

# the Sou'Wester

Spring 2021

## A Solitary Letter

The story of Canada's reliance on solitary confinement continues to be written. An eloquent and poignant letter, which the Sou'Wester reproduces here with the author's permission, serves as a moving backdrop to that tale.

March 26, 2021

Madame Anne Kelly  
CSC Commissioner

Re: Segregation, solitary confinement.

This letter is written because of my visceral reaction to statements that are attributed to you in an article written by Justin Ling on February 28, 2021. It is written that you made the statements that solitary confinement does not exist and that some inmates do not want to come out of their cells.

As an inmate serving a life sentence and who has had many segregation placements—some of which I clearly earned— I was shocked by this answer. It left me feeling frustrated, angry and revolted. Why? Because every inmate and employee of the CSC knows that segregation exists. And to deny this fact and the very negative, destructive consequences of segregation feeds mistrust and unhealthy views towards the professionalism of the CSC.

*Continued on page 4*



### Getting Together At Open Door

Want to Meet at "Open Door?"

A well kept secret?

A treasured activity?

A longing for fellowship that the Pandemic has pushed astray?

All that precedes, and much, much more. Yes, the Pandemic has changed Open Door - like it has changed many other things in our lives. However, the directors at Communitas - the creators, sponsors and brain trust behind Open Door quickly adapted and had the next weekly meeting set up as a Zoom call. And not only did Open Door survive; in many ways it continues to flourish in this new virtual setting.

Someone remarked that Zoom is the cultural equivalent of those old seance scenes we used to watch in the movies: "Are you there?" "Can you hear me?" "You are muted - show us a sign!"

So while we cannot meet in person it has allowed us to interact with presenters from Middle Canada, the West Coast and attendees from next door and far and away. It is kind of cool.

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We would love to hear from you!



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Send your letters to our editor at:  
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*The Sou'Wester name is a reference  
to Montreal's Southwest, where  
Communitas began its work in 1999  
and is still based today.*

 @communitas\_MTL  
 /communitasmontreal

# Getting Together at Open Door

(Continued from page 1)

What happens at Open Door evenings? While not a secret, it is rare that we get advance billing of who the main event speaker will be. That, it seems, is part of the fun - as well as the applause for newcomers and significant announcements in people's lives. It is fun. It is fellowship. It is a community.

And while we miss the handshakes, small talk, camaraderie, smiles, snacks, coffee and juice - and perhaps most of all the visits from 'those inside' - we are still building community and keeping the home fires burning during these difficult times. Open Door is a shining light on how offender reintegration can be done in a more positive, humane and ultimately, successful manner.

What happens at Open Door evenings? People meet, talk, share and learn, often by the main event, but not always from the speaker. They learn from the discussions, from the questions, from thinking, and from the presenter - all of whom are happy and willing to share their expertise. Some of the

topics since the start of the year have been:

- Budgeting and credit card uses and abuses
- Sustainable agriculture
- Workplace inclusivity
- Healthy personal finance
- Black History Month
- Ravens
- The Tree of Life - Part 1 and Part 2 (I already have questions and am waiting for part 3)
- The Chinese Year of the Ox (Lunar New Year)
- Barter and Trade - a method of a more sustainable future

- Safe Alternatives to N-95 Masks
- Looking back at 2020
- Looking forward to 2021
- And who can forget our 2022 New Year's Eve menu?

The fact that the talks have come from half a dozen different presenters for the year, that a typical evening has 25 to 30 attendees - with different thoughts, viewpoints and insights - well, it makes for some interesting banter, learning and an enjoyable way to spend a Tuesday evening.

What are you doing next Tuesday? The doors open at 6:45....want to meet me there?

Lino

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## Open Door 20th Anniversary Book Project

Open Door, now in its 20<sup>th</sup> year, continues with lively presentations, a full house and a collective desire to resume our meetings in person. Whodda thunk that we would make it this far? But we have, and we need to celebrate. The Open Door tenth anniversary was very festive, and some of us remember the grand gala we had with the Member of Parliament, the Bishop of Montreal, and journalists snapping pictures. The response was so great, we were setting up extra tables as people poured in.

Ten years later, and we have achieved another milestone. Although the pandemic prevents us from commemorating the 20<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Open Door with a grand soirée and all our

members wearing their Saturday evening best, we can still celebrate! We have decided to write the story of the gathering that has meant so much to so many.

The Open Door 20<sup>th</sup> Anniversary book is to be the collaborative effort of as many Open Door attendees, past and present, as we can find. Everyone has an Open Door story and we want to know yours! A small team of volunteers and ex-inmates has been meeting since February, working to develop the ideas and discover how to make this idea come to life. Most recently, we have begun contacting the many years of guest speakers, members and community partners to see if they'd like to contribute their memories. It has come to our

attention that we might even be able to contact our currently incarcerated members to elicit their contribution.

We envision publishing this book in paperback and electronic copy, using a yearbook format with photographs, illustrations and the contributions of as many people as possible. Yes, dear reader, that means you!

Jot down a few of your memories of Open Door and feel free to reach out. If we have your email or phone number, we will be contacting you!

Jeri

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### A brother cries out for help

Lying in darkness  
Up all night  
Feeling all right  
Can't change my mind  
Waiting for death  
No matter how I try  
I am broken  
Father do not forsake me  
How can I replace my brother  
Dressed in black  
With black roses

The world keeps turning  
Cry for me Cry for me  
What do I want What do I want  
Lying here  
Waiting to go to purgatory  
For me this is best  
I am not afraid to burn in hell  
No one will wait for me  
Crying out for help  
Jesus I pray to you save me  
Crying out for help

Alan

# Trading: A Community Approach to Mutual Support Using the Gifts We Already Have

Our ability to take care of ourselves is limited by our circumstances. Even in Canada, many of us lack the opportunities to maintain a healthy lifestyle. We may lack appropriate job opportunities, adequate housing, social programs, or access to higher education. For many, the reality is that even if we have jobs that allow us to scrape by, they can leave us with no time or energy left to take care of ourselves. We often lack the resources needed to pull ourselves out of situations where our basic needs are not being met, often through a series of events that have left us with few choices. We may not be able to afford healthy or enough food, let alone the supplies we need to maintain our households. When these human rights are neglected, we may feel like the situation is hopeless. When this becomes the norm, the unfortunate reality is that many cope in ways that are counterproductive. This could include overdependence on credit and borrowing or even illegal activity. In this situation, we're forced to exhaust ourselves treading water or sink further into this cycle. Or so we may think.

Barter and trade is a wonderful option for those of us who are in these situations. For those of us who feel like trying something new, it can offer us financial relief. It can actually save us time depending on our planning and choices. For example, if we need new

furniture, we can trade something we already have for it. Since furniture can be very expensive, one would save money or the time it would take to work for that amount of money. Or we could reduce our monthly budget by trading for things on our shopping lists like toilet paper or food. It can really help to save money and potentially pay off debt. We can find access to educational books and even to teachers. Trades like these can make education more accessible. Of course, we can



trade for fun, too!

An added bonus is that trade is also a more sustainable way to live. Purchasing eco-friendly goods is out of the price range of so many of us who wish to live in an Earth friendly way. When we're trading, not only are we saving things from being thrown out but we're reusing them over and over.

It is such a relief to be able to know that, even if we don't have something and can't afford it, it is possible to trade for it. It can allow us the space and security to take care of ourselves and contribute in a way that we can be proud of. Even for someone who has no income, has little time or has other limitations, trade is a great option because it is free and can be done anywhere. For those of us who have very little, we can even trade discarded items that we find outside.

Choosing to enter into trade is a choice to take care of ourselves as well as the community. Trade is mutually supportive and inclusive. Many traders are marginalized individuals, although our backgrounds vary greatly. Some of us still may need the help of social programs and community organizations for support, and there is no shame in that. Some are very well off and have an abundance they'd like to share. Some of us are just average people trying to do the right thing. At some point, though, we've all realized that one way or another, the status quo is unsustainable and we need a change. Whoever we are and whatever the reasons we have for trading, we're all here for each other.

Leigh

## To Mask or not to Mask...

**Masked to masked... a smile**

**Masked to Half-masked... a frown**

**Half-masked to Half-masked...a look**

**Masked to Unmasked ...turn away**

**Half-masked to Unmasked...a shrug**

**Unmasked to Unmasked.. a smile**

**Michele**



# A Solitary Letter

*continued from page 1*

In as few words as possible I'll describe who I am. My whole life I've been diagnosed with mental problems from both ends of the spectrum. Depression, hyper-activity, anxiety, bipolar, Anti-social Personality Disorder and Borderline Personality Disorder, etc. You get the picture.

Through the years I've exteriorized these problems by unjustly attacking individuals and other destructive behaviours. Also I have interiorized these problems with suicide attempts, self-mutilation, drug, alcohol consumption and other risky lifestyle behaviours, etc., you get the picture.

Within my family it has been multigenerational the mental health problems. Suicides, substance abuse, post traumatic stress disorder, ADD, social anxiety disorder, depression, panic disorder, schizophrenia, bi-polar and border line personality disorder. Last June my aunt died who had BPD in a psychiatric wing of a hospital. And 3 generations of my family passed through the same mental hospital.

Being from such a family, I and my sister were placed in the care of family services, because our mother was sick. At the age of 7-8 in a foster home I experienced segregation for the first time.

When a child would misbehave in this home, we'd be physically punished then later locked in a boot closet with no light, that was within a coat closet beneath the stairway. No light no space, fed once a day, to eat in total darkness. It was very suffocating, lonely and scary on top of the demeaning way the staff would talk to us.

I learned many things from those days locked up. I learned that no matter how much I kicked, punched or banged my head on the door to be free, no matter how much I cried, adults and authority always said it was for my good. But I learned that at least the pain of banging my head, hands, and feet until broke or bleeding was a good pain compared to the emotional and psychological pain of being rejected, abandoned, demeaned.

So through my life at juvenile detention – the horror of Shelburn – to the federal prison, segregation followed me. As did my distrust of authority and my self-mutilating.

The years of segregation– over 30 years– the loneliness, despair, hopelessness and helplessness. The unending derogatory and belittling behaviour of staff towards those segregated, deformed me, damaged me. I could not function normally, nor appropriately. In the end I destroyed many people's lives and gave grief and pain to my own family. This is said not as an excuse for my behaviour, it is said as factors inside the mind of a destabilized person.

2008 was my last segregation placement. It was then that I decided that I would try to help out other inmates in segregation or detention. I took jobs like inmate committee, ombudsman, peer counselor, so that I could help get inmates out of segregation, to stay out, or the very least find little ways to help their time in there be a little more manageable.

Years later this culminated with an invitation by the senior program designer for the CSC to help with designing a manual for Program Agents to aid inmates in segregation. This is titled "Module Motivationnel—Unités d'intervention structurée." My name is written in the Remerciements of the November 2019 Version. During the same period I was invited to make a small presentation and do this at the Staff College in Laval Québec. Later, another smaller one at CFF-600.

Since the Pandemic has been with us, I have been witness to segregation tactics being used where I presently reside for preventive measures. 30 minute walks, 15 minute telephone calls, cold food, no window in the cells, and staff telling us it's segregation rules to protect us from the Covid-19. Here there has been depression, a suicide, self-mutilation, and other dysfunctional behaviour.

Also during the Pandemic I have received correspondence from inmates across the Québec Region, that tell me of confinement measure like segregation and the conditions in the SIUs. During this time I received copies of the SIU-IAP Preliminary Findings of 26 October 2020 and Mr. Doob's report of the 23 February 2021 and the "Troisième mise à jour concernant la Covid-19; Bureau de l'enquêteur correctionnel."



It is evident that not only segregation and solitary confinement still exist within the CSC, so does the mindset / culture that justifies it and minimizes its cancerous toxic effects, on people, on the costs to the community, on mental health problems, on recidivism, and victims.

Madame Commissioner, I believe that there exist enough examples, ideas by people with much more expertise than I, to find alternatives to segregation / solitary confinement more substantial than just a mere name change, and yet at the same time address the very valid needs to protect institutional

security, staff members, inmates and the community as a whole.

The failure to do so will not only be a missed opportunity to do what is right and show leadership, this kind of failure would put the consequences on the backs of future taxpayers and future unknown victims with all the grief, sorrow, pain and destruction that this may entail.

The programs that exist within the CSC for inmates to work on their problems therapeutically is a good example for the CSC at this time. Take a step back from the problem, ask for help and be willing to use the help offered. It is time that the CSC opens itself up to the expertise that is available, so that the CSC can achieve its Mission Statement more professionally, more efficiently, and most importantly more humanely. For we are all humans; staff, inmates, victims, the community.

Thank you Madame Commissioner for taking time from your busy schedule to read this. May it give you food for thought and reflection.

Good day  
Name withheld,  
Inmate and segregation survivor

# Mostly Legal — Commentary

Sou'Wester readers will ask themselves, why this stirring *cri de coeur*? Were we not previously assured that the demise of Canada's unconstitutional system of administrative segregation has been ushered in by the Courts of Appeal of Ontario and British Columbia, rulings against which the Justice Department has dropped its appeals? Have not CSC's year-old Structured Intervention Units (SIUs) washed away the stain of unlawful solitary confinement?

To achieve compliance with the United Nations' Mandela Rules on segregation and torture, and our own Charter of Rights and Freedoms, the legislative and policy framework governing the SIUs guarantees that a) they will be employed as little as possible; b) the length of stays will respect constitutional time limits; c) programs and services promoting release to a mainstream population will be provided; and d) residents will have access to a minimum of four hours daily outside the cell, including at least two hours of meaningful human contact. The SIUs' blueprint entrusts oversight of these protections to two independent bodies: the Implementation Advisory Panel (IAP), chaired by eminent criminologist Anthony Doob; and the Independent External Decision Makers (IEDM). The first of these, established in mid-2019, was completely thwarted because CSC refused to comply with data requests, and then was aborted before the fall of 2020, leaving the IEDMs as the only surviving agency assigned to the oversight of individual cases to ensure that rights are respected and the abuses of the previous segregation regime are avoided.

To fill the void created by the IAP's early exit, criminologists Jane Sprott and Anthony Doob embarked on an unpaid study of the SIUs' first year of operation. The resulting report, dated October 2020, concluded that the SIUs were holding many people for long periods, were failing to deliver the promised hours out of cells and with meaningful human contact, and differed in practice from region to region. CSC responded that these violations were explained for the most part by the restrictions imposed by COVID, prompting the criminologists to issue a second report in November which demonstrated that the program's failings pre-dated the pandemic.

Sprott and Doob returned to the identified areas of concern with their third report, dated February 23, 2021, finally with the benefit of some of the CSC data they required. This report found that, notwithstanding improvement in some areas, regional disparities persist, and "meaningful independent- perhaps

judicial- oversight needs to be implemented." Shockingly, their study revealed that 28.4% of SIU stays, by virtue of their length, still met the U.N. definition of solitary confinement, and "an additional 9.9% of stays fall under the definition of 'torture or other cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment.'" The criminologists' bottom line is blunt: "We think that the time has come for Canada to acknowledge that it still has solitary confinement and torture by another name."

Presumably, our letter writer would agree. As for the Commissioner, her prompt response to his letter was gracious and concerned, and assured him that "We know we have more work to do.... We have a number of actions underway.... As we continue to learn and make improvements to the SIUs, we remain steadfast in our commitment to ensure the success of this new correctional model." We shall take this as recognition that at this juncture, compliance with the law remains elusive.

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This spring, Canada's volunteer team was back in harness, having added another member, law professor Adelina Iftene. Their new report, dated May 10, 2021, is about the sole remaining source of independent oversight, the Independent External Decision Makers. The researchers remind us that the failings noted in their earlier reports occurred during and despite the operation of this body, and also bring our attention to several additional failings which the IEDMs do not appear to correct—namely, that Black prisoners are "more likely than other groups to be in the SIU for more than 2 months..." and "considerably more likely than others who were transferred into an SIU to stay 121 or more days." As well, it appears an individual's mental health "does not play a significant role in determining whether the SIU is an appropriate place for an individual to remain."

The IEDMs are intended to concern themselves with the rights of each individual SIU prisoner, particularly concerning length of stay and hours out of cell. CSC provided data to the volunteer team regarding the length of stay only, and the May 10 report accordingly deals only with that issue. Indeed, the team

discovered CSC was unable or unwilling to reveal the average number of hours SIU prisoners were out of their cells in a month. Furthermore, it was impossible to know how IEDMs are selected, who chooses them, what case information is routinely sent to them, and how that information is identified. And thanks to the confused language of the enabling legislation and policies, "it is difficult or impossible" to say when the law requires IEDMs to review individual files. Overall, the team found this attempt at independent oversight to be "an almost completely secretive process".

The May report reveals CSC appears to acknowledge a requirement to refer cases within 67 days (although this does not always occur), so that the files actually arrive at the IEDM for their first review after three months: as a result, this 'safeguard' can offer no protection against that initial lengthy period of SIU detention. Equally disturbing, one learns that while the legislation empowers IEDMs to

order an SIU stay terminated, it is CSC who is mandated to structure the timing of that decision's execution, allowing it "to bend and adapt the rules and timeframes to what is convenient for them," thereby failing to remedy the unconstitutionality affecting the old segregation regime. In fact, the study revealed that prisoners ordered released by an IEDM decision tend to languish in SIUs longer than those who were not 'assisted' by this safeguard!

In the end, the May study asks again if the SIUs "rid Canada of what is internationally defined as solitary confinement and torture," and answers, "We can see that the IEDM review system does not do that." No reference is made to future plans for further volunteer independent scrutiny of the SIUs, but if I were CSC, I would not bet against it.

By Steve





# Annual General Meeting May 26, 2021

## From the Coordination Team

Another cycle ended at Communitas and here we are again, about to have our Annual General Meeting.

This will be an opportunity to present our 2020-2021 Annual Report: an overview of our programs, activities, and overall community involvement throughout last year. As each of us very well knows that was our first full COVID

year, one that came with many challenges and great initiatives (including the adventure that our Digital Literacy Workshop series was), so try not to miss out on the chance to take part of this very meaningful gathering.

If that was not reason enough, the AGM is also when Communitas membership elects the Directors of the Board who will oversee and take care of the organization throughout this coming year (until the 2022 AGM). So please come prepared to exercise your right to vote and, through it, to be an active part of the organization's life.

This year's AGM will take place on Wednesday, 26 May at 7:00pm... can you guess where? Yes, on Zoom!

So please, mark your calendars, confirm your interest in continuing with your Communitas membership, and, to quote one of Communitas' voices of wisdom, *be there or be square!*

Coordination



It is now fourteen months since volunteers last visited the penitentiaries, so our news about some of the individual inmates we formerly met with is scant. However, at Open Door, we have been happy to welcome five new attendees, newly released, from Federal Training Centre 600, who are now living in halfway houses or in the community.

During National Volunteer Week, April 18-24, past-volunteers all received hearty thanks for their previous work and their patience at being unable to return to those activities. The SCC commissioner, Anne Kelly, also offered us some ideas on ways to continue contributing, without having to actually go into an Institution:

**Mail:** Letters to someone who gets no mail. Ask a person in charge.

**Radio:** If it exists, connect with other local organizations to develop a program. Same opportunity for those with skills for yoga, music, etc. where recorded sessions can be shared.

**Email:** Did you know that we can send information to inmates, via the volunteer coordinator? We hope to explore this possibility further. Stay tuned!

**Phone:** If there are local arrangements, where inmates need a particular person to talk with.

**Donations:** Collecting items for ex-inmates returning to community, who may be in need.

**Other ideas:** If you have other suggestions, bring them to someone in charge.

We have also received news of important changes for the local chaplains. Alain Ferron has sent news to volunteers, of his recent departure from site chaplain at the Federal Training Centre in Laval. Since April 15<sup>th</sup>, his new appointment is to the post of Regional Director of Penitentiaries in Quebec. Those who have benefited from his work in Laval for 23 years will be sad to lose him, but will look forward to good decisions in his new post. His work will still be for the same employer, Bridges of Canada.

Another change for the site chaplains, caused by Covid, is that chaplains must remain in one place of work. This means that Sabrina will only be chaplain at FTC 200 and Jacynthe at FTC 600.

Margaret

## Funky Definitions

**Vegetarian** (*noun*) Latin phrase, original meaning: "really bad hunter"

**Cell Phone** (*noun*) A device used for looking less alone while in public places by yourself

**Synonym** (*noun*) A word used in place of one you can't spell

**Poor** (*adjective*) When you have too much month at the end of your money

**Calories** (*noun*) Tiny creatures living in your closet who sew your clothes a little bit tighter every night

**Latte** (*noun*) Italian for "you paid too much for that coffee"



# Open Door Musings on National Volunteer Week

## April 18-24, 2021

### *Volunteering that we have done in the past*

- \* I worked with a men's group at church. We offered to do renovations at a women's shelter and did a new kitchen, walls, dining room...the whole thing. Then we worked with CBC and raised thousands of dollars for that shelter.
- \* I helped an art dealer hang exhibitions of modern artists. Once we had a large painting to hang on a tall staircase and we piled up a tower of tables and chairs on the stairs, but no one dared to climb up to hang the painting. Then a passer-by came in and he wasn't afraid, so he climbed up. I said, "You got here just in time!"
- \* I do quilting with David and Susanna Shantz. We sell the quilts and donate money to different causes, or give them to people who need them.
- \* I acted as a referee for kids' soccer games. I like working with people who are young at heart. I also liked cooking at an immigrants' centre.
- \* When I was a high school student I did adult literacy. I was in my school uniform and worked with all sorts of people. I remember that one of my students was a cowman, he tended cows.
- \* I did flood relief in Sri Lanka, and as a novice nun I also reached out to people who lived in the slums.
- \* I picketed in front of grocery stores in New York that were selling Gallo Brothers' grapes and wine. The United Farmworkers Union thought that winery was not treating its Mexican workers fairly.
- \* I was working with kids at church. One day a six-year-old kid ate three boxes of donuts that were supposed to be for everyone. He said, "I was stress eating." I was responsible for hitting the PLAY button when we all watched videos and this kid liked to sit with me in front of the machine and talk.
- \* I was just about to start helping with adult literacy when the pandemic shut everything down.
- \* In high school I became a biology tutor to a girl who got 29%. She needed to pass science or she wouldn't graduate. I tried everything but nothing worked. Finally I just brought a big tub of Lego for us to play with. She started building cells with Lego and could name all the parts of the cell! She needed to build

in order to learn. She got 71% on science and is now a carpenter who makes incredible furniture.

- \* When I was 17 years old I taught swimming to 4 to 9 year olds.
- \* I biked in a cycle-a-thon from Montreal to Quebec City to boycott the improper treatment of immigrant farm workers. In England I helped welcome West Indies immigrants by organiz-



ing dances for them featuring their music.

- \* I work with Baobab, being a grandmother to Buddhist, Hindi, and Muslim immigrants from Bangladesh and elsewhere.
- \* I've worked with literacy. About that Lego story: it's been shown that 9 out of 10 inmates are more kinesthetic or tactile learners, not visual or auditory. Because of this, they are disadvantaged in our education system.
- \* Growing up in the States I did a lot of activism in the 1960s, especially for civil rights and against the Vietnam War. Then I put together a film for a suicide prevention line. The line was so busy, the need for it proved to be 24/7.
- \* Growing up on a farm, you could say I did volunteer work as a kid...actually, more like slavery, child labour. Farm kids are way tougher than town kids.
- \* In India I was a volunteer digging trenches. Sometimes those international aid programs aren't all they're cracked up to be.



*You make a living by what you get. You  
make a life by what you give.*

-Winston Churchill



# An interview with Laura

(Bark bark!)

**L:** Sit down!

**SW:** What's your dog's name?

**L:** Sahontah. It means big ears in Mohawk I am told. Sometimes one ear goes toward the front, the other to the back, like antennae.

**SW:** Cool. My first question is where you were born.

**L:** I was born at the Royal Victoria Hospital in Montreal.

**SW:** What about your parents? Where were they born?

**L:** Both my parents were born in Montreal but my mom's parents were from Sicily and my dad's parents were from Marche, a region between Rome and northern Italy.

**SW:** You often say you are very Sicilian. What were your parents like?

**L:** My dad was mellow. My mom was always rather quiet, not typical of someone with Sicilian ancestry. First generation here does not always follow the old culture. I'm more Sicilian in temperament. I react faster when something is good or not good. I have lots of emotion, both happy and sad. Sicilians are vivacious: hand movements and emotions.

**SW:** Did you ever visit the town where your grandparents were born?

**L:** Yes. I visited my grandparents' birth town in Sicily in the 80s. There was an awful lot of unemployment, people hanging around the streets. But it is beautiful country down in Sicily. That is the location where *The Godfather II* was filmed.

**SW:** Tell me about your life as a teenager. I was wondering if you had lots of guys after you when you were a teenager.

**L:** As a teenager I was quiet and was probably considered boring. I went to Pius X Catholic high school where girls were on one side, boys on the other. Recess and lunch were at different times, so we only saw boys after school or on holy days of obligation when we were at Mass. A couple of years after I graduated, the school became coed. The nuns were gone and, I think, the brothers were gone, too. My life as a teenager may have been different had I been there when the changes took place.

**SW:** Your husband was Italian; your parents must have been pleased about that.

**L:** Yes. My late husband's family came from the same region as my dad's parents.

**SW:** Where did you meet your husband?

**L:** I met my husband at the hospital. He was a doctor and I was close to graduation from nursing school.



**SW:** When were you married?

**L:** We got married when I was 22. We had three children, two boys and a girl, and now I have seven grandchildren between ages 21 and 8.

**SW:** Tell me about your life with your husband.

**L:** I travelled to many places with my husband.

**SW:** What is your favourite country that you visited?

**L:** My favourite country was Italy. Great scenery, great wine, great food. You can always see the next town from the highway because they are always built on hills, protecting them from enemies.

**SW:** Tell me about nursing.

**L:** I worked in orthopedics. I loved being there. Then I moved to the recovery room because the hours were better: 11 - 7. I could get stuff done in the morning before work and then be home at 7:30.

**SW:** How many years did you work as a nurse?

**L:** I was a nurse for only 3 years after I graduated. I quit working when I became pregnant. The 1970s was a time of women's liberation but I chose to be a stay-at-home mom.

**SW:** You did go back to school after staying home with the children. Talk to me about this.

**L:** I love learning and have been in school most of my adult life. I started at Concordia

and got a BA there. Then I went into Social Work at McGill where I obtained a BSW. After my husband died, I started to study law in Ottawa but left soon after. I decided to get a Masters in Social Work instead and later started a PhD in social work.

**SW:** Tell me about Social Work.

**L:** I worked five years with a francophone resource for women in difficulty. Then, I worked five years in a halfway house called CRC L'Espadrille at the old YMCA downtown.

**SW:** What is the connection between espadrille and the halfway house?

**L:** An espadrille is a leisure shoe. So it was about easy, casual living, not as restricted as when you are in prison. The guys loved it there because they had free access to the gym and free food in the cafeteria.

I was a counsellor and anytime they needed to talk, I was available. When the fellows were ready to go before the Parole Board, I wrote a report on his progress. That YMCA closed and they built the new Y but no longer wanted a halfway house in the new premises.

**SW:** What happened after that? What did you do?

**L:** Although we no longer had a halfway house, we set up a Day Centre for prisoners at the provincial level. I set up two bilingual programs that I animated along with a third program set up by a colleague. I presented these at RDP detention centre at the provincial level, and at Bordeaux, also provincial, to the "prévenus": the individuals who are detained and awaiting trial and who are not eligible for the services offered the sentenced prisoners. I had a great time animating these programs. I remember going to a particular wing at Bordeaux to deliver some documents where some of the members of Hell's Angels were being held and one of the detainees was a former resident at the halfway house where I had worked. He wanted me to come into the room where he and the Hells Angels were. I did. The Hells Angels started surrounding me and said, "How do you know him?" I answered, "You ask him how I know him." They looked at me as if to say, "She's not afraid of us." I could not reveal any information about this person but he explained to them how we knew each other. He said to the others that I was a nice counsellor during the time he was there. After we talked briefly, I wished them all a good day and left that wing.

**SW:** What about the PhD?

**L:** First of all, after I left the day centre, I went to work at Waseskun Healing Lodge in the northeast. At the same time, I started the doctoral program at McGill. I remained at Waseskun for a year and had to resign because of health issues. But I did continue in the doctoral program. However, as an only child, I had to take care of my ailing parents and so I had to withdraw from the doctoral program. This said, my dissertation is a document that would be interesting to read. The point of the doctorate was to promote Circles of Support and Accountability. So I decided to condense the paper and give it to Communitas. It may be useful to our organization. I still must work on it. I hope I can finish it one of these times.

**SW:** Your parents both lived to a ripe old age.

**L:** Yes. Mom had just turned 94 when she died and Dad was 3 weeks from turning 97 when he passed away. It was hard to work on a PhD under these circumstances. That is when being an only child is difficult...no siblings to help you.

**SW:** Tell me about your involvement with Communitas.

**L:** I joined Communitas in 2002, recommended by Francine. She did her stage here with Peter who was her supervisor. She said, "You'd be very interested in Circles." So I joined after Francine introduced me to Peter and Michele.

**SW:** How many Circles have you done so far?

**L:** I've done at least 11 Circles, plus two on the French side.

**SW:** You're also very active in your church.

**L:** Yes, I am. I'm on the Parish Council of my Church. I am also a volunteer during this pandemic, ushering parishioners to their seat. We have arrows on the aisles like one-way streets. Some seats are taped so no one sits there. It's all strategically planned; we accompany people who wish to receive communion and then direct them out when the Mass has ended.

**SW:** How are you dealing with this pandemic?

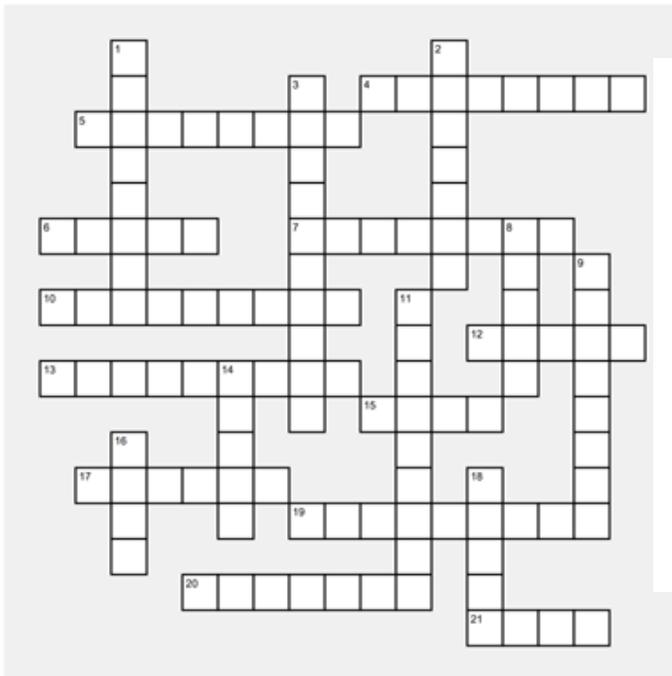
**L:** I wear a mask whenever I leave the apart-

ment, even when I take the garbage downstairs. When I visit my daughter, we stand outside and I still wear a mask. My worry is not so much becoming ill; I don't have a tendency to catch what's going around. My concern is being a carrier of the virus and not knowing it and then giving it to someone else.

**SW:** Do you have any other comments to make or anything else to add?

**L:** My youngest is moving to Vancouver Island with his family and I have a standing invitation to spend January and February on the Island with them. I feel safe travelling within Canada but my days of travelling outside of Canada are over. The extent of my visiting with family in Italy is using the WhatsApp.

## Seaside Crossword



### ACROSS

- 4) Clingy crustacean
- 5) Wind-driven craft
- 6) Where the buoys are
- 7) Moving waters
- 10) Spineless one
- 12) Sandy area
- 13) Coney Island attraction
- 15) Coral formation
- 17) Wave rider
- 19) Two-hulled vessel
- 20) Saturday and Sunday
- 21) Ocean motion

### DOWN

- 1) Marine creature's home
- 2) Flying saucer
- 3) Shore construction
- 8) Drying cloth
- 9) Holiday from work
- 11) Beach whistle-blower
- 14) Breakers
- 16) Beach hill
- 18) Luxury boat

Free Crossword Puzzle, Compliments of © [Memory-Improvement-Tips.com](http://Memory-Improvement-Tips.com)

Solution on page 11

# Reflections on International Biodiversity Day!

## “This Green Thing”

April 18, 2021

*Open Door participants took time to mark International Biodiversity Day by reflecting on their own “green” practices and what individuals can do to live in harmony with the world around us. The topic was sparked when Richard shared an anonymous reading that has been circulating on the Internet for many years that calls out modern day lifestyle habits when compared to those of prior generations.*

Checking out at the store, the young cashier suggested to the much older lady that she should bring her own grocery bags because plastic bags are not good for the environment. The woman apologized to the young girl and explained, “we didn’t have this ‘green thing’ back in my earlier days.”

The young clerk responded, “That’s our problem today. Your generation did not care enough to save our environment for future generations. ”The older lady said that she was right, our generation didn’t have the “green thing “in its day.

The older lady went on to explain: “Back then, we returned milk bottles and beer bottles to the store. The store sent them back to the plant to be washed and sterilized and refilled, so it could be used over and over. So they really were recycled. But we didn’t have the “green thing “back in our day.

“Grocery stores bagged our groceries in brown paper bags that we reused for numerous things. Most memorable besides household garbage bags was the use of brown paper bags as book covers for our school books. This was to ensure that public property (the books provided for our use by the school) was not defaced by our scribbles. Then we were able to personalize our books on the brown paper bags. But, too bad we didn’t do the “green thing “back then.

“We walked up stairs because we didn’t have an escalator in every store and office building. We walked to the grocery store and didn’t climb into a 300- horsepower machine every time we had to go two blocks. But she was right. We didn’t have the “green thing “in our day.

“Back then we washed the baby’s diapers because we didn’t have the throw away kind. We dried clothes on a line, not in a energy-gobbling machine burning up 220 volts. Wind and solar power really did dry our clothes back in our early days.

“Kids got hand-me-down clothes from their brothers and sisters and not always brand new clothing. But that young lady is right we didn’t have the “green thing “back in our day.

“Back then we had one TV, or radio, in the house, not a TV in every room. And the TV had a small screen the size of a handkerchief (remember them?), not a screen the size of the state of Montana. In the kitchen we blended and stirred by hand because we didn’t have electric machines to do everything for us. When we packaged a fragile item to send in the mail, we used wadded up old newspapers to cushion it, not styrofoam or plastic bubble wrap.

“Back then, we didn’t fire up an engine and burn gasoline just to cut the lawn. We used a push mower that ran on human power. We exercised by working so we didn’t need to go to a health club to run on treadmills that operate on electricity. But she’s right; we didn’t have the “green thing “back then.

“We drank from a fountain when we were thirsty instead of using a plastic cup or plastic bottle every time we had a drink of water. We refilled our writing pens with ink instead of buying a new pen, and we replaced the razor blade in a razor instead of throwing away the whole razor just because the blade got dull. But we didn’t have the “green thing “back then.

“Back then, people took the streetcar or a bus. And kids rode their bikes to school or walked instead of turning to their moms into a 24- hour taxi service in the family’s SUV or van, which costs what a whole house did before the “green thing “.

“We had one electrical outlet in a room, not an entire bank of sockets to power a dozen appliances. And we didn’t need a computerized gadget to receive a signal beamed from satellites 23,000 miles out in space in order to find the nearest burger joint. But isn’t it sad the current generation laments how wasteful we old folks were just because we didn’t have the “green thing “back then? “

Please forward this on to another selfish old person who needs a lesson in conversation from a smart ass young person. We don’t like being old in the first place, so it doesn’t take much to piss us off... Especially from a tattooed, multiple pierced smart ass who can’t make change without the cash register telling them how much.

*An anonymous older person*



# Some Basic Principles of Restorative Justice

*Adapted from: A 2013 Safe Communities publication put out by the Alberta Government, posted by the Community Justice Initiatives (CJI)*

Restorative justice allows victims, offenders and their respective family members and friends to come together to explore how everyone has been affected by an offense or conflict and, when possible, to decide how to repair the harm. Victims can say how the crime or conflict affected them and ask the offender questions. Learning first-hand how they have hurt others often helps offenders to accept responsibility, while answering questions makes them accountable to those they have harmed.

When extended beyond a response to conflict and crime, restorative justice can be used proactively and is called restorative practice.

In the child protection system, extended families meet with a facilitator to make a plan to protect children in their own families from further violence and neglect, and to avoid removal from the family.

In schools, circles and groups provide opportunities for students to share their feelings, build relationships, and solve problems. When there are behaviour violations or conflicts, students play an active role in addressing the wrong and making things right.

With reintegration, community volunteers form circles of support to engage and equip people leaving prison and custody facilities to settle into community and find their meaningful place.

In the area of healing sexual abuse and trauma,

we use support groups, education groups, workshops and facilitated dialogues to assist survivors, offenders, and their family members to understand, heal, and move forward.

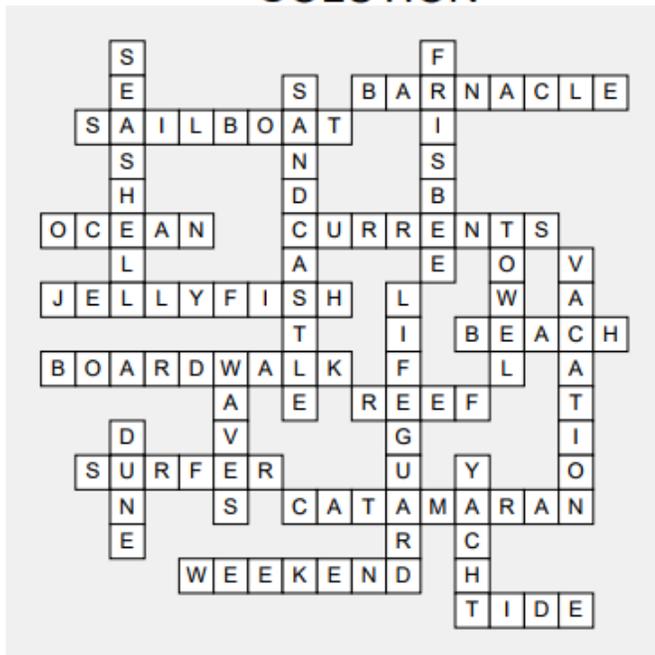
CJI is part of an effort to make the Waterloo Region of Ontario a Restorative Practice Community. From the working group on Restorative Practice: "Restorative Justice is an important aspect but only one part of restorative practice. In a sense restorative justice lies at the roots of a broader vision of a peaceful and emotionally smart community."

<https://cjiwr.com/about-us/what-is-restorative-justice/>

*Community Justice Initiatives (CJI) is a non-profit organization known world-wide for starting the first modern Restorative Justice program.*

- Voluntary:** All individuals are free to engage in the process.
- Respect:** All participants in a restorative justice process are respected equally.
- Acknowledged harm:** There is a recognition of the harm caused to the victim and community
- Accountability:** The offender takes responsibility for the harm that he/she has caused.
- Inclusiveness:** Full consensus is sought among those affected by the crime.
- Shared responsibility:** People involved in a process determine what is needed to understand, heal, and move forward. This can include agreeing on actions to repair harm like paying for damaged property, apologizing, attending anger management, addiction treatment or mental health support programs, or committing to volunteer work. The facilitator's role (community representative) is to empower those in conflict to create their own solution—not to suggest or impose a solution.
- Balanced:** The needs of the victim and the community are balanced with the financial and personal capacity of the offender
- Non-adversarial:** Decisions are made on a consensus basis.

## SOLUTION



# Please support Communitas!

**Communitas is a non-profit, volunteer-driven organization which welcomes (ex-)offenders back to the community by supporting them in their social, spiritual, emotional and practical needs.**

We rely heavily on support from individual donors like you. The stigma associated with work in this area brings unique financial and other challenges with it and so your contributions are essential in sustaining our important work.

I support Communitas and their programs and am enclosing a donation of:

\$25     \$50     \$100     Other \_\_\_\_\_

"Tax receipts will be issued for donations of \$20 or more. Please include the following information for that purpose:"

Full name Including middle initial: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

E-mail: \_\_\_\_\_



## **Circles of Support and Accountability (COSA) at Communitas: Is it for you?**

Communitas is proud to have introduced Circles of Support and Accountability (COSA) to Quebec in 2000 and have provided more than 50 circles since. COSA matches individuals with a history of sexual offending with a group of everyday community members who are committed to helping you navigate the challenges of life in the community and achieve a successful, crime-free life.

If you are interested in hearing more about the possibility of having your own circle, contact:

Monika Barbe 514-244-6147

[coordinator@communitasmontreal.org](mailto:coordinator@communitasmontreal.org)

We would love to hear from you!



3974 Notre Dame West, Suite B  
Montreal, QC H4C 1R1 Tel.: 514-244-6147

Send your letters to our editor at:  
[info@communitasmontreal.org](mailto:info@communitasmontreal.org)

[www.communitasmontreal.org](http://www.communitasmontreal.org)

*The Sou'Wester name is a reference to Montreal's Southwest, where Communitas began its work in 1999 and is still based today.*

 @communitas\_MTL  
 /communitasmontreal