

Stories from the Heart



On a Journey to Write YOUR Story

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On a Journey to Write Your Story'

© 2025

by **Lauren Giulian,**

Geri Gray, Lisa Huffman, Barry Milliken,

Debbie Milliken, Anastasia O'Shawanoo and “f” 

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Heartfelt Insights

7613 Chester Trail, Port Franks ON N0M 2L0

Author@LaureenGiulian.ca

Acknowledgement

As provider and facilitator of the ***Journey to Write YOUR Story*** program, I want to acknowledge that in order to create this collaborative work we gathered on the traditional, unceded territory of the Anishinaabek people of Kettle & Stoney Point First Nations.

I cannot offer enough gratitude to express the impact and honour that it was to provide this program at the Kettle & Stoney Point First Nations Public Library. *Chi Miigwetch!*

It has always been, and will continue to be, my hope that the ***Journey to Write YOUR Story*** program will inspire people, but especially the people of the First Nations to share more of their stories with those of us who do not know them; to teach us how to be better caretakers of this beautiful land; and how to demonstrate greater respect for all people.

I commit to deepening the relationships I have built through the offering of this program and to honouring the land and peoples wherever I go.

A portion of the proceeds of the sales of this book will be gifted to the Kettle & Stoney Point First Nations Public Library.

Laureen Giulian

Dedication


This book is dedicated to the stories within us;
the ones that lie waiting to be shared;
the stories of our Ancestors;
the stories that teach us;
and the stories that help us to grow.

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A Voice

A voice in its full authenticity
 Is powerful and true.
A voice in a language not its own
 Sounds awkward and unsure.
A voice, for sure, doesn't always
 Follow standard language patterns.

Yet a voice can portray a story
 Full of wonder, colour and culture.
It can transport you to another
 Time and place,
Where the world can learn
 To hear a different way.

When two cultures come together
 And one has held the upper hand;
When we fail to hear
 The voice of another human;
Because it sounds so foreign to our ear;
 We risk the loss of wisdom
 We could all stand to hear.

When I chose to hear differently -
 When I listened from my heart -
I hear a voice rich with insight.
 I heard the song of ancestors
And came to inner-standing
 That the language doesn't matter.

When a heart guides a voice
 To share a tale of epic highs and lows,
I owe it to the speaker
 To hear the story told.
 No judgement shall I hold.

Laureen Giulian

Foreword

It is both an honour and a privilege to provide space for stories to be told.

Many people have not ever known what it is to be truly heard. Such was the experience of the participants on this ***Journey To Write Your Story***. As it is with many humans, for whatever reason, the journey has not always been easy. For the Anishinaabek people of Kettle & Stony Point First Nations and the surrounding area, it has many twists and turns, making the stories of this area very unique in many ways.

Oral storytelling is an integral part of cultural identity for the First Nations people of Canada. As the elders pass on to other worlds, their stories are lost forever if younger people cannot remember hearing them. In many cases, prevailing societal attitudes prevented these stories from ever being given voice in the first place.

Sad as it is, the art of remembering has been lost. Children today are not taught how to remember. Rather, their minds are programmed to believe that they can find everything they need to know on the internet. Unfortunately, the stories of the ancestors are not yet on the internet.

My goal is to help people preserve these stories in a way that allow them to live forever - recorded not only orally - but for all time. By holding space with dignity and respect for each individual voice, we are able to move past societal beliefs and bring the ancient stories back to life.

I am so grateful and honoured to be witness to this process and to hold space for other stories to come forward. I hope that you, our reader, take time to engage with the lessons in this small book. Take time to go inside, to hear what it is your body has to tell you. Connect with the Earth, with water, with fire, air and spirit and journey with them to release your own personal stories.

Chi Miigwetch/ Thank you for the opportunity to share this journey experience with you.

Your Story Matters!

Laureen Giulian

Author,

Transformational Journey, Quantum Energy & Alchemical
Healing Facilitator

Heartfelt Insights

Chapter One



A Guided Journey to Telling YOUR Story

Everyone has a story.

What if... we released our stories onto the page to live in perpetuity. Imagine the power those stories have to record activities and events, to teach ancient skills and to guide us through crisis with grace and ease. Imagine the ways in which they can: teach others how to tell our truths; to love; to let go; to rely on the bounty of the Earth and to become the best version of themselves?

What space would be emptied by the emotions that had held us 'stuck' in our stories? What might you have space to invite into your life, once the stories had been set free?

We invite you to breathe into the possibilities of what you may open to experience. Just allow yourself to imagine what it would be like to dream freely. Go ahead. Take a minute to feel into the opportunities available to you when no thing stands in your path.

See in your mind's eye, the book you hold in your hands. See the colours on the cover of the book – *your* book. How does it feel to see YOUR NAME emblazoned on the front cover?

This is YOUR story! We encourage you to write it along with us.

Why?

Let's begin by examining the question on every writer's mind... Who Am I and why is my story important? Who will benefit from hearing it?

First, let us ask you, *Why Not?* You have lived a life full of experiences from which you have learned so much. You are unique in the way you approach situations and events and your responses to those occurrences have forged the person you have become. You are a *wisdom keeper*. Your knowledge is sacred. If it is not shared, others will not have the opportunity to learn what you you have discovered.

Take a moment now, to think about one moment in your life or one truth you have gained that is significant to your personal journey.

Below are some things to think about when writing about your experience, event or truth. We've created some space here, for you to jot down some of the details around this idea. Take as much time as you need to fill in the blanks – we'll wait while you do this.

1. **Subject** of the event or truth
2. **Why** is it important for me to tell *this* story

3. **When** did it happen?

4. **Where** did it take place?

5. **Who** was there?

6. **What** happened?

Writing for even ten minutes a day, every day, makes the process of writing easy and far more enjoyable.

- Find a time that is quiet in a place that is comfortable for you to begin to write.
- Turn off all your distracting devices.
- Write at the same time each day.
- Write for 10 minutes each day about what's on your mind (called a brain dump) or continue to expand on the story you began on the preceding page.
- Many writers begin with a journal to record events of the day or a particular experience. From these, the fabric of your story can be developed to form your book.

If you're more interested in writing about someone else's adventures, or from a more documentary perspective, then the question becomes Who am I to tell *this* story? Wherein lies my authority?

The answer is... You were born for this!

Writing Prompts:

Prompts are just that... a provoking thought or image that gets the creative juices flowing. These can be as simple as one word that incites a stream of consciousness to begin to flow or an image that inspires you to create a story around it. Even music can cause us to fall into a state of mind where the energy of the sounds are interpreted by our brains in ways that draw out the stories we hold in the shadows of our being.

On the first day we met together for the *Journey to Write YOUR Story* program, we talked about the numerous reasons for sharing our stories. One of the primary causes we considered that day was the fact that society has become so reliant upon technology for gathering what we need to know. An unfortunate fact for many, is that our Elder's stories are not yet recorded. Therefore, much of the ancient wisdom may become lost if we cannot re-member cultural beliefs and habits, not to mention the unique point of view

of people whose participation in recorded events has not been accurately represented.

We pondered the following thoughts to get us started with our writing. Please give yourself 10 minutes to write something about one of these two ideas:

- I remember when...
- My Grandmother/Kokum taught me three things...

Use the space provided here to begin writing YOUR story, using one of the prompts provided above.

Your Story Matters!

Share what you've written with a good listener. We found that this is a powerful exercise that strengthens the storyteller within you. We also learned to appreciate the different ways in which a story can be told.

Some of us are natural born story tellers. Others take a more practical view of the facts, much like a reporter. A narrator is often employed to describe the events within the story, rather than the first person involved. It can be interesting (and challenging) to tell a story from a different perspective, for instance from the viewpoint of an observer. Then, a few of us are gifted with the ability to be as engaging as a child, expressing a tale with wonder and joy.

How will you present your story?

Our collaborating authors wish to share with you the results of our prompted writing experience. We hope you will enjoy the variety of subjects and witness the development of our writing skill as we share our stories throughout this book.

Positive Thought for today:

“I give myself permission to speak honestly and to stand with integrity to share my story.”

Never In My Life

Never in my life,
was I taught the fight or flight,
going through the challenges,
without any insight,
following my grandmother's teachings,
to walk in love and light,
not knowing that one day,
the light would turn to night.

Never in my life,
had my chest felt so tight,
as the world become silent,
in fears of it turning violent,
nothing is as it seems,
until I remembered my dreams,
could these have been a warning,
to embrace what's in my genes,
but what is in my genes,
for this I have no knowledge,
and now the journey really begins,
to answer my higher calling.

Never in my life,
would I have thought to walk this path,
to be caught up at the crossroads,
enduring centuries of scathe,
persevering through the tests and trials,
making sure to break familiar cycles,

not to give into my own desires,
but spark the flame for our inner fires.



Never in my life,
would I have thought to feel such pain,
of all my ancestors before me,
and the children who remain,
our mother earth is calling,
for us to make a change,
to take care of and heal our waters,
for our spirits will remain.

Never in my life,
had this been so surreal,
flashbacks of my childhood,
the truths are being revealed,
everything I never understood,
weighing out the bad... to see the good,
all of a sudden... there it was,
the purpose in this life... was love.

Anastasia O'Shawanoo

Image Credit: Anastasia O'Shawanoo

~ I Remember When ~

I was a child, maybe 10-years old. Up until this point life wasn't magnificent or anything spectacular. As a matter of fact, it was quite ugly! I was born in 1963 to a family of "Indians" who continue to live off the land and fish in the waters off the shores of Lake Huron. It was in the time of colonization and civilization of reserves, after the residential school times and during the forced imposition of the Indian Act rules. It was a time when the fishermen in my community were being told they could not fish to keep their families alive anymore and no more hunting; You need to buy a license from the province of Ontario. It was a time when broken people preyed on the vulnerable and victims became predators. It was a time when the clear blue waters quickly turned brown and thick. Television was a luxury. I remember that of my earlier days before I was 10-years old, when life was ugly.

Then, my dad bought me a pony! His name was Nod. I think it was the happiest and scariest time of my childhood. Nod was a pony my dad bought on a promise I made to him. The promise to stand up for myself – to not to cry anymore – and - if someone is trying to hurt me that I would "Make them bleed and then they will leave me alone!", as my dad put it one day when I came home crying from the white man's schooling. Kids were mean to me, and I cried a lot. That promise I made to my dad to be strong, to fight for life and the promise to take care of Nod.

~ To Ride - To Stand - To Free Myself - To Challenge ~

As a child, I was so happy and free once I got to know Nod. That first pony dad brought home was purchased to bring my tiny withdrawn self into a new life. I became stronger and more confident as I learned to ride. I started to live life and explore. I wanted to change the world. To change the life I had experienced so far. Nod was a type of re-birthing for me. To be free and free myself but first, I had to stop being afraid. Afraid in this world of danger. Afraid to speak – afraid to fall – afraid to stand – afraid to touch – afraid to want – afraid to feel. First, I had to rise in spirit and take control of who I am and what I want from this life. First, I had to stop being afraid and embrace the challenge!

I grew up second youngest in a family of 8. In those days, my dad was the best fisherman in our territory - legendary! He would set nets far out in the lake and travel by boat to places the other fishermen dared not go. We, my family and my people, live on Kettle and Stony Point Reserve, located on the beautiful shores of Lake Huron. Across the water to the west was the United States of America. The shore to the north was a beautiful sandy beach. I remember a few times when mom and us younger kids would sit late at night on the shores with our car lights blinking so dad could find his way home off the lake. In the early mornings he would go back out on the lake to collect the fish in his nets and return

with his boat laden down with buckets of fish – Including sturgeons!

As a small child I used to try to help my dad clean the nets. I would cry to him and tell him I didn't want to go to the white man's school; that the teachers were mean, and the kids picked on me. One day I cried so hard he became stern with me and told me that if I didn't want to get picked on then I was to learn to stand up for myself. He told me to "Make them bleed and they would leave me alone". He was tired of me coming home crying and wanted me to learn to fight for what I wanted. He also told me that if I didn't like what the white man's rules were doing to our people then I was to go to their school and learn their ways so that I could change their systems.

To help me, as a small child, he took us kids to the local Ponderosa horse riding place to buy us a pony! As my siblings bounced around my dad, he looked at me hanging quietly in the background and asked, "If I buy this pony, will you learn to ride it and take care of it?" He asked my older siblings if they would teach me how to ride Nod and what he would need to survive as our pet pony. They agreed. I promised my dad that I would, and he bought him! That little pony had spirit. It threw my brother to the ground several times that day. My dad sat in the shade beside our house watching us kids take turns riding and petting the pony. Slowly, I got used to the pony.

As I look back on my childhood, it was filled with excitement and adventure. I began to forget why I was afraid in

this world. Nod and my dad opened that door for me. As I wandered further and further from home, my dad reminded me that I was not to return home crying because people were being mean to me or if I fell off my pony. He reminded me that it was my responsibility to protect myself and my pony and to get back up when knocked down. As I went from fear of life to a confident rider, my life also seemed to change. I became fearless of this life!

I grew into a strong warrior woman with a big heart for life. Come walk with me into the history I made for myself. Come explore 50 years of being nomadic and getting lost in the society Europeans created for us Indians in our own lands. As I look back in remembering my life's beginning, I realized that first pony my dad bought me and the advice he gave me was what helped me survive the world as I was to come to know it to be - Dangerous! Turning the page will unveil something no person but me will experience.

Geri Lou Gray-Shawnoo

A Good Day in A Good Way, Stories of a Survivor

Indian Day School

One time quite long ago, sixty-seven years to be exact, there was a class of students that came to the height of land overlooking the water that gave the Reservation its name of 'Kettle Point' - a location that residents simply called 'the Point.' It was a nice day, with a gentle breeze blowing in off the lake and the sun shining.

This class had traveled from the Indian Day School further inland from the lake, arriving in two cars - one a shiny late model, and the other one older and noisier. The children clamoured from the cars, with most boys immediately running for the edge where they picked up acorns from the oak trees growing there, and threw them out to the water.

The teacher, emerging from the newer car and straightening her dress, called to the boys, her voice sounding shrill above the gentle wind, "We didn't come here to play - you boys get back from that edge!" She walked towards the children, "Remember this is a science class – we're here to study these peculiar stones that you call 'kettles'. We'll have to get down to the water where most of them are, so be very careful..." Her voice was a warning.

One girl called back from the edge, "There's a pathway going down here, Miss Johnstone."

The teacher walked warily to the girl and looked down.
“Oh dear, that's very stoney...”

Another girl spoke, “It's ok, we'll guide you down.”

They took her hands and, with some leading and some behind, they walked carefully down the diagonal path to the water. Once there, she saw that some of the boys were already on the shore, throwing the flat stones called shale, trying to skip them over the water. The teacher saw that some had gone into the water with shoes on. Again her voice rose shrilly above the wind, “You boys are in trouble – I say again, we are still in class.” She made her way to a large kettle that lay partially embedded in the flat slate.

“Now before we continue with this morning's lesson, I will tell you the names of two very great explorers that you should know and remember. These brave men likely traveled these very waters – they were called 'Couriers des Bois', which means Runners of the Woods.”

A boy said, “If they were Runners of the Woods, how come they were out in the water?” Some children laughed, until they saw the teacher's face.

“Well Calvin,” she said, “to help you remember their names - which are Radisson and Groselliers - maybe you will stay after school and write them out one hundred times on the blackboard – would you like that?”

The boy looked down at his wet shoes, “No, Miss Johnstone,” he muttered.

The teacher continued, “...and maybe Calvin would like some help writing out what these great men accomplished in helping to make our country. That's what will happen if you don't pay attention and learn this lesson – is that clear?” She bounced her hand on the stone, “...IS THAT CLEAR?”

Some of the students answered - “Yes Miss Johnstone!”

The teacher continued, “Now, remember what we took in class this morning. Who can tell me what kind of stones these are?”

No one spoke.

“Remember...ign-n...”

One boy's eyes got big, he blurted, “Ig-ignerant!”

The teacher sighed, “No Matthew, the stones are not ignorant, but you will be if you don't listen and learn.

Now a girl spoke up, “The stones are igneous.”

“Very good - thank you Carol - now class, let's all say it together...ig-n-e-ous...”

Now she saw a girl that stood a little ways away from the group. “Isabelle, you are part of this class – come over here.” The girl did not move, except to put an acorn on top of a smaller kettle that she stood beside. The teacher spoke again, her voice harder, “Isabelle, we're waiting...”

The girl didn't move, but said, “My grandparents brought me here since I was little.”

A boy said, “Everybody knows your grandparents are witches.”

The teacher turned angrily to the boy, “Matthew, that's enough out of you!” then turned back to the girl, “Isabelle, are you going to do as you're told?”

Now the girl spoke again, “They said the stones are round because they hold our stories and our teachings.”

The teacher stared at the girl, and after a moment said, “So, tell us Isabelle, how is it possible to get these teachings you talk about into solid stone?” She bounced a fisted hand again on the kettle as her voice rose, “And I guess they must be much greater and more important than what I'm teaching if they can fit into solid rock!”

The girl was silent; her eyes filled with tears.

Now the teacher saw that someone was descending the diagonal path that she had come down awhile before. She saw that it was the driver of the other car that had brought the children – a man who was also the custodian at the school. As he reached the bottom, the teacher said, “We're almost finished here, Nathan - we don't need any help, thank you.”

The man did not speak, but came and stood beside the girl, putting a hand on her shoulder. “This is my girl,” he said, “she gets good teaching from my folks – her grandma an' grandpa.” He glanced down at the girl, “She's a good girl”, he said.

Then, as the teacher stood silently, first one, then another of the students came to stand beside the girl and man, until half of the students stood with them.

The wind and water whispered around them, the class that came to the place called 'The Point' on that summer day long ago.

Barry Milliken

Giizhik

“Thank you, Creator, for the beautiful little kitten you sent me. We have always been taught to be grateful especially if the gift you send is a living being who needs help.”

It had all started when this little kitten crawled onto my lap. I was sitting outside smoking my pipe when a heavy snow storm continued. I never expected this little kitten to hang on desperately as the snow continued to cover both of us. I think I tried to get him off, but he was determined not to leave me.

I ended up calling for my husband for help. He came outside to see what dilemma I was in. He looked at both of us and he couldn't stop laughing. After his great laughing episode he gently removed the little kitten and took him inside the house.

Both of us were relieved once the snow was off of him and we could see how cute he was. The little one's eyes won us over. They twinkled every time he looked at us. I bet our eyes did the same.

After the snow was off of him and his fur was dry, he proceeded to check out his new environment. With his quiet little meow, he certainly made it known he was satisfied with the new home he had found for himself. All he had to

do was ask the Creator and he was heard. The Creator listened to the dilemma the little one was in and he sent him to our house.

That little one is not the only one with a strong belief. We constantly thank the Creator for the wild and crazy little fellow. With his hopping and bouncing, he always gave us many chuckles.

Since he was pretty much still a feral kitten, he loved to climb the curtains. Not only that, he loved to step on the computer or mess up all of our work. We would look at each other and say, “Boy I certainly hope he grows up soon.”

Back then, we had a lot of wishes where he was concerned. One thing I know is I think I am too old now to go through a bouncing crazy feral cat. Yes he has calmed down a lot now, not 100% but quite a lot. He is at the point where we love him and would not think about giving him away.

He gets along quite well with our poor older cat. At least she tolerates him for which I have to give her credit. Especially when she is up in years and we drop this crazy little beast on her.

It cost a lot of money when the coyotes got a hold of him. It was amazing how he managed to get home, but he did. He showed his deep love for us when he managed to make it

back home. With a lot of medication and care, he managed to survive. After a year of massaging his foot, it was starting to heal. It will never be perfect, but he certainly finds things to get into. The vet and I both agree that he is not allowed to go back outside.

I only wish Bear could understand that he is too small to take on the coyotes. I actually think our boy believes he can take on a coyote. Silly little one. You are precious to us, and we don't want to lose you.

Debbie Milliken

I Remember

Chapter 1: Witnessed

I Remember...

The sparkle of dust
in streams of sunlight,
Reaching into my crib,
Drying my tears.

I Remember...

Squatting in the driveway,
to watch an ant, explore the edges of a puddle.
Turning my face toward the sky,
I wondered...
If I am watching him,
Who, is watching me?

I remember feeling seen.

Chapter 2: Held

I Remember...

Lying on bed of green,
In the softening glow of dusk.
The tender spring grass
cooling my bare arms & legs,
as my muscles twitched & my breath settled
in the echo of spinning cartwheels.

I Remember...

Sticky sap & prickly needles.
The smell of pine.
Secure in arms of branches,
soft winds nuzzled my face
& whispered my name.

I Remember...

Falling onto a blanket of white,
& melting in a cool embrace.
Blinking as a shower of kisses
Fell from the night sky.

I remember feeling held.

Chapter 3: Play

I Remember...

Drawing my fingers through
the smooth, warm, sand.
Forming patterns of waves & spirals.
Symbols, from my heart.
Clearing my canvas,
To begin again.

I Remember...

The rush of the wind against my body,
A steady hand guiding my way,
as I dropped from the sky.
Pumping my legs,

I sailed higher & higher,
until a sudden drop,
nudged free a bubble of laughter.

I Remember...

Releasing tiny bubbles of air,
While sinking to the sandy bottom of the lake.
My eyes open wide to capture,
the play of the Sun's rays,
as they danced through the water.

I remember sacred play.

Chapter 4: Love

I Remember...

Awake in the hush of darkness,
breathing in the scent of you.
Swaddled on my heart,
I nuzzle the top of your head.
Wondering...
Are you listening & can you hear it too?

I remember feeling love.

Dryer Sheets and Cigarettes

My grandmother was a beautiful soul and a proud indigenous woman. Her favourite animal was a turtle, and I knew this only because I remember small turtle figurines were scattered around her house. There are many things that my grandmother taught me, and as I am reminded about them, the first thing that comes to mind is how she taught me to respect people and all cultures and different backgrounds.

When I think back to being a child, I didn't really identify with being an indigenous person because my skin is too light, but I knew that my grandmother was. Her skin was darker than mine and she always had indigenous art and wore things like a fuzzy coat with caribou on it. She used to smoke and one of my favourite smells to this day is the mixture of dryer sheets and cigarette smoke from when she would hug me.

It was a time in my life when I didn't know a lot about the world. I was bullied a lot as a child from most of the other kids at my school, because I had crooked teeth. They used to tell me I looked like a rat. I never understood nor will I ever understand why people are cruel to each other over such trivial things. I didn't understand sexism, racism, or classism as a child. I didn't understand Greed. I didn't real-

ize people deny the truth as much as they do, in complete ignorance when it stares back at them.

My grandmother could relate to my feeling downtrodden and pushed around by my class mates in school, and that was how my grandmother first taught me about racism. She said one day when she was a young girl, while she was in class the boy behind her wouldn't stop repeating a racial slur. I wouldn't dare even repeat the word or put it on your conscience if you thought of what it might be, but it was very offensive to my grandmother and her culture. I don't remember if I ever heard my grandmother yell at me once in my life; although, I'm sure it happened. When it did it was never demeaning, over-critical or harsh. She kindly asked the boy behind her to stop, but he wouldn't. The teacher didn't do anything either because it was quiet enough he couldn't hear it. I can't imagine my kind-hearted grandmother as a feisty child getting up and punching the kid behind her in the face but that's exactly what she did. My grandmother ended up getting in trouble for punching the boy behind her.

I wish I had the guts to stand up to my bullies like that when I was in school, but I didn't. I wish I had the courage to stand up and fight the evils of the world. They say, "Evil prevails when good men do nothing", and as I got older, I found that to be true. What my grandmother taught me was that, everybody deserves to be treated with dignity and respect until they refuse to give it anyone else; and further-

more, to stand up against the ignorance bigotry and greed of the world. Surely this was a lesson to me about not being a bigot and how hurt my grandmother must have been to have had that happen to her.

“f” 

Three Things

My paternal grandmother taught me three things: sewing, baking and the legacy of family.

I wasn't able to spend a whole lot of time with my grandmother, Ethel. She lived on the other side of the city of London, Ontario and we only had one car and driver – Dad – who taught school all week. We managed to visit her on Sundays every couple of weeks or so. It didn't take me long to learn that when I had the opportunity to go to her house, she needed my full attention.

Gramma had a huge, white, wooden trunk full of family photographs that was kept in the back bedroom, at the bottom of the stairs to the attic bedroom where my Dad and his brothers grew up. It was my job to memorize who everyone was and how they were related because she believed that writing on the back of the image would destroy the photo. We spent several years committing to my memory the faces and relations of a dynasty of aunts, uncles, cousins and their marriages, etc. I learned more about any of them than my father ever knew, especially about his Aunt Francis, Gramma's younger sister. I often wondered how she could have known that I would be the one person in the family to become the "Keeper of the Tree"? Years later, my mother transcribed all of this information onto the computer and it became even larger than

we could have dreamed, having recorded approximately 10,000 relations between the two of us!

My grandmother was an accomplished seamstress who dressed herself and her family of six children very elegantly. Along with sewing, her fingers were adept at needlepoint, tatting, crochet and knitting. She taught me to make beautiful things by just looking at a picture and creating as close a copy of it as I possibly could. Learning in this way, I gathered valuable skills that gave me an inside edge on crafting and fashion design over the years. I still have a small box of paper quilt pattern pieces that she had cut from pieces of the daily news.

She loved to bake and made the world's best chocolate chip cookies.

Once baked, they found a home on the top shelf of the bread box on the kitchen counter, right next to the arrow-



Gramma R

root cookies that were a staple of her hospitality. I loved learning to measure out the ingredients for her recipes with her. We spent a good amount of our time together tasting our creations. Years later, I altered Gramma's chocolate chip cookie recipe slightly by halving the amount of butter and substituting margarine. My father took some to school in his lunch one day. The head of the bakery school department walked by the table where Dad was eating lunch and spied the cookies. "Are those chocolate chip?" he asked. "Of course!" Dad, ever one to brag, had to share one of his cookies. "These are the best I've ever tasted! I must have this recipe!" I have to tell you that very few people have this exact recipe.

Laureen Giulian

Chapter Two



The Journey Begins...

Our Vision is not only to encourage you to *Tell* your stories, but to be *Seen* and *Heard* by your readers with greater clarity and inner wisdom. We wanted to create a collaborative collection of short stories to be published in book form in which your stories could be included. This will build your confidence around writing.

Throughout the course of our time together, we will examine several aspects of our writing craft. We have already discussed the Who; Why; General Writing and Commitment skills. We will take a closer look at what elements make a good story and talk a bit about clearing old beliefs so that you *can* tell your story. Editing your work ensures that the reader will have a clear understanding of your message without being distracted by language, while retaining the uniqueness of your ‘voice’. We will be writing together, adding a new story with each chapter of this lesson plan, along with reviewing our work from a publisher’s perspective. Toward the end, we will consider various publishing options and resources.

There are many different ways to tell a story and you’ll need to discover which genre suits your writing style and subject matter.

1. Memoirs document true life events and the emotions that you experienced during those times.

2. Fiction is the telling of imaginary events, people, places and things. They can, however, be based in reality. Many people feel safe telling their stories *as if* they happened to a fictional character.
3. Non-fiction is used to explain the workings of programs or services, historical events and places of significant value and interest, etc.
4. Poetry can be used to serve many needs and can cover the subject of any genre. It is more the form that is unique and so, warrants a genre of its own.
5. Journals remain private for the most part and are not necessarily published until one has passed on from this world. However, if you are an avid journaler, you wish to create a unique style of journal for other people to follow. There are countless different journals being published today.
6. A Blog is a series of self-published short stories, poems, including some rants occasionally, which is posted on the internet at regular intervals on well-trafficked websites. These can include, but are not limited by, facebook, LinkedIn, E-Blog websites and personal webpages.
7. A Video Blog is similar, though differs from the written blog by the addition of a video presentation.
8. Screenplays and movies are written in a different format which would include scene direction and changes, narration and dialogue. It is a very detailed way of scripting that takes a great deal of attention to detail.

Writing your story requires that you make a commitment to yourself, other people (your children/grands and your readers) and not least - your story.

Remember to ask yourself, “Who Am I and why is my story important?” Be clear about who it is who will benefit from your story being written. When you write about it, be conscious about how you tell the story – is it relatable and/or relevant? Can it be used as a resource for others? The way in which you share your story should answer these questions for you.

Your Story Matters! You cannot begin to know how it will transform your life and the lives of other people who read it. This is your legacy! It doesn't need to be a classic, it just needs to be YOUR story.)

Remember to reivew the Elements of a good story often:

- When did it take place?
- Where did it take place?
- Who was there?
- What happened?

Please read the following story and see if you can identify all of these elements in the story.

The Shovel Hit the Ground
An Ode to Our Ancestral Soil – A Recipe for the Avid Gardener!

The shovel hit the ground. My foot resting on the top edge of the blade, I pushed. The spade bit into the ground, moderately moist and crumbling away from the intrusion. Earthworm crept up out of the crevice as I watched and waited.

Levering the handle so that the blade dug underneath a bit more horizontally, I tried to gauge how much would fall off the blade as I lifted, swung to the side and emptied the load onto the level ground on the other side of the line of concrete blocks edging the growing space.

Looking back at the fresh hole, I marvelled at the variations of colour and density of the soil throughout the depth of the hole: thick, dull grey bleached by sun on top; rich, black and porous just beneath – this band less than an inch in depth; re-gold sand beneath, sprinkled with dark and fibrous tree roots. Earth. Dirt. Soil.

I lifted the shovel by its handle and aimed it straight into the ground, a blade's width to the right of the first cut. With one swift and solid movement, forcing the blade six inches into the soil. Septing down on the blade, it cut a further two inches bringing it to the same depth as the initial hole.

Lever across beneath the surface. Left. Swing. Toss. Repeat.

The rhythm became intoxicating, as steady as my heartbeat. Keenly focused repetition ignited a trance-like state. Breathe. Heave. Lever. Heft. Twist. Fling. Breathe. It became a meditation, spanning eons of moments stretched over time.

In those moments, I was connected to every grain of soil, sand and strata that had ever been disturbed by a boot, scratched by a twig, etched by a rock chisel, split by a spade, blade or even larger earth movers. The soil relenting, willingly to displacement and relocation, the only objection coming as the spade met with something other than earth. Connected, in one moment, to every footfall upon this land knowing instinctively those who walked before me. Offering reverent thanks for their stewardship of the same.

Thud! A stubborn tree root sends a vibration through the handle of the tool, only gently pulling my attention from my meditation. Breathe. Clear earth away gently to expose the root. Ask tree to draw it's energy back from this branch of root. Ask forgiveness. Give thanks. Elevate arms. Drive shovel with great force to split the root. Stand shovel in ground nearby. Bend. Grasp. Pull. Displace dirt as root is exposed to air and eyes for several feet. Retrieve shovel and repeat to remove unconcealed root. Breathe. Wipe brow of labour's sweat.

I return to the place on the ground where the root was discovered, in order to continue my meditative exercise of digging a trench. Several shovels full later I hear a “chink” and discover the obstruction is a beautiful specimen of marbled quartz, pine feldspar and mica, its edges softened over a millennium of displacement through soil and water. This one is a remnant of Mom’s flower bed, edged with field stone gathered from all over the province. Memories rise and swirl.

Another “chink” reveals a deeply rusted bit of iron hinge, likely left in the old fire pit after burning pieces of the old bunky several years ago. Dad had built it so that any of his Scouts or students could camp out at our place here. On occasion, my sister and I would brave the night in the little wood cabin that held two Murphy bunks and a night light on the wall. Once the squirrels, chipmunks and spiders moved in, the bunky held only garden tools and cast-offs that couldn’t be chewed. More evidence of the temporary nature of our tenure on this planet.

I take a break to drink deeply of the icy cold water in my thermos. Open a long, clear plastic bag to withdraw dry roots and marvel at their finger-like construction, delicate and finely formed. Placing them down on the smooth top of a concrete block, I spy an empty pail. Move across the lawn, past the newly forming apples on the little tree, up the steps to the tap on the side of the house. Choose a spray

nozzle that fits the longest garden hose; pull back the quick disconnect and apply gentle pressure to make the connection. Turn on the water. Walk back down the steps, passed the tree, pulling the length of hose along with me through the garden gate to fill the pail with enough water to wet the roots without drowning the crowns. Slowly set the crowns upright in the pail so that they aren't shocked by the cool water.

Return to the meditative thrust, lift, swing, and toss of excavating.

At long last, after much digging, perspiration and replenishing of water in my body, an eleven foot long trench was ready. Shovel aside. Transport a pail full of composted manure. Distribute evenly through the deep furrow. Admire the consistency of aged poop. Goat poop retains its original form while horse dung becomes softer, losing its substance. Interesting.

Breathe deeper. Appreciate aroma of earth food. Offer gratitude for soil's sustenance.

Turn. Dip hand into water, retrieving now quenched roots. With care, I separate out just one crown and place it at one end of the long opening I'd made in the ground while spreading the roots out along the ditch. The crown sits tent-like. Choose another crown and place about one foot from the first. Repeat until six crowns are set.

Take up the spade again. Moving to the pile of earth removed from the furrow, dig in. Lift. Sift out fine roots. Move to sprinkle lightly over the crowns and roots of asparagus. Gently cover them with only a couple of inches of soil for now.

Rest. Hydrate. Repeat the process until seventeen crowns of asparagus have been planted.

Rest while sky offers rain to feed the young roots. Wait. Watch. See green tips breaking ground. Add another layer of soil every few days until the trench is almost level, leaving a bit of a hollow to hold future rains to feed the new shoots.

Drink deeply of the joy of gardening!

Laureen Giulian

Identifying the Elements of Your Story

Now that you have read *The Shovel Hit the Ground - An Ode to Our Ancestral Soil – A Recipe for the Avid Gardenerer*, can you identify all of the elements?

Subject of the event, experience or truth

Why is the story relevant or relatable?

When did it happen?

Where did it take place?

Who was there?

What happened?

Now that you are amply familiar with the elements of a good story, you will want to create a space in which it feels safe to reveal your thoughts and wisdom. What follows is a guided meditation designed to help you get grounded so that your story will flow naturally. It is recommended that you read the meditation first, or perhaps record yourself reading it out loud, so that you can listen with intention.

***Exercise to Create Space for Writing:
A Guided Meditation***
(takes about 10 minutes)

Get comfortable in your chair, while sitting up straight with feet flat on the floor. Take a deep breath in through your nose and hold it gently in your lungs. Exhale through your mouth, as if you are blowing out a candle. Repeat this breath twice more, making each one a bit deeper and holding it a bit longer. On your exhale, notice how your body feels as you take a normal breath. Just relaxing in your skin. Your shoulders lower, release the tension in your jaw and your chest.

Invite Mother Earth, Turtle Island, to come and be present with you now. Take a breath and feel her reaching up from the centre of her core, sending love and support up through the souls of your feet.

Imagine the energy moving up through your calves, into your hips, up into your belly and your heart. Allow her energy to sit there in your heart for a moment, swirling gently around mixing with your own body's energy. Then allow her energy to be released back down through your abdomen, your hips, down your calves and through the souls of your feet. Thank Mother Earth, Gaia, Turtle Island for nurturing and supporting you through your physical experience on this planet. Offer your gratitude for her love. Breathing in; breathing out.

Invite the element of Water to come and be present with you. Your body is a vessel or container for Water. Ask

water to make you aware of its presence throughout your entire body – much like the water filling up a bath tub. Feel the water lapping against the inside of your vessel, clearing up all of the dirt and debris that is no longer needed by you. Allow all of the old notions, beliefs and programs that no longer support your optimal expression of yourself to be disbursed into Water. Pretend that there is a plug at the very top of your head. Ask Mother Earth to take the energy of Water out through your feet, to be transmuted and transformed for the highest good of Creation. Pull out the plug at the top of your head, allowing water to drain through the bottom of your feet into Mother Earth. Give thanks to Water for clearing and cleansing all that no longer serves you. Chi Miigwetch Water. Breathing in; breathing out.

Bringing your attention to your heart space, imagine a tiny spark of firelight. It may be simply a glimmer of light or it may be a candle flame or a bonfire. Taking another breath, see the light grow with your breath. Release your breath and notice that the light dims a bit. Taking another deeper breath, watch the flame grow to fill all four chambers of your heart without harming your body. And release it. Inhaling even deeper, watch the flame grow to fill up your heart and all of the chest space around it. Exhale. How bright and how much space can your light fill? Take a deep breath and imagine your flame growing beyond your physical body to fill the entire room. Releasing your breath gently, offer gratitude to Fire for impregnating you with its passion and transmuting your energies to serve your highest good. Breathing in; breathing out.

Placing your hands on your belly, invite Air to come and be present with you now. Breathing deeply, feel the breath extend your tummy outward. Release it through your lips gently. Taking Air in to your belly again, feel it overflow up into your lungs and hold it there. Allow for the exchange of oxygen and carbon dioxide to occur. Then blow your breath out through your lips very slowly. On the third breath, our deepest breath yet, fill your belly and lungs and all the way up to your head – to feed all the grey matter there. Holding the breath here. Feel your body begin to tingle as the oxygen reaches out to each and every cellular structure in your physical form. Release the breathe ever so slowly, though your lips, like the kiss of a breeze on a feather. Offer thanks and gratitude to Air for feeding you with the Breath of Life. Breathing in naturally; breathing out.

Allow yourself to bring your awareness to the top of your head. Moving your awareness high above your body to the Great Spirit/God/Creator or whatever name you call the force of Creation. Let's invite Divine Spirit to come and be present with us now. On your next breath in, draw the light of Spirit down through the crown of your head, into your body, travelling down through your spinal cord and lighting up your body with Divine White Light radiating all around you. See it completely filling your body from head to toe. When you exhale, extend some of that light down through the souls of your feet to nourish Mother Earth, Turtle Island. Breathing in, feel the Mother's energy coming back up into your body with gratitude, rising up

through your legs, into your belly and up to your heart where the two energies blend together to support you in all you endeavour to do. Thank Spirit for filling us with Divine Love. Offer your gratitude to Spirit for connecting with us, now and always. Breathing in; breathing out.

Bringing your awareness back into your physical body, feeling the chair beneath you. Breathing normally; exhale and wiggle your fingers and toes. Wiggle your nose and gently open your eyes. Stretch and give yourself a gentle hug. Press your hands around your face and head. You may want to tap your fingers on the top of your head, closing the energy portal there and grounding yourself into your physicality.

Writing Prompts to Get You Started:

- I remember when...
- Once upon a time...
- My Mother once told me...
- I was told a story about my (ancestor)...
- When I was a child...
- It all started when...

Using the space provided on the following pages, write a short story or poem after choosing from one of the writing prompts listed above.

Follow Up:

Expand your writing prompt into a short story and expand your memoir story to 3 typed pages, double-spaced (or 5 pages hand written 2x spaced)

Building Confidence:

“My stories have the power to inspire and transform, and I confidently share them with the world” (Organic Growth Marketing - Shawna Lee Van Mourik, www.shawnalee.com)

Elementals

Imbuing Earth Energy

Sensing power beneath my feet
Moving towards me from deep below,
Passing with ease, through barriers of form.
Unrestrained & unstoppable.
Traveling up my legs, into my body,
filling my cells with a sweet sense of calm.
Tethering me into myself.
Connected. Rooted.
Strong & Secure.
I am Home.

Witnessing Water

Aware of her presence,
flowing in every corner of my Being.
Moving, dancing, in a nurturing exchange.
Pooling. Waiting. Held & Contained
Clearing. Cleansing. Releasing. Set free
Reminding me to honour
the rhythm of her Dance.

Reciprocity of Air

Receiving.

Cool air passing through my nose

Warming, in my throat.

Dropping down to fill my belly,
before expanding up into my lungs.

Stretching the borders of my cage,
nudging the tension that keeps me contained.

Receiving. Softening.

Gratitude growing in my cells.

Releasing. Offering.

How odd that my waste is nourishment for another?

Until death do us part, we are bound
in this Dance of reciprocity.

Even unintended or unaware,

I breathe You,

as You breathe Me.

Building Fire

Cupping my hands

I shelter a tiny flame.

Patiently tending,

I place each twig.

And wait.

With gentle breath,

I watch the alchemy begin.

Sensing Spirit

Expanding.
Beyond the borders
of my control.
Reaching out,
Reaching in.
With kindness & tender care,
patient & pure,
unrestrained or contained,
I am flowing free,
Embracing ALL that IS,
Divine & whole.
Nurturing Grace,
I AM
Unfolding...

Lisa M Huffman

~ *Earth – Water – Fire – Air – Spirit* ~

As Laureen tried to guide us to a spot within ourselves for this exercise, I could not connect to the image she portrayed. Instead, as I reached for the elements she spoke of, I was connecting with my own image of body, mind, and soul to become one with the group and the universe. I felt guarded, yet safe. My mind drifted and I became weightless. It took me back to when I was 16 and left in the company of 2 human junkyard dogs! There was only 1 road in and out of the Florida swamp with no streetlights to guide me out if I was able to climb over the 12-foot barb wire fence around the compound.

I have often wondered where my life is going....and why I survived this long. When I entered my teen years, I never thought I would live to see 30 or even 50. This month in 2025, I turned 62 years old. As a rebel teen - it seemed that I was always in dangerous, undesirable situations with questionable people around me. When I turned 16, I was in a situation where I could have died numerous times! During one of those situations, I knew there was a very good chance that I would not survive the night, and I acknowledge that I really did not want to die – so I prayed to the one who created me – The Great Spirit in the sky! With all my being I took my heart in my hands and held it up high in an offering to the Great Spirit; I prayed for life and accepted death if I was to die that night – I prayed for death to be swift and painless - if it was to be at all. I prayed to

the Great Spirit and promised that if I was allowed to live, I would try my hardest to accomplish why I was put on this earth and to complete what was needed for a Good Life – I promised to bring good to everything and everyone around me!

I tried to become one with the universe as I strolled through the darkness of night. It was so dark that I could not see my own hands held in front of my face. I felt light in my steps, as if I was floating. I could hear the danger all around me - thrashing and growling every time I began to doubt myself. I could not allow fear, excitement or even hope into my thoughts as any emotion seemed to trip my feet as I seemed to float above the danger surrounding me in the darkness. To survive that night, I had to willingly accept death and trust that if I was meant for something more in this existence then my Creator would help me find the path to survive.

~ With a song in my heart – I held it high – Giving thanks for being created ~

That night, when I was 16, I prayed so very hard for my own life to continue and for life of humanity to exist for all. As I glimpsed dawn on the horizon I felt as if I was walking into a new phase of life, coming out of the darkness. This month, as I turned 62, I look back on some of the events in the past and it has been an amazing life indeed. I have met so many people in this journey as I was very nomadic in trying to stay connected to my ancestors. I gave my life to creation in thanks for my existence. In my future

book, *A Good Day in a Good Way; Stories of a Survivor*, I will add chapters to offer insights, explore the meanings of dreams I've had, "voices" I've heard while praying in search of answers, and my thoughts of where society(s) are heading in the next 50 – 100 years. Today, in 2025, I think back on my life and am so thankful to be allowed to continue my existence in this world today.

Try to find the good in every day. Each morning you should give thanks to your creator for the ability to open your eyes and live another day. Correct the mistakes you have made. Live and let live. Look for something positive in today for you might remember the good 'ol days. Remember that sometimes when it rains – It pours but no 2 days are the same. Forgive yourself when you are weak and focus on being stronger; a mistake is a lesson to be learned. Learn from those lessons. Everything happens for a reason. Become a good, productive person in "your" society(s). Life is what you make of it and life can be short if you don't take care. Live it well.

Gerri Lou Gray-Shawnoo

A Good Day in A Good Way, Stories of a Survivor

Creators Gifts

We have been so fortunate for all the beautiful and sacred gifts we have been given from the Creator. We have been taught to show respect and protect our water.

Our water seems to be not only essential to life but also incredibly useful. We drink it and cook with it. We bathe in it and play in it. In winter, we find people skating on it. There are so many fun things to do once the water has frozen.

Water regulates earths temperature, provides a habitat for the food we eat and we find it essential.

We thank the creator for the gift of life, for air, food and water. We are also given the beautiful gift of family. The act of breathing represents the divine gift of life and the intimate connection between the creator and his creation. Air sustains our physical bodies.

If you take gifts together [Sweetgrass, Cedar, Birchbark, Stones, herbs], you might leave tobacco in the ground to honour the gift you are taking, returning energy and prayer to our Mother the Earth. We also thank the Creator.

Debbie Milliken

Grandmother Cedar

Once there was a great cedar tree that grew on the bank of a flowing river. So big and so tall was this great cedar that all of the birds and animals, even the fish in the river all called her *Nokomis*, or Grandmother. But though she was so tall and so strong, she was also very lonely. *Gizhe Manido*, the Great Spirit, felt her loneliness and asked *Zhawnoodin*, the South Wind, to help.

Zhawnoodin picked up a tiny seed and carried it, carried it and put it down right near Grandmother Cedar. That little seed took root in the ground and started to grow. Grandmother Cedar looked down at that little tree and, oh, she was so happy that she called him *Noshenh*, her grandson.

Now, when he was small, he had fresh, tender branches – and we know how the deer love to eat those tender branches. But when the deer came close to her grandson, Grandmother Cedar put out her strong branches and shoed them away – and that little tree grew some more.

And sometimes in the spring, *Noodin* the wind could get very strong. Sometimes, *Noodin* would get so strong that that little tree would be almost blowing over. When that happened Grandmother Cedar put out her thick branches and gave her grandson shelter from *Noodin*, the wind - and that little tree grew some more.

And sometimes in the summer, *Giizis* the sun would get so strong that that little tree would be almost ready to catch fire, that's how he felt. But when that happened, Grandmother Cedar put out her long, thick branches and gave her grandson shelter from *Giizis*, the sun - and that little tree grew some more.

Well now, that little tree had grown so much that he was almost half the size of his grandmother. Sometimes, there by the river, she would tell him stories about the world around them – *Noshenh* loved that most of all.

But then one day after she had finished a story, she saw that her grandson was looking kind of thoughtful and sad.

After a moment he said, “*Nokomis*, I wish I could be like *Ziibi*, the river, he's always going somewhere - or *bineshiinh*, the bird, who has the whole sky to fly around in. All we ever do is stand here. What good are we, just standing here like this?”

Grandmother Cedar looked at her grandson for quite a while before she spoke.

“We're very important standing here, *Noshenh*”, she said. “Oh, maybe it would be nice to swim like *Giigoonh*, the fish, or run around like *Waaboozonh*, the rabbit, or fly like *Bineshiinh*, the bird – but then we wouldn't be doing our job, would we?”

Nokomis could see that her grandson wasn't sure what she meant, so she continued.

“We're in this place doing exactly what we're supposed to be doing, and that is to stand here by the river with our roots in the ground so that *Aki*, the earth, doesn't wash into the water when it rains – that wouldn't be good for the river or for all the ones who live there.”

She saw that her grandson was listening carefully to her words. “Our branches are full of green foliage that helps to clean the air - everyone around us needs clean air to breathe and to live. So you see, *Noshenh*, we're helping to keep everyone alive - that's why we're standing here. We may be just one part of everything that's here around us, *Noshenh*, but we're just as important as every other part – we all need each other to live and be healthy.”

Now *Nooshenh* looked at the water again and saw the fish and the little crabs that were there. Then he looked around and saw his friends, the animals, who were always close by. He looked up and saw the birds, who came and made their homes in his branches and sang to him. Then, as he looked up he saw his grandmother looking down and smiling at him.

Well, many more years went by and that young tree grew to be a great, mighty cedar, even bigger than his grandmother.

Now his top seemed to be almost touching the clouds, and when he looked across the fields and meadows, he could see the mountains far in the distance.

But now, when he looked at his grandmother he saw that she wasn't doing so well – she had lost some of her branches, and sometimes he heard her sighing in the wind.

Then one day, she said, “Oh *Nooshenh*, I'm getting old - I don't feel I'm good for anything anymore”.

He looked at his grandmother for a long time before he spoke, then he said – “*Nokomis*, do you remember when I was small and you protected me in the spring from *Noodin* the wind so I wouldn't blow away - then in the hot summer, you protected me from *Giizis* the sun so I wouldn't burn up. And do you remember when I was sad because we couldn't go anywhere or do anything like the animals, or the fish, or the birds could? You helped me see that we were just as much a part of everything, and just as important as everything else.”

Nooshenh saw that his grandmother was remembering and smiling just a little, and he continued, “Through all those years, *Nokomis*, you took care of me in every way that you could. Now I can take care of you.”

Barry Milliken

Star Dust



No taste, no smell, no sound, no touch...just Star Dust.

A beautiful, weightless, luminous speckle of timeless matter slowly distances itself from an interstellar cloud it once called home. Navigating its way through the celestial spaces, being guided to a destination it already knows, yet having to learn how to grow. No recollection of how its journey began, freely descends onto a most captivating land.

At the base of an extraordinarily large, incandescent tree, its roots transform into my feet. I observe the subtle, evolutionary transition of each molecule, harmonizing with rare

earth minerals, to form a physical being in which our luminous light will be sheltered.

Taste, smell, sight, sound, and touch - I am now more than just Star Dust. Awakening to these senses, I explore the land I will now call home: Maamaa Aki. She speaks a language only the luminous light within us can understand. Her vibrations resonate deeply, and I subconsciously absorb the effects of her elements-earth, wind, fire, and water. She provides all that is needed for her creations to thrive.

The two-legged, the four-legged, the water creatures, and the winged beings glide gracefully through the indigo hues of the setting sun. Each carries a role and responsibility to sustain the cycle of life. The Sun, as I have come to know as my grandfather (Nimishomis giizis) gives me his strength as he rises over the horizon each morning,

My first breath of air feels heavy, but with gratitude, it becomes natural. Breathing deeply, I feel the Earth beneath my feet, grounding me. The weightlessness of my former existence becomes a gravitational pull into a collective frequency-matter formed with purpose.

In this transformation, I discover my role as Anishinaabe Kwe. I am led to Nibi (water), recognizing it as our life source. I vow to protect its purity, embodying strength and

bravery to stand against anything that threatens the greater good.

Maamaa Aki, Mother Earth, holds water within her, nourishing all of creation. Her rivers are her veins, sustaining her strength in every way. As the skies darken, I meet my grandmother, the Moon, Nookomis Giizis. I give thanks to her for Nibi, water, the first life source she gifted us. She guides us through cycles-seasons, growth, and tides.

Water is Life!

Through these teachings I embrace the responsibility of sustainability. I become Nimaamaa Aki's hands, helping to maintain her ecological balance. I cultivate her fruits and marvel at the beauty she shares, fulfilling the needs of all her caretakers.

The luminous light I now see resides not only in me but in all things. An internal fire, ishkode, connects everything infinitely, illuminating Love, Respect, Courage, Truth, Honesty, Humility, and Wisdom. These are the Seven Grandfather Teachings, guiding Ninjichaag-my spirit-through growth. And when my time comes and my journey is done, I will know my way home.

The love within us emanates from the heart-Ode'. The strawberry, Ode'immin was the first fruit Nimaamaa Aki bore. Resembling the same shape as our heart, this was her

sign for us to do all things with love. This is the purest of energies that unites all of creation, igniting the eternal fire in her being. With this love, she endures and thrives, no matter the challenges she faces. Anishinaabemowin.

Pronunciation:

Nimaamaa Aki- (NI-maa-maa Ah-kee) – My Mother Earth

Nimishomis Giizis – (NI-mish-o-miss Gee-zis) – My Grandfather Sun

Kwe- (Kway) – Woman

Nookomis Giizis- (NO-co-miss Gee-zis) -Grandmother Moon

Ishkode- (ISH-ko-day) – Fire

Ninjiichaag- (NIN-ji-chug) – My Spirit

Ode'imin – (O-day-min) – Strawberry

Anastasia O'Shawanoo

Image Credit: Anastasia O'Shawanoo

I Made It

I finally made it to a place where love blossomed.
I wonder how you've been sometimes,
like roses in the rain.
early fall when you opened up to grasp the sun,
but you were met with clouds.
As the leaves turned colours your petals wilted,
and we were estranged.

I know you've done some pruning
to the strings that pull your heart,
but you've grown strong and tall with stride.
You are older now and proud.
Each year you surpass the beauty of the last.
I'm excited to see how you've grown,
and I've worked tirelessly through the winters of your heart

Your beautiful brown eyes that sparkle
will flicker across mine
in the light of the candles at dinner.
When we part again for the night,
there's no need to fear the turning of the leaves,
and the chill in the air.

I made it.

“f” 

Sensory Elements

Musky smell of rotting leaves
Decaying plant matter
Damp, warm, loving Earth.
Strong under my feet. Supporting me, lifting me
On dunes of sand.
Energy caressing me.
Tickling my feet and calves
Rising with determination
Filling my heart with compassion.
Exchange of love.
Gratitude.
'Glug'
Water replaces Earth's loving arms.
Fills me up.
Makes my tummy seasick.
Picks up sludge and
Emotional debris from within
Releasing a torrent of trauma tears
For all time.
Firelight warms, revives
Dries my tears.
Fills me with a wonderful glow
Rich and rewarding.
Passion.
Breath swells.
Feeds me.
Cells vibrate. Come alive.

Light breaks above me.
Reaches down through, in and around me.
Joy bursts from the Light
Consuming me...
Delightful sharing with Mother.
Abandoning my Being into Light.

Laureen Giulian

Chapter Three



The Journey Continues...

It's always a good idea to move energy in, through and around you before beginning a session of intentional writing. Here is a little exercise to Shake out the Writers Block.

Take 3 deep breaths and then pretend that you are gathering energy up from Mother Earth with your arms; pull it up over your legs and through your body – all the way up to your head and sigh it out. On the next upward sweep; pull the energy into your stomach and lungs and sigh more loudly while shaking the energy out of your body gently, through your shoulders, arms and hands. The last time we reach to fill up with Earth's energy, we're going to release it much more loudly and with a full-body shake (or as safely as you are able). Go ahead and shake those shoulders, your head, your arms, your legs and feet. We want to move as much stale energy out of our bodies so that we can have more increased focus.

My hope is that you actually participated in moving the energy, rather than just reading the words. Your active participation will facilitate your becoming a great writer.

Now, let's review the elements of a good story once more. Do the stories you're writing along with us (and in your own time) answer these questions?

When did it take place?

Where did it take place?

Who was there?

What happened?

To help you build your story into a book worthy of accolades, many story-telling tools can be used to fuel your mind and tease the story from you. The key is to choose items that engage your senses and relate to your story.

- Photo Prompts
- Tactile Aids (fruit, plants, creatures, etc.)
- Old letters & postcards

A tactile experience can provoke beautiful prose such as the one on the following page. This demonstrates really tactile, experience-based writing.

Ceremonial Cacao

Ingredients:

1 ounce -100% pure ceremonial cacao powder

4 to 5 ounces hot water

1 tsp cinnamon

1/4 – 1/2 tsp cayenne pepper

1 – 2 tsp pure maple syrup

1 tsp vanilla

1 tsp lion's mane powder (optional)

Mix ingredients together in a small saucepan to warm and then place it in your favourite cup or mug and drink with intention.

Note: Cacao is an adaptogen and therefore, aids in supporting the body, mind and soul while developing new habits and practices.

I said a little prayer before tasting my first cup of cacao. “I am grateful for the energy of this cacao. May it open my heart to the energy of ascension and guide my journey.”

I took the first sip and felt a blush wash over me, right down to my toes. Intention is key! The next sip brought the same loving energy over me like a blanket, skimming over the top of my head and around me while simultaneously pouring through my crown to fill me up. I savour its rich texture on my tongue and the roof of my mouth – just a tiny

bit granular and buttery at the same time. It coats my throat and into my stomach from where it begins to radiate through my lower body. My head tingles and I become more sensitive to the energies of my environment.

This is not for the faint of heart! My belly feels immediately full and swells to receive even more the blessings held within this cup.

Medicine for our Body, Mind and Soul; a Healing balm to soothe and stir; an awakening of needs from ancient times.

Coming to know Cacao in ceremonial ways is intentionally spiritual, mentally stimulating and brings sacred medicine to Body while undergoing directional change.

And So It Is. I Am Cacao.

Laureen Giulian

Tools for Writing Longer Stories and Books:

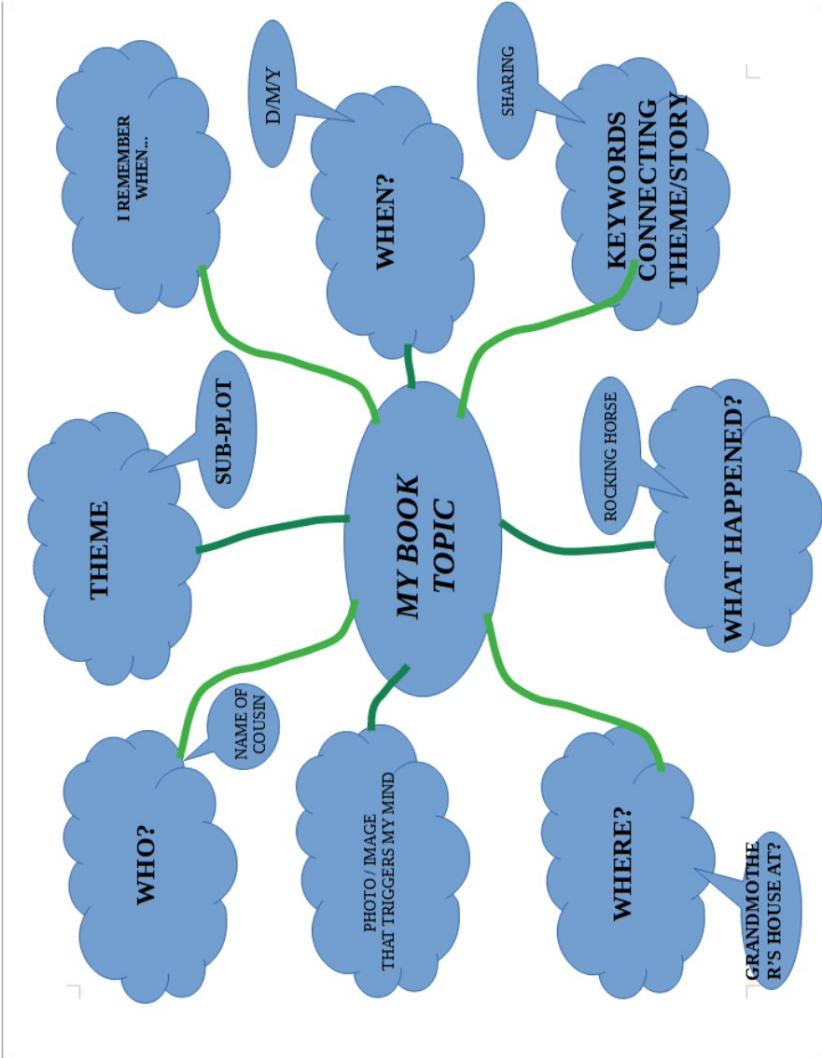
To move your story from an idea to completed book, Vision Boards or Mood Boards provide inspiration, focus and motivation.

I suggest that you collect magazine pictures, computer generated images, and interesting photos. These will inspire you to brainstorm; represent the goal of your project or Plot; move you through a process of creativity; develop characters; and/or create a compelling ending.

You can use web-based images; photos; drawings; motivational phrases as long as those images that you choose to use in your published work are copyright-free. Software such as: Canva or MindMap can be used to help generate a pictograph of your story plot for free. A printed copy of your board can be embellished easily, making it more interesting and motivating. All you need are your imagination, some paper, Foam-core or Bristol board; scissors; pencil and markers; Post-it Notes; glue and glitter; ribbons, sequins, stickers, etc. for embellishing.

While you are in that creative space, ask yourself how each image/word/thought contributes to the message of your story. If it does not contribute in a meaningful way to your message, then it doesn't belong on your board or in your story.

The following is a simple Mindmap story board sample:



About Editing

Format and story structure vary depending upon whether you write poetry, novel, memoir, blog, movie, etc. Spelling doesn't matter as much *until* you get the story written. I recommend working with professional editors and/or proof-readers to ensure that spelling errors don't detract from the message of your story. With regard to sentence structure, your editor needs to be able to read what you've written. Remember to indicate when you would 'pause' during your own narration of your story with the correct punctuation.

All of this is not to say that your 'voice' doesn't matter – indeed, it does! Discuss with your editor, the way you speak and those phrases or languages that influence it. It is important, as we've said earlier in this book, that your voice be celebrated for its unique manner of story-telling.

Editing prices will vary but are generally based on the word count of your completed manuscript.

Writing Prompts:

During our five-week *Journey to Write Your Story* program, the group used images from the *Elemental Forces of Creation Oracle Deck*, by Lisa Michaels and adopted by Kacie Aileen Knight and Nicole Rose, to gain inspiration from the phrase and /or image as a writing prompt. An alternative was to examine what our name means to us.

I would like to encourage you to take 10 minutes right now, to explore what arises for you from:

- A random image of your choice
- A sensory experience you had
- Re-tell a story that you were told as a child
- What life lesson would you like to share with someone?

Set a timer and just write what comes to your mind. When you've finished, find a friend with whom to share what has been written.

Our *Journey* participants really rose to the occasion when given this week's writing prompts. Our voices continued to grow in strength and clarity which showed up in what was written that day.

Writing Prompt: Each participant drew a card from *Seeds from the Sacred Feminine – A 52 Card Wisdom Deck with Handbook* by Andrea Menard & Illustrations by Leah Dorian. If you're interested in using this colourful oracle deck for inspiration, you can find them here:

<https://andreamenard.com/cards>

Feel free to use the following pages to write what comes to your mind from an image of your choice. Then come back and read what our program participants wrote in response to the prompt.

Please Assist Each Other

Please dispose of unwanted articles. They are not the most exciting pieces of art we can decorate our homes with. In fact, most of it really deserves to be hidden in a green garbage bag. We have spent so much time asking for help. Both of us realized it's time to speak out.

One of the things I am concerned about is the amount of garbage thrown on the ground. I see it on grass, on the lawns and along the ditches. It certainly is a sign of not caring for our surroundings. If we all take the time to pick up some of the garbage it would take far less time for everyone - that way, there is a lot less you have to pick up.

My husband is a person who will pick it all up. It would be finished in no time. Who is constantly picking up other people's garbage?

Due to medical problems, I am unable to help him physically. But my thoughts and heart go out to him when I see him dragging garbage home. I think we have a chance of cleaning up our rez with the kids. They seem to take more interest in keeping our home cleaner.

Hopefully our young ones can teach the older ones how to dispose of garbage. Thank you for taking the time in reading this and I hope you will take the time to put the unwanted items where they belong.

Debbie Milliken

Smile at a Stranger – What My Name Means to Me

A simple smile can change a person's day. It can bring the grumpiest person joy – That joy usually lasts longer than a moment if you let it. Smiles can last for as long as you want them. It can re-appear in your mind if you let it. Some smiles are genuine with good intentions attached. Other times, smiles are hiding dark and hidden thoughts of an individual. I have learned not to trust everyone who smiles. I watch their demeanor and the conduct of those around them. I ask myself - what is acceptable behavior for this person and the group of people associated with them? Above all, I look in their eyes... The eyes don't lie – unless they are dead (so to speak).

It is said that the soul of a human can be seen through their eyes. I like the eyes that shine; it's an indication that they have some good thoughts in the life they choose to live. My life's choices, as an "Indian" woman, took me in a direction of danger. I often think I was looking for death and danger. Doing this has led me to look into some dark, soulless eyes! Dark, lifeless eyes.... the kind that makes your hair stand on end; The eyes of a Serial killer...or 2! As I reflect, I think I would need both hands to count how many killers I've met in my life.

I have met so many people in my journey. These people I met came from various interactions; Some strange encounters indeed.... Some encounters were more spiritual than physical - some both! As I reflect on my life's walk, I wonder if my being was put in a situation to affect the other individual's thought. Throughout my future book, *A Good Day in a Good Way; Stories of a Survivor*, I will go more in-depth into discussing the chance encounters I have had in my life's walk. My name's sake *and* title of my future book will elaborate these points as chapters in my life and explain their profound meanings.

As I travelled in my life's journey, I have encountered some of the grumpiest, dangerous, people in life but with a smile, I can change their attitude – at least for the time that I am with them and my spirit name may have kept me alive to write my book, *A Good Day in a Good Way; Stories of a Survivor*. This book will stay true to my namesake and who I am. I will tell no lies. I think it is through my spirit being that I survived this nomadic life; being true to who I am with all my heart and soul. It may take an effort at times, but it is better to make that effort than to scowl at the day. Everything happens for a reason, and you never know what your future holds if you are given another day to live.

As I look back on my life, I think I must have been insane to be in some of the situations I was in and how lucky I am to be alive today. I have encountered some of the darkest people like serial killers, murderers, pedophiles, traffickers, people who will sell you to get what they want, as well as people who are just vicious and judgmental in spirit and ac-

tions. For instance, as I waited at a bus stop, I came across a man all dressed in black with long black hair and wearing a heavy upside down cross around his neck and trying to look mean with a scowl on his face. Twice the size of me. He looked a bit intimidating, so I conversed with him and made him laugh.

Gerri Lou Gray-Shawnoo

Play Your Drum

“Play your drum,” I hear in the universal distance as my spirit slowly makes its way back to my body from the dreamworld. Fully reconnecting to face another day in this physical realm, I open my eyes and become aware of all my body parts, wiggling my toes, stretching my legs and back, reaching my arms and fingers as high as I can reach them, then taking them to detangle my long brown hair as I embrace gratitude for this beautiful vessel.

As I complete the transition into full consciousness, the distant voice repeats in my thoughts, “Play your drum!” I had so many questions running through my mind. Like, where was this voice coming from? Why is it telling me to play my drum? What am I supposed to play on my drum? Who am I to play my drum for? With no immediate answers, thinking I would only have to wait to go to sleep and journey back to the dreamworld to solve this mystery.

“This is going to be a long wait,” I thought to myself.

I stand up and walk over to the bathroom to wash my face and brush my teeth. Looking at my reflection in the mirror, I wonder how I can get answers to all my questions today without having to wait to go back to the dreamworld. I walk over to my dresser and pull out a soft, cotton, long sleeve shirt and a beautiful, long, ribbon skirt. The fabric looks like the Northern lights, reminding me of all my ancestors before me and how they light up our skies with iri-

descent colours as they dance so majestically. Couldn't help to wonder - could it have been my ancestors telling me to play my drum?

Looking out the window, I notice the night is slowly fading away and the horizon is filled with a beautiful orange and yellow haze. Then, appears the first ray of light from Mishomis giizis (grandfather sun). I hear his voice echo across the lands, "I am giving you a new start with all of creation, it is time to greet the new day." Grabbing my drum and drumstick, I walk to the front door and grasp my door handle to open it. Stepping out on the fresh green grass, I feel a universal connection from the soil on the soles of my bare feet, embracing all the elements and energy giving life unto my being. I gaze over at the weeping willow tree, admiring its long hanging branches with small delicate leaves.

Reminiscing all the times spent sitting in its branches as a child, feeling the comfort only a mother could give. I inhale through my nose, then exhale through my mouth with a big "ahhhh" saying, "Chi-miigwetch mitig" (Big thank you, tree). Imagining the roots of every tree connected and communicating with each other, gifting each part of creation the first breath of the day. With my face soaking in the warmth of the sun I give thanks for mino-bimaadziwin (the good life) and everything provided to live in such a way.

I scan the area to find a nice spot to sit with my drum and watch mishomis rise into the blue skies. Slowly bringing my awareness to his reflection glistening off the still calm

waters on the lake below, I begin to admire the tall white birch trees lining the shoreland.

Circling where the land meets the water, they display a mirrored image. An elder once told me, “You will know where the cleanest waters are...by where the birch trees grow.” As I gaze at this perfect picture, I cannot help to notice the similarities of the trees reflecting in the water and compare it to the physical and spiritual realms.

Taking in the beauty of my surroundings, I feel gifted to be able to witness all of creation coming alive. A smooth, calm, breeze gently whisps through the lake creating a ripple affect towards the shore.

Two large dragonflies come whizzing towards me and hover in front of my face, trying to communicate. I then remembered my aunty once telling me that dragonflies represent healing and transformation. Could this be the first answer to one of my questions, why was the voice telling me to play my drum?

Suddenly, a beautiful Monarch butterfly landed on the rim of my drum! “Ohhhh I get it!” I said loudly with excitement. The dragonflies and the butterfly came to remind me of the teachings I had already been taught, “My healing journey is part of the transformation in discovering my true identity!” Having given recognition to the lesson, the butterfly lifted up on gilded wings.

Getting comfortable as I kneel, and I sit on a slant with my feet slightly to the side, I look at my drum and try to keep

the memory of the voice from the dreamworld alive. Closing my eyes, as I face the east, knowing this is where life first begins, I sound my drum to each of the four directions. Boom, boom, boom, boom.

Acknowledging the infinite circle of life, I'm transported back to the first sound I ever knew: my mother's heartbeat. I imagine myself as a baby, cradled in the purest waters in her womb, safe and nurtured by the one who would guide me through the stages of life. She taught me the ways of an Anishinaabe Kwe, showing me how to walk in harmony with Maamaa Aki (Mother Earth).

Replicating the double-heartbeat rhythm, I begin to sing. An overwhelming flood of emotions overtakes me, and my voice carries a melody only nijichaag (my spirit) knows. Racing thoughts fill my mind-thoughts of humanity, and the centuries spent fighting not only each other but themselves, to conquer the divide for the infinite love of peace.

The vision of the medicine wheel comes to me, it's four colors - yellow, red, black, and white, symbolizing interconnectedness: my relationship with myself, others, the spiritual world, and nature. I reflect on the lessons from my journey so far, realizing that to pursue my purpose, I must first align my mind, body and spirit. "Healing my mind so my body thrives, and my spirit fulfills it's calling," I say aloud.

"That's it!" I shout. "That's my purpose!"

It was Gitchi Manidoo (Great Spirit) guiding me all along, telling me to play my drum, to sound my voice across creation, and to share the Anishinaabe way of life for the healing of Maamaa Aki.

As this discovery becomes imminent in real time, I finish my song and take a deep breath. “Ahhhh,” and say, “Chi-miigwetch!”

Sometimes, all we must do is listen, be still and pay attention to the signs we are given. We all have a special gift to contribute to this journey as a collective and together we can accomplish all that is needed for the greater good.

Anishinaabemowin Pronunciation:

Mishomis (mi-SHOW-miss) - Grandfather

Giizis (GEE-sis) - Sun

Aki (AH-kee) – Earth

Maamaa (MAA-maa) – Mother

Ninjichaag (NIN-ji-chug) – My Spirit

Mino Bimaadziwin (MINO-bi-maad-zi-win) – The Good Life

Kwe (K-way) – Woman

Chi-miigwetch (CHI-mee-gwetch) – Big thank you

Gitchi Manidoo (GI-chi Man-i-doe) – Great Spirit

Anastasia O'Shawanoo

Sing Your Song of life

Life is waiting, to hear you sing.
To follow the rhythm that bubbles up from within.
Close your eyes & lean in. Still your mind.
Can you hear the whispers of your heart chiming in?

Breathe. Deep into your belly.
Wiggle your fingers & toes. Shake off, ALL your NO's.
Wave farewell, as notes from your inner critic
float on by like the clouds in the sky.
Feel a smile begin to grow from the twinkle in your eye.
Let it lift the corners of your serious frown.

See! It's not so hard.
Can you feel your wonder grow?
Hold on tight. And soon, you'll reap what you sew.
Listen for the sounds that are calling from within.

Wondering...

What IS the song of this, my life?
In the stillness, all is quiet.
No music fills the void.

Many (but not all), of my chords have been set
in the haunting key of fear & self loathing.
Telling a story, handed down, that is not mine alone.
Yet it weighs on my heart & burdens my breath.

Heavy & hard, are the songs of regret.

Beckoning how, I appeal to the sky,
Do I navigate these dark waters of bottomless grief?
Where did it come from? Was it given to me?
Searching for cause, seeking someone to blame,
has turned out to be, an exhaustible game.
I am beginning to wonder if not one is at fault.
And yet, it would seem, that we must all do our part.
To heal & reveal, what lies cloaked in dark.
To know, that it holds an unextinguishable light.

As I sneak past the guards, all puffed up at the gate,
I see they are filled with illusions of hate.
Built on foundations of betrayal & hurt,
stands a house full of mirrors, now empty & cold,
protecting the seeds of a life changing truth.

I am NOT what happened to me.
Nor am I the story, that I have been sold
& come to believe. Of this, I am sure.
I am SO much more, than a sad broken song.
For hiding deep in the folds of my heart,
I AM a unique melody.

Strung together are the pearls of my tears.
Stars that guide my way though the darkest of nights,
And clear my view to reveal a much different song.
Of the purest love, Unending & free
That is blossoming in Me.

Hope

Sad, heavy heart
wrapped in a grey misty day.
The rain on the sill, keeping time.
As I breathe in, breathe out.
& let the heaviness go.

Gazing out the window,
I see a face in the snow, traced
by the branches of a young tree.
Her eyes are closed.
Is she searching for Peace?
Biding her time. She waits.
For spring to return
& the new growth to emerge.

Lisa M Huffman

Laugh a Big Belly Laugh

When I think about my own laugh and how when I do have a really big belly laugh it's usually quite boisterous. I think I learned to laugh from my grandfather, "Puppa Ron". I used to laugh a lot more than I do now and I think maybe some of that is lost from having such hard experiences in life.

When I was a boy, however, I found that Puppa would make a crass joke like talking about space travel and calling the space craft a "rocket shit". We would laugh. You could probably hear his roaring laugh from half way down the country road most of the time when we really got chuckling.

After a lot of hard times which I could drone on about for days I'm sure, and after losing my puppa to old age and a heart attack, my laughter has died out a bit. I wish I could go back to the days of singing and playing guitar with Puppa Ron and being a kid.

I know Puppa didn't have the easiest life in the world either, so maybe things need to change, because I can remember puppa laughing his big belly laughs right up until he passed away. After everything I've been through, the child I forgot somewhere in the past who laughed a great big belly laugh with his puppa seems to be missing from my life.

So, when I think about it, there must have been a little happy kid off somewhere in puppa's life that he held on to. Something that kept a smile on his face right up until he died.

Some how someway I need to find that somber lost boy in my psyche and cheer him up.

“f” 

Make Some Noise

When I go back as far as I can remember, I was lying in my crib or basket that lay in the veranda of our house by the lake. I heard footsteps - the sound of someone approaching. Somehow, I knew that it was my sister who was older and liked to tease me. I pretended to be asleep and could hear her breathing as she stood beside my crib. Then she went back into the house and I heard her call to our mother, "He's ok, just pretending to be sleeping."

Barry Milliken

“Listen to the Wisdom of Your Feelings”

My heart honours the Wisdom of my gut.
Energy flows between my heart and my belly.
Reading the room, reading my body
And the corresponding responses of my Body Wisdom.

Young, Old. It matters not.
Wisdom is valued, not for its age
But for its feeling within me.

Taking energy in through my belly.
Holding it there.
Processing; digesting; fermenting.
Measuring by my heart's wisdom,
How does this make me feel?
What emotions arise?
Does this serve me now?

I feel in so many ways.
Thoughts from my mind interrupt the flow.
I thank them for trying to help
And send them on their way.

Feelings.
Feeling into my body, my core.
Is what lives there
A reflection of my environment?
Or am I projecting what is within me onto it?

Feeling deeper. I root.
Find Lightness in my heart.
Solace in my Being.
Joyful recognition of Water,
Lapping like waves
Clearing emotions
Making room...
For Me.

Lauren Giulian

Chapter Four



A Bit More of the Journey...

Review your writing:

You've finished writing your book – Congratulations! Now, you must begin to review what you've written with an eye to the details before you enlist the services of an editor. If grammar and spelling are not your strong suit, you may hire a copy editor to do this for you. A content editor will address any details that are out of place and the flow of your story as it progresses from one scene to another. No matter *how* you decide to execute your book review, there are a number of things to consider.

In what format do you see yourself continuing to write?

- Journal
- Blog / Vlog
- Books (soft or hard cover) or e-books
- News articles / Editorial columns
- Collaborative books
- Magazine articles
- etc.

Spelling, grammar, punctuation, format

There are some excellent dictionaries and thesauruses online, in most word processing software (MS Word/ Word Perfect and LibreOffice) as well as in the library. When thinking about grammar, remember that USA English is quite different from Canadian English, so know your audience. Grammarly is a US based

product. Again, most word processing software has built-in grammar detectors. It is while you are reviewing that you can tweak the document formatting to accommodate an extra line space between paragraphs; indent the beginning of a paragraph or not; use *italics* to indicate conversational speech, or thought bubbles.

Does it have all of the elements of a good story?

When? Where? Who? What? Can these elements be identified easily?

Is the language fluid or do you have to concentrate to understand the point of the sentence?

Repetitive phrases; run-on sentences or incorrect word usage can make your work unclear.

Could it use a bit of polishing?

If you have used the same word five times in a paragraph or two, you likely need to find some synonyms or rework your paragraph.

What Genre and Target Reader aligns with your work?

- Fiction
- Non-fiction
- Auto-Biographical
- Children's Stories
- Youth
- Adult

The Value of a Support Network

We all need a cheer section to get us to the finish line when we take the journey to write our stories! Family members and a couple of very close personal friends become the first people with whom we share what we've written.

Beta readers are the first to read the finished copy. These people are chosen (usually) because they match the target audience for your book. These are people who hold no bias about your work. They don't know you as well as your family and close friends do. Generally, these people are not paid for reading your book, except by receiving a .pdf copy at no charge. It is highly recommended though, that these people be asked to sign a non-disclosure or confidentiality agreement, assuring that they will not share your book or disclose its contents to others.

Writer's Groups (on-line or in person) can be counted on to provide both support and gentle guidance for how to make your writing even more impactful. They will give you honest evaluations of sample readings of your book, if you ask. The members of your writer's support group are often your first paying customers.

Preparing to Publish

There are many things to consider when preparing to publish your story. We will not go into as much depth with those options in this book. There are many other resources at your disposal to aid in making the decisions that best serve you as an author.

Despite your publishing style, employing the services of a good editor has value far beyond what you immediately see. There is a reason for the old saying “Four eyes are better than two!” A good editor will catch the remaining spelling errors, grammar and syntax (the way the words flow together.) The input of an editor makes your good story great!

There are three basic publishing options for publishing your story:

1. Traditional publishers receive hundreds of thousands of book proposals and limit the types of books they publish. To be considered for publication you must submit a book proposal through an author agent service. This adds to the cost of your book, and extends the time necessary that it takes in order to reach a publishing deadline. The bonus of taking the time to be signed by a traditional publisher is that you will receive a partial payment to support you while you write your story. Royalty fees will then be paid out to you on a quarterly basis (minus your initial start-up bonus.)

2. A Vanity Press is a smaller publishing house that encourages authors to self-publish using their brand label. They will offer all of the services that a traditional publisher will, but charges you for each of those services individually. This can become a costly adventure if you choose not to do some of the formatting, marketing and promotional work yourself. You really do need to know the ins and outs of the publishing business and what components you can do yourself (like obtaining an ISBN for your book on your own.)

3. Self-Publishing. There are actually a couple of ways to do this: either through an online sales portal such as Amazon or Ingram Sparks or by printing a limited number of copies of your book with no online purchase options. When self-publishing, you as the author are singly responsible for all aspects of getting your book into the hands of your readers.

It is advisable to take the time necessary to interview potential partners in editing, publishing and marketing your story. You want to feel comfortable working with these people, confident that you trust them to see the value in your story and be mindful of your voice, authenticity and intention.

Publishing Costs

While Traditional Publishing doesn't necessarily involve direct costs for publishing, you may incur a fee for an

author agent. Some agents will require a retention fee, while others will wait until you've published to be paid for their services.

As we've mentioned before, Self-Publishing fees are governed by your ability to do some of the tasks of publishing for yourself. For instance, you may obtain an ISBN (International Standard Book Number) by contacting the Library and Archives Canada to request an individual identification number for each format of book you intend to publish. Identification numbers differ for hard and soft cover books, as well as e-books. Obtaining your own numbers ensures your book and its contents remain under your own governance and copyright. This is also where who you know matters. If you have a large online presence, or are exceptionally well-known beyond your community, you have a greater chance of being able to market your book and generate a large sales volume through your own efforts. Expect to pay between \$3,000 and \$20,000 Canadian funds to publish your story with a vanity publisher.

Self-publishing with assistance from Ingram Sparks or Amazon's KDP service is far less expensive. They have all the services of a vanity publisher, without the sales incentive to sell you services you are capable of supplying for yourself. At the very minimum, you may need to pay them to convert your book from a .pdf copy format to an e-book and possibly to produce your book's cover. Both of these publication service providers have great tutorials on their websites for do-it-yourselfers. The only drawback is the need for a cell phone to pro-

cess the two-step verification necessary to access the sales details from your personal author administration page.

You can self-publish your story on your own, under your own publishing name, by paying a reputable print-on-demand commercial printer to print your books for you. Again, do your homework to find someone who will support the intent of your story while adhering to copyright law.

Prices vary greatly for each publishing avenue you may choose. It is wise to be mindful of a few things that may impact the cost of printing your book:

- Size of the book (ie: 5x7", 5.5x8.5", 8.5x11", etc.)
- Colour photos cost more to print
- The length of your book (# pages and word count)
- Hard cover verses soft cover
- Quality of paper
- Size and type of font

Confidence Building Thought:

“I am uniquely equipped to market my book, my passion and authentically attract my ideal readers.”

Writing Prompt

After repeating the exercise to remove energy blocks from the previous chapter, jump right in to write using any of the following Writing Prompts (10 minutes writing time):

- (a) Write about a pebble or piece of glass found on the beach.
- (b) Write a letter to your teenage self

Use the following pages to record your story. Then come back and read what others have written.

March 2025

Hey “f”

I'm here to help. I'm you 25 years in the future. I can't give you any advice or tell you how to do things differently. Time doesn't work like that, and I wouldn't change a thing anyway. What I can give you is a compliment and let you know things are going to be alright. One thing I know about you is how strong you are and you never really show that to people because of your humble nature. I'm here to tell you all the people who bullied you and backed you into a corner never really go away, because there are always new people to bully you wherever you go. You really can't run or hide, but luckily for you, facing your fears has never been a challenge. You were always different and you knew that from the start of your life, but the problem with being someone special is that people are afraid of what they don't understand. You will never give up on playing and writing music but you already know that by now and at this time in your life you are a brilliant seasoned musician.

I don't go out much anymore and I quit all the things your mother told you to never start, with the exception of still being addicted to nicotine. In fact my friend circle now by comparison is so small I don't have to worry much about being engulfed in social drama or being lead with peer pressure down

the wrong path. You will eventually grow into yourself and be comfortable with the good person you are, and have always been. It's not what hurt you, or the people you hang out with, or how much money you have, that is important in life. Who you are is what really matters, and if there is anything we take with us when we die, it's who we are and what we've done. You never sell your self short and give up your beautiful soul for money or power because you know how empty that would feel.

I'm proud of you; for making it through all the times you wanted to throw your life away; for graduating college against all odds with a debilitating mental health condition; for surviving your problems with addiction issues and finally breaking them; for making sure everyone around you who knows you work a minimum wage job in your late thirties and haven't gone anywhere in life that they also know if they were in your position they wouldn't have even survived; and for never giving up on love or anything for that matter.

I met someone. She's the most beautiful person I have ever met and had the joy to get to know. Sadly, we've lost contact for what is hopefully not much longer. I miss her dearly and I think she is the only person I've ever met that felt more pain in their life than you and still remains a good person. She's deep, and complicated, and in a lot of ways in that regard, like you. I know when you finally find her you will fight tooth and nail, nearly to the death for her, and still not conquer your foes until much later. You will win eventually if you haven't already. Even if you never see her again in this life you will

see her in the next I'm sure. It's not in your nature to give up,
so don't.

Sincerely,

Your older self.

“f” 

I Found a Rock One Day

I found a rock one day. I had just moved back to my home community in Kettle Point, and I was renting my mom's small one-bedroom house with my 34-year-old daughter. I wanted to plant a flower garden in her honour. As I started to clean the yard, I looked for rocks to make a border. Just my luck - I found a huge boulder – a very large rock, maybe 80 pounds, I was soon to discover! This rock was so big and embedded in the earth that I needed to dig the ground around the edges to loosen it. I started digging to find the edges of it ... 10, 15 minutes later, I had at least found its circumference. I continued to dig deeper and loosen the dirt around its edges. I kept having to widen the circle because the rock kept getting bigger which also meant I needed to dig deeper. I began to wonder if I would ever find the bottom of that rock.

An hour later I found the bottom of the rock, but it was still stuck in the dirt. I dug deeper with determination and excitement at the outcome. After all this time I had put into trying to dig that rock out, I was not stopping now. I made the circle of the hole wider at the base of the rock. I knew I was going to need some leverage to get that 80-pound rock out of the hole I had just dug around it, lol. Determination sunk it. I wanted that rock. Thinking ... where was I going to get a stick or pole sturdy enough to use as a wedge? I only had a shovel. I needed a secondary wedge to hold the rock while I rolled it out of the hole that surrounds it. I was standing at the edge of a small, wooded area that separated my mom's house from the neighbor. There had to be something I thought! I saw no stick

strong enough to lift this 80-pound rock from this hole. to jam under the rock to wedge it from the ground. I searched closer to the house and found a broken maple axe handle. I returned to the rock I kept digging around and around that boulder trying to free it from the spot it had come to know as its home. I began to wonder if I was disturbing something that wanted to be left alone and in this spot. It was quite a nice area. I used to play in this little shaded area.

As I continued to wrestle with the boulder, I noticed a van full of people had pulled over to watch what I was doing. Now I was really determined but hoped they would leave. I pushed and pushed on the stick and the bolder barely moved. After struggling with it for a few minutes and assessing the situation – I dug a hole under the rock to wedge the maple axe handle under the rock! Then I angled one end of the hole around the rock to roll it up and out of - its home. I told myself, and it, that I was not removing it to throw it away. I was only moving it to the front of the house to showcase it and surround it with flowers, so everyone who arrived at my home could admire as I do. After much digging, leveraging, and angling a ramp for the 80-pound rock to roll out of this hole I dug with so much determination, guilt, excitement, and wonder ... I was ready, lol.

After testing the strength of the stick, I pushed hard and steady to pry the rock further from the ground. It began to move. Fifteen minutes later I had partially rolled the boulder! I held the stick in place with my leg and shoved the shovel head deeper under the rock. I knew the shovel handle was maple as well, so it was strong. I began by sliding and pulling

the rock along the dirt it was sitting in. It was moist by now from how deep the hole was, so it made the rocking motion a little easier. Little by little I was able to move the rock closer to the ramped area. Once I got the rock resting on its side along the bottom of the ramp area, I used the shovel to wedge it up the ramp as much as I could and quickly shoved the maple axe handle under the rock to hold it halfway up the ramp. With the axe handle holding the rock up I quickly pulled the shovel away and jammed it under the rock above the axe handle and held it there to, once again, assess the situation. Did I have the strength to push that 80-pound boulder the rest of the way up the ramp? It was the highest point and would be the toughest, I thought. Checked for stress points on both handles of my tools. They looked good. I hadn't heard any creeks or cracks by them. I moved on with determination.

I used my foot to jam the shovel as far under the rock as I could get it and left the axe handle under the shovel head to assist the hold. Knees bent, shovel handle on my shoulder, I slowly tested our strength by exerting upward pressure to begin moving the rock up the ramp. The tools were still holding strong. I took a step forward and readjusted the shovel handle on my shoulder. I wondered if I was strong enough to finally roll this boulder onto the surface of the earth. We, the 80-pound boulder and I, had reached the highest point of the hole. Would we, the tools and I, break and get run over by this boulder?

In one swift movement, I spun around and placed the shovel handle on my back and held it there while I caught my breath (and composure). The van was still sitting on the road,

the people inside watching me as I became more and more determined than ever to flip that rock over and out of the hole. In one good push – the rock flipped over! The people in the van burst out laughing and drove away. I took a few moments to look at the rock and rubbed the earth from its, now top, underside. It felt ridged with lines of bumped areas - interesting and inviting. I got some water and began to wash it off and stood back waiting for it to dry. An image was beginning to appear! I gasped in shock after washing off the rock! There in the underside of this 80-pound bolder was an image – several images if you really looked at it. To me the image looked like a crocodile eating a baby – or – some type of alien. It was interesting to say the least and I got no ill feeling from disturbing it. I put my tobacco on the earth and said a prayer; Apologizing to Creation if I disturbed something I should not have and thankful for finding the image if I am allowed to take this rock. The imprint in the rock seemed to be sending a message. I called my traditional advisor to come see what I discovered.

Geri Lou Gray-Shawnoo

A Good Day in A Good Way, Stories of a Survivor

Transpire

The tides are rising high,
as the prophecies come to light,
the seventh generation,
being caught up in the war in the skies.

Going through the phases,
each time the lightning strikes,
on that fine line of being the protectors,
without losing sight of the light.

We never seen what was going on,
on the other side,
because the generations before us,
were stripped of their birth rights,
and then so unjustly accused,
of being a victim of their own demise.

Thoughts roaming freely,
on borders, close to insanity,
divided by fear and an entity,
that we thought would never leave,

Finally, the time has come,
for lack of love to be done,
from this day forward and on,
we shall overcome and become one.

Anastasia O'Shawanoo

Thoughts From a Pebble

A stone or pebble is one unit in the total sphere we call the 'Universe'.

We hear about energy condensing into a tiny speck, which then became the Big Bang that blew everything into the void. It boggles the mind to even try to imagine what was there before this happened, because it could only be nothingness.

Today, we often hear questions about there being life, as we know it, somewhere else in the universe. This seems a ridiculous question because we, as a species, are only one small pebble on the wide, endless beach that is the universe.

This prompt brings the thoughts and awareness of a state of conditions that exist in our world today. First and foremost is the underlying, but largely disregarded threat of human over-population of our planet. It seems a matter of simple logic that if this condition is not acknowledged and dealt with on a grand scale – that we, as a species, may succeed in destroying, not only ourselves, but also forever damaging the natural state of our mother, the earth.

On this theme, we can say that our own Indigenous teaching of Humility reminds us that above all, we are only one species among countless other life-forms on the planet, and are no better than any other. That Creator has seen fit to invest humans with the gifts of both Will and Imagination shows that great Power to also possess an ironic (perhaps wicked) sense of humour.

Barry Milliken

I Am From...
(an homage to my roots)

I am from Hygge
~ the Danish art of cozy togetherness ~
steeped in my cells long before birth.
From grateful celebration
Of all that is good.
From open arm welcome,
& room in both heart and home.

I am from smiling faces, impeccably placed,
over unspoken terror & hurry & haste.
From breaking “the law”, to do what is right.
From burdens too great to bear.
From mental illness, addiction & abuse.
Fueled by unspoken wounds,
handed down, in a war-torn family,
divided from home & from heart.

I am from forbidden love.
From rich & from poor.
From good & from bad.
From light & from dark.

I am from empty room & broken bonds.
From sleepless nights & reaching arms, unmet.
From distance & divide.
Through generations of leaving home,
to end the cycle of pain & find a new way.

I am from why & why not?
From seeking & searching. To surrender & strength.
From living the question, until life's answer revealed.
I am from "go big or go home" and "give all that you've got"
Until nothing remains. From landing face down,
in the dirt, with bruised body & weary heart.

I am from the sweet surrender
of landing in the ether filled space.
From shifting sands & uneven ground
From dancing leaves & glittering sunbeams
that fill time & space.
From sun showers & rainbows, sunset & moonrise.
Held in the company of fireflies,
beneath stars that twinkle,
behind lightening shows.
In celebration of the night sky.

But most of all. I am from Love.
From flames that grow deep in my heart.
From twinkling eyes that dance in delight.
From tears that fall, unstrained.
From playful presence & curiosity,
Returning to Be,
I am.
Me.

Glass

My girlfriend and I decided it was time to do something exciting. If it isn't exciting, maybe something we could do at the beach. Maybe work on our homework. I know it isn't exciting but doing it together helps the time to pass.

We realized we both had two sentences finished on our story, so I figured it was time to gather up all we need. We heard they had built 3 swimming areas. It is already beginning to sound like fun.

“Yes, do we have everything we need. Yes, I think so, towels, homework, extra supplies and money. You know, looking for glass doesn't sound very interesting, but I don't think she has to many things to choose from.”

“Yeah you're right. Let's go.”

When we got there, we were totally in awe. The swimming areas were huge. Everyone swimming had these cute little swim suits on with little wings attached. Well, we both have money if we get hungry plus there is free fruit to eat.

“I'm not hungry yet so how about we head towards one of the swimming areas to start looking to see if we can find anything we could use. Before we start searching, we should pray to the Creator for everything he has done for us.”

“That's a good idea. Sometimes we forget and take him for granted. Thank you for remembering for us. OK I will grab a couple of towels in case we want to go swimming.”

When we got there, we couldn't believe how beautiful it was. There were so many beaches to explore. Hopefully something would spark their interest, also their teacher's interest when they wrote about it. All right, it is now time to go to the first beach.

We searched for over an hour and didn't find anything of interest. But that was OK. There were still two more beaches to search. Will beach number 2 offer us the glass we are looking for? No, it didn't want to give us the wonderful, beautiful piece of glass. But to be honest we were starting to get hungry.

“How about we go get a hot dog and pop? Then we can get some fruit before we head to beach number 3.”

“Sounds good.”

“Wow, I didn't realize that I was hungry. Would you please be my mother so I know when I should eat?”

“Yeah, hahaha!”

So off we headed to beach number 3. We unpacked all our things and got ready to start our search. Each of us took a different direction hoping we would find treasure quicker.

We were both getting slower because we were starting to get tired. It was only the two of us left at the beach.

All at once, I heard my girlfriend scream at the top of her voice. It was so loud I thought she was really hurt. She was jumping up and down and screaming. When I finally got there, she didn't know what to say or what to do.

My girlfriend said, "Look at this!"

In her hand she held a beautiful piece of glass that was amazing. It shone and made things come close and move farther away.

"Wow!" Was she ever lucky! I was so happy for my friend that I started crying.

My girlfriend looked at me and started laughing.

"That's not funny."

"Yes, it is. Look down at your feet."

When I did, I saw an identical piece of glass. I picked it up and checked it all over.

Wow! The Creator certainly loved us both.

"Thank you Creator for the gifts."

Debbie Milliken

What My Name Means to Me

Laureen is an extrapolation from the root word '*Laurel*'. The laurel bush is an evergreen shrub, its leaves rich and vibrant. The Laurel is thought to symbolize great victory, glory and spiritual evolution. Its leaves are often twisted into a crown to grace the heads of those participating in countless ceremonies, especially on May Day.

My name is one I've had to grow into. At birth, my mother named me for my lineage – I am the third consecutive woman to carry this name. Both my mother and her mother were known by the same name, either in first or second position in their full names. Neither one of them was called by this particular name though, in conversation or otherwise. Though she loved my name, my mother took one look at me (all six pounds ten ounces of me) and declared that I was too tiny for such a big name. From then on, it was shortened to "Laurie".

I was in my early 30s and a respected professional entrepreneur when my legal name began to stick. It did raise some eyebrows when family members heard other people call me by my proper name the first few times. This began when I was visited by family at my place of employment. My clients were the first to embrace this identity and it warmed my heart to hear my name. To my family, I would always be a very tiny, little 'Laurie'.

By this time in my life, I was well on my way to knowing who I truly am, as a soul incarnating in form to experience life on this pretty blue planet. I felt deeply and followed my intuition, developing a sixth sense that put some people on edge. I appreciated the nuances of societal beliefs though, and was therefore able to blend into the fabric of daily life, much as a wallflower would despite seeking desperately for validation. All the while, my skills bloomed much like the leaves and flowers of the laurel bush.

In recent years I have settled even more fully into my nomenclature, designing for myself a frequency that is at once magnetic and nurturing.

Having finally ‘grown into’ my name, I believe that the struggle to create my identity was worth it. It feels full, rich and holds a vibrancy that shimmers from deep within my essence – magickal!

I am Laureen.

Laureen Giulian

Chapter Five



The Call to More

The phone ringing breaks my writing focus.

Picking up the receiver, I say, “Hello?”

The voice on the other end asks, “Is this Author (insert your name here)? I’d like to talk about your book, (insert your book’s name here.)”

My heart leaps up to my throat where a breath catches and squeezes it tight. My mind races through more than a dozen scenarios in a fleeting second before my heart says, “Wait! You don’t know yet what blessing this is. Breathe and be curious – discerning - but open.”

I answer the caller, “This is she/he/they. How can I help you?”

“I’ve read your book and wondered if you had considered selling your story to a movie producer? I can help you do that.”

What unfolds is an opportunity to expand into awareness of possibility – dreaming bigger than the big screen.

What future do you see for your writing? Does it end when you’ve written “*the End*”? Is your work destined for something more?

Laureen Giulian

The Journey Draws to a Close...

As we wrap up our time together, I hope that you will have moved through this beginner's writing course finding your strength and voice in what you write.

Let's take some time to quickly shake out the writers block and get into the mindset needed to clearly assess our written work with discernment.

Take a deep breath and connect with Mother Earth. Imagine her arms reaching up to tickle you. Open your mouth and laugh out loud! Laugh really hard. Go ahead and shake those shoulders, your head, your arms, your legs and feet. We want to move as much stale energy out of our bodies so that we can have more increased focus.

Publishing Resources:

We are blessed in Canada to have a number of very diverse resources for writing and publishing our written work.

The Canadian Authors Association

[<https://canadianauthors.org/national/canadian-book-publishers/>] offers both literary support and publishing resources for Canadian Authors. Their website is loaded with information and networking contacts.

The Writers Collective of Canada

[<https://wcc-cec.org/resources-for-writers/>] is another organization offering mentorships and publishing support to Canadian writers.

The Writer's Union of Canada

[<https://writersunion.ca/get-published>] website includes a large inventory of self-help resources that can either be purchased for a fee or are available for free (with a paid membership to the Union.)

A simple *Google* search of 'publishing resources in Canada' will provide a number of other links to support and services available for Canadian writers.

ISBNs:

International Standard Book Numbers (ISBNs) are free in Canada. You can request one by creating an account through the Canadian Library Archives online.

[<https://www.canada.ca/en/library-archives/services/publisher-s/isbn/apply.html>] You will be required to provide the name of your book, a publisher's name (you can create your own company name under which you may self-publish) and other details about your book. Once published, you will send them two copies of your book (for print versions) and an electronic copy of your e-books to be included in the Canadian Library Archives collection.

A traditional or vanity press publisher may include an administration fee for obtaining one for you. When this happens, you do not own the rights to number. (It is a good idea to obtain your own ISBNs whenever possible.)

Copyright:

The necessity of copyright cannot be over-stated! This step protects your written work and guarantees the authenticity of your work. You can apply to copyright your intellectual property by opening a My Canada Business Account with the Government of Canada at <https://ised-isde.canada.ca/site/canadian-intellectual-property-office/en/copyright> . The directions for opening an account and registering your work for copyright are clearly laid out on the website.

You'll find some very compelling reasons for registering your work for copyright at <https://ised-isde.canada.ca/site/canadian-intellectual-property-office/en/copyright/registration-copyright-filing-online> . Please note that a one-time fee will be charged to apply for a copyright certificate.

You will find several samples of copyright statements to use in your own publications by checking the first pages of any book or by conducting an online search for copyright wording.

Compiling YOUR Story:

Congratulations! You are an Author!

By now, you have written four short stories which should be a minimum of 250 words long from the writing prompts contained within this book. Add to these any additional writing created while participating in this program (two, possibly three poems or short stories) and other writing, written by you before our Journey to Write Your Story program which fits in with Your solo book's message. Now you have the basis for an amazing book.

Edit each of your poems and short stories for spelling and obvious punctuation.

Transcribe your writing (if you haven't already) to a digital format and correct any previously uncorrected spelling and grammar (as much as you can.)

Be certain to sign (by hand or digitally) and date with a © at the bottom of the page until you have assembled your work into one continuous document. At that point, you'll be able to insert one copyright statement at the beginning of your work that protects your intellectual property.

Now it is time to offer gratitude to yourself and your support network – including the Elements and your Spiritual Guides – for getting you to this point.

It is an incredible endeavour to craft and publish a book or any other form of writing. Be proud of what you have accomplished!

Confidence Building Thought:

I've Got This!!

On the following pages, write a short story or poem on a subject of your choosing. Fill it with tangible visuals and emotions that support the message of your story.

Welcome to My World

In my life's walk, here on this earth, I walk with my ancestors in mind and am guided by Creation. I have always been nomadic; Living here and there and yet nowhere. Throughout the whole event I put one foot in front of the other (sometimes a shoulder too) and kept moving forward – Believing I was meant for a purpose, something better than what I was currently experiencing; I always wanted more – expected more from my existence in this world. I strive to not disappoint my ancestors, make my relations proud of my actions and to leave a strong, lasting and positive impression on your future.

~ I believe in me – Faith in my creation – Faith that I will see my ancestors again ~

It has been an interesting life, so far, being nomadic as I searched for ... in search of what? I'm not sure but, as I reflect, I always seemed to be looking for something. I've met numerous people in this nomadic life of mine and have had many strange interactions. Some people seemed to be put there for a profound directional reason. Others were on a spiritual level for directional considerations that have left me thinking – wondering if I am, why I am, and am I where I was meant to be in that moment of time as well as what will I do with and for this life and the generations yet to come? Still, I continued to drift choosing to live and let live. Do no harm. Greet each day with positive intentions. Strive to be productive in some way. I give thanks for being able to live another day as I have been blessed to be here. I can see living no other way of living, of being here. I invite you here to preview a

few snippets of my upcoming book, true life's story titled, *A Good Day in a Good Way, Stories of a Survivor*.

~ *Chance Interactions – Strangers – Maps – Dreams* ~

I now believe that lots of good things can come from acknowledging I'm sitting in shit. Flowers bloom in shit. Even shit contains life (eventually). So, shit cannot entirely be a bad thing. Shit can be directional... You can let it suffocate you or you can bloom from it. It all depends on how much you like to sit in shit and what you're going to do about the shit you're in. As you will soon read about, as I testify, I have been in some bad shit roaming around this earth.

I've walked among animal predators & human predators, alike. Why I survived is a question still unanswered – Why? Searching for what? Am I insane? Why was I there in those moments? My future book will leave you wondering; Who am I? Who is this Indian woman that sprang from a scared child? The chapters are many and are all true. The following short stories are a few incomplete examples as first drafts. Let me know what you think. Here I go.

Gerri Lou Gray-Shawnoo

A Good Day in A Good Way, Stories of a Survivor

Water Walking

When I was small, my parents would load us into their VW Bug and take us to the beach. My mom told me that the first time I met the water by myself, I was one and a half years old. She remembers that I stood at the water's edge, curling my toes into the sand and watching the waves roll over my feet. After a brief pause to look out over the lake, I walked confidently into the water and kept on walking, even as my head went below the surface. My hair had been tied up in a ponytail, offering a convenient handle to retrieve me from my water walk. To this day, I still wonder where I was headed.

Water continued to play a strong role in my life. Weaving together memories of great peace and joy, as well as memories of great sadness. My next memory of water came around the age of five. My family had moved to Lake Huron when I was three. First to a cottage in the village of Camlachie and shortly thereafter to my childhood home in a lakeside community called Blue Point. My older brothers and I used to take turns begging our dad to throw us out over the water. I loved the feeling of flying through the air and then landing with an explosion into the water. Sometimes, I would hang suspended below the surface, feeling the contrasting silence that followed the intensity of the crash. This memory brings a smile as I remember feeling safe and held.

We also played a game called dunk. Dunk was not as fun as flying through the air. On this day, my dad was glassy eyed and grumpy. I should have known better. I kept asking for him to throw me. Annoyed with my persistence, he began to dunk me repeatedly beneath the water. The 'game' progressed and

soon I was gasping for air and unable to tell him to stop. I remember feeling panic, as my lungs began to ache. Now frantic, I grabbed at his leg to scratch him in effort to get his attention. Yelling in pain, he finally stopped. A cloud moved over his face as tears washed down my face, mixing with water from the lake. I walked back to the beach quietly gulping the air. I don't remember if anyone noticed. But I did. Next time, I would know better.

My favourite time at the beach was when my mom and Aunt Debbie would pack us a lunch and we would head to the beach for the day. The path down the steep cliff to the beach was a long one, so it was important to come prepared. I loved to build islands in the sand with my younger cousins and to swim with my brothers. Unfortunately, dunk continued to be a family favourite, despite the fact that it often ended with someone in tears. As my swimming skills improved, I learned to stay underneath the water and swim away for a break. When everyone else left the water to warm up, I would stay in by myself. Jumping high above the water, I would sink to the bottom, to watch the sunbeams as they danced through the waves on the surface. Other times I would fill my lungs as full as I could and practice floating. I remember feeling frustrated that my feet would always sink and slowly pull me down and under. After years of swimming lessons and training to be a lifeguard and swim instructor, I enjoy floating even more. Especially now that I can easily stay at the surface with my toes in the sun and my arms relaxed above my head.

As we got older, my brothers and I were able to swim on our own. Thankfully, we grew tired of playing dunk and instead enjoyed surfing the waves when the lake was rough. Learning to navigate the waves taught me a lot about life and how to go with the flow instead of against it. My body remembers the pain of landing forcefully on the beach when I forgot to use

the strength of my body to soften my landing. By jumping off the wave, at just the right moment, I could run ahead onto the beach. It was equally uncomfortable to try to block the wave by standing rigid against its force. The waves taught me that it was important not to leave the outcome completely up to the wave, or to try and fight it. The safest place to be in strong waves was underneath the wave on the bottom where the force was much less. Or riding on the top and moving with the wave in the direction you want to go.

When I was 16, I went swimming by myself in rough, deep water after a storm. On this day, the lake shared with me a valuable teaching. Even when things feel rough on the surface, there is always a larger and deeper wave that will hold you up. In order to access this smoother and more focused wave, I had to stop struggling and drop below the choppy surface waves to swim within it. When I was able to do this, I could move with the force of the wave and be carried to shore. Last summer, while spidering our yearly sacred circle dance camp (a term we use to describe the role of weaving the web or container to hold the camp), I was reminded of my experience out on the lake. In sacred circle dance, we are held together by a wave that is guided by one or two weavers of the dance. In my role of co-creating and assisting to hold the larger container for the many waves within each dance session, I was reminded of the wave beneath the wave. I could feel it holding me, as I held the container for the camp. It was a powerful experience to be reminded of. In particular to feel held by a force much larger than myself. Especially when the waters were rough.

I am still learning to navigate rough waters. As I remember my experience in the dance, I am reminded that my body knows the way. All I need to do is remember that the wisdom

I am looking for swims in my cells. Held within the wisdom
of the water I hold inside.

Lisa M Huffman

Hailey, My Hero

This story is about Hailey, a wonderful little granddaughter who melted her grandma's heart every time she saw her. I imagine everyone else also has the same love for one of their grandchildren. But I am sorry, my granddaughter is number one. Not only in my heart but in my whole life. All she had to do was smile at me and I was willing to give the whole world to her.

If anyone had a tagalong, she was mine. I never had to ask her if she was coming with me, because she was already at the door with her shoes on. Her mom always wondered if I ever got tired of her, but the answer was no. I loved having her with me. She had such a great sense of humour, and was never upset or cranky. Her mom had a hard time believing that, but it was true. Just about every day when the weather was good, we would spend many hours walking in the bush. She loved learning about the plants and animals we saw.

Before I finish my short little story, I have to tell you something absolutely wonderful. When she was only 4 years old, she rescued her scaredy-cat grandma. I am deathly afraid of snakes and at the top of her voice, she told me to stop. She would not let me go any closer. She put both hands up and and said, *STOP!* again. I finally listened to her because she was extremely serious. She said there was a snake lying on its back on the bush. She came and grabbed my hand and

took me away from the snake. I will always remember that as my fantastic granddaughter rescuing me. Every once in a while I have to remember this story because she was my hero whom I love with all my heart.

There are so many stories I could write about where my granddaughter is concerned. She is full of laughter, love and always thinking of something to do. Even at the age she is now.

There was the time I was in the hospital following an operation. I had a home worker but I was unable to eat anything, so I started to lose a lot of weight. Everyone was getting very worried, so lo and behold, they asked Hailey if she would stay with me. That was just what I needed - Grandma and her granddaughter. Her laughter and humour brought me out of my depression, along with her cooking. She would get up in the morning and made sure I had a tasty meal. Same for lunch and it was my turn for supper. I could not get out of bed so, we always had to order something. She always thought that was the best meal of all. I have to say just having her with me made such a wonderful way to heal. As I said earlier, thank you for rescuing me. I will always love you. Thank you Hailey and thank you for the chance to write this.

Debbie Milliken

What the Spirit Needs

Maybe the greatest commonality that we share as inhabitants of this planet is that we are human – we are all human beings. As humans we share a special gift that Creator has seen fit to give us – that is the gift of *Imagination*. There's a saying that goes 'If you can imagine, you can do it', and that may be true – but the gift can also bring trouble if we don't use it properly or well. We find that it can be a blessing, or a curse. John Lennon wrote a song called 'Imagine' that became famous – even school children sang it in their concerts. Some of the words in the song were – “Imagine all the people, sharing all the world” – those seem like nice words, maybe a good idea. But maybe there's something else we can say about those words and that idea. Today, perhaps we need to take those words and that idea in a slightly different direction. So, there is a story that has come, and perhaps it's a story that *needs* to be told.

The story wants us to imagine a place – a natural place where there's a small lake, with trees that come down almost to the shore on the far side. It's near the end of day so the light is fading, but we can still see some reflection on the water. The birds have gone to their nests, and the frogs and crickets have started their chorus - how nice they sound.

Now, on the far side of the lake we see that a small fire is burning, and around the fire four people are sitting – two of them are young, a boy and a girl in their teens, and two of them are old, an old man and an old woman. The boy is stand-

ing and he's talking, maybe telling a funny story as the others sit and listen. We can see there's an easiness between them, and it's because the old couple have invited their grandchildren to their home and are now enjoying their company.

But now we see that something is wrong as the old man is having trouble trying to rise from his seat – he falls back and his hand has gone to his chest. The others go to him, the young ones calling, “Grandpa what is it – what's wrong?”

The girl reaches into her jacket – “I have my phone; I'll call for help!” But as she pulls it out of her jacket, the phone spins out of her hand and falls to the ground. The boy goes to pick it up, but the old woman stops him – says, “No, look at your grandpa...”

They look and see that the old man has struggled up so he's almost sitting again – slowly his arm swings outward towards the lake.

“This is all we need,” he says, and looks at his wife. “You tell them, what I told you – you tell them...” Then he falls back. Now they go to him, the boy and girl at his arms, their grandmother at his head. They lay him back as the old man repeats, “You tell them...” And then he's gone.

After such a time, it takes a while for things to settle down. Then, when they're together again, the girl says, “Grandma, we're wondering – what did Grandpa mean when he said, *you*

tell them? It sounded like he wanted you to tell us something – something he must have told you...”

Their grandmother waits a long moment, then she says, “Your grandfather had a strong dream, maybe even a vision that he told me about. He said that in his dream he saw something that happened to people all over the world – all over the earth. It was something that spread among them, just like that sickness that almost wiped our people out when it came so long ago – that small pox – what they call *epidemic*. But this one was different, he said – it didn’t make people sick, it made them change.”

Their grandmother looks at the young ones to make sure they’re listening. “It was in everything they touched out on the land and in the water. It was even in the air that they breathed, he said – so everybody got it and it made them feel different, act different. And once they got it, they couldn’t, or they wouldn’t, do anything that would hurt the earth. That’s what your grandpa saw. And he said that some people tried to hide because they didn’t want to be like that, but then they really got sick in their spirit and in their mind from not being on the earth. That was the dream, the vision, that your grandpa had. He wanted me to tell you because he couldn’t speak English too good.”

The old woman now leans towards her grandchildren, “You are the young ones – the next generation,” she says. “He wanted you – and I want you – to go out and tell the story of your grandfather’s dream – his vision – wherever you go. For

that message to spread all over the world just like seeds in the wind – it's from the Mother Earth, so it's good.”

So, that the story and the message from our imaginations. We hope it's a message whose time has come.

Barry Milliken

The Bonus Stuff



"Making Peace with God"

I'm working on a film and have been the last 7 years. It's dedicated to the love of my life and her son who passed away as an infant. It's about love and loss and making peace with God.

When I was commissioning the guitar from a gentleman in Okanagan Valley B.C., something screamed in my head that my guitar needed custom inlay and to call it by name. An old western film came to mind and I gave it its name. There is an interesting juxtaposition and some irony behind the name because it is an actual instrument of peace and not war, unlike the pistol with the same name. That being said, there are few better ways a man can relent to God's wisdom than staring down the barrel of a Gun, and if one is to make peace with God that sort of sacrifice is a necessity. Most weapons shoot hot lead to pierce the flesh and bone. My instrument just happens to shoot out sound waves in harmonic resonance that pierce the heart and soul.

Much like a child in gestation, you took 9 months to be born. Built by an artist for an artist and paid for on the peasant wage I'm making. I don't care that my blood sweat and tears went into affording such a nice piece of musical equipment. That was the point. It's better to suffer an immense amount of pain for a labor of love and die a hero, than it is to live a painless

life in obscurity and die for nothing. I will choose the former every time so that when death does knock on my door, I will smile in his face and meet my maker with pride.

“f” 

Fasting

This is something I want to tell you about fasting. I have been on a four day fast, but if you have never gone fasting before I would advise you to first go on a one or two day fast. It's quite difficult, because you are unable to eat or drink anything during that time. As long as you can get through the first day, you can pretty well count yourself as making it through the second day. If you can only fast for one day, I wouldn't worry about it because you can always try again. Just have faith that it is between you and the Creator, and you will have more chances ahead of you. You really don't have to worry about what you need for yourself, as there are many people that would help put you out.

It's always best to make sure you know the date and time. This is very important. There are also different articles you are allowed to take with you. Make sure you do take tobacco with you for the Creator and helpers. Also, be sure to take a gift for the one who put you out. You may need to take a few more gifts in case he has other helpers he uses. Be sure of all of this ahead of time. You may be required to make a meal, or have friends do it for you when you come out. If you are offered fish soup, take some. It's one of the most important foods to get your body starting to function again.

You may think you are starving, but you really are not. Also don't forget your towels. It's when you are crying because you

are homesick. No, just kidding about the homesick idea. Double check with the one who put you out to make sure you have everything. Since there is no outdoor toilet, don't forget to take along toilet paper and handy wipes. Be sure it is his rules and it's not for us to try to change his mind. Sometimes other people are fasting at the same time-not together but in their own lodge close by.

Certain rules are in place and must be followed. This sounds very easy and for one day or two, it is. Don't worry you will be fine. The Creator will be there with you. So I wish you all the best and really wish I could be there when you come out (to brush your hair because after you look very crazy.) If not, just remember the most important one (The Creator) is with you all the time. He never once deserted you all the times. See how special you have been.

Well I guess it is time to help the ones going on their 4 day fast. Tee Hee Hee. Gotta love them!

You brought your tobacco right? So, I wish you all the best and I hope you have been paying attention to the ones going on their 2 day fasts, because your fast will be twice as hard as theirs. You will be hungrier, thirstier and wishing desperately to be home. Not constantly, but it will be hard when the 3rd morning arrives and you start singing, really checking out the scenery and the temperature, especially if it is hot out there. My thoughts are with you, and I am sending prayers for you. But hang on. You only have two more days to go. Remember you are one of the Creator's heroes. Not everyone can do, or

even want to do, what you are doing. He is the greatest one who knows the struggle you went through and all the hardships you endured.

Well, this is all I have to say except *way to go my friend – you did it!*

Debbie Milliken

A Story About a Man Called ‘Hungrybun’

In our teachings, we hear that when we are in this special way of sharing knowledge or telling our stories, we are standing in the place of, or in the footsteps of, our Ancestors – yes, this is true. And in a sense, we are also standing in the footsteps of *wii-biiyaawok* – those who are not yet here, they are the next generation. This is why it is important that our stories be told, shared and passed on.

An example of this is a story that was told by one of our Elders whose name was Rachel – or, because she has passed on, we now say *Rachelbun*.

She said that when she was a girl in Stoney Point, there was a man who traveled around to different communities, and this man always had stories to tell. One thing that everyone said about him was that wherever he went he was always wanting something to eat, so that’s how he became known among the people – they simply called him ‘Hungry’.

“Oh, haven’t seen ol’ Hungry around here for awhile, eh?”

“No, I heard he was over in Bucktown last week...”

Rachelbun said that she was a little bit afraid of him because he would suddenly appear at their door and he would always be pretty noisy coming in. That’s just the way he was. When

this happened she'd run and hide under one of the beds that her father made – like many men in those days. He was what you call a 'Jack of all trades'. So, there she'd be under the bed and from there she'd watch as her parents welcomed him in, then sat him down in one of the chairs her father had also made and brought him food. Maybe it'd be muskrat stew or *nugzignug*, which is corn soup, with plenty of her mother's homemade oven bread, or fried bread. Whatever it was, she could see that he really loved his food.

One time, after he had finished eating, Rachelbun said that he pushed his chair back and then he said, "I think there's somebody under the bed – I wonder who that is, *under the bed...*" As he said this he turned and looked right at her with a funny little smile on his face. She said that when he did this for a moment she was scared – but then he said, "that little one doesn't have to be scared of me, becuz' I've never hurt nobody – an' never would hurt nobody – come on out little one an' maybe if you wanted I could tell you a little story – would ya' like that?"

So, that's how Rachelbun met the man called 'Hungry', and although she couldn't remember just what the story was about that he told her, she did say it might've been about someone who lived in a cave somewhere...

So, that was from a time when Rachelbun was a little girl, and she said that as the years went by, they saw less and heard less about Hungry the traveller and storyteller. Finally, when Rachelbun was a young woman, people would mention him

only now and then, and when they did, the name they called him by would be 'Hungrybun'.

Barry Milliken

He was Pulled Between Two Different Realities

She was from the wrong side of the tracks.

That didn't stop Damian from wanting her.

There was something about living on the edge, the not knowing what was coming next and from the exciting way that she always found what she needed – one way or another. It was a dodgy way to live, if one could call it *living*.

Elena was a woman who was comfortable in her skin. She knew just how much to lean on her looks and the knowledge that most folks didn't have a lick of sense when it came to being in the company of an alluring woman with a wily nature. Every moment, she was fully engaged in experiencing to the max what the moment could bring.

Damian thought maybe it was the danger of the attraction that drew him to her like a moth to a flame. She was his fatal attraction. No doubt came to his mind that this woman was going to cost him – what he had yet to realize.

Watching her stretch like a pampered feline, he groaned.

“Elena, don't do this to me. You know I can't resist you and I have to report to work in a half hour.”

“So that means we still have plenty of time. Kiss me.”

She curled one graceful arm around the back of his neck and drew him close, her golden eyes taunting his every breath.

“One last kiss, then I have to go, Sugar.”

The kiss seared his lips and was burned into his heart and mind at once. He didn’t want it to end.

“Don’t start something you can’t finish, Lover Boy” she growled.

“I’ll be back in the morning” promised Damian.

He could barely stop himself from begging her to stay in tonight. He knew she would blow off his warning though – that’s the way she operated. He knew that by morning she’d be in the kink and that he’d regret deeply having done the job he was paid to do.

Lauren Giulian

Me and Uncle Hud

I have come to know and believe that the Earth is a very special place, even sacred.

When I was a boy, I could stand on the shore in front of our home by the lake called Huron, and as far as I could see to the north, and as far as I could see to the south, and all of the space between, was water. Water is a very special part of the Earth.

Just as we are affected by the natural world, so too are we affected by the people in our lives. And so it was with one of my uncles who everyone simply called Hud. He was, in his own way, a helper to all those who knew him. A man who could fix most anything or build most anything. A hunter in the winter, and a fisherman in the summer. Uncle Hud built a boat that he used to set his nets to catch the fish that provided him his main living.

I can say that I felt like the luckiest boy in the world because uncle Hud chose me as his *shkaabeywis* – his helper. In the mornings before first light, I would be awakened by a hand on my shoulder and a low voice, “Aambe Bupper - that was his name for me, either that or just 'Bup', and I once asked him if it meant something in our language. I knew only a few words, while Uncle spoke it fluently – he just said, “Nope, just seems to fit.”

Uncle Hud had an outboard motor that a White fellow gave him as payment for work. That motor pushed his boat along good and fast. Out on the lake, as the rising sun was starting to make some colour in the eastern sky, I could look back behind Uncle at the motor and see a V-shape on the water from our boat, then I could look up and sometimes see a V-shape of geese in the sky above. When I tried to copy their calls up to them, Uncle would have a little smile as if to say... “kinda silly, but you're tryin’”. As the sun rose, I would see rainbow colours in the flying water from our boat. In these mornings there was nowhere else in the world I wanted to be.

We would go straight northwest from our dock until we saw the side of a reef where we had laid his net the day before. That's when I got to handle the motor – feeling so important, while Uncle hauled in the net. The main catch was always the pickerel that people wanted most, or at times the bigger salmon-trout. But one fish that Uncle didn't like to see were the big, heavy carp that could tear the net. Some of these were almost as big as me, with sharp spikes that stuck out from the sides of their heads. The smaller ones I could help to catch by the gills and throw them back overboard. Uncle Hud took care of the bigger ones.

One morning, as I watched, I saw that the net was going off to the side and Uncle was struggling to hold on. My Uncle was a strong man, but as he held the net I felt the boat being pulled against the water that was now getting rougher. Uncle's face changed as he fought to bring the net in – a look of some an-

ger, but also determination. Now I started to see a big shape, dark and moving in the water beside the boat.

Breathing hard, Uncle looked into the water.

“Just what I thought,” he said. “That’s a sturgeon!”

That big fish got a look at us, his big body thrashed, making water fly and almost pulling Uncle over the side - then he was gone.

Now Uncle pulled in what was left of his net and standing straight, he held the torn sides up, then let them fall into the box at his feet. The look of anger turned to a little smile as he reached for his cigarettes and took one out. With his hands shaking a little, he broke the cigarette in two, held one part up then put it over the side into the water. Still with that little smile, he looked at me.

“That guy was pretty big, eh Bup? Better do some exercise – then I’ll beat him!” He laughed, but then his face turned serious again. “Don’t forget Bup, that’s our ancestor – gotta respect.”

That’s the biggest and best memory I have of my Uncle Hud.

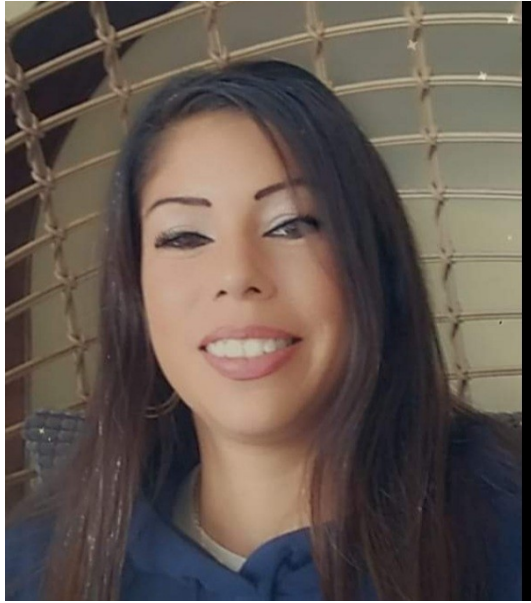
I had a dream after that happened. I was in the air with water below me. Then, in the distance, I saw darkness on the water and some kind of disturbance, so I went over there. When I looked down, I saw a dark circle that moved like a whirlpool.

I knew they were sturgeon – four of them swimming in a circle. As I watched, they broke off and swam away, each in their direction. When I awoke, I remembered what Uncle said about them being our Ancestors, and I knew that was a good dream.

Barry Milliken

About the Authors





Anastasia O'Shawanoo

Anastasia O'Shawanoo is a Shawnee/Ojibwe/Potawatomi woman and direct descendant of Tecumseh. With ancestral lineage to the Three Fires Confederacy, she embraces her responsibility to carry forward her ancestor's efforts—keeping the faith, protecting all relations, and safeguarding the lands and waters. In doing so, she re-kindles the flames of the past while lighting the path for the next seven generations.

Anastasia is a dedicated advocate for Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women (MMIW), Every Child Matters, Truth and Reconciliation, and the Tecumseh Ogichidaa Warrior Society. Guided by strong support systems of family, elders, educators, and community, she has cultivated meaningful relationships

and established herself as the Librarian at Kettle and Stony Point First Nation Public Library.

Through her role, she engages her community with culturally grounded and educational programming, including a Homework Club that empowers high school students to achieve their Grade 12 diploma. Her commitment and leadership have been recognized with the Ontario Library Association's Spirit of Reconciliation Award (2023), the President's Award for Exceptional Achievement (2025), and a nomination for the Angus Mowat Award.

Through her work, Anastasia reminds us that the strength of our ancestors lives on in every step we take today. By carrying forward their vision and nurturing the next generations, she shows that reconciliation is not only possible, but alive in the stories, programs, and communities we build together. Her journey is a testament that when we honor the past, we ignite a brighter future — one where the flames of resilience continue to guide us all."

To connect with Anastasia O'Shawanoo:

Email: anastasiashawanoo98@gmail.com



Barry Milliken

Boozhoo, my English name is Barry Milliken; my Spirit Name is Zhawanoo Binesii, which means Southern Eagle; my clan is Wolf. I am a member of the Kettle and Stony Point First Nation located on the southern shore of Lake Huron. Since returning to my home community in 2001, I have endeavoured to build a knowledge of my Indigenous language, culture and history. I have found this knowledge and the ongoing experience of learning to be a welcome enrichment to my life. A vital part of these paths of learning has been through the intriguing world of Story. As I am now in my eighties, I have come to know the importance of both the hearing and the telling of Story.

Therefore, when we found that an opportunity for writing stories was being made available through our library, my wife Deb and I knew that we wanted to be part of it. Since returning to our home community we have shared many of the same programs of learning.

Personally, I found that the writing and story program took me to a place quite familiar to me, while offering a unique meditative experience. We now look forward to seeing the finished book as we continue to turn our life experiences into Story.

To connect with Barry Milliken:

Email: bgrant.milliken31@gmail.com



Debbie Milliken

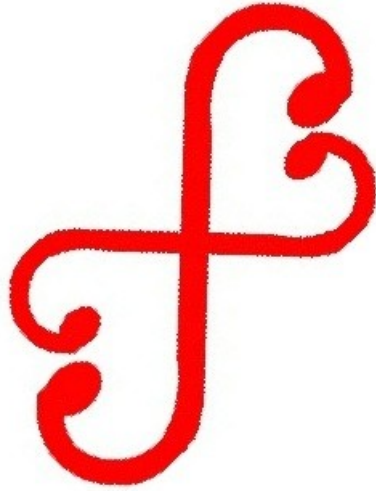
Boozhoo, I am a member of the Kettle and Stony Point First Nation. Though my early life was spent mainly on Toronto, my connection to my home community and my people grew stronger through the years.

After moving home permanently with my family in 1991, I made healing and wellness of both myself and my family a most important priority in my life. I now live in my community of Kettle Point where, together with my husband, I work to share those parts of our knowledge and culture that can be shared appropriately.

Most recently, I have experimented with a combination of stories and the many forms and colours that I also see in them. Though not a part of this present book, I hope to see them someday in a story book for use in schools.

To connect with Debbie Milliken:

Email: millikendebbie442@gmail.com



“f” is a young man of First Nations heritage who grew up around Chemical Valley in southwestern Ontario. After completing two college degrees in electronics and industrial electrical, travelling became the primary focus. The pull of home drew him back after a few short years on the road.

A musician and singer for 29 years, *“f”* proclaims, “It’s something I will never let go.” Having struggled with mental health issues and addiction for several years, circumstances led to a series of unfortunate events. It is these events that bring the power of *“f”*’s voice to these pages as an author and aspiring screenwriter. He is on a mission to bring the story he’s been writing for the past eight years to life on the big screen.

A life-long practice of “*f*”s has been to keep a record of his life, video-recording jam sessions and such. “I can’t see myself not continuing to write and keep track of things as time goes on. I’ve had a lot of hard life experiences and lessons from which other people could learn. I would strongly recommend participating in Lauren’s workshop, if you feel like other people have something to take back from your story.”

To connect with “*f*”:

Email: contact.me@f-fait-accomplis.com

Website: <https://f-fait-accomplis.com/>

or follow him on facebook and Instagram



Geri Lou Gray-Shawnoo

Geri Gray (Shawnoo) was born to Freida and "K" Shawnoo in 1963 and grew up along the shores of Lake Huron on the Kettle & Stony Point Reserve. She began to travel by thumb, in her early teen years. This led to her dabbling with danger. She has always believed she walked with her ancestor's presence and guidance. After surviving a nomadic life, Geri developed no (more) fear of death as she survived many strange encounters in the places she travelled.

In this year of 2025, Geri can be found communing with nature in her community's garden or in the backyard of her new forever home where peace runs rampant. Geri lives on the hill in Kettle Point, near the water tower at the bend where the eagle meets the falcon. It is here, among her plants and ancestors, that you will find her and a new, different thought or way of life.

In the Journey to Write YOUR Story workshop, Geri discovered how to structure the book that people wanted her to write. The writing prompts provided by Lauren Giulian inspired her to create a collage or two, bringing focus to the many chapters of Gray's upcoming true life story, [A Good Day in A Good Way, Stories of a Survivor](#). The book will elaborate on surreal interactions, strange dreams, and her philosophy of life as well as continued connections.

To connect with Geri Lou Gray-Shawnoo:

Email: question_me2@hotmail.com



Lisa Huffman

Lisa Huffman earned a Bachelor of Science in Occupational Therapy from University of Toronto, with a culminating thesis examining the impact of illness and functional loss on life roles. After several years burning the candle at both ends, she sustained a life altering concussion, returning full circle to experience personally, the impact of lost ability on identity.

A lover of words, Lisa gratefully joined Stories from the Heart on a Journey to Write YOUR Story. Returning to the written word offered a way to reflect and integrate her healing process. Finally closing the chapter on her experience of loss, she understood that she had always been supported by the natural world. Her collection of writing describes her homecoming with the Earth to feel the unwavering support of the ground. Coaxed by the wind to remember her love of the dance. Warmed by the Sun, she softened. Witnessed by the water, she

let go. Held by the Ether, she remembered. That she is never alone.

Lisa is a grateful co-steward of a beautiful 2-acre blend of cultivated and wild land, in southwestern Ontario. A lover of seasons, she finds delight in tending her garden, walking in the bush, getting lost in the creative process, spending time with loved ones around a table or fire, meeting others in the circle of community and snuggling with her four-legged fur babies. She is the creator of a model to understand and restore nervous system regulation, a teacher and facilitator of Sacred Circle Dance (a collaborative movement practice celebrating a diversity of music and dance from around the world) and a dedicated student of Gabrielle Roth's 5 Rhythms® and the Gene Keys®. Lisa is passionate about healing and strives to do her part to brighten her corner of the world.

To connect with Lisa Huffman:

Email: Lisa.huff@live.com



Following a life-long love affair with words, author Laureen Giulian surprises herself with each new book release and the personal growth facilitated by the process.

As a lay minister in a tiny Anglican Church on a First Nation's Reservation in southwestern Ontario (and most recently as a participant in local activities), Laureen was gifted first-hand stories of ancestral wisdom, cultural abuse, relocation and identity crisis.

Living on the south shore of Lake Huron, allows Lauren Guilian to commune with nature in ways that feed and nourish her creative Soul. Guided by the Elementals, Spirit, her husband, family and feathered friends, Lauren strives to share her love of storytelling through a multitude of sensory media.

To connect with Lauren, check out her website:

<https://LaureenGiulian.ca>

Email: Author@LaureenGiulian.ca

or follow her on facebook, Instagram, www.AllAuthor.com or www.Medium.com

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