



# WOMEN WHO DO

*In this special section, we celebrate 19 Canadian women who shine as leaders in their careers, from artists to doctors to entrepreneurs. What do they all have in common? They're at the top of their game—and they're incredibly inspiring*

PHOTOGRAPHY: LILY & LILAC



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**KARLYN PERCIL, CONSULTANT AND ENTREPRENEUR, TORONTO**  
**IN HER OWN WORDS:**  
**ON THE POWER OF COURAGE**

"I moved to Canada from St. Lucia when I was 25. I was working for a bank there and I continued working for the company in Toronto, which thrust me onto Bay Street. On Bay Street, everybody looks like their lives are perfect. I felt so insecure saying, 'Am I the only person who can't find my place?' I called the employee helpline a couple of times but I was so ashamed to tell anybody. I was struggling to fit in and I couldn't.

There was this girl at work who teased me about my accent. That experience almost took my voice away from me: I started to be afraid to speak up in meetings. I thought, 'If I don't say it properly, then I shouldn't say it at all.' You know how as women we try to not take up space, we don't want to be a bother? I shrank and I kept shrinking.

Then I got to a point where I was tired of being tired. I reached out to a few girlfriends and I asked, 'How do you deal when you try to raise your hand, but a gremlin appears and says, "Who do you think you are?"' People started opening up right away. I thought, 'Wait—you're struggling too? And nobody is saying anything?' That was the beginning of my release. I could finally breathe.

Fast-forward to last year. I was 39 and I asked myself, 'Do you still want to be here when you turn 40? What do you want your job to be? What do you want your *life* to be?' So I quit. I walked away from a 23-year career at the bank. Everybody thought I was crazy. But there was a voice in my soul that I had to listen to. My entire life, I had dishonoured that voice. I tried to squash it with new hair, makeup, clothes, boyfriends, shopping, church, whatever. It took me such a long time to listen to that voice, to act upon it, and then to have the courage to actually live it.

So now I'm working on my own. I have my own consulting company and my own products. I also do speaking engagements, including courses to help women strengthen their self-love. The 21 Days of Self-Love course was one of the most liberating. One of the big things I had to overcome was being a survivor of childhood sexual abuse. In the Caribbean, you don't talk about that—we're taught to sweep things under the rug. But it doesn't go away; it festers. When I looked back, there was the little girl inside of me who was still hurt, who was waiting to be acknowledged. And by not acknowledging that little girl, I was ignoring who I really was. That's why a lot of us are walking around feeling lost, like something's missing, like 'I'm not fully who I know I'm supposed to be.' I'm trying to help women enjoy the journey to self-knowledge and success. I define success as having the courage to listen to my inner voice—to trust it and act upon it, and to love the person who looks back at me whether or not I happen to feel like I'm good enough or worthy enough that day. The most important thing is to begin the journey. Don't be afraid to start. Your voice is powerful, it's valid. Your story matters."



**Chan Hon Goh, dancer and entrepreneur, Vancouver**

Chan Hon Goh, the National Ballet of Canada's first principal dancer of Chinese heritage, has some deceptively simple advice: "Don't be too hard on yourself." After retiring from the National Ballet in 2009, Goh flexed her entrepreneurial muscles by founding Principal, the first dance shoe company made by and for dancers. And, as if starting her own business wasn't enough, she's also the director of the Goh Ballet Academy, the author of the biography *Beyond the Dance* and a mother. "Finding the right balance of perfec-

tionism can be difficult, especially for high-achieving women," says Goh. Born in Beijing and raised in Vancouver, Goh is the daughter of two dancers, so it's fair to say that perfectionism is part of her DNA. She also spent her dancing years "surrounded by creative and high-calibre people"—like her directors and coaches at the National Ballet—who have given her a "deeper understanding of the artistry of dance." This mentorship was vital for Goh, especially when, at different moments throughout her career, three major bone-related injuries tested her resolve and the limits of what her body could handle. "You have to really want your dream," says

**Jaël Richardson, author, Brampton, Ont.**



As an author and the artistic director for the Festival of Literary Diversity (FOLD), Jaël Richardson is an unflinching advocate for inclusivity in the arts. Having realized early in her career that the publishing world is "monolithically white from top to bottom," she has insisted on her seat at the table of Canadian literature. "Being truly inclusive is hard work," says Richardson, explaining that diversity is not a buzzword. Her success has come, as Richardson puts it, from "responding to what I love to do and to the needs I see," which include making up for a dearth of diverse voices by creating platforms for them. "That's how I came to writing," she says. "I felt motivated to understand my story and to understand my dad's story." Richardson's first book, *The Stone Thrower: A Daughter's Lesson, a Father's Life*, is a memoir that weaves her life experience with that of her dad's (former CFL quarterback Chuck Ealey) and sifts poetically through questions of race and belonging. She is now looking to publish her next book, *Gutter Child*, which is a work of fiction but tackles a similarly thorny and painful question: What does it mean to grow up in a world designed for your failure? Richardson knows firsthand the financial strain of sustaining a not-for-profit festival like FOLD, but she says that both her mother and her faith have been central to keeping her spirits up. "My faith is not like a road map," she explains. "It's more intuitive, and it's about becoming attuned to what calls me, what I feel a purpose to do, and letting that guide my decisions." For Richardson, empowerment comes from within, and intuition is her compass—and we can't wait to see where it will take her next.

*"That's how I came to writing: I felt motivated to understand my story and to understand my dad's story."*

**Janette Ewen, lifestyle expert, Toronto and Los Angeles**



Janette Ewen describes herself as shy, but it's hard to believe that if you ever watched W Network's *Inside the Box* or one of her many other plucky television appearances. Ewen is a lifestyle expert who can talk beauty, design, food and entertainment with the best of them. In fact, she's put her contagious confidence to work on the countless projects she now has on the go (including mentoring young designers and an award-winning collaboration with Mobilia, a growing design firm in L.A.). Her guiding principle has been to follow her gut: "I've never had a plan for any of this!" she says. "I always do what I love and the money comes after." Even when obstacles have come up—like when the magazine she edited, *Chocolat*, folded, or when the television show she hosted with Ty Pennington ended—Ewen was steadfastly optimistic. "I see those things not as failures, but as stepping stones because they led to a friendship, or they led to a new project," she says. "Each bump is just a curve in the road that leads to something new and innovative." Ewen is the portrait of gratitude and says that mentorship has been crucial to her success. She explains that there were many generous souls who helped her out along the way, such as style industry legend Lisa Tant who was her boss at *Chatelaine*. "When I asked Lisa how I could ever pay her back, she said to just pay it forward. I try to do that with young women working in design—I try to help them get started." Ewen has some new, hush-hush projects on the horizon—and no doubt they will bear her signature optimism and impeccable taste.

**GIVING BACK**

*To thank the inspiring women featured in this special section, PANDORA JEWELLERY made a donation in their names to Dress for Success, the global non-profit organization that empowers women by providing them with professional clothing, career advice and development tools.*  
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**Phoebe Glasfurd, creative director, Vancouver**

For Phoebe Glasfurd, "inspiration has come from many places," which makes sense, considering the creative director has set down roots more than once. She grew up on a rural farm in western Australia, did her design training in Melbourne, went to work in Sydney, and has now settled in Vancouver. This nomadic philosophy is captured in the sleek designs, cheeky copy and bespoke food packaging she creates for Glasfurd & Walker, the design and branding studio she co-founded in 2007, which works with clients in the gastronomy industry, such as local favourites Meat & Bread and the Juice Truck. "Each project is unique, and each company does business differently," says Glasfurd, but great design is universal. Coming up with innovative ideas for clients in the fashion or food business hasn't been the hardest part for the entrepreneur; it was relocating as an up-and-comer from Australia to Vancouver "with no professional network at all." It took time, of course, for Glasfurd to set up relationships with collaborators, but, you know what they say: No grit, no pearl, and Glasfurd's steadfastness is undoubtedly paying off. Glasfurd & Walker has lots to look forward to, like designing both a dairy-free-ice-cream parlour and a new restaurant opening at the Fairmont Pacific Rim. Glasfurd proves that the future is bright when you're willing to go wherever inspiration takes you.



**Stephanie Boridy, fashion expert, Montreal**

Born in Lyon, France, Boridy grew up in Montreal's West Island, reading and collecting magazines "incessantly," unaware of "how they would intimately influence my career path," she says. Now the founder and creative director of Oui the Chic (with partner Ashley Kassab), a luxury lifestyle brand and online store, Boridy has lived many lives in the world of fashion. An assistant beauty editor and then web and social media editor at *LOULOU Magazine* and a personal shopper at Holt Renfrew— to name a few—Boridy has done it all. After years of dabbling in blogging and e-commerce, she learned that "just because something comes easy or is a hobby, doesn't mean it's your purpose." The Renaissance woman has recently narrowed her focus. "Ultimately retail chose me, and the fit couldn't be more appropriate," she says. "In my case, what was always a fall-back career (retail jobs) ended up being my true place and career purpose." Motivation, for Boridy, is everywhere—and lately it can be found on the seat of a bike. "I recently started spinning, and the coaches and my fellow spinners really inspire me to strive to be better and stronger both physically and mentally. I'm inspired by people who are true to themselves and who let their personality shine and aren't afraid to fail or be different."



**Karine Vanasse, actor, Montreal**

French-Canadian actor Karine Vanasse's angular features and bright eyes are instantly recognizable from the TV series *Pan Am* (cancelled in its prime, after one glorious season) and more recently from *Blue Moon*, *Revenge* and *Cardinal*. Vanasse started acting young in different Quebec television series and managed to escape the trap of fading child stardom by growing an impressive list of television and film credits from *Polytechnique* to *Midnight in Paris*. Vanasse knows that her career could have ended much earlier (what ever happened to Jonathan Taylor Thomas or the entire cast of *Saved by the Bell*, anyway?), but she worked to position herself not only as an actor "but as a part of the larger project," chiming in with her thoughts along

**CATRIONA SMART, FOUNDER OF COCO & COWE AND CREATIVE DIRECTOR OF HALO PR, TORONTO**  
**IN HER OWN WORDS: ON THE POWER OF CHANGE**

"I've always loved fashion. I had a clothing store with two partners, and we designed, produced and manufactured clothes in Canada. It was very exciting—you could create something better every season. But a lot of manufacturing was leaving Canada, and it was getting extremely expensive.

While that was happening, I started my blog, Coco & Cowe, nine years ago as a creative outlet. When our partnership broke up, amicably, I started to treat the blog as a business, even though income wasn't actually coming in. When you have an entrepreneurial mindset, it's hard to turn it off. It was a challenge to write without knowing how many people were listening at the beginning. I felt like I was bouncing ideas off a wall, so I started throwing events and dinners to share what I was doing.

It took a long time to feel successful. It's only really happened in the last two years. But looking back, I see success not only in terms of finances and followers, but rather knowing that we have a true community.

The internet can be wild. You get judged, and the bigger you get, the more people poke holes in what you're doing. When people started to see that my site was turning into something, I got cyber-attacked by someone who had set up a fake account and tagged all the people I was working with to shine a light on all the horrible things they were saying. It made me want to stop—but it also made me realize that you can't let one person, hiding behind an anonymous profile, take away what you love.

Trolls and negative people can have a lot of power on the internet. I worry about that—I have a young daughter. I think it's important to keep putting out positive imagery and be louder than the negative voices. My mom was an amazing role model for me. She worked, had three kids, but she was always super positive and didn't get down on the little things.

Recently, I decided I wanted to grow my business even more—I knew that I didn't want to be 45 years old, taking style shots. I had a great working relationship with the PR director of the Four Seasons, so when she said she was leaving and wanted a creative partner, it seemed natural. We founded Halo PR, which allows me to still do events for Coco & Cowe, but also to have some longevity as the creative force behind a more structured business.

It's an exciting time, both in PR and in digital media. People are talking now about real beauty, about authenticity, about not using filters, about not altering photos. That's a big step—there's a rebellion against people being sucked and fixed to look a certain way on Instagram and a desire to see all kinds of people. That brings me hope that the voices of many will be heard."

**DANIELLA ETIENNE, BILINGUAL PR AND COMMUNICATIONS SPECIALIST AT PANDORA JEWELLERY, TORONTO**  
**IN HER OWN WORDS: ON THE POWER OF REPRESENTATION**

"I started my career at a record label—I've always loved music. I worked in marketing and helped promote the first albums of Rihanna, Justin Bieber, Kanye West and Lady Gaga, before anybody knew who they were. It was exciting—no two days were the same. It was a demanding job, too—after eight years, I decided there's only so long you can live that rock 'n' roll life. I asked myself how I could transfer my skills in sponsorships and marketing into something concrete that I could do as I got older. In 2009, as a transition, I started an online magazine called *The BHD*, which explored, in an honest way, what it means to be a woman. There were a lot of great outlets addressing 'outfits of the day'—I wanted to add something different to the cultural conversation, inspired by the types of things I talked about with my friends, like how to overcome hardships on the way to success. It was real talk, but it was inspiring and fun, too. One of my first bosses always said, 'If it's not fun, it's not worth it.' That's still my mantra.

I told myself I wouldn't go back to corporate, but then last year I was offered this job at PANDORA JEWELLERY, and it reflected a lot of the values I had in my own business about female empowerment, and it also allowed me to execute my ideas on a bigger platform. I could still be creative and work with creative partnerships, and I could also highlight women who are doing great things across Canada.

Part of highlighting inspiring Canadian women means making sure that everybody has a voice. We have a duty to reflect what's happening in society by mirroring our country's cultural diversity and diversity of voice—to fairly and authentically represent what Canada looks like. When I was growing up, I didn't see a lot of black women in media or in business. In my role at PANDORA JEWELLERY, I'm able to impact change from the inside. More than ever, it's crucial that people use their platform, their voice and their audience to create change.

Change is essential to growth. Success to me is stepping out of your comfort zone—not being afraid to do things differently and challenging yourself to do something that hasn't been done. On my first day at Universal Music, I was told, 'You're going to be in charge of third-party marketing.' I didn't know what that was and had no contacts, so I literally started from the ground up, looking up company phone numbers and cold-calling to build my client list. There's something to be said about just doing—life is a constant learning process."

*"Success to me is stepping out of your comfort zone—not being afraid to do things differently and challenging yourself to do something that hasn't been done."*

the way. "This was so important to developing my career and becoming a mature actor," she reflects. Quebec is known for fostering and supporting its homegrown talent, and Vanasse says that working with great French-Canadian directors and actors—including Denis Villeneuve, Émile Gaudreault and Caroline Dhavernas—has been crucial to her success. "Caroline was the first person who really showed me that you could be a French-Canadian actress and still hope to explore new territories," says Vanasse. "She was the one that led the way and dared me to explore more." Tackling these new territories isn't always easy, but one of Vanasse's acting teachers told her a truth about acting that still rings true years later: It won't be comfortable. "The point of acting isn't to be comfortable," she explains, "but I don't let fear lead the way." It helps, she says, that she has "amazing women around me, supporting me and my vision."



**Olga Kovalchuk, research scientist, Lethbridge, Alta.**

Not all heroes wear capes, and Olga Kovalchuk's lab coat is proof: The professor, scientist and entrepreneur has devoted her working life to radiation and cancer research. Her many accolades and awards (a research chair at the University of Lethbridge, a federally funded Discovery Grant) have come, she says, "with a lot of work, a bit of luck and God's help." Originally from Ukraine, Kovalchuk was a teenager when the nuclear

disaster at Chernobyl exposed dozens to radiation and crippled untold others with cancer years later. That experience proved to be formative, and she went on to study science in Ukraine and Switzerland before coming to Canada in 2001, eventually landing in Alberta at the University of Lethbridge to research ways to improve health, longevity and customized care for cancer patients. Kovalchuk surrounds herself with "great mentors, wonderful colleagues" and the support of her family, all of whom understand her passion. "My mom and dad are both scientists. My husband, Igor, is a scientist, too—my best friend and collaborator," she says. Kovalchuk has since co-founded several biotech start-ups that focus on discovering treatments to fight cancer and other age-related diseases. Kovalchuk explains that one of those ventures, Canada Cancer and Aging Research Laboratories (CCARL), "offers a personalized approach to cancer treatment" so doctors are empowered to make case-by-case decisions for each patient. Bit by bit, by uniting traditional science with new technologies, Kovalchuk is changing cancer care as we know it.



**Juliana Bennett, fashion entrepreneur, Montreal**

Since she was a child, Juliana Bennett has been inspired by fashion. "My earliest childhood sketches were always about women and clothes, and it's hasn't stopped since," she says. But the Parsons grad burned out after working for seven years as a designer, opting to take a year off to paint and reconnect with her creative side. Turns out that some time away from the industry was just the trick—she recently launched Agent Armoire, a sleek online personal styling business that aims to link clients "with the perfect clothes for their budget, shape and aesthetic sensibilities."

For Bennett, fashion is a mix of all the things she loves most. "It's a celebration of art, design, culture, business, history, diversity and individuality all mixed into one beautiful melting pot. And it's always a reflection, for better or worse, of the current cultural climate that we live in," she explains. "Although I've fallen in and out of love with it over the years, fashion gives me energy, inspiration and purpose in my life. It's never boring!" Her advice for entrepreneurs looking to make their start is to be open and flexible as opportunities reveal themselves. Be okay with diverging from your so-called original plan and just "let things happen organically. Be in the moment!" And as for styling advice? "Start investing in some quality wardrobe classics because you're going to kick yourself later on when you realize you've wasted so much money and time on throwaway fashion while that beautiful trench coat or classic watch you've been eyeing since you were 21 is still totally relevant!"

**Dr. Eve Tsai, neurosurgeon, Ottawa**



Neurosurgeon Dr. Eve Tsai is driven by a desire to "try to fix things." Growing up in Saskatoon, Tsai was encouraged by her high school teacher to pursue a career in a field traditionally populated by men, such as medicine. "From there, I spent my summers learning to do medical research and eventually studying neural regeneration," she explains. Now Tsai does a mix of medicine, research and teaching at the University of Ottawa, with most of her energy spent on trying to "fix" the problem of spinal cord and brain regeneration. Her work is known as translational research, which tries to connect clinical experience with medical research so that everyone is talking to each other. "The surgeon-scientist is an endangered species," says Tsai, explaining that this kind of translational research isn't as common as she'd like it be—at least not yet. She suggests that this multidisciplinary approach to research looks at the problem from as many different perspectives as possible "instead of looking at egos." Tsai is enticed by a challenge, which is also something she's noticed about the successful women around her. "They don't give up," she says, "that's the common thing—women in different fields, scientists, engineers, CEOs—they all have this same, singular optimism." And, working with the Ottawa Hospital to fundraise for spinal cord and brain regeneration research, Tsai isn't giving up either. "You can either look at challenges as barriers, or you can look at them as barriers that you can overcome, go through, go around or go over." It's just as simple as that.



**Bobbie Burgers, artist, Vancouver**

Painter Bobbie Burgers has no formal training, but refining her craft over the years has been "a beautiful learning curve." "I'm kind of a solo painter, over there on the side," she says. "I don't really have any mentors in particular. I wish I did, but I just started painting in my late teens." Burgers acknowledges that she "may be too stubborn" to have reached out to find mentorship, but it didn't slow her down. She had her first solo show at 19 and has since exhibited at major institutions, such as the Art Gallery of Ontario and the International Exposition of Contemporary & Modern Art in Chicago; she has an upcoming showcase of her work in Beijing. Burgers's large abstract florals are experientially based paintings, which means that there's no guidebook to lead the way. "They're a rebellious take on domesticity and this genteel state of woman," she explains. "Because, you know, I'm six foot one and a little bit outspoken." This year, though, the time felt right for the artist to deliberately slow down. Since she started painting, she has done roughly four shows a year (and had four kids)—keeping a pace that sounds superhuman. "I'm taking this year to get off the treadmill of having to produce and get work out of the door," she says. "I felt like it was disingenuous to my own character to be creating something just out of duty, and now I feel like I'm really trying to make it more an expression of my feeling, my character, what's happening in and around me." Burgers will be part of a group show in May, her first ever, where she will exhibit alongside her favourite artists, like Joan Mitchell, Gershon Iskowitz and Gathie Falk. Turns out, it's never too late to find your tribe.

**JESSICA DESJARDINS, FOUNDER OF BEAUTY SITE BEAUZEZINE.COM, TORONTO**  
**IN HER OWN WORDS: ON THE POWER OF CONFIDENCE**

"I was studying health science at Ottawa University but always loved beauty, so I started my website, Beautezine, on January 1, 2011. My plan was to go to med school—I had taken the MCAT and applied; in my last year, I was working in a clinic and as a teacher's assistant. But within a year of starting the website, I'd quit my job and was like, 'Let's give it a shot.' Not a lot of people were doing that at the time, so I was terrified because I wasn't making enough money to pay my rent. I gave myself three months to cover my bills and I haven't looked back.

It was a very uncertain time—and to be honest, that uncertainty never goes away as a self-employed person. You just learn to accept it and use it as fuel. I wouldn't have been able to predict half the things that are trendy in the digital world today. When I started, Instagram wasn't really a platform, and now people have very successful careers just by being on social media. I don't know what the next big thing is going to be, but I pay attention. The most important part about growing with this industry is being flexible, listening for change and being quick to pivot and adapt.

It's also important to have a different point of view. A lot of people think that makeup is superficial, but I think it can change the way someone feels. I've always been inspired by makeup artist and company founder Bobbi Brown. Her line was one of the first that got me excited about makeup, and her philosophy has always been close to mine: Make women feel like the best version of themselves. Her story is very powerful, but I'm not planning on going the route of creating a product line. I see myself expanding more into digital

businesses. There's an app I want to start and another website I want to launch. It's exciting that you don't necessarily need a tangible, physical product to create a business anymore. You don't need to open up a shop or create some sort of hard copy. It's really empowering that if you have a good idea, it can go a long way. When I look back and see all the little baby steps that have gotten me to where I am, I feel successful. I wake up and get to do what I love. As a kid, I did crafts and coloured all the time. And as I got older, my face became the canvas. When I was 10 years old, digging through my mom's makeup bag, playing with her makeup and my Bonne Bell lip gloss felt special. Now, there's nothing better than doing someone's makeup and having them look in the mirror and feel good, or recommending a product that makes someone walk with more confidence."



**TARA MULDOON, FOUNDER OF FYOU, TORONTO**  
**IN HER OWN WORDS: ON THE POWER OF FORGIVENESS**

"At 18, I was sexually assaulted and I felt I didn't get justice from the system. I became an angry person. I spent years working in public relations but realized that it didn't matter how much money anybody has, you still have to look in the mirror and examine what your inner conflicts look like. So when I was 25, I started FYou. We're a team of young adults who create platforms about what forgiveness looks like. We don't work exclusively with sexual trauma; we have programs in jails and high schools, a book series, a speaker series, art shows, anything that creates conversation about what it means to forgive yourself and others. This was my way of figuring out the purpose of what I had been through—what it meant for me to move on.

I know it's very hard on my parents that this conversation keeps going and that I've been so public. My dad has picked up *The Globe and Mail* and seen my story on the front page. But they've been really supportive; they understand this is my journey.

It used to be difficult to speak publicly, but people step up afterwards and say they've had a similar experience and now they feel less alone. It's those conversations that allow me to not feel shame. It's actually really terrible to know that so many people have experienced it—that's always a reality check.

We are funded by the government—specifically the Trillium Foundation—and in the past six years, we've had some really amazing celebrity partnerships. We did the SlutWalk with Amber Rose; we partnered with Desmond Tutu; and the Pope has our book. Now we're focusing on our fourth book, which will be coming out this year, and will be a compilation of young women's stories about what forgiveness meant to them.

Our program is a glimmer of hope. We teach that hurt people are the ones who hurt people, and we are trying to stop that cycle. In this past year, we've really focused on gun violence, street violence and sexual trauma. In my experience, people have an easier time forgiving someone else but have a hard time forgiving themselves, so I really want to take this next year to dive deeper into that: What does it mean to forgive yourself in any situation?

I'm working with the justice system in Ontario and we want to make tangible changes around policy. We have some big dreams. Launching an International Day of Forgiveness is something I see happening in the not-so-far-off future. I think that would be powerful.

I understand that some people think forgiving is a sign of weakness, but I can speak to the fact that forgiveness saved my life: I would not be here, smiling, standing or possibly even alive, if I hadn't worked toward freeing myself of the burden I was carrying."

*"In my experience, people have an easier time forgiving someone else but have a hard time forgiving themselves."*



Thomas or the entire cast of *Saved by the Bell*, anyway?), but she worked to position herself not only as an actor "but as a part of the larger project," chiming in with her thoughts along

TEXT: JULIA CORDELL; GLASS: BURID; BORIDY: VANASSE; KOVALCHUK: BENNETT; TSAI: BURGERS; PHOTOGRAPHY: LILY & LILAC (SMART, ETIENNE, MULDOON, DESJARDINS); ALEXANDRE/IGRENT (VANASSE); DAVID FULLER (KOVALCHUK)



**MEGHAN YURI YOUNG, WRITER, TORONTO  
IN HER OWN WORDS: ON THE  
POWER OF EXPRESSION**

"I've always loved writing—as a kid, some of my best friends were books. I was a huge fantasy and sci-fi junkie partly because I loved escaping into different worlds. My parents divorced when I was very young—they always provided a great atmosphere so I never felt like anything was missing, but I think it was a good way for me to deal with those feelings.

Now, I've been in media for more than a decade. I currently have a blog under my own name and I work for myself. My best stories come from a place where I'm either trying to figure something out, or I have figured something out and I'm sharing that experience. I'm going through a transitional period right now and I'm writing about that a lot. I recently wrote for the Bell Let's Talk program about a violent episode when I was sexually assaulted. I could never write about that experience from a first-hand perspective, so I turned it into a story. That's how I think about it—I sometimes can't believe it's real, that it happened to me. When you share bits of yourself, you get comments like, 'Oh, you're so brave.' But it's not about bravery—it's about being open and maybe, hopefully, it creates a domino effect, because people in greater positions of power are trying to do bigger and better things, and lending my voice might help their cause.

To that end, a few years ago, I started the Sad Collective, an online mental health forum, with one of my good friends, Vas Marapas. She's like the yin to my yang—I'm the bubbly, cheerful person, and she's sarcastic and witty and just a huge fireball. We wanted to create a community that has both an online and offline presence—that bridges the gap between the two. We're working

on One Brave Night, a major fundraising project for CAMH [Toronto's Centre for Addiction and Mental Health]. We want young women to use the Sad Collective as a platform to seek help, and to help generally destigmatize mental illness.

When you have your own blog, I think there can be a misconception that what you're doing is competitive and self-centred, and sometimes it does appear that way. A lot of my income comes from partnering with brands, and I always make an effort to work with brands that I actually respect. But it's hard to find yourself when you feel like you may be selling out.

I think the most important thing, especially important for people in social media, is that you've got to get out of your bubble. It's so easy to get trapped in an echo chamber. The easiest ways to escape that are by reading and by travelling—seeking out new experiences, people and cultures. As much as the world might be getting smaller, there's still so much to learn."

*"My best stories come from a place where I'm either trying to figure something out, or I have figured something out and I'm sharing that experience."*



**Angela Teng, artist, Vancouver**

Visual artist Angela Teng combines crochet and acrylic paint to create textured, sculptured paintings that are so curious they are hard to look away from. While studying at Vancouver's Emily Carr University of Art and Design, Teng met artist and teacher Elizabeth McIntosh, who helped steer Teng in the direction of abstract art. "From that point on it was clear what I wanted to do," Teng explains. "I wanted to approach abstract painting from the consequence of the female perspective, better yet, a feminist approach to art making." This turn toward the abstract has been fruitful, and Teng currently has paintings on display at the Vancouver Art Gallery as part of an exhibit that runs until mid-April. After that, she has a solo show in the works at Equinox Gallery in May. Teng is still working to make room for her professional and personal priorities. "I'm a new mom, so finding a rhythm in the studio has been difficult. I'm trying to balance motherhood and being an artist," she says. "It's been empowering to say the least." New rhythms don't daunt Teng, who suggests that challenges and missteps are all a part of her artistic process: "It's in the failures that interesting ideas surface."



**Christina Bomberry, designer and dancer, Six Nations of the Grand River, Ont.**

Christina Bomberry's interest in fashion came early, when she started modelling. But, in the end, fitting into clothes that were made for a rigid definition of beauty didn't sustain her interest. Instead, Bomberry began making traditional ceremonial clothing in her hometown on the Six Nations reservation. A gifted fancy shawl dancer at powwows, she learned traditional beading and sewing from her grandmother Evelyn. "She shared her passion for sewing with me at a young age," says Bomberry, who opened a fabric store in her name and honour, Evelyn's Fabrics & Jady's Sewing Notions, on the reserve. "Taking care of our traditions and our people is very important." Bomberry's grandmother Mary was another important mentor—she encouraged her to never give up on what she wanted. It's in tribute to both women and their drive that Bomberry continues her work, making custom and one-of-a-kind clothing for her community. The greatest challenge for the entrepreneur is a familiar one to many women: "How to juggle family life and business. I was always taught to put my family first," she explains. But as a single mother with two children, that isn't always easy. "It's all worth it, but it gets challenging to balance it all and to be in 10 places at once." Bomberry explains that mid-winter ceremonies have just wrapped on the reserve, which are her busiest times as a seamstress ("We always like to look our best when we are honouring our creator!"). This summer, you will find Bomberry selling her wares at the Native American Indigenous Games—supporting the athleticism and traditions of her people by passing their history on, stitch by stitch.

**SAMANTHA CLARKE, LAWYER AND WEDDING PHOTOGRAPHER, TORONTO  
IN HER OWN WORDS: ON THE  
POWER OF PASSION**

"Photography was something I always wanted to do, but education was really important for my family, so I said, 'Okay, let me do something responsible.' During my undergrad and my master's in the States, photography was a hobby that allowed me to stay creative and kept me sane. Then, when I came back to Canada to go to law school, I was poor and realized I could shoot weddings on weekends and connect with people to tell their story.

That's a beautiful feeling. I work with a lot of low-income, marginalized people in my day job at a legal aid clinic doing disability and employment law. It can be stressful and sad, but when I get behind the camera for a wedding, the world is okay—there's love in the world.

Since I have two jobs, I get asked, 'How do you balance?' a lot. It's not about balance for me. I have to prioritize certain things and, sometimes, others just don't get as much attention. That's the price of passion. I've learned that saying no is really important. I can't be selective in my day job; we take on anyone who needs help. But with my photography, I'm only interested in storytelling—I don't do it for the money.

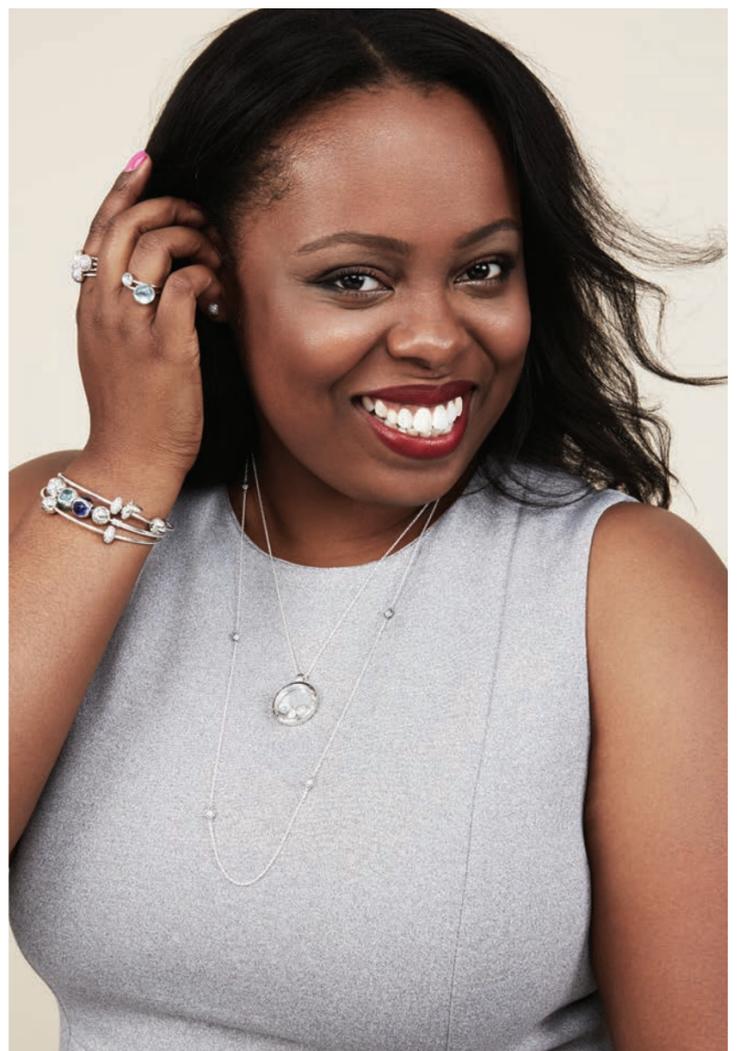
The weddings I shoot are celebrations of culture, families, legacies. I work with a lot of brides who are of African descent or women of colour, and they're not really represented in the bridal industry, so I get to share a story of a different kind of bride.

Along the way, I've had several mentors. One in particular—a lawyer who is now the CEO of Girl Guides of Canada—was really instrumental in helping me become a professional. Without seeing examples of successful women doing things that I wanted to do, I don't know if I would have pushed myself. So now, I do one-on-one mentoring with younger creative women who are photographers or entrepreneurs. I give them ideas about how to manage having a full-time job while being creative. A lot of them are really keen to learn from me because I've been able to do both for so long, which is not all that common.

But I think having a 'side hustle' is a reality for a lot of people because, especially in Toronto—it's expensive to just survive. I think that what I do is more than that: It's my calling. I like

to say I'm 'multi-passionate' because I'm truly fulfilled in both jobs; without both, I wouldn't feel like I'm serving the world the way I should be. With my words, I'm able to help a client, and with my camera, I'm helping to tell a story. Making sure that people are heard, seen and have a voice—that's my true job."

*"It's not about balance for me. I have to prioritize certain things and, sometimes, others just don't get as much attention. That's the price of passion."*



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