



THE SOU'WESTER

Mouvement Communitas Montreal

FALL - 2017

We have a new name:
“Communitas”

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IN THIS ISSUE

Solitary in prisons	1
A little poetry	2
A night at Open Door	3 & 4
Legal Perspective	5,6,7
Interview with Jeff	8,9
Spiritual Moment	9
Participatory Budgeting	10
Picnic at Marie's	11
Community Outreach	12

Legislation comes following string of deaths

‘Liberal bill aims to limit solitary in prisons’

Article taken from Montreal Gazette

OTTAWA * The federal government introduced legislation Monday to restrict the use of solitary confinement inside federal prisons and to better protect prisoners with mental illness or at risk of self-harm or suicide.

Once passed, the bill would — for the first time — impose a so-called legislative framework establishing a time limit for what prison officials call administrative segregation.

The bill — part of the Liberal government's broader efforts at criminal justice reform, which include reducing the number of indigenous Canadians behind bars — was introduced with just a week left in the spring parliamentary calendar, meaning it's unlikely to come up for debate before the fall.

It also comes after several high-profile solitary confinement cases, including the 2007 death of Ashley Smith of Moncton, NB, an emotionally disturbed 19-year old who died in custody after tying a strip of cloth around her neck.

A coroner's inquest into Smith's death ended in 2012 with 104 recommendations, including a call to end to "indefinite solitary confinement" and the use of segregation beyond 15 days for female inmates with mental-health issues.

Shortly after taking office in 2015, Prime Minister Justin Trudeau ordered Justice Minister Jody Wilson-Raybould to take a second look at the Smith inquest's recommendations as part of her mandate to implement criminal justice reforms.

Administrative segregation is used when there is no reasonable alternative to maintain the safety and security of the institution, staff and inmates. It differs from disciplinary segregation, which is applied to inmates who are found guilty of a serious offence in custody.

The Correctional Service of Canada is also amending its policy to outlaw the practice in cases involving serious mental disorders or prisoners who are certified, those who are en-

gaged in 'self-injury' and those at risk of suicide.

Under the current law, the Correctional Service of Canada is required to release prisoners from administrative segregation at the earliest possible time. The new law would establish an initial time limit of 21 days and then 15 days once the legislation has been the law of the land for 18 months.

The legislation also proposes amending the Corrections and Conditional Release Act and the Abolition of Early Parole Act to make them compliant with the Charter of Rights and Freedoms. That includes reinstating an oral hearing after a suspension, termination or revocation of parole.

The legislation would also allow offenders convicted of an offence before March 28, 2011, and who meet the criteria for accelerated parole, to once again be eligible for an accelerated parole review.

*Mike Blanchfield
The Canadian Press*

GREAT NEWS!

Communitas has received 'Charitable' status!

This August, Communitas received the fantastic news that its application for charitable status was approved by the Canada Revenue Agency. Importantly, Communitas can now provide tax receipts to those who donate to our work—which should make it easier for those who wish to support our work to do so—and is also now eligible for a number of other benefits. While this does mean that there are some limitations on our future work (for instance, we cannot participate in political activities), it is overall an important step for our long term success in terms of our public profile, fundraising, and volunteer recruitment.



A LITTLE POETRY FROM OUR FRIENDS

DEAR GOD

So far today, I've done
all right. I haven't gos-
siped; I haven't lost my
temper; I haven't lied or
cheated. I haven't been
grumpy, greedy, nasty,
selfish or overindulgent.
....I'm very thankful for
that.....

But... in a few minutes
God, I'm going to get out
of bed, and from then on,
I'm probably going to
need a lot more help.

Amen

A Ball Well Hit

(for golfers only)

They stole my clubs
They were custom made
I made them myself
Without any aid.

From best components
The irons you see
Were forged with a feel
Made just for me.

The shafts gave a swish
The ball became me
With sweet spot so silent
I felt clean and free.

The club face made contact
With click-sound unknown
The ball just flew
Without any groan.

With no physical jolt
To let me know
The ball became me
And just had to go.

It was quiet, no noise
It was spiritual you see,
That ball through the air,
Was really just me.

My goal was carried,
And through with a swish,
My goal was achieved
It was my great wish.

No feeling,
No sound
With friends
All around.

My spirit went fast
Shot straight through the club
My friends were amazed
And said, "That's good Bub."

With great satisfaction
However, you see.
It can be disappointing,
Between you and me.

Sometimes it's a joke
And my friends all know
It's just the way.
And it's all for the show.

And something inside,
And I say, it's no shit—
There's no greater feeling
Than a ball that's well hit.

By Bob

Penguins

Dressed in their tuxedos
On Antarctic ice
Single file, single file
Always being nice.

Living in community
Traveling in packs
They never seem to suffer from
Anxiety attacks.

But tell me, little penguin
What's really going on?
Are there tides of inner turmoil
Just beneath your outer calm?

Confide, my flightless waterfowl,
What lurks inside your soul?
Do you suffer penguin jealousy
At 55 below?

Confide, my flightless waterfowl,
What lurks inside your soul?
Do you suffer penguin jealousy
At 55 below?

Lined up on the seashore
Off one at a time
Fishing for an evening meal
In the salty brine.

On land, share the catch
Tidy up the nest
A dapper, upright seabird
Just trying to do its best.

But tell me little penguin,
Has it always gone this well?
Has bipolar depression
Ever made you live through hell?

Do you crave fermented sea-
weed
Or doubt monogamy?
Are rage and hate and mood
swings
Part of your psychology?

Such a calm demeanor
Guess we'll never know
Living on snowy wastes
Will do that, you know.

Can't let your inner self out,
Can't let your neighbours near,
The other flightless waterfowl
Might look at you and sneer.

By Colin



RESPECT

REASONABLE.....

EXPECT THE BEST.

SAY THANK YOU.

PROVE HOW RESPECTFUL
YOU CAN BE.

EVERYONE SHOULD BE
RESPECTFUL —

CARING FOR OTHERS.

TOUGH TO BE, BUT IT'S
THE BEST TO BE.

A Night at Open Door

by Colin

It is 5:30 PM on Tuesday evening. The sun is high in the sky – we're at the longest week of the year. Four of us wait at the carrefour, the central point of the jail, beneath a greasy skylight.

Down the hall walks our driver for the evening. The doyenne of a famous Montreal academic clan. She is clad in gardening clothes – a sort of tracksuit – I don't know how you'd describe it. Let's just say that the chauffeur hasn't dressed up for the occasion, nor should she have.

Ready to go? She asks in a Parisian drawl.

Sure, why not. I have nothing else to do. Get out of jail for the evening – sounds like a plan.

Down Pie IX, right on Sherbrooke, through construction sites and traffic lights, chatting with the chauffeur about French, in French... I gape out the window of our government-issue van like a Labrador retriever on the highway. So many sights to take in. That building wasn't there... that's still where it was... the Olympic Stadium has two construction cranes around it now, rather than the single one that towered over it when I went to the 76 Olympics... The roadwork looks as dodgy as ever... And why is everyone dressed in black? Why does everyone under 30 hold a shiny black sliver of plastic in front of their noses? Oh, that's right... it's 2017.

We get to the nexus of Anglicanism in Montreal. The steeple is still on an angle, still the leaning tower of Henry VIII, just as it was when I was a child going to church here twice a year (Christmas and Easter for social rather than technological reasons); just as it must have been when I was baptised here (an event that escapes my memory, but I have a certificate saying I was here).

Through the courtyard, with casually dressed people splayed casually around the giant head of Raoul Wallenberg – who, as a Swede, might well have loved this place for its sense of gentle, free acceptance. Through the plexiglass doors, up the stairs, into the room with its impressive parquet flooring and its otherwise improvised feel. A daycare day, we are told. Toys are there, and one is careful not to step on what might be diaper remnants. Conference room chairs and folding tables arranged in a giant hollow square.

The people milling about are of all ages, shapes, genders and races. Many are convicts, ex-convicts or something in between. Others are community members wanting to help, or they wouldn't be here. Everyone is dressed like a university student, even the inmates. The "civilians" are welcoming, friendly, in that restrained, non-huggy Anglo way. This is still English Montreal; something I am reminded of as I peer through the giant windows lining one side of the room.

The windows are filled with the ornate red stone walls of The Bay building. Over a century ago, ships coming back empty from Europe would load this red stone in their holds as ballast. Resourceful Montrealers would use Scottish flagstone for their homes, shops, fire stations and offices. Easy to carve shapes into, doesn't dissolve in snow – unlike the Olympic Stadium. Our ancestors knew something. Functional, not showy, exuding low-key stability, a bit like the Cathedral next door.

The Bay has just about fired everybody who works there. Their walls still exude confidence.

Everybody here? Okay, let's begin.

We recite out names around the table. Lots of smiles.

Someone recites a poem about how nice it is not to be in jail for a night.

Some people are focused on getting coffee. By some people, I mean, principally, me.

A presentation: on Palestinians on the West Bank. They too are in a sort of jail. It takes hours to go through checkpoints to get to menial poorly paid jobs. Palestinians get to use 1 gallon of water for every 7 used by an Israeli settler.

Cont.....



**Donations of time,
money and service are
welcome.**

**We are especially
looking for volunteers
who would be
interested in
escorting.**

**Please contact our
offices
By phone or email, or
visit our website:
(514) 244-6147**

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**Financial donations are
welcome**

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A night at Open Door cont...

Unemployment is insanely high. There is a checkerboard map of the region, where everything is divided up, seemingly at random, between the "ins" and the "outs". You wonder what a similar map of Montreal might look like. Our society hides those lines a bit better. One wonders which civilization is more transparent.

The presenter is part of a group trying to help the plight of the "outs" through peaceful dialogue, social work, and some political lobbying. He hits walls, but he's not about to jettison his approach. Violence is never the answer. A good lesson for we trying to get back into society.

In the end, he mentions as an aside, that his West Bank don't get along with those awful people in Gaza. Divisions are part of who we are as people. The Anglican missal once contained references to evil "popery" and "civilizing" Canada's "savages."

Today their doors are open. But change takes generations.

The presenter is thanked. It's wonderful to hear a talk unrelated to prison or crimes, I think to myself as I anxiously eye the table behind him where sweets and dip are about to be laid out. I calculate the best angle to walk over as nonchalantly as possible and scoop up as much free grub as will fit into my cheeks.

On the way, people stop to thank me for whatever I may have babbled around the folding tables, or to discuss philosophy and my old Cathedral. I get caught up in the conversations, ever grateful to be treated like a human being. But within minutes I learn how to keep a chat going while filling my cheeks with cookies and cheese. It can be done. It takes some nodding, and a bit of mime.

Everyone says their goodbyes. We all promise to see each other when the law will allow. They seem genuinely happy we were there.

Back in the van, along a sidewalk I once trod thousands of times. The old Diocesan Bookstore, one of my favourite spots on earth, lies buried somewhere beneath our feet, in the galleries I can't go to, sits what is left of my family's long fallen business. This could be as much home as I have left.

It is a lovely summer evening. Couples walk hand in hand; tourists take photographs; a young lady dressed in black shouts into a small sliver of plastic, annoyed.

We load ourselves back into the van. Back to Laval: a city I once refused to write about as a Financial Post writer because nothing much was happening there.

Back to jail.

Do not pass go, do not collect \$200.

STRESS MANAGEMENT

A lecturer, when explaining stress management to an audience, raised a glass of water and asked 'how heavy is this glass of water?' Answers called out ranged from 20g to 500g.

The lecturer replied 'the absolute weight doesn't matter. It depends on how long you try to hold it. If I hold it for a minute, that's not a problem. If I hold it for an hour, I'll have an ache in my right arm. If I hold it for a day, you'll have to call an ambulance. In each case, it's the same weight, but the longer I hold it, the heavier it becomes'.

He continued, 'and that's the way it is with stress management. If we carry our burdens all the time, sooner or later, as the burden becomes increasingly heavy, we won't be able to carry on.

As with the glass of water, you have to put it down for a while and rest before holding it again. When we're refreshed, we can carry on with the burden.' So before you return home tonight, put the burden down. Don't carry it home. You can pick it up tomorrow. Whatever burden you're carrying now, let it down for a moment if you can.

So my friend, put down anything that may be a burden to you right now. Don't pick it up again until after you've rested awhile.'

Taken from Montreal Gazette

PERSPECTIVES FROM THE

LEGAL GALLERY



CANADIAN LAW OF PARDONS IN FLUX

What a Pardon is and is not

The Criminal Records Act is a federal statute which enables a person convicted of most offences to apply for a suspension of his or her criminal record after the specified waiting period has elapsed following expiry of any sentence of imprisonment, period of probation, and payment of a fine. The Parole Board of Canada determines if a pardon application should be granted, and if the conditions exist for its revocation. If granted, a pardon causes the administrators of the justice system to seal and set aside the judicial record, so that the conviction is no longer public and does not show up on criminal background checks (subject to certain exceptions, such as sexual offence convictions when applying to work with minors and other vulnerable people). As well, any disqualifications that federal law normally attaches to a conviction are extinguished.

A person who has obtained a pardon is permitted to respond "no" when asked if he or she possesses a criminal record. The pardon does not, however, erase the fact that the person committed a crime and was convicted for it, and thus it does not allow a person to answer "no" in those situations where one may be asked if one has ever been convicted of a crime. Nor should one assume that the granting of a pardon has motivated a police force to destroy its own notes pertaining to the offence.

Tightening of the Rules

In the last decade, Canadian law-makers have devoted considerable attention to the laws and regulations governing our system of pardons. In April of 2010, lamenting the fact that Karla Homolka would be eligible that year to apply for a pardon, and that another high-profile sexual offender has had the advantage of a pardon since 2007, then Prime Minister Stephen Harper signaled his government's intention to conduct a major overhaul of the area. Accordingly, in 2011-2012 Public Security Minister Vic Toews proceeded to increase the severity of the rules controlling access to pardon, which was officially rechristened 'record suspension.' Since that time, many have come to view the new rules as inimical to the underlying purposes of a system of pardons.

The 2011-2012 amendments to the Criminal Records Act doubled the waiting period after warrant expiry to ten years for indictable (i.e. more serious) offences, while the period following summary conviction offences was raised from three to five years. An important and unhelpful novelty was the introduction of permanent ineligibility for those convicted of three indictable offences, and for sexual offences against children. (Needless to say, persons serving life sentences have always been ineligible, for they are incapable of satisfying a waiting period as their warrants never expire.) And in another dramatic innovation, despite the opposition of 98.9% of Canadians who responded to its poll, the Harper Government more than quadrupled the application fee from \$150 to \$631.

Why reform is needed

A system of pardons provides an invaluable service to Canadians by rewarding and facilitating the efforts of deserving individuals with criminal records to move forward with their rehabilitation, and by enhancing the safety of communities by motivating the individual to remain crime free and maintain good conduct. Other societal benefits are realized as well, for example, as access to employment is augmented, social service payouts are reduced.

PERSPECTIVES FROM THE LEGAL GALLERY cont.....

As early as 1970, George McIlraith, Canada's Solicitor General (today called Minister of Public Security and Emergency Preparedness) recognized that pardons were desirable because of *the apparently unjust consequences that are still attached to a person who has been convicted of an offence, but who has long since rehabilitated himself and become integrated into society in a wholly satisfactory way. The consequences, in those circumstances, of having a conviction can work many injustices.* Studies have demonstrated the injurious impact a criminal record can have on travel, employment, the ability to find housing, admission to school, access to social services, general reputation in the community, and overall self-esteem. Clearly, the adverse effects of an 'unpardoned' criminal record are dramatic in severity, nor are they less dramatic in scope, as these surprising figures reveal: one out of every four (23.2%) Canadian males over the age of 14 has a criminal record (as have 4.3% of females), and more than 490,000 Canadians have received pardons and record suspensions since 1970.

According to statistics obtained by The Canadian Press through Access to Information, with the new restrictions in place, the rate of application for criminal record suspension from March to December, 2013, was more than 40 per cent lower than the rate in 2009 and 2010. As the new rules were being instituted, it was estimated there was a backlog of 22,500 people waiting for action on their applications, a consequence of the interminable waiting periods for treatment of their requests. But for those whose cases have been dealt with, one sees that in 76% of those receiving pardons, property offences, drinking and driving offenses, and simple possession of drugs were their most serious infractions. Ninety-five percent of pardons granted are still in force, indicating that the overwhelming majority of pardon/record suspension recipients remain crime-free in the community.

CHANGING OF THE GUARD

With the election of the Trudeau Liberals in October, 2015, federal government policy in the criminal justice field headed in a new direction. The new Prime Minister quickly furnished all of his cabinet ministers with Mandate Letters setting out their responsibilities and objectives. This in itself is not unusual-- what distinguished this act from its historical antecedents is that this time these statements of direction were shared with the public. Thus we know that Public Security Minister Ralph Goodale, in collaboration with his Justice Department homologue, was mandated to conduct an extensive review of the criminal justice field, with emphasis on the formulation of constructive, evidence-based policy, implicitly suggesting a contrast to a decade of ideologically-driven changes effected by the Harper regime.

This focus on 'what works' in place of criminal justice policy intended to assuage the anger and frustration of disgruntled voters has already made itself felt in the courts, where Justice Canada has withdrawn or declined to initiate a number of appeals against fair and constructive decisions won against Mr. Harper's Justice Department. The new attitude is apparent as well in the legislative field (one may note certain aspects of Bill C-56, and the imminent filing of legislation to legalize and regulate marijuana), and begins to be detectable in the operations of the Correctional Service and the Parole Board.

As concerns the specific matter of pardon reform, the commitment hinted at in the Prime Minister's Mandate Letter was specifically reiterated on January 24, 2016, Minister Goodale announced his intention to reconsider the previous government's approach to record suspension, which he characterized as "punitive." Public Security explained that the preparation of a report was underway which would guide the coming reform. Accordingly, in June of 2016 the Ministry conducted a survey through an online questionnaire open to stakeholder organizations and concerned individuals, as well as all other members of the public willing to share their views on parole. The ostensible aim was to obtain a picture of Canadians' level of satisfaction or disapproval with the existing law, regulations, policies, and administrative practices of record suspension. Suggestions for improvement were invited.

PERSPECTIVES FROM THE LEGAL GALLERY cont.....

The Government's announcement of imminent reform has been applauded by many of our criminal justice system's stakeholders sharing the Minister's enthusiasm for a more constructive management of criminal records. Canada's national association of prison lawyers, for example, responded to the Ministry's public invitation by suggesting (i) the repeal of permanent ineligibility of certain categories of ex-offenders; (ii) the elimination or significant reduction of the cost of application, given the financial fragility of many persons with criminal records; (iii) slashing response times after the application is submitted; (iv) prohibiting employers' common practice of asking the unfair question, "Have you been discharged of an offence, or pardoned for an offence?"; (v) looking into the benefits of automatic granting for certain offences after a set crime-free wait, without application or costs, such as takes place in the United Kingdom—this especially as Canada already has recognized the advantage of this approach in the related context of conditional discharges (erased automatically after three years), and absolute discharges (removed after one year); and (vi) returning to the use of "pardon" in preference to the expression "record suspension" which is a confusing term or many, and also misleading, as it seems to imply the threat of imminent restoration of the record, rather than a lasting forgiveness for past transgressions.

While the Liberal government's examination of parole issues has not yet resulted in a legislative initiative, the courts have already undertaken an active role. A Superior Court judge in British Columbia agreed with the argument that when an offender is convicted under the old law, the delay before pardon eligibility is part of his sentence, so that a subsequent increase in the legislated wait time constitutes a second penalty for the same offence, and violates one of the guarantees of the Charter of Rights and Freedoms. The Crown did not appeal that outcome. Two offenders in Ontario then brought a similar argument before Mr. Justice Robyn Ryan Bell of the Ontario Superior Court of Justice. Michael Charron had finished his sentence and was two years away from his application date when the Conservative government doubled his wait time. Fellow applicant Joseph Rajab found himself in the same situation. Mr. Charron was able to launch his constitutional challenge initially through crowdfunding, after which Legal Aid Ontario agreed to take over its costs as a constitutional test case. The Ontario Crown came around to the position that the British Columbia decision was well-founded in law, and consented to a declaration that the relevant sections of the Criminal Records Act are unconstitutional. On June 19, 2017, Mr. Justice Bell signed an order finding those provisions to no longer be of any force or effect in Ontario. Yet outside Ontario and British Columbia, while the Liberal government formulates a course of action, the Conservative government's legislated delays still must be applied, for the statute has yet to be amended. One assumes the government will move expeditiously to regularize the situation through legislation, for there is nothing but legal costs to prevent other ex-offenders throughout the country from applying to the courts armed with the British Columbia and Ontario rulings and the example of the Crowns' previous consent.

Submitted by Stephen Fineberg



A chat with Jeff Kennedy, our new Communitas Coordinator

As part of keeping our community informed and up to date, an interview was conducted with our new incoming co-ordinator, Jeff Kennedy. As you can see by the interview, Jeff gets around and is highly involved in the community. We wish him all the best in his new position.

Q: Where did you grow up?

A: A couple, very different places: I was born in the 'Chemical Valley'--Sarnia, Ontario--and lived in that area for the first decade of my life. I later moved to rural Prince Edward County to finish my 'growing up', which is a place I still refer to as home.

Q: What were some of your favourite memories from childhood?

A: Going to camp each summer. Driving to Detroit with my dad for my first Red Wings game (sorry Habs fans). Exploring the woods behind my house with my brothers.

Q: What in your childhood may have foretold your interest in law?

A: My parents might say the fact that I was pretty argumentative, but I'd frame it as having a strong sense of justice!

Q: How did you end up in Montreal, doing your PhD? What is your dissertation about? When do you hope to complete it?

A: After law school I wasn't sure what ought to come next, so I came to McGill for a master's degree to explore an academic route and ended up loving the city, the Faculty, and ultimately, being able to dig deep into the questions and issues that I care about. A doctorate at McGill seemed the next logical step. My dissertation looks at criminal sentencing as a special type of public decision-making and explores the ways in which taking seriously the idea of democracy and the values that underpin it--for instance, equality, mutual respect, and autonomy--can not only solve some of the big questions that scholars and law-makers deal with, but can do so in a way that would make sentencing more just.

Q: How did you get hooked up with Communitas?

A: During my time in Kingston (at Queen's University) I was involved in a reintegration project there and found a passion for it. When I realized I would be in Montreal for a while I looked for similar projects. Met Peter (Huish), saw how great this group was, and then the rest is history!

Q: You're currently the Coordinator. What does your job entail and what do you hope to see for Communitas going forward?

A: It's a pretty dynamic role, so I spend my time on a lot of different things: some fun stuff where I get to interact a lot with our members and some less exciting behind-the-scenes administration work. A big part of it now is implementing the new CoSA National Capacity Project, through which the federal government has resumed funding for Circles and which means growing and formalizing our current CoSA project. I also work closely with the various groups that drive Communitas (our Board of Directors, Steering Committee, and members) to keep everyone on the same page and help things run smoothly.

With respect to what I hope to see for Communitas going forward, I'm focused on two interrelated things. The first of these is growing the impact of Communitas' already-great work in terms of bringing what we offer to more people that need it, building more bridges with the community, and better helping guys not just get on their feet when re-joining the community, but take their place in the

PEOPLE

Some people come into our lives and quickly leave, while some stay awhile leaving footprints on our hearts and we are never the same.

Anonymous

Restorative Justice Week

3rd week of November



Annual Xmas Party

Dec. 5



A chat with Jeff cont....

community as active, equal citizens. The second of these is focusing on creating a sustainable organization that can carry this work long into the future. Part of this means fundraising, but a bigger part of it is involving and building the capacities of our members to take a more active role in helping to drive the organization. In doing this, I believe that it will not only help our organization, but help prepare each of us to take more active roles in our community more broadly.

Q: Any questions that I didn't ask that you would like to answer?

A: Nope.

Q: What do you do in your free time?

A: What's 'free time'?

SPIRITUAL MOMENT— *Great Reflection*

Submitted by Michele



Be Proud of Your Scars

When a bowl is broken in Japan it is put back together with the cracks being filled with gold, creating a beautiful lining.

This is to emphasize the beauty in what was once broken. They believe that when something has suffered damage, and has a history, it makes it more beautiful and the same goes for the human beings.

Everything that you've been through, everything that you are going through doesn't make your life uglier although it may seem that way when you are going through it. It is up to us to choose to paint our struggles with gold and make it beautiful.

You are not broken beyond repair, you can pick yourself up and learn from what's happened and become a better person from it because of the struggles that you have been through. You can wear the scars proudly as a badge of honour as if to say look at what I've been through its made me who I am today and I can get through anything life puts in front of me now.

Nobody has had a perfect life and nobody ever will. It is only up to us if we chose to paint our broken pieces gold and make it beautiful.

Don't be ashamed of what's happened to you. Everything that has happened to you has happened to you for a reason, so the more we deny, the more we complain and don't accept what has happened to us, then it does not become useful.

The moment that we accept and find what has become useful in the struggle, the things that we've been through, then that's just like us painting the cracks in our broken pieces gold. Turning something that could be ugly, into something beautiful and inspiring.

When what you have been through is inspiration for other people, then it was all worth it, so don't get stuck on how things used to be. I once heard a quote that said every next level of your life will demand a new you, and sometimes it takes being broken in order to become that new version of yourself. So if you are going through hard times I hope these words can help you or somebody that you love.

Sean Buranahiran

COMMUNITAS EVOLVES

Participatory Budgeting at Communitas

Over the course of six weeks in August and September, Communitas implemented its first ever 'Participatory Budgeting' (PB) process—an inclusive, democratic process where members of a community propose ideas for how to spend a portion of their budget and vote on which proposals are to be funded.

Starting in Brazil in 1989, PB has spread across the globe to be used at the national and municipal level, as well as in schools. It has several benefits, including allowing money to be spent in ways that better reflect the needs of community members, and providing an opportunity for those members to become more involved and grow their capacities as citizens. Each of these things is especially important for our organization, which continually seeks to better meet the needs of those currently and formerly incarcerated, and facilitate their full reintegration back into society.

As a first-time experiment, the Board set aside \$1500 for our members to decide how it should best be spent. We dedicated two Open Door nights—one for discussion and proposal creation, and one for deliberation and voting—and in between had a volunteer committee work to research and refine proposals, as well as prepare them for presentation.

Nine projects were eventually put forward, and the winning four projects included:

- A Community Garden project which will provide our members an enjoyable activity and allow us to donate produce to those who need it;
- An upgrade to purchase our coffee from an organization which seeks to provide stable employment to those released from prison;
- A pilot project to provide focused support for individuals immediately after their release; and
- A scholarship to support the studies of a student who has had an incarcerated parent.

There remains more work to be done before some of these can be implemented, but these projects will undoubtedly enhance our work going forward. Congratulations to everyone who participated, and a special thanks to Stephania, Jeri, Michael, and Carl for their work behind the scenes!

Jeff

GUEST SPEAKERS



Guest speakers are an important aspect of Open Door in that they are most informative, useful and very often heartwarming.

In the picture to the left, we were recently honored to have the Assistant to the Executive Director of the Montreal Chapter of Alzheimer Canada.

The Alzheimer Society is the leading not-for-profit health organization working nationwide to improve the quality of life for Canadians affected by Alzheimer's disease and related dementias and advance the search for the cause and cure. They are located in every province across Canada and in over 140 local communities.



Annual Resource Day

Submitted by Michele



Great day at our friend Marie's

STEERING COMMITTEE DISCUSSION

More funding may become available.

More student involvement.

Use of mass e-mails.

More specific pamphlets.

Secure graphic designer.

Dec. 5 Christmas Party.

August 5th, 2017, dawned bright at Marie's in Deux-Montagnes, the habitual site of the Communitas annual Journée de Ressourcement. Everywhere else in Montreal, it felt like it was pouring with rain, but we were blessed as usual with beautiful weather, wonderful friends, good food and great conversation. Communitas members came from far and wide to celebrate the day. There were newcomers experiencing the delight for the first time, and veterans of Communitas there to welcome them and be reinvigorated.

The river was too high for kayaking this year, but that did not prevent the intrepid from braving the water and enjoying a swim or two. Much socializing and laughter was seen and heard as the day progressed, with folks coming and going throughout the day adding their food to the pot-luck. Excitement too was experienced by the athletics fans in the house who crowded around the television to witness the final race of the great Usain Bolt as he tried to end his career on a high at the World Athletics Championship in London.

All in all, a splendid day was had by everyone and we look forward to reconvening next year - same place, same time.



Super Time

Super People

And

GREAT FOOD!!!





COMMUNITAS



Reaching out to the community....."

Communitas was present at the Fall 2017 McGill volunteer fair, looking to recruit some enthusiastic new volunteers. A delegation of four current Communitas volunteers spent 4.5 hours greeting students, fielding questions about restorative justice, distributing pamphlets, and trying to recruit new faces for Open Door (both as audience members and presenters!). While many of the students weren't familiar with restorative justice, almost everyone we talked to was excited to hear more about it, and some friends of Communitas dropped by the table to say hi. We also participated at Concordia's volunteer fair in October!

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Please support COMMUNITAS

Communitas is a volunteer organization welcoming ex-offenders back to the community by supporting them in their social, spiritual, emotional and practical needs. We foster restoration and accountability and attend to the needs of all those affected by crime.

Communitas, so far, has relied upon support from the Community Chaplaincy of Montreal (Aumônerie de Communautaire de Montréal) and individual donors like you. The stigma associated with offenders brings financial and other challenges with it. Your contribution helps.

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



\$25



\$50



\$100



Other _____

Tax receipts will be issued for donations of \$50 or more.

Name: _____

Address: _____

E-mail: _____