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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 ppppplease?
My jjjjjacket's gone. My ssssshirt is tttorn.
My fffriend ttttook all my mmmmoney."
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

McCauley Writers Atlas is a project partnership
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