



The Grain is Ready by Peiter Molenaar, oil on canvas, 24" x 48", [www.alicatgallery.com](http://www.alicatgallery.com)

# A Country Road

To every thing there is a season, and a time  
to every purpose under heaven.

A time to be born, and a time to die;  
a time to plant, and a time to pluck up that  
which is planted.

Ecclesiastes

written by Cynthia Reyes

It's just past dawn when I open the side door of our small blue house in the woods. Across the lawn at the edge of a patch of woodland, Mindy, all glossy black fur and guilt, slinks away. Below our bird feeder, grey and blue feathers are scattered on the grass.

Mindy is our neighbour's cat and she's just had a blue jay for breakfast.

I suppose it's our fault, really. Mindy believes our home and grounds are hers – after all, my daughters and I have pampered her with affection and treats since she was a kitten. But how were we to know that she'd grow up to be such a fearsome predator? She delights in chasing chipmunks,

rabbits and squirrels that gather – often, quite peaceably – under the bird feeder in our garden. And when she can catch them, she kills and eats the birds.

I pick up my running shoes from their usual spot just outside our door, turn them upside down, shake them out. The last time I forgot, my foot squashed a soft, cushy frog, comfortably asleep inside my shoe. My foot and I have never forgotten that sensation and we're determined to never repeat it.

I grab my neon-green hand weights – bought at a ridiculously low price because of their crazy colour – and head into the garden. Dozens of large white hydrangea flowers nod lacy round heads over a low stone wall that follows the curve

of a long, serpentine garden bed. There are exactly six hundred and seventy-seven rocks of various shades, sizes and shapes in that wall and I know this because I placed them there myself. It took me two years and when I finally finished, the family opened a bottle of cheap champagne to celebrate the end of the long journey.

To every thing there is a season, a time for every purpose under heaven. Autumn is a busy time in the animal kingdom, each creature preparing for the change of seasons just ahead. Our resident chipmunks scurry about their business, pause to watch me, go back to work. A black squirrel runs across the grass in front of me, stops to inspect the nut held in its front paws, sniffs it, scampers off to wherever it stores food for the winter.









previous page, *After the Rain* by Lynne Schumacher, 40" x 60", [lynne.schumacher@sympatico.ca](mailto:lynne.schumacher@sympatico.ca)  
 above, *The Covered Bridge* by Bill Saunders, 18" x 24", acrylic on board, [www.crescenthill.com](http://www.crescenthill.com)

I turn left through the strip of woods that borders one side of our property. I stop for a few seconds to hopscotch on the large flat stones that my husband and I placed here to make a path from the garden gate. I grin as I hop, feeling entirely like a little girl back home in Jamaica again.

A fragrant, late-flowering clematis vine runs along the dark wood of the old split rail fence, almost covering the arbor over the garden gate before continuing along the other side. Its small cream-coloured blossoms are a charming contrast against the dark wood.

Opening the garden gate, I am only steps away from the narrow gravel lane that leads to my house. On one side of the lane, stretch hundreds of acres of dense forest. I've never made this walk without slowing down here to give thanks for the sheer grace of living in this place. It's a small slice of paradise. A never-ending landscape of woods, paths, streams, the occasional elusive whitetail deer and all the birdsong a person can glory in.

When the sun goes down, legions of stars

shine against the vast black velvet night sky. In our small paradise, nature is the star. The families who live around here have fought for decades to keep it this way.

These days, however, you can feel, taste, smell change in the air. Inevitable change is heading our way, and I know change will bring a whole new set of unknowns with it.

We left a smart new house in Toronto for a house half the size. But here, with no dining room, not enough closet space, small bathrooms – in fact, everything too small except the great outdoors – my family feels at home. We belong here.

My husband, our two daughters and I can't get through the day without bumping into each other. When my mother visits, which is often these days, the house feels comfortably full, but never overcrowded. Occasionally tempers flare but no one locks away resentments or themselves for long. It's a house of love and hugs.

"Home, the spot of earth supremely blest, a dearer sweeter spot than all the rest," wrote Robert Montgomery. This place has been my



W. SAUNDERS





Third Line by Lynne Schumacher, 40" x 32", [lynne.schumacher@sympatico.ca](mailto:lynne.schumacher@sympatico.ca)



Under the Canopy by Lynne Schumacher, 48" x 36", [lynne.schumacher@sympatico.ca](mailto:lynne.schumacher@sympatico.ca)





left page, Road to the Hideout by Henri Lobo, 24" x 30", acrylic on canvas, [www.crescenthill.com](http://www.crescenthill.com)

sanctuary, a refuge from a high-flying career in network television. Far from home, on one international flight or another, in one strange hotel room or another, in one foreign city after another, I can always close my eyes and summon up the images and sounds in the small blue house built thirty years before, nestled into the hillside.

I hear the waterfall in the little stream that runs alongside the house, gurgling and splashing its way over rocks as it courses downhill to the larger trout stream at the back. I see the banks of ferns that share the sloping land, giving way to meadow rue, wild ginger and a host of other perennials. I smile at the memory of the long, thin weeping willow branches bending down to meet the water, as if engaged in some ancient ritual of the natural world.

Change brings change, my mother always says. Much sooner than we expected when we moved in, development is already changing the local village. Fields that once sprouted corn and hay are now filled with very new, very large houses on very small lots. It's the same trail of development that forced our congregation to expand our tiny Anglican church to make room for legions of newcomers. The church handled the change well and the addition is lovely, but I suspect that not all the change will be as welcome or as neatly handled.

Out of nowhere, it seems, subdivisions crammed with new houses have sprung up, surrounding our village. When we first moved here, our home was only an eleven minute drive



Road To The Lake by Henri Lobo, 24" x 24", acrylic on canvas, [www.crescenthill.com](http://www.crescenthill.com)



Around the Bend by Henri Lobo, 36" x 24", acrylic on canvas, [www.crescenthill.com](http://www.crescenthill.com)

to the commuter train, then forty minutes on the train to downtown Toronto where my husband and I worked. Now, less than a decade later, as the number of city commuters multiplies, travel times have doubled. On some days, we spend a total of four hours in train and car, often arriving home at our paradise tired and cranky.

It's the old story of the family which moves to what it believes is the last unspoiled place on earth – or at least within driving distance of the city – not realizing that thousands of other people will soon be doing the very same thing.

"Try to remember the kind of September, when life was slow and oh so mellow..." sang the great Harry Belafonte.

I hang a right from the front gate, stride briskly up the lane, arms pumping, weights swinging. The air smells fresh and clean. Gone are the sultry days of summer. On the forest side of the lane, the berries on a mountain ash tree are turning red, as are the plumes of wild sumac and the wild apples on low spreading trees.

Our country lane, at this end, is one of those little pockets of serenity that few strangers ever enter. You come here if you have a reason – or if you're lost. Houses here range from sprawling ranch bungalows to cottages like ours. They fit easily, some imperceptibly, into the woods.

I smile at Bill's beloved Calla lilies standing magnificently tall and red in his front garden. Bill and Ginette were the first neighbours we met. A tall handsome blond couple, immigrants from





Late Afternoon Light and Shadows by Lynne Schumacher, 48" x 40", [lynne.schumacher@sympatico.ca](mailto:lynne.schumacher@sympatico.ca)



Old Muskoka Road by Adriana Rinaldi, oil on canvas, 24" x 24", [www.AdrianaRinaldi.com](http://www.AdrianaRinaldi.com)



Joyful Journey by Perry Haddock, acrylic on canvas, 30" x 30", [www.alicatgallery.com](http://www.alicatgallery.com)



Mailbox by Mike Smith, [www.mikesmith.ca](http://www.mikesmith.ca)



Untitled by Adrian deRooy, 30" x 40", oil on canvas, [www.crescenthill.com](http://www.crescenthill.com)



An Autumn to Remember by Lynne Schumacher, 48" x 36", [lynneschumacher@sympatico.ca](mailto:lynneschumacher@sympatico.ca)





the Netherlands, they proudly told our family that they'd raised nine children in their three bedroom house. We warmed to them immediately.

Bill took us on a tour of his basement workshop where he carved ornate, wooden spoon-holders. I loved the workmanship and the low price and bought one as a present for my mother. Since then, I've brought back a silver spoon from every city where I've travelled and my mother lovingly arranges them in Bill's spoon-holder.

These days, however, Bill has stopped

knew these woods like the back of his hand, but recently he's got lost there a couple of times.

Soon, Ginette tells me, they'll have to leave here, go somewhere Bill can be looked after properly.

Change brings change. I'm reminded of an Iroquois Confederacy belief that every change must be weighed by its impact on succeeding generations. A short walk into the forest, at the top of a ridge, the sign on the lookout tower announces that twelve thousand years ago in the time of glaciers, this was "the Iroquois shoreline".

leaves and frothy light-green blossoms scampering up the dense trees and tall shrubs that line the laneway. As one of the last vines to bloom, the wild cucumber is a harbinger of a harsher time ahead. Once the wild cucumber blooms, nothing can hold back the change to bitter cold weather and long dark nights.

I shiver, feel a sense of foreboding. As if, as an older relative of mine used to say, there's a goose walking over my grave.

The lane ahead is now a long ribbon of dust and

or part of their living from crops, the life source for crops is sun, soil, rain and snow. We homeowners get our water from wells which depend on the same rain and snow.

A pickup truck heads down the lane towards me, stirring up clouds of dust. The driver slows and waves. I enthusiastically wave a neon-green weight back at him. He grins, obviously amused. I grin back. If I'd been walking on a street, even in the village, we would have ignored each other. But out here on the country lane, there are certain



Sentier a Plaisance by Daniel Plante, 16" x 48", www.balcondart.com

carving. The Alzheimer's disease that was barely noticeable two years ago has advanced, making Ginette nervous when he leaves the house. Knowing this, the neighbours keep an eye out for Bill when he heads off for a walk-and-smoke into the acres of forest across the lane. Once he

Change on this scale boggles my mind. It's hard to believe that a twelve minute drive from here, what's now Lake Ontario once stretched this far north.

On both sides of the lane the wild cucumber vines are in bloom, their geometrically shaped

gravel, flanked on both sides by green oceans of corn. You can tell just by looking at the corn fields whether we've had sufficient rainfall that summer. Last year, yellow oceans of defeated corn bordered this lane on both sides.

Out here in the country, where farmers get all

conventions that must be observed. If you come across another human being – even in a pickup truck – you smile, wave, say hello. It's what we do.

I slow down in front of a long, tree-lined drive that leads to a red-brick farmhouse and a huge grey barn and stables. This is where our fourteen-





left page, Harvest Fields by J. Woodburn, 36" x 36", [www.loftgalleryart.com](http://www.loftgalleryart.com)  
above, Leading Me Home by J. Woodburn, 36" x 60", [www.loftgalleryart.com](http://www.loftgalleryart.com)  
below, A Place Called Home by J. Woodburn, 48" x 42", [www.loftgalleryart.com](http://www.loftgalleryart.com)



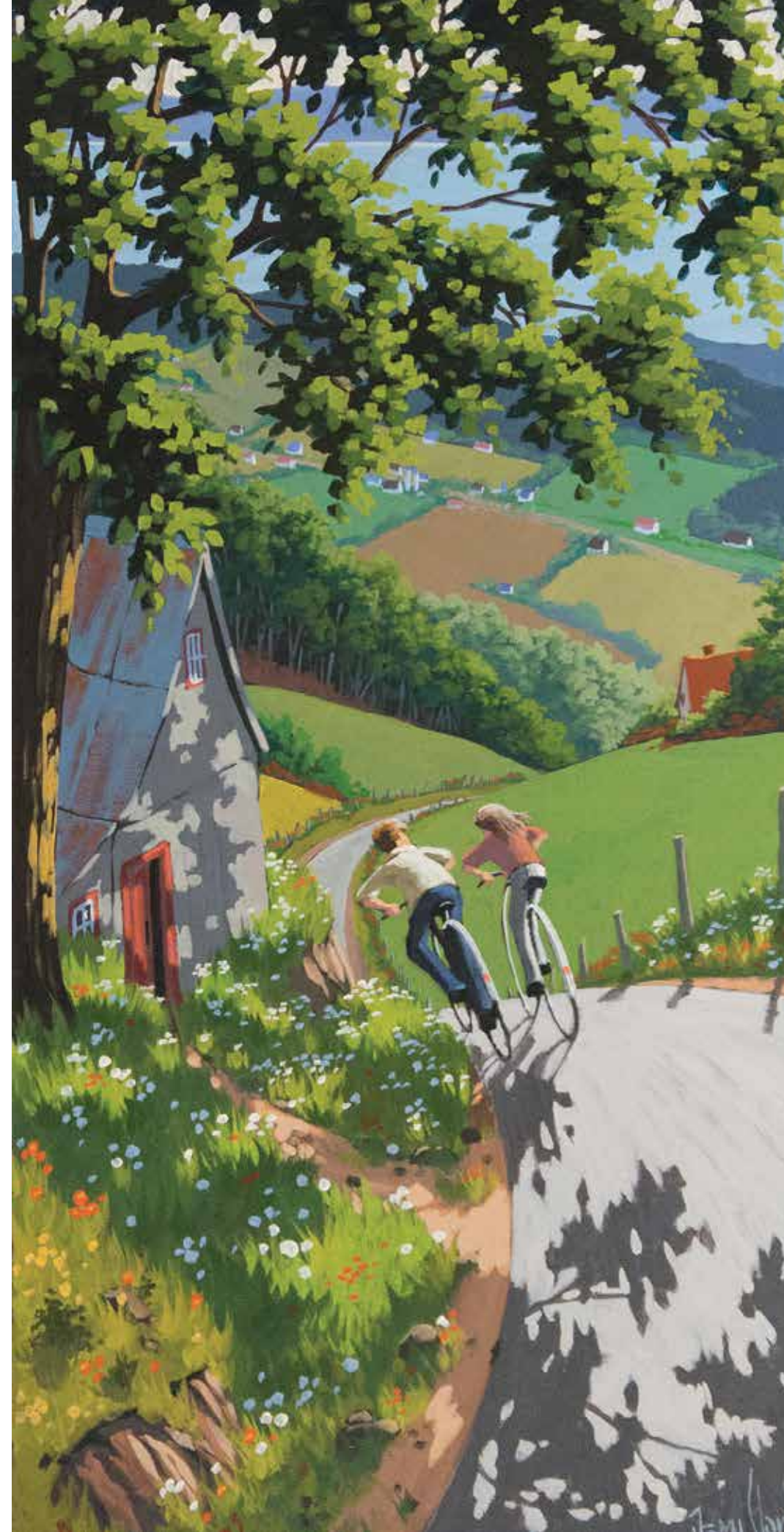




left page - top,  
Morning Sun, Morning Mist  
by Lynne Schumacher, 48" x 60",  
[lynne.schumacher@sympatico.ca](mailto:lynne.schumacher@sympatico.ca)

left page - bottom,  
Pure Country by Gordon Lewis,  
oil on canvas, 36" x 60",  
[www.assiniboia.com](http://www.assiniboia.com)

right page,  
Où allez-vous comme ça? by Rémi Clark,  
acrylic on canvas, 40" x 20",  
[www.aupitbonheur.com](http://www.aupitbonheur.com)





Highway #1 East by Luther Pokrant, oil on panel, 32" x 20", www.mayberryfineart.com



right page - bottom, Heartland by Yehouda Chaki, oil on canvas, 23" x 60", www.oenogallery.com



right page - top, Country Roads, Caledon by Brian Usher, 24" x 24", oil on canvas, brian.usher@arabelladesign.com







Upper Back Pasture by Charles Spratt, 30" x 36", charles.spratt@sympatico.ca

year-old daughter Lauren hangs out whenever she can. Because of the horses. She, like her older sister Nikisha before her, loves horses. Lauren's favourites here are Victory Star and Lady.

When Lady was in foal, Lauren lived in a state of high excitement, giving us daily reports on the expectant mother. When Lady finally gave birth, you would have thought it was Christmas and Lauren's birthday all rolled into one.

Lauren rides, grooms, cleans stables (much more diligently than her own bedroom), sketches – and dreams of one day having a horse of her very own.

Just up the lane is a grand brick house surrounded by a barn, tall grain silos and beautifully kept paddocks and fields. Horses and herds of placid cows graze in the sunlight. One of these years, according to the municipal plan, a four-lane highway will cut through here.

I imagine the bulldozers and wrecking ball destroying everything and I want to cry.

I walk to where our country lane is cut in two by the main road leading to the village. When we moved here, this was just another sleepy, country intersection through farmers' fields. But now on the far side of our gravel lane is a brand-new suburb. Big, new, two and three-storey houses on plots only slightly bigger than the houses. Long rows of them crammed together, as if Canada, the world's second largest country, is running out of room. A large man-made pond out front is supposed to make it all look rustic and natural. It doesn't. It makes the whole thing look artificial, out of place.

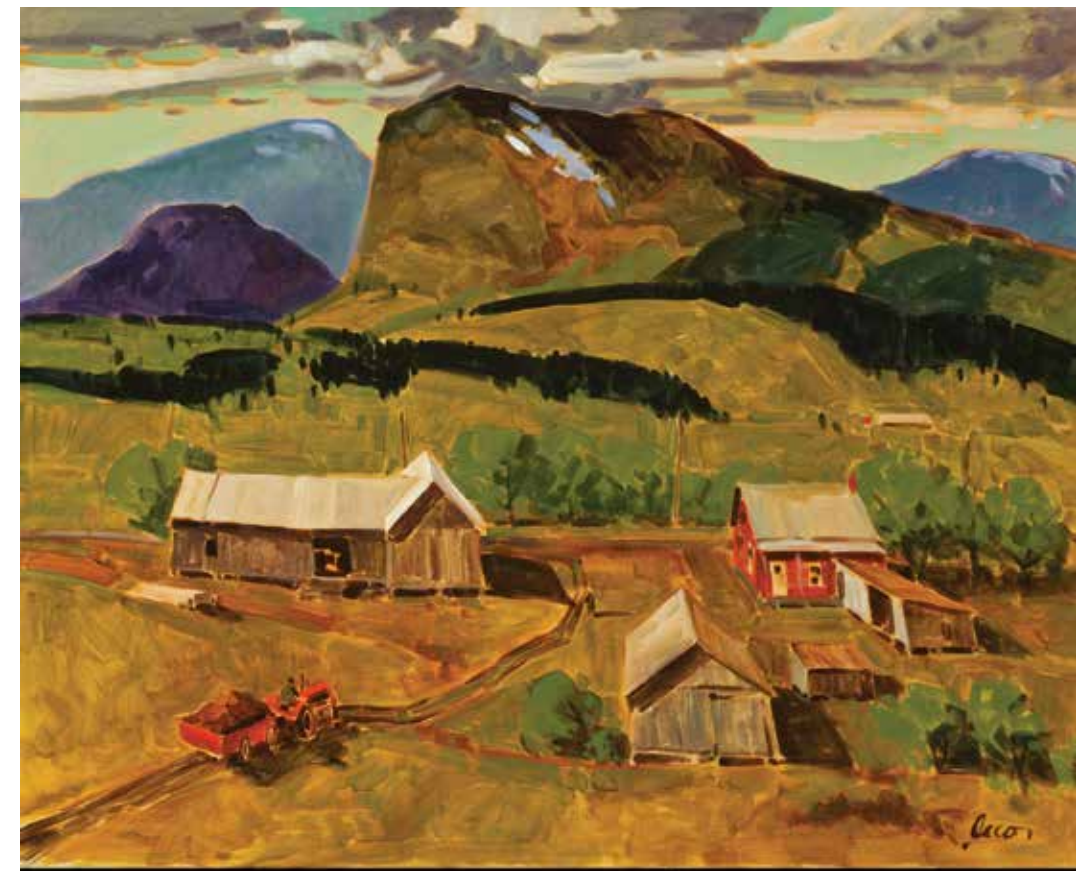
I turn around, back the way I came. To my left, a herd of jersey cows sprawl in a pasture. They too will be gone by the time the highway comes through. But they are cows and right now they seem totally content.

Whenever we come here together, my husband turns into a mischievous boy. He stops at the fence, bellows a low, convincing mooooooo. The



Autumn Gold by Douglas Laird, 30" x 48", www.westmountgallery.com





left page, Instant Magic by Claude Tremblay, 24" x 24", [www.balcondart.com](http://www.balcondart.com)  
above, Rang St. Hilarion by Paul Tex Lecor, 24" x 30", [www.balcondart.com](http://www.balcondart.com)  
below, Kenner's Mills by Paul Tex Lecor, 30" x 40", [www.balcondart.com](http://www.balcondart.com)











A Lesson in History  
by Yvette Moore, 30" x 40",  
[www.yvettemoore.com](http://www.yvettemoore.com)

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Over Horizon by Yvette Moore, 18" x 24", www.yvettemoore.com



right page - top, Hunting Gophers by Ted Raftery, oil on canvas 18" x 24", www.gainsboroughgalleries.com



Over & Beyond by Yvette Moore, 16" x 20", www.yvettemoore.com



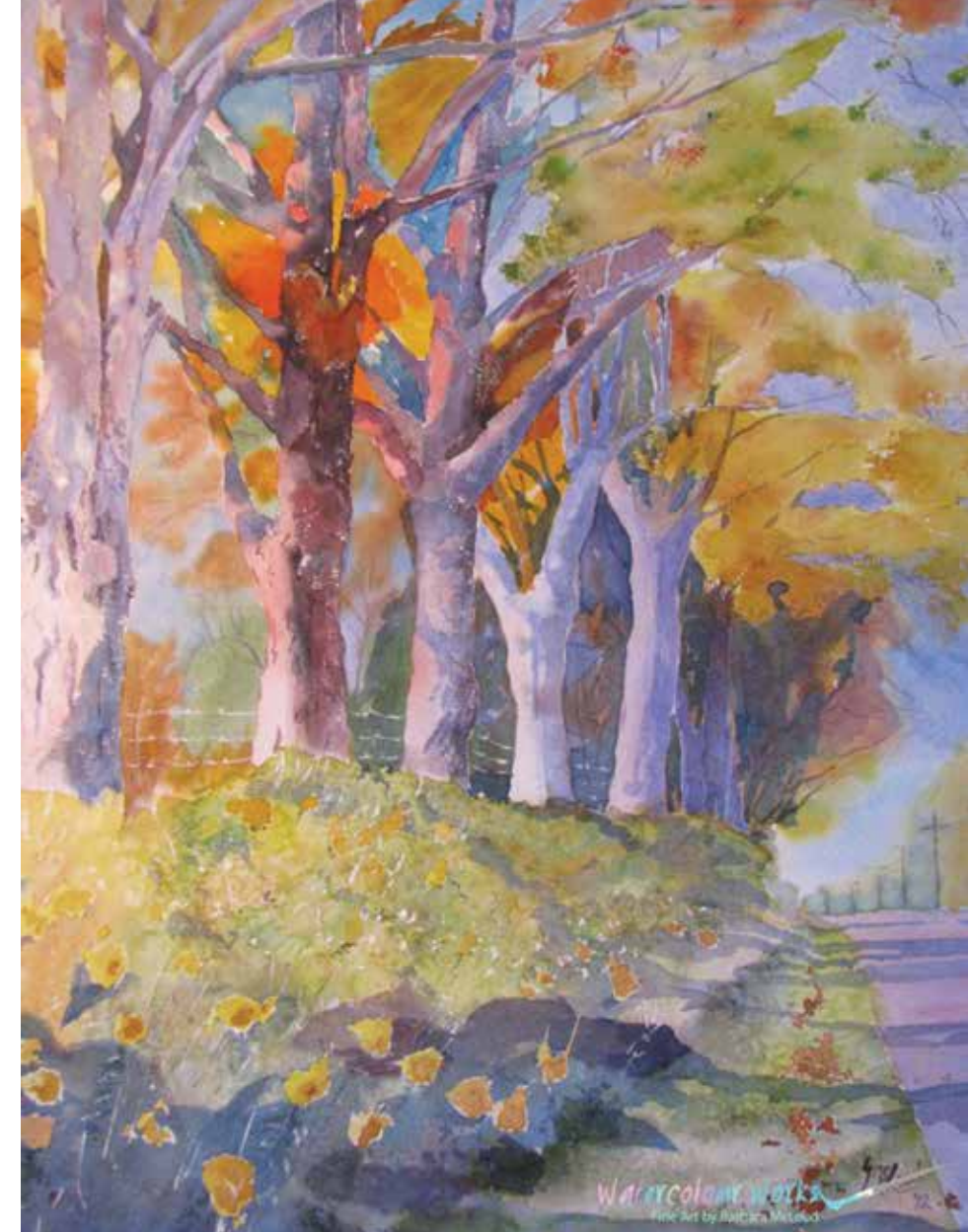
right page - bottom, Ontario Pasture by Vadim Dolgov, oil on canvas, 24" x 48", www.westmountgallery.com



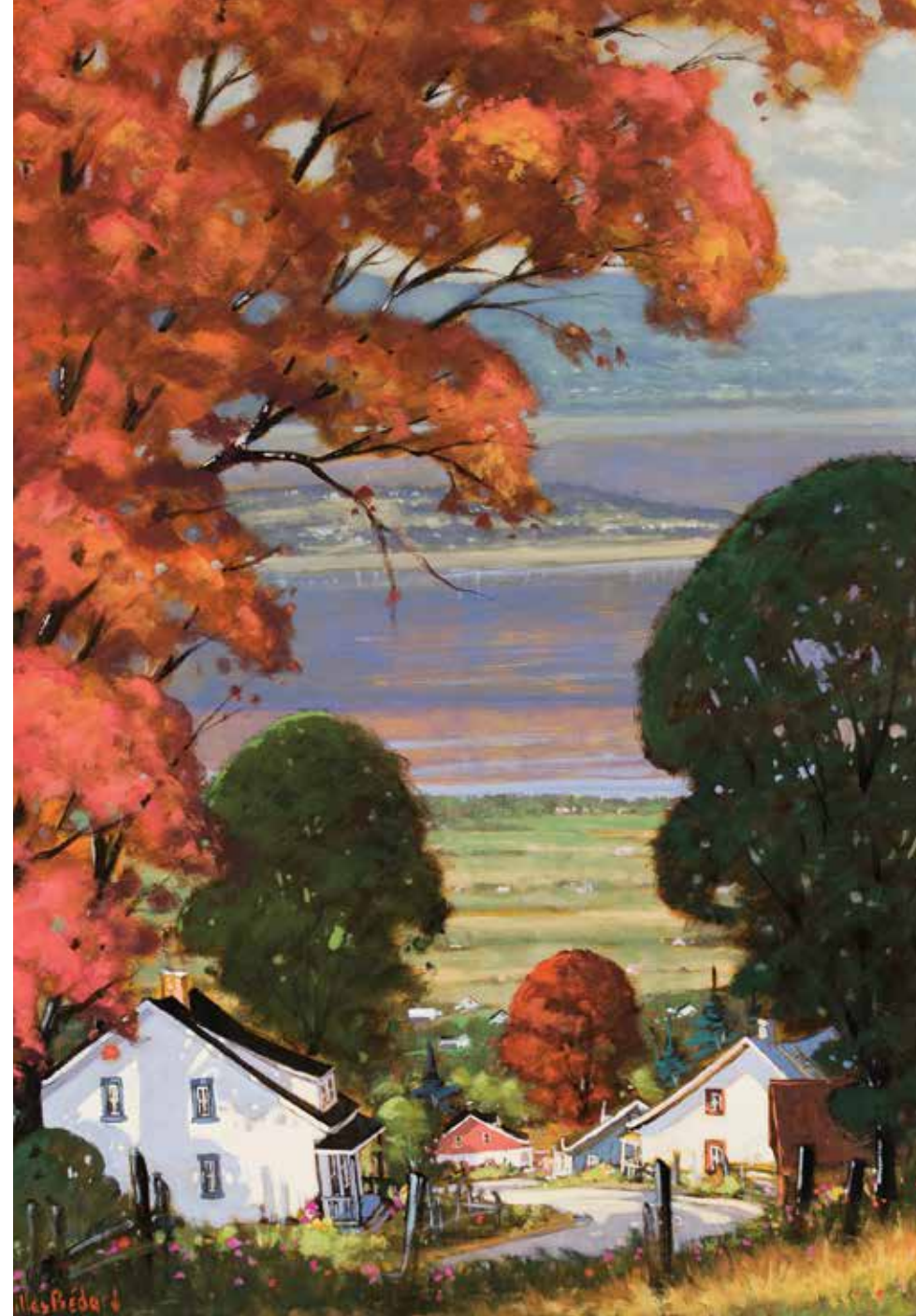




above, There Was a Road by Carl Schlademan, Acrylic on Canvas, 36 x 48", [www.assiniboia.com](http://www.assiniboia.com)  
right page - top, Pillars of Christner Road by Barbara McLeod, [bamcl@bell.net](mailto:bamcl@bell.net)  
right page - bottom, La Petite Maison Centenaire 1979 by Normand Hudon, 12 x 16", [www.balcondart.com](http://www.balcondart.com)







Baie-St-Paul, Charlevoix by Gilles Bédard, acrylic on canvas, 48 x 36", www.auptitbonheur.com

always land rich and money poor. Most of us have farmed here for a long time and made very little money in spite of all our hard work. We start at dawn, keep going till it's too dark to do anything. It's been a very hard life. When we sell the land for development, we'll finally get enough money to retire and live a whole lot better."

It's the longest speech I've ever heard this farmer make. He is usually a man of few words.

For us, the change is bittersweet. Our home sits on a few acres of land in the forest at the edge of the village. Developers could build more than half a dozen three-storey houses on it.

Every year the land becomes more valuable.

It's a catch-22 situation. If we sell, we'll make a handsome profit, but we don't want to sell. Yet, with all the increased traffic and congestion, it's getting harder and harder to get to and from the city where we work and where much-loved relatives live.

"Development giveth and development taketh away," I say to my husband, sighing. I have said it so many times in the last year that he sometimes finishes the sentence for me.

I walk back home along our country lane. Past the woods on my right and the trees and gardens and occasional neighbours on my left. I give thanks again for my good fortune – that I've been given the incredible gift of being able to live in this paradise, this Eden.

As my mother says, change brings change. Soon, we'll have to make the decision to stay or go. But not yet. Maybe when the seasons change again and the snow and bitter winds of winter have come and gone.

But not yet. Cynthia Reyes' book, *Home: Lost and Found*, will be published in 2013.

cows clumsily stand, back legs first, and lumber towards him. He and the cows greet each other. He talks softly to them, some foolishness I've never deciphered. The cows seem to understand, even if I don't.

Change brings change. We scoff at the endless, unrelenting development that encroaches on our country way of life and doubles our commuting time. But we also know that the change has brought an unexpected boon to the area. Property prices have increased dramatically.

A neighbouring farmer, for one, is delighted. "Look at it this way," he explains. "Farmers are



