Winnie Harlow

“MY SKIN IS NONE OF YOUR BUSINESS”
Voila!

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PRADA CANDY

EAU DE PARFUM
At least three people in this issue have been suicidal.

And one came very close to being successful.

The idea for a mental health theme came about after our publisher, Ken Hunt, mentioned that some doctors at Toronto’s University Health Network told him that we are facing the biggest mental health crisis ever thanks to the COVID-19 pandemic.

Our team started to talk about all the troubled designers we have known: John Galliano, Marc Jacobs, Yves Saint Laurent, Alexander McQueen, Kate Spade…the list goes on. We also began thinking about people nearer and dearer to us who have been struggling of late and how current social and economic pressures are triggering anxiety and depression and making anyone who lives with these conditions feel worse.

Then we started to compile story ideas, and weeks later, when they began to roll in, I realized that more than ever, people are acknowledging their mental health challenges.

Some, like Kelsi Sheren, wind up in crisis. In “Chain Reaction” (page 16), she describes how she couldn’t function after returning home from a tour of duty in Afghanistan. A doctor suggested, among other things, that she try art therapy, which she resisted. But she did start playing around with crystals and beads. Now, her jewellery brand Brass & Unity has patented the use of spent bullets and casings, and 20 per cent of her net profits go to veterans charities. And her marketing offers frequent reminders that it’s OK to say “I’m not fine.”

Rabiah Dhaiwal could have used that advice when she attempted suicide in her first year of university, but she grew up in a culture that believed in “powering through your problems,” she tells beauty director Natasha Bruno in “Ray of Light” (page 50). In addition to being back at her studies, Dhaiwal is creating a mental health foundation aimed at raising awareness and reducing stigma.

Bruno also spoke to beauty and grooming pros who often find themselves on the front lines of mental health (“Rescue Mission,” page 44). To read that there are barbers who have saved lives after learning how to spot signs of trouble in their clients is truly impressive.

For one of our fashion spreads, we invited members of the ballroom community to model some of the season’s coziest knits and share some of their challenges (“Comfort Zone,” page 54). Their stories are touching, including that of Tamar Miyake-Mugler, who first attempted suicide in grade school and never expected to make it to 18. “When the world doesn’t expect anything of you, having people to be accountable to can be a matter of survival,” she tells writer Nichole Jankowski.

There are some things in this issue that made me angry—like reading in “Taking Shape” (page 20), by culture and lifestyle editor Pahull Bains, that plus-size model Mina Gerges has been called “disgusting, ugly, a pig.” And in “Posing Questioned” (page 28), how Bee Quammie, when she was modelling, was made to feel like an “inconvenience” by white makeup artists who didn’t have her shade of foundation.

But there are also passages that made me smile, like in “Legacy Mode” (page 76), by fashion news director Odessa Paloma Parker, when I learned that Dr. Liza Egbogah had an ornate top and matching headpiece made for her father’s funeral because “he loved extravagant things.” And that one of cover girl Winnie Harlow’s favourite stress relievers is colouring! “Disney princesses are my thing,” she says in “The One & Only Winnie” (page 66), also by Parker. “I like to make them ethnic or Black, because there wasn’t a Black Disney princess for a long time.”

I have long felt that therapy should be treated like dentistry: We should all get a “checkup” every six months, and if there’s an issue that needs to be fixed, we keep going back until it is. Until that becomes commonplace, let’s remember that reaching out for help is a sign of strength, not weakness.

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Chef Artois is a part of the Rally for Restaurants initiative, which was created to help support the Canadian bar and restaurant industry in this difficult time. If you’d like to show your favourite local spot some love, you can purchase a restaurant gift card and learn more at www.RallyForRestaurants.ca

Enjoy responsibly. Must be legal drinking age. */MD Anheuser-Busch InBeV S.A.
The Capucines, Curated

Carrying on in the tradition of tapping artists from Yayoi Kusama to Stephen Sprouse, Louis Vuitton’s latest collaborative endeavour, the Artycapucines II Collection, sees six talents from around the globe lend their vision to the swish Capucines handbag. Beatriz Milhazes, Henry Taylor, Jean-Michel Othoniel, Josh Smith, Liu Wei and Zhao Zhao offer their dazzling takes on the top-handle tote. Taylor’s effort for the collection is the most engaging, boasting a 2017 portrait of Noah Davis, the late American creative who founded the artist-run Underground Museum in Los Angeles. Laser printing imbues the bag with a brush-stroke-like quality. From Milhazes’s psychedelic colourful rendering of the peace sign (how timely!) to Othoniel’s tactile treatment featuring a raffia body and a beaded handle that recalls one of his sculptural works, the results exemplify the idea that fashion truly is art.
Joint Venture

To celebrate the 50th anniversary of the Bone cuff, a cherished Tiffany & Co. piece conceived by Italian designer Elsa Peretti, the legendary retailer offers a selection of specially created styles in sterling silver and 18-karat yellow gold that feature black jade, turquoise and green jade details. In a press release about the cuff, Peretti highlights how her bold bracelet is meant to follow the lines of one’s body with masterful nuance. “I have always been interested in the mechanics and its feel,” she says. “Every jewellery piece should be captivating and comfortable to wear.”

Stripe Dreams

“... I have been in love with the Hudson’s Bay striped blankets ever since I can remember,” says Moschino’s creative director, Jeremy Scott, who has been known to give a cheeky twist to the world’s most recognizable logos. “I’ve always wanted to put my spin on this icon!”

And spin he did! The Italian brand collaborated with the Canadian retailer on a collection of pieces in honour of the founding of Hudson’s Bay 350 years ago. “The thing I like most about collaborating is the human experience—the exchange of ideas and the way a concept can unfold, morph, be birthed and take on new precedence,” says Scott.

The novel designs in this limited-edition group include a moto jacket, a hoodie and lounge pants as well as several accessories—all of which cleverly rework the famous Hudson’s Bay Point Blanket’s stripes. Falling in line never looked so good.
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“I can’t believe it’s the end of the world and I’m still painting.” That’s what California-based artist Sofia Enríquez thought to herself as the COVID-19 pandemic started to take hold of our daily lives. Enríquez, whose large-scale installation Mismo appeared at last year’s Coachella, offers custom hand-painted work on clothing by way of her Mucho line. “It’s a way to stay connected with my collectors and a really personal way to dress people,” she says. Fans of the intimate pieces include Queer Eye’s Tan France.

Enríquez notes that there’s an element of “make-believe” in how she approaches her custom practice but that sometimes the fantasy takes a darker turn. “Even though some of the paintings are bright and colourful, a lot of their undertones are kind of sad,” she says. For the jumpsuit on this page, she says she “was thinking about death and survival and where we go when we die.”

Her motifs include cellphones (a commentary on communication), religious iconography and figures ranging from delicate to monstrous. “I painted ‘I feel it’ and ‘Nu uh’ on this jumpsuit,” she notes. “It shows the contrast in my emotions. I’m expressing them, but at the same time, I’m not. I’m not saying anything; I’m just putting pictures on something. And that’s how I’ve been able to process my own mental state. I can have intense waves of feeling good or bad, which I don’t really communicate verbally or physically. But when I start painting, that’s when the feelings begin to come out.”

The unfurling of the COVID-19 crisis gave Enríquez time to pause and reflect on her daily life. “Before quarantine, I was working 10-hour days, six days a week, and then working in the art studio for like five hours after that,” she says. “I didn’t realize how isolating that was. When the quarantine started, I had nothing but time to work in my studio. I am definitely still motivated to put my work out there, but I’ve also been giving myself time to play. I’ve been learning how to skateboard and skimboard and reaching out to friends and genuinely listening to them. I’ve become interested in learning about people and how I can be of service to them rather than just having life be about me and my artwork.”

Bottoms Up

With the allure of a great pair of jeans as its inspiration, the Game Changer Pant is the latest innovation from IZ Adaptive, the accessibility-centric brand launched by Toronto-based designer Izzy Camilleri over a decade ago. “It’s the most important work I’ve ever done,” Camilleri says of the denim design. It has a seamless, pocket-free back to prevent the onset of pressure sores that wheelchair users can develop from sitting on such detailing all day and comes in blue and black styles. There are plans to release chinos and sweatpants soon, and versions for kids are in the works as well. FASHIONMAGAZINE.COM/MAKEITLAST
"Underplayed puts spotlight on gender inequality in electronic music."

A film directed by Stacey Lee

Underplayed

Executive Producers

Bud Light   Julien Christian Lutz   Taj Critchlow

www.underplayedthefilm.com
Chain Reaction

After returning from Afghanistan with severe PTSD, Kelsi Sheren began crafting jewellery. Now she has a business that is paying it forward.

By ODESSA PALOMA PARKER

There’s no dearth of fashion brands that were founded with a sense of purpose, from amplifying local artisanry to supporting myriad charitable endeavours. The industry has become a place where community and globally focused initiatives are able to flourish. But you don’t often see ingenuity in both design and philanthropy springing forth from the depths of extreme despair—and that’s where Canadian accessories brand Brass & Unity finds itself uniquely positioned.

When self-professed fashion outsider Kelsi Sheren launched the label in 2016, she was driven by an intense personal aspiration. At the age of 18, she had applied to join the Canadian Armed Forces after a “serendipitous” encounter with a WWII veteran. “I chose to go into the military because of somebody I met while I was in school in Ottawa,” she recalls. Sheren was studying tourism travel services at Algonquin College to escape from her small-town Ontario life, and shortly after her classes began, she found herself on a bus with an elderly veteran. “I wanted to know her story, so I started asking her questions,” says Sheren. “Next thing I knew, I was off the bus and walking to the college to quit, and I joined the Army the next day. This woman had a massive impact on the way I looked at the world after our conversation…. It wasn’t necessarily what she said that was compelling; it was the way she carried herself. She must have been in her 90s—she had a chest full of medals and a badass attitude. It looked like she had lived a thousand lives, and there was something in her face that was intriguing to me. I never saw her again, but meeting her was a turning point in my life. I was meant to meet her. I strongly believe that.”

Sheren went to Afghanistan shortly after enlisting in late 2007. A year into her tour, she was injured and sent home after being diagnosed with severe post-traumatic stress disorder. “I couldn’t function any longer,” she says. In addition to the physical and mental trauma (which she still grapples with today), Sheren returned to Canada
“with no help and no support” from the military. “I spent six months contemplating suicide on a daily basis and almost following through with it multiple times,” she says.

Treatment for Sheren’s trauma included a cocktail of medications that left her feeling “zonked out,” but she received a more constructive suggestion during a therapy session after she relocated to British Columbia with her husband. “My doctor is a veteran who served in Rwanda during the genocide,” she says. “He knows how to handle people like me.” He recommended that she try art therapy, which “sounded hilarious to me,” she recalls, given that she grew up following more active pursuits, like tae kwon do and motocross.

She decided to give it a try since she was spending most of her days pacing or staying in bed. The light bulb moment came after she awoke from a dream about starting a jewellery business where the proceeds from sales went to charity. Sheren, who says she’d never worn fashion jewellery before starting Brass & Unity, suddenly found herself intently studying the healing properties of crystals and devising ways to craft these elements into something wearable. “My husband went to work one morning at seven and came home at five and I was in the same position—still working,” she says. “And I hadn’t had a flashback all day.”

Her brand has since achieved international renown, and she has patented the use of spent casings and bullets in her jewellery and sunglasses. The eyewear is particularly meaningful to Sheren because it was the one way she could claim a sense of identity during her military service. “When I was in the military, sunglasses were the one thing we could more or less personalize in our uniform,” she says. “They were my only form of individuality.”

Sheren has also set her sights on promoting the upcoming release of her memoir, Brass and Unity. The book gives an open and graphic account of her past and candidly expresses how the aftermath of her military service affected not only her own life but that of so many others. These experiences were the inspiration for Brass & Unity’s corporate mandate of donating 20 per cent of its net profits to veteran charities around the world, and the brand also launched a personal protective equipment program when the COVID-19 crisis made such supplies scarce.

Brass & Unity is nominated for a Canadian Arts & Fashion Award this year in its Fashion Impact Award category, but Sheren points out that her philanthropic drive was more a primary motivator for starting the brand than being part of the fashion industry. “I needed to find a way to help my friends,” she says, adding that she “lost more friends to suicide post-service than [she] lost in Afghanistan.”

Waxing philosophical about where she’s been and where she’s headed, Sheren cuts right to the chase: “If you don’t go through a journey, what are you doing?”

**What’s your idea of a wardrobe staple?** “I love a good pantsuit. I’m all for a boyfriend blazer and cropped pants. I have so many pantsuits, and they’re all funky—none of them are ‘normal.’”

**What’s your most treasured fashion item?** “I have a gold, diamond and sapphire ring that my mother gave me. When I was about six years old, my dad took me to a jewellery store for the first time and let me pick out my mom’s birthday present. That was the ring I picked. To my surprise, she recently sent it to me in the mail, saying, ‘I didn’t want you to have to lose me to gain this.’ It was a pretty emotional moment.”

**Who’s your style icon?** “Olivia Palermo. She can go from looking chic as hell in a pantsuit to wearing a full-blown floral outfit in the most obnoxious colours, which I could never pull off.”

**If money was no object, what fashion item would you buy?** “An embellished Balmain jacket.”
ften dark wine in colour, amethysts are naturally entwined with stories about drinking. Plato the Younger quipped of the stone, “Let it either persuade me to be sober, or let it learn to get drunk.” According to some Greek legends, the lesson was to remain sober. Dionysus, of course, never did. Once, in a drunken rage, he threw himself at a girl named Amethystos who was on her way to pray at Artemis’s altar. She spurned him, and the god was so angry about the rejection that he unleashed hungry tigers on the girl. Artemis parried by turning Amethystos into transparent quartz. Dionysus was so ashamed that he cried streams of wine, which turned the colourless crystal maiden into amethyst.

In keeping with this myth, amethyst helps those who are overcoming addictions of all kinds. It calms and soothes on wakeful nights and is often kept under the pillow. With so much troubling our sleep these days, amethyst is a touchstone—its violet power smooths away anxiety and stress in turbulent times.

HOW THEY FORM

Amethysts form (without divine intervention!) inside volcanic and sedimentary rocks called geodes. When cracked open, they reveal a Grape Crush slushie of amethyst crystals frozen inside. Six-sided and pyramid-tipped, the long crystal shards glisten in a spectrum of purples from barely lilac to deep royal. The colour comes from the mingling of iron and manganese with water that pooled inside hollow rocks thousands or even millions of years ago. Environmental changes occurring while this liquid is slowly cooling and crystalizing can affect the colour saturation, causing the tips of the crystals to be darker than their base. That graduation—called colour zoning—is a characteristic of amethyst. It requires supremely skilled cutters to facet the stone in such a way that the colour looks uniform from the top, with the chromatic layers only visible from the side.
Amethyst and 14 karat gold ring, $140, Aurate

Amethyst, turquoise, diamond, pearl and 18 karat white gold necklace, $425,000, Van Cleef & Arpels

Amethyst pendant with 14 karat gold filled chain, $70, Amelia Rose Design

Amethyst, diamond and 18 karat rose gold ring, $11,800, Chopard

Amethyst and 18 karat gold earrings, $3,855, Gucci

Amethyst and 14 karat gold ring, $490, noahnoahnah

The Canadian Connection

Amethyst is Ontario’s official gemstone and is mined in Thunder Bay and Nipigon. Some businesses, like the Blue Point Amethyst Mine and Amethyst Mine Panorama, even treat the purple stone like summer berries, offering U-pick operations and gallon buckets to fill. So, given the abundance of amethysts, there is no point in investing in an extremely spotty stone. And strong, dark purples are not always a prerequisite; what has been trendy lately are pale-pinkish-mauve amethysts called Rose de France. But if deep purple is what you like, then think twice before leaving your amethyst in sunshine or next to a heater. Heat and UV rays bleed out the colour, making it appear yellowish.

Which Ones Are the Most Valuable?

Because amethyst often forms in large chunks and is hard (7 on the Mohs scale), it lends itself to the most complex, fancy cuts. The shade of purple is the main factor that determines the value of the gem, though. For example, Siberian amethysts are beautiful purple stones with flashes of crimson and blue. These kinds of amethysts are no longer necessarily mined in Siberia (the “Siberian” descriptor now just refers to a purple stone’s glimmer of red and blue), but once upon a time, Siberia did produce the most precious amethysts—as did Idar-Oberstein in Germany. The price of these amethysts rivalled the vertiginous sums people happily paid for rubies and emeralds in the 18th century. Then, a plentiful deposit of amethyst was found in Brazil, which brought the price tumbling down. Now, besides Brazil, amethysts come from Zambia (deep-purple stones that are sometimes flawed with inclusions and colour zoning) and Uruguay (gems that can be even darker than those mined in neighbouring Brazil).
Taking Shape

Mina Gerges wants you to rethink what a male model looks like.

By PAHULL BAINS

This past summer, Egyptian-Canadian model-influencer Mina Gerges appeared on the inaugural season of Canada's Drag Race as a member of its "Pit Crew"—the underwear-clad male models who assist with various segments of the show. Though racially diverse, the members of this squad, on both the Canadian and American iterations of the show, have one thing in common: six-pack abs.

Gerges became the first member of the Pit Crew who didn’t fit into that archetypal male model mould and received a flood of messages—both positive and negative—following his first television appearance. "I was called disgusting, ugly, a pig, saw the vomit emoji a lot, and was told that I need to go to the gym and lose weight," Gerges wrote in an emotional post on Instagram. He tried to shut all that out and...
focus on the positive impact instead. “A lot of queer men comment that this is the first time they’ve seen a body like theirs represented and that they hope to one day have the same level of confidence that I have,” he later told FASHION.

In 2015, Gerges’s Instagram account went viral after an article appeared on BuzzFeed about his tongue-in-cheek recreations of iconic red carpet outfits. Since then, he has been featured on TeenVogue.com and worked with brands like Sephora and Calvin Klein; both reached out to him directly online, so eager were they to include him in their campaigns. But despite having signed with Toronto’s B&M Models last year, he finds that consistent modelling work as a plus-size male model is not easy to come by. What the industry needs, he says, is to go beyond featuring models in one-off circumstances for the sake of diversity and focus on more consistent representation.

“I always feel like the odd one out,” Gerges says of his on-set experiences. “That process of tokenism almost makes me feel like I’m a problem. Sometimes it’s hard for stylists to find clothing that fits, or sometimes they don’t know how to style me because they’re not used to working with bigger guys.”

But Gerges is determined to help bring about change. He was raised between Cairo and Abu Dhabi, and it was only when he moved to Canada with his family at the age of 12 that he first encountered the terms “gay” and “queer” and began Googling “gay men.” “All I saw were extremely muscular white men,” he recalls. This led him to conclude that there was only one “right” way to look as a gay man. He became consumed with his physicality and battled body dysmorphia and eating disorders during his early years at Western University, in London, Ont., where he received a degree in media and the public interest.

“The first thing I would think about when I woke up was my body and how much I weighed,” he says. “The entire purpose of my life was to have a six-pack and that was it. It was traumatizing and exhausting.” To make matters worse, when he first confessed to his mother that he was suffering from an eating disorder, she dismissed it. “She laughed in my face and said, ‘Guys don’t have eating disorders; only women do,’” he says. “I felt so lonely. I knew I needed help, and hearing that from my mom made me feel more isolated.”

So instead of seeking professional help, Gerges took matters into his own hands and pulled back from his presence both in the gym and on social media. “Going to the gym every day makes you naturally critique your body all the time,” he says, adding that he also hid all the mirrors in his house. “I felt an inner peace that came with freeing myself from needing to prioritize how my body looked.”

He also began taking periodic breaks from Instagram. “I realized that it was contributing to the self-hatred, because I was saving pictures of muscular guys or following fitness pages that only showed muscular bodies with thousands of likes or thousands of comments,” says Gerges, noting that seeing this online praise can skew one’s own feelings of self-worth. “I started cleansing my social media of all these images that made me hate myself because I looked so different from them.”

Gerges now views the gym as a space that helps him with his mental and physical health rather than a place for body modification. He has also been moving away from “body positivity” as an aspirational concept.

“I learned about body neutrality recently,” he says. “It’s the idea that you’re always going to have ups and downs with your body—that you’re not always going to love it. It’s important to normalize having a relationship with your body that isn’t always positive and to just exist in it and not make it the biggest thing that you’re always thinking about in your life.”

Understanding how social media fuelled his insecurities is a key reason why he now uses his own platform—Gerges has over 100,000 followers on Instagram—to create a space where men of all sizes and shapes can see themselves reflected and respected.

“For men, the idea of body image is still so taboo,” he says. “It feels like we’re centuries behind in comparison to the kinds of conversations about body image that women are having. When I first started seeing curvier women and plus-size women in fashion, that changed my life. I’d see the stretch marks or the cellulite, which I also have, and think ‘If they can look that confident and beautiful, so can I.’ I’m taking that moment of looking up to plus-size women and bringing that to my work so men can feel seen, too.”
FREE YOUR MIND

For centuries, we’ve accepted the belief that creativity is connected with the burden of an unsound mind. Countless members of the fashion world have burned out, fallen from grace and, in the most tragic of cases, taken their own lives because the way the industry has often functioned—quickly, unscrupulously—has left little room for some of the most admirable talents to find peace during the creative process, let alone while they’re enduring the taxing aspects of entrepreneurship and, now, a global pandemic.

But thanks to the dismantling of discomfort around discussing mental health issues, it’s becoming less taboo to talk about the troubles experienced in one’s personal and professional lives. To inspire your own pursuit of calm and clarity, five creatives share how they’re managing, coping with and nurturing their mental health.

By ODESSA PALOMA PARKER

ADAM TAUBENFLIGEL Transcendental Meditation (TM)—a mantra-centric practice done 20 minutes a day, twice a day, to be considered effective—came to Triarchy’s creative director, Adam Taubenfligel, at the most opportune time. “I was having brunch with a friend in L.A. and complaining to her about how I just never seemed to be able to snap out of the way of life that I’d always known and that it wasn’t working for me,” he recalls. “It was the same complaints over and over again, and it seemed weird that I kept doing things the way I’d always done them and wasn’t progressing at the rate I wanted to.”

His friend mentioned that post-brunch she was planning to attend an information session about TM. “I felt that I had nothing to lose,” he says of why he decided to join her. It ended up being a moment of great impact, turning Taubenfligel’s attention inward—initially in a powerful, unpleasant way.

“It’s brutal because the first few days of doing it, you’re purging so much stuff that it actually manifests physically and you feel it,” he says. “I almost gave up because I didn’t want to feel like that. It was horrendous. But then you get into a groove with it, and I’ve been doing it every day, twice a day, since then.”

Taubenfligel first tried TM six years ago and says that while he always does the morning meditation as soon as he wakes up, the recommended 4 p.m. practice isn’t always feasible given his packed schedule. “It’s hard to get into because you don’t think you can dedicate the time, but when you do, it really changes your output,” he notes. “The days when I do the 4 p.m. one, it is often more effective than in the
morning—there are studies that show that 20 minutes of TM give you the same benefits as three hours of REM sleep. There are times when I’ll come out of the afternoon meditation and feel like it’s a whole new day.

TM hasn’t just given Taubenfligel a renewed sense of time during his day to day and motivated him to pursue other personally beneficial choices, like elective sobriety; it has also driven him to add the mantra “Take a deep breath. Sustainability begins with mindfulness.” to the inside of Triarchy’s ethically crafted garments.

The courses that teach someone TM aren’t free, and Taubenfligel recognizes that this can be a deterrent. But he says that knowing how his money is spent—via the David Lynch Foundation, which manages TM teachings—makes it worth it. “It goes into their programming, where they teach TM in inner-city schools and prisons,” he says, highlighting that the foundation is also able to modify course costs based on someone’s income level. “To me, that’s money well spent because it’s going to the greater good.”

TRISH EWANIKA In the early days of lockdown, Trish Ewanika was dealing with the reduced pace of her fashion line’s production as well as the recalibration of orders she had placed for her eponymous boutique. Unlike in the past, when she’d typically work a 12-hour day, reprioritizing meant she could explore different ways of tending to her sense of calm. “I made sure I was home before it was dark because the streets were empty and it was weird,” she recalls of the energy shift in the typically bustling Annex neighbourhood where her shop is located in Toronto.

“I’d find myself at home at six or seven o’clock—when normally I wouldn’t be home until 10 or 11—and wouldn’t know what to do with myself,” she says. “Like a lot of people, I thought a cocktail sounded like a good idea. I’d make one, put a few olives in a bowl and then sit down to read—something I also hadn’t had the quality or quantity of time to do before.”

Noting that she would have been travelling to Palermo, Italy, in May, Ewanika soothed herself instead by “picking up The Leopard by Giuseppe Di Lampedusa and some novels by Natalia Ginzburg.” Some of the effects of quarantining in Toronto also lent themselves to transporting her to a European destination, including the fact that bars turned into bodega-style storefronts and you’d see more people picnicking in parks. “I hope some of that stays,” Ewanika says of her fondness for a less hurried way of life.

Some of it will change, though, as the winter looms, and now Ewanika—who has returned to doing Pilates classes to keep her strength and balance up—is pondering other ways for her mind to escape. “I’m thinking of going back to playing the piano,” she says. A friend who takes lessons inspired her to revisit this skill, which she first studied in her youth, and she says that unlike doing crochet (another suggestion from a friend), which is “too close to her work,” plonking away at the piano is something that will keep her mind occupied in a different way than work does.

Ewanika—known for her minimalist and largely seasonless designs—is also nurturing aspects of simplicity and slowing down when it comes to her work life. “Time isn’t ours to manage the way it used to be,” she says, highlighting how much longer things in her business operations take because of delays and virtual hiccups. “You have to give yourself a break on that account. Now, I’ll pack up and leave at eight and say ‘I’ll just have to wait until tomorrow’ because my health and mental well-being override anything that feels urgent at the moment.”
LAUREN CHAN  “I started therapy around the time that I launched Henning,” says Lauren Chan, a New York-based entrepreneur in the plus-size space. “I decided to do it because I was very stressed out. It was also something that I had heard a lot of female founders talking about—the necessity of keeping yourself well when you’re running a business.”

It also helped that in her circle, seeing a therapist wasn’t something to be shy about. “In New York City, it seems like everybody has a therapist, and it’s very normalized in a really beautiful way,” she notes. “Perhaps I notice this because I surround myself with progressive, creative people who want to be in tune with that side of themselves and have that aspect of wellness in their lives.”

She used two digital platforms—Psychologytoday.com and the app Talkspace—to find a mental health professional she felt she could trust and who would understand her. While she used to see her therapist at their office near Washington Square Park, quarantine has forced Chan’s sessions to move online for the foreseeable future; it’s a circumstance that initiates a helpful way of framing the many roadblocks one can encounter in a day. “I can’t control the timeline of when I’m going to physically be back in an office with somebody,” she says.

Chan further highlights the ways in which seeing a therapist has helped her reconsider her approach to her work life, which she says had been causing her to lose “the ability to compartmentalize and cope in a lot of ways.” “The biggest lesson I’ve learned through therapy is to be a little less forward-thinking and to reel back some of the ambition and competitiveness that comes from having a work personality like mine; it has helped me to be a little more considerate and to feel more level,” she says.

“It ended up being great timing because now we’re in a massive slowdown in the fashion industry, and these tools, which I had been working on for almost a year prior to the pandemic, have been incredibly helpful,” she says about starting her sessions after kicking off her business in the fall of 2019. “I don’t know—and I don’t want to know—how deeply stress would have affected me during this crisis for small businesses over the past six months.”

LESLEY HAMPTON  Toronto-based designer Lesley Hampton has relied on physical activity throughout most of her life to preserve a sense of determination, clarity and focus. “I started horseback riding every weekend at the age of seven,” she says, adding that when she moved from Canada to Australia as a teenager, she enrolled in a school that had an equestrian program. The mental and physical conditioning required for competitive sports proved useful during her adolescence and provided the self-starter spirit that she needed to found her eponymous fashion brand in her early 20s.

Hampton’s design work has been deeply influenced by her athleticism and her efforts to keep fitness part of her daily routine as her body changed. She says that navigating her feelings toward the typical visuals of what a “physically fit” person looks like is an ongoing obstacle. “Once I grew past the XL size, it was harder for me to put myself out there in workout clothes,” she says. “It’s something I still struggle with.”
MUSEMO HANDAHU

As someone who lives their life on the internet, content creator Musemo Handahu has self-care practices that are intrinsically linked with her career. The Halifax-based fashion blogger, who has over 50,000 followers on Instagram, makes an effort to share how she mitigates the impact of not only the large-scale anxieties of 2020 but also more individualized issues.

“I’m really struggling right now,” she says about the restrictions that quarantine has resulted in. “Travel has always been my most important method of self-care, and not having that has started to take its toll on me. It doesn’t only boil down to seeing family and my best friends; travelling also allows me to experience really important moments of Blackness and Black culture. That’s important to me because where I live, there aren’t a lot of people of colour who are creatives. You can feel like the city is erasing you in some way. Now, I’m wondering, ‘What’s the next step for survival?’ And I wonder if other Black people who live here are feeling the same way.”

To offer insight into how she combats the feelings that come along with this notion of erasure, Handahu is candid about her coping mechanisms. She took up cycling in the summer and was pleased by the unexpected results. “Initially, it was going to be my form of exercise,” she notes. “But when I started riding my bike, it changed to just wanting to get some air. I’m not necessarily concerned about burning calories but about feeling some sort of freedom.”

And in an Instagram post in late August, Handahu posted about “the things [she needed] to do to get through a day,” which included “cried—a lot” and “laughed—a lot.” She divulges this information to give a more well-rounded perspective of herself on her social media feed—something she thinks her community is craving now more than ever. “I think people view me as someone who has a lot of confidence,” she says. “Being transparent about bawling my eyes out shows a level of relatability to my followers. I think we’re all tired of perfection—of always seeing these put-together people and having this idea that they don’t go through things, when that’s not the case.”

Revealing her need for moments of levity is equally important to Handahu. “It’s about allowing yourself the grace to actually step away from something that’s overwhelming and giving yourself a moment to breathe—that’s what laughter represents to me,” she says, adding that she’ll hang out with a funny friend or watch a stand-up comedy show when she needs a mood-lifting break. “It’s me saying ‘Yes, the world is really screwed up right now, but I need to have a moment of joy. I’m going to take that for myself.’”

Handahu notes that it’s important to remember that when you’re opting to take time for these moments, be they happy or sad, being purposeful about it is key. “You shouldn’t feel guilty for allowing yourself to step away for a bit,” she says. “We can’t always be carrying the burden of what’s happening in the world 24/7. It’s not healthy.”

Yet she’s resolved to stay active in whatever ways she can, including participating in cycling classes pre-pandemic and, now, taking walks every day. Her affinity for sports and its many benefits was part of her motivation to develop the athleisure angle of her business, and she recognizes the value of that authenticity in her work. “I started a line that I myself could look up to,” she says. “I changed dress sizes a lot in the past few years, so I wanted to create a brand that would still include me.”

Many people hesitate to exercise because of their physicality, and Hampton gives a shout-out to businesses like Toronto’s Fitness by Sarah Taylor for fostering a plus size-specific space. She also follows social accounts like those of self-love advocate and podcast host Kenzie Brenna; that’s how she learned about the app BetterHelp, a resource that has helped her to pursue therapy in a way that suits her soft-spoken personality.

“As someone who’s a quieter person, talking about my issues verbally isn’t really the best way for me to work through something,” says Hampton, highlighting how, over time, the impact of running a company, growing into her Indigenous identity and grappling with “demons” caused fluctuations in her mental and physical health.

“BetterHelp offers a texting service so you can message a therapist and have communication that way,” she says. “I tend to close up if I’m talking out loud about my issues or conflicts.” Given this struggle, her outspokenness about managing her well-being is especially inspiring.
Love Connection
How Brie Code—yes, that’s her real name—is changing how we game for good.

By MADDISON GLENDINNING

In 2015, Brie Code noticed a gap in the gaming world. After spending almost eight years at Ubisoft as an AI programmer, she began to wonder why so many people she knew said they didn’t like video games. “I tested different games on my friends and pitched different game ideas to them and saw a very clear pattern,” she says. “They seemed to want things that centred more on care and connection than domination or violence.”

This prompted her to dig into the psychology behind games design. During her research, Code discovered that there are two key responses to stress in humans. The first is “fight or flight,” which is the most commonly known response; it’s when adrenalin is released in your body, fuelling your desire to win. The second is “a little known but very prevalent” response called “tend and befriend.” In this scenario, explains Code, it’s not adrenalin being released but “oxytocin, which is the love hormone. It drives behaviours of care and connection, looking at who is more vulnerable than you and protecting them, seeking out your allies or your friends and talking with them about the problem and finding solutions that work for everyone instead of trying to win.”

Approximately 50 per cent of humans react to stress with the tend and befriend response. “The general tendency is for more feminine people to have this response,” says Code. So why doesn’t the games industry provide more experiences that speak to this response? “It’s because of the lack of diversity,” she says, adding that in the first five years of her career, she was the only woman on any of the development teams she was part of.

Code—who attended the female-focused start-up accelerator Apple Entrepreneur Camp in 2020 (the first Canadian to ever do so)—launched her Toronto-based AI company, Tru Luv, which places marginalized voices at the centre of its design process and allows them to address gender-based opportunities in the games market.

#SelfCare was the first product introduced by Tru Luv. The app includes “mini games that instead of going from easy to hard, like most games do, go from awkward to smooth, empty to full or disconnected to connected,” she says. “They actually get easier as you play them, but you have this sense of being more and more connected to them.”

Code says that ahead of #SelfCare’s release in 2018, she had hoped it would get “a few thousand” downloads. When it launched, it got 500,000 in the first six weeks—with zero advertising. Overwhelmed by the success and positive feedback the app received, she toyed with the idea of scaling the product out immediately, but her team said, “‘No, we’re on to something; let’s build the whole model for a new form of human-computer interaction,’” she says. “So that’s what we’re doing.” They refer to it as “Companion AI.”

As a result of the COVID-19 pandemic, downloads of #SelfCare have doubled—and Code and company are already looking ahead to how they can help people next. “We all had to go through the shock of isolation and the change that will continue to happen,” she notes. “These are all potentially traumatic episodes for people, so technology that helps with the processing of trauma—and even helps create the conditions for post-traumatic growth—is something that we’re thinking a lot about right now.” ■
From meditation and mindfulness tools to medical expertise, these apps offer users different means for maintaining mental health.

**Headspace**

For 10 years, this meditation and mindfulness destination—which has been endorsed by the likes of Emma Watson and Zach Braff—has centred on recontextualizing and processing concepts and feelings like anxiety, grief, acceptance and self-esteem. This year, it launched fitness content and announced John Legend as its “chief music officer.” (He curates a playlist for “focus.”) It also started a daily series called The Wake Up, where users can watch captivating nature videos and find out more about how meditation helps both the mind and the body. **Fee:** $69.99 annually after a free 14-day trial.

**Breethe**

Founded in Montreal by a team of meditation enthusiasts and a certified meditation teacher, Breethe was built to assist people dealing with stress, anxiety and sleep issues. At the outset, users are asked to select their top goals from a list of options like fall asleep, reduce COVID anxiety, get healthier and improve relationships. A variety of resources, including music playlists (curated to help with objectives like focus, peace and healing), guided meditations, bedtime readings and hypnotherapy sessions, are available to improve users’ state of wellness. **Fee:** $17.49 a month after a free 14-day trial.

**Happify**

This self-guided app aims to help build skills for leading a healthier, happier life through a series of exercises and games. A questionnaire helps to determine the right “track” for users, focused on goals such as defeating loneliness, reducing worry and overcoming insecurities; the app offers over 100 such tracks created by a team of research scientists and practitioners. Every two weeks, users are given a new “happiness score” determined by a short assessment. The company claims that 86 per cent of regular users see an improvement in two months. **Fee:** Free, with paid upgrades that unlock additional tracks.

**Maple**

This Canadian company connects users to licensed doctors and health-care practitioners any time of day or night. After describing symptoms and requesting an appointment, users can choose to have a visit via text, video or audio chat on the app’s secure platform. Doctors can diagnose and provide prescriptions during the consultation. Besides experts like psychiatrists, mental health therapists and life coaches, Maple’s roster also includes other types of practitioners, such as dermatologists, lactation consultants and dieticians. **Fee:** Free, with visits starting at $49.

**Stoic.**

Focused on offering strategies for coping with stress, increasing productivity and encouraging gratitude, this app boasts tasks such as journaling, visualization, meditation, goal-setting, breathing exercises and more. In addition to daily motivational quotes, it features guided tools based on what users specify as their main focus for the day; these personalized exercises help to reframe negative thoughts in a positive way, identify fears and obstacles and gain clarity. **Fee:** Free, but upgrading to a premium subscription affords customization options featuring reflective questions and philosophy notes.
Once upon a time, I entered the world of modelling. As a tall, slim 12-year-old, I was offered a spot in a “model house” (a residence where several models live together at one time) in New York. I remember how excited my agent was when she shared the news with my mother and me—and how crestfallen I was when my mother said she was against it. For almost every objection she had, I silently responded in my head: “Her safety!” my mom said; I said, “I’m sure there are bodyguards.” “Her education!” my mom said; I said, “I’ll bet there are tutors.” “Her mental health!” my mom said; as a preteen, I had no clue what she was worried about. As I continued my modelling career, I soon came to the realization that modelling and my mental well-being were often at odds, and I had to learn how to rebuild my self-confidence.

Growing up, I adored glamour. My friends’ extracurricular activities consisted of gymnastics and dance lessons, while mine were acting classes. I begged my parents to take me to casting calls. I watched Fashion Television faithfully every Sunday, sitting enraptured in front of the TV while Jeanne Beker lifted the veil and showed me a vision of what I hoped would be my future. I practised my runway walk, trying to emulate Naomi Campbell and Yasmeen Ghauri; perfected my photo shoot angles in the mirror; and waited impatiently for my big break.

It felt like it came when I signed with a modelling agency in my Southwestern Ontario hometown, but that break snapped when the aforementioned New York offer was rejected by my mom. I could understand her safety and schooling concerns, but I didn’t have a clear concept of what mental health had to do with anything. When I moved to Toronto a decade later and rededicated myself to my dream of modelling, I began to understand the connection.

Rejection and race are the two things that affected me the most. Choosing to enter the modelling industry knowing how notoriously cutthroat it can be is one of the wildest choices you can make, especially if you aren’t mentally prepared for it. When I was younger, not getting booked for a job stung, but I was always excited for my next chance. In my 20s, I had a much better understanding of what was at stake, so each failed casting call or agency meeting hurt more than the last.

The most public thing about us is our body, but our relationship with it can be extremely private and complex. The realm of modelling only focuses on the public and makes no space for the rest; that’s a lesson I learned quickly. Standing in front of a potential agent or casting director and being told exactly how to walk—and then being poked, prodded and measured—was jarring for much longer than it wasn’t.
Placing a portfolio in front of a fashion gatekeeper and trying to decipher the look on their face as they flipped the pages twisted my stomach into knots. Sure, I could always change my hair, and the wizardry of makeup could give my face new angles and contours, but, ultimately, I knew I was being judged by the very foundation of myself—the things I couldn’t easily change, if at all.

My quietly competitive nature had been honed during my youth by playing basketball and running track and by attempting to exceed academic expectations. But modeling was different. I didn’t see how I could work harder or do better after losing out on a gig. For whatever reason, my face wasn’t right or my body wasn’t right or my walk wasn’t right, and the subjectivity of fashion meant that what one gatekeeper detested about me, another loved. Finding a quiet place in my mind to go to, where I allowed that subjectivity to free me instead of locking me into a mental prison of picking myself apart, required a lot of work. Sometimes it was just easier to join the chorus of judgment and level it against myself, too.

The journey to a more diverse and inclusive fashion industry has been a slow one. I still remember the agency meeting where I was told “there’s already a Black girl on the roster” and the agent didn’t see anything much different in me. I later looked up that lone Black model, and aside from our shared height, we looked as different as two Black girls could look. I also remember the meeting where I played a “young mother” role always had me thinking back to little girls who get lighter and lighter in each subsequent photo shoot, but if this limited presentation of Black beauty persists in the Canadian industry, my daughters will need to continue.) And while I thank the industry for giving me the mother, quieted the anxieties they saw images like these.

What did start to mess with me was when I booked jobs and saw how my Blackness was received. There was the shoot where I was requested to arrive with my hair in its big and kinky-curly natural state and then had to deal with deep sighs from the photographer when he couldn’t figure out how to shoot without casting shadows over my face. Then there was the Toronto Fashion Week runway show where I almost missed my first walk because the one Black hairstylist was on lunch break and no one else felt courageous enough to put my hair in a bun. Makeup artists who didn’t have my foundation shade treated me like I was an inconvenience, and I began to panic if I ever left for a gig without my own makeup bag. Clients wanted to look progressive by booking a Black model, but they didn’t know what to do with us. And I was hyper-aware of how differently I was treated, compared to other models. It became an odd mental space to be in, where I refused to apologize for my Blackness but felt like a lone fish swimming in an anti-Black ocean. Why did no one else see how wrong this all was? Why was it more acceptable for white and other non-Black industry folks to treat my Blackness like an annoyance than to make these spaces more truly inclusive? I really began to question my participation, because the anxiety before, during and after a job began to weigh on me.

After I became a mother, I questioned my participation even more. Getting booked for commercial campaigns where I played a “young mother” role always had me cast with a Black “father” alongside very-light-skinned or biracial children. Genetics is a funny thing—two Black people can produce children with various phenotypic qualities; however, these casting choices seemed more like a statement on acceptable presentations of Blackness than an acknowledgment of genetic variance. Was I being complicit in what felt like the erasure of children who looked like mine? My anxieties now didn’t just centre on how I felt about myself in the industry but also on what my children would think and feel when they saw images like these.

Pulling back from modeling helped me address the guilt I felt in those moments as a mother, quieted the anxieties around feeling like an inconvenience and helped me deal with the wounds the constant rejection had given me. It was a process of dismantling negative thoughts and replacing them with new positives about myself. It was a process of finding different ways to highlight discussions about diversity in fashion so that eventually no one will ever feel less than genuinely valued and welcome. It was a process of constantly empowering my own two daughters; I may no longer play the mother to little girls who get lighter and lighter in each subsequent photo shoot, but if this limited presentation of Black beauty persists in the Canadian industry, my daughters will need a buffer for their self-esteem.

Thinking back, I remember feeling that Jeanne Beker was giving me a peek into my future—one full of glamorous moments. But that glamour came at a cost that I couldn’t conceive of in my youth. Once I had the mental capacity to be able to better handle the challenges of the industry, I had aged out of the “ideal” of youthfulness. (Ageism in fashion is another discussion that needs to continue.) And while I thank the industry for giving me the experiences it did, I thank my mom—and her seemingly excessive concerns—even more.
STYLE TIP
Treat these heritage patterns like a neutral and mix them with everything in your closet.

Coat Check

Whether trim, tailored or oversized, plaid or check outerwear works for all silhouettes.
Soia & Kyo, $645
Acne Studios, $1,200
Dynamite, $140
Officine Générale at Mytheresa, $950
Nanushka, $1,125
Shrimps, $1,150
JW Anderson, $2,400
RW & Co., $200
Only & Sons at Simons, $170
Colour Theory

Let mood-boosting brights bring on the sunshine no matter the weather.
STYLE TIP

Try statement-making colour in bold blocks, or let one flamboyant piece steal the spotlight.

Versace, $1,450

Heirloom, $240

Mr P, at Mr Porter, $55

Paul Smith, $2,540

Pierre Hardy, $790

Off-White

Fendi

Louis Vuitton menswear

Prada

Lacoste

Paul Smith

Mr P.
STYLE TIP
Sport a major statement with your favourite denim for a right-off-the-runway look.
Get the Message

“Wear” your feelings to help end the stigma surrounding mental health and support organizations that are part of the effort.

Have a Strong Day, $45

Ban.do, $65

Madhappy, $235

Maison de Choup, $90

MantraBand, $45

Own Your Stigma, $40

SPREAD THE WORD
Madhappy has developed an online platform called The Local Optimist to share resources and raise awareness about mental health.

LIFE SUPPORT
Own Your Stigma donates up to 15 per cent of its proceeds to organizations aiding and supporting those living with mental illness.
78% of women have experienced sexual harassment in public spaces.*

Get your training program at standup-canada.com

*International study conducted in 2019 by L’Oreal Paris with IPSOS, with data gathered in 8 countries with over 15,000 participants.
Happy Days

Can beauty and grooming help boost mood? Absolutely, whether it’s as simple as a soothing spa treatment or as life-altering as a chat with a hairstylist who is trained to recognize signs of distress.
Green Rush

Ever since the legalization of cannabis, the wellness and beauty industries have been completely obsessed with CBD-laced products. Short for cannabidiol, CBD is a molecule (or cannabinoid) produced uniquely by the cannabis family, and it can be extracted from either industrial hemp or marijuana. Hemp classifies varieties of cannabis that contain 0.3 per cent or less THC—the compound best known for giving you weed’s signature “high” sensation when digested. Marijuana varieties, on the other hand, contain more than 0.3 per cent THC, which can induce euphoria. To clear the smoke, yes, both come from the cannabis plant, but unlike THC, CBD is non-intoxicating. Instead, it’s hugely praised for having a myriad of benefits, such as reducing soreness and healing acne and other skin issues when applied topically. It is also a powerful anti-inflammatory and antioxidant and linked to relaxation. Here’s a look at four standout local brands with therapeutic CBD offerings.

By NATASHA BRUNO

Bombs Away

Calyx Wellness was founded by Danielle Blair after she witnessed the incredible healing effects of CBD therapy on her partner, who had undergone surgery for the removal of a brain tumour. The company launched with CBD ingestibles and has since expanded to include topical products. Among Calyx’s offerings are hemp-derived CBD Bath Blooms ($16 each)—a.k.a. calming bath bombs. “These are great for soaking in a bath to relieve aches and pains after a long day,” comments Blair.
Bathing Beauty
Give your bathtub the ultimate luxe cannabis experience with this onyx liquid from Montreal brand Nannette de Gaspé. Bain Noir Cannabis Sativa Bath Soak Treatment ($325) cocktails hemp, meadowfoam and poppy seed oils, along with a fragrant blend of neroli and eucalyptus, for an intensively nourishing and pampering mental escape.

OIL THRILL
Let’s get into some science. Our skin actually has natural receptors for cannabinoids that allow for CBD extract to be fully absorbed, which makes it all the more effective, shares Katie iarocci, director of product innovation for 48North. “The ‘beauty’ of topical cannabis products is that you can apply them directly to the area you want to treat,” she says. “Topical cannabinoids produce their effect by interacting with receptors in the skin surface they are applied to.” A leading licensed cannabis producer based in Ontario, 48North partnered with American brand Apothecanna in order to help bring some of its CBD body products to the Canadian market. Infused with 48North’s own locally grown cannabis, along with juniper plant extract and a herbal blend of peppermint and arnica, this hard-working 48North Apothecanna Extra Strength Body Oil ($62) is ideal for targeting overworked muscles.

MASK CRUSADER Face masking gets a cannabis makeover with Honest Botanicals Co.’s CBD Bentonite Clay Mask ($25). Made in Vancouver, this detoxifying powder contains CBD extracted from organic Canadian-grown hemp, plus natural clay, and is ideal for treating acne-prone and oily skin as well as eczema, inflammation and redness. Simply mix one tablespoon with water until you get a spreadable paste.
Buoyant, shoulder-grazing tresses are a prominent feature of Crown Lands, the genre-bending psych-blues rock band comprising Cody Bowles and Kevin Comeau. “They’ve definitely become part of our identity, for sure,” comments Comeau. “Our hair is important to the band and what it represents.”

The pair, who hail from Oshawa, Ont., began their joint hair journeys six years ago, back when Bowles (vocals, drums) and Comeau (guitar, bass, keys) first met and quickly bonded over their shared obsession with Canadian progressive rock band Rush. Their look developed out of necessity rather than an active decision, shares Comeau. “It was more about the fact that I had spent all of my money on guitars, so I didn’t have any left for haircuts.”

Their lengthy locks have become a trademark that creates an impact onstage and are as unforgettable as their “heavy, loud” music. “It’s a presence thing,” expresses Bowles, who identifies with the non-binary pronouns they/them and isn’t shy to enhance their cascading curls with wild outfits, body glitter and makeup. “When people see us, they’re like, ‘Wow, sick!’ They know they’re in for something interesting.”

Headbanging and hair whipping while shredding his guitar is paramount to Comeau’s showmanship. “It’s my only way of dancing because I’m standing and playing keyboards with my feet, so I can’t move around,” he explains. “Before touring ended this year, I’d almost built up some choreography: I had movements for each song.”

And that feeling of hitting the stage to perform for a crowd? According to the duo, it’s like a time-escaping,

Hair Game Strong

This Canadian rock band’s glorious manes aren’t the only things turning heads. Their socially conscious lyrics shine a spotlight on First Nations.

By NATASHA BRUNO
transcendental moment that changes you, inside and out. “When the sound waves hit your body, you become bigger,” expresses Comeau, mentioning music and religion in the same breath. “It’s the same reason why people go to church or join sports teams—it’s to serve something that’s bigger than yourself. And I think that’s a huge part of human nature and societies. We want to be part of something bigger than ourselves. That’s what Crown Lands represents for Cody and me. It is so much more than the sum of its parts.”

A greater mission is written into the band’s name. It’s a direct nod to territorial areas once belonging to the British Crown that were passed on to the federal or provincial governments—lands that Indigenous peoples traditionally occupied. It’s a blunt and powerful alias that compels the duo to create music that educates people about Indigenous injustices and Canada’s troublesome history. “It’s our duty to speak up about things that really matter,” states Bowles, who is half Mi’kmaq (an Indigenous tribe from the Atlantic region of Canada). And in the wake of a global chorus calling for a reckoning with anti-Black racism, policing and inequality, Crown Lands’s passion to raise marginalized groups is burning stronger than ever. “There’s a spiritual revolution happening, and we have a duty to be the soundtrack to it,” says Comeau. “As a straight, white-presenting male, I have a huge responsibility to be a good ally.”

Their 2017 song “Mountain” paints a picture of colonization and the damaging government-sponsored residential school system (an attempt to eradicate Indigenous youth of their cultural language and practices that caused long-term intergenerational problems among Indigenous communities). Then there’s “End of the Road,” which was released this year and shines a spotlight on the notorious Highway of Tears, a remote stretch of road in British Columbia known for the dozens of women and girls—mostly Indigenous—who have vanished or turned up dead in the area. To this day, most of these cases are still unsolved.

As much as this rock band creates music in the hope of sparking change, it has also become a potent outlet for Bowles’s mental health. “Music has helped me through so many hard times in my life,” they share. “It has helped me through major depression.”

Comeau, on the other hand, is quick to flip the script. “Listening to music helps a lot with mental health, but creating it can sometimes be super straining,” he says. Especially when you have to “tear your soul apart to write a good record” and hit the road for a whirlwind tour that pulls you away from loved ones for lengths of time—realities that are often not spoken about in the music industry. Comeau adds that he reached his lowest point this past February while recording Crown Lands’s latest creation, Wayward Flyers, a five-track acoustic EP. How did he cope? With weekly therapy. “It’s never the wrong time to get therapy,” he states. “Finding someone you can talk to? There’s no shame in that whatsoever. It’s been the best investment in my life—other than my guitars.”

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**Top Shelf**
Here, the duo unpack what their hair (and beard) routines consist of.

**Bowles’s Heroes**

“I only use conditioner in my hair because it’s so curly and thick and knots a lot. I apply this every other day in the shower.”

* Maui Moisture Revive & Hydrate + Shea Butter Conditioner, $11

* On tour, I sometimes put some mousse in my hair if it’s feeling dry.*

* Aussie Catch the Wave Mousse & Leave-In Conditioner, $4

* I apply a leave-in conditioner concoction that I make. I use coconut oil with a blend of castor oil and this amazing oil that has nettle extract and some other really good stuff in it. I mix it all up with some water and go to town.*

* Living Libations Crowning Glory, $30

**Comeau’s Heroes**

“I started my hair journey basically stealing Cody’s shampoo or conditioner on the road, and I got hooked on Maui Moisture’s Coconut Oil line. I always shampoo and condition at night.”

* Maui Moisture Curl Quench + Coconut Oil Shampoo, $11

* I comb my hair in the shower when I’m conditioning and let the conditioner soak in for a few minutes.”

* Maui Moisture Curl Quench + Coconut Oil Conditioner, $11

* For my beard, I use natural coconut and jojoba oils and a nice beard balm when I’m feeling fancy. This is the best one I’ve ever used.”

* Mad Viking Beard Co. Black Label Society Sonic Brew Premium Quality Beard Balm, $26

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A growing number of women are experiencing seasonal hair loss. Kérastase’s Genesis collection gets to the root of the problem.

By SARAH DANIEL

According to Google Trends, breathing apps, CBD skincare and sound baths were some of the most commonly searched items under the category of wellness in 2019. Indeed, many of us are looking for new ways to feel better and live healthier lives—now more than ever. But while we are applying hyaluronic acid-infused sheet masks to our faces, getting regular pedicures and dry brushing our bodies, there’s one area we may be overlooking: our hair. But something called seasonal hair loss, or hair fall, is changing that.

When the seasons change, your body takes notice and it loses a little bit of hair, says David D’Amours, hairstylist and editorial director at Kérastase. “It’s not a drastic change, but it’s a small change your body feels,” he says, and it’s enough to cause more stray strands than usual to appear on your cashmere sweater.

While hair loss has traditionally been viewed as either a male concern (something our dads, brothers and boyfriends need to deal with) or a side effect of aging, that’s not the case, says D’Amours, who has worked with celebrities like Celine Dion and the former first lady of France Carla Bruni. In fact, it’s the number one hair concern among millennials, which makes sense considering that 88 per cent of women experience seasonal hair loss by the time they are 40 years old. It’s no wonder that another trend, coined “hair wellness” by the beauty industry, is gaining momentum.

Canadian women know first-hand how our hair reacts to frequent and often extreme temperature changes (a fact of life in Canada that inspired the popular meme that we have 11 seasons, not four), but there are a number of other factors that cause hair fall, says D’Amours. There’s daily exposure to pollution and UV rays as well as our collective obsession with heat styling tools that weaken our strands, causing them to break off mid-shaft. Meanwhile, at the scalp level, our diet, in addition to biological factors like fluctuating hormones, can trigger hair fall from the root, as can the stress of a busy lifestyle or, say, living through a global pandemic. When D’Amours reopened his Old Montreal salon in June after closing because of COVID-19, he noticed hair loss in many of his clients. “Even the quality of hair had changed,” he says, adding that Genesis, Kérastase’s collection of products developed to prevent hair fall that serendipitously launched this spring, couldn’t have come at a better moment. “The pandemic caused a big change in our lives. And I think it’s why more people are noticing hair loss.”

The new collection features six products that work together to reduce hair fall by both strengthening the hair fibre to prevent breakage and stimulating the roots to reduce long-term hair fall. And just because they work doesn’t mean they need to smell like they belong in a medicine cabinet—which is why they are infused with a luxurious bergamot and citrus scent conceived by Calice Becker, the woman behind popular perfumes for fashion houses like Marc Jacobs and Oscar de la Renta.

One of the key ingredients, Aminexil, is believed to inhibit an enzyme that tightens collagen in the scalp—one of the causes of hair fall from the root—and works in tandem with caffeine and ginger root extract, two more scalp-targeting ingredients that stimulate circulation. On another front, edelweiss native cells provide moisture to hair and protect fibres from extreme environmental conditions. (Hello, polar vortex.) There are two shampoos for different hair types: Bain Nutri-Fortifiant, which helps smooth thicker hair for less breakage when detangling, and

Expert hairstylist David D’Amours says more of his clients are experiencing hair loss due to stress.
At the Salon

Hairstylist and Kérastase editorial director David D’Amours says that whether his clients come to the salon for a blowout, balayage or bangs trim, they love the instant results of Fusio-Dose. “It’s one of the most popular treatments in our salon,” he says of the customizable hair application that’s now available in the Genesis range. Applied at the sink and rinsed out, the treatment takes just a few minutes, which is why it’s ideal for busy clients, he says. It can also be mixed and matched with a selection of boosters from other ranges that do everything from brightening blond to thickening strands. And while the at-home version of the Genesis treatment Masque Reconstituant is a great DIY option, it’s a nice treat to top off your service when you’re in the salon, says D’Amours. “It’s like the cherry on the sundae.”

Bain Hydra-Fortifiant, which is ideal for finer hair because it removes pollution and excess oil from the scalp to restore volume to limp strands, says D’Amours. Volume for all hair types comes via the Anti Hair-Fall Fortifying Serum and Treatment Ampoules. While some of D’Amour’s clients worry that using extra products might weigh their hair down, these have the opposite effect. They add body but feel very lightweight in the hair, he says. But his favourite product in the collection is Défense Thermique, a heat-protective spray that works for up to 220°C. He recommends it to his salon clients (who use their flatirons to do beachy waves at home) as well as his celebrity and model clients (whom he instructs to bring a bottle on photo shoots and film sets). D’Amours loves that, as with all Kérastase products, he can customize treatments, allowing him to mix and match Genesis products with other lines depending on hair type and colour as well as other needs—something that reminds him of a favourite destination in Paris. “It’s like a trip to the French pharmacy,” he says.

While Genesis products take a strategic approach to preventing hair fall, maintaining healthy hair and a healthy scalp is a holistic endeavour, which is why Kérastase developed the line with the guidance of a dermatologist. Dr. Laura Scott says that losing between 50 and 100 hairs a day is normal but cautions that when there is extreme breakage, or when hair is significantly sparser in a specific area, it needs to be addressed.

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Special Offer  Scan the QR code to discover the full range of Genesis products and find a Kérastase salon near you at kerastase.ca. Enter the code FASHIONMAG to get a special gift with purchases over $75. To discover more professional luxury care for your hair, follow @kerastase_official on Instagram.
Rescue Mission

Meet four beauty and grooming experts who are incorporating mental health support and suicide prevention into their work.

By NATASHA BRUNO

Lorenzo P. Lewis
MENTAL HEALTH ADVOCATE

Lorenzo P. Lewis isn’t a barber, but his organization, The Confess Project, comes alive in Black barbershops. The initiative, which was designed to get barbers talking to their male clients about mental health issues and to recommend culturally sensitive resources, was born out of Lewis’s life experiences. When Lewis, who’s based in Little Rock, Ark., was growing up, he says that he frequently visited his aunt’s hair salon and witnessed self-care turning into self-love via client-hairstylist relationships. “I saw women who were going through hard times come to the salon, and months later, their lives were transformed,” he chronicles. “They would come, get empowerment and leave happy.” He’s also well aware of the sacredness that hair salons and barbershops hold in black communities as one of the few places to truly feel seen in a society riddled with systemic barriers. “I felt supported, heard, celebrated—and not just tolerated,” he expresses. Having experienced all that joy, and then becoming aware that suicide is the fourth biggest killer of Black men aged 20 to 44 and the third leading cause in black boys under 20 in the United States—not to mention personally suffering from depression—Lewis saw a need to work from the shop floor.

“Because of this atrocious issue, I realized we need more forces—more people to be at the forefront of the conversation,” he says, adding that recruiting Black barbers as mental health advocates also addresses the lack of therapists of colour—support figures who can properly relate to a client’s background. Along with helping barbershop clients across the United States, Lewis is also rightly proud of The Confess Project’s influence on barbers. “We’ve had barbers who were struggling with mental health be able to acknowledge their own trauma and get on medication,” he says. “It’s been an awakening journey for them.”
Tom Chapman
BARBER

It’s often joked that a person’s barber or hairstylist is also their therapist, since many people share their private lives during a hair service. After losing a close friend to suicide, and realizing the rare intimacy between men that exists in a barbershop, Tom Chapman decided to take action. In 2015, the U.K. barber founded The Lions Barber Collective, an international group of barbering experts on a mission to raise suicide prevention awareness among men. At the heart of The Lions Barber Collective is BarberTalk, a program for hair professionals that combines mental health training with barbering demos that Chapman developed under the watchful eye of a leading psychiatrist in England. Comprising four pillars, BarberTalk aims to equip barbers with the tools to recognize warning signs, ask the right questions of a client (even direct, uncomfortable ones), listen with empathy and without judgment and, finally, guide clients toward local mental health services so they can get the help they need. Chapman shares that The Lions Barber Collective continuously spearheads suicide awareness through public appearances, media interviews, industry events and barbershop pop-ups at universities, sporting events and festivals. A big goal of his is to have his training be part of school curricula.

“Taking Action
The world loses close to 800,000 people to suicide every year. The number in Canada is nearly 4,000, says Dr. Juveria Zaheer, a psychiatrist and suicide researcher at the Centre for Addiction and Mental Health (CAMH). In September, CAMH launched “Not suicide. Not today.”—a multi-layered campaign that tackles the discomfort around talking about suicide and addresses stigma. With the COVID-19 health crisis, the timing couldn’t be any better. “People have asked me more about suicide and suicide prevention in the past six months than ever before,” says Zaheer. “It takes all of us to prevent suicide: families, friends, communities. It takes all of us to be able to reach out and reach in.”
Andrea Olivera
AESTHETICIAN AND AROMACOLOGIST

With a private by-appointment-only studio in downtown Toronto, Andrea Olivera has gained a devoted following—TIFF celeb attendees included—for her Ayurveda beauty treatments that go far beyond surface level. A centuries-old Indian practice that was developed alongside yoga and vedic astrology (also known as Hindu astrology), Ayurveda centres on tailor-made healing modalities to benefit an individual’s specific self-care needs. Everything with Olivera starts with a karmic life reading to understand each client’s dosha, or body-mind type, using a vedic chart. According to Ayurveda, each dosha (Vata, Pitta and Kapha) expresses a unique blend of dominant physical, emotional and mental characteristics that have been with us since birth. Our dosha also guides reactive dispositions when certain life events and relationships throw our innate traits out of whack: Vata is inclined toward fear and anxiety; Pitta bends to control, with anger and frustration; and Kapha is sensitive to sadness and lethargy. What’s more, these imbalances can manifest in skin and body ailments, such as acne, eczema, headaches and neck and shoulder tension. Olivera’s trusted facial and body treatments are about rebalancing your natural elements. “My concept is ‘Know thyself; heal thyself,’” she explains. “The chart provides a look at the issues in your life. All my treatments, herbs, rituals and prescribed yoga postures are then customized to your body-mind type.” She adds that most clients book in for her 4.5-hour Ayurveda Healing Escape package. The all-encompassing offering includes a karmic reading, karma emotional release (negative-emotion-releasing talk therapy plus aura smudging, conducted in front of a mirror), a detoxifying oil bath massage, a signature facial, an Indian head massage and a balancing Ayurveda lunch to finish. Clients leave renewed and beautified, along with a prescription for at-home rituals, from food to fragrance, to incorporate into their daily lives.

Lee Pycroft
MAKEUP ARTIST

The beauty journey of Lee Pycroft, a highly-sought-after A-list makeup artist for the majority of her career, took a major turning point after life events led to depression. “All my coping mechanisms had ceased to work,” shares the U.K.-based artist. As a new way to pull through, Pycroft began leading charitable makeover events for vulnerable women who were going through a terminal illness or domestic violence. “I brought in massage therapists, hairdressers, makeup artists and nail technicians and really just used beauty as a platform to help people experience something different,” she says. The ripple effect on the women’s self-esteem was huge. “We gave these women a sense of attention, a sense of status—a sense of being reconnected with a part of themselves they had forgotten,” she says. “We were meeting people’s emotional needs and bringing them together in communities where they felt a sense of belonging.” The events were also deeply healing for Pycroft because they focused her attention outward. “Depression is a very inwardly focused state of high emotion,” she explains. “Going out and talking to people who were going through things beyond my comprehension threw a perspective on my own challenges. I started to feel like I was of service and adding value to the world.” Captivated by the inner transformations she witnessed, Pycroft went on to study psychotherapy and emerged as a qualified practitioner who now offers makeovers and psychotherapy to an array of clients. “I saw a platform where I could dispense tips around therapeutic tools through a more conscious beauty ritual,” she says. Her sessions, which have gone virtual during the health crisis, incorporate makeup lessons with relaxation and breathing techniques to guide her clients to a more chilled-out, self-caring state.
Removes 10 YEARS of yellow stains
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*When brushing twice daily for 4 weeks. †Offered for sale in retail channels.
Toothpaste fights cavities.
Chill Zone

Five stress-reducing spa treatments to help brighten your mood.

By INGRIE WILLIAMS

This year has already been a lot. Now, the ongoing angst unleashed by COVID-19 dovetails with the arrival of winter’s long, dark days and a slump in mood known as seasonal affective disorder (SAD). While it won’t cure despair, unwinding at the spa can give a much-needed boost. Read on to discover five of the most relaxing treatments at spas across Canada.

WHERE: UNCOMMON SPA, CALGARY
THE TREATMENT: ÉMINENCE BODY WRAP, $125, 60 MINUTES

Uncommon Spa offers pampering services and the perks of a full-fledged organic vegan bar all under one roof. “Relaxation or de-stressing need not be just physical or mental—we wanted to make a place that is both,” says spa owner Gaurav Gupta, who also runs Calgary’s popular Leela Eco Spa locations. Using products from natural skincare brand Eminence Organic Skin Care, the hydrating Stone Crop Restorative Body Wrap starts with gentle dry brushing to exfoliate from head to toe, after which a body mask is applied. Once you’re cocooned in a bundle of warm towels, a customized mini-facial begins. Extend your post-treatment bliss with an artisanal signature cocktail like the Lulu White—a blend of Prosecco and rose- and cardamom-infused gin served in a glass that is topped with rose petals and dusted with pink sugar.

WHERE: VIDA SPA AT WESTIN BAYSHORE, VANCOUVER
THE TREATMENT: SHIRODHARA, $270, 90 MINUTES

“We’re seeing a demand for Ayurvedic treatments because the whole concept is all about bringing balance back to your mind, body and dosha, or personality type,” says Alison Hegedus, president of Vida Spas. In addition to a customized massage and oil blend designed to soothe or invigorate as your dosha dictates, the Shirodhara treatment includes warm oil poured over the forehead, or third eye, for 15 to 20 minutes. “It flows very slowly and methodically—it almost puts you in a hypnotic state,” says Hegedus. “You’ll fall asleep, and then you’ll have the best sleep of your life that night. It’s the perfect treatment for anyone who is going through any type of anxiety and needs to slow down.”
WHERE: SIBÉRIA SPA, QUEBEC CITY
THE TREATMENT: HEART TO HEART MASSAGE, $89, 60 MINUTES

Sibéria Spa, a short drive from downtown Quebec City, is a year-round Scandinavian-inspired oasis that centres on a thermal experience of alternating hot, cold and repose to achieve a state of deep relaxation. “We want people to rest to the rhythm of the flowing Rivière Jaune in a peaceful and quiet environment, right in the middle of nature,” says co-owner Michel Carrier. Dedicated to well-being, the Heart to Heart massage is exclusively for anyone experiencing cancer and alleviates symptoms such as pain, fatigue and nausea. “Its goal is to give the patient some of their strength back,” says co-owner Julie Panneton. A thoughtful bonus: Caregivers are given complimentary spa access.

WHERE: PROVINCE APOTHECARY, TORONTO
THE TREATMENT: THE GUA SHA LIFT ORGANIC FACIAL, $180, 75 MINUTES

At Province Apothecary, a new COVID-19 safety measure has made it even easier to unwind during The Gua Sha Lift Organic Facial. “You’ll chat with the aesthetician about your skin needs at the start, but during the treatment, there’s no talking; this leads to deeper relaxation,” says founder and CEO Julie Clark. The holistic facial also utilizes a contoured jade stone tool that elevates sensation. “With the gua sha, you’ll get additional pressure,” she says. “The therapist can really go into soft tissue and muscle to release tension a bit more than they could with their hands. It’s especially great for those with temporomandibular joint [TMJ] disorder.”

WHERE: THE FLOATATION CENTRE, HALIFAX
THE TREATMENT: SINGLE 75-MINUTE FLOAT SESSION, $70; INTRO FLOAT 3-PACK, $160

Overwhelmed? Immersing yourself in Epsom salt-rich water, absolute quiet and total darkness could unlock bliss. “Being able to disconnect completely from your environment, whether it’s your phone, your family or your job, and letting your brain and body have that lack of stimuli does induce a relaxed state,” says Lindsay MacPhee, founder of The Floatation Centre. Along with increasing the levels of dopamine and endorphins, it can also reduce chronic pain, she says, adding that floatation therapy—like meditation—is ideal as a mindful practice integrated into your routine. Since reopening the centre earlier this year, MacPhee has noticed that clients are coming in more often than they normally would—a testament to floating’s effectiveness. “COVID-19 and quarantining have really made folks realize the benefit that floating is having on their mental wellness and physical well-being,” she says.
While sheltering in place at home in Surrey, B.C., during the coronavirus clampdown, Rabiah Dhaliwal mastered winged liner. “I’ve become an eyeliner god,” laughs the 21-year-old.

A cat-eye flick is the latest addition to Dhaliwal’s self-care menu—go-to activities, from journaling to therapy, put in place to improve her well-being. “Even if I’m just going downstairs to make food and then study, makeup can feel empowering,” expresses Dhaliwal, who is enrolled in science at The University of British Columbia and aiming for med school. And for someone who has struggled with her mental health for several years, self-care has become crucial, especially during an unsettling pandemic.

As for her eyeliner, it was swag she received at the L’Oréal Paris Women of Worth Canadian Edition gala pre-shutdown in March—along with a $10,000 award. Each year, the beauty giant seeks out Canadian women who demonstrate influence within their communities, and Dhaliwal, along with nine other women, was honoured with a charitable grant.

She was recognized for her work as a mental health advocate and as a volunteer vice-president with the One Blood for Life foundation, a non-profit organization that aims to increase the ethnic diversity of the national stem cell registry. “You have a higher chance of finding a match within your own ethnic community,” she explains. “For a lot of racialized communities within Canada, those donor numbers are lower.” Dhaliwal joined the organization in Grade 12—the same year her beloved grandfather was diagnosed with cancer and required numerous blood transfusions. He passed away in her first year of university, causing her mental health to “spiral out of control,” leading to anxiety, post-traumatic stress disorder, depression and eventually an attempted suicide that left Dhaliwal in a coma and recovering in an adolescent psychiatric ward. “I was feeling suicidal because I didn’t have healthy coping strategies; time in the hospital and going to counselling and therapy really helped equip me with those tools,” she says, acknowledging that her mental health is a continuing healing journey. Sharing her story has helped tremendously.

Dhaliwal has started her own mental health organization, called the Voices for Hope Foundation, which is in its planning phase. Voices for Hope aims to dispel harmful misconceptions surrounding mental health and illness and to bring to light these “invisible” health issues. “We do this by spearheading educational workshops and campaigns, writing social justice think pieces and doing policy and advocacy work,” states Dhaliwal.

And at the heart of this organization is a platform to amplify BIPOC (Black, Indigenous and People of Color) voices. “We want to give people of colour a safe space to share their experiences and equip them with tools for healthy healing,” she says. Culturally sensitive representation truly matters in the mental health space, and it’s something Dhaliwal wishes she had seen when she was struggling with suicidal thoughts.

As the second-generation daughter of Punjabi-Sikh immigrants who escaped religious genocide in India, Dhaliwal says she grew up in a culture with a survivalist mentality of “keeping your head down and powering through your problems.” Opening up about her poor emotional health just didn’t feel like an option. “Izzat is a word in Punjabi that means ‘honour,’” she explains. “Staying silent is seen as honourable because of the survival mentality that has manifested in our community. Talking about your problems is seen as self-indulgence.”

It’s complex stigmas like these that inspire Dhaliwal to speak out today, especially so that young racialized women like her “can see that there is someone who looks like them who went through this and came out the other side stronger.”
The world loses one person to suicide every 40 seconds.

Over 75% of all suicide deaths are men.

Suicide is the 2nd leading cause of death for people aged 15–24.

In Canada, 4000 people die by suicide every year.

For each person we lose, at least 7 to 10 others are deeply affected.

Lesbian, gay, and bisexual youth are more at risk than their heterosexual peers.

For women, the attempt rate is 3 to 4 times higher.

Lesbian, gay, and bisexual youth are more at risk than their heterosexual peers.

Transgender and gender diverse people are at greater risk than those who are cisgender.

Among First Nations, the suicide rate is 3 times higher than the general population.

That’s more deaths than war and homicide combined.

It claims 800,000 lives every year.

Over 75% of all suicide deaths are men.

Suicide is the 2nd leading cause of death for people aged 15–24.

In Canada, 4000 people die by suicide every year.

For each person we lose, at least 7 to 10 others are deeply affected.

These are the stats. And it’s time we change them.

Not suicide. Not today.

Together, we can prevent suicide. Donate today.
camh.ca

If you are experiencing thoughts of suicide, you are deserving of help and can call 1-833-456-4566. If you require immediate, in-person emergency care, call 911 or go to your nearest emergency department.
With the deepest gratitude

This circle of dynamic women is united in their vision to truly help.

To the inspiring women of the Tiffany Circle, the Canadian Red Cross thanks you for your philanthropic leadership.

This is the ninth year of the Tiffany Circle, and after nearly a decade your commitment and compassion has improved the lives of countless vulnerable people in Canada and around the world.

The Red Cross Tiffany Circle is a growing global movement of women who are leading the way in philanthropy. Members share a deep commitment to helping the most vulnerable in their communities, nationally and around the world by investing in the humanitarian world of the Red Cross.

Learn how you can join this powerful network of women: redcross.ca/tiffanycircle
Sun Queen

Drake calls her “the 6 goddess”—and for good reason. Winnie Harlow is a force whether she is standing up for herself and others or just gazing into the sunset.

(SEE PAGE 66.)
Ballroom competitions have provided acceptance and accolades for many who grew up feeling lost—or worse. Nichole Jankowski spoke to some Toronto ballroom community members as they modelled a selection of the season’s coziest knits.
“It wasn’t until I found vogue that I could genuinely be free in my skin.”

— Matthew Cuff

In March, members of Toronto’s ballroom community, including Tamar Miyake-Mugler and Aura Louboutin West, were in Chicago for the 19th annual Midwest Awards Ball when the news came that the Canada-United States border was closing. The event was cut short as they rushed home to Toronto.

This early period of the pandemic, with all the grief, anxiety and isolation of lockdown, was destabilizing for many. Cracks in our society—issues like systemic racism and police brutality—had widened. But under the pressures of the pandemic, these fissures, which disproportionately impact our poor, elderly, migrant and racialized populations as well as those living with disabilities or addiction, have been thrown into high relief. Though often invisible to white, middle-class, heteronormative society, their existence was not a revelation to anyone in ballroom.

“Welcome to what it feels like to not be able to be where you want to be—where you feel like you deserve to be—because it’s just not safe,” says Miyake-Mugler, a member of the iconic House of Miyake-Mugler. “I feel like the world’s getting a taste of what it feels like to be a visible minority…. It’s the same isolated feeling.”

After being raised in a conservative Seventh-day Adventist household, Miyake-Mugler found ballroom at the age of 20 and is now, at 28, known as “the Queen of Canada.” She wants to be a visible presence for kids struggling with identity—to create a blueprint for how to live unapologetically and authentically and maybe even wind up in bright lights in Yonge-Dundas Square, one of the places where the Absolut Changemakers campaign she was cast in aired.

“Being from a Christian Jamaican home, it’s very hard to live in the skin I’m in,” says Matthew Cuff, also known as Snoopy Lanvin of the House of Lanvin. “It wasn’t until I found vogueing, a new style of dance that incorporated poses from high-fashion magazines as well as ancient African art and Egyptian hieroglyphics. She helped shape competition categories like vogue, runway, face (beauty) and realness (the artistry to pass as a traditional member of the assigned gender- and status-coded archetype). When so much of the world is closed to you, walking is a way of taking back power. In ballroom, if you work hard, you can win—even if it is only in this arena.

Today, Cuff teaches at a premier studio, The Underground Dance Centre, and last year, he vogued »
On Milan: Knit vest, price upon request, black dress, $3,375, shirt, $665, shoes, $970, earring, $720 (for a pair), and bag, price upon request, Simone Rocha. Socks, stylist's own.
“We are each other’s support system, more than our own blood relatives.”

— Tamar Miyake-Mugler
There are not many scenes or communities where people like myself—who are Black, queer, underprivileged or all those things—can come together.

— Tamar Miyake-Mugler

Louboutin West, whose given name is Nikolaos Théberge-Dritsas, is the youngest, newest ballroom member on-set for FASHION’s knitwear shoot. He is already father of the Toronto chapter of the House of Louboutin and has co-hosted and organized balls at venues like Artscape Daniels Launchpad and Soho House Toronto. Still, he always carries with him a historical awareness and is cautious not to step on anyone’s toes. “I’m still a guest,” he says.

Miyake-Mugler, who recruited Louboutin West into the role of father, believes there’s space for everyone in ballroom as long as they enter as an ally and behave with integrity and respect. “It’s really important to have a space for LGBTQI people to just be and exist and let loose and feel welcome and feel included,” agrees Matthew Chiu, known as Dynasty Milan, who helped bring categories like runway, best dressed and hand performance to Canada. “Now more than ever, it’s amazing to hear people in Montreal or Vancouver say ‘I never saw an Asian person vogue until I saw you do it.’”

Milan discovered ballroom after moving to New York at 18 to attend the Alvin Ailey American Dance Theater. He would tag along to rehearsals for the House of Ninja, founded in the 1980s by Willi Ninja. Known as “the godfather of voguing,” Ninja elevated the style of dance to new heights, becoming a sought-after choreographer in the process. He died of AIDS-related heart failure in 2006 at age 45, but the iconic house lives on in his name.

For a community that has endured so much, it’s a sense of belonging that has helped sustain them. “To just create something out of nothing—it’s really the tenacity of the human spirit,” says Milan. “It really is the beauty of inclusion.”

FASHIONMAGAZINE.COM/MAKEITLAST
On Cuff: Sweater, $2,175, skirt, $1,045, and boots, $1,580, Sacai.

Hair, Jasmine Merinsky for PtM.ca/SheaMoisture.
Barbering, Chadwin Bartley for PtM.ca.
Makeup, Nate Matthew for PtM.ca/Dior Beauty.
Fashion assistant, Tara Ocansey for PtM.ca.
Production, Coey Kerr for Rodeo.
Top, $1,475, and dress, $5,805, Robert Wun. Earring, $1,340, Katkim.
The One & Only

WINNIE

Winnie Harlow didn't realize she was different until others pointed it out, including the modelling agents who rejected her. Now, she is one of the most memorable faces in fashion.

I don’t think I realized at first that I was different,” says Toronto-raised, Los Angeles-based model Winnie Harlow of how a childhood vitiligo diagnosis impacted her notion of what her life would be like. “That was due to my upbringing. It wasn’t until I was out in the world that I could sense the differences.”

While reactions to Harlow’s appearance have shifted from devastating bullying to praise and admiration, her uniqueness is what ultimately made her a star in the fashion sphere. *Vogue* covers and catwalk appearances at some of the most exclusive events, like Jean Paul Gaultier’s 50th anniversary show, speak to the power of her self-possession and determination, and these are traits she has been cultivating for quite some time.

“My grandmother took me with her to pick up my cousin at school one day, and a little kid came up to me and was like, ‘What’s on your skin?’” she recalls. “My grandmother has a very strong personality and is very confident, and I was raised around her. She remembers me replying »
This page:
Jumpsuit, price upon request, Alexandre Vauthier.
Boots, $320, Schutz. Earrings, $290, and ring, $180, Misho.

Opposite page:
Vest and bra, prices upon request, Coperni.
briefs, price upon request, Marc Jacobs. Earcuff, price upon request, Rinaldy A. Yunardi.
‘Child, my skin is none of your business.’ That was my energy growing up.”

Harlow’s ability to retain and expand that energy has led to her landing campaigns for Puma, Fendi and Diesel—all lofty achievements after less than a decade in the industry. Her foray into modelling began after a friend urged her to attend a casting call for the annual Fashion Art Toronto event. Harlow, who was working at La Senza in Yorkdale Shopping Centre at the time, put off the suggestion, but her friend persisted and Harlow gave in. “I thought I should at least try,” she says. “I got off work one day and took a bus to the casting; I was in a ton of shows that week. It was encouraging, and I’m really happy that I listened to my friend.”

It was a breakthrough moment for Harlow in terms of showing her “what the fashion industry could look like.” Up until that point, she’d been rejected by modelling agencies. “People didn’t really know what to do or where to place me or how to book me because it had never been done before,” she says. “That was my challenge in the beginning. I just had to make a voice for myself to be heard.”

Harlow’s ambition was bolstered through meeting TV and online personality Shannon Boodram, who discovered her and made a viral video clip in 2011 about vitiligo and the fact that it didn’t detract from Harlow’s standout qualities. “I’m grateful for Shannon’s eye—for seeing a story there,” says Harlow. “She was the first person to say she could see me on the cover of Vogue. It wasn’t something I could visualize because I hadn’t seen it. But she had that visionary eye.”

In fact, Harlow remembers looking at posters in the store where she worked—all featuring “white girls with blond hair and blue eyes”—and thinking she wanted to be in that position one day. “I worked at La Senza and ended up walking the runway for Victoria’s Secret,” she says. “That was a full-circle moment for me.”

The tenacity Harlow has exhibited throughout her career perhaps shines most brightly when she speaks about her fears. Reminiscing about our cover shoot in southern California’s Joshua Tree National Park (a locale known for its intimidating wildlife), she says, “I thought about there being snakes, and that was kind of scary, but I worked around them before, for a Nike shoot.” She is also afraid of swimming, but she learned the skill in order to do an underwater photo shoot. “While I did cry at one of the lessons, I went back and kept pushing myself. I’m just the type of person who can’t let my fears stop my progression.”

While Harlow doesn’t allow dread to consume her, when speaking about the anxiety that the uncertainty of 2020’s events has caused, she says that she “tends to internalize things a lot. Sometimes it’s hard to verbalize things that are complicated or frustrating, but it’s good to talk about them.” Her go-to confidants include her mother and her boyfriend, NBA player Kyle Kuzma—she flew to Orlando to join in his team’s quarantine “bubble” this past August.

Touting her Jamaican grandmother (a fellow Leo) as a strong influence in her life, Harlow now counts Naomi Campbell as a “powerful force” in her career, adding that the legendary supermodel called her on her birthday this year. This connection is a long way from her attempts to enter the fashion industry so many years ago, when she was told that if she wanted to work in the industry, she “should be a makeup artist.”

Now, Harlow is in demand for not only her beauty but also the ingenuity she brings to editorial shoots. “I take pride in being more involved in the process now,” she says of her work, reflecting on how social media has allowed her to feel more connected to her followers—although her favourite interactions with them are still when she meets them on the street during fashion week.

“I remember getting a DM from a fan in the Middle East who also has vitiligo,” she says of her fortuitous interaction with Shahad Salman. “She showed me comparison pictures of her and me, and they were so similar. A while later, I had the opportunity to do a Vogue Arabia cover, and we were trying to figure out how we could make it powerful. The idea struck that we could have a shoot with Shahad. It’s not just about me being the first; it’s about me being able to open the door for others.”

This notion sets Harlow apart from others in the fashion industry—an industry that’s notoriously narrow in terms of who it allows into its realm. And it exemplifies the idea that if people have someone to look up to, which points out she didn’t have when it came to modelling, it can make a world of difference.

Harlow’s desire to broaden perceptions is also evident in her downtime activities; one of her favourite stress relievers is spending time with a colouring book. “Disney princesses are my thing,” she says. “I do my own takes on them. I like to make them ethnic or Black, because there wasn’t a Black Disney princess for a very long time. I like to switch it up and make a character be from a different race or have different hair—give her a pink lace-front wig instead of black or blond flowing hair. I’ve done pink ombré wigs myself—I want to see myself as a Disney princess as well.”

As imaginative as her approach can sometimes be, Harlow is also quick to highlight the importance of keeping ideas and admiration grounded in reality. “I don’t personally believe in role models, because a role model by definition is someone who’s put on a pedestal and looked at as something that’s not even human,” she notes. “We are all humans…. You can’t think that anyone in the world is perfect, and that’s what that ideal of a role model suggests. I look at people off the pedestal and think that we are all equal. It’s more about inspiration.” And that’s something that Harlow, more than most, knows a thing or two about.
Dress, price upon request, Iris van Herpen. Shoes, price upon request, Simon Miller. Earrings, $155, Misho.
This page:
Jacket and pants, prices upon request, Marina Hoermanseder.
Earrings, $3,465, and rings, from $3,855, Grace Lee.

Opposite page:
Dress, $1,995, Dion Lee. Earrings, $1,005, Alexander McQueen.
Jacket, $3,800, and pants, $1,565, Alexander McQueen. Shoes, price upon request, Haikl. Headpiece and necklace, prices upon request, Area.

Dr. Liza Egbogah, a Toronto-based manual osteopath, fell in love with the flair of Nigerian dressing before she started wearing it herself. “I loved looking through my mom’s old pictures because everyone was wearing traditional wax print dresses,” she remembers. “I’d ask my mother how I could get those kinds of pieces and she’d say, ‘I never thought you’d be interested in Nigerian clothes.’”

This might be due in part to Egbogah’s international upbringing; she was born in Calgary and lived in both Libya and Malaysia while growing up. But she recalls that during visits to her ancestral home—her parents were born in the same Nigerian village—she was mesmerized by what women in the markets were wearing. 

Legacy Mode

For Dr. Liza Egbogah, a closet full of pieces from Nigeria allows her to stay connected to her roots.

By ODESSA PALOMA PARKER
LIVING OUT LOUD

Egbogah fell in love with Nigerian style through old photos that were taken before the family was eventually forced to abandon traditional ways of dressing during British colonial rule.

PATERNAL INSTINCT

The luxe beadwork of a custom-made top and headpiece that Egbogah wore to her father’s funeral pays tribute to his refined taste. “He never wore jeans a day in his life,” she recalls.

KINDRED SPIRIT

Egbogah wears a topper and shorts from Toronto-based brand Precious Threads by Abiola, founded by domestic abuse survivor Abiola Akinsiku.

WINNING LOOK

“I have a sea of wax print pieces,” says Egbogah of one element consistent in her collection. Here, a selection of artful earrings is nestled in the grooves of a traditional board game called Ncho.
MEMORY BANK
Egbogah hopes to one day give her collection to her five-year-old niece, whom she describes as a fledgling fashion designer.

FIT TO PRINT
A dress by Emmy Kasbit featuring an Akwete fabric on the bodice is a favourite of Egbogah’s. The textile is native to the eastern region of the country where her family is from and reminds her of her grandmother’s old aprons.

CONSPICUOUS CONSUMPTION
Egbogah is so enraptured with eye-catching prints from Nigeria that she even developed iterations to use in her line of shoes, including the Ankara print seen here. “I look at fashion as art,” she says. “I’m investing in things that are beautiful and support creativity.”

BOLD CALLS
Fleeing the Biafran war meant that Egbogah’s family lost many of their personal belongings. A “desire to be connected to [her] roots” is one reason why she’s drawn to the work of local craftspeople and designers.
It was when she was in Malaysia that she developed a love of batik—the centuries-old print work typically made with wax that also appears in the traditional dress of African nations. Attending an international school where uniforms were mandatory, Egbogah nurtured her interest in the creative potential of batik during art class, eventually making a small “collection of T-shirts and scrunchies.”

As a teenager, she moved back to Calgary and found herself “wanting to fit in”; her style throughout that formative time consisted mostly of hoodies and pieces from early adopters of the athleisure aesthetic, such as Triple Five Soul and Baby Phat.

Her sartorial appetites changed when she was in her early 20s—when her parents returned to live in their home country and her mother began bringing vibrantly printed Nigerian looks back to her family when she visited Canada. “That was a turning point for me,” says Egbogah. She started travelling to Nigeria more frequently, and a deep interest in the culture and style of the region took root.

Whether they be items given to her by her mom or the custom-made pieces Egbogah acquired for special events, the spectrum of craft techniques—opulent patterns, textures and embellishments abound in Nigerian fashion—is now stored in a specific closet space in her home.

“I can’t say that I have a favourite—I have favourites,” she says with a laugh while mentally cycling through her collected wares, including purchases from designers like Emmy Kasbit and JZO. The front-runners include pink-hued floral pieces crafted for her wedding festivities and an ornately detailed top, skirt and matching headpiece she had made for her father’s funeral.

“That I love because it was so intricate and really honoured him,” she says. “He loved extravagant things.”

Personalization is the cornerstone of Nigerian style; everyone who attends any social event is expected to arrive in an outfit that has never been worn by the wearer before. “You’re only supposed to wear them out once,” says Egbogah about occasionwear. “Afterwards, you give it to somebody else to wear or it’s given to a tailor to be reworked for more day-to-day wear.”

Letting go of such significant couture-level wardrobe items nagged at Egbogah, which is another reason why she cultivates a personal collection. When she travels to Nigeria now, one of her favourite things to source is hand-painted clothing. “They’ll start with plain cotton and then paint each one by hand,” she says of these artisanal items. “I consider that wearable art. Instead of focusing on buying paintings to hang, I’m interested in wearing paintings.”

In fact, Egbogah is so avid about preserving the creativity of Nigerian makers and designers that last year she attended Lagos Fashion Week (for only three days—it was all her busy schedule would allow). It was her first time at the event, and she returned to Toronto ready to start investing in the pieces she had seen. “It opened my eyes to so many contemporary Nigerian designers, and now I make an effort to collect their pieces and support them,” she says. This endeavour hasn’t been easy, though. Before she discovered Western-based African-focused e-commerce sites such as Ditto Africa, she wasn’t able to buy pieces from Nigeria due to monetary restrictions put in place by the Canadian government.

Thankfully, Egbogah has also been able to satiate her passion for Nigerian style from within Canada and has become a close friend of and collaborator with Precious Threads by Abiola designer Abiola Akinsiku. Akinsiku’s dynamic printed collections and the important story behind her brand deeply resonate with Egbogah, who owns over a dozen Precious Threads by Abiola pieces. “She’s a survivor of domestic violence,” she notes of Akinsiku, “and proceeds from sales go to help support other women who are victims of violence.”

When she reflects on the connection she has with Akinsiku—who created a three-piece capsule collection along with shoe embellishments for Egbogah’s orthopedic footwear brand, Dr. Liza—she highlights an inclination that is pervasive, but rarely spoken about openly, in creative professions. “I don’t know if it’s because of the work I do with fixing people, but for some reason I’m always drawn to pain,” says Egbogah. “I find that so much beauty comes out of other people’s pain.”

She also feels she has a kinship with the talent she crosses paths with on the TIFF circuit, where she has a yearly charity event in addition to a studio set up to give medical attention to the stars. Egbogah says she’s genuinely interested in the "joy and beauty" that come from the trauma and sadness that many creatives grapple with.

In much the same way as she strives to turn suffering into something good through her occupation, Egbogah chooses to focus on how she can amplify Nigerian creatives through growing her collection and, of course, wearing it. “It’s my pleasure, and I feel a sense of purpose when I get to put Nigeria in a positive light,” she says. “One of the reasons I’m so active in promoting Nigerian fashion is that the country gets so much negative publicity. But when you look at the beautiful fashion and music and art—things that move people... You can’t have a negative impression of Nigeria if you love all the wonderful local arts. And there’s a joy in celebrating heritage. That’s my blood; that’s my people. They’re doing great things, and I want to share that with everyone.”
Whenever I couldn’t sleep pre-COVID, I put together outfits in my mind. I thought about an event I had on the horizon—a trip to New York, an upcoming opera, dinner with friends—and mentally scanned my closet in search of the perfect tulle skirt, velvet blazer or knee-high boots that I could build the rest of my look around. Some people count sheep, but I am soothed with visions of all the pretty things in my wardrobe that are begging to be brought to life.
I’ve had multiple sclerosis (MS), an incurable chronic illness, for 19 years. For most of this time, I knew my life was going to be difficult, but I had faith in who I was and believed my diagnosis couldn’t change that. But as my disease progressed, slowly and insidiously, there came a day when MS was no longer just something I had (an illness); it was something I was (disabled).

The forces attempting to erode my sense of self went beyond what MS can do. Adding a cane and then a rollator, and sometimes a wheelchair, to my day-to-day look was not part of my insomniac dreams but an unexpected nightmare for my identity. I went from being able to pass as “normal,” where a stranger commenting on my appearance would likely be complimenting my red leather loafers or raw-silk turban, to feeling like I was wearing a sign inviting people to ask “What’s wrong with you?” or “Can I pray for you?”

For most of my life, my style was the first thing that spoke for me—a style I thought of as chic meets whimsical, never boring and always a little bit “look at me.” When the effects of MS forced me to add mobility aids to my wardrobe, it suddenly didn’t matter how loud my statement necklace was; my disability was the first thing that spoke for me, and it had nothing good to say. I found myself shoving my rollator out of photos and surfing the walls and furniture at home rather than have my husband see me using a cane. I was convinced that looking fall-down drunk was still more appealing than looking disabled. Of course, my husband is no fool. I looked drunk and disabled—and probably a little stupid.

I wanted the world to keep seeing me the same way I saw myself. But even my vintage pink boa couldn’t detract from the pitying looks and inquiries that being attached to a rollator invites. People don’t believe you can be attractive, successful, sexual or even smart if you have a disability. I was freaking out and, for the first time in my life, unsure of who I was.

It was during this self-indulgent existential crisis that I ruminated over Fedora for days, thinking “That guy seemed cool; I could be friends with someone like that.” And then it struck me. Like, duh, if that guy looks cool with a mobility aid, maybe I look cool, too. I realized that the key to accepting my new look—the mobility aid version of myself—was in seeing people who look like me looking better than me. So much of fashion is aspirational. How was I supposed to understand the potential beauty of someone with a disability without high-fashion examples to consider?

I turned to the internet in search of new role models. (Selma Blair’s red carpet moment at the 2019 Vanity Fair Oscar party, when the actress appeared in a flowing Ralph & Russo gown with a customized matching cane, hadn’t happened yet.) The absence of stylish images of visibly disabled young women in mainstream media validated the negative associations I assumed were being made about me. I felt like I’d been excommunicated from the world of designer clothes and it bags that I loved so much.

Coming to terms with my inability to walk unaided is an ongoing negotiation, but my North American birthright to superficial vanity and materialistic self-obsession is no longer negotiable. My new disabled identity isn’t going to keep me from my “look at me” outfits. I decided that I would not only stop being ashamed of my mobility aids but also celebrate them.

I sourced the best-looking devices I could find—no small feat considering that just about every industry has yet to recognize that people with disabilities have the same fashion literacy as the average consumer. The idea that disability is the only identity we’re entitled to is reinforced when the tools we need to help us move look so medical, devoid of aesthetic or individuality.

I found two companies in Europe (naturally!) that were making rollators that matched my vibe. Sleek and streamlined, they had hidden cables, making them look more sporty than assistive, and they came in colours like Oyster White and Cloud Blue. I hired a fashion photographer to create the kind of images I had been looking for—for my own sake but also so I could litter them all over Instagram, knowing there had to be other people looking for the same kind of mirror I had been seeking.

Since my initial online searches in 2017, the virtual chronic illness community has expanded and social media has become a place where people with disabilities can see and be seen and are unapologetically taking up space. The landscape is changing, and the new fashion industry has started to take notice.

I used to be happy to pass as “normal,” but with 22 per cent of Canadians identifying as disabled, disability is normal. It is just another way to be human, and how can we not find beauty in that? In the end, MS didn’t make me change my style. It made me insist on my style, and my “look at me” attitude has never felt more powerful.
This one-of-a-kind hand-cut Ethiopian chrysoprase amulet necklace in 14-karat gold is just one of many jewellery pieces created by Miami-based Joanne Stone. The designer has studied mystic teachings, Kundalini yoga, tea ceremonies and fine art with a specialty in sculpture, but it is Stone’s focus on the healing properties of crystals that sets her work apart—she will even tailor designs to an individual's energetic needs. In Taoist medicine, chrysoprase is intended to help with major life transitions and calm anxiety and fear. But since it’s the rarest member of the chalcedony family, let’s hope there’s enough out there to meet the demand.
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