

the Sou'wester

Spring 2018

Edition 024

"A NEW CHAPTER HAS BEEN WRITTEN IN THE STORY OF OUR LIFE TOGETHER"

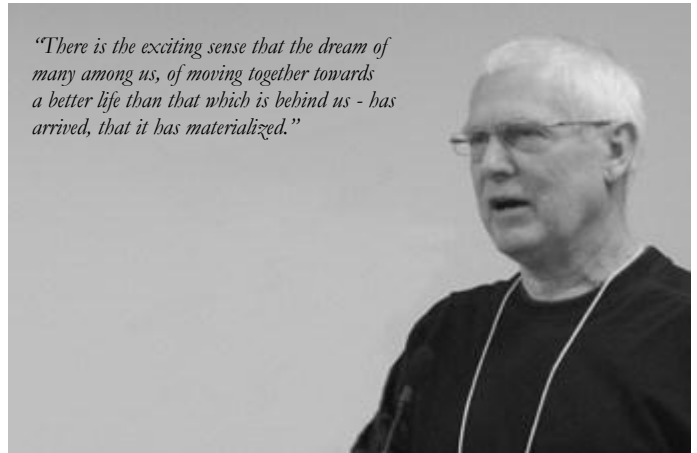
It bears repeating again that we are, concretely, Communitas, that which we have named ourselves for this new episode of our shared life.

It is our name but it is also that which we live. It has been a truly exciting time for us, as we became, mysteriously, whom we have always been, or perhaps easier to grasp, whom we have wanted to be, and we have been able to put a finger on that by meaningfully naming it.

Communitas is more than simply a name because it holds within it a complex of the senses of togetherness, belonging, mutuality and diversity, movement and direction, all at play together. As one who has been present to the entire sweep of our movement and time together and who has known all who have participated, I trust you will forgive me this incomplete attempt to speak of this wonderful reality that is beyond words, impossible to nail down.

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"There is the exciting sense that the dream of many among us, of moving together towards a better life than that which is behind us - has arrived, that it has materialized."



Peter is not only Chairman of Communitas' Board but he has served as a prison chaplain in the Montreal region for two decades. Although retired, Peter still visits Federal Institutions on a regular basis, spreading the Communitas message.

DRINK KLINK!



Klink Coffee is a Toronto based social enterprise which provides jobs and training for people returning from prison.

A GREAT COFFEE WITH GREAT POTENTIAL

Communitas has sourced its coffee from KLINK since September 2017, after our members voted to support their project within our Participatory Budgeting initiative.

In the piece below, KLINK'S Executive Director, Mark Kerwin, speaks about the importance of a supportive employment environment post-incarceration, the future of KLINK, and how others can help further their vision.

I truly believe that in order for us to evolve and solve the many challenges coming at us today, we have to get out of the thinking that created the

problems in the first place. This applies to myself, others, as well as to societal and global problems.

If we look at the state of the world, many believe that it reflects the current state of our communal and participatory mind. We certainly have room for improvement - each and every one of us counts and can help or hinder where we aim to be in the future. Canada is in a fantastic place to lead the world, with its compassionate responses to global issues. The area that I've been fortunate enough to have the opportunity to work on and within is in the Corrections industry (for want of a better word).

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We would love to hear from you!



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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.

A little poetry from our friends...

HAPPINESS

Happiness lies neither in vice nor in virtue; but in the manner we appreciate the one and the other, and the choice we make pursuant to our Individual organization.

TEAMWORK

"Everything I achieved throughout my career, and all the rewards that followed, came as the results of team effort. If they say anything about me when I'm gone, let them say that I was a team man."

Jean Beliveau

ARRESTED

By Bob

To sit in a cramped space
Accompanied by Obscurity and Shame;
And feel life's awkward journey,
Slipping away into a void of no return.

Mindless reveries
Of death to a life once lived,
Gone...

As the ebbing flow of a receding tide.
Life's wordless breath slips away.

To sleep upon a hard wooden plank,
With Grief and Shame,
The long night's companions.

Daybreak falls upon a suffering silence
With incumbent consequences of a grave
loss.

Where are the friends
That vanished in my grief?
And where lies the family

That's gone, come and gone?
The dust of death,
The grit and sand
Within an amniotic fluid
Preparing for new birth.

Who teaches the child that is reborn
When crisis opens both its doors?
Time passes and memories abound
To fill a haunting void

Like sinews clinging to dry bone
Of things that were, and are no more.

Time passes and memories abound

To fill a haunting void

Like sinews clinging to dry bone
Of things that were, and are no more.
Destiny and purpose are reborn

In the chrysalis of darkness,
The dark mystery of transition,
Where life begins.

To fly to distant
Places within memories,
To sit with another
And witness the brilliance of his shame.

As children we suffer and know no end
Of life's brief struggle,

To make sense and survive
The sounds of violence,
And the loud boastings of cruel men
Creating yet, another day in hell,
And feeling the death of innocence.

Consider the passing generations,
Who once had place and names.
And now forgotten
In so short a time.

Consider the glory and the fame
That passes unremembered
In moments of obscurity and shame.

CRUEL TUBE

BY Colin

Oh toothpaste, why won't you go back?
I hope and hope and hope and hope
And hope again I'll squeeze you in
And replay all my darker turn.

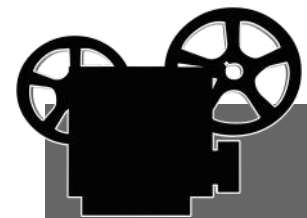
The tube is cruel, the tube is harsh
That vomits out its gummy soap
And never lets it home again
All my mistakes from whence they came.

My boasts, my crimes, the time I won
And never took the open door
The opportunities forgone
The ebb and flow of live events.

When I was nice, but nicer still
I could have been; and then that time
A life foregone; there was no point
There never is with dentifrice.

You brush, you rinse, it vanishes
Washed down the drain, like so much paste
No plumber's tool can get it back
No quantum trick can wake the cat.

One day they'll build a time machine
Or better yet, a neat device
That pumps the paste back in the tube
Exactly as it sat that year.



MOVIE NIGHT NEWS

Two small changes in our "Movie Night" procedure as it will now be held at the Communitas Office located at 3974, Notre Dame West, suite B — each **first Monday of the Month.**

**SEE YOU ALL
THERE!!**

Integrity Is...

By PaigSr ©

Integrity is...
The morals that start your day
The ethics that take you step by step
The soundness from which your decisions come
And the completeness you feel at the end of the day.

Integrity is...
Honesty that comes from with-in,
As your actions also reflect you
Like the faith of a mustard seed
Your honesty will also help you grow.

Integrity is...
Virtues that work through you
Values that are with you at all times
Consistency of you projecting forth
To be all that He has made of you.

Integrity is...
A steadfast feeling of going forth
Doing what's right in His eyes
For He is the one leading the way
Showing you what integrity is.

The humble man

Author anonymous

To the unconscious souls, lost in the touch screens of their smart phones,
Take the time to open your eyes with piety,
So that the naked eye can see what I can see,
Like the humble man as he lays on the streets,
Alone with no home with only the things that he can keep,
In a bag as he sleeps on the cold concrete, not even seen by the sheep,
As they walk past the humble man laying at their feet, begging for change,
Realize that what he needs is not only the means, but actual change and what it means,
Stop...take a second to ask him about his dreams, his passions and all the things,
That make him the best he can be...Then ask yourself...

What can you can do to help, what is a dollar to the wealth of a piece of mind?

Can you see the signs of a genuine soul that is in need of a hand?
Simply to help him stand on his own two feet...

Then listen to what he says as he speaks:

Wait...what is it that you seek?

Is it success, happiness or fulfilment of what you think you need?

Is it need, or simply part of your greed?

If that's so, then open your hand to receive this seed, then plant it in your heart.

Watch it grow into a tree,

bearing the fruits that will succeed to feed,

The humble man...

*Submitted by Bob Morell on behalf of a prison inmate
who was asked to write about homelessness.*

The Communitas Canvas



Grizzly cubs, 2003

Stipple art by Douglas Barnes

The Communitas Canvas is place where we feature art made by members and friends of Communitas.

Want your art or photography featured in the Sou'Wester?

Send us a copy of your artwork alongside any title or author name that you want included. We'll do our best to fit it into one of our upcoming newsletters!

A GREAT COFFEE CONT...

The biggest challenges I see for the community I serve is not housing or employment, its mindset and belief in oneself; however, the employment we offer is the foundation for creating a community, a steady place to come and learn, to share and grow, and to believe in oneself again, as well as earn the income to be able to afford good housing.

KLINK Coffee Inc. is a non-profit social enterprise that was founded by John Howard Society Toronto to create good quality employment with good pay. Having any kind of decent, appropriate housing is a key fundamental

to a quality life, and being able to afford that is dependent on good quality employment. The founders of KLINK realized that there were many employment agencies that people could go to, but they weren't creating the work itself.

Most of our community members know how hard it is to find any kind of employment with a criminal record, so KLINK is a starting point to create work - and hopefully to scale this model and expand it. That happens one cup of coffee at a time, in your hands at home or at a cafe that serves our coffee, or one bag of coffee at a time that people can order online and have shipped anywhere in Canada.

I feel incredibly grateful to Sonya Spencer, Executive Director of John Howard Society Toronto, and Ted Addie, KLINK's long time full time volunteer and Chief Operating Officer, for hiring me back in August of 2016. I didn't come from the non-profit sector, although I always loved volunteering at yoga and meditation centres, and also raise funds for Team Diabetes as an ambassador. I also didn't come from the Corrections industry, so approached my position at KLINK with curiosity, fresh perspective and lack of knowing all the "rules." This helped me in breaking through perceived barriers to solving this conundrum of incarceration and post-incarceration, and also having a lack of judgment when it came to the people that come through the KLINK program. In fact,

what happened to me is that I was transformed by the experience and continue to be transformed. And the people I have the honour and privilege to learn from every day have also helped transform me and what I believe is possible through their grit, determination, heart and dedication. I am inspired by the stories of the people

Most of our community members know how hard it is to find any kind of employment with a criminal record, so KLINK is a starting point to create work - and hopefully to scale this model and expand it.

around me. The sweet aroma of coffee being grinded doesn't hurt much either...

The long range vision would be that we have a precise and tight model of business that other G20 countries could license from us, and that way we would get a steady source of income from licensing the intellectual property (similar to a franchise). Having top notch programming and courses on "all the things you never learned at school" requires good and steady funding and revenue. Taking our model global would also spread social enterprise and good employment opportunities to other people around the world who struggle with the same challenges that we do in Canada in how we treat people with criminal records.

The mid term vision would be to have the revenue and income to purchase land, then build a beautiful KLINK centre that would serve as a community and innovation hub - complete with a cafe, a boutique hotel (for profit) that would fund supported micro-housing above it (not for profit). Coffee and barista training could be provided, as well as corollary initiatives like is done at Homeboy and Homegirl Industries in Los Angeles (you inspire us Father Greg!). Pop up space for other social enterprises at reduced rent could bring in more revenue, as well as advertising space, and telecom on the rooftop. The cafe, perhaps our own roastery, and bakery could provide excellent training as well as revenue.

A barbershop, an events space - all these creative endeavours could take place that would lead to people from all over the world coming to learn about social justice, inclusive community, and creative problem solving. This would get more top notch talent interested in creating a better Corrections experience for all involved in it.

It's great to have a long range dream, but the day to day here and now is ruled by how we can get our story out to people so they get interested in buying our coffee. This allows us to continue to grow and expand our program, and also to improve our training

programs and experiences for those coming through KLINK. Please watch our youtube video at our web site www.drinkklink.com

under "why KLINK" and see how positively KLINK has impacted those interviewed. The coffee is some of the best coffee in the world, and the cause it supports is also very needed and worthy. KLINK Coffee is also always needing help from volunteers that can assist us in day to day improvements like content creation (video especially), social media, events management, staffing tables at farmers markets to increase brand awareness in the market place. Most of all we ask that people like, share, buy or donate - all of these easy action steps helps us to help others in need. We may not have all the answers or solutions, but feel like we really do make a difference and shine a positive light in an area that all Canadians should take a closer look at. The planet is a globe, and we are all inside that circle. No one is outside the circle. It's time to start living like everyone counts and that our individual problems are connected to our community and how we choose to treat all human beings and life itself. Drink KLINK. Change Lives. Brews up good! Thank you for reading and please consider ordering our coffee if you drink it yourself, or for anyone in your life that loves coffee and doing good.

Mark Kerwin,
Executive Director KLINK Coffee Inc.

A CHAPTER CONT...

Although it can't be completely grasped, there is value in celebrating the moment when we have caught sight of it, have felt it, have lived it. This recent period of transition, renewal and affirmation, this sense of a new chapter in our lives has many features:

- our name, *Communitas*, is the most obvious one;
- it has been the second year of incorporation, with all that this has meant;
- opportunities for member involvement and participation have been created and have become a priority;
- we now have a board of dedicated directors;
- focus and task-oriented groups have been added to our Steering Committee;
- our COSA work has been rejuvenated because of renewed public funding through COSA Canada, a national organization of which we are a member;
- we have engaged Jeff Kennedy as our Coordinator and Michael Pedruski as Assistant so that we now have the needed coordination of the many gifts, leadership and efforts which carried us through earlier chapters;
- Table Talk and Open Door are flourishing (with many servers and enablers);

- the *Sou'Wester*, our newsletter, is reborn – this has served as catalyst for a creative review, renewal and coordination of all “communications” within and beyond us – publicity and public engagement, website, social media activity;
- renewed intentional participation in, promotion of, and education in Restorative Justice, including participation in a recent National Conference;
- renewed and enhanced relations with community partners, especially CSRQ and ACM; and not least of all,
- greater financial resources with all this has added – stability, management, accountability and new possibilities...

Indeed we have written a new chapter in our story, carrying forward the formative essentials of earlier experience while creating the elements which will guide and help to sustain us in transitions yet required of us...

Peter Huish
Communitas Chairman



A surprise visit from our northern indigenous community

Open Door extended a warm welcome to Mr. Kenneth Matoush, a Cree Correctional Release Support Worker who provides support to various Cree individuals passing through the justice system. He travels extensively throughout various communities including Mistissini, Val d'Or and other northern communities.



Christmas cheers and joy at the annual Communitas Christmas party!



The Communitas Christmas Party came early this year, with celebrations being held on December 5th at the beautifully decorated Open Door venue.

Some sixty guests showed up bringing food and good cheer to the evening. Guys from the Pen joined other Communitas members to share delicious food, conversation and lots of laughs. As can be counted on every year, Santa and his Elf made an appearance – checking out the “naughty” and “nice”, and Christmas music – from *Bubl * to a

jazzy Fitzgerald, played throughout the evening.

The food kept coming through the door in an endless stream, giving the guys in the kitchen happy logistical problems to solve – but in the end- all was warmed, and dished, and served with even left-overs to be packed for distribution to the needy.

Communitas wishes everyone a Merry Christmas and a peaceful and fulfilling 2018.

A few recent Open Door presentations

October 10 – Commemorating Expo 1967 with a sphere and a cube



“Tonight’s topic is based on a cube and a sphere and has something to do with a 50th anniversary.” All Montrealers, even if they had to think for awhile, would eventually identify the 1967 World’s Fair and its two most famous buildings: Habitat ’67 and the US Pavillon. And who were the architects? The US Pavillon, the large skeletal golf ball whose casing burned in 1976 and yet remains a landmark of the Montreal skyline, was built by the American Buckminster Fuller, the inventor of the geodesic dome. Fuller is responsible for all those semi-circular playstructures on children’s playgrounds.

Habitat 67 was built as a Master’s thesis by architectural student Moshe Safdi at McGill University. Bob put up his hand and reminisced at how wonderful it was to be in his 20s during Expo 67, with so many young women visiting from all over the world... Another exciting memory was by Bill, a former journalist, who recounted how on the day that the US Pavillon burned, he sped through the traffic, through the crowds, followed by the fire chief, to the scene of the blaze. Now that’s frontline journalism!

Oct 17 – Landlord / Tenant Rights

Our friends at the Legal Information Clinic at McGill came back again to talk to us about the law. They’ve spoken to us about consumer law, family law, our rights as citizens when we are approached by the police, and tonight they came ready to talk to us about our Rights as Tenants, our rights as Landlords. It’s important to have a written lease and to understand all the clauses, but it’s even more important is to have good relationships with your landlord, your neighbours, and the caretaker, so that when problems arise, human goodwill may prevent legal hassles.

Still, know your rights and responsibilities, document your phone calls and conversations, keep your receipts, photograph any damage... and feel free to call the Legal Information Clinic at McGill if you need legal information. They are not lawyers who can advise you, but are students who can do research and inform you.

Oct 24, 2017: Commemorating Canada’s first Nobel prize



It was in October 1923 that Canadians Frederick Banting and John Macleod received Canada’s first ever Nobel Prize for their discovery of insulin. This was a huge discovery because up until the discovery of insulin, diabetes was a death sentence—by starvation, oddly enough. Banting and Macleod had two colleagues who had contributed to the research and yet who did not receive Nobel prizes, so Banting and Macleod each split their \$40,000 prize four ways, so that each of the four scientists received \$10,000.

As true humanitarians, Banting and Macleod immediately published their production method so that labs all around the world could start producing insulin and saving lives. Immediately their discovery made a difference to millions of diabetics around the world. If we compare this to today’s drug companies that patent their production methods and charge exorbitant prices for their medicines, we can be proud of these two Ontarians who put human lives above personal gain.

Oct 31: Civic Politics in Montreal



Fred is a retired professor of Economics and has been a life-long activist in local and international politics. He and his wife can often be seen hanging up political posters or participating in demonstrations. Since a municipal election was around the corner, Fred came to talk to us about the importance of voting and being informed in political matters. We told him beforehand that he could not use Open Door as a political platform, and he was very good about adhering to this restriction.

On the other hand, he gave us quite an explanation on the many ways that politicians and political parties get illegal contributions, kickbacks etc., and the measures that have been taken in recent years to try to eliminate this. Many of us do not participate in politics but we must tip our hats to those who work to keep our democratic system ethical and transparent.

Nov 7: The Orphan Train



Tonight's presentation was an eye-opener for everyone. Nobody knew much about the children who were sent from Britain to North America for adoption or for work, as parents hoped for their children to have a better chance in the new world, and society wanted to relieve itself of orphans. In those days children were considered big enough to go out and earn their own living at age ten or eleven. We remembered that one of our early volunteers, 92-year-old Stanley Wilson, had come to Canada alone at age 12 and then became a father-figure to so many street kids in Montreal.

Then there was the Orphan Train, a train that transported unwanted or orphaned children from Eastern United States to be chosen by families in the West who needed laborers or perhaps could not have children of their own. Bill told the story of a load of children who had all been chosen by families except for one 4-year-old girl, who stood alone at the station. No one chose her so the station manager convinced his wife that they should take her, although the wife had not wanted any children. Bill showed us her photograph. That little girl ended up receiving a good home and eventually became Bill's mother. Thank you to Bill for sharing with us this personal and eye-opening segment of our history.

Nov 14, 2017: The Oil and Gas Industry



Sandy worked as a Communications Officer for Petro-Can, back in the days when it was a Crown Corporation. He started as an explosives worker, a person who placed dynamite every few hundred meters or so in order for seismologists to read the seismic data and determine whether or not there was oil to drill for underneath the blast. He also explained to us what "fracking" is (pumping a liquid into a well to extract oil) and why people object to it.

He had quite a challenge convincing one attendee that there is no such thing as clean coal, although politicians and industry investors may claim that coal is clean, Sandy assured us that coal is never clean. We won't hold our breaths waiting for fossil fuel energies to go out of style, because the world will be hungry for them as long as they exist.

Nov 21, Restorative Justice Week: A Victim's Story

National Restorative Justice Week is the third week of November. It's celebrated in prisons and in communities all across Canada, as people more and more agree that the criminal justice system is not serving our communities well. Open Door was honoured to welcome Mathieu and Julie Ann to present to us a victim's story. They started by showing a short video of a man who had been the victim of a random stabbing in the United States and who had eventually evolved beyond his feelings of fear and vengeance, self-pity and helplessness to feel compassion for his offender and to wish him a happy life. Then Julie Ann, who had been working with Mathieu at the Centre de services de justice réparatrice, told how she had moved beyond a lifetime of victimization to a life of inner freedom, thanks to her ability to speak her truth and then forgive. She spoke so coherently that she seemed like a woman who had been telling her story to groups for years, but she was in fact only learning to tell her story and to heal herself. We wish them all the best in 2018!

Dec 12, 2017: Making Christmas cards

It was a chilly night and a tiny group of Open Door faithfuls turned up for the annual Open Door Christmas card production night. There were only about ten people so we brought the tables close together and all sat in a small rectangle so that we could all talk as we listened to Christmas carols and made cards for our loved ones. Crayons, coloured pencils and paint were all used to express ourselves creatively. Jeri brought her collection of antique Christmas cards, some dating back to the 1950s, for inspiration and fun.

Dec 19, 2017: Singing Christmas carols

There was a huge improvement in our Open Door annual carol sing-along. For the first time ever, every one at Open Door had the same carol sheet, and what a difference it made to have us all sing together! Admittedly, we won't be quitting our day jobs to pursue a vocation as The Open Door Songsters, but we sang with gusto and laughter and everyone enjoyed it. In the middle of the evening there was a surprise: Santa Claus showed up with gifts for everyone who had missed the Christmas party on December 5, especially for the guys who couldn't get an escort from the pens. Open Door Santa never disappoints and he wished us all the best in 2018!



Fun and Games at FTC (CFF Laval)

by Bob Morell

After eight years as a prison chaplaincy volunteer, I was finally going to get my wish of a tour of a prison, in this case TFC Laval.

Sabrina, one of the chaplains there, was offering a tour, given by the guards for about twenty-five people. The instructions were to be at the prison at precisely 8 AM in order to pass through security screening and start the tour at 8:30 AM. We were asked to bring a \$5 donation for the guards' Centraide campaign. Toward the same cause, there would also be jars of spaghetti sauce, made by staff in the prison kitchen, for \$10 a jar. It was strongly suggested that we support this as well and that we bring exact change.

The tour was to end no later than 9:30 AM.

I obediently arrived at minutes before 8:00, with exactly twenty five dollars, but missed the visitor parking sign on the left, proceeding past two staff parking lots until I reached the far end close to the main entrance. I was just parking there when a prison van drove up beside me. A rather surly guard stepped out and curtly asked me what I thought I was doing. When I told him of the visit, he told me to go back out and turn right into the visitor parking lot. Obediently, I did

as instructed except that when I took the first right I found myself driving onto the perimeter security road. The same guard was now blasting the vehicle alarm and waving frantically at me. I was allowed to slowly back out and enter the proper area, followed closely by "Officer Friendly".

So far, so good. Others were starting to arrive, and together we walked toward the entry gate but found that Officer Friendly had blocked our path with his vehicle. He directed us to go back and wait inside our cars until 8:30. We tried to explain our situation, to no avail, as he only would say "my boss told me 8:30, not before". We all followed his instructions diligently, with the notable exception of me, standing by my car, arms folded, locked in a staring contest with Officer Friendly, in one last act of defiance. Sabrina arrived and was equally mystified by the change because it would take about half an hour to process everyone, leaving us with a very short visit. Suddenly at 8:15, the guard began waving us over with his arms. As we approached the vehicle, which had the sliding door open, someone joked "oh look, he's going to give us a ride (the hundred or so feet to the entrance). It seems as his part in the tour was showing us the non-descript interior of the van and then proceeded to show us how his gun worked. Was it my imagination or was he looking at me the whole time? Finally we managed to slowly pass the security check and entered the prison around 9:00, with my dignity still intact and twenty five dollars in my pocket: the exact amount required for my contribution to the Centraide campaign as well as two jars of spaghetti sauce – one for me and one that Peter had asked me to get for him.

From here on in things took a turn for the serious. As we walked along an inside road toward the ranges, we were met by another guard standing beside the same type of prison van as before. He was smiling and pleasant, a vast improvement over his predecessor. He explained that this was a prisoner transport vehicle, yet even with this in mind I couldn't believe what I was seeing

as he slid back the door. A thick metal box had been fitted into the interior. When opened, its small bolted door revealed a space barely large enough for two men, fitted with a narrow metal bench and no padding whatsoever. When one of the volunteers was handcuffed and placed inside, it became clear there was no room for him to lean back or forward without banging his head. It was horrifying to imagine a person remaining in this erect position for the entire trip. I asked the guard why there were no seat belts, to which he replied that they were not legally required in buses, taxis and prison vehicles. With memories of Officer Friendly still fresh in my mind, I decided not to pursue the topic. He did not seem at all bothered by the inhumanity of it all.

Next we were shown one of the unoccupied ranges which was pretty much as described to me: cell measuring 7x11 feet, narrow cot, desk, sink, toilet, thick door and a window at the far end. As I stood inside a cell, trying to imagine spending most of my time in such a confined space, I looked out the window and saw my second disturbing sight. In the middle of an open space between the ranges was a fenced-in enclosure about 15 feet high, 20 by 40 feet in area, topped by a coil of barbed wire. Inside was a lone person walking slowly around the perimeter, hands in pockets, head bowed.

He was one of only three inmates we would see during our entire time there, in a prison with hundreds. He was probably in segregation for bad behavior or his own protection and this was his one hour of exercise, but the absence of human contact seemed unnecessarily cruel to me. Another example of inhumanity in prison.

Then we entered a building where a female guard showed us the various ways drugs are smuggled into prison - inside book pages, envelopes, cell phones (not allowed inside), tennis balls lobbed over the fence - and how alcohol

is made from sugar and wrapping a coil of tubing passed through a toilet bowl to distil it. Such small quantities, I thought. I knew already from my previous encounter with Officer Friendly how difficult it would be to get close enough to throw a ball over the fence into the yard undetected.

The most pleasant part of the tour was meeting two inmates in the gymnasium, the nicest building we saw, with exercise

We all followed his instructions diligently, with the notable exception of me , standing by my car, arms folded, locked in a staring contest with Officer Friendly, in one last act of defiance.

machines and the logos of all NHL teams on the walls. There, an Inuit and an aboriginal explained items that they made, their native unions inside and joint activities. They were a joy to meet and very pleasant as they answered our questions. Finally, a touch of humanity.

But it was too good to last as we entered a room that housed the swat team, an emergency response centre. The guard reminded me of the Daniel Craig version of James Bond as he explained the various weapons used to subdue violent situations. He wore an air of quiet confidence and a smirk on his face that seemed to say "I could kill you if I wanted to and you wouldn't see it coming". He was especially proud of the array of sprays and gases that could be used to blind or suffocate a person into submission. While such measures may be necessary in some cases, it was the guard's apparent pride in using them that got to me.

We never did see the chapel and after a brief walk through the library, and what looked like very old and outdated books, the visit was over just after 11AM. It bothered me that the inmates may have had to spend the morning in their cells during our time there.

As we were leaving, I couldn't shake the disturbing images that remained - the

metal box, the lone inmate in the enclosure, the gas, the inhumanity that people inflict on other people, and finally the reality that human beings, including the ones I have come to know and care about, have to exist in such a harsh environment.

There was another disappointment to come when the time came to buy the spaghetti sauce. The guard at the entrance seemed surprised and said there was none for sale, and that we had to order it in advance. Sorry Peter, it'll have to be Ragu for dinner.

I was relieved that I experienced no further confrontations with Officer Friendly and that I would make it out without being shot or arrested.

Not so much fun and no games.



LIGHT AT THE END OF THE TUNNEL

December 3, 2017. Ironically on this very day, 19 years ago, I was arrested for first degree murder. Flash forward to today, December 3, 2017 and here I am, writing about my story – a story which in my opinion, and the opinion of the people closest to me, has turned out to be a successful one.

After spending 18 long hard years behind bars, I am now living in a halfway house impatiently and excitingly awaiting my release date in the weeks to come. Having the support network that I was so lucky to have helped in enabling me to make something better of myself. Don't get me wrong, managing the ups and downs of living without freedom wasn't easy, and it was very hard at times for everyone involved ... especially my loved ones.

During the last two decades, I turned myself around. I went from being a young, stupid kid to getting myself educated, learning new skills, and becoming a man.

As I was preparing for the transition between being locked up to reintegrating into society, I slowly began to create stability in my life. I kept a

routine... I continued with my therapies... I signed up for volunteer work and remained committed to it. This allowed me to obtain the needed experience to get employed with them, which in turn gave me the necessary skills to find better employment... and I did not give in to the temptations of reconnecting with the "poisons" of my past. I'm not going to lie... it has been hard at times, but it is definitively abetting to my success.

Since my transition to the house, I can proudly say that I have positively made something of myself... I sustain a very healthy relationship with my dear loving supportive mother, family and friends, which I am very grateful for. I have secured myself meaningful full-time employment with benefits... I was able to invest wisely, and now own a vehicle of my choice... I am now looking to

purchase my first home... and planning a future with a childhood friend who has never given up on me, and who has been there for me during all this time.

To everyone who is reading this... If there is one piece of advice I can share with all of you, it is that:

When people tell you: "when you get out of jail, You're on Your own, there is nothing for you and there is no help..." I beg to differ! Ever hear of the saying "Where there is a will, there is a way"? Well, it is true if you are willing to put your mind and effort into it, you will succeed. I am now moving full-force ahead with my life plan. I'm not going to let anything get to stop me... I am in control of my future, and I won't let life's obstacles get in my way.

Be grateful and thankful... and surround yourself with positive people who will make you want to be a better person.

By Eric



IN THE NEWS

In the news is a feature where we highlight interesting and relevant news items taken from outside media sources.

New sentencing provision likely off to the Supreme Court

“Challenge expected to new parole model”

Article taken from Montreal Gazette

CALGARY* Legal experts say a sentencing provision that can keep killers in prison for the rest of their lives is likely to make its way to the Supreme Court of Canada.

The federal government enacted legislation in 2011 that allows a judge to order a multiple murderer to serve consecutive periods of parole ineligibility for each offence. It has only been applied on six occasions.

The most recent was in the case of Derek Saretzky, who was sentenced in August for the first-degree murders of a man and his two-year-old daughter as well as a senior in southwestern Alberta.

Saretzky received the mandatory sentence of life in prison. But instead of the usual 25 years before parole eligibility, the judge ordered that Saretzky spend at least three

times that long — 75 years — behind bars before he can apply to get out.

“This case hammers home the stark reality of the law as it is now. If you want to make it consecutive, you’ve got to make it 75 for three murders,” said Calgary defence lawyer Balfour Der, who is challenging Saretzky’s conviction and sentence in Alberta’s Appeal Court.

“Were talking about a 22-year-old who would end up with ... no parole until he’s 97.”

“If we look at it that way ... maybe we should give him a break. On the other hand, this is a very serious crime. This is highly emotional because of the circumstances of the deaths and who are the victims.”

Derek said it’s a tricky legal issue.

“One of the grounds of appeal will likely be that the consecutive minimums of 25 years amounts to cruel and unusual punishment and, because of that, the section is unconstitutional.”

He suggests a sliding scale for consecutive parole ineligibilities that still recognizes the seriousness of a case.

A University of Calgary law professor said she wouldn’t be surprised if the case shows up in Canada’s top court.

“I don’t know how or in what manner the court would deal with it, but I would suspect it will happen,” said Lisa Silver.

The Canadian Press

Communitas and restorative justice

The Communitas Mission statement declares: “Communitas is a non-profit, essentially volunteer-driven, English-speaking organization, **working in accordance with the principles of Restorative Justice** for a safe community, through the accompaniment and re-integration of those who have served time in a penitentiary.”

At the core of restorative justice is a desire to heal the harm that has been caused and restore the parties (victim, offender and community members) to a sense of balance in going forward.

The victim needs to address and understand why he/she has been harmed and to have a voice in the offender’s coming to terms with past actions. The offender needs to recognize the harm he/she has inflicted and take steps to make amends that will help the victim heal. The community too has been broken by the harm and it needs to be there to support the victim, as well as witness the steps the offender is taking to repair the relationships that have been broken.

Communitas can facilitate the offender’s re-entry back into the community by offering support. The offender’s desire to re-integrate smoothly is often made difficult by the societal prejudice

against those who have committed crimes and have been incarcerated. Through the bonds of support, close contact and building a sense of community, Communitas becomes a living testament of successful re-integration.

It is driven by both the ex-offenders themselves along with dedicated volunteers who seek justice for all, a justice that is alive and one that builds up the broader community and makes it more compassionate and safer place. It all begins with a simple smile and handshake.

By Bill

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 \$50 or more. Please include the following information for that purpose:”

Full name Including middle initial: _____

Address: _____

E-mail: _____

**AFTER YEARS OF CONFINEMENT,
RE-ENTERING SOCIETY CAN BE A
CHALLENGING EXPERIENCE
FOR PRISONERS.**



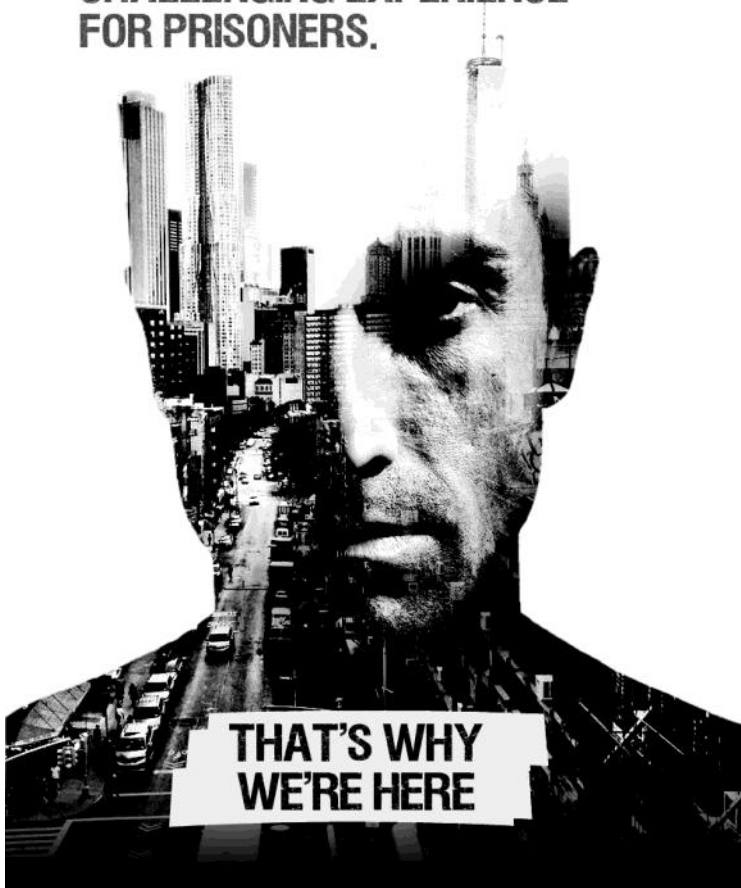
Circles of Support and Accountability (COSA) at Communitas: Is it for you?

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:

Jeff Kennedy 514-244-6147

coordinator@communitasmontreal.org



We would love to hear from you!



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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.*