

# TEEN FLEES UKRAINE

**Article by KTN war correspondent Diana Gerbershagen of Germany (former exchange student to Cranbrook), age 17**

War has returned to Europe after more than 50 years of peace. It is unimaginable, that there could be war in the EU in our modern times. But this year we all have been proved wrong. War made a comeback in the middle of Europe's heart.

Russia's president Putin brought the war back to Europe. Since 2014, with the conquest of the Crimean Peninsula, relations between Russia and the Ukraine have been strained. But with the invasion of Putin's troops into the Ukraine in February 2022, the situation escalated. Two months into the war and there is no end in sight. The east of the Ukraine has already been taken by Russian troops. Over 5 million Ukrainians, mainly women and children, had to leave their homes and flee to other countries. According to OHCHR (United Nation Human Rights website, visited on 28th April), at least over 2800 Ukrainian civilians died, including at least over 200 children. And those are only official numbers - there are so many destroyed places, so many starving people, so many dead soldiers, that we, living in our safe homes, cannot even imagine.

What seems to be so far away, can become close. I got the chance to talk to two Ukrainians who had fled from Mykolaiv (Ukraine) and are now staying at their aunt's house in Mainz (Germany). The daughter is 15 years old, has 5 best friends that are now scattered all over the world. She is in 11th grade and is dancing professionally (she wants to be an choreographer one day.) Her mother is an engineer and is travelling the world. Her husband

and son stayed in the Ukraine to work and study. Even though the men wanted to fight for their country, there were just not enough arms for them to do so.

*"We did not leave voluntarily."*

Three weeks after the war started, the Russian troops came close to their hometown. The family decided that the mother and the daughter had to stay in Odessa (Ukraine) for a few days. They had two bags and their dog with them. Often, they heard the siren to warn people of danger and to hide in the basement. They heard the bombs flying over head and could tell about how far away they were. The bombs land in one place, but then spread out in different directions, so there was always the fear of not knowing where the bomb would be. "It was impossible to sleep," said the mother with a pale, shocked face and tears in her eyes. As the invasion progressed and expanded, they needed to leave the country. They drove 30 hours by bus and finally came to Germany.

Everyday, they contact their family in Ukraine, who are doing fine so far. A lot of the houses in the neighbourhood are destroyed though. Their house is still standing, but they have unexploded warheads lying in their yard. "We did not leave voluntarily", said the mother and the daughter. "We want to go back to the Ukraine as soon as possible".



**Photo submitted. Destruction is evident in Mykolaiv, Ukraine.**

Even though there is nothing funny about it, they shared some absurd moments to laugh about. Once, two Russian tanks came to their town, but because one did not have enough fuel, the Russian soldiers left it there to get gas with the second tank. Some Ukrainian civilians put a Ukrainian flag on the tank in the meantime. When the Russian troops came back they saw the tank and thought it was a Ukrainian tank and shot it.

Another moment was with an older lady. She was watering her plants on her balcony, when a Russian drone flew by her balcony and "stared" at her. She did not want it to look at her, so she looked around her balcony and found a tin can of tomatoes. She took it and threw it at the drone. She never saw the drone again.

Those stories are just the tip of the iceberg. As the Ukrainians told me: "We are appreciating not everyday now, but every second." So let's also appreciate our safe homes and our peaceful lives and help others who do not have it. You might wonder now: How can I help? Well, you have many options here. For example, my school has opened a welcome class for Ukrainian teens. People at my school, who speak Russian or Ukrainian, as I do, can help them out by being a buddy and welcoming them. Here are some different options: You can help by donating money to certified organisations. Secondly, if you have the possibility, you can take some Ukrainians into your home. Thirdly, you can demonstrate against the war. And finally, don't be quiet! War is never right or good, so tell your opinion to others and share it! Let's bring peace back to Europe!

*What is Diana's biggest regret? "I regret not drinking coffee this morning but also let regrets go! Personally, I like to learn from my mistakes and change my future and not regret my choices."*

## SPRING IN THE SELKIRKS



**Photo of Dark-eyed Junco by Hazel Raine.**

**Hazel Raine of Creston, age 14**

Lately I've been paying more attention to the birds around me, exploring what the life of a feathered being entails. Goldeneye, Dark-eyed Junco, Stellar Jay, Osprey, Nighthawk, Flycatcher, Tree Swallow, Grebe, Pileated Woodpecker, Brown Creeper, Catbird, Red-winged Blackbird, Rufous Hummingbird. The need to name - to place each individual bird in its own labelled box - comes from a place that yearns to know, to classify, to see through the naturalist's eyes.

The Creston Valley Bird Festival happens annually in May to foster awareness of birds and their habitats in the Creston Valley.

*What does Hazel regret? "My biggest regret is failing to speak up when it's important; whether for myself or others. It's always a slap-to-the-head moment after I realize I missed that moment to vocalize my thoughts."*

# MORE THAN A CAPSTONE PROJECT GONE RIGHT

Interview and article by Nico Hammer of Creston, age 18

Written and illustrated by first-year TRU student Sydney Sunderland, *I am Everything in Between* is a children's book highlighting and celebrating how people don't have to fit into specific gender stereotypes. Officially for ages 4-8, but informative for all ages, the message is that it's okay to be yourself.

Sydney had no intention of publishing a children's book right out of high school but having received supremely positive feedback from friends and teachers, she decided to send it to multiple publishers, and Rebel Mountain Press agreed to publish it.

With the topic of gender identity being a bit of a taboo subject in the past, Sydney wasn't expecting to receive as much support as she did when creating and publishing the book. "I was a bit surprised with how many people or how much support I got because I had had support from the beginning from my family and my friends, my teachers but with the amount of support I've gotten from people I don't know...and I've gotten people coming up to me and saying congratulations and I just didn't expect that much support from the outside world," she said, smiling.

"Gender identity is a big spectrum, there's no right or wrong and you can change your mind too."

The book is more than just a capstone project gone right, Sydney wrote this book from a personal view hoping to help inspire and educate everyone to be who they are. "It came from my own experience because when I was a kid I didn't fit into a stereotypical gender norm of a little girl like a lot of my friends did...but there were times as well where I would get negative reactions from other kids my age or older kids or even from adults sometimes just because of the way that I dressed or the way that I presented myself or the type of activities I chose to do," she says, adding that for kids it's not a thought process they have and it can be devastating to them if unsupported.

"When you're a kid you don't really think about why you want to wear different clothes or why you want to play a sport instead of dance classes but getting those negative comments was definitely confusing and hurtful to me growing up... I think it's an important message not only for kids to see but also really important for parents, teachers, other adults, and older kids as well because it is definitely confusing. Especially with more information and more openness about the topic it's important for kids to have something to help understand."

Having known others struggling with their gender identity and even struggling with it herself to this day, Sydney states how identity is a spectrum and it's not required to always know where you stand on it.

"As someone who struggled with their gender identity and continues to a little bit, I think it's really important to be yourself. Once I started expressing myself the way I wanted to it was really validating for me and once I started presenting myself the way I wanted like when I cut my hair



Photo submitted. Author Sydney Sunderland holding her book: from capstone project to published product.

or started dressing the way that I wanted to I felt a lot happier...It's okay to not have it figured out and you don't have to put a label on yourself if you're not ready. I think that it's important to know that everyone figures things out at their own pace. You could figure out your gender identity when you're 10 years old or you could figure it out when you're 25 or you could figure it out when you're 40, there's no timeline and it's just important to stay true to yourself because you don't need to have it figured out...It really is a big spectrum there's no right or wrong and you can change your mind too" she says with a grin.

And lastly, she had some exciting and supportive words for those who want to try and take their capstone further. "I think if you want to, you should put yourself out there and you should try because you'll never know if you don't try... I think the capstone gives a great automatic support system in most cases because you'll have your teachers and your peers already there with you so I would take advantage of that while you have that help and resources available to you and if you have your ideas then I think just take it as far as you can because you won't regret it."

I AM EVERYTHING IN BETWEEN can be found wherever you buy books... but buy local!

What regret does Nico carry? "My biggest regret is not trying very hard in school because now my interests have changed but I don't have the grades to pursue them."

## YOUTH, FEMALE, QUEER REPRESENTATION

Article by Maya Provencal of Rossland, age 23



Photo submitted. Young Leader Maya Provencal. What is Maya's biggest regret? "Not investing my paper route money into Bitcoin 15 years ago. Haha."

Three years into my degree I was invited to sit on a committee of professors, administrators, students and scientists to create a sustainable waste management plan for my university. I was selected, along with a handful of classmates, out of a student population of over 45,000. Sustainability had always been a passion of mine and I was honoured that someone high up in the university had recognized my commitment to the cause.

This committee held six meetings over the course of the year and I didn't contribute a single thing to the sustainable waste management plan because I was too nervous to participate. I felt less intelligent, less qualified, less important than everyone else in the room. I believe that my nervousness was, in part, due to a general lack of diversity in professional and academic spaces. Growing up, I didn't see a lot of youth, women, or queer folks in leadership positions in government or in academia. As a result, I didn't see myself as worthy of a seat at the table.

Luckily, I have since realized that I am intelligent, qualified, and important enough to speak up. I am

honoured to now have the opportunity to use my voice and represent the youth, the women, and the queer community in our region through my work with the Stronger BC Young Leaders Council where I will be joining other youth in providing feedback on policy at the provincial level. My hope is that youth across the province will see themselves in this council to use their voice too.

Want more say politically? The StrongerBC Young Leaders Council is an opportunity for young British Columbians to share their expertise and lived experience with the provincial government. Their input will help shape government policies and services on topics that include employment, the environment, mental health supports, affordability and other areas. A future intake is expected as existing members complete their terms. New members will be selected with the goal of representing all regions of the province as well as the diverse backgrounds and experiences of young people in B.C. No previous experience is required.

# WHAT IS YOUR BIGGEST REGRET?

High School Spotlight: students from the Grand Fork Secondary School Journalism Club in Grand Forks, BC, share their responses



Photo submitted. From left to right: Dorothy Keys; Daelen Clark; and Breanna Warren. Kent missing but there in spirit.

DAELEN CLARK, GRADE 12

My biggest regret, or at least for right now, was when I first went shopping for my grad suit along with my sister. As my mother was paying for the suit, and paying the \$800 price tag, I began thinking about how the price of the suit seemed to be as expensive as the high bills you'd get from Wal-Mart. And as such, I attempted to quip about how you could get the same prices from Wal-Mart. That kinda poor planning and poor wording led to me embarrassing myself as I looked stupid when I said it, which my mother and sister made clear to me. This regret over expensive suit prices emphasized my fears around telling lousy jokes and embarrassing myself.

KENT ARMSTRONG, GRADE 8

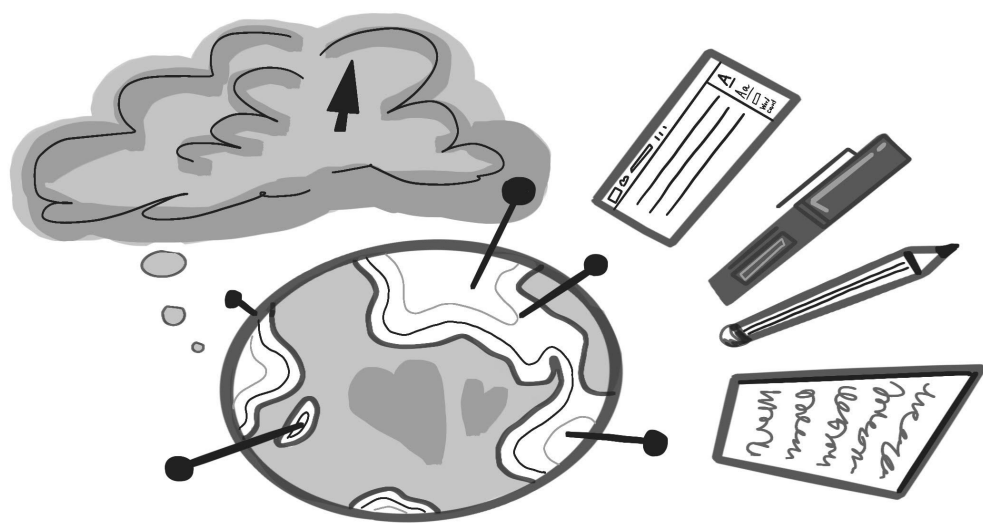
I got my thick-skulled dog, Sirius Black, on January 28, 2021, from Rock Creek, or more accurately my parents got him for me. My dog does some less than smart things, like eating socks, and walking into door frames. My biggest regret is not training him to be less stupid. If I had trained him to like people, he wouldn't be so scared of people, but I'm working on it. If I had trained him to walk better sooner, I wouldn't have to be teaching him to walk better now, when it is a lot harder. But I am on my way to fixing my problems. However long it takes.

BREANNA WARREN, GRADE 8

My biggest regret is not moving to Grand Forks sooner. I did not have a good school year in Alberta because of bullying. I argued with my parents that I did not want to move to Grand Forks because I had friends, yet that was not completely true. The only close friends I had in Alberta were the ones I danced with. My dance friends helped me forget about the problems I had at school. I think moving to Grand Forks was one of the best things that has ever happened to me. I have made multiple friends. The school here is amazing. The teachers are great and are always willing to help you review, study, or understand your assignments. I have joined the volleyball team at Grand Forks Secondary School and really love it. I also joined a drama performance called "Newsies". Both activities are very fun and a great way to meet others. Don't get me wrong, there are people and things I miss about Alberta, but I really enjoy British Columbia.

DOROTHY KEYS, GRADE 11

I believe that regret is something we can choose to have. Regret holds people to the past when they could be looking towards the future. Yes, there are things in my life that I didn't want to happen, and I would give anything to reverse them. But they helped shape who I am today. Many of those things I had no control over. I moved to the Kootenays in the middle of my Grade 9 year. I did not want this to happen to me, I didn't want to leave my friends. But I had to, and through that I have met some of the best people and had the best experiences. While things have gone wrong in my life, the way I see it, we can choose how we look at bad situations that have happened. They can either be a thing we will regret and hold against ourselves and others for the rest of our lives, or as a way to learn and grow as people. I choose to do the latter because if I didn't, I wouldn't be where and who I am today.



## HIGH FIVES

by Maeve Hawksbee of Winlaw, age 15



What big or small accomplishment made you proud this month?

"I did a painting I was really proud of." ~Aurora, age 15

"I went to the dentist and realized that you always have something to improve." ~Watt, age 16

"I wrote a couple narrative essays that I was proud of!" ~Aziel, age 14

## WRITE THE WORLD: BEST EXPERIENCE OF MY LIFE

Illustration and article by Ava Campbell Wall of Beasley, Age 14

Calling all teen writers! Have you ever wanted to have your work published, receive peer reviews, or enter writing competitions? Try Write the World, a global forum for writers aged 13-19. Writers can publish poetry, short stories, and essays, and interact with other writers through comments and peer reviews.

I've been on Write the World for nearly a year, and it is one of the best

experiences of my life.

I love reading other youth writers' work and giving feedback, and receiving feedback from them in return. Their monthly writing competitions are a unique opportunity for youth writers to win cash prizes, and they have detailed, reflective writing prompts available to respond to year-round. I've grown so much as a writer through the lovely, welcoming community, and served as a Community Ambassador last fall; an internship-style program which allowed me

to meet and connect with other Ambassadors worldwide.

A testimonial from Madison Zuniga, WtW Community Ambassador Alum: "Write the World has provided an invaluable experience for me over my years of high school and into college. The community is unique and enriching, and my writing skills have been improved by the presence of other young and passionate writers. Easy to join, intuitive, and encouraging, of all the writing platforms out there for young people, I would say Write the

World is the best!"

I would highly recommend Write the World for any youth interested in expanding their writing skills, peer reviewing, or simply connecting with like-minded, creative teens from across the globe!

Find Write the World online at <https://www.writetheworld.com/>

What does Ava regret? "I regret regretting things...so I guess I should learn to stop regretting things!"

# ARTS

## Kootenay Youth (alternative title Age 17, Nelson)

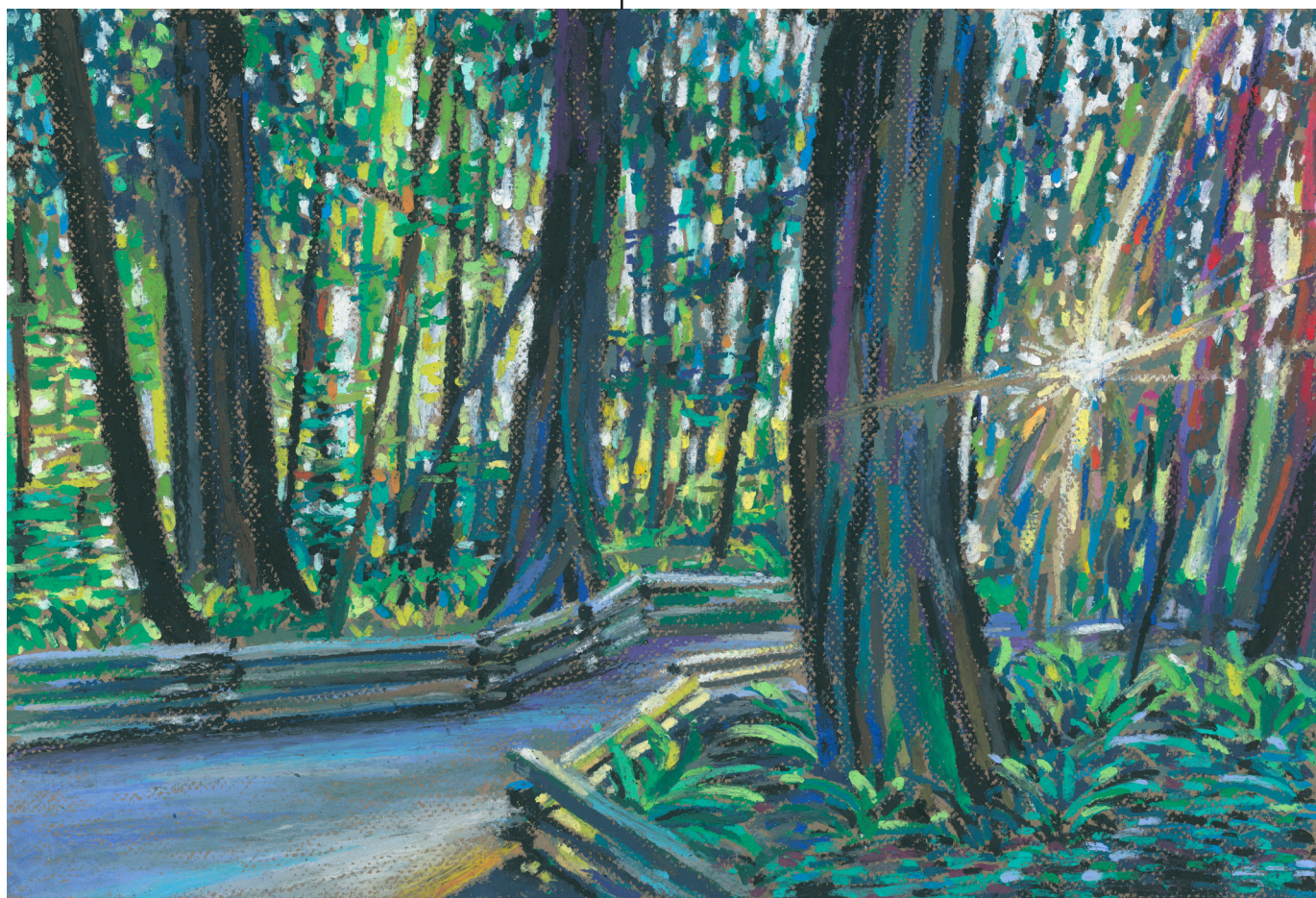
Poem by Mika Elkuf-Warthe of  
Queen's Bay, age 17

Cradled by mountains  
My whole life  
Stagnant and familiar  
Unchanging but comfortable

Suffocating  
Who needs air  
When a view like this will  
Steal my breath anyway

I live  
Cupped in massive stone hands  
Densely dappled with tall green hairs  
I am soft and safe inside the alpine womb

What is Mika's biggest regret? "Well, I think I regret how quickly I reached the limit to this prompt's word cou--"



**Worth More Standing**, painted by David Ivanchikov of Shoreacres, Castlegar, age 17

## THE NOVEL THAT MAKES YOU THINK

Book review by Maya Krause of  
Nelson, age 15

The Giver, a 1993 YA novel written by Lois Lowry, is a morally driven, gripping story. It follows a 12 year-old boy named Jonas, who thinks he lives in a utopian society, but when he is chosen to be the next receiver of memory, his whole world is turned upside down.

He lives in a society where no one has a sense of individual identity and their lives have been regulated since birth, from who their parents are, to their partners, to their jobs.

On Jonas's voyage of discovery, he realizes there is more to life than the way things have been done and he makes a dramatic decision to change the system.

This novel made me think about cultural differences, the importance of memory and how we are drawn to things that we have never experienced. In Jonas's case, because his society removed pain and emotion in the hopes that it would create a more efficient system, he wanted to share this with the rest of the community.

Was his decision in the end the right choice? As a reader I liked how this novel made me think about both viewpoints and how I would run a community. This novel brought my friends and I together and allowed us to discuss many topics in the story.

What does Maya regret? "My biggest regret is when I went to Vernon for a cross country ski race, I was very hyped about the race until I hurried around a sharp corner and crashed not just once but twice, which led to me being a bit behind but at least it was caught on camera."



Book reviewer Maya with support of her dog, Kuma

## STREET TALK

KTN correspondent Ashleigh Germaine of Nelson, age 13, asked youth at Trafalgar Middle School: If you could change something in the world, what would you change?



"I'd definitely try to change world hunger. I'd try to change all the wars and the bad things that are going on." ~Jakub, 14



"Climate change because that is a really bad thing right now." ~Ayla, 13



"I know that I would definitely change everybody's cars to electric, even though it might cost a lot of money for the charging stations, it would reduce greenhouse gases by so much and the world might be cooler again." ~Ben, 13

What does Ashleigh regret? "My biggest regret is being so shy when I was younger that I missed out on so many opportunities."

# KTN NEEDS YOU!

We are looking for teen journalists, photojournalists, and reviewers. Interested, but never done it before? Don't worry! We can teach you!

And we are looking for stories! Something happening in your community that we should know about? Let us know! Contact Editor Melodie Rae at the Nelson Public Library at [mstorey@nelson.ca](mailto:mstorey@nelson.ca).

