



THE  
MCGAULEY WRITERS  
ATLAS  
MAY 2013



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## *FOREWORD*

This project got moving a little less than a year ago when David Prodan (from E4C) and I were trying to plan a multi-stage writing/ publishing project that would bridge a creative writing learning group we were co-facilitating with the community around it. The class was a joint initiative between the Learning Centre Literacy Association and E4C, and drew participants almost entirely from the McCauley neighbourhood.

We'd talked about McCauley a lot in class, but it was striking how dramatically perspectives differed. People saw different things at different times, and the most recent experience (positive or negative) seemed to wipe the others from mind.

A Writers Atlas was the sort of vehicle that could convey at least some of the complexities and contradictions of McCauley. We settled on a submission format so that all of our perspectives could be broadened, and set about using different writing and mapping formats to reintroduce ourselves to the faces of our neighbourhood – the purely physical and architectural, the historical, the political, and the cultural. I'd especially like to thank Chris and George for their thoughtful exploration of different journeys in the neighbourhood through their writing. We received many submissions, but the surprise was in how elegantly they worked together, and how often apparently forgettable daily sights became true landmarks.

In the end, this atlas is intended to function as an introduction of sorts, to peoples and opinions. It builds an understanding of geography, culture, economy, and resources. And what else does an atlas do? It inspires curiosity and travel. I hope the McCauley Writers Atlas does the same for you.

*Dyan Semple*

## Aura of Little Italy



*Photo by Chelsea Boos*

Musty smell in the air, but clean  
unlike other neighborhoods in other cities  
musty stench

Lived in this neighborhood for 18 years  
but never really noticed the trees  
especially in Giovanni Caboto Park  
huge and gnarled with rough overlapping bark  
the texture making them look thousands of years old  
ancient

Smell of dead grass in the park very autumny  
even on the first day of spring  
the musty smell, dead grass and old gnarled trees  
making me think of Halloween  
I swear I can taste the atmosphere

Suddenly a bird is calling for its mates  
or just letting its presence be known

The mural on the side of the Boys and Girls Club  
whisking me back to the 60's  
where I remember, as a child, lots of public murals and artwork

More autumny smells of Halloween  
the dead leaves needing to be raked up  
another mural, this one on the side of a house  
colourful

Dead bushes? Or hedge?  
with dead berries giving off a pungent odor  
and yards with lots of pinecones giving off a woody aroma

Finishing off at Spinnellis with the carrot cake I order all the time  
tastes moist, freshly made and the icing seems to be thicker and  
creamier  
a better treat than usual

Maybe it's just more tasty and refreshing  
because of the hour or more I've just spent cruising the  
neighborhood  
finally topping it off with a hot cup of coffee  
what can I say?!  
Beautiful

*George Sarantis*

## Untitled

Beware of the worn chair  
That sits by the alleyway  
Tall shrubs and bushes lean over this chair

Make your way to the chair for a thought  
Maybe just a rest for the day

Soon a rain cloud casts a shadow and a thought  
Will have to put off for another day

Maybe some sunshine will refresh my thoughts as  
Tomorrow is another day

*Christopher Leclair*



Red Wall



*Photograph by Alistair Henning*

***The Man in the Glass***

Ding dong diddledy ding  
the innercity doorbell sings.  
The man upstairs puts down his book.  
Nobody else is home. He wonders.  
10 o'clock Sunday night. November.  
The neighbours sometimes snort coke  
in the alley, mainline smack, leave needles  
in the weeds by the garbage cans,  
turn tricks on a mildewed mattress  
stashed in a rusted-out Chevy van,  
deal drugs, carry knives, curse,  
shout death threats over fences,  
volley F- and S- and C- words  
as if in a game of tennis.  
In this same block last summer  
they found a body in a dumpster.  
The northwest wind whistles  
outside his bedroom window.

Ding dong diddledy ding.  
He vaults the stairs in threes.  
At the downstairs landing he stares  
at the front door's oval glass:  
a dim Rembrandt tableau  
of blacks, dark grays, and drabs.  
A spruce trunk's shadow on the left.  
Its longest branch across the sidewalk  
six feet up shudders in the gale.  
One olive-green Honda at the curb,  
bull's-eyed windshield, smashed-in door.  
Snowflakes dance like goosedown  
around the flickering yellow streetlight,  
drift and settle on brown grass.

In the centre of the pane, a backlit phantom.  
"Will you help mmmme pppplease?  
My jjjjacket's gone. My ssssshirt is ttorn.  
My fffriend tttook all my mmmoney."  
A black gob oozes down his chin.  
The gap between his upper teeth, a cavern.  
One sleeve ripped off, at the elbow  
a fist-sized scab below a blue tattoo:  
two serpents coiled around a skull.

The man inside pats the deadbolt knob,  
rests his palm against the maple door-frame.  
"Wait there," he says. "I've got something."  
He fetches, hands him out a blanket,  
and phones for an ambulance.

The next day, on the way to work,  
the inside man steps out.  
The rising sun glistens on new-fallen crystal.  
The sky is bright and blue.

*Gary Garrison*

## Sticky White Fingers

They are a noisy lot those aboriginals. It jars her nerves all that hollering to Johnnie or screaming at Carmin – a block away. Just a peeks worth and the window blinds parted then Ivy's white fingers brushed her lap of toast crumbs, while thinking how she envied their camaraderie. It's not so lonely she thought. The way they travel about the inner city, like a pack of wolves.

Some diversion away from her blinds and dark depressions were necessary. For her it was books: man/woman against nature; man/woman who changed history; or even a real good, bloody murder. But she had to get up and going for that.

She reached for her gloves and the longer one of her coats. Three blocks past fortress high snow banks and she entered the library. Two bags full, she left the scanner and pocketed her yellow library card. Walking past a row of computers, she noted the end one was empty. Beside the computer lay a pair of mittens.

Black, thick, fur lined. Are they seal, wolf, bear skin? She was over the moon or rainbow, she couldn't decide. Her white fingers tingled. Her black heart raced. Why, it's crazy out of rhythm? She looked both ways and grabbed the mittens. Not until the second stop sign did she look four ways, then she took off her tight gloves and slid all fingers – wiggle free – inside those furry mittens.

A winter with mittens – as big as bear paws – she came out from behind the blinds more often.

All the time, before she lost them, she would wonder. Did his mother, his sister, his aunty, cut and hand stitch those mittens he lost? Did he miss them? She did!

Parting the blinds in late March, a wet snow fell. Was the sky weeping because it wanted blue? Ivy put on her gloves and her lined, black rain coat. Again the yellow library card scanned two bags full. She heard a BANG! Then a screeching crash. Startled, she froze. But then she breathed, because it was only a man, at a computer, playing games. His dancing dark eyes caught hers.

"It's cold out" he said.

"Yes, I'm still numb, chilled to the bone, and all that" she said.

He laughed and threw himself out of his chair. Hand to heart, "I'm Johnnie" he said.

"Here, here," he reached another brown hand into a doubled up plastic shopping bag and an assortment of hats, scarves, mittens tumbled out.

"Always carry extras... come on lady, take sumthin." He jut out his wide chin, "Make a me happpeeeeeeee."

When she left the library the sky was still a wash of grey. But no matter, that afternoon Ivy had an urge – to clean her sticky, fingered blinds.

*Julia Rose Tomlinson*

## McCauley Lesson Learned

Going to the drop-in  
The other day,  
I passed an old fella  
Just plodding away

I said "How are you"  
And "have a nice day"

He said "Thanks for asking sonny"  
And he was on his way

Met him again and  
Conversation we shared  
Again he thanked me  
For it seemed no one cared

He told me "As we go through  
Life  
Take it easy son  
Cause this world  
Is full of strife  
The world is in turmoil  
Our outlook is blue  
Treat everyone with respect  
Cause one day this 'old fella'  
Is going to be you"

In ending I'd like  
To say  
Love and respect your  
Fellow man  
Is the order of the day

*Richard – on Wally Mayor*

Temple Crystal



*Alistair Henning*

Photo Essay Paula Kirman







The Fountain



*Alistair Henning*

**Childhood Observance:**  
***The Dark Before Dawn***

I first realized it when as a toddler  
I got up to watch cartoons at six  
Right after they played the national anthem  
But I really didn't begin to be unnerved by it  
Until I got up to walk to hockey practices  
Before school

There was an eerie mystery in the air  
Where strange unforeseen occurrences  
Only seemed appropriate for  
Those unwise enough  
To be up and out at this hour

Except for myself  
All the world was asleep  
And those lost souls behind the wheels  
Of those vehicles  
Spilling their exhausts into the crisp morning air  
As they raced along the pavement beside me  
Didn't count  
As these were adults and thus allowed  
To be up at this sacred hour

It was a magical time and place  
That didn't fit into any category  
Other than the peculiar  
The thrilling  
And the unnatural

*George Sarantis*

## My Metis Urban Garden

Cedar stands in the north watching  
landscape ridged by sandstone ribs  
branches remind me of  
making cedar paths around the fire  
into the sweatlodge  
before our ceremonies.

Prairie crocus flowers  
downy petals that morph into  
feathery tufts on filigree stems  
as spring warms to summer.

From farm fields, violets  
brushed a soft lavender  
glow like evening horizons  
after summer showers.

Dug from country ditches  
wild blue bells transported  
in a silver pail  
tremble in gentle breezes  
remedy a troubled heart.

Taken from near the slough  
tall shooting stars –  
launched rockets point  
black pistils skyward.  
Beneath each  
a yellow band bridge  
five bright fuschia  
flamed fins.  
Transplanted from the farm  
yarrow now sits stately.  
Compact antique ivory islands float  
on stalks above green lace leaves.  
Chewed, her roots sooth throats  
of singers during prayer songs.

*Jacqueline Fiala*

## Snow

Blowing winds bring soft cries of hungry wolves  
These cries heard far and wide

Blowing leaves means blowing rain  
Stormy weather turns to wet snow

Wild animals gather food for winter  
Birds move south for winter

Blowing snow seen from afar  
Winter here to stay a while

*Christopher Leclair*

Untitled



*Paula Kirman*

Untitled



*Paula Kirman*



**heart of open mic night**

follow the lights  
up streets and avenues

feeling tonight this pacific cafe  
here to sip good coffee  
feeling wintery cool

early evening  
words and music rushes  
slushes of cars past the storefront

creative sparks  
a map of our hearts  
winding through the city

somebody keep this going  
if i slip the local scene

i've got to know so well  
all about you

*David Prodan*

## Powwow

Powwow time is here again  
Drumbeats fall like thundering rain  
Dancers step to the beat  
Sweating from infernal heat

The day is hot as it is long  
Drums keep beat to Indian song  
Voices lift with tones high  
Carried on winds to the sky

Moccasin feet rise and fall  
Traditions old respond to the call  
Ancient ones passed on the dance  
Pupils learned, now they prance

All dance with such ferocity  
Their eyes aglow with destiny  
Once again the land does ring  
Wind does hear warriors sing

Blackfoot, Cree, Stoney and Sioux  
Blood, Peigan and Sarsi too  
Moving together under flaming sun  
Moving as if all are one

Bodies pivot, sweep and sway  
Stored energy transformed this day  
Powwow time is here once more  
The circle renewed on grassy floor

*Terry Lusty*

## Powwow 1



Idle No More participants march to Churchill Square from Canada Place as part of the One Heartbeat march and rally on December 21, 2012. The event started on the north side of the Walterdale Bridge, which is a sacred burial ground. Protesters stopped at several locations for speakers and round dances.

*Paula Kirman*

## Powwow 2



Drummers lead the march from Churchill Square to Canada Place on the Idle No More Global Day of Action on January 11, 2013.

*Paula Kirman*

### Powwow 3



A round dance on Jasper Avenue in front of Canada Place as part of the Idle No More - One Heartbeat march and rally on December 21, 2012.

*Paula Kirman*

### Powwow 4



A hoop dancer in the centre of a round dance on Jasper Avenue, by Canada Place, where the Idle No More Global Day of Action finished on January 11, 2013.

*Paula Kirman*







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between E4C and The Learning Centre



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