

ACCESSIBILITY INSIDER 2024-25

FROM THE DIRECTOR: FINDING SPACE AND COMMUNITY

Each year Accessibility Services holds an annual student survey. Your feedback and contributions are critical, and we carefully review everything that is written and reflected back to us in the survey. A recurring theme from thousands and thousands of responses over the last 5 years is that those registered with Accessibility Services are looking for community and shared spaces with others that are 'just like me.' Students tell us how much they feel like 'they are the only one' and they share with us their desire and need to find and know others who have common lived experiences. As a staff working with over 6000 registered students, we know just how many of you share the same challenges, hopes and dreams.how then does connection between students start to happen?

We do not envision Accessibility Services 'creating' community. If we were try to do so it could never truly be a student community, and it would not provide a meaningful or appropriate response to the students' voices that have been shared with us. There is however an opening for those of us who work in Accessibility Services to use the privileges and opportunities we hold to : 1) create new spaces; 2) new opportunities for connection; and 3) new supports so that students can co-create and collaborate together to build a community that reflects your needs, your voices, you values and your aspirations. That is what "Open Mic Nights" the "Dialogue Series" and the "Accessibility Insider Magazine" are all about. Creating new blank, open, undefined spaces that address the disconnect and open up opportunities for community and meaning making.

This edition of the Accessibility Insider Magazine speaks to the talents, gifts and beautiful voices students bring to the table when they come together in one space. It is powerful. Thank you to everyone who has shared of themselves in these pages. I assure you it means more than you can ever know to your fellow students.

Mike Nicholson | Director, Accessibility Services (St. George Campus)

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The background features a vibrant orange color with large, flowing, brownish-orange wavy lines that create a sense of movement and depth. The word "POETRY" is centered in a bold, lime green font.

POETRY

Have you ever
Listened
Under
Water?

Gurgled.
Muffled.
Murmured.
Clogged.

The water fills your
Ears
With a gentle
Humming
Buzzing
Ringing

You're enveloped
In a thick
Blanket
Of wet
...Damper

You hear a sound
Well, noise
You can't really decipher sound
Down here
Under the
Surface

So everything is just...
Noise.

Gurgled noise.
Muffled noise.
Murmured noise.
Clogged noise.

The thing about being
Under Water
Is
You can't really tell which direction
Noise
Comes from

Up
Down
Left
Right

You squint your eyes
Trying to locate the
Source of noise
But most noise just
...Sounds the same

Gurgled.
Muffled.
Murmured.
Clogged.

You squint
But your vision
Only compensates
So much
For being
Deaf.

Abigail Lash-Ballew (she/her) is a PhD student at the University of Toronto in the Factor-Inwentash Faculty of Social Work. Abigail has lived with single-sided Deafness since the age of fifteen, following a traumatic head injury. Her research interests include the impacts of racism and white supremacy on social work practice and education, particularly in areas relating to child welfare and motherhood. Abigail is originally from the Washington, D.C. area and now lives in downtown Toronto with her spouse and two young children.

UNDER WATER

BY ABIGAIL LASH-BALLEW

AS I JOURNEY AFAR

BY EVAN CHAN

Though I walk far,
Where the shadow looms.
In every moment of each day,
my heart blooms.

For in this life,
There is nothing afar.
Only destiny,
Which defines who you are.

Though I suffer,
For humanity's sake.
The works of the righteous,
Carry no weight.

For here I am,
In this life of mine.
Sitting in darkness,
Before the divine.

As hope is thine,
Not from afar.
May we find new life,
In the resurrected mind.

For alas,
The stars are near.
The incarnation of hope,
Gently reappears.

Though my ages past,
The spirit of life nears.
For one thousand years sake,
We will not fear.

For in this life,
We journey together.
Proclaiming our voices,
That the beginning is here.

Though I walk far,
Where the shadow looms.
In every moment of each day,
my heart blooms.





DEAR TEDDY

BY KETMIE BONNIFAIT

No need for words, you just knew,
The way to comfort, see me through.
Through every trial, thick or thin,
You've shown me strength, you've helped me win.

In every step, you've met my pace,
No rush, no pull, just steady ground.
A gentle rhythm, a warm embrace,
A bond that's rooted and profound.

The world may bend, the path unclear,
But with you near, I'll never fear.
You, my compass always by my side,
My anchor, my little quiet guide.

When streets grew narrow, voices pressed near,
Your calm dissolved my doubt.
With just a glance, you'd make it clear
Together, we'd figure it out.

It's not about what I can't or lack;
It's how we turn and bend.
You, my shadow, always at my back,
My partner, my furry friend.

Since last May, you've led the way,
With patience, calm, and love each day.
With every step, you never stray,
By my side, come what may.

So here we are, with a paw in hand,
Together we've walked, we'll always stand.
Through every step, on you I depend,
Teddy, you are my truest friend.

BY KIRA SUN

SMILES BACK AT ME MY SEROQUEL

my Seroquel smiles back at me.
a soft, warm, tissue-pink heart looks back at me.
beatless.
like I wish mine were
some days.

some little child's heart broke when it learned that real hearts don't resemble
the soft corners they're used to
and break with a louder crumble than they could ever imagine a zig-zagged line
could make.

a single pill filled with the hope of smiles,
drowned with a gulp of water and a disregard
for the future.

maybe it looks back at me.
hopeful too.

bridges don't seem so scary when tugged by the warmth of your bed
and the soft sheets that melt away your breath.
the bridges of my own mind waver and shake,
teeter with the pressure of wind and weight.

pink hearts were once my favourite drawing—
two imperfect strokes.
two imperfect rhythms,
pushing and pulling,
tearing
and tugging

waves splashing with
each ebb and
flow.



IN THE MODERN OTHERWORLD OF TÍR NA NÓG

BY SABRINA MCLENNON

a prince of the emerald isle emerges:
from the foggy dew, my eyes twitch to glitter bluish green in daylight, purplish red in twilight
as his calloused hands shaped my statue
fired in blue marl clay at 1400 centigrade,
with rose tourmaline glaze,
he wills the mudded dirt off my feet
instead embossing opalescent angel wings
as he refashions my brown orbs to chrysoberyl
sun and light flow through his veins

in a flower-filled meadow, always lush,
a master of multiple disciplines devotes his time
to me and the flowers and him have time to
ground rose petals at me feet me
as the sculptor takes a break
in a dawn of buttercups,
the sun clouds this morning are grey and white
my pulse is slow, my red-pink heart blooms
through silk cloth so astoundingly
am i the beauty of a garden bed?
the moon is no door. She is sweeter than Mary
iridescent and mystical over the face of old stars
from ceramic, he crafted my hands to gold
showering my stone with silver coins
solely warmed by sunbeams as the incandescent
light of the moon
swells around me like a bruise
agawp at the impeccable moon
and i am aware of my heart:
it opens and closes
the water i taste is lukewarm and bitter of sea-salt
that comes from a home far away as health.
proud male marijuana flowers bloom and unload

their griefs on my feet as if
i were G-,
prickling my ankles and murmuring their humility
i am nobody; i have nothing to do with explosions
nobody watched
me before, now i am watched
am i the beauty of a garden bed?
honey-sweet lips breathe life to mudstone
as the colour returns to my lips
and my half divine boy gives gifts
a gift, a love gift that purifies my blood and air
moulding a queen made beautiful by the moon
the harp of erin is rung, and i am aware of my heart:
it opens and closes
the water i taste is lukewarm and bitter of sea salt
that comes from a home far away as health.
between the eye of the sun and the eyes of roses;
i have no name, i have wanted to efface
myself. the lovely roses eat my oxygen
their redness talks to my bruises of unknown origin,
it corresponds.
s.m.

SILENT RESILIENCE

BY LAVARNAN MEHAVARNAN

To the taxi driver that proclaimed,
“This generation does not know sacrifice!”
As his villainous monologue spews forth,
Between the lines of a parent with good intentions.
The other elderly passenger nods in agreement.
While I sat there, biting my tongue silently.
To these folks, there was not much left to say
My voice, half as a child,
Half as an adult still finding their way,
Could not offer much sway.
Yet, as another child of immigrant parents,
I must wholeheartedly disagree.
These sacrifices did not go unnoticed,
And most certainly not in vain.
We may never fully comprehend that pain
But bleed from the aftermath all the same.
A decision made in under a minute

With repercussions that would last a lifetime.
You pulled yourselves away from your former homes
In exchange for another someplace far away.
A life completely unknown,
A new village for children to be grown.
Torn away from sheltering battlefields,
Fortifying your hearts to become our precious shields.
Our sacrifices are minor
Compared to your leap of faith,
We still struggle to understand our place
Unable to communicate face-to-face.
The choice that was ripped from your hands,
Now bestowed into our shaking palms.
To figure things out for ourselves
As young adults,
As children,
As the next generation of resilience.



maya's eyes are ever so brown
like the bark of an oak, ash, or hawthorn tree I think
her little head is carved in wood,
yet her eyes are quickest to brim with tears.
o maiden fair, thorn in the stem of an Irish rose our
young lady, grow and see
Auntie Siobhan says we have traveling feet slippers
for princesses, a song from Turtle Island
travels across blue bolts of a cold moon
among stars and showers of gold
to awake her warrior - like strength.
She is a small island, asleep and peaceful Surrounded
by the smiles of women

You are a mountain, among mountainy women
I am a baby mountain, a seed about to break.
o maiden fair, the smile of a babe
and the silver tract of time empties into your eyes as
the green blue sky empties of its promise,
like a feeding me of love
and there is no middle ground upon which she will
stand safe a place called swords, at forgotten
crossroads of sweet grass and buttercup.

Your true land is here :
The easter lilies are white and trumpet- like shaped
the shamrocks, they have been cared for tenderly at
the cliffs of Moher
the sun and moon guide us
A little light is filtering from primrose flowers
And from your little mouth
issue sharp cries full of pearls
Glittering and digesting
as stars open among the bog rosemary

Little baby hear my voice, beside you, o maiden fair
In the palace of legacy, justice, and valor
With windows of generational crystals
Here one is safe
there are family photographs
the sun blooms, it is a world of white snow now.
s.m

NOBLE MAIDEN FAIR

BY SABRINA MCLENNON

FIREFLY

BY KOBY LEE

The world was built before me
Filled with misery and mystery
But we put those feelings aside every Halloween
The time of hiding who you are
Hidden behind the fears of others
You can see how you impact the world
Even though no one can see you

As day falls to night
I cloak myself behind the fear of regret
I am a piece of clay
Sculpted by my mistakes
Carving the past with the knife of the present
I don't need to see what I'm about to do
I can feel it
You cannot judge what you cannot witness
I work in the dark I stay relentless
No one sees who I am until I step into the light
So I fuel my own fire and fly through the night

AEROPHOBIA: NAVIGATING AIRPORTS IN A WHEELCHAIR IS A NIGHTMARE

BYLINE: CCD

I am not a nervous flyer.

I have flown on planes since I was a couple of months old. I'm quite familiar with the mechanical hum of the plane and the violent rumbling whenever it hits turbulence. There is a baby picture of me somewhere, sitting comfortably staring into the aisle with a plastic fork in my mouth. Completely calm, perhaps even a little mischievous. Yet, the idea of the metal bird dropping from the sky never truly crossed my mind. Perhaps the fact I was merely three months old when 9/11 happened, my fear of planes just never took root.

Sure I am afraid of falling from a certain height. Whenever I'm on the subway platform, on a bridge, at the CN Tower, or even on the Leviathan, I don't appreciate the stomach drop I feel whenever I fall. It's a scary feeling, one where you lose absolute control, and where

gravity takes over. It is when you are at your most vulnerable, and all you can do is let out a curdling scream and cry.

While this fear has never stopped me from going on a plane, it is the airport that makes me... uncomfortable.

The airport is massive, with so many terminals and gates that it is easy to get lost. I hate getting lost; I'm a creature of habit. I spent my first semester at U of T sticking to the paths and buildings I knew because getting lost would lead to an increasing sense of panic.

Secondly, airports are too loud. Every time an announcement crackles through the speakers, I can barely make sense of it over the hustle and bustle of the airport. Travelling through security, staff instructing me to do things, and asking me tons of questions, but with the beeping of machines, babies crying, and the cacophony of sounds.

But despite hearing everything, I hear nothing. I stare at the airport staff, feeling exposed to the fact that I have no idea what they just said. Sometimes I ask them to repeat, other times I pretend I understand and move on so that the line of frustrated and impatient travellers can keep moving.

This is why I feel reassured whenever I travel with my family or friends, they become my ears as I navigate through the chaos. I just turn on autopilot mode, zone out and all I have to do is follow their instructions. I don't have to think, make decisions or engage with anyone, I just have to coast. While I don't like to burden them, it has been my default since I was a kid.

But all of that changed last summer when I, for the first time, flew back home to Toronto from Barbados.

My sister and I were flying to Barbados together and we woke up at 4 am so that we could get our ride to the airport. We had packed our bags the night before so that all we had to do was hop into the car. But something happened when I grabbed the house keys to lock the front door. As I tried to insert the key into the lock, my vision began to shake. Having blurry vision was nothing new. I have a lazy eye, and due to my epilepsy, I tend to have short episodes where the world spins. But what was different this time, was that my whole body felt heavy, especially my head. I couldn't see straight, and my knees began to wobble before I eventually fell on my butt, dizzy and confused.

Perhaps my brain just hated waking up at 4 am after going to bed around 10 pm. My sister asked if I was okay. "I'm fine," I mumble. "I just tripped," I say, not wanting to worry her. I stumble to the car and try to close my eyes. All I needed was to rest my eyes for a bit. By the time we got to the airport, my dizziness had subsided and was quickly forgotten by the time we reached the gate.

But this small feeling of vertigo was merely just the beginning, and a warning of which I casually disregarded.

The week in Barbados was a lot of fun, minus getting catcalled or verbally harassed by some crazy men, we enjoyed eating out, going to the beach, snorkelling, and exploring the island.

Eventually, the week was over, and it was time for me to return so that I could go back to work. I packed

my bags the night before and tried to go to sleep. But the sweltering heat made the task impossible. The next day I was exhausted and had a headache, yet I soldiered on. My ride arrived and my sister helped carry my suitcase into the trunk.

But as I entered the car, my eyes began to shake. I suddenly felt as if all the energy in my body was sucked out of me as the world began to spin. It didn't help that the car being low to the ground was bouncing up and down the bumpy road. I felt sick to my stomach, seeing everything moving so fast. Even worse, it felt as if my seat belt was loose, it didn't keep me from flopping around like a rag doll.

It was like the same vertigo I had a week ago, yet worse.

So much worse.

After what felt like an excruciating hour, we arrived at the airport. They opened the door and I took a wobbly step. "Are you alright?" They ask me. "I-I feel dizzy," I admit. They sit me back in the car and get me a fruit punch. Maybe what I need is sugar. I drown myself in the sweet red drink. They drove around the airport until I felt better.

However, I did not feel better.

The one time I'm flying alone, this happens? I couldn't stop the tears from flowing as we drove around. After twenty minutes we were back at the airport but the world was still spinning, my head was still reeling. How on earth was I supposed to fly now?

I can't walk straight. I can't see straight. I was a straight-up mess.

That was when they decided that I would need a wheelchair.

Now, I have lived with invisible disabilities all my life. I can accept that I cannot see, hear very well, or face challenges when learning things or that I may occasionally randomly drop to the floor and have a seizure. But what I have always taken for granted was my mobility. It was the one thing that guaranteed my autonomy as a disabled individual.

In addition to being hearing impaired and now dealing with temporary vision impairment, it seemed that I had lost my mobility as well. Even though I knew it was temporary, and was probably the only way I was going anywhere, I was nervous.

I've occasionally wondered what it would be like to use a wheelchair. But after years of learning just how terrible it is to fly with one, the wheelchair did not comfort me, rather it just made everything more anxiety-inducing.

The first thing we had to do was to change my ticket and boarding time to PRE so that I would be boarding the plane first with the other wheelchair-using passengers. Second, I had to wait for airport personnel to take me through security. And wait I certainly did. I don't exactly know how long I was waiting for the staff to come and get me from the ticket booth, but it was long enough for me to get irritated and wonder if they had forgotten me already. A feeling that would plague the entire trip onwards.

Finally, the staff arrived and took me to security. A man took my suitcase while a woman pushed the chair through the gate. The man put my suitcase on the

conveyor belt and the woman pushed me toward the metal detector.

“Can you walk?” She asked me. A silly question to ask a person in a wheelchair but I digress. I stood up, legs shaking, but I couldn’t even take a step before falling to the ground. She quickly grabbed me midair and put me back in the chair.

After passing security, the staff pushed me through the airport towards my gate. As I rolled through the crowds, thousands of eyes were on me. Even though my vision was still shaky, I could feel their stares. Within their blurred faces contained pitiful looks. For the first time in my life, I felt uncomfortable within a crowd. Eyes were on me everywhere I went. I wanted to disappear, and become invisible again. Yet within this chair, I was on display for the world to see, their eyes digging under my skin.

The staff took me to a gate, parked me by the window and left. But my relief was cut short when I realized that there were two gates in this room. For a while, I was confused. I didn’t remember what gate I was supposed to be at and wasn’t sure if I was in the right place. Nothing at the gates indicated which flight was which. If there was an announcement I could not hear it. If there was a screen, my eyes were too shaky for me to read it.

I was trapped within a mode of chaos where colours clashed and merged with noise.

Of course, I should have trusted that the staff would not be stupid enough to take a disabled passenger to the wrong terminal, don’t they personally board wheelchair users first? But how should I know? Since no one was telling me anything, I decided to find

someone who would. Unfortunately, I was too far from the front desk, and any other passenger. Even as people walked passed by, I struggled to get their attention. I was too tired to raise my voice. Despite being stared at, people ignored me. So I decided to move to the front desk.

There is only one problem, my lack of upper body strength has tendered my arms to have the strength of a raw spaghetti noodle. So using my feet, I scooted myself over to the desk. A kid to my left stared at me while I moved across the room. What? You’ve never seen a wheelchair user use their legs?

After getting the food I needed, I scooted back to the spot where my suitcase was and patiently waited.

Eventually, I got hungry. However, the food court was pretty far from where I was and I wasn’t going to kick myself around just to get food. So I asked for an escort, but that took a while as the first person went on break and never came back, so I had to ask someone else. They rolled me to a nearby cafe. In the chair, the counter was super high. The airport personnel parked me right behind her. “What do you want?” She asked, curtly.

“I can’t see the board, can you tell me?” After she listed out the various sandwiches, I told her what I wanted and my escort ordered it for me. I pulled out the cash but since I was at an awkward angle, my escort took the cash and paid, giving me the change.

Finally, it was time to pre-board. Someone took my suitcase and another put me in the wheelchair line. Two by two, the staff came and collected us. They rolled us over the tarmac towards a wheelchair-accessible bus which took us towards the plane. They

transferred me into a skinny, aisle-friendly wheelchair before they pushed me onto the mechanical lift. The lift itself was rather bare bones, it lacked any sturdy handrails that would protect us from rolling off the platform. Instead, what was keeping us from falling to our certain death was a single, limp chainlink in front of us and the strong iron grip of the female personnel who held onto our chairs behind us.

With the ground spinning beneath me, the deafening roar of the plane's engines behind me, and my hair flapping in my face, I felt my stomach churn, and my heart beating in my ears.

Finally, an air hostess grabbed my chair and pulled me up backwards up a thin ramp. My heart dropped as I flopped forward. I grabbed the armrest and hooked my feet with the footrests, pleading to God that I don't fall out of the chair due to the steep incline of the skinny, makeshift ramp.

At last, I was pulled into the coolness of the airplane. They rolled me down the aisle and the air hostess transferred me into my seat.

Sadly it did not take more than five minutes before my face went green.

The air hostess offered her arm as I leaned against her towards the tiny cubicle. The minute I closed the door, and let's just say my stomach did not appreciate all the jostling around.

Once I was done, I cleaned up after myself and tried to open the door. Maybe I just couldn't see the handle, or maybe I was just too weak. Either way, it took me a few frustrating tries before I was able to escape my claustrophobic prison, stumbling into the aisle.

"Are you a nervous flyer?" She asked me. I laughed at the assertion.

"No, of course not. I'm just dizzy." She helps me back to my middle seat and offers me some Ginger Ale and a nausea pill.

Fortunately, the rest of the trip was better. Other than the initial nausea, I was knocked out for most of the flight. When I came too, I ate my snacks and was offered some chicken noodle soup for free. I guess you get perks when you're sick.

I was still dizzy, and lethargic; I struggled greatly with lifting the tray out of its slot on the side of the chair. Fortunately, the two male passengers in my row were kind enough to help me out with that.

But eventually, as I was getting better, I was able to walk for short distances without additional assistance.

Despite that, I still needed a wheelchair if I was ever going to navigate Pearson Airport. I knew that wheelchair users would leave the plane last. As it allows for ease of transfer into the wheelchairs.

But I didn't expect that it would take so long to get a wheelchair. After the last able-bodied passenger left, the crew began packing up and leaving the plane. Even the pilots shut off the engine and grabbed their suitcases before they left. I never thought planes could be capable of dead silence, it was suffocating. Slowly I started to notice just how big a plane was compared to my tiny body. Were they going to forget me? Like that other passenger who got stranded on the airplane from the news?

I moved seats closer to the front so that I would be more visible. But even then I couldn't shake off this feeling of abandonment. Fortunately, the air hostess who was helping me out the entire flight volunteered to stay with me until my wheelchair arrived. When the airport staff came with a wheelchair he first asked if I was waiting for my own wheelchair. Despite my poor hearing and shaky vision, I could feel a sense of initial panic coming off him in waves before sudden relief when I told him I was not.

As he pushed me through the gate, I carried my backpack in my lap as he took me to one of the accessibility carts. It was a massive golf cart with multiple seats that took disabled and elderly passengers across the airport. This particular one took us to an accessibility centre, where airport personnel were busy assigning passengers with staff to help get them to where they needed to go.

After an excruciating wait, someone was able to take me through security, and baggage claim. By this point, the carousel had stopped. It was empty and looked abandoned. It took us a little bit of going around the room before I was able to find my suitcase off to a far-flung corner.

Finally, the airport personnel took me to another accessibility centre at Terminal 3. The staff here were to help passengers find a ride home.

However, by this point, I was sick of waiting around. I've never felt so much itching to go home at that moment. I got out of my chair, and leaning on my suitcase, I slowly exited the building towards the pickup where a family friend was able to get me. It did take us a while to find each other. Under the darkness of night and the blinding lights of circling vehicles, it was difficult to separate one car from another; much less identify what car was what.

But despite everything: my dizziness, my lethargic body, my deafness, my nausea, my anxiety, my fear, my frustration, my impatience, I was finally home.

This experience was certainly a traumatic adventure. It has opened my eyes to what wheelchair users and those with anxiety disorders experience. At least I know what to do if I fly alone or if I need assistance.

But I just hope I don't get nervous again.

CATHERINE DUME





**PHO
TOGR
APHY**

PHOTOGRAPHY

BY NATALIE ST. PIERRE-JUBB

Photography has been a part of my life for as long as I've been able to hold a camera. It fills me with immense joy. A couple of years ago, during my first year abroad at law school at the University of Glasgow, Scotland, my parents recognized my passion for photography and generously gifted me my very first camera. Since then, it has become my constant companion, accompanying me to Edinburgh, Bavaria, Lisbon, Wales, and finally back to my home to Canada.

Photography allows me to capture moments, places, faces, and landscapes I may never experience or witness again. My goal is to evoke what it was like to be in these places because being there truly felt like a dream. These are the places I dreamed of visiting since I was a little girl. Every day for years, these are the places I hoped and prayed I would travel to one day.

I often look through my photographs and I am reminded of how lucky I am to have witnessed such beauty. What I often find most beautiful is untamed wilderness, unmanicured landscapes, and the raw imperfections of living. I am constantly in awe of our planet, and it felt like a privilege to explore and document these destinations.

While these places may be far from home, beauty is everywhere—even in the simplest, most ordinary places. You don't have to travel far to find it.

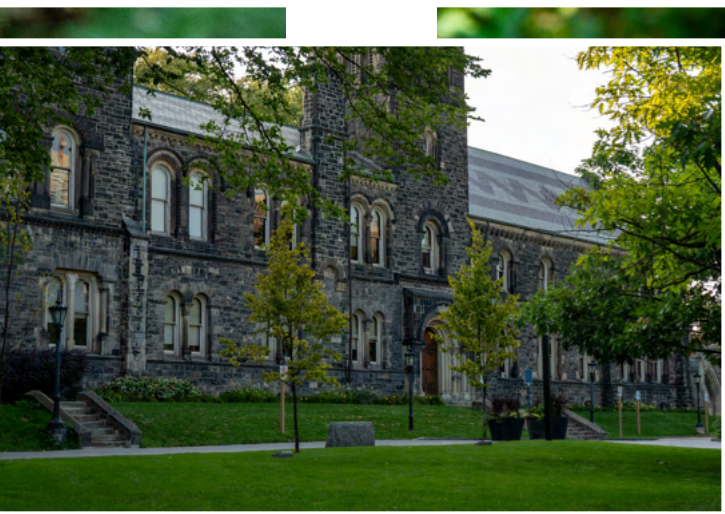
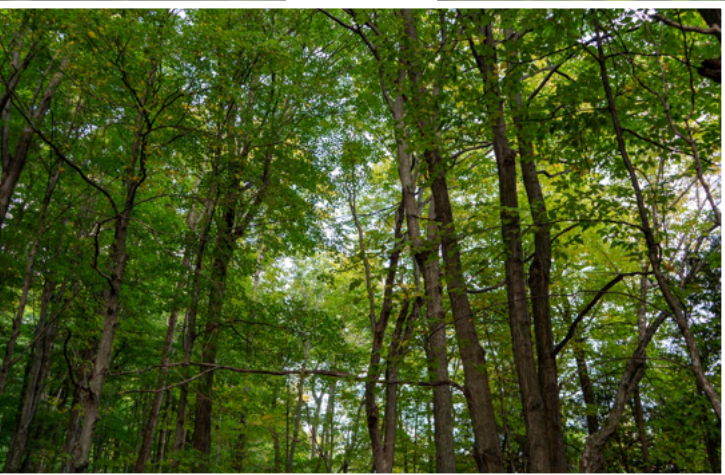




PHOTOGRAPHY

BY RIANNE MATTHIAS





VISUAL ART

The background of the image is composed of large, flowing, organic shapes in a vibrant orange color, separated by white space. A prominent, large white 'X' shape is overlaid on the right side of the composition, extending from the top right towards the bottom left. The text 'VISUAL ART' is positioned on the left side, with 'VISUAL' on the top line and 'ART' on the bottom line, both in a bold, sans-serif font.

Mixed media: I used paint as a base then markers and colored pencils for the details. Oil pastels were also utilized for the multicolored face in the middle of the circle.

Dimensions: 71.10cm x 55.8cm x 0.20cm

Theme: An exploration of self-identity and culture and how it constantly is transforming

Inspiration: The artist under the name cosli_ on Instagram greatly influenced this piece.

Description: The circle in the centre is Yin and Yang which is symbolic of the balance in life: constantly vacillating between contradictions and trying to conflate them into one. Blue and red, the two representative colours used in the circle also represent the middle of the Korean flag. My heritage. The white stripes on each side complete the rest of the flag. Although the stripes are black and the background white on the Korean flag, there was an intentional switch between the two to demonstrate how identity becomes convoluted overtime. Especially with immigrant children. The background has a theme of space. There are many eyeballs which are emblem of small planets that float aimlessly without clear direction in life. Navigating space is a difficult feat as it is expanding ceaselessly just as figuring one's identity. The figure in the middle is an accurate description of many, including me, trying to pin down their own culture, but also spread their wings into the unknown.



INEVITABLE EXPANSION

BY JIYN SONG



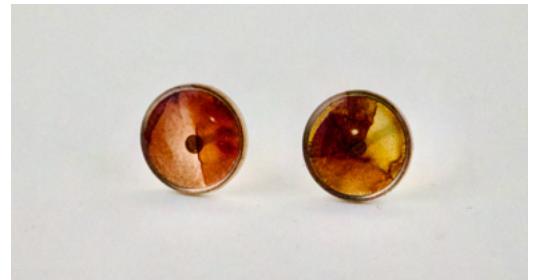
ART

BY REVATI ECCLES

My name is Revati Eccles, and I am a 4th year student, majoring in Diaspora and Transnational Studies with minors in Writing and Rhetoric and Buddhism and Mental Health Studies. I love playing around with different types of crafts and art mediums to create my pieces. The first painting is a mixed medium piece using encaustic painting, oil paint, acrylic paste, of the Toronto skyline that I actually did for one of my courses. The pieces in embroidery hoops are made using cotton, fabric dye, pigment powder, and batik techniques. The earrings are made from alcohol ink paintings I did and are sealed in UV resin.

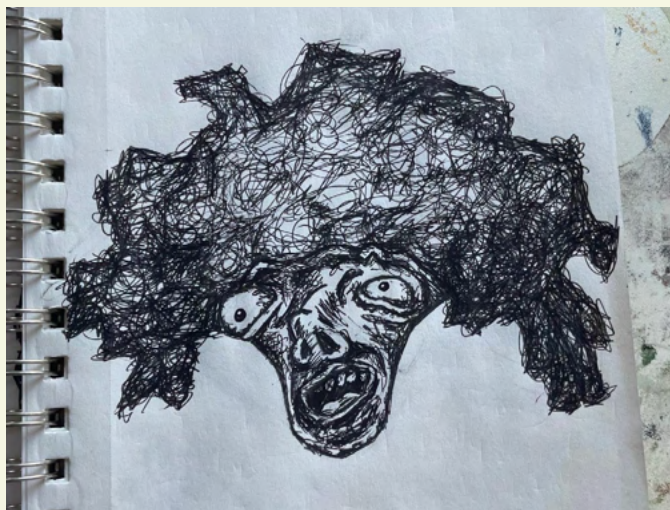
Most of my pieces are inspired by different aspects of myself - whether it be my heritage, disability, family, friends, husband, experiences, or even my other hobbies - and I love being able to represent that in my pieces.







ART
BY FINN FRAY



ART BY ELLE ROSEN

“Progress” and “The Lonely One” by Elle Rosen

These pieces are original and handmade by stippling, which is an art form that I use to create nature portraits. It is simply small black dots with no line work





EMBROIDERY

BY CLARA

Title: Beating Against the Odds

Caption: A pulse of perseverance, captured in every stitch.



MANIA

BY FAISAL FAKHANI

Mania, the other side of the mood spectrum; Depression's non-identical twin who doesn't get as much attention.

What textbooks fail to tell you about Mania is that it's addictive.. Mania is like having an I.V. of drugs trickling into your veins around the clock; it's having so much confidence it's scary.

Mania is the best version of yourself you could ever dream of being; it's a smarter you dissecting life on steroids and frantically jotting down fifty ideas a minute.

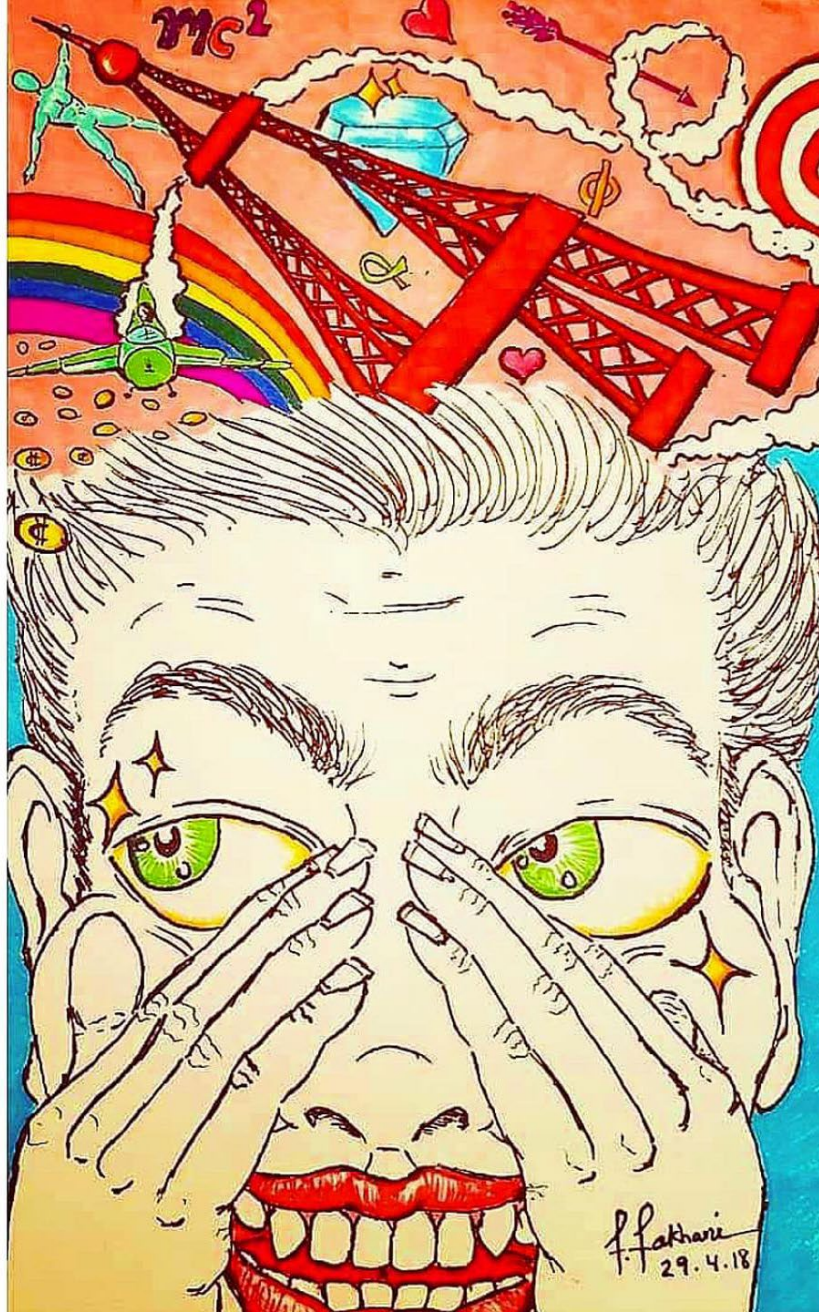
Mania is believing you could have it all and that everything is at the tips of your fingers even if you can't afford it.

Mania is reckless; it means being invincible to danger or disease.

Mania is illogical; it means going out driving at 5 a.m. in the morning in search of something that's running faster than your thoughts.

Mania is promiscuous; it's having strangers become lovers and then strangers again night after night.

Mania is the heightened dose of life that you were never meant to have or tolerate...



Mania: 'meɪniə/(noun)- mental illness marked by periods of great excitement or euphoria, delusions, and overactivity.

INTO PERSISTENT DEPRESSION: WE ARE WHO WE ARE

BY ALISHBA AFAQ

“Into Persistent Depression: We Are Who We Are” explores the coexistence of darkness and light during my experience of persistent depression, showing that while emotions may shift a baseline low mood will remain. The piece consists of two mirrored halves: an inverted night sky (“low” moments) and an upright sunrise (“high” moments).

In the top half, inverted trees stretch toward the dark, deep and cool night sky that is filled with twinkling stars. A hemisphere in the center, representing the moon, radiates soft light around the sky, subtly illuminating some of the black trees with shades of blue. The bottom half transitions into a sunrise, where the same trees stand upright below a rising sun that completes the moon’s hemisphere into a full sphere. Clouds surround the sun, which dramatically illuminates the sky glows with bright, warm hues of orange and yellow that transition into darker pink and purple hues around the trees.

The mirrored halves are not actually separate but continuous, like the highs and lows that co-exist within an emotional landscape. The night sky reflects overwhelmingly “low” moments, where the world may even feel upside down. Conversely, the sunrise reflects “high”, positive moments that are filled with brightness. The illumination from the moon and sun, along with the constant darkness around the trees, shows that regardless of the circumstances, our light can never be extinguished even if lingering depression remains.

This piece never transitions into full daylight because with persistent depression, there is no break from the “darkness”. However, our steadfast light will remain intertwined with the darkness regardless of the circumstances.



Alshwaf
10/02/2025



**REFLECTIONS,
ADVICE,
AND PERSONAL
NARRATIVES**

It was a cool summer night. The slender-stemmed palm trees stowed away from the shore. In the distance, I could pinpoint the whereabouts of the iconic mountain scraping the sky and the magnificent cliff kissing the ocean. Down below, I could make out the faint beams cast by the lighthouse. The calm waves drifted up and down the shoreline, their swish-swash sounding out for kilometres along the beach. I lay on the smooth sand bed. It was soft to my touch - delicate, even powder-like. I glanced up at the darkness above.

The canvas of the sky was pitch black, but gradually became illuminated by lights projected onto its deepening night, strung up in different patterns and orientations. It was as if some higher being took their brush and, with a flick of the wrist, cast a spray of white paint across a backdrop of black. Stars upon stars - some small, some big, some bright, some dim - speckled the night sky. From my surf-side sanctuary, I surveyed the interactions between them, so seemingly close to each other, to me. And yet, it takes light-years for them to be seen, for their radiance to travel to the human eye. By that point, some may have perished already, their fate not known now, not known in thousands of years - not known ever. All constellations may one day share that destiny, the far-flung stars that once anchored and conjoined them into man-made stories suddenly extinguished, their images - pegasus, bull, swan, dragon - gone. From afar, these constellations looked practically next to each other

TRANSCENDENCE OF THE STARS

BY ANDI WONG

from the shore of my sacred sands, but the thought of how far away each one was from another struck me: Are they wandering the galaxy as star-crossed lovers?

Within the vast darkness hung a star, isolated and alienated from those which it was surrounded by. I stared at it, gravitated towards it; neither the brightest nor largest, it shimmered in the middle of the sky's solar scenery. I theorized that it was near a black hole, unable to escape both the terror and temptation of its impending destruction. I imagined that the star was birthed by the Big Bang; not belonging to any constellation, not having any planets orbiting it. Scorching in the centre, about to be sucked into a black hole - these elements are what classify a star as abnormal, its purpose defined by how observable it is to aliens on a remote part of the universe named "Earth."

A sudden change in weather arose, the howl of its harsh wind trying to both drown and devour me. Waves swished to and fro, one second invading my feet, the next retreating from the beach, gathering more energy, more water in an effort to conquer my island asylum. I shuffled back towards the land. The waves speedily rose and gained on me. I tried to ease myself by reimmersing in the stars.

Lost. Alone. The star spent an eternity searching for life, for a purpose other than radiantly awaiting its event-horizon doom. Searching for the truth to reality, while being in constant darkness, only being able to navigate through the universe using its natural light. Once a keen spirit, its solar flare started to diminish. It tried signalling to others that death was imminent, but once again, none of its fellow neighbours heard. Heard the score of its scream. Heard its cry of fear. Heard its pain. It was as if it was in solitude. Space is a void, full of nothingness.

A deafening silence...

What is the size of the universe? Is it round? Is it infinite? Questions flooded my head as I realized that the stars above my head were a two-dimensional map of the vastness that we call our world. I could never understand the star. The exact location of it and what its intentions in its life were.

I stopped drifting in my thoughts for a moment, and reoriented myself. Though the wind had died down and the waves settled, the sand beneath me seemed coarser now. I remained on the beach enjoying the glimpse of the universe, contemplating what it may behold, until a bright orange light gleamed on the horizon.

EPISODIC MEMORY

BY EMMA RUSSELL-TRIONE

Sibley spreads her wings and flies straight into her handler's hair. Held firmly in place by the rope tied around her feet, she staggers, stumbling up and down the length of the handler's glove before settling uneasily back into place.

Sibley is a red-tailed hawk. She, along with a kestrel and a Northern saw-whet owl, is visiting my nature-writing class under the supervision of a handful of volunteers. Each bird is contained in a wooden box punched with air holes. As soon as Sibley was released from hers, she started flapping wildly, her beady eyes fixed on the tree outside the classroom window. I've seen birds like her before, flying or perched high up above my neighborhood; hawks are common in urban

areas. My brothers look out for them when they take our cat into the backyard, and bring her inside if they see one. Red-tailed hawks perch high above their prey, then drop down on whatever unsuspecting rodent (or kitten) is below them, holding it fast with their claws.

Like most people, I prefer cute animals over scary-looking ones. Atwood, the little puff of an owl, has captured everyone's hearts with her tiny stature and big eyes, but today I find myself drawn to Sibley. I wouldn't describe her as cute, but her movements—step-shuffles up and down the glove, futile attempts at escape—are familiar. This beady-eyed, sharp-footed creature, who makes me jump every time she flaps her wings, is nervous.

I'm taking this course during my first "normal" school year in what feels like a very long time. As I attend my university lectures, study in my dorm room, and hang out with my friends, it isn't lost on me that just twelve months ago I was light years away from all of this. Omicron had wrenched my pandemic trauma out of its hiding places, and I moved through life disconnected from everything, trapped in a cage of anxiety that rendered me dysfunctional. I barely slept. If someone coughed beside me, I visibly cringed, an involuntary response that earned me looks from whoever was around.

My mind whirled constantly with potential risks— the distance between me and the person next to me on the subway, the amount of people in a room, my proximity to an open door or window. As COVID-19 restrictions began to ease, my anxiety intensified. The risks didn't go away with the masks and vaccine passports. Their disappearance just meant more calculations, ones I had to make myself, since the rest of the world had stopped counting.

I lost a full year of high school. Everything was on pause, eternally on pause, and there was no way of knowing when life would move safely forward again. I was terrified by the loss of what had already gone, and the potential that even more time would slip beyond my control.

Sibley lives at a rehabilitation center in the University of Guelph's Arboretum. She was attacked by peregrine falcons in downtown Toronto, and is blind in one eye as a result. Of the three birds brought into my classroom today, she's the only one with such a violent story. Is that also why she's the only one who seems afraid? The other birds are unbothered by this new environment and happily devour the bits of food proffered by their handlers, but Sibley won't settle. She flaps, shuffles, refuses to stand still.

I'm under no illusion that Sibley and I experience a mutual connection. Still, her clear desire to get the hell out of here is something I remember well. It's March 13th, marking three years since the pandemic began. As I remember how long it took me to let go of my COVID-19 fears, I find myself wondering what Sibley's life must be like, and whether she remembers or is traumatized by the attack.

A strict separation between humans and the natural world— one in which we're superior, and the only species capable of complex thought and feeling— has kept questions of emotion in animals out of the scientific world. And yet there's plenty of evidence to support the possibility that animals feel joy, sadness, and grief, just as we do.

Using the work of Charles Darwin, the biologist and ornithologist Nikolaas Tinberg identified 'four Fs' that drive birds' survival: fight, flee, fornicate, and feed. Emotion in birds moves beyond this, however: they may remember traumatic experiences, feel empathy, and grieve. "What Does a Parrot Know About PTSD?," written by Charles Siebert and published by the New York Times in 2016, says that captive parrots exhibit symptoms of post-traumatic stress disorder after their owners pass away. Although bird's brains have very few of the structures "associated with mammalian intelligence," studies have shown that "the[ir] ratio of brain to body size is similar to that of the higher primates... [which] yields in both species... [an] episodic memory and theory of mind, the ability to attribute mental states... to yourself and to others." Sibley isn't a parrot, but it's theoretically possible that she's not only able to identify her own psychological state, but also that of those around her.

These days, no one talks about the pandemic anymore, and when they do, it's in the past tense. Less than two months after my encounter with Sibley, the World

Health Organization will declare that COVID-19 is no longer a global threat, and the word “pandemic” will be dropped from our present altogether.

I go to my classes. I spend time with my friends. I stop worrying about social distancing and— for the most part— stop calculating risks. Now, when I can’t sleep, it’s because of the essay that’s due or the job application I have to finish by tomorrow. After two years of being frozen in time, my life has suddenly jumped to warp speed, and I’m racing to keep up with it.

Sibley attempts another escape, this time extending her wings completely. Red-tailed hawks have a wingspan of over a metre, and the handler’s hair is blown across her face as Sibley flaps wildly. Her body language is clear: I don’t want to be here, she’s saying, in her more-than-human way.

I imagine Sibley at home in the Arboretum, soaring through her enclosure or tucked into her nest, safe from the animals that might prey on her blindness. Maybe she has a mate there. Red-tailed hawks mate for life, and care for their chicks together. I’ve never wished for an animal’s happiness before— to be honest, I’ve never even thought about whether animals can be happy— but I wish for Sibley’s now. She’s reminded me of the ways in which life pauses, then moves on, and how, ready or not, you’re swept along with it into whatever comes next.



AFFIRMATIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

BY KAYLA DUBOIS

4 Positive Affirmations to repeat when you are feeling down:



I am **not defined** by my past,
my mistakes, or my struggles

I am *worthy* and *deserving* of all
the good things life has to offer



I am **proud** of how far I have
come



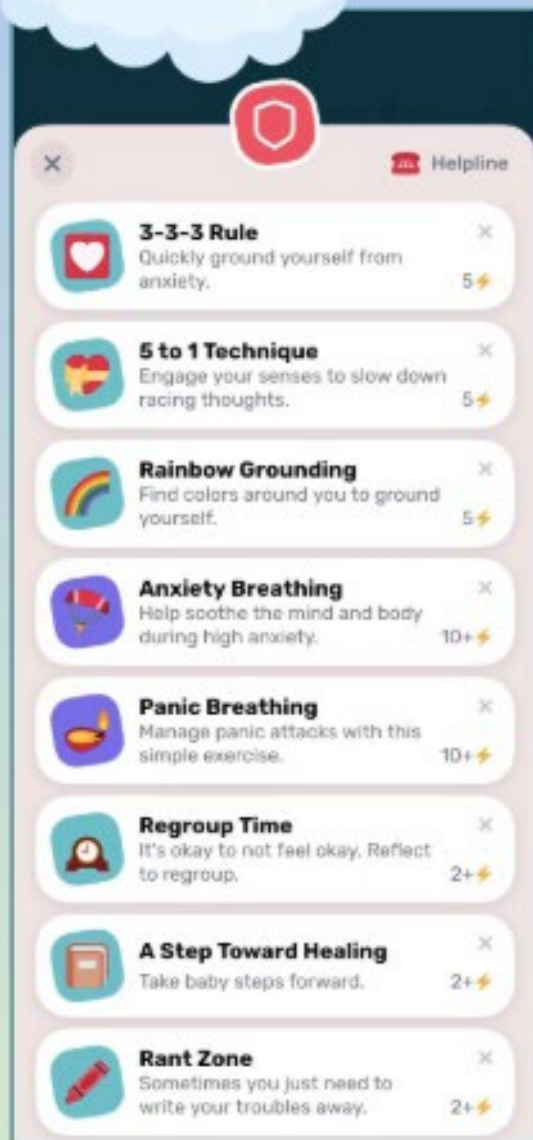
I shall not worry, for
everything will fall into place

Written by: Kayla DuBois

App recommendation for self care and mental health:



“Finch”



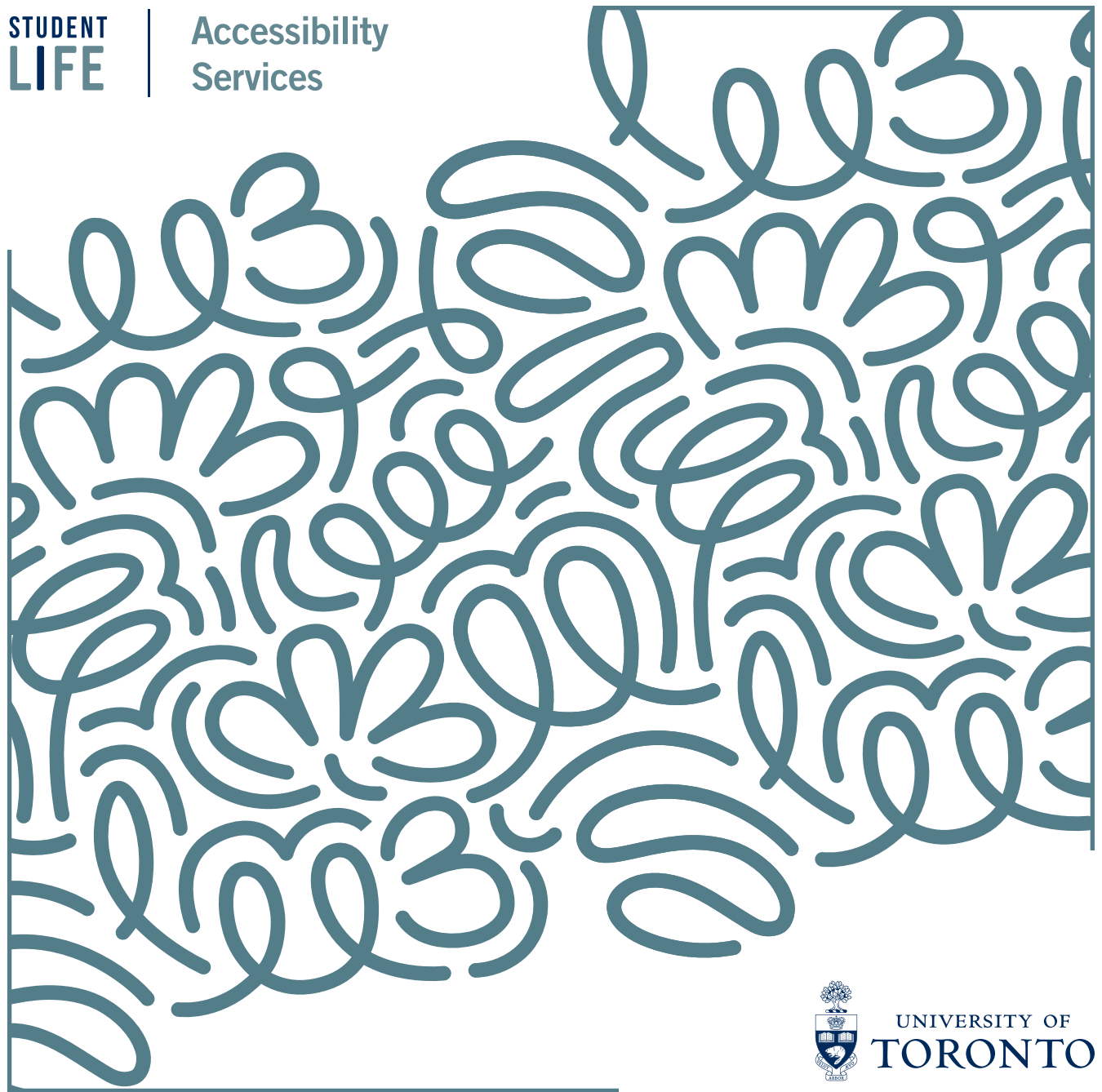
“Finch” is a cute, fun, and helpful self-care app for everyone. Your pet finch encourages you to complete daily tasks and goals. In addition, there are beneficial resources provided such as journal writing and breathing exercises to help you calm down during hard moments. My favourite feature is that you can add your friends and support each other through the app! Please consider checking this app out if you struggle with your mental health.

With love,
Kayla DuBois



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