.



Maria Falcao **Balanced Children**

Maria is the owner of Balanced Child. With her Early Childhood Educating diploma and Resource Consultant Certificate and over 13 years' experience, Her passion has been allowing the natural process of children to develop and grow in a holistic life. Maria believes each child is on an individual learning quest, and recognizes each child as a whole being, which are creating and following their dreams, passions and desires in their own unique way. Visit her website at www.balancedchildren.ca.



Susan McCrae **Bang Up Wedding**

Years of writing social policy, funding proposals and reports, provided Susan with the practice for fiction writing. And years as an award winning visual artist helped her access and creativity. Now she writes short stories, one of them chosen as a finalist in the Alice Munro Festival Short Story Competition, 2013. Two were published on www.CommuterLit.com. Susan is currently working on other stories and a novel, 'Olympic Marathon'.



Bob Smith **Water Quality**

Like many writers, R.K. (Bob) Smith has worked in widely different settings, accounting for diverse characters, settings, and story lines. He describes his stories as 'character-driven', rather than 'plot-driven'. People face some kind of challenge and face it with creativity and integrity, often connecting with others as part of the process. He has published novels and short stories in online, newspaper, and more traditional printed formats, as well as having written Christmas stories heard on radio.



Alison Walton

Beyond Words

Alison is a self-taught artist who works in various mediums and styles, from carefully detailed animal portraits to abstract expressionism. Her life-long fascination with the human condition and the need for self-expression led to a published true-crime book, a Bachelor's degree in Psychology and subsequent employment as a social services counsellor. Drawing on these and other unique experiences, combined with her artistic skill, Alison created *Express Yourself with Paint* with intent to explore the range of human emotion through visual art. Participating groups have included people with physical and emotional challenges, college and university faculty on retreats, and adults and teens.



Sandra Wilson

This is How We Learn

Sandra is a writer, educator, amateur photographer and Director of the *Wilson Education Resource Centre*. With a Bachelor of Arts in English and History much of her work includes historic facts presented in fun and interesting ways. Although trained to take portraits at Sears Portrait Studio, Sandra prefers to capture nature with her camera. Her passion is to help people learn, laugh and be inspired. Please visit Sandra at www.werconline.ca.

The capacity to learn
is a gift; The
ability to learn is a
skill; The
willingness to learn
is a choice.

Brian Herbert

meetville.com



FROM THE EDITOR

I realize how fitting it is that the topic for September is How We Learn ... because first and foremost in my mind right now is one of my greatest teachers, my father. Dad passed away in Hospice Wellington on August 21, after collapsing in his home and being taken to hospital on July 27. August has been a blur for me, as a result (and you will understand why this issue is rather sparse, I'm sure).

Following are the words of tribute to my father, that I delivered at his funeral on August 28:

When I was growing up, Mom, Dad and I did a fair bit of travelling. One of the more memorable trips was to Europe, when I was 13. We visited 8 countries in 3 weeks ... Dad was nothing if not organized! In one town, I can't remember where ... Germany, I think ... we passed a gift shop, and in the window was a very small black poodle figurine, that reminded me of my own dog back home. I wanted it so badly But the store was closed for the evening, and wouldn't open until 10:00 the next morning. And we were scheduled to leave 9:00, to stay on track.

We got into our rental car right at 9:00. As I said, Dad was nothing if not organized! But then, something out of the ordinary happened. Dad got lost ... or so he said. We ended up driving around town for ... you guessed it ... an hour, with Dad continually asking Mom to check the map again

At 10:00, we pulled up to the gift shop. "Well," Dad said, "since we're here anyway, we might as well go in and buy you that dog."

I'm not sure when I finally realized that being lost was a ruse. Probably not until Dad told me, years later.

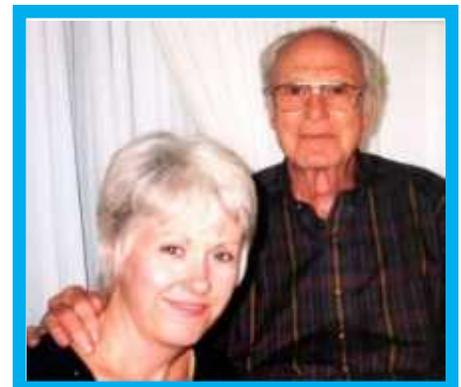
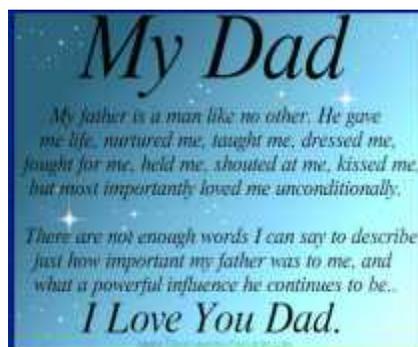
A simple act of selflessness, one of many that my Dad exhibited over the years.

Flash forward to the present ...

One day, shortly after Dad was admitted to hospital this last time, my daughter Carrie and I went to see him, and picked up Starbucks iced coffees on the way. As soon as we walked into his room, Dad perked up (an unusual occurrence at that time), looked me directly in the eye and asked "What's that?", pointing to my coffee. I told him, and he said "I want some", again, very coherently. I poured some into a glass, and proceeded to give it to him on those little sponges on sticks that they have for patients whose mouths are dry. This happened three or four times, and the peace and joy on his face was incredible. The smallest gifts can sometimes mean the most.

My brother Doug has said more than once, in the last four weeks, that Dad is our hero. And it is true. In his own quiet, unassuming way, he has been a pillar of strength for all of us. And while we will miss him dearly, we are content in the knowledge that he passed peacefully, and without pain ... and that his spirit is now free, and watching over us always.

Lisa





BALANCED CHILDREN by Maria Falcao

When we are born in this world, we have a sense of self and purpose. An apple seed already knows that everything inside the seed will transform into an apple tree. It takes much water, love, sunlight, space and growth in order to fully develop and bloom into a mature tree. It takes many seeds together to help that apple seed grow into a tree.

Just like that apple seed, children already have an intuitive knowledge of who they are. The child needs society to allow them to be loved, be free, explore, have a safe place, learn without judgement, enjoy a positive learning environment and have a sense of being and accepting. These seeds are what are needed for the child to develop their true self.

We all have our own unique way of learning. We live in a society that awards and praises children who learn as auditory learners. In school, the only

way we are being taught to learn is by sitting and listening to obtain all the information we can by the teacher; by memorizing material and transmitting it into our lives. Although this is great for the children who learn this way, what happens to tactile, visual and read/write learners?

In many ways, children will tell us how they learn. They will tell us how they learn through play, words, emotions, and by their physical bodies. For example, a set of Lego is on the floor. One child takes the Lego and starts counting it, sorting colors and separating the big pieces from the small. The other child starts to create a building with the Lego. Both of these types of play are correct and both children will learn something different and valuable from it. It also shows us that one child is interested in building, while the other child is more interested in the math concepts that are being offered through the Lego.

Learning not only takes place in childcare, home and school, it takes place in grocery stores, nature, through pets, through fights with siblings, through a sports game; basically anywhere. Through everyday experiences, we allow natural learning to occur. For example, allowing children to explore the monkey bars, without us hovering over them, will teach resiliency, eye/hand

coordination, social skills, how to be gentle with themselves when they don't make it across the first time, and finally when they do make it across, a sense of accomplishment.



Left and right brained thinking also comes into play with how the child learns. We need to focus on building the child's level of awareness in left and right brained thinking. Right brained children are often crafty, musical, great at sports, sensitive and daydreamers, while left brained children are often very logical, mathematical, scientific, and good problem solvers.

As much as we need a balance of both sides of the brain to function, we also need to encourage the side of the brain the children learn from. If the child excels in playing the piano, but we think it is best for them to become a scientist, this does not serve the child. Giving the child many different opportunities to explore various outlets and enhance their natural abilities is important. But, listening to them in



what they want to learn is more important.

Another way to allow children to find out what they are interested in is to be mindful. By allowing children to meditate, do yoga and walk in nature, we allow them to stay quiet in their own thoughts. Children should be allowed to listen to what their body wants from them. Allowing mindfulness for their soul, physical activity for their body and challenging their mind in different ways will help the child on their journey to develop into their own unique person. Children will come across times when they are overwhelmed and stressed. By allowing children to explore meditation, yoga and exercise, we can allow the children to de-stress and focus on quieting their mind. When a child quiets their mind, the child will have a better understanding of what their body, mind and spirit is calling them to do. It brings them back to quiet space.

I want to touch base on being an introvert and an extrovert. Being introverted or extroverted is not a learning style, but helps determine the different ways on how to cope with learning and the world. An extroverted child, needs to express themselves through people, through socialization,

through connecting with peers. An introverted child, needs to be alone to process their thoughts, to gather their energy and to regroup themselves. It is important to recognize these two traits since this is the way children learn to cope with the world around them.

Honouring and teaching children how to cope while learning, will help them better understand their needs. I myself am an introverted, kinesthetic learner, right brained person who is very intuitive. Needless to say the school system was a nightmare for me. It was the total opposite of how I learned, and to this day I still do not fit in society's standards on who I should be. That is why I started Balanced Children. I want a world where all children are accepted for who they are, without being judged and are able to learn and grow the way they need to. After all, we need all the types of learners in this world to make it work so we can become one as a society, not individuals living in a society.

To learn more about balanced lifestyle for children, visit my website at www.balancedchildren.ca or email me at maria@balancedchildren.ca for more information.



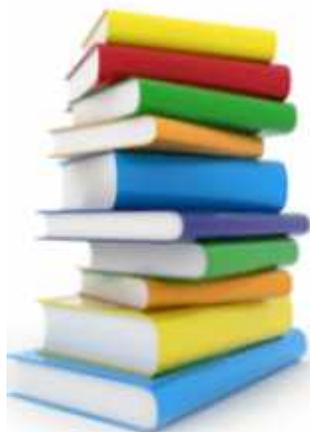
THIS IS HOW WE LEARN by Sandra Wilson

Encouragement, discovery and experience; this is how we learn.

We have the ability to do things, to understand things, to enhance our talents. These abilities grow when we are encouraged to try, to do and to be our best. Positive words strengthen our inner selves, they allow us to believe in ourselves and therefore release the knowledge we hold inside. We all have intuitive knowledge, lessons we have learned and opinions to share. All of this knowledge is held within and can be called on when our lives need it or can offer it. Certainly this knowledge, this index inside us, can be reached easier with support, encouragement and positive opportunities.

When we try and fail, when we step out and look, when we search out an answer or a different way, we discover. With each discovery we learn; we learn how to get better, we learn how to grow and we learn which path we should follow. Mistakes help us discover the wrong way to do something or the need for something different. Finding a hidden talent, a suppressed passion, or an undiscovered idea helps us learn where we should be going or what we should be doing. Explorers got lost and their mistakes led to great discoveries, just imagine where your discoveries can take you.

When we do, we learn. No matter what we experience, we can learn. With every step forward we can learn about



**Empowerment
Through Education**
*Living A Dream,
Building A Future*

the next step, we can look for the next opportunity, we can grow with each experience we overcome and each experience we delight in. Life is a learning experience, each day brings us lessons. We take each lesson and apply them to what we do, to what we know, to whom we are – and each lesson will teach us more about ourselves and our world.



SYNERGY

a story by Bob Smith

We're perfect partners Andrew Parsons thought as he opened the door for Emily to the vacant house where they were to meet the clients. He knew it was important for real estate agents to arrive before potential purchasers, and according to Emily, from the phone conversation expressing interest, these people were excellent prospects.

A white smock hanging on the coat rack behind the door reminded him of the one Mr. Lombard wore in Grade Twelve Chemistry class. His mind flitted back twenty years to the first day when Mr. Lombard had assigned people to share science tables according to the alphabet.

"Talking is always a problem when stools are side-by-side," he said, "so you won't be sharing with your best friend." That's how Andrew had ended up beside Emily Parton, a girl he vaguely knew from other classes. He had never taken much notice of the somewhat withdrawn girl with the short brown hair and undistinctive eyes, nose, and complexion. *She probably thinks of me the same way*, he admitted. *Quiet and unremarkable.*

Andrew had already recognized that for adequate learning, he needed to see things, not just hear them. Mr. Sampson, his Ninth Grade English teacher had been the worst, never

giving them anything in writing. Andrew had only managed to scrape through because he could read the stories and poems at home, then see on-line commentaries posted by others, sometimes even participating in such discussions. All Sampson did was pontificate, seeming to love the sound of his own voice.

Andrew had groaned that first day in Chemistry when Mr. Lombard gave them an assignment with no handout. "What am I supposed to do?" he muttered. It was a comment to himself, but Emily heard it and assumed it was directed to her. She talked loudly as if Andrew was hard of hearing, and slowly and distinctly as if he was backward. He wrote down her instructions, then showed her.

"That looks good," she said after a quick glance. At first, he had thought she was immensely clever to have read it that fast; it was a few days before he recognized her reading was slow and very laboured, something she avoided when possible.

During the first classroom chemistry experiment, she kept saying, "Mr. Lombard said ..." as Andrew pointed to the instructions in the book. But between them, they managed just fine. Andrew wrote up their results, and when they got the highest mark in the class and were expected to present their results, Emily spoke, never referring to the written page Andrew had given her.

That set a pattern; Andrew recognized she was as oriented to sound as he was to visuals. The symbiosis they developed was gratifying, producing marks much higher than either had ever achieved before. They recognized how one could help the other and began doing their homework together. Andrew explained how maps worked, discovering the process of having to verbalize what he knew by just looking helped him understand them in greater

depth. Mrs. Hillyard in History made them listen to recordings about the War of 1812 and Emily made notes Andrew could use, and she too discovered translating ideas clarified things. He helped her set up her new computer at home one day after school since the manual - like any - was completely beyond her. She helped him cope with his father by telling him words to look up on the internet and using visual metaphors for increasing intoxication like 'lightheaded', 'legless' and 'falling down drunk'.

By the time high school was over, their Chemistry class partnership had expanded into all aspects of their lives. A personal relationship had developed and neither could imagine existing without the other. In college, they enrolled in Business Administration, specializing in Marketing. Andrew had discovered the word 'synergy', the whole being greater than the sum of its parts, and knew it explained why they were top of the class. However, he also knew each relied on the other, and getting hired by the same advertising company and then being allowed to work as a pair was an impossible dream.

However, when they talked with someone from a local real estate company during the college's job fair, he described how many agents worked as partners. That's why they enrolled in a course to get their real estate licences immediately on graduating.

They were very successful. Andrew focussed on facial expressions and other body language. Emily specialized in words, not just the meanings but the tone of voice. The pattern they developed when clients showed interest after an initial tour was to encourage them to walk through by themselves while picturing living there. That was legitimate customer service, giving people the opportunity to imagine the place as a home, but it also gave Andrew and Emily a chance

**BEYOND WORDS:
DISCOVERING OURSELVES
THROUGH EXPRESSIVE ART
by Alison Walton**

to share observations. Emily could easily read between the lines with comments about layout or when asked about neighbourhood. Andrew was quite attuned to visible indicators such as subtle nods or scowls. Talking together allowed him to identify for her positive and negative reactions when she had spoken, and she could share her insights from voice tone. That allowed them to increasingly personalize their approach the longer they spent with clients. Frequently, post-purchase evaluations, which the agency always requested, contained the line, 'They seemed to know exactly what we were thinking.'

"I'm Andrew. This is Emily," he introduced themselves when the Rogers arrived. He noticed the way the man guided the woman with a palm on her back, the relaxation underlying her smile, and the flexibility of her posture as she seemed to lean back into his hand. He knew Emily would learn more about them from the conversation she was initiating, much more than they realized they were revealing.

The smiles and widening eyes were positive indications. More telling was the way one would seem to dawdle with great interest while the other rolled eyes or smiled in exasperated impatience to move on. - And those roles alternated, each sometimes lingering and at other times eager for the next room. When comparing notes, Emily confirmed Andrew's observations by talking about the excited undertones she could hear.

"We don't have to sell this one," Andrew said. "The less we push, the better."



Not long ago while purging my home of its seemingly bottomless pit of books, I came across a small book of poetry written by my old friend, Ed Wildman. Ed had practiced criminal law for decades in Barrie, Ontario and one day packed it in to become a full-time poet. At his book launch for *Gentlemen of the Street*, a collection of poems about Ed's encounters with some of Georgian Bay's toughest bad guys (his former clients), he wrote in the copy I had bought, "To Ali – who showed me that books are possible." I had met Ed a few years previous, when I was in the throes of writing my own true crime book and had consulted him via email about some legal issues involved in writing a story of that nature. When I moved to Barrie shortly after my book's publication, Ed became a friend. He was holding writing workshops at a long-term addictions and rehabilitation centre for men and invited me to talk to the clients about my book. It had been a few years since I had done any public speaking about the story of David Snow, the man I had met and befriended in Orangeville, Ontario, who turned out to be one of Canada's most dangerous criminals.

The experience, as horrific as it was, had been the catalyst for unexpected life changes and discoveries, one of which was how creativity, in writing and in art, could aid in knowing ourselves through self-expression. Fittingly, through Ed I found this in my work at a place where second chances were possible, aptly named Hope Acres.

The men of Hope Acres were captivated with my story of meeting David Snow, of intuitively knowing he was deeply troubled but unable to

pinpoint what it was, or to predict what he was capable of. Some had come from areas such as Midland and Penetanguishene where Snow had broken into cottages and camped out while planning his next sinister move. On the way home, Ed asked if I'd like to do weekly art workshops with the guys on a volunteer basis – run by the Salvation Army, there wasn't a lot of money to go around for things like that – and I agreed. My part-time job allowed me to swing one morning a week, and thus began one of the most fulfilling, meaningful experiences of my life.

Imagining what Day One at Hope Acres as the new volunteer "art teacher" would bring was daunting. Driving the country roads that led from Barrie to the rolling hills of Mulmer Township, I wondered what I'd do to start off a new program for the guys – I had no solid plan of action, hoping something brilliant might come to me during the 40 minute drive there. I relaxed a bit knowing they had already met me, and knew me as Ed's friend whom they liked, admired and respected. Still, how to introduce art to forty guys of all ages, in recovery, sketchy backgrounds, some just out of prison.....

I had never taught art before. Apart from helping out at my kids' school or their cubs/sparks' arts activities, I had not officially stood in front of a class of students awaiting my instruction on how or what to create. I also didn't really believe art could be taught; yes, you could learn about light and shadow and hue and tint and with enough practice replicate a still life. But, to create something from nothing...to express what was happening within without worrying about the outcome... to learn about the self through visual representation. Could I convince these guys to do that? It turned out I could, and for the most part, without much convincing.

There were, however, a few reluctant participants. Ed's writing class was easier; they could write freely, about anything at all, and most told stories about their lives in short prose or poems. It was part of their program to journal every day anyway, so they were used to writing. Also, many of the men hadn't drawn anything since grade school let alone created paintings. Sadly, some had been discouraged from art at a young age, so had lost the spontaneous creativity of childhood. One young man adamantly stated he would not be taking part in any art class. Another said it was stupid, "for kids", and yet another complained it was a waste of time. "If I wanted to paint pictures I'd go back to kindergarten," he smirked.

One of these guys was a 30-ish, muscular, tattooed fellow named Jeff. For the first few classes, he sat in the front row in a challenging posture, staring suspiciously while I explained the morning's exercise and would eventually attempt to draw something only to avoid the alternative, which was spending the morning in his room. On the fourth week into the classes, for some reason, he became more interested and by the end of that morning had created an intense piece of colourful abstract shapes that he said represented his anxiety about being forced to participate in this class...

From that day on, Jeff became consumed with expressive painting. Each week I returned to Hope Acres, he would excitedly show me what he'd created on his own time, each painting increasingly more bold. It got to a point where the other guys teased him because he'd covered almost every inch of the walls of his room with his paintings. For me, that transformation was the epitome of what painting from the heart was all about.

Although Jeff was an extreme, and not all the guys were thrilled with the idea of self expression through painting,

they soon started to really enjoy it. I think one reason was that there were no rules, no right or wrong way to do it. They were so used to fully structured days and being accountable for every moment. At the same time, however, there was structure to the class. At each session, I gave them a topic to work with – a pivotal memory, a time they felt proud, how they saw themselves, how they thought others saw them. Sometimes, the paintings would be poignant reminders of tragic pasts. Other times they would be paintings full of colour and light, with images symbolizing freedom and peace. I remember a few: a pear-shaped object split in half by a dark line, each side a different colour, representing "the two halves of me"; another a depiction of a grim Christmas morning, where violence had broken out and Santa Claus had been shot by an angry young boy. This one in particular stayed with me; not so much for the content, but more for the reaction it had caused in the Major. He was outraged that this kind of thing was "going on" in art class, and had demanded the artist destroy his work and start again with something less "negative". He gave me the hairy eyeball, too...wanting to reprimand, I'm sure, but instead just walked away, shaking his head.

I think it was at this point I realized how fearful so many people are to explore and find the difficult emotions that exist within all of us. And how maybe, I was playing a part in helping release it. I was teaching not only these men how to find a little bit of freedom from the pain of their lost childhoods and the ravages of addiction, but teaching myself, too, to learn from within.

So to Ed, who thanked me for showing him that books were possible, thanks for showing me the endless possibilities for self-awareness when we look within through creative self-expression.



**ANCIENT SPIRIT RISING:
RECLAIMING YOUR ROOTS &
RESTORING EARTH
COMMUNITY
by Pegi Evers**

Nature Spirituality has always been essential to my life journey, and the teachings of First Nations elders and community peoples continue to be an important part of my ongoing learning and personal transformation. At an *Elders Gathering* hosted by Trent University in 2010, I heard revered Wisdom Keeper and Professor James Dumont (Anishnaabe) say that "Everyone needs to get back to their own indigenous knowledge." Like a lightning bolt from the blue (!) this simple statement activated a monumental set of questions about my own life, and issues in the wider society. Why were my kindred spirits in the spiritual community assuming First Nations identities or taking cultural and spiritual property that did not belong to them, and where were our own indigenous expressions as people with European heritage? Over the past three years I have been driven to examine these issues, and *Ancient Spirit Rising: Reclaiming Your Roots & Restoring Earth Community* is the result of exhaustive research on eco-identity, along with my own nature-based observations, conclusions, evocations, poetry and illustrations.

For those of us with European ancestry, core questions continue to arise on locating our authentic wisdom traditions and reclaiming our roots in

Earth Community, and the themes in *Ancient Spirit Rising* are an attempt to add to this critical conversation. For the first time in human history with travel, the internet and other resources, we have full access to the indigenous knowledge (IK) of any culture, including our own. Then why must we take bits and pieces from the First Nations of Turtle Island when we have our own ancestral belief systems, sacred objects and ceremonies that are bursting with earth-connected wisdom, beauty and power? In these times of massive change, the reclaiming of our own ancestral traditions can provide us with spiritual and material tools for re-landing ourselves in our local ecosystems, challenging the toxic effects of capitalism, and creating a sustainable future.

In the course of writing *Ancient Spirit Rising* I began to realize that having a spiritual focus in life includes social and environmental justice, and by not engaging in activism on behalf of oppressed peoples and the other-than-human world we are not reaching our full potential. In the rich environment of cultural pluralism that is Canada today, taking responsibility for our privilege and the history of Settler-Colonialism will go far in establishing mutual respect and peaceful co-existence between all peoples. By increasing our solidarity and allyship with Turtle Island First Nations (our “co-existence in co-resistance”) *Ancient Spirit Rising* offers diverse strategies for healing the colonizer/colonized divide. Discovering alternatives to common misconceptions, reversing the racism of cultural appropriation, and developing skills for intercultural competency are all positive and empowering practices. Working for peace and justice is essential to personal and planetary healing, as is the directive to re-enchant and rebalance the world with a massive injection of holistic principles promoting biophilia and spiritual

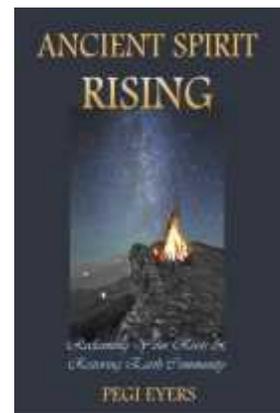
ecology. Essential to re-rooting ourselves as ecocentric peoples is to fall in love with the Earth again, and to revere the elements, manifestations and creatures in the natural world as sacred. “*You cannot destroy that which you love.*”

The “Great Turning” to ecological civilization is happening everywhere, in all sectors of society, and the various knowledge systems and their disseminators are doing a wonderful job at bending the curve! Many of us are finding the value in embracing ethics and lifestyles that reflect our connectivity to the new “Earth Story.” But what is often missing in these practices are the spiritual expressions that would arise from a strong, grounded connection to the land itself, from the recovery of our own ancestral traditions, and from “*getting back to our own IK.*”

As we take our cultural recovery project, there are a wide range of earth-connected spiritual traditions already in place that center on our European *Old Ways*. Although I advocate for specific ethnocultural paths such as Gaelic Traditionalism, Old Norse Traditions, Hellenic Polytheism, Religio Romana (ancient Rome) or Baltic/ Romuva Spirituality (for example), the renaissance of reconstructionist paths such as Druidry, the Avalon Tradition, Neo-Paganism, Wicca and Matriarchal Studies is good news indeed, and contemporary nature-based spiritualities such as Animism and Ecomysticism hold elements of both ancient and modern practice. Becoming part of a specific ancestral group can give us a firm foundation, and a place to turn for spiritual guidance, cultural values and familial connection. If we are the lucky ones who know the details of our heritage, how beautiful and how honoring of ourselves and our Ancestors to re-create our specific traditional roots to the best of our ability!

Wild nature is calling us all back home, and *Ancient Spirit Rising* offers various ways and means to recover our essential bio-lineage through earthing, rewilding, ecopsychology and visiting Sacred Sites (which we are so fortunate to have access to in Southern Ontario). Our reclaiming process involves the re-inhabitation of place, or getting to know the unique features of our home landscape, and we also have a responsibility to embrace green sanctuary work, remediation, geo-justice and eco-activism, and to do the hard work of caring for and protecting the land. We all have a part to play in the paradigm shift, and *Ancient Spirit Rising: Reclaiming Your Roots & Restoring Earth Community* offers exciting guideposts and modalities for our revitalization journey.

As diverse indigenous societies and spiritual traditions teach us, true knowledge is gained by thinking with both the head and the heart - a journey of emotion as informed by the mind - and my *Ancient Spirit Rising* reflections have been tempered by my true heart’s knowing, and the personal agency of that expression. We are all *People of the Earth*, and I invite you to join me on a path of personal and collective transformation!



Ancient Spirit Rising: Reclaiming Your Roots & Restoring Earth Community is available in both paperback and PDF format from Stone Circle Press at www.stonecirclepress.com and at www.amazon.com.

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Every article I've written for *One Thousand Trees* has been right on topic for what is going on in my life in the moment. Lately I've been in the process of re-assessing my entire mode of being.

As I began to delve into the inner sanctum of my soul, different emotions were suddenly bombarding my spirit, mind and body! I felt like I'd just opened every door to my past, the good, bad and the ugly. Now I've created every desperate, powerless and damaged part of me to rise up and demand to be acknowledged. Every emotion now racing through my body and coupled with thoughts of fear, hurt and anger. I suddenly saw how empty my precious soul had become.

When people show you who they are ... believe them.

I began by acknowledging the abandonment, disconnection and heartbreaking pain I endured from my two oldest sons. The eldest had discarded me as his mother several years back, for reasons unknown to me. As far as the second eldest and his wife, truth be known, it was all about their gaining control of my mother's will and trust. Including possession of her home that overlooks the Bay and entire city of San Diego. During this process I've also been banned from any contact with my mother.

Follow your gut-level feelings. You'll thank yourself later.

If I had always been true to myself, as in paying attention and listening to my inner-being, so many heartaches could have been avoided. Looking back I can see how God was tapping me on the shoulder and saying "Pay close attention here". But in the end, I did not trust my inner-self or God's guidance.

Listen to your heart ... be your own best friend.

I never really understood what this meant until I was abandoned by half of my family, lost my precious first grandson to suicide and the passing of my dad and stepmother to death a few years before. The truth for me is nothing is more important than holding myself in the highest esteem possible. In the end, I'm all I've got, and all I ever had.

Speak the truth, your lies will always come back to haunt you.

The truth is a precious commodity. If you've lived through any type of betrayal you will understand the importance of this compassionate way to communicate not only towards others but towards ourselves.

Cherish those you love ... You never know if you'll see them again.

Through the loss of precious loved ones and several close friends I've come to cherish the moments with my younger son and daughter and their families, and some of the dearest friends anyone could ask for. Always remind yourself to say "I love you" when you part as it may be the last time you see each other.

Being kind and loving is more important than the need to always be right.

Follow your heart, it is your best compass. Forgive yourself, loved ones and dearest friends. Never part company without an "I love you". You'll always feel complete with that person.

Thought creates form ... choose the good ones.

Ultimately we are always at choice, we can react or respond. Reaction is automatic and responding in conscious and deliberate and thought out.

Be Here Now!

All we ever can experience are successive moments of now. Cherish every moment we have with our loved ones and dearest friends. And ... remember an "I Love You" as you part. It may be the last time you get to say it or they get to hear it.

Our Beliefs are a filter for our own reality.

It is done unto you as you believe. Love is the supreme expression of life. It is the essence and the ground of being for all creation.

Forgiveness

Forgiveness is for letting go of the angst, the hurt and pain. It has nothing to do with the other person. It is forgiving yourself peace.

Hold the vision, trust the process.

1. Listen to your own feelings.
2. Be compassionate
3. Be open to what your heart is telling you.

4. Create a solid source of Love. A connection of wisdom and comfort.
 5. Choose to be around loving people
 6. Speak up for yourself ... You're worth it.
 7. Take good care of yourself ... body, mind and soul.
 8. Find work that you love.
 9. Create a balance in your life with all-of-the-above
- * And lastly; Always be grateful.



FOCUS ON VOLUNTEERING by Jennifer Annett

In-Community Volunteer Leader inspires others to donate blood

Did you know the third most popular reason people volunteer is because they have been personally affected by a cause? When you or someone you know have been affected by a concern or crisis, you may find yourself suddenly more aware of the role volunteers can play in raising awareness and recruiting fellow supporters for your cause. You might be surprised to learn only 5% of Canadian volunteers support health-related causes, like blood services, cancer care, aids, Alzheimer's, multiple sclerosis, vision, or hearing. Volunteering for such causes is a tremendous way to give back to the community.



Royce Bodaly, who volunteers with Canadian Blood Services, plays a key role in filling this gap. By providing information about Canadian Blood Services and the opportunities for blood donation, he is able to raise awareness among community members, friends and networks on the impact they can have on the lives of Canadian patients.

As the In-Community Volunteer Leader, he is responsible for organizing and leading the volunteer team to promote upcoming clinics and recruit new donors. He actively seeks out additional event opportunities, schedules volunteers and manages event day logistics, all while balancing his work and a young family.

Royce is a valuable resource to the blood services program and an inspiration to others. Why does he do it? Royce says, "I volunteer because it makes me feel closer to my friend who is a cancer survivor." Thank you Royce for the generous donation of your time and energy.

It may be easier than you think to get involved and support a cause you are passionate about. Visit the Volunteer Opportunities Database for a searchable list of volunteer opportunities across Cambridge and North Dumfries. Go to www.uwcambridge.on.ca/volunteer-centre.php, and then click "Search the Online Database". Browse by "Areas of Interest" and select "Health Care",

or use the Keyword Search. For one-on-one assistance in finding a volunteer opportunity that suits your interests, call the Volunteer Centre at 519-621-1030, ext. 253.



VOLUNTEER OPPORTUNITIES IN GUELPH

Guelph Community Health Centre requires **Welcoming and Client Engagement Volunteers** to assess visitor needs and direct visitors accordingly. Volunteers will also monitor the waiting area and alert staff of any safety concerns. Volunteers that are comfortable working with vulnerable populations and are able to be empathetic, compassionate and non-judgmental are encouraged to apply. For more information, contact Hannah Senitt at 519-821-6638 ext 326 or email volunteer@guelphchc.ca.

Guelph Food Bank requires **Warehouse Assistants** to sort food products, stock shelves and create food hampers. Volunteers will also be tasked with general maintenance duties and portioning products. If you are able to carry 25+ pounds and can work well independently and as part of a team, this position is a good fit for you! For more information, contact Tracy Marchesich at 519-767-1380 or email gfb@spiritwind.ca.

Family and Children's Services is seeking **Youth Mentors** to provide one-on-one support to youth aged 13 and older with everyday life issues, conflicts and stresses. Volunteers will offer youth guidance and a listening ear. This position requires the volunteer to spend 3-4 hours weekly with the child/youth. Students 16+ are welcome to apply. For more

information, contact Karan Mann at 519-824-2410 ext 4822 or email karan.mann@fcsgw.org.

Junior Achievement Guelph-Wellington requires **Youth Mentors** to share their business and financial literacy expertise with students while delivering the Junior Achievement programs. Volunteers will work in partnership with the teacher in the class. This will require facilitation of program materials and helping students to develop confidence, leadership skills and critical thinking skills. Ideal volunteers are experienced business people, university or college students, or entrepreneurs. For more information, contact Karen Gallant at 519-576-6610 or email kgallant@jwaterlooregion.org.

Bibles for Missions Thrift Store in Guelph requires **Youth Clothing Volunteers** to assist in sorting, pricing and hanging up youth clothing. This is an opportunity to gain customer service experience and work in a team setting. Shifts are flexible and no previous experience is required. Students 16+ are welcome to apply. For more information, contact Nellie van Donkersgoed by phone at 519-821-2498 or by email at nellie@biblesformissionsguelph.ca.



VOLUNTEER OPPORTUNITIES IN KITCHENER-WATERLOO

Carizon Family and Community Services invites applications for **volunteer tutors and mentors** for the **Pathways to Education Program**. Support high school students who face unique challenges completing high

school. For information email dgellatly@carizon.ca.

The Community Music School of Waterloo Region is recruiting a **fundraising officer**. Make an impact on the lives of youth in our community. Develop and execute new fundraising strategies with the CMSWR team. Contact Caroline at chissa@cmswr.ca.

Royal Medieval Faire needs **special event volunteers** to assist with set-up, take-down, run activities or assist with activities on September 19. Must have the stamina to work outdoors rain or shine. For information visit www.royalmedievalfaire.org.

Focus on Nature is looking for **volunteer program assistants** to be part of a team that inspires students in grades 4, 5 and 6 to explore and appreciate the wonders of the natural world around them through photography. To get involved contact email workshops@focusonnature.ca.

Volunteer coaches are needed for the **Letters, Sounds and Words program**, offered by Strong Start. Help children ages 5-7 develop early reading skills through activities and games, 30 minutes once a week. For information visit strongstart.ca.

Bereaved Families of Ontario - Midwestern Region is looking for **volunteer facilitators** once a month. Groups are in Kitchener and Cambridge. Call 519-603-0196 for information.



BANG UP WEDDING a story by Susan McCrae

Hurdle #1 The Engagement

My family didn't believe us when we committed on Boxing Day, 1965. My engagement to Tony Vander Voet passed uncelebrated except by us.

My Mother felt we were unsuited. My Father accepted it, without enthusiasm. Tony's mother, recently divorced and bitter, said, "Live together, marriage spoils everything."

I'd been studying in Toronto, with five months to graduation. Tony was finishing a degree, at the University of Alberta, Edmonton. Letters and occasional phone calls weren't enough. When you love someone, absence does strengthen the resolve to be together. We told both families we'd marry the following summer, like it or not.

Hurdle #2 Where to Wed

We wanted to celebrate simply with people who mattered. My father insisted on fanfare and party in Edson, where it was important to invite friends whose children's weddings they'd attended. Tony's mother, younger brother, Paul, and older brother, Larry with wife Lynne, would be there.

Since my mother was active in the United Church in Edson, we chose that venue. We saw the minister to finalize plans before I returned to Toronto and he gave us a questionnaire which asked if we planned to raise our children in the faith.

Our response: no.

Red faced he said, "You couldn't start your lives with the lie of a church wedding."

I pointed out there is no lie. "It's important to my family and we're doing it for them."

Mother was grievously unhappy but determined that my wedding would happen in that church. My parents were left to arrange place, reception, invitations - it was their party.

We promised to show up suitably dressed.

Hurdle #3 The Dress

My bridesmaids Jeanne Overton, Cathy Thompson, and Delia McCrae, my young sister would make dresses in any style with a flowered yellow fabric I'd send from Toronto.

I designed my dress and a tailor in Toronto agreed to make it. A sleeveless sheath was topped by a short cape which turned into a train of lace. It was all blue. I'm a washout in white.

It was wonderful, with tiny covered buttons and loops of fabric to close the cape. All for eighty dollars. I was a financially challenged graduate student who borrowed money for my train ticket home, but I had a stunning blue wedding dress.

Hurdle #4 Getting Home

I said goodbye to Toronto, my flatmates and the lovely old apartment in Rosedale. With little money for food, my expanded vision of life's possibilities kept me company. I was ready to get married and start a new life with Tony.

Whether the reluctant preacher yielded to my mother's badgering or congregational politics I never knew. But the date was confirmed for Edson United Church on June 18, 1966.

Tony was busy starting his Master's so I went to Edson. A few days of getting on my mother's nerves were enough. She was under pressure, and my blue dress was her last straw. She and my grandmothers stood shocked when I lifted it out of the suit bag.

"How can you get married in that," Mom growled. "You know what everybody will think."

"We have to find a white dress," Grandma Fisher insisted.

"I either get married in this dress, or shit brown," I hollered back.

At the kitchen table, Dad bent over laughing.

"It is a pale blue," Grandma McCrae whispered as I stormed out.

The dress became legend. Years later, at the local salon, they remembered the 'bride' in the blue dress. 'And she wasn't even pregnant'... remained unsaid.

Dad invited me to escape with a 'Fly-In'. Dozens of small planes would fly in to Grande Prairie, to commemorate a pioneer trek on horseback. They promised a good party.

Hurdle #5 What Flies There Must Fly Back

The quiet woke me. Silence is not good when you're travelling in a Cessna, a couple of hundred miles an hour, 1,000 feet above ground. Dad, an experienced WWII flying instructor, muttered and cursed.

"What's going on?"

The artificial horizon on the instrument panel tipped as if drunk, left then right.

"Engine cut out."

"Can we make the airstrip?"

"Trying to. Headwind's fighting us." Al Worthing, the plane's owner struggled to keep us afloat.

"Holy shit we're gonna crash." Reg, my seat mate woke up.

"Mom's will never forgive us," I muttered. And Tony? How could I do this to him.

A gust caught the undercarriage, the wings bounced sideways then down.

"We're going in, HEADS DOWN," Dad bellowed.

Elbows locked, I braced on the seat in front, head on knees, heart in throat, breathless. We crunched and cartwheeled.

Consciousness dawned. Blood splattered, I hung upside down suspended by my seatbelt. A goose egg, no blood, but pain coursed across my stomach where the seatbelt gripped. Blood poured from Dad's head, onto the ceiling - floor.

"Dad," I shouted. His arm hung, dangling on a loose thread.

Al groaned. Reg gawked over a swollen cheek.

Blood flooded my head, pounded. I smelled gasoline. We had to get out.

"I'm okay," Al grunted.

"Can you see if Dad is?" He touch fingers to Dad's neck.

"Pulse is strong."

The best news, tears ran into my hair. "Al, I smell gas, let's get out."

The crumpled door gave enough for him to kick it open. We'd landed in spongy waterlogged muskeg before the nose dug in and flipped. The soft landing had saved us and the wings kept us from sinking into the soggy terrain. We released belts, tumbled onto the ceiling and out onto the wing.

"Blood," Dad moaned.

I resisted hugging him, “Yours, from your head. We’ll get you upright to stop the bleeding.”

“My arm, awful sore.”

“Shoulder looks dislocated, maybe broken,” I said.

“Have to help, can’t use the arm.”

Reg boosted me onto the undercarriage, which sat like legs on an upside down June bug. At Dad’s door I braced legs on either side and pulled hard. It opened and I braced the uninjured side of his body on my knees and released the seatbelt. He screamed, fell on me, and passed out.

Head wounds slowed with the benefit of gravity and I rigged a bandage. My sleeping bag kept him warm and a small duffel pillowed his damaged shoulder.

We cheered at a squawk from the radio. The other plane we’d flown with in tandem was near and piloted by Dr. Jim Crawford. Al relayed that we’d crashed and the Cessna soon buzzed overhead.

Dad groaned, “What’s your Mother going to say?”

“She is going to be royally pissed at both of us.”

He winced.

“You in pain?”

“You bet.”

“All I can offer is Midol,” I hiccupped and hoped it sounded like a chuckle, “you know for the cramps at that time of the month.”

“Bugger damn,” he said, “so long as it won’t give me female complaints, too.”

A siren wailed; help was on the way.

I walked into Mom’s arms at the hospital, “I’m so sorry, Mom.”

“Why?” she said. “You’ve everything to be happy about, even though you scared the living daylight out of me and your grandmothers.”

“We almost spoiled your party.”

“But there wouldn’t be a party without you, honey. This will make the wedding extra special, she smiled. ”And I won’t even mind about that dress, though it will be talk of the town years.”

Tony and I collected Dad next day. They’d set his shoulder under sedation, and he flew on Demerol. He high stepped, one wobbly knee up at a time, grinning wide across his bandaged face.

Hurdle #6 The Ceremony

The church was packed. Our aerial misadventures brought everyone out. The processional proved too much for the organist who could manage two of music. She settled for base and harmony, the melody left to our imaginations. I was too busy supporting Dad to notice. It takes Demerol a long time to wear off.

Tony was handsome in his dark blue suit despite the hangover he shared with his attendants, Cliff Bengston and Derrick Trachsel. Our university chorus mate, Claire Jacobson, sang with stunning beauty. She’d instructed the organist to play only the melody.

Picture taking was last on the agenda before the reception. For our colourful wedding the photographer chose black and white film, the last mishap of a memorable wedding day.

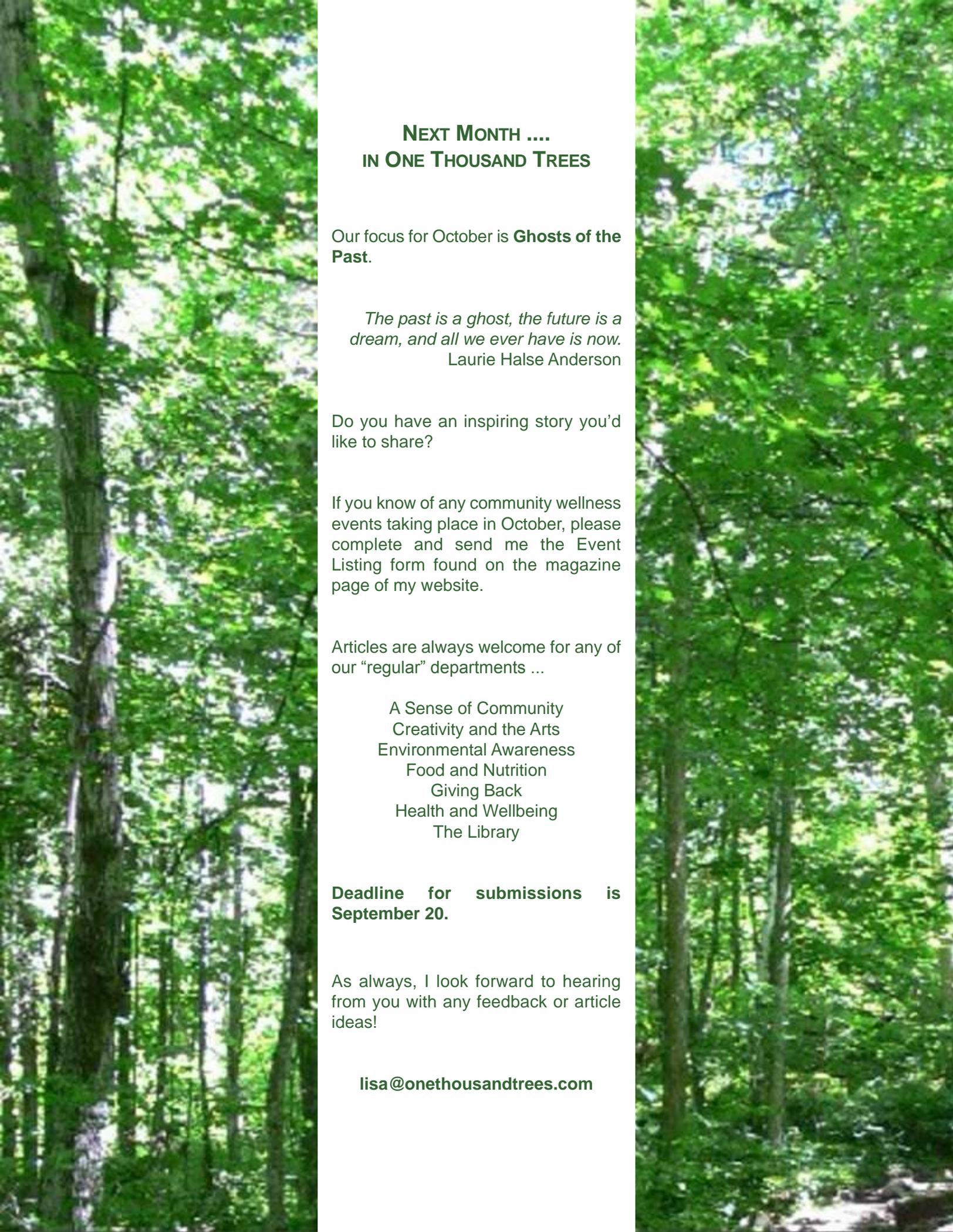
We’d overcome major hurdles and miraculously survived a plane crash. A toastmasters at the reception raised a glass to ‘a bang-up wedding’ and we cheered in unanimous agreement.

Postscript

I’m fortunate to celebrate forty nine years of marriage with Tony, so far. It’s been a full eventful life together with two wonderful special children, David and Andrea, born in different Latin American countries. They’ve travelled the world and life with us and chosen loveable partners to produce our three smart, fun grandchildren Christian, Julian and Emma Grace. We delight in each of them, whenever we’re together.

We’re not done. Our next adventure is around the corner. We should have expected the eventful part. Our bang-up wedding was just the beginning.





**NEXT MONTH
IN ONE THOUSAND TREES**

Our focus for October is **Ghosts of the Past**.

The past is a ghost, the future is a dream, and all we ever have is now.

Laurie Halse Anderson

Do you have an inspiring story you'd like to share?

If you know of any community wellness events taking place in October, please complete and send me the Event Listing form found on the magazine page of my website.

Articles are always welcome for any of our "regular" departments ...

A Sense of Community
Creativity and the Arts
Environmental Awareness
Food and Nutrition
Giving Back
Health and Wellbeing
The Library

Deadline for submissions is September 20.

As always, I look forward to hearing from you with any feedback or article ideas!

lisa@onethousandtrees.com



The Grand River flows 300 kilometres through southwestern Ontario from the highlands of Dufferin County to Port Maitland on Lake Erie.

The Grand River Conservation Authority manages water and other natural resources on behalf of 39 municipalities and close to one million residents.

One Thousand Trees' target market is defined by the borders of the Grand River Watershed. Department Editors are responsible for promoting practitioners, events and volunteer opportunities in the cities of Brantford, Cambridge, Guelph, Kitchener, and Waterloo.

Visit the Grand River Conservation Authority at www.grandriver.ca.