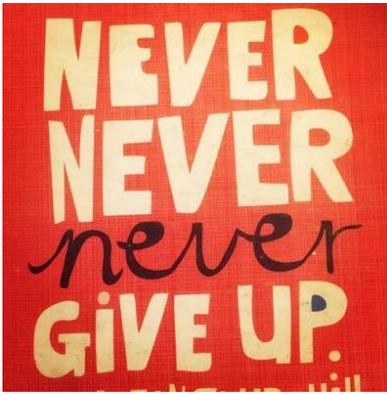


Dinuka Gunaratne



Thursday and Friday

Building back up: From everything to nothing to everything

I am hoping to share a chapter of my life that at the time, I didn't think I was going to survive. The funny thing about life is that it can surprise you in the most amazing of ways. Before moving to Edmonton, I was happily employed with a good job, amazing friends, and a stable life in Ontario, Canada. Or so I thought! Overnight, it all changed and I had to figure out what to do next. This is a story of a 26-year-old having to make choices that would alter the course of his life, career and everything in between. I hope by sharing this story, I can show that through resilience you can overcome most unforeseen adversity!

Roxanne Ulanicki



Thursday and Friday

Broken Candy: One woman's story of disability

Growing up with a disability in rural Alberta has made me aware of the extreme privileges of living in Canada. Had I been born almost anywhere else in the world, I might not be alive today. I am very grateful for my childhood and every opportunity that was made available to me. One of those opportunities was to represent Canada in the 1988 Paralympics in Seoul, Korea. By the age of 25 I was worn out, demoralized and angry. From my perspective, a lot of very able people were telling me that my needs did not matter. I did not find accessible housing until the age of 35; two years after I accepted a medical retirement from my employer. I have spent the last 15 years advocating for change with extremely varied results, both positive and negative. I'm excited to share any and all parts of my story from Rural Alberta to the Paralympics, advocate to activist.

Johnny Lee



Thursday and Friday

Happily Homeless

Life is never what we expect. Yet would you ever expect happiness being discovered through homelessness? Well I never would have thought so either. Until I experienced it for myself. Naturally there are times one would find themselves experiencing extreme hardship and loneliness that comes with homelessness as well. But one also finds freedom. Sometimes, many of us only discover what truly matters in this world after the societal shackles are removed. And if we're lucky, we find ourselves apart of a community. A community not so wrapped up in material status, but simply with living. Living with nature, with each other... and our friends.

Jan Buterman



Thursday and Friday

Reflections on trans exclusions from an ex-substitute teacher

What happens when a person is trans? In the context of Alberta public education, teachers should not expect discrimination on the basis of gender identity. However, the exclusion of people whose gender identity is different than the sex they were assigned at birth is a reality and it affects any and all connected to the school environment including legislators, administrators, and students. Engage in conversation with me to explore some of my unexpected moments of trans exclusion that I describe as the "Meantime."

Max Quilliam



Thursday and Friday

Caught in a Bind

I've always felt like my life was a bit of a balancing act; between dealing with anxiety, an autistic sibling, gender identity, the loss of a parent, and conservative relatives, getting by day-to-day was a bit of a tight squeeze. I will be sharing stories about my eighteen year journey that brought me to identifying as a non-binary transgender male.

Salman Ahmed



Thursday and Friday

Three Bags Full

Political intrigue! Romance! Conspiracies! These are all things you won't be hearing in my story. What you will hear encompasses the tamest "black sheep of the family" story you will come across. It delves into what it's like growing up with no sure footing in any one culture, and what it's like finding out that suicidal ideations aren't actually a part of growing up. But also, you'll hear what it means to actually come back stronger from mental illness, being comfortable in your own skin, celebrating life, and understanding that where you are now is a result of everything that has already happened to you, the good and the bad.

Derek Thunder



Thursday and Friday

A Spiritual Journey

It is a difficult road to feel proud of who you are when the outside world draws a dark picture of you. The road to who I am begins by understanding who I am as an Aboriginal person. The road improves as I discover the gifts of being Two Spirit. And the road continues as I brave the path of healing away alcohol.

Nancy Buterman



Thursday and Friday

Straight Up Sexism

In the 1960s, a woman in the workplace was expected to make sure the seam on her nylons was straight. She was also expected to accept the straight up sexism of being paid less than her male trainee. A senior shares her stories and observations of gender and discrimination.

Najm Altameemi



Thursday

Finding Peace: Three wars, three countries and Beekeeping!

My family and I first left my city Fao, where I was born, in 1980 during the Iraq-Iran war. We fled to another city where we thought we would be safer and did not take anything with us. We started a new life. Then the Gulf War began and resulted in the sectarian problems between the Sunnis and Shias in Iraq. I then made the decision to get away to protect my family so we moved to another province. Life was very difficult and dangerous with many great risks. I then took my family from Iraq to Syria, and my life began again. Finally, after eight years in Syria, my family and I came to Canada to start a new life again in 2015. Please come to hear my story about how I rebuilt my life again and again. And about how I am now beginning my new life as a beekeeper!

Angela Penny



Thursday

Mental Health: Opening Up Perceptions

Have you ever wondered what it looks like to live with depression and/or anxiety? You are invited to take a peek through the lens of a young, home schooled teenager diagnosed with depression and follow her journey as she navigates growing up in a devout Christian home, graduating high school late, the post-secondary world, the ups and downs of dating, and the joys and struggles as wife and mother. Raw experience, authenticity and a dash of humor are sprinkled throughout as Angela shares her highs and lows. You may even discover your eyes a little further opened and that our human experience isn't so different after this ride. Buckle up, baby!

Jiwon You

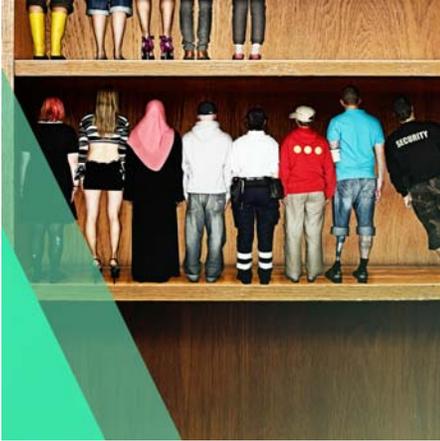


Friday

Depression greets me like an old friend

Living with depression is not fun. Living with "treatment resistant" depression? Downright dreadful. But that doesn't necessarily mean I'm wallowing in sorrow and misery all the time. I like to consider my life as a strange journey accompanied by my "companion", depression, and would like to share the ups and downs I have been through with it: of hopelessness, suicide attempts, and finding support. Finally, I want to share the fact that living with mental illnesses is, at times, okay.

Melinda Dupuis



Friday

Alcohol, Drugs, and the Hell's Angels: "Living a life of Hell to Sobriety"

Why is she talking to that man? She must be...

Why is she losing so much weight? She must be...

Why is she dressed that way? She must be...

Why is she wearing make-up and her hair done nicely? She must be...

Try living with these questions for nearly 10 years now. How would you feel if you had to keep yourself safe, always explaining that things are not what they seem to be? By sharing my lived experiences I can bring to light what is often hidden. October 20th of each year is a day which I cherish with all my heart, my sobriety birthday. As of today, I could not be a good mother, a university student, or live a healthy lifestyle. Come and hear how I came to this point in my life where my ultimate goal is to become a Community Parole Officer and help people that use to be me. You know what? All it takes is "One day at a Time" and I will make my dreams come true!

Andreea Mohora



Thursday and Friday

Being a social and medical "Complex Case"

My first 23 years of life were spent in Romania, where neglect and all kinds of abuses were what I thought was normal. At 24 I left the country on my own to come to Canada, thinking my life would be happy and normal. How naive I was! After only a year in Canada I found myself suffering from shingles and in a relationship that was rough, but seemed normal at the time. A few years later I walked into a counselor's office after a concussion, to find out that the relationship was abusive on every level and that I was suffering from complex PTSD due to numerous events I experienced in Romania and Canada. Trying to make sense and recover from what I had experienced has been a very long journey, with lots of ups and downs. Over 6 years ago I made the best decision of my life: I decided to have children. My only viable option at that time was intrauterine insemination with donor sperm. The process of getting pregnant, carrying the pregnancy to term, and delivering and raising my twins was very intense, with many points of breakdown, and lots of lows. I will share my various interesting experiences that makes different health professionals and everyday social interactions label me a "**complex case**".