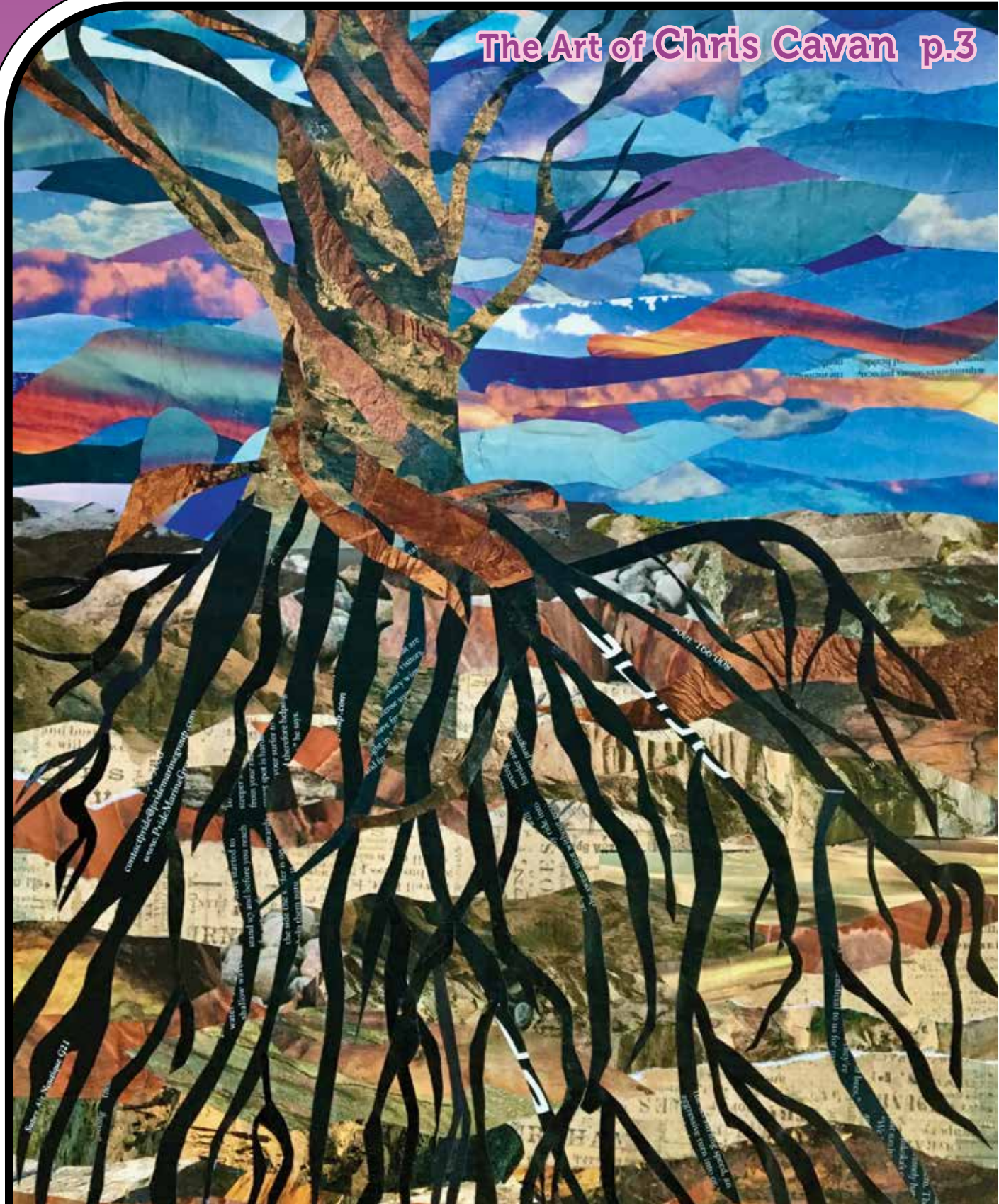


# the Humm

free

Arts,  
Entertainment  
& Ideas

The Art of Chris Cavan p.3



p.2

February's Events



p.5

Folkus Concert Series



p.6

Family Fun Day



p.15

Starting Veggies Indoors

## Watcha Gonna Do in 2022?

Since you're reading theHumm, I'll wager that you're going to keep on supporting the many wonderful artists, organizations and small businesses that make this area vibrant.

Here are three events that are planning to return in February:

**Taking Care of the Browns** at Studio Theatre, Perth from Feb. 10-20, [ticketsplease.ca](http://ticketsplease.ca)

**Frost & Fire Winter Festival** on Feb. 19 & 20, [perth.ca/frostandfire](http://perth.ca/frostandfire)

The **Folkus Concert** on Feb. 26, [folkusalmonte.com](http://folkusalmonte.com)



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# February Events

## ALL MONTH

**Mississippi Valley Textile Museum:** *MaterialWorld* [from Feb 5] <mvtm.ca>  
**Sivarulrasa Gallery:** Barbara Gamble <sivarulrasa.com> [from Feb 16]  
 The **Almonte Library Corridor Gallery** presents Deirdre Palmer's watercolours & acrylics

## FESTIVALS

Feb 19-20, **Frost & Fire Winter Festival.** Indoor & outdoor winter activities in Perth. perth.ca/frostandfire

## COMMUNITY

**Back Forty Outdoor Saturdays,** 10AM-4PM. Snowshoe trails/rentals, sledding, fireside food/drinks. 1406 Gully Rd., Mississippi Stn. Artisancheese.ca

**Naismith Men's Shed** (naismithmensshed.ca):  
 Thu, 9AM, breakfast, breakfast (\$10+), Gourmet Restaurant, CP;  
 Thu, 10:30AM, Gaming Group, Almonte Legion;  
 Fri, 10AM, Zoom chat, nicolasdfry@gmail.com for link

**Hackberry Men's Shed** (almontecarver@gmail.com):  
 Feb 1, 15, 7:30AM, breakfast (\$10+), Gourmet Restaurant, CP;  
 Tue, 7PM, Zoom chat. rkamm@connectwell.ca for link;  
 Thu, 7PM, meet for coffee/chat, 134 Stonewater Bay, CP.

**MERA Speakers:** Thurs, 7-8:30PM. Feb 3 *Batik in Africa*; Feb 10 *Basketmaker Adventures Around the World*; Feb 17 *Children, Nature & Relationships*; Feb 24 *Hunting for Postal History*. hmogford@gmail.com for Zoom link. Sugg'd donation \$10

**8008 Lingerie Grand Re-opening,** Feb 14. Moving across the hall at 14 Mill St., Heritage Court, Almonte

**Breakfast with Soul,** Feb 15, 9-11AM. Speaker: Hai Dai, Wariga calendar. powerupyourlife@gmail.com for zoom link. Free

**Pakenham Hort: Growing More Butterflies,** Feb 16, 7:30PM. pakenhamhort@gmail.com for Zoom link

**Gardening Workshop: Horticulture Therapy,** Feb 22, 7PM. w/Allan Goddard. jyoung@carebridge.ca for Zoom link/details. Neighbourhood Tomato Community Farm

**Almonte Lectures: Teaching Immigrant Children,** Feb 25, 7:30PM. w/ Johanna Filp-Hanke. AlmonteLectures.com for Zoom link

## VISUAL ARTS

**Almonte Quilters' Virtual Mtg,** Feb 21, 7-9PM. Art East Quilt Co. almontequiltersguild.ca for link. \$5 guests

**Lanark Co. Camera Club Mtg,** Feb 22, 7-9PM. Speaker: Julian Elliot re UK across the seasons. presidentoflccameraclub@gmail.com for Zoom link

**Lanark County Quilters' Guild Mtg,** Feb 22, 7-9PM. lanarkcountyquilters@gmail.com for link.

**Meet the Artist: Barbara Gamble,** Feb 26, 2-5PM. Sign up for 2-3, 3-4, or 4-5PM. Sivarulrasa Gallery, Almonte. 256-8033, info@sivarulrasa.com

## THEATRE

**Taking Care of the Browns,** Feb 10-12, 17-19, 7:30PM; Feb 13, 20, 2PM. studiotheatreperth.com. Tix: \$24 at ticketsplease.ca

## MUSIC

**Folkus: Shawna Caspi w/ Amanda Lowe Warnakulasuriya,** Almonte, Feb 26, 8PM, Almonte Old Town Hall. Tix: ticketsplease.ca, \$30/20

## Claiming Column

**AiC: Cheng<sup>2</sup> Duo,** Almonte, Mar 5  
**Queen Flash,** Smiths Falls, Mar 12  
**Folkus: Julian Taylor,** Almonte, Mar 26  
**Shirley Valentine,** Perth, Mar 31-Apr 10  
**Arts CP Show,** CRApr 30-May 1



Who's Reading the Humm

Back in 2019, Keith Sheldrick from Almonte sent in this great photo, and wrote: "This is a picture of me reading the Humm at the Bahama Bay Resort in Davenport, Florida on April 11 of this year."


Thanks Keith — and here's hoping we can resume safe travels again soon!

## Humble Thought

"When you are a young person, you are like a young creek, and you meet many rocks, many obstacles and difficulties on your way. You hurry to get past these obstacles and get to the ocean.

But as the creek moves down through the fields, it becomes larger and calmer and it can enjoy the reflection of the sky. It's wonderful. You will arrive at the sea anyway so enjoy the journey. Enjoy the sunshine, the sunset, the moon, the birds, the trees, and the many beauties along the way. Taste every moment of your daily life."

— Thich Nhat Hanh



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**Breakfast with Soul**

WOW Bali is a regenerative NGO whose "Ancient Future" research is based on ancient wisdom – integrating spiritual technology with behaviour science for optimum sustainable development via human creative potential. Visit wowbali.com for more information.

Prof. Hai Dai is the co-founder of WOW Bali and the visionary behind "Sustainable Dynamics." At the next Breakfast with Soul he will introduce us to his teachings on the Wariga Calendar.

**Meet Prof. Hai Dai - February 15 from 9-11AM**  
 Zoom Link: [us02web.zoom.us/j/9732086439](https://us02web.zoom.us/j/9732086439)

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**ON SALE NOW:**

 **Taking Care of the Browns**  
 by Studio Theatre Perth  
 February 10-20

 **Folkus Concert Series**  
 at The Almonte Old Town Hall  
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**COMING SOON:**

 **Art in the Garden**  
 at Kiwi Gardens  
 Tickets on sale May 1



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theHummm is a monthly arts, entertainment and ideas newspaper delivered free to businesses and visitor attractions in Almonte, Perth, Carleton Place, Westport, Pakenham, Carp, Arnprior, Smiths Falls, Burnstown, White Lake, Balderson, and Ottawa. Our mandate is to connect and promote people and events in the small towns and rural communities of the Ottawa Valley — where the arts flourish and entertaining characters run amok!

**Submissions**  
 By email or on disk.

**Content Deadline:**  
 20<sup>th</sup> of the month prior to publication

**Advertising Deadline:**  
 22<sup>nd</sup> of the month prior to publication

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**Thumm's up this month to:**  
**Seaway Valley PharmaChoice** in Carleton Place. When the cast and crew from *Sketchy Santa* had to contend with Omicron, many of us descended en masse on Seaway Valley. The owner was professional, patient and comforting — thank you for being so kind to us during that stressful time!

# Chris Cavan – Rooted to the Sky

Almonte artist Chris Cavan's exuberant watercolour paintings are a testament to the essential role that trees play in her creativity and overall wellbeing. Trees have sustained and inspired her since she was a young girl,

by Sally Hansen

and dominate her art, her poetry and her writings. On the advice of Almonte "Energizer Bunny" and fellow artist Neil Carleton, Chris compiled an extensive binder of her art, photographs and original writings to accompany her recent art exhibit at the Corridor Gallery at the Almonte Public Library. In it she writes, "Trees ground me and keep me rooted to this sweet earth. They also make my spirits soar with the winged ones who sing so joyously from their lofty perches."

In return, Cavan celebrates them in paintings that glow with an emotional intensity that reflects her connection to her subject. In recent years, she has begun to "use more impressionistic techniques and let the shapes emerge into my daydream." She is also branching out by creating exuberant collages. She describes her creative process thus: "I escape my surroundings by submitting to the enchantment of painting. This letting go is a transformative, meditative state that allows me to deeply reflect on nature. The spirits of old, gnarly trees appear, and after spending a couple of hours with these wise friends, I am created anew. It is truly re-creation for me."

Like Canada's renowned tree champion Dr. Diana Beresford-Kroeger, Cavan traces her ancestry to Celtic-Druidic roots and wonders if this contributes to their shared compulsion to "speak for the trees." She dedicates her aforementioned binder to her: "Diana Beresford-Kroeger is a world recognized author, medical biochemist, botanist and climate change visionary. She possesses a unique understanding of modern western science and ancient Celtic knowledge. Orphaned in Ireland in her youth, Beresford-Kroeger was educated by her Irish elders who instructed her in the Brehon knowledge of plants and nature... In the 1970s Diana started her own arboretum and collected trees from all over the world. She discovered the importance of mother trees at the heart of the forest and she scientifically proved that trees are a living library of medicine that have a chemical language and communicate in a quantum world... Diana's Bioplan... encourages ordinary people to develop a new relationship with nature, to join together to replant the global forest... This plan was adopted by the city of Ottawa." <dianaberesford-kroeger.com/about-diana>.

Cavan is growing her binder into a book comprising portraits of her paintings, her photographs,

and original poems and meditations. Titled *Rooted to the Sky*, it is her homage to trees — her lifelong companions and source of meditative and artistic inspiration.

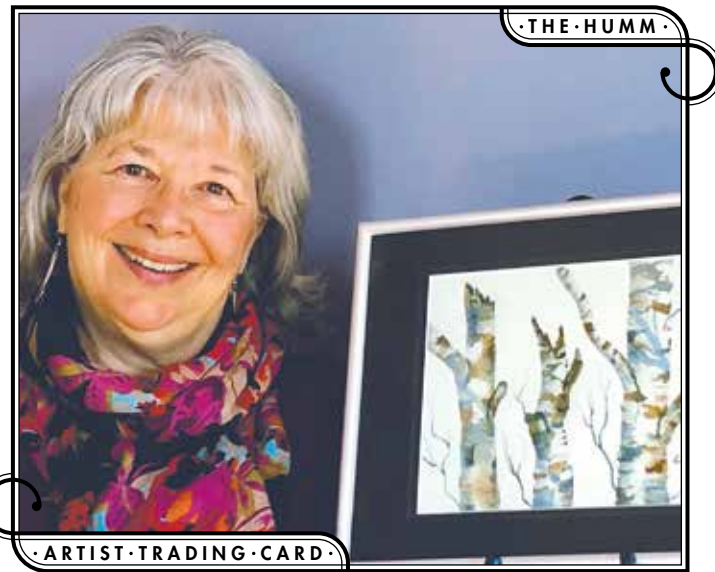
There is no doubt that Chris Cavan is an eco-activist. Like Beresford-Kroeger, David Attenborough, Humm columnist Susie Osler and many of this publication's readers, she creates art in many forms not just for her own "re-creation," but to promote awareness and stimulate action to protect the trees that nurture us. "Biophilia" is the term popularized by Edward O. Wilson in his 1986 book of the same title to describe what he believed is humanity's innate affinity for the natural world. He also spoke for the trees — he is quoted as saying that destroying a rain-forest for economic gain is like burning a Renaissance painting to cook a meal. As of yet, there is no noun that describes an individual who recognizes how tightly the wellbeing of our species is connected to



our relationship with and the health of the natural world. There should be, so theHumm bravely goes forth and proposes "biophile".

A true Valley girl from Arnprior, Chris always loved nature, being outdoors, and art. She took art lessons as a kid, did lots of art with her own kids, and became serious about her painting twenty years ago when her family responsibilities lessened. After moving to Almonte seven years ago, she joined The Centre for Creative Living at St. Paul's Anglican Church and is currently a member of both the Off the Wall Art Circle and the Creative Writing Circle, where she is working on *Rooted to the Sky*. Is it coincidence that the Church's icon is a "tree that supports the branches of hospitality... reflection... and social justice"?

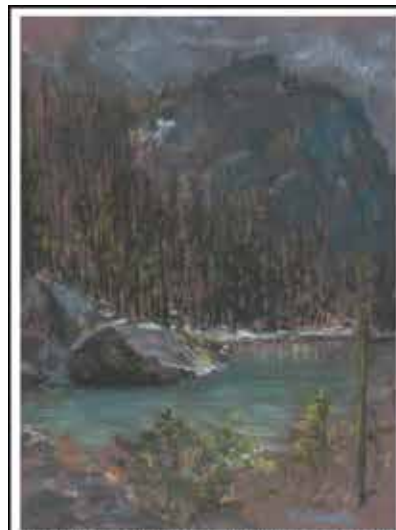
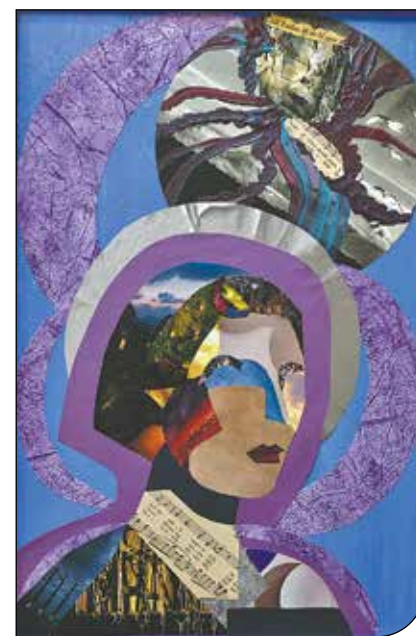
It is not surprising that Cavan is currently taking two online writing courses. She has had a fascinating and challenging teaching career that was only possible because she is a lifelong learner. After considering nursing and journalism, she majored in



English and then completed her B. Ed. at Queen's University, taught in Pembroke, got married and started a family. She taught for over thirty years, originally teaching mostly high school English, but eventually teaching every grade from Grade 2 to adults. As her children got older, she transitioned to teaching ESL/ELD (English as a Second Language/English Literacy Development) in response to a large influx of newcomers to Canada. Over 7,000 Somalis alone resettled in Ottawa in the 1990s, and Chris met many of these courageous, disrupted families as well as people from all over Africa, East Asia and the Middle East. For many, language was the first and most difficult barrier to overcome in their new home (the cold weather was the second).

Her experience of teaching traumatized, culturally isolated, even pre-literate (no written language) young adults fourteen to twenty years old, "taught me about courage, the will to go on and start again... They showed me through their stories how lucky we are as Canadians... never take our freedom, democracy, rights as a woman, any rights at all... for granted. The experience brought the world to me. Those young people taught me way more than I ever taught them..."

Like many other artists profiled in this arts paper, Chris Cavan is delighted with her decision to join the arts-friendly Almonte community. As she notes, and I second, "Everyone I know loves Almonte!" Until pandemic restrictions are finally unnecessary, Chris relies on social media and word of mouth to share her art. She recently participated in an online, week-long retreat titled 7 Days of Rest & Sacred Renewal, dedicated to the healing and thriving of Earth and all her inhabitants. Her contribution will be posted at <7days-of-rest.org> in the coming weeks, where you can enjoy her presentation and see her inspiring paintings and written meditations. To schedule an appointment to meet her and see her artworks in person, please check the back of her Artist Trading Card for her coordinates.



"Emerald Lake, Yoho National Park", pastel on paper, 1989

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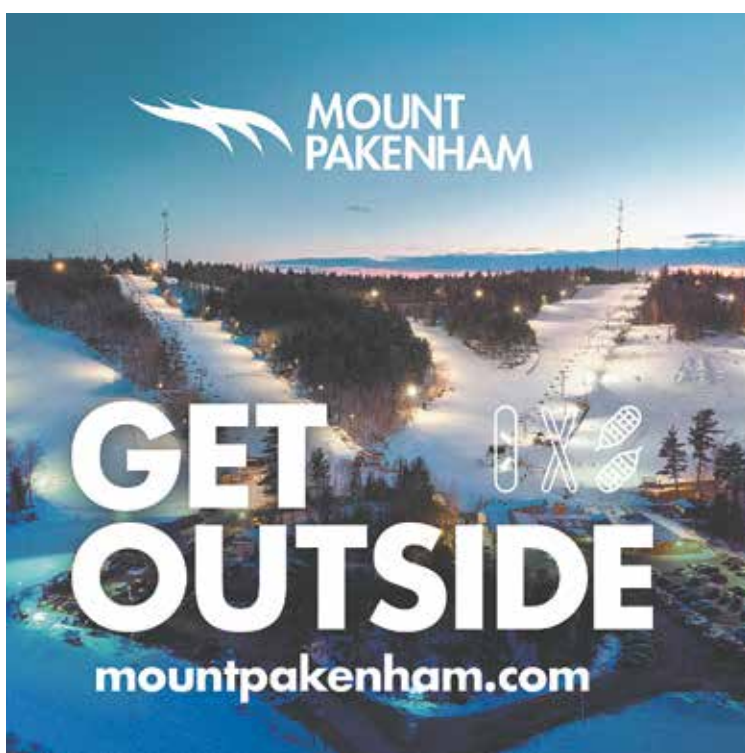


"My Rose Field", oil and wax on canvas, 2021

**WHO** Chris Cavan  
**WHAT** Painter, collage-maker, poet, writer, editor, nature lover  
**WHERE** Almonte, <chris.cavan@rogers.com>, <7days-of-rest.org>  
**WHEN** Contact Chris for an appointment  
**WHY** "Art allows me to take my heart for a walk in the woods and listen to the magical whispers of old trees."

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# Taking Care of the Browns

## A Canadian Play at Studio Theatre Perth

Need a laugh, a little positive lift to your spirits? Don't miss Studio Theatre Perth's upcoming production of *Taking Care of the Browns* by Canadian playwright Peter Paylor. It's a hilarious and heartwarming romantic comedy about family, community and dead house guests, and a reminder that some old-fashioned things are well worth keeping. The play is scheduled to open on February 10, assuming pandemic restrictions are lifted.

"I chose this play because it struck me as the most real conversation. I could identify with these people, and it's a fun play," says Grey Masson, the play's director.

The main characters are Justin and Amber. They're nice people raised by nice parents. They're Canadian in the best possible way.

Their neighbour Bernie is also a nice guy, who'll pitch-in in a heartbeat even as he wanders in and out of their apartment. When a stranger, Janet, needs help moving, they help. And when Janet needs to find a home for her dead parents, Mr. and Mrs. Brown, they naturally offer to take them in and take care of them. Really, how much trouble could a couple of urns be? Then as the play unfolds the Browns take on a new role.

"They become therapists in the afterlife!" explains Masson.

The production is well on its way to being realized. Masson has chosen a simplified set that keeps the focus on the urns and the actors.

"I wanted to have a simpler set in the next play I directed, because a lot of our sets are looking pretty standard and I wanted to break the mould," said Masson, adding that this play offered a perfect opportunity.

Designed by Fiona Bladon, the set does away with the usual three walls and instead uses colour and partial walls to delineate different areas. "Designing a set for a play like this is an exercise in commu-



The Browns may have passed away, but they're still the central characters in Peter Paylor's hilarious comedy *Taking Care of the Browns*. Shown here in rehearsal are Lucas Tennant as Bernie, Rob Glas as Justin and Joanna McAuley Treffers as Amber, all watching a televised Brier in the company of the Browns.

nication," says Bladon. "I had to understand what the director was thinking and what the author was asking and what the actors would need, then find the balance among all those."

Meanwhile the actors are having a whale of a time bringing their characters to life. Veteran Perth actor Lucas Tennant, portraying Bernie, is thoroughly enjoying the process. "Bernie is a fun-loving guy, who'll give you the shirt off his back. He's a hoot to portray and play around with," says Tennant.

Another familiar face, Joanna McAuley-Treffers, playing Amber, says she's loving the charm and optimism of the play. "If we do get this up on the stage, the audience will leave the theatre feeling positive. It's quite the uplifting play in a gentle, quirky way," she says.

Performances are scheduled for Feb 10, 11, 12, 17, 18 and 19 at 7:30PM and February 13 and 20 at 2PM. Tickets are \$24 each and available through <ticketsplease.ca> or 485-6434, and at the door. Attendees must show ID and vaccine QR code certificate to gain entry.

## MERA's Speaker Series

Brighten up your winter on Thursday evenings by tuning in for an exciting series of talks presented by MERA. Cozy up at home, as the Speakers Series will be held over Zoom.

There are four talks schedules in February, each running from 7-8:30PM. Join as many as you like — organizers have tried to plan something for everyone. Interested viewers need to subscribe to the series to receive the invitation to watch the talk, by emailing Helen at <hmogford@gmail.com>.

On February 3, **Jennifer Raby** <jennifer-raby.pixels.com> will present "Batiks in Africa: discovering my visual voice". Jenn developed a passion for Batik due to its unique elements and because it requires the artist to think and act innovatively. She loves to share the joy and magic of this process with others.

On February 10, **Ankaret Dean** will present "Adventures from Around the World: by a lifelong basketmaker". Ankaret Dean never imagined that making a small weeping willow basket in 1975 at Sheridan College would lead to a lifelong interest in baskets. From teaching across North America and internationally she has had the opportunity to travel to learn, and also to travel with Canadian Executive

Service Organization (CESO) as a volunteer. She opened the Lanark Highlands Basketry Museum in 2016 with a collection of over 300 baskets.

February 17 brings **Kathy Boelsma**, **Melissa Cornacchia** and **Anna Baranyi** to speak about "Children, Nature and Relationships: creating spaces for connection". Three educators offer different perspectives from their unique backgrounds and will share how experiential learning, co-created spaces and creating community can impact children's wellness and ecological identities. Connections to plants, the land and the elements form the foundations of creating curriculum together. Discovering the relationships formed in nature, through the eyes of a child, can impact our own thinking and learning. Donations for this talk can be made to Art for Aid <artforaid.ca>.

Then on February 24, **Chris Anstead** will present "Searching for Postal History: a chance to wave the flag for Elphin's favourite son, duelist John Wilson".

Visit <meraschoolhouse.org> to see the full list of speakers and topics, as well as all the other exciting things happening at the schoolhouse.

# Songs for Our Time

## Folkus Brings Shows to the Almonte Old Town Hall and Your Livingroom!

By Sandy Irvin

We're counting this year as our 20<sup>th</sup> season. And so far, none of it has gone as planned. But we're still sure that we love live music, and that we want to keep supporting Canadian artists. And we're still sure that you love music too.

With the continued uncertainty over numbers and live concerts, Folkus has added online streaming as an option for those who want to enjoy our concerts from the comfort of their own couch. At a bargain price of \$20 per show per household, it's a great chance to make or order a nice dinner and open a bottle of something special, dim the lights, and make an evening of it.

Please know that this won't be just another Zoom! We'll be including you in an unforgettable musical night. Our artists will be playing live in the Almonte Old Town Hall, with its gorgeous acoustics and setting. We've hired an online streaming expert and will be sending out a top-notch musical event to a private YouTube Channel. A live audience will be present, which always gives an extra energy to the show.

We'll be offering streaming for all our shows this year. The next one is on February 26; we'd love to have you join us, and listen to Shawna Caspi and Amanda Lowe W.

In a world where language is forged as rushed texts and tweets, Toronto-based singer-songwriter Shawna Caspi <shawnacaspi.com> takes her time craft-

ing lyrics that are poetic and meaningful, often using unusual rhymes and surprising turns of phrase. She delights in nuance and detail — the way words sound, the way they're shaped, the way they roll around on the palate. Her songs resonate with stories that are relatable, but told in new and unexpected ways.

Caspi is a multitasking singer, fingerstyle guitar player, poet and painter. Blessed with a warm, supple voice, and mistress of fingerstyle guitar thanks to hundreds of hours of practice, Caspi is known for her incisive, clever songwriting and warm presence on stage. A connector of curious humans, Caspi spent years on the road playing solo shows at festivals and in concert halls, train cars, backyards and living rooms, drawing energy from shifting landscapes and long drives through Canada and the United States. Shawna returns with her fifth album, *Hurricane Coming*, a collection of raw, deeply personal songs set against a backdrop of colourful cinematic soundscapes. She also created a series of abstract paintings inspired by the songs on the album, seamlessly combining her work as a musician and visual artist.

*Hurricane Coming* feels deeply relevant at the moment. After touring her last album relentlessly, Caspi took a break to rest, reflect and focus on songwriting. It was in those moments of stillness and solitude that she confronted her own experience

of burnout, anxiety and struggle with self-worth. In working through the shadowy parts of herself, Shawna discovered more ways to practice gratitude and appreciate little victories. This process of slowing down and looking inward resulted in her most

"Shawna Caspi has the rare gift of presence, a warm presence that immediately invites audience engagement, from the first strum of her skilled guitar playing to the last exquisite note she sings. Shawna's lyrics show, her music and delivery tell; her songs are beautiful stories that stay with listeners long after the CD is spun, long after the gig is over."

Opening for Shawna Caspi is Amanda Lowe Warnakulasuriya. She is a talented artist, born in Sri Lanka, raised in PEI but currently based in Ottawa. Accompanied by her own guitar, she explores the intimacy of voice and the edges of reverb. With warmth, quirky takes and self-described awkward wit, she celebrates the extraordinary in the everyday.

With the new rules and changes, doors will open at 7:15 to allow time for screening. Please bring your proof of vaccination (per Ontario rules, that's a QR code now — if you don't have one on your phone, the library can help you print one), your mask and your good cheer. The concert will start at 8PM, and there will be a brief intermission. We're looking forward to welcoming you back to the Almonte Old Town Hall.

Details at <www.folkusalmonte.com>, tickets at <folkus.ticketsplease.ca>. Questions? <hello@folkusalmonte.com>.



Folkus presents Shawna Caspi (above) with opening act Amanda Lowe W on February 26. Come listen at the Almonte Old Town Hall or livestream it from home!

raw, honest and personal writing. With all of us reckoning with our own slowdowns, the songs are especially touching.

Check out her remarkable video for *Echo* at <youtu.be/LMzPKBfEZxQ> (the artist in the video is Almonte's own Jennifer Noxon!).

Andy Frank, a founding partner of Roots Music Canada, has this to say about her:

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The Little Humm

# February Fun for Family Day!

As I write this little article, we have had the kids at school for two-and-a-half days this year and it's nearly February. Having kids online in lockdown during the darkest month of year, while trying to get work done, was the farthest thing from "fun"... there was stress, tears and soo much coffee! I was gearing up for Blue Monday (the most depressing day of the year) with trepidation as everyone's

**Saturday Fun**

We all know that a good Saturday starts with some local maple syrup on a high stack of pancakes. To do this best, I suggest going full Curious George and hitting up your local maple sugar shack. Tour the farm, eat some pancakes there or buy a bottle of the good stuff and head home for brunch. Sugar bushes like **Fulton's** in Cedar Hill offer a sledding hill, playground, and ski and snowshoe trails. Bring your gear for a full day of fun in the sugar bush!

by Sarah Kerr

**Sunday is for Skiing**

We love our local hill, **Mount Pakenham**, on Sunday afternoons in the sun. They've outdone themselves to make skiing safe and fun throughout the pandemic. You don't even need to go into the lodge if you have

anxiety was already so high, and yet I felt a sliver of excitement about the back-to-school announcement. Finally, the kids would return to school! But mother nature had other plans — no, Mr. Ford, not time to return to class yet. Blue Monday was a Snow Day!

I threw in the towel on expectations of productivity and gave into the snow day experience. My kids made pancakes and we drenched them in local maple syrup, we put on every piece of snow gear we could find, dug our way out of the front door and jumped into snow drifts higher than our kids. We went sledding and cross-country skiing, drank hot cocoa with marshmallows, snuggled by the fire, rented the really bad slapstick comedy *Snow Day* and tucked the kids into bed with a Mercer Mayer classic, *Just a Snowman*. And despite the absolute exhaustion of starting the third week of school still at home, jumping into winter full-on brought back a little spark — well, that and the fact that the next day schools were finally open!



From mighty Mount Pakenham to maple syrup on pancakes at home, Sarah Kerr has some wonderful local recommendations for Family Day weekend!

So this month as we gear up for Family Day, I wanted to share a fun weekend itinerary that you can tweak to immerse yourselves in the season. You can try and pack it all into Family Day Weekend or spread out the fun throughout the month. And if you can remember, take a picture of your family with theHumm on your local travels and send it to Kris & Rob!

your own gear — their ticket booth is outdoors, they offer picnic tables for their outdoor BBQ and hot chocolate bar, and outdoor porta-potties abound. Hit the slopes for a day of family fun!

**Friday Night Date**

If you have little kids like me, I suggest this would work best if you leave the kids on a movie night of their own and bust out for a date night. If your kids are older, then they might get a kick out of joining in for your own "bonfire table" dinner reservation at the **Cheshire Cat** in Carp and then a timed skate down the new forest trails at **Icelynd** in Stittsville (reservations required). Dress to impress — and in Canadian winter, that means in many, many layers so you don't complain about the cold!

**Holiday Monday**

There are a number of ways to approach a holiday Monday, based on your personality. One is to go hard and head into the city for a skate on the famous **Rideau Canal**, grab a beavertail and see some of the world-renowned ice sculptures. The opposite would be to stay home, send the kids out to build a snowman in your backyard, and prepare meals for the week ahead while tuning into the **virtual Winterlude festival** online. A moderate option would be to keep it local, hit up the **Sens Rink of Dreams** in Smiths Falls and tuck in for an early night!

Whatever your personality, and energy level, I hope you catch the spirit of the season this February and have a wonderful family day weekend!

"Life is the flower for which love is the honey."  
— Victor Hugo

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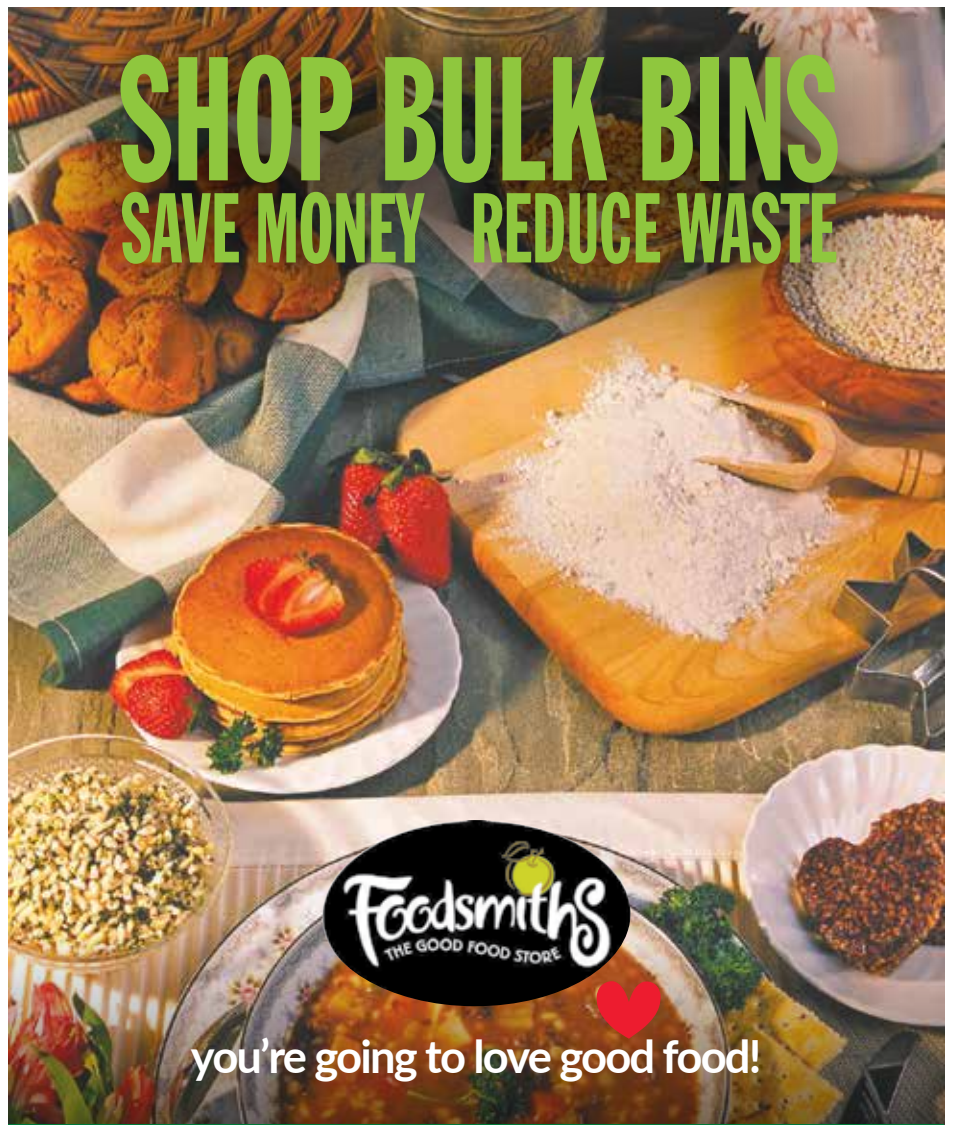
# Perth's Frost & Fire Winter Festival

Perth Tourism is pleased to present the Frost & Fire Winter Festival, taking place over Family Day weekend on Saturday, February 19 and Sunday, February 20.

Returning after a brief pandemic-caused hiatus, the two-day event will provide visitors with an array of activities geared towards all ages. Traverse throughout Perth and take part in the scavenger hunt for a chance to win some great prizes. Encounter entertainers and partake in a horse and carriage ride along the downtown heritage streets. Peruse wares handmade by skilled artisans at the Vendor Marketplace in the Crystal Palace. Strap on some skates and enjoy one of the outdoor rinks, or try your hand at axe throwing. Finish your day with a warm beverage, dine in at one of Perth's great restaurants, or enjoy some delicious takeout around one of the fire pits before the town's skies are filled with fireworks.

While the majority of events will take place outdoors, guests are asked to wear their masks at all times as a precaution. Social distancing and capacity limits must be followed at both indoor and outdoor venues.

Experience a fun-filled, family-friendly weekend in Perth. Visit <a href="http://perth.ca/frostandfire">perth.ca/frostandfire</a> for more information and to stay up-to-date on details.



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Climate Network Lanark

# Are You Riled Up Yet?

“Now that extreme weather caused by climate change is regularly harming communities, people are demanding action to reduce greenhouse gas emissions. And make no mistake, once people get riled up, change will happen, as it has with even the most entrenched interests.”

— Rick Smith, *The Globe and Mail*  
 Rick Smith is well known for his work on the impacts of pollution on human health. The research in his book *Death by Rubber Ducky* was the impetus to get hormone-disrupting

any decision on who might create a climate action plan. Now in 2022, they continue to meet and build public support for climate action in Prescott Russell. We wish them well as they forge on!

We were further inspired to hear from Michèle Andrews from Sustainable Merrickville-Wolford — an organization founded in the fall of 2019 to coordinate local action to address the climate crisis. In November 2019 they petitioned the United Counties of Leeds & Grenville to declare a Climate Emergency and initiate a Climate Action Plan. There was no interest from the county at that time, though after some pressure from the media and local residents the matter came back to them and they committed to having a Climate Action Plan initiated by June of 2020. The pandemic, along with turnover of the County's CAO, has sidelined that initiative. The group states that they have been keenly following the impressive work of Climate Network Lanark and are hopeful that when the pandemic winds down and the next municipal election has passed, they will be able to bring this back and point to Lanark as an excellent local model for addressing the crisis.

Meanwhile, Sustainable Merrickville-Wolford has a robust website <sustainablemw.org> with lots of practical suggestions as to how people can take action. Their plans for 2022 include collaborating with the Chamber of Commerce to bring climate change action to their members, and to bring awareness during the next two elections of the need for all candidates to address the climate crisis, regardless of party affiliation. For more information, people can reach the group at <info@sustainablemw.org>.

You can see that citizens everywhere are realizing that without solidarity, real movement on climate isn't going to happen. People-power is needed: RIGHT NOW! No one can remain on the sidelines anymore.

We have written about the CNL survey in this column numerous times, and the response has been inspiring! You can still take the survey: find it on the homepage of <climatenetworklanark.ca>. We are using the great ideas from the survey, along with tons of citizen action experience, to create change. And while you are there, please sign on to tell the committee developing our Lanark County Community Climate Action Plan that we want to see our Greenhouse Gas emissions cut in half by 2030. This is a critical step to keep from increasing global temperatures over 2°C and falling into climate catastrophe.

Here is another quote from Rick Smith to help sharpen your focus on the fundamental issue of our time: “How many casualties will there be before we finally learn from our mistakes? It's only through working together that we can protect ourselves and future generations from more unnecessary suffering.”

Realizing that people all over the rural counties in Eastern Ontario are working for Climate Action is very hopeful. Please let us know how you would like to get involved: email <climatenetworklanark.ca>.

by Chandler Swain

carcinogenic chemicals out of baby bottles and kids' toys. When parents realized that BPA was in the bottles they used every day to feed their vulnerable newborns, they demanded — and got — a foot-dragging federal government to classify the chemical as a toxin to protect Canadians' health.

It has been proven again and again: if citizens get together to demand action from governments, change will happen. The folks at Climate Network Lanark (CNL) who are working with Lanark County Council to form an aggressive Climate Action Plan tell me that other counties in Eastern Ontario are reaching out to get some guidance to work with their own councils in the hopes of getting the results we aspire to (demand?) here in Lanark.

It has been very inspiring to hear from citizens from neighbouring counties who are determined to get their councils moving on real climate action.

CNL was contacted by JJ Davies, who recently moved to Renfrew County and was interviewed by theHumm for their Hummail e-newsletter and the article on page 14 of this issue. JJ was inspired to try and get her new home county on the path to serious climate action, and in fact presented to Arnprior Municipal Council in late January. She reached out to CNL, and we are now hearing from others who also want to learn how CNL has achieved what it has so far.

Lynn Ovenden is involved with an organization called EcoEast (EcoEst), which is demanding sustainable action in the United Counties of Prescott-Russell (UCPR). UCPR's council consists of the mayors of the eight municipalities in Prescott-Russell. In the spring of 2021, EcoEast asked residents to help create a climate action plan, which resulted in the UCPR Coalition for Climate Action. They prepared a briefing note and petition with 300 signatures requesting that the county join the Federation of Canadian Municipalities' Partners for Climate Protection and commit to planning for climate action. A working group of staff and citizens will develop the plan. In their meeting with UCPR Council in November 2021, EcoEast persuaded the Council to join the program. Because of a lack of staff and experience to undertake a climate action plan, they deferred

## “Growing Hope” Gardening Workshops

On February 22 at 7PM, Zoom in to hear Master Gardener Allan Goddard speak about Horticulture Therapy. Allan will discuss the therapeutic effects that horticulture can have for our wellbeing, particularly mental health benefits.

Then on March 22 at 7PM, Scott Sigurdson from Indian Creek Orchard Gardens will give a talk on Permaculture. Scott will continue to enlighten us about permaculture and organic strategies for the home gardener, including four crucial aspects of

organic agriculture: fertility, pest, disease and vegetation management.

These timely and useful talks are part of the Neighbourhood Tomato Community Farm's “Growing Hope” winter series. For more information or to register, email Jay Young at <jyoung@carebridge.ca>. Learn how the Neighbourhood Tomato Community Farm is working on “Growing Food, Building Community” by finding them on Facebook.

www.thehummm.com

February 2022



# Performing Arts in Pandemic Times

By Kris Riendeau

I've spent much of the past two years writing about the impact of the pandemic on performers and the performing arts. As a publisher and editor of theHumm, I do not make my living as a performer, but I sure am performing arts-adjacent. Through our Hummail e-newsletter and in the pages of our print publication, we have interviewed dozens of musicians and actors over the past months, commiserating about the challenges of restrictions and imagining brighter days ahead.

And although I'm not a professional thespian, I'm about as gung-ho an amateur as you get around here. I've been involved with community theatre since high school, when I helped form the first "show choir" in Ottawa (I still have the article from the *Ottawa Citizen*). We sang, we danced, we sewed our own costumes and did our own choreography. In university, I met my husband (and Humm partner in crime) while playing the part of Bebe Benzenheimer in *A Chorus Line* (Rob was playing bass in the pit band, looking cool). After moving to Almonte, we got involved with the Valley Players, the Almonte Social Action Players, the Mississippi Mudds, Puppets Up! and various Fern Martin productions. Two years ago Rob and I formed Humm Team Productions and sold out five amazing performances of *Who Stole Christmas from Mississippi Mills* (which he wrote and I directed). We were on such a high after closing night that we immediately booked the Almonte Old Town Hall for December of 2021, envisioning another full-blown musical extravaganza!

Then Covid sauntered onto the stage. With all its far-reaching and long-lasting implications. For months, all thoughts of community theatre were completely overshadowed by, well, just about everything else that we all had to deal with. But amidst all the social-distancing and staying home to stay safe, people began to yearn for the kinds of connections that come from working as a group — as a team — to create something bigger and more beautiful than the sum of their parts. During the first year of the pandemic Rob took some amazing writing courses, wrote several short plays and sketches, and we started dabbling in Zoom theatre. It was fun, but it sure wasn't live performance.

As restrictions eased in the spring of 2021, hopes began to rise and creative energies went looking for outlets. We were able to put on one of Rob's plays — in-person! — as part of Studio Theatre Perth's



weekend of short plays in August. With fingers crossed, we decided to try to make use of the two weekends in December that we had booked back in pre-pandemic times. *Sketchy Santa — Holiday Shorts* started out as a collection of short plays and sketches, loosely linked by a through-line involving Santa and some goofy elves. We were guardedly optimistic, rehearsing in small masked groups with a cast that was double-vaccinated. Anyone who had so much as a sniffle stayed home and Zoomed in to watch the rehearsal, and we had understudies for every part just in case.

In the fall, Ontario loosened indoor capacity limits and things looked even more promising for performers. We decided to add a few musical numbers to our production, and were able to rehearse in larger groups. I remember saying (on numerous occasions) that rehearsals were "the most fun I had had all pandemic!" Some cast members — notably those who worked in education and healthcare — found that our time together was an important stress reliever and spirit-lifter. Others who had recently lost parents or partners found solace and support. Cast and crew who were new to Humm Team Productions were welcomed into our group, and in some cases to the wider Almonte community for the first time.

Two days before opening night — the day I was scheduled to be interviewed by Alan Neal on CBC's *All in a Day* — Omicron put an abrupt end to our joyful plans. It got past our double-vaccinated defenses, and we had no alternative but to cancel all performances and refund all the tickets. As producers of the show, Rob and I spent the next several days

doing the exact opposite of what we had hoped for, worrying constantly about our cast and crew, and feeling responsible for the disappointment we were all enduring. Then I ended up testing positive for Covid.

At this point, you may be thinking *poor Kris!* or perhaps *why is she whining at me?* But this is not a sob story. In fact, my goal is to convince others (and remind myself) that it is entirely worthwhile to continue engaging in creative pursuits during uncertain times. Nothing can erase the joy we experienced in building a community of dedicated, talented, goofy players — fools for the divine, as cast member Ed Lawrence describes us. Although we were unable to take the ultimate step and share our joy with the wider community of theatre-goers, we spent four glorious months collaboratively crafting a show that would have filled you with happiness and possibly made you worry about peeing your pants laughing. And we will do it again in a heartbeat.

So here's to all the performers, amateur and professional alike, who are weathering this storm. Although shutting down our show was one of the most gut-wrenching decisions Rob and I have ever made, we agree with Bebe Benzenheimer and every other cast member in *A Chorus Line*:

*We did what we had to do,  
But I can't regret  
What I did for love,  
What I did for love...*



## Calling Birdhouse Builders

By Glenda Jones & Barbara Carroll

The highly successful online birdhouse auction returns this year from April 18-29. Proceeds will go to the Mississippi Madawaska Land Trust <mmlt.ca> to enable them to continue improving High Lonesome Nature Reserve with new fencing, parking area, signs and trail markers, and protection for Monarch butterflies. The fundraising goal is \$7,500, and to make it happen we need birdhouse builders and buyers!

The buyers will get their chance later. In February and March, we need donations from birdhouse builders. Last year we had 52 birdhouses donated for sale. Let's see if we can outdo ourselves this year! Donating a birdhouse couldn't be easier. Houses will be accepted up to April 14. There is no age restriction. Last year the oldest builder was 88 and the youngest was 8. There is no entry fee, and a tax receipt will be issued after the auction. Every house will be displayed on the auction website along with the builder's name. There will be several categories, including one for children, with prizes for the houses garnering the highest bids. Houses can be functional (birds can nest in them), ornamental (no admittance for birds), or even both!

Imagination can run to the exotic, the fanciful, the colourful or the humorous. Houses can be traditional or funky, and for any kind of local bird. Any kind of material can be used. They can be made from yarn, glass, metal, ceramics, wood, fabric — whatever. They can be large or small. They can be garnished with buttons, beads, ornaments, twigs, or anything you have around. They can be made of new material or from recycled/upcycled material as is being done at the Hub and Rebound. It's a good cause to improve property we can all enjoy. Let's make it happen!

If you have a birdhouse to donate, please contact Glenda Jones at 256-6479 or Barbara Carroll at <barbaracarroll493@gmail.com>. Your birdhouse will then be stored at Barb's house in Almonte until it is united with its new owner at the end of April. The auction site will go online in the first week of March and your creation will be on display for potential buyers. We will have a registration form for you to complete at that time, and we will send you the link for this form once the auction site goes up. We are getting a wonderful response already. Let's keep and build the momentum!

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# On Hope and Optimism

By John Pigeau

Back in January, my boss — theHumm's delightful and talented editor/publisher, Kris Riendeau — asked me if I would like to contribute a few sentences about what I was hopeful for in 2022. I would be happy to, I wrote her. But then I sat down to write something, and I was overcome by a foggy sort of sadness. I sat in front of my laptop for quite some time, thinking quietly.

Eventually, I was able to write something: A swift end to this dreadful pandemic was, and is, my greatest hope.

I sat back and sighed. Yep. That was about it. And truthfully, it was hard to think of anything else to be hopeful about. Then I remembered something Kris had mentioned in her email — that she was hopeful for the return of live performing arts, which would allow, among other things, Humm Team Productions to stage their *Sketchy Santa* show which was to have opened in early December but sadly had to be cancelled due to the pandemic. Kris's was a hopeful thought, indeed, it struck me. The videos for that adult-themed show — featuring a song by the ghost of Elvis and ridiculous belly dancing elves — promised a brilliant and hilarious production, and some much-needed levity. We could all use a whole lot of that, I think.

And actors want to act. Singers want to sing. Fiddlers want to fiddle. And so on.

I am fortunate to know a lot of talented artists. Musicians, novelists, poets, painters, etc., etc. And I know how much they've suf-

fered since March 2020 — financially, yes, but artistically and even spiritually as well, the spiritual bit being, for some, that buzz of being able to perform for an audience, or to see your art on a wall at an exhibit, to show up all-smiles-and-gratitude for a book launch and signing. Every artist creates because they feel the need, because they're driven by their essence, because they need to tell a story, to create something beautiful from nothing with their minds and imaginations, hands and voices. And most of it from fairy dust.

This I know well. I've written a novel, after all, and I've been working diligently on a memoir for about seven years now. It means a great deal to me, telling this story, a snapshot of a very difficult time in my life. During a pandemic, often a sorrowful time of grief and isolation, the book (which deals with both of those subjects) seemed to take on more importance. That is to say, I realized more and more how much we are all touched at one time or another by grief and sorrow.

And so, I wrote, it was also my hope to finish the book this year. Since 2015, I have — with tremendous gratitude — received several grants from the Canada Council for the Arts and the Ontario Arts Council to help me with research and book-related expenses, so I feel a deep obligation to get the book "right." And I feel like it might make some small and good difference in the world, as some memoirs do — in offering readers solace through shared experience.

That's one thing I hope for, at any rate.

I'm kind of skipping over the important part of a publisher accepting it for publication, in saying that... but, you know, one step at a time, as they say.

Back when we could get together with friends, I would get a bit silly sometimes and say, "I think that key parties will be popular again soon." And that would get a few laughs. It was thought based on a bit of truth, actually — that we have all missed the intimacy of human contact and connection so very much these last 600-plus days and counting. One day when this is all behind us we're all certainly going to want and need a whole lot of prolonged hugs, I should think. Might see another baby boom, even. Who knows?

But I'm hopeful we'll all be thankful for the gift of human touch again, and perhaps be a bit more mindful of its importance in our lives too.

Bring on the tickertape parades for all doctors and nurses and frontline and health-care workers too! Imagine that? I actually can. Some version of it, anyhow, like you see in old photos taken after both world wars, with festive, grateful people cheering and kissing and hugging and throwing confetti in the air.

More things connect us than divide us, I believe.

A recent example: "Happy Friday!" a very cheerful cashier at Shoppers Drug Mart recently said to me. I wished her the same. Later, in the car, I told my dad about it. "If that charming lady had a tip jar," I told him, "I'd have left her five bucks." "Good idea," Dad agreed.

I'm optimistic that soon, in moving forward, we'll all be mindful of the good, vital work people have done during these hard days, and that everyone is paid a better wage for their labours.

There are other things of profound importance to be hopeful about — I'm quite sure we can all think of many — but there are some "silly" and "simple" things too. Life's been a bit too heavy for some time now, so maybe it's good to think about those things as well.

What silly joys have we missed?

I'm not much of a dancer, but I miss "silly" dancing in my living room with my friends on a festive Friday Music Night. I do a decent Ed Grimley impersonation, which usually gets sillier if a song I don't really like shuffles on — say, the Proclaimers' *I'm Gonna Be (500 Miles)*, or Skynrd's *Sweet Home Alabama*. That one actually gets me dancing like Forest Gump. Truly, silly fun.

I miss those nights. Hopefully, there'll be more on the horizon. And soon.

Which reminds me of something E.B. White, the author of *Charlotte's Web* and *Stuart Little*, once wrote: "Hang on to your hat. Hang on to your hope. And wind the clock, for tomorrow is another day."

Something else to be optimistic about? Spring equinox — and more delicious daylight. Well, that's coming, and it's not too far off. March 20 is the day. Hopefully we'll be able to safely gather with friends by then, all a little wiser, and so much more grateful.

More things connect us than divide us.

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# Back Forty Artisan Cheese — the Reopening!

For many individuals and small businesses, the past two years have been quite a challenge. Cancellations, restrictions, mask mandates and ongoing closures have affected all of us in one way or another. But with Yin comes the Yang, and many of us have taken the downtime during the pandemic to re-evaluate our priorities, goals and aspirations.

For Jenna and Jeff Fenwick, owners of Back Forty Artisan Cheese, this resulted in a decision to temporarily close their retail cheese shop located on their farm and headquarters in Mississippi Station. Their cheese shop, farm and annual summer “Curds and Cooks” festival had become a notable destination for residents and tourists alike. However, the demands of running those operations in addition to meeting wholesale commitments left Jenna and Jeff with very little time to implement some of their other visions for the destination. The shutdown provided them with the time needed to reevaluate their goals and implement this vision.

On Saturday, February 5 from 10AM to 4PM, Back Forty will be re-opening their weekly Saturday riverside destination with new and improved amenities. They will be launching the area’s first commercial outdoor wood-fired kitchen. Executive Chef Derek Pennell, one of the area’s leading culinary practitioners, will head the rustic live fire kitchen. Using traditional cooking techniques and ingredients inspired by our roots, Chef Pennell will be creating mouth-watering dishes, working with Back Forty’s on-site culinary gardens, organic pasture-raised meats, and of course featuring their raw sheep milk cheeses.

The pandemic has also put a spotlight on public health and highlighted the importance of exercise, sun and being outdoors. This healthy outdoor lifestyle is what initially led Jenna and Jeff to the countryside, and over the years Jeff has been building numerous multi-purpose trails throughout the forest on the large riverside acreage. The winter provides one of the very best times to experience these trails, and on Saturdays (starting February 5) patrons will be able to choose a suitable loop, rent snowshoes, and hike



When Back Forty reopens on Saturday, February 5, they will be offering snowshoe rentals, tobogganing and bonfires in addition to delicious local food and beverages!

the property’s 5.5 km of freshly groomed trails. In addition to the trails, customers and their families will be able to toboggan on the farm’s rolling hills. Afterwards, you’ll be able to warm up by the bonfire with a hardy farm-to-table meal and a hot or cold beverage. Liquor licensing is also underway, with future plans to serve their own farm-produced ciders along with some of Ontario’s top wines, ciders and craft beers.

Aside from the cheese shop, this is an outdoor winter experience. Dress appropriately and you’ll be sure to enjoy this unique destination that is just an hour outside of Ottawa.

For a location map and more information, please visit <artisancheese.ca>.

## Material World Exhibit

There’s a new history exhibit coming to the Mississippi Valley Textile Museum! *Material World on the Mississippi* will have hands-free interactive videos of mill workers talking about many aspects of working in a textile mill. Topics include operating the machines, the comradery, and the health and wellbeing challenges of the industry.

The textile industry in the Mississippi Valley has also negatively impacted the environment and its people. These issues exist in a complex network of relations, connecting plants, animals, mill workers, townspeople and Indigenous communities through the Mississippi River. Some of the effects of growing urbanity, industrialization, disenfranchisement of indigenous communities, pollution and health effects on workers and residents are showcased in this exhibition.

Mill workers ran their lives on a very tight schedule. Oral histories and research have provided us with a detailed schedule for a day in the life of textile mill workers. Their average workday



was from 7AM to 5PM on weekdays and from 7AM to noon on Saturdays. Workers had exactly one hour to have lunch. Few workers brought lunch to work, as many walked or biked home for lunch. The “workers’ walk” and “workers’ staircase” made these trips more efficient for the people at the Rosamond Woolen Company.

The bell at the Rosamond Woolen Company rang over six times a day to signal the start of the day, lunch, and the day’s end. As there were multiple mills in Almonte, each mill had a distinct bell so workers for each one would be able to track their time.

The industry was somewhat progressive too — if a worker was ill and unable to come to work, they would receive ¾ of their wages upon sending a doctor’s note. Vacation days included Christmas, New Year’s Day, Good Friday, Victoria Day, and the first week of July.

As a special gift, the mill owners of the Rosamond Woolen Company would invite employees to attend a Christmas Eve dinner.

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### Winter Gardening Zoom Workshops

*“Growing Hope”*

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with Scott Sigurdson, Indian Creek Orchard

March 22, 7PM  
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To register or for more information, contact [jyoung@carebridge.ca](mailto:jyoung@carebridge.ca)

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**The Reeve Report**

# What's the Risk?

It's a cold day, but I need to saddle up old Nellie. Yup, she's a high horse, and I'm on her! Giddy-up old girl, we're headin' for the trail.

Every morning I gird myself for a risky day. I might trip on the dog in the semi-dark. The hot coffee might spill or the toast burn, or heaven forbid I might slip and fall when I go for the newspaper. But today, I've already dodged the bullet four times. This portends well.

Having success so far, I think I can risk heading to the grocery store. Risk? Oh, you bet! Simply driving on March Road is a chal-

by Glenda Jones

lenge. Then there's the roundabout, then a left turn, then finding a parking spot. What if there's a stray basket roaming the lot? What if the sun's in my face? What if, what if, what if???

Isn't it a miracle that we ever leave home? It's not so much that we are incompetent, but we're being coerced into thinking that risk besieges us, invisible, lurking, threatening to destroy our ability to assess the dangers in daily life. From an early age we learned how to navigate hazards without scaring ourselves silly that some tragedy was going to occur. We learned to ride a bike, cross a street safely, not annoy our parents unduly, get to school and home in one piece, and as fearful as we might have been, we coped without always thinking about the risk. We didn't worry because we'd already given these things a go, and knew how far we could stretch ourselves. My Dad used to say it was best not to waste a good worry, because you might need that energy later.

The all-pervasive conundrum seems to be "is it safe"? It applies to everything from schools to the handles of the grocery carts. Surely some degree of personal discretion has disappeared when we need the level of oversight being imposed on so many aspects of our lives. Could we not have decided for ourselves if it was safe to eat at a restaurant without having the livelihoods of thousands being threatened? Did we have to look like wraiths for months without a haircut because some dastardly germ might attack us? We were all masked nearly to the point of a paper bag over our head so we'd avoid it. Could we not have had access to friends and family suffering in LTC when they needed our attention so badly? Would a hug for a senior dying of loneliness have been a death sentence? It's not likely. But who would take that risk? Who would have signed off on a gesture of love so badly needed? Not the powers that be!

Better to "protect the elderly" than allow them to decide their own comfortable risk level.

We are now so ingrained with constant vigilance; we are relying on others to make the rules for us. "Don't go sledding when the hill is slippery"; "Sanitize hands before every visit"; "Don't enter if you are sick". Here's my favourite: "If you are ill, please stay home". This one is on a lit highway billboard that you pass when you're already on the road going somewhere!

(Nelly, don't you dare jump that snowbank: that's risky for the two of us. What do you know: I recognized that for myself without being told).

The degree of risk has to be weighed with the knowledge we have garnered through experience. We learn our limits of tolerance by watching others, studying circumstances, maybe challenging ourselves, and then we are prepared to either decline or accept an activity, knowing the dangers but confident in our own ability to handle the situation. Isn't that exactly how you'd learn to ride this big horse I'm on right now?

Of course, we need to have a healthy respect for safety, but we also need to get back to trusting our own judgement in assessing what is best for our own wellbeing as well as the common good. We have to be mindful that our risk taking isn't impinging on the health or safety of others. We have to do the right thing so we don't put others in danger or cost lives by our negligence. We need to trust the expertise we're offered and follow common sense that will contribute to a shared wellness.

We can never control every single element of our lives. Kids are going to get sick, roads are going to be icy, air won't always be purified of every germ, bacteria will follow us everywhere, but we simply cannot give up on living. If we are willing to take on a healthy degree of risk we will be able to regain our lives. We need our friends, we need a hug, and we need our theatres and concerts. We'll be careful and live by the rules, but we need some degree of control over our own activities without being bound by the naysayers who are determined to erase all degree of risk from life in general. Hovering governments, like hovering parents, deny us the opportunities to find a tolerable level of comfort.

How hard would it be to loosen the reins and see if we can stay in the saddle? We might find it satisfying to discover our own ability to ride without a guide beside our horse.

Nelly, you don't go fast enough to pose much of a risk to my safety, and for that I'm grateful. Okay, big girl, you can turn back for the barn now. We'll do this again when the snow's gone.

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# Help NLHS Restore the Pioneer Log Cabin

Located on the grounds of the North Lanark Regional Museum, the Pioneer Log Cabin has been a popular tourist destination for many years. Not only does the cabin have local historical importance — architecturally it is an excellent example of a rough-hewn log cottage-style settler's home. The construction is typical of log homes found across the Ottawa Valley in the early half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century.



The North Lanark Historical Society (NLHS) is seeking financial assistance from the community for its project of restoring this important part of our shared local history.

Sadly, the cabin has been closed for almost three years owing to its present state of disrepair and to accessibility issues. Major repairs are required to preserve the exterior and to maintain the cabin and its contents in a safe condition. The entire building needs to be raised off the ground, new footings

installed, some exterior logs repaired, and the logs totally rechinked and resealed.

The cabin was originally built circa 1840 on Lot 15 Concession 11 of Ramsay (near the present Almonte roundabout) by the William Wylie family, who resided on that lot from 1837 to 1853. The building was also owned by the Lockhart Family for several generations, and finally by the Thurston Family. It was donated to the North Lanark Historical Society in 1983 by Don and Britt Thurston and moved to its current location. The historical society set up a committee in 1983 to oversee the cabin project, with members Grant Anderson, Helen Davidson, Stewart Drummond, Ernie Giles, Victor Kellough, Dawn Leduc, Frances McLean, Norman Paul, Jean Steel and Gerry Willard. Stones for the fireplace and chimney came from the local Don Duncan farm. The cabin was rebuilt over the next two years with funds from a New Horizons Grant and volunteer labour from the NLHS. It opened as part of the museum in the summer of 1985 and has since been a popular attraction for visitors of all ages.

The NLHS hopes to proceed with the exterior renovations as soon as possible. Once the exterior work is completed, additional work inside the cabin will be required, as well as installation of a gravel perimeter around the building to assist with drainage. However, the projected cost of all the renovations will exceed the normal operating budget for the Society. As a result, NLHS is asking for donations from its members and the general public.

All donations will be recognized and issued a charitable tax receipt. Donations may be sent to the NHLHS by regular mail, or you can donate online electronically. To make a donation or for more information about this project, please email <nrmuseum@gmail.com>, visit <northlanarkregionalmuseum.com> or phone 257-8503.

## Spellbound at Sivarulrasa Gallery



From February 16 to March 25, Sivarulrasa Gallery is delighted to present *Barbara Gamble: Spellbound, Forty Years of Artmaking*, an important survey exhibition featuring works by Ottawa-based artist Barbara Gamble. The exhibition can be seen in-person during regular Gallery hours: Tuesdays to Saturdays from 11AM to 5PM, and Sundays from 11AM to 4PM.

Presented in both Gallery I and II, the exhibition surveys Barbara Gamble's work over the past four decades, providing fresh insights into the artist's creative journey. The gallery is thrilled to feature selected works, some never previously exhibited, created from the 1980s through to 2021. Included are life drawings produced in the 1980s during independent group studio sessions, pastels created in wilderness settings, experimental works in printmaking, and paintings of landscape subjects. While Barbara Gamble has exhibited in many group and solo shows throughout her career, many of her studies and investigations made with different materials and subjects have never been seen by the public before.

Born in Ontario, Barbara Gamble grew up in Canada's Maritime provinces, lived in the US and Europe, and settled in Ottawa. She completed her Bachelor of Fine Arts degree at the University of Ottawa in 1994. Her paintings have been exhibited extensively in galleries and in municipal, provincial, and national institutions. A passionate advocate for the arts, she has also served in many volunteer positions in the cultural sector, including positions on the board of directors of the Ottawa Art Gallery, CARFAC National, and the Enriched Bread Artists. Her paintings are held in many private, corporate and public collections, including the Canadian Museum of Nature, the Ottawa Art Gallery, the City of Ottawa, Air Canada, Fairmount Hotels and the Business Development Bank of Canada.

Everyone is invited to the gallery on Saturday, February 26 from 2-5PM for a Vernissage and to meet the artist. In keeping with Ontario rules that will be in place at the time of this event, there will be a limit of 25 people in attendance at any one time to allow physical distancing. Please register for the first hour (2-3PM), the second hour (3-4PM), or the third hour (4-5PM) by emailing <info@sivarulrasa.com>.

*Midsummer's Milkweed* by Barbara Gamble will be featured in her solo exhibition at Sivarulrasa Gallery

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theHumm Interview

**From Climate Anxiety to Political Action**

JJ Davis is an Arnprior resident who recently started a petition to demonstrate community support for a presentation she gave to Arnprior Town Council regarding the lack of a municipal climate action plan. She presented on January 24 after drumming up significant support for the reduction of greenhouse gas emissions, which she feels should be top of mind for any municipality. Here's how JJ started turning her climate anxiety into political action.

by Kris Riendeau

**theHumm: I understand you're relatively new to the area but have connections to it. What brought you and your family to the Ottawa Valley?**

JJ Davis: When the pandemic hit, my husband and I ran a small farm in Hamilton, Ontario. I also worked at an incredible restaurant at the time. Sean and I traded off childcare. Sean would work the farm in the day and watch Simon, our then three-year-old, in the evenings when I went to work. When the severity of the coronavirus became more real, Sean and I noticed that working harder was not yielding the typical results we were used to. Putting in more hours and pivoting to virtual farmers' markets and rallying all the farmers in our network and trying new and different methods just was not creating anything sustainable. We felt very stuck and very alone.

Sean and I had talked, well really argued, about moving to the Ottawa Valley to be closer to his parents, but we thought maybe in three to five years' time. The pandemic was a lot of things, but I am grateful that it afforded me the time and pressure to figure out what mattered most. And the idea of my children growing up with a big, tightly knit family around the corner won out. So we sold our house, left our business and set up shop here.

**Tell me a bit about your background and the factors that have inspired you to take political action on behalf of the environment.**

I didn't ever think I would be thankful for my "climate anxiety", but that is really what pushed me to finally do something. I would say there is my existence *before* the most recent Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) report that stated a "code red for humanity", and there is *after*. Before the IPCC report, I would say I was informed about climate change but had to turn a blind eye. It felt too big for me to take on and I was too small and too busy. Before the IPCC report I existed with an underpinning of daily anxiety about decisions I made, like packaging I brought home and my consumption habits. But after the IPCC report, when I came home in tears and sat on my kitchen counter crying to Sean about how children are going to grow up in a world where mass migrations are a common experience because we are not on target to keep the global temperature rise to the acceptable 1.5 degrees, something clicked. That anxiety was pressurized into action. I can't affect national greenhouse gas emissions, I can't stop federal oil subsidies, but I can look at what I am doing and work as a community to reduce emission here. And that starts with the local municipality.

**Many individuals, businesses and organizations are already working hard to mitigate climate change. How does a municipal plan fit into this mix, and what kind of message does it send to higher levels of government?**

Having a municipal plan to identify and reduce greenhouse gas emissions demonstrates to those individuals, businesses and organizations that their town supports them. That they are not alone in trying



JJ Davis is channelling her climate concerns by trying to persuade Arnprior Town Council to develop a municipal climate action plan

to create a livable future. Arnprior's *lack* of a climate action plan is an act of leaving those individuals, businesses and organizations out to dry. Having a municipal plan in place shows that the town is doing its part to fight against climate change by taking control of what a municipality can change. Fifty percent of greenhouse gas emissions come from municipalities. Creating a climate action plan and a committee for climate change considerations is how Arnprior can say "we understand the risks and are doing our part". Municipalities can protect and encourage green spaces, secure energy-efficient practices within arenas and community centres, and incentivise green development that wouldn't depend on fossil fuels for heating and cooling. We all have a part to play, and municipalities need to step up.

The message it sends to higher levels of government is that Arnprior wants a plan that is right for Arnprior, one that supports its residents now. It shows higher levels of government that we care about our future and we can't wait for a decision to trickle down to us at a municipal level. It shows everyone that Arnprior takes its role in climate change seriously and can provide support for residents who are just as anxious as I.

**Why was it important to have support in the form of petition signatures before presenting to municipal council? Are there other ways in which concerned residents can assist you?**

The petition is an extension of your voice. By signing it, I am symbolically bringing you to the council meeting. With the petition in hand at the council meeting it is not just me asking for a climate action plan, but hundreds of community members as well. I know a lot of people don't know what to do about climate change and I know how overwhelming and paralyzing the behemoth can feel (think back to me crying on my kitchen countertop). But by signing this petition and telling the town of Arnprior to create a plan to reduce its greenhouse gas emissions, you can take action against climate change.

If you are that concerned resident, please email me at [jjh.davis@gmail.com](mailto:jjh.davis@gmail.com) or join the nascent Facebook group Ottawa Valley Climate Action, where I hope to create community support for local action. The group will act as a think tank for ways to fight climate change at a local level and provide support for those looking to do more.

# Starting Veggie Seedlings Indoors

I JUST NEED TO PLANT SOMETHING!! After months of winter, gardeners are understandably crazy eager to plant some seeds. But slow down, hombre! This is a case where timing is critical! We've all despaired over sprawling three-foot tomato plants that we can't

by David Hinks

plant in the garden for another three weeks. We've salivated over the seed catalogues and ordered the perfect varieties with all the flavour and disease resistance that we've dreamt of — so now let's give them the patient care they deserve.

The amount of time that seedlings can grow indoors before they need to be planted in the outdoor garden varies considerably. Tomatoes only need six to eight weeks; peppers and eggplant eight to ten weeks; broccoli and cabbage five to eight weeks; onions and leeks ten to twelve weeks; melons, squash and cucumbers four to six weeks.

Transplants of frost-tender veggies such as tomatoes, peppers and eggplant and vines will not go into the garden until the last week of May; transplants of frost-tolerant veggies such as onions and leeks and brassicas (cabbage family) can go in the garden in the first week of May.

So if we are exercising restraint, our seeding schedule should look something like this: onions and leeks mid-February; brassicas, peppers and eggplant mid-March;

tomatoes first week of April; cucumbers and melons mid-April.

Several vegetables that I have tried starting early indoors and have found virtually no benefit include peas, corn and beans — they are just so much happier growing directly from seed planted in the garden. Also, root vegetables such as beets and carrots do not transplant well. Peas can be planted directly in the ground probably by mid-April; carrots and beets by the first week of May; and corn and beans close to Victoria Day.

The approach to growing seedlings that I am describing is one that has worked well for me for several decades, but many other approaches are possible — plants are pretty flexible.

The key to growing seedlings successfully indoors is lots of light. If plants don't have enough light, they will be spindly and weak and will not be able to handle the transition to outdoor conditions. I use artificial light as I have found that even a very sunny window is unlikely to provide sufficient light — although I do know folks who have been successful window-sill gardeners.

The set-up does not need to be fancy or pricey. I use utility wooden shelving and suspend fluorescent fixtures by chains between the shelves so that I can adjust them to keep them within a couple of inches of the seedlings. Used fluorescent fixtures are available for next to nothing at garage sales. I use only the cheapest four-foot fluorescent tubes as my results have been just

as good as using special "grow" tubes. On the other hand, some gardeners spend many hundreds of dollars on LED full-spectrum lights and nicely built stands, which I fully understand if you are growing plants for bloom in your living room.



I try to do one-step planting; for example, I have plug trays with 39 cells and I put one seed in each cell. The other approach is to put a bunch of seeds in a small container and then transplant into larger pots/cells. There are endless possibilities for containers — plastic trays that berries come in spring to mind. I use a commercial seedling medium that I moisten well before filling the cells.

I turn on the lights first thing in the morning and turn them off when I go to bed. I water only when the growing medium is dry to the touch but before the seedlings wilt, and drain off any excess water that has not been absorbed in a couple of hours — watering from the bottom is preferable.

Seeds contain all the nutrients required for germination. I use a diluted organic

fish-based fertilizer weekly after seedlings have been growing for a few weeks.

Seedlings are very vulnerable to certain kinds of viral diseases, commonly called "damping-off". Seedlings that appear healthy topple over from the base and die. I have found that this is virtually eliminated by using a commercial seedling medium and new plastic cells/plugs and ensuring good air circulation by keeping a fan running constantly. The air movement also produces stronger, stockier plants.

Vine crops such as cucumbers and melons do not like to have their roots disturbed when they are transplanted into the garden, but they do benefit from an early start, so I plant them in biodegradable pots that I can plant directly in the garden. Three that I have used are peat pots, coir (coconut) pots and Cow Pots.

One thing I do after planting the seeds is to maintain charts of what I have planted — both indoors and outdoors — at times I supplement this with labels, but I find that these get lost, move or fade. No job is finished until the paperwork is done!

It is necessary to harden-off seedlings before planting them in the garden. They need to be given gradual exposure to outdoor conditions until they are outdoors full time in a week or so. As I transplant these lush green growing plants into the garden, it always seems miraculous to me that just two or three months ago they started from small, hard, apparently lifeless objects.

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