

The Phoenix Sings

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



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's Social Justice Initiative Continues A Tradition Of Community-Based Chronicling And Storytelling, Offering Viewpoints On Mental Health Across A Broad Spectrum.

IN THIS EDITION



Big Thanks to this issue's contributors: Maverick Smith, Lisa Walter, Andy M., Ken Munro and Lynn LaCroix. Do dive into their pieces and catch some news of the ever-shifting landscape of rebellion, resistance, and health news for service users.

LAW NEWS

COERCION IN CANADA: CHARTING THE BLAME, PUNISH AND CONTROL GAME

By Lucy Costa

Who is getting blamed and targeted during this time of disagreement confusions and suffering in our local and global communities? Every day we hear or know about people struggling to get by in a world increasingly shaped by a few tech billionaires controlling wealth and how we even communicate with each other. Wealth gaps are growing for mental health service users/ folks with disabilities, refugee and immigrants, Indigenous communities, and young people are struggling to get employment. Meanwhile, community supports are shrinking (and by “community supports” I mean real, welcoming spaces with caring, interested and purpose-driven humans across the frontline and academic spectrum). So with everyone having more challenges why all over the country, coercion is rising. **Here are just some examples:**

Ontario Passed June 2025	Bill 6 – Safer Municipalities Act (June 2025) <ul style="list-style-type: none">Empowers police to order individuals to stop using illegal substances in public places, including encampments. Police can order individuals to leave the area. Penalties: Up to \$10,000 in fines or 6 months in jail.
Saskatchewan Passed August 2025	Safe Spaces Act / Street Weapons Act Grants police the power to seize “street weapons,” for example hypodermic needles. Penalties: Up to \$5,000 in fines or 1 year in prison.
Manitoba Passed November 2025	Bill 48 - the Protective Detention and Care of Intoxicated Persons Act, <ul style="list-style-type: none">Allows police and designated officers to involuntarily detain individuals who are highly intoxicated by drugs (such as methamphetamine) or alcohol for up to 72 hours.
Manitoba	Reports indicate a surging use of seclusion across the province’s mental health and hospital system. Source: Winnipeg Free Press, December 5, 2025
Nova Scotia	Implementation of a new weapons screening system at two Halifax-area hospitals. Scheduled for December 2025
Alberta Passed May 2025	Bill 53 – Compassionate Intervention Act <ul style="list-style-type: none">A Bill that aims to force people who use drugs into involuntary addiction treatment.

For further reading on this please see the January 2026 piece in the Globe and Mail. Journalist Rob Wipond who asks” [Why does Canada have such high rates of forced psychiatric hospitalizations?](#)

What we don’t hear about the many ways the “blame- punish-coercion” game happens in other places. The under or un-reported stuff. **WE WANT TO TRACK THESE TRENDS AND ARE LOOKING FOR FUTURE SUBMISSIONS AND REPORTS**

BILL 48 PROTESTERS CALL FOR “CARE, NOT CAGES”

by Lisa Walter

In late November, 2025, the Manitoba provincial government rushed into law new powers to detain people deemed intoxicated for up to three days. The government, headed by NDP Premier Wab Kinew, heralded The Protective Detention and Care of Intoxicated Persons Act as important both for community safety and public health. However, community members, organizations, and agencies quickly expressed alarm. Under the new act, police and community safety officers can take someone they believe is intoxicated and causing a public disturbance to a so-called protective care centre, where they can be held involuntarily for three days. Bernadette Smith, the Minister for Addictions, has described the detox centre as an access point for addictions medicine and social services, and provided assurances that detainees would be assessed and monitored by qualified health care providers.

Perhaps unsurprisingly, the reality has not shaped up to the hype. A tour by media crews of the new facility, which opened in early December, set off alarm bells for addictions services providers and members of Indigenous communities. It hosts twenty cells that appear identical to solitary detention jail cells, complete with steel sink/toilet units. It appears detainees are being monitored by paramedics only, with no doctors, nurses, or social workers on site. Some detainees have said the only assistance they are provided on release is a bus ticket.

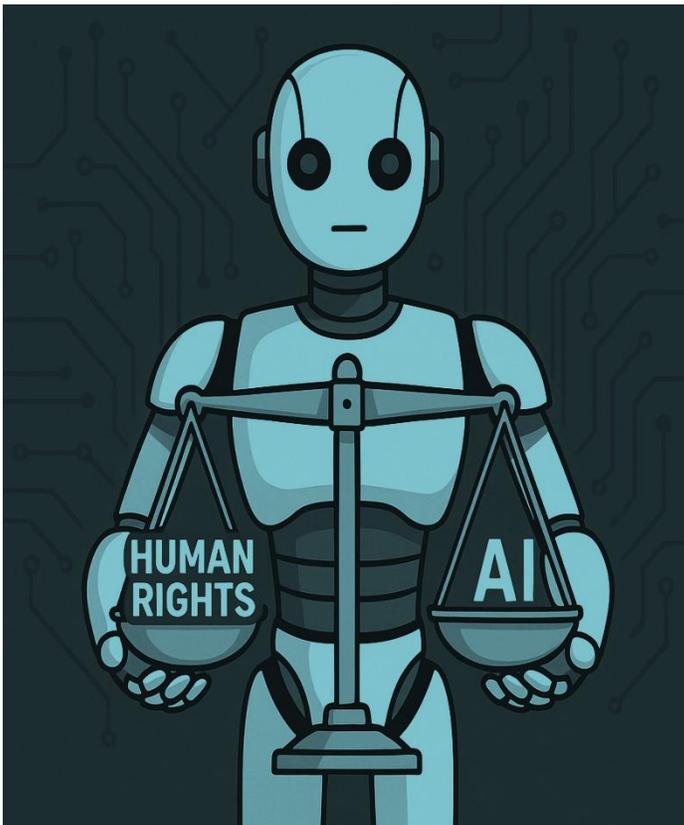
At an Indigenous-led demonstration at the provincial legislature on November 23, speakers decried the law as a heavy-handed Colonial response to complex social challenges. They described the disproportionately impact it will have on First Nations, Inuit, and Metis peoples. They pointed out that in their haste, health officials sidestepped consultation and collaboration with traditional knowledge keepers and wellness workers. Some described the humiliation of having been subjected to involuntary treatment, and the difficulty of accessing sparse and poorly-funded voluntary services. (Indeed, it is worth noting that the government has so far failed to deliver on its 18-month old election promise to open a permanent safe consumption site.)

Medical providers, including the former Chief Psychiatrist, have criticized the initiative as lacking any basis in medical evidence. Operators of the province’s only safe consumption site denounce it as grossly stigmatizing and further marginalizing people who use substances. In a public statement, the Manitoba Human Rights Commission suggested the legislation may lead to conditions which are only justifiable “when evidence tells us that less discriminatory options

do not exist... In particular, we stress the importance of ensuring that the rights of detainees are very clearly outlined in this new regime.” There is no indication, however, that detainees are being advised of their right to consent or what may happen if they withhold it. Given the potential for discrimination and abuse, it is perhaps alarming that the law also contains wide-ranging protection against legal action for police and all involved in operating the detox centre. Set against growing public calls in Western Canada for the curtailment of patient rights, involuntary treatment, and long-term psychiatric incarceration, the new detox law strikes a grim note. Community organizers have indicated, however, that efforts to challenge it will continue.

ABOUT AI

Ontario Privacy and Human Rights Commissions release joint principles for responsible use of AI



On January 21, 2026, the Information and Privacy Commissioner of Ontario and the Ontario Human Rights Commission released [Joint Principles](#) to guide the responsible use of artificial intelligence in Ontario’s public sector. Building on their 2023 joint statement and aligning with broader AI governance frameworks, the Principles set out clear expectations that AI systems be valid, reliable, safe, privacy-protective, human-rights affirming, transparent, and accountable. The commissions emphasized that while AI holds significant potential to benefit Ontarians, public trust depends on ensuring these technologies are developed and deployed in ways that safeguard privacy, prevent harm, and uphold fundamental human rights.

ON POLICY

Incident Reporting – A community duty

By Andy M.

Many of us have been there. A forced stay that we couldn't understand. The second change in medication in 3 years. Restraints. Hospital staff that showed the opposite of compassion and empathy or worse, threatened with police intervention to get you to do something. Whatever it may be, it is important that these incidents in care be reported appropriately. Without reporting there would be no accountability and without accountability there can be no improvement.

In Ontario, there are several main avenues for reporting grievances against healthcare practitioners, your psychiatrist, or others. They include the internal hospital client relations office (often now referred to as patient experience – ask about it and they will direct you on how to submit a complaint), Ontario Patient Ombudsman (www.patientombudsman.ca), or the College of Physicians and Surgeons of Ontario (www.cpso.on.ca/public/services/complaints-and-concerns). Those are the three core mechanisms we have to share our stories where it can make a big difference in improving matters.

Of course, when logging an incident do know that it is an uphill and tiring battle. The timeframe is often six months or more for an outcome of any kind, even if it is being dismissed as is unfortunately all too common. Beyond the time waiting to hear back, we continue to face challenges with epistemic barriers or in other words barriers to people “believing us/understanding us”. We face widespread institutional bias, dependency relationships that complicate accountability, and an all too common practice of making notes in our charts that are largely unsubstantiated objectively without professional bias or blinders, although self-reinforcing which provides the appearance of validity.

Despite these hurdles, it is important to record through the above incident reporting channels that these events have happened to us and our side of the events. Otherwise, we are voiceless and things will continue on as they are, in their unacceptable way.

Those who have tried know that complaints are often trivialized and ignored. While important to provide a record of dissent and concern over the current state of psychiatry via your own incident, going into the process you should know that it will likely not improve your life in a material way. Rather it would come as an emotional victory if there were a victory at all. Instead of an individual victory, the hope would be in time that as a community our stories of maltreatment would chip away at the institutional pedestals and change will slowly come. Essential change through incident reporting.

EVENTS

BELONGING

By Ken Munro

It is a factor in our healing. It's getting out. Connecting with others. It is belonging! But it can be difficult since we are all on tight budgets. And being crippled by our mental health challenges that can act as "roadblocks". But there are places where we can go, relax, socialize. And there are all free.

In the first weekend of May, Toronto hosts "**Jane's Walks**" named after the late Jane Jacobs, author and community builder. The walks are run by local Torontonians. It is even encouraged to set up our own walks. Something that interests us.

On the last weekend in May, there is "**Doors Open Toronto**" – where buildings normally closed are open to the public are free. And let's not forget, **ROM walks** sponsored by the Royal Ontario Museum. Most of them are free. Sundays at 2 pm; Wednesdays 6 pm. Running May – October.

But if our interest is to get more involved, try volunteering. How about legal demonstrations and protests? Unions usually run these protests. Particularly against the Doug Ford's government.

And "**TTC Riders**" – an advocacy for transit riders are always looking for volunteers. They run a free newsletter. But, beware: they are always looking for money.

We may want to subscribe to the free e-mail newsletter "**blogTO**". They may have some suggestions.

But if we really want to get out of our "safety zone", try setting up a group on social media like Facebook. It's free. There is "meetup" but that costs money. About \$24 a month.

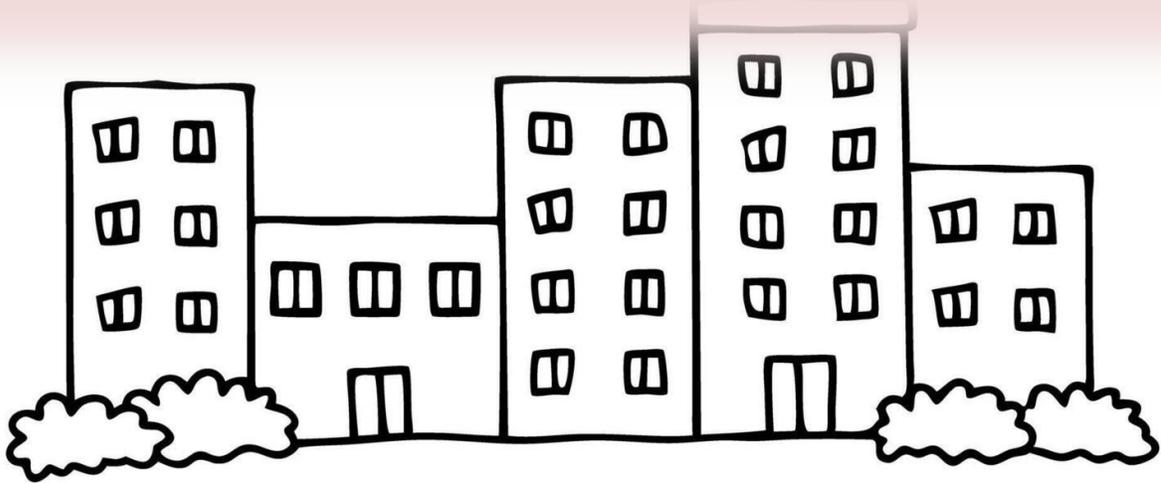
Our local library may allow us to post notices for our groups.

But setting up a group takes determination. There is a need for setting up a group. People are lonely, hurting, isolated. It's just that people don't want to belong to something that is just starting out or struggling.

Yes! The need is oh.....so great!



What is Bill 60?



The **Residential Tenancies Act** and what they mean for tenants with mental health disabilities. The session will focus on new eviction rules, notice requirements, and Landlord and Tenant Board processes, and how these changes may affect housing stability, accessibility, and procedural fairness for our community.

Date: Friday March 6, 2026

Time: 12:00PM - 1:00PM (Eastern Time)

Register in advance for this meeting:

<https://us06web.zoom.us/meeting/register/KmFCP3-GRZCJvRL7hLhKg>

After registering, you will receive a confirmation email



PERMANENT RESIDENT CARDS 101: RIGHTS, RESPONSIBILITIES, REPLACEMENTS & RENEWALS

DATE: FRIDAY, MARCH 13TH, 2026 TIME: 12:00PM-1:00PM

Please join us for an informative session focusing on Permanent Resident
Card Renewals.

After registering you will receive a confirmation email containing information
about joining the meeting.

Email: lucy.costa@camh.ca to register

Who Should Attend?

Everyone is welcome - including mental health service users, peer workers
and staff.

Learning Objectives:

- An overview of what a PR card is, it's purpose and the distinction between Permanent Residence and a Permanent Resident Card.
- Guidance on how to apply for a PR card, including eligibility requirements, and required documentation.
- A discussion of common challenges in applying for a PR card and additional resources that are available.

Health Justice Clinic

A collaboration between the Empowerment Council and the University of
Windsor - Faculty of Law, funded by The Law Foundation of Ontario.

We can help with:

- Housing Law (i.e. evictions, rental increases and tenant rights).
- Immigration & Refugee Law (i.e. citizenship, PR card renewals, temporary residence and status regularization).
- Family Law (i.e. child custody and family support).

Eligibility: By staff referral - current inpatients or outpatients of CAMH.

The Algorithm Will See You Now



AN INFORMATION SESSION FOR SERVICE USERS

Join us for an AI online 101 information
session:

What is AI?

What are the different types of AI?

How can AI be helpful?

How to stay safe when using AI

THURS. MARCH 5TH, 2026
2PM - 3PM

Register in advance for this meeting:

<https://us06web.zoom.us/meeting/register/48xvBbo6TaalnQYOxxnluQ>

Policing Madness

On the Intersections Between Mental Health, Homelessness,
and Policing in Toronto & at York University

Event & Survival Gear Drive



**ANDREA VÁSQUEZ
JIMÉNEZ**
**POLICING-FREE
SCHOOLS**



DREDDZ
**VOICES FOR
UNHOUSED
LIBERATION**



JENNY DUFFY
**TRINITY
COMMUNITY
HUB**



ANONYMOUS
**ORANGE HATS
LEGAL
OBSERVATION**



LYNN LACROIX
**CRITICAL DISABILITY
STUDIES, LES NOCTURNES
STREET SOLIDARITY
MODERATOR**



ELENE LAM
**SCHOOL OF SOCIAL WORK,
BUTTERFLY ASIAN &
MIGRANT SEX WORKERS
SUPPORT NETWORK
MODERATOR**

This event brings together community, organisers, researchers, and students to discuss the intersections between mental health, homelessness, and police abolition on-and-off York University campus. A discussion panel, a community safety workshop, and a social gathering comprise this event. Food and refreshments will be available! **Please bring any new, or gently used, clean sleeping bags, tents, tarps, backpacks, or sealed hygiene products (travel-size particularly appreciated) for our Survival Gear Drive!** If your organisation would like to set-up a table at the event, please contact llacroix@yorku.ca



MARCH 4, 2026
LOCATION - HNES 140
PANEL 2:30 - 4:00 PM
WORKSHOP & SOCIAL
4:00 - 5:30 PM
REGISTRATION REQUIRED



[Policing Madness: On the Intersections between Mental Health, Homelessness, and Policing - Fill out form](#)





Experience the enchantment of this outdoor light exhibition illuminating Ontario Park. Showcasing imaginative works by talented Ontario-based artists across diverse disciplines, Lumière brings this year's theme, "Rhythms of Light: Motion, Sound, and Time", to life.

Whether you're seeking inspiration, igniting curiosity, or simply embracing a sense of wonder, Lumière invites you to explore the magic where light and art converge.

**Trillium Park 955 Lake Shore Blvd W,
Toronto, ON, M6K 3B9**

**February 16, to March 27, 2026 every day
at 6 p.m. - 11 p.m. Cost Free**



AFGHAN WOMEN'S ORGANIZATION
REFUGEE & IMMIGRANT SERVICES



LAMP
COMMUNITY
HEALTH CENTRE

Understanding Nutrition Facts Labels

Join us to learn how to read & understand Nutrition Facts labels.
Please bring 1-2 empty food packages (boxes or cans) that have
a Nutrition Facts label to use during the session



Tuesday, March 03, 2026
10:00AM - 12:00PM



302 - 3050 Confederation PKWY
Mississauga, Ontario L5B 3Z6

For more information, contact:
Parveen: 647-703-5958



Mississauga
#M1S1R5

ANNOUNCEMENTS

Mad Pasts, Mad Presence Conference

Tuesday, Apr 28 at 9 am to Wednesday, Apr 29 at 5 pm

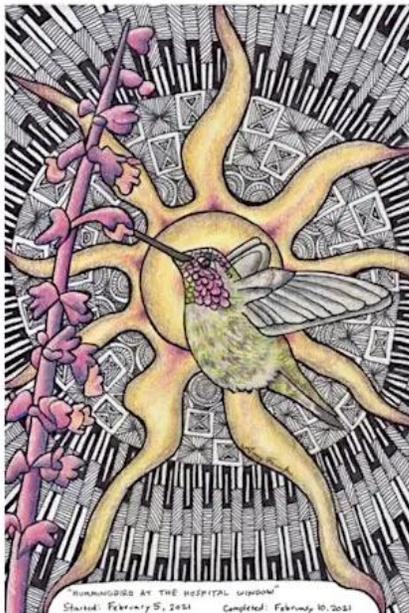
Mad Pasts, Mad Presence brings together scholars, artists, activists, survivors, and community to reflect on the mad movement and legacies.

This is a hybrid event.

In-person location:

Clearihue building, Critical Humanities Commons, University of Victoria

Register [Here](#):



Toronto Mayoral Election: October 26, 2026.

2026 Key Election Dates for you to remember

What can an elected Mayor do for YOU?

May 1: Candidate nominations open

July 6: Election jobs portal opens

August 24: Vote by Proxy applications open

September 1: Eligible voters can add or update information on the voters' list and apply to vote by mail.

October 6 to October 11: Advance Voting, with two locations per ward

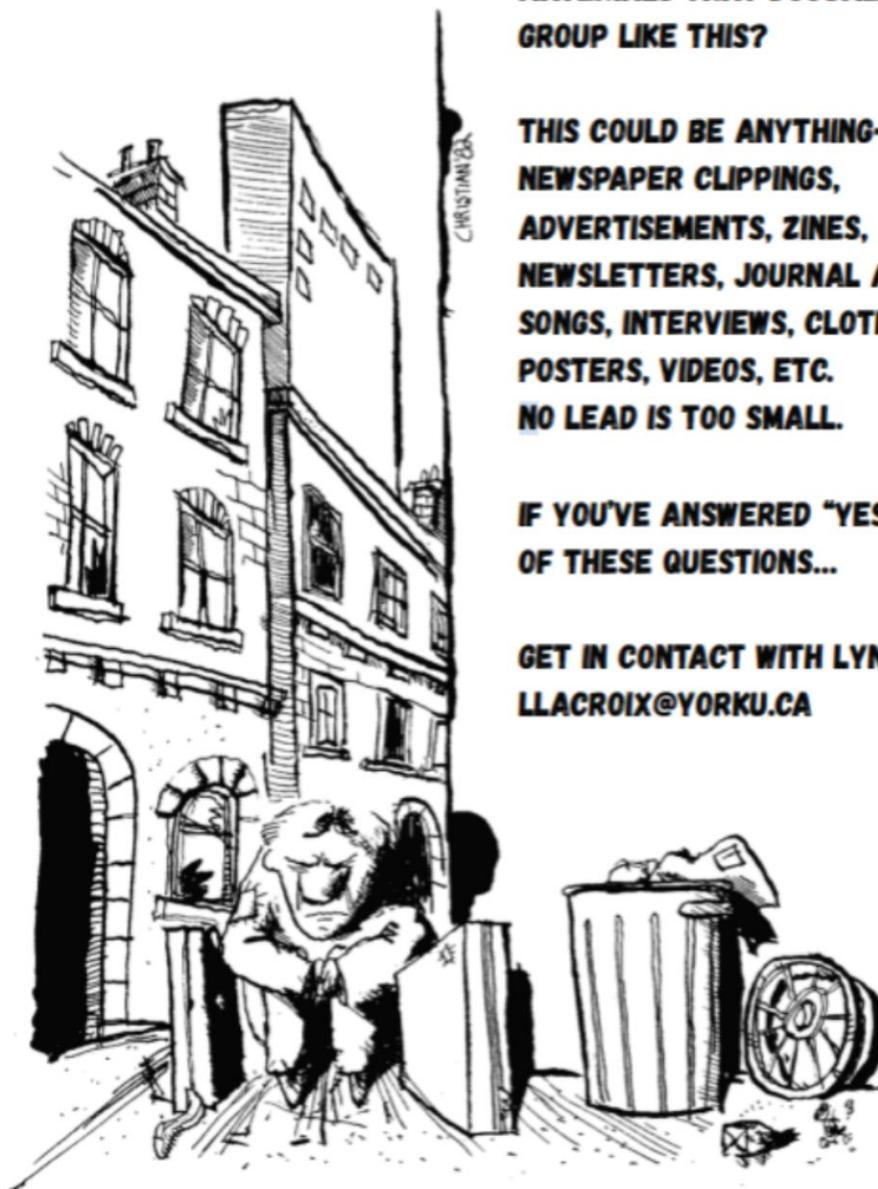
FLIPPING THE MICROSCOPE

Research *with us, by us*: Mad & drug user-led knowledge in the making.

**HAVE YOU WORKED ON A
GRASSROOTS STREET
OUTREACH GROUP BETWEEN
1970 – 2000 IN CANADA?**

DO YOU KNOW SOMEONE WHO HAS?

**MAYBE, YOU KNOW OF SOME
CULTURAL ARTIFACTS OR ARCHIVAL
MATERIALS THAT DOCUMENT A
GROUP LIKE THIS?**



**THIS COULD BE ANYTHING—
NEWSPAPER CLIPPINGS,
ADVERTISEMENTS, ZINES,
NEWSLETTERS, JOURNAL ARTICLES,
SONGS, INTERVIEWS, CLOTHING, PINS,
POSTERS, VIDEOS, ETC.
NO LEAD IS TOO SMALL.**

**IF YOU'VE ANSWERED "YES" TO ANY
OF THESE QUESTIONS...**

**GET IN CONTACT WITH LYNN.
LLACROIX@YORKU.CA**


**IMAGE FIRST
APPEARING IN
PHOENIX RISING
VOL. 3 NO. 2, 1982**

EXTRA EXTRA

Feeding the Movement? Call the Caterers Who Get It.
Planning a meeting, training, conference, or community gathering?

Let your food reflect your values.

-  Delicious menus
-  Community-rooted and socially conscious
-  Experienced with grassroots events, boards, and advocacy spaces

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Web: otwcafe.com

Online ordering: otwcafe.catertrax.com

**WORKING FOR
CHANGE**

A HOME. A JOB. A FRIEND AND SOCIAL CHANGE

A charitable anti-poverty organization that
operates OTW and other social enterprises
www.workingforchange.ca



Miziwe Biik

Toronto's Indigenous Employment & Training



Meaning “water all around us” as in the ripple effect, Miziwe Biik serves the Employment and Training needs of Indigenous People in the Greater Toronto Area.

We believe that strong Indigenous communities advance self-reliance through traditional practices and values, as well as modern resources.

Miziwe Biik is an Indigenous Skills and Employment Training (ISET) Local Delivery Mechanism (LDM) of the Aboriginal Labour Force Development Circle ([ALFDC](#)).

Client Funding Eligibility

Unemployed or underemployed Indigenous people who live in the Greater Toronto Area. Indigenous people are First Nations status and non-status, Métis and Inuit.

More info: <https://www.miziwebiik.com/>

To Register : <https://form.jotform.com/MiziweBiik/join>



PITCHING A NEWS STORY TO THE PHOENIX SINGS

by **Maverick Smith**

In journalism, 'pitching' a story refers to a short proposal sent to an editor or journalist to sell a story idea, aiming to spark interest for coverage.

To help everyone in the process of pitching stories and other material for the new newsletter, The Phoenix Sings, here are some questions that should be answered when deciding if your material is appropriate. Answering the following questions when pitching stories for Phoenix Sings should lead to researched and focused pieces that align with the mission of the newsletter. **Please see the mission of the newsletter.**

Knowing how to pitch a piece to this particular publication is also good practice for writing query letters for other publications.

- **What is your proposed headline? What is the story about in a nutshell?**
- **Why is this story relevant to the readership of The Phoenix Sings (meaning the Mad and Service User community)?**
- **What section would this story fit in? The current sections in The Phoenix Sings are:**
- **1) Law News, 2) About ART, 3) About AI 4) Announcements 5) City Happenings 6) "Extra Extra"**
- **What is the value of this story, meaning what is "new" about this information? For example, is this new information for the Mad and Service User community?**
- **What background research have you done on this story?**
- **What or who are the primary (first-hand) and secondary (second-hand) sources for your story?**
- **Are you ready to pitch this story, or do you need to do more research first?**
- **How much space, meaning word count, do you need for your story?**
- **What pictures, graphics, or video material does your story have or need?**
- **Is your story written in as plain language as possible so people can understand?**

There is a lot going on for people across Canada (Turtle Island), and we would love to hear your stories and or, ideas , or art.





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.