

MY LIFE ON THE SLUSH PILE
LIFE ON THE SLUSH PILE

MY SISTER IS MY MUM

A META-MEMOIR



By **LINDSAY WINCHERAUK**

Friends + Surgery + Friends + More Surgery

MY LIFE ON THE SLUSH PILE

МЯГКИЙ ПЫЛЕВОЙ СЛАДОСТНЫЙ ПОДСЛАДИК



A story about finding yourself after accidentally discovering your life started with a lie.

Not every day do you meet someone who watched both of his parents die from The Big C and laid them to rest, only to discover sixteen years later that they weren't his parents after all!

It's like being reborn as a whole different person.

ABOUT A BOY



A boy is born in a secret place. A dark place. A sad place.

His Mother is his Sister. Making her his Sister + his Mother.

His Father is his Grandfather.

His Grandmother is just his Grandmother.

His Brothers used to be just Brothers. But then it is discovered they might be Uncles as well.

That turned them into Brunkles.

His Sisters used to be just Sisters. But then it is discovered they might be Aunts as well.

That turned them into Sisaunts.

The boy is never meant to know the truth because his birth brings with it, shame.

How could any of them be, okay?

Especially, the boy and his Grandmother?

WHO AM I GOING TO BECOME?



Friends + Surgery + Friends + More Surgery

FRIENDS + SURGERY + FRIENDS + MORE SURGERY

VANCOUVER BRITISH COLUMBIA

AUGUST 4, 1991-MAY 16, 1992

PATRICK KM

VANCOUVER

4 AUGUST 1991

Hello Lindsay, welcome to Dumpsville, population = you

Life began to suck. With Gail issuing me my pink slip, I was primarily alone in a new city. Sure, Wes was still there, but he was a free spirit chasing life.

Do you remember Pat from Corrie & Vern's wedding?

You do!

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Pat had signed on to Serve & Protect as a Royal Canadian Mountain Police (RCMP) member. Fortunately for me, he'd been transferred to Vancouver.

Pat is a big burly man. Rumour has it, his family originated from the Screw part of Cork, Ireland. Not only had he signed up to protect society from its more nefarious elements, but he had also been assigned to drag me out of the emotional quicksand I was wallowing in.

How did he do that?

Well, the simple answer: booze.

"Hey Linds, I know you are suffering from an emotional explosion – do you like The Hip? Anyhow, listen to this tune. Can you hear the melodies swell? Is this not an atmospheric jam to help cure all ills. Buddy, I'm sorry for what you're going through; pour your heart out while I pour you some gin + juice."

Pat would allow me to share the story of my heartache in short bursts. Then he'd shove another drink in front of me. He'd let me flounder in the burdens of my broken love that couldn't be undone. And then, he'd shove another drink in front of me.

He did an outstanding job at dragging me out of the quagmire.

I was drunk., often.

KNEE UPDATE KNEE UPDATE

8 AUGUST 1991

Gail kept spinning and twirling away from me. I couldn't keep up with her. I couldn't win her back. My knee was still shredded from my injury during The Flaming Hoops Basketball Tournament.

It's a Thursday, why don't you get her a gift?

Good idea, maybe after my doctor's appointment?

"Lindsay, your knee, well, not good. You must do an hour every day of rigorous physiotherapy."

"Can I do three hours?"

"Sure."

I spun between physio and crying.

Jocelyn, a co-worker from the Bombay Bicycle Club, dropped by for a visit, Jocelyn used to be a professional stripper.

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What other kinds of strippers are there?

All of us.

She brought her five-year-old daughter with her.

"Sweetie, sit here. I'll turn on this nice man's TV. I need to talk with him for a while in a different room. His kitty will look after you. Lindsay, do you like contorting?"

Towel, please –

Lindsay, why did you include this in your story?

Because Jocelyn was an ex-stripper, nothing more.

FAMILY SUPPORT FAMILY SUPPORT

VANCOUVER

9 AUGUST 1991

I needed to reach out to the family. Isn't there a saying, family is everything—or something along those lines?

Brother Don had moved up the political ranks in Saskatchewan and he had met Gail.

"Don, Gail dumped me. I blew out my knee. I'm a mess."

"Well, Lindsay, you know your problem: you are an underachiever. You are the best looking + smartest Wincherauk, but still, you fail. That is likely why Gail kicked you to the curb."

That fucking, sucked.

I know, I'll phone Bernice + Sadie. They did once tell me if I ever need to call, for anything, call collect because they work for the Alberta Government Telephone Company (AGT).

"Hello, Bernice, I have a collect call for you from Lindsay. Will you accept the charges?"

Bernice replied, "Lindsay, who?"

ORTHOPEDIC SURGEONS' OFFICE

VANCOUVER

9 AUGUST 1991

"Lindsay, I'm happy to tell you your knee has recovered enough for you to go ahead and play sports again."

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TOUCH FOOTBALL GAME

11 AUGUST 1991

I took the snap from center, sprinted to my right, cut + spun + planted to throw, POP.

NOT FUCKING GOOD.

"Gail, I blew my knee apart. I can't drive. You know I love you. I've got a gift for you. Can you pick me up?"

CLICK

It must've been a bad connection.

Gail stopped answering my calls.

Until we got back together.

We now have 3 beautiful children.

THE END

ORTHOPEDIC SURGEONS' OFFICE

VANCOUVER

14 AUGUST 1991

"Lindsay, you'll have to come back in four months. The doctor is too busy to see you today. Do you still have crutches?"

DR. REGAN'S OFFICE

UNIVERSITY OF BRITISH COLUMBIA HOSPITAL

VANCOUVER

14 AUGUST 1991

"Lindsay, this might hurt a little. Brace yourself, I am going to wiggle your knee."

"FUUUUUUUUCCCCCK."

" | Inaudible | , can you come back to see me in a few days? I need the swelling to subside to be able to give you the best diagnosis?"

16 AUGUST 1991

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"Lindsay, there is no easy way to tell you this. Your knee is fucked. The previous doctors kept removing things instead of fixing them. You have no cartilage left; your bones are grinding together. You have torn your ACL + two other ligaments."

I need to call Gail.

"Son, operating may no longer be an option. For now, learning to walk normally is your first goal. So, you need to go for extensive rehab to rebuild your leg. If you can do that, I will look inside to see if I can do anything?"

"Will I be able to play sports?"

"For now, let's focus on the first goal."

"Doc, if you can fix some of the damage after the second surgery, then what?"

"Lindsay, extensive rehab."

SATAN'S PURSUIT

UBC PHYSIOTHERAPY CLINIC TO HOME

VANCOUVER

19 AUGUST 1991

Rehab sucked. Pain + Pain + More Pain.

The thermostat hit +30 Celsius. 86 Fahrenheit if you're American.

I was \$\$\$ broke. I was seven miles from home, with no way to get there. Going home today was going to resemble a journey to Hell. I'd been to Hell before.

I began to crutch. The sun beat down on the sidewalk, much like a tinsmith working his craft. I began to hallucinate; Satanic demons were chasing me; I beat them away with my crutches. Crutches that were sparking fires on the burnt grass of a long summer.

Three miles into my crutch home, I was drowning in a tsunami of my own sweat. My underarms were burned raw. Beelzebub and Lucifer were on my heels, salivating.

I was on the verge of succumbing to the oppressive heat of the day.

Just as my inevitable end had arrived, three miles into my journey, with the vultures circling above, a lovely couple driving a Pontiac Sunfire pulled up beside me.

"Hey, mister, you look like you could use some help. Where are you going? We'll give you a ride."

I turned to face them, with my face broken with anguish.

"NO."

Wow, you are an idiot.

I prefer Martyr.

Crutch - Crutch - Crutch

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Lucifer, give up; you will never catch me. But, hey, is that Beelzebub in that Starbucks? Is he sitting with a Zombie?

REHAB + ANXIETY + TUESDAY GIFTS FOR GAIL +

WES AND PAT PLYING ME WITH BOOZE

VANCOUVER

OCTOBER-DECEMBER 1991

*I can't live
If living is without you
I can't live
I can't give anymore*

Turn that crap off.

What do you mean you need your bartenders to be able to stand up?

I hurt myself on a Sunday; I was pulling the cushions off the couch by the following Wednesday.

Somehow, I survived.

Not without moments of rage.

Crutch – Crutch – Crutch

I'd come across a posse of young panhandlers sitting on the sidewalk in front of the pharmacy where I would go to have my prescriptions filled.

"Mister, spare change?"

"You do see I'm using crutches, don't you? Can't you even open the door for me?"

"Fuck you."

SMACK

Did that hurt? It looked like it pulled.

KNEE SURGERY...

VANCOUVER

FEBRUARY 1992

This was becoming far too familiar, a freezing sterile room – stinking clean. Masked men and women hovered above me. My ass was exposed. No matter how many times one has surgery, it doesn't matter. I was terrified; needles dangled from my arms; Satan sat in the corner anxiously waiting.

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Doctor Regan asked me to count backward from 100.

I made it to 99.

Operation number (?) was underway.

When I woke up, Satan was gone.

"Lindsay, good news, you qualify for another operation."

I was drifting in and out of dense fog.

"Lindsay, I'll come back later, once you kick your morphine addiction, and repeat what I just told you."

Hours later, the rehab bus pulled up to the hospital, Doctor Regan told me if I hurried, I might be able to catch it.

FAMILY DOCTOR (DOCTOR MUSIAL)

VANCOUVER

FEBRUARY 1992-?

Doctor Alex Musial's practice is in the upscale neighbourhood of Kerrisdale. Most of his patients are aged. Close to expiring. He is also Wes's doctor. We got along famously.

"Doc, my knee is screwed. The pain is relentless. It swelled to the point of Blimpdom."

He began laughing hilariously.

"What's so funny. I'm in excruciating pain."

"I'm sorry, Lindsay. Didn't you have chest hair? Never mind. Now, what were you saying? Hey, Lindsay, I have an idea; since you are out of commission anyway, why don't I send you to an eye specialist who can perform surgery to fix your drooping eye?"

"Okay."

BLIND EYE(S)

VANCOUVER

11 MARCH 1992

"Lindsay, count backward from 100."

I made it to 99.

Hmm. This morphine is sure trippy.

My postoperative nurse was certainly crotchety.

"I don't care if you just had knee surgery and can't walk. We will not release you until you can go to the bathroom by yourself."

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"But I can't see or walk."

"I don't care."

"Why are you lying on the floor? Let me assist you? Stop using your knee as an excuse."

REVISED ADULT SURGERY TOTAL

5 x LEFT KNEE

1 x RIGHT KNEE

APPENDIX

EYE

1.5 x AMATEUR LOBOTOMY

DR. BABS

=

8 SURGERIES ADMINISTERED BY MEDICAL PROFESSIONALS

VEHICULAR SOLIDARITY ΛΗΤΟΣ ΣΩΜΑΤΙΚΟΣ

VANCOUVER

APRIL 1992

I had purchased a sweet ride complete with working headlights and a regular gear shift, a fiery red Fiat Spitfire convertible.

It only had one quirk. It developed an aversion to making left turns. Right, sure. Straight ahead, no problem. Left, never. It was an unfixable problem.

I think it was showing support for my mangled left knee. I had finally done the responsible thing and purchased a car I could afford. Oh well.

MONEY WOES ΤΑΤΟΝΕΣ ΜΟΕΣ

VANCOUVER

END OF APRIL 1992

I needed \$\$\$.

I put my walking sticks in the closet beside the Atari. I was finally able to return to work. I was facing one daunting problem: my employer had replaced me. They decided 155-days off was one day too many.

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I hit the pavement searching for work and managed to land two jobs.

1. Earl's Restaurant (Waiter + Bartender)
2. Hotel California (Bartender + Eventually Manager)

Bartending had sucked me back in. I was about to check-in.

*Relax, said the night man
We are programmed to receive
You can check out any time you like
But you can never leave!*

The Hotel California = 5 Stars minus 4.5.

Dive doesn't do its description justice.

Occasionally, the cleaning staff would come to my office with upsetting news.

"Mr. Lindsay, the man in Room 450, is sitting upright in his room. There is a needle dangling in his arm. We poked him. I think he's dead. Do you want to come to look?"

"No."

CAM PART 2

VANCOUVER > VICTORIA

2-4 MAY 1992

"Hello, Cam, how long has it been? Great to see you."

Before starting my career at Earl's, Cam dropped out to the coast for a surprise visit.

He was reeling from the lost love of a failed marriage; rumours of insider trading were swirling around his head.

Wes had managed to land a managing gig at a funky restaurant named Cucina - Cucina, an Asian-owned Italian joint. Wes filled the cleaning bottles and managed to pack the joint nightly. The owners loved their restaurant being full. Eventually, they tired of his techniques.

On a horrific morning, one of the owners was kidnapped. A ransom note was issued, exciting Wes. The other owner, not so much, so he fired Wes. Severance was served. Cam and I were to be the recipients of its gravy.

PARTY TIME

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Hop on the fast ferry from Vancouver to Victoria

In an attempt to

Alleviate my knee pain + Cam's divorce pain + Wes's sobriety pains.

Drinks were served onboard.

Fifty minutes after departure, we arrived in Victoria's beautiful inner harbour.

We grabbed our luggage and sauntered into Milestone's Restaurant Lounge.

Cam knew the bartender.

"Hey, Barkeep, can we store our belongings in the office?"

ITINERARY

Lounge + Lounge + Lounge + Brewpub + Nightclub

I can't recall the name of any of the establishments

See Above↑↑↑

We were collectively pickled, feeling no pain, two sheets to the wind, but somehow, still delightfully charming. I was cutting a rug on the club's dancefloor when my knee started to turn into spaghetti.

TIME TO EAT

Three lovely locals joined us at an all-night eatery.

"Let us be your hosts for the evening."

Hey, fantastic, spaghetti! I don't recall ordering spaghetti.

"Gross, Wes, look at your chicken burger. It's pink inside."

Our server approached, aghast at the kitchen's mistake. "Sorry, let me get you a new one."

"Don't worry about it. My stomach has a strong resolve."

"Hello, your name is Lindsay; you're cute. I'll take care of you tonight. You can stay at my place for the night."

Wes and Cam left with the other girls.

"Yeah, no, Lindsay, I've changed my mind. You are on your own."

When the server returned, she gently pulled my face off my pasta.

No problem. Better check my pockets. \$5. It's going to be a good night.

My knee began to revolt.

I left the restaurant hitting the streets; rain was pelting down. I needed to think.

I'm drunk

Maybe I need to not think at all.

Yes, that would be the ticket.

Escape your problems with denial and the answers will find you.

Those bricks over there look like bricks.

Not thinking wasn't going to work.

I know, think more.

Those guys hanging in storefronts seem to know what they are doing.

Nah, they don't look like me.

Damn it: I thought.

Think Lindsay, think.

What would Lindsay do?

Hey, that's me; I will just ask.

What's the best hotel in Victoria?

I answered the Empress, *I liked my style, the Empress it was going to be.*

I was on a mission. I could see the Empress's lights in the distance. I jutted across the hotel's front lawn. I slipped and fell onto my back. *This will do.* I closed my eyes. The rain pounded my face forcing me to stay awake. *Crap.* I got up. I hobbled the last few yards to the hotel. A bellman held the door open for me.

I was dripping with confidence, drunkenness, and I limped past the front desk.

I glanced left and casually said, "*Hold my calls, please.*"

The Empress has six floors; I hopped in the elevator and punched six and then, checked my pocket: still only \$5.

The door opened on the Sixth Floor, and I hopped off and began searching for a resting place where I could avoid eviction.

My brain spun.

I stumbled upon vending machines. I purchased a coke and a newspaper and continued my search. Finally, I found a room with my name emblazoned upon it.

FIRE CLOSET LIKE CLOSET

My room was spacious, three-feet wide x three and a half feet long. I'm slightly shy of six-feet tall, so the room was a perfect fit; I settled in for the night.

I used my coke as a pillow + the real estate and classified sections as my mattress. I used the remainder of the paper as blankets. I am supposed to keep my knee elevated while sleeping. The length of the room left me no option.

I slept like a baby.

In the morning, I was awakened by the rumbling of maids in the hallway. I feared being discovered. I deduced my remaining \$3.25 wouldn't cover the cost of the room. Paranoia raced through me. It was time to Check-Out.

I propped myself up, attempted to regain a sense of composure and exited my room.

A maid passed me in the hallway.

"Good morning. How are you? You may clean my room next. Have a wonderful day."

I hustled around the corner to freedom.

I grabbed a bite to eat at McDonald's and started aimlessly roaming the streets. Two hours later, Wes and Cam found me.

"Lindsay, we stayed at this magnificent acreage. The girls served us breakfast in bed; the night before had turned carnal, we fed apples to horses in a meadow in the morning, and then, the girls drove us back to the city. It was amazing! What did you get up to?"

"Well, let me show you. Follow me. Follow me. Just a bit further. Floor 6, please. This way." I

opened the Fire Closet's door. "Here, this is where I slept."

Cam asked me, "Are you done with the paper?"

We returned to Milestones to retrieve our luggage. Cam's friend listened intently as we shared our stories.

At the end of the tall tale, he festooned a confused look and then asked, "Was that the only room they had left?"

THIEVING SPIKE THIEVING SPIKE

VANCOUVER

4 MAY 1992

NEW FRIEND INSERTION NUMBER ONE

Thieving Spike, his moniker, will make sense soon.

We worked together at Earl's, where I started as a server instead of behind the security of the bar. Unfortunately, I sucked at carrying trays of anything.

First shift, first table, I carried 10 glasses of water on a tray.

"Sorry, sir. Could I offer you a shampoo packet with your meal?"

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FLASH FORWARD: 2006 FLASH FORWARD: 2006

Life was testing me daily.

I could either fight my way through my challenges or wither away.

I was fucking up.

I needed to sink or swim.

I'm talented, I think.

I need to speak up.

Why this insertion here?

Because I'm reeling in drunk.

I've returned home to a stinking cat litter box and a solo dinner.

I loved my cat.

I needed someone to love me.

I'm a big talker.

I'm full of shit.

I'm personable.

I sound like a success.

I sabotage everything.

What holds me back?

I'm not sure.

What I do know, if I don't snap out of whatever the Hell this is, I risk my story ending sadly.

RIVALRY

Thieving Spike and I shared many things in common, we loved the Montreal Canadiens Hockey Team, + we were avid tennis players and golfers.

'In common' helped our bond form quickly.

In May, Dr. Regan gave me the GREEN LIGHT to play tennis.

My next operation was two months away.

The GREEN LIGHT came with a few conditions:

1. I must wear my knee brace.
2. If I experience the slightest twinge of pain, stop playing.

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Spike and I formed a ferocious rivalry on the tennis courts of Vancouver.

SLICK

VANCOUVER

MAY 16, 1992

Enter Slick.

I'm sure you'll remember him from my stint in Regina.

Slick is Rick Gillis. He was a transplant from the flatlands of Saskatchewan, just like me. Slick is exceptionally gregarious and personable. He transferred from a Keg Restaurant in Regina to manage a Keg in Vancouver. He moved west to be my flatmate just when I had added the Hotel California to my work roster.

With the insertion of new and old friends, my life was swinging upward.

Slick is a great man with a big heart. Back in Regina, he teetered between one of the best-dressed men in the city and often spilled into the "Caddyshack" persona of Bill Murray.

SLICK = BIG CITY SUAVE + A HINT OF SMALL-TOWN SENSIBILITY.

He loved the purple cloak of Crown Royal.

"More Napshkins, please."
TATOLE TANTRUMMING SURGERY

Slick had been gifted with a huge laugh, best described as a Hyena squeezing the life out of a Gremlin. With each pinch, the infectious squeals would increase in pitch. Disturbingly, it appeared as if the Gremlins were enjoying their demise.

BIG RED BIG RED

VANCOUVER

19 MAY 1992

Carol, Big Red, sauntered into the Maximum Blues Pub in the Hotel California for her first shift as a server. I was behind the bar. Her face was strewn with disgust. She looked like she was about to turn and sprint away.

I calmed her.

"Carol, it's not all bad; you know this is like any other dive bar. Our patrons are old, misunderstood, always drunk, often crotchety, many suffer from waning health, and occasionally, some of them poop themselves."

She laughed.

"Carol, we are their guardians. From time to time, we have to wake them when it is time for their next drink."

She stayed.

Big Red is slim, beautiful, and funny. She has an insatiable lust for life. She is equally at ease climbing a mountain or laying poolside with a margarita. And she's a gifted writer and a polished businesswoman.

Big Red has crawled through caves, repelled down buildings, swam with crocodiles, and she overcame a fear of sharks. Big Red lights up life.

Most importantly, she became a great friend.

Would you like to hear more?

She loves tequila. If you tried to drink shot-by-shot with her, you'd likely be left under the table.

Carol learned from the sharks she once feared.

"Fuck, Carol, that hurts. STOP IT."

I'd frantically shake my ass with Carol's teeth clamped onto my ass; I started running.

Big Red's teeth were sunk in deep, creating denture moulds on my ass. This was a regular occurrence.

I kept running; Big Red floated horizontally behind me.

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—shielding 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.

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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.

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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.