**Being an Immigrant - similar cover but different story**

Growing up in a big happy family of 10 in a small city in India to moving across the world all alone as a 20-year-old has been quite rewarding. Was I scared? Yes. Was it overwhelming not knowing anyone around you? Yes. Will I do it again? Absolutely! I have received love, respect and made wonderful friendships. Sadly, I couldn’t stay shielded from hate for long. Outright racism for wearing a toque right here in YEG. How did it change the spirit of my journey? Does love trump hate? Come and find out when I share my story.

**Broken Candy: One woman’s story of disability**

Growing up with a disability in rural Alberta has made me aware of the extreme privileges of living in Canada. Had I been born almost anywhere else in the world, I might not be alive today. I am very grateful for my childhood and every opportunity that was made available to me. One of those opportunities was to represent Canada in the 1988 Paralympics in Seoul, Korea. By the age of 25 I was worn out, demoralized and angry. From my perspective, a lot of very able people were telling me that my needs did not matter. I did not find accessible housing until the age of 35; two years after I accepted a medical retirement from my employer. I have spent the last 15 years advocating for change with extremely varied results, both positive and negative. I’m excited to share any and all parts of my story from Rural Alberta to the Paralympics, advocate to activist.

**Echoes of Poverty: Understanding poverty through narrative retelling**

Poverty is normally defined in terms of money. Lives become reduced to single stories that support the myths of the classless society and the North American Dream. It results in poverty being seen as an individual failing without considering structural reasons for systemic poverty. Join me as I share my story of abject poverty and exploring the experiences of poverty in the context of post-secondary education to create more empathetic and subjective understandings.
Reflections on trans exclusions from an ex-substitute teacher

What happens when a person is trans? In the context of Alberta public education, teachers should not expect discrimination on the basis of gender identity. However, the exclusion of people whose gender identity is different than the sex they were assigned at birth is a reality and it affects any and all connected to the school environment including legislators, administrators, and students. Engage in conversation with me to explore some of my unexpected moments of trans exclusion that I describe as the "Meantime."

Caught in a Bind

I've always felt like my life was a bit of a balancing act; between dealing with anxiety, an autistic sibling, gender identity, the loss of a parent, and conservative relatives, getting by day-to-day was a bit of a tight squeeze. I will be sharing stories about my eighteen year journey that brought me to identifying as a non-binary transgender male.

How can you be gay and Muslim?

People like to assume that my fraught relationship with my faith is because my sexuality. The fact that I'm gay definitely had an impact on my relationship with Islam but, in reality, reconciling these two aspects of my identity was actually pretty easy once I realized I had the power to define them on my own terms. To tell the truth, being gay has never been a barrier to my sense of spiritual fulfillment. It’s true that existing between the margins of what people think is possible can be difficult, but I’ve grown quite good at holding all the different parts of me together, no matter how disparate they may seem.
A Spiritual Journey

It is a difficult road to feel proud of who you are when the outside world draws a dark picture of you. The road to who I am begins by understanding who I am as an Aboriginal person. The road improves as I discover the gifts of being Two Spirit. And the road continues as I brave the path of healing away alcohol.

Derek Thunder

Friday and Saturday

Transitioning Triggers: Surviving When You are Soft-Hearted, Sharp-Tongued and Trans

As a non-binary trans survivor of childhood trauma, I have come to understand that my gender and my trauma are not separate experiences. How these two things are connected is the root of my healing process. My story centres on finding self-love by learning to accept all the parts of myself, positive and negative, and the ways they are connected. Possible chapters may include: my hair, pronouns, dogs, hyper-vigilance, being an empath, the relationship between my ptsd and body dysphoria, dogs, mini-trans victories, learning to trust myself, internalized misogyny, trans “inclusion”, conversations with my dad, and dogs.

Daley Laing

Friday and Saturday

Finding Peace: Three wars, three countries and Beekeeping!

My family and I first left my city Fao, where I was born, in 1980 during the Iraq-Iran war. We fled to another city where we thought we would be safer and did not take anything with us. We started a new life. Then the Gulf War began and resulted in the sectarian problems between the Sunnis and Shias in Iraq. I then made the decision to get away to protect my family so we moved to another province. Life was very difficult and dangerous with many great risks. I then took my family from Iraq to Syria, and my life began again. Finally, after eight years in Syria, my family and I came to Canada to start a new life again in 2015. Please come to hear my story about how I rebuilt my life again and again. And about how I am now beginning my new life as a beekeeper!

Najm Altameemi

Thursday, Friday and Saturday
Adventures in the Forest: A Story of a War Child

My journey began in a Bor Dinka village and traditional farming community in South Sudan. When I was a young boy, I was caught in the middle of the Sudanese war and, at 15, I was recruited as a child soldier, becoming the first generation of the "Lost Boys of Sudan." During my periodic participation in the South Sudanese frontlines, I was shot, seriously injured and captured as a prisoner of war. Prior to my arrival in Edmonton, I lived in Ethiopian refugee camps, a madrassa in Khartoum, and in Cairo, where I assisted the diplomatic crew of the Sudan People’s Liberation Movement Chapter for the Middle East and North Africa Egypt-Cairo. I would like to share my story and offer my insights into South Sudanese culture, politics, and history.

Kuai Biar

Depression greets me like an old friend

Living with depression is not fun. Living with "treatment resistant" depression? Downright dreadful. But that doesn't necessarily mean I'm wallowing in sorrow and misery all the time. I like to consider my life as a strange journey accompanied by my "companion", depression, and would like to share the ups and downs I have been through with it: of hopelessness, suicide attempts, and finding support. Finally, I want to share the fact that living with mental illnesses is, at times, okay.

Jiwon You

Happily Homeless

Life is never what we expect. Yet would you ever expect happiness being discovered through homelessness? Well I never would have thought so either. Until I experienced it for myself. Naturally there are times one would find themselves experiencing extreme hardship and loneliness that comes with homelessness as well. But one also finds freedom. Sometimes, many of us only discover what truly matters in this world after the societal shackles are removed. And if we're lucky, we find ourselves apart of a community. A community not so wrapped up in material status, but simply with living. Living with nature, with each other... and our friends.