



Photo by Mari Hiramoto

Belleville Mayor Mitch Panciuk and Sikh students chatted after the students helped Panciuk experience turban wrapping.

Mayors and college welcome international students to Loyalist

By Mari Hiramoto

Loyalist College held an international welcome event Wednesday hosted by President Ann Marie Vaughan. The guests were Mitch Panciuk, the mayor of the city of Belleville, and Jim Harrison, the mayor of the city of Quinte West.

International students performed dancing and singing from their own culture. They also did a Sikh turban wrapping experience with the mayors. Panciuk got an orange turban, and Harrison got blue. Ac-

ording to the student on the stage, both the colours have an important meaning in their religion.

Panciuk had never worn a turban before, and he found it an interesting experience. He said it was tight and warm underneath the turban, and it was almost like wearing a toque.

"It's symbolic of their religion and their faith... who they are as people," said Panciuk. "I feel honoured...that it was put on me today. It let me have a little bit of understanding of their faith and culture."

After the turban wrapping, the Punjabi students and Panciuk exchanged thoughts and ideas regarding building an inclusive society for the citizens of the city of Belleville.

Loyalist has approximately 3,000 students enrolled in more than 70 programs. "With these numbers," said Panciuk, "Loyalist is small enough to provide personal friendly and caring attentions to all students. And it's also big enough to give you all the education that you will need. Loyalist faculty and volunteers will go above and be-

yond making you feel right at home here in Belleville."

International students enrolled in Loyalist College can take advantage of the international centre which provides a variety of assistance for adapting to college life socially, academically, and culturally. The college also provides information regarding immigration and settlement issues, in addition to supports for students whose first language is not English.

"We are a very inclusive country. We welcome you here, welcome your family

and your relatives. We all have very similar objectives in life and that's to be a good citizen and when you are in Canada, and you are a good citizen, that's just exactly what we ask," said Harrison.

Looking back at his own success as a student, Harrison encouraged the students to achieve academically. He also emphasized the importance of functioning fully in society.

"My door as the mayor of the city of Belleville is always open to you. If you have any questions about the city, I welcome you to contact me any time," said Panciuk.

Photojournalism student receives Governor General award

By Sasha Seftor

Belleville woman and Loyalist College Photojournalism student wins Governor General's Award.

Shelby Lisk was born and raised in Belleville Ontario but she has always known that she is a Mohawk of Tyendinaga. Growing up, Lisk had many questions about her heritage and indigenous culture but didn't always feel as though she was able to ascertain the answers she sought.

"I spent a lot of time trying to learn more about my culture and being angry at my family for not teaching me anything about it. All I knew was that I was Mohawk. As I got older and took more courses on indigenous culture and spoke to other indigenous people I found out that this was a common issue. When my grandmother and even my mother were growing up it wasn't a good thing to be native, they knew they were but they didn't talk about it. If you looked white and could pass as it you didn't tell people you were native, you didn't want to be stereotyped in a negative way or possibly take away opportunities from your children. This shame and prejudice was passed down from generation to generation."

Lisk harnessed the emotions she was feeling while trying to discover more about her culture, and navigating complicated social stereotypes into poetry. Poetry that was eventually recognized

and celebrated, winning a Governor Generals History Award in 2018.

When asked how she reacted to the news of being awarded one of Canada's most prestigious awards Lisk said,

"I was so surprised. I had entered on a whim. The most amazing part was seeing how happy and proud my mom was, mostly because I had pursued a life of art instead of getting a "real job" it was cool to see my mom be so proud of me. She got to see me and my art be recognized by people outside of the family and community and I'll never forget what she said: 'I know sometimes it's going to be hard, but this is what you need to be doing', she was ok with me taking this path."

Lisk's award winning poem "Invisible Indian" highlights her own experience with, as she calls them, "double edged stereotypes." Being an indigenous person who looks Caucasian, feeling as though she should act native but not "too native" in order to be accepted. As well as the shame and frustration some indigenous people feel for losing their culture but realizing that it is not their fault, that this was something that was done to them.

Lisk may have initially written the poem as a personal piece to help her better understand her own feelings surrounding the struggle to learn and embrace her culture but she soon realized she soon realized she was not alone.

"The poem was the first writing that I had ever had published, I couldn't be-

lieve how many responses I got from other indigenous people going through the same thing. To me that is what makes art so important and why I want to continue to make it. Sharing your experiences so other people know they aren't alone in their own experience."

In a serendipitous moment Lisk's former Indigenous Feminism Professor at University of Ottawa, Claudette Commanda, was on hand at the post Governor General Awards gala to give to opening remarks and a land acknowledgment. Lisk credits Commanda with being the first person to make her feel comfortable with her Indigenous identity.

"Claudette pushed me to let go of the insecurities I had about what others may be thinking about me whenever I felt like I might not look native enough. I never forgot that. I was so happy to share the day with her, it made me feel like things had come full circle"

Lisk has a BFA with a minor in gender studies from the University of Ottawa and is currently completing a diploma in photojournalism at Loyalist College as well as a diploma in Mohawk language and culture through Tsi Tyónnheht Onkwawén:na and Queen's University. She would like to use the culmination of her education and skills to continue to tell Indigenous stories and be a voice for the often under represented community in journalism.

To see the winning poem written by Lisk, see page 2.



Photo by Sasha Seftor

Belleville native and Loyalist College photojournalism student received a Governor General's Award this week in Ottawa.



Photo by Mari Hiramoto

Supt. Peter Lambertucci and Michael LeSage answer questions from the media about last thursday night's arrests. A man and a youth were arrested thursday night after police raided two homes in the Kingston area.

Youth charged in terrorist activity

By Kyle Visser

The RCMP and Kingston Police made two arrests at two homes on Thursday, Jan. 24 after an investigation of a “substantial, credible attack plot.”

A Kingston man and a youth were arrested on terrorism charges that night.

The youth has been charged with “knowingly facilitating a terrorist activity,” and “counselling a person to deliver, place, discharge or detonate an explosive or other lethal device” in a public place.

The youth cannot be named under the Youth Criminal Justice Act.

A second man, 20-year-old Husam Alzhabhi, was released late Friday

night and was not charged.

The RCMP and Kingston Police held a press conference Friday afternoon about the terrorism charges.

“I want to ensure you that there is no threat to public safety at this time, and we took every possible measure to mitigate any potential threat at the time of arrest,” said RCMP Chief Superintendent Michael LeSage at the press conference.

The arrest of the two men came after a month-long investigation that began with a tip from the FBI. A release from the RCMP reads:

“In particular, the RCMP would like to thank the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI), the Kingston Police, the Ontario Provincial Police (OPP),

‘We can confirm that RCMP air assets were involved in this investigation. Investigations of this nature are extremely complex and resource intensive, as the RCMP must balance the collection of evidence with maintaining public safety.’

RCMP press release

Canada Border Services Agency (CBSA), the Canadian Security Intelligence Service (CSIS) and Financial Transactions and Reports Analysis Centre of Canada (FINTRAC) for their co-operation and collaboration.”

Police say the pair had an informal relationship with one another. The investigation is still ongoing for further background on the youth’s actions.

Earlier this month, a plane was seen multiple times flying at low altitude over parts of Kingston late in the evening. Kingston residents complained of the noises it made so late at night.

At the press conference, RCMP officials confirmed the plane in question

was used to aid in these arrests.

“We can confirm that RCMP air assets were involved in this investigation. Investigations of this nature are extremely complex and resource intensive, as the RCMP must balance the collection of evidence with maintaining public safety.”

Police were seen taking items out of the Kingston houses and stated at the press conference that trace elements of an explosive substance were found. The RCMP officials said the material was removed and they destroyed by detonating it.

The charged youth will be held until next week, after his lawyer has more time to study the case. The case will come before a judge in February.

(Editor's note) Shelby Lisk describes why she wrote the poem, *Invisible Indian*. I wrote *invisible Indian* out of frustration of the balancing act that all Indigenous people seem to have to do between recovering what their family has lost while incurring the judgement of greater society for not knowing, not being enough, not looking enough of the part. I spent a long time being angry with my family for not knowing who I was. Eventually, as I learned more, I understood why things had happened that way and I began to forgive and heal. It has been a hard journey, especially because my kanyenkeha:ka grandmothers are not alive anymore to ask those questions to. This poem is about the fact that I will not be what the colonizers wanted me to be. The double edged sword of them taking everything from my family and then scoffing at us for what we don't have now. I will not settle for being what they dreamed of. I will be what my ancestors dreamed of.

Invisible Indian

It's strange to me how people always want me to be an "authentic indian" when I say I'm kanyen'keha:ka.

They want me to look a certain way, act a certain way. They're disappointed when what they get is.... just me. White faced, light haired. They spent hundreds of years trying to assimilate my ancestors, trying to create indians like me, who could blend in, but now they don't want me either. They can't make up their minds.

They want buckskin and face paint, drumming, songs in languages they can't understand recorded for them but with English subtitles, of course.

They want educated, well spoken, but not too smart. Christian, well behaved, never question. They want to learn the history of the people, but not the ones that are here now, waving signs in their faces, asking them for clean drinking water, asking them why their women are going missing, asking them why their land is being ruined.

They want fantastical stories of Indians that used to roam this land. They want my culture behind glass in a museum. But they don't want me. I'm not Indian enough.

They say I'm fake, but they don't realize that every time I have to write and speak to them in English, the language of the colonizer, I am painfully aware of what I've lost. So I sneak around quietly, gathering pieces - beads here, a word there,

a dance, a song, until I'm strong enough to stand tall and tell them who I am.

They tried to make Indians like me, who could blend in. My great grandmother moved her children out of their community into the big city of Toronto to try to hide in plain sight.

Keep it.

Hush.

Hush.

I will break the silence.

I am clinging to every piece of my mom, my grandma, my great grandma that I have. I am clinging to any bit of tradition that found its way through the cracks, like a plant growing towards the light.

I have always been in love with these small pieces of resistance.

My great grandmother told my dad to bury my umbilical cord in the dirt behind my home. Now a tree grows from that piece of me.

I am connected.

When my aunties gather around tea, I will absorb every story

they tell.

I will stare at photos of my tota until they speak to me.

I will scavenge all the bits of knowledge from here and there

and pull them together.

Close to my heart.

Cover them.

Protect them.

Bundle.

I will knit with my grandma's needles. The only piece of her I have. I will knit until I know her. I will forgive. Forgive my mom, her mom, her mom, for what they couldn't teach me.

They always did the very best they could.

I will hold on for dear life.

I will dig my hands into the dirt.

I will let them drag

and pull on me

until the earth is embedded under my fingernails.

But, I won't let go.

The Pioneer

Editor, Matthew Botha
Photo editor, Kyle Visser

Faculty advisers: Frank O'Connor, Scott Whalen, Daniel Williams, Linda O'Connor

The Pioneer is currently produced by photojournalism students for Loyalist College and the surrounding area. In the spirit of the pioneers who settled our community and who were rooted in tradition, these pioneers always had an eye on the future. Our students strive to serve the public interest, seek the truth and uphold the highest standards of our profession.

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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Photo by Matt Botha

A chilly week

A severe weather front continues to plow its way through Belleville. The region has seen Arctic-like temperatures, along with significant snow fall over the past couple days.

Encouraging youth to get involved politically

By Frank Moses

People in their post-secondary years, generally between 18 and 24, get involved in progressive causes that make life, as they would like to see it, better.

A variety of issues, including Indigenous rights, changes to OSAP, free speech and LBGTQ2S acceptance, are well supported.

So why can't we seem to get involved, or even vote in large enough numbers, to make effective change in the sphere that most affects our lives? Government.

Don't stop reading -- Snapchat can wait.

In 2015, Canadians of voting age turned out at 68.5 per cent -- in an election that would see Liberal Justin Trudeau take the helm. It was a fairly good turnout.

The overall voter turnout rate for the 18-24 age group was 57.1 per cent, over 10 per cent less than the



Photo by Frank Moses

Natasha Annett-Lawrence is a PC party member, volunteer and the wife of one of five candidates vying for the PC nomination in Northumberland-Peterborough South.

eligible voting public.

Natasha Annett-Lawrence is the wife of PC hopeful Phil Lawrence. She ran a PC party membership phone drive on Saturday, Jan. 24 in Cobourg.

Speaking on political volunteering in general, she said, "It's a good way for your voice to be heard. It's a good way to see how the political process works first hand, and it's incredibly enriching... you form friendships."

She would like to see more people involved, and become party members.

"You have say in selecting the leadership in your party. You have say in policy and platforms made on behalf of the party. Without membership you can't be as involved."

Party membership is not necessarily the core issue. In 2014, only 34 per cent of eligible voters 18-24 cast a ballot in the provincial election.

In the 2018 Ontario election, one that would see Doug Ford's PC party

easily win a majority, 58 per cent of registered voters went to the polls -- and for the first time, millennials represented the largest group eligible to vote.

Did you?

Protests on tuition cuts, sex-ed reform and minimum wage stagnation fill the streets. We even turn out in large numbers to protest the policies of Donald Trump. That seems mildly ironic -- given the state of affairs in Canada.

Had more young adults voted, the political landscape would be different. It is doubtful the second-place NDP, under Andrea Horvath, would be cutting OSAP or rolling back sex education policies.

The future is yours -- just vote for the one you want.

Here's a video look at getting involved:

<https://vimeo.com/loyalist-photoj/getinvolved>

Military families enjoy day skiing

By Desirée Decoste

The day started off as a terrible looking one. The snow squalls were so bad you couldn't see 50-100 feet in front of you. Then the weather turned for the better, and the day was a nice, semi-sunny and cloudy day, other than it being freezing cold.

Batawa Ski Hill has been a place for people to go and ski since 1959. There are nine runs and a terrain park that everyone can enjoy when they come to the slopes.

The Trenton MFRC held its annual ski day for military families on Sunday. People spent the day on the slopes and enjoyed a hot lunch for a discounted price. Families were able to purchase tickets at the MFRC office for the annual day. The prices were \$45 if you had no equipment and \$35 if you had your own. If you were five years old or younger, it was \$20. The ticket purchase included a lift ticket, equipment rental and group lessons with a barbecue lunch.

Isaac Hollinger was one of many participants out on the slopes that day. He was there with some of his friends, and when he fell, they decided to give him a snow shower. What are friends for, right?

The snow was fluffy and great for skiing. The powder from the snow fell earlier in the day, was perfect for the skiers and created a fantastic day of skiing. The moguls had nice pillows of fresh powder on them, so when someone fell, it was like puff of smoke around them and you couldn't see the skiers until it settled.

There were people of all ages, young and old, people who were experienced and those who were not. They had about 100 people participate in this year's MFRC Day event. Many people were catching an edge (when the edge of a ski or snowboard accidentally digs into the snow, usually resulting in a fall or near fall) and the powdery snow was flying through the air.

"We love hosting the military families here at the hill each year. It's exciting to see families have a special day at the hill



Photo by Desirée Decoste

Isaac Hollinger was at Batawa Ski hill this past weekend. Hollinger fell at the bottom of the hill resulting in his friends deciding he need a snow bath.

together, whether they are experienced skiers or snowboarders or learning how to do both as a family," said Dan Schell, communications co-ordinator at Batawa Ski Hill.

"We are all about families coming together and having a great time outside over the winter months out on the slopes. To be able to offer a fun day for our military families to get together is

always something we look forward to doing each year."

You could say there were a few gaps, which are skiers who don't understand proper on-slope etiquette, ski wear or ski technique, but all that doesn't matter when you're there to have fun.

The weather held out and it was a great day for everyone who came out to enjoy the hill.

This is the fourth year that Batawa Ski Hill has been working with the MFRC to host this special day.

"We are so grateful for the work and sacrifice of our military families, and to be able to help give them a special day with their families and loved ones," said Schell. "Making memories together is something we always enjoy each season."

The MFRC holds many different

kinds of events. They held a "snow fort fun" event on Jan. 30 and come February, there are all kinds of events people can participate in.

On Feb. 4, there will be a knitting and crocheting event and on Feb. 7, a paint night and a Pinterest DIY event. If you are interested in more information about the events, go to the MFRC website.



Photo by Matthew Syriac Elias

Jamming it out

Earl Streetcorner Coleman, a participant of the Loyal Blues Fellowship performs at the monthly jam. Coleman is also a member of the local band Kingstown New Mississippi, along with fellow Loyal Blues participants Roger Dorey, Mike Acerra and Gerry Ratz.

Scavenger hunt helps beat the winter blues

By Desirée Decoste

It was bitterly cold and the wind made it feel worse, but thankfully at the Quinte Mall, you could come in and enjoy a winter scavenger hunt with hot chocolate at the end.

This past Sunday was the Escape Winter Scavenger Hunt at the mall.

"In total, there were 173 completed 'ballots' or hunt forms and 224 hot chocolate coupons were redeemed," said Erin Graham, marketing manager at the Quinte Mall. "Laura Secord had

prepared for 125 coupons, so they were delighted with the final total."

It was busier then it usually is at 10 a.m. on a Sunday morning. You would almost have thought it was Christmas again with the hustle and bustle, but everyone wanted to finish the scavenger hunt to get put in the draw and get their free hot chocolate.

To start off the scavenger hunt, you had to stop by guest services for your escape winter scavenger hunt form so you could write down the 10 different retailers that had a picture of a snow-

flake in the store. You then had to walk around and look for the 10 retailers that had the picture of the snowflake.

"The idea for the hunt was not only to drive traffic to the retailers, but also to offer the community a fun event out of the winter weather for the day," said Graham.

"I participated with two of my children, so that I could reflect on the event from a customer's perspective. It took us about an hour and my kids had a blast."

Once you found all 10, you brought your form back to guest services with

your name and phone number on it. Your form was entered into a draw for a prize pack, which includes: \$100 Quinte Mall gift card, \$100 Sam's gift certificate, \$50 Kernels gift card and \$50 Laura Secord gift card. Every participant received a coupon for a free hot chocolate from Laura Secord, redeemable only on the day of the scavenger hunt.

"We had a lot of fun," said Trish Dubyk. "We had to lap twice to get all the snowflakes, but it was fun." Dubyk and her three kids, Jorja, Ember and

Lucy, participated in the scavenger hunt.

"Being a business in the Quinte region takes more than just sales and promotions. Our customers enjoy connecting at/with the shopping centre," said Graham. "We love being a part of the local community and will always strive for a balance of sales and traffic driven events combined with community events."

Graham plans on doing this event again, in some form annually, and possibly tying it to another time and holiday.

Loyalist Lancer makes his mark

By Shelby Lisk

Loyalist student Jaden White has been chosen as this year's recipient of the Scott Reid Memorial Award.

The award is given to a men's basketball player who demonstrates a positive attitude, leadership, and eagerness to learn. Reid played on the Lancers' basketball team from 1991 to 1994. He passed away in 2001 of brain cancer.

"I never knew that coming in as a first-year student athlete, I would make such an impact on the team like that," says White, a first-year general arts and science student.

White made the move from Naotkamegwaning First Nation, formerly known as Whitefish Bay Reserve, to attend Loyalist in the fall. The on-reserve population of his community is less than 1,000 people and is an exhausting 22-hour drive from Belleville.

"My family always messages me and tells me how proud they are. 'Keep working hard,' they always tell me and just stay focused. They are really proud of what I'm doing," says White.

White isn't a stranger to commuting for school, as he attended St. Thomas Aquinas High School in Kenora, Ont., an hour away from his community. White would board with a family in Kenora and go home on weekends. To pursue his basketball dreams, he also had to move to Toronto for years during high school.

"Playing basketball where I come from, it's not very big, so you have to

go away from home just to chase what you want and for opportunities in basketball. In high school, I was away from home a lot. I think it was half of Grade 9 and all of Grade 10 I was in Toronto playing for a prep school.

"That really helped me grow up more. I learned how to do my own laundry, how to cook, how to budget my own money, just time managing. It really taught me a lot about life and how to be mature," says White.

He admits that this helped with his adjustment to being even further away from home now and this big transition certainly hasn't stopped White from making a positive impact on those around him.

"I selected Jaden because he was a great fit for this award. He has a passion for the game and is always looking for ways to get better. He never complains and is always a positive member of the team," says Athletic Director Jim Buck.

"He has come to Loyalist all the way from a small reserve in Northern Ontario. Scott was the type of guy that would have befriended Jaden immediately and would have made sure he was looked after. I have no doubt they would have become good friends."

Although the award is based on exemplifying the attitudes of Reid as a basketball player, the players also need to maintain a 60 per cent average, says Patrick Kabeya, Loyalist men's basketball coach.

White was scouted by Kabeya while he was playing for Team Ontario in the North America Indigenous Games, or NAIG, as White calls it.

NAIG brings together Indigenous athletes from across Canada. White tried out and earned himself a spot on the Ontario men's basketball team the summer before his Grade 12 year.

"For the Team Ontario basketball team, we had a training camp here at Loyalist so we worked out and had a few practices and scrimmaged against the varsity team and that's how my coach saw me," says White.

Kabeya admits that he was drawn to White when he saw his towering 6'6 stature.

"Jaden is a very positive, very nice guy. We actually say he's like Mikey from *Recess*. He's the gentle giant. He came in here pretty shy. He was very quiet and with time, he got more confident. He's one of the guys that everyone kind of accepted for who he is and he's very much a part of the family," said Kabeya.

Following his years at Loyalist, White would like to go to university to further his education and hopefully play basketball. He has ambitions to study criminology and police foundations so that he can become a police officer.

White's ambition has proven to be an inspiration for other youth in his community.

"Because there's not a lot of basketball opportunity in Whitefish, a lot of people look up to me because I'm playing at the college level now. I get kids telling me 'I want to be just like you'. I always like to tell the little kids that 'I want you to be better'. That's what I would say to them, 'I want you to be better,'" says White.



Photo by Shelby Lisk

Jaden White poses in his Treaty #3 jersey from Kenora, Ont., following winning the Scott Reid Memorial award the following day. The award is given to a men's basketball player who demonstrates a positive attitude, leadership, and eagerness to learn. Treaty 3 is the team that White played for near his home community of Naotkamegwaning First Nation, formerly known as Whitefish Bay Reserve. White is proud to be Objibwe from Whitefish Bay but says that "playing basketball, where I come from it's not very big so you have to go away from home just to chase what you want and for opportunities in basketball."



A student holds a sign while chanting 'Doug Ford has got to go!' during rally to protest the new cuts to both OSAP, and tuition across Ontario.

Students upset over funding cuts

Story and Photos by Matthew Botha

Elected on the notion that Ontario Premier Doug Ford was "for the students", his recent slashes to both OSAP and tuition have many thinking otherwise.

The Ford government announced last week that it would be making what some say are "consequential changes" to the way it will be handling OSAP. The current system offers students significant grants, rather than hefty loans. This alleviates some financial pressure for students struggling to come up with the high tuition costs of post-secondary education.

The system also allows students who come from low income families the chance to apply for free tuition, fully subsidized by the government. The proposed changes include \$600 million in cuts to student grants. This drastic change in the system has current students, and those looking to apply for college and university, worrying about their future.

The anger and outrage of students was made clear when thousands showed up last Saturday to protest the changes at Yonge-Dundas Square in downtown Toronto. The mass of people took to the streets, signs in hand, chanting, "Doug Ford has to go!" as they made their way to Queen's Park.

Anger aside, many said they simply want an explanation. They said nobody understands how these cuts will be beneficial. Students interviewed at the protest provided only their first names.

"If Ford continues with this policy, he's going to burn his electors in a way where I don't think they'll want to vote for him again. The changes that he's making have real consequences on people that I think he needs to take to heart," stated Steven, during the protest.

"This directly affects me," said Sarah, who is currently enrolled at McMaster University. "I come from a low-income family and OSAP is my only way to pay for my schooling. Without it, I'm kind of in shit. We are the feature and you're affecting us in ways you don't realize. By cutting this system, you're refusing a lot of kids from pursuing their dreams."

Other students, although disagreeing with the cuts to funding, said they understand that Canada's debt is at an all-time high. Some say that cuts do need to be made, but nobody seems to be able to justify the decision to remove the six-month grace period on paying back OSAP loans.

Currently, after a student graduates, they are given six months to find a job and start making an income. Once those six months expire, the interest rates kick in on their loans. The Ford government has changed that. Once the student graduates, the interest starts building immediately. This makes what is already a heavy sum to pay back, only get bigger. "When you have a degree, you need time to find your career," argued Damian, who was at Saturday's protest. "You need time to settle down and get your income together. Once you take away the six-month grace period, you're forced to take whatever job you can get, whether it's in your field or not."

For a video look at this story, click here:

<https://vimeo.com/loyalistphotoj/studentmarch>

Loyalist student president Scott Rook made his voice known at the rally, representing the students of the College.



(Above, left) The harsh weather conditions that hit Toronto over the weekend did not stop the students from coming out in formidable numbers.

(Above, right) The passion of the students was evident in the signs they held.



(Bottom, right) thousands of students braved the winter conditions as they packed Yonge-Dundas Square. The students then took to the streets as they marched their way to Queens park.





Derek Kring reflected in the motivation wall of the wellness loft at Loyalist.

Photo by Matt Botha

Mental health on campus

By Shelby Lisk

Yesterday marked the eighth Bell Let's Talk Day, an annual initiative which sees Bell donate five cents to mental health programs for each text sent or voice call made. The 2019 campaign was anticipated to exceed one billion text and voice interactions.

Last year, Bell Let's Talk reached a record number of 131,705,010 total messages of support and \$6,585,250 more funding for Canadian mental health. Beyond text messages and calls, Bell Let's Talk Day video views on social media, tweets using #BellLetsTalk, use of the Bell Let's Talk Facebook frame or Snapchat filter, Bell will also donate five cents to Canadian mental health initiatives.

Bell Let's Talk has created a venue for people to start a discussion about mental health, with many celebrities and people in the spotlight talking about their personal struggles in a public venue.

In recent years, there has also been more attention paid to how students are coping with mental health on campuses.

In the spring of 2016, the National College Health Assessment, or NCHA, a national online survey that collects information on students' health behaviours, attitudes, and perceptions, indicated that depression, anxiety and suicide attempts are increasing among Ontario's post-secondary students.

An estimated 46 per cent of students reported feeling so depressed in the previous year that it was difficult to function (increasing from 40 per cent in 2013) and 65 per cent of students reported experiencing overwhelming anxiety in the previous year.

The report from NCHA brings attention to the fact that this change in attitude is especially important at Ontario's colleges and universities, as 75 per cent of mental health disorders first appear before the age of 25, according to American sociologist Ronald Kessler.

"Mental health is always a huge concern for students attending post-secondary education and providing mental health services and activities is a top priority for the Loyalist Student Government. We offer several activities through the year, however, for this week, we are hosting a thrive week with many activities, including yoga, a spa day at residence, therapy dogs, Friday Night Frost and colouring," said Scott Rook, Loyalist College student government president.

The NCHA also created a list of recommendations for post-secondary institutions to implement, including providing wellness supports for students and triaging students to mental health providers and providing free mental health care to students through services that exceed those funded by OHIP. There was also a recommendation for the government to provide dedicated funding for culturally relevant and diverse counselling on campuses.

About a year and a half ago, the college recognized this need for student wellness initiatives and mental health initiatives. In response, they created the co-ordinator of wellness programming position which is held by Ryan Stoness.

"In the last five or six years, we've really opened the door to having conversations about mental health and various awareness campaigns. Bell Let's Talk is a great example. It has really opened the door for people feeling like it's okay to talk about it, it's comfortable to talk about it and we should be talking about it," said Stoness.

Although mental health is a big part of wellness, it also encompasses helping students be their best in all physical, mental and emotional aspects. Great resources exist to help students who are struggling or in crisis including counselling services and student success mentors for each department but Stoness's job is to engage students before they need that kind of mental health support.

A wellness ambassador team of students has been created to promote wellness on campus. They do this through on campus activities such as bringing in therapy dogs, opening the student

food cupboard in the residence commons and through sharing wellness tips on their website and social media (wellnessloyalist.com).

The wellness loft also opened last week and is a quiet place for students to relax but will also be offering weekly activities during universal break as well as yoga and meditation weekly. Watch the newsletter for the schedule of times for these free classes.

Another recommendation of the NCHA report is to provide culturally relevant and diverse mental health supports to students on campus. Loyalist does this through spaces such as the Indigenous Resource Centre and the International Student Centre.

The Indigenous Resource Centre was created to act as a liaison between College administration, Indigenous communities, and government agencies. The centre supports students through offering free healthy meals, tutoring, someone to talk to, as well as Lunch and Learns for applying to scholarships and budgeting.

"People want to make sure they fit in. In the centre, you're equal, valued and respected as soon as you walk in that door," said Paul Latchford, manager of the Indigenous Resource Centre.

Latchford also noted that centre staff members are actively working towards making the Indigenous population more visible on campus through artwork and creating a more "inspirational-looking vibe" around the college, instead of institutional.

"Students need to know that we can fit in here, are accepted and that we have the ability to do this. Many of us can't turn to our siblings or family and extended family and say 'Hey, how did you do in college?' or 'What did you do in university?' or 'What did you do in skills and trading?' because it didn't happen. We have the dreaded residential school experience and the effects of that so there's very much a stigma and again it's about fitting in and being accepted and recognized, equal and valued," said Latchford.

We also have a large international student population to support as they transition to moving across the world to Belleville.

"My position starts as soon as they put in an application for their visa," said Madhulika Potukuchi, international student officer at Loyalist.

"I am in touch with students whether they need help with airport pickups or once they're here on- or off-campus housing. I give them those options. In terms of getting them settled, we do offer them separate orientations."

The centre also send out a weekly newsletter to remind students of what they've been told in orientation as well as extending invitations to activities. Another important note is reminding students how to dress and be prepared for weather, as many of them are coming from countries that don't experience cold and snowy winters like we do in Canada.

Potukuchi emphasized enriching students' wellness by working to get them involved so that they make friends. The international centre gives each new student a peer to peer mentor who has been here for a year and is used to living in Belleville. They are there to hang out with new international students, help them do groceries or understand the bus schedule, for example.

"I feel that the more we talk about it, the more we give that exposure to students. Whether it's through newsletters or in our orientations, and not just from the international centre, but from other departments as well. I think that will create that awareness that these resources are there for you to use and they are included in your tuition fees," says Potukuchi.

All students have access to counselling services and student success mentors. Visit the student success hub above the SAL to book an appointment with these resources or find the correct resource to help you.

If you need to seek access to resources outside of school hours, there is a confidential helpline that is active 24/7 and is aimed at post-secondary students in Ontario. The phone number to dial is 1-866-925-5454.



(Above) Jaideep Singh, first year fitness and health promotion student and Jacinta Obasohan, 2nd year customs and border student, take a photo with Jamie then collie wearing a Bell Let's Talk toque.

Photo by Shelby Lisk

(Right) Andrea Forrester, project management student poses with Jamie the Collie for a photo at the Bell Let's Talk booth at Loyalist.

Photo by Shelby Lisk

(Below) Brandon Landis hangs his sign in the wellness loft. The question posed is "what does wellness mean to you?" Landis wrote "Believe in everyone, including yourself!"

Photo by Shelby Lisk

