



Photo by Kaeden Dupre

Armandeep Singh, left, studying general arts and science, and Japinder Singh, enrolled in the PSW program, are first-year international students at Loyalist College. They describe their first winter experience as a big adjustment from the warmer climate of India.

Chilly temperatures a shock for students from warm climates

By Kaeden Dupre

The grass is frozen, and the trees are bare. Wind whips across the lightly damp powdered snow as it makes its way to send a painful chill to those just making their way to school. Some are lucky to have their own car, but the rest have to deal with the bitter cold as they wait for the bus.

International students making their first trip to Canada to receive an education feel the shock of winter's cold for the first time. Some come prepared, having had word from friends or family already living in Canada, but many come with little to protect themselves from the cold weather.

Students coming from warmer climates like India or Nigeria face spiralling costs along with the education in Canada, which is quite high. Buying a good winter jacket, thermal gloves, a toque, a scarf, and winter boots, along with warmer clothes like sweaters and thicker and heavier pants, can be very expensive for students newly arriving in Canada.

Loyalist College tries to help students by providing warm clothes for those who desperately require them but struggle to afford them.

"In our international office, we have a budget, and we get a lot of donations. Warm jackets, clothes, hoodies," Uzair Shahid said. "In our international

orientation, which usually happens in the first week of the classes, we put a significant amount of time into explaining how to cope with the winter, the importance of wearing warm clothes, and the importance of wearing waterproof shoes."

Shahid is the international student advisor at Loyalist College. He first came to Canada in 2017 as an international student. He describes January as the most challenging time of year to intake new international students as it falls right in the middle of the coldest season in Canada.

The biggest winter issue for international students at Loyalist right now is transportation. Many students

and even Shahid have described the Belleville transit system as unreliable.

"When they travel and stop at a bus stop for hours, especially when there are no buses and on holidays, it becomes very, very challenging for them," Shahid said.

As international students do not share the same holidays as Canadians, the busing system stopping on Canadian holidays creates a disruption in the lives of these students.

"At the beginning of the first move, it was so hard because lots of buses were not in service, and they were just out of service at the beginning," Nayana Shaji said.

Shaji is a first-year biotechnology

student at Loyalist. She describes her first experience with snowfall and cold weather as a special experience, but now as time has progressed, she has begun to find it irritating.

Most international students have at first enjoyed the snow but soon realized all the challenges that come with it. Not being able to go outside unless they have warm clothes, but even then, the wind is so fierce it drives them back inside.

Some advice for new international students from international students who have been in Canada over the winter is to purchase warm clothes, drink plenty of water, and seek advice from the international student advisor for any questions you may have.

Sports offer participants a sense of belonging

By Olivia Harvey

Community is something that comes easily to some people when moving to a new town, but for others, it might not be that simple.

Whether or not you're shy, unfamiliar, or stuck on where to start, finding somewhere you belong can be difficult. So when there's an opportunity to create your own community, would you take it?

For students at Loyalist College, the opportunity has been provided through the college's campus recreation program. For many years, Loyalist has recognized the significance of creating connections among students and has prioritized creating spaces for individuals where they can come together, socialize, and create lasting friendships.

Through multiple recreational programs, Loyalist can help bridge the gap between students from diverse backgrounds and offer the chance to build relationships that will show them support. Whether you're looking for a way to keep busy, stay active, take a break from academics, or meet new people, the Loyalist campus rec programs are welcoming and an inclusive environment.

"Sport and recreation is about so much more than skill level and win-



Photo by Olivia Harvey

A Loyalist College campus recreation soccer game is played at the Loyalist dome on Jan. 20.

ning - it's about teamwork, camaraderie and enjoyment. People from a range of backgrounds, cultures and beliefs come together to play a game, sport or take part in an activity, not because they're forced to, but because they chose to," said Amy Hoskin, the athletic co-ordinator at Loyalist College.

Hoskin also said that no matter your skill level or abilities, Loyalist tries to offer programs that can cater to anyone and everyone. The activities are open to full-time students at the college, and they are encouraged to try new things and have fun. Having staff who are mostly students themselves can also help foster a sense of relatability and participation. The staff are there to facilitate the activities, while also ensuring safe game play and co-operation.

Students find comfort in the ability to have these programs offered to them, which can help them find a sense of belonging in a new town and country. For those who are far from home, connecting with others can feel awkward or intimidating, but sports can provide instant common ground. It could be through a shared interest in a certain game or the simple act of physical activity. Participants can always come together and find something in common, right off the bat.



Photo by Phoenix Giroux

Sons of Jacob Synagogue's vice-president Shima Viggoda shows Festival of Faith attendees one of their Torahs on Monday.

Faith communities welcome everyone

By Phoenix Giroux

There are thousands of different religions, and in a world of uncertainty and a decline in religious practice, so being able to explore different faiths and beliefs can make a difference for all religious communities.

Some local Belleville churches only see about 100 to 150 participants each week, with the majority of that population being senior citizens, meaning in the coming decade, the number of participants will be reduced. Bringing in a younger congregation is the aim of many religions. By hiring younger spiritual leaders, the goal of bringing in more participants is hopeful.

"We come to these communities – it doesn't matter the faith or the philosophy – to be reminded of the love, compassion and service to others, and I think the noise of the world can often drown out what's important," said the festival organizer Lesya Fesiak.

The local group United Nations Quinte

Branch had a gap of public events since the pandemic and so local volunteers decided to put together the Belleville Festival of Faith. The Festival of Faith is completely volunteer-based with spaces even being donated.

There are 10 different faiths participating in this event, which is taking place Jan. 19 to Jan. 25.

The week started with a presentation by the Holy Trinity Greek Orthodox Church, led by Martin-Nektarios Shudall. It was a good turnout with a diverse group of people attending the one-hour information-packed session. Shudall spoke on the history of the Greek Orthodox Church, its customs and some rules that may not be commonly known; for example, musical instruments are not allowed in the church, as voice is much more powerful than any instrument.

On the same day, many participants were seen again, in the evening, at Eastminster United Church. Rev. Mike Putnam led the session with a big smile, ex-

'It's the United Church ethos that we want to be a community organization. We open our doors to all kinds of community groups and community things.'

Rev. Mike Putnam

cited to open the doors and meet people of the community, as he has only been at Eastminster for three weeks.

"It's the United Church ethos that we want to be a community organization. We open our doors to all kinds of community groups and community things. We support good things that are good for the world and the community, and so this building was built not just to serve

the worship on Sunday morning, but to serve the community," Putnam said as he spoke on the building of United Churches.

A sense of community can strongly be felt at each of the sessions. Many other presenters were seen seated in the pews and chairs of other faiths. Members of the Buddhist faith, who presented on Jan. 21 at the Belleville Public library were in attendance. Individuals from the Sons of Jacob Synagogue were also seen attending the presentations at Holy Trinity and Eastminster.

The Sons of Jacob Synagogue presented on Jan. 20, led by Norman Weddum. Many tables were set up with the local Jewish history and important Jewish items. The turnout of the third event of the series was nearly 50 with ages varying from senior citizens, middle-aged adults and a few young adults all eager to learn more on the customs of the Jewish faith.

The session at the synagogue was more interactive than the prior session, allow-

ing attendees to read about the history as well as allowing them to go up and see a Torah, after the hour-long information session ended.

The history and customs of every faith were discussed. Questions were asked and nothing was off limits. The Q&A part of each session really showed how curious people are, how much isn't taught and yet people are extremely interested.

The Faith Festival still has many sessions left. On Jan. 21, Hinduism and Buddhism both held sessions at the Belleville Public Library, and on Jan. 22 the Islamic Society of Belleville had a session.

On Jan. 23, the Kanyen'kehà:ka Traditional Beliefs and Baha'i Faith have a session scheduled in the evening at the Belleville Public Library. On Jan. 24, the Sikh Gurdwara community will have a session and will be providing head coverings at the event. And finally, on Jan. 25, the Christ Church Anglican will finish off the Festival of Faith.

Small business full of beans

By Kaeden Dupre

The smell of roasted coffee beans filled the air of the small shop of building 2, which is part of a group of buildings neatly tucked in the back of the small village of Stirling, Ont.

Six full burlap bags lay on pallets beside the big metal beast that turns green coffee beans into the bean that fuels most of the brains of people in all industries.

Jon Lawrence is a businessman; he owns and operates Maple Construction and Development Ltd. full-time, but on the side, his hobby is coffee roasting. Lawrence purchased the Epic North Coffee Company from a couple from Barrie, Ont., near the end of the COVID-19 pandemic. The business itself does not require a storefront as it operates primarily as a background business supplying cafes and restaurants.

"We'll do the roasting and more on the wholesale side to those companies, or we'll send finished bags to end users as well," Lawrence said. "Almost all of them bring in pre-roasted coffee because it's just another big step and a fair bit of equipment that they need to do it themselves."

The coffee market is extremely competitive, with major brands practically consuming the market because of their lower prices and brand recognition. However, coffee shops, cafes, and other small businesses have developed a trend of purchasing from local providers, which not only creates a mutually beneficial relationship, but also attracts consumers who feel more connected to their purchases because of their local proximity.

Coffee beans cannot be grown in Canada, but they can be sourced from ethically grown farms in South America and Asia. Small coffee roasters in Canada that sell ethically sourced coffee have gained the trust of the consumers because larger companies may provide coffee that was not sourced ethically or lower-quality



Photo by Kaeden Dupre

Jon Lawrence, the owner and operator of Epic North Coffee Co., stands beside his coffee roaster and watches the beans stir in the cooling tray. Lawrence's business is a small operation run in a business park in downtown Stirling.

products to make a larger profit.

As a business model in a Canadian market, small coffee roasting businesses can be sustainable. On average, Canadians consume 6.5 kg of coffee per person every year, according to the website MadeinCA.

Lawrence also supports the community through sponsoring a dirt rally driver, Jonathan Drake, out of Kingston, and an athlete, Brendan Neely, out of Barrie, who participates on the Spartan Race Circuit.

The Epic North Coffee Company operates out of a small lease in Stirling. It is operated solely by Lawrence. His opera-

tion consists of a small office and one coffee roaster approximately six feet tall, five feet long and three and a half feet wide. Lawrence also has an optical sorter. This machine separates discoloured beans or any with imperfections to have all the marketable beans ready to sell.

"It runs through the sorters so that before we would package and sell it, it's another double check just to ensure the highest quality we can get," Lawrence said.

The process begins with pouring the raw product from the burlap bags into the hopper on top of the roaster. The

batch is roasted at a certain temperature for a certain length of time before it gets dispensed onto the cooling tray, which stirs the beans until they are cool. Each batch is made with specific coffee beans that determine flavour profiles, but most of the desired flavour profile comes from the length and temperature with which the bean is roasted, like a dark, medium, or light roast. The batch then gets transported to the optical sorter. The finished product is then bagged with a heat sealer or stowed in bins for wholesale purchase.

Sports...

Continued from Page 1

Activities like sports are fundamentally about working together, and that shared knowledge can naturally create a sense of vulnerability for everyone. Letting students rely on each other results in the breaking down of barriers and helps to build relationships.

Beyond physical activity, these programs foster emotional well-being and build confidence for students so that they can thrive both academically and socially.

"I used to have a couple friends, but now I have a whole bunch, and we go to the campus rec times almost every week. You get to hang-out with your friends and play a sport you think is fun," said campus rec participant Sheri Kapoor.

It is evident that inclusion and encouragement are things that the staff of the campus rec programs are passionate about, constantly engaging with students, making sure they all feel welcomed.

Whether it's through kind words of encouragement or even actively participating in the activities, the staff always tries to make the atmosphere positive and supportive. The staff wants to encourage students to push themselves outside of their comfort zone, try new things and have fun while doing it.

"We want to encourage students who might be hesitant to join. It is important that staff and participants create a positive environment that encourages and includes everyone!" said Sarah Fielding, a staff worker for campus rec.

Loyalist's staff members and volunteers want their culture of inclusivity to make everyone feel involved and help people continue to make meaningful connections.



Photo by Olivia Harvey

Barrie Elites Volleyball Club 16u Black Ice team plays at a tournament at Richmond Hill High School. Rep volleyball can be a sport of immense pressure for teams.

Pressures common in youth sports

By Olivia Harvey

Youth sports like rep volleyball are meant to teach resilience, teamwork, skill, and the joy of playing the sport. But more often than not, young players tend to overlook these principles because of what some say is the intense need for victory or university/college scholarships. What was once a game of fun has now become filled with immense pressure to exceed expectations, with the outcome forcing its way out on and off the court.

Sports like volleyball, which are structured as one-half game play and one-half mental game play, make it a tough and demanding sport for young athletes, players say. When a rep team is faced with unfortunate losses at a tournament or a game, they say they often start to fall apart at the seams as a whole, as the invisible pressure comes to

a breaking point.

Often players let the emotions of the court get to them, causing them to tense up and make silly mistakes. The team dynamic then shifts to self, making a player's trust in their team fade which then leads to players taking the game into their own hands deciding they need to win back every point lost.

"Playing on a high paced team can be tough and very hard mentally. I try to not let all of the pressure get in my head by reminding myself that it is okay to make mistakes," said Scotlyn King, the libero for the Barrie Elites 16u Black Ice team.

Parents, coaches and even other teammates can unintentionally factor into the unnecessary stress that comes with the need to win and the convincing idea that recruitment is the ultimate outcome, which ends up overshadowing the enjoyment of playing the game.

"It used to be kids playing for fun. Now, too many kids are worried about being recruited, and the pressure they put on themselves is much higher. The pressure they get from outside sources, like parents, is also much higher," said Stephan Kenneth.

Kenneth has been coaching volleyball and other sports, like hockey, for over 15 years and has been witness to the growing pressure young athletes face. As years pass, this kind of stress affects not only a player's mental health, he said, but can also impede in their overall performance, as athletes focus too much on how things will play out rather than improving their skills or having fun.

"Kids are hard on themselves; they overthink things, which causes stress. Instead of just going out and having fun, there's so much pressure put on them to win. Sometimes, it's not all about winning, it's about

playing the game."

The pressure of a sport like volleyball can have drastic effects on individuals' mental health, so much so that Volleyball Canada and the Ontario Volleyball Association have provided multiple outlets to help with some of the struggles their athletes might be having.

"The code of conduct outlines expectations for appropriate behavior within OVA programs, activities, and events. Athlete self-care is a resource from the OVA's Athletes' Council that includes a self-assessment and an individual mental health action plan," the Ontario Volleyball Association's website states.

There are also rep clubs like Barrie Elites Volleyball Club, which has been in operation for 20 years and actively promotes the development of youth athletes through volleyball.

Their club president, Candice Keller, along with their team of executive and coaches, say they want to provide the athletes of the club with helpful resources and healthy outlets to help them with the intense pressure that comes with playing.

"The Elites focus on harvesting a positive environment for our athletes to which we work to focus on clear mindset, positive encouragement and long-term athlete development at practices and throughout the season."

As the pressure keeps rising on young athletes, players and coaches say it is important to remember that youth sports are about enjoyment and learning. They say as soon as that is taken away, the pressure to perform perfectly sets in, overshadowing the values of teamwork, problem solving, and development.

Grandmothers' Council holds special ceremony

By Pheonix Giroux

An overwhelming sense of family and love was what you were welcomed with as soon as you entered The Mid-Winter Ceremony held by the Katarokwi Grandmothers' Council in Kingston on Saturday.

The regularly drab venue of the Kingston Community Health Centres on Weller Avenue, was transformed by the people occupying the space. An array of colourful ribbon skirts and beaded jewelry, mostly in the colours of the medicine wheel, was worn. Quiet footsteps tucked in moccasins joined the large group. Gathering in a circle, they welcomed each other with overwhelming joy as this was the first time they would meet this year.

The Katarokwi Grandmothers' Council is an Indigenous group that holds four ceremonies every year to continue meeting with local Indigenous people and welcoming non-Indigenous people of the community to join. They hold The Sweetwater Ceremony in the spring, The Strawberry Ceremony in the summer, The Harvest Ceremony in the autumn and finally The Mid-Winter Ceremony in the cold months.

"Mid-Winter is the time where we are fairly quiet, we're sedentary, we didn't go out to hunt. There were people on the trap lines, but we mostly came back to our own community or family in the evening times. That's when we'd get together, share food, stories and song and that's what we continue to do during the Mid-Winter celebrations," said Judi Montgomery of the Katarokwi Grandmothers' Council.

The Council has been meeting for 11 years. In 2014, four grandmothers from different nations came together, and decided that because they no longer had a friendship centre in the city, they would do what grandmothers do best. That means inviting people over give them food, tell stories, play games and make music, but do it on a larger scale so the whole community can be involved.

There are no large benefactors that contribute to the Katarokwi Grandmothers' Council. The group is in a partnership with Grassroots Indigenous Youth Initiative, but the events are mostly stand alone. The only thing that is consistent is the grandmothers. It started with



Photo by Pheonix Giroux

Katarokwi Grandmothers' Council's Judi Montgomery leads the closing circle at the Kingston Community Health Centre for their Mid-Winter Ceremony.

only four, but they have now grown to 15, and with each event, they grow with Indigenous community members and non-Indigenous people.

A welcome circle was the first thing to take place on Saturday, starting with introductions and a healing song. The music vibrated through the room, as anyone in the circle with a drum pitched in, and rattles followed along to the beat. Those without a musical instrument swayed or tapped their feet, feeling the song regardless if they understood the language of which it was sung. Stories were told and winter feelings were exchanged. The ceremony was a time to celebrate being together,

and the group cherished every moment of it.

"My favourite thing about The Mid-Winter Ceremony and all the ceremonies is that I get to see all your beautiful faces and it's just so amazing when everyone comes together," volunteer Lana Callahan said during the welcome.

In the circle, smells engulfed everyone. Soups that had been simmering and meats that had been cooking were now resting. Far in the back, Grandmother Kate was making her famous and beloved fry bread, that she has been making for 30 years. She refused to make it the day before, wanting it still to be warm when lunch starts.

During the four ceremonies each year, depending on which grandmothers are available, there is always a learning opportunity for everyone who attends. There have been activities like making tobacco ties to introducing people to the medicines, including what they are and how to use them. There is always The Sacred Fire outside. There would be a fire keeper present to educate people on why the fire is kept burning and what the purpose of the fire is.

The Grandmothers' Council always makes sure there are local vendors at every ceremony. They do not charge a seat fee. They just want the local Indigenous vendors to sell their mer-

chandise and help local artists. There is also a silent auction table to which local Indigenous artists donate their art to sell. The money is then put towards the next ceremony.

Once everyone was finished with their lunch, the grandmothers invited everyone to come back to the circle to conclude the event, thanking everyone who had shown up and supported their community whether they were Indigenous or not. There was also thanks to the creator for giving them all what they need to be happy as people, and wishing everyone is safe until they meet again in the spring.