



Photo by Melchizedek Maquiso

Tracey Julie Kennedy poses with one of her shamanic healing tools, a crystal, in her working studio at By The Moon. Before becoming a shaman, Kennedy taught for seven years at Loyalist College. She has been practicing shamanism for the past three years.

From teacher to healer

By Melchizedek Maquiso

Tracey Julie Kennedy never expected to be a healer.

For most of her career, Kennedy has been a teacher, including a seven-year stint at Loyalist College.

It has been almost a decade since leaving Loyalist and several other jobs later that Kennedy found her true calling three years ago – as a shaman.

“I taught at Loyalist for a total of seven years. They have hired me to do some work at the college and so I was teaching in the arts and science program and the continuing education program,” the 38-year-old Belleville resident said.

Encyclopedia Britannica defines a shaman as “a person believed to achieve various powers through trance or ecstatic religious experience. Although shamans’ repertoires vary from one culture to the next, they are typically thought to have the ability to heal the sick, to communicate with the otherworld, and often to escort the souls of the dead to that otherworld.”

Kennedy said her formal introduction to shamanism happened at a desperate time.

“I was first introduced to a shaman when I was really sick to the point that doctors couldn’t figure out what was wrong with

me and I had many treatment options. My body was going toxic and wouldn’t recover in any way. It was heavily, heavily medicated and I was at the end of my rope and I didn’t know what else to do,” she said.

A two-hour session with a shaman led to another meeting and eventually, a life-changing decision.

“I saw her one more time and I was hitting full recovery. And at that point, she had said to me that part of the reason that I had become so sick and that I was having difficulty and treatment wasn’t working for me was that I was spewing medicine everywhere – that I was very powerful in being able to assist others and if I didn’t step into my calling, perhaps there would be further complications. So she told me to go to the United States to train under Alberto Villoldo and I haven’t looked back since.”

Villoldo is the founder of The Four Winds Society, which according to its website, is “an international research and training organization which is preserving a thousand-year-old tradition of knowledge to achieve personal and planetary healing.”

Kennedy was a student in the institution for a total of two years. Shortly after, she set up shop in Belleville. She has been renting the loft at By The Moon Studio, a holistic health and fitness centre on Dun-

das street overlooking the Bay of Quinte, for a year now.

Stereotypically associated with the occult and shunned by mainstream religious devotees, Kennedy said that religious leaders come to her to seek help.

“You wouldn’t believe the people who come here,” she said. “I have people who are heavily practicing in the church, who are also deacons and ministers and who come for sessions.”

Kennedy said that her clients are diverse.

“I have people of all ages. I have people right from being in the womb still. My oldest client is probably 80-something years old. It totally ranges. I never know who’s going to come in. It’s been very well received. I haven’t had any difficulties at all in this community. In fact, if I had to tell you exactly what my clientele looked like, it would change every two weeks as to who comes in. I get quite the mix of people.”

She said her clients also have diverse health and mental issues ranging from trauma, post-traumatic stress disorder, conception issues, night terrors or even people who can’t move forward emotionally. She also said she has clients who feel they are cursed or damned.

Kennedy clarifies that what she does is not a replacement, but a complement to

her clients’ individual treatments.

“Some people come in because they receive diagnosis from doctors and the treatment that they are given is not helping them, it is making them more sick. So I help to support them in whatever it is that I can do, to help support the system to go back into balance. Everything I do is a complementary service.”

The system ranges from medical practices and alternative medicine.

“I tell clients who come here – continue with your medication. But if you’re starting to feel high, please go back to your doctor because maybe you need to adjust your levels,” she said, referring to clients who are prescribed medication by their doctors.”

A typical session with Kennedy starts with tracking, where she sits one-on-one with a person to determine and explore their issues in-depth. Kennedy said she looks for the bigger picture hoping to answer what the client’s soul is wanting. At some point in the session, she takes one of her stones that have been used in the ceremony. Clients will blow these, which in turn, will charge them up into the stone.

At the end of every session, Kennedy performs a decoupling, which turns off the flight response, which eventually allows clients to relax.

Footbridge may now get complete facelift

By Amielle Christopherson

A discussion about repairing the Catharine Street footbridge has now turned into a debate about replacing it completely.

In April of 2010, City of Belleville officials said the bridge required patch repairs to its deck top, the abutments and pier. Extensive repairs to the underside of the deck were required and the railing would need to be refurbished.

A total project budget of \$230,000 was approved by council during the capital budget process in 2010 and 2011.

However, in 2011, there was an inquiry about whether there should be lighting and aesthetic upgrades such as concrete moldings and decorative railings added to the bridge, even though there were no funds put aside for this additional cost.

On Monday Feb. 13, council met and estimates were given for both fixing and replacing the bridge. Replacing the deck could cost between \$870,000 and \$1 million. Replacing the whole structure could cost between \$1 million and \$1.2 million.

Councillor Tom Lafferty and Councillor Pat Culhane said that they are both in favour of having the additional lighting on the bridge. They both also noted the lighting on the Veteran’s Memorial Bridge and said they would like the lighting on the footbridge to reflect that.

“Lighting is expensive. The lighting on the Veteran’s Memorial Bridge was very expensive. However, it’s also functional, attractive and is going to last a long time,” said Culhane.

“The city has already put in over \$1 million into the downtown to try and fix it up and we’re going to put in a bunch more,” said Culhane.

“It’s small, but it can be attractive and we’re going to work on that.” Since the footbridge is a gateway between Catharine Street and downtown, Culhane said she would like to see it reflect all the time and money that they are putting into the area.

When refurbishing the bridge, the city might also look at making it wider as well.

“Biking on the bridge is a big deal,” said Culhane. “Having a biking lane would satisfy that.”

Lafferty agreed. “It can’t be used for other forms of transportation and it leads to the biking paths by the river.”

Widening the bridge would help continue the city’s plans for promoting alternative transportation and continue the long-term master transportation plan.

Whether the bridge is fixed or completely replaced, Lafferty said, “It needs to be done right away. Nothing’s been done to the bridge since the reports came out. We’re waiting for things to be approved.”

At the end of the discussion, the council agreed to defer the matter to operating budget talks, with the bridge being worked on during 2012.

Postpartum depression robs woman of life’s pleasures

One in five Canadians experience mental illness in their lifetime

By Linda Horn

Staci Foote is a 24-year-old stay at home mom from Trenton. She was first diagnosed with postpartum depression after her daughter was born and she has suffered from the illness since. Foote said her one of her biggest symptoms of depression is extreme tiredness and sadness, which prevents her from enjoying a normal life.

Foote said she feels people think she is making things up and that people don’t take her illness seriously.

“It makes me feel bad because I wish they would understand. I wish people would realize it is not easy. You don’t want to have it,” said Foote.

According to the Centre for Addiction and Mental Health, she is one of the one in five Canadians that will experience a mental illness in their lifetime.

Those who suffer mental illness find it hard to disclose that to people. The centre’s website states that: “Just 50 per cent of Canadians would tell friends or coworkers that they have a family member with a mental illness, compared to 72 who would discuss diagnoses of cancer or 68 per cent diabetes in the family.”

When people have a mental illness doing things like working or attending school can be difficult for them. The centre’s web-



Photo by Linda Horn

Staci Foote is a 24 year old stay-at-home mom. She was diagnosed with depression four years ago just after daughter was born. Foote tries to have a regular life despite the side effects of her illness. Foote said extreme tiredness and sadness prevents her from doing activities like attending school or work.

site states that “On any given week, at least 500,000 employed Canadians are unable to work due to mental illness, including ap-

proximately 355,000 disability cases due to mental and/or behavioral disorders plus approximately 175,000 full-time workers ab-

sent from work due to mental health issues.”

Natasha Sinclair, a 30-year-old culinary management graduate from Loyalist Col-

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Staci Foote

lege, said when she was first diagnosed with depression five years ago she had a good job that paid well.

Her illness progressed and when she was later diagnosed with borderline personality disorder, she found she was no longer able to work. She said the stress became too much to handle and she had to focus on her recovery.

She said her personal relationships also suffered.

“I believe people think mental illness is real but some have boundary lines, can help you for so long. Then they expect to you to be OK. They want a quick fix,” said Sinclair.

“Mental illness does not work like that,” said Sinclair. “You have to take the time to recover. You need to take your medications and get some type of therapy.”

“Stigma does come with mental illness but you need to stay strong and stay with your recovery. Stigma does not matter. All that matters is getting well,” said Sinclair.

Letters of Hope helps raise awareness of mental illness

Loyalist students asked to take part in anti-stigma campaign

By Linda Horn

The Family Support Network of Hastings and Prince Edward Counties is asking Loyalist students to take part in their Letter of Hope contest.

Lorraine Pyle, chairperson of the Family Support Network committee, met with first-year social worker students on Wednesday. She asked them to take part in the letter contest she has created.

The letter of hope is part of a mental ill-

ness anti-stigma campaign called Out of the Darkness.

Pyle asked the students to write a letter or public address. In the student’s own words the student should say what needs to be said, done, or changed to alter people’s perception of mental illness and to offer hope that the stigma can be lifted.

The contest was intended for first-year social worker students, but after a meeting with Sandie Sidsworth, executive director of the Canadian Mental Health Association of Hastings and Prince Edward Counties, Sidsworth suggested that she extend it to the child and youth worker and community and justice service worker programs.

“We have people from those backgrounds working here and the students in

the programs now would benefit from this contest as well,” said Sidsworth.

Sidsworth said the CMH would provide a \$200 prize for those two programs.

“I think this contest is a great way to get a dialogue going, a dialogue about mental illness and removing stigma. It’s about letting people know it is OK to ask for help and support,” said Sidsworth.

Lori LaMorre-Slatyer, field placement co-ordinator and professor of the social services worker program said,

“This is one of first experiences the students are getting to advocate and put a face on being a front-line social worker while helping to end the stigma associated with mental illness. This is a great opportunity for our students to practice their advocacy

skills,” said LaMorre-Slatyer.

Social service worker student Misty Haggerty said “I think it is very interesting. It is a great way to get people involved and talk about mental illness. I am not a strong writer, but this contest does attract me to try to write something and enter.”

The family support network is a volunteer-run committee that provides support and programs for family members of someone diagnosed with a mental illness.

As well as with working with the committee, Pyle is also a social worker but it is her own life experience that got her inspired to run the letter of hope contest and end the stigma of mental illness.

“I lived the experience of stigma and I

have a daughter who has a serious mental illness. Many individuals who have a serious illness will step away or pull back from the stigma that is associated with it. They are met with ridicule, absurd remarks. It is not behavioral, it is an illness. Changing that perception is done through education,” said Pyle.

Entries must be submitted by April 1 and will be judged by a panel from the Family Support Network. The winning letter from the social service worker program will receive \$300 while \$200 will go to the winners from the other two programs involved. Winners will also be asked to be a guest speaker during Belleville’s Mental Health Awareness Week celebrations being held from May 7 to May 11.