



The Learning Network  
Issue 23 | December 2017

# **Voices of Our Sisters**

Poems on experiences of  
violence and homelessness



The Learning Network team is honoured to share these insightful and moving poems with you.

We are grateful to Bonnie Doxtator, Maggie Traynor, B.J. Bilyea, and Christine Bolton for sharing their experiences through poetry for this special Newsletter.

In Solidarity...

The background is a vibrant watercolor illustration. On the right side, a dark brown tree trunk rises, with thin, black, swirling branches extending upwards and outwards. The branches are adorned with various leaves in shades of yellow, orange, and red, some with black outlines. The watercolor washes are primarily in warm tones of yellow, orange, and red, with some cooler tones of blue and green at the top and bottom. The overall effect is soft and artistic.

# **Being a woman comes with a price**

Being a woman comes with a price  
Always on guard  
Waiting and listening  
For that intrusion at any moment  
To steal her away

She is like Jesus  
Ready to forgive in a moment  
Even though the pain she endured  
Left her bloodied and broken  
Never to be the same again

Reality for her  
Is to hide it within  
To make sure no one knows  
The depth of her despair  
At the same time  
Trying to keep it all together.

Being a woman comes with a price  
You can see it in her eyes  
It's held so deep within  
If it touches her soul  
She sometimes can never make it back again  
Being a woman comes with a price.

**- Bonnie Doxtator**



# About the Family

About the family  
With hearts made of stone  
Whose fault is it anyway  
Maybe our own

About the family  
Crying all the time  
Grieving for one another  
To come together again

About the family  
The young kids suffer  
With rage and anger  
And loss of control

About the family  
With no one to guide them  
They turn away from each other  
To look for love

About the family  
Being so afraid  
Of what is right  
Knowing only what is wrong

About the family  
Hoping someday  
We will be one again  
To save what is left  
Of the heartaches and tears

- **Bonnie Doxtator**



# Looking Through Native Eyes

I look at you  
You look at me  
I can tell  
You don't like what you see

Oh! By the way  
I have something to say  
Your looks and gestures  
Will have to pay  
Someday

Think as you may  
Talk as you wish  
I am not like you  
Actually I'm quite a dish

So put me down  
Jealous as you are  
I am loved and cherished  
More than you by far

Maybe the next time we meet  
The judgement will be  
Gone like the wind  
As our ancestors say

I look at you  
You look at me  
Next time we meet  
We might like what we see.

- *Bonnie Doxtator*



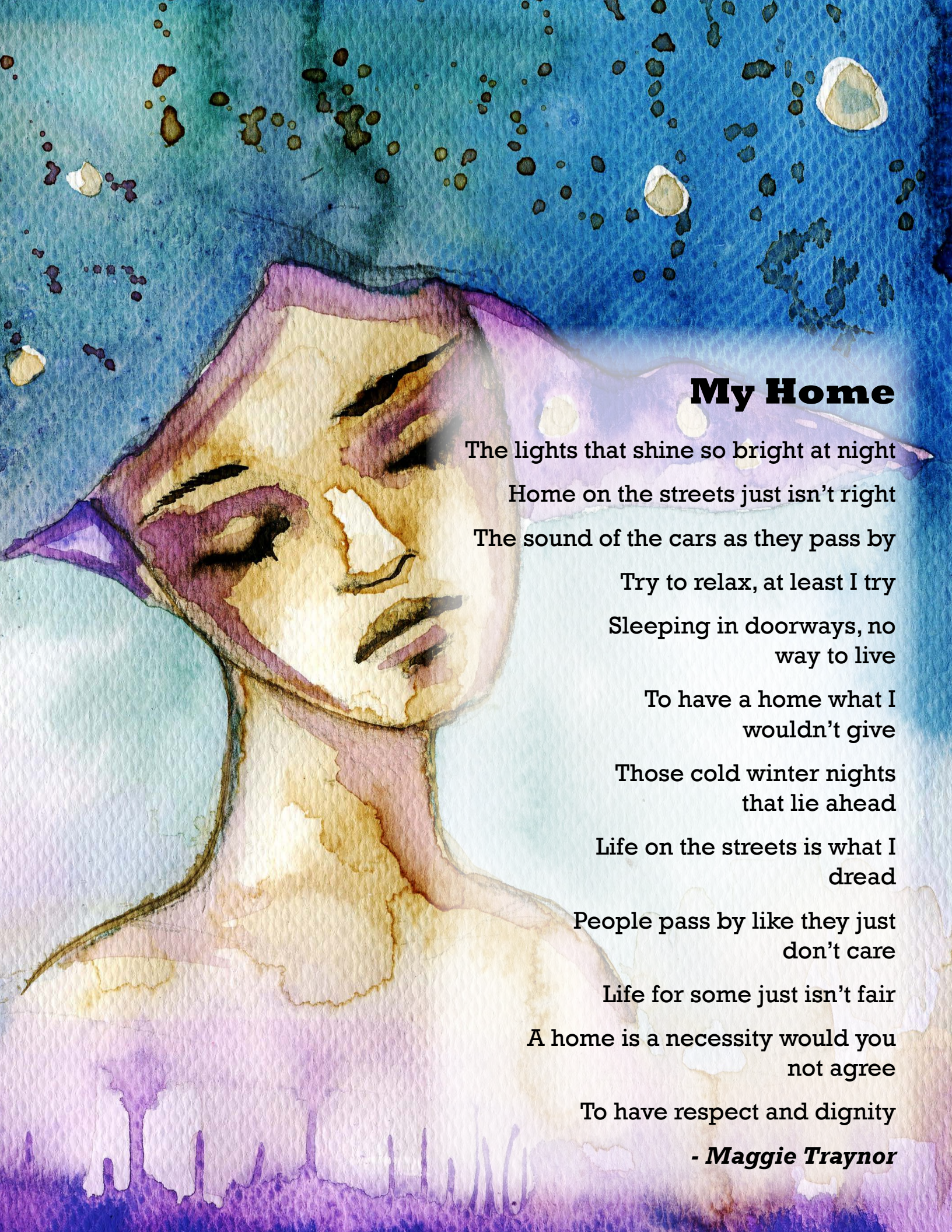


## **The Bridge**

Sleeping under a starlit sky  
The sounds of the cars as they pass by  
Cement for a pillow, I guess that's ok  
Under the bridge is where I'll stay  
The nights are still warm I'm happy to say  
But the cold days of winter are on their way  
Try to survive on a cold winter's night  
How the body aches, it just isn't right  
All alone, no one by my side  
This is where I think I'll hide  
Out of mind, out of sight  
This is where I'll spend the night

*- Maggie Traynor*





## **My Home**

The lights that shine so bright at night

Home on the streets just isn't right

The sound of the cars as they pass by

Try to relax, at least I try

Sleeping in doorways, no  
way to live

To have a home what I  
wouldn't give

Those cold winter nights  
that lie ahead

Life on the streets is what I  
dread

People pass by like they just  
don't care

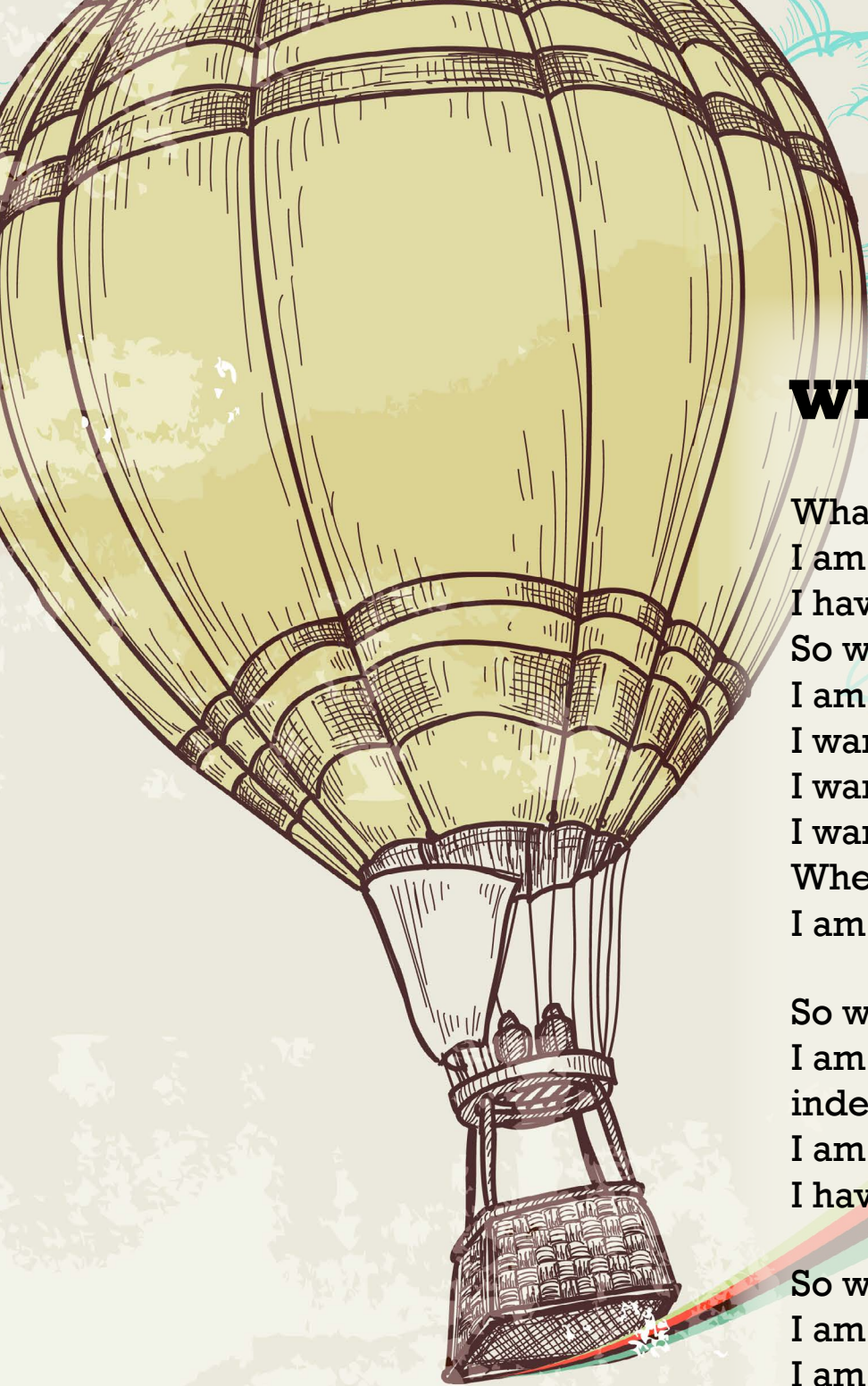
Life for some just isn't fair

A home is a necessity would you  
not agree

To have respect and dignity

*- Maggie Traynor*





## **What Am I**

What am I  
I am a survivor  
I have survived  
So what am I  
I am a wanna be  
I want to be an artist  
I want to be an actor  
I want I want I want  
When will I see  
I am just a want-a-be

So what am I now  
I am a person filled with  
indecision  
I am a person who has vision  
I have envisioned

So what am I  
I am a person before my time  
I am a person with absolutely no  
rhyme

So what am I  
I am person who flows like  
poetry  
I am a person and I guess I'm  
just me

**- B. J. Bilyea**



# Sister

She was our shelter from the storm  
In her presence  
We were all safe and warm.

She was the one  
who took the blame.  
We were all cowards  
Cringing in the dark  
Escaping with our shame.

She was the one  
She wore our pain.  
We had caused the storm to appear  
Now in the dark  
We all hid our fears.

For we all knew.  
She would shelter us from the storm  
She would keep us safe and warm.

In our guilt  
In our fear  
We should not shed a single tear.

For we all knew  
She was near  
Facing the storm alone.

She had no fear  
She was our sister.

- **B. J. Bilyea**



# Fairytale

Dressed up in a flower – We all have the power

To make a secret wish – For us, for that and this!

Inside of you is a magic – It's always happy, never tragic!

Because the story continues on – Everything is right and rarely wrong!

Our voices sound like a gentle chime – When we sing it's melodic, like a nursery rhyme!

When you sleep, we all hover around – As we patiently await your slumbers' sound!

For in your dreams we are forever near – Painting pictures of glory, year after year!

So always remember there is a Fairyland – All giggles and purity, hand in hand!

If ever you're lonely or faced by fear – Put a smile on your face and your Fairy will appear!

Though sometimes Fairies are hard to see – You can feel their presence if you truly believe!

- *Christine Bolton*

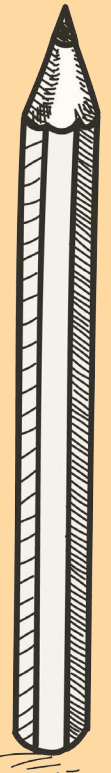
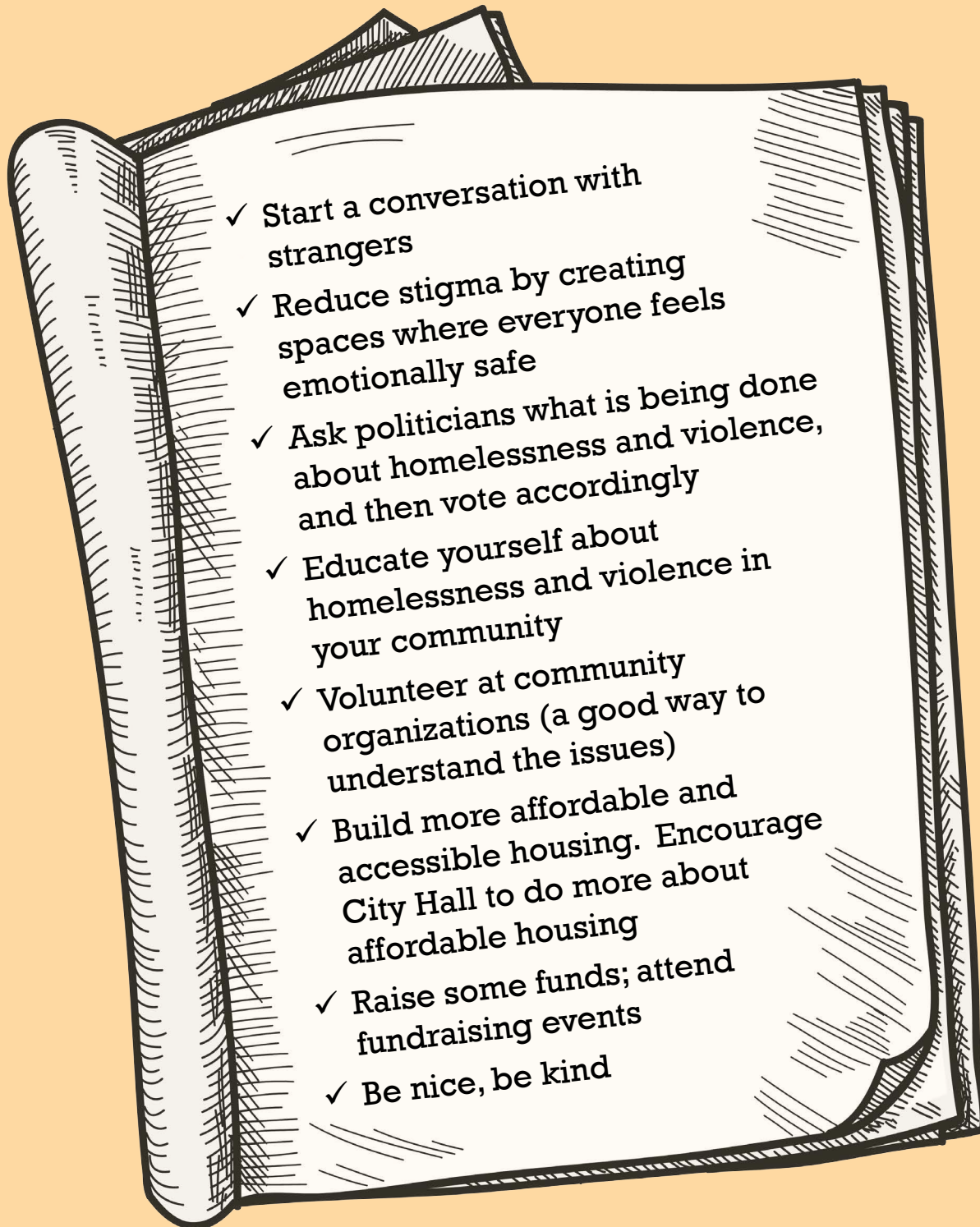




# What you can do to help

The poets contributing to the newsletter suggested eight actions that any one of us could take to support women experiencing homelessness and violence.

Start today!





# WOMEN, VIOLENCE, AND HOMELESSNESS NEWSLETTER SERIES

NOW AVAILABLE

[Women, Intimate Partner Violence,  
& Homelessness](#)

[Voices of Our Sisters: Poems on experiences of  
violence and homelessness](#)

COMING SOON

***LGBTIQ2S Youth, Homelessness, and Violence***

In partnership with Dr. Alex Abramovich (Centre for  
Addiction and Mental Health)

***Indigenous Women, Homelessness, and Violence***

In partnership with Ontario Native Women's  
Association

***Immigrant and Refugee Women, Homelessness,  
and Violence***

In partnership with Ontario Council Of Agencies  
Serving Immigrants

***Women Living with Disabilities and Deaf Women,  
Homelessness, and Violence***

In partnership with DisAbled Women's Network of  
Canada

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Thank you, Cary Myer.

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have been realized.

## CONTACT US!

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Contact [vawln@uwo.ca](mailto:vawln@uwo.ca) to join our email list!



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