

BEST FEATURE STORY

There were so many entries in this category that showed wonderful promise, but were let down in the execution with everything from punctuation errors to jolty and abrupt writing or flat-out not being a feature, just a long(ish) news story. The winner in this category told a great tale from start to finish, holding the reader's attention throughout.

TYLER DAWSON

The Low Down to Hull & Back News

This was a story you don't often hear about - recovery from a car crash. This piece captured the reader's attention from the very beginning and kept it going all the way through. Well written.

JOEL BARDE

the Nation

This story really captured the feeling of the festival. The smells, the tastes, the sounds and the human elements were all there. It could have done with another edit - watch your tense when writing, some repetition - but the overall read outweighed the small issues.

2



Summer on Fort George The Nation spends several days getting back to basics at Mamoweedow

Story by Joel Barde Photos by Umbreen Butt

It is early morning on Fort George Island, and 87-year-old Jane Matthew is building a teepee with her husband. Grabbing two long birch poles tied together at one end with bright red ropes, they place the bottoms in the soil, forming an inverted V. Jane moves deliberately, methodically placing the rest of the poles until the structure is formed. Two of her sisters - also both in their 80s - sit under a pine tree, watching.

The couple then hoist a canvas tarp around the bottom two-thirds of the teepee. Tying ropes to another tarp, they manoeuvre it into place, covering most of the top third but leaving a three-foot hole for the smoke.

"Everything tastes better when cooked over a fire," she tells me, taking

10 the Nation August 7, 2015 www.nationnews.ca

BEN BULMER

The Low Down to Hull & Back News

This was well written, but it really felt like it needed another voice to make it a full-blown feature. Some stories are fine with one voice, but this felt somehow lacking.

1

Five years on the road to recovery

By Tyler Dawson

She lay in her car following a head-on collision, unable to move her legs. It was the flash of the car radio that made Cindy Meade-O'Hara believe she was still alive.

"I'm like 'I don't think they have radios up in heaven,'" she said with a little laugh from her apartment in Hull.

She had flopped over toward the passenger seat, and felt something digging into her side. She assumed it was the stick shift in her Dodge Neon.

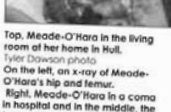
It wasn't.

It was her femur.



Five years after the crash, Meade-O'Hara, 39, contacted the Low Down looking for the original story about her accident. At the time, police said the injuries sustained in the crash were minor. They weren't.

Meade-O'Hara has just completed a long and arduous rehabilitation, a road to recovery that forced her to move from her home in Masham to Hull. She has learned to walk again on legs held together with titanium plates, survived a coma, and recovered from a deadly bone infection that saw four metal rods drilled into one of her legs.



Top: Meade-O'Hara in the living room of her home in Hull. Tyler Dawson photo.

On the left, an x-ray of Meade-O'Hara's hip and femur.

Right: Meade-O'Hara in a coma in hospital and in the middle, the transmission of her car on the passenger seat. Photos courtesy Cindy Meade-O'Hara

lost control of her car on an icy hump in the road, plowing into another vehicle coming in the opposite direction. The impact was so hard that the seatbelt in her car broke, and the transmission came flying through the firewall, landing on the passenger seat. What she remembers is the silence. "The most eerie feeling ever, like totally silent, dark, like alone, you don't hear nothing."

And then the noise: the radiator hissing, people talking, and the voice of an off-duty police officer who was holding her head and telling her she couldn't go to sleep. Meade-O'Hara kept repeating that all she wanted was to sleep. In the photos of her car, expended syringes used by medics can be seen littering the floor. She was extracted and taken to the hospital in Hull, where she was rushed into surgery.

Nine days later, she woke up from a coma. Doctors had planned on inducing a coma because of the pain. But when she was on the operating table, she threw up, filling her lungs, and had to be put on an artificial respirator. What followed was an 11-month stint in hospital, after which she moved to a live-in rehabilitation centre. She returned to the hospital to have the bone infection treated. She was on so many antibiotics and painkillers that her veins were damaged, and her skin badly bruised.

"You'd think I was a junkie," Meade-O'Hara recalled. Eventually she had a pic line installed - a tube that snakes through the body to deliver drugs directly.

While she was in hospital, Benoit moved from their rented home in Masham to a new place in Hull, near the physiotherapy centre. They had been in Masham for only a year, having moved there after a stint in Fort McMurray, Alta. "He was always there," said Meade-O'Hara, crediting Benoit with showing her the necessary support throughout the rehabilitation process.

For the next few years, Meade-O'Hara visited the centre for rehabilitation. It was hell - a punishing routine of therapy, and doctors who pushed her to the point of inducing anxiety attacks. But it worked: months later, she took a step after a week of trying. "All of a sudden I did one step, and I'm tellin' you, I bawled my eyes out," Meade-O'Hara recalled. "Everybody's crying, I'm crying, I'm walking like a baby, and I'm crying."

Though Meade-O'Hara now talks of the accident fairly comfortably - even approaching it with a bit of grim humour - for

Stress plagues soon to be evicted tenant

By Ben Bulmer

The lines on George Acheson's forehead tell tales of a life well lived. They also show stress, and reveal that this is a man with a lot on his mind. As he stares out over the Wakefield bay from his first floor apartment, his worry is very evident - not even the beautiful view can mask the harsh reality of his situation.

"It's number one on the stress list, having your home taken away," said Acheson. "I've been so stressed out ever since I got the news."

Acheson's landlord, who'd told him two weeks previously he'd been served papers and the house was to be expropriated, delivered the news of his impending eviction. Such terms might be loaded with angles for legal minds, but to Acheson they translate simply as "homelessness."

"Wherever I move, rent is going to be twice what I have now," he said. "This is how people end up homeless."

Early in the spring, Acheson had realized something was awry when he was informed of a visit by the authorities.

"These guys came in with ties and clipboards. I don't think anyone's ever been in here with a tie," he said with a chuckle. "They were like real bullies, like they had an agenda, like I was just a mosquito in their way."

The men were conducting a municipal evaluation in order to decide how much the property owner should receive when they legally confiscated his property. They didn't have a mandate to ensure that the people living in the building were rehoused.

Acheson is adamant he doesn't want to come off sounding like a victim, but admits he's horrified when it comes



George Acheson sits in his Wakefield apartment, which is set to be demolished. This will leave the 65-year-old tenant effectively homeless. David Irvine photo.

"Wherever I move, rent is going to be twice what I have now... This is how people end up homeless."

-George Acheson

the first flood Acheson remembers happened in 2008.

"I don't know about flood planes... but it seems there's a problem with this village," said Acheson. "When the basement flooded, you would think the municipality would have done something to fix it right away... this is something which needs to be fixed immediately."

But it wasn't fixed immediately and several floods later, Acheson is losing his home and wondering whom to blame.

"Isn't it the mayor's fault? If I was the mayor and something happened in my village I'd make sure I got down there and fixed it."

Walking around the back of Acheson's property there's a small stream, flowing quietly and innocently. Its slow pace doesn't look threatening as it meanders by, passing through a rusted old pipe under the road.

Anyone cutting across the yard would probably jump over it in one stride without giving it a second look. Acheson will probably never look at it in the same way again.

As the drizzle pours onto the deck of his small waterfront apartment, Acheson lights a cigarette and stares out of the window. It's obvious to see, even on a rainy summer's day, why he doesn't want to leave this place.

Flooding on the property has been happening for years, and the expropriation is deemed by the municipality as "urgent". But Acheson is perplexed why it's taken so long to resolve, and why the solution is so drastic.

Acheson became her primary caregiver, and what had once been seen as a temporary move became permanent. When

As his mother grew frail,

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Judge: Emma Graney, Politics Reporter, Regina Leader-Post, Regina, SK • Number of entries in the Best Feature Story category: 26