

# SI<sup>M</sup> MAGAZINE

January 2020  
Winter Issue No. 28

*Image*

The Making of  
*Kadupul*

*Lifestyle*

First Nations *Fashion*

**BUSINESS**

Sena S. Ahohe:  
*From Pharmacy to Fashion*

**FEATURE**

*Nutritionist Extraordinaire*  
**ILONA GORELIK**

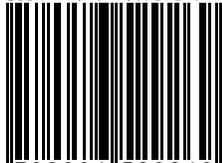
*A Life Dedicated  
to nutrition*

*Tricks To Help  
you with the treats*

*Exclusive*

*Opening up to the Woman behind Open World*

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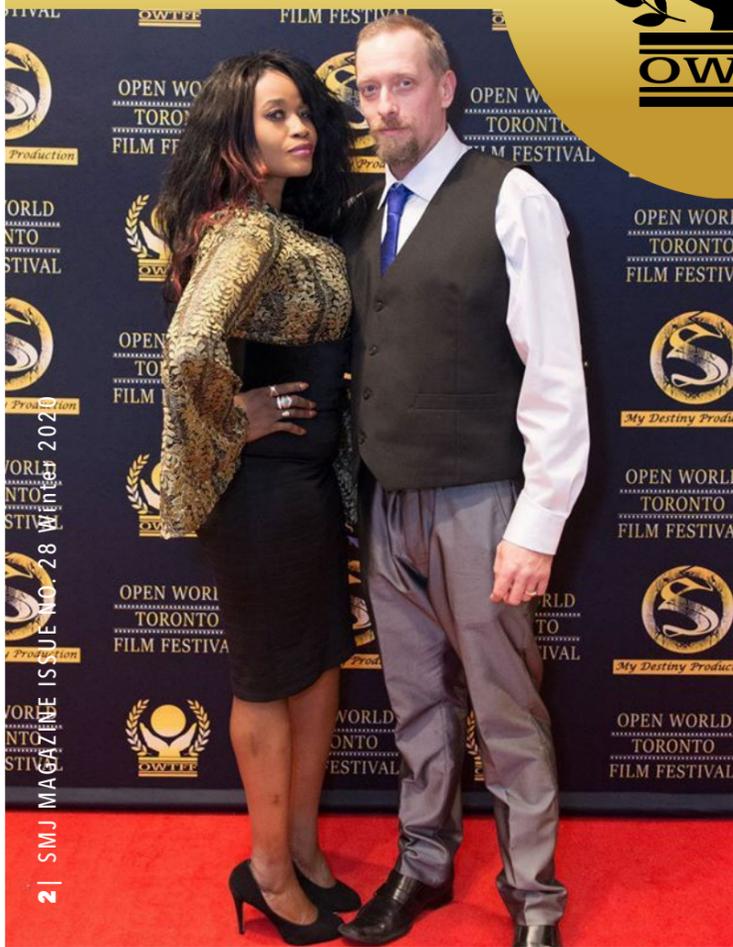


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# SAYING *Goodbye*

*By Sheri L. Lake*

It's amazing how perception of time spent changes in our memories. Everything seems like it just happened. Working for SMJ Magazine these past 5 plus years isn't exempt. Maybe it's appropriate that I refer to another designer to put it into perspective. Maximillian Keiner discovered a mathematical explanation for why time passes more quickly with age. Much like money, the more there is, the less its worth – so the more time you've lived, the shorter each year feels. It seems like yesterday that I met Shelley to chat about the "look" of a fairly young magazine.

It's been a pleasure to work with her and Andrew as they built SMJ. My part was to give visual life and style to the wonderful stories and accounts being written. It's hard to explain the satisfaction I get from knowing some of "me" will live on in print and in the digital world long past my lifetime. What a blessing!

## MY FAVORITE FRONT COVER



Have you guessed at my favorite front cover? I chose the first special edition we did for the Glass Awards - with Leandria on the cover. It was our first special edition - which was great. But I also felt somehow connected to her because I had watched her come up on Sunday's Best. I thought hers was another true rags to riches story. She's had her struggles just like the rest of us but MAN - can she blow or what????!!!! I was at the event in person too which made that issue even more memorable for me.

## FROM THE EDITOR-IN-CHIEF

It's never easy saying goodbye, especially when the person leaving has been an integral part of a venture that I've often referred to as 'the little engine that could.' When we started SMJ Magazine Sheri was not part of the original team, but make no mistake, she is a big part of the reason why we gained a little momentum each year and are why we are as vital as we are today.

You may still see Sheri in a future Special Edition or a one-off project. We are never going to say never, especially to an extremely talented woman that will always be a part of the SMJ family.



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MAGAZINE

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**W**e are starting the year 2020 with a bang. I am so excited for all the ideas and inspirations coming from everywhere. The winter is a great time to plan and get the creative juices flowing.

Who knows what 2020 will bring? The number associated with this year has brought out all sorts of clever hyperboles and references. Yet so far the New Year has brought us troubling news carried over from 2019: recurring safety and traffic issues in the GTA, continued tensions in gender relationships in the corporate and entertainment world, and new crises on the international front.

On a personal note, 2019 ended with a harsh month for us. We are looking forward to the New Year, new collaborations and endless opportunities that await us. In this issue, our front cover story shines the light on our newest writer with SMJ, and leads to another change both inside and outside the magazine. Ilona Gorelik is a practicing Toronto-based nutritionist who will be telling us in every regular issue how living healthier begins with eating healthier.

Her presence has resulted in several ripple effects. Just as SMJ underwent a major re-branding four years ago, Andrew and I are undergoing a personal health re-branding this year. I will be consulting with Ilona during the year and will be reporting to you on my progress. Andrew will be working on his health management with Dr. Lisa Ramsackal, a chiropractor and acupuncturist who pens the regular SMJ feature YOUR HEALTH IS YOUR WEALTH. What this means for regular issues is that there will be a major expansion of the health & wellness section starting with the Spring 2020 edition.

Our exclusive in this issue showcases one half of the team behind the Open World Toronto Film Festival. Sabine Mondestin's journey to Open World is an unusual one. The OWTF was where our documentary W'AT ABOUT US was specially presented last November. By the time SMJ Magazine's Spring 2020 is published, we will be telling you about a new premiere of the final edited version of W'AT ABOUT US in a new part of Canada.

Our Image, Lifestyle, and Business headline stories are all unique in their own way. The Image story came from an interview I did with a new friend and fellow filmmaker. Deepa Mahani's short documentary entitled Kadupul is searing both figuratively and literally as it tackles the horrible tragedy and unspeakable bravery of a burn victim. Under Lifestyle, our Fashion & Design Editor Claris M. Manglicmot reports on a photo shoot with a mature First Nations model. Our Business headliner is on a new fashion designer whose previous profession came from an unlikely source: pharmacy!

Finally, you will be hearing this year of our new partnership with STUDIO CHAAR PRODUCTIONS. Let me tantalize you with a few early details: it can be likened to our latest version of SMJ LIVE; it may take the format of both radio and TV, and it involves my interest in relationships and Andrew's interest in the arts.

I want to take this time to wish our readers and various supporters the very best for the New Year and this decade. Remember to use our magazine APP by downloading from Apple Store or Google Play Store to purchase current and pass issues. Share us on your social media platforms. Let's continue to build and sustain.



**FROM THE  
DESK OF**

*Shelley*



FashionFaith78 Boutique

FashionFaith78  
Boutique

Stepping out in faith as an entrepreneur in fashion!

By Michelle Moore

# FASHION

MY LOVE, MY PASSION

# FAITH

MY FOUNDATION

## 78 THE YEAR I WAS BORN

I have always envisioned myself in the fashion industry. My journey began when I graduated from Cathedral High School in Hamilton Ontario. I had a love for Fashion which led me to apply to the Design Program at Fanshawe College in London Ontario. I still remember the excitement receiving the acceptance letter that welcomed me into the Fashion Design Program. It was short lived though because I quickly became homesick, missed my boyfriend and I really disliked "pattern-making."

I knew in my heart I still loved fashion. I have always had a keen eye for fabrics and styling came very easy to me. I just did not want to be the person physically sketching and making the clothes. Yet I loved the art of designing, from sketching to selecting fabrics to knowing the proper placement of where "darts" should go on a garment to get a certain silhouette or the art of "drapping."

Throughout the past 20 years I have naturally found myself gravitating to the arts/creative field, especially within the fashion realm anything from working as a Fashion Show Coordinator in downtown Toronto to having an opportunity to work with African Fashion Week Toronto as well as working with Hamilton Fashion Week. I am now stepping out in faith to create my own fashion legacy. I have named my company "FashionFaith78 Boutique".

I wanted my business name to truly represent me what I stand for and my values. I wanted to create a boutique experience that would give women stylish, sophisticated, trendy clothing that won't "break the bank" and give women who are XL - 3XL stylish options as well! I wanted to provide fashionable clothing that allows a woman to show off subtly. No need for a woman to show every part of her body to get attention!

Starting your own business is not for the weak/faint of heart. It is not easy to step out in faith, putting yourself out there for the whole world to judge you...but at the end of the day you truly have to believe in yourself, and keep the faith at every stage of the game. Investing in you...now this is the scariest stage of them all! Basically putting your money where your mouth is!





Another large part of my journey launching my own business is setting obtainable goals; I believe every business owner needs to be able answer the following questions:

- Why?** *(Why do you want to do this & is there a purpose for doing this)*
- How?** *(How are you going to accomplish your goal?)*
- What?** *(What are you willing to sacrifice in order to achieve success?)*

So let's dig a little deeper... My purpose of launching "FashionFaith78" is to use the gifts God has given me, to uplift women by using clothing to encourage and empower them to be their best versions of themselves. I truly believe that when a woman feels she looks good, she is more confident and that in turn uplifts her spirit bringing her a certain kind of joy to her life. Women who fall into the plus size category often times believe they need to lose weight in order to find stylish, trendy clothing that will actually fit their body type. I myself frequently wear a 1x relating to tops & dresses. I don't believe I am overweight, but in today's society the trendy retail stores are generally geared to the smaller sizes which leave those who fall outside that range to fend for themselves!

I plan to level the playing field...I have already started sourcing and connecting with a wide range of vendors who offer quality products coupled with my ability to pick out pieces that compliment many different body types. I believe following this formula of only buying pieces that I actually think are stylish and cute and will keep the authentic passion alive in this new business venture along with God's grace!

Last but not least...What am I willing to sacrifice in order to achieve success? I am not going to lie to you readers, I love watching T.V.; however since I took the leap of faith of starting my own business, I do not have the time to watch as much TV as I once did. I give more time into finding more opportunities for my business to grow; sourcing quality products takes hours (to say the least)!

I am extremely excited to share with all SMJ readers two upcoming events in 2020.

I will be a vendor at the "Women with Passion & Purpose" event that will be held in Hamilton Ontario at Michelangelo's on Saturday March 28th 2020.

And then...I will be officially launching FashionFaith78 shopping party on Saturday April 25th 2020 at 1141 Upper Wellington (KWC Center) Hamilton Ontario from 12PM until 3pm.

For more information send me an email [fashionfaith78@hotmail.com](mailto:fashionfaith78@hotmail.com)



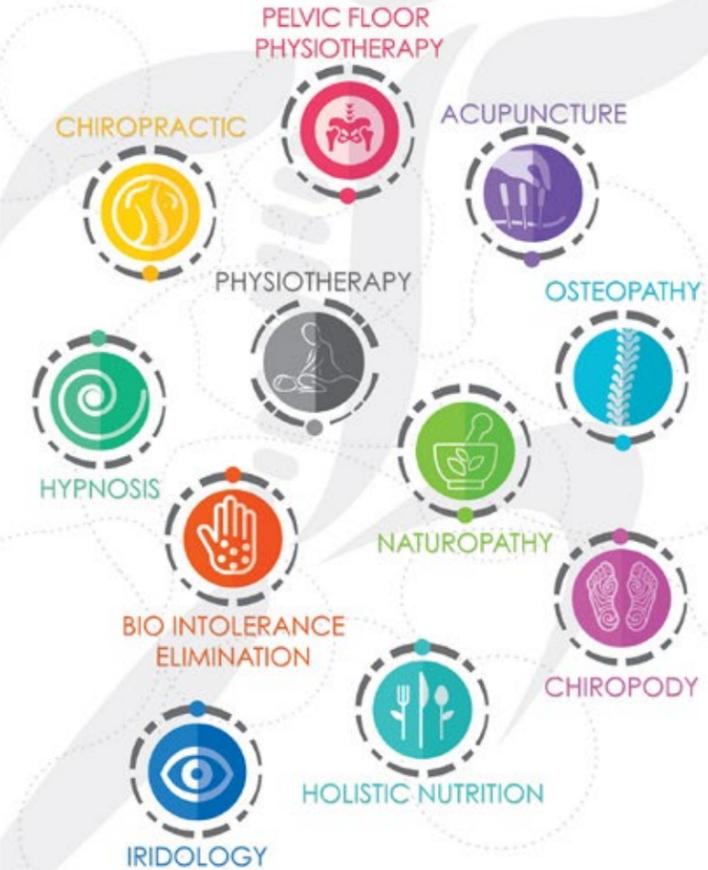
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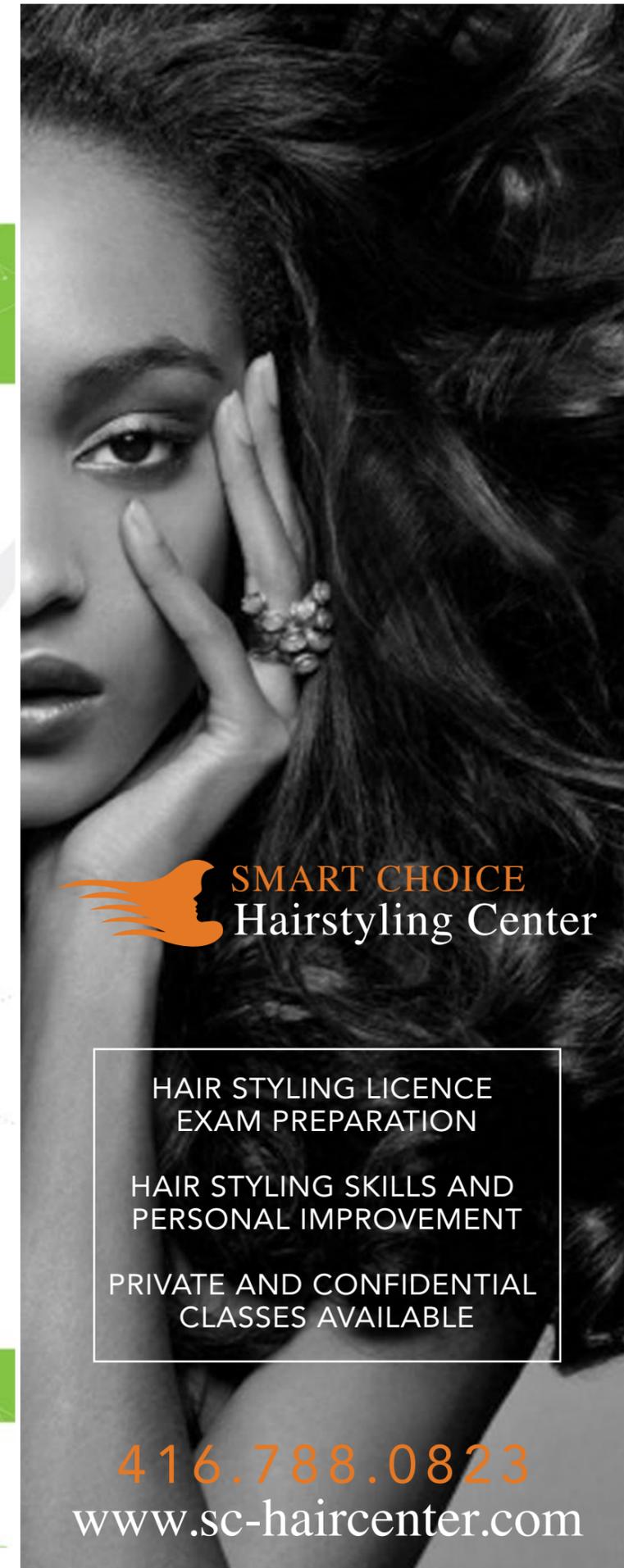
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# FIRST NATIONS FASHION: FROM MANHATTAN TO SAULT SAINTE

by Claris M. Manglicmot



MANHATTAN



SAULT STE. MARIE

I met Kelly Solomon in New York last fall. She was there to chaperone her daughter Kiarra who was the guest model in the 2019 CCA Editorial Model Search competition. I was surprised as to how photogenic she was in person over her photo postings in social media. I told her that evasive beauty challenged me, and I might consider her as my first mature model shoot.

Fast forward I was in back in Sault Sainte Marie for the second time in about a year as the Show Director of a fashion event. I immediately contacted Kelly and we fixed a date for a photo shoot. Afterward I sat down to chat with this proud and accomplished First Nation lady at the peak of her life and career at 53.

**Claris:** Please tell me about yourself: your origin, your family, your beliefs and your principle of life.

**Kelly:** I am a proud Anishinawbe Kwe (Indian Woman) from Garden River Ontario, mother of three and grandmother to one. I am the eldest of four siblings born in Garden River First Nation. I was raised with traditional cultural values from a strong woman leader: my mother Valerie. She taught her children to believe in ourselves and to be proud of our heritage. My dad showed us a strong work ethic.

My determination in life comes from a variety of positive and negative life situations that I have endured. Becoming a mother gave me the inspiration to set and achieve my goals. My goals included furthering my education to become successful and independent so that I could give myself and my children a good life. I also taught my children that kindness

does not cost a thing; that they should be sensitive to others as we do not know what they are going through. A few kind words or gestures can mean a lot to someone. I fully encouraged my children to follow their dreams and that everything is achievable if they work for it.

**Claris:** You mentioned how much you invested in your education. Tell me more about that, how it impacted your employment and your influence in the First Nation community.



**Kelly:** I finished a Bachelor's Degree in Psychology and a Masters of Business Administration in Community Economic Development. My educational background enabled me to become employed in the Social Work Field. I have had the privilege of working with First Nations for the past 20 years setting up programs and services to help empower families and Individuals and becoming a role model.

I feel very confident and proud about whom I am as a woman. I truly enjoy my field of work and look forward to

learning and sharing my knowledge with others. I currently work for a Native Child and Family Services Agency which allows me to work within seven First Nations reserves. This is an opportunity for me to help others beyond my home as well as gain more experiences and friends. I am at the point in my life where I feel very confident that I will remain employable because of my education and work experiences.

**Claris:** I am at a loss for words. We have met and talked a lot in New York and Toronto but I never realized there were so much more of you to discover. You have achieved a lot as a person and I am sure your community is very grateful. This leads me to my next question. How do you immerse yourself in your community?

**Kelly:** My community knows the hard work I have done to be where I am. I hope that I have inspired to do anything that they set their minds to. It takes dedication and hard work but everything is achievable.

**Claris:** I totally agree. Setting a good example is the best thing you can do to inspire people around you. Not to mention you volunteer a lot as well. What sort of hobbies or fun things do you do in your spare time?

**Kelly:** My hobbies include my flower beds and planting a small garden during the summer. I also enjoy sewing, decorating, and making all sorts of crafts.

I love to travel with my youngest daughter Kiarra who is 16 years old. We have had the luxury of visiting Rivera Maya, Mazatlan in Mexico,



Los Cabos in Mexico, parts Punta Cana, Cuba and Aruba. When we travel, we get to experience different cultures, food and fashion. It is also a great way of creating everlasting memories.

**Claris:** I like how you balance your life. You work hard but you also play hard. I heard a lot of contradicting opinions about the lack of privileges among the First Nations. Please tell me your point of view on this sensitive topic.

**Kelly:** Yes, there can be many pros and cons living within a First Nation community. For me, I focus on the positive aspects. Our community is located close to an urban centre

so that opens up many different opportunities for employment and education. We are not isolated. I live in beautiful surroundings. I have all of my family members close by. We have many different lakes and forests to enjoy. I have chosen to not focus on any sort of racism and I encourage my children to do the same. Life is truly beautiful.

**Claris:** You are indeed an inspiration not only to the First Nations but to anyone. I am so pleased to have met you and do your shoot. Before we go I must ask what is fashion to you?

**Kelly:** To me fashion gives me the outlet to be who I am. I find fashion a very fascinating way to express one's self. Fashion helps to boost

my self-confidence. When I look good, I feel good. It also provides me with a creative outlet. I like that fashion is always evolving. It takes away the boredom of wearing same things all the time. I get to wear different types of clothing, makeup and hairstyles.

**Claris:** Thank you Kelly. This interview will definitely inspire a lot of women.

Our Creative Team had the honor to shoot an editorial at the residences of Kelly and her sister Darlene Solomon at the First Nations reserve in Garden River, Ontario. The setting was like an enchanted ginger bread house from outside but so glamorous inside.



Production Team: Creative and Shoot Organizer: Claris Minas Manglicmot | Photographer: Dennis Madigan  
Hair and Make Up: Candace David | Sponsors: Darlene Solomon and Jewels Box | Model: Kelly Solomon

# FW PARIS FASHION WEEK

by *Claris M. Manglicmot*

The Couture Culture and Arts (CCA) team was front and center last fall at one of the five world-famous season fashion weeks in Paris, France! The creative team did two outdoor editorial shoots and capped the trip by participating at Paris Fashion Week.

Our advance party headed by Sands LCP had the all-male shoot in Paris. The models were Dallas Ricci (CCA Model Search 2019 Winner) and

Benjamin Lagace from Modeles LCP. After the shoot they left for Rome for a rest and recreation trip. They came back to Paris in time for the main editorial shoot with our female model Taylor McCarroll of His and Her Models.

Upon our return in Paris, there was no time to lose. Maria Bokhari and I virtually dropped our bags and went to scout shoot venues with our male models. We got our location

inspirations from the many past iconic films and TV series that have been shot in Paris. We went to Pont de Bir-Hakeim bridge as seen in the film "Inception" in 2010; we walked by Pont Alexander III as seen in the movie "Midnight in Paris" 2011. We explored Place Dauphine as seen in the movie adaption of "Sex and the City" 2004; and we also visited the famous café Chez Julien. The surroundings with beautiful cobblestone walkways were once the location of Louie Vuitton's campaign shoot.



Paris Team Credits:

Producer: Couture Culture and Arts (CCA) | Creative Directors: Claris Minas Manglicmot and Sands LCP  
Photographer: Maria Bokhari | Models: Dallas Ricci: Male Model Winner: CCA Model Search 2019  
Benjamin Lagace: Modeles LCP, Taylor McCarroll: His and Her Models | Designers: Mitch Desunia Curtis, Elliot Vincent Lakuach, Finezza by Ivan Lehec Yves, Jean Lacasse, Willy Cutti, Jewelsbox | Sponsors: Glen Tejada, Jesse Mc, Ben Simbulan



# Opening Up WITH THE WOMAN BEHIND OPEN WORLD

by Andrew Terry Pasieka

Sabine Mondestin, co-founder and president of the Open World Toronto Film Festival (OWTFF), just celebrated her fifth year of this uniquely diverse event with her partner in the arts and in life, Steve Labeau. She comes to Toronto by way of Los Angeles, Vancouver, and Montreal.

Sabine was born and raised in Montreal, with three sisters and one brother. Three of her siblings were creative like herself, but only Sabine pursued the arts as a career. Of Haitian heritage, her parents did not see the potential of this passion, so she put aside that dream for a time and went into post-secondary education in order to be trained in

a profession. However, her parents were not overjoyed with her choice of journalism. She wound up working in the electronic and print media as a movie critic, but soon tired of it as she felt stifled by editors, politics, etc. in what she could report or write.

She moved to Vancouver in 2005 for a change of scenery, to learn English, and become a full-time actress. She became a director by accident in 2010. There was a writer's strike in British Columbia at the time which meant no productions were being filmed. She was bored just doing a menial side job to pass the time so she wrote a screenplay called "Thirteen Witches." Once the strike was over she gave it to a male

director she knew, but fired him when he started acting inappropriately with members of the cast. A female directing colleague was then approached, but she thought the project too big for her to tackle.

Steve, who had moved to the coast with Sabine, suggested she should hire herself. Her first time as a director was with a cast of 35 and filming a production whose running time was close to two hours. It was hard, and she had her share of conflicts with the cast, but she loved the experience. It has not deterred her from doing other projects since. By 2013, Sabine felt it was time to move again. Even though Vancouver has the scenic mountain

backdrop, she wasn't a fan of the weather. Toronto beckoned, so she and Steve headed back out east. She was immediately struck by the vibrancy of the city and the fast pace. Nonetheless, she was disappointed that there seemed to be a wide gap in the film community between the 'A listers' who would get maximum expose at festivals, etc. and those with comparable talent but not with the same recognition factor or just starting out.

She and Steve actually went back out to the west coast and lived in Los Angeles for most of one year, but returned to Toronto before the end of 2014. Within a year she and Steve founded the Open World Toronto Film Festival, which 'opened' opportunities for the diverse and 'B lister' filmmaker to have 'that red carpet experience.' Steve has had to be convinced each year to do the Festival again, although Sabine laughs and says tongue-in-cheek, "the convincing has been easier each year!"

Investments have come from their own pockets and financial success has been slowly building. They continue to look for a major sponsor and thought they found one a few

years ago. Unfortunately it took a turn that Sabine is all too familiar with. Their PR person at the time (who was white) started negotiations with an entrepreneur who was giving all the indications that a deal was going to be struck. Then he was introduced to Sabine: a co-founder who is a black woman. By the end of the meeting it was, "Oh, let's wait for a bit and we'll see how things develop." There was no sponsorship that year. Sabine doesn't want to play the race card but she never called back.

Diametrically opposite to that experience has been her inter-racial relationship with Steve Labeau, which is 15 years plus and still counting. They met in Montreal when she was working at McDonald's and Steve was a service technician for the fast food outlet. She would make fun of him and they joked with each other all the time. They soon realized that they looked at life the same way and had similar goals. In essence, they just clicked.

Steve is a talented musician in his own right, but tends to shun the limelight. He is more content to organize, flesh out, and support ideas and inspirations of Sabine's.

He doesn't miss an opportunity to promote Sabine, which is good because Sabine does a super job of promoting everything and everyone she is involved with, except herself.

What is the future of OWTFF? Well, Sabine will be adding a day in 2020 as the festival moves back to October (15th-16th-17th-18th), when it was held in previous years. She wants to have a student competition. Steve works full time for the Festival, so he is already putting out feelers for the first film submissions. Sabine says it is essential for one of them to be full time in order to maintain the high standard they demand of OWTFF each year.

She is directing a project in January and doing whatever jobs she needs to do both inside and outside the entertainment industry to make ends meet and help to finance the Festival. "I will do whatever I need to do to ensure we are in a good position to run another Festival this year. Everyone knows where my priority is. I am an open book that way."

Spoken like the president of Open World Toronto Film Festival.



For more information, go to [www.owtff.com](http://www.owtff.com) is also on Facebook, Instagram, and You Tube



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EXTRAORDINAIRE  
*Ilona Gorelik*



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A LIFE DEDICATED TO

# Nutrition

by Andrew Terry Pasieka

**A TESTAMONIAL:** *Ilona approached The Village Health Clinic last year to collaborate (with our) health care Professionals. We instantly hit it off with similar mindsets and visions for our practices. We both believe in educating the public on health and the importance of food, therapeutic vitamins and screening for healthy lifestyle. We both strive to be health advocates for the public to bring them to their best self and obtain optimal health & wellness.*

*Ilona takes her time to meet with each client and help with any obstacles or customizes meal plans based on each individual's needs and is always updating her knowledge and collaborating with professionals to help her clients' best needs. This is exactly the approach we have at The Village Health Clinic.*

**Dr. J. Del Bel Belluz**

“Everything is psychological. It's part of human behavior. First of all, you have to want to do it. Then you must be positive about expecting success in your nutrition program. Then you have to figure out what works for you and what doesn't.”

Ilona Gorelik is only 31, so it is kind of amusing to this baby boomer of an editor to hear her say she has spent a lifetime practicing what she has been professionally trained to promote: good eating habits. But she says she was eating in small portions 5 or 6 times a day long before she was an adult. She admits it was achieved by trial and error, but she remembers feeling light-headed and lacking energy when she missed a meal.

Ilona was actually 25 years old when she decided that “health and wellness was my thing,” and re-entered Humber College in Toronto for a 2-year Nutrition Management Diploma Program, graduating in 2016. On the surface, this appeared to be an abrupt career change. The native of Belarus (one of the republics in the former Soviet Union, now an independent state), who had immigrated to Canada from Israel with her parents and sister for a better and safer life, was already a graduate of a human resources program, and had spent over a year in the HR profession when she came to the conclusion that this was not something she wanted to do.

Her father owned a trucking company in Canada and her mother a driving school, but it was actually her mother's serious health issues that were a catalyst in her decision. She had a heart condition, high blood pressure, diabetes, and was very overweight. Ilona worked with her every step of the way, applied her own eating habits along with what she was learning. Her

mother's health dramatically improved and she lost 110 pounds.

After this family success, she wanted to do something special with the general public, and came up with the idea that she would devise nutritional recipes that would be cooked fresh, packaged, and delivered to clients on the same day. The program was developed by May 2017. Every Sunday has become an assembly line of preparation, cooking, packaging, and delivery. She has hired a publicist who has exponentially raised Ilona's brand awareness and brand recognition.

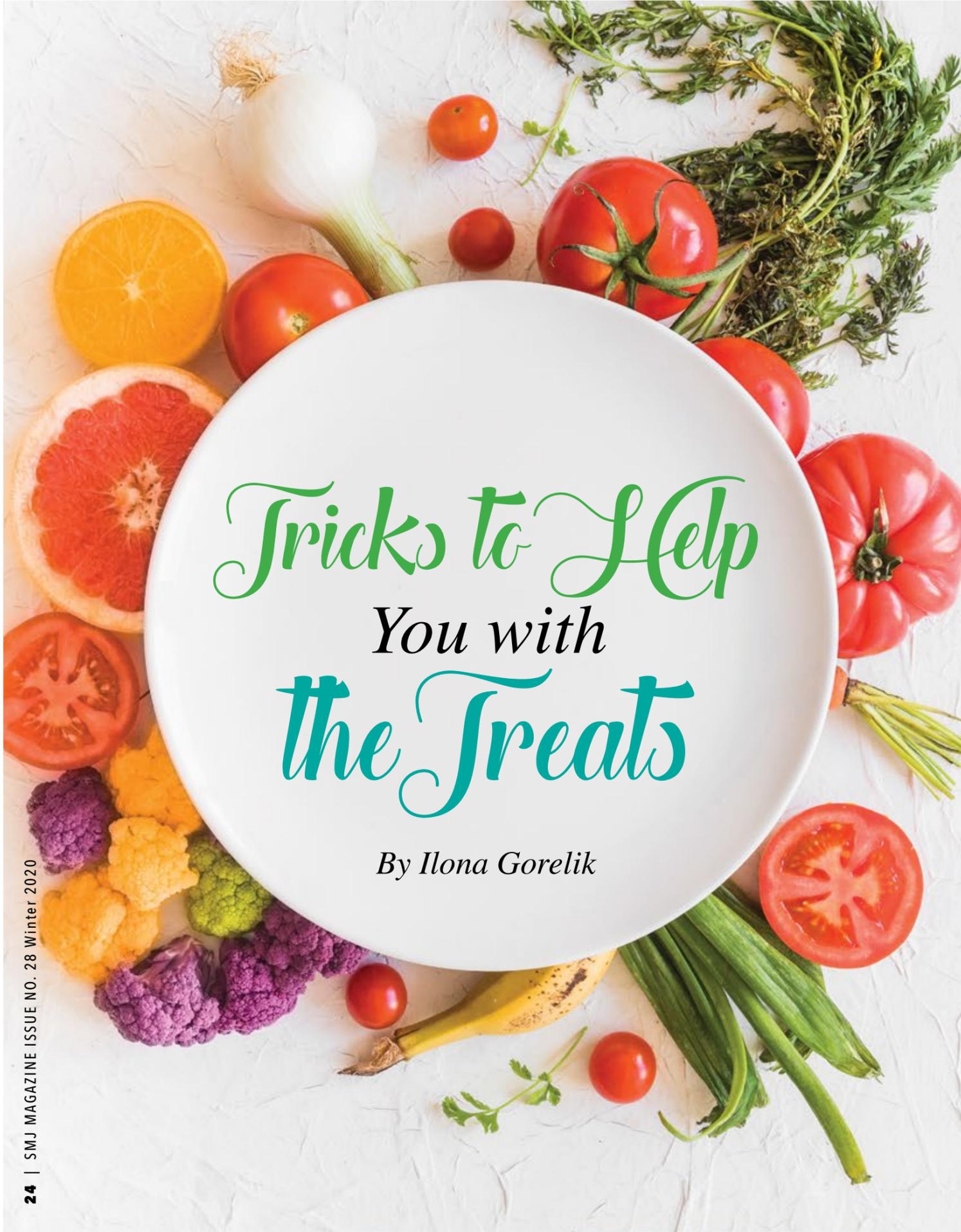
Ilona states that the decision to start on the program, whether immediately or after a 'health corrective' period has to be a lifestyle decision. It starts with the admission that the individual has a problem. That way the client will be ready for a change. The client who can't make that admission illustrates a failure to establish good nutrition balance which shows more of a problem with their head than their waist. Important evidence that Ilona has to support this are people who use the word 'can't.' She says that people who constantly use that word are not going to receive her help, because they haven't understood the principal of 'mind over matter.'

“Everything is psychological. It's part of human behavior. First of all, you have to want to do it. Then you must be positive about expecting success in your nutrition program. Then you have to figure out what works for you and what doesn't.”

Ilona then makes an interesting statement. As a nutritionist, she is not there just to guide her client through the program. She is there to help them understand that the body can be very resilient, and can bounce back to health fairly quickly. The key in taking advantage of its recuperative powers is to understand that what we put in our mouth, in what portions and what time of day, constitutes 80% of good nutrition balance. Only 10% is dependent on exercise, and another 10% on maintaining stress levels, hormonal levels, your water intake, and sleep.

“Most of the population doesn't understand proper nutrition. The No. 1 thing I continually hear is 'but if I start exercising I'm going to lose the weight.' And I say no you will not. You can jog for six hours swim for four hours, and run a marathon, but if your nutrition is not done correctly, with proper portion control and water intake, you will never see the results you set for yourself.”

Over the two plus years she has run her program, Ilona Gorelik has heard all kind of stories of how people think that cheating on nutrition by skipping meals and the like can bring weight loss, good nutrition, and ultimately, success. Too often starving is followed by bingeing. Success has to come in stages, and if the goal is a big one, then it may be just baby steps. Once again, it all comes down to mind over matter.



# Tricks to Help You with the Treats

By Ilona Gorelik

HELLO SMJ READERS!  
I AM EXCITED TO BE JOINING  
THE SMJ TEAM.

MY NAME IS ILONA GORELIK,  
AND I AM A TORONTO-BASED  
NUTRITION PRACTITIONER.



The holiday season can bring temptation and extra calories lurking around every corner, from frosted cookies at the office party to eggnog at your neighbor's get-together, to extra boxes of chocolates and other treats that are still around the house well after the festivities are over.

The winter follows right after, a time of year that we tend to hibernate and/or vegetate. So, how are we expected to stay healthy or even to maintain our weight? I have seven great tips to help EVERYONE not over indulge. They are tricks that are guaranteed to help you stay on track.

## 1. NEVER ARRIVE HUNGRY

Don't go to a party when you're starving! Grab a quick, nutritious snack beforehand. If you do arrive hungry, drink some water before filling your plate, or if you can, squeeze a lemon in for a cleanse.

## 2. STICK TO YOUR ROUTINE AS MUCH AS POSSIBLE

If you typically start the day with a smoothie and end it with a jog, keep it up! Avoid the temptation to stop exercising or paying attention to your normal food routine because "It's the holidays, I can eat whatever," or "It's too cold outside to do anything."

## 3. REMEMBER PORTION CONTROL

Enjoy the holiday food, but with mindfulness. Meaning eat slowly, savoring every bite and keep your portions in check.

## 4. BE CONSCIOUS OF ALCOHOL INTAKE

Mulled wine, spiked eggnog and Irish coffee can seem like the perfect addition to your holiday season, but proceed with caution! Try and choose lower calorie beverages, like wine. Drinking water between cocktails is a great tip as this decreases overall calorie intake and keeps you hydrated. Alcohol also reduces will power and increases appetite!

## 5. MAINTAIN A REGULAR EATING SCHEDULE

Don't skip meals during the day, as this will cause you to binge later, or even late-night snack. Keep yourself feeling satisfied with healthy eating throughout the day.

## 6. PAY ATTENTION TO YOUR TRUE HUNGER SIGNALS

Ask yourself am I actually hungry, bored or simply thirsty? Chew food slowly, wait 10 minutes after you finish your plate and pay attention to how you really feel.

## 7. WALK IT OFF

Take two short lunch breaks instead of one long one and squeeze in a 15 minute walk outside around your office.

These tips have worked for me, my friends and clients for years. Just remember, stay healthy, and love yourself.

Ilona Gorelik is a Nutritionist with a life-long interest in health and wellness. Find out more by going to [NutritionBalance.ca](http://NutritionBalance.ca).



# ABOUT THE TOWN

# WITH SMJ





# from Pharmacy to *Fashion*

by Andrew Terry Pasieka

In today's society people are aware that they need to prepare for more than one career in their working lifetime; virtually no one spends 30-40 in the same job or at the same company. Usually this means identifying one's transferrable skills and applying them in the new career. However, for Sena S. Ahohe, going from a pharmacist to a fashion designer sounds like a 360 degree transformation rather than simply transferrable skills.

The result of this transformation was KEJEO DESIGNS a West African inspired brand that celebrates modernity and tradition. Blended African textiles and coloration with western styles create "Kejeo" pieces depicting beauty in the "mina" language of Benin and Togo, where Sena is from, in the form of casual wear, business attire, or special occasions outfits.

The brand recently has been seen on the runways at AFWT 2019, Toronto's International Fashion Encounter, Toronto Fashion Industry's: When Fashion Meets and been worn by a number of artists/influencers/media personalities from G98 FM and Breakfast Television just to name a few.

At the outset of our interview we had to ask her opinion as to what was the catalyst that triggered this seemingly drastic switch in careers. Her answer was an involved one, similar to the career U-turn she took.

*"Fashion has always been a passion for me. I have always been a fan of trendy styles but never dreamed of having a clothing brand until a few years ago.*

*At that time, I offered a former co-worker who was also friend of mine a very casual top made with African prints, something that one would wear everyday back in my home country. Although she really loved it she told me that she would keep it for a special occasion. I tried to explain to her that she could pair it with a pant or skirt and wear it like any normal colorful printed outfit. After my conversation with her, I realized I probably needed to start wearing my African clothes more often for her to see me and in different ways so she could really see how African clothes can be adapted to the everyday life here in North America. I also realized that if my friend was thinking that way, chances are that there were many more people thinking the same way. I realized that I needed to raise awareness about how African clothes can be used and worn here in the western world.*

*I started to wear more of my African clothes, and to my surprise I was getting many compliments. I decided to replicate few of the styles I used to wear and offer them for sale to whoever liked them and would be interested in purchasing them. And as I started to sell them more and more, that's when I told myself that I could turn this into a business."*

If fashion was always a passion, would she say growing up if it was hidden, or if there was a family background?

*"There was no family background of fashion. However, my mother used to own a huge business of African prints, the original Dutch wax from Holland (Vlisco Brand). I grew up knowing a lot about the different types and quality of prints out there, so anytime we needed to have an outfit sown I wanted the fancy stuff, but my mother would never let me have it. So I always told myself that one day when I got older, and could afford those fabrics myself, I would sure do whatever I wanted with designing in those fabrics".*

Sena grew up in Cotonou, the Economic Capital of Benin Republic, in a family with 3 siblings. Both her parents being hard working people, instilling in her that she could do anything. Her mother started a small business selling school supplies, kitchen supplies, and then moved to the Dutch Wax business which became very successful over time. She remembers during the school breaks, she used to always go to the market and stay at her mom's stand, sometimes for the entire day helping her. Watching her mother struggle in her business but still able to grow and achieve something was a great lesson.

*She came to Canada six years ago for family reasons. For thirteen years prior to that she was in the United States, finishing all her undergrad and*

graduate school. Sena was trained in pharmacy in the U.S. and also obtained her doctorate degree in pharmacy. She spent almost her entire career in the profession working in Retail pharmacies and hospitals.

The switch to fashion was actually gradual. From the time Sena realized that she wanted to do something to raise awareness of how African prints can be adapted to the Western world to making a total switch, it took her about 6 or 7 years. We then wanted to know how long she was in fashion when she formed Kejeo Designs.

*“For me the intention was always there, to make those outfits that fit my vision. However, I had to spend a good 2 to 3 years through observations, trials and errors of various styles (using full prints or prints mixed with plain fabrics), and getting feedback from close friends and the clientele I was selling my designs to.”*

*When I realized that the feedback I was getting on most of my designs was positive and many people were embracing what I was doing, that’s when I decided to fully dive in and create KEJEO. I am still listening and evolving with what the demands are because that is what the fashion industry is all about”.*

In summary, Sena’s story is one of unique courage and perseverance to succeed in making such drastic switch in careers. We wondered what advice or encouragement she would offer to young women whose passion is far from their present situation and seems almost impossible to reach.

*“My No 1 advice is to believe and trust in yourself and not let anyone discourage you and tell you that you cannot do it...No matter what you do, you cannot please everyone, and you cannot serve everyone... If you have a passion, an imagination, a vision, it is because God put it in you, and you need not to let anyone deceive you that you cannot do it. It is doable!”*

*My No 2 advice is to try to network with other entrepreneurs that have been successful and try to learn from them and be encouraged. By listening to other successful people, you will understand that you are not alone, that even the most successful people have their own struggles, even bigger ones. By listening to others it will give you more encouragement to keep on pressing till you reach your goals.”*



Model Credit:  
Nadia Joseph @nadiajoseph  
Photographer Credit:  
Olga Hutsul @olgahutsulphotography

www.kejeodesigns.com  
@kejeodesigns



# THE MAKING of Kadupul

by Shelley Jarrett

I had an opportunity to see a short film by fellow Mississauga resident Deepa Mahanti when it was released earlier in 2018. Now as 2019 nears its end, she has a second project called Kadupul almost done and scheduled for release by March 2020, with a tentative premiere date of March 15th. The filming commenced at the end of July, took a couple of months to complete, and has been in post-production since.

The film is being produced through Myiesha Inc., a non-profit company first founded in 2009. The mandate for the organization is community-oriented through causes such as She’s Me, I’m Here and Fire Divas.

Deepa refers to the film as a musical documentary. When I asked her what the inspiration for the project was, she had this answer.

*“Kadupul means the most vital flower in the world. The film depicts the true identity of a woman stripped of all superficial layers, from the struggles that all women go through. In this case the stripped layers were very real and a result of being the victim of a fire. The inspiration was music because I thought life can be personified by that. Different musical styles can represent our different moods, our daily ups and downs, joyous moments, and devastating events.”*

The metaphors are vivid, but it is important to know why this story needs to be told. Deepa explains.



*“It was memorable for me from start to finish. The most difficult part was just being human.”*

“The reason for putting this story on a visual platform like film is that it would mean not only the voice of Subhra (the subject of the movie) could be heard, but also the (persona) of Subhra could be seen as to how she deals with her (tragedy), as have many other women in our community... (her) beauty shines through, is not just on the surface but rooted deep within.”

Deepa Mahanti and Subhra Mukherjee Rathnam first met when Deepa was organizing an event through her not-for-profit organization. They were providing 100 warm blankets for a shelter in the Peel region for Christmas. She was putting together a short documentary of eight women of her ethnic background and was touched by Subhra’s story, who was one of those women. In spite of the trauma and horrible journey she had to endure, she was still resilient and powerful.

Deepa then discussed how she had to separate her feelings for Subhra as a friend as opposed to being the subject of a film that she was directing.

“It was memorable for me from start to finish. The most difficult part was just being human. I identified with the pain and suffering that I know Subhra felt. But as a filmmaker I had to put any personal feelings aside to do justice to my vision. It was very traumatic experience for me, hearing her tell her story. I can’t express it in terms of words, but I felt the connection.”

At this point, I wanted to bring Subhra Mukherjee Rathnam) into the conversation and get her viewpoint on similar questions. I started with asking her why she felt it was important to tell her story.

“Being a spiritual guru myself, we are taught how to be better human beings and give unconditional love to all. I practiced regularly and taught meditation to all ages including children and those who have very special needs. When I met Deepa, I told her a little bit of my story, and we discussed the idea of Kadupul.”

She feels the final result will be amazing, but it doesn’t match her final result.

*“What I lived through... I lived when I was lit with fire from head to toe. I lived when I was*

*screaming for help, but there was no one to help. I was alone in that house. I lived when I was praying to God to let me faint, because I could not bear the pain anymore. I lived when the nurses at the hospital did my dressings twice a day between 2-3 hours each time. They were fueling my newly forming skin. I was an extremely beautiful woman. When I saw myself in the mirror for the very first time I died and lived at the same time. It doesn’t matter what I lost on the surface I never lost my inner self, it never died.”*



A movie that relives the most terrifying moment of one’s life must be in a very different way excruciating of the entire healing process that Subhra went through for the past six and a half years. Feeling the moment and the emotions as she relayed her story on film must have been very hard. But the courage she displayed in fighting alone and the therapy she endured cannot be discounted. Subhra says in summary,

“This documentary is very deep; it took me to the dark corners where I fought myself. In feel very blessed by the universe that I have a friend like Deepa. She could not hope to know how painful this would be, but tried to be as understanding as any human could be.”

I wrapped up our time together by asking Deepa two technical questions. What was her experience on set with the crew?

“Well, had to prepare them, knowing that we had to be super sensitive, knowing that sometimes the topic would be overwhelming. There was a lot of behind the scenes discussions on being in the moment. We tried to be like one big family.”

What surprises, if any, did she have on set?

“I was surprised in that it was more painful than I imagined. At times I was just listening and a feeling overcame me and I cried. This was not expected, it just happened naturally. Mind you we were reliving real life effects”.



# ABOUT TESHARAH BRISCOE

By Karlene Millwood

One day last November I opened Facebook to a lovely message entitled See You Through. I recognized the name of the sender so I clicked the link to listen to what has become a hauntingly, sweet and comforting reminder that I am never alone.

It was part of the latest video from Prayze Factor award winning gospel artist, Tesharah Briscoe, a young woman whose passion to sing started at the age of nine while she was living in Jamaica. Tesharah's cousin, who

was the choir director of their church, noticed her gift early on and nurtured it by allowing her to sing the lead on some hymns.

She migrated to Canada at age 11 and found an affinity for sports like basketball, floor hockey, badminton and cross-country sprinting yet never neglected her singing. As she explains it, "I took the discipline that I learned in these sports and translated it into my [music]."

Tesharah is also a songwriter. When she's writing a new song she focuses on making it come to life naturally. "I want to stay true to how it's downloaded to me." Then she makes an admission.

"I don't play an instrument...I write from my gifting. I'll be walking down the street and a melody comes, or praying and even in dreams God gives me songs. Musicians are usually surprised that I don't play an instrument and I'm still able to write the quality of songs that I do. So it's definitely God

that placed that in me and I do it out of a sense of purpose. I think I'm a better writer than a singer, so I want to start writing for other people as well, not just for myself. One of my greatest dreams is to write for Disney."

Her journey to her passion is an interesting one. She enrolled as a Political Science major at York University, but her heart was in music. "When I walked by the Arts building I would hear someone playing the piano and my heart would feel light as a feather and would beat a little faster and I remember thinking this is what I'm supposed to be doing."

Tesharah was in her third year when she decided to switch her major but it was too late in the term. She inquired about adding music as a minor and was informed that, although she wasn't failing, her GPA wasn't high enough. She resorted to taking as many music classes as she could whenever and wherever she could find them. After graduation she stayed true to her passion and became a professional singer in 2012, releasing several albums and singles to her credit.

Tesharah has experienced some naysayers along her journey who advised her to choose a different career. She admitted there were occasions it hurt but the Godly wisdom she held on to gave her that push to go on.

She has also had to fight discouragement from within, including some personal struggles.

"There are times when it feels like you're giving more than you're receiving, when it seems like you're pushing against a wall...I'm getting older and want to put down some solid roots like purchasing a home...I ask myself, do I want to continue or

do I want to do something else. (And personally)... I struggled with the tone of my voice. I used to think it was too rough but it's in those moments when I think I can't do it or I feel uncertain that God would give me a song."

"When I speak to...long-time supporters, they remind me why I am doing this at all. That is why it's so important to have the right people around you. They...remind you of what's important and help to push and pray you through... I had to experience



helplessness and hopelessness so that I could write about it from an authentic place and it could speak to someone else. If I'm not going through it, I won't be able to represent it."

Tesharah reflects that sometimes the industry can create an environment of intimidation and remembers several times when she was afraid to go on stage to perform. She would literally pray and ask God to make the promoters forget to call her to sing, until one day her manager admonished her not to be selfish with her gift. "It's all about what YOU are here to offer. Someone else can't do

what I can do because it's unique to me."

Her career highlights include her Jamaica tour with the crew from G987, an invitation to the Stellar Awards and winning the Prayze Factor award for International Female Lead in Atlanta, GA.

She confesses that as a creative entrepreneur her major challenge is finances, especially travelling to promote her work. It is her faith that keeps her going in these rough times. "It's like a fire within my soul that fuels me. There's a scripture that says, don't be weary in well doing and I have to remember that because sometimes it's tiring giving out so much."

Her advices to young people who aspire to be singers come from her beginnings as a worship leader.

"Music is a powerful tool. Even the people who are singing secular music were given that gift by God. When your focus for using your gift is about God it's the most beautiful thing... He will download what you should do...That way whether the public affirms you or not

you will stay on your path. The music industry can steal your passion so the only way to keep it is to allow God to reveal ways to grow. Get some training; get a vocal coach or a music mentor."

She's looking forward to 2020 and the video launch for the remix of her song, "Shine." Tesharah's music is available on Spotify, Amazon, Apple Music and other prominent digital music platforms.

Tesharah Briscoe

 Tesharah

 tesharah



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Happy 2020!  
I hope you've had  
a wonderful start to  
the New Year.

In looking back at 2019 I can honestly say that I had an incredible year. I had made plans and set goals and pretty much have achieved what I had set out to do. As I look forward to the New Year, I think about how wonderful it could be if there were instructions on how you can make it an amazing one. Here are a few things I've learned along the way that have helped me be in a better place.

- 1 I think being true to myself is important in creating my plans and moving forward in work and life. Taking some time to reflect on my good and bad attributes can help to understand things that have worked well for me and those that have not.
- 2 Create and foster meaningful relationships. Make time for the people who you meet that share the same interests and values as you in work and life. The thing that you might be chasing is making connections with those people in your life and that can help you become the best you.
- 3 Once you have fostered those relationships, be thankful and show appreciation for them. You have a tribe! We all do! These are the people who encourage you even though you've felt like you've fallen. These are the people who sing your praises and will do anything for you at the drop of a hat. Without your tribe, your fears and insecurities might have been a bigger and more intimidating mountain to climb. So whether it's saying "thank you", spending time over coffee or sending a card, appreciation goes a long way. We all need to feel loved so reaching out to our supporters makes them feel equally supported.
- 4 Don't hold onto relationships that are negative or toxic and are not working for you. They say all good things come to an end. So why hold on to bad things? We spend so much time and energy in relationships that are draining, clouding our minds and distracting us from our goals. By moving forward without the negative relationships you might feel lighter, more focused and more successful in your personal life and career.

# YOUR HEALTH IS YOUR WEALTH

By Dr. Lisa Ramsackal

- 5 Choose positivity instead of negativity. Words have power and the language that you use might be holding you back. Keep your mind and language positive and let go of the negative thoughts and words that keeps us from reaching our full potential. Don't discount your achievements and success with phrases like "oh it's nothing" or "it's no big deal". Own your accomplishments and celebrate them no matter what their size or level of difficulty.
- 6 Time is precious so use it wisely. This one I have a personal and ongoing challenge with. No matter how much I plan I find myself procrastinating or finding other things that distract from my time. I've head the following piece of advice so often; "it's ok to say no". I've recently learned something about myself; that I'm somewhat of a people pleaser and I can't say no. I'm not alone on this either. Many of us have difficulty saying "No". Why is it so difficult? Maybe we don't want to disappoint? Don't want to deal with awkward conversations or feel the need to justify why we are saying no? Saying no is acceptable and we do not need to qualify it. You do not need to justify your decisions, they're yours to make and your time is precious. Stop making time for things that don't bring you joy, are not productive and are not helping you achieve your goals, and especially if you do not want to do them.

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# LIFE WILL GO ON

By Vanessa "SLUR" Louis



It's almost that time: New Year's. Whether or not I should make New Year's resolutions? Maybe the question should be about keeping them, because I have yet to fulfill the few made around this time last year. Am I bothered? No, because frankly, so many things happened in 2019 that I am just thankful to have survived it all. I'm sure that I was not alone with unfulfilled resolutions. This year end I have a different mindset. I hope that you can find peace without resorting to another set of New Year's resolutions.

The resolutions which I made in 2019 slowly faded into oblivion as the days turned into weeks and into months. Other priorities took precedent and those extra ten pounds which I resolved to lose became the ten pounds I was comfortable keeping. How much happier would their loss have made me? Would I have really noticed, or would I have found other faults once they were gone?

Or how much did I lose by overthinking my past and sacrificing my happiness for others? All those failed resolutions came at a price and the price was not always mine to choose. Also, our realities are always changing. For the past twelve years I've had a secure job, a guaranteed income and countless protections. And in a blink of an eye, all that changed. This financial life which I was comfortable with for almost thirteen years is gone. Taken in that context, would ten pounds lost along with trying to please everyone have made a difference?

No, they wouldn't have. So you see, when life happens, even New Year's resolutions are secondary. Now with the reality that when you are reading this, we will be a few weeks into 2020 and many of you will be a few weeks into your own set of New Year's resolutions. For once, I won't have any desire to create mine.

In the past, expectations have guided my resolutions which focused on getting to a point in my life to feel

better because someone criticized me...questioned some physical attribute...the texture of my hair or the darkness of my skin. Fortunately for me, 2020 will see me leaving the tradition of New Year's resolutions behind. Perhaps it may just be for one year, but I will enjoy leaving behind that unnecessary pressure I place on myself.

And so, I look forward to 2020 and all the uncertainty which will come with it. Will I lose ten pounds, or will I gain twenty? It doesn't warrant a resolution. I will start the New Year on a new journey. All I have to look forward to is celebrating another 365 days with those whom I love. I will leave everything else up to whatever reality emerges. I will continue to take life as it comes, with the belief in that old adage: LIFE WILL GO ON.

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**Or through her blog [www.stylelikeyourrich.com](http://www.stylelikeyourrich.com)**

# Affairs of the heart

## LETTING NEW LOVE IN

By Akua Hinds

Are you feeling jaded about your entire love experience and you are convinced that you are going to continue being in the same unsatisfying relationships that you had been in the past? If you are, believe me, I understand. Feeling miserable about love instead of feeling positive about new love opportunities seems to be a trend these days. As we enter into a new decade, I have had a lot of time to reflect about what the best way is to start over, and I have come to an amazing conclusion; renewing starts start with you. You are the one human being who can give yourself the fresh start that you long for. The first step to letting love in is by allowing one hundred percent positivity into your life and allowing positivity to direct your steps.

I never realized that I had a mainly negative mindset towards relationships until years ago when my friend Michelle pointed it out to me that I tended to speak negatively

with regards to love whenever we had conversations. I had scoffed at that idea at first, but the more I thought about it, the more I had realized that Michelle was right; I did have a tendency to complain about my love life failures instead of compliment my love life opportunities. Can you relate? When we complain about our love lives, nothing really gets accomplished. Venting out your frustrations is not going to solve your relationship issues. To solve your relationship issues start looking at things from a more positive point of view.

While there is nothing you can do about your past romantic choices, you can choose whether or not you want to repeat your past. When you think positively, the regretful relationships you had could actually prepare you for a future strong love match. You do not necessarily need to ignore your past in order to move forward from it. You can use your past to help you

build a stronger future. Changing the way that you think is a very tall order, but it is exactly what you need to do if you want to bring new change into your life. If you focus on what you want to attract, that is what will come into your life. Focusing on what you want will help you to heal from the past as well.

New love can only enter your life when there is a place for it to enter. Have you made room in your life for the right person, or are you still complaining about what did not work out for you from before? When you release what did not work for you before, you are creating a safe space for new love to blossom in your life. Make room in your life for success to blossom, love to bloom, and resentments to wither away. Let love in and give yourself a chance to move forward. You truly have the power to grow in emotional strength and to make this a happier new year for yourself!!

*Akua Hinds, journalist, actress, music performer & instructor, founder & marketing owner of dating sites [www.InterracialDesires.net](http://www.InterracialDesires.net), [www.RichSinglesDate.net](http://www.RichSinglesDate.net), [www.ChristianPartner.co](http://www.ChristianPartner.co) & independent business owner at [www.PureRomance.com/AkuaHinds](http://www.PureRomance.com/AkuaHinds). Please visit [www.AkuaHinds.com](http://www.AkuaHinds.com)*



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