



November 25 2005



Lindsay
WINCHERAUK

GUEST SHOT

DTES: EYESORE OR OPPORTUNITY

The Downtown Eastside is a cancerous eyesore that will not just fade away. Instead, it's filled with the tweaked-out. The lost and forgotten that have been warehoused in the area to live out their lives in altered states.

Driving through, *Night of the Living Dead* quickly comes to mind.

Open drug usage is rampant, young girls frothing at the mouth close to overdose, injections taking place – visible to even the blind.

Unlike American cities, where super expressways allow mainstream society to avoid seeing the destruction and despair; unless they take the wrong off-ramp, we must face the problem and find solutions.

Why?

Because this area epitomizes our failure, framing it for the whole world to see, even our American neighbours are appalled, "*We've never seen anything like this before.*"

I thought like most others for the longest time and showed little compassion. The chant, "*Get a job,*" comes to mind.

But over the years of driving temporary construction workers to work, they show up at 5 a.m., hoping to get work, either for extra cash or to support habits; three workers have changed my views.

Ryan, Patrick, and Mary, surprisingly, never complain and rarely tell tales of hardship; instead, they're cheerful, supportive, and encouraging.

They are just people like me and you.

Ryan offers little insight into his world.

Life has left him guarded.

Mary has had a tough go of it. She has medical disorders; however, getting up and working gives her a sense of dignity.

Patrick - 5' 11", 119 pounds, is fighting a dark demon.

"I'm 119 pounds. I have to get off the dope."

I naively asked if it was easy to do?

"Not when your dealer is waiting outside when you cash your cheque."

Patrick's story is somewhat tragic, much like the stories of most in the area. Though unique, they all blend together with common threads.

Why talk about this area?

Because it will not go away –

On some level, we've failed, and we must find a way to cleanse the problem. These fine individuals have been warehoused; with their support networks long gone, they're trying to escape reality, which is difficult at best.

The Olympics are coming. This area represents opportunity. *The eyesore must be eliminated before we welcome the world.*

- ✓ Do we sweep it under the rug and pretend?
- ✓ Or search for long-term solutions?

In the next few years, the warehouse is going to be moved. Maybe to your neighbourhood, just-off the expressway.

ONE LAST THING

When you're sitting in your luxurious condo with your loving family, remember this: The Rick, Peter and Cathy's of this world probably had a hand in building it.

How can we judge what we don't understand?

What's on your mind?

FINALLY, AN ARTICLE: attempting to open everyone's eyes about finding a solution to the Downtown Eastside (DTES: eyesore or opportunity? *24 hours*, Nov. 25)! Despite the fact that the area is full of people "tweaked out," we must pay attention to the fact that many of the residents have been "lost and forgotten" about. I would encourage everyone to watch through *Through a Blue Lens* and realize that sometimes all people need is some support and encouragement, and not just to be told to "get a job." Instead of complaining about it, let's try to come up with feasible solutions.

-Megan Elphick, via e-mail

WHO IS LINDSAY WINCHERAUK?

Lindsay Wincherauk is a fearless writer. He has published two books and has had more than eighteen OPEDs appear in major commuter newspapers. Lindsay wasn't born with a silver spoon in his mouth. His father (who wasn't his father) worked as a mechanic. His mother (who wasn't his mother) worked as an excellent chef in a diner. In fact, his birth was in a secret place where | society deemed | unfit mothers were sent to give birth in isolation — shading families from shame. If the babies survived being born, usually, they were sold to wealthy Americans or adopted out to farm families.

Lindsay's life began with a lie.

Despite Lindsay's perilous beginnings, starting with deception, Lindsay knew no better and went through life excelling at things, usually in two-year stints. Be that athletics (hall of fame, record holding, one-eyed quarterback), scholastically, career-wise (generating more than \$70 million in revenue for one company), socially, + without question: creatively!

Lindsay's challenging beginning instilled in Lindsay heaping doses of compassion and empathy. Lindsay's life starting out as a lie gave him a keen sense to spot BS from miles away. It also provided him with a dry sense of humour and an understanding those born with silver spoons in their mouths will never be self-aware enough to understand (or admit) their good fortune.

During Lindsay's work career, he was well-liked by all coworkers. Lindsay was also well respected by his diverse collection of clients, developing several fantastic friendships, primarily because Lindsay is known for his unflinching integrity and ability to hold conversations on most topics.

Lindsay's life mantra is:

The most valuable part of life is the fabulous people we meet during our journeys. If you treat people with respect (leaving judgment at the door), and more importantly, by opening doors for those less fortunate or who can't speak up for themselves, you are living a good, compassionate life. Making money at all costs is not the only thing mattering. Life can be difficult + devastatingly unfair.

Lindsay believes sharing vulnerability is what makes us human. Lindsay will never shy away from being honest about his pain.

Lindsay also believes we must stand up for ourselves, + more importantly, for those who are too burdened by the injustices of life, they can't find the strength to stand up for themselves.

SOME THINGS LINDSAY IS MOST PROUD OF ARE WHEN:

- A sixty-year-old employee of his, who had entered a point of life where life had become more struggle than joy (it happens to all of us as we age), said to Lindsay, *"I must thank you. I've listened to how you treat people, + by listening, I've learned so much about compassion and patience. Thank you. I consider you a great friend."*
- Another employee who was struggling with addiction thanked Lindsay for his kindness, presenting Lindsay with a Christmas card from him and his girlfriend. Tucked inside the card: lottery tickets.

LINDSAY WINCHERAUK, compassionate, empathetic, well-read, kind, blessed with unflinching integrity, humour in balance, loved by coworkers + friends alike.

Lindsay will always stick up for the underdog. Lindsay understands there are countless older people suffering job loss because COVID gave some companies an opportunity to – Lindsay thinks it is essential to draw attention to this life-threatening issue by being the voice for those too broken to speak up for themselves.

Lindsay is currently pitching four manuscripts to publishers and literary agencies. One of the manuscripts (he can't talk about) will blow the roof off the predatory practices of – Lindsay is writing relentlessly and is also pitching OPEDs and short stories, fiction, + non to literary magazines around the globe.

Lindsay has appeared on Breakfast Television, radio programs in Montreal, + several others in the Vancouver area. Lindsay has also been a featured guest on CKNW + CBC, both on several occasions. And Lindsay was a vital witness of a Hate Crime. This led to the first Hate Crime conviction in Canadian legal history, resulting in him being a speaker at an Enough is Enough Rally (anti-violence rally) with dignitaries, politicians, law enforcement, and community leaders in front of a crowd of approximately five thousand.

Lindsay was the **#1 MIXED-TAPE DJ** at the **UNIVERSITY OF SASKATCHEWAN** for most of the nineteen-eighties, a fact bringing him joy.

Lindsay resides in Vancouver.
