**WINTER 2025** WHERE WE'RE FROM created by those who are or have been incarcerated



**EDITOR** Anna Sigrithur VOLUNTEER EDITORS Ben Waldman Brook Fehr **COVER ARTWORK** Leonard Hourie GRAPHIC DESIGN Brendon Ehinger LAYOUT Samantha Klassen

#### CONTRIBUTORS

Leonard H.	Timmy S.	Megan
Zaccheus K.	Greg T.	TF
Robert S.	Lloyd	Harrison B.
Winston T.	Eddie C.	Michael C.
Alfred	Bojan K.	(MKC)
Jaye	Anthony	William E.

#### LAND ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

The John Howard Society of Manitoba operates on Treaty 1 Territory, the traditional lands of the Anishinaabe, Cree, Oji-Cree, Dakota, and Dene peoples, and on the homeland of the Métis Nation.

We acknowledge that the ongoing effects of colonization have resulted in the criminalization and overincarceration of the Indigenous community. As an organization, we recognize that understanding this connection is essential to our work as we move towards reconciliation.

PUBLISHED BY



583 Ellice Ave. T: 204-775-1514 Winnipeg, MB F: 204-775-1670

R3B 1Z7 E: office@johnhoward.mb.ca

## letter from editor

Dear reader.

The Inside Scoop has come a long way since it was launched back in 1993, a humble black and white bulletin printed at the John Howard offices. Over the last 30 years, hundreds of currently and formerly incarcerated writers and artists in Manitoba have used the Scoop to broadcast their voices. Now, we honour the Scoop's history as we relaunch it and amplify those voices into the future.

This relaunch issue's theme is "Where we're from." John, our literacy instructor, teaches a poem called "I am from" in his classes at the Winnipeg Remand Centre, Stony Mountain Institution, and in our community classroom. The poem asks writers to share memories of home through small details like cooking smells from grandma's kitchen, classic rock in the background, and the funny sayings of an uncle or sister. You'll enjoy several of these poems peppered throughout this issue.

Incarceration is an isolating experience, and it is important for people to get to talk about who they are, outside of their involvement in the justice system. The "I am From" poems help them do just that. For readers, especially those without such lived experience, the poems' details become windows into each poet's personal universe–their memories, families, and dreams for the future. Through this relaunch, we aim to better serve both kinds of readers by making the Scoop a similar such window for connection and understanding.

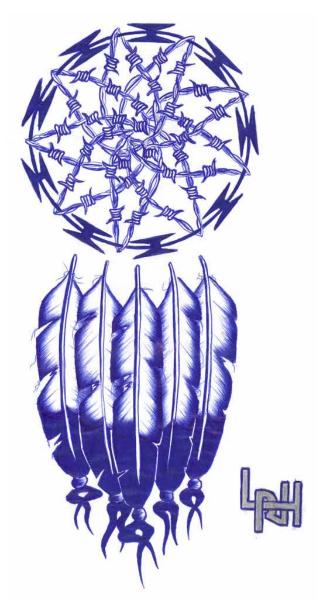
If you are a long-time *Scoop* reader, you'll notice a few new things in this issue: sections like book reviews, word of the day. and "Dream Canteen", where Scoop contributors write in to tell us the items they wish the canteen at their institution sold. You'll also find more long-form pieces from contributors who share reflections and stories. In this issue, they're related to the theme of places they come from and where they are going. And, as always, there is plenty of artwork by talented visual artists.

The Scoop eagerly awaits your contributions for our new sections. I am excited to see where we go together. Thank you for ioining us on this journey!

In literacy and in solidarity,

Anna Sigrithur

Editor, the Inside Scoop



COVER ARTWORK BY LEONARD H.

**Editor's note:** The vast majority of artwork in this and all *Scoop* issues has been created using the basic art supplies available inside of prisons: ballpoint pens, pencils, and looseleaf paper.

- **I AM FROM** Super Mario 64 and video games scattered all over the living room floor.
- I AM FROM smoked moose meat, and the fire that was also a source of our home's heat.
- I AM FROM "be nice to your sisters, you're the only brother," always said by a very loving mother.
- **I AM FROM** Tom Petty, 'Free Falling' was the song, played through the day and all night long.
- **I AM FROM** my beautiful sisters and parents, too. A house that smelled of perfume, through and through.
- I AM FROM strawberries which grew in the front yard, blueberries in the bushes afar.

BY ZACCHEUS K.

- I am from a bungalow, carpeted floor, huge picture window, heavy floor TV and wooden dresser record player-radio.
- (am from "I love you," and "watch out for the bear."
- ( am from my mother's home-cooking, my dad's guitar by his chair.
- I am From mixed tapes from Merv's in Swan River.
- I AM From the blowing wind in the fields and the sound of waves from the lake.

BY ROBERT S.



### The Babies and the Butterflies

long time ago, the Anishinaabe people lived in harmony with the land and animals. The animals helped the human beings live in peace with all living things by teaching them lessons. Their lessons became oral teachings that would be passed on from generation to generation. The oral teachings often told of a spirit named Nanabozho who worked with and through the animals. This story is about Nanabozho

and how he helped the people through the lessons of the animals.

At one time, the heartbeat of the village was strong: The people lived by the natural laws that had individuals serving the community. With each person doing their share, the Tribe was rich and viable in its functions.

Then, one day, a chord of alarm suddenly rippled through the people, bringing the entire village into one conscious state of worry. Everyone could feel that something was horribly wrong: the babies of the village had stopped laughing and were no longer joyous. The people became very worried and began to try everything they knew to restore the babies' happiness, but nothing worked.

But then, the people decided to summon the help

of Nanabozho. Nanabozho came and had a look at the babies. His heart sank with the realization of the people's crisis. When babies stop laughing, it is a very sad thing for the people. And so, Nanabozho sent for

the animals who gathered in the village to see what was wrong.

The animals decided to try and cheer up the babies by doing tricks and acting silly. The Fox chased his tail in circles in one direction, stopped, and chased his tail the other way—but the babies remained silent. The Bears rolled around, head over heels, crashing into one another—nothing.

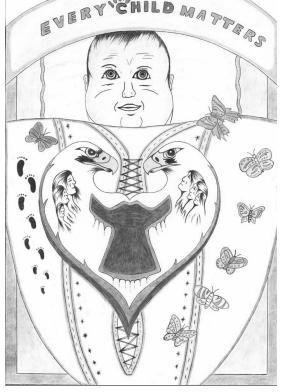
> The Wolves howled and sang with chipmunks sitting on their heads! But nothing changed. It seemed that all of the animals had done everything they could think of, but nothing made the babies so much as smile. The animals were very sad and were about to give up.

fluttered in. They arrived in a spectrum of beautiful colours, flapping and dancwonder. Eventually their and chase them.

The animals and the people rejoiced at the babies who were once again happy.

But just then, the Butterflies ing their aerial performance. The babies, whose heads had been downturned, suddenly looked up and watched the Butterflies with little arms stretched out in reach of the Butterflies, and they began to smile, laugh

Editor's note: In this piece, Winston writes a parable about the 60s Scoop, using the traditional Anishi= naabe trickster character, Nanabozho. In it, the babies symbolize the scooped children and the butterflies symbolize their transformation and healing as they grow into adulthood.



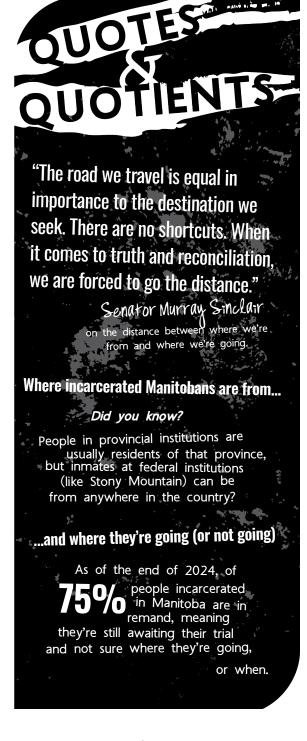
WORDS AND ARTWORK BY WINSTON T.



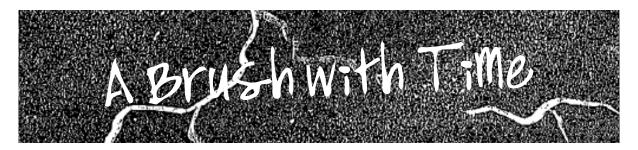
- I AM FROM rolling tubes, walls of VHS tapes, hockey and football league posters, NHL stat books.
- I AM FROM Caesar salad, pork chops, bacon, bacon, bacon.
- I AM FROM home by the time the street lights come on.
- I AM FROM each disc I could manage to maintain and not drop from the brick CD players.
- I AM FROM the three NHL cowboy hats my father would wear, yellow smoke-tinted moustache.
- I AM FROM woodlands and target practice with bullets and arrows.

BY ALFRED









How reading Gwendolyn Womack's *The Memory Painter* while incarcerated at the Winnipeg Remand Centre made me see time—and reading—in a new light.

BY GREG T.

I was sentenced, cuffed and led down the underground halls to the Winnipeg Remand Centre. After a strip search and a quick, cold shower, I was locked into my new home. The feeling is overwhelming as you step into an unknown and isolating world. Only hours earlier, I had my wife and children in my arms. Going from the warmth of family to the stark, cold reality of incarceration. Fear and loneliness crept in fast and the unknown started playing with my thoughts.

The unknown is often the hardest part to grapple with in such situations. What will your daily life be like? Will you be able to maintain any sense of identity or connection? How will your loved ones cope without you? These are all valid thoughts that can easily play on your mind during those first hours or days.

After not reading for 30 years, I realized how essential time is for the brain to expand beyond the daily grind, beyond the constant pressures that had once defined my existence. Life had always been a blur—rushed mornings, deadlines, responsibilities, the unyielding demand for attention. It wasn't until I was incarcerated, with nothing but time on my hands, that I understood how much I had been suffocating my mind.

In *The Memory Painter* (by Gwendolyn Womack), I found a world that transported me out of the cold walls of the Winnipeg Remand Centre. The novel, a blend

of mystery and science fiction, delved into themes of reincarnation, memory, and the way past lives could impact the present. It was as if the author had written a map of the human experience—one filled with love, loss, and the endless search for understanding.

As I read, I could feel my mind slowly expanding, as if it had been locked in a cage for years, and now, finally, it was free. The characters in the book experienced life not just as a single timeline but as a web of interconnected stories, each one building on the other. I couldn't help but reflect on my own life. Each chapter seemed to unlock something inside me, something I had long since buried under years of routine and distraction.

The longer I stayed in that cell, the more I realized that time—my time—was no longer something that could be measured by the ticking of a clock or the passing of hours. In prison, I had the luxury of absence: the absence of work, the absence of the constant demands of family and life. But it was also an absence of self—an absence I could finally confront.

The books gave me the space to explore that self, to dive into memories I had long ignored. I began to see how my past was a series of moments, not always connected, but constantly shaping who I was. I had time to think about all the decisions I'd made and how they led me here. The irony wasn't lost on me—locked in a cell with nothing but time, I found the freedom to think, to reflect, and to consider the future.

In the silence of the cell, I learned that time isn't just a measure of hours or years; it's the space in which the mind grows, unburdened by the rush of the world outside.

## LOST SOULS

BY LLOYD

I am burnt out from living life in the fast lane
Trying to run from the pain
All this thinking has me going insane
I can't even remember my spirit name
I don't even know my clan
Lost from my roots
I'm an Urban Indigenous man
Born-n-raised in Winnipeg
A real inner city G
Rest-n-peace to all my loved ones who were
murdered on the Winnipeg streets

I want you to know I'm sorry
For all that missing time while I was
sitting in Stony
All that time wasted unless
I can tell you my story
So, before you think you have to go do a drill
-Think twice- don't let something that could last
30 seconds
turn into life

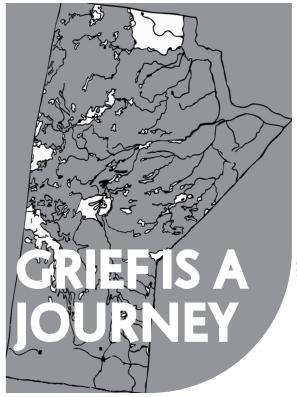
Because your beautiful soul won't make it to heaven
I wish I had that luxury
But I've been gang banging since I was 11
Plus I've been yelling 'Eff the World' since I was 7
So what does that tell?
that you want to judge me
And lock me in a cell?
And what you're telling me

Is when I die, I have to go to hell.



ARTWORK BY EDDIE C.

## &FEATURESCOOP:



WORDS BY TIMMY S. ART BY STAFF

#### **Home from Cold Lake**

I was getting off the fire line that summer after three weeks in the bush in Cold Lake. I'd been a wildlife type two firefighter for 16 years and always came home with a good amount of money. I usually spent it on my youngest siblings because we came from a poor family and I wanted them to experience a good time outside of our community. So, I would always take them out.

But that year, I came home to something I'll never forget. I immediately went to my brother's room to get him ready for a day we could enjoy together. But his door was locked. I knocked and banged on his

door with excitement because I was ready to spend my firefighting money with him.

My sister walked out of her room and said, "Is he up? He's been sleeping for three days."

His door was blocked by something, and I instantly remembered the last conversation we had together; he said, "Timmy, here is where I keep my fishing knives and my hunting guns, they will be under my bed at the corner. ok?"

I then thought about the issues he was having with his partner: the betrayal, the relationship broken, the continuous drinking he was doing. At that moment, I knew something bad was behind that door.

I was able to finally

get the door open just

enough and I squeezed in as fast as I could before my sister could

#### **South Indian Lake**

follow me

The loss of my little brother played a big role in how I saw life and how I treated people. At first, I was angry. I slowly destroyed everything good in my life.

Then one day, I stood up, I said to myself, "I'm six-foot-one but I'll stand even taller and stronger. I'll understand why this is happening and I will overcome all this pain."

I still had money saved up from my job; I had enough to travel out of my community. I first found

myself in South Indian Lake where I stayed for a couple of months over the winter.

There, I was able to attend church services on Sundays and I actively participated in reading, communication, and sharing my personal experiences. I made acquaintances who I tried my best to push towards a better relationship with God, and a more positive look at life's purpose. After a short time in that reserve, I travelled for two years to many more reserves where I shared the same message to the friends I would meet: Churchill, The Pas, Gillam, Leaf Rapids, Cross Lake and Grand Rapids.

#### **Thompson, Grand Rapids**

There is one thing I've always wanted. That is a baby girl that I can

call my own; family, flesh and blood, created by me

and a partner. I have faith in God that he will provide me with this gift. And so, I decided to leave my community again.

I traveled to Grand Rapids where I settled for a while when I met someone.

Her name was Tina, and the first couple weeks together, we had fun. When Treaty Days came around, Tina encouraged me to participate, so I did.

At the opening event, the chief shot an arrow into the field and whoever was to grab it first was awarded \$100. I wasn't a fast runner, but I said to Tina, "I'll try for you."

The arrow went flying into the sky. I see half the men running left, the other half running right. I go left and see the arrow hit the ground. There are four people in front of me but I don't stop running. They stumble, roll and collide, crashing into each other. Somebody's dog even crashed into the pile of people!

I'm laughing at the pile up, but then I see the arrow in plain sight. I slide toward the arrow like a baseball player and grip it in my hand. Another person reaches it at the same time but I tear it out of their hand.

Just then, the dog bites me in the butt! I yell and punch the dog in the nose and it lets go. With one arm, I raise the arrow in the air in triumph, and with the other hand, I'm holding my left butt cheek. I walk towards the Chief who asks me my name and where I'm from

"I'm Timmy, from Nisichawayasihk Cree Nation, Nelson House, where the three rivers meet"

> "Thank you, Timmy," says the Chief, "It's nice to have you here participating."

> > shared a good couple gether, but eventualcohol took effect made us resent

Tina and I shared a months to-ally drugs and on our lives. They each other and I felt I became her biggest problem. One Friday evening, I came home from the store to find her and her baby daddy together, and she looked at me with dead eyes and told me it's over.

continued on page 10

#### Winnipeg

My next stop is Winnipeg. The city lights, with it, a diversity of people, culture, history, and opportunity. I was ready to make a positive image of myself and try new things. But, after being in the city for almost a month, nothing was going well: I was almost completely broke and I was staying in a tent. I walked around all day, meeting people and realizing the city is a harsh place. I thought to myself, I don't want to end up like this. I will do my best to help who I can, when I can.

One day, on a bus ride, I met Brittany. In a low voice, I managed to stutter, "Hi." Our conversation lasted an hour and I forgot where I was going; we ended up at the other side of the city at her place. From that day on, we spent every day together.

Her youngest daughter is the light of my life, the source of my happiness. One day, out of nowhere, Brittany says to me, "Timmy, this is your baby girl forever." I couldn't believe it. Was this a sign? Is this where my path has been leading me all along, towards becoming a father to these kids, to this girl?

I spent ten amazing months with her. But I realized I have to make a choice, because I am in trouble with the police and I am avoiding jail. I can't keep lying to her. I need to turn myself in and do my time and get it over and done with. I don't want to lose her or my baby girl. I don't want them to feel abandoned. She understands. She tells me she will be at home waiting, but I'm too scared, so I avoid it a little longer.

During this time, I start drinking and doing drugs, and it's getting out of hand. All the substances, PTSD, depression, all of this together is killing me inside, and eventually I make a mistake that gets me thrown in jail.

Those first two weeks incarcerated, I had never felt so upset about my actions. But one day, I realized I am where I am supposed to be. I asked God for a baby girl, and he answered my prayer. But he wants me to do it right, so he threw me in jail for this time to rehabilitate and heal myself inside and out.

When I get out, I will come back into her life as a father who will fight for her on her journey.



#### **POET**RY

- I AM FROM hockey pics on my wall.
- I AM FROM mom's beef stew.
- I AM FROM Korn, falling away from me.
- I AM FROM mom smoking cigarettes in the house, she always smelt like them, it made me sick.
- I AM FROM Sesame Street, a big D shape, the lake on the Back Side.

BY TF

I AM From my mother's curly hair and my strong father.

I am From "never rat."

I AM From rock songs on records and cds.

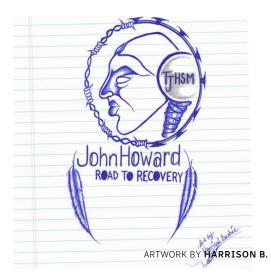
I AM From "don't know where I'll be tomorrow."

I AM From spaghetti and grilled cheese.

I AM From scary ghosts and non-human spirits.

I am From the haunted apartment near the tracks.

BY JAYE





Incarcerated people in Manitoba have access to a canteen where they can purchase food, toiletries and basic necessities. However, options are limited. We asked learners in the John Howard literacy class at the Winnipeg Remand Centre what they would get if they could get anything at the canteen. Here is what they said:

Popcorn
Beef jerky
Doritos (Sweet Chili)
Grape Drink
Kit Kats
Spandex 'gitch'
Nail clippers
Brayden S Eyelashes
Beading Supplies

Gavin A. S.

DREAMCATCHER BY CORY K.



## **WARMING** UP

the streets like

BY BOJAN K.

n a cold February Winnipeg night, with just a t-shirt on underneath two 1990s Adidas windbreakers, I was shivering at the corner of Talbot and Watt.

It must have been close to midnight and I saw an old friend walk by. I noticed a gang vest on him as he walked away. I've known him 15 or 20 years, he's always been a stand-up guy, and tough, like his old man. He changed when his dad died, became stern like him. His dad was sometimes unfair but mostly played by the rules like a ref.

A few minutes later some girl came up to me and said, "Come with me." She brought me into a building and said, "Warm up here in the stairwell by the heater, I gotta go check on my brother."

you're in an interrogation I woke up leaning into that heater with 7 or 8 fellas with bandanas surrounding me. It was 3:30am and they wanted to know room what I was doing in "their" stairwell. "How'd you get in? Did someone let you in?" I told them I walked up and the door was open and I'm just warming up. One asks me my name and I tell him. A big guy in the back says, "I heard of him, he's not a cop." No phone, no proper clothes, no money, yeah I'm a cop, give me a break, I think.

A guy in the middle of the group pulls out a great, long, sharp-looking army knife and starts playing with it. As he does so, a few others show me they're also packing. I say, "Let's not get off on the wrong foot here, fellas. I ain't harming nobody and I ain't trying to do so neither, I just legit was warming up." I open my jacket to show them I'm unarmed and not to feel threatened, but playing it as if I'm just showing my lack of clothes. I'm freaking out inside about the situation I'm in.

All I'm thinking about is leaving this stairwell

One guy says, "Why shouldn't we fuck you up?" I reply, "For what? Warming up in a stairwell? If that's your rationale then go ahead and do your best." The guy with the big knife says, "this guy's crazy—you're crazy man. You see how many of us there are here?" I say, "Me, crazy, huh? I'm the crazy one? Trying to stay alive while warming up in a stairwell?"

The big guy in the back who seemed to be the voice of reason says, "Buddy, you got a lot of balls saying that. Warm up, but I don't want to see you The cold winter around here again." sun ... illuminates

When they left, I was shaken up, elated, sad, happy, and angry, but all in all I felt good about this rude awakening. It was a good reminder about the world we live in, and how mindless and simple things can go so unexpectedly right or wrong in the dash of a second.

My life had been on a serious decline the two weeks prior to this. I had just gotten out of jail, and walked away from my family, and put up a serious boundary between us, and was homeless. So here I was with a new outlook on things, ambition and nothing to lose.

The next day, my life started getting brighter. I ran into someone from my past, found a warm place to stay, clean warm clothes, and even had some scratch in my pocket. Things were looking up.

About a week later, I am driving my friend's car down Talbot. To my right, I see this big guy and some lady standing at the bus stop. When I get

closer, I realize it's the voice of reason from the stairwell. I immediately pull over and walk up to him. He is on edge; he thinks I'm there for revenge, but I say, "Hey man, I just want to say 'what's up'." He explains how his aunt is trying to get to the hospital and he's taking her there. I said, "Say no more, hop in, I'll drive youse." The drive is fairly quiet: small talk about sports, weather and whatnot, him checking on his aunt a few times. I drop them off and we go our separate ways.

I'm fueling up the Mazda at 7-Eleven on Talbot and Watt. It's been almost 3 weeks since I had that run in and could have died not even a block away from where I stand. My mind is wandering around with all kinds of thoughts of, what if, well, so what, what if. Over my left shoulder, running my way, is this big fella screaming out, "Bozz, hey Bozz!" As he gets closer, I see the same big guy I drove to the hospital, but this time I see the biggest smile on his face.

The cold winter sun in Winnipeg that is blinding to drive in and illuminates the streets like you're in an interrogation room was shining hard that day. The big guy gives me the biggest bear hug ever, and explains that had his aunt not made it to the hospital when she did, she would not be with us today.

This is giving me goosebumps right now writing this, my friends. Think about it, had we not met, if I had died, had anything else happened between those two interactions, one or two lives would be gone. The contrast between pride, humility, generosity, reason and understanding is there in one picture.

Those few weeks of my jail release were real tests of fear, character and pride. They were absolutely life-altering weeks. In closing, I encourage all of you reading this to be kind to one another. Do not be quick to judge. Have more patience with one another and try to show love in everything you do.

I am from Sega Genesis, Nintendo and the Gameboy era.

I am from Golden Grahams, pop tarts, pizza pops and Chef Boyardee ravioli.

I am from "we'll see," "do your homework," and "time for bed."

I am from Dance Mix 93, 94, 95, and cassette tapes.

I am from Bugle Boy Jeans.

I am from high rocks near the river where we all swam.

BY ANTHONY

I am from greenhouse, woodstove, happy bunny posters and lord of the rings.

I AM From fluffy bannock, rice and eggs, and cream of wheat.

 $\mbox{\fontfamily am from "come inside now, come eat, I love}$ you."

( am From Loretta Lynn, Michael Jackson, Cyndi Lauper and the Scorpions.

I am from speed stick, pine-sol and fresh baking.

I AM From a big yard, fresh air, dogs barking, trees blowing in the wind.

BY MEGAN

# Simple Man

**Father God** I am but a simple man who forgets your lessons fast I am no one special but still I see just how my form you cast And when I stop to smell the roses and take a look around me Behold my eye sees everything that's made, was made by Thee.

At times like these I feel you near, brings goosebumps to my skin An awe, a peace flows over me, my soul, my heart abrim Please my father, ne'er forget that I am no one special I am but a simple man whose joy grows exponential.

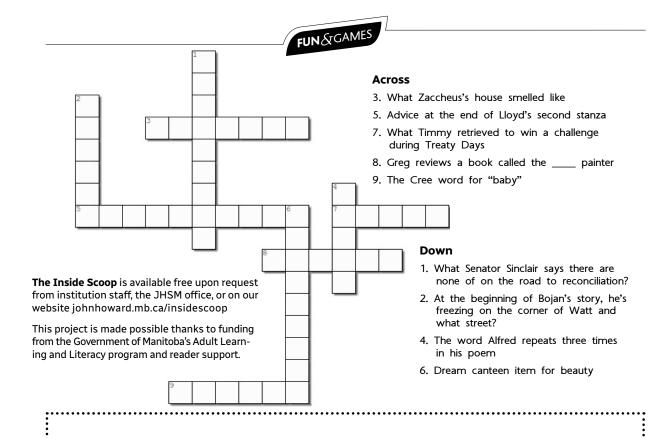
I am no one special, a simple man, please God remember me Just a speck, a fleeting jolt upon your tapestry Here today and gone tomorrow makes no sense to me For in my eyes, I feel your love last long like centuries.

And every minute You keep me here amongst your savage garden My love, my life, my gratitude, it bonds, it holds, it hardens Your grace bestowed upon my head, your attention I adore Your eyes upon this simple man, what else could equal more?





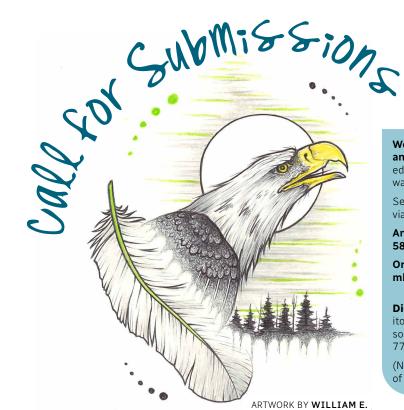
ARTWORK BY LEONARD H.



This issue is about where you're from. In this space, draw where you are going!



submissions to the Inside Scoop and we might publish it in the next issue





We welcome your submissions of writing and artwork! If you want to work with an editor on your piece, please indicate that in the waiver. We look forward to working with you.

Send submissions and a signed waiver (below) via Canada Post to:

Anna Sigrithur, John Howard Society of MB, 583 Ellice Ave, Winnipeg, MB, R3B 1Z7

Or, email them to asigrithur@johnhoward. mb.ca

**Did you know?** If you are incarcerated in Manitoba, calling John Howard is a free phone call, so give us a shout if you have questions! (204) 775-514 ext. 112 (Anna) or ext. 113 (John).

(Not incarcerated? You're still welcome to call, of course!)

#### The Inside Scoop Waiver

Please attach this to any artwork or writing you submit to The Inside Scoop.

Mail to: Anna Sigrithur, John Howard Society of MB, 583 Ellice Ave. Winnipeg, MB, R3B 1Z7

Name:			
Title of piece:			
I am open to discussing edits to my work (circle one):		Yes	No
I give permission for my work to be printed in <i>The Inside Sco</i> understand that my work may also be used in other John Ho a handout in group classes, or for future promotional or fund	ward Society publications such as	workbooks and fac	cilitation materials, as
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Mailing address:  Where would you like edits and/or copies of The Inside Scoop mailed to?	Note: We reserve the righ you about edits to your v ing sexism, racism, home that glorifies violence, dr	vork. We will not pri ophobia or transph	int anything contain- obia, gang symbols, or