

The Pioneer

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Photo by Elliott Gould

Esegent Lemma leads a march supporting women's rights during the International Women's Day event Tuesday. Lemma is inspired by her adoptive grandmother, Mieke Thorne, who had this to say: "I never was a feminist; I did what I wanted to do. I stayed home with my children. that was my choice, but at the same time I've learned along the way that women in the rest of the world don't have that freedom and my heart aches."

March highlights day for women

By Zachary Prong

Dozens of men, women and children gathered at the Belleville Public Library on Tuesday afternoon for the annual International Women's Day March.

As they paraded through downtown Belleville, they chanted slogans such as "Stop sexual violence against women, make it happen!" and "Education for all, make it happen!"

The march, one of thousands taking place elsewhere across the globe, was or-

ganized by the local International Women's Day Committee, a group comprised of various community members and supported by organizations such as Amnesty International and Bridge Street United Church.

According to the organizers, the goal was not only to celebrate the achievements of women, but recognize that many women in Canada and across the globe who continue to struggle for basic human rights.

"I want to march for the simple rea-

son that we can do this here in Canada," said Mieke Thorne, a local representative of Amnesty International. "We can get city council approval, we can get a police escort, and we don't have to pay for that. In other countries when they march, they are beaten, they are put in prison. But we can do it in this country so we should."

City Councillor Garnet Thompson, who attended on behalf of Mayor Taso Christopher, said he believes it is important that men also participate in the march.

"As men, we should support women and have solidarity together. We need to understand that women are a vital part of our society," said Thompson.

Rachael Elson, who works at the Belleville General Hospital's Domestic Violence and Sexual Assault Response unit, brought her seven-year-old son Payton to the event.

"It's a good chance to show him the importance of equal rights for women. To instill those thoughts so when he grows up, he'll have a better understanding of

these issues," said Elson.

Elson went on to talk about the problem of sexual assault here in the community.

"We still deal with sexual assault all the time, and we know that less than 10 per cent of people go to the police or hospital," she said.

For Kelly Hendricks, another participant in the March, the issue of sexual assault is all too real – several years ago, she was sexually assaulted.

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Photo by Beatrice Serdon

Queen Owodiong dips in cold water to support Freezin' for a Reason, a fundraising event organized by Loyalist College public relations students, in Belleville last Saturday. The event raised \$7,400 which will go to the YMCA Strong Kids program. For more photos and the video link, see page 7.

A freezing, frosty fundraiser

Nearly \$8,000 goes to YMCA Strong Kids campaign
 By Emma Gardner

Jumping into waist deep, freezing cold water isn't the most fun thing to do on a Saturday morning, but it was all to raise money for the YMCA Strong Kids campaign.

Loyalist College's public relations students teamed up with the YMCA to create

a fundraiser, something that was unique and fun and that hasn't happened in Belleville in years. The students came up with Freezin' for a Reason. Approximately 50 people participated and they managed to raise nearly \$8,000.

The challenge was that if you raised \$25 in pledges, you only had to go in the water up to your knees. If you raised \$50, you had to go in up to your waist; if you raised \$75, you had to go in up to your shoulders and anyone who raised \$100 or more had to go all in.

The event took place at Herchimer Avenue boat launch at 11 a.m. Saturday morning. A 12x12-foot hole was cut into the ice and a carpet rolled out to it. There were paramedics standing by with two firefighters in the hole to help anyone out if needed.

The team, Angela Best, Jessica Klein, Stephanie Nguyen and Rob Alexander have worked nonstop from September to get this going.

"Our goal was \$500," Best laughs. "This was the first one ever and we didn't know how it would turn out."

An act of kindness can go a long way

By Andrew Johnson

A Random Act of Kindness can be defined as an act someone does for no reason except to bring happiness, however briefly, into someone's heart. For 20 years, volunteers in the Quinte region have been trying to raise awareness for these seemingly small yet sometimes powerful acts of humanity.

Chris Macdonald is one of the founders of Quinte's Violence Awareness and Random Acts of Kindness Program, which began after her son Mark Fyke was killed while vacationing in Florida in 1997. Within a year, two more local youth, Becky Middleton and Shawn Keegan, were also killed as a result of senseless acts of violence.

The community was shocked, and friends and family set out to channel their grief towards making a positive change in their community.

Now, every year in mid-March, the city of Belleville and communities in the Quinte region are decked out with blue ribbons to commemorate Fyke whose favourite sports teams were the Toronto Blue Jays and the Maple Leafs, and the many victims of senseless acts of violence.

After opening Kindness Week, as it has come to be known, with a candlelight vigil at the Quinte Mall, Kindness Crews then set out to spread acts of kindness with their motto in mind: "Kindness is contagious." The event has reached its 20th anniversary this year. The program, Macdonald says, has been growing steadily ever since.

UV loaded with goody bags of treats and chocolates, stuffed bears and T-shirts soon to be handed out to anyone and everyone. Her crew, canvass-

'The lady must have been having a tough day and was so touched that she just said 'You have no idea how much this means to me right now!''

Chris Macdonald

ing Belleville, is one of several in the Quinte region spreading awareness through acts of kindness.

She's joined by her two sisters, a niece and a daughter. They have been doing it for 18 years.

Sometimes all it takes is just a simple act to change someone's day for the better and, quite possibly, their life. Macdonald recalled handing out gifts to a complete stranger one day a few years back. "The lady must have been having a tough day and was so touched that she just said 'You have no idea how much this means to me right now.'"

That, she says, is what it's all about.

The crew started out at Hastings Manor Long Term Care Facility, stopping off at a local radio station to hand out goodies and give a brief interview on the air. Afterwards, they stopped by Children's Aid to bring kindness to workers and kids alike. They spend a lot of their day just handing out random gifts to random strangers, and the smiles are, indeed, contagious.

"Everyone has a story," says Macdonald, and sometimes these small acts can go a long way to brightening someone's day.

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Speaker brings message of empowerment

Women's Day speaker says work still needs to be done around the world

By Lindsay Leveque

"If we don't talk about it, it means we're accepting it."

Samra Zafar was the guest speaker at the Belleville International Women's Day March Tuesday at the Belleville Public Library. She is an active board member on multiple women's organizations and also a public speaker on women's rights.

Originally from Abu Dhabi, Zafar arrived in Canada at the age of 16, facing an arranged marriage and over a decade of oppression and opposition against getting an education.

At the age of 18, Zafar became a mother and was forbidden to leave the house by a husband who constantly abused her.

After years of abuse, Zafar made the decision to leave her husband. As a single mother, she pursued an education and had to work multiple jobs, all the while raising her daughters.

Zafar completed both bachelor's and master's degrees in economics from the University of Toronto.

"I come from a very conservative culture and I know when I started speaking up, I faced a lot of backlash and I still do. It's important because it's not just a family issue, it's a human rights issue. That goes for any other issues women face."

Zafar is very involved in awareness work around women's empowerment and she also speaks on prominent public platforms such as Amnesty International where she advocates for women's rights.

We are "bringing more and more dialogue on various platforms and bringing issues to light for example, domestic violence. Today there is a lot of conversation about domestic violence and a lot of people are talking about it. But not too long ago, it was supposed to be a family issue that was supposed to be discussed behind closed doors and women were not supposed to speak up," said Zafar.

International Women's Day celebrates the social, economic, cultural and political achievements of women.

"International Women's Day is about supporting other women and really empowering each other to reach new heights, break barriers, raise our voices against injustices that happen day in and



Photo by Lindsay Leveque

Samra Zafar is a public speaker on behalf of women's rights and is involved in awareness work around women's empowerment. Zafar is a voice against abuse and was the guest speaker at the Belleville International Women's Day march Tuesday. Zafar is also the founder and executive director of Brave Beginnings, an organization which provides mentorship, guidance, support and friendship to help women rebuild their lives after abuse or oppression.

day out," said Zafar.

"Some of these injustices are not just big issues like domestic violence or trafficking. It's also the everyday hidden biases and cultural stereotypes that make women feel they're not worthy enough or qualified enough or brave enough to take those risks, whether it is in a woman's personal life or her career. I still face this issue everyday, even after coming this far," said Zafar.

The International Women's Day campaign theme for 2016 is Pledge for Parity. That means everyone - men and women - can pledge to take a step towards help-

ing achieve gender parity more quickly. This can mean helping women and girls achieve their ambitions or call for gender-balanced leadership.

"This day really marks the importance of bringing those conversations from under the rug and really putting it out there," said Zafar.

Zafar is also the founder of Brave Beginnings, an upcoming organization that provides mentorship, guidance, support and friendship to women who need help rebuilding their lives after abuse or oppression.

The World Economic Forum predicted in 2014 that it would take up to 2095 to achieve global gender parity. Then one year later, in 2015, they estimated that the gender gap wouldn't close until 2133.

"It's really time for women to start speaking up and saying this bothers us or this doesn't make us feel good about ourselves," said Zafar.

Tuesday, March 8, marked Belleville's 23rd year celebrating International Women's Day. The theme for this year's event is "Make it Happen."

Participants at the event gathered at the

Belleville Public Library for the annual downtown march before the Zafar spoke.

"What I hope to see in the future is people talking about it because that's the only time people are going to be aware and realize what they're doing. They're going to start questioning and taking notice that, 'hey, maybe the way I'm thinking is not right,'" said Zafar.

"I have faith that once people start to realize that having these stereotypes and ideas and bias is not the right thing to do, then people will start changing their behaviour and their mind sets," added Zafar.

TVNM short films featured

By Emma Gardner

Four minutes, four people, four positions and four weeks to finish it. Those were the guidelines for the television and new media students for Thursday night's Four Squared in Alumni Hall.

The second-year TVNM students worked hard to produce short films that were played in Alumni Hall for a chance to get screen time at this year's fifth annual DocFest, which took place March 4 to 6.

This year, there were 12 short films that played and all of them had amazing stories. The content ranged from a girl who found her self-confidence through cosplay to a mother talking about her

Olympic son's leukemia. But only four films made it through.

The judges, Victor Cooper and Doug Knutson, were moved to tears in some of this year's short films, others made them laugh.

"The content of this year's films was better. Definitely a step up from last year's," Cooper said.

The four winning films were as follows: *A Walk in the Park* about Bon Echo Provincial Park, *The Era of Cosplay*, about a girl who learned to love herself through cosplay, *When the War Comes Home* about a man who served in Rwanda who has PTSD, and *Beyond the Stars* about a local man who is a doctor by day and an astrophotographer by night.

Chinese culture captured in calligraphy

By Litong Chi

It was back in March 2004, when Xueyuan Wang and his friend Jun Wang started Lingao County Calligrapher Organization (LCCO). They devoted themselves to the dissemination of Chinese calligraphy culture.

"We only had 12 people when we first started, but now we have over 150 members. We have our own publication and newspaper," said Xueyuan Wang, the founder of LCCO.

Lingao county is one of the poorest counties in China. However, this impoverished place has inherited significant culture more than any other developed major cities in the country.

Instead of digital printing, most of them posters or promotional pieces you find on the street in Lingao are all hand-written. People decorate their

front doors with their own creations of calligraphy or wash painting.

In Chinese calligraphy, the way you write every stroke is just as important as the content. Different content goes with different fonts. People use Cao font to write passion, Kai font to write peacefulness, and Xing font is a way to express calm in the heart.

"Your personality are all revealed on the paper. Looking at one's writing is an efficient way to know the person. You are the way you write," said Jun Wang, co-founder of LCCO.

To prevent this precious culture from disappearing, the Chinese government has started to encourage all schools to consider calligraphy as part of their courses.

For a video look at this story, go to: <https://vimeo.com/158424279>

Three programs put on hold for now

Advertising and marketing communications being suspended

By Litong Chi

This March is the last month for the advertising and marketing communications program. It is also the last month of Professor Harvie Brydon's 30 years of career at Loyalist College.

Loyalist announced the college will not be accepting new students for advertising and marketing communications, graphic design and broadcast engineering technology. However, current students are able to finish the program they enrolled in.

Both graphic design and broadcast engineering technology are three-year programs, so these two programs will still be around for one more year so students in third year can achieve their diplomas.

"When we suspended the program, we made a commitment to the students that we will allow them to finish the program," said John McMahon, the college's senior vice-president, academic and student success.

But advertising and marketing communication, a two-year program, will have to say goodbye this year.

"The decision to retire or suspend a program is never taken lightly, but it is a decision that is part of a normal review by colleges, where we look at the health of the program," McMahon said.

The number of students in the program, financial issues and quality issues are three elements the college considers

to determine the health of a program. McMahon emphasized these three programs have no quality issues -- they are great programs with high quality.

"The style of learning is the best thing about this program. We work in process with our students. Also, creative thinking is a component in this program that could be introduced in many programs," said Brydon, a professor of advertising and marketing communication.

Broadcast engineering technology, a unique program in Ontario, is also one of the three suspended programs.

"Having to just met with the director of engineering for Corus radio and heard his dismay over the suspension, I know the industry still has a need," said Eric Heidendahl, professor of broadcast engineering technology.

"This program is unique and our grads have an excellent chance of getting really good jobs after graduating. On top of this, the industry is solidly behind this program as they need engineering grads to fill a need."

There were students who were interested in these three suspended programs, but they can't pursue those programs at Loyalist College for now.

A detailed communication plan has put in place after the college suspended intakes on these three programs. The school communicated with all students who applied to these programs and explained the situation to them, and also offered them alternative programs or redirected and helped them to apply to the same program in other colleges.

To suspend any program is a tough decision for a college to make, and there is always a possibility to bring a program back. The suspension could



Photo by Litong Chi

Professor Harvie Brydon has been teaching at Loyalist College for 30 years. The program he teaches, advertising and marketing communications, is one of the three programs that have been put on hold.

be an opportunity for the college to offer the program in a better way (for example, a three-year program might be shortened to two-year program). The college needs a strong business case from these programs, in order to bring them back.

"No decision has been made," said

McMahon.

While it is farewell to these suspended programs, Loyalist has also added five new programs: aboriginal construction renovation, college technology and trade preparation, entrepreneurial studies - business launch, general arts and science - workplace and international

trade and logistics management.

"Many of these new programs are specific programs design for a specific group of students. When you bring in a new program, it's important to support the program for a little while, but after that, we have to really evaluate," said McMahon.

Love blossoms from dating sites

Online places to find romance becoming more popular

By Emily Reeson

The online dating industry, including popular dating apps such as Tinder, is a \$153-million a year industry and is growing at a steady pace.

What is driving this industry to an all-time high? According to Michelle Jetha, a psychology professor at Cape Breton University and specialist in human sexuality and social and emotional well-being, there are a number of reasons we seek the company of others.

"Many factors drive us to be in relationships. We are a social species. We need to be with other humans. The drive is in part physical and has a basis in brain chemistry. Falling in love produces a very euphoric feeling (romantic and passionate love). As humans, we innately want to connect with others."

According to Statistics Canada, over 14 million people in 2014 used on-line dating sites. Eighteen to 34-year-olds account for 39 per cent of online dating users.

"The internet has opened a lot of doors for meeting partners and communicating with others. It's a billion dollar industry that has been growing in part because of the money it generates," said Jetha.

The popular dating app Tinder boasts it "empowers users around the world to create new connections that otherwise might never have been possible." According to a dating site's review, Tinder has over 50 million users world-wide.

Some of these sites are stereotyped as being popular "hook up" sites. Meeting partners through dating services, now done online, has been popular for years. With the internet allowing us to access a wider audience, it has now increased in popularity and has become a huge moneymaker in the process.

Traditional dating sites may not have boasted 50 million users, but they have assisted with creating life-long relationships. Linda Gratton, of St. Catharines, Ont., first used a dating site advertised in a local paper in 1985. The process was much different than using sites such as Tinder.

"Each person would go to the office of the dating service and answer many

questions. Then they would input them into the computer. Then, in a few weeks, you would get a letter of the person you were matched up with. You were only obligated to spend 15 minutes with the person. If it didn't feel good, off you go," says Gratton.

Gratton and her husband Norm did meet through a dating service in 1985 and have been married for 28 years.

Each person has their own reason for using services to assist them in connecting with others.

"My sister came to me with the article and convinced me to sign up because I was working in a hair salon with women all day and I didn't like to go to bars, so I thought I would give it a try," said Gratton.

Now, when using on-line sites, profiles are easily accessible and all you have to do is pick whom you are interested in.

"The first things you see on Tinder are pictures. Then, with a tap into someone's profile, you can learn much more, including who your common friends are, what interests you both share, their job and education background, and other fun stuff the user chooses to share. This gives you context before deciding whether to swipe right," explained information on the Tinder site.

'The internet has opened a lot of doors for meeting partners and communicating with others. It's a billion dollar industry that has been growing in part because of the money it generates.'

Psychology professor Michelle Jetha

Some users of these sites may just be looking for 'friends with benefits.' "Friends with benefits receive benefits of intimacy and sex, but avoid commitment and responsibilities of a relationship. Women tend to see these relationships as more emotionally involved and men put more emphasis on the sexual benefits," says Jetha.

However, there are healthy long-term relationships that come about because of the ability to connect with many more people through the Internet and on-line dating sites.

"According to research, factors that influence relationships include: geographical nearness (proximity), similarity with respect to age, educational status, and religious affiliation, reciprocity of love, and physical attractiveness," says Jetha.

All of these criteria can be screened even before meeting some one face to face now.

The majority of humans want to bond with one another and now the world is wide open to find "Mr" or "Mrs" right, whether for the short term or a life-long relationship.



Photo by Emily Reeson

Caleb Champagne and Mara Berris fell in love through Tinder. "It was better than anything that I could have, especially off Tinder," said Champagne, who has been in a relationship with Berris for a year.

Church descendants gather for special weekend event this summer

By Emily Lafleur

The Old Hay Bay Church, the oldest surviving Methodist Church in Canada, is opening its doors this summer for a special event for descendants of the founders of the church or those related to families of the youth who drowned nearby in 1819.

In that year, Barnard Cole and his family lived across the bay from the Old Hay Bay church. He owned a boat that he used to cross the bay.

On that fateful day, the boat was headed to church across the bay. Four of the Cole family were among those in the boat. Three of the family members would eventually survive.

There were 18 people in the boat in total, including four members of the Cole family. All of them, with the exception of Barnard Cole and his wife, were young people.

About half way across the bay on the way to the

Sunday service, the boat was leaking badly. Those aboard tried to fix the leak but by that time, the water was pouring in too fast.

One of the young men said he was a good swimmer and decided to jump out to lighten the load. In doing so he rocked the boat.

A number of the young women, who could not swim, struggled and clung to each other and in this way, they all drowned. Those who clung to the boat kept floating until help came, but 10 of the 18 people originally on board drowned.

Nine of the graves of the victims are in the cemetery across from the church, and one person was buried on the north shore.

The fundraising event takes place Aug. 26, 27 and 28. The event is called ROOTS 2016 and will be held at the church. Funds raised will cover the costs of the events planned for the day, which include a dinner and pilgrimage church service with guest speaker.

Old Hay Bay Church was built in 1793 when money was donated to build a Methodist church in Adolphustown, now Greater Napanee.

Many tourists who visit Old Hay Bay Church are researching their own roots. The church's board of directors decided to combine this interest in discovering roots with the annual pilgrimage service at the church. They will make it a day-long event with fun family events, a dinner, a church service and guest speakers.

The church is also a provincial and national historical site. Old Hay Bay Church encourages everyone, people of all ages, to celebrate, learn about and appreciate this important part of Canadian history. This year, several fundraisers will be held on Aug 25 to 28 to help fund these annual events.

Kathrine Staples is a trustee and also the treasurer of the board of directors of Old Hay Bay Church. She was also chairperson of the Adolphustown Bicentennial Celebrations in 1984. She knows the interest

people show in their roots and wants to make a success of the new and improved Old Hay Bay Church annual historical celebrations.

"Many people, from near and far, are cooperating and helping with this event," she says.

The planning committee is preparing a wide variety of events. On Aug. 25, there will be a movie event featuring a film called *Discovering Emma*. This movie was made at Old Hay Bay Church in 2003. Rebecca Wilkinson, a Loyalist College graduate from the Radio Arts program and the screenwriter for the film, will be there.

There will also be book vendors and guest speakers talking on the theme of Insight. Bus tours, activities for children and a dinner with entertainment will be part of the event. Aug. 27 will also be the day of The Old Hay Bay Church annual Pilgrimage church service. There will be a guest speaker at the church service and the Salvation Army Band will play.

Documentaries shed light on water quality issues in Bay of Quinte

By William Acri

Local Belleville residents came to the Belleville Public Library Saturday to watch informative documentary films that shed light on the problems associated with high levels of phosphorus in the Bay of Quinte.

The two films, created by Douglas Knutson in partnership with The Bay Of Quinte Remedial Action Plan were titled: *Excess Phosphorus In The Bay Of Quinte* and *Bay Of Quinte Aquatic Bugs*.

The first film showed that over the years, the levels of phosphorus in the bay have greatly decreased. However, the film's main point was highlighting the problem that high levels of phosphorus in water can cause, including producing high levels of algae, which in turn can destroy aquatic plants, fish habitats and turn clear water dirty.

Sarah Midlane-Jones, who works with The Bay Of Quinte Remedial Action Plan, said "Phosphorus is a naturally occurring element in nature. It's when you get an excess of it that it can become problematic." She went on to say that "it takes one pound of phosphorus to grow 500 pounds of algae."

Jones added that some of the sources that lead to an excess amount of phosphorus are sewage treatment plants, agricultural runoff and storm drains, which at some point all end up in the Bay of Quinte.

Douglas Knutson, who has lived in the Belleville area for 53 years, said "back in the '70s and '80s, there was so much algae in the water here that



Photo by Will Acri

Douglas Knutson and Sarah Midlane-Jones attend the premiere of their film shorts at the Belleville Public Library. These two films aimed to raise awareness for the current state of the health of the Bay of Quinte.

the treatment of it required massive amounts of chlorine."

"The big complaint here was the smell and taste of the water," he explained.

Knutson noted that he although doesn't support an introduction of a

new species into a stable eco-system, but he does remember when zebra mussels first showed up in the bay, over time they ate most of the algae and the resulting effect was clear-looking water.

Perry DeCola, superintendent at the water treatment plant in Belleville, said, "Phosphorus is a natural nutrient found in aquatic environments and it has always been in the Bay Of Quinte."

"There is a treatment called 'The Tertiary Treatment' which can be used to filter out all nutrients like phosphorus but it is very expensive and it can clog filters very quickly," said DeCola.

He went on to say that, "household waste water, either sink, drain or toilet, does heighten the levels of phosphorus in the bay."

The superintendent noted that the water treatment plant does chemically treat the water to remove phosphorus by using ferric chloride which greatly reduces the levels of phosphorus in the bay and in Belleville's drinking water.

The future for The Bay of Quinte Remedial Action Plan will include their continued effort to educate people about clean water and keep pushing for lower levels of phosphorus in the Bay Of Quinte. The Bay of Quinte Remedial Action Plan has been active in the Belleville area since 1985, and they came into existence as part of The Great Lakes Water Quality Agreement. The agreement, which, was enacted in 1972, is a shared piece of legislation between the United States and Canada. It lays out laws aimed at keeping the water in the great lakes clean.



Photo by Lindsay Leveque

Darci McCulloch, 27, knows the importance of not only feeding her son Jacob, 2, healthy and nutritious food but also teaching him about healthy eating and gardening and where food comes from. "I try to teach my son about healthy food by getting him to help prepare all his meals with me. I include him in this process so I can teach him about food and where it comes from. It's more important to me to make sure my son gets the proper nutrition than to justify being lazy and substituting processed, GMO food that degrades my son's health," says McCulloch. Photo by Lindsay Leveque

Parents should make healthy choices

Feeding good food to children important for learning

By Lindsay Leveque

"I try to teach my son about healthy food by getting him to help prepare all his meals with me. I include him in this so I can teach him about food and where it comes from."

Local mother Darci McCulloch, 27, knows the importance of feeding her son Jacob, 2, healthy and nutritious food. An important part of being a parent is to help your children eat well and be physically active, according to the Dietitians of Canada.

"It's more important to me to make sure my son gets the proper nutrition than to justify being lazy and substituting processed, GMO food that degrades my son's health," says McCulloch.

Healthy eating helps children concentrate and perform better in not only school but also sports and other day-to-

day activities, according to the dietitian website.

"He is fascinated with gardening and this will be our second year planting our own garden. He helps through the whole process and by summer he is eating cherry tomatoes right from the vine," says McCulloch.

The Dietitians of Canada also state that the most important thing you can do to help your children develop healthy eating habits is to lead by example, because children learn their eating habits from their parents.

"I believe as a consumer it is my right and responsibility to know what I am putting into mine and my son's bodies. As a parent, I am obligated to keep my child fed and I think that many parents seem to not take this aspect of being a parent seriously," said McCulloch.

"My son has been eating the same thing as me since I could blend it for him," she added.

According to Statistics Canada, between November 2007 and 2008, the cost of bakery and other cereal products rose 13 per cent, while fresh fruit rose 19 per cent and fresh vegetables rose 29

'He is fascinated with gardening and this will be our second year planting our own garden. He helps through the whole process and by summer he is eating cherry tomatoes right from the vine.'

Darci McCulloch

per cent. The unsustainable price inflation for nutritious food undermines Canadians efforts to protect and enhance their health through a good diet.

"I believe that the increasing price of fresh produce can deter some parents away, but then again it all comes back to education, price matching and budgeting. If produce isn't on sale or is expensive, I would look to frozen veggies and fruits. Even if buying fresh, healthy food may seem a little more expensive,

in the long run even if I spent 50 dollars extra every penny would be worth it," says McCulloch.

The Community Development Council of Quinte started an initiative called the Good Food Box Program, which offers buyers fresh, nutritious fruits and vegetables at \$15 for a large box and \$10 for a small box, available monthly.

The boxes are packed in Belleville and distributed throughout Hastings and Prince Edward Counties. The types of fruits and vegetables change monthly depending on what is in season and the box itself is available to any and everyone according to the CDC Quinte website.

Also available is the Good Baby Box, similar to the Good Food Box except this box includes baby food and baby care items such as jarred baby food, cereal, diapers, baby wipes, shampoo, and formula, according to the CDC Quinte website.

The Heart and Stroke Foundation states only one in eight children in Ontario meet the daily recommendations for fruit and vegetables.

In Ontario, one in three children are

overweight or obese, a rate that has tripled in the past 25 years, according to Statistics Canada.

Almost half of children will be at an unhealthy weight by 2040, and 70 per cent of today's children will be overweight or obese adults, according to Statistics Canada.

Breakfast for Learning is one of the largest charities focusing on children's nutrition in Canada. Breakfast for Learning has been supporting school-based breakfast, lunch and snack programs for over 20 years.

In 2015, Breakfast for Learning funded 1,887 breakfast, lunch and snack programs operating in 1,656 schools which in turn supports over 238,000 children.

Hunger has a big impact on a child's ability to learn and function, yet one in six Canadian children face hunger every year, according to the Breakfast for Learning website.

Children who go to school hungry risk many life-long consequences such as less developed literacy and numeracy skills and poor health due to a lack of nutrition, according to Breakfast for Learning.



Photo by Will Acri

Aakash Patel has been in Canada since 2014. He is an international student from India and currently majors in bio-science program at Loyalist College.

Newcomer makes home at Loyalist

Bio-science student going to work towards pharmacy exam

By William Acri

Aakash Patel came to Canada two years ago from Gujarat, India looking for a better future. He found the pathway to that future at Loyalist College by studying bio-science.

Patel wanted to go Australia and do his schooling there because his sister lives in Melbourne. However, getting his citizenship there proved to be difficult and his second choice was Canada, because his cousin lives here in Belleville.

Patel's interest in bio-science started in India where he was working towards getting his Masters of Pharmacy degree. However, Patel felt that his prospects were better studying abroad and he said he hopes to be a pharmacist once he passes the pharmacy exam.

When Patel was asked about how he copes with Canadian winters, he replied, "the summer in India is too hot to handle." Patel said he was hoping to enjoy the beautiful beaches of Australia, but added, "I can visit Australia sometimes."

Patel isn't sure right now if he is going to get his full Canadian citizenship, but for his short-term future, he's working towards passing the pharmacy exam in order to achieve that open door to a well-paying job and future career.

Patel and some of his family are from Gujarat, India, which is located in western India. That area experiences hot summers and mild winters.

It is in a part of India which is rich with culture and history and has been referred to as the jewel of India in historical documentation of that area.

Loyalist College is home to international students from all over the world. The college is hoping to continue giving international students a chance to study in Canada.



Photo by Andrew Johnson

Gifts of kindness

Sisters Janice MacLeod (left) and Chris Macdonald load up their goody bags to be randomly distributed to people throughout Belleville as part of the Violence Awareness and Random Acts of Kindness Week. The program, which Macdonald started after her son Mark Fyke was killed in 1997 while on vacation in Florida, celebrates its 20th anniversary. Their goal is to promote acts of kindness to complete strangers, with the idea that goodwill prevents acts of violence. "Everyone has a story," says Macdonald. "Sometimes just a small act of kindness can make a big change in a person's life."

Literacy critical in early years

By Emily Reeson

The Ontario government has taken an active role in assisting caregivers in supporting the development of critical early literacy skills in their children through the creation and ongoing support of over 100 Early Years Centres.

Strong early literacy skills have long been recognized as a key indicator of future school success. Research has shown that the basis for these skills begins to develop between infancy and three years old.

"Children with strong early literacy skills entering into a kindergarten program tend to be the leaders in inquiry-based programs and excel. The inquiries would likely be more individual allowing students to follow their own interests instead of a group inquiry," said Tina Cochrane, an experienced early childhood educator who works for the Halton District School Board. With solid early literacy skills developing upon entry to school, children are going to engage, take risks and feel positive about learning.

These skills are promoted through early

exposure and handling books, but this is not the only experience needed to develop these skills. According to Zero to Three: National Centre for Infants, Toddlers and Families website, "The interactions that young children have with such literacy materials as books, paper, and crayons, and with the adults in their lives are the building blocks for language, reading and writing development."

In order to assist parents with learning about and supporting their child's cognitive and literacy development Early Years Centres were established throughout Ontario starting in 2004. "My mandate is to support literacy programs and promote early literacy in the communities that I service," said Donna Kaye, the early literacy specialist for the south Hastings and Prince Edward area, which includes Belleville.

The Ontario government states that it is now committed to further improving the services provided to families by the year 2018. The government says it is working on integrating existing family programs funded by the Ontario government with

the Early Years Centres to "give families and children access to high-quality early years programs, as well as some programs that meet needs within their community," according to the government's website.

Accessible resources as well as programs for parents of children from infancy to six-years-old are currently accessible in Belleville, through Family Space.

The focus of these centres is to provide programs that are inquiry-based allowing children to play with materials and within experiences that promote the six essential skills needed to support and enhance literacy development: having fun with books, learning about print, sounds that are made in speech, knowing letters, developing word understanding and being able to tell a story. "The most important thing for young children to develop strong early literacy skills is exposure to language whether through books, poems, songs, writing or talking," said Cochrane.

Children learn through play and by playing with literacy-rich materials and in a literacy-rich environment these skills develop naturally. These experiences oc-

cur through inquiry-based learning. Cochrane states that inquiry-based learning is when an educator plans and provides experiences and materials for exploration based on the children's interests.

These centres also assist parents with learning about and understanding early-literacy skills and development. According to the early years website, these programs "support all parents and caregivers in their roles. Parents and caregivers also have access to information about child development and specialized services as needed."

Early literacy skills evolve naturally through playing with books, through positive play interactions and modeling of adults and ongoing literacy (speaking, reading, writing) interactions between young children and the adults in their life.

According to Kaye, baby bouncer and book programs are one of the most popular programs offered through Belleville's Family Space. "It is for parents who have babies under 12 months. We meet over four weeks. We come together for an hour each time, learning songs and rhymes and

all those wonderful early literacy activities that are going to encourage our children and help boost their language development. I really believe that early literacy learning is all about developing relationships and face to face positive interactions using lots of language and exposing them to language in a playful way and introducing books to them in this way," said Kaye.

Kaye believes that children should be continually exposed to books from the time that they are born. "Even in our prenatal programs, we promote reading to babies from the start and how important it is," said Kaye.

Parents, grandparents, educators and child-care providers support children under their care in the best ways they can. These centres are a source of support in promoting early literacy skills to assist with the future success of the children that they care about.

The Family Space Early Years Centre in Belleville is located at 100 Station St. To find out more about this community resource and available programs, visit www.familyspace.ca.



Photo by Emma Gardner

A night of music

By Emma Gardner

The sounds of Irish flutes and whistles are in the air. The violinists are playing perfectly with the beat of the bodhrán. When they are all playing together in harmony, it truly transports you to Ireland. You can imagine the way the land looks and you can almost smell the Irish stew. You can see people laughing and dancing. It is amazing.

There's just something about the way live music lifts your spirits and dances with your soul. It has a way of making you feel different things, depending on what's playing, and it brings people together.

The Quinte Irish Canadian Society aims to preserve Irish music, singing and dancing. To accomplish that, they hold live music sessions every Wednesday night. People of all ages and different playing levels gather together to honour their ancestry with traditional Irish music.

It is an hour-and-a-half of pick your tune, then people start playing and others join in whenever. Some of them have been playing together for 10 years. Others have only just joined. No matter what your skill level is or who you are, they welcome you with open arms.

(From left) Corroll Leafe on violin, Wilfred Gauble on the Irish flute and Jeff Mouck on the accordion all play Irish music together every Wednesday night.



(Above) Fatima, far right, sits with her four young children and her mother-in-law Seddiqa in the living room of their home. Several days earlier Fatima's husband, Baseer Ahmad, a security guard, was killed when a Taliban suicide bomber struck a popular French restaurant in Kabul. Ahmed was the family's sole breadwinner. "I hope no mother ever sees this," said Seddiqa.

Photo by Zachary Prong

(Below) A portrait of Baseer Ahmad. "He went to earn money to provide for us a morsel of food and he ended up dead," said his mother Seddiqa.

Afghan civilian casualties on the rise

By Zachary Prong

On the evening of Jan. 1, 2016, 12-year-old Ahmad Baset was picking up groceries for his family at the local corner store on a quiet, muddy side street in Kabul. Across the road, 40-year-old Baseer Ahmad, the father of four young girls, was manning the security gate at the Le Jardin restaurant, one of the few establishments left in the city that catered to the dwindling population of foreigners.

It was approximately 9 p.m. Suddenly, without warning, a massive explosion erupted. Glass, twisted metal and ball bearings ripped through walls, cars and human flesh. Le Jardin burst into flames and the front of the restaurant completely collapsed.

The blast killed Ahmad instantly and a piece of shrapnel tore through Baset's head. He was pronounced dead upon arrival at the hospital. Dozens more were wounded, many horrifically.

Sitting in the living room of their small apartment, Ahmad's mother Sidiqa, his wife Fatima and her four young children sat and cried as they mourned the loss of their family's sole breadwinner.

Sidiqa says her grandchildren don't understand what happened to their father.

"The youngest one is shocked. She cries and asks where her father is. She cries and hits herself. Whatever we do we can't stop her," she

said, and then pointed to her other granddaughter, "This one says her father has gone to get food. That he will bring biscuits for them," said Sidiqa, "I hope no mother ever sees this."

Ahmad's salary was modest, just enough to cover basic expenses, and now that he is gone, his family is left unsure how they will get by.

For Baset's family, the loss of their oldest son has been devastating.

"He was kind and always looked out for his younger siblings," said his father Ahmad Jowad.

"Everyone is hopeless now. We've lost hope," said his uncle, Muhammad Masef.

Civilian Casualties on the Rise
The attack, claimed by the Taliban, was just one of many that have devastated families across the country.

According to a United Nations Report released in February 2016, civilian casualties in Afghanistan last year were the highest since they began keeping track in 2009; 3,545 were killed and another 7,457 were injured.

The growing violence across the country, coupled with steep economic decline since the beginning of the international drawdown in 2014, has left many in Afghanistan with a deep sense of anxiety about their country's future.

Record numbers of civilians have fled the country and Afghan refugees attempting to make their way to Europe are second only to Syrians.

But despite the increasing levels of violence and economic instability, many Afghans are choosing not to vote with their feet. Many want to stay and ensure that any progress made since 2001 does not disappear.

Sitting in a café where men and women mix freely, an unthinkable scene not many years ago, a group of young Afghans belonging to the Non-Violent World Organization (NVWO), an Afghan NGO that encourages non-violence and respect for human rights, all talked about their desire to stay in Afghanistan.

Shaber Khuram, a recent high school graduate and member of NVWO, talked about some of the challenges he has faced growing up in Afghanistan.

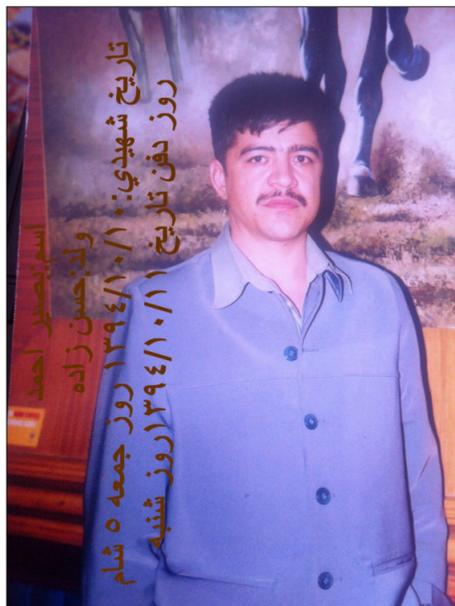
Just last year when he was travelling from Kabul to his hometown in Samangan Province the Taliban stopped the bus he was riding on. They forced the passengers off the bus, searched them, and after finding a man with an Afghan National Army ID card they executed him on the spot.

"No kid should have to see things like this," said Khura.

But when asked if he wanted to stay in Afghanistan, he replied yes.

"It's not my fault that I was born in Afghanistan, but it is my fault if I don't do anything to change it," said Khura.

For a video look at this story, go to: <https://vimeo.com/158388525>



(Left) A portrait of 12-year-old Ahmad Baset taken at a friend's birthday party a few weeks before he was killed.

(Right) Ahmad Jowad prays at his son's grave a week after he was buried.
Photo by Zachary Prong

Brrrrrrrrr – a chilly dip



Photo by Assad Sharifi

YMCA lifeguards Lesley Butler (left) and Tasha Dobson go for a plunge in the Bay of Quinte to raise money. The Loyalist College public relations class organized the fundraiser. Over 200 people attended the event and nearly \$8,000 was raised for Belleville YMCA.



(Above) Francine Short and Lyndsay Kerik, Loyalist College employees, take a plunge last Saturday morning.

Photo Assad Sharifi

(Below) Steven Halloran dips in cold water to support Freezin' for a Reason, a fundraising event organized by Loyalist College public relations students, in Belleville.

Photo by Beatrice Serdon



(Above) Kayden Hennig bathes in the freezing water at the East Bayshore Park in Belleville. Photo by Assad Sharifi

(Below) Peter Knudson dips in cold water to support Freezin' for a Reason last Saturday. The event raised \$7,400 which will go to the YMCA Strong Kids program.

Photo by Beatrice Serdon



Take a look at all the sights and sounds of Freezin' for a Reason: <https://vimeo.com/158488973>



Around 50 men, women and children showed their support by marching through the streets of downtown Belleville for International Women's Day. The crowd shouted various chants like, "Equality for all, make it happen," promoting gender equality for all women. Mieke Thorne, an organizer in the event says, "There was a really good turnout this year, even better than last."

Photo by Taylor Bertelink



(Above) Organizer Mieke Thorne (left) shares a lighter moment with another participant after the two took part in the International Women's Day march in downtown Belleville this week.

Photo by Curtis O'Connor

(Bottom left) Ken Palmer and David Milne march for International women's day in downtown Belleville. The march was to create awareness against sexual assault and other forms of violence against women.

Photo by Aman Parhar

(Bottom right) People of all ages took part in the march to celebrate the role of women in the world.

Photo by Aman Parha

March...

Continued from Page 1

She became a client of the Domestic Violence and Sexual Assault Response Centre (DVSAR) where she received counselling for two years.

"They did so much for me. They helped me immensely," said Hendricks, "so I wanted to give back and started volunteering with them."

Hendricks now works with the DVSAR team. When women who've been sexually assaulted come forward, she's brought in to assist them.

"I want them to know there's a light at the end of the tunnel," said Hendricks.

For her, events like the International Women's Day March are important because she believes we still haven't achieved gender equality here in Canada.

"Things are not equal and there's room for improvement," said Hendricks, "We need to come together and raise awareness, and we need younger people to get involved to keep it going."



On the street

Litong Chi and Andrew C. Johnson asked people at Loyalist College the following question:

What's your plan after graduation?



Aaryaman Sundarakrishnan, TV and new media, "I didn't get an internship yet. I'm probably going to move to Toronto. Jobs related to media production and documentary production are what I am looking into now."



Autumn MacPherson, police foundations, "I will be coming back to Loyalist College next year for Community and Justice Services. I plan to apply to the RCMP (Royal Canadian Mounted Police) after graduating from that program."



Joban Sran, business administration, "I want to find a job or continue my education in London. I have relatives over there."



Krutika Patel, advertising and marketing communication, "I'm not staying in Belleville. I like Manitoba, so I may find a job there and save up for university."



Simran Sran, biotechnology, "I have two more months before my student visa expires. If I find a job within two months, I will apply for my work visa. If not, I will probably apply for other universities."



Suman Sangha, health administration, "I just graduated last December, I'm looking into nursing and other health-related programs right now."

Editorial

Government makes big promises

Last October, a Red Tide swept into parliament, ousting the Conservatives with a campaign built on Liberal idealism. Some big promises have been made, not the least of which has been a plan to correct the nation's course on environmental policy. This return to the climate fight was announced with much fanfare as Justin Trudeau arrived at the December 2015 Paris Climate Talks fresh off a decisive election victory, proudly proclaiming: "We're back."

Is this all just political chest-beating? Is the government going to follow through and, if so, will any of it matter? Some scientists are becoming increasingly alarmed at data that suggests the warming of our planet has gotten out of our control. It may end up being a case of too little too late.

Canada has been a laggard in the climate arena. We gave the middle finger to the world back in 2011, being the only country to pull out of the 1997 Kyoto Protocol with its landmark carbon reduction targets. We signed an agreement in Copenhagen in 2009, but that's just a pretty piece of paper now, as our meagre national CO₂ target of 17 per cent below 2005 levels by 2020 is a pipe dream after over seven years of Stephen Harper at the wheel.

NASA recently reported that January 2016 saw the most abnormal temperature rise in history. There are signs that some parts of the world, specifically the northern hemisphere, have already breached the mark of plus 2 degrees Celsius over pre-industrial times. That mark, says the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change, is the final barrier against the inevitable heat-death of our planet.

The prime minister has pushed for a national carbon-pricing strategy, with the overall goal that Canada will work towards reducing its carbon emissions as per agreements made during the 2015 Paris Climate Talks.

Since the election was announced, Trudeau promised he would sit down with provincial and territorial leaders within 90 days of the Paris conference "to establish a pan-Canadian framework for combating climate change."

That meeting wrapped up on Friday with the expectation that ministers would emerge with a framework for a national climate change strategy. What the conference really accomplished was to begin another six months of consultations. Ministers have promised to report back by September, the month some environmental groups set as the deadline for having a national climate plan in place if Canada is to show the world that it's really "back."

It remains to be seen, however, whether any of this will have much of an effect as temperatures steadily rise every year. Canada, having a colder climate, actually stands to benefit from global warming, according to a recent report in the journal *Nature*. But just how secure will we be if we're an island of calm in a volatile world?

Nearly three quarters of the world's (mostly poor) citizens live in the warmer regions of our planet vulnerable to climate change. The crises that would likely arise as a result of an increase in famines, droughts and floods would certainly be a threat to Canada's stability, even if a warmer climate is a boon for us. Just a look at the recent refugee situation in Europe, and it doesn't take a scientist to see that no single nation would be disaffected by a climate over the edge.

Less than three years ago Canada was listed as among the most wasteful countries on earth. The Conference Board of Canada found in 2013 that while we are improving the energy efficiency of our economic output, we're doing it at a slower rate than most. We also produce twice as much garbage per capita than the Japan, a much more densely populated country than ours. Environmental inefficiency is our *modus operandi*.

We're all in this together, and every little bit is going to count if we're to save our planet. Canada needs to pull its weight.

The current government intends to do its part to curtail this climate doomsday scenario. The question is, whether or not we will be able to fulfill our lofty goals, and whether any of it will really matter in the end.

Andrew Johnson

China's one-child policy ends, but attitudes don't

After 35 years, China's one-child policy has come to an end. China is ready for change, but the Chinese are not.

"I can't even afford to raise one child. I'm not going to have a second child just because they finally change the law," said Guodong Zhang. Zhang comes from a middle-class family. His son, an only child, just had his second birthday.

There are millions of cases like Zhang and his family whose desire to have another child has been dampened by the reality of their financial situation. Parents in China are now, after more than 30 years, allowed to have a second child. The Chinese government approved the two-child policy last October, but it may be too late to change the custom that has already been shaped over decades.

According to China Parenting's official website, it costs approximately half a million yuan (\$100,000 Cdn.) to raise a child from birth to 18 years of age in China (this includes basic life expenses, education, health-care costs, etc.), and that is only an average cost. Statistics China shows the average salary in China for 2015 was 45,000 yuan (\$9,000 Cdn.) per year, which means it will take over 11 years of savings (with no spending on basic necessities) to earn enough money to raise a child.

This financial imbalance is the main reason why young adults, even after they form their own families, are still reliant on their parents' money to survive. And this issue, characteristic of Chinese society, has already become an obstinate malady that threatens to drag down China's economy.

On the other end of the spectrum is providing for elders in the family. Almost all young adults who are working their way up in society now were born under the one-child policy, and this puts them in a difficult position. Without siblings, the responsibility of taking care of both parents and grandparents falls on their shoulders alone.

The dilemma is that these young adults need financial support from their parents and even grandparents. And at the same time, elders need time and care from their kids, which doesn't allow the younger generation to explore the world and leave their family behind. On top of this, there's nothing in the way of support coming from the government.

The end of the one-child policy is assured, because some serious consequences are already starting to appear. There are problems arising with gender imbalance (over 37,000,000 more males than females), unstable family income (if a family loses the only child, this family becomes a poor household), and a high savings rate (due to the high cost of living) which is contributing to the Chinese economy's recent sluggish growth, and therefore the world economy's stagnation.

You can say the two-child policy is a good thing for China, but just like the nature of life, it takes time to see it grow. The impacts of this policy would not be seen for at least 10 years.

China is trying to reboot the economy by taking a radical new step, but if everything else stays the same, then it is not a real change.

Litong Chi



Opinion

The other side of Afghanistan's story

By Nick Tardif

Those seeking to only report on the misery and destruction that continues in parts of Afghanistan do a disservice to those Afghanistan and coalition forces who have fought and died to rescue a nation from the grips of Taliban rule.

These seekers of misery would have you believe Afghanistan is worse off today than it was under the Taliban's rule. That freeing an enslaved nation from an archaic ideology and setting it on a path to democracy was only done to fulfill the western world's need for conquest. They would try to convince you of this, but the facts don't support that narrative.

The reality is, progress is happening on many different fronts in Afghanistan. The progress is slow, it's steady, and it's real. It might not be exciting enough for the nightly news or front page headlines, but it exists if you're willing to look for it.

Since coalition forces freed the Afghan people from the tyrannical Taliban regime, the country has seen democratic elections, the building of schools, and women being educated and excelling in their chosen career. There's been a tremendous improvement to the quality

of Afghanistan's health care system and its ability to deal with infectious diseases. These advancements took time and sacrifice to achieve, and it shouldn't go unnoticed.

In 2014 with 55 per cent of the votes, Ashraf Ghani was sworn in as the president of Afghanistan in their first democratic transfer of power since the Taliban lost their grip on the country.

The World Bank reports that prior to the ousting of the Taliban in 2001, only 21 per cent of primary school children were enrolled in school. Ten years later in 2011, a whopping 97 per cent of primary school children were enrolled.

The education of women in Afghanistan is another brilliant success story. Girls under Taliban rule were forbidden to receive an education. As such, prior to the coalition invasion in 2001, no girls were known to be receiving a formal education. However, by 2012 the World Bank estimates that 2.9 million girls were attending schools and receiving a formal education.

Women still face widespread discrimination and violence in Afghanistan, but it is improving. Under Taliban oppression, women were forbidden to work and were married off at a young age. Although this still occurs in parts of Afghanistan, today's Afghan woman has found

opportunities that haven't existed for decades. Women now find employment as police officers, soldiers and even journalists. According to the Central Statistics Organization, women are filling the ranks of government agencies at a faster pace than their male counterparts.

In 1990, the mortality rate of children under the age of five was 18 per cent. The World Bank reported that in 2015 that number had declined to nine per cent. The immunization rate for measles in children aged 13-23 months has improved from 27 per cent in 2000 to 66 per cent in 2014.

These are not trivial, insignificant improvements to the quality of life for the average Afghan man, woman and child.

Are things in Afghanistan great? Absolutely not, especially when viewed through impatient western eyes. To say things are worse or only slightly better than under the Taliban rule is sensationalistic and disingenuous. To find success stories one simply has to look at the United Nations web page. There you'll find many inspiring examples of bravery and achievement.

It's not unreasonable to assume, that for a county like Afghanistan, that's been at war for decades, that progress could take some time.

Doors to remain open at Sir James Whitney

By Emily LaFleur

Sir James Whitney School for the Deaf and Ernest C. Drury School for the Deaf aren't going to close anytime soon, so that means deaf students will still have access to education and sign language. It also means the future of the deaf culture is looking bright.

Instead, Sagonaska Demonstration School for students with learning disabilities is at the risk for closing. This will affect students because public schools are not equipped for all students with special needs.

Todd Smith, MPP of Prince Edward-Hastings, spoke in the House of Commons and questioned Liz Sandals, Minister of Education, about the rumours about deaf schools closing and the potential closure of schools for students with learning disabilities. Sandals rejected the possibility but admitted that there will be investigation and study of all of these schools in Ontario to generate a report so the government can improve the quality of teaching and learning environments for students with unique needs. The reports could be anything from changing the curriculum to closing some schools and moving the students to one school for all. This means Centre Jules-Léger, the French

school for the deaf, could be closed because of fewer students, and the Sagonaska Demonstration School as well.

CJL has its own lawyer and they are fighting to keep the school opening. There are no other schools equipped for French students who are deaf. For the Sagonaska School, the parents of the students are fighting and trying to spread awareness.

I am deaf and an alumnae of Sir James Whitney School for the Deaf. I've experienced attending a public school for 15 years and decided to transfer to the deaf school at the age of 18. I finally learned sign language and realized that I basically learned nothing during the 15 years at my old public school. I wasn't provided an interpreter until I was in Grade 9, so I didn't know what was going on or what the teacher said during elementary school. In Grade 9, I struggled to understand the interpreter and the context of courses.

At the time, I was provided an English tutor and had her for two years. Shockingly, I didn't know about a deaf school until I was 18. I never knew anything about deaf culture or its history. That led me to transferring to Sir James Whitney where I stayed for two and a half years. I wish I had known about the school when I was young because, for the

first time, I actually felt like I am belonged. For the first time, I was able to question the teachers and worked with students directly. My reading and writing skills skyrocketed.

I am concerned about the possibility of closing all deaf schools because it means students will have less access to sign language, deaf culture and education. They would also be denied access to be with their peers. Students thrive better with those who are the same. Deaf students are able to learn from other deaf students, just like hearing students with their peers.

The public schools are not equipped because they don't have sign language interpreters so they have to hire one if they have a deaf student. For students with learning disabilities, they usually need more time to complete assignments and more time on the one-on-one teaching method. Students require different methods of teaching that the public schools are not equipped to do as well.

It is important to keep deaf culture by teaching sign language and keeping the schools open so the rich history of deaf won't be overlooked. This is all about the future of deaf children and children with learning disabilities.

The Pioneer

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The Pioneer welcomes your letters and comments. Please send material to the editor at the address below before Wednesday. We reserve the right to edit submissions for content and length. All letters must be signed and include a daytime phone number.
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