

# PATIENTS

A study of Canmore during the COVID-19 pandemic  
by Eric Ollivier

*With special thanks to Naia Noyes-West,  
the National Theatre School of Canada  
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## LAND ACKNOWLEDGEMENT:

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Canmore is located on the traditional lands of Treaty 7 Territory, comprised of the Stoney Nakoda Nations of Wesley, Chiniki and Bearspaw; three Nations of the Blackfoot Confederacy: the Pikani, Kainai, and Siksika; and the Tsuu T'ina of the Dene people. Treaty 7 territory is also shared with the Métis Nation of Alberta, Region III. Before the signing of Treaty 7, and prior to the establishment of provincial boundaries, this region was also used by the Ktunaxa and the Maskwacis people. We acknowledge the past, present, and future generations of these Nations who help us steward this land, as well as honour and celebrate this place.

## SCENE ONE: Patience

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**NIA:** Patience... it's the highest virtue. I have none.

**INTERVIEWER:** *This play was compiled from a series of interviews conducted in the town of Canmore, Alberta during the coronavirus pandemic of 2020.*

**FIONA:** We've been in quarantine a month... Mid-March is when shit really hit the fan and now we're at mid-April.

**NADA:** I think 2020 is going to be completely shut down. If we're lucky enough for it to have been eradicated... or we get a vaccine by the end of this year, then I would say 2021 could look normal again.

**NIA:** Definitely given the type of government we have here in Alberta, things will open up very quick.

**LARRY:** Being an engineer, I'm all over what the curves look like. And I find it really fascinating to see how Epidemiologists are doing all these predictions and so on, so... I think we'll have a new normal sometime in the next month.

**NADA:** And it worries me! Because I read constantly on the news that people are talking about "oh, let's, uh, we're thinking about reopening stuff, let's see how we can reopen, let's get this..." - no! Just be patient. Wait for this to be eradicated or we will never have a normal life again. 'Cause it's just gonna keep... they'll be another wave.

**NIA:** I think globally there will definitely be lots of resurgences for probably... a year or two?

**CAROL:** It will continue to unroll as we go through summer, into fall, into winter...

**NADA:** I'm always an optimist, so... I don't feel it's gonna have any negative impacts, except for financial, obviously - which I really couldn't care less about. And people are more introspective...

**GUY:** I've had a lot of opportunity for introspection...

**NADA:** ...so I think there are some positives to come out of that.

**GUY:** ...for thought, and... Yeah, looking at what paradigm one likes to maintain or change.

**INTERVIEWER:** Paradigm, meaning?

**GUY:** A mindset, I guess. Applying regular filters and specification, but re-evaluating what those are. Change some of those initial requirements, filters, specifications, and then have a broader perspective to look and find what I might do in the future.

**NIA:** I hope that not everyone is as antsy-pantsy to get out of the Valley as I am. I hope that people come out of this saying "oh yeah, you know what? I don't mind *not* travelling." Because Canmore's response to Covid-19 was very much the way someone responds when you say "don't move - there's a bee on your face," and they *immediately move!* It's just like "don't move - there's a pandemic," and immediately everyone was like "*I have to fly to Florida right now and visit my grandparents!*" And you're like...

**NADA:** Just be patient.

**GUY:** I had a trip out to the coast and took in a week of sea-kayaking.

**NADA:** And not a patient.

**LARRY:** We have a little cabin in British Colombia, so we snuck out there a couple of times.

**NADA:** I could stand on a soapbox... Being patient is the only thing we can do, it is the most important thing we can do.

**NIA:** Because when it comes to activism and... just keeping regular things in check in the Bow Valley... And making sure that those who make decisions... and those who make decisions who shouldn't be making the decisions... It's really hard to keep those people in-check when the public is always gone.

## **SCENE TWO:** Gone

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**NIA:** Growing up here... It was wonderful.

**INTERVIEWER:** *Nia, 24 years old.*

**NIA:** I felt totally safe all the time. I remember... my preschool used to be this little barn down by the Bow River, and it had this beautiful meadow next to it. After preschool, all the kids would go home and my mom was working at the time and so it would be a while before she came to get me, and I would just sit in the field, by myself, and it was like... that was completely normal.

**INTERVIEWER:** Is that preschool still there?

**NIA:** No, it's gone. They tore it down. It was, like, mouldy when I was in it, so... Yeah, the building definitely had to go. And the meadow is now some housing.

**LARRY:** There used to be a little grocery store...

**INTERVIEWER:** *Larry, 57 years old.*

**LARRY:** Where the Stonewaters is downtown?

**INTERVIEWER:** The furniture boutique?

**LARRY:** Yeah, there used to be a grocery store in there. Same building, but it looked totally different back then. And when you walked into Marra's Way Grocery... you knew kind of everybody in there. Like, it would take you forever to go buy a jug of milk, kind of thing. And now you get a little bit of that in Save-On, but not really. You know, it's not quite the same. That's a great example of something that was representative of a great small town, and... it's gone, right?

**NIA:** "Gone" is the effect that, like, Canmore used to look like this place where nature and urbanity were completely and perfectly mixed together harmoniously. But now it's like: here's the urban, and here's the nature, and that tiny little spot where they intersect - that's not a good place to be, that's where all the conflict happens.

**JUDY:** The community has grown too congested, and we're suffocating the very thing that was beautiful and the draw of the community.

**LARRY:** Canmore is no longer a small town. We live in a bit of an illusion, maybe - that it is.

**JUDY:** It used to be a very social town...

**INTERVIEWER:** *Judy, 57 years old.*

**JUDY:** Tight-knit. When you went to the Drake you knew all the people there. It was also a bit of a Swinger's town... Among a group of renowned couples there was a lot of partner swapping, which I guess is natural when a community is small and your options are limited.

**CAROL:** In the 90s, it was still so small and funky.

**INTERVIEWER:** *Carol, 63 years old.*

**CAROL:** I mean, bar-hopping meant walking from the Sherwood House - now the Wood - and to the Drake! And in between there were a whole lotta houses with front porches, and people sittin' out there havin' a beer, so sometimes you didn't actually make the destination - you got sucked onto the porch!

**JUDY:** There was this house on the corner where Communita is now. One man owned that entire corner and he had a bungalow with this large yard. He sold antiques, collectibles and mostly junk that was placed all over the front yard and back yard. It was a cool and quirky place, kind of like an old yard museum. I went there at least once a week to shop. Directly

across from it - where the Marra's Way Sushi is now - was the Coffee Mine, where all the locals went for coffee and lunch.

**TENAYA:** My first date was at Marra's Sushi.

**INTERVIEWER:** *Tenaya, 20 years old.*

**TENAYA:** In high school, there was a lot of, like, just wandering around. Not many people had cars, and like, there's no public transport... or now there is, but there wasn't at the time. And like, people didn't want to pay for taxis, either, so we would walk all the way from, like, Benchlands up into Three Sisters or something... Get drunk on the way to parties.

**NADA:** I used to go on my bike and bump into Grizzly Bears.

**SARA:** I decided to cycle home.

**INTERVIEWER:** *Sara, 57 years old.*

**SARA:** And I got three minutes away, and... the biggest Grizzly Bear I have ever seen crossed the road in front of me.

**TENAYA:** There was, like, this one Bull Elk who would always just hang out near my house... We did not give him enough space.

**SARA:** And it was getting closer to home that it finally soaked through to me to be slightly terrified of what had just happened... 'Cause I had been mock-charged by this bear, and didn't really know whether it was a mock-charge or not a mock-charge... All of that stuff had started to soak through.

**TENAYA:** We would do all of our activities regardless of if this massive elk was around. Like, there was this little creek near us where we would go and play and, like, swim and build forts and whatever... pick berries to eat. This guy was just, like, always around. He didn't really seem to mind.

**SARA:** When I told people the story, at a coffee shop, everybody went "oh yeah! Last time I saw a bear..."

**NIA:** Growing up here, nature was as normal as walking around in your own home, conversing with your own family and friends. You wouldn't treat a bear any different from any other stranger in the street - don't walk into it, be nice, give it space...

**FIONA:** I never feel lonely in nature.

**NADA:** Nature is my *church!*

**FIONA:** "...and the pews are full."

**JUDY:** Nature is calming and exciting at the same time. It's a thrill when you're restless and bored, and a chill pill when you're stressed and overworked.

**NADA:** I have these overwhelming... What do you call it? I dunno. It's like a pull.

**INTERVIEWER:** *Nada, 57 years old.*

**NADA:** Sometimes... especially in the summertime, when I look up at the dark mountain at nighttime, I just wanna run! And go there. And I know what an idiot that sounds like, 'cause it's like "oh god, yeah, like - I have to go on a trail and then I have to find it and then it's dark..." It's not even logical.

**STEVIE:** I feel like mountains shape the people that I love here.

**NIA:** They are the most patient things on the planet. And humans the least patient.

**FIONA:** There's this Lao-tzu quote: "Nature does not hurry, yet everything is accomplished."

**SARA:** Those trucks are moving at phenomenal speed...

**GUY:** Our amount of time that we spend here is such a short period of time, given the age of our environment here...

**FIONA:** I once saw that name carved into a tree.

*(FIONA pulls out a pocket-knife and carves until ADAM's speech.)*

**GUY:** But we can have very sharp impacts on it in short periods of time.

**SARA:** On the south side the highway, there used to be places where the elk could eat...

**NIA:** And the moustache lands! They look like a moustache.

**SARA:** Annd we have built on all of them. Annd the last couple of years there have been these awful, awful attempts by the elk to cross the highway... And just elk after elk getting run over. Or, you know, the mom calling the baby, and later that afternoon the baby is still trying to cross... Because it couldn't do it fast enough, it couldn't judge the traffic. So... Yeah. I hate that we murdered thirty or forty elk over the last year and a half.

**ADAM:** Animal mortalities... It's the road, but it's more the trains.

**INTERVIEWER:** *Adam, 35 years old.*

**ADAM:** Especially in the Park, where the road is mostly mitigated with the overpasses and underpasses and fencing - the trains are not. And that's a whole land-ownership thing - that's a whole other issue.

**NADA:** I remember we were in Nova Scotia, and we were... somewhere - I can't even remember the name of the park. But, you know, when you stop and you read those little things... And one of the Premiers had said... quoted a saying: "We shall... we will have no more wilderness. All we have now is all we will ever have." Because wilderness - untouched wilderness - you can't create it. And that quote has just stuck with me forever.

**INTERVIEWER:** It's funny now that we have this sickness that's targeting us... It's making us more vulnerable. If we're a sickness to nature, now we're experiencing a sickness to us.

**NADA:** Mhm - we are a virus.

**INTERVIEWER:** And it could be catastrophic.

**NADA:** Absolutely. I almost wish it would be catastrophic to the human race. But I try not to say that out loud.

## **INTERLUDE:** Dualism

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**INTERVIEWER:** *William Cronon in The Trouble with Wilderness.*

**WILLIAM:** The trouble with wilderness is that it quietly expresses and reproduces the very values its devotees seek to reject. The flight from history that is very nearly the core of wilderness represents the false hope of an escape from responsibility, the illusion that we can somehow wipe clean the slate of our past and return to the *tabula rasa* that supposedly existed before we began to leave our marks on the world. The dream of an unworked natural landscape is very much the fantasy of people who have never themselves had to work the land to make a living - urban folk for whom food comes from a supermarket or a restaurant instead of a field, and for whom the wooden houses in which they live and work apparently have no meaningful connection to the forests in which trees grow and die. Only people whose relation to the land was already alienated could hold up wilderness as a model for human life in nature, for the romantic ideology of wilderness leaves precisely nowhere for human beings actually to make their living from the land.

This, then, is the central paradox: wilderness embodies a dualistic vision in which the human is entirely outside the natural. If we allow ourselves to believe that nature, to be true, must also be wild, then our very presence in nature represents its fall. The place where we are is the place where nature is not. If this is so - if by definition wilderness leaves no place for human beings, save perhaps as contemplative sojourners enjoying their leisurely reverie in God's natural cathedral - then also by definition it can offer no solution to the environmental and other problems that confront us. To the extent that we celebrate wilderness as the measure with which we judge civilization, we reproduce the dualism that sets humanity and nature at opposite poles. We thereby leave ourselves little hope of discovering what an ethical, sustainable, honorable human place in nature might actually look like.

**GUY:** Young people especially are the ones that we need to be giving opportunities to to learn more about ecosystems and... giving them happy, healthy interactions in the environment.

**INTERVIEWER:** *Guy, "61 years young".*

**GUY:** Yet showing them that they'll be developing their own attitudes and philosophies, but still needing to sustain decision-making through science. So, it's great to feel good and happy about something, but it's important to understand the interaction of each component - species and what's valuable and what isn't... Valuable in different ways - is it fiscally or culturally or is it part of a food source for another species which is part of an interconnected web? But you still need to return to science whenever you're interacting with people who make very formative assessments, because there is very little room in their decision-making for something which is subjective; it is very hard to put a quality on something which is faith-based. There aren't units for faith-based decision-making, like love and like and emotive and... So we need to be able to express all these things in a formative and science-based way. And that takes a lot of skill and navigating - how to find that data, and how the testing was done, and then how to apply it and make it feel very affirming to people who are making decisions on our behalf, like local governance and committees within Council and so on.

### SCENE THREE: Broken

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**CAROL:** Something in here is broken. I'm just curious to see if we're going to figure it out collectively - what's the broken piece and are we *collectively* going to fix it?

**NIA:** I think a lot of people who move here from other places grow up with certain ideals, and then they say "I want to go somewhere different, and experience what's different." And then they say "oh, I like it here - I like it 'cause it's *different!*" And then they naturally tend to make that place more similar to the place that they left. And they will do that to the detriment of anyone who actually likes this place the way it is.

**LARRY:** I think some of the Councillors are too heavily influenced by industry in the Valley.

**GUY:** Reliant on a quick profit from high-volume construction.

**LARRY:** I don't have much faith in them to make the right decisions... The Three Sisters development, for example?

**MICK:** Which part?

**INTERVIEWER:** The part that intersects with a Wildlife Corridor.

**MICK:** So, um... *(He huffs.)*

**INTERVIEWER:** *Mick, 56.*

**MICK:** I was fucking mad. And I'm still fucking mad.

**CAROL:** We solidified the Wildlife Corridor science - it won the Premier's Award, under Klein, and it has been manipulated ever since, according to what developers have needed. They've ignored the science, and successive Councils have struggled with this.

**MICK:** They made it very clear that if Council decides to, um, swim outside of our purview, that there would be consequences and repercussions.

**INTERVIEWER:** For the record, this developer is the Three Sisters Mountain Village, or TSMV, represented by Quantum Place developments. The Smith Creek development would extend Canmore eastward...

**LARRY:** All the way out to Dead Man's Flats.

**INTERVIEWER:** On the south side of the highway.

**ADAM:** We've long been called the most developed landscape on the planet that still has Grizzly Bears. And we are at risk of losing Grizzly Bears in this Valley, for sure. But the much bigger problem is that if we don't have Grizzly Bears in this valley, they're struggling to connect between Banff National Park and Kananaskis Country. And if they're not connected between those secure habitats, they're also having trouble connecting this whole continental scale of genetic information. So, no bear is travelling from Yellowstone to Yukon, right? No single bear

is doing that. But genetic information is. If the Bow Valley cuts them off, we've separated this continental-scale population right down the middle.

**MICK:** I'm still getting contacted by people, saying "how could you have approved this?" And it's like... I haven't approved anything. Hold on, let me get something for you. (*He fetches a document.*) From 1992... "*An application to construct a recreation and tourism project in the town of Canmore, Alberta*" - the Smith Creek development... But the applications that we keep getting actually aren't for a "recreation and tourism project in the town of Canmore, Alberta", they're Residential Housing projects! The vision that they have is, like, the 'burbs... which continues to appeal to out-of-towners, but is not what our existing residents need. You're ultimately working against the market. The market has control over the value of land, the cost of land, and the municipality has no way to interfere.

**CAROL:** I've been to too many Council meetings where the developer of the day carried the voice, because the Land Use Bylaws and the Municipal Development Plan gave them every authority and right to move forward.

**MICK:** I'm not making excuses, I'm just explaining the large force that municipalities are up against in Alberta. BC has some really great rules and laws that allow the municipality to ask for more from developers, and other levels of government. What I'd like to see these developers come forward with is a shared vision with the community - of housing that the community can afford, of recreational opportunities that we can engage in, and with wildlife that will be protected.

**NIA:** People have this idea that we cannot live without foreign money and that is bullshit. All you need for a healthy economy is for money to flow, it does not matter from where it comes.

**CAROL:** In the Canmore of my dreams, I see adequate social housing for people under a certain income threshold - that is paid for not by the taxpayer, but by the industry.

**SARA:** As a builder, if you build a two-million-dollar house, you also have to build places for the servants of that homeowner to live.

**MICK:** The province hasn't built adequate social housing since the 80s... So, if there's meant to be equilibrium between supply and demand, and if the true demand of Canmore residents is for income-appropriate housing, and the market is only supplying high-end housing... that says to me that the market in Canmore is broken; when it comes to the housing market.

**NIA:** Rent is really high here, food is really expensive...

**STEVIE:** The Keeping Up With the Joneses thing has gotten *huge*.

**TENAYA:** Growing up, I thought I was poor... 'cause my parents couldn't buy me the newest skis.

**STEVIE:** Thirty grand on an 11-year-old?! *Hell! No!*

**TENAYA:** I thought that everyone was this rich, I thought everyone lived in big houses, had nice cars, were able to drive to Calgary and the ski hills, buy passes... Afford all of these really nice things.



**MICK:** We commissioned a living-wage study and realized that Canmore's living-wage number is higher than the City of *Vancouver*, which people think is the most expensive place to live in Canada.

**SARA:** Let's say a couple meets and discovers "oh, we can get great, cheap rent by moving in together." So now it's two people sharing a bedroom, and that's all good. And then they have a kid. And, okay, the kid can sleep in a crib at the end of the bed for a little while... and then the toys go everywhere and the kid starts running around... By the time they're three or four, it's not tenable anymore. So - last time I looked at the numbers - over three hundred kids born here every year, and we have less than one hundred start kindergarten.

**MICK:** We're seeing more second-home ownership and having locals then pushed out of the market, to a certain extent.

**TENAYA:** I don't think any place should do that - should drive out locals to make way for more wealthy people. So, I guess you could say I'm an opponent of gentrification.

**INTERVIEWER:** Adam, you have a young kid - do you see your family staying here in coming years?

**ADAM:** No. No, I'm surprised we're still here now, you know? Teepee Town, which is where we live now, has a redevelopment plan.

**TENAYA:** I'm in Spring Creek, in the trailer park, and this is gonna be demolished.

**ADAM:** We live in an older bungalow house, and that's exactly the kind of thing they're trying to get rid of.

**TENAYA:** It's just gonna be, like, more nice houses, I guess.

**ADAM:** Fourplexes and condos of varying Calgarian size - none of which we can afford.

**TENAYA:** You're just creating this atmosphere of disconnection and luxury that is just not achievable for most people. If you're kicking out people who have these important roles in their community, whether it's a teacher or someone working at the grocery store or the bike shop... If they don't have the security to live here, they're not gonna be able to... so they'll leave.

**ADAM:** One thing I wanna say, though: there is a ton of victimhood in Canmore, especially among old Canmore - that we're getting pushed out and that we're getting replaced and that that's a great injustice... And in some respects, it is; I wouldn't diminish that - I feel it very personally. It also is true that we have fully replaced other folks, that this was Indigenous territory for thousands and thousands and thousands of years. So this story that we tell of how at-risk we are, how victimized we are, needs to be contextualized in this way. We've already full-on removed and displaced people.

**BUDDY:** According to oral history, we've been here since time immemorial.

**INTERVIEWER:** *Elder Lloyd "Buddy" Wesley, of the Nakoda Nation, 70.*

**BUDDY:** Canmore is in our traditional territory - going right up to Jasper. It was used for hunting and migration. The name of Canmore is *Chuwapchipchiyan Kudebi*. *Chuwapchipchiyan Kudebi* is where a young warrior was going back to wherever they were camping, and it was

getting dusk, and you can barely see what's kind of twilight. And so he thought he'd seen a moose, so he took a shot at it, and it was a young *sapling*. And that's why *Chuwapchipchiyan* is "sapling", *Kudebi* is "to shoot".

**VICKI:** The location where he shot the sapling.

**BUDDY:** Yeah.

**NIA:** I feel like that so describes Canmore so well.

**LARRY:** We live in a bit of an illusion...

*(A train whistle blows.)*

**EDNA:** It was in 1884 when the first wood-burning locomotive rounded the curve into the newly erected Canmore depot.

**INTERVIEWER:** *Edna (Hill) Appleby in Canmore: The Story of an Era, from the 70s.*

**EDNA:** It was named Canmore in honour of King Malcom of Canmore, Scotland, who defeated the usurper Macbeth and reigned as King of Scotland from 1057 to 1093. Canmore is a Scottish-Gaelic word meaning "Big Head", that is big brain.

**INTERVIEWER:** What's in a name?

**NIA:** The Big Head statue, downtown...

**INTERVIEWER:** What's in a monument?

**NIA:** The artist had it manufactured. He paid for it to be created in a factory - it's not a work of art, it's an industrial project!

**INTERVIEWER:** In this artist's defence, he did the sculpture's digital design.

**NIA:** But the *concept!* He had previously been to an art show where he saw this giant, hand-made statue done by Zhang Huan, a Chinese artist, called Ash Head No. 1. He basically saw this, and then he copied it, had it made in a factory and shipped here as "the Head" for Canmore, because apparently Canmore means "big head" - like "big cheese", the head of mining. So now we have this giant *thing* that is entirely a fake and forgery of a real art project that was done by someone else, somewhere else, and who is not properly credited.

**INTERVIEWER:** What do we choose to commemorate? The McDougall church, near Morley...

**EDNA:** Reverend George McDougall, a Methodist missionary arrived at Edmonton in 1862. The hearts of the McDougalls were with the Indians, and so they traversed the prairies "to Christianize and Civilize." April 29, 1873, they established a new mission 15 miles from the mountains in view of the Bow. They were received in Chief Bear's Paw's tent. They called the new mission "Morleyville." At Morley they quickly built a church, and in November 1874 a small schoolhouse was built, the first schoolhouse south of Edmonton.

**INTERVIEWER:** *Arthur Manuel in Unsettling Canada.*

**ARTHUR:** My father told us that, at the school, what they teach you is to follow a set of institutional rules and minute-by-minute instructions. So all they really teach you is how to follow orders from the authorities.

**BUDDY:** A lot of people were indoctrinated.

**EDNA:** The last letter Reverend George McDougall wrote, dated December 23, 1875, was a request for an Orphan House. This orphanage was granted in 1879.

**INTERVIEWER:** It was typically referred to as the "Orphanage" although it was a Residential School. It was known variously as the McDougall Orphanage and Home, McDougall Institute or Morley Boarding School. The Morley Indian Residential School finally closed in 1969. And then, in 2017...

**VICKI:** Somebody burned it down. And they're rebuilding it. That was a whole other contest, and there was meetings... But yeah, somebody burned it down!

**BUDDY:** Well, you know, a lot of my people voted against rebuilding. It's a bad memory... Why carry on that memory? There are a lot of grandkids living today that they hear stories from the Residential School, how they were treated.

**VICKI:** There are still so many day-school survivors.

**BUDDY:** And they see *that*. It's a bad memory. Okay, what they should do with that church, when they're rebuilding it, is put a history - how my people were treated. That's what they should spell out there. Like prison, you know. Worse than prison.

**VICKI:** We need to be teaching the truth of the actual history. Like, pretty much Indigenous history has been wiped out of any textbook whatsoever.

**AURORA:** I hope we use this moment to look at ourselves as a town and find ways to tear down the systemic racism that we have here.

**TENAYA:** There's a lot of racism here that people don't talk about. Like, the fact that it's mostly white people living in Canmore is pretty weird. It affects everyone growing up, 'cause if that's what you're used to, and if no one's aware of it, there's not gonna be a conscious effort to stop either racism or other "isms" from happening.

**AURORA:** Can we use this moment to look at ways that we are currently not being good stewards of this land and change that? Right? We're building from scratch, let's build proper.

**GUY:** I hope that people are less focused on material aspects, more focused on establishing a sustainable environmental outlook for the community.

**NIA:** I hope that those who are generally unaware or disbelieving of the non-monetary economy understand that it is a thing, it's a real thing, it's bigger than the monetary economy, it determines way more of our life, and...

**BUDDY:** We have to stop being ethnocentric. We have to start saying "oh, that's the way you do it? Oh, I'm interested in it." Instead of "oh, that's not the way we do it." We have to all validate each other.

**FIONA:** There's a quote... "Another world is not only possible, she is on her way. On a quiet day, I can hear her breathing."

**INTERVIEWER:** Arundhati Roy.

## **INTERLUDE: Cuts**

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*(The forest.)*

**NIA:** We were often walking around town, running around town, through the woods, by ourselves, totally alone... often barefoot.

*(NIA runs.)*

**TENAYA:** There's such a competitive atmosphere here.

**NIA:** Cut-throat.

**TENAYA:** You feel a lot of judgement for not being a high-performance athlete, you feel like you're not good enough if you're not this perfectly fit human.

*(The sound of a chainsaw meeting wood. TENAYA holds her breath.)*

**NIA:** It stung a little, on a personal level, that I could not bike home with my friends because of my asthma.

*(A tree falls. NIA halts and catches her breath.)*

**BUDDY:** I know it's a necessity to get lumber, but at least, if you're gonna do that, do it respectfully - put tobacco down, get First Nations to come and bless the area before you start clear-cutting. Because when they do that, they kill all the plants, they kill all the medicine, and along with that they kill the spirit. So they replant, but the spirit is gone. It takes many years for Mother Nature to say "okay, here's my spirit again."

**NIA:** I knew my closest friend did not even own skis or a bike, but it was normal for us. We lent and borrowed when needed. Houses, vans or shacks were all considered valid lifestyle choices. In my circle, no one was expected to be a super athlete, outdoor time was just that, outdoor time, you didn't have to bag three peaks in a day to make it count. It counted enough to just sit by the river with a can of beer, camp in the yard, sit in a field by the preschool and wait for a pick up...

*(TENAYA finally exhales, breathes.)*

## **SCENE FOUR: Another World**

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**SARA:** I was watching it in January.

**BUDDY:** Some say it's man-made...

**SARA:** And I didn't know that we were gonna shut down...

**BUDDY:** Who knows, you know?

**SARA:** But when I started seeing countries who are ahead of us start shutting things down, I knew those shutdowns were coming here, too. So I was encouraging people to get their last haircut, and all of those kinds of things, probably in early February. I was starting to fill the pantry a little bit in February... Just a little extra, you know, a couple extra cans this week and a couple extra next week. And then in March, on a Monday, I said "I'm wondering if we should have a Covid meeting with the board," and people kind of went "*we'll*, I suppose." And on Wednesday, I sent an email out asking who'd like to be on that committee, and I got two people saying yes. And then by Friday, almost every member of the board said they'd like to be on it. By the time we got to Monday, my agenda had changed four times, because that's how fast it suddenly landed on us.

**STEVIE:** I have three or four friends who literally saw this in *December* and pulled everything out of the stock market before it fell apart. Like, they knew what the implications of what was happening were, and that it was nearly apocalyptic in terms of what it would do to the market. And I said to them "well why didn't you tell me?!"

"Would you have believed me if I told you?" Good point... Probably not.

**INTERVIEWER:** *A journal entry from March 13th.*

**FIONA:** Friday the 13th: Apparently it's the end of the world. Pandemonium has set in... People are hoarding toilet paper, buying everything in bulk; preparing for the "inevitable quarantine". I think we're pouring all of our pent-up anxieties and angst into this sickness. With only 150 confirmed cases in Canada, nobody is shaking hands, hugging, touching their faces, going out... All concerts, sporting events, large gatherings of any kind have been cancelled.

**STEVIE:** When they announced that schools were going to be closed, I felt the weight of every primary caregiver, who mostly tend to be women, who realized that their double-day was about to become a triple-day. And I felt that weight for myself as well as from... I just felt it from every woman that I have ever connected with. And I felt the inherent misogyny in them announcing it on a Sunday night, when you know they knew Friday.

**TENAYA:** My office closed on, like, March 12th or something? And then we were working from home for a week, and I was still, like, seeing people and not really taking that many precautions. So it was probably, like, March 20-ish when I started feeling like "okay, this is actually serious; we need to be taking a bunch of precautions, I need to not be seeing everybody..."

**LARRY:** We would bring groceries into the house and put 'em in the basement, and they could just sit there for two days or three days - however long it takes - to make sure that there's no virus still on them.

**GUY:** There's such a broad range of people's beliefs and actions currently. And yet we need to respect that, because we don't really ultimately know who's right and who's wrong at the moment.

**CAROL:** I have a 24-year-old daughter who lives in Vancouver, and at the beginning of this whole thing we went to get her. She has a roommate who determined that this is really an old people's disease, and "because I'm 25, I'm not gonna die", so was still going out partying, drinking, dancing, doing all sorts of not-taking-it-seriously behaviour.

**NIA:** I don't fear death very often, am pretty confident in my own immortality. I don't know if that's naiveté or just me telling myself that I'm the main character of my own story, so I don't get to die.

**CAROL:** I'm in the vulnerable category with Covid, because I am of that age and have recently been diagnosed with COPD, because I've been a lifelong smoker. And a week ago, my daughter and I were so uncomfortable we left the store. It was not cool. I've had to ask people "could you step back?", as they reach above me to grab something off the top shelf. And they give me that look, like "what's your problem, lady?"

**NADA:** I have noticed the worst has come out of some people. A good friend said some really hurtful things, which really surprised me, and I don't know if we'll ever be friends again. She just... Oh, she told me that I'd done something selfish - that I'd put people at risk, which I hadn't. And that, uh, "you do realize that people who've had cancer won't get put on ventilators." She said that I don't have the same, um, level of... You know, like if a doctor has to make a decision between two people, I would be the one left to die. That's what she said. And I don't know if it's true or not, but the fact is it doesn't matter if it's true or not - the point is that she said it to me. I don't care how pissed off you are with someone, you talk it through. But she didn't want to talk it through, she just threw obscenities at me.

**LARRY:** Overall people have just toed the line, which is shocking to me. You know, you would think that some people would be like "well piss on this, we don't need to self-isolate," but I would say it seems like everybody recognizes the seriousness of this whole thing.

**GABRIEL:** What can we do to adapt so that people can still, you know, get their latte, for example?

**INTERVIEWER:** *Gabriel, 57.*

**GABRIEL:** So, everyone has shut their coffee shop, and fair enough, but Beamers has found a way to stay open. And what they've done is: they've got a table set up at the door, they're still making coffees and baked goods, and now they're selling flour, toilet paper... and they're making a margin on that. They're seeing where there are gaps in the market and providing a service. And do I feel more kinship to them as a consequence? Yeah! Thank you.

**NADA:** My business is done. We're going to lose a lot of businesses - the little boutiques and restaurants.

**GABRIEL:** Canmore will survive.

**NADA:** We're going to go back to where we were in the 90s - an ex-mining town with absolutely nothing to come here for.

**GABRIEL:** If we're going on the cheap in the coming years... Like, fewer cruises, people not flying to Europe, maybe not even being able to fly to Europe - I'm going to the extreme here, where this is protracted... People are going to go to the mountains. So all these restaurants and hotels will do reasonably well, you know? People are going to be dying to get out of the house. It'll be interesting to see how this all looks when summer comes along. It's easy to be really bleak about it 'cause we're still in the middle of it!

**STEVIE:** I'm ready to kill my husband.

## **SCENE FIVE:** Small World

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**STEVIE:** My home is my workplace, so now everybody's in my workplace.

**INTERVIEWER:** *Stevie, 38.*

**STEVIE:** And I feel like it's effected, just, the expectations... And I see that gloss over in my husband, to a certain extent. "It's your job, you're at home, it's your job." But it doesn't feel like a choice now. Before it was my choice to be at home with my kids - it doesn't feel like a choice anymore.

**CAROL:** I'm just keeping myself at home, so that I don't become one of those burdens on our healthcare system. And I don't want to leave this earth anytime sooner than I need to.

**STEVIE:** I'm a caregiver to an 81-year-old man, and I need to keep his morale high. So, actually, the one benefit of this is having this giant come-to-Jesus with my husband and my kids, saying "our job is to keep grandpa going emotionally. That is our job. So every night you need to dig deep..." 'Cause he only lives in Cochrane, but we can't go into his house, and so every night he calls at eight-thirty, and we pass the phone around, and we spend about twenty-five minutes on the phone, and we dig deep for bullshit... Whatever - the smallest of small talk, with a cheery voice, just stop, you answer, you called and he answers the phone - "*hiiiiiiii!*" Trying to just... It's so much harder to keep yourself up emotionally when you're isolated and you're just a new widow. So, I've learned to love my father-in-law more. *(She breaks out in laughter.)*

**AURORA:** I have been saving the world through video games. And the reason I phrase it like that is because of a video, at the beginning of the pandemic, of some Italian mayor chasing people through the town, yelling at them to stop being outside and go play video games.

**NADA:** I'm bingeing a bunch of Netflix.

**INTERVIEWER:** What are you bingeing?

**NADA:** Oh god, do I really have to tell you?

**INTERVIEWER:** Yes.

**NADA:** Outlander... And now my inner-voice has a Scottish accent - that's how bad it is!

**CAROL:** We're all finding our own roles in a much smaller world. We're all finding: people need meaningful, they need to be needed, which is what our jobs provided us with before they disappeared. So, in lieu of that, how do we find purpose?

**NIA:** I've done a lot of, just, trying to master a personal routine, master having a healthy life without it being dictated by other things I must do.

**CAROL:** We've been given an opportunity to see how life could exist on a different plane.

**ADAM:** Canmore is a different place right now than it has been for the last twenty years - in that it's a lot quieter, a lot fewer people around. I've been going to a lot of places that I used to

go to when I was a kid, with my son. It feels a lot more like I remember it. And it feels a lot more like what I would've imagined doing with my kid than what I've been able to do until now.

**CAROL:** My neighbourhood really hasn't been all that connected - we've seen a lot of overturn of the houses over the decades we've lived here. But suddenly, we're all connected again! There's ways that we are finding to maintain connection, and it seems to be, interestingly enough, drawing us together, whereas our previously stupid-busy lives didn't allow us that opportunity. I hope that the lessons we are learning right now about connection will be held on to. What we're seeing is: yeah, there's a lot of fear, because of the economic situation, but I'm also seeing a really loud chorus of optimism - that we are going to learn something here, that the world that we restart doesn't need to look like the one we just walked away from.

**FIONA:** I really profoundly don't want things to go back to the "normal" of before. I want the world to change and stay changed for the better; people more connected, people more aware and tuned in and loving and caring, people getting outside and reconnecting with nature more.

**CAROL:** Do we all really need that which we accumulate? Have we missed Bed, Barn & Beyond? Or whatever it's called... Have we really missed that stuff? What we have truly missed is the people, not the stuff. But we live in a society where we've been hard-wired to get up and have a career, make money. That keeps me up at night.

**INTERVIEWER:** Well, maybe this pandemic is just what we've needed.

**CAROL:** As long as we learn the *lesson*. Instead of just, you know, busting out and going "well that's over!" Which is what we're starting to see right now...

**BUDDY:** May...

**INTERVIEWER:** May.

**BUDDY:** This time...

**INTERVIEWER:** The Government of Alberta plans to reopen the economy.

**BUDDY:** It's the new year to us. Everything starts in May.

**TENAYA:** I was thinking that this would not end until November, or something, so I was really surprised to see that the Alberta Government is opening businesses up... Or like, allowing that.

**ADAM:** Canmore reopening means tourism reopening. I think there's a little bit of anxiety about that. And a little bit of anxiety, to be honest, about that impulse itself, which is to be wary of people coming from elsewhere. You know, I'm worried about the xenophobia that's emerging.

**MICK:** There's this inherent tension between people needing to get back to work, needing to provide an income, trying to start the piecing of our lives back together, with the fact that that means inviting strangers into our community.

**FIONA:** There have been Canmore residents out in the streets with picket signs, reading - pretty much: "Go home. Don't come into our town. You're putting us at risk." Which I get, but like...



**MICK:** People seem to be of the opinion that the shutdown was a not-get-sick-ever plan. The point of flattening the curve wasn't for nobody to ever get sick, it was to make sure our healthcare systems were beefed up and ready to rock and roll. And the fear that I'm hearing from a lot of people is based in misunderstanding that healthy people actually need to get sick now.

**NIA:** I understand the issues with the xenophobia coming out of this, but remember: this place was once rural, and the "Rural West" has a DIY ethos based in the experience of overcoming significant struggle in order to leave home (the Urban East) for a "better" life that not everyone approves of, rooted in self-identification, freedom and some concept of "wilderness." Whether home is Toronto or India, that story sticks. Add the ongoing experience of having Eastern policy, news, memories, and culture thrust up you and this place, only to watch it fail in a landslide of roadkill, water shortages, pollution, and trying to make your new home a little more like your old one. That is ongoing colonization: the constant unsettling of old and re-settling of something new.

## **INTERLUDE: The Three**

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**EDNA:** 1859. Captain Palliser's party started on their third expedition to probe the mountains from the west looking for a pass that could be used by the Canadian Pacific Railway. Palliser's chief assistant, James Hector, a twenty-five year old medical student, wrote in his diary...

**JAMES:** Towards evening an excellent camping place was reached opposite a mountain with three peaks, which forms a very imposing group. In a nearby clearing we made camp and stayed for several days making a geological study of the rock formation.

**ROGERS:** They look the same as they did to me that morning in September 1883.

**INTERVIEWER:** *Major Rogers, 191 years old.*

**ROGERS:** There had been quite a heavy snowstorm in the night, and when we got up in the morning and looked out of the tent I noticed each of the three peaks had a heavy veil of snow on the north side and I said to the boys, 'Look at the Three Nuns'.

**EDNA:** They were called the Three Nuns for quite a while but later were called the 'Three Sisters'. More protestant-like, I suppose.

**BUDDY:** We don't name... You know, unlike the Euro-Canadians, we don't name mountains after people. Because we're not worthy, we're not worthy to be named after that mountain. Look at me, you know? That's majestic - it's a spirit, it's a big spirit. Like in Chief John Snow's book, he lays down "these mountains are our sacred places." Before, we don't just go up there just to hike, we go up there to pray, to do our ceremonies and rituals. We respect the mountains. They're alive. We only have names as landmarks. We call these *Yamnîbi*, but later on it was - by the Euro-Canadians - was called Three Sisters. *Yamnî* is "three". "The three" is what they're called.

## **SCENE SIX: Wake**

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**AURORA:** “Hey, it’s still a pandemic. We’ve got masks.” Like, when we saw people who weren’t wearing a mask we were like: “you need to wear a mask.” If they said no, we were like: “we would like to invite you to leave.”

**INTERVIEWER:** *The 25th of May: George Floyd is brutally killed by cops in Minneapolis, which sparks a series of protests across the continent and around the world against police brutality and systemic racism.*

*(Masks. Signs: “Stop trying to justify injustice. Black Lives Matter.”, “The system is built to suffocate us. Let us breathe.”, “I can’t breathe.”, etc.)*

**AURORA:** I was one of the four organizers of the Black Lives Matter protest in Banff.

**INTERVIEWER:** *Aurora, 38.*

**AURORA:** And... it was... I had a few people tell me that it was the largest thing they ever saw in town.

**FIONA:** I went to the protests in Calgary. It was scary. I went to all three and got Covid testing yesterday... Thankfully negative.

**AURORA:** I had a morning call with Alberta Health. Turns out - I didn’t realize this - the Public Health Order against gatherings of people does not count against protests. The right to protest is supposedly inviolate... somebody should tell our government. I figured from the start we were breaking the law, but apparently we’re not. So Alberta Health Services was like “well, we can’t endorse this, but we’re gonna help you.” And... there was a number of officials from AHS that actually came to the protest, as participants in the protest. They would make recommendations, but we didn’t have to follow them, and even when we said no, they would continue helping us. So that was really wonderful. And then, of course, there’s also the internet noise, about how we shouldn’t be doing this... How unnecessary it was, or how risky it was, or when we get locked down again it’s our fault, or whatever else. So I was really grateful that Dr. Hinshaw actually put out the other day that she’s like “I’m not aware of any cases of any outbreaks at all from any of the protests.”

**FIONA:** The transmission rate was so low because of preventative measures.

**AURORA:** I’ve been hearing stories of changes people have already made... Like, there’s a restaurant in town, the Radiant, that actually put an item on their menu that’s a white vanilla cake. And I tried it out the other day, and it’s this white cake that when you cut open is actually, like, vanilla charcoal inside. And they put this card down on the table, it says “food for thought”, and they put it down and walk away. So I read the thing, and it says... *(She pulls out a phone. Reading off it:)* “From the outside, this white vanilla cake is our vision of the world today - the American dream, perfect society, happy, comfortable, social environment that we idealize. Underneath its surface, though, is the foundation of oppression we fed into over years of systemically repetitive history. You thought you were getting the vanilla cake - think again. In a world where vanilla-ism dominates, we lose the virtues of every other equally valuable flavour.” *(Puts down the phone.)* So I’m, like, *crying*...

**CAROL:** If we could learn something here it would be valuable, but I’m not confident.

**JUDY:** People in general have a tendency to move on quickly and forget the past.

**INTERVIEWER:** *Bye!*

**STEVIE:** Hold on, sorry... *(Turns away.) Bye, Christine! Don't fall in the river... Are you taking the T-Rex? (Turns back.)* Christine has a friend that has three T-Rex costumes, so sometimes they get drunk on the river and then dress up in T-Rex costumes.

*(Two T-Rex's emerge and roam about.)*

**STEVIE:** They took the bus to Lake Louise... *ha!* They took the bus to Lake Louise, like, three weeks ago, and I'm just like "you're not allowed to tell me these things." But, her and her friend who was the cook where she was working, they get bored, and they took the bus to Lake Louise and then he put on his T-Rex costume and was, like, running around on the shore, and she's taking video, and...

*(One of the dinos starts to film and take pictures of the other.)*

**BUDDY:** We're in a very fast lane... everyone is fast. Today everything's going fast, you know? Even at home... Everything. And it seems to me that it's going towards destruction.

**ADAM:** This is where bears would go, this is where elk would go, historically. This is why this valley in particular was Indigenous territory, why it was a trade route... It's where the animals go. It's already no longer where the animals go, it's where the animals come to die. More animals die here than are born here. And this is the place where they should be born and moving to other areas and populating other areas - it should be a surplus producer of bears here, and it's not - it's where we kill bears.

**AURORA:** Sleeping Buffalo Mountain...

**INTERVIEWER:** Or Tunnel Mountain.

**AURORA:** It's a legend... it's an apocalypse legend.

**BUDDY:** And one day everything's going to be computerized... You know, right now they're probably looking at us from a satellite. They can type into your computer, they can type into my phone, they know who I am.

**AURORA:** When you look at it from this angle, it looks like a buffalo, and the legend says that when the sleeping buffalo wakes, that's a sign that the world is ending.

**BUDDY:** What's going to happen in twenty year's time? We're gonna get stricter and... Some kind of disastrous thing is coming, you know. And I don't know what it is. Maybe I'll get it wrong. But it might happen. Maybe it might not. You know... it just...

*(A third dino costume is presented.)*

**BUDDY:** But on the other side, my dream is: let's stop now. Let's stop destroying the world, and just live simply. Why? Why not?

*(A flash becomes an asteroid.)*

**END OF ACT ONE.**

***Thank you for reading.  
This is a working draft of “Patients”  
and interviews are ongoing.  
I plan to continue submitting  
updated versions of the script -  
stay tuned!***

***Warmly,  
Eric***