

# Black Family Newsletter 2022!



Merry Christmas, Happy Holidays and Happy New Year!

As I type this end-of-year newsletter, my Mom and I are hunkered down in our respective homes, in Orillia, in the midst of the big Christmas weekend snow storm. Mom (age 88) is still living in her own apartment. I am living with our dogs, Sloan and Romi, and cat, Dexter, in the same house where I have lived for the past 22 years. Em moved to Cape Breton, N.S. in the fall. Weather-permitting, Em and their partner, Nita, will be flying from Sydney, N.S. to Toronto, on Monday, December 26th, to celebrate Christmas/Yule and New Year's with my Mom, the pets and me, to visit with a few other friends and family members, and to enjoy some winter attractions.



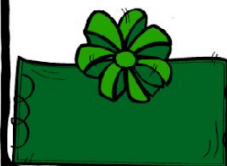
In May, I will be 63. This year I am completing my 31st year as an educator and my 20th year as a elementary school teacher (I was an Educational Assistant and worked in educational publishing before I went to Teacher's College). I will be retiring from teaching at the end of this school year!

This past summer, I embarked on a couple of Algonquin Park backcountry adventures: a three-day solo backpacking trip, on the Highland Trail, with Sloan, and a solo week-long paddle-in trip, on Canisbay Lake, with Sloan and Romi. I also enjoyed week-long campground stays at Awenda, Six Mile Lake, and Arrowhead Provincial Parks. Em joined me on their days off, and Em and I also camped together on weekends in May and October.

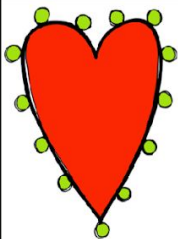
In September, I completed my 9th and final year on the board at Aspen Valley Wildlife Sanctuary.

This past summer, Em worked a 5th consecutive contract with Ontario Parks. Em was promoted from gatehouse attendant to Park Ambassador, for Mara and McRae Point Provincial Parks. This job drew on Em's extensive customer service expertise, and had them running educational programs and updating the parks' social media sites, among other tasks. Robyn-the-cat and I enjoyed attending Em's programs in July and August, whenever I wasn't camping!

In October, Em moved to Cape Breton, N.S., to live with their partner Nita, and Nita's family. In November, Em secured a permanent, full time position at the Sydney, N.S. SPCA shelter! Em's tasks include animal care and reception. The job is a perfect fit for Em, even though it can be emotionally taxing, and working for a charity doesn't pay as well as working for Ontario Parks.







In 2021, we lost my Uncle Syd, Aunt Betty and dog, Bailey. Sadly, in 2022, two more family members passed away.

My Dad, age 90, died during the summer after a brief illness. Em and I were grateful that we could spend some time with him, in hospital, during his last few days.

Our cat, Robyn, was diagnosed with cancer in early June, and given four weeks to live. Robyn seemed to like car rides, and we had a pet stroller that belonged to Bailey-the-dog when she was ill, so we started taking Robyn on little "bucket list" field trips. Weeks turned into months, and Robyn continued to thrive, so we kept taking her on adventures. Robyn visited pet stores, the Farmer's Market, festivals, parks, and a pumpkin patch. We also took Robyn kayaking and camping! In November, five months after her diagnosis, cancer finally caught up to our little, ginger girl and we had to say goodbye.





## 2022 Photo Gallery

