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# the Sou'Wester

A grassroots newsletter on criminal justice & prisoner reintegration

Summer 2022 Edition

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

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## The Communitas Journée de Ressourcement

The Communitas Journée de Ressourcement 2022 was a resounding success – after a Covid hiatus of two years! As advertised, the sun shone, and the weather was perfect!

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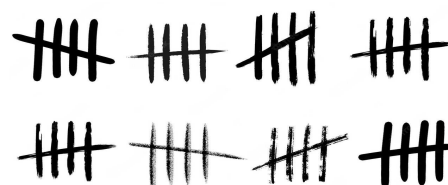
## No Need for Speed

Cycling across Canada is a life's dream for many cyclists, a dream that had dogged me for years. Every spring as the snow melted I'd wonder: "is this the year that I'll do it?". But life has had its way of throwing obstacles at me when I'd try to take off for three months.

Nevertheless, this summer I decided to live the dream. The plan was to ride to Newfoundland, fly to Vancouver and ride back home. A coast-to-coast 7000 km ride using only one flight.

I loaded my tent, floor mat, sleeping bag, light cooking gear, clothing, repair tools and my trusty drone on my road bike. She/it now weighed 35 kilograms. Never before had I done a single day of cycling with so much gear in tow. Just before I left, I removed my odometer as I did not want to be bothered by my speed - the important thing here was to enjoy the ride without feeling the need to perform.

*Continued on page 3*



## No, longer prison sentences do not reduce crime

*Experts' Open Letter in Response to a Recent CBC Article*

On September 15, 2022 a CBC article claimed that "experts" support handing out "longer jail sentences" in order to reduce crime and respond to "prolific offenders". As experts in criminology, sociology, and law we feel it is our obligation to clearly and decisively reject this assertion. Decades of research from Canada and comparable jurisdictions like the United States, United Kingdom and Australia has shown that longer prison sentences do not reduce crime.

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## The Communitas Journée de Ressourcement

*Continued from page 1*

Although we missed the men from the pens that would usually attend, we were well represented with more than 35 people gathering on the day for food, conversation, renewing acquaintances, and just generally relaxing.

The food was plentiful as expected with everyone bringing their favourite dish, to say nothing of the fresh corn provided by Marie and cooked at the bottom of the garden.

Marie supervised and controlled all from her mobile chair up on the deck – making sure people had dishes and utensils, bags, and paper towels with which to display and collect their offerings of food and drinks. As per usual, the desserts were so many that they were allocated a table of their own.

With the weather so nice, sitting around in the outdoors - on the grass, by the water or on the deck and catching up with old friends and meeting new ones was a great way to spend a Saturday afternoon. The river wasn't cold, as some had expected, and one intrepid guest enjoyed a swim,



which by all accounts was refreshing. The excitement during an impromptu rock-skiing contest got out of hand, and another person fell in--also refreshing.

Many earnest conversations, whether one-on-one or in groups took place throughout the day, with new volunteers and old timers sharing and exchanging life

experiences. It was fascinating to observe the constant making and remaking of different groupings as people circulated freely.

A wonderful day was had by all, and plans are already underway for next year's event!

*Michele*





## No Need for Speed

*Continued from page 1*

For the first part of my journey, the mighty St-Lawrence gave me ever changing scenery on my left until I crossed the Matapédia Valley towards New-Brunswick. I had no itinerary and was looking forward to waking up and not knowing where I'd sleep at night. I would choose between campsites (some official, some not), cheap motels, or the hospitality of unknown folks along the way. There is a popular app used by a vast community of cyclists called Warmshowers that allows you to host or be hosted. Most are happy to offer some comfortable welcomes and know how a little hospitality can go a long way after a few days in the wild.

The Maritimes opened up to me with undulating grass fields, deep blue oceans, cliffs of blood-hued dirt, and waving purple lupine flowers. The ebb of tourists and locals would pass me by as I cycled on city roads, bike paths, trails, and highways. When sharing the road with motorized vehicles, wide shoulders mean everything to a cyclist. The less you have to worry about the cars and trucks passing

to your left, the more you can enjoy the scenery. When shoulders are narrow or just non-existent and a loaded lumber truck passes you at 120 km/h on a two-lane highway, you get pulled into a roaring wind tunnel that reminds you that you're at the mercy of every single passing driver. Thankfully, most provinces have paved very wide shoulders and offer safe passage to cyclists.

I made my arrival in St-Johns Newfoundland two weeks after my departure which marked the first milestone of my journey. It was now time to put my bike in a box and fly from the Atlantic to the Pacific. As I flew over what seemed to be an endless continent that I would have to bike across to get back home, I wondered what I had gotten myself into.

After reassembling my bike at the Vancouver Airport, I headed for the Crows Nest Highway that would take me through the Rockies. I had landed after weeks of record rainfalls. I will admit that I got lucky weather-wise. It was eerie as days later there would be droughts, forest fires or storms. When I stopped, people talked of hail the size of tennis balls just days before. There are many hardships when bike touring and dealing with Mother Nature is THE big external factor. Blistering afternoon heat will fry

you on the dark asphalt. Strong rainfalls will find a way into your waterproof bags and weigh you down until you've dried out your gear. Strong headwinds will make you shake your fists at the heavens and rue the day you first got on a bicycle.

They said the Rockies would be beautiful and of course, they were. They also said that the Great Plains would be mundane and boy were they wrong. After looping across British Colombia's mountains and rivers, I was treated to a straight easterly highway and flat terrain. I would hit the road at sunrise so I could get most of my cycling done before the punishing afternoon heat, as shade was now a rare commodity. This great expanse offered me a panorama of canola, sorghum and wheat that seemed to meet the sky at the horizon. Many might find driving a car across the Prairies boring, but I was surprised to enjoy the rhythm of subtle changes you get to experience when you're out there contemplating on a bicycle.

Days later, as I was almost out of Manitoba and deep into my thoughts, I realized that, just like that, I was out of the Prairies. I was suddenly surrounded by pristine lakes, intriguing islands, and tall Black Spruces. I had only experienced such beauty in paintings by Frederick Varley (one of the Group of Seven) and could now pedal leisurely through these inspiring landscapes. Ontario was a long and strenuous province to ride through, but the payback was immense. The views and hidden campsites on Lake Superior made up for the dangerous roads that constantly went up and down through endless hills.

As I rode closer to home, the feeling of accomplishment became more and more palpable. This once-in-a-lifetime quest has filled my head with so many memories and sceneries that I will undoubtedly revisit many, many times.

I am blessed: the road has given me so much, yet it has asked me for nothing in return.

*Nico*



## No, longer prison sentences do not reduce crime

*Continued from page 1*

The following points, all supported by a wealth of peer-reviewed academic research, directly contradict explicit assertions and implicit assumptions in the article:

- Lengthy prison sentences do not deter individuals (specific deterrence) or others (general deterrence) from committing crimes. There is some evidence that certainty of capture and sanction may impact behaviour. A position paper from the federal Department of Justice summarizes the evidence nicely: severity of punishment – i.e., longer prison sentences – does not deter people from committing crimes.

- There is no reliable way to predict who will go on to commit crimes in general, or serious, violent acts in particular, in the future. On the contrary, research has shown that attempts to make such predictions are unreliable and discriminatory, especially against Indigenous peoples, Black people, other racialized communities, and women.

- Research shows that sending someone to prison – whether before trial or after sentencing – increases the likelihood that they will be charged with and convicted of a crime in the future. There are many reasons for this. Half of those sentenced to federal prison have histories of trauma and childhood abuse. Prison conditions are harsh, and people often leave with further physical and emotional scars that they are ill-equipped to deal with. Treatment for mental illness and problematic substance use behind bars is abysmal. Removing individuals from the broader community is intensely destabilizing and tears apart families and support networks, significantly increasing the risk that a

legacy of trauma will be passed on to another generation.

- The suggestion that individuals need to be sentenced to longer prison terms to benefit from programming is false. Research consistently shows that programming is more effective if it is delivered while a person is in the community rather than behind bars. Community programming can also be provided at a fraction of the cost.

- Regardless of sentence length, there is no guarantee that people will be able to access appropriate, effective programming in custody. Programming is almost non-existent in many provincial jails. Even in federal institutions tailored programming is lacking, wait lists for the programs that do exist are long, and there are many barriers that prevent individuals from participating.

## In short, prisons and lengthy prison sentences do not prevent crime and are not the means to achieve community safety.

- Most people leaving prison have no further contact with the justice system. The people the public is most concerned about (typically those who committed violent crimes) are the least likely to reoffend. If an individual does come into contact with the criminal system again, it is likely to be for a minor, non-violent offence or a breach of a court order.

- Contrary to the assertion in the article, our criminal legal system does consider individuals' criminal record during sentencing, taking into account not only the specific incident they were found guilty of but also their broader history and any patterns of behaviour when determining a fit sentence.

By the Canadian government's own measures crime in Canada generally, and in British Columbia specifically, is at

historic lows. Despite this, over the past few months there has been an ongoing public discussion in British Columbia about a perceived rise in crime and the role of the criminal justice system. The British Columbia Assistant Deputy Attorney General, in a detailed response to public concerns, called attention to the negative impact of "uninformed or inaccurate public statements." It is ironic, and deeply concerning, that an article that quotes this very statement would then go on to propagate so-called "expert" information that is, quite simply, false.

In short, prisons and lengthy prison sentences do not prevent crime and are not the means to achieve community safety. Individuals experiencing poverty, mental illness, the criminalization of drug use, and/or homelessness are among the communities that are often subjected to the most intense scrutiny and surveillance

by police, making them far more likely to be arrested. Most crime in Canada is related to property offences, administration of justice charges (such as not complying with a court order), and drug-related activity, all of which tend to be tied to structural factors

which could be better addressed through other means. Increasing reliance on the criminal legal system and prisons to respond to the crises of inter-generational trauma, homelessness, substance use and the drug toxicity crisis, and the failure of our mental health system will only exacerbate the underlying problems.

***[www.ccla.org/crimiminal-justice/no-longer-prison-sentences-do-not-reduce-crime/](http://www.ccla.org/crimiminal-justice/no-longer-prison-sentences-do-not-reduce-crime/)***



## News From the Inside

June 18th was a day of relief to the growing list of would-be chapel visitors to both sites of the Federal Training Centre, in Laval. Peter Huish had sent out a group email with a grid of in-person visits to start in one month.

There were old-timers, anxious to resume contact with the men they regularly visited (pre-pandemic) but also a healthy list of more recent volunteers, ready to sample

what Communitas' vocation really is about.

When the meetings actually began, our relief was matched by that of the detainees, men who had felt cut off from the outside world for so long (28 weeks!), and several were able to describe how that felt. During the summer, a new outbreak of Covid affected parts of B16 but this time, only the detainees living in those blocks were quarantined.

Meanwhile, at Ste Anne, where almost all activities resumed some months ago, the situation is best described as "normal". This includes in-prison programs in the chapel, and a Mass and Bible Circle on a

weekday afternoon. Many detainees are employed in work outside the pen, and a group of the men attend Entré Libre. In addition, we are hoping to find an Escort Driver to accompany another group of anglophones to Open Door. Volunteers also spend time as a phone-in/listening service for various men on a weekly schedule.

There has also been a restorative justice program, now completed, with cooperation from the Jean-Paul Morin Society.

*Margaret*



## Communitas Needs your Support!

Anyone who attended our Annual General Meeting last May will have heard the news that our funding for the past 5 years from the Ministry of Public Safety has come to an end.

At the same time our historical financial support from Aumonerie Communautaire de Montreal (ACM) has also been cut as the Correctional Services of Canada (CSC) decided to stop funding Community Chaplaincy.

As these were our only recurrent sources of funding, it has left us in the position of depending on donations from our membership and the general public.

The Communitas Board of Directors is of course actively seeking other possible means of stable financial support, however we would like to encourage any and all support from our members at this time of uncertainty.

In addition to our annual funding drive in December, we receive sporadic donations from individuals who come across our work and decide to support it, or who hear about us from friends and/or family and like what we are doing.

I would like to propose that anyone who wishes to increase their financial support to Communitas do so by becoming a monthly supporter via our Canada Helps account. <https://communitasmontreal.org/donate/>

It could be signing up to donate as little as \$5 per month. The fact that it is monthly would allow us to know in advance how much we can count on. Already we have five (5) donors who have independently decided to contribute in this way, and it is a big help.

In case you are wondering what practical things your funding would support, we have restarted our Open Door and Table Talk programs in-person, and so are again spending to purchase food and drinks after a hiatus due to Covid lock downs. We also have our recurrent costs for rent and telecommunications – although both of these have been considerably reduced with our move last year to new offices in the Undercroft of Christ Church Cathedral.

Last but by no means least are the cost of our 2 part-time staff members without whom we would not be able to accomplish as much.

Our deep gratitude to all the many persons who are already giving generously of their time and their money to support our work, and be assured that we have already made it through 22 years and will make it through this hardship as well with your help.

*Michele,  
President, Communitas*



### Justin, Justice, and Jaskirat

The Trudeau government's reformist ethos not surprisingly has provoked accusations of woke virtue-signaling by critics on the right; for in truth, whatever failures to deliver on promises may dog the Prime Minister, his obvious desire to be understood and remembered as an advocate of equality and diversity stands in clear contrast to the concerns which would preoccupy a more conservative administration. This immediately becomes clear in the Prime Minister's mandate letters to his ministers: in December, 2021, for instance, he instructed all federal departments to review their operations through the prism of gender, and to take action on the needs of "women, Indigenous Peoples, Black and racialized Canadians, newcomers, faith-based communities, persons with disabilities, LGBTQ2 Canadians;" and "to implement the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples and to work in partnership with Indigenous Peoples to advance their rights." During his tenure, the Prime Minister has legalized ordinary marijuana use, and presented legislation which will eliminate certain mandatory minimum sentences, and will provide for a more expeditious review of unjust conviction claims.

Perhaps less familiar to Canadians is the government's adoption in 2019 of the Accessible Canada Act, intended to satisfy its responsibilities under the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities. Government literature explains that ACA seeks "to realize a barrier-free Canada by 2040. The legislation benefits all Canadians, especially persons with disabilities, through the proactive identification, removal and

prevention of barriers to accessibility in 7 priority areas...." All federally regulated entities, from banks and transport companies to the RCMP and First Nations Band Councils are expected to implement these goals, and always through consultation with disabled persons. At the time of this writing, the Parole Board of Canada is inviting persons, especially the disabled, to comment on the accessibility of its programs and services, and to describe existing barriers and "how

**In light of its professed commitment to social justice and constructive, evidence-based policies, this author finds incomprehensible that same government's heartless, indefensible treatment of Jaskirat Singh Sidhu, the hapless individual whom Canadians will forever associate with the Humboldt Broncos bus crash.**

we can be more responsive to the needs of people with disabilities."

In light of its professed commitment to social justice and constructive, evidence-based policies, this author finds incomprehensible that same government's heartless, indefensible treatment of Jaskirat Singh Sidhu, the hapless individual whom Canadians will forever associate with the Humboldt Broncos bus crash.

Let us review the facts surrounding the man and the event. Mr. Sidhu came to Canada as a permanent resident in 2014 to join his future wife, who had arrived in 2013 with a nursing degree. He and Tanvir were married in India in 2018 and returned to Canada to continue building their life here. Sidhu, who held a commerce degree from India, was working

at a liquor store, while Tamir worked part time at a Tim Horton's. One week after their marriage, to enable his wife to pursue a dental hygienist program, Sidhu opted for a second job as a truck driver.

Sidhu's license to drive trucks was issued after a single week of instruction and two weeks of supervised driving. On one of his first solos jobs, he was asked to transport a giant load of peat moss on a tractor-trailer pulling a pup trailer through wintery Saskatchewan on unfamiliar rural roads.

He faced adversity from the start. His trailers got stuck in the snow and he needed a tow. Then the tarps came loose, putting his load at risk. At 5 p.m., again with flapping tarps, he was attempting to check the ties in his rear-view mirror when he missed a stop sign at the intersection. The intersection was a notoriously dangerous one, previously the scene already of six deaths. He was not drunk, speeding, or texting when he hit the bus. Need I mention that sixteen were killed and thirteen injured, almost all of them members of the Humboldt Broncos hockey team.

Sidhu was charged with 16 counts of dangerous driving causing death and 13 for causing bodily harm. Wracked with remorse and determined to spare the families further suffering, he eschewed trial, pleaded guilty, and declined to plea bargain, choosing to embrace any sentence the court deemed fit.

#### **A Sidebar on Sentencing**

Scott Moe, currently premier of Saskatchewan, was convicted in 1992 of impaired driving while under the legal drinking age. In 1994, then a businessman, he was charged with impaired driving and leaving the scene of an accident, charges which were stayed. In



1997, he entered a highway at a rural intersection without stopping, and hit a car, killing a woman and leaving her young son with lasting injuries, both physical and mental. Moe left the scene without rendering assistance. For the next twenty-three years the family did not know the driver's identity, but having learned it in 2020, they complained he had not yet reached out to apologize and express remorse. For that fatal accident Scott Moe received a traffic ticket for driving without due care and attention.

Back to Mr. Sidhu. After 90 impact statements over four days from understandably devastated victims, an eight-year sentence was handed down, by far the longest ever imposed in Canada where fault was not attributable to drugs or alcohol or a pattern of reckless driving. The disproportionate sentence would likely have been corrected on appeal had Sidhu asked for one. He did not.

Sidhu arrived at Prince Albert Penitentiary a broken man with an anguished wife. Although nothing in his previous life or behaviour before the courts suggested an intention to evade responsibility, or follow a criminal or reckless path if free, it was two and a half years before CSC was willing to move Sidhu from medium to minimum security, an apparent (and arguably illegal) capitulation to perceived public sentiment. Sidhu abstained when he reached day parole eligibility. Much later, conscious of the impact on his wife, he reconsidered, and on July 20, 2022, he was granted a six-month day parole.

Where individuals clamour for Sidhu's removal, almost always this is not because they doubt his remorse or the depth of his suffering, but because they find his presence painful. Yet unless events take a new course, Sidhu's punishment stands to be cruelly compounded by deportation from Canada. Because he is a permanent

resident rather than a citizen (as his wife is), and was sentenced to a lengthy prison term, our immigration law designates him an inadmissible person subject to removal with no right of appeal. In these cases, an officer of the Canadian Border Services Agency (CBSA) must make a report which recommends that the subject either be permitted to remain in Canada, or be brought before the Immigration and Refugee Board (IRB) for an admissibility hearing inevitably resulting in a removal order. Once seized of a recommendation to order the hearing, the Minister may (or may not) submit the case to the IRB. Sidhu, finally persuaded to fight for his family, has taken counsel to assist him. Immigration lawyer Michael Greene prepared an exhaustive 415 page brief which included many letters of support from Sidhu's family, the public, and even three Broncos families. Scott Thomas, in particular, the father of a player who succumbed, is one of the family members who has forgiven Sidhu and appreciates his honesty and empathy and his potential to make a positive contribution to Canadian society.

Despite the lack of criminality or risk to the public, and the impact departure will have on Sidhu's wife, who would abandon her new country to accompany her husband, the CBSA officer, with his superior's endorsement, issued the fateful IRB recommendation in March, 2022. Although appeal is not available, Sidhu is entitled to approach the Federal Court for a review of the officer's opinion to ensure it was arrived at fairly and based on correct information and relevant considerations. Lawyer Greene did just that in late June, which entitled the Department of Justice to respond by late July, after which a judge, having studied the filings, must decide in the coming months if Greene has permission to plead the case in open court. Should a positive decision be obtained, the

existing CBSA recommendation would be set aside, and the file sent back to a different CBSA officer for a new study, this time performed in accordance with the law.

In the meantime, a petition circulates calling for the CBSA to recognize that "deportation would be a miscarriage of justice." In the end, a just outcome will always be in the hands of the Trudeau government, for the Minister is empowered by law, whatever actions are taken by the CBSA and the IRB, to allow Mr. Sidhu to stay in the country on humanitarian and compassionate grounds. Should Sidhu's lawyer as a last resort request that intervention, as one expects he will, a decision by the Minister not to intervene would be the practical equivalent of a choice to deport.

As W5, CBC, and many other news outlets, not to mention civil suits before the courts, focus on the responsibility of the transport industry and its pitifully inadequate regulation and inspection by the federal government, and on the dangerous conditions present at the accident site, one must wonder why the Minister waits while the legal system brings the house down around the head of this truly repentant individual with an honest, hardworking, law-abiding history. The Trudeau government is exploring restorative justice principles in other arenas. In the case of Jaskirat Sidhu, an honourable man destroyed by an implacable fate, it seems bent on applying the letter of the law to achieve maximum damage. Where is the reverence for justice in that?

*By Steve*



# Two-eared listening is essential for understanding restorative justice in Canada

July 10, 2022

Restorative justice was introduced in the western world in the late 1970s as a way to rethink crime and punishment. It's an approach to criminal justice that sees crime as a violation of people and relationships and makes it the obligation of those responsible to put right the wrongs committed.

In time, restorative justice grew to include nurturing relationships and is now also practiced in education, community, employment and environmental contexts.

Indigenous communities around the world have always lived in alignment with what we now call restorative justice — it is tied to Indigenous worldviews and influences all aspects of life. When understood holistically, restorative justice has the incredible potential to support healthy community life.

And while advocates of restorative justice may acknowledge its Indigenous roots, meaningful collaborative dialogue and leadership with Indigenous people is often lacking.

Why are Indigenous Peoples' worldviews not more involved in growing restorative justice's approach? Could it be that they once offered insights, but a willingness to listen was missing?

## Two-eared listening

At a National Restorative Justice Week panel in 2018, Chief Mi'sel Joe (one of the authors of this piece) from Miawpukek First Nation said, "If you want to know about restorative justice, just ask."

Chief Joe's invitation challenged panel attendees by forcing them to acknowledge how white-centric the field was. It encouraged people to question how a western perspective of restorative justice

might be contributing to colonization.

True to his word, Chief Joe was willing to answer the question. So we embarked on planning an event, Two-Eared Listening for Deeper Understanding: Restorative Justice in N.L., where Indigenous people would lead attendees towards a deeper collective understanding of restorative justice.

From the start, our academic approach was challenged and we learned to listen deeply. After watching a video clip of Mi'kmaw Elder Albert Marshall explaining the concept of two-eyed seeing, Chief Joe shares:

"What we are doing is not two-eyed seeing, but two-eared listening. At the heart of justice is listening. Before you can restore justice, you need to listen to the stories of injustice."

We realized that what we were being taught, and what we had been learning, was encompassed in this term two-eared listening.

Two-eared listening is based on the idea of learning and understanding, a willingness to suspend judgment and the desire to communicate respectfully in a way that might challenge previously held beliefs or assumptions. Chief Joe says:

"When we talk about justice and injustice, that concept is not just spoken words. Injustice is about hurt and pain, so that brings in parts of our body, including the heart and soul. [This talking] includes body language [and] knowing someone is listening and caring. If you are listening from your core, you will understand the telling of these stories of justice and injustice."

## Restorative justice in Newfoundland and Labrador

After over two years of planning and discussing restorative justice we held a three-day event in November 2021. Every component was led by Indigenous people and two-eared listening was the key focus.

The event was a technology-free space that allowed people to be present without distractions. Attendees practised two-eared listening by being open to receiving new

learning, suspending judgment, listening with intention and purposefully engaging in (re)conciliation.

Each day began with Elders smudging, lighting the kudlik (a traditional lamp used by Inuit on the coast of Labrador) and offering prayers. The event featured insights and teachings from Elders and musicians, community leaders who presented contemporary realities and sessions that focused on education, community and justice.

Elders shared stories and reflections, and the event concluded with prayers and blessings followed by a meal and a mide-wiigwas, a Mi'kmaw ceremony of gift exchange.

As participants and presenters left the gathering, we heard repeatedly, "We need to do this again!" and planning has already begun for future events.

Two-eared listening paved the way for deep listening, which is a critical part of truth-telling in the restorative justice process. But it's just the beginning; truth must be followed by action and take on new meaning, otherwise current conditions will remain unchanged.

As restorative justice continues to be developed and practised in western contexts, it is imperative that Indigenous people lead the conversations and non-Indigenous people listen with two ears. In this way, the load of (re)conciliation can be carried together "in a good way."

Two-eared listening is a critical element for western advocates of restorative justice. Acknowledging the Indigenous roots of restorative justice is not enough. Authentic relationships that allow for reciprocal engagement and leadership that look at and listen to the past, present and future are required — not just for the healing of the Nations, but for the well-being of all.

This article is republished from The Conversation under a Creative Commons license.

*Read the original article here: <https://theconversation.com/two-eared-listening-is-essential-for-understanding-restorative-justice-in-canada-185466>*

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## Open Door notes

Torrin said good-bye to Open Door by presenting an evening entitled LGBTQ+ 101. Diversity and inclusion are hot topics these days, and we were introduced to identities such as Two-Spirit, pansexual, and intersex. Cis is short for cisgender, which means that a person's gender identity corresponds to their sex as assigned at birth, whereas "straight" describes a sexual orientation. We wish Torrin every success in the pursuit of his Master's degree.

Leigh led us in a presentation on psychological violence, which is something we have all experienced at the hands of others and, as one member reminded us, that we have all also inflicted on our

victims. Leigh sought to inform us about damaging behaviours that go unnoticed or ignored so that we could identify patterns and avoid becoming involved. There was so much interaction that we have scheduled Part II of this topic later this autumn.

August 10th is International Prison Justice Day. Some might not take kindly to drawing similarities between humans in cages and chimpanzees in cages, but we briefly cited from Jane Goodall's book *Through a Window: My Thirty Years with the Chimpanzees of Gombe*. Jane uses prison language to describe laboratories that use chimpanzees for scientific experiments, referring to the animals as inmates serving life sentences in their prison cells. In the same way that prisons are designed to keep the public ignorant of how we treat society's convicts, Jane asserts:

How can we, the citizens of civilized, western countries, tolerate laboratories which—from the point of view of the animal inmates—are not unlike concentration camps? I think it is mainly because most people, even in these enlightened times, have little idea as to what goes on behind the closed doors of the laboratories...

On two evenings at Open Door, medical students from Montreal universities dropped in to interview some of the ex-inmates about the quality of medical attention they received while incarcerated. These students had expressed interest in

perhaps working inside of prisons when they became doctors and were pleased to have an opportunity to speak to our members. Thanks to Mimosa, who set up the meetings.

Lino presented *The Good, the Bad and the Ugly of Capitalism*, and compared it to the feudal system that preceded it. We learned that the word bankruptcy is derived from the Old Italian *bancarotta*, meaning "broken bench," since bankers traditionally dealt from wooden benches. The term is said to have originated in Renaissance Italy, where there allegedly existed a tradition of smashing a banker's bench if he defaulted on payment, allowing the public to see that the banker, the owner of the bench, was no longer in a condition to continue his business.

One evening was dedicated to the topic of gun control in Canada, the country with the fourth highest rate of gun deaths of the 22 OECD countries. Although Canadians believe ourselves to be unanimously in favour of maintaining our peaceful, handgun-free country, anti-gun control groups are heavily lobbying our politicians and in the absence of an equally vocal anti-gun lobby, we will ultimately have fewer and fewer gun controls in the future. The Coalition for Gun Control invites us to learn more at [guncontrol.ca](http://guncontrol.ca).

## Open Door attendees answer the question; what's the atmosphere like when the men from inside are back?

**Alan:** Much better. Yeah, that's the whole point! It's great, it's always been great, but (now) it's even greater!

**Lino:** Well, I've only been to one when the guys have been here, but it was like life was back in it. Not that it was... it was ok before, but it just was like, juices were flowing. There was more of a purpose.

**Jeri:** Well, people have stayed longer after the presentation is finished, that's wonderful. It's like a shining star to have men coming from the penitentiary. It just gives a little bit more glamour to the evening, to have people from inside. We love it, because, you know, they've been on lockdown for 28 months, and just to know that they've been waiting for us, and for them to know that we've been waiting for them, it's like homecoming again.

**Garth:** Good! I used to be one of them. You have a sense of freedom here. It's like, you have a coffee and a biscuit, but it's more than that. It was something, to get

out of the institution. People want to help you, and that's really, really, really nice. People from the inside that I knew years ago, they come here and it's, "How are you? It's a pleasure to meet you again!". They're happy.

**Alana:** What I thought was great was the welcome. The energy on our end to receive them, that's what *Communitas* is about. It's cool to have them here. There are men that are here that have been out for a while... but now we're here, and (the men inside) they can come out, and that's kind of awesome, right?

## *Sou'Wester Interview*



### **The Sou'Wester interviews Natasha**

*by Leigh*

**SW:** Where were you born?

**Natasha:** I was born in Ottawa. I grew up mostly in Ottawa, and then I moved here to Montreal when I was in grade 7. Or Grade 8.

**SW:** What were you like as a child?

**Natasha:** Uh, super energetic! Really loud spoken, that kind of reckless-attitude-kind-of-person, yeah. That's the best way I can describe it.

**SW:** It sounds like you were fun.

**Natasha:** (laughing) Yeah, lots of trouble, but fun I guess.

**SW:** Can you tell me about the martial arts that you do?

**Natasha:** Yeah it's a Japanese martial art called Kendo, and basically you have a bamboo sword and a set of armour. Basically, the point is that you get two out of three strikes, and you win - for an

official tournament. It's basically meant to mirror old Japanese samurai.

**SW:** How come you chose that form?

**Natasha:** Both chance and choice. There was a Japanese dojo that opened up close to my house, and I was always really into martial arts growing up. But my parents were not for the martial arts scene, probably partially because I was so rambunctious, they thought I was going to go around hitting people. They said, "practicing on my brother," which they didn't want. So at one point I had my first part-time job, and I was walking home from my job one day, and I saw a dojo open up and I'm like, "hey, I have my own money, I'm 18 years old now, nobody can stop me," so the options were either Taekwondo or Kendo. Taekwondo is the kicking one. So, I thought about it for a bit, and I also really liked swords growing up so I thought it would be really cool to learn how to actually use a sword, so Kendo it is! I've always been an athletic person, but martial arts are a little different in discipline and respecting your opponent to kind of a different height than other sports. There's a different etiquette to it.

**SW:** Do you have any hobbies?

**Natasha:** I actually do a little bit of writing on the side, a little creative writing. I mostly like longer stories, I like the horror genre, adventure, that kind of stuff.

**SW:** You watch anime, right? What's your favourite anime?

**Natasha:** "One Piece", by far. So, it's 1400 episodes long. So, I really like long stories. For the most part, it's masterfully written. It's got such good world-building, intertwining plot lines, and character development... it's basically everything I'd want in a show. It has no end currently; it comes out weekly.

**SW:** What's your favourite meal?

**Natasha:** That's a hard one. I'm going to go with the stereotypically Italian answer and just say pasta. I could eat that every day.

**SW:** Whom would you want to sit down and eat a meal with?

**Natasha:** The creator of "One Piece". I wouldn't want spoilers, but I'd like to have some general ideas of how he kept track of thousands of characters and thousands of plot lines. I think it came out in 1996. So, it's ok if he sometimes changes his mind or adds a few things he didn't initially plan.

**SW:** What do you do to relax?

**Natasha:** Take naps. Sports is a huge stress reliever too, to get all that bad energy out.

**SW:** What are you grateful for?

**Natasha:** I'm grateful for a lot of things. I'm really grateful I moved to Montreal, honestly, I've met so many really nice people here and I've gotten so many opportunities. My family and Communitas, too. Communitas has given me a lot of opportunities for my future and my career. My coaches, with all my sports, and their support.

**The Sou'Wester is launching a competition inviting all who wish to submit a creative piece to be considered for publication in our newsletter. There will be a first, second and third prize awarded to the winners and runners up. All genre of entries is encouraged – short story; poems; art; cartoons; etc.**

**The Communitas Editorial Committee members will be the judges, and the competition will run until March 31, 2023.**

**First, Second and Third prize winners will have their entries published in the following editions of the Sou'Wester: Summer 2022; Fall 2022; Winter 2022; Spring 2023 as appropriate.**

**Deadlines for the first competition will be announced.**

**Entries should be sent via e-mail to :**

**Communications@communitasmontreal.org**

**or by mail to:**

**Communitas,**

**1444 Union Avenue,**

**Montreal Quebec, H3A 2B8.**



## Internet Humour

Thanks to my internet service provider, I  
was finally able to read a book....  
*They had an outage.*

Your parents in 1996: Don't trust  
ANYONE on the Internet.  
*Your parents in 2022: Freedom Eagle dot  
Facebook says Hillary invented AIDS.*

A farmer installed a modem in his barn  
*I guess you could say he has stable internet  
now*

I researched about LGBT on internet today.  
*Just couldn't get a straight answer.*

I put a video of me sneezing on YouTube  
and now the whole street is doing the same.  
*Apparently it's gone viral.*

How do trees access the internet?  
*They log on.*

Guys, I just read something on the  
internet saying that Albert Einstein may  
not have existed!  
*Turns out he's just a theoretical physicist.*

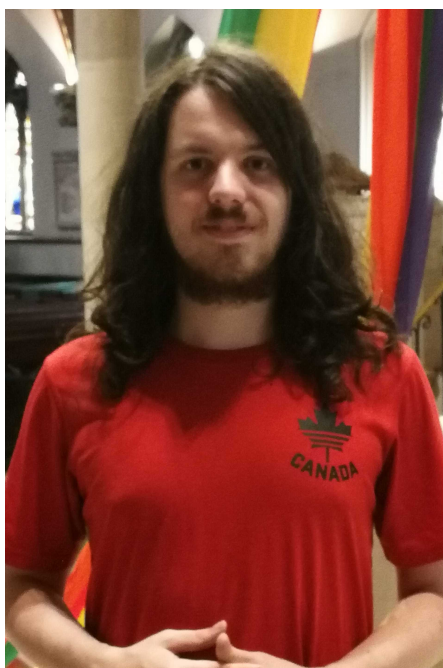
## A Warrior I am Not

A warrior I am not  
Taking life stride by stride  
I AM  
A hit to my pride  
Can't find my mind  
Reserved and quiet  
Riding horses in today's event  
Blood flowing like a river through my  
veins  
pulsing  
a mist closing in  
there is no mystery  
friends surround me  
looking wide-eyed  
getting by  
I am not for rent  
God is my Saviour  
What can I say?  
The world is dying  
Society is to blame  
My eyes are open  
A warrior I am not

By Alan  
September 2022



Digital art, inspired by Table Talk  
**By Bob**



## Communitas Summer Intern - Torrin

Communitas welcomed intern Torrin to  
our midst over a 6-week period in June-  
July this year.

Torrin brought his energy, ingenuity and  
intelligence to his time with us, both at  
Open Door which he faithfully attended,  
and to Table Talk which he was  
responsible for relaunching after the two-  
and-a-half-year-long Covid lockdown  
period.

Although only 20 years old, Torrin  
showed himself to be a deep thinker and  
expert communicator in his presentations  
at Open Door – “Neurodivergence and  
Justice” and “LGBTQ+ 101”. He was also

invaluable as a techie whenever we ran into  
problems with the hybrid setup of Open  
Door.

His organizational skills were also revealed  
as he led the restarting of Table Talk at its  
new venue in the Undercroft every Friday.  
From designing menu plans for a six-week  
period to assisting with the shopping,  
preparing the meals, participating in the  
talk of Table Talk, and lining up other  
volunteers to assist Table Talk going  
forward – he was a constant help to the  
Communitas team – especially to Peter  
(Intern Supervisor) and to Bill and Jeri.

We wish Torrin well as he returns to  
Ontario to complete his studies.

**Michele**

# 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: \_\_\_\_\_

**Make cheque payable to Communitas**

*Please mail to:*

*1444 Union Avenue*

*Montreal QC, H3A 2B8*

You may donate through our online donation page by clicking here, or by filling in the form above and mailing it to our office.



## **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:

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

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

 [@communitas\\_MTL](https://twitter.com/communitas_MTL)

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