

THE PRICE IS RIGHT // THE PRICE IS WRONG

By Rhonda Stephens

Recently a news article was released stating: "In some B.C. emergency rooms, it's alleged that medical staff call a game "The Price is Right" where doctors and nurses would try to guess the blood-alcohol level of Indigenous patients. BC Health Minister Dix called the alleged actions "intolerable, unacceptable, and racist," and said the allegation would be investigated. (CTV News). For many of us in the DTES this is not new news. we are well aware of how we are treated in the hospitals. Writing about racism is second nature to us, we live and breath it each day. I speak from experience when I say I will not go to emergency unless it is absolutely necessary, usually never. why? Because I am usually treated like I should not be there, talked to like I am a child, don't understand English.

In this day and age, these concerns continue to be a systemic problem, where the mindset of the medical system is still tattered with the stamp of racist labeling - we are all drunks, or high on drugs. I am reminded of the reports which appeared a few years ago when it was brought to light the amount of Indigenous women who were being sterilized. My aunt was one of those who cannot bear children because these decisions were made without her consent. I am also reminded of the anger I felt when

reading the story of an Indigenous mother, Joyce Echaquan, who died in a hospital in September 2021. Echaquan, recorded last moments of her life on a video. The video captured Echaquan screaming in pain, along with the voices of staff members clearly making degrading comments, calling her stupid and saying she would be better off dead (BC TV news).

Some comments from SRO Indigenous tenants. "The last time I went to the emergency, I sat in emergency from 10 pm to 6 in the morning, after I signed in. even though my leg was bleeding like crazy after taking a fall". Every person who came in after me got to see a doctor except me, (I had a broken leg) (Tenant: WEST hotel). another tenant recants her story "During the summer it was so hot in my room I had a hard time breathing, I woke up in the middle of the night, sweating like crazy and confused. I couldn't breath, I tried to get up and was so dizzy I fell and bumped my head, "I didn't want to, but my neighbor called an ambulance. Story short, I was treated like I was garbage, asking me when I drank last, mm, I don't drink, when



was the last time you did drugs, mmm I don't do drugs. Same story same shit" (I had suffered heat stroke) tenant from the Summer hotel.

Awareness of the racism we face in the health care system for those who reside in the DTES is not meant to make anyone feel guilty, but to bring awareness to the changes that must take place. for this to happen we must take the time to understand Indigenous history and hold the health authorities accountable for the insufferable treatment and games the staff play with our lives.

If you want to share your specific story of experiencing or witnessing racism in the BC health care system, you can call the investigation team at 1-888-600-3078 or email us at Racism@bccombudsperson.ca

RESILIENCY IN THE DTES

By Jill Radcliffe

At the beginning of the pandemic, food got extra scarce in the neighborhood as everything shut down. Offers of gift cards, hot meals and groceries came our way. I began working with tenants who lived in different buildings to find ways to get the foods to those in need. Two years later we built up food programs in 30 SRO Hotels to include the following:

Elders Grocery Program, which is run by Indigenous tenants in the DTES: Every Monday 40 DTES Elders receive a delivery of fresh veggies and fruits, canned fish, eggs, meats, crackers and cereals.

Chinatown Grocery Program ordering and packing is done by China town tenants: Every Wednesday we deliver 180 packed bags of seasonal fresh fruits and veggies and some dried goods to tenants in

Chinatown SRO buildings.

SRO Tenant Free Produce Market: Once a week, 6 SRO tenants host a free produce market in their building, providing fruits and veggies for their neighbors.

SRO Hot Meal Program: LatinX community kitchen, Save-On-Meats, HAVE Cafe, Lotus Light and DTES Neighbourhood House cooks 1,900 good hot meals every week for 18 SRO hotels. The V6A Garden Club also harvest veggies for the Hot Meals and also cares for the sacred medicines garden at the Astoria Urban farm.

...If you want to get involved please come find me at the Warehouse!

My name is Jill Ratcliffe. I am the Director of the food program for SRO-C. I grew up on the east coast and moved to the

DTES 6 years ago. When I first was living on my own at 15 I started volunteering with a meal program to eat and to participate in my community. I continue to stay involved in community food work in different ways over the years. I am very grateful to all those contributing their time and efforts to make this all possible.



SRO-C ELDERS CORNER: A REASSURING DREAM

By Sampson McKay

As a child when I was first aware of my dreams, I always wanted to follow my grandfather's footsteps. But something happened that didn't quite make sense to me. My personal goals were obscured, which led me to have bad memories. It misdirected me for many years until one day I came to a realization, a spiritual awakening, a healing dream, and a vision.

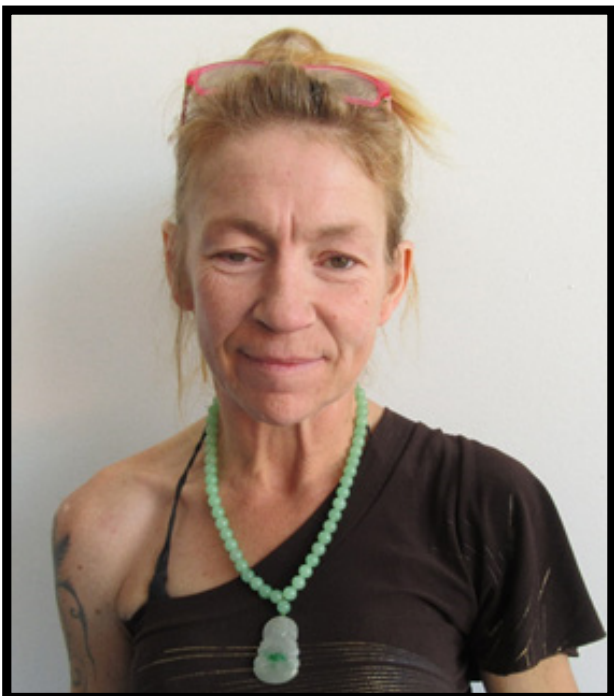
I was placed in a Residential School in Edmonton, Alberta. The rest of my brothers and sisters were sent to Alert Bay Residential School. I was petrified and confused: first they took my grandfather away, now they separated me from my sisters and brothers. Although there were a number of other native kids assembled at my placement, I was scared and very lost. It was then my trust was gone, and I learned to hate which led me to being super-independent and troubled.

I often wondered what would have been

WARRIOR DOWN

Patricia Hamilton was born May 1970 to the Pine Creek Ojibwa Nation in Manitoba. Trish was a warm and happy person who exuded confidence, made people laugh and gave them a sense of security being around her. In the words of so many people Trish was known as "mom" always ready with a helping hand for those who needed it, whether it was just a shoulder to lean on or to help financially. She was always putting other people ahead of her own needs.

Trish began working for TORO (Tenant Overdose Response Organization) in 2011. In her words, "I really didn't know where I was being taken on this road, but my world changed when I became a TORO lead in my SRO hotel. I have saved hundreds of lives by reversing overdoses and teaching people how to use narcan. My life means more now that I can see the work I am doing. I am ever so grateful for TORO for



my purpose in life if my dreams weren't obscured, and I wonder if my life was meant to be that way, that is to be left with bad memories. I spent over 20 years on skid-row, desperately searching for an answer, it led me to becoming an alcoholic. I even contemplated suicide.

One day I woke up from a drunk at the Vancouver Detox, again thinking of a way to end it all. Then all of a sudden it was like being hit with a thousand volts of lightning! Something happened! something had come over me. I sat up on the bed and suddenly realized that if I succeeded in doing away with myself, heck, I'd be forgotten in a few days. I like to think of this as a spiritual awakening and healing dream.

Today I have priorities, and a good walking and talking relationship with the Creator. I'd like to think that I have been to hell and back, so I am very happy just to have survived the whole ordeal. Maybe that was really what my grandfather was trying to teach me, how to survive and not make

finding me and saving my life by offering me this position. On top of that I give out medicine of sage and sweet grass, sometimes pine and devils club, that I make with the TORO Indigenous program. I also took on a role of doing outreach when ever I was needed."

"what helps me as well when I struggle is my partner in crime, Andrew and my dog rocky. Rocky was our dog but I named him after my fav. show Rocky Balboa." Scooby (her partner) remembers fondly, "when she got hired with TORO she got sparkles in her eyes."

Patricia passed to a drug over dose. Her partner Andrew, alias Scooby shared this thought, "do not use alone. This is a lesson for all of us, its ok to use as long as you don't overdo it. Do it a little at a time, Patricia was quite keen in saying this"

After Trish passed Scooby remembers how many people would come up to him on hearing of her passing, not knowing how many peoples lives she had impacted. He misses her dearly each day, rocky still waits for her. Scoobys message is, "Trish's death is not in vain, the drug supply is toxic and is killing so many people. Her death is a wake up call for something to be done for safe supply"

We at the SRO-C miss Trish, her jokes, laughter and sense of humor.

Walk softly daughter.

Hagwil hiyeen, Hagwil heyeen deek.
Tooyaaski niin will hawilin hiyeen.

things worse.

All good things and bad things must come to an end. And if you are fortunate enough you will one day suddenly realize your dilemma and do something about it.



For me, the change I have longed for has finally transpired. Although they may not be the same dreams I had as a child, I am quite content with my new goals. Let the Creator be your guild.

Sampson McKay is from the Nisga'a nation and holds a Hereditary chieftain name "Tam Yeethl Smax" and hails from the house of Nagwauun. – He lives and continues to do volunteer work in the DTES. Tooyaksiy' niin Sampson.

Last Time

by Kathleen B.

Last night we braced the wind,
bodies closely together,
keeping the cold at bay.
Our hands clasped tightly,
surrounding our love with
warmth.
I never wanted to let you go.
Hope, yes;
Love, yes;
You loved me like no other.
No other would dare, this utterly
painful pain the darkness gave me.
But you came along
waging protective wings around me.
Your mind is my symphony,
my heart would race,
Knowing I did not deserve you.
My mind would play tricks on me,
Making me believe this would last.
I held you in my arms,
As you lay barely breathing.
Your lips so blue, your breath struggling.
WHY, did u not wait for me?
A few more minutes,
I would have set my eyes on you.
I feel your last breath,
I hold you in my arms,
I looked at my veins screaming at me,
I looked at your veins,
no longer yielding to want.
No longer.
No longer.

