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**BIENVENUE SUR VOTRE PISTE DE DANSE !**

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# LES MARDIS RÉTRO

LES CHANSONS CULTE DES ANNÉES 50 À L'AN 2000

# LES JEUDIS HITS-MOI

LE MEILLEUR DU MILLÉNAIRE

# LES WEEK-ENDS X-LARGES

TOUS LES VENDREDIS ET SAMEDIS • LA MUSIQUE D'AUJOURD'HUI

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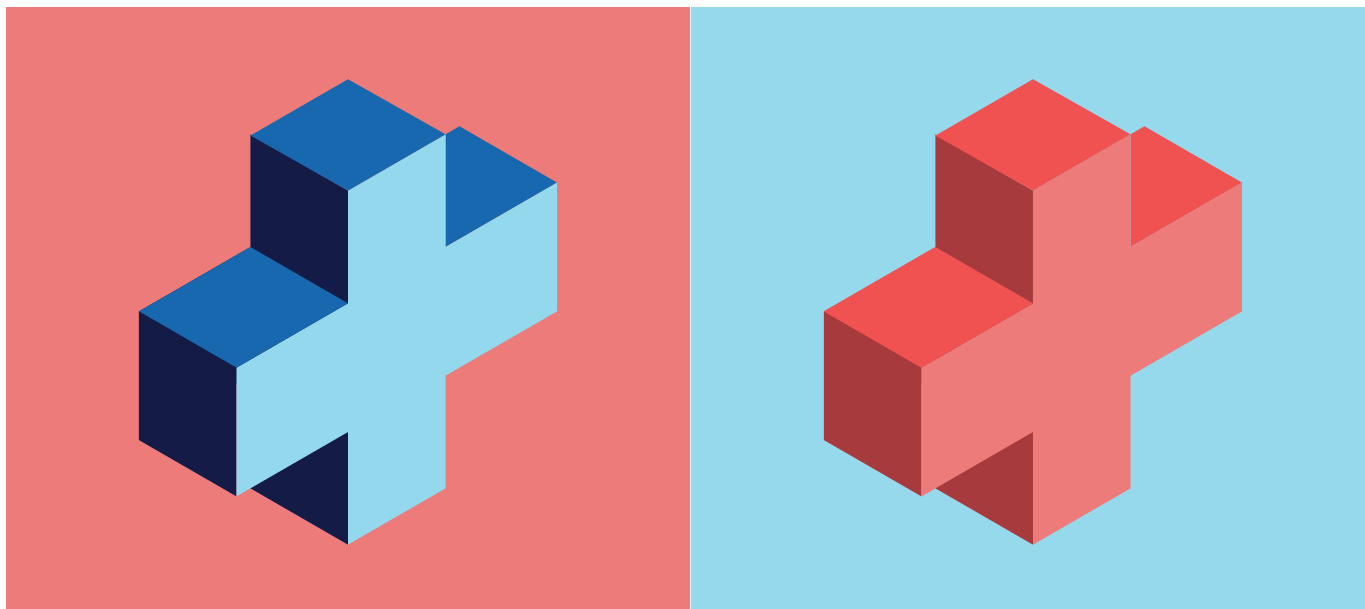


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# EDITORIAL

## Systems in Sync

Health is one of those topics that's tough to pin down.

It's both individual and social, it's related to our personal choices and to our environment, and it means many different things to many different people.

Talking about mental and physical health can be frustrating when our understanding of the self appears to have remained stagnant within the collective conversation. We have a gap between what is required and what is possible, and we often struggle to keep our head above the raging waters.

We're overwhelmed; there's so much going on, oftentimes we feel like we can never catch a break. Navigating self-care can be difficult—it's something we learn as we grow older. But self-care is different for everyone. What feels invigorating for some people is harmful to others. There's no one-size-fits-all approach.

While meditation and exercise may work for some, others may prefer other forms of care, like art or dance therapy. We all have individual challenges that we deal with in our own way. That being said, care should not only exist on an individual level, it should exist at

the community level, and we should all check in with each other on a routine.


People face different barriers in overcoming their health problems in accordance with their identity. Women and non-binary people—especially those who are also people of colour—tend to be put on waiting lists more than men, and doctors tend to not take their concerns seriously on a systemic level. These barriers can lead to their issues being left untreated or misdiagnosed for years.

On the other hand, men often have a hard time expressing their emotions, and have a hard time crying, because they are conditioned from a young age to feel shame when they cry. Seeking help from professionals can be especially intimidating for men, because of the stigma attached to asking for help. They are often at higher risk of suicide because of this.

And while mental health and physical health are often represented as two separate fields, we think it's important to remember that they reinforce and affect each other in various ways. They

cannot be disconnected from each other in our thinking.

We also think it is important to have a conversation about how perceived social class hinders access to health services. International students and undocumented people don't get access to Quebec's public health insurance, and often can't afford the fees being asked of them. Unpaid interns face psychological stress from having to balance their internship with their wage jobs, studies, personal life and family.

Maintaining a stable body and mind is a constant struggle, based in both our individual chemical makeup and our collective relationships. As such, health needs to be a collective conversation. While this magazine presents certain examples and types of health, there is no set way to define it, and it's important to note that this is not an exhaustive look into the concept of health. This conversation needs to continue long after you've finished reading the words between these covers. There is still a lot of work to be done. 

# Concordia's Systematic Sexual Violence Problem

## Three Former Students Expose the Flaws in Concordia's Sexual Violence Policies

BY KELSEY LITWIN  
@KELSEYLITWIN

**It's been three years since Cathy was assaulted by her ex-boyfriend.**

The assault, which caused Cathy to lose partial hearing in her left ear, took place at her Montreal apartment, and resulted in a criminal proceeding against her attacker. At the time, both Cathy and her ex-boyfriend were Concordia students.

Her attacker was found criminally guilty of the September 2014 attack, and had conditions placed onto him that included a restraining order. Six months later, in February 2015, he violated those conditions, assaulting Cathy once more. This time, on campus.

After a student hearing process—that's how Code of Rights and Responsibility complaints are handled at Concordia—which was drawn out for more than a year, he received 30 hours of community service, to be completed by the end of the Winter 2017 semester.

In the years since, her attacker has worked to complete his degree, while Cathy has since stopped going to school.

"She's terrified," said James, a friend of Cathy's, on her behalf. Because of the trauma she endured, she finds herself unable to talk about the experience without experiencing intense anxiety. That anxiety also makes it impossible for her to go into Concordia, he said.

\*\*\*

Maria was friends with her harasser before the trouble started—they had met on a Facebook group for new Concordia students in 2014. Eighty per cent of survivors know their harasser before

the incident. Admittedly, the two had a rocky relationship, she said.

In April 2016, she began seeing posts about herself on social media—a Concordia subreddit and YikYak, an anonymous, location-based platform—but because she was running for a position within her student association, she thought the sexist slurs were related to her campaign, she said. But once the campaign was finished, the posts continued. Then, her phone number was leaked on a fake dating profile.

She said she started receiving phone calls from individuals saying they knew where she was on campus. Concordia's security brought her to the Sexual Assault Resource Centre.

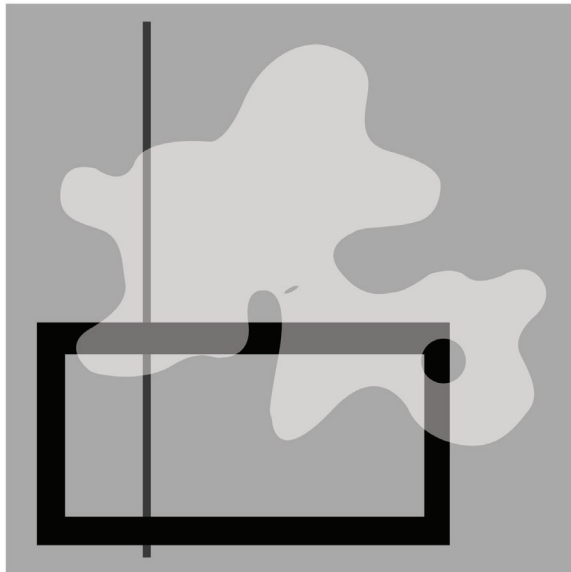
Due to her familiarity with the university, she said she knew where to go and who to speak with to file her complaints, both with the Montreal police and with the Office of Rights and Responsibilities. Maria said she also alerted the Dean of Students office.

At her hearing, her harasser was found guilty of violent and threatening conduct. He received a letter of reprimand. The tribunal process, including putting together a 300 page evidence package, distracted her from her studies, resulting in poor grades. She is taking a year off school.

"And now I'm left with the academic scars of that [experience]," she said.

\*\*\*

Felicia was a part-time employee of Concordia's bookstore for two and a half years. In 2015, she began experiencing harassment—it was both physical and psychological, based on her sex and gender—at the hands of a co-worker. In November of that year, she decided to alert her manager, who cut Felicia's hours but still had her scheduled to work with her harasser.





When she approached her manager about the situation again, she was fired. She was given two reasons for her firing, one of which included personal–ity differences.

She filed a complaint with the Office of Rights and Responsibilities, but it was transferred to Concordia Human Resources without her consent.

The stress of the experience caused her grades to drop, she said, which means she must now apply to Concordia for readmission. The low GPA, Felicia said, also prohibits her from applying to another university.

\*\*\*

The three women are in various stages of filing complaints against the university or their harassers with the Quebec Human Rights Commission.

At the moment, Cathy and Felicia are seeking a combined \$120,000 in damages. That includes the \$20,000 Felicia is seeking through her complaint with the Quebec Administration Tribunal. Maria is in the process of finalizing her complaint.

The Centre for Research–Action on Race Relations is assisting the women in bringing their cases forward. Since CRARR’s inception in 1983, the non–profit has evolved past its original mandate to “promote racial equality

and combat racism in Canada,” to now advocate for all human rights.

Fo Niemi, the executive director of CRARR, said these three cases are examples of Concordia’s systematic flaws in dealing with sexual violence, which per the university’s definition, includes both harassment and assault.

“They are a testimony to how the system is not working,” Niemi said. “It might work for the university, it might work for the bureaucracy, but it doesn’t work for these women, at the frontline or at the end of the process.”

Part of the reason why the women are seeking so much money, Niemi explained, is to make a point.

“It’s no longer about harassment but about [...] the university’s duty, legal as well as social and ethical,” he said in regards to Cathy’s case.

Since 2014, Concordia has seen a total of 85 sexual harassment complaints. The 2016–2017 academic year saw the lowest, with 23 reported cases to the university.

In the same time frame, the Quebec Human Rights Commission saw 26 sexual harassment cases, almost three quarters of which were against women. During that time, they’ve had four cases of sexual harassment on university campuses filed—two in 2016 and two in 2017,

between Jan. 1 and Sept. 30.

Cindy Viau, assistant to the executive director for the Groupe d’aide et d’information sur le harcèlement sexuel au travail du Québec, said one of the deterrents from advancing harassment complaints to a higher governmental level is the risk of revictimization.

“It’s a long process, it’s a hard process,” Viau said. “They have to evaluate if they want to do all of that.”

She continued to explain that it’s hard to anticipate the outcome of a legal case, and due to how drawn out they can be, survivors sometimes decide to not bring their cases forward “because it’s so difficult.”

Additionally, she said, that unlike other legal proceedings, proof is hard to obtain, rendering the process even more challenging.

“Sexual harassment is generally done behind closed doors where there’s nobody around,” said Viau. “So what? Because it’s happening behind closed doors, [these people] don’t have access to the justice system? So there’s something that needs to be adapted to that reality.”

Despite the difficult process, Maria believes that coming forward with her story can pave the way for other survivors.

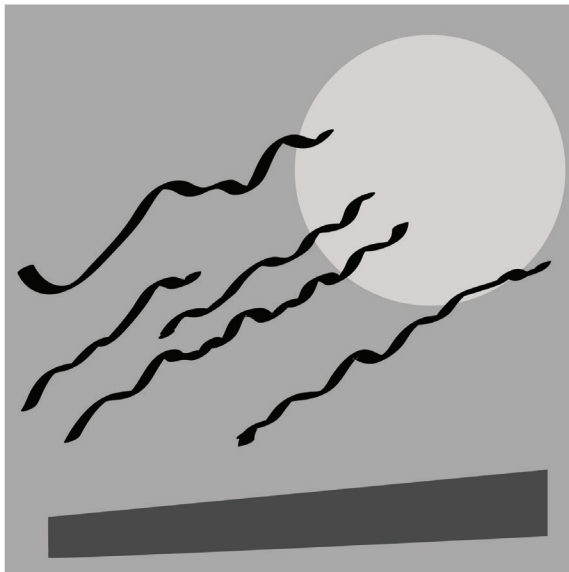
“I’m seeking for this to be heard,” she said. Maria explained that while working in a government office this summer, she “heard lots of stories like mine, students at HEC, students at [Université de Montréal].”

One woman, Maria remembered, was hesitant to come forward because she had heard negative stories from others who had, and she was fearful of the consequences. But Maria said that in repeating her story over the summer, she became detached from it and felt like coming forward was the right thing to do.

“It happens quite a lot, and if we want any change to come out of this, we need to speak up,” she said.

Maria wants to see changes made within Concordia itself. Specifically, she said there are flaws in the complaint and tribunal processes.

“I think in that first initial few months, between [filing the complaint in] April and [the tribunal in] October,



## 8 THE LINK

I had no support, I had no security on campus,” she said. “There were no terms between him and I.”

She continued that she still felt as though her harasser could approach her on campus and continue to publish her whereabouts online. “I had no insurance,” Maria said.

Similarly, she said that tribunal process was not set up to handle sexual violence cases—she said she had to sit next to her harasser during the hearing, which lasted six hours.

James, Cathy’s friend, said she holds some of the same complaints. Though she was first offered the opportunity to testify via video, he said terms changed so that her presence was required, although she was able to leave after providing her testimony.

“One of the flaws [...] is in how the meeting was set up,” reiterated Niemi. “Just the thought of being inside that room with your aggressor without a security guard is a serious deficiency.”

Melodie Sullivan, Concordia’s senior legal counsel, restated however that accommodations can be made, even up until the day of the hearing.

When presented with the alleged flaws that Maria, Cathy, and Felicia perceived during the process, Sullivan remained

firm that had the women approached the university with their concerns, accommodations could have been made, including those pertaining to their studies.

“The feedback I’ve heard from people I’ve worked with, survivors that have come for support, is that it’s been really efficient, and even within a few days to a week, changes are made in their courses, exams have been moved, accommodations have been made quite quickly,” agreed Jennifer Drummond, coordinator of the SARC. The centre, she said, should be a survivor’s first stop.

But many of Cathy and Maria’s concerns stem from the last part of the process: the sanctions imposed on their harassers, community service and a letter of reprimand, respectively.

Both women say that once the decisions were rendered, that was the last they heard of their cases from the university.

“It’s been a year and a half and there’s been no follow up,” said Maria.

The decision rendered read that “the majority of the [Student Hearing Panel] recommended that the present file be forwarded to the appropriate department(s) for its assessment and management.”

Maria said that after she received the decision, she went to check with campus security and the Dean of Students office, two departments that she

assumed would be considered “appropriate” in this situation. She alleged that neither had been informed of her case.

When Cathy’s decision was reached, “there was no provision to keep her safe if she wanted to come back to campus,” said James of his friend. “And what’s to stop [her harasser] from doing it again?”

Niemi echoed the statement. “When the decision came down, it was complete silence. No follow-up. No outreach,” he said. “She was left entirely on her own.”

Sullivan explained that what these women experienced after their hearings was par for the course. When asked whether there was a procedure in place regarding notifying those who’ve filed complaints, of sanctions imposed, she said, “Not directly, no.”

“Anyone who’s fearful and still thinks that there’s any threat whatsoever should come on down [to the university] and go back to either [Drummond] or the Office of Rights and Responsibilities,” Sullivan continued. “If she has any reason to feel that either the sanctions are not being followed or if she has any concern for her safety, anything like that, she should absolutely speak to whoever she wishes.”

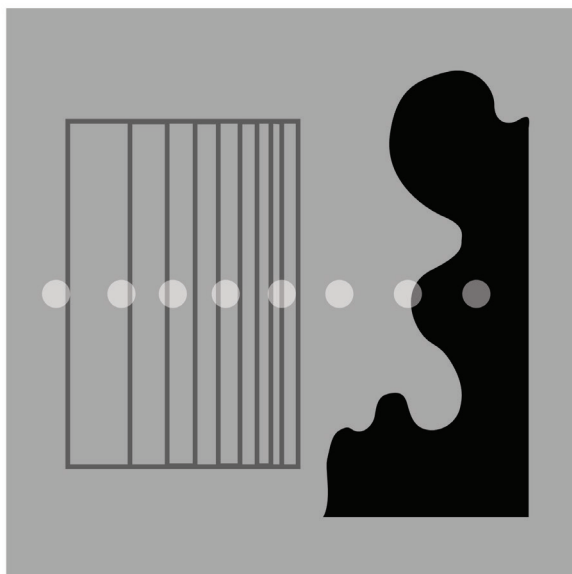
Niemi, however, calls the university’s passive follow-up a “serious systematic flaw.” In Cathy’s situation, he said, “Threatening and violent conduct [...] should have been a red flag for the university right away.”

Despite Maria, Cathy, and Felicia’s allegations, of which Concordia President Alan Shepard said he is unaware, he maintained that the university’s sexual violence policies are among the top in the country.

“I think we’ve had very progressive, open discussion about a super complicated, difficult topic. I’m proud of the way Concordia has handled it. I think the services we provide to people who have been assaulted are strong,” Shepard said, including the university’s preventative efforts, such as consent workshops. “In my view, Concordia’s made big steps forward.”

But those strides aren’t long enough for Maria.

“It angers me that here I am, taking the whole year off of school, and I’m the one being penalized and behind in my studies,” she said. “And he’s the one walking around with a letter of reprimand.” □



# Throwing Money at the Problem

## How Will \$23 Million Address Sexual Violence on Campus?

BY OCEAN DEROUCHIE  
@OSHIEPOSHIE

**Sexual harassment and assault on campus is a pervasive issue. Not only within Concordia, but on provincial and national levels, too.**

We seem to talk about it a lot, too. We've watched *The Hunting Ground*. We've engaged in social media frenzies, most recently the #metoo movement, and before that, #beenrapedneverreported. We say we understand there's a problem, but no matter what we do, no matter how it's framed, it still seems like it's not being taken seriously enough.

Of almost 9,300 people who work or study at Université du Québec's six campuses, over 3,400 respondents reported experiencing a form of sexual violence by someone connected to their university.

We also know that about one in four women experience sexual assault while they're in college or university. For men, it's about six per cent. And about one quarter of trans or nonconforming students will also experience a form of sexual assault. These numbers have a tendency to increase for marginalized peoples, especially Indigenous women, women of colour, and those with mental illness or disabilities—they're all four times more likely to experience sexual violence. But of course, these numbers come from those who are willing to disclose their experiences, so it's likely the real numbers are much higher.

In August, shortly before students headed back to school, Higher Education Minister Hélène David and the Quebec Government announced they would be funneling \$23 million into all post-secondary institutions across the province over five years, with one goal in mind: to combat sexual violence.

While administrations across the province hooped and hollered in joy, student groups and people working on the ground questioned how these funds

will affect change.

And as such, the reviews are mixed. "It's a step in the right direction," explained Jennifer Drummond, Concordia's Sexual Assault Resource Centre coordinator.

"But when it's divided that many ways and over five years..." She paused. "It would be great if it was a lot more."

Concordia Student Union Student Life Coordinator Leyla Sutherland and Academic and Advocacy Coordinator Asma Mushtaq, who spoke together, feel the policy is a welcome investment, regardless.

"[The Quebec government] talks about prevention, as well as support which is an important second part to any approach to sexual assault policy," said Sutherland.

Mushtaq, who works at the CSU Legal Information Clinic, is currently working on protocols on how to internally review parts of policy, specifically Concordia's, that have loopholes. This includes loopholes in the sexual assault policy that came out in 2016. She believes that these policies "should be reviewed with a more intersectional lens and [intersectional-]based approach."

Other Montreal students have their reservations. Connor Spencer, Student's Society of McGill University's vice president external, said that she's hesitant and wary of the new policy announcement because of her experience at public consultations.

### PROBLEMS FROM THE GET-GO

The Quebec government announced, following a string of break-ins and assaults at University of Laval, that it

would hold public consultations around the policy starting October 2016. Those consultations ran until March 2017.

During these announcements, David said that the consultations would bring together government, institutions, student groups, and organizations to discuss methods of prevention and support.

These meetings were well-intentioned, explained Spencer, but they missed the mark.

"They were very problematic," said Spencer, who attended the Montreal consultation in April. "The space was not accessible to survivors, and survivors were not invited."

Despite claims that the consultations would incorporate students, she said that barely any students were invited.

"It was less than ten students in a room full of middle-aged white people talking about how they were going to deal with sexual assault, and kind of patting themselves on the back."

Some students crashed the party, though. Survivors from the McGill chapter of Silence is Violence disrupted the meetings, Spencer detailed, and proceeded to give their testimonies.

She feels that the public consultations were inaccessible in other basic ways as well. No English translations were provided for the meeting, which was held in French. Spencer said she found herself in the awkward position of also trying to translate Silence is Violence members' testimonies from English to French to a person sitting next to her.

"The only way you could provide feedback [at the consultation] was to stand up and speak into a microphone in front of two hundred people," she added.

"So there were problems." On top of that, Spencer said that there was only one group that works with survivors invited to the space. "It's great that they got that one, but it was not enough. The

**“It’s not enough to hire someone. I don’t think, in terms of services for survivors, it will have a huge impact”**

—Jennifer Drummond

only reason I got into that room was not as someone who had worked with survivors but as an incoming student executive.”

#### A QUESTION OF DISTRIBUTION

The Minister of Higher Education said that to combat sexual violence on campus, the Quebec Government will invest \$23 million among all post-secondary institutions, over five years, in the province. This includes CEGEPs as well as universities.

There are questions about how the funds will be distributed.

Sutherland and Mushtaq agree that allocation should “be done in consultation with stakeholders and individuals at the universities, including survivors.” She reiterated that these discussions should acknowledge the specific circumstances of each institution, be that student population, their biggest concerns, and what loopholes exist in policies.

“We don’t really know what the \$23 million is going towards right now, and it would be good to have a breakdown and see what exactly it is that is going to be required of universities,” said Spencer.

The province has yet to detail how the money will be distributed. It’s unknown whether it will be allocated equally or based on need.

Some institutions, like McGill and Concordia, already have resources cen-

tres, student groups, and policies based around prevention and support. To distribute money evenly would “ignore some of the realities of where each group is at,” noted Sutherland. “Funds should be distributed to reflect that.”

“We’re lucky as a large research-based institution to have those kinds of resources available,” explained Spencer. “But in regional universities... That funding from the province could be what decides whether or not they even have staff dedicated to dealing with sexual violence on campus.”

If divided equally among the more than 70 public colleges and universities in the province, funding could be less than \$63,800 annually per institution. But the CSU executives think assessments could help, along with looking at what tactics have worked at Concordia and McGill, and how they could be applied or revamped at other schools.

Spencer said the numbers don’t look so bad on paper, but it’s hardly enough for university centres that support themselves already, let alone “big enough to make a difference in the regional universities for actually creating support systems that don’t yet exist.”

Drummond suggested that the funds could potentially go towards research projects, campaigns, or even creating online workshop modules.

“But it’s not enough to hire someone,” she said. Until last year, Drummond was the SARC’s only full-time staff member. “I don’t think, in terms of services for survivors, it will have a huge impact.”

#### UNIVERSITY POLICY HOLES

At Concordia, Sutherland and Mushtaq are worried about loopholes.

“It’s often the case that there is little recourse within the university or legal context, depending on the loopholes that exist in policy. It’s extremely important that these processes be survivor-centric,” said Sutherland.

Concordia’s Sexual Assault Policy came into effect in May 2016, and McGill’s in November 2016 after student groups disputed the policy for not doing enough.

Concordia’s administration has shown support Concordia’s Sexual Assault Resource Centre, most notably with the relocation of the centre itself, from what was once an unmarked office

on the third floor of the GM building to a sunny and spacious multi-room office on the sixth floor of the Hall.

Similarly, Spencer said McGill’s policy also needs some work.

“The main problem is that it’s a stand-alone policy, and relies on the Code of Student Conduct to implement any disciplinary measures,” meaning you cannot pursue a complaint against a faculty or staff member through that policy.

“The first sentence of the policy says that ‘This applies to all Members of the University.’ That’s a lie,” she continued.

Additionally, she explained that those disciplining in accordance to McGill’s code aren’t trained for dealing with sexual violence. “They are trained to discipline people for plagiarism.”

Concordia’s policies are better in some ways, said Mushtaq, “but there is always room for growth and improvement, especially when vulnerabilities are concerned.”

She continued, “We’re talking about people who are informing the policies, and with each voice that is added, it will amplify that.” She advocates for approaches that are inclusive of trauma and people’s individual experiences, hoping that the results from there can “only get better.”

#### A TOP-DOWN APPROACH

For Spencer, the main issue with the policy making is the “top-down approach” that Quebec has taken to addressing sexual assault on campus. She suggests that, depending on what is stated in the forthcoming law later on, a new set of consultations can be launched.

“Specifically with students and survivors, making sure that those voices are heard when they critique what is supposed to influence their everyday lives on campuses.”

She also worries that the government might attempt to impose new and under-funded structures, as opposed to supporting networks that already exist by means of student leadership.

“In the face of administration not taking care of its students, often students step up, and you find that on every campus... Why not instead fund the structures that have already been created out of a need of a community? That’s something I would like to see.”



## KEEP THE CONVERSATION FLOWING

Listening to feedback will play a crucial role in how these kinds of policies will affect those they are geared towards. Hopes that the Quebec government will re-evaluate the situation after the policy and bill are implemented are high.

Having a policy in place is great, but as Sutherland said, “It’s not an endpoint of the process.”

Especially when there is still so much work to do.

Sexual violence isn’t a new issue, but it’s only now that people are starting to pay attention. It’s almost inescapable. With post after post from survivors sharing their stories, our feeds overflow with allegations against Hollywood bigshots or members of our own communities.

Maybe this will be a turning point. Maybe this policy will incite change — whether directly through its laws or indirectly through the reaction of Quebecers.

The danger perhaps is that another policy will be put into motion with no follow-up to come afterwards.

“There should be a plan in place to look at these policies and see if they’re still upholding the safety and the dignity and the well-being of students,” Sutherland points out.

And if we’re to do that, it’s going to take a lot more than \$23 million. It’s going to take energy, time and dedication. But the value in finding solutions to this issue is worth far more than the money. □





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**Send everything in PDF form to [secretary@thelinknewspaper.ca](mailto:secretary@thelinknewspaper.ca) before Nov. 28. Good luck!**

# Exposing Hidden Roots

## Montreal North's Collection of Racialized Authors and Artists Hopes to Uproot the Marginalized

BY MARISSA RAMNANAN

**"Sit down, get comfortable. This is home."**

Empress Rosiclar was a step short of hugging me when I walked into Racines, a bookstore. The walls were splattered with color, music was playing in the background, and there was art. Everywhere.

Racines is bookstore gold. Located in Montreal North, at 4689 Henri-Bourassa Blvd. East, the store has a feature that makes it special: it only carries books and art made by people of color. All of the art on the walls is created by local, racialized artists, Rosiclar explained.

Rosiclar has worked there ever since the bookstore opened on August 5.

Sophia Sahrane, a Concordia graduate and employee at Racines, said the purpose of the bookstore is not to find a balance between racialized and non-racialized authors and artists, because that is impossible. Instead, the purpose is to represent racialized people.

"It's an independent store, nobody funds us," said Rosiclar.

"We are very new, and it shows," Rosiclar said. They've used up most of their funds, she admits, and this is why they are now only open three days a week. Their profit mainly comes from book sales and hosting events.

Racines carries books written in English, French, and Creole. They have a wide selection of books written by Montrealers, like local activist Robyn Maynard's new release *Policing Black Lives*. Local authors and artists pass by to sell their works at Racines all the time, said Sahrane.

They also have works by international authors, including *The Kite Runner* by Khaled Hosseini and *Ru* by Kim Thúy. If they don't have a specific book that a customer is looking for, Racines will often order it for them.

It's all for sale, by the way, Rosiclar said, waving a hand in front of her. Everything, from the plants on the tables, to the statues—and it's all affordable.

Books tend to cost between \$7 and \$13, and those on the bottom shelves are sold for \$5 or less. They also have a handful of books that they give away for free.

The people who come to the shop are diverse. Everyone has different languages on their tongues, different kinds of loves, yet are all under the same roof, attracted to this little literary safe haven.

Racines isn't just a bookstore, said Rosiclar. She continued that owner Gabriella Kinte's main goal was to create a safe space, a second home for people. They always have music playing, and offer customers coffee or tea, she said. It's not only about making money.

"There is so much love here," said Rosiclar. "That's our main focus: love."

The bookstore is open to all ages and races, but is especially catered to Montreal North's racialized youth.

"Here, come, let me show you," she said pointing to the wall by the couches. On it, words were painted in bolded black, "You are special. You are leaders. You are Dreamers. You are thinkers. You are respected. You are a friend. You are loved. You are the reason I am here."

This is Racines' slogan, she explained. "We just wanna love people, and we want our customers to love themselves."

That's the reason they don't only sell books. It's a place where people have freedom of speech, she said, "And we respect that. We let people express that in their art."

The space has posters and postcards depicting LGBTQ+ and fantasy art. They also sell dolls for children depicting women of color and t-shirts with political statements saying things like "Youth of Colour, You Matter." Rosiclar skipped happily around the room while showing off the products, a genuine smile on her face the entire time.

This place is important, she said, because

it's the first of its kind in Montreal.

Montreal North is a racialized community, added Sahrane. In 2014, 42.9 per cent of the community was listed as being part of a visible minority.

"When we talk about segregation in Montreal, I think of this borough," Sahrane said.

"In Montreal North, of all places," said Rosiclar, "the need is high for inclusive, diverse, safe spaces like these for people of color."

When she was a little girl, she said, she felt like she didn't fall into the stereo-

**"In Montreal North, of all places the need is high for inclusive, diverse, safe spaces like these for people of color"**

**—Empress Rosiclar**

type of "blackness" because she loved to read—she felt marginalized. And, when she did read, the characters in the books never reflected who she was.

"I couldn't really attach myself to a character, because their struggles were not mine," Rosiclar recalled. "I remember when I was young, I used to put a towel on my head and pretend I had long, blond hair, because I was seeing that [in







the media] and I was also reading that.”

“Now I look at the books we have here,” Rosiclar continued, “and [the characters] are all like me. I know their struggle, and I can relate to them, and I can be healed through reading the characters’ experience. I never found that anywhere else before I stepped into Racine.”

And now, the youth of Montreal North have an opportunity to experience this as well.

Sahrane shares this sentiment. “[People of colour] are pegged with a certain stereotype and can’t escape that. So, racialized individuals often just stick to their stereotype and caricature, which perpetuates the subordination of racialized people, and the supremacy of white folk,” she said.

The bookstore is safety and family oriented, said Rosiclar, and it is not just for book and art lovers. Racines also hosts multiple events throughout the month, about a variety of subjects.

They have discussions and interactive workshops on a variety of topics related to race and writing. On Oct. 7, they had a discussion about “Pre-Columbus,” two days before the celebrated Columbus Day in the United States. Their biggest event of October was a Halloween party on Oct. 28 called “Heroes of Color.” They also had a dating event called “Books and Chill.”

“And it worked!” Empress said, laughing.

“A space is finally created for folk to not have to justify their existence,” said Sahrane. “It is important for racialized folk because we are often silenced when we try to engage in conversations about racism.” At Racines, people can talk about their experiences only if they want to, and at their own pace.

Racines is a good resource for learning as well, said Sahrane. Teachers come in trying to find books to read their elementary school kids with racial-

ized characters. A lot of non-racialized people come into the space and want to understand, for example, how feminism is whitewashed. Racines has an educational value for non-racialized people to learn without being shot down, or tokenizing their “only black friend” by bombarding them with questions about living while black. They meet people at Racines who want to share as much as possible about their personal experiences, within respectful boundaries, and who want to educate others.

Everyone who works on their small team is very involved in the community. The owner Gabriella Kinté, for example, is involved with Montreal Noir and Black Lives Matter Montreal.

Racines is a very small scale resource, said Sahrane. They do outreach work at schools and with educational associations such as the Federation autonome des enseignants, but there is only so much they can do. Systemic racism is such a massive issue, said Sahrane, and she hopes other spaces like this one are created.

The bookshop is also a place for people to meet and talk, said Rosiclar. Kids pass by to just hang out. There is a comfortable leather couch for people to sit, a little corner for children, set with a colorful table and chairs, toys for them to play with and books for them to read, and a table with a couple of chairs at the entrance of the store.

That is my favorite place in the store, said Rosiclar, pointing at the table with a wooden statue and two cacti as decoration, by the door. That table is perfect for conversation, and for sharing, she said.

And it was.

“We at Racines want to take care of you, and want to connect with you,” she said. “We try our best to get you the book you want.” The clientele is already faithful, she continued. She isn’t sure if it’s the way they accept and welcome people, but they would always come back, she said.

“When you come here,” said Rosiclar, “you will always find somebody who is willing to be part of your family.”

Rosiclar wasn’t exaggerating when she welcomed me to the store.

Racines felt like home. 🏠

*Racines schedules monthly events. Check their Facebook page, Racines, or at 4689 Henri Bourassa Blvd. East.*

**Top: Activist Sophia Sahrane, a recent Concordia University graduate, is an employee at the Racines bookstore in Montreal North.**

**Bottom: Art by local artists is also sold at the bookstore.**

PHOTOS FRANCA G. MIGNACCA

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# Quebec Students Gear Up to Fight Against Unpaid Internships

BY MIRIAM LAFONTAINE  
@MIRILAFONTAINE

**Students all over the world today have experienced, or will experience, unpaid internships.**

Whether it's due to a course requirement for graduation, or as a point of entry into a competitive job market, internships are part of a new reality faced by students everywhere.

Internships are more than a method of gaining skills associated with a student's career of choice. The exponential growth of unpaid internships represents a structural change in the economy, and the effects of this change are felt everywhere.

Companies lay off, or don't hire, workers because they rely on the unpaid labour of interns. Entry-level jobs once seen as a necessary liability are more and more being

transformed into unpaid internships. Training periods, which were historically paid for by companies, are less likely to be paid. More fields than ever rely on the labour of interns for basic tasks.

This reality has not come without contestation. Mobilization against unpaid internships began last year on Montreal campuses like Université du Québec à Montréal. The fight for remunerated student labour is now gradually spreading to Concordia and McGill Universities, where both undergraduate unions have begun year-long campaigns to push for paid internships. Organizers hope to build a broad-based student movement against unpaid internships that's capable of challenging this new system of unpaid labour.

In many programs at Concordia, an internship is required for graduation.

Students get a form of compensation for their work in these internships, since they get course credit in return. However, very few programs at Concordia enforce that

internships be paid. In fact, some programs go so far as to only allow students to get course credit if the internship is unpaid.

If you're a student in applied human sciences, art education, geography, education, music, theatre, contemporary dance, or human relations, you're

one of those students only allowed

to take unpaid internships.

The Concordia Student Union wants to see an end to that. Its campaign for the year is to lay down the groundwork to ensure that, in the future, all for-credit internships at Concordia are paid. To do so, the CSU is working hand in hand with the Association for the Voice of Educa-

tion in Quebec, the provincial federation they're part of, which will focus on putting pressure on the provincial level.

But before the CSU and AVEQ start making formal demands to Concordia's administration and the provincial government, they need to convince students to change the lens through which they view their own education and their own labour.

"It only makes sense that it should be remunerated, it is labour. The discourse needs to be shifted in terms of how we talk about these things," says Asma Mushtaq, the academic and advocacy coordinator with the CSU, who's helping lead their yearly campaign against unpaid internships.

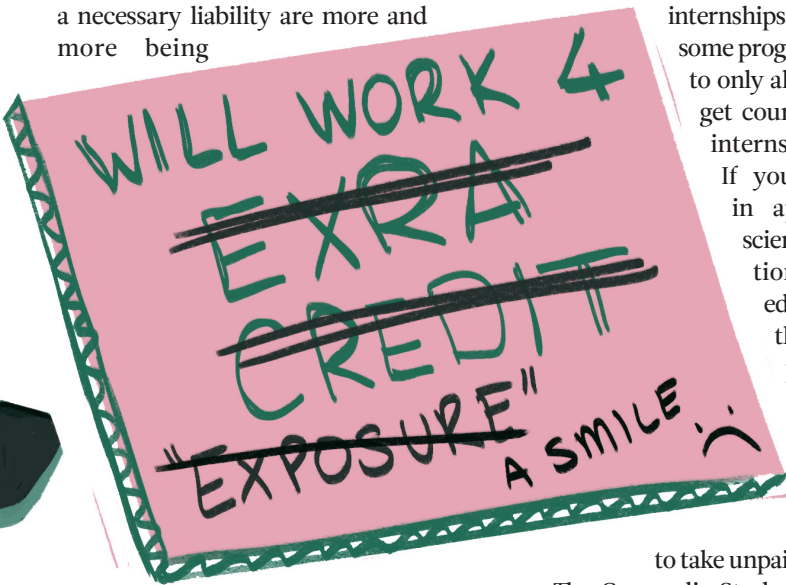
Both her and the CSU's mobilization coordinator Ahmed Badr, who is also leading the campaign, agree that students are routinely exploited by employers who feel they are doing students a favour by giving them unpaid internships.

"We accept unpaid internships because we need to get experience, we need to have it for our careers," says Badr. "Some people take advantage of our need to have experience."

They hope that as students become more vocal about their needs, employers will change the way they interact with student labour and begin to place a higher value on it.

Those in typically feminine fields tend to get the shorter end of the stick, says Mushtaq. "There's unequal conditions in terms of how [unpaid internships] are applied, and there's not a standardized benchmark for it," she explains. "Especially for generally feminized fields."

Students from the faculty of Engineering and Computer Science who get accepted into Concordia's Institute for Aerospace Design and Innovation get the chance to take on paid internships. These internships aren't for course credit, but unlike a student in art education who will be forced to do unpaid internships to graduate, students in



aerospace design and innovation get paid \$20 per hour, for an internship that lasts 500 hours or more.

Other students who want to get paid for their internships can apply to be part of Concordia's co-op program, which helps set students up with paid internships according to their field of study. However, only certain programs allow their students to apply for the co-op program, and none of the programs where unpaid internships are required take part in the program.

In line with what Mushtaq's noticed, many of the programs that are part of the co-op program at Concordia are those in traditionally masculine fields. There are significantly more options for paid internships in Engineering and Computer Science and the John Molson School of Business, but comparatively less for fields that have long been seen as feminine such as the social sciences. In the fine arts department, the only program eligible for the co-op internships for students is art history, and the application is now listed as unavailable.

Mushtaq wishes there was a more centralized way of overseeing for-credit internships at Concordia, so that students from all programs could take part in internships of the same caliber. Some programs issue out surveys to their students after they end their internships,

whereas others don't, she says.

The result is that it's hard to track whether students are getting the most out of their internships, and it's hard to track which students are being exploited. She says that, unfortunately, students who are looking to gain knowledge and experience may get distracted from those goals, since their employer may have interests which are not in line with those of the student.

Beyond criticisms of legal internships, many students also take part in illegal internships. This happens because of a general lack of knowledge on what constitutes a legal internship.

For an internship to be considered legal in Quebec, it either has to be part of a government-approved training program overseen and directed by an educational institution, be part of a vocational school training program, or be done for a non-profit organization.

It's unclear whether or not those who take on internships outside of these parameters have the legal right to a wage. In 2012, Jainna Patel filed a labour complaint against Bell Canada for a 5 week internship she did with Bell Mobility in its Professional Management Program in Mississauga, Ont., and demanded she be paid a wage for her time. Her complaint was later rejected by Human Resources and Development Canada, but her choice to file a labour complaint did make some difference: Bell Canada later discontinued that internship.

Interns within those three parameters are also exempt from protection under Quebec's law on labour standards. That means they get no guarantee of a minimum wage, paid holidays, or the right to absence leave if they're sick or need to see their family. It also means they can legally be unpaid, even if the intern is working an hourly schedule the same way any other employee would.

Viewing this relationship as exploitative, AVEQ's campaign against unpaid internships argues that it's unfair to have interns exempt from protection the labour law. Beyond giving support to the CSU, AVEQ is getting ready to pressure the provincial government to rewrite the law and remove the exemption for interns. If changed, it would assure interns a mini-

mum wage, and would also allow interns to receive the same protection that other legal employees are allotted under the law.

On Oct. 11, the provincial government said in a press release that they would be making reforms to current labour standards law, leaving it now especially vulnerable to criticism from the student movement.

Widespread unpaid internships perpetuate the privilege of the rich, says AVEQ mobilization coordinator Kristin Perry, since those who can't afford to work without a wage will have to move on to other things. On the other hand, those who are fortunate enough to live at home or who don't pay rent can take on the financial burden that comes with doing multiple unpaid internships.

In the end, Perry says, the person with more work experience will be more likely to get hired. The other person, who would otherwise have been equally qualified for the job, often ends up being brushed aside because they lack the experience necessary to compete.

"It's making it more difficult for the people who are already being marginalized. It's just widening the gap even farther," Perry says.

"It's a normalization of the struggle. That's just what you have to do to complete your degree. But it's a clear barrier to student's mental and physical health, and their ability to sustain themselves financially while going to school," says Sophia Sahrane, AVEQ's research coordinator who's overseeing a study on unpaid internships set to come out this academic year.

While this year's CSU campaign against unpaid internships is the first major campaign of its type at an anglophone university, it isn't the first in Quebec. The *Comités unitaire sur le travail étudiant*, are a group of committees from different Quebec campuses focused on the fight for paid internships and the betterment of student labour. The first CUTE committees were formed at UQAM and CEGEP Marie Victorin about a year and half ago.

"After the student strike of 2012, there was a crisis in the student movement, and a lot of people were asking themselves how the student movement could be reactivated," said Pierre Luc-Junet,

**"After the student strike of 2012, there was a crisis in the student movement, and a lot of people were asking themselves how the student movement could be reactivated"**

—Pierre Luc-Junet



who started a Concordia chapter of CUTE this semester.

“There’s an internal crisis,” he says. “People don’t know how to react, what to do next.”

In 2012, many radical Montreal students advocated for free education, but CUTE pushes the argument further. The organization was formed around the idea that all students should be paid a wage for the labour that goes into finishing a degree.

“At CUTE we have a broader analysis of student labour,” he says. “We wanted to rethink the whole approach of the student condition, and the student movement.”

The idea that students deserve to be paid a wage isn’t new, and he says CUTE draws inspiration from scholars like the radical autonomist, feminist, and Marxist Silvia Federici, who started the Wages for Housework campaign in 1973, and autonomist Marxist scholar George Caffentzis, who published a manifesto advocating for student wages in 1975.

Junet says that students “must be considered not as future workers that are in a transition phase between the family and the work station, but as workers. Because they’re producing something that has a value.”

As intellectual workers, students produce knowledge, and should therefore be compensated, he says. Junet acknowledges their goal is long-term, and right now the CUTE committee’s main focus is to see an end to unpaid internships.

Many of those who are part of CUTE were inspired to join because they saw the injustice of having to work for free.

UQAM education graduate Camille Tremblay-Fournier had to quit one of her unpaid internship as a preschool teacher at the Commission scolaire Pierre-Neveu in the Laurentians after being too burnt out to continue. Now she organizes with CUTE.

“In education it’s very violent, you have to be a good teacher, a good mother, you have to be very professional all the time,” she said. “It’s very patriarchal. For me it was very intense, that internship. I quit.”

Tremblay-Fournier had to do unpaid internships as part of her program, which requires her to take on four of them over four years. She says that what’s being asked of her is too much, and that interns

often take on the same work as the teachers they work alongside. That’s especially the case for their final internship, where all students have to work a full semester as a teacher. For her last semester, she worked a full semester as a sociology teacher at Cegep du Vieux Montréal.

She describes the experience as exploitative, and found it hard to strike a balance.

“It’s very complicated, to combine a lot of work at home, and at school, and to have a job after school,” she said. “It’s impossible.”

Junet also relates to the struggle.

As a fine arts student in Concordia’s film studies department, Junet says he and his colleagues get emails asking to do unpaid work on a weekly basis. He’s done an internship before with a cinema production company, and was able to get credit for it, but he left feeling ripped off. Since he had to pay for the course in his tuition fees, he felt he was paying to work.

Last summer he was offered an unpaid internship with Rencontres internationales du documentaire de Montreal, one of Canada’s biggest documentary film festivals. He considered it, out of pressure to conform, but later refused because he thought too much was being asked of him.

He said that in the first month of the internship, interns were required to work 15 or 20 hours per week, and that by the last month of the internship, interns were expected to work full time, especially during the festival’s ten day run.

“There’s people telling you that it’s a very good opportunity. If you do it well, after that you could have a job in this company. You can start your career,” he says. “That’s the irony. You start your career by being completely exploited by what will become your bosses, and that’s a fucking strange relationship when you start something. That has to be denounced totally.”

#### WHAT’S NEXT?

Now, CUTE and other student groups in Quebec are gearing up for a day of action on Nov. 10, declared the International Day of Interns.

A coalition of 12 different groups has been formed, made up of both CUTE committees and student associations on both university and CEGEP cam-

**“In education it’s very violent, you have to be a good teacher, a good mother, you have to be very professional all the time. It’s very patriarchal”**

—Camille Tremblay-Fournier

puses. Students from Concordia, UQAM, Udem, and CEGEPs Marie-Victorin, Maisonneuve, and Gérald-Godin are all expected to attend.

A declaration of their demands is in the works, and will be presented publicly the day of.

Member of CUTE Thierry Beauvais-Gentile said the protest will take place at Square Victoria, and also says internal disruptions are expected at UQAM. Some student associations part of that coalition are debating going on strike that day. But so far, only the interns part of ADEESE, the education students association at UQAM, AÉTS, UQAM’s social work students association, and l’AÉMÉ, the education association at Université du Québec en Outaouais, have agreed to go on strike that day.

Strikes of this nature have been successful before. In 2016, Quebec psychology interns under the union Fédération interuniversitaire des doctorant.e.s en psychologie staged a four-month strike. With the pressure they exerted, the provincial government later agreed that from then on, all psychology interns would be paid a bursary \$12,500 per semester.

“I think a few student associations are using it as a trial for an intern strike. They’re using it as a, ‘let’s see how many interns can show up,’” said Beauvais-Gentile. ☐

# A Picture Worth a Thousand Identities

## Andrew Jackson's Photographic Look Into Jamaica and Montreal

BY RHONDA CHUNG

### Click.

It's a long exposure photo.

And everything slows down.

The wind runs invisible ribbons through the tall grass in the planters of de Maisonneuve Blvd.

Even the sound of the shutter is perceptible as it winks its eye shut.

"The camera is a passport into your lives," says Andrew Jackson, as he gazes down the long hallway of Concordia University's Hall building.

Born in the small town of Dudley, near Birmingham, Jackson has captured images of his British homeland for outlets like *The Guardian* and *The Financial Times Magazine*.

In February, Jackson will spend a month at New York's Syracuse University as an artist-in-residence for its 2018 Light Works Residency.

His work will be published in their special edition, *Contact Sheet: The Light Work Annual*. He is also the co-founder and co-director of Some Cities, a community interest company, which is a participatory initiative aimed at creating opportunities for skill-learning and narrative sharing via photography. Jackson was also the winner of the non-profit agency award, Multistory Bursary 2018.

But today, as the recipient of the Artist International Development fund from the Arts Council of England, he is in Quebec, getting rewarded for his photographic works taken in Jamaica and Montreal.

"If I stared at someone for five minutes, they'd box me; but as a photographer, they let me into their lives—they tell you intimate personal details," he says. "They're not telling you, though, they talk to the camera."

The camera is a temporary space—a portal with two facing doors, if you will.

The shutter click is the moment when both of those doors are open, and when Jackson gets to take a peek into someone else's world.

And that is the exact thing that he's been exploring in his current project that focuses on migration, memory,



PHOTOS COURTESY ANDREW JACKSON





Photographer Andrew Jackson's most recent works in Jamaica explore identity through migration, memory, and notions of urbanism.



and notions of urbanism.

As Jackson moves through different urban spaces and documents them one photographic still at a time, he finds himself with another lens in his tool kit, one of ethnography. Each city provides its own distinct narrative about how humans have moved through space; in turn, these spaces tell stories that knit a unique psychological tapestry of its inhabitants.

A graduate from Newport University in Wales, where he underwent a masters in their documentary program, Jackson explains that there are 148 different ethnic groups in Birmingham.

“You’ve got people speaking different languages, different dialects of those languages, different religions.” He pauses and sincerely asks: “How do you get a society to work when you’ve got so many different identities taking space in it?”

Montreal provided just the urban avenue for such exploration. Home to a population that, according to Canada’s 2016 Census, is 53.4 per cent Francophone, 15.1 per cent Anglophone, and more than a third Allophone. It became the obvious place to explore the phenomenon.

This kind of “super-diversity,”—a term coined by American anthropologist Dr. Steven Vertovec—is becoming increasingly common in urban societies because of globalization and transnational movement. Urban environments have provided rich soil and fertile spaces for ethnic diaspora to form roots.

But how do roots develop in foreign lands?

Jackson’s trip to Jamaica earlier this year was an attempt to answer this question all while discovering his own roots.

He talks about trying to capture a record of his parents’ existence before they made their transatlantic trip to England in the 1950s.

What was this country where they grew up?

What was the house they grew up in like?

Where did their stories come from?

But the streets have since disappeared from the last time his parents were there—that’s what Jackson discovered when he tried to follow his father’s directions. His chuckle fades as he spins



out a question that is unintentionally bittersweet. “How do you tell your father that his route home has disappeared?”

And thus his project in space, diaspora movement, and psychological migration was born.

In a talk given several years ago in the DB Clarke Theatre, Concordia’s Dr. Sherry Simon discussed this in-between

world of the immigrant who stays. They are seemingly always the “Other” in the land they’ve adopted, but are also keenly aware that they no longer fit into the country where they were born and raised. Simon compared their movement to that of the St. Lawrence river—an endless ebb and flow of identity.

Who changes, though? The person



who has migrated, the space that fills with migrants, or the places that get left behind because of migration?

Jackson wonders what happens when people stay and don't go home.

"Immigration is often talked about only in terms of people coming, not about them staying or retiring," he said. "It's almost as if they don't make roots. How long can you keep calling them migrants?"

Since embarking on this journey, what has struck Jackson the most is the sustained invisibility of visible minorities. He remarks how easy it is for marginalized people to be made invisible, to go through life unseen, ignored and to be easily erased from the lives of those who belong to dominant communities.

In this sense, geographies are more than just physical space, they can be cultural and they can also be emotional.

Psychogeography—as explained by French philosopher Guy Debord—reveals how individuals are affected by their living environment. The emotions and behaviours that a physical space can elicit from its citizens can be wholly intentional or not.

Montreal is no stranger to this concept, as Bill 101 ensured that the visual linguistic landscape of *la métropole* would very clearly reflect its cultural values.

For those who migrate and who dare to not be silent about their erasure, what then?

Where do their voices fit in a narrative that would actively exclude them?

Finally, on the ninth floor of Concordia's Hall building, Jackson has come to visit ghosts. Just under 50 years ago, a sit-in that lasted for 10 days was staged on this very floor that implicated over 400 undergraduate students, and has since been called the largest student uprising in Canadian history: The Sir George Williams Affair.

Nine international students who migrated from the Caribbean reported the racially-biased grading practices of their biology teacher. It did not take long for the administration to completely disregard the students' charges and exonerate the professor from any malfeasance.

The administration never made contact with the students.

In the face of erasure, the students chose to be visible and vocal, and paid the price. According to all accounts, the

sit-in only became a "riot" once police arrived on the scene.

Almost 100 students were arrested. Some were deported, and others fled the country.

"It's a deliberate process and never an accident," he said.

Jackson places his tripod down in front of the sprawling open space of the ninth floor hallway. Once locked into place, he turns to his camera case, opens it and exposes a perfectly nested line of small, yellow cylinders of Kodak film.

He develops each picture by hand.

"Sometimes you'll spend all day taking pictures and not one will come out well," he says.

He laughs softly as he moves through the ritual motion of drawing the film out, feeding it into the camera, and then closing the camera's back.

Today, the sound of feet scurrying to the class fill the hallway where there had once been a melee of chants and defiance.

Hallways, by their nature, are not a migratory space. They are rarely a resting place. Instead, they're a place where bodies pass through before finding their final destination.

Click.

In just a millisecond, Jackson has imprinted this space of transition onto his film, and will fly it back to his island—even the ephemeral can take flight transnationally.

"Not all migration takes place across international borders," he says. "But all migration is followed by psychological change, I believe." □



# I WANNA ROCK!

## (And Not be Limited by My Gender)

### Feminist Rock Camp Empowers Young Women and Gender Nonconforming Youth

BY SAVANNAH STEWART  
@SAV\_EDEN\_S

**In case it isn't apparent from the name, Rock Camp For Girls and Gender Nonconforming Youth is a rock camp like no other.**

On the surface it may seem like any ordinary band camp. The kids are taught how to use equipment and play an instrument, and over the course of a week they form a band, write a song, shoot a video clip in badass rockstar get ups. They finish off the program by performing onstage at their graduation party.

But at RCFG\*, they make sure the kids know that rock music, like anything else, doesn't exist in a vacuum.

Between the music, gear lessons, and band practices are workshops and group circles that are designed to get the campers thinking about a wide array of social issues.

Rooted in feminism and anti-oppression, the workshops educate kids about sexism, racism, classism, mental health awareness, and more to help them use their music as an outlet for their experiences. They're encouraged to incorporate what they learn into their songs.

"Feminism, of course, was the founding value and principle of rock camp," says Taharima Habib, outreach and media coordinator on the camp's board of directors.

Indeed, the camp takes a distinctly feminist position on rock music, and uses it as a means to instill female empowerment into the kids who attend.

"Rock camp was actually started by a couple of Concordia students who strongly believed that there was just

not a very safe space made in the music scene in Montreal for women, or just anybody different from a white, cis man," Habib explains.

"The music industry is so male dominated, as are many industries, but the music industry in particular," adds Emma Bronson, current board member and former camper of five years.

RCFG\* remedies that, according to Bronson. "I felt like I could take up as much space as I wanted to."

Created in 2009, the camp takes place over one week in late July and it is open to kids aged 10 to 17.

On top of the yearly summer camp, this year is the first they've been able to offer Rockademia, an extracurricular activity that takes place once a week for eight weeks throughout the fall. It's offered to girls, women, and gender nonconforming individuals aged 10 to 25, and their hope for next year is that they can include a 25-and-over age group as well.

Habib says that there's been a need in their community for programming for adults for a long time now.

"Every time we do any kind of outreach, [I've] always had people coming up to me, like 'What about us? What about the moms? Can't we be a part of this, too?'"

#### REBELLIOUS SELF-EXPRESSION

So, why rock music?

"We've been asked so many times why rock music, or why not pop music.

Because we're not trying to please anybody," Habib explains.

"Because it's loud," Bronson says. "I think women are taught to be quiet, and taught to be small and not take up a lot of room, and here you are learning to play the drums. The drums are made to be loud, the drums are made to be hit, and [girls are] just so not used to doing that."

Habib explains that rock music gives the kids an opportunity to speak their minds in a way that is loud, rebellious, and bound to garner attention, which can be difficult for girls and gender nonconforming individuals.

"That mic gives you so much power and that's something that these young kids, these young, beautiful, marginalized kids have never had before, or are struggling to get in an otherwise male-dominated place," she says.

The participants choose between vocals, guitar, bass, keyboard or drums, and are urged to choose an instrument they have never played before—after all, learning new things and stepping out of your comfort zone is what RCFG\* is all about.

Then, they form their bands, and with the help of their band coach and the music instructors, they write their songs.

"They sing about different things, but mostly they sing about feminism and cats," Bronson laughs. "That's the two main things."

Lydia Bhattacharya, who attended the first session of Rockademia in the 18 to 25





Rock Camp for Girls and Gender Nonconforming Youth teaches kids to use music as an outlet, and also gives them feminist and anti-oppression knowledge.

PHOTO COURTESY LAURENCE PHILOMENE

age group, had never played rock music before then.

"I played the piano and the flute, in the way that all elementary school kids do. But not a bass or anything close to it," she recalls.

The learning process with the volunteers was casual and interactive, she explains. "A lot of them were in bands and they had learned from their own teaching so there wasn't this weird pressure of formal [training]," says Bhattacharya. "My first day, I learned how to play 'Smoke on the Water.'"

#### PRACTICING DIVERSITY

For Bronson, RCFG\* is the place where she says she blossomed. "You can go there with no musical experience at all and they'll make you feel like you're the most amazing musician in the world, and that's what young girls need to boost up their confidence."

After five years as a camper and one summer volunteering as a band coach, Bronson was elected onto their board of directors in September.

The board is largely made up of women of colour, but Habib admits it hasn't always been that way for the camp.

"We've been called out before, before my tenure at rock camp, that rock camp has been known to be very anglo, very exclusive, very cliquey, and very white."

As a camper who started attending the program in its second year, Bronson agrees that diversity was not very present in the first few years.

"I ended up being one of the only people of colour at camp, and that posed a huge issue," she says. "It wasn't that it was majoritarially white, it was that we were



preaching diversity and empowerment for everybody, and that wasn't represented."

Bronson felt that they had difficulty properly teaching the kids about the politics of intersectional feminism and race. "We were kind of stuck on the term 'equality' [when] we don't have that."

As a woman of colour, it was important to Habib when she joined the board that they find ways to make their camp more open and inclusive. They've reached out to various organizations in the city that focus on issues of race, looking for opportunities to collaborate on projects.

They've since been working with Native Montreal to start an art and music therapy workshop for women and children who have experienced sexual violence, which they hope they can start offering as of March 2018.

"More and more when I go out and I

meet all these people [to do outreach], the first face they see of the camp is my face—my brown face," she chuckles.

Bronson and Habib agree that the last few years have seen more diversity at the camp and on the board. "We're really proud of where we are now," says Habib.

#### BEYOND CAMP

Phoebe Pannier, another Rockademia attendee alongside Bhattacharya, had never been in a rock band before. After completing the program, she's thinking of continuing with the bass and starting a band with a friend.

"It's not so hard as it seems to get started on an instrument. If you have a couple hours a week, you can start."

Habib can see the effect the camp has on kids. "These kids become militant. They go and study social justice, Indigenous peoples studies, they go

into women's studies, [...] they go to workshops outside of camp," she says. "When they come back next year, they have more information for us."

For Bronson, one of the most important things she picked up at RCFG\* was the ability to identify and subsequently deal with injustices, like "how to handle myself in toxic environments and having that vocabulary, being equipped with that vocabulary to deal with those situations."

Equipped with an understanding of social justice issues and a rebel rocker attitude, the kids have what it takes to set out in the world and bring change.

"Rock music is exactly what's going to let you do that," Habib says. "Because you're going to dress up really weird, you're going to sing really, really intense songs, you're going to scream into that mic and people will listen to you, and you deserve to be heard." 🎸



Rock Camp for Girls band, The Highlights, with Mali Pedro at the guitar, Uma Nardone at the bass, Florence Ens and Brianna Bohbot on the piano, was one of two bands to perform at the L'Euguélonne bookstore during their graduation ceremony, on Oct. 27, 2017.

PHOTO ELISA BARBIER @ELISABARBIER\_



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Illustrators Graeme Adams (left) and Zoe Maeve Jenkins (right) drawing together in Adams' Outremont apartment.

PHOTO BRIAN LAPUZ @BRIANLAPUZ

# The Ins and Outs of Zine Making

## Artists Zoe Maeve Jenkins and Graeme Adams Reveal Their Process

BY AYSHA WHITE

**Every year since its inception in 2002, Montreal's small press, zine, and comic making communities convene at Expozine, North America's largest small press fair.**

Expozine happens every November, this year on the weekend of the 25 and 26. Many of the exhibitors are Montrealers, but the fair attracts people from all over North America and Europe.

Zoe Maeve Jenkins, 24, and Graeme Adams, 25, are a pair of artist friends hoping for another chance to display their respective works at Expozine this year. Adams was *The Link's* copy editor and graphics editor between 2013 and 2015.

They plan to share a table.

"Often they don't tell you until it's quite late," Jenkins said. Both agree that they find the selection process of who gets awarded a table at Expozine mysterious. However, Jenkins said sharing

tables is a fairly common practice, which helps negate the sting of rejection.

Jenkins and Adams have collaborated on a comic called "Low Flying Start", and are about to begin its second instalment. Each artist's work starts on opposing sides of the comic and join in the middle.

Last April, Jenkins graduated from Concordia's Fine Arts program with a degree in studio arts. Imagine what Anne of Green Gables would look like if she were an art student living in Montreal in 2017, instead of Prince Edward Island at the turn of the 20th century. Jenkins' memory doesn't include a time when she wasn't drawing.

She first went to Expozine as a visitor five years ago when Montreal was brand new to the Toronto native.

During the first few years of her degree, Jenkins focused on making large scale paintings, but in 2014 after attending Expozine and a handful of other fairs like it she began to experiment with book based works of her own.

With more applicants than tables, applying for Expozine can seem daunting. But Jenkins applied to exhibit her work at Expozine two or three years ago and was accepted on her first try. Even though she only had one comic to present that year, the budding zine artist felt welcomed.

While two days of making small talk at Expozine can be tiring, the work pays off when she finds herself energized and inspired to create new things.



## HOW THEY'RE MADE

Zines, products of punk/DIY culture, are more likely to be reproduced using a photocopier than professional printers, the way comics are. Zines don't necessarily need to have panels or characters that tell a cohesive story the way a comic does. The self-published mini mags can be fictional or talk about real things, from grassroots mental health tips to where to find photo-booths in Montreal metro stations.

According to Jenkins, another area of distinction is that zines are typically be small, sometimes pocket-sized works. Comics tend to be more or less standardized, when it comes to sizing.

Jenkins stressed how important zines are as physical works. "It tends to be better when read in person," she said, not worrying to make her books available online.

Instead, she makes them available to be purchased in a physical copy, something she believes the average zine reader cares about. When Jenkins creates her zines she thinks about the layout in terms of the physical copy, and never about how it would appear if she posted it to the web.

She noted that there doesn't seem to be any stigma against self publishing in the zine world, rather it's the norm. Jenkins said, "It's seen as a valuable thing to do."

The process of making zines is laborious, perhaps more than other forms of art. Her first and longest zine took her a year to produce.

"I do think it's good to work on things when you don't feel like working on them because that is how you'll end up actually getting stuff done."

She likes the repetition of drawing and

perfecting the same image over and over again. "I also enjoy being able to chip away at something and not always putting such active emotion into it."

Jenkins explained that when she focused on painting it could lead to feelings of intense investment in the outcome of one piece. In contrast, the process of creating a zine feels calmer to her. She can logically look at her work and decide where each panel goes, then redecide and rearrange. And rearrange and redecide. To Jenkins, zines are about "making small pieces come together into something larger."

Living in Montreal for the past five years has influenced her artwork, especially the landscape of the city in contrast to her hometown of Toronto. While she wouldn't call herself a perfectionist, there are certain areas of her work where she's very particular, such as wanting the pages, "to be really really crisp."

Jenkins uses a mix of India ink, 2b, and coloured pencils, as she finds it difficult to use the same materials all the way through. Once, a classmate commented that the way a series of her drawings flowed when presented as a whole reminded them of written poetry.

She understands how fussy the process of creation can be, and has learned when to step back and declare that she's done. When making a zine, Jenkins starts with the prose she wants to use. "It never feels fully integrated to me until it's completed with pictures." She views it as the most intuitive way to fill in the questions the text poses.

Jenkins collaborated with her friend Sasha Howard, a poet, to create a zine

entitled "Memos." She made the drawings and Howard wrote the words. They viewed the individual nature of their work as being complementary.

The cover of "Memos" looks like a moving mass of wavy, crystallized ocean. Jenkins explained that rubbing salt into the ink created a dimensional texture. She likes to try different things and said her most recent drawings are line heavy, using a combination of pen and pencil.

"I don't like making comics where I've written something and then have to have an image to illustrate it. I'm much more interested in how those things fit into being one thing, and how they create gaps or connections that I wouldn't find otherwise just working in one medium or the other," Jenkins said.

She's arrived at a point artistically where she does not want to have one without the other. Along with a number of former Concordia arts graduates, Jenkins contributed to a comic anthology organized by former Concordia student Jordan Boileau, intended to come out shortly before Expozine this year.

She collects other material as research and inspiration. Her drawings are incredibly textured.

Learning how to choose the right shade so that it would appear as dark as she wanted was a learning curve, but one she quickly got the hang of. Jenkins usually prints her zines in black and white because it's considerably cheaper.

"There are a lot of artists working in the same medium as me, but the things





that inspire me often come from outside of my medium,” Jenkins said.

She mentioned “reading a lot of everything,” as an inspiration for her work. As an example, she tries to integrate certain academic theories into her art.

Meanwhile, her friend and fellow artist, Graeme Adams, started drawing at the age of five. It quickly and permanently became an integral part of his identity. He eventually pursued an education in the Fine Arts program at Concordia. He graduated in 2016 with a bachelor’s degree in studio arts.

“I work at a restaurant with a couple of small gigs on the side. I think I live a pretty typical millennial life in a lot of ways,” Adams said.

For Adams, making zines is a lengthy, emotional process that forces you to reckon with your own limitations. It’s a “totally isolating process” that only he can complete alone. Since creating comics takes him a while, he can only create a substantial amount of work by spending time by himself.

Consequently, he can go long periods of time without talking to anyone and often ends up “sitting in front of a table stewing in frustration and confusion.” It may not be the most healthy lifestyle, but he’s gotten used to it nonetheless. Perhaps making art gives him a sense of control that he feels is lacking elsewhere in his life, he pondered.

Comic-making is as a way of “Energizing the planes of life we all occupy, but that it doesn’t have any spatial or temporal presence, like the mental life, emotional life, spiritual life,” Adams mused. Like Jenkins, he gets inspiration from reading, but also by simply from the world he’s living in.

“If making one drawing is like walking a tightrope, making a comic is like walking a tightrope while juggling,” he said.

Part of why Adams views it as more difficult is that an individual drawing must only speak for itself, whereas a theme has to be continued throughout a comic.

Adams wants each drawing to stand on its own as an individual work of art, while also forming aesthetic coherence with the whole comic. A consistent visual connection must be maintained through a line



COURTESY GRAEME ADAMS

of narrative and action. He thinks comics are an unwieldy art form that, if done correctly, provides him with a stronger sense of satisfaction.

Adams suffers from what he describes as a common problem for artists that, “They end up hating their work weeks, days or even hours after they’ve made it.” He explained that even though he ended up really disliking the drawings he made in a comic entitled *Spells* a few years ago, the extra positive response he received from readers helped to make it worth the distress he put into making it.

His work jumps between different styles of drawing. It might not be the best idea in terms of self branding, but he finds drawing to be so interesting that it feels limiting to create his comics in one style.

“I think life tends to be full of uncomfortable syntheses of moods, so having

goofiness and bleakness in close proximity is kind of an ongoing goal for my drawing,” Adams said.

He admitted that in many respects he’s still a beginner, which means that every drawing he makes still has the thrill of being novel and exciting. His comics vary in tone, some being serious and gloomy and others being silly and irreverent.

“I think I’m a pretty serious person who has trouble lightening up, so the sillier drawings are a way of challenging myself to do that,” he continued.

“But there’s often a serious intent behind them too, to the extent that they provide contrast with the gloomier material. I see *Expozine* as a mass expression of solidarity among people who toil over their creative projects, instead of doing more pragmatic things. It gets hot, crowded and smelly, but at the same time it’s totally exhilarating.” □



# The Only University Figure Skating Team in the Province

## McGill Figure Skating Team Gears Up for First Competition of the Season

BY FRANCA G. MIGNACCA  
@FRANCAMIGNACCA

**As soon as Danika Kapeikis learned to walk at 16-months, her parents opted to put her on the ice instead of placing her in daycare. Now a kinesiology student at McGill University, Kapeikis has found a way to incorporate her identity as a figure skater into university life.**

Kapeikis is one of two captains of McGill's figure skating team. She works alongside co-captain Lisa Nakajima and manages a team of 17 skaters. Kapeikis has been on the team and in university for two years, and Nakajima for four.

The team's season started in Septem-

ber, with tryouts on the 11th.

"I think that we'll have a really fun year," said Nakajima. "There's a stronger bond that I'm already feeling now and we've only been practicing for two days as a team. I think that this year it'll be a more cohesive team, which I'm

really excited about."

On training days, the entire team wakes up at a time when many students are just getting to bed. Their practices are held from 6:30 to 8:00 a.m. at McGill's McConnell arena.

"We're talking about university stu-



Danika Kapeikis, co-captain of the McGill figure skating team, learned to skate as soon as she learned to walk. —PHOTOS CARL BINDMAN





dents who have gone out of their way to make the commitment to be on this team,” coach Eric Neumann said.

“One of the main reasons why I’m here is the early morning practices. It shows their dedication and that is really the most important aspect I find from all the kids that I see here that come in week after week.”

Neumann added that whether they’re sick, or hungover, they still have to show up to their practices.

“We all have the same passion, so it makes it easier, and if you’re there it’s because you want to be there that early,” said coach Nancy Alexander.

This year is a “transition” year for the team, with many members having graduated last year and several rookies welcomed to the team. Kapeikis said that they integrated well with the veteran members, bonding with them at their yearly Rookie Night event.

Unlike other McGill teams, they don’t have a rivalry against The Stingers, as Concordia doesn’t have a figure skating team. Some members of the team would like to see that change in coming seasons, and would also like to see the team go varsity.

“I hope that it expands more in

Quebec. It would be really fun to have other universities within [the region] to compete against,” figure skater and the team’s vice-president of finance, Gabriella Johnson said.

After suffering an injury a few years before she started university, Johnson was looking for a way to get back on the ice while pursuing her studies. A former coach of hers used to be on the team and recommended it to her.

Tabatha Cannon, a skater and executive member of the team, added it would be good to become varsity since the team is currently student-led and it would help to alleviate some of the pressure.

“We’re student-run, so seeing something develop where we’d become varsity and that [...] McGill funds us more, it would be a really good development because we wouldn’t have to organize the entire thing,” she said.

The team only competes in two competitions a year, and while it would be difficult for them to have more competitions outside of the province, they would like to see a league of university-level figure skating teams develop in Quebec, so that they could compete more often.

Because they aren’t varsity, they don’t

Co-captain Lisa Nakajima says she will be sad to leave the team after graduating at the end of the season.

get the opportunity to compete in the Ontario University Athletics championships, which Nakajima feels the team is more than capable of competing in.

“I think that we have the potential to be [varsity] and I think that that’s something we should definitely work towards. [...] We have the potential to do well, and so I think that in the next few years, I hope the team continues to kind of work towards that,” Nakajima said.

The team’s first competition of the season is Nov. 23 at Carleton University, in Ottawa.

“I’m actually super confident. We got a lot of great new skaters, and we have a lot of people returning that are also amazing. So [...] I’m confident that we’ll do really well, and hopefully we’ll place again in synchro,” Cannon said.

Last year, the team placed second in synchronized skating at the winter invitational. It was a huge victory for them and has them hoping for gold this year.

“They don’t have a history of placing a lot in synchro so now that we know that we can, I think we’re going to try really hard and do as best as we can so we can do it again,” Cannon added.

They have a few months to train for their competitions, but having to learn new programs and adjust to skating with new teammates means competitions come up a lot quicker than you’d

**“I hope that [figure skating] expands more in Quebec. It would be really fun to have other universities [...] to compete against.”**

**Gabriella Johnson**



think, Kapeikis explained.

“Going [into competition] you get a little bit nervous but I think that just shows that you care,” Kapeikis added. “Everyone is encouraged to just go and skate their best—whatever happens out there happens. No matter what, we’re proud of everyone on the team.”

Kapeikis’ family was built off skating in a sense. Her parents met when they were skating with Disney on Ice, and they are now both figure skating coaches. Her older sister now tours with Disney on Ice, while her younger brother is a national competitor in the U.S. Figure Skating Championships.

“It’s really nice for me, even though I chose more of a school route, that I’m still able to incorporate skating into my life and I’m able to share that with my family,” said Kapeikis.

She’s tempted to pursue figure skating professionally, but Kapeikis is focusing on her studies for now. She appreciates that the team allows her to continue gathering the necessary experience, in case she chooses to go down that route after her graduation.

“Especially talking with my sister, I know that life would be really fun and maybe it’s something that I would be interested in after I graduate, just to join a show for a couple of years,” she said.

For McGill students who didn’t make the team this year, or who aren’t interested in making the team but still wish to skate, the club also holds open practices every Monday and Thursday morning, from 6:30 a.m. to 8:30 a.m., where students outside the team can skate alongside them.

“We offer skating skills and developments for all skaters, so we want to make sure that they can maybe have a chance of making the team next season,” Alexander said.

Neumann added that the team and the open practices are a good way for new students to adjust to their new surroundings.

“The one big coalescing factor is you’re talking about a lot of people that come from different parts of the country, from different countries altogether and the one thing that binds them is the sport,” said Neumann.



**Tabatha Cannon, an executive member of the figure skating team, would like to see the team go varsity.**

Their practices act as a space where students who want to make the team next year can practice, and for others to relieve some stress between classes.

“Being in university can get really stressful with all your work and assignments that are due, but as soon as you get on the ice, you just feel like all that weight drops off your shoulders and [...] you can focus that time on doing something that you love,” Kapeikis said.

The team also has their annual Holid-ay show on the evening of Dec. 8. The show is a fundraiser to pay for the team’s expenses and competition fees. At the end of the show, the team invites all attendants to join them on the ice.

After four years with the team, the end of the season will mark a hard goodbye for Nakajima, as she hopes to graduate

from honours anatomy and cell biology, and move on to medical school.

“[Skating] makes me really happy inside, I don’t know how else to explain it. I love it so much and I couldn’t live without it. It’s definitely really nice to have something else to focus on, other than academics,” she said.

“I like pushing myself and like having a challenge so it’s definitely hard physically, especially being a student now. It wasn’t as easy as it used to be to do a lap around the ice, but I love it.” □

*With files from Harrison-Milo Rahajason*

*For the story of why Concordia doesn’t have a figure skating team, go to our website: [www.thelinknewspaper.ca](http://www.thelinknewspaper.ca)*

# Same Field, New Sport

## Former Stingers Soccer Player Gabriella Dobias on her Switch to Rugby

BY IRELAND COMPTON  
@IRELANDCOMPTON

**Gabriella Dobias has always fancied herself an athlete, so it's no wonder her transition from Concordia's women's soccer to its rugby team has been so smooth.**

"I've always been a lover of all sports. I played basketball in high school, played everything that I could," said the fifth-year exercise science student.

For the last four years Dobias called herself a member of Concordia's Sting-ers soccer team.

"[Dobias] joined the team for the 2012 season, as basically a walk-on who contacted me that summer to tell me she was coming to Concordia," said her former coach, Jorge Sanchez.

After four seasons of Concordia soccer, being held back by an injury and some issues with her academic progress, Dobias decided it was time for a change.

Dobias took matters into her own hands and sought out women's rugby head coach, Graeme McGravie.

"She first came to me about playing in April and I told her to join a club in the summer to decide if she really liked it or not," said McGravie, who's known Dobias since her first year at Concordia.

McGravie was her academic advisor when he worked for admissions, and he felt from the first time he met her that she was the kind of athlete he'd like to have on his team.

"She's always been one of those people where I felt that if she wanted to try rugby and play soccer I would try to make it happen," he said.

This summer Dobias—who plays as a back, the position generally asked to move the ball—joined the local rugby club, Montreal Barbarians, where she got her first taste of the rugby pitch.

For the past seven years and throughout university, many have encouraged

her to play rugby, said Dobias. In the eleventh grade, her best friend's father started a rugby team out of her high school but she decided not to play.

"My mother really didn't want that for me because of my face and the possibility of breaking my teeth," she said. So, she remained on the sidelines supporting her friends.

After playing all summer though, Dobias finally decided to make the switch, leaving the team she's been a part of her whole university career, to become a member of Concordia's rugby squad.

Overall, her friends and family have been supportive of her decision, or at least mostly supportive, in the case of her mother.

"I actually didn't tell my mom until I was already switched, so she kind of didn't have a choice at that point," she laughed. "Of course, my friends were totally excited [when] I joined the team,

since a lot of them are rugby players that I've known for so long."

### A SMOOTH TRANSITION

While rugby is not entirely similar to soccer, it's safe to say that her previous experience on the soccer field has been helpful to her game. McGravie believes that a lot of her basic skills, like quick feet, body positioning, and aggression, transferred easily.

Another important skill Dobias brought over with her is her kick. Having been trained to kick a soccer ball with precision, it's natural for her to use this to her advantage on the rugby pitch when kicking for conversion after a try. She has an eye for angles and she sees exactly where she needs to put the ball, kicking it between the uprights with ease.

Skills she did not bring with her from soccer, she's picked up fairly quickly with a little bit of hard work.

"[Dobias'] application to the technical aspects and wanting to be better is encouraging," said McGravie. "She's been open to learning, you can tell she wants to be better and she wants to play. You can see the drive there, which is fantastic."

Dobias attributes some of her success to her summer with the Barbarians, which gave her valuable experience she was able to bring with her to Concordia.

Used to being a Concordia athlete, Dobias already knew the level of professionalism that was expected, she explained.

With the Barbarians, said Dobias, she had the opportunity to play both Division One and Two, giving her a lot of playing

**"My mother really didn't want that for me because of my face and the possibility of breaking my teeth."**

**Gabriella Dobias**





**Gabriella Dobias continued to play for the Concordia Stingers this past season, but this time around it was for rugby, not soccer.**

PHOTO CARL BINDMAN @CARLBINDMAN

experience in the process. “[It was] kind of a stepping stone to Concordia rugby.”

Also helpful was her experience with open play in soccer, which translates well to rugby especially as a back which requires players to really see the field.

That is not to say there were no challenges for her in this experience.

“Hitting was something to get used to for sure,” said Dobias.

Even with the advantage of having spent years watching rugby games while cheering on her friends, Dobias felt it was difficult to catch on to the specifics of the game. Rugby is inherently complicated to learn given the complexity of the rules and the plays, so it makes sense that she would struggle in this aspect.

“With the backs there are a lot of plays, and sometimes they would explain things with certain terminology that I just did

not understand, which really put me on my heels sometimes,” said Dobias.

Despite these minor setbacks, Dobias feels she had a successful season—she’s learned quite a bit, she said. She intends to apply the knowledge she’s learned as a rugby player at Concordia again this summer with the Barbarians in hopes she improves even more.

#### **A NEW FAMILY**

Ultimately, Dobias is successful in her transition from a technical viewpoint. But on a more personal level, she feels she’s really bonded with the team. A rugby team has a special kind of dynamic that is unmatched by any other team sport, where teammates sweat, cry, bleed, and drink together.

“I’ve always been an honorary member of the rugby family, but

it’s been good to become a part of it officially,” she said. “The bonding helped me get to know the rookies, and [the rugby team] is definitely more intense about bonding, they do a lot more than the soccer community just in general.”

She credits this to the fact that a lot more of her rugby teammates live in the same area whereas in soccer, they were more spread out. Having a lot of her teammates from the Barbarians also play for the Stingers really enhanced the experience in her opinion, since Dobias never really got that experience with the soccer team given that each player played for a separate club during the off season.

“For her to give up playing in her final year,” said McGravie “The sport that she’s played for four, that’s pretty impressive.” 📺



# Shooting Guns in L.A.

## A Summer With Family Exploring a Different Kind of Lifestyle

BY SARAH JESMER  
@SARAHJESMER

**I shot a gun for this first time this summer in southern California.**

It was June; a blue sky, squint your eyes in the sunshine type of day. I was with my uncle Tony. I went to California to spend time with my extended family, a group of more than six families, not including my grandma, who now spends her days going to cooking classes and watching Jeopardy.

My relationship with Tony until this visit consisted of shy pleasantries at bustling family gatherings and rare exchanges on Facebook. My goal was simply to spend time getting to know a side of life that I never explored before.

Tony and I became great friends, and for that I'm so grateful. He's this boulder of a guy and, cliché, the nicest person you'll ever meet. He's been a lot of different things—track coach, park ranger, carpenter, and most recently, an LAPD security officer. He's on medical leave though, so we had a lot of down time together.

Tony's a frequent hunter, so I wasn't surprised to hear one day that he had a six foot tall gun safe hidden in a cabinet in his dining room. The amount of firepower in that safe was impressive. I jumped at the opportunity to go shooting when he offered to take me to a range one day, not because I share his love for all things ammunition and hardware, but I was curious.

I'm anti-violence, and following, I'm anti-gun. I see guns as protection and some people's tools for finding food. Tony calls them "toys."

At the range, the gun felt heavy in my grip, like holding a cast iron pan in one hand. I gave it a fair run I think, I tried my best to understand what made Tony so happy about doing this with his free time. As I stood between two separators amongst grey stone floor and walls, I awkwardly loaded the cartridge, lifted the gun up with my arms out in front of me, and took aim at the poster we put up of a zombie moose. Tony noted that if I was trying for a fatal shot, I'd have to aim for the mid chest.



I take a break from shooting and let Tony spend a round. I'm not the only one waiting on the stone bench. I look to my right, and a man is watching his friend trying to shoot. He holds his own target in his hands. Each target costs less than a dollar, and sometimes people take pictures with them, or keep them as souvenirs of a day well spent.

PHOTOS SARAH JESMER









There are more than 200 hand gun shooting ranges in California. There are outdoor and indoor ranges, handgun and rifle ranges, club and public shooting ranges. The only requirement other than signing a waiver at this public range was that the shooter be over the age of 18, or had the signature of a parent or guardian.



Paper targets for sale were either a circular target, a target on the silhouette of a man, with a few pictorial posters of women in distress to aim around.



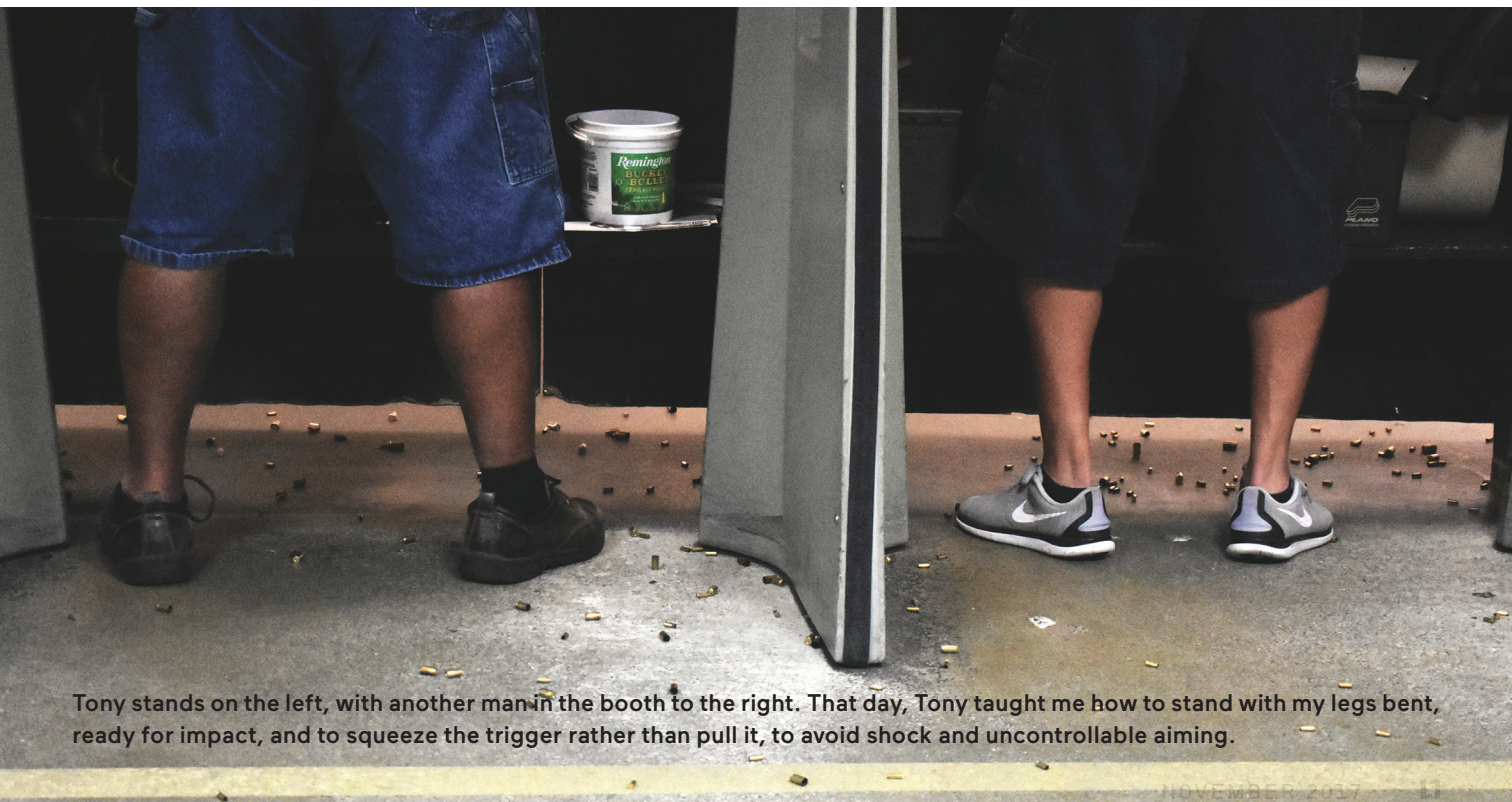


Hand gun ranges are usually formatted as a stationary booth, with an opening at the end of an aisle, spanning down around fifty feet in some cases. A wall of loose black gravel catches bullets at the end of the range.



Possessing guns is not a right according to Canadian law, but there is still a strong appreciation for them. In Quebec, the Association des collectionneurs d'armes du Bas-Canada holds an arm fair in Longueuil each November, where gun enthusiasts can meet and explore the world of vintage arms.

The Canadian Coalition for Firearm Rights based out of Ottawa, formed in 2016. It's volunteer-based, and one of its leaders, Ontario director Tracey Wilson, told the Ottawa Citizen that it had an overwhelming amount of support and volunteers wanting to become members.



Tony stands on the left, with another man in the booth to the right. That day, Tony taught me how to stand with my legs bent, ready for impact, and to squeeze the trigger rather than pull it, to avoid shock and uncontrollable aiming.



**A DIFFERENT WESTERN LIFESTYLE**

I don't want to talk about Trump anymore. I want out of my liberal echo chamber and I want other people to come with me. I'm tired to a point of frustration, like coming home exhausted to a bed with too many clothes on it so you end up just throwing it all on the ground, to deal with tomorrow morning.

I took these photos to remember what it was like shooting a gun. Doing it didn't warm me up to the idea, but at least I know exactly what I disagree with now. After being in the U.S. briefly post-election, I saw that the division between some people who were searching for solace or understanding amongst others who felt the same way as them.

In Los Angeles, I learned again and again that there's value in exposing yourself to things that you don't usually expose yourself to, whether consciously or otherwise.

This summer was an exploration of things that I never had, such as learning what it's like to spend time with family members that up until recently were strangers. Or driving a pickup truck down busy suburb streets after biking for months straight in Montreal. Or sitting on the couch and flipping through a magazine by cops for cops that Tony gets at his house.

Living in a world, even for a brief moment, that is opposite of your daily life is beneficial.

It can make our values stronger,

and sheds new perspective on things. It gives us fresh appreciation for the things that we have, and the world gets bigger. We all know there are benefits of trying something new. You don't have to live in it forever, but visiting the grass on the other side could do us all some good.

I doubt that I will ever grace an L.A. shooting range on a sunny afternoon ever again. But at least it happened. I learned about the hardware and what it feels like to send a bullet flying, and how some people build a sense of confidence stemming from their firepower.

My stance hasn't changed, but my perspective has. Support and understanding are different things. I want to live with more of the latter. And fewer guns. 📷



Tony and I took turns emptying clip after clip. At first, I kept putting the bullets in wrong: too tight, backwards, unaligned. It took some time to get the clip to feel comfortable in my hands. I thought about that show, *Criminal Minds*, a lot.



# Sex Ed(itorial): Move Past the Stigma Around STIs

## We Need Open Conversations About Sexual Health

BY REBECCA CHANT  
@REBECCA\_CHANT

Your eyes may have glanced over the title of this article and then checked to see who wrote it. You probably don't recognize my name, so you might assume I am going to share my STI experiences. You might be wondering which one I have. Herpes? Chlamydia? HPV?

I don't actually have an STI. In fact, I've never had one.

My STI status has no relevance to who I am. Except, I still felt the need to tell you I've never contracted one.

That is the fundamental issue with STIs—they carry an enormous stigma. If I walked into class with a cold, people might move a few inches away from me, but they wouldn't mark me forever as “the woman with the cold.” I wouldn't hesitate about telling people I had a cold. So why are STIs any different?

Sacramento sex educator and founder of the upcoming website Sex+ Parenting Kenna Cook said it comes from the fact that sex is a taboo topic.

“STIs are seen as a punishment, when in reality they are just a very common, easily spread bacteria or virus like the flu,” she explained. “There is so much shame built into our society about wanting sex, talking about sex, and thinking about sex, that people think it is deserved. We see STIs as a disease of morality.”

Kim Cavill, sex educator at O.school, a sex education website, said that STIs tend to make people feel vulnerable.

“STIs can produce symptoms that people generally wish to avoid, like herpes blisters or genital warts,” she said. “These symptoms, and thus the STIs themselves, become laden with cultural symbolism about shame, promiscuity, cleanliness, virtue, and even divine retribution for ‘sinful’ behavior.”

Preventing any type of disease or infection is always the goal. Worry or fear of contagious illnesses is not unusual, and not something we should aim to erase.

The goal isn't to promote ambivalence towards getting sick—the goal is to be able to have normal conversations about prevention and treatment.

If you go on a trip, you learn about avoiding tap water, you remind your friends to close their mouths in the shower, you ask the waiter for no ice cubes. Talking about STI prevention in an open, neutral way like this is the only way forward.

Laura Claver, sex blogger and ex-nude model, said we need to move away from the idea that “sex is bad” and focus on better sex education.

“STIs have to stop being used as scare tactics and punishments. We have to stop making moral judgments on those with STIs. We need to normalize and encourage testing, and encourage being knowledgeable instead of fearful and ignorant,” she said.

Reported rates of STIs have been on the rise since 1997, according to the Canadian Notifiable Disease Surveillance System. The Public Health Agency of Canada reports that the increased rate is partly attributed to “improved lab tests and screening, as well as people not consistently using safer sex methods.”

In 2008, 70 per cent of the over 160,000 cases of “notifiable diseases” reported to the CNDSS were sexually transmitted and bloodborne infections. Chlamydia accounted for 51 per cent of the overall reported diseases.

The Public Health Agency of Canada says

minimizing your risk includes: learning about safer sex methods, talking to your partner about protection, and getting tested. These methods of risk reduction are effective, but they are complicated by the fact that STIs carry a stigma.

That stigma inhibits sex education, it makes conversations with new partners awkward, and it makes trips to the doctor's office intimidating. The ideas that STIs are dirty or immoral make it difficult to have open, honest conversations.

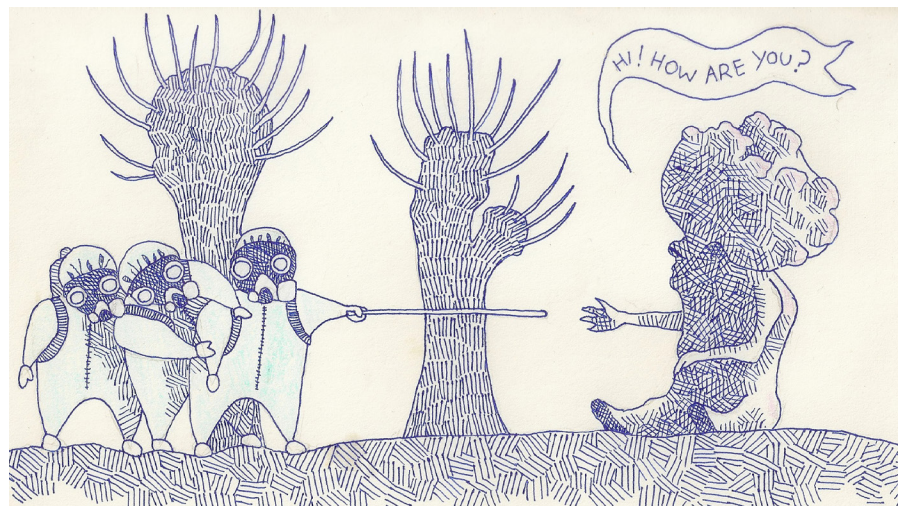
Even the World Health Organization says that “lack of public awareness, lack of training of health workers, and stigma around sexually transmitted infections remain barriers to greater and more effective use of [preventive] interventions.” If we are shamed from talking about STIs, how will we prevent the spread of them?

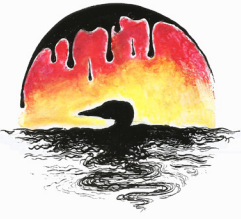
Making safe sex conversations and contraceptives “sexy” is one way to help reduce the stigma. Changing our perception of sex and STIs is the first step towards reducing rates.

Genderfluid sex educator Indigo Wolfe said they want to see more people talking about STIs. “I want to see major news outlets discuss how to protect, but still engage. I want condoms and dental dams to be accepted as sexy things,” they said.

Talking openly about STIs can help reduce the stigma surrounding them, which in turn can help reduce rates of transmission. Normalizing the conversation will change the outcome. ☐

*If you'd like to contribute to the column, send us your questions, comments, stories and thoughts to [opinions@thelinknewspaper.ca](mailto:opinions@thelinknewspaper.ca).*





# People's History of Canada: Abortion Is Still Not a Constitutional Right

## Lack of Legislation Leaves Abortion Rights in Limbo

BY ANNE-MARIE RIVARD

**In the last 50 years, Canada has unquestionably made significant progress with respect to women's rights.**

In 2016, at the United Nations Commission on the Status of Women, Canada reaffirmed its strong commitment to women's issues and was elected to the Commission for the 2017–2021 mandate.

Despite historical breakthroughs achieved by Canadian women for equal opportunity and equal rights, provincial and territorial inequality with regards to access to abortion services—as well as the inequality between urban and rural regions—persists in an important way. The result of this effectively puts the lives of women in danger.

The most representative example of this inequality is Prince Edward Island. After considerable efforts from pro-choice groups, with advocates going as far as threatening to file a lawsuit against the provincial government, the province obtained earlier this year its very first reproductive health clinic.

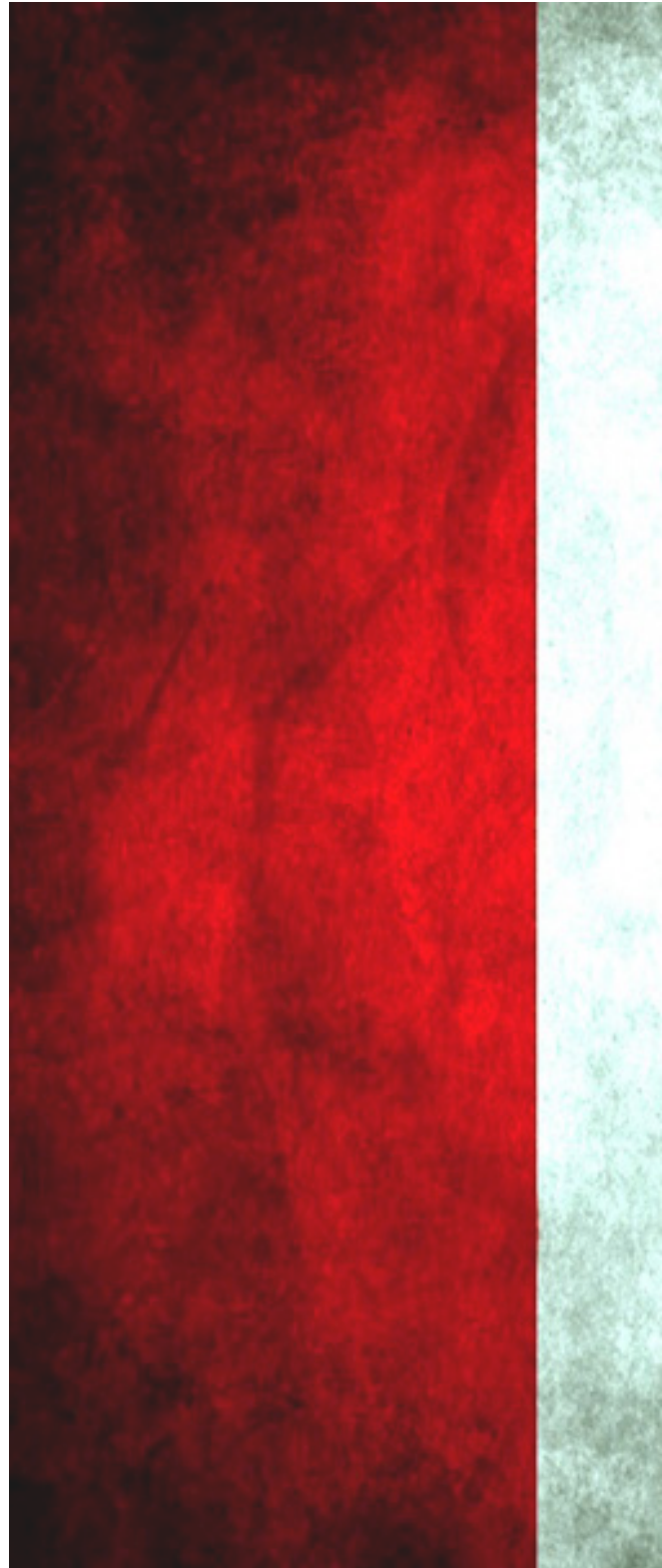
The situation regarding Mifegymiso—otherwise known as the “abortion pill”—is also telling: while it has been available in the U.S. for 20 years, the medication was made available to Canadian women earlier this year, no less than three years after Health Canada received

an application from the drug company.

Furthermore, Mifegymiso is still not readily available or covered by health care in all Canadian provinces or territories. For example, in British Columbia—one of the provinces with the best access to abortion after Quebec and Ontario, respectively—women still have to pay out of pocket for the abortion pill.

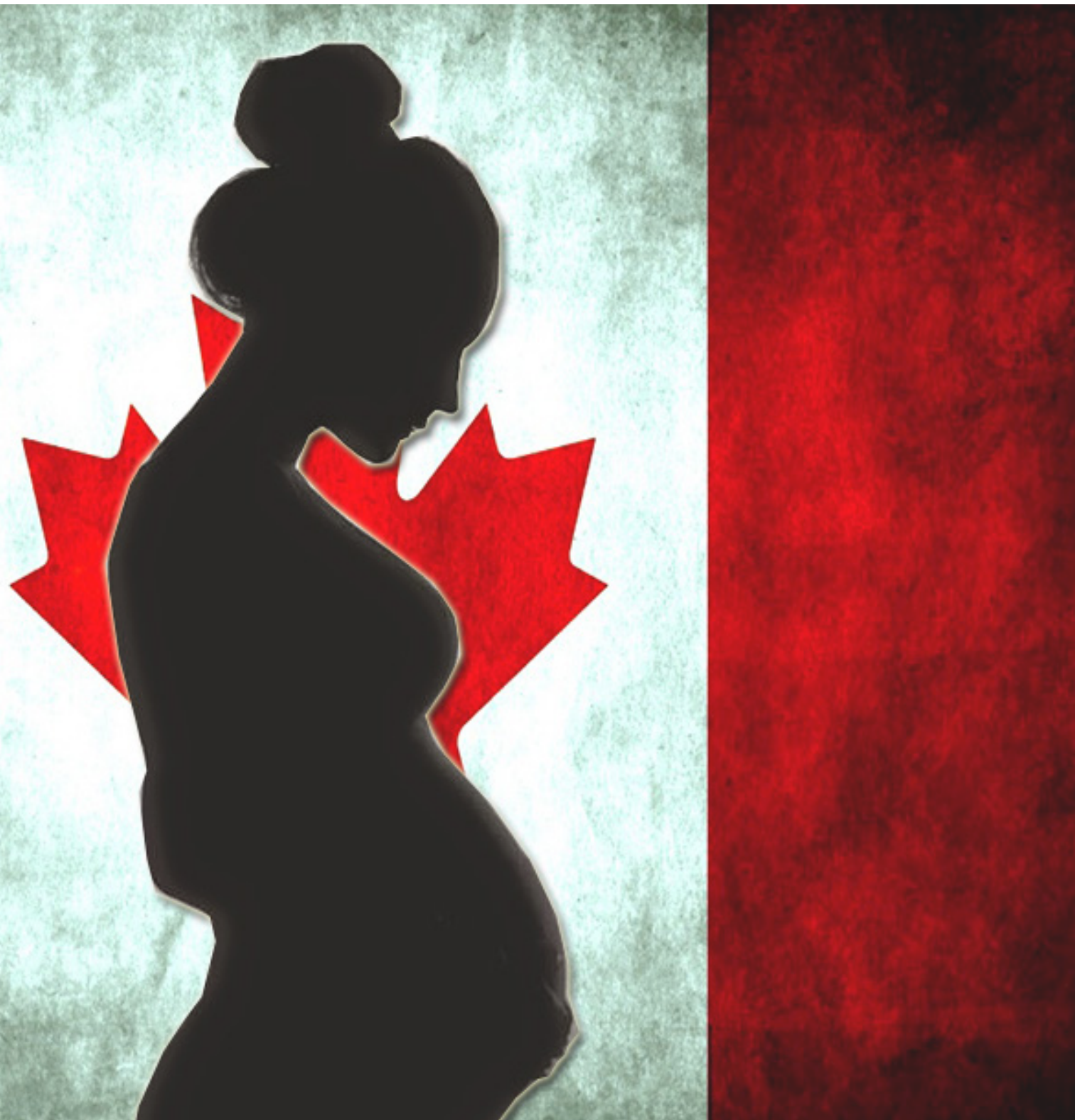
The Criminal Code of Canada, adopted in 1892, stated that abortion was a crime. From 1892 to 1969, women who chose to have an abortion had to do so illegally. It should be noted that this period—the latter half of the 19th century—is precisely the moment in history when the medical field took control of the discourse on reproduction by pushing midwives out of the picture. Prior to this, women—especially urban dwellers, it must be said—had some agency over reproduction and birth control.

The birth control pill became available in the U.S. in the 1950s and in Canada in as early as 1957. Canadian doctors, however, refused to prescribe the pill to unmarried women, or only in cases of “menstrual irregularity.” In 1969, an omnibus bill (C-150), which modified Canada's Criminal Code with respect





GRAPHIC SHREYA BISWAS @SHREYA\_DORA



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to abortion—among other issues such as decriminalizing homosexuality and allowing the free sale of contraceptives—was adopted.

Consequently, from this time onward abortion was permitted, but only under strict conditions: women who chose to have an abortion had to first obtain authorization from a so-called Therapeutic Abortion Committee. TACs consisted of three doctors—typically male—who would authorize the procedure only if the life of the woman was in danger.

In January 1988, the Supreme Court of Canada declared with the Morgentaler decision (*R v. Morgentaler*) that article 251 of the Criminal Code, which criminalized abortion, was unconstitutional. One year later, Canadians followed the case of Chantal Daigle, a Quebec woman whose estranged and abusive ex-partner, Jean-Guy Tremblay, was attempting to prevent her from having an abortion. Daigle, with the help of pro-choice advocates, fled the province to terminate her pregnancy in the U.S. when her case was brought before the appeal division of the Supreme Court.

In August 1989, in the *Tremblay v. Daigle* decision, the Supreme Court ruled that the fetus is not a human being according to Quebec civil law or to Canadian common law, and that the father has no right with respect to the termination of pregnancy.

A common misconception about the Morgentaler decision, which exonerated Dr. Henry Morgentaler and his colleagues, is that its outcome was conclusive and that it ended the battle for abortion rights. The highest court of Canada, in a five to two ruling, did indeed invalidate article 251 of the Canadian Criminal Code, but only three Supreme Court Justices out of seven stated that a woman has a constitutional right to choose to have an abortion. It is therefore important to point out that the Morgentaler decision was about a doctor's right to practice

abortion and not about a woman's right to choose.

When Brian Mulroney and the Conservative Party of Canada were re-elected in May 1990, Minister of Justice Doug G. Lewis brought before Parliament Bill C-43, a legislative measure that aimed to bring back Therapeutic Abortion Committees, criminalizing abortion for Canadian women except under certain circumstances.

Bill C-43 was adopted by the House of Commons by a vote of 140 to 131, but was defeated in the Senate by a tie vote in January 1991. Since Bill C-43, there have been no legislative measures pertaining to abortion specifically. However, because abortion in Canada is not subject to any kind of public policy, there have been no less than 48 bills or motions looking to either recriminalize abortion or grant the fetus a legal status presented or debated in Parliament since 1988.

The most notable of these legislative measures was Private Member's Bill C-484, drafted by Edmonton-Sherwood Park Conservative MP Ken Epp in November 2007 under the title Unborn Victims of Crime Act. Bill C-484 was seen by many as a veiled attempt to recriminalize abortion by giving the fetus a legal status, thereby restricting access to abortion.

Here in Quebec, many groups opposed C-484, notably the Fédération des médecins spécialistes, the Collège des médecins and the Bâtonnier du Québec, as well as a great number of women's groups. They all considered the Unborn Victims of Crime Act to be a concealed way to make abortion in Canada a criminal act. C-484 is the only bill to have passed second reading in the House of Commons—six bills or motions have been introduced since 2007, but none have passed second reading. C-484 died on the order paper when an election was called.

Although abortion was decriminalized in 1988 by way of the Supreme Court of Canada's Morgentaler decision, a legislative vacuum persists and Canada is a country where in 2017, abortion is still not the subject of any kind of public policy. The Supreme Court refuses to constitutionalize the right to abortion and the Canadian government does not care to legislate, shifting the responsibility to provinces, which have jurisdiction on healthcare in Canada.

Consequently, access to abortion for many Canadian women is restricted and the right to have an abortion is fragile, as it does not represent a constitutional right. Contrary to *Roe v. Wade* in the U.S., which affirms a woman's right to choose, the question of abortion in Canada remains open and vulnerable. Political dawdling compounded by public unawareness can only result in abortion lingering in legislative limbo for years to come. [5]

**“The most representative example of this inequality is Prince Edward Island. The province obtained its very first reproductive health clinic earlier this year.”**

# COMICS

Anonymous by Moragh Ailish Rahn-Campbell // @madd.egg



FIN. ③

The Epic Adventures of Every Man by Every Man





Hastily Put Together by Theo Radomski // @flannelogue



Caity Comics by Caity Hall // @caityhallart





Live Laugh love by Bronson Smillie // @bronsosaurus



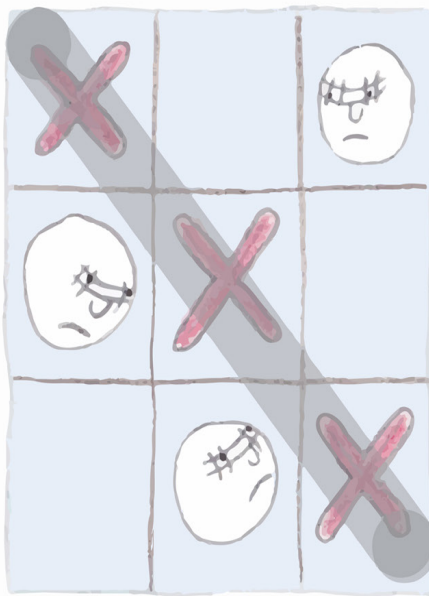
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# GOOD LUCK WITH YOUR EXAMS!



I wish you all the best on your upcoming exams  
and final projects.

After the term ends – enjoy the break!

Alan Shepard  
President

[alan.shepard@concordia.ca](mailto:alan.shepard@concordia.ca)



# HEADS CLASH

WHAT IT MEANS FOR STUDENTS

## MAKE CASH

◇ By Harrison–Milo Rahajason

The Stingers were in Quebec City to play the Université Laval Rouge et Or on Sept. 24. Concordia quarterback Trenton Miller was running down the middle of the field, trying to move his team into better field position. Thirty yards into his scramble, Miller looked up and all he could see was a helmet.

“I just felt it hit the side of my head,” Miller said.

His and a Laval defender’s helmet had just collided.

Everything slowed down, said Miller. As he opened his eyes, things became hazy.

Miller was sidelined indefinitely and the defender was not punished for the hit. This instance is cruel, and unfortunately, it just may well be another statistic in football’s rapidly growing concussion epidemic—one that is now a growing business opportunity.

Enormous television contracts between networks and sports leagues, apparel sales, and fantasy sports are all sports-related business opportunities that have turned into multi-million dollar industries over the years.

In the last decade, companies have started exploiting something different: head injuries.

“It’s already starting to be a big industry,” said Concordia head athletic trainer Sean Christensen. “You’re starting to see concussion-specific clinics [...] sprouting up not only Montreal but across eastern Canada.”

Christensen then mentioned Lumosity, an online memory training program that claims to improve a person’s memory and problem-solving skills by playing games. A Lumosity membership costs \$15 a month, which prompted the Federal Trade Commission to launch

an investigation. They found that there is no medical evidence that memory games improve cognitive function.

The FTC and Lumosity settled a \$2 million court case because it was determined that Lumosity had run misleading advertisement campaigns.

Just as Lumosity continues to profit on the fear of age-related loss of cognitive function, business people have seized the opportunity to profit on the fear of head injuries.

### CAVEAT EMPTOR

When it comes to any industry, John Molson School of Business professor Robert Soroka likes to invoke the phrase “caveat emptor,” which Latin for buyer beware. He says that this is especially applicable to the concussion industry.

“Every business survives and thrives by the satisfaction of a market’s need,” said Soroka. “Here, we have a situation where there are concussions and people are concerned. Some entrepreneurs may try to create solutions to try to alleviate those concerns.”

The NFL has been in a lengthy legal battle with former players who have sued the league, claiming that it neglected the health risks related to the repeated head impacts a football player will receive over the course of their career. As a result, the NFL has started pouring hundreds of millions of dollars into concussion research.

Business people have taken notice and concussions themselves have consequently become an industry.

“There is no way to prevent a concussion,” said Alain Ptito, director of the psychology department at McGill. “But there will always be someone coming along, looking for a slice of the cake.”

Companies marketing protective mouth-guards, padded helmet caps, and even beverages as protective measures against serious head injuries have all helped to satisfy a market that a fear of concussions created.

“There are good business people who want to go do things the right way, and put money towards real research that is endorsed by a legitimate scientific community,” said Soroka. “But then there’s the unscrupulous business person who will prey on fear to try to separate the consumer from their dollar.”

The NFL, and football in general, attracts more viewers and paying spectators than any other sport in North America. The league brought in \$14 billion in 2016, and is only expected to see that revenue increase by the year as more consumers invest in it. Naturally, any public threat to such a lucrative industry is not going to be left unresponded.

“If health products for something as specific as concussions just begins to pop up, that is an enormous red flag,” said Soroka. “Concussions aren’t new, but if you start seeing new technology that isn’t endorsed by a scientific community, consumers should be cautious.”

This doesn’t only apply to professional athletes, though.

Parents have taken notice of the sport’s long-term health risks, and youth participation in football is declining. Since football is a particularly expensive sport to play, equipment companies find themselves making less money.

Riddell, a leading football equipment company,

THE LINK

released their “Revolution” helmet model in 2002. The University of Pittsburgh Medical Centre collaborated with Riddell on a study using high school football players as test subjects. It found that high school players using their model were 31 per cent less likely to become concussed. So of course, that model rose to the top of the helmet market in a hurry.

In 2014, the Federal Trade Commission conducted a study of their own, and swiftly disavowed Riddell’s claims about the “Revolution” helmet, citing that the initial study by Riddell and the UPMC was poorly conducted. But in the 12 years between the two studies, the company had retired the 31 per cent claim.

Riddell advertised it between 2008 and 2011, according to the FTC. In those years, they sold thousands of helmets based on false data. Parents, who were aware of the dangers of football, were more at ease with their children playing football if they wore the helmets. Since then, Riddell has released several updates to the “Revolution” model, and despite the knowledge that the helmets aren’t as protective as once thought, the company is still associated with head safety.

“As soon as there’s a perception that a risk is mitigated, consumers are going to be interested,” said Soroka.

These supposed innovations might not only be completely useless, but they might be detrimental as well. In thinking that they’re more safely equipped, players may allow themselves to play with reckless abandon. This is called the Peltzman Effect, and it’s something that poses a danger.

Neurologist Harry Kerasidis writes in *Psychology Today* that people will behave according to the perceived risk associated with whatever activity they’re doing. In football, players feel more protected because of the enormous suit of armour they’re wearing when they’re on the field.

Psychologically, football players feel more inclined to play dangerously. Kerasidis uses the example of rugby, where players play more carefully because they don’t wear as much protective gear, leading to fewer head-to-head collisions than in football.

Soroka says that this all comes back to the main point—you can’t prevent a concussion. With head injuries being such a hot topic of conversation, people are bound to try making a quick buck.

His recommendation to potential consumers of concussion products as well as all new health-related innovations is to be careful. Find out if any scientific communities have endorsed questionable products. Celebrity endorsement typically point to what he calls “unscrupulous” business, but legitimate endorsements from scientists don’t. Even then, Riddell got away with their 31 per cent promise for years.

#### ON THE FIELD, IN THE LABS

Kathy Cohen, the owner and founder of Neurocircuit, a clinic that specializes in concussions, says that the best way to handle head injuries from a medical standpoint is to make use of baseline testing.

Doctors will test a person’s healthy, uninjured brain and catalogue specific data points which eventually combine to make up one’s neurological baseline. The same testing will then be done when a person is suspected to have suffered a concussion, and that will determine the severity of the injury.

“Sometimes athletes won’t admit or realize they’re hurt and will want to keep playing,” said Cohen, who founded the company after her daughter suffered multiple concussions and finding out that the medical options to treat her were limited.

“The best thing to do is to remove a player from the game and run a baseline test. That’ll help guide the trainer’s treatment,” she said.

While Neurocircuit is a for-profit clinic, the service they provide is not a





gimmick. Christensen confirmed that all Concordia athletes follow baseline testing, and that has been an important part of Miller's recovery.

"[Concordia sports medicine] linked me up with Dr. Scott Delaney at McGill, who's world renowned in terms of concussions," said Miller. "He does a lot of concussion research with the McGill neuro department with Alain Ptito. They were able to put me through a functional MRI and see how my brain is. In terms of that, it was really good and really nice of [Concordia] because those doctors are really helping me a lot right now."

At this point,

Miller's return to action is a process with little clarity. The details of the injury and the timetable for his return remain confidential, but he hopes that in following his doctor's orders, he'll be back.

The research that McGill's neurological department and Christensen does with the PERFORM centre at Concordia is important. Christensen, however, admits that research on head injuries has been a growing trend over the last five years.

They're elusive injuries that are fertile ground for an industry.

"A lot of it is people trying to play ahead of the curve, and be ahead of the technology," said Christensen. "But again, the more research we do on it, the more we realize that there's more to learn."

While there is good research being done, science—scrupulous or not—isn't the solution. Miller recommends updating rule books.

"When you read the rule book of the Réseau du sport étudiant du Québec, it's archaic in terms of head injury rules," said Miller. "Playing in the NCAA five years ago, they changed rules about targeting and hits to the head. I think the RSEQ's rules, for me, is very much intent based and the referees have to decide if the player was trying to hurt someone or if there was intent to hurt within the hit in order for it to lead to a suspension."

But ultimately, the sports themselves are the problem.

Football isn't going anywhere—it makes too much money for too many people. So long as there is money to be made and young athletes interested in the sport, they'll keep playing the games.

Whether it be stricter rules, high-tech gear or cutting edge research, the brain-damaging hits won't stop happening. Those measures serve only to justify the dangerous sports that people will be more than happy to profit on while athletes' bodies continue to deteriorate.

Maybe, it's the sports themselves that the buyer ought to be wary of. ♦

*With files from Alexander Perez*

□ Photo Carl Bindman



# USING IN PEACE

## CACTUS' NEW SAFE INJECTION SITE HELPS REDUCE RISKS FOR DRUG USERS

◇ Jesse Stein

Opiate abuse doesn't discriminate.

This is a lesson Amélie Goyette learned while working with people in crisis.

"It's not just homeless people, we see everything from students to lawyers in suits," she affirms.

Goyette has worked at CACTUS for 13 years. It's a community driven organization focused on reducing the risks of drug use—an option for Montrealers looking to reduce the harms associated with using opiates.

Rates of Hepatitis C are high among injection users, and CACTUS reports that 68 per cent of injection drug users are carriers of the virus. Intravenous users also are at a higher risk of contracting HIV.

CACTUS hopes to reduce the spreading of viruses like this through their services. They offer clean needles and support for people who use them.

"I wanted to work with people that no one wanted to help," Goyette says.

They're also connected with a number of other community organizations like *L'injecteur*, a magazine produced by and for drug users.

In 2010, CACTUS helped start "Messagers de rue," a project which hires people with significant financial problems to distribute clean needles and clean the streets where there are active users. This highlights their approach of offering resources for users who want to work and help make a difference with those at risk.

Their new location by Saint-Laurent metro offers a room where users can inject drugs in a clean environment, and where healthcare practitioners are present to administer naloxone in the case of an overdose. The location is one of three supervised injection sites that were opened in Montreal this June.

An injection of naloxone can effectively reverse the effects of an opiate overdose. Being trained in how to deal with an overdose, and having access to lifesaving

drugs can prevent unnecessary deaths.

Since moving to their new location in June, Goyette says three people have overdosed on site. Fortunately, none of them were fatal.

In her experience, Goyette sees that people often begin with prescription opiates like oxycodone before moving on to harder drugs like heroin, since doctors prescribe opiates less than they used to. Goyette says that, in general, once a person starts injecting heroin, they never go back to pills.

In recent years, she's seen the number of fentanyl overdoses go up. Fentanyl, a synthetic opioid, has been credited for the unparalleled spike in drug overdoses. In Montreal's Centre-Sud region around the Gay Village alone, there were 64 opioid overdoses between Aug. 18 and Oct. 16, according to data released by Urgences Santé.

Since fentanyl is 10,000 times more potent than morphine, it is active at incredibly small doses. An amount equivalent to a few grains of sand can be enough to kill someone. While extremely potent, it is also cheap to manufacture and very profitable for drug dealers. Since clients are looking for the most potent batch of heroin for their money, fentanyl sometimes gets mixed into dealer's batches. This puts even the most experienced long term users at risk, as they have no way of knowing for sure what is in their bag.

"Drugs will always be there," Goyette says. For someone that has seen just how debilitating drug abuse can be, she strongly believes that humanizing users is the only answer. "It's about creating a connection, if they decide they need help, we're here."

CACTUS also employs a number of peer workers who have past experiences with heroin abuse, or are currently using. Marino Leroux has been part of





users, and is able to connect with them since he had used in the past.

“Users always felt comfortable around me” Leroux says.

As someone so connected with the community, Leroux spends a lot of his time working directly with users. At times it can be hard to be so close to that lifestyle after getting clean, but he believes his past is an asset to the work he’s doing.

“People can tell I won’t judge them, and they let me get close to them,” he explains.

He also believes that change can happen for anyone. “Sometimes it takes a while but being there and giving someone the space they need can make a huge difference,” Leroux says.

While in recent years deaths related to overdoses have spiked, it’s organizations like CACTUS that are working to reduce stigma surrounding drug abuse. Other organizations working to help users have popped up like Dopamine, a safe injection site situated in the Hochelaga-Maisonneuve district, and L’Anonyme, a mobile unit that moves around the downtown core of Montreal.

A statement from Concordia University says its health services, including counselling and health care, take a harm-reduction approach to substance use, understanding that drug use happens and that “processes to promote abstinence have limited impact.”

University spokesperson Mary-Jo Barr wrote that Campus Wellness and Support Services offers group therapy for students, but will direct those “who need a higher level of support” to community resources. She also said CWSS will be training their staff and security on how to support students who use drugs later this year. ♦

the team for almost five years, and has seen the impact it can have on people in at-risk communities.

Leroux started out by working with Plein Milieu, a community organization that works to help young people, drug users, and the homeless in Montreal by offering everything from clean drug supplies to legal advice. He feels strongly affected by his work with drug

**“IT’S ABOUT CREATING A CONNECTION,  
IF THEY DECIDE THEY  
NEED HELP, WE’RE HERE.”**

**—AMÉLIE GOYETTE**

# THE CONSEQUENCES

## HOW OUR HEALTH SYSTEM FREQUENTLY IGNORES AND MISDIAGNOSES WOMEN

◇ By Penina Simon @purplecraze18

Women and non-binary people often spend hours on end on waiting lists and then in waiting rooms, only to hear the same words spoken to them over and over again.

“You’re probably just stressed!”

“Have you tried losing weight?”

“It could just be your hormones. You’re just experiencing very bad period symptoms.”

Ask many women about their experiences with healthcare and they will be able to tell you at least one personal horror story about a medical professional who didn’t take their concerns seriously.

Doctors do have years of medical knowledge and experience under their belts, but they have never lived in their patient’s body. Therefore, they cannot entirely know what is normal for their patient. The doctor’s job is to listen, and fully investigate the issue.

However, there seems to be some disconnect that leads women, and people who identify as women, to frequently be disbelieved and misdiagnosed by doctors. Because of this, some women’s conditions get ignored or mistreated, and can become worse as a result.

A report from *Vice* in 2014 found that Canadian women are more likely to be put on waiting lists, likely due to doctors not taking their concerns seriously. A Statistics Canada study from 2010 confirms this. The fact that women wind up sitting on these waiting lists for longer than men has reportedly increased the overall mortality rate of women in Canada by 2.5 per cent.

A doctor has the power to not take their patient seriously, and the more they decide to do this, the more likely their patient is to die. There are many individual accounts from women about not being heard by their doctors. At this scale, it is a systemic issue.

A factor in the phenomenon of doctors

ignoring their patients is the many misconceptions that exist around women and pain. Women are frequently accused of being overdramatic and told that their pain isn’t as bad as they believe it to be.

Racism and intrinsic biases are other important factors. On some level, many doctors will also believe that women of colour, particularly Black women, can handle more pain and don’t need the amount of treatment that they say they do. There have been numerous accounts of doctors sending Black women in intense pain home with nothing, or even downright accusing them of lying and exaggerating.

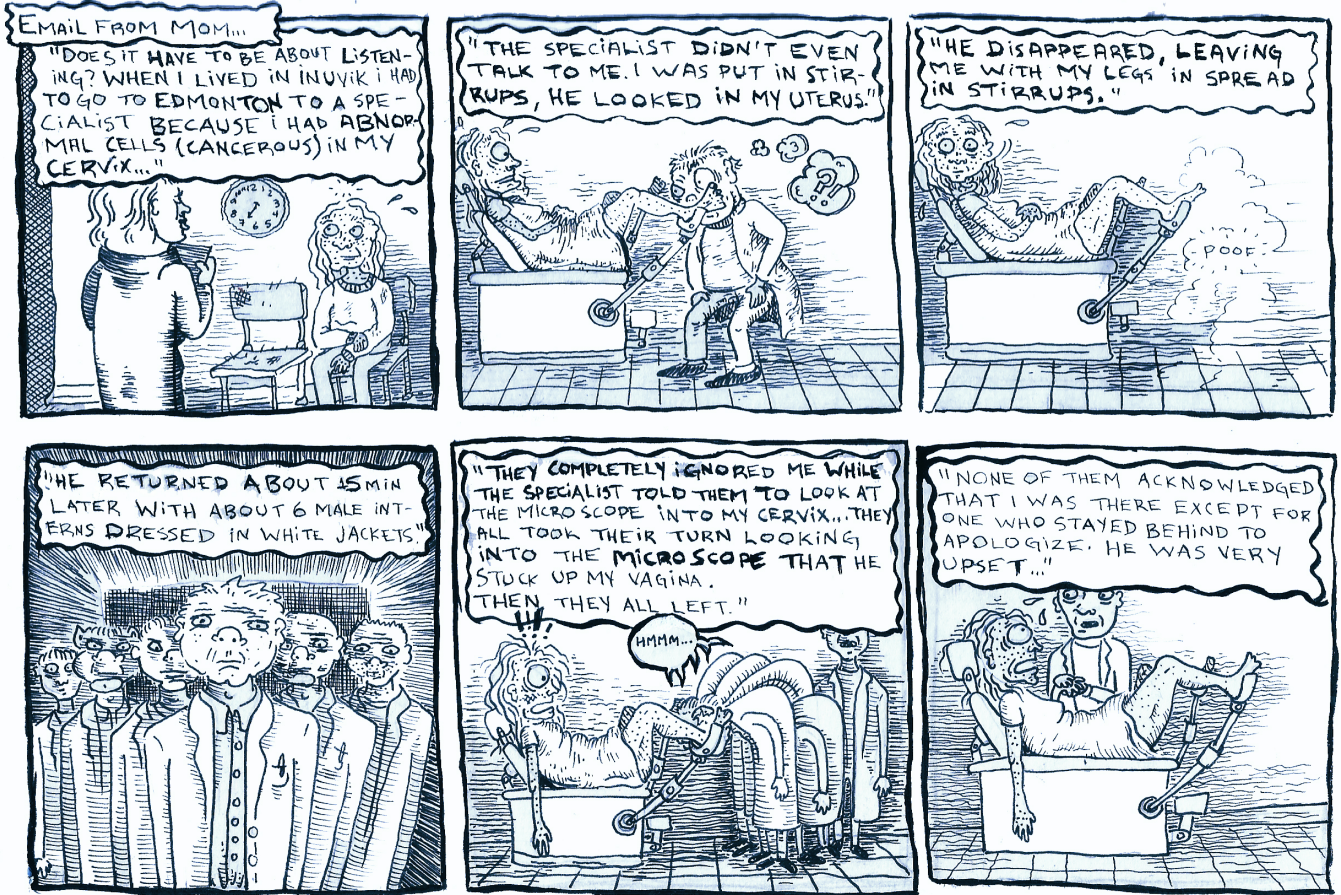
Many physicians also stereotype women as being more naturally emotional. The issue that a patient might be experiencing may be completely physical, but physicians often search for solutions related to emotions and mental health. Of course, mental health treatment is incredibly important, but sometimes physical symptoms are a sign of a physical problem and not physical manifestations of stress.

Doctors often blame pain on periods or hormones. They have no way of knowing what a normal period feels like for each of their patients and yet will frequently insist that everything is normal and the pain is all in the patient’s head. This can lead to people suffering from conditions such as uterine fibroids or endometriosis for years without hope of any sort of treatment.

People who know they will be ignored or stereotyped are not keen to reach out for help, especially when their care will likely be inadequate or even emotionally or physically harmful. This is especially true for people with intersecting marginalized identities, such as transgender women, women of colour, and women with disabilities. Mistreatment and stigmatization directly lowers the overall



# OF BEING DISBELIEVED



□ Comic Moragh Ailish Rahn-Campbell

health of women and people who are assigned female at birth, as well as the minority groups to which they belong.

Every individual has biases, and doctors are no exception. At the end of the day, doctors are people, and if they believe that women are over-emotional, that Black women should be strong and therefore exaggerate pain, or any other stereotype imaginable, then patients will continue to be mistreated by the system that controls their health.

People should not get sick because of medical professionals, and yet many are still continuously denied help. The healthcare system demands that women and non-binary individuals fight for medical attention, for a diagnosis, and for treatment. People have jobs and lives and aren't always able to dedicate their time to leaving messages on answering machines and sitting in waiting rooms,

especially if they are sick and already have depleted energy.

Fortunately this problem does have a solution, which is simply listening.

Listening to women and non-binary patients, and listening to people who belong to marginalized identity groups.

Access to appropriate healthcare is a human right. It is not the job of the doctor to believe or disbelieve their patient, it is their job to treat the patient. Unfortunately, accessible and adequate healthcare does not exist for many people in Canada and in the United States, and this can no longer be ignored. ◇

# HEALING CREATION

DISCOVER DIFFERENT FORMS OF ART THERAPY AND WHERE TO FIND THEM

◇By Shannon Carranco

Being a university student in Montreal can be a terribly stressful ordeal. Between taking classes, studying for exams, having full-time or part-time jobs, maintaining a social life, and experiencing this city for what it is, it can be easy to disregard the importance of balancing our mental health. When having burnouts, breakdowns, or feelings of anxiety or depression, we are often encouraged to seek out psychological services, but verbal counselling or psychotherapy may not be the right avenue for everyone.

If you're looking for a type of therapy that is a little more playful, imaginative, or downright fun, there are a multitude of options for you right here in Montreal. You can explore your inner child through the use of drama therapy, express yourself with your whole body with dance and movement therapy,

explore the inner critic or the superego through creation with art therapy, and foster change within yourself by making sound with music therapy. If you're fed up with verbal therapy services, you might want to check these out.

## ART THERAPY

Dana Schnitzer, an art therapist and psychotherapist, graduated from Concordia's art therapy master's program in 2002. For the last 13 years, Schnitzer has been practicing art therapy with children and adults with an array of mental health issues, specializing in anxiety, depression, and ADHD.

"Art therapy is a way to help people explore their inner world and their unconscious mind," Schnitzer said. "It can bypass the usual defense mechanisms that exist in language. So one can be very surprised by what one finds."

According to Schnitzer, the type of art her clients create in their sessions will be different depending on what they'd like to work on. It begins with a conversation about what the problem is, and then depending on the problem, the session will either be directed by the client or by Schnitzer. Different artistic materials will be available for the client to use.

"It could be drawing, painting, sculpture or collage," Schnitzer said. "It really depends on what the person's problems are and what they want to work on. A painting would not be recommended for certain people with certain problems, and it would be very much recommended for others."

Schnitzer explained that by giving the problem a material form, whether it be the inner critic or the superego, it's easier to identify and understand the problem from another perspective.

Children can also benefit from art therapy practices. According to Schnitzer, because most children don't have the mastery of language yet, they can express themselves more profoundly with art materials than they can verbally. It allows them to create a safe space in which they can explore their feelings indirectly. Making art can also foster a better alliance between a therapist and a child.

Schnitzer also practices psychotherapy, but said that the most profound change she has witnessed within her clients over the last thirteen years has occurred when using art therapy techniques.

"The art therapy is what goes the deepest, is the most profound, the most memorable, and can affect the most change in the life of a person," Schnitzer said. "When they manipulate the materials, there's an alchemy, a transformation that happens. Symbols and archetypes are very powerful messages to the unconscious and can be very surprising, and they can be used to really deepen the understanding of the self and promote healing."

## DRAMA THERAPY

The North American Drama Association is a non-profit that was founded in 1979 by a group of professionals who used therapy techniques related to the practice and art of drama.

The NADTA's president is Jason Butler, a drama therapist with a PhD in inter-



Therapist Dana Schnitzer graduated from Concordia University's art therapy masters degree program in 2002. □ Photos Shannon Carranco.



disciplinary studies from Concordia University. The NADTA recognizes a drama therapist as having completed at least 1,000 hours of professional practice, having a masters degree in drama therapy or another related field, said Butler, and they are also often psychotherapists, depending on the state or province they work in.

“We have drama therapists that are working with just about any conceivable population, be it small children, adolescents, adults, people with psychiatric disorders, or developmental disabilities,” Butler said.

The act of drama therapy is very diverse. It can involve writing and producing plays, acting out improvisational scenarios, or making use of puppets or masks.

“I was running a program in New York City for many years for the homeless and mentally ill,” Butler explained. “Some of the drama therapy we did would be creating plays, where the participants wrote their own plays, sometimes about their life experiences. But the therapeutic process of writing and producing and putting on those plays for the community was drama therapy in one sense.”

Butler explained that drama therapy is especially useful for certain populations that are unable to express themselves by sitting and talking about their issues with a therapist. Drama therapy has the ability to circumvent some people’s defense mechanisms, like children with developmental disabilities. It uses the whole body instead of just language.

“Kids often don’t have a great way of talking about their negative experiences, or their traumas,” he said. “Drama therapy allows the child and the therapist to engage at a level that they wouldn’t be able to.”

Studies on drama therapy have shown that because there is a more playful aspect to the therapy, clients are more likely to stay with the therapy in the long term, Butler explained.

“We actually have clients up on their feet doing role plays, so they have an embodied experience of the change they’re working towards.”

In 2016, Butler was an assistant professor of creative arts therapies at Concordia University, where he taught research in drama therapy and was a drama therapy practicum supervisor. According

to Butler, the master’s degree in drama therapy at Concordia is a 60 credit program that requires 800 hours of hands-on work experience with two different populations. In their first year, students are often placed in senior centers or work with people with developmental disabilities. In the second year, students can choose what populations they want to work with, which are often in schools or hospitals in Montreal.

### DANCE THERAPY

In 2013, Montreal’s dance institute Les Grands Ballets started a program called the National Centre for Dance Therapy. The NCDT facilitates the training of dance therapy, and has led world class research on the benefits of dance therapy for children, adults and seniors. It places dance therapists in hospitals, schools and prisons where therapists have one-on-one sessions with those who are seeking dance therapy.

Christian Sénéchal, the NCDT’s director, said that when the NCDT first looked into community involvement in Montreal, they found that there weren’t any training centers for dance therapists in the city. After researching the potential for dance therapists to be positioned in institutions like hospitals, prisons and schools, the NCDT decided they would start their own training program for dance therapists. The program has since attracted people from around the world.

According to Sénéchal, “The use of dance and movement has a complementary tool for the health, for rehab, but also for a psychological perspective and a physical perspective.”

The NCDT offers business-to-business services, which means that they



Students combined maps, paint, images and other artistic materials to create collages.

do not offer one on one dance therapy sessions, but instead coordinate programs with institutions that are in need of dance therapists.

Sénéchal said that because dance therapy is more playful than verbal forms of therapy, it can create fantastic results for children and seniors. In a study the NCDT organized with the Geriatric Institute of Montreal and Concordia’s PERFORM center, a gym and research facility located on the Loyola campus, the NCDT had seniors doing regular exercise and dance

therapy, and found that the seniors' levels of stress were substantially lower when dancing.

"It's easy to understand.

Just think about your grandfather or grandmother on a treadmill for 12 weeks, compared to having a dance therapy group where you're sharing memories and singing and dancing. It makes sense."

Sénéchal believes that there's a bright future for dance therapy in Montreal. "We have had dance therapists in Montreal for decades, but I think there is a new light now. In the last five years, we have more and more researchers from other fields who are interested in these effects."

### EXPRESSION LASALLE

Expression Lasalle is a non-profit community mental health centre located in southwest Montreal. It offers art therapy, music therapy, and drama therapy to its clients, free of charge—it's the only therapy centre in Montreal that does.

Expression Lasalle was founded in 1990. According to the centre's director, Julia Olivier, the Quebec government deinstitutionalized hospitals throughout the province in the 1970s, which heavily affected how many hospital beds were available to patients in psychiatric wards, and forced people with mental health issues onto the streets.

In the second wave of institutionalization in the late 1980s and early 1990s, the Quebec government began to invest in community resources, one of which was Expression Lasalle. The person hired to develop Expression Lasalle in 1990 was an art therapist, and the centre has since had a continuity of art therapists running it.

Other than an initial membership fee

of \$15, the services offered at Expression Lasalle are completely free.

"Most of the people we see are people who have mental illness, so they can't work or they're working part-time and they're living below the poverty line," Olivier said. "In principle, we believe that therapy is not just for the rich. People who are socially and mentally disadvantaged should also have access to quality therapy."

Because Expression Lasalle is the only one of its kind in Montreal, they have waiting lists for up to a year for most of their services.

The centre mainly offers group therapy sessions that happen once a week for two hours a week, and last from six to nine months. Olivier said that most of the groups start with six or seven members, which creates an intimate and trusting atmosphere.

"It's a closed and confidential setting where people can form a trusting space, where they can come deal with their emotional and psychological difficulties."

Expression Lasalle also offers therapy on the theme of sexual abuse. When the centre first opened its doors, they had people who sought therapy for experiences related to sexual violence or rape, Olivier said, but felt uncomfortable working through their traumas in a group setting that wasn't comprised of others who shared similar experiences. Over the years, Expression Lasalle developed a program specifically offered to people looking to work through their sexual violence traumas, which is run by a therapist who has a background and understanding on the subject.

"It is a specific service that we have developed knowing that it is a difficult topic to address, and we want to create an environment where people feel safe," Olivier said. "Knowing that other people in that group are all having that experience, we notice that it helps rather than to just be in other groups. It's a slower approach and its more structured and there are exercises that

foster understanding."

The centre is run by two full-time administrators and five part-time therapists. Then, each fall, the centre receives between six and eight students who are studying to become art therapists from Concordia, McGill, Université de Montréal and Université du Québec à Montréal. The students are provided hands on art therapy training, and in turn they provide their own services to the members of the centre.

### STRUGGLE FOR RECOGNITION

Creative therapies haven't always been so prevalent and accessible in Quebec, and they continue to struggle to gain acceptance and recognition within the Ordre des psychologues.

Bill 21, which was adopted by the provincial government in 2009, aimed at creating a stricter policy concerning what the Ordre des psychologues considers professional psychologists, social workers, marriage, and family therapists, vocational guidance counsellors and psycho-educators. This ultimately made it harder for creative art therapists, drama therapists, music therapists, and dance and movement therapists to become part of the Ordre des psychologues.

In response to that, "a number of devoted creative arts therapists joined forces to advocate for the cause of arts therapists at risk of facing professional prejudice due to [the] pending adoption of Bill 21," said Catherine-Emmanuelle Drapeau, who is the chair of the governmental affairs and regulations committee of the Association des arts-thérapeutes du Québec.

They formed OPTA, the committee for an Ordre professionnel pour les thérapeutes par les arts, which advocates for the recognition of the profession of creative art modalities. There are currently two graduate level training art therapy programs offered in Quebec that are being submitted for evaluation to the Ordre des psychologues du Québec, Drapeau said. ♦

**"ART THERAPY IS WHAT GOES THE DEEPEST, IS THE MOST PROFOUND, THE MOST MEMORABLE, AND CAN AFFECT THE MOST CHANGE"**

**-DANA SCHNITZER**



# WHY DON'T MEN CRY?

◇ By Erika Morris @thingjpg

In an iconic tune by The Cure, Robert Smith sang, “I try to laugh about it/hiding the tears in my eyes/cause boys don’t cry.”

It’s been proven that releasing emotions by crying reduces emotional stress—stress that could eventually lead to cardiovascular disease, among other disorders, if not released.

One of the main functions of crying is to reduce tension and to quicken recovery from distress. It’s also a powerful way to communicate pain and distress to others, says an article on crying during adolescence published in the *British Journal of Developmental Psychology*.

But if you’re a man, you’ll often find you have a hard time crying. *The British Journal of Developmental Psychology* shows that as boys grow older, they tend to cry less.

An experiment was conducted with 216 boys and 265 girls, aged 11 to 16, who completed questionnaires on crying frequency, proneness, and empathy. Adolescent boys scored higher than girls on only one question: I feel shame when I cry.

The study also showed that high levels of empathy correlate with more crying, even though men with higher levels of empathy still tend to cry less than women who are just as empathetic. Regardless of heightened emotions, adolescent boys still cry less, suggesting a more social cause to the phenomenon.

The findings transcend cultures. A study in 35 countries in the Americas, Europe, Asia, and Africa found that women are just more likely to cry.

According to Concordia psychology professor, Dr. Michael Conway, men have a hard time expressing emotion because of the way we socialize boys and girls.

“When it comes to emotions it tends to be done differently,” he said. “Boys are

discouraged to feel emotions like sadness and fear so they’re less likely to be comfortable with those feelings which might make it harder for them to express it.”

Marc Lafrance, an associate professor in the Department of Sociology and Anthropology at Concordia University, said this is the case because men are expected to live up to an ideal of masculinity.

Lafrance said that in our society men are discouraged from showing all forms of emotion, including pleasure and joy.

“Men who are expressive are mocked and seen as effeminate,” he said. “Even with positive emotions men should keep their composure, never be too happy or too sad. Maintain this perfectly neutral emotional disposition at all times.”

He also says that men are even more discouraged to express their own pain, whether that pain be physical or mental.

Professor of psychology at Concordia, Dr. William Bukowski, defines masculinity as a type of instrumental competence that includes being achievement oriented, self-reliant, and ambitious. Masculine people tend to value competition and tend to place focus on themselves more than others.

Professor of Irish Diaspora Studies, Dr. Jane McGaughey, looked at the definition of “manliness” from the 1800s until World War I, which lay the ground for masculinity today. She explains that “manly men” have to be stoic. They can feel emotion, but not show it to others. Not feeling emotion is considered a failing for men, because you need to be able to show your humanity. These expectations contradict each other.

“For a lot of men in the Victorian time period, the only thing that they could show affection for was their dog,” she said, laughing.

Manliness also includes taking up a lot of space and being dominating, as well as being in total control of themselves

THE LINK

and their environment. These stereotypes apply most to men in Canada, the United States, England, and Ireland, said McGaughey.

Bukowski believes that talks of masculinity should be expressed in terms of how it affects femininity as well. He describes femininity as having to do with heightened sensitivity for others. People who are feminine tend to be more invested in their relationships with others, and tend to place a higher value on other's needs rather than their own. Caring for others, loyalty, and an attuned sensitivity to the needs of others would be all stereotypical feminine traits.

He claims masculinity and femininity aren't opposites, since people can be hyper-masculine and hyper-feminine at the same time; an androgynous individual. Someone with high masculinity, and low femininity tend to have lower levels of attachment to other people. As a result they tend to be less emotional.

"It's not masculinity itself per se that is the issue," he said. "Instead, it is masculinity in conjunction with low femininity. You can be hyper-masculine and very much inclined to express or engage in crying if it's the case that you're also high in femininity. But I don't want to say that people who cry a lot are necessarily high in femininity."

Lafrance claims that a difficulty to express emotions negatively impacts relationships. Since often men can't express how they feel, their partners are likely to feel they can't have a complete and fulfilling relationships.

There are very few settings where men can express their emotions, says

Bukowski and Lafrance. Men are socially permitted to cry at events like funerals, but even then they need to be very controlled, and not act out for too long.

These pressures start in the household Lafrance said. There are strong cues that come from both parents and siblings on how one should react to difficult situations.

"Often they're very subtle and banal, but they teach men either directly or indirectly that manifesting emotion is a bad idea," he said.

These can come from being told on a routine basis to just pull yourself together. There are also explicit commands that make clear that boys "don't do stuff like this." Even if parents don't discourage their sons from showing emotion, they still have a whole society that tells them that if they don't find a way to keep their emotions under wrap, they will be socially penalized.

"They will be penalized by being ostracized from groups of friends, to being singled out by macho teachers," said Lafrance. "There are all sorts of ways our society punishes boys for not being stoic, emotionless people we would want them to be, apparently."

However, according to Bukowski, Lafrance, and Conway, claiming that all

cises to help them access their emotions.

"I find that my male students jump at the opportunity to do that sometimes more than my female students," she said. "It's because they're given permission, a safe space to play different roles, and they get to access parts of themselves that they might not be able to in their everyday life."

She gets her students to do breathing and sound exercises, and the exercises allow them to open up and cry on command.

"I don't know how many times I've done simple breathing exercises or deep humming [to try] to open all the resonators in the body and I have students crying," she said. "They're lying on the floor, eyes closed, and they're just breathing and all of a sudden they start to cry because they're releasing something profound that is connected to their voice."

She claims that the minute you open up that channel, you're opening up the pathway to expressing emotion. You're not deciding which emotion that is; you're just letting it happen.

Lafrance thinks that "it's not that men don't want to change, but a lot of them don't know where to start."

The Centre de ressources pour homme de Montréal is an organization in the

**"IT'S PART OF BEING A HEALTHY PERSON, TO HAVE A FULL RANGE OF EMOTIONS."**

**—SERGE FORTIN**

men have a hard time crying and that women don't is a gross generalization. There's a lot of variability. Some women can't cry, some men can, and vice-versa. That being said, many men relate to the struggle.

Acting coach Liz Valdez says she hasn't found a divide between her students who identify as male or female—they both have a hard time expressing emotion in front of each other, as we live in a society where you are not allowed to do that. In her classes, she gets students to do exer-

Plateau for men who need help and support. They offer services like psycho-social follow-ups, group intervention, one-on-one therapy as well as support groups where men can share their feelings and vent about difficult experiences on a weekly basis.

It's a safe space where everyone present can offer advice and support to one another, regardless of the issues someone is facing. The group, led by a therapist or trained counsellor, also encourages people to form long-lasting



relationships, and develop a support system.

“Any man who feels like he has a hard time with life can ask for support at our organization,” said the general manager of the centre, Serge Fortin. “Men aren’t taught to take care of themselves by themselves.”

He said that men feel it’s harder to open up in a support group, but Fortin hopes to see that change.

“We have more men willing to participate in individual counselling than in a group. They have to feel more comfortable with their situation before going to groups,” he said. “Most men are shy, ashamed about being in a difficult situation and needing the help of others to get out of it.”

However, a minority of men have attended other support groups before and prefer it.

“We offer groups as it’s an opportunity to try new behaviours and actions that will produce different results,” he said. “If you keep on acting the same way you usually get the same results. But if you experiment, you get new results.”

When your life is out of sync and your functioning impaired, Fortin said that men need to express their emotions instead of suppressing them if they want to get better.

“We see a lot anger at first and then anxiety or sadness or guilt and shame but a lot of the time they’re [hidden] underneath [that] anger. The environment we want to create is [one where] emotion expression is acceptable for men and they can express all their emotions.”

He explains that men can be violent because they never learn how to deal with the anger that masks their sadness. If they were able to express their sadness, anger wouldn’t go on to take its place. When they’re sad, he says men don’t have the same impulse to act violently.

Being in touch with one’s emotions is for the greater good, he says.

“They’ll feel better about themselves, their lives, and the people they love if they can communicate more openly and experience these feelings properly,” he said. “It’s part of being a healthy person, to have a full range of emotions.”

But that’s not the case. Fortin explains they don’t keep tissues in the Centre’s offices.

“If people cried then we would need those tissues, but men don’t tend to cry at our meetings,” he said. “It’s already hard to ask for help. If you’re crying you’re showing another depth of helplessness, and that increases the shame men are experiencing. The norm is still that men don’t cry.” ◇

□Graphic Jo Franken



THE LINK

# IT'S NOT FINE

## MEN AND MENTAL HEALTH

◇ By Caisse Doubleday

Three words. One loaded question: “How are you?”

One usually evasive answer: “Fine.”

But things aren’t “fine,” and men, you have to start being honest with us. How are you, really?

Referred to as the “silent crisis” by the Canadian Mental Health Association and a relatively new concept in Canada, studies show men have a high rate of mental health issues and difficulty seeking help for it.

Statistics Canada’s suicide study in 2009 found that men were three times more likely than females to commit suicide. Suicide also ranked second as the leading cause of death for males 15 to 34 in Canada. And this devastating trend expands past Canada: studies done in the United Kingdom showed depression and suicide rates increased among young males. In Australia, suicide has replaced car accidents as the leading cause of death for males since 1991. “Fine” isn’t working anymore.

Luckily, men have started talking about their mental health—it’s shifted from being a secret to a life or death issue. Doctors, families, and peers are becoming aware of the sleeping silence of the pain men are suppressing every day.

Dr. Michael Myers, a psychiatrist and clinical professor in the Department of Psychiatry at the University of British Columbia noted that doctors are now paying more attention to the topic. They especially keep an eye out for potential signs of depression among men, such as hostile behaviour, womanizing, substance abuse, and irritability.

To find out more, I spoke with five men about their mental health, asking

each one why it’s important to talk about it, especially now. Meet Seb, Antonio, Mike, and Andrew.

Seb is a 28-year-old trans Concordia graduate with depression and anxiety. Antonio Bavaro is a male in his mid-twenties who works in Toronto and has been “chasing the dragon” his whole life. Mike Allison is a 32-year-old skateboarder from the Maritimes now studying at University of Toronto, who’s in recovery for substance abuse, and Andrew Carter is a 52-year-old cis-gender white male who has depression, and is also the host of Montreal’s CJAD morning radio show.

**THE LINK:** Are you or were you hesitant to talk about your mental health?

**SEB:** I did hesitate. [...] There is definitely still a stigma around it.

**MIKE:** I don’t find it difficult anymore, but for years I did. As a man, there’s that stigma of not opening up to your friends. Luckily as I got older, I noticed that this wasn’t the case with my friends. Obviously, this was with a select few within my group. Personally, I refuse to acknowledge the stereotype of men being “tough.” It’s bullshit. The reason that I open up so freely is so that I can share an example, and let people and other men know, it’s alright to talk about these things.

**ANTONIO:** I don’t hesitate at all—men need to talk more about what’s going on inside in general, and I’m lucky enough to feel free enough to do so. I’ve been open with my parents 110 per cent

since I was a child. I had to be open with my mental health issues when I started post-secondary education because it affects my studies so much.

**ANDREW:** Hesitant? Not now. There was a time I would have hesitated out of lack of understanding; I didn’t even understand I had an issue. [...] I was always one of those, “Oh suck it up types, it’s not real,” but it’s real.

**TL:** When did you start talking about your mental health—what changed?

**SEB:** Over the last few years I’ve been talking more about it. I started going to therapy just before I started transitioning. I’ve been very honest with my partners about my depression and anxiety, and the ways it can affect our relationships. At that moment I was being honest with everyone about being trans, and discussing my mental health was a natural extension of that since they felt very related.

**MIKE:** I got to a point in my life where I was so broken and depressed. I began sharing openly with friends who I was using with and started plotting my way out. I hit my bottom and it was just not an option to keep quiet about it anymore. I had to share it with people in order to save my life.

**TL:** What do you think prevents men from talking about their mental health?

**SEB:** I do believe it’s more difficult for men because there is a culture of toxic masculinity where discussing mental health will be seen as weak or talking about emotions is a “woman thing”. It really depends on the context too, as a trans person I feel it has its own stigma attached to it because people already think being trans is a mental illness, and so any mental health issues I might have are assumed to be associated with that. It’s reductionary and difficult for me to break out of that pattern with cis therapists.

**ANTONIO:** I find some women and feminists unwilling to accept that men have more issues with mental health, as most go unreported. Why else would three out of four suicides in Canada be men?



Men are stuck in a box: we are conditioned to be cold, competitive, cruel, sexually vigorous, violent, solitary [...] but men really need to look inwards towards each other to understand many of us have mental health issues and desperately need help.”

**TL:** When and how did you seek help?

**SEB:** I did reach out for help when I realized some aspects of my anxiety were impacting my relationships and my functioning. I’ve been in therapy on and off over the last few years, tried medication and self-medicating. I used the McGill mental health services without success, and when that failed I went to [the queer community resources] ASTTeQ and Project 10 for referrals to trans-friendly therapists, as well as financially accessible ones. Money has definitely been one of the biggest barriers for me in accessing these services, since most of them aren’t covered.

**MIKE:** When I began actively wanting to address my

mental health I found it challenging to find the resources. In an act of desperation, I reached out in a post on Facebook. This did two things for me: it held me accountable and it put me in touch with a variety of people who either had experience with it or knew someone who did. Through that I got into a detox centre and started my path of recovery.

**ANDREW:** When I understood what [depression] was and that it was real and it needed to be dealt with.

Andrew went to therapy, support groups, and has tried antidepressants. He said therapy and antidepressants have helped him, as well as being open with others.

What if we didn’t believe in the stigma? What if you—the male-identifying reader—could address the shame or embarrassment associated with talking about your mental health, reducing

its power and setting it free?

From my experience, it takes more courage to be vulnerable than it does to be silent. Silence is dishonest. These four men shared the truth, a truth that will always be there: a truth that challenges the toxic culture of masculinity, as Seb noted. A truth that puts equal weight on a man sharing his emotions, as a woman does her’s, like Antonio mentioned. And a truth most of us want to hear—and help with—such as with Mike’s friends and Andrew’s story.

It’s going to take time to set aside years of a male “dominant” stereotype, to change the narrative, to encourage men to be brave in a different — and sometimes uncomfortable — manner. Let’s

not sleep on this anymore, it’s time to dismantle the stigma and reconstruct our perception. We’ve been hitting snooze for too long. ◇



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*Corrections: In the last issue, The Link misstated that Les Grands Bois was founded by two individuals, and that founders of 203 crew no longer do graffiti. Skateboarder Evan Smith was also attributed as Evan Richardson in a photo caption. The Link regrets these errors.*

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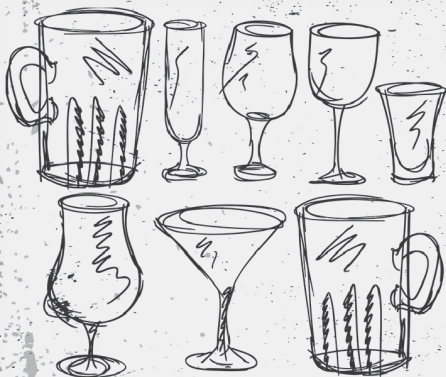


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