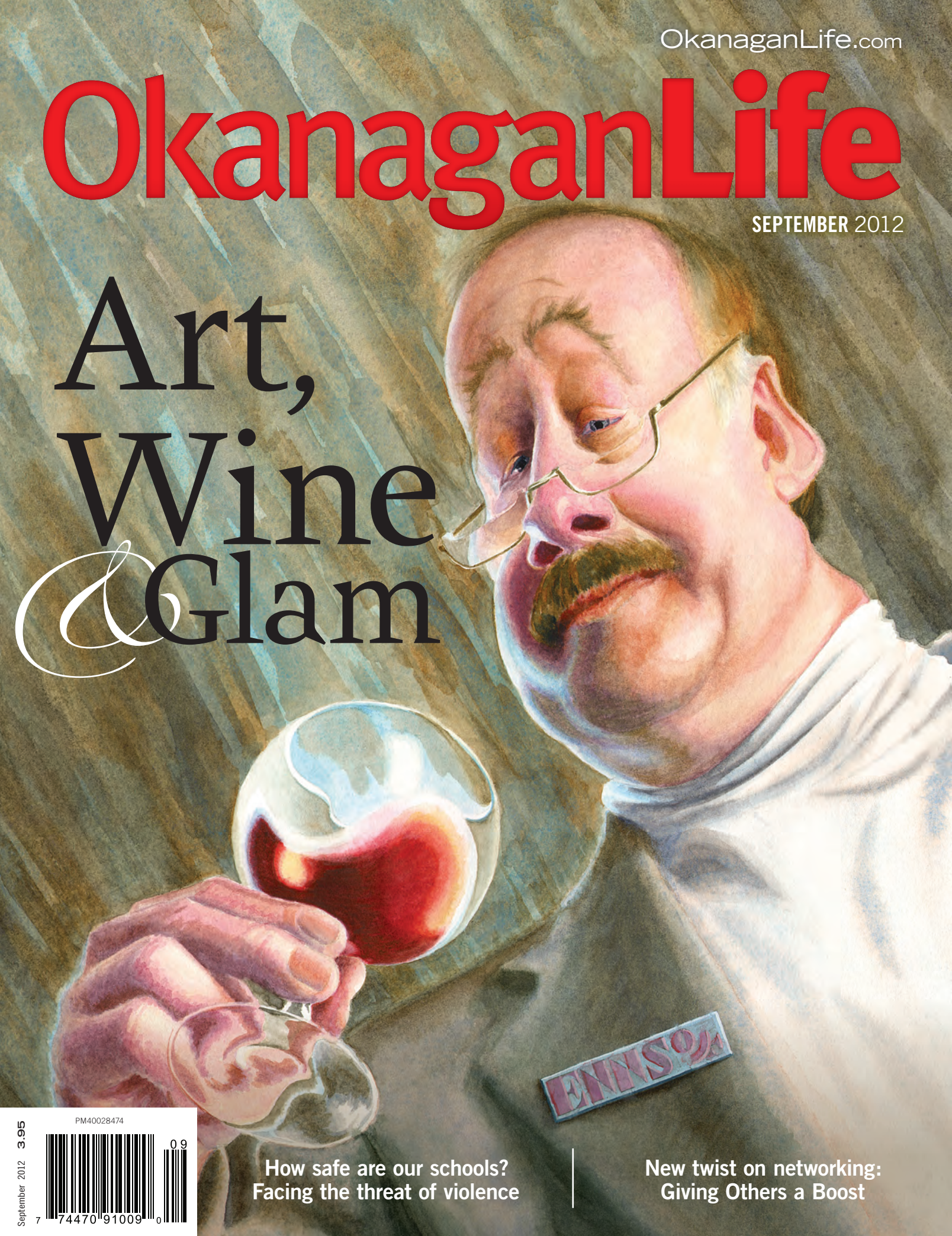


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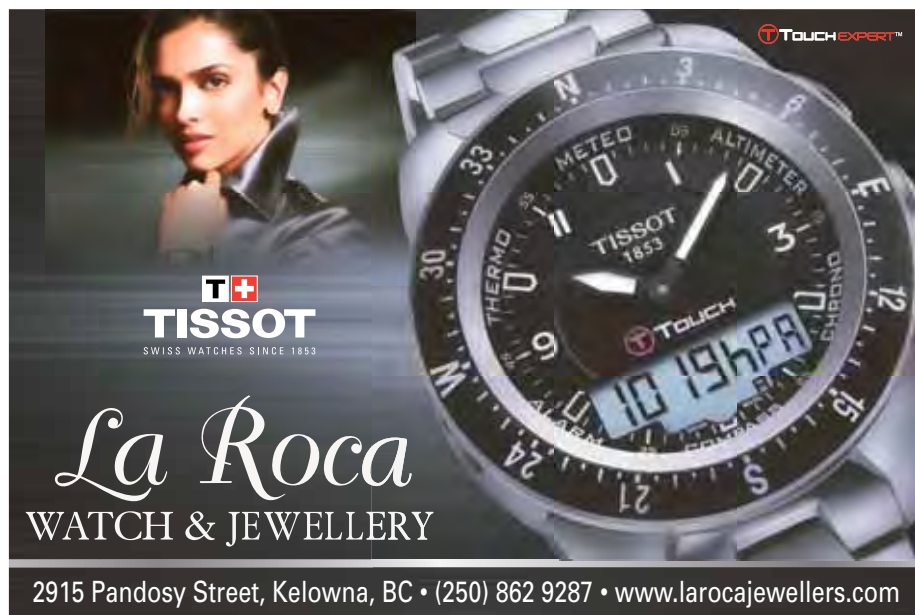
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ad design Michelle Wilmot

contributing writers Michael Botner
Laurie Carter
Dawn Renaud
Gillianne Richards
Patti Shales Lefkos
Tia Steyn
Shelley Wood

contributing photographers Michael Botner
Barry Hodgins
Dawn Renaud
Gillianne Richards
Jason Richards
Janus Steyn

cover art Will Enns

okanaganlife.com Laurie Carter
editor

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ON THE COVER:
THE SCHOLAR
BY WILL ENNS



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paul'svoice



The case of the missing cake: we know whodunit

■ It was 1967. A culprit had made off with a piece of cake and Mom and Dad were on the case. Deliciously, I anticipated and welcomed the trial as we assembled in the kitchen because innocence was mine. My eight-year-old eyes sneered at my seven older brothers and sisters, intent on intuiting who the thief might be. Glances around the room should provoke the offender into squirming, sweating or gasping — fair's fair, right? My father's voice: "Who helped themselves to a piece of cake last night?"

Presumably, a sibling let himself have cake (ate it too) and although 45 years have passed since the Great Byrne Cake Caper, I cannot recall whodunit. Neuroscientists tell us that each time a memory is replayed our brain "remembers" the scene slightly differently. Essentially, we rewrite the memory. I'm pretty sure it was in the kitchen, with a knife — Scarlet, Plum or Mustard — still dunno?

Today we understand that most memories get tucked away in the unconscious regions of our brains — very few reach conscious awareness. The conscious memories change a bit each time we remember them. This can be a little frightening for obvious reasons — too many replays would not only cloud our recollections, they might distort our ability to recognize our preferences.

My eight-year-old brain not only remembered the scene, it delivered (to me) an idea that grew into a tasty plan. You see, I reasoned, my stealthy sibling made one mistake. He wasn't brazen enough. He left the rest of the cake behind. I vowed that when the time came for me to exercise my cat-burglar skills, I would simply steal the entire cake. No self-respecting parent (or sibling) would ever suspect a kid of being that cruel or callous. Brilliant! Licking my lips, the genius continued. If questioned, my response was already rehearsed, coolly calculated and Pink Panther-ish. "Burglars," I'd say. "It *must* have been burglars."

I never tested my theory. Didn't have the chutzpah. The idea I was so in love with — actually stunk.

During the last 30 years in Canada we have seen amazing prosperity — only problem is, practically all of the economic gains have gone to the top one per cent. They had the chutzpah to take your cake, my cake and most of Patti's. Whodunit? "Politicians," they'd say. "It *must* have been politicians." Even more cakes — missing — so more scapegoats paraded. "Unions," they'd say. "It *must* have been unions." Today, practically all the cakes are sitting in vaults. Childhood fairness has been crippled by corporate greed. Let the squirming, sweating and gasping begin.

Where do you shop for your crumbs? Martin Luther King said, "The time is always right to do the right thing."

Let them eat cake!



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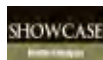
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VOLUNTEERS AND STAFF AT THE CANADIAN CANCER SOCIETY SOUTHERN INTERIOR ROTARY LODGE

YOU CAN MAKE A DIFFERENCE

Rotary Lodge needs volunteers

- I'm working a four-hour shift as a volunteer receptionist at The Canadian Cancer Society Southern Interior Rotary Lodge when I see a stranger enter. Ahhh, I think. *A new one, a visitor to Kelowna—with cancer.*

The telltale signs include a deer-in-the-headlights look in her eyes and a blue folder in her hand. She's just walked across the parking lot separating us from the Cancer Agency Clinic where she was given her treatment regimen and the dates she'll start chemotherapy, radiation or both.

I smile a welcome and try not to interrupt as she stammers out her request. Though I've heard variations many times before, her story is original and poignant. Patients are often accompanied by a loved one, but those that come alone are facing the harsh reality of declaring out loud, for the first time, their plan to fight this insidious disease. It's like a declaration of war—to be fought here—in a strange place, with family and friends many miles away—for weeks or months.

The lodge, which has facilities for 38 out-of-town residents, has handled patients from the Yukon to the Alberta border. A registered nurse (RN) is on duty 24-7 and reception is manned by

volunteers from 8:30 a.m. to 8:30 p.m. each day. The lodge accommodates from 1,000 to 1,200 patients a year, using upwards of 6,400 volunteer hours.

I reach over and pat the hand clutching the blue folder and offer her a short tour and general information about the lodge. My expression waivers between neutral and business-like and the visitor usually follows that lead. This is not a good time for pity or sympathy—it could tip them off the edge of their bravado.

Touring around the main floor, we pass small groups of residents talking, laughing, surfing the Net, playing games or doing puzzles in the two spacious lounges. Some are bald, some are peach-fuzzy; many are wearing hats and some are wearing their own or borrowed hair. What they all have in common is how relaxed they look. They *seem* normal—and they are—in this building. Most have cancer, with many reasons to stress, but that's not the feeling you get as they each make eye contact with the guest and smile or nod in silent recognition. They remember being the newbie.

I'm grateful to be one of nearly 40 volunteers at this amazing lodge. All of our guests can teach us something about life's journey. They have

families and lives, dreams and fears and hopes. They all have courage. My job is to make their stay as pleasant and comfortable as possible and to help the RNs and staff. It's easy. I find the shift gratifying. No wonder over half of the present volunteers are "originals," serving the whole 14 years since the lodge opened.

But that's the catch. While many of us are now retired and go south for the winter, cancer doesn't take a holiday. Volunteers are needed for regular shifts (same day and time each week) and there is a pressing need for on-call volunteers (like me) to fill in with only a few day's notice.

To learn more or to apply to become a volunteer, visit www.cancer.ca, select British Columbia & Yukon, they click on the How Can You Help tab. —Vicki Bissillion

UNITED WAY 2012 KICK-OFF

Change Starts Here Campaign

United Way has already launched some exciting initiatives for the 2012 campaign. Check out the Change Starts Here photo contest on Facebook where you have a chance to win a Nikon 3000 digital SLR camera package from Future Shop, a professional photo shoot from Everlasting Moments Photography, and Nesters gift cards. This contest is open to all residents of the Central and South Okanagan. Email a photo(s) of what you believe illustrates the meaning of Change Starts Here to info@unitedwaycso.com. Once your photo is uploaded to www.facebook.com/unitedwaycso, be sure to share it with everyone you know and have them "like" our Facebook page and your photo(s). The 10 most "liked" photos will be judged by a panel of volunteers.

In the United Way Facebook "like" contest, you could win a

weekend getaway at the Best Western Premiere Prestige Oceanfront Resort in Sooke, BC. All you have to do is like the Facebook page for United Way Central and South Okanagan and you are entered to win. The prize will be awarded when the "like" counter hits 750.

Another new initiative sees United Way going green by recycling electronics and raising more funds for the 2012 campaign. If you have old cell phones, toner or inkjet cartridges, laptops, iPods, MP3s or digital cameras, consider donating them to the United Way campaign. Bring items to the office at 202-1456 St. Paul St., Kelowna, or drop them off at Kelowna Capital News on Enterprise Way. You can also join the movement by collecting electronics in your workplace and donating them to the United Way. Help raise funds for vulnerable people in our community and help take care of our environment at the same time.

Two official 2012 campaign kick-off breakfasts are scheduled: Kelowna (Sept. 14) and West Kelowna (Sept. 18). Meet United Way community partners, learn about their work and the exciting things planned for the campaign, and hear the announcement of the 2012 campaign goals. Tickets are \$35 and available at www.Eventbrite.ca.



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The 32nd annual Fall Okanagan Wine Festival kicks off with the BC Wine Awards Reception and Tasting at the Rotary Centre for the Arts, September 27, 7 p.m. to 9:00 p.m. World-renowned judges will have their work cut out for them, with wines from over 100 BC wineries. Enjoy tapas and canapés from Okanagan Street Food. Tickets are \$50 from www.selectyourtickets.com.

Here's a small sampling of the more than 165 additional events throughout the Valley:

For a high-end dining experience, try Mission Hill's Fall Epicurean Wine Dinner with the winery's executive chef Matthew Batey, along with chef Dale MacKay, winner of Canada's toughest cooking challenge; \$165 (all prices are plus tax and gratuities). Or get your hands dirty and then enjoy the fruits of your labours with a Mediterranean-style feast at Nobel Ridge's Harvest Work Day, October 4; \$69.

Grape stomping parties are fun for the whole family. House of Rose Winery is hosting events on September 29 and October 6 at

1 p.m., no reservations required. Bring non-perishable food items for the Kelowna Food Bank and enjoy complimentary appetizers and tastings; prizes for the best stompers. Or head to Beaumont Family Estate Winery at 11 a.m. on September 29 in your best *I Love Lucy* costume; admission by donation.

If you're all about the wine tasting and you really can't bear to choose, get it all under one roof. Sample some 240 wines from more than 60 wineries at the Valley First Grand Finale Consumer Tasting—the oldest and largest event of the fall wine festival with live entertainment, bread and cheese, and a free taxi ride home. October 5 and 6 starting at 6 p.m.; one evening for \$65 or weekend pass for \$110.

Early birds get Bubbles for Breakfast at Road 13 Winery (six dates to choose from; \$45). Or try an aboriginal culinary adventure at Nk'Mip Cellars on September 29 at 11 a.m.; \$65.

Full schedules are available at participating wineries, liquor outlets and Starbucks locations, or online at www.thewinefestivals.com.



TEEN WRITING TEAM

■ Dané le Roux sits in bed and for a moment the then 12-year-old thinks before she picks up her ballpoint pen and notebook. After filling three pages of whatever comes to mind, she hands the notebook to her mirror image sister.

Julie scans through the words. "Well, this is good. Let's see what we can get from it."

The twins continue to work on the thriller that originated from those first three pages. They type

and reshape and prepare for publication. They're 16 when *The Watching* is published as an e-book and paperback.

In the story, teenaged friends Marissa and Suria are intrigued by the supernatural phenomenon of a mist forming a wolf and increasingly feel that something or someone is watching them. The young writers say that their book is about facing your fears and how things are not always what they seem until you delve deeper into a situation.

The youngest of five children, Dané and Julie were born in South Africa and spent most of their school career in Saskatchewan. In 2010 they moved to Coldstream and are now students at Kalamalka Secondary School. For both girls, English is a favourite subject.

Recalling the process of creating the book, Julie says: "We'd work on it every single day for months and then we'd forget about it for a few months, so it took a long time. That is why we didn't get it published until now."

Dané adds that they continued to write in notebooks because they didn't expect to get published. Their English teacher in Saskatchewan did the initial edit and when they finally started typing the manuscript, the book changed dramatically. "The story itself is the same, but a lot more events were added to it..."

"And a lot taken away," Julie adds. "If you compare the book we wrote to what it is now, you wouldn't see much similarity."

Their mother, Lynn, recalls how the twins have been creating stories together since the age of four, acting them out with their Barbie dolls, and drawing comics. They write their stories the same way they talk: comfortably completing each other's sentences.

"Whenever we get bored," says Julie, "we just hand it over and say: 'Go somewhere from here.'"

Dané picks up the narrative: "I always write the beginning, she always writes the end."

Now aged 17, the twins are about to submit their second book, *Dream with Me*, for publication. They let the cat out of the bag a little on the plot, admitting that the inspiration for this "very sad book" was Saskatchewan trick rider Dee-Ann Mezei, who died in May 2010 after a horse-riding accident.

And they've already moved on to a third project, with yet another theme. Dané and Julie are now close to finishing *Liquid Ice: The Legend*. "All three of our books are completely different. You would see no resemblance in genre."

They hope to have all the books published by the time they graduate, after which they'd like to go to university and continue using their "wild imagination," writing together as a hobby.

Dané and Julie are adamant that authors should know the end of a story before they write the beginning. Obviously this literary duo knows where they're headed. —Tia Steyn



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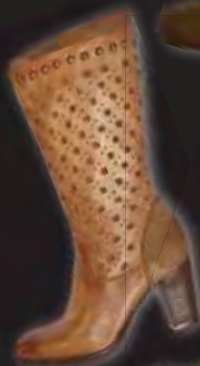
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Left: Stace Williamson.
Inset (L to R): James Dow, Karl
Narinesingh, Don Ferguson.
Facing Page: Gillianne dressed
for her hooker role.

On set

by Gillianne Richards

Confessions of a newly-minted movie maven

■ Thick dark blood is about to drip into my eye. I'm in the back yard of a little house near Knox Mountain. The guy sitting next to me throws money and a knife on the table as weird noises circle around the yard. Suddenly, he's sucked up into the air by an unidentified beast that tears into him, splattering the mess across my face and into my left eye. It burns, but I don't flinch. The beast looks me over. I let out a blood-curdling scream. "Cut."

I just shot my first movie role in the science fiction psychological thriller *Toyfa*, an Okanagan production. Of all the sub-cultures in the Valley, the different niche hobbies and interests that are popular around here, I willingly confess that I've always wanted a closer look at the dark side of independent cinema, so I jumped at the chance to be massacred in close-up.

There's a long history of film production throughout the Valley, from small series classics like *Gold Trails* and *Ghost*

Towns to high-end Hollywood productions like *The Pledge*. Perhaps the biggest cult following comes from locals who love the gore and glory of the classic horror/sci-fi movie that are spawned on scraps in our own backyard.

Darryl John of Kamloops is the devilish genius behind an upcoming festival called Fake Flesh Film Fest. After years of making movies like the B grade slasher 6, he's involved enough people in his films to fill a theatre, so he decided to rent one and turn it into a festival so everyone could enjoy their work on the big screen. It's a unique, but equally valid way of sharing art with the community. "One thing I realized," says Darryl, "is the large amount of people in this area who have either trained to work in movies or have done big budget movie work, and have relocated here, and now have no movie projects to work on. So finding qualified help has never been a problem." The horror genre can bring a high return for low cost. Darryl

PHOTOS BY GILLIANNE RICHARDS

finds that if he builds it, they will come.

Stace Williamson also knows what it takes to make murderous movie magic. He stars in *Toyfa* and wrote, directed and produced it, too. His fairly extensive theatrical training has served him well. Even at a pre-production meeting downtown, he relates in a way that holds the audience (me) in an animated state of suspense. He thinks a-mile-a-minute, speaks in perfect soliloquy and has ideas pouring out faster than the waitress can top off his coffee. When a guy like this offers you the role of a hooker who gets killed in the first scene of his movie, you answer, "Yes!"

Working with his renowned crew, James Dow and Don Ferguson of Techyou Media and Karl Narinesingh of Ninth Floor Creative, is also a huge incentive.

My scene may only last a minute but the hours of work that go into organizing crew, setting up locations, filming, editing and more, blows my mind. Doing it right, says Stace, takes time. Like other art forms, it also seems to take a type of heart and courage that only true artists possess. "I went out in the community and found a lot of people interested, and a couple who had the guts to really see something through. A lot of people say they want to, but when it comes down to the nitty gritty, making a full length feature with no money, no budget, you have to pull it out of a hat. But by doing that you learn how to make movies, you really do. People are like, 'Oh, if I get this much money I'll make a movie.' But you need to just start making it, make it on your phone. If I were waiting for money I'd still be waiting. People always think you've got to get motivated by money, but you'll never make it in the real world of film if that's all your motivated by."

Words of advice that apply to all the creative professions, whether it's oil painting or blood splattered movie making, how big your art becomes is up to you. **OL**



PHOTO BY JASON RICHARDS



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Art Means B



Left: *The Captive Artist* is one of Vernon's historic murals. Lead artist Michelle Loughery.

Forget the starving artist stereotype, these savvy Okanaganites know how to make their art pay—in so many ways

By Gillianne Richards

"So, will it be wine or coffee?" asks my host as we tour his home, an art gallery decorated with an air of enchantment. A white baby grand dares me to play a note as I walk by. Buffets of Easter bunnies perch in display across the kitchen walls. Near the entrance, the portrait of a man painted on a deer hide draws me in. I look deep into his blue eyes and hear him say, "I have a Gewürztraminer in a bare naked bottle."

I turn to the real life version of the man on the deer hide and laugh in agreement. Wine will go perfectly with this tour.

When I meet creative types, there's often a touch of the surreal involved. The ability to think outside the box is a trait entrepreneurs use to build businesses. And when you're good at mixing business and art? — usually it means that sales add up.

I'm on a trek across the Okanagan to meet three prominent visual artists and hear their views on being successful in the Valley. Each has found different ways of getting there.

u\$iness

Below:
Will Enns painting
a Summerland
area landscape.

Wine Labels and Digital Dreams

Will Enns is a Summerland artist whose work is popular among wine connoisseurs. There's a reason he has a bare naked bottle of Gewürztraminer. The owner of Sonoran Estate Winery, which uses his art on their labels, left it as a gift. He pours me a glass and we tour through rooms hung with his work; energetic portraits, romantic vistas, and lush memories whisked to life by Will's palette knife.

He's not a brush man; he prefers a more solid set of tools. Will is the type of student who becomes a master by doing.

"When people say, 'Oh you're so talented, you're painting is so good,' I say, 'Well, that's not really a talent, it's a skill set. Drawing is a skill set. Painting is a skill set. But it's a skill set that's laid on top of a talent. The talent is creativity.'"

Spoken like a man capable of many things. He also paints digitally, rendering images from photographs, producing prints and high quality images for magazines and other publications.

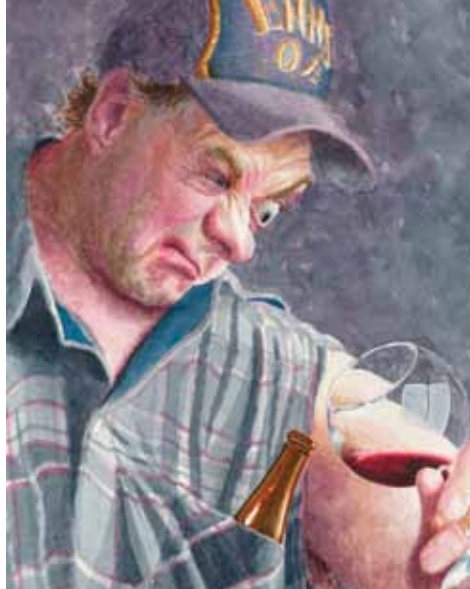
But if painting is the skill set, I wonder

about the source of Will's creativity. He credits being raised in a time when childhood was light on safety measures. "I was nine and playing with power tools," he chuckles, lifting his hands to show that he managed to keep all his fingers.

There's an equally strong business side to his artistic mind, perhaps developed during years spent working the stock market. Will only recently developed his art skills, and it didn't take long for him to tap into two of the strongest markets in the Okanagan: wine and tourism.

"When people come here they want to remember the holiday, they want to buy what reminds them of this





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place.” Will fills that need by painting the landscapes around local wineries, producing art for their labels, and trying unique ideas like a line of greeting cards featuring comical caricatures of “the people you meet at wine tastings” — beer swilling rednecks included.

I comment on how some local artists find they can’t make it work here, that they need to leave or switch careers to survive.

Will says, “I talk with artists at different times about the difficulty of selling art. I think it’s a difficulty that most artists experience to a certain degree, because art is the last thing people buy — because it’s the last thing they need — and it’s the first thing they don’t need. Let’s be honest. I don’t

bother asking myself questions like, *what makes me feel good today*, I ask, *what do people want to buy today*, because if they don’t want to buy it, I won’t be able to sell it. It’s pretty simple.” We toast to his tip for success.

“Drawing is a skill set. Painting is a skill set. But it’s a skill set that’s laid on top of a talent. The talent is creativity.”

Above (clockwise):
Lulu and the Scrappers, Redneck, Welcome to Thornhaven, The Connoisseur.

WILL ENNS PHOTOS BY MICHAEL BOTNER; OTHERS CONTRIBUTED.

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Dual Market Appeal

Nestled in a Kelowna neighbourhood is the welcoming home of an artist who has a pretty good sense of what people want to buy. At prices nearing \$10K, he's doing something right.

Alex Fong began messing around with watercolours in design school. While others beg for the medium to play nice (acrylics let me paint over my mistakes, watercolours laugh in my general direction), they willingly kneel to Alex's hand. His work has a clear voice. It's poetic, whimsical, and delightfully balances the play of light with the elements of nature. The images also have a deeper, connective quality, as if they came from impressions of our collective youth.

Although many of his ideas are born in the Okanagan, much of his support comes from beyond. Alex has always had local buyers, but there was a time when making ends meet was tough. So he went east to the market in Calgary. Patrons of the oil province soon agreed he was a good investment. All that

attention helped things progress locally and Alex estimates that close to half his sales are now regional.

Wanting other artists to find success here as well, he dedicates time to developing Kelowna's cultural district. A hard-working member of a number of committees, he was an integral part of the group that championed the Rotary Centre for the Arts.

Alex continues to contribute both ideas and art to big projects, but he's also good at thinking small. A long-term dream is to create a dedicated space where children can enjoy and show art that is curated for them and displayed at their height.

"When you raise kids in a community, you want them to have as much good influence as they can possibly get. When they grow up they'll just be better people," he says with tender insight that belies the businessman and shows the heart.

His interest in art and the economy isn't just about selling his own work; it's about developing an infrastructure that supports the creative community as a whole.

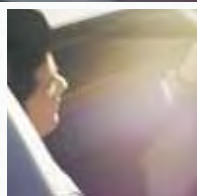


Left: Alex Fong.

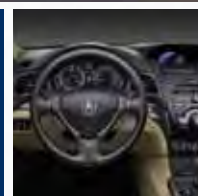
Above (top down): *oh, what a night; wake up; pillars*



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Below: Indian Motorcycle, Vernon

Facing page (clockwise):

Michelle Loughery with *The Allure of Clay*, Vernon; Michelle Loughery communing with her idea of a blank canvas; Michelle Loughery with *The Captive Artist*, Vernon.

Another Brick in the Wall

If you drive through downtown Vernon you can't miss the collection of vibrant murals that are a history lesson on the community. Michelle Loughery, the local artist who led the project, doesn't have a degree in the arts. She's a self-taught citizen whose involvement in local arts organizations helped her to find her calling.

In consideration of the arts council budget in Sparwood, BC, Michelle decided to figure out how to create public art herself. She grabbed some students and started painting a mural. A man from out of town passed by and asked the price of a mural like theirs. They responded professionally, quoting him a nice fat number. The next day Michelle had a cheque and plane tickets in her hand. It was the start of a career that would soon raise millions towards turning urban walls into works of art and changing the lives of countless youth along the way.

There's something a little bit country, a little bit rock 'n' roll about Michelle. She has a way of making you feel relaxed and excited at the same time. She's a prolific fundraiser and it's no wonder—you can't help but want to fuel her creative fire. She's built a business around bringing public art not just to the walls of buildings, but into the lives of kids. She runs a number of amazing grassroots projects and has been requested internationally to teach what she does so well: provide youth (especially high risk kids) with an opportunity to express themselves in a way that is non-threatening, large scale and high impact, all while sharing heritage and culture.

"Our young people are our most precious resource and a driving force for our societies," says Michelle. "A key objec-

tive of my work is the empowerment of a community or group members."

It's been life changing for her too. Her slogan, "Take it to the wall," is about how mural painting is bond-making. Confessions, opening up, hearing your own thoughts more clearly—these are all part of the magic of a group mural. There's a gravity to it that pulls you in closer to yourself and to each other.

Michelle takes me outside a coffee shop to a bare brick wall and gets me to lean in close. We stand talking, not face-to-face, but wall-to-wall. "Art is a business like anything else and artists need to learn the skills to fund their work if they want to succeed," she says. Two minutes in and I'm ready to pay to paint the whole wall.

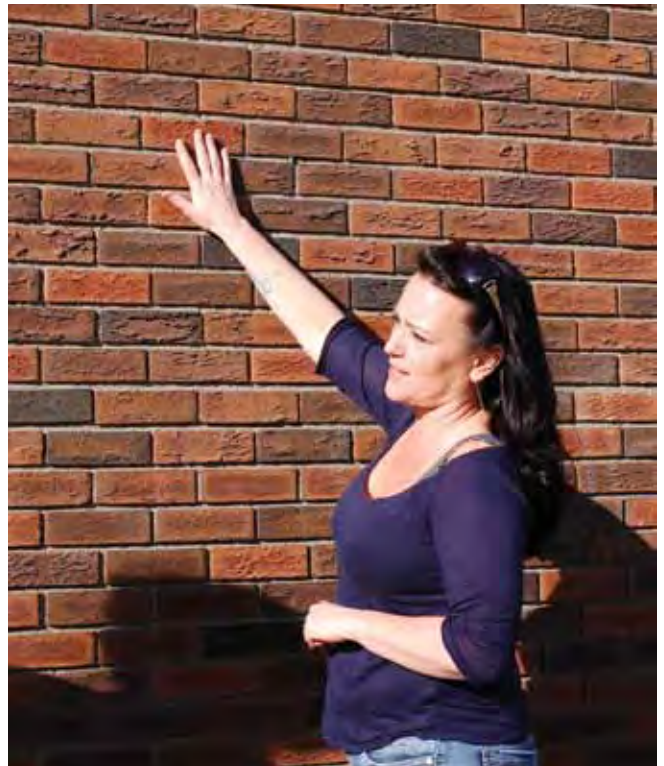
Artists like Will, Alex and Michelle are an integral part of our local economy, but turning creativity into a career can be tricky. As I learned from these three visual artists, to make a lasting mark you need more than just skills and talent, it's an eye for business that lets you behold the way to success. **OL**



PHOTO CONTRIBUTED



*“A key objective of my work is the empowerment
of a community or group members.”*



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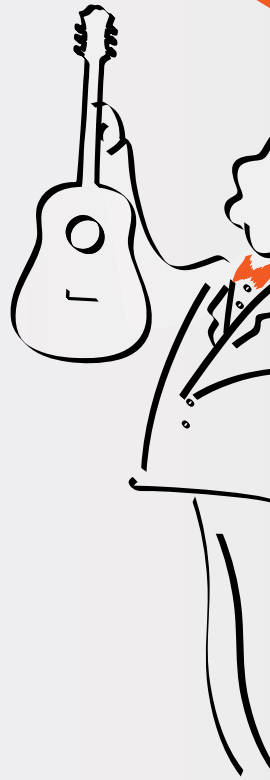
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By Patti Shales Lefkos

How safe are our schools?

Okanagan educators squarely
face the threat of school
violence and disasters

We remember with horror the April 1999 Columbine High School massacre when two Littleton, Colorado, senior students killed 12 classmates and one teacher. We recall how the fear multiplied when eight days later, a 14-year-old walked into W. R. Myers School in Taber, Alberta, killed one student and wounded another in what is widely believed to be a copycat incident. And more recently, the terrifying September day in 2006 at Dawson College in Montreal when one student died, 19 were injured and the shooter committed suicide.

Shooting violence in Canadian schools actually goes way back to May 1975 at Centennial Secondary School in Brampton, Ontario, when a 16-year-old murdered a teacher and fellow student, and injured 13 others before killing himself. Michael Slobodian became the first recorded high school killer in the country.

Since then there have been 18 violent gun incidents in our schools and an increasing number of stabbings in the past decade. While the majority of incidents have taken place in large cities in Eastern Canada, we are not immune. In November 2010, a Kelowna teen was suspended from school for pointing a mock gun at a motorist. The following April, three Kelowna schools were put under lockdown when witnesses reported to RCMP seeing a man with a gun. Later in 2011, the Halloween murder of teenager Taylor Van Diest in Armstrong and the recent incident of an 11-year-old Saskatchewan boy bringing a loaded gun to school remind Okanagan school district officials that violence has moved west.



Below: Deserted hallway at Vernon's Fulton Secondary during lockdown drill



All students need support

- High-risk, potentially violent behaviours may include possession of weapons, bomb threats and verbal, handwritten or internet threats to kill or injure others.
- There is no profile or magic checklist of indicators for the high-risk potentially violent, student. Some students who actually pose a threat display very few traits of traditional high-risk students while others seem to meet the general criteria.
- Fluidity between homicidal and suicidal domains is common in many youth who commit serious acts of violence. Many threat makers do not pose a risk to others but may be thinking of killing themselves.

Source: J. Kevin Cameron, Canadian Center for Threat Assessment and Trauma Response

Ready for trouble

The noon break draws to a close on a sunny February day at Clarence Fulton Secondary School in Vernon. The hallways are full of life. Fulton cheerleaders are packing up and counting profits from their Valentine's Day cupcake sale in the bright school atrium. Groups of students wander in, snow still on their boots, heading for classes. Laughter and chatter fill the air as 800 students settle in for the afternoon.

Suddenly an air horn blasts from the PA.

Silence.

The next sound is the voice of principal Malcolm Reid reading from a standard script, part of strict district protocol.

"Attention all staff and students. This is a Level 1 lockdown. For security reasons, teachers please check the hallway for staff and students and direct them to a classroom and then lock your classroom door immediately."

Silent pause; Reid repeats the message.

In classrooms students hand in cell phones and huddle in previously designated corners not visible from windows while teachers lock doors and turn out lights.

In less than 30 seconds an eerie silence engulfs the building. Reid, vice-principal Jeff Huggins, head custodian Barry Jackson and RCMP school liaison officer (SLO) Kathy Szoboticsanec stride silently along the dim deserted hallways, rattling door handles to check locks and peering into rooms to ensure that no one can be seen.

Back in the office two more announcements end the drill. Teachers and the SLO debrief with students. At the end of the day the principal will provide feedback on what could be done differently next time.

This was a drill, but students and staff know lockdowns are serious business.





New school culture

"Lockdown drills have quickly become a part of school culture," says Reid. "The original anxiety of parents and students that occurred when we started drills about six years ago is no longer there."

"At first, students didn't want to surrender their cell phones," says SLO Szoboticsanec, "but when we took the time to explain the dangers of uncontrolled information leaking out in a real disaster, they understood. Now, there's no problem."

Most districts require three lockdown drills a year in each school, but none should be a complete surprise. "Lockdown drills can be quite unnerving for some students and traumatic for others," says Rod Baruta, principal of Kelowna's Dr. Knox Middle School. "You have to weigh the benefits. The main thing is that the students know the procedure."

And take it seriously. "We practice enough times so

that we'll remember what to do without questions or problems," says Alexandra, a Grade 10 student at Vernon Christian School. "When we perform any drill, real or practice, I'm glad to know that we'll take care of one another to make sure no one gets hurt or makes a wrong decision."

"We know about Columbine and Taber and the seriousness of what could happen," says Laura, a Grade 12 Fulton student.

"It's nice to know we're all on the same page to know what we have to do," adds a fellow student, Taylor.

Above clockwise:
Fulton principal Malcolm Reid announces lockdown drill over the school public address system; sign of the times; deserted stairway during lockdown drill.

PHOTOS BY BARRY HODGINS

Multiple Threats

Lockdown in the face of possible violence is just one of a myriad of potential critical incidents. The BC Ministry of Education requires that all schools have emergency planning and critical incident response protocols in place to deal with a variety of crisis situations.

Sometimes rapid, efficient evacuation is called for. "All schools have at least five fire drills a year, often a surprise, and up to three earthquake drills as well as the lockdowns," says Don Wilcox, director of instruction – student support services for School District 22.

Critical incidents create strong emotional responses in both students and staff. The existence of well-established plans for dealing with the situation can reduce confusion and ensure that decisions are reasoned and thorough. When an incident occurs, there is often little time for reflective decision-making.

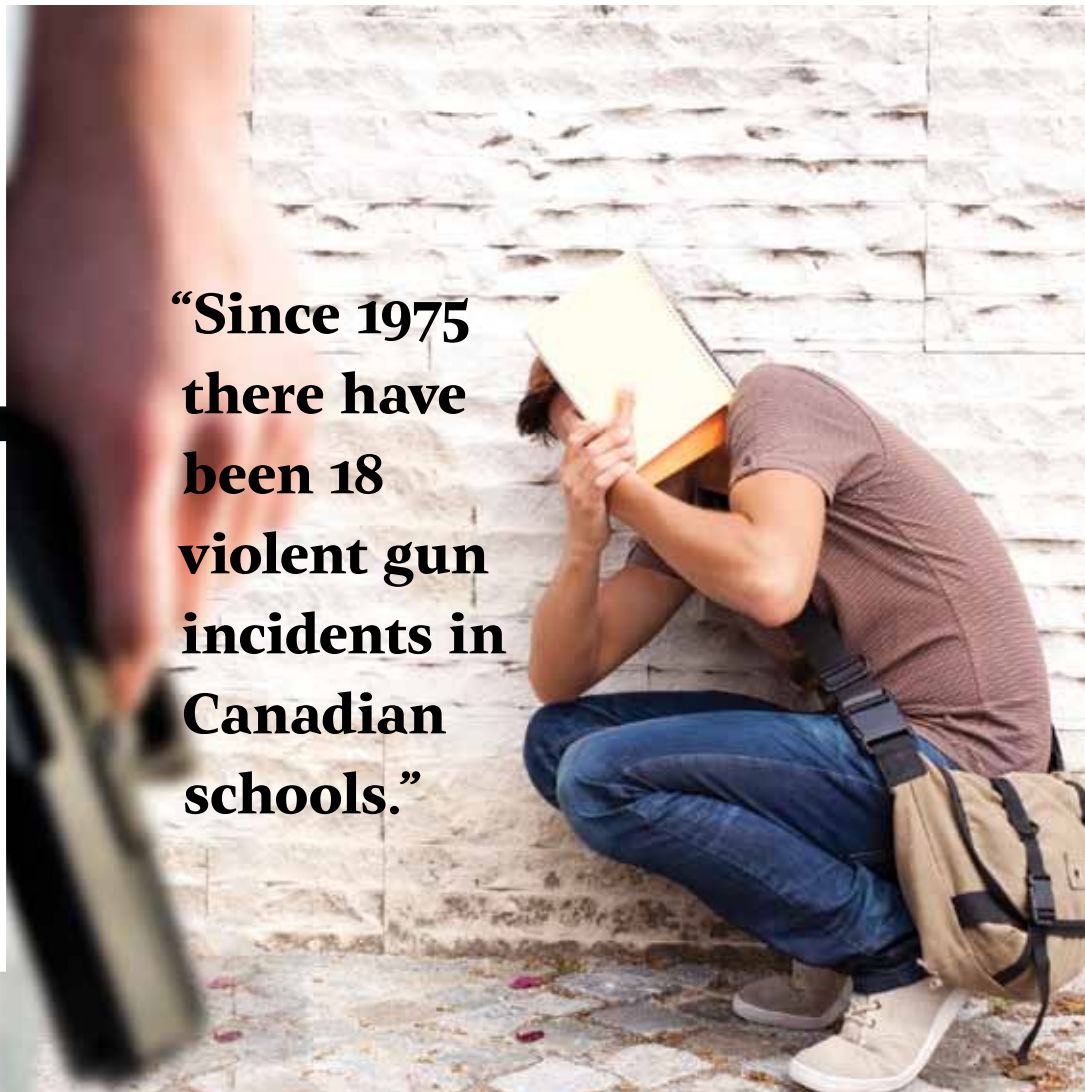
"That's why plans have to be practiced and in place at all times," says Alan Lalonde, principal of central programs and services for School District 23 and chair of the district safe schools committee. "Protocols are updated yearly, posted in all classrooms and offices at schools sites, on a restricted website and available on iPhone for administrators."

He adds, "You can always practice more, but the biggest challenge is how to act appropriately, to use common sense, to stay calm. At superintendents' meetings we experience simulation exercises and discuss what might be done to handle scenarios at each school."

Below clockwise: Principal Reid checks that every classroom door is secured during lockdown drill; hypothetical gun incident; tools of the trade for a school lockdown. All mobile phones must be turned in.



**"Since 1975
there have
been 18
violent gun
incidents in
Canadian
schools."**





Procedures and Practice

Each district hosts an inter-agency safe schools committee. Among the goals are providing a venue to voice concerns, increasing public awareness of safety issues, formulating recommendations for schools and community members and reviewing models and research related to school and community safety.

Procedures to deal with all emergencies and to respond after an incident must be well-established and practiced long before a crisis occurs. To help prepare, Vernon, the

Central Okanagan and North-Okanagan Shuswap have joined forces with partners such as the RCMP and various other community stakeholders to bring in Canadian expert J. Kevin Cameron of the Canadian Center for Threat Assessment and Trauma Response.

In concert with the RCMP behavioural sciences unit, Cameron developed Canada's first multidisciplinary threat assessment training program. "All district and school based administrators, counsellors and SLOs have completed Level 1 threat assessment training and many, also Level 2," says Wilcox. "The cooperation of agencies is exceptional here. We have a marvellous working relationship."

Sessions introduce the new field of student threat assessment, offering insight

“Expertise is available at every school site and district response teams can be sent in to support and assist.”

Above: Alan Lalonde, chair of the safe schools committee for School District 23.

ALAN LALONDE PHOTO BARRY HODGINS, SIDEBAR PHOTO CONTRIBUTED

Resources for parents

- Canadian Center for Threat Assessment and Trauma
Response: www.cctatr.com
- Common Sense Media: This site arms parents with enough information to help them make informed choices about what to allow kids to play. Reviews include less violent alternatives with the compelling game-play that kids want.
www.commonsensemedia.org
- Intended as an early warning system for school counselors, this document may be of interest to some parents:
www.bced.gov.bc.ca/sco/resourcedocs/words_not_enough.pdf
- Resources relating to school safety such as *Your Role in Helping Children and Youth Develop Healthy Relationship Skills and Keeping Kids Safe—A Guide for Parents of Students in Grades K–12*.
www.bced.gov.bc.ca/sco/resources.htm



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into known school shooters and other violent youth, and helping districts and schools develop protocols for threat/risk assessment intervention teams.

Various other experts from agencies like Interior Health and the Ministry for Children and Families have been brought in to guide districts and schools in forming critical incident response teams.

Wilcox says there are district teams in place for both threat assessment and crisis response and trained personnel at every high school, usually the administrator and counsellor. Elementary school administrators are also trained and there is a counsellor shared among four schools. "Expertise is available at every school site and district response teams can be sent in to support and assist."

Communications Hurdles

In a real emergency efficient communication is paramount. While administrators have cell phones supplied by their district, classroom teachers do not. There is a great variety of communication systems, depending on the age of the school building,

Most have public address systems so that messages can be broadcast from the office to all rooms. However, the way teachers are able to communicate back to the office is another story.

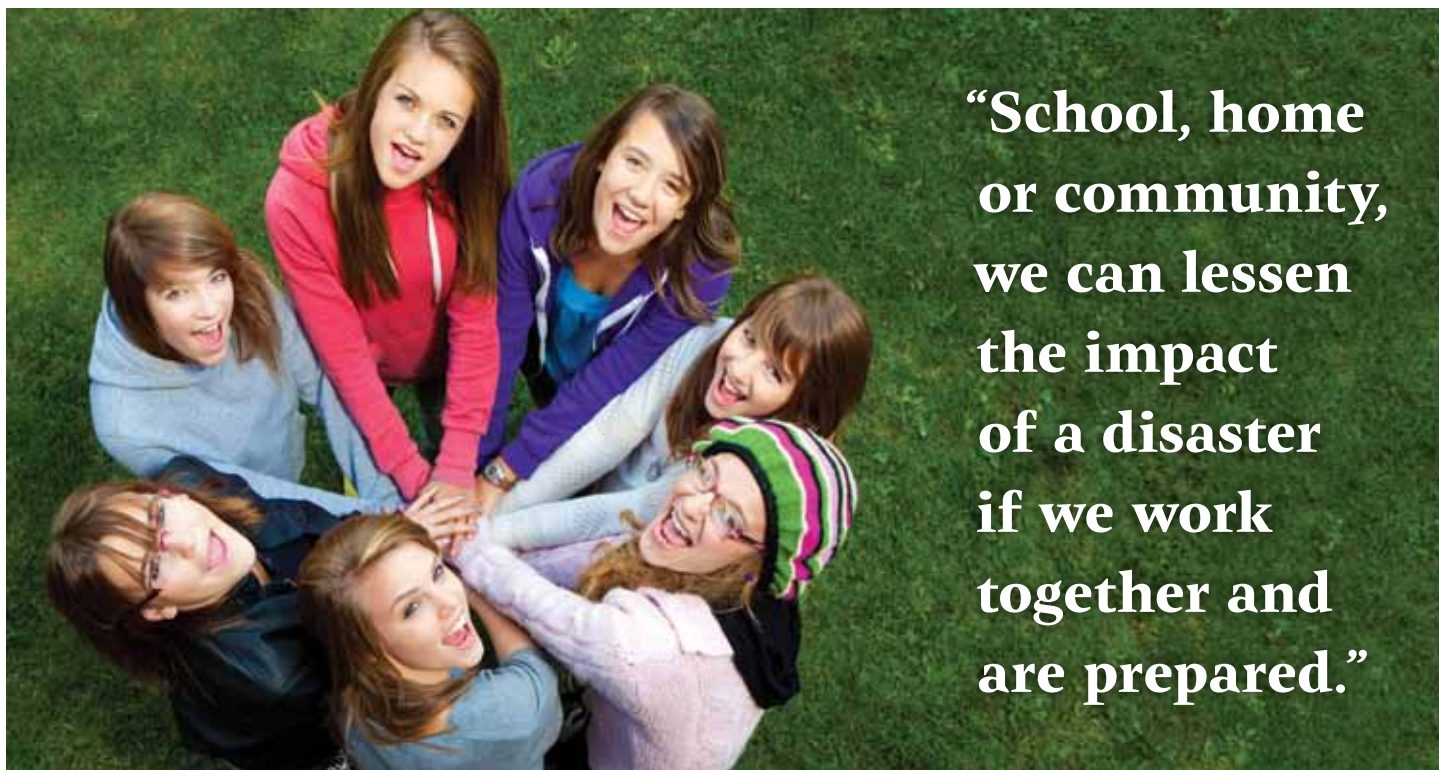
"Most depend on the intercom (public address) system and the fire bell," says Alice Rees, president of the Central Okanagan Teachers' Association.

Kevin Epp, past president of the Okanagan-Skaha Teachers' Union, considers the situation to be grossly inadequate. "Most classrooms have intercom at best, and it may

or may not have someone monitoring in the event of a crisis. As well, in the case of a disaster the system may not function. There are many classrooms that have no other means of communication. In the event of emergencies in the classroom, teachers are left with no other means but running to the office or having students run to the office to get help."

Relatively new schools like Dr. Knox Middle School boast up-to-date communication technology. Principal Baruta can use the public address system or call any room using a four-digit number. Teachers can respond in kind. Such luxuries are not yet in place in all Okanagan schools.

The RCMP has copies of all school emergency plans as well as aerial photos, blueprint plans and designated evacuation site meeting points for most high schools. These can be brought up on the computer in squad cars. "We have been working on this for the past three years and still have to provide this information for the Coldstream area and all elementary schools," says Wilcox. Modifications and alterations to all schools are updated annually.



**"School, home
or community,
we can lessen
the impact
of a disaster
if we work
together and
are prepared."**



Coordinated Efforts

As well as RCMP, fire and ambulance services, backup and coordination support are available from teams like North Okanagan Emergency Management. "For school emergencies, ESS (emergency support services) is the support and the school district is the lead agency," says Helen Sinclair, deputy emergency support services coordinator.

"For instance, in the event of a school bus accident, we would work with fire and ambulance onsite to immediately register families affected (schools would later follow up) and provide a crisis line for mental health support for families to assist the school district crisis response team and assist with the media control component," she says. "In the event of an evacuation of a neighbourhood surrounding a school, we can set up a reception centre, register people and take care of students, families and others who cannot return home."

Sinclair says, "School, home or community, we can lessen the impact of a disaster if we work together and are prepared." **OL**

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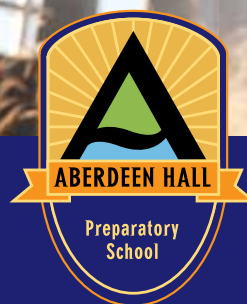
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Booster Juice also offers fresh squeezed juices including carrot,

apple, multi-veggie blends and sunny orange; freshly grilled wraps, panini, quesadillas and energizing (locally grown) wheatgrass shots with nutrition values right off the charts.

Ask about the Booster Juice Healthy School Lunch Program. Many schools have weekly or monthly Booster Juice Day where they order an assortment of smoothies and wraps and sell them on a first-come-first-served basis — also a great fundraising idea. Learn more at www.boosterjuice.com.



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Ten Thousand Villages, the oldest fair trade organization in North America, creates opportunities for artisans in developing countries to earn income by bringing their products and stories to our markets through long-term, fair trading relationships.

Fair trade means the artisans are paid a fair price, usually what they request. They receive half of the payment when the order is placed and the other half when their items are delivered to port. Ten Thousand Villages pays all shipping and other costs. If items are on sale in the store, artisans are not affected.

Many staff in the company's 45 Canadian stores are volunteers. Shop locally in Kelowna and Penticton.

Centre of Gravity

The 2012 Centre of Gravity (COG) festival, held August 3 to 5 in Kelowna, wrapped up to very positive reviews. With more than 150 athletes and 20-plus musical performers, COG was one of the biggest events on one of the hottest weekends of the summer.

Newly implemented crowd control and clean up improvements included: a shuttle service that relieved downtown traffic and got people home safely; additional port-o-potties and garbage patrols that kept downtown well maintained; aggressive post-event clean up; a soft close to help with crowd control as guests gradually left the park; and COG House, which took stress off downtown streets by giving guests another venue.

"This year's Center of Gravity festival was a success on many levels," says Kelowna city councillor Colin Basran. "I witnessed the event organizers and RCMP doing a great job of dispersing the COG crowd and making sure our downtown was a safe place to be. Business owners I've spoken to, particularly those located downtown, say COG was a great boost to our local economy."



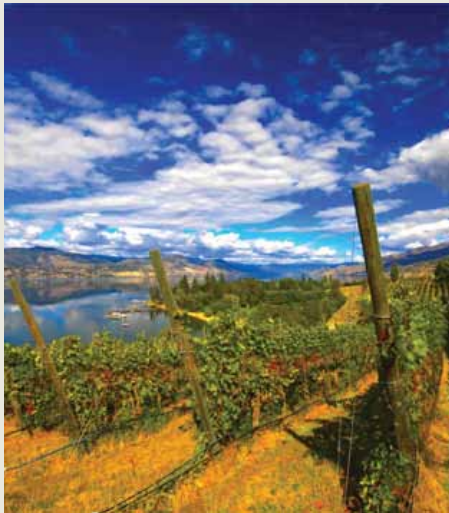
Deep Creek

At Deep Creek Wine Estate and Hainle Vineyards Estate Winery, the Huber family builds on a history of both tradition and innovation. Canada's first certified organic winery, Hainle was also the first in North America to produce and market Icewine. Since purchasing the Hainle winery in 2002, the Hubers have managed their vineyards in strict accordance with their own wine purity law which dates back to 1856 and includes a strong commitment to natural, chemical-free viticulture.

Along with the Icewines, they are dedicated to producing the highest possible quality, naturally dry, fully fermented wines, garnering both awards and international recognition. Marketed under their Deep Creek and Hainle labels, these wines can be found in specialty shops and high end restaurants, and in their wine shop.

Visit the winery daily between 11 a.m. and 5 p.m. from April 6 through October 31, and by reservation during the off-season. Drop in for wine

tasting or call ahead to arrange an exclusive wine tasting at the wine bar or wine tasting with cellar tour. There are three different packages to choose from and each includes wine to take home (from two to six bottles). Tours can be arranged with pick-up and drop off and you can add an optional lunch basket or dinner options. Find the winery just off Highway 97 in Peachland at 5355 Trepanier Bench Road, or call 800.767.3109 for reservations or more information.



Bounty Cellars

Bounty Cellars creates wines by blending grapes purchased from a variety of growers. These wines are offered for sale under the Bounty Cellars label or supplied to customers under their own individualized labels. Customers can order as few as two cases or arrange for larger, long-term volumes. Bounty Cellars can create completely unique wines as well.

If you're planning an event, opening a restaurant, looking for a corporate gift, a unique fundraising or marketing idea, mark the occasion or build your brand with a quality wine customized with your own label.

Dirty Laundry Vineyard

In the Trout Creek area south of Summerland lies one of the most fun and attractive wineries on the Bottleneck Drive wine route. Visit this newly expanded boutique winery with the great story behind the name, award winning wines, free tastings and a unique gift shop. Enjoy a European-style picnic basket lunch filled with an array of hand chosen deli delights while sipping a glass or sharing a bottle of wine on the vine-covered patio.

The vista of vineyards, Okanagan Lake, historic KVR steam train and trestle bridge, plus free weekend entertainment and family friendly staff, all contribute to making this winery Trip Advisor's top Summerland destination.

Learn the story behind the

name, read the latests news on Dirty Laundry wines and check on coming events at www.dirtylaundry.ca.



Dirty Laundry Vineyard president and co-owner Robert (Bob) Campbell with sales and marketing manager/viticulturist Judi Skinner and operations manager and co-owner Hermann Teichtmeister on the newly renovated patio.

Castoro de Oro

If you haven't already tasted the effect of the Golden Mile's alluvial soil and southeast aspect on the wines of Castoro de Oro, then add this Oliver winery to your list of destinations for the Fall Okanagan Wine Festival. BYO fixings to grill on the barbecues in the winery's lovely picnic area and pair up your lunch menu with Castor de Oro wines including new

releases—10:30 a.m. through 4 p.m. each day of the festival. Free WiFi available if you need to keep in touch.

But you'll really want to devote your attention to the oaked, unoaked, varietals and blends—the 12 or so small-batch, handcrafted wines produced by Bruno Kelle and Stella Schmidt each year. Learn more at www.castorodeoro.com.

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Where do you go from here?

A portrait of Geoff McIntyre, a man with short brown hair, wearing a dark blue button-down shirt, smiling slightly. He is positioned on the left side of the page, with a blurred green vineyard background.

Legislative changes have opened domestic borders offering new possibilities for B.C. wine growers. Geoff McIntyre works closely with local producers to help them harvest new opportunities and expand their brands across Canada. With more than 15 years of industry experience, Geoff will keep your operation competitive and profitable, so you are well positioned to seize new opportunities.

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Osoyoos Lake Bench

by Michael Botner

Semi-desert conditions are great for more than beach holidays in the South Okanagan. Check out the big Euro-style wines of Osoyoos

■ Osoyoos Lake Bench is the Okanagan's southernmost grape growing region. The semi-desert landscape supports antelope brush, scorpions and rattlesnakes, but the hot, dry climate has attracted another life form, the vines of a burgeoning Okanagan wine industry. While a host of producers boast sizable plantings on the Bench, there are only five Osoyoos-based wineries. This does not include Osoyoos Larose, which currently does not have a cellar door, but its wines are made from grapes grown on a dedicated, 80-acre vineyard at the northwest end of the lake. The culmination of a Canada-France joint venture, Osoyoos Larose produces only two wines: Le Grand Vin and Pétales d'Osoyoos.

The first winery at the north end of Osoyoos Lake, La Stella, brings a touch of Tuscany to the Okanagan. Situated on

lakefront property, the Italian villa style winery features a large patio, ideal for picnics. With over an acre of Sangiovese Grosso, its trademark is Fortissimo, an impressive Super Tuscan style red.

If you miss the turn-off for Young & Wyse, you could end up at the Osoyoos border crossing. A long-time winemaker at Burrowing Owl, which is owned by the Wyse family, Steve decided to carve his own path. Fruit is sourced from 10 acres at the winery, plus a leased vineyard on the opposite side of the lake.

Take Hwy 3 to the sandy East Bench for three more wineries. Newest is Adega on 45th, ensconced in an inviting mission-style winery, opened in spring 2012. Inspired by the wines of California and Portugal, brothers-in-law Fred Farinha and Alex Nunes, and their wives Pam and

Maria, decided to switch from growing orchard fruit to grapes four years ago.

While the name (and labels) are quirky, Moon Curser co-owner Chris Tolley is dead serious about making richly flavoured wines from East Bench fruit. "A contiguous piece of land, we get more sun and higher temperatures, ideal for growing Cab, Syrah and others," he says.

At Nk'Mip Cellars, North America's first aboriginal owned and operated winery, winemaker Randy Picton sources grapes for his bigger reds at the 21-acre vineyard surrounding the winery and 10 acres nearby. Overlooking Osoyoos Lake and backed by imposing granite cliffs, the intriguing winery features the outdoor Patio restaurant, which showcases locally inspired cuisine with splendid Nk'Mip wines. **OL**



PASCAL MADEVON

Winemaker and Vineyard Manager
Osoyoos Larose

When Paris native Pascal Madevon arrived in the Okanagan amidst the 2001 harvest, his knowledge of Canadian wine was minimal. "Compared to France, Canada was not on the map in wine production," he says. After 10 years at Château Tour Blanche in Bordeaux, the University of Bordeaux oenology grad was hired to manage the Groupe Taillan-Vincor Canada joint venture vineyard and winery facility for Osoyoos Larose. He worked with the Vincor team for three months during the 2001 harvest, then convinced his reluctant family to relocate in the Okanagan from the Médoc region of France. Surprised by the heat and dryness (as well as the berry-hungry bears), he was impressed, not only by soil and terroir, but the quality and ripeness of the fruit. "Picked from vines that were only three and four years old, the grapes were fantastic—and disease free," he says. The first wine, 2001 Le Grand Vin, was an elegant blockbuster. The latest release, 2008, is bigger and more complex. Located on a bench above the northwest corner of Osoyoos Lake, the 80-acre vineyard comprises the five traditional Bordeaux varieties: 60 per cent Merlot and 22 per cent Cabernet Sauvignon with Cabernet Franc, Malbec and Petit Verdot. "I spend most of my time in the vineyard," says Pascal. A tasting of 2011 barrel samples, before blending, shows a powerful, silky Merlot and Cabernet Franc with super complexity and concentration. Despite less than ideal conditions, "2011 is the best yet for Osoyoos Larose," says Pascal.

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Showcasing a collection of the finest Osoyoos wines, the five star rating system stresses value for price.



ADEGA ON 45TH 2010 SYRAH

Osoyoos, Okanagan Valley

★★★★ \$24

From Osoyoos' newest winery on the East Bench, this intriguing Syrah boasts polish, complexity and potency. On the finely-textured palate, it shows blackcurrant and plum fruit with hints of violet, leather, mixed spices and vanilla. Best with barbecued beef.



MOON CURSER 2010 BORDER VINES

Osoyoos, Okanagan Valley

★★★★ \$25

Made from Osoyoos East Bench fruit, this winning blend includes six Bordeaux varieties, including Carmenère. It delivers integrated layers of supple plum and cassis fruit, notes of tobacco, mocha and cedar, framed by sweet tannins. Superb with roast pork.



OSOYOOS LAROSE 2008 LE GRAND VIN

Oliver, Okanagan Valley

★★★★1/2 \$50

The crowning jewel of a dynamic partnership between Canada's Vincor and Bordeaux-based Groupe Taillan, 2008 Le Grand Vin reveals complex and classy flavours of cassis, coffee bean and butterscotch backed by velvety tannins. Pairs with lamb.



LA STELLA 2009 FORTISSIMO

Osoyoos, Okanagan Valley

★★★★ \$35

La Stella's "Super Tuscan" red combines Merlot, Cabernet Sauvignon, Sangiovese and Cabernet Franc. Elegant palate delivers nuances of tobacco, raspberry, blackcurrant, dark chocolate and tomato purée with chalky tannins. Accompanies grilled steak.



NK'MIP CELLARS 2009 MER'R'IYM MERITAGE

Osoyoos, Okanagan Valley

★★★★1/2 \$50

From fruit grown on Constellation's leased McIntyre Bluff vineyard, this stunning red meritage sports layers of densely-packed black cherry and cassis, nuances of dark chocolate, coffee and tobacco, and finely-grained tannins. Partners duck, lamb and beef.



YOUNG & WISE COLLECTION 2011 AMBER

Osoyoos, Okanagan Valley

★★★★ \$22

An exotic blend of Viognier, Gewürztraminer and Pinot Gris, Amber shows spritzig in the glass, elusive aromas of straw, rose petal, peach and lychee, and flavours suggesting lychee, peach, grapefruit, ginger and mineral. Partners Asian cuisine.

PHOTOS BY MICHAEL BOTNER

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Left to right:
David MacCoubrey,
Dianne McEvoy,
Gregory Fuchs.

PHOTO BY DAWN RENAUD

Giving Others A Boost

Entrepreneur Dianne McEvoy and her team have put a whole new spin on networking. Way beyond the standard munch 'n' mingle, these community-spirited events boost business, the arts and local charities

■ At the end of a gorgeous summer afternoon I pass through the entrance to Heaven's Gate. Guided by a couple of smiling volunteers I squeeze into the winery's jam-packed parking lot, then make my way to the patio where I spot a tiny dynamo darting purposefully among the guests: Dianne McEvoy, a rental property manager and member of two strata councils, owner of Falcon Business Services Inc., and founder/facilitator of icton 16 Steps to Discovery & Empowerment. All this, and somehow she still had the energy to co-found a new community initiative, Giving Others A Boost (GOAB).

Dianne has a knack for bringing like-minded people together. Participating in a Community Futures entrepreneurial program, she met David MacCoubrey, owner of Sirf Web Marketing Strategies, and Gregory Fuchs, private chef with Gregor's Gourmet. On one of their breaks the three talked about how they might continue to support each other. "A few days later," she says, "I came back to them and said that there were a lot of entrepreneurs like us who could probably use some support and promoting, and maybe we could look at doing a networking event of some kind."

With plenty of other networking opportunities around, Dianne says the trio has worked hard to make theirs unique. Each event showcases three local entrepreneurs or small businesses, plus an artist, a photographer or writer, and a musician. "We also bring in a small, locally owned winery that provides free tastings of four of their wines and we generally have a chef who prepares three special hors d'oeuvres."

Today's chef is GOAB co-founder Gregory Fuchs. Inside the winery, a fabulous spread awaits—Greg's delectables plus treats from the Twisted Tart, with wines served by our host. I help myself to a few goodies, check out a vibrant display of watercolours by artist Derrie Selles, and head back out to the patio. Enjoying the soothing guitar and vocals of the Corner Turtles, I look over an information display for the South Okanagan Victims Assistance Society (SOVAS).

GOAB is more than a mini trade show in a relaxed social atmosphere. In keeping with their mission of giving others a boost, Dianne, Greg and David donate the proceeds from the cover charge (\$20 with advance confirmation) for each event to a different

charity; today, the beneficiary is SOVAS. Amberlee Erdmann, the organization's resource development coordinator, tells me they were thrilled to be selected. Although their funding generally goes to programs, she explains, not operational costs; their fax machine recently broke down and she's hoping today's donation will cover a new one.

It will. The evening nets SOVAS \$900.

Although this is only the sixth bimonthly event, GOAB has already donated \$2,170 to five local charities: Pathways Addiction Resource Centre, Penticton and Area Women's Centre, South Okanagan Women In Need Society, South Okanagan Therapeutic Riding Association, and the Gathering Grounds Café, which tries to support those in the community who are falling between the cracks. "We held our second event there," says Dianne, who hosted the first in her home—a venue they quickly outgrew.

The group eventually hopes to establish office space (probably sharing the space and a receptionist) and produce a quarterly newsletter to further raise their profile. And as GOAB grows, they plan to offer more: workshops on ►



Check email; enter new contact information from yesterday's networking event. Connect with fellow entrepreneurs on Facebook and introduce several contacts to each other.



Print handouts on using meditation to help overcome addiction; prepare inspirational topic for homework journaling, and print. Attend Penticton 16 Steps and facilitate group from 9 am to noon.



Lunch at computer. Check email; musician invited for next GOAB event is unavailable. Reply with an invitation for a later date; look through contacts for another musician and send invitation.



Bookkeeping for lawyer. Consult with accountant re: client's travel expenses; contact lawyer to clarify. Prepare and post blog pages on today's discussion for Penticton 16 Step; update Falcon Business Services.



Check email; review contractor's quote for balcony repair for strata. Reply with a couple of questions and add information to agenda for tonight's strata meeting. Input latest data into QuickBooks and print out financials.



Chair strata council meeting; discuss contractor's quote, financials. Adjourn; check emails and next day's schedule. Prepare to-do list; confirm three more attendees for upcoming GOAB event. Confirm musician. Head for bed.

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OTHER AMBITIONS: HOPES TO SPEAK AT SCHOOLS TO HELP KIDS UNDERSTAND ADDICTION "BEFORE IT GETS A CHANCE TO GET A FOOHOLD ON THEM."

anything from health and fitness to Facebook to organizing; competitions for artists and writers, and a Canadian Idol-style competition for singers; a networking membership alliance with discounts; even a charitable foundation. They're looking for a corporate sponsor to match each event's donation, and these matching funds will be kept in a separate account to be distributed by a board representing several charities and non-profits. It will be a foundation of last resort for those with a worthwhile cause, Dianne says. "If a person needs money and they've exhausted every avenue, they've gone every place they can possibly go to to get the money and still can't, they can apply."

On September 29, in celebration of its first year, GOAB will host a gala celebration at the Seniors Drop-in Centre on South Main Street in Penticton from 5 p.m. to 11 p.m. Like other GOAB events it's open to the public, but this one features a full buffet dinner supervised by a Red Seal chef, entertainment provided by several musicians, and (hopefully) wines from GOAB's six featured wineries. "We're hoping to sell out," says Dianne. Tickets are \$55 (advance only).

Visit GOAB on Facebook or learn more at www.givingothersaboost.com. **OL**

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GOAB co-founder Dianne McEvoy presents a cheque to Amberlee Erdmann of SOVAS.

PHOTO BY DAWN RENAUD

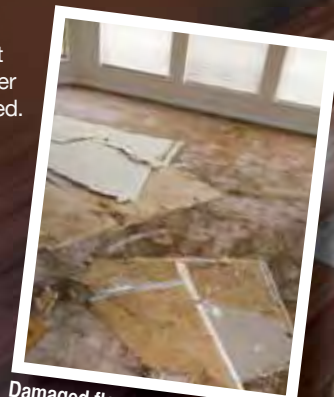
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Spectator's Olympics

Dream big and pass the ketchup

■ I love a lot of things about the Olympic Games, but topping the list must be the blithe embrace of irony. For instance, all that public weeping and roaring for people you'll never meet, nor care about in just a few weeks' time. That is, until another 47 months have passed and you realize you've actually heard the name Alexandre Despatie before—indeed, cared for him deeply. And you feel a pang of guilt, like you'd misplaced the email address of an old friend, years ago, and didn't Google hard enough to find it.

I skipped the Vancouver 2010 Olympics—a decision I'll regret to my dying day—so when the chance came to go to London 2012, it was a no-brainer. Shell out £100 for swim heats, no medals? Who cares! Plenty of beautiful bodies, wet, in tight clothes? Sign me up!

We watched Michael Phelps squeak through to the finals in the first swimming event of the games, cheering ourselves hoarse for no one in particular. We saw the Chinese phenom Ye Shiwen blow away the competition in the women's 400 medley before anyone started questioning her record-breaking times. Like everyone else, we were too busy screaming to think it all through.

In fact, for those of us who are spectators, a certain all-heart/no-brain approach to the Olympics is part of its charm. We care abruptly and profoundly, without taking the time to question the flood of emotion or its authenticity. This is why corporations like Coke and McDonalds get away with being the chief sponsors of an event that epitomizes sport at its highest level. Rational thinking has no place here, otherwise skeet shooting would have gone the way of the tug-of-war years ago. I'm pretty sure the nutritionist for the athletes wasn't urging them to carbo-load on Sausage McGriddles, but those of us glamming around the Olympic village in our red-and-white face paint and maple-leaf T-shirts can turn a blind eye to these kinds of petty contradictions. Heck, if "everything in moderation" was going to make it as a motto, Phelps didn't get the memo.

Watching the Olympics affects people in one of two ways: some feel overcome by a powerful inertia, leading them to park in front of their flat-screen TVs and call in sick for two weeks straight. It's a quintessential irony of the games that most

people will skip boot-camp so as not to miss the men's eight-with-coxswain. The rest, and I count myself in this camp, start scanning the Olympic program for sports in which we, ourselves, might yet have the chance to medal. For the winter games, I've always fancied I might at least make the podium for curling, never mind I've never once thrown a stone. These seem to be older folks who are good at vigorous cleaning. I could do that.

For the summer games, I'm thinking sailing. That looks sort of peaceful. And I used to know how to rig a Laser II.

Riding the tube into central London after our swim event was over, high on emotion and stiff from leaping from our seats, we kept watch for fellow Canadians.

I wore my Hudson's Bay Olympic-issue garb, greeting my countrymen and women with the sort of bonhomie usually reserved for the pub on New Year's. In the heady afterglow of our unabashed patriotism, anything was possible.

My husband, seeing me cast a surreptitious glimpse at my own flexed bicep in the subway car window, leaned in and whispered: Do you think people are wondering if we are a part of Team Canada?

It's certainly conceivable, I figured, delving deeper into my Rolo McFlurry. You can dream big at the Olympics. Others have, clearly, and it's worked out for them. **OL**

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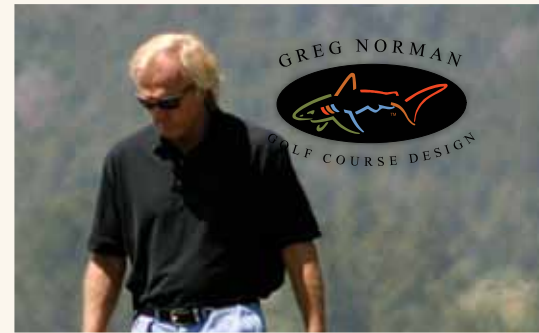
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