



Photo by Nav Rahi

Krati Bargujar, global business management student from India, is covered with bright colours while celebrating Holi with her friends at Loyalist College.

# Loyalist celebrates Holi Festival

By Nav Rahi

The Holi Festival brought joy and bright colours to Loyalist College on Wednesday, March 8. International students from India celebrated their traditional festival, with all students, and college staff from other communities. The event was organized by the Loyalist student life team. Holi is a popular ancient Hindu festi-

val, also known as the Festival of Spring, the Festival of Colours or the Festival of Love. Canada is known for its multinational culture and Loyalist has proven that by celebrating the Indian traditional festival with students from all communities. Students and staff from all communities participated in the celebration of the Holi Festival.

“This is my favourite festival, and it

feels like home today,” said Sukhman Kaur, an international student from India. “And I want to thank Loyalist College and the student life team for organizing this beautiful event,” she added.

The event started at noon in the P7 parking lot, and everybody was greeted with remarks by Loyalist President and CEO Mark Kirkpatrick and President of Student Government.

Loyalist President Kirkpatrick had a special wish everyone in the Hindi language, saying, “Bura na mano Holi hai” which means “Do not be angry, it is Holi.”

“I really enjoyed today. There are very few times when we get to have fun, but today’s event was full of fun,” said Makul Cheeru, a biotechnology student from India.

White Holi themed T-shirts and co-

lours were distributed by event organizers from Loyalist’s Student Life team, but white T-shirts did not remain white for long after participants threw colours on each other and started dancing to a live DJ.

“We want people from other communities to know about our traditional festivals and Holi is one of them and it is good to see everybody enjoying the festival.”

## Being a witch much more than stereotypical image

By Danielle McPherson

Rather than casting spells and brewing potions, some witches practice in more subtle ways, using tarot cards and sometimes even their own natural born gifts, no voodoo dolls or flying broomsticks required.

When people think of witches, they tend to go one of two ways — those who are green with warty noses and melt when

met with water, or the others think of the Sanderson Sisters and those who were hanged in the Salem witch trials.

Many don’t realize that being a witch is more than a broomstick and a book of spells.

For Lori-Grace Petroff, self-proclaimed witch and business owner of The Little Witch in Midland, Ont., and of the School of Witchery, what started as things no one else saw, has turned into a key part of her

life and in many of those she has had sit across from her at her table.

Petroff says that her talents have been with her for most of her life, from seeing things others didn’t like energies attached to old and dusty items, and having hyper-realistic imaginary friends. Growing up, Petroff thought that her experiences were abnormal. She thought everyone experienced these things in their own way. It wasn’t until she was in her late teens and

twenties that she learned that this isn’t an everybody thing.

“(As a kid) I would know when people were pregnant and that was off-putting to some people to be outed by a child,” says Petroff.

Petroff describes herself as the worst kid to take on field trips because she would be engulfed by the energies and the things she was seeing. She was constantly running behind the pack on these trips,

because of those things.

“We went to the museum. I would see energies, I would see people, attached to the things on display.”

When she was pregnant with her first child, and after a dream of seeing her baby in her body, learning it was to be a boy, Petroff wanted a logical explanation for all that she experienced. Once and for all, she wanted answers.

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## Batawa ski season to end on high note

By Hunter Middleton

Over the March break, Batawa Ski Hill was bustling with activities for guests of all ages.

From March 12 to March 18, the small hill of Batawa had lots of fun planned for its guests, from friendly staff dressed for a party, to a chance to win a night season pass for next season and free marshmallow roasting.

Batawa is ready to send this season out with a bang. With modified hours, there was time for everyone to enjoy the great snow conditions on the hill. The week’s hours followed Sunday through Thursday, 9 a.m. to 5 p.m., and Friday and Saturday, 9 a.m. to 9 p.m. There was also an extra week added on to the season.

“As a result of recent snowfalls and steady temperatures below zero, we are excited to announce that we are extending the season!” stated a post on the Batawa Ski Hill website. The hours added on followed — Wednesday, March 22, 5 p.m. to 9 p.m., Thursday, March 23, 5 p.m. to 9 p.m., Friday, March 24, 1 p.m. to 9 p.m., Saturday, March 25, 9 a.m. to 9 p.m. and Sunday, March 26, 9 a.m. to 5 p.m.

During this week, three-day camps were planned for skiers and snowboarders of all skills between the ages of four to 15, with two sessions running — the first from March 11 to March 13, and the second running from March 15 to March 17.

The camps were broken up into the morning, 9:30 a.m. to 12 p.m. and after-

noon, 1 p.m. to 4 p.m., with a wide range of group types to fit each kid’s skills, paired with one of the best ski instructors, the Quinte area can offer to provide an engaging lesson.

While on the slopes and at the chalet, guests were greeted by staff dressed in their best Hawaiian shirts and ‘90s retro fluorescent garb, ready to ensure skiers had a great time at the hill. Guests had the opportunity to take breaks throughout the week with free marshmallow roasting every day at 12 p.m. and 3 p.m. and free hilltop hot chocolate at 7 p.m. on March 10, 11, 17 and 18.

Along with the activities, guests had the chance to win a free 2023/24 night season pass to Batawa Ski Hill by finding a snow snake hidden on the property, with the snake’s bright colours. Guests were cautioned to keep an eye out for them on the hill. Along with the snow snakes, Batawa’s mascot Batawa Bigfoot Shred was also hiding around the slopes from 13 to March 19. When the mascot was found, the guest received an order of cinnamon poppers or funnel fries.

With early spring weather on the way for the week, solid snow conditions, and all but two of the runs open at Batawa, the season was ending on a high note. For more information about Batawa Ski Hill, one can visit the website at <https://www.batawaskihill.com/> or their social media platforms, Facebook and Instagram.



Oskar Hagberg executes a nose grab off a large snow jump in the Batawa factory terrain park. Oskar is a snowboard instructor at the Batawa Ski Hill and is a regular in the factory terrain park.

Photo by Hunter Middleton





Photo by Heather Waldron

Cabin Boy Knits founder Christopher Walker knits together with his partner Jamie Godin on the porch of their cabin in the woods in Stirling. The two yarn aficionados share their love for sustainable fashion and naturally dyed yarn on their YouTube channel with over 20,000 subscribers all around the world.

# Sustainability key for this business

By Heather Waldron

Christopher Walker, founder of Cabin Boy Knits, along with his partner Jamie Godin are working with Quinte Tourism to bring a textile fibre dyeing workshop to the region this summer.

The experiential tourism course will provide students with a full experience, where students will learn the history of dyeing and of yarn, forage for dye plants, and sip on some dandelion tea from their Oak Hills land. Walker, who specializes in yarn, says that the courses are not just for knitters, but are designed to appeal to a wider audience interested in sustainable fashion and natural dyeing.

Walker, who launched the business in 2016, started posting videos on YouTube

that centered around natural dye, foraging and different types of fibres. His life and business partner Godin, whom he affectionately calls “the other guy” in his videos, remained mostly behind the scenes until a few years later when they decided to introduce him to the viewers.

They say that that’s when their channel went from 700 to about 7,000 subscribers. Today, the channel boasts more than 20,000 subscribers. Over the years, the duo has taught at festivals and knitting organizations all over the world.

Although the COVID-19 pandemic put a dent in their plans to participate in more festivals and shows, they did see a spike of online interest in the knitting world.

“We always keep it light, and we have

**‘We always keep it light, and we have a good time doing it. We don’t get into anything political. We do history and talk about breeds of sheep.’**

*Christopher Walker*

a good time doing it. We don’t get into anything political. We do history and talk about breeds of sheep,” said Godin, acknowledging that it’s been an emotional and challenging time for a lot of people

who just need an escape.

The increase of worldwide knitters led the couple to open their own online shop in February 2021 where they try to source their yarn as locally and ethically as possible. With a commitment to sustainability and environmental stewardship, they joined the Upper Canada Fibreshed and Walker became a board member. The UCF brings farmers, mills, weavers, knitters, natural dyers and textile designers within 400 kilometres around Toronto together to form an economy and support each other.

“We use well water; we use snow. But it’s difficult to be perfect when someone asks if it’s all Canadian. When you factor in the sustainability factor, when you think about going all the way to B.C. and

bringing it in, it’s better for the environment to just go south of the border to Vermont and bring it in, like, it’s closer. But we do try to promote Canada as much as we can,” said Walker.

He added that it is important that the buyers or sellers they work with share the same principles of sustainability, diversity, equity and inclusion.

The company’s commitment to sustainability and their passion for natural dyeing has made them local experts in the field. Their courses with Quinte Tourism are just one example of how they are sharing their knowledge and expertise with others. The courses will be held at the Cabin Boy Knits workshop in a picturesque setting that provides the perfect backdrop for a hands-on learning experience.

## Witches...

Continued from Page 1

Petroff waited until the day her son was born to find out if her dream was right. She was

jumping into the deep end. Petroff was looking and searching for reasons and clues, when she came across studies on the metaphysical world, and what is beyond what everyone else sees.

What started as a topic of interest and a personal journey of tarot reading, medi-

tation and other forms of metaphysical studies led to meeting with clients at the local library to give them the answers they needed.

“I started doing small readings for people... I would take them to the public library and use their little private rooms and do half-hour readings for people.”

Since then, Petroff’s business has exploded in all directions and can no longer be contained by the walls of the library and the stacks of books.

Now that her three children have all grown up, Petroff says she is now better able to move freely to meet with clients

and to teach others their way around a tarot card.

Throughout the pandemic, she started with zoom calls to Cambrian College as a guest to do short 10-to-15-minute readings with students, but since the recent lifting of mandates and visitors being allowed on campus again, she is able to be on campus for in-person sessions. She says it is amazing to see the students face to face.

While she enjoys doing her readings, reflexology, and other witchy things, Petroff also teaches the craft.

From teaching others how to read Tarot

cards or how to dissect their dreams, she lives to teach other readers how to make their talents into a business as she has.

Petroff says that while teaching people about the metaphysical world, there are things to know about owning a business such as customer service, and the technical side of being a business owner.

“Using all the stuff that I have studied... (I teach) how to do all the business stuff when you aren’t doing hocus pocus.”

With over 26 years of experience, Petroff says that it is all about the person sitting across from her and what they need to hear, sometimes even if it isn’t

what they want.

“It’s not about me. It’s about trying to facilitate or create a safe place to find healing, and clarity and form connections with their own spirit guide.”

When doing her readings, she sends her clients a prep package, letting them know that she wants as little backstory and information as possible, “no cheat notes” as she says, as she lays her deck across the table, she describes it as a story of that person’s life unfolding in front of her.

Double, double, toil and trouble, no cauldrons bubbling or eyes of newt, here, but perhaps there is more than the physical world.

# Wellington arena to be site of affordable housing

By Nav Rahi

A public meeting was held on Monday, March 13 by Prince Edward County Affordable Housing Corporation at Wellington District Community Centre to discuss plans for the demolition of the Wellington Arena and the future construction of affordable housing on the site.

The demolition of the arena was scheduled for Friday, March 17. The meeting was held to answer questions from nearby residents about the demolition.

During the meeting, Charles Dowdall, the executive director of the Prince Edward County Affordable Housing Corporation, spoke about the plans for the affordable housing project. He explained that the demolition of the Wellington Arena was to be carried out by Budget Environmental Disposal Inc., a company that specializes in environmentally responsible demolition and disposal services.

Dustin Stevenson, the project manager at Budget Environment Disposal, also addressed the public meeting and discussed the process of the demolition project. He assured residents that all necessary safety precautions were to be taken to ensure the safety of the community during the demolition process.

“Our intention is that in late July of this year, we will start with the construction of a 36-units, affordable apartment rental unit and four three-bedroom townhouses on

that site,” said Dowdall. “To be perfectly clear, these are not market rent units. All units are 100 per cent affordable. They are not subsidized units. When we say affordable, it means that the rent maximum rent has to be at least 20 per cent below the average market rent, according to CMHC, not what our numbers are.”

According to Dowdall, the rent for a one-bedroom apartment will be \$740 maximum monthly and two-bedroom apartment will cost a maximum of \$920 a moth, and three-bedroom apartment will be rented monthly for a maximum of 1,100.

The project manager at Budget Environmental Disposal explained the demolition project.

“There will be excavation, heavy excavation machinery. There will be a lot of activity taking place and when necessary, there will be temporary road closures simply for safety reasons, with the heavy equipment taking materials out and heavy equipment coming in,” said Stevenson. “But there will be advance notice when those temporary closures will take place and quite frankly, it will only impact those people that live on Maple Street who we have already spoken to.”

The demolition was to start on Friday, March 17 and will take about three to four weeks for the complete demolition process, and for the removal of the materials and dust. People can go online and see the demolition in process. Cameras



Photo by Nav Rahi

Charles Dowdall, executive director of Prince Edward County affordable housing corporation, addresses the plans of demolishing the Wellington arena at a public meeting at Wellington District Community Centre.

will be installed on-site that will provide a live feed that people can watch from their homes.

One trophy from 1929 has been retrieved from “Duke Dome”, which has been stored offsite and sealed because it has to be de-

contaminated. After it has been decontaminated, it will be brought over to the Wellington Community Centre and an additional showcase will be installed in which hockey memorabilia will be displayed.

The former Wellington “Duke Dome”

was in operation for 36 years, from 1974 to 2010, until it was decommissioned in 2010. The reason behind its closure was the construction and opening of the Wellington and District Community Centre (Lehigh Arena).





Photo by Heather Waldron

**Jim Buck sits in his office at Loyalist College. The college held a surprise retirement celebration for the athletics director to honour his 36-year career at Loyalist. Friends, family, and colleagues showed up to commemorate his legacy of leadership and dedication to athletics.**

# Athletics director says goodbye

*Jim Buck retiring after 36 years at Loyalist College*

By Heather Waldron

Loyalist College is celebrating the 36-year career of retiring Athletics Director Jim Buck who is set to be inducted into the Hall of Fame of the Ontario Colleges Athletic Association (OCAA) on May 1st.

A surprise retirement celebration was held during the Lancers basketball team's final home games in honour of Buck.

Dozens of friends, family, colleagues came out Saturday, Feb. 11 to celebrate Buck's long career at Loyalist. The atmosphere was buzzing with excitement while friends and family gathered near the college entrance to surprise the athletics director.

His face brimming with delight as he

wandered through the entrance, Buck's jaw dropped when he noticed the guests eagerly awaiting his arrival. As he greeted everyone at the entrance, he was shocked to discover his oldest daughter Lindsey Shillington, her husband, and daughter had travelled all the way from Alberta to celebrate the special occasion.

Buck attended Durham College as a student, played on their basketball, soccer and badminton teams and was named the college's male athlete of the year in 1983-84. He later became the head coach of Durham's women's basketball program and led them to the OCAA championships.

In 1987, Buck moved to Belleville to become assistant athletic director at Loyalist College which, according to Durham College, later led to him becoming one of the top athletic administrators in the country. Buck has dedicated over three decades to Loyalist, working to build a successful athletic program. From hiring top-notch coaches to upgrading the athletics facilities, his efforts have had a significant impact on the

school and its athletes.

"What stands out most about 'JB' is his selfless and genuine dedication and care for the people around him, whether staff, students or alumni," said Athletics Success Mentor Dave Templar. "Jim is an incredibly warm and kind individual with an amazing sense of humour who is always gracious with his time in conversations with others. As a mentor, JB knows what to say and when to say it to motivate his staff to deliver their best work."

"Jim is wonderful. He is the best boss and mentor you could possibly ask for. He has taught me so much about college athletics, the OCAA, life in general and Loyalist college," said Athletics Coordinator Amy Hoskins who has worked with Buck for 13 years. "He has a wonderful sense of humor. He loves a good practical joke. There's been a lot of them in our department over the years. He has some of the all-time best ones for sure."

"Jim has had an incredible impact on Loyalist College athletics and on many athletes' lives individually," said Loyalist

soccer player and game day staff Emily Postma. "Jim is always welcoming, kind, positive, encouraging, and has been such a great role model to everyone he comes in contact with."

The retirement event was held at the gym, during the final basketball games of the season, where Buck had the opportunity to reconnect with old friends and colleagues while watching the games.

During the games on Feb. 11, both the women's and men's teams were off to a great start and came out strong with two big wins. The women's team pulled off a 79-67 win and the men's dominated with a 72-52 win against the Seneca Stings. The energy in the crowd was electric and Buck watched from the sidelines with pride as his son, Bobby Buck and his teammates sped up and down the court working hard to secure the win.

As the games came to an end, the guests moved downstairs to Loyalist's Shark Tank Pub to carry on the festivities. The night began with a few speeches. They spoke about Jim's dedication, hard work, and passion for sports.

Hoskins read a letter from Buck's good friend Laurie Cahill from Mohawk College who was unable to attend that night:

"Throughout Ontario, the words Loyalist Lancers and Jim Buck are synonymous with integrity, sportsmanship and pursuit of excellence. Jim's life work tells college administrators everywhere that the passion, ability and dedication to work can be successful in serving our students is right here within our halls yesterday, today and tomorrow."

Buck, in turn, gave a speech thanking everyone for their kind words and support throughout his career. "What Loyalist has done for me is given me a home and given me some incredible friendships and I've worked with some of the most amazing people," he said.

The retirement party was a testament to the lasting impact that one person can have on a community. The college, its athletes and colleagues say they will never forget the legacy of the retiring athletics director and the contributions he made to their athletic program.

## Furry friends seek place to call their forever home

By Kenzie Friesen

In the front window of the Humane Society Hastings Prince Edward, local residents can expect to find a small white and brown-eared tabby cat by the name of Willie Nelson, who rests comfortably in the front windows of the building to give everyone a warm welcome.

Willie shares his room at the Humane Society with his white and orange-coloured brother, who is named Renji. Willie and Renji have been bonded together for their whole lives, and will only be released for adoption if they can be adopted together.

"When cats – or any kind of animals are surrendered to us that are already bonded, we always keep them together before and after their adoption just to make the whole process easier for them," explains Ann Munro, the communications and marketing manager at the Humane Society in Belleville.

As more people walked into the Humane Society last Tuesday morning, more and more furry faces popped out of their hand-knitted beds and blankets to sneak a peek at the possible new families walking by. Each animal had tiny, colourful, hand-written notes with their names on the door done by children in the Rescue Readers program, in which schools can register online for their students to come into the Humane Society and spend time with the animals by reading their favourite books to them.

The Humane Society Hastings Prince Edward constantly has a wide range of events to offer Quinte residents, including

their PetSmart adoption weeks, Humane Society YourTV Bingo, Winter dog coat sales, holiday-themed raffles, and more to help pay for the care that the animals there deserve. The Valentine's Day events thrown by the Humane Society are also what managed to help get 48 cats, 19 dogs, five rabbits, and one rooster all adopted in February, making a total of 78 animals who found their forever homes.

"There are hundreds of amazing animals in our shelters and other rescues and they all deserve a second chance at a great home," says Munro when talking about the animals they currently up for adoption. "These are animals that are just waiting to love somebody."

In a long hallway in the Humane Society is a room with a grey door covered in sticky notes from multiple Rescue Readers addressed to Chomper the cat, who can be found in his room resting on top of his favourite purple blanket. Anyone who enters Chomper's room is greeted with kind eyes and loud purring from the tabby cat, who always gets up to greet his guests by lying at their feet and showing off his striped 29-pound belly.

"Chomper was 32 pounds when he first came to us in January," says Munro. "He is a nine-year-old sweetheart who just loves everyone... We have staff members who go in on their lunch hour just to hang around with Chomper. He just has this lovely way about him, and he's special."

In addition to Chomper, 31 other cats are sitting in their own toy-filled rooms at the Humane Society waiting to finally go home. Four dogs waiting in their kennels in the

same hallway bark excitedly every time the door handle opens, but none louder than Ozzy; an Australian Shepherd who wouldn't stop trying to roll his toy ball under the gate for people to play with him. Other dogs including Mack, Shadow, and Natt all show off their best spins, jumps, and even more barks for the possible family members in the room.

At the end of the hall is a room full of the building's smallest animals, also all hoping to find their families. Four small fancy rats by the names of Dutton, Jeremy, Tate, and Ryan huddle together in a bed in the corner of their cage to get ready for a nap before more people start entering their room. Besides the rats are two guinea pigs eating together in their pen, one named Chocolate, and the other named Teddy. At the end of the room sit two cages full of more colourful sticky notes for the Humane Society's only rabbits, Caramel and Winter. Even Slash, a small orange guinea pig who normally enjoys hiding in his wooden tunnel, enjoyed the attention of those in the room.

Each room in the Humane Society Hastings Prince Edward contains either an animal waiting for love or employees with enough love to give as they wait together to find forever homes across Quinte West. Members of the public can still come into the Humane Society any time from noon until 4:30 p.m. to enter their latest chocolate and candy raffle, shop through their collection of pet winter coats, or to even meet a new best friend.

For more on this story, click on this link: <https://vimeo.com/808527657>



Photo by Kenzie Friesen

**Chomper is eagerly awaiting adoption to a family who will be patient with him and his health, and willing to give him lots of attention and play time.**





Photo by Hunter Middleton

(From left) Samantha Kigutaq Metcalfe and Cailyn Nanaqu DeGrandpre. People travelled far and wide to attend the opening ceremony of Waawaateg, an indigenous art installation located in downtown Kingston in Confederation Park. The exhibit will be at the park until March 31 and showcases work from artists and storytellers around the area depicting indigenous stories. The opening ceremony also had a performance from the Indigenous throat singing duo Samantha Kigutaq Metcalfe, the leader, and Cailyn Nanaqu DeGrandpre, the follower.

# Indigenous art installation features artists and storytellers

By Hunter Middleton

Last Friday night was filled with beads, ribbons, art and Indigenous throat singing for the grand opening of Waawaateg, a Northern Lights and Indigenous Storytelling display in Confederation Park in downtown Kingston.

The park was filled with life after the sun went down last Friday night. Many Indigenous and non-Indigenous people gathered, bundled up to stay warm for the grand opening, with some coming from as far as Whitby to attend the event. The interactive light and sound experience got its name Waawaateg from the meaning 'there is a display of the northern lights in Anishinaabemowin-Ojibway, and is made up of five different art installations by Indigenous artists and storytellers.

To start the ceremony, there was an opening speech in both English and multi-Indigenous languages, along with a calling of the spirits and a land acknowledgment. Next, the following artists and storytellers were introduced: Dakota

Ward and Jaylene Cardinal, Lindsay Brant and Jamaica Cass, Duncan Pheasant, Rick Revelle, Alyssa Brady and Tewateron-hikwa Gleniste. Almost no two pieces of art were the same, in a wide range of media, from photography to painting on snowshoe canvas, with each sharing a unique story.

Dakota Ward and Jaylene Cardinal shared their points of view when it came to the crowd's reaction to the work they had presented.

"It was very cold tonight, but it was very heartwarming to see that many people come out," said Ward. "It was very nice to see the turnout be so successful. And it was very encouraging for not only as an Indigenous person, but as an artist to just continue what we do."

Cardinal added, "It just shows, by the people coming out to see the art, that this is what story and art brings. It brings connections in a different way. It brings understandings and in a whole new way. And just being able to share this space and the music and just all the energy put

**'I think it's really important to give Indigenous people the spotlight, and I think that really, truly happened tonight. And I think it's important to keep this going, and I hope to see more events like this in the future.'**

*Kigutaq Metcalfe*

together was very beautiful."

After the introductions of the artist, the Inuit throat singing duo Tarniriik took to the stage. The duo is made up of Samantha Kigutaq Metcalfe, the leader, and Cailyn Nanaqu DeGrandpre, the follower.

Inuit throat singing is when two people,

usually women, face each other and use their throats, bellies and diaphragms to expel sounds. The two people go back and forth, matching their partner's rhythm until one messes up, or starts laughing. The duo sang many traditional songs and did two rounds of competition in which the leader would start off with a sound and the follower would have to recreate the sound. There was no silence between the songs, and the explanations behind the songs, because of the loud cheers and encouragement from the crowd for the duo to keep going.

When the singing duo was asked about how the ceremony went, Nanaqu DeGrandpre replied, "It's definitely a baby step, but the more and more baby steps we'll take, then we'll go into normal walking and into running."

Kigutaq Metcalfe added, "Yeah, exactly. I think it's really important to give Indigenous people the spotlight, and I think that really, truly happened tonight. And I think it's important to keep this going, and I hope to see more events like this in

the future."

The ceremony ended slowly as many enjoyed corn soup and fry bread after the singing performance while looking closer at the art installations and talking with the artists about their work. Visitors also had a chance to shop for Indigenous-made items such as jewellery and artwork.

Among the crowd were many younger children asking questions and showing great interest in the Indigenous culture around them. "It's super, super moving," said artist Alyssa Brady.

"I come from a family of residential school survivors. I think of a story of a family member who was abused because of the language that he spoke. So just to see all the kids running around is super important. It was really important for me to bring my kids here today and just be part of this because every little drop of celebration that we can get, I think, is a little act of reclamation. It's just really good to see kind of that revival and that pride, flipping the coin and taking back what was taken from us."

# Belleville welcomes POP Culture's Comic-Con

By Kenzie Friesen

The sidewalk in front of the Royal Canadian Legion in Belleville was lined last Saturday with Quinte comic book fans who were ready for Comic-Con to finally make its appearance here for the first time since the 2020 pandemic.

Shortly after 10 a.m., people were able to pay the entrance fee, as well as donate their canned goods to the Deadpool cardboard cutout standing beside the doors to receive a free comic book of their choosing.

The Legion was soon packed with people excited to get out their wallets to spend their money on the exclusive merchandise of their favourite comic books or TV show characters the event and its vendors had to offer. Many different vendors from across Ontario filled the biggest room in the Legion for shopping by members of the public.

The event came to Belleville courtesy of POP Culture Canada, which is dedicated to helping plan charity events across the country. POP Culture Canada specializes in helping organize autograph signings, celebrity appearances, vendors, and more, all while benefitting food banks around Ontario by collecting donations from every event they host. The organization is currently working its way towards raising over 20,000 pounds of donated food.

There to welcome fans upon entry were rows and rows of limited edition Funko Pops, brightly-coloured stuffed animals, with custom-made purses and backpacks. Shelves full of vintage action figures and figurines stood tall along with walls of the Legion, among them sat She-Ra, Scooby-Doo, countless Marvel characters, the Predator, and more, giving those wishing to leave with a new action figure endless options.

In the right corner of the venue stood the owner and creator of Zelfa Comics,



Photo by Kenzie Friesen

**An employee who asked to remain anonymous stands in front of a booth of Action Packed, a popular comic book, card, and game store in Kingston, Ont.**

Luanga Nuwame.

"Welcome to my little cardboard corner of heaven," he smiled and said as he welcomed fans to his booth. 3-D cardboard art surrounded Nuwame's booth, and in front of him proudly sat his own line of comic book series.

"I like to create three-dimensional cardboard art pieces, and if you look over here, you will see my own comic books

that I produced myself through my own publishing company," said Nuwame.

"One of my favourites is this one, Paper Rock Scissors N' Stuff Wars, where the characters Rock, Paper, and Scissors battle each other and different elements in outer space," he explained, holding up a comic book with cartoon paper soldiers, and rock warriors on the hand-drawn cover.

Beside Zelfa Comics sat the longest

row of comic books in the Legion, filled with thousands of comics supplied by Action Packed, a comic book and game store from Kingston, Ont., offering every kind of comic book from DC to Marvel, and everything in between. Those stopping to browse through the shop's merchandise rarely left without a new comic book in their hands.

Eventually, people in the Legion

paused as one fan walked through the doors dressed head to toe in a silver metal suit as the Mandalorian, complete with an entourage of Star Wars-themed characters behind him. While the Mandalorian passed through the walkways stopping to talk with excited fans, another cosplayer strolled in wearing a red and black clown suit, and holding an oversized hammer that read, "Your Face Here!" which is also worn by DC character Harley Quinn.

Both cosplayers had no problem posing for photos with fans throughout the event and were happily reciting famous lines from their characters. Other characters continued to make their appearances throughout the event, including manga characters Deku, and Todoroki from My Hero Academia, played by Kai Faris and her friend, who wanted to remain anonymous.

"We might have had a little too excited to dress up as our favourite anime characters," giggled Faris, with her friend, "but it's been so much fun!" The pair then rushed back to admire the wide variety of anime character-covered merchandise waiting just behind them.

The other side of the venue offered exclusive and rare versions of board games, jewelry, galaxy-covered purses and wallets, old Nintendo Wii games, puzzles and more from as many vendors as it would fit. Including booths set up by vendors like This Little Kitten, Mandiness Entertainment, Chubcats, The Sage Bunny, and Six Thirteen Creations, who all smiled excitedly at each customer stopped to view their merchandise, and each booth was being constantly visited by those in the bustling room.

When the clock finally reached 3p.m., vendors and fans alike lingered around the comic book-filled room despite the event wrapping up, with no one in the room wanting to leave, and eagerly awaiting for the next Comic-Con in Belleville.