

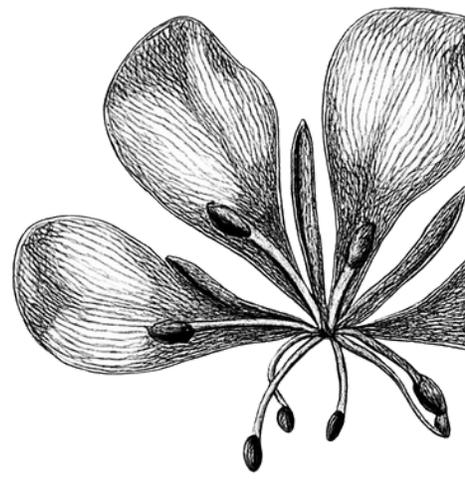
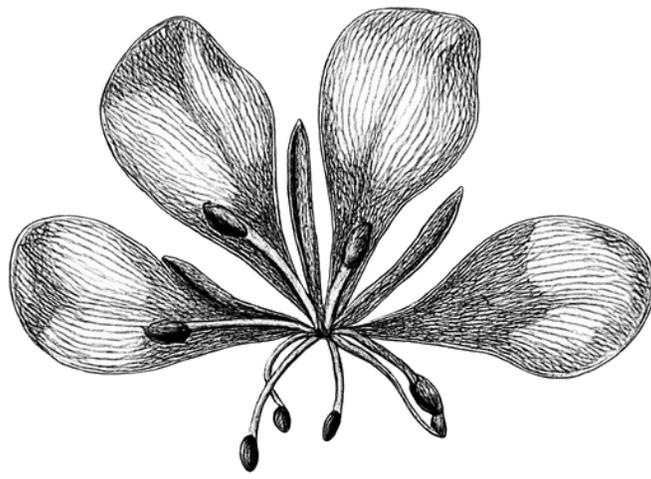
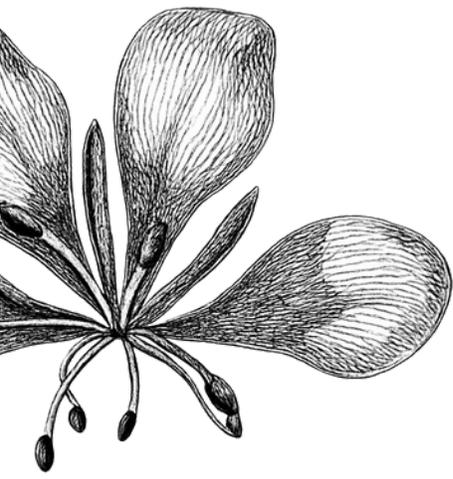
THE PHOENIX SINGS

**News on Rebellion and Health
for Mental Health Service Users**

DECEMBER 2025

**A project of The Empowerment
Council and Workman Arts**

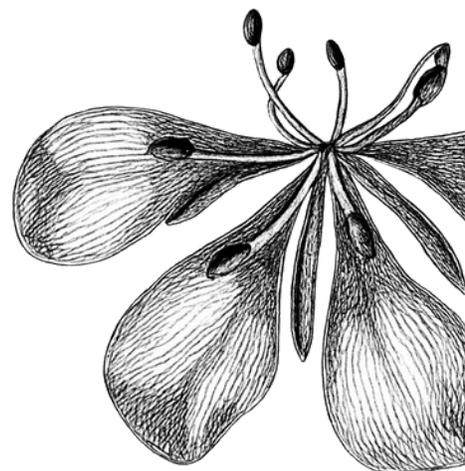
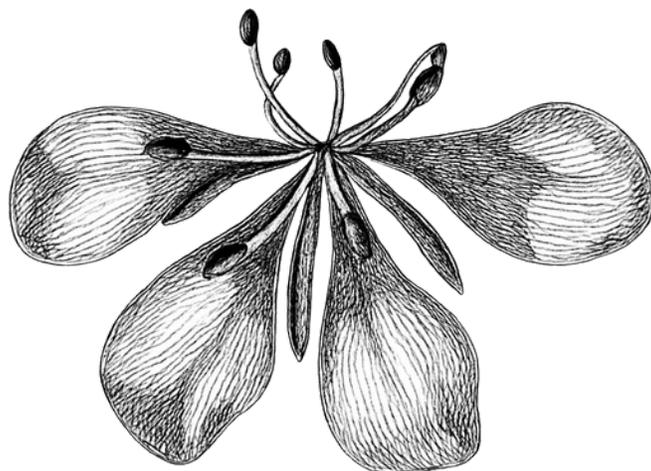
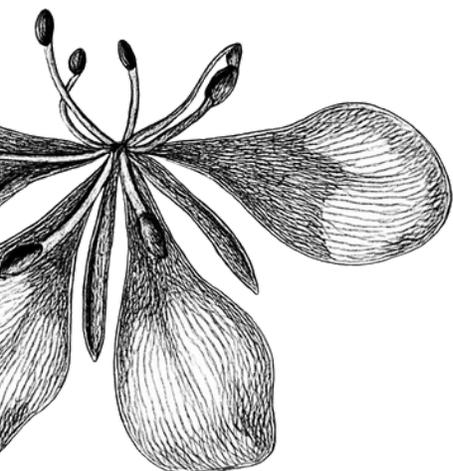
Toronto, Canada



OUR MISSION

As a space for thoughtful dialogue and shared community perspectives, The Phoenix Sings uses a community-journalism approach by and for the Mad and Service User community. We bring together voices to explore art and culture, as well as the laws, policies, and practices that shape mental health services and experiences. We are also committed to highlighting events and issues of relevance to our communities.

The Empowerment Council and Workman Arts continue a long tradition of community-based chronicling and storytelling, offering viewpoints on mental health across a broad spectrum.





IN THIS EDITION:

The Mythos

Law News

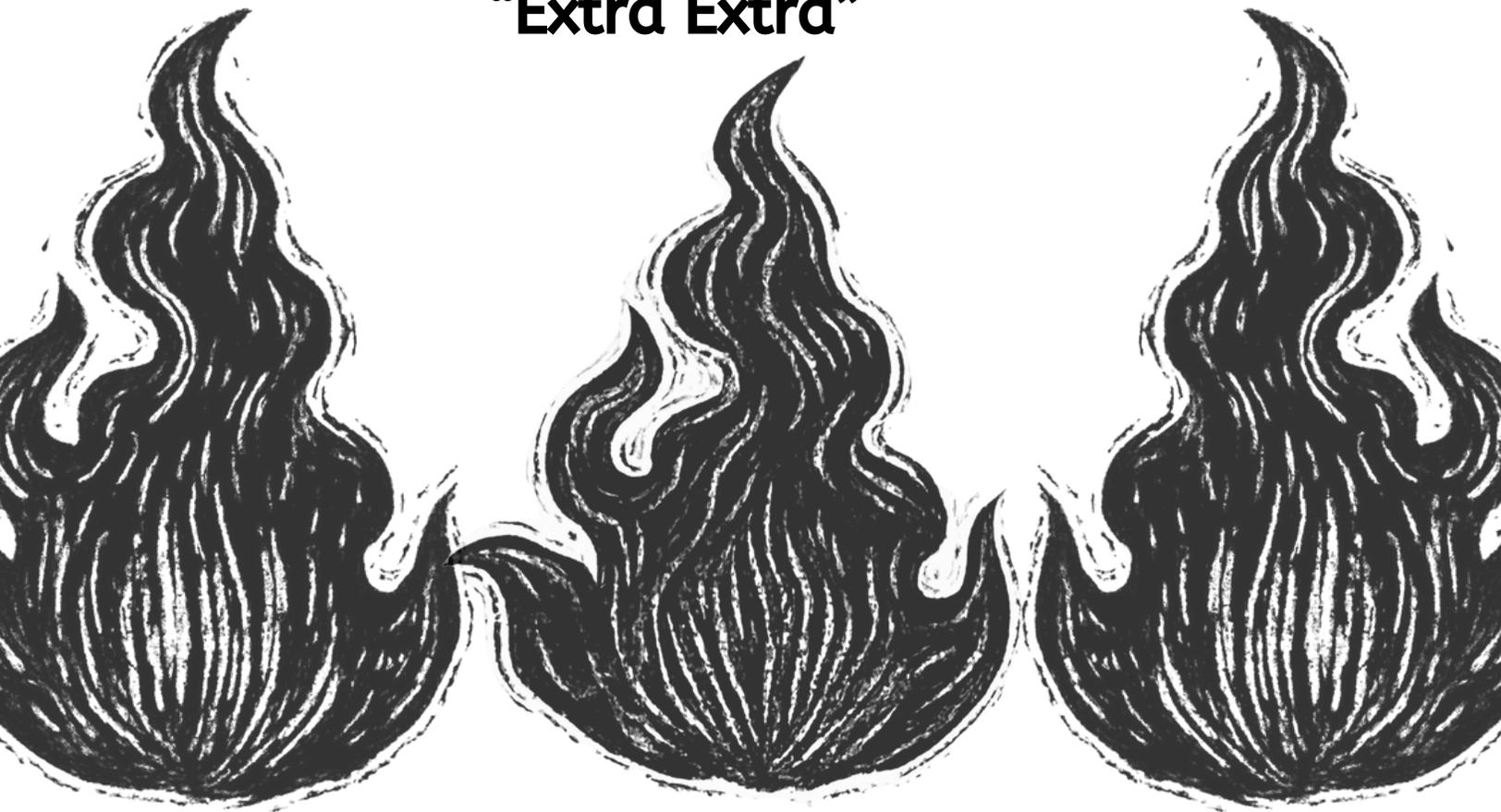
About ART

About AI

Announcements

City Happenings

“Extra Extra”



THE MYTHOS

International Day of Persons with Disability

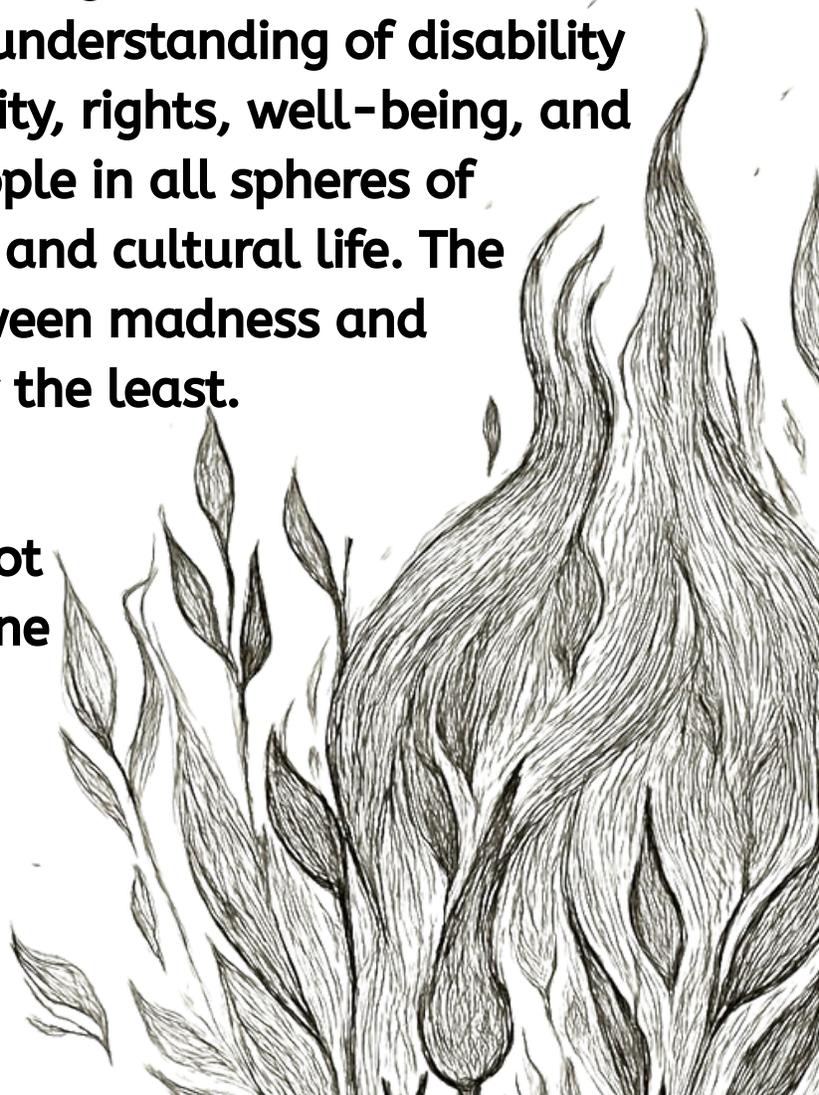
The relationship between distress and disability has continued to be a vexed and controversial one.

(Beresford, 2015)

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In 1992 the United Nations proclaimed December 3rd as the International Day of Persons with Disabilities (IDPD). The goals of celebrating IDPD include: increasing awareness and understanding of disability issues with a focus on dignity, rights, well-being, and integration of disabled people in all spheres of political, social, economic, and cultural life. The historical relationship between madness and disability is complex to say the least.

Our community and organizing histories have not always easily allied with one another, and yet also have not been wholly and completely separate.



Releasing our first issue of Mad Times on the International Day of Persons with Disabilities aims to acknowledge these complexities drawing on both the overlaps and tensions that exist between our communities and experiences without having to completely unpack and unravel the finer details.

In essence, in the spirit of IDPD, this first issue of *The Phoenix Sings* (and future issues to come), highlights an important connection between our movements by creating a space to report on the political, social, economic and cultural life of mad people and amplifying issues of madness that often get overlooked within mainstream media.



LAW NEWS



Lucy Costa

WHAT IS BILL 6 (SAFER MUNICIPALITIES ACT, 2025)?

Bill 6 is a new Ontario law introduced in the Ontario Legislature on April 30, 2025, that creates the Restricting Public Consumption of Illegal Substances Act, 2025. It also makes changes to the Trespass to Property Act.

Basically, this law makes it illegal to use illegal drugs in public places, including parks, sidewalks, or even inside tents or other structures if not officially allowed.

The Ontario government announced Bill 6 would include funding for housing (815 affordable and supportive units), shelters (971 spaces across the province), and the Ontario housing benefit. But, this isn't nearly enough to meet the housing and shelter needs in most Ontario communities.

What the Law Allows

- Police or local by-law officers can ask for identification, seize someone's drugs, ask them to leave a public space. If the person doesn't comply, they could be arrested, fined up to \$10,000, or jailed for up to 6 months.
- 

BILL 6 (SAFER MUNICIPALITIES ACT, 2025)

Why should you care?

- **It punishes people who are houseless, living in encampments, or use drugs**
- **This Bill could worsen inequality, especially for Indigenous, racialized, or disabled people who are already over-policed**
- **This violates human rights, like the right to security, liberty, and equality under the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms.**
- **We need more housing, health care, and harm reduction supports instead of criminalization.**
- **It has allowed people to spread misinformation and biased views on social media and other sites, without access to accurate information from past legal cases or research.**
- **Finally, as the city continues to clear encampments, there is increased pressure on shelters for people who are houseless.**



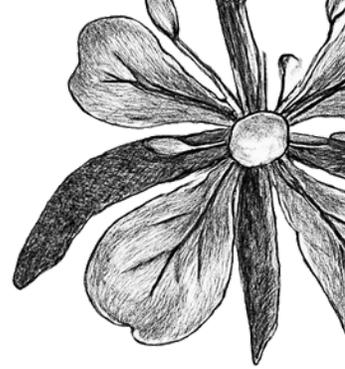
COERCIVE INVOLUNTARY TREATMENT

In June 2024, a group of Ontario mayors asked all levels of government to take “quick” action on homelessness, mental health, and addiction. One mayor even said the government should use a special rule called the “notwithstanding clause” to stop people from challenging the law in court. He said taking away some rights might be needed to make people get treatment, even if they don’t want it.

Later, on May 1, 2025, the Ontario government said it would study whether to force people in jail with drug problems into treatment against their will. This came after other actions that target people who use drugs, like cutting back safe overdose consumption sites, banning public drug use, and raising trespassing fines.

Then, in March 2025 Ontario’s mental health and addictions minister, Michael Tibollo, says the system is already too overwhelmed to force people into treatment. He says the goal is to make sure everyone can get help in their community within a week. This issue is an important one to pay attention to!

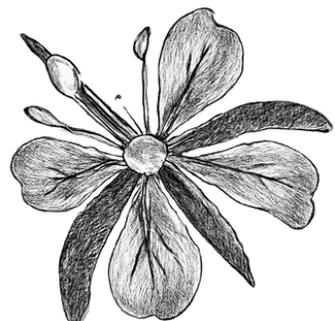
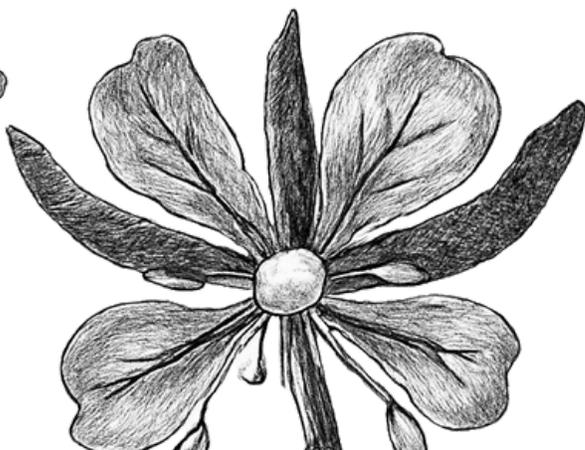


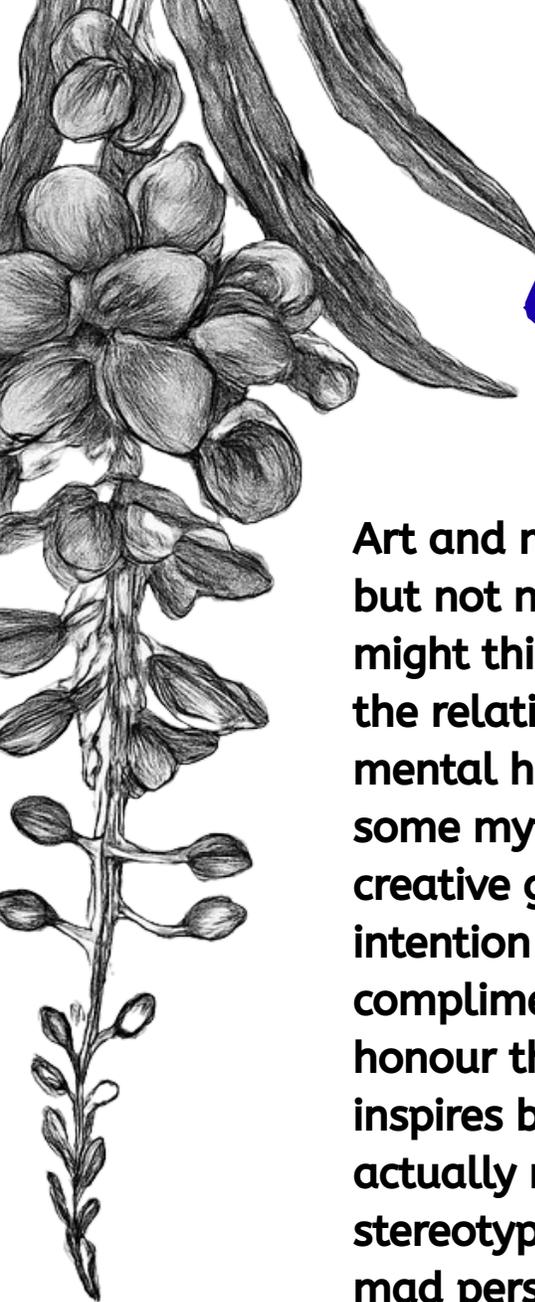


BILL 60

Ontario Premier Doug Ford shouts, “Go Find a Job” amid passage of Housing Bill 60.

Bill 60 makes it harder for tenants in Ontario to defend themselves and easier for landlords to evict. It shortens eviction timelines, reduces the times to appeal, and limits what tenants can raise at hearings unless they gave advance notice. Tenants may also have to pay 50% of rent arrears upfront to present a defense. The Bill removes the Landlord and Tenant Board’s ability to consider fairness or personal circumstances and eliminates compensation for “personal use” evictions. Tenant warn these changes increase evictions, reduce access to justice, and push more people into housing insecurity and homelessness.

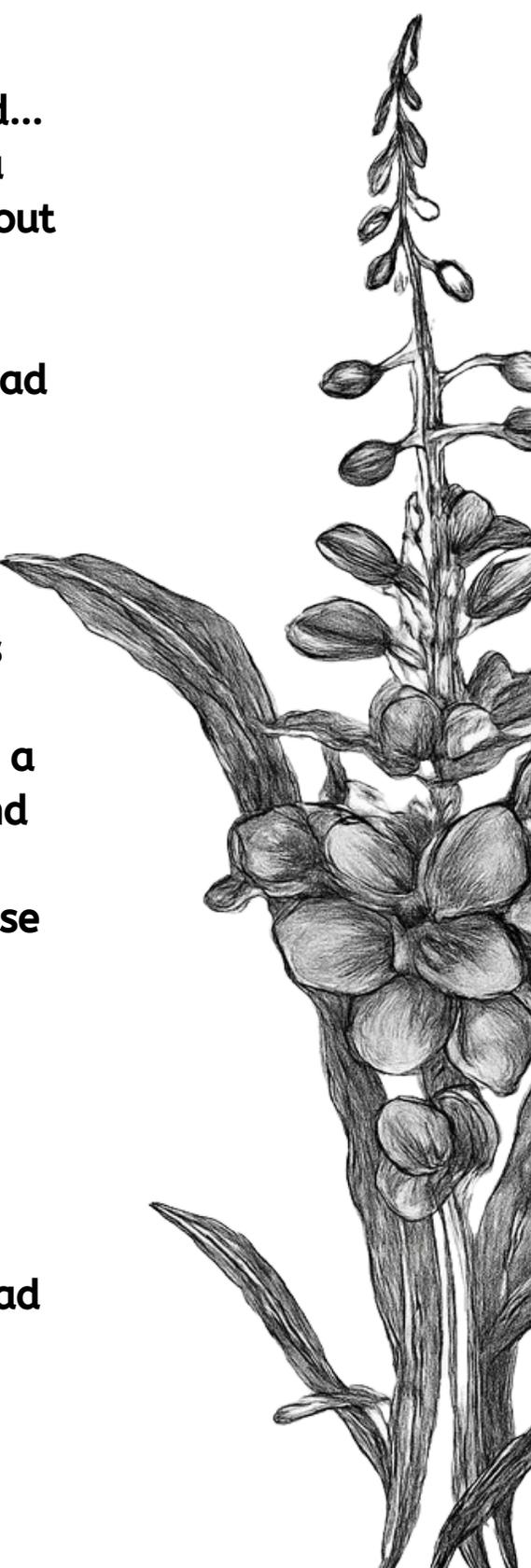


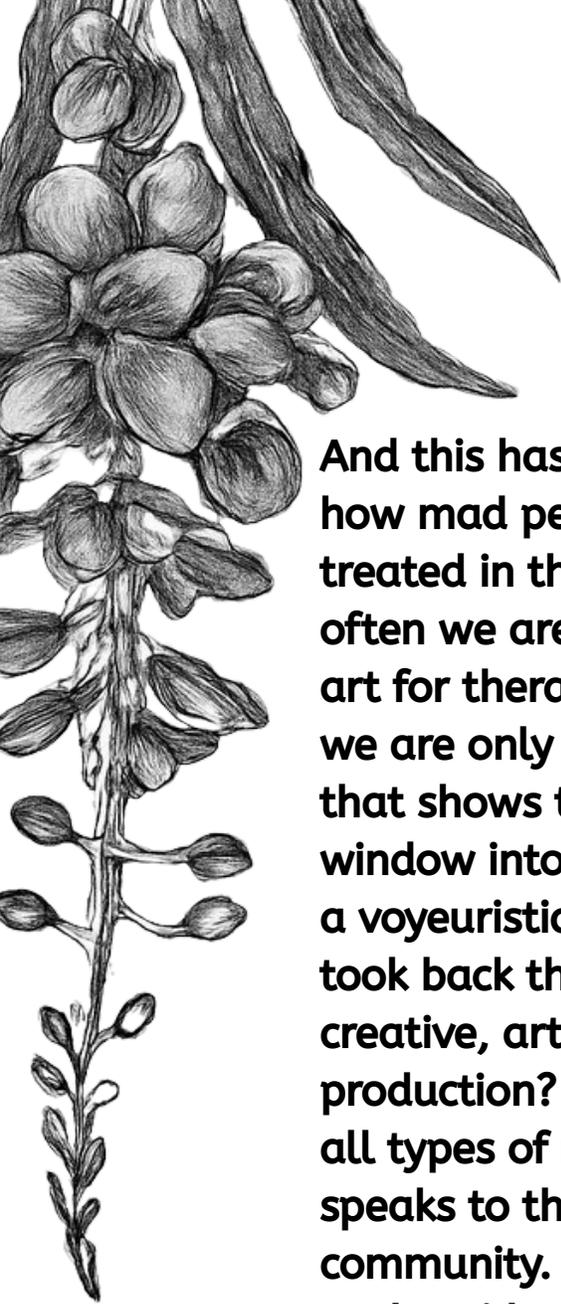


ABOUT ART

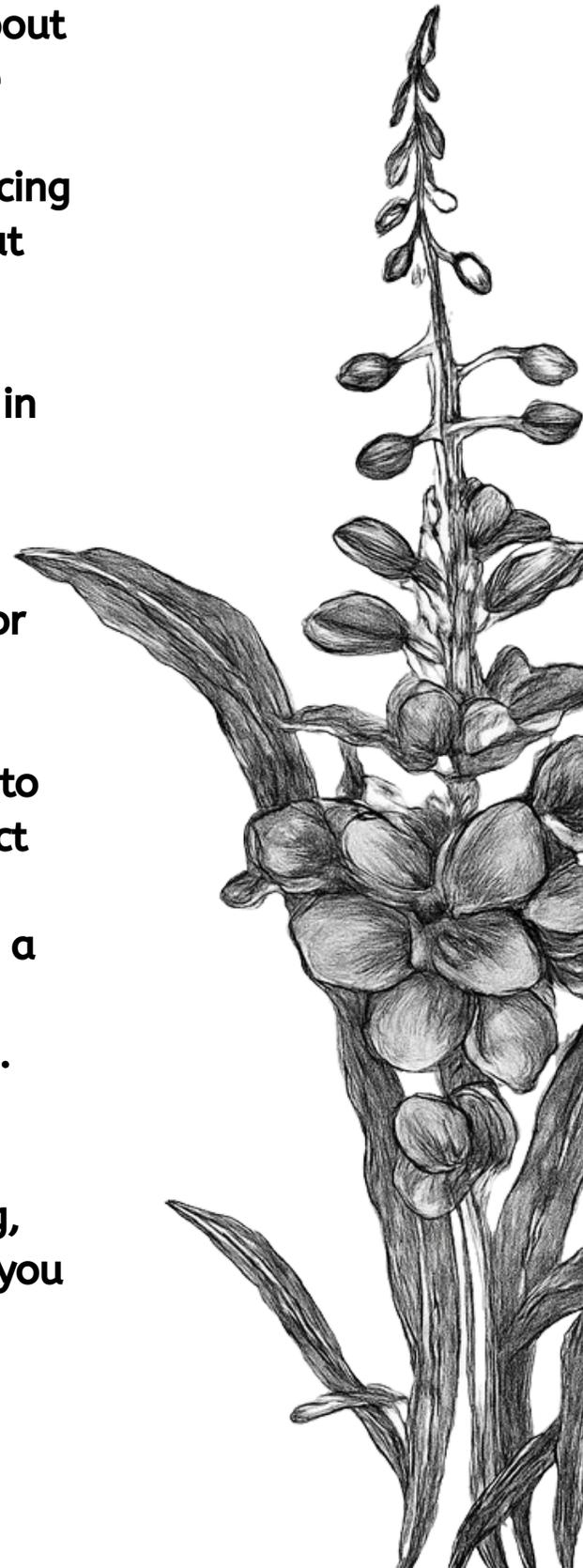
Jenna Reid

Art and madness go hand-in-hand... but not necessarily in the ways you might think. When people think about the relationship between art and mental health they often envision some mythical experience of the mad creative genius. And while the intention is to see this as a compliment - a way to value and honour the beauty and magic that inspires brilliant works of art - this actually reinforces negative stereotypes of what it means to be a mad person. Art has had a long and complicated relationship to our community when controlled by those within mental health institutions. Initially asylums refused access to artistic tools and prohibited inpatients from doing anything creative. In the late 1700s things shifted in the asylum and art went from a forbidden activity and instead was used as a tool for therapy.





And this has informed so much about how mad people and their art are treated in the formal art world - often we are seen as solely producing art for therapeutic reasons OR that we are only able to produce work that shows the outside world a window into our mad experiences in a voyeuristic way. But what if we took back these stories about our creative, artistic, and cultural production? Mad people use art for all types of reason and much of it speaks to the culture of our community. Mad art can be used: to explore identity, as a subversive act of resistance, as part of our countercultural formation, and as a way to protest the wrongs we experience in the world around us. There are so many incredible examples of mad art and we're excited to be highlighting, storying, archiving, and sharing these with you from a critical mad perspective!



ABOUT AI

Shaun Laffan

AI is everywhere these days—like glitter, it just keeps showing up—and the mental health and addictions world is no exception. As this tech keeps expanding, we want to share what we’re learning and hear all about your hopes, worries, curiosities, and “uh-oh” moments when it comes to AI.

So what exactly is AI?

Artificial intelligence is a branch of computer science focused on creating machines and software that can perform tasks that normally require human thinking and reflection. These tasks can be things like understanding language, recognizing images or speech, solving problems, making decisions, and learning from experience. Instead of being programmed with exact step-by-step instructions for every possible situation, AI systems use data and patterns to “learn” how to respond or improve over time. AI powers technologies such as voice assistants like Siri or Alexa, recommendation systems on Netflix and YouTube, and even tools that help doctors detect diseases from medical scans.



Potential Dangers and Concerns with AI?

Well. . . Privacy!

AI systems often rely on large amounts of data, which may include personal or sensitive information. If this data is not properly protected, it could be exposed, misused, or stolen. It's important that service users be cautious about what information you share and to understand that AI systems are not always completely private or secure.

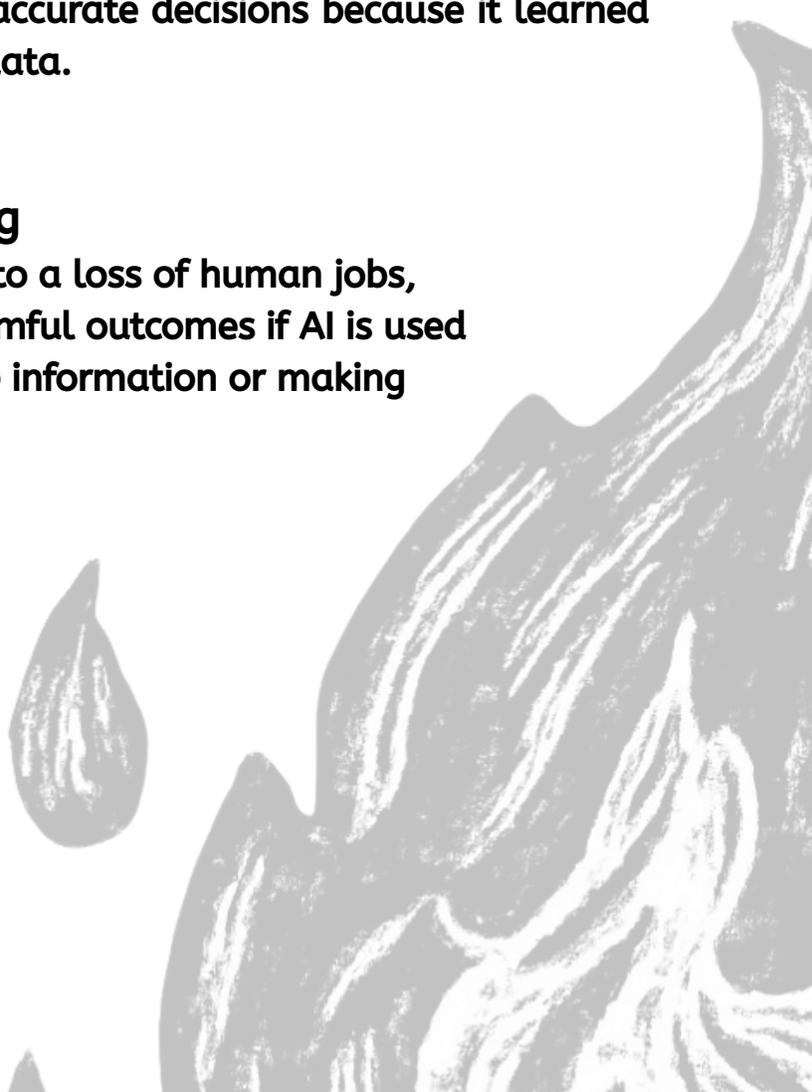
How about Bias?

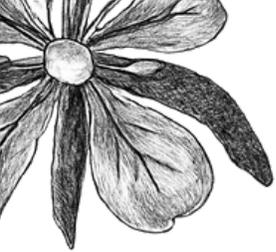
An AI system may make unfair or inaccurate decisions because it learned from biased (unfair and inaccurate) data.

Loss of Human Critical Thinking

Relying too heavily on AI could lead to a loss of human jobs, reduced critical thinking, or even harmful outcomes if AI is used irresponsibly, such as spreading false information or making unsafe decisions.

If you are interested in learning more about AI please let us know and we will be organising a discussion session in the future for discussion.





ANNOUNCEMENTS

MIND THE GAPS

<https://mindthegapsguide.ca/>

This guide is for graduate students who want practical advice on how to navigate the challenges of grad school. Instead of focusing on self-care, it helps you plan and make strategic choices about things like funding, working with your supervisor, and deciding whether to share mental health concerns.

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PALLIATIVE PSYCHIATRY: WHAT DO SERVICE USERS THINK?

Palliative psychiatry is an emerging way of offering support to people who have been using mental health services for a long time, and current treatments haven't worked well or at all.

Palliative psychiatry as a model is not about giving up or about dying. It is about having more comfort, and living life in a way that feels right for you. To learn more or offer feedback on this emerging research and conversation, contact the Empowerment Council at 416 535-8501 Extension 33013 or email: EC1.Volunteer@camh.ca

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ARCH DISABILITY LAW CENTRE 2 EVENTS

The Centre for Independent Living in Toronto (CILT) and Partners are pleased to invite you to International Day of Persons with Disabilities: Resisting Ableism, Building Community and Hope!

When: Wednesday, December 3, 2025, 1:00-3:00 PM Eastern Time (Canada)

Access Supports: ASL-English interpretation and CART Captioning will be provided.

If you require any access accommodations, please let us know by Nov 26, 2025.

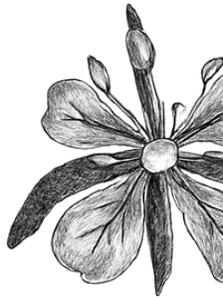
Register in advance for this meeting at:

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/81252820000/register/a1XmyDUsQUIRCZzUhutH-Q>

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CRISIS WORKERS on the TTC

Starting Nov. 15, crisis workers will be available around the clock on the "u" portion of the Toronto Transit Commission's Line 1. Toronto Community Crisis Service (TCCS) workers will be stationed at Spadina, Union and Bloor-Yonge stations but will be deployed to respond to calls



SAVE THE ASIAN MENTAL HEALTH CLINIC

Save the Asian Initiative in Mental Health Clinic

Dec 3 2025 7:00 – 8:30PM EST

On June 18, 2025, University Health Network dissolved the AIM Clinic abruptly after 23 years of service. Over 1300 petition signatures and supports from organizations and mental health professionals have been ignored. Let us gather together and share our stories, unite in solidarity, and let the world know that AIM and culturally accessible mental health services matter. <https://re-aim.ca>

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CTOs Community Treatment Orders REVIEW TIME

Well, better late than never, folks. The government is mandated to review this legislation every 5 years. It is late again, but If you are someone on a Community Treatment Order and you want to offer feedback , see info below:

The Ministry of Health is conducting a review of Ontario’s Community Treatment Order (CTO) program as required under the Mental Health Act. This review will assess how CTOs are currently being used, their effectiveness, and their impact on clients, families, service providers, and the health system. MOH is running focus groups in late November and early December, and has also developed an anonymous survey. The details are below:

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Clients to Join a Focus Group or Complete a Survey

Focus group options for clients:

- **Option 1: December 3rd from 1:00 PM – 2:00 PM. Access the focus group using [this Zoom link](#).**
- **Option 2: December 5th, 2025 from 1:00 PM – 2:00 PM. Access the focus group using [this Zoom link](#).**

If you have any questions, please reach out to armanda.iuliano@optimussbr.com who is coordinating this effort.



CITY HAPPENINGS

FREE EVENTS

Hiroshima Appeals: A Poster Exhibition of Global Messages

By The Japan Foundation, Toronto

Book your visit to the Hiroshima Appeals Poster Exhibition at The Japan Foundation, Toronto.

Location The Japan Foundation, Toronto 2 Bloor Street East, Suite 300 Toronto,

Register here : <https://www.eventbrite.ca/e/hiroshima-appeals-a-poster-exhibition-of-global-messages-tickets-1247224625429>

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Laughter Healing Circle

Date: every Wednesday at 11:30 am – 12:00 pm

Location: Zoom (you'll get the link after registration.)

Laughter is the best medicine.

In this group, we laugh together through laughter exercises known as laughter yoga.

Laughter Yoga is a unique health concept in which we can laugh for a long time without jokes, humor, or comedy.

No experience needed. No equipment needed.

Join us if you want to have a little break from your stress, worries or loneliness. This program is for residents in Ontario, all ages are welcome.

Please register from the link below.

<https://forms.gle/TsYXbXgqheqBDSZb9>

If you have questions, please contact Maiko at 416-529-2915 / mtaku@tno-toronto.org



FREE EVENTS

Toronto's Most Scandalous: Celebrity Headlines

By Toronto Public Library

Historian Adam Bunch talks about the celebrities whose scandalous lifestyles have made tabloid headlines around the world.

Friday, December 12 · 12 - 1pm

Location Online

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Art Museum at the University of Toronto: Earthwork

In this exhibition, Migwans shifts our understanding of earthwork to refer to a way of working, rather than the making of singular objects, reclaiming the art historical framing from an Indigenous perspective. It considers multiple layers of engagement with the land, including a history of land defense movements, medicine walks, and ancestral practices of prescribed burns, alongside contemporary art.

University of Toronto Art Centre

15 King's College Circle Toronto, Ontario

September 4, 2025 until December 20, 2025

Every Tuesday at Noon - 5 p.m. Every Wednesday at Noon - 8 p.m. Every

Thursday at Noon - 5 p.m. Every Friday at Noon - 5 p.m. Every Saturday at

Noon - 5 p.m.



"EXTRA EXTRA"

Do you need a computer?

Renewed Computer Technology (RCT) is a not-for-profit, charitable organization that empowers learners, educators and not-for-profit organizations with increased access to information and communications technology (ICT), skill development and learning opportunities, in a socially and environmentally responsible manner.

Partnering with the **Renewed Computer Technology** we are offering affordable, renewed computer packages.



1. Open camera on phone
2. Hold camera up to QR code above
3. Click link that appears on your screen
4. <https://form.jotform.com/210064491669265>

You can apply for this program if you are:

A resident of Ontario and you are an individual with limited income.

Parents or legal guardians may apply on behalf of a child or youth under the age of 18.

We offer **1 computer per person**, with a limit of **2 per household per year**.

For more RCT information, please contact:

Adam French
Community Engagement Lead
Email: afrench@rcto.ca

All systems include our
1-YEAR DEPOT WARRANTY

*batteries not covered by warranty

We have Desktop Packages starting from \$130.00+ \$35.00 to ship the computer to your home or pick up at our Ottawa Office (\$15.00)



You get - a desktop complete with Windows 11 and Office Libre - With Windows Defender, monitor, keyboard and mouse

We have Laptop Packages starting from \$125.00+ \$25.00 to ship the computer to your home or pick up at our Ottawa Office (\$15.00)



You get - a laptop complete with Windows 11 and Office Libre - With Windows Defender

*Computers may not appear exactly as shown

With funding from

Canada

Visit Us Online @ www.RCTO.ca

RCT 
Renewed Computer Technology

"EXTRA EXTRA"



John Howard Society Peer Support Worker Job (Peel Region)

More Info Here : [PeerWorker Job](#)

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CASEWORKER EMPLOYMENT & SOCIAL SERVICES

Information Sessions:

Learn more about the caseworker role within Employment and Social Services by attending one of our upcoming virtual information sessions. These sessions will be hosted via Microsoft Teams and facilitated by Divisional staff.

For more info:

<https://jobs.toronto.ca/.../T-CASEWORKER.../597504217/>

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The Dream Team is back

The Dream Team is a group of people with lived experience of mental health and/or addiction who have been advocating for supportive housing for over 20 years.

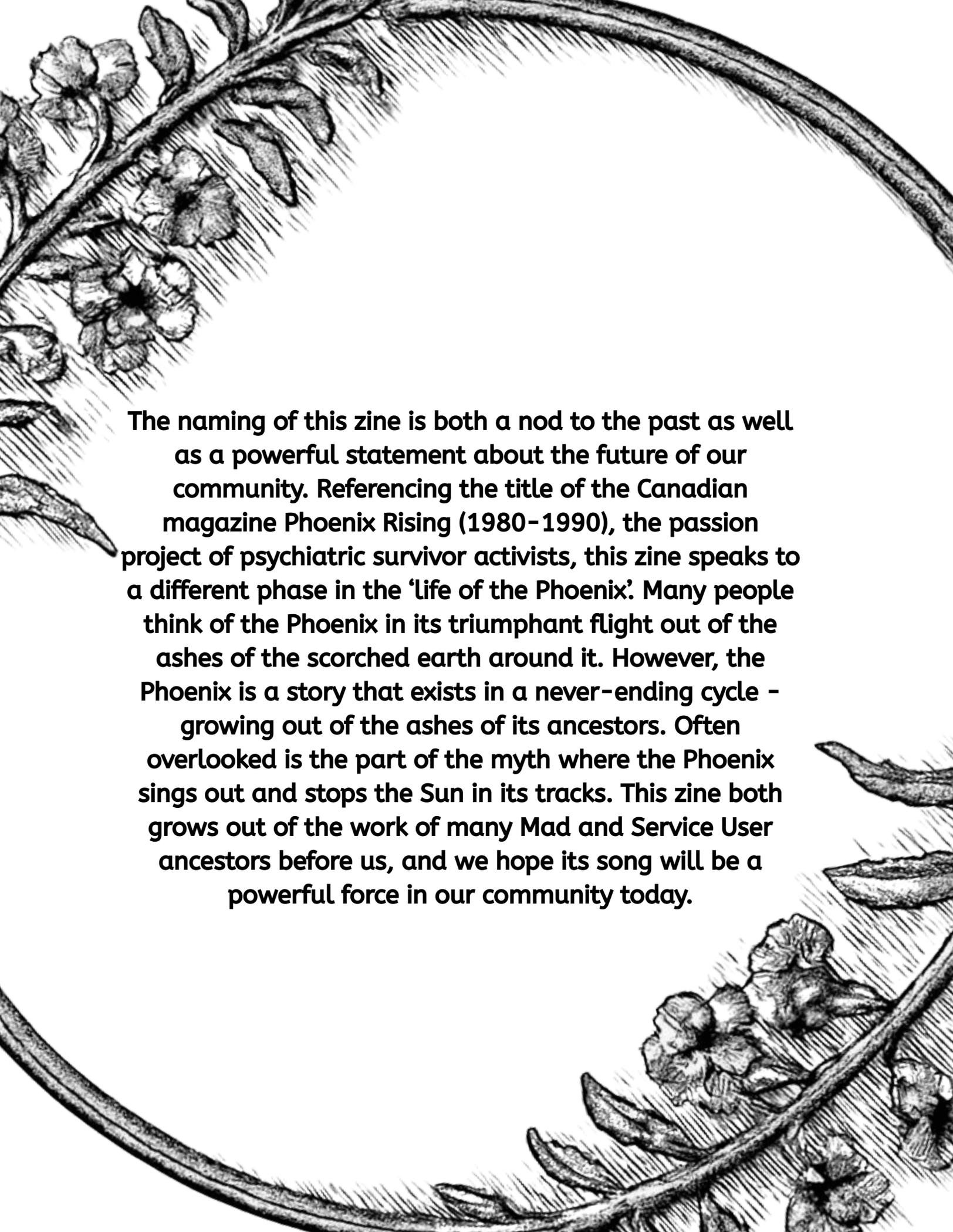
The Dream Team and The Empowerment Council will be hosting an info session in 2026. Look for the details in our next issue or sign up to earn more.

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TO SIGN UP for THE PHOENIX SINGS

VISIT: <https://tinyurl.com/57aupwj4>





The naming of this zine is both a nod to the past as well as a powerful statement about the future of our community. Referencing the title of the Canadian magazine Phoenix Rising (1980-1990), the passion project of psychiatric survivor activists, this zine speaks to a different phase in the 'life of the Phoenix'. Many people think of the Phoenix in its triumphant flight out of the ashes of the scorched earth around it. However, the Phoenix is a story that exists in a never-ending cycle - growing out of the ashes of its ancestors. Often overlooked is the part of the myth where the Phoenix sings out and stops the Sun in its tracks. This zine both grows out of the work of many Mad and Service User ancestors before us, and we hope its song will be a powerful force in our community today.