

# WHO says we need fresh air?! Their story is my story



Marie LeBlanc

*Exposure to everyday chemicals can make photographer **Marie LeBlanc** sick. Even the tiniest amount of perfume, hairspray or pesticide in the air can trigger symptoms like burning eyes, headaches and skin rashes. But the artist said fresh, clean air eases her daily struggle, and when she breathed Jasper's "pristine" air in Canada, she was inspired to share her message.*

LeBlanc suffers from Multiple Chemical Sensitivity (MCS), affecting about three per cent of Canadians. She said: "Fresh air is good for everyone but for people like us it's what we are struggling for."

"It's less pain, my head is clearer. When you're in a building overexposed to certain things it affects your pain level and the way you think. In fresh air it's a little bit better. "I wanted to go to Jasper because the air is so much better there. When I go outside it's like wow, the air is so good."

LeBlanc, who lives in various places in Canada, has photographs on display at the entrance to Jasper's Habitat for the Arts.

Her art focuses on environmental illnesses and

sensitivities, and toxic environments.

She said: "I'm doing art and doing training and awareness."

"Through my photography I have different photos that express how I am feeling in that time – photos that express what it's like with multiple chemical sensitivity."

LeBlanc met Marianne Garrah, director at Jasper Community Habitat for the Arts, last summer.

Garrah said: "She was passing through town and shouted at us from across the road, she couldn't come inside the building – so that was intriguing enough."

"We started talking and she said she was raising awareness for her cause and left some photographs with us. She's telling a story through her photographs."

LeBlanc hopes to bring the other strand of her creativity to the town, too.

She has projected quotes from others suffering with environmental illnesses onto buildings in Manitoba, including the Nuit Blanche in Winnipeg and the Winnipeg Centennial Concert Hall.

She said: "I would like to project '**WHO says we need**

**fresh air?!** in Jasper and take it across Canada.

This art projection presents insights and comments from people all over the world who do their best to live their life while coping with an environmental illness. It is a dramatic eye opener to say the least if one has no knowledge of what an environmental illness can do to a person's life."

This year is the federal election. Marie would like to share her first person experience struggles in Canada and around the world as well as her personal experience.

She would also like to project **WHO says we need fresh air?!** in some fashion at Parliament Hill or at the Art Gallery nearby and meet with Prime Minister Trudeau.

In the big picture Marie is looking for solutions to improve the situation of those living with MCS and other environmental illnesses.

Marie who herself is precariously housed/homeless is passionate about improving the living situation for others like herself.

She would like to see a sustainable housing community of single detached houses built in a setting conducive to environmental illnesses to have a better quality of life, similar to that in Snowflake Arizona.

We are all affected by toxins in our environment. How long will it be until you or someone you know is affected by something in your environment?

"As I'm doing this I'm looking at others with multiple chemical sensitivity who are struggling, and I think I can do something about this."

"I'm in the same spot but this fresh air project is helping me through. Many people in Canada living with these conditions are seeking refuge and looking for pristine places such as Jasper. For them it is important to their survival just to have clean air to breathe."

Christa Upton who wrote a book on her personal story named: MCS: Banished from the Human Race ([www.blackhillspicturebooks.com](http://www.blackhillspicturebooks.com)) says this:

"Marie has a lovely talent for seeing art in the ordinary, deep emotion in people, and beauty in nature. Her photographs grab the soul. She is using this ability to bring awareness to a very important cause:

environmental illness.

People with this illness are marginalized, ignored, and even abused at the hands of doctors, so they are in desperate need of advocacy. Environmental illness is slowly being recognized as a real, physical illness in more and more countries around the world, but much more awareness is needed.

Marie has created many amazing photographs, given many good interviews, and brought the cause to life through her creative, outdoor projection project. She has done all this while fighting near-homelessness and this same illness herself, courageously jaunting across provinces to approach people and collect stories".



Marie LeBlanc

*Marie LeBlanc is an artist, poet and photographer, with a background in alternative health and Bachelor of Arts in Human Geography and Sociology (Advanced Major). She advocates and has been active in many committees to create awareness for people with various disabilities. She was awarded the Mental Health Volunteer Hero of the year in 2012 and has helped coordinate mental health walks.*

*She is currently living in a 1991 dodge campervan which she gutted herself, although it leaks quite a bit.*

Marie was asked to make a video on her experience of living with MCS for MCS Awareness month last May.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3NFw0y6cl54&feature=youtu.be>

Part of this article was first published in the Jasper Fitzhugh online newspaper in January 2019. <https://www.fitzhugh.ca/she-was-passing-through-town-and-shouted-at-us-from-across-the-road/>

## Upcoming Art Exhibitions and showings

Read more articles that Marie wrote in the Community News Commons online news hub which include:

<https://www.communitynewscommons.org/?s=Marie+leblanc>

<https://www.communitynewscommons.org/our-city/education/art-projection-focuses-on-environmental-illnesses/>

Please visit [MarieLeBlanc.net](http://MarieLeBlanc.net) and contact her at [WHOsaysweneedfreshair@gmail.com](mailto:WHOsaysweneedfreshair@gmail.com).

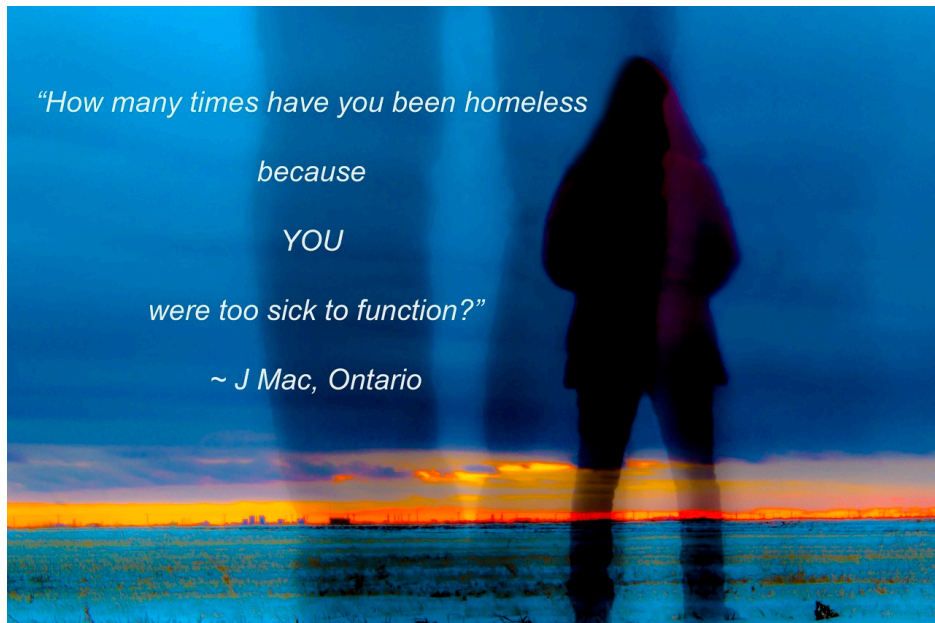
'**WHO says we need fresh air?!**' will be at the Jasper Community Habitat for the Arts, Jasper, Alberta, Canada(chosen because of pristine air).

It will run In conjunction with Jasper's annual PJ Day, 'WHO says we need fresh air?!' March 1-14 2020 at the Habitat for the Arts.

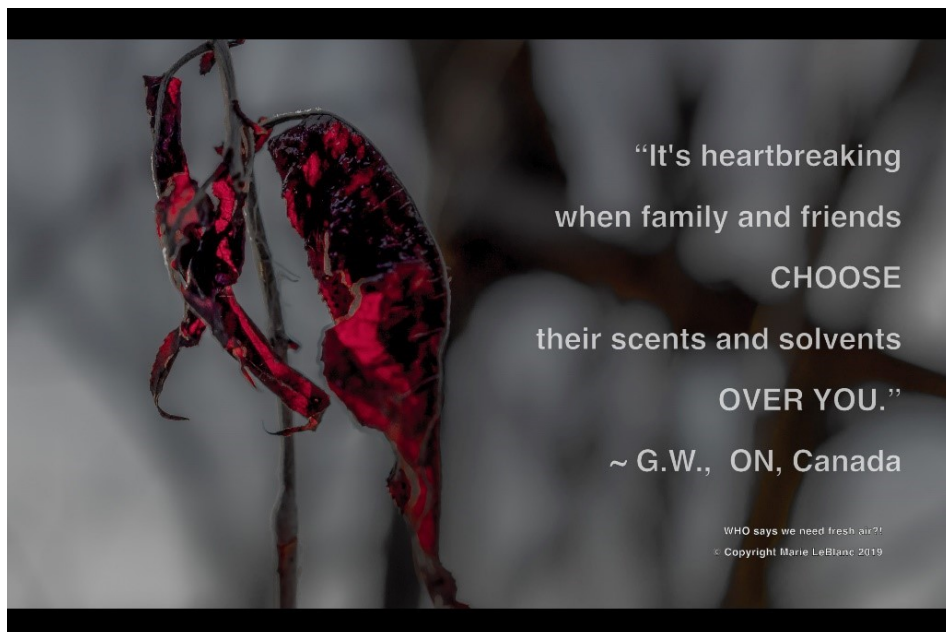
PJ Day is a day to recognize those who spend a lot of time in their pj's due to auto-immune diseases.

For many MCS sufferers, this is a familiar scenario. The event kicks off on Sunday March 1st at 7pm and includes refreshments.

Please see [MarieLeBlanc.net](http://MarieLeBlanc.net) for updated information.



Homeless: Too sick to function - MarieLeBlanc



MarieLeBlanc