

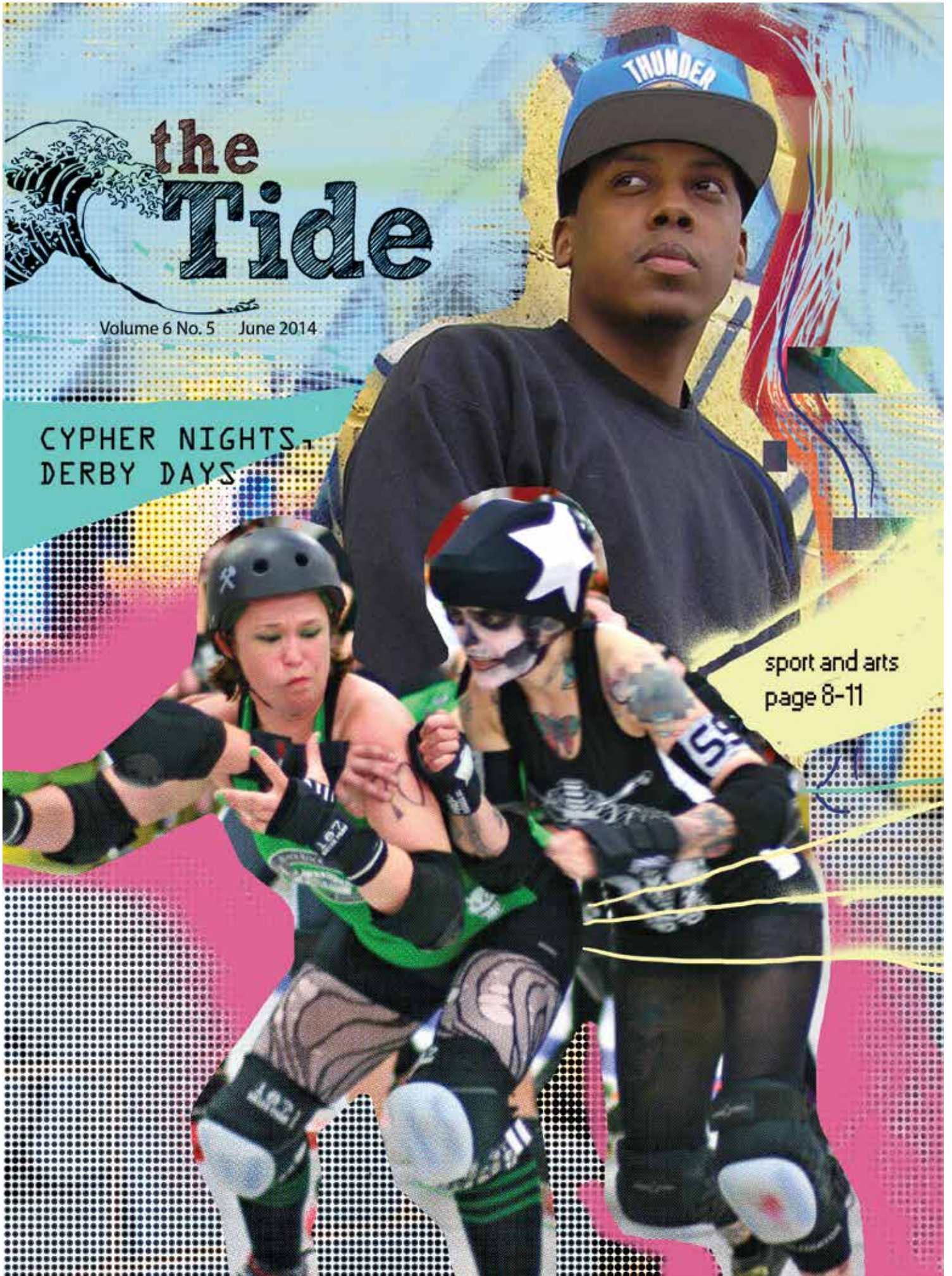


the Tide

Volume 6 No. 5 June 2014

CYPHER NIGHTS
DERBY DAYS

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Recent cuts to CBC Cape Breton are a major blow to the region

by ROBERT DEVET

K'JIPUKTUK (Halifax) – Eliminating the positions of an award-winning reporter and a technician in the CBC Sydney newsroom is a huge blow to the town and the region.

"Back in the nineties there were about 100 people who worked for the Cape Breton CBC, now we are down to 12," says Rankin MacSween, president of New Dawn Enterprises Limited, a large volunteer-driven community business organization.

MacSween is one of the local supporters of public broadcasting who rallied end of May in support of CBC Cape Breton.

"We're a community that is at this interesting point in its history, at that turn in the road. It is really important, as that process unfolds, to be able to talk to one another and listen," says MacSween. "CBC is able to offer us that opportunity."

CBC Cape Breton offers four and a half hours of local radio programming each weekday.

MacSween does not argue that local stories would not be covered without a local CBC presence. There are probably more radio stations in Cape Breton at this time than ever before.

"But the CBC, more than the others, is able to really embrace the notion of conversation, because it is positioned to go deeper and spend more time," says MacSween.

CBC/Radio-Canada's problems are the result of federal budget cuts amounting to \$115-million over three years, a \$30-million funding freeze, and losses in advertising revenue; 650 jobs will be cut nationwide.

Poor monitoring of drinking water in Nova Scotia, says auditor general

by STEPHANIE TAYLOR

K'JIPUKTUK (Halifax) – Nova Scotia's Department of Environment isn't properly monitoring public drinking water, according to the province's auditor general.

In the annual report, acting auditor general Alan Horgan and his team concluded that although most municipal facilities complete audits on their water supplies on schedule, a number of registered water treatment centres failed to conduct their audits every three years as required.

Of 38 registered facilities examined, the report said 23 were found to have incomplete audits within the mandated time frame.

"To ensure that water safety risks are identified, the Department needs to make sure it is meeting its planned facility audit frequency," the report said.

Instances were also identified where water samples were not properly collected 30 days after a boil water advisory was removed.

A lack of clear guidelines on water testing for inspectors was another concern the report identified. Horgan noted several occasions that inspectors could not produce

the proper operator's certification and also stated that no documented policy exists on the nature of how water testing is to be performed.

This year marks the province's fifth consecutive year of poor performance.

"Government department and agencies are not taking enough action to correct operational deficiencies they know to exist," the report reads.

Horgan called for a better implementation process of recommendations and cites that less than half of the recommended changes made in 2011 were put in place.

The report said only eight of the total 301 recommended changes made were reported to the auditor general.

The Department of Internal Services, Department of Service Nova Scotia and Municipal Relations, Department of Labour and Advanced Education and Department of Economic and Rural Development were the worst offending departments listed in the report.

Halifax Debtors' Assembly tackles debt, shame, and solutions

by ROBERT DEVET

K'JIPUKTUK (Halifax) – The first debtors' assembly was held June 3 at the Bloomfield Centre on Agricola Street.

Max Haiven, a Halifax-based activist and assistant professor at the Nova Scotia College of Art and Design (NSCAD), is the driving force behind the assembly.

Many are affected by debt, he says: people surviving on exploitative payday advance loans; people carrying huge amounts of credit card debt, and young people going in debt to meet the rising cost of living.

Haiven finds inspiration in the debtors' movement that emerged from Occupy Wall Street in late 2011.

Debtors' assemblies first occurred in Zuccotti Park in New York's Wall Street district, and then in San Francisco, Portland and other cities. The assemblies provided an opportunity to talk about living with debt.

"Debt has this tremendous silencing effect on us," says Haiven. "We have to deal with debt on our own, it's a burden we have to bear by ourselves. For people to get together and talk about it is like a kind of radical therapy."

Haiven argues that cuts to post secondary education have left many students in debt, and erosion of government-provided social care have left many people in consumer debt.

Haiven believes not all debts are bad. "The idea that we ever could live a life completely free of debt is fantasy," Haiven says. "We owe a debt to each other as social beings. We are fundamentally a cooperative species and the obligations we have to each other are actually what makes our lives worth living."

"Here in Halifax we ... need to begin our analysis by acknowledging the incredible debt [settlers] owe to the Mi'kmaq nation," says Haiven.

"We could legitimize the debts that are currently unacknowledged."

For more information:

<http://halifaxdebtorsassembly.wordpress.com>

Dalhousie University offers new “student-centric” health services

by STEPHANIE TAYLOR

K'JIPUKTUK (Halifax) – Mental health, sexual health and alcohol abuse are the top priorities of Dalhousie’s Student Health Services, says Executive Director of Student Wellness, Verity Turpin.

A move-in location plus a shift in programming are new ways the clinic plans to improve access to health services, she said in an interview Monday.

Last year, the director of Dal’s counselling services along with other department directors, as well as members of the Dalhousie Student Union and Student Health Promotion were brought together to develop a new student wellness strategy.

After almost a year of consultations with students, Turpin said the team determined there was a need to shift the focus of Dal’s Health Services away from a community model to a more student-centric clinic.

“All of our programming efforts will be directed at students,” she said, while promising that current community members who are patients at the clinic will notice little



A move in location plus a shift in programming are new ways the Dalhousie Health Services clinic plans to improve access. | Photo Kendra Lovegrove

Young people from 15 to 24 are more susceptible to suffer mental illness and/or substance use disorders than any other age group, according to Toronto's Centre for Addiction and Mental Health.

change.

Starting in the fall, Turpin said there will be more outreach and education programs around sexual health, mental health and alcohol harm prevention.

Young people age 15 to 24 are more susceptible to suffer mental illness and/or substance use disorders than any other age group, according to Toronto’s Centre for Addiction and Mental Health Services.

Better access to mental health support is one of the university’s main concerns, Turpin says.

In the past year, Dalhousie Counselling and Psychological Services has directly helped more than 2,500 students from Dal, as well as the University of King’s College and the Nova Scotia College of Art and Design.

Anxiety, stress and a lack of sleep are three most common factors post-secondary

students across North America say prevent

them from achieving their academic goals, Turpin said.

She describes how Dal’s Health Services will now begin to offer more workshops that focus on helping their students cope with these specific issues.

International students can also expect to have more support. Turpin says that thanks to new funding and a small increase in student fees, Health Services is in the process of hiring a new personal counsellor who specializes in the needs of international students.

Of the 18,000 students enrolled at Dalhousie, 14 per cent call Canada a second home.

Students in the faculties of nursing and medicine will have more opportunities to take on new leadership roles in Health Services, Turpin says. These include chances to help facilitate flu clinics and run sexual

health workshops under the supervision of trained physicians.

More flexible appointment hours, better online information about the types of services available, and the hiring of a nurse practitioner for Dalhousie’s downtown Sexton campus are other changes she says students can expect to see.

A new building is another part of supporting student health, Turpin explains. Starting this week, Health Services will move to the second floor of the LeMarchant Street Mixed Use Building. She believes students will feel more comfortable in the newly designed clinic that offers a spacious waiting area with plenty of natural light and more privacy than the previous location.

Student Health Services, Dal Counselling and Psychological Services and Student Health Promotion will all be located in the same area, which Turpin says will make it easier for students to receive the treatment they need.

“We will be aligning all of our services and all of our outreach and all of our resources to meet students where they are,” she says.

CeaseFire hopes to prevent violence

First-of-its kind anti-violence program in Canada takes to the streets of HRM

by STEPHANIE TAYLOR

K'JIPUKTUK (Halifax) – The cure for violence starts with a community.

“We view violence as an epidemic,” says Viki Samuels-Stewart, project manager of CeaseFire Halifax Communities — a new outreach program that treats violence as an infectious disease.

The deaths of nearly 19 black youth between 2006-2011 as a result of gun violence became the catalyst for different communities in Halifax to begin the search for a solution, which is when CeaseFire was first considered.

CeaseFire, now called Cure Violence, is a model of violence prevention that was developed by a University of Illinois doctor in 2000 as a way to reduce Chicago's rate of gun crime.

It has since been applied in New York City, N.Y., Baltimore, Md., Boston, Mass., — even Mexico.

The program brings together community services with outreach workers to stop violence in a three-pronged approach: identify, intervene and help change the behaviours of people who are involved in, or who are seen as at-risk to commit violent crimes.

“We know that Halifax is not Chicago

in terms of the level of violence,” Samuels-Stewart said. “But we don't want it to become like that, nor do we want to become immune to it.”

She said Halifax recently became the first Canadian city to implement CeaseFire, which will be funded by \$2.5 million from the federal government over the next five-years.

The program will host a series of community launches starting June.

"We view violence as an epidemic."

– Viki Samuels-Stewart, project manager of CeaseFire Halifax Communities

During a recent roundtable meeting with other local organizations, CeaseFire outreach coordinator Marcus James explained the program uses a combination of intervention and community response strategies to stop violence before it escalates.

The goal is to examine the root of why someone turns to violence, then provide the necessary supports a person needs to change their lifestyle.

People will have improved access to education, employment and housing

options through partnerships with different community organizations around the city, he says.

Samuels-Stewart sees the program as effective because it confronts violence at the street level. Three outreach workers, known as interrupters, have been placed in five communities: North Halifax (near Uniacke Square), Central Halifax, North Dartmouth (near Churchill Court), North and East Preston — neighbourhoods where violent

crime at times has been problematic.

Samuels-Stewart describes how interrupters work as “credible messengers.” They are people who are trusted in these neighbourhoods, either from their previous work experience in the area or from having grown up in the community.

Interrupters are the frontline, she says. They are insiders who anticipate where violence may happen before it erupts, and help people to deal with conflict in restorative ways rather than by picking up a weapon.

But the first and most difficult step is getting people to talk.

“It's all about building those relationship and trust,” Samuels-Stewart says. “It's the most important thing ... if a person trusts you they are bound to talk to you about their lifestyle.”

The program targets black men between ages 16-24, but she promises no one outside that demographic will be denied support.

“That historical and current disadvantage of the African Nova Scotian community is reflected in the violence because young people don't have hope,” Samuels-Stewart says.

Halifax had the highest rate of gun-related violent crime of all major Canadian cities in 2012, according to Statistics Canada report released earlier this year.

March in memory of Kaylin Diggs who was murdered in August, 2012.

| Photo Ben Sichel



DND cuts cost nine men their jobs

Layoffs at HMC dockyard put workers' safety at risk; critics call cuts "hypocritical"

by STEPHANIE TAYLOR

K'JIPUKTUK (Halifax) – It was the news Gerald Roussell had been afraid of.

“I knew it was coming,” the 58-year-old said. “First time in my life I got laid off from any job I ever had.”

The man who once earned a medal for saving lives as a navy firefighter stands outside the gates of the HMC dockyard where he is losing his job. Roussell is one of nine fire watch commissionaires to be laid off as a result of the Conservative government's cuts to the Department of National Defence.

Now all that's left for Roussell is to apply for unemployment.

“Here at my age, 58-years-old, who's going to hire you on?” the Dartmouth resident says. “I want to work, I'm able to work, but can't work 'cause of layoffs.”

With 15 jobs slashed in the past two years, it's been a reality that has loomed over the dockyard for some time, said 54-year-old Allen Dejan. The military veteran who served 20 years can barely talk about losing his job without choking up.

“It's tough”, he says. “All I can say is it's tough.”

Fire watch commissionaires work with tradespeople who perform welding, burning or other “hot” jobs aboard ships at the naval

base. They have specialized training as fire sentries and are responsible to protect the safety of workers.

Because military and police veterans come with years of experience and have undergone basic firefighter training, they are commonly hired as commissionaires once they leave the service, explains NDP Veterans Affairs critic Peter Stoffer.

“They provide an invaluable service to Canada,” he said.

Stoffer and Member of Parliament Robert Chisholm gathered with fire watch commissionaires at a press conference in May to shed light on the ongoing job cuts.

They said dozens of people are losing their jobs as a result of a private sector contract with Commissionaires Nova Scotia being eliminated.

“It just doesn't make any sense at all,” Stoffer said. He sees these cuts as undermining the Harper government's earlier promise to hire more veterans for federal public service jobs.

In the 2014 budget, the Conservative government proposed changes to the Public Service Employment Act in order to give preference to veterans and former Canadian Forces members who are applying for government jobs.

The budget estimates that every year approximately 7,600 members of the Canadian Forces leave, including 1,000 due to medical reasons.

“Finding meaningful employment is a key factor in making a successful transition to civilian life,” reads the report.

The budget's proposals fall in line with Bill C-II or The Priority for Hiring Injured Veterans Act, which parliament amended last fall in order to create more job opportunities for veterans.

“It's extremely hypocritical,” Stoffer said. “The government on one hand cannot say, ‘we're going to hire veterans,’ and on the other hand lay a whole bunch of them off.”

He not only worries what message this sends to veterans but fears what these job cuts mean for the safety of tradespeople at the dockyard.

“We're the frontline,” Dejan explains. “You're talking about fire that will take a second and could burn down a ship. It happens so quick that if we're not there (in) the first second, then it's too late.”

Commissionaires say another two rounds of cuts are expected in the fall, which would leave only nine on the job.

The plan is to replace the commissionaires with navy personnel, Stoffer said. Besides the safety risk in bringing in less experienced workers, he thinks the decision is financially absurd and will end up costing taxpayers more money in the end.

“Why would you retrain a whole bunch of people to do a job that folks that at a very affordable rate are already doing?” Stoffer said.

He expressed concern about what future cuts will mean once next year's shipbuilding contact gets underway and there are fewer people to do an increased amount of work.

Gerald Roussell of Dartmouth, N.S., will lose his job as a fire watch commissionaire on June 13 as a result of the conservative government's DND cuts.

| Photo Stephanie Taylor



Violent death of Quest resident part of a double tragedy

Advocates call for immediate closure of large institutions

by **ROBERT DEVET**

K'JIPUKTUK (Halifax) – The violent death of a resident at the Quest Regional Rehabilitation Centre in Lower Sackville has parents, activists and self-advocates worried and saddened.

On May 11 an alleged assault occurred at the institution. An attack by a fellow resident left Gordon James Longphee, a 56-year-old man, in intensive care with critical injuries.

On May 20, it was announced that Longphee had died.

At a hastily called press conference outside of the Quest building Brenda Hardiman, co-founder of Advocating Parents of Nova Scotia (APNS), a support organization for parents of children with intellectual disabilities, called the death of Longphee part of a double tragedy.

"The other tragedy in this devastating situation is that a person could well face criminal charges," Hardiman said. "APNS believes that both the [provincial] Department of Community Services and Quest should shoulder some responsibility for events that take place in their facility."

Hardiman is the mother of Nichele Benn, who currently is a resident of Quest. Benn faces assault charges for attacking a staff member of the institution.

Supporters of Benn argue that she suffers an organic brain disorder that causes her aggressive episodes and that she, and others like her, do not belong in the criminal justice system.

"To think of the senseless death and to think that there could be criminal charges... We want institutions closed and small option homes with proper staffing established," said Hardiman. Small option homes typically accommodate as few as three residents and are located in the community.

"Staff do what they can with the resources they are provided. But there are just too many people living here," said Hardiman.

Hardiman believes that resident-to-resident violence is a much more frequent occurrence than Quest and Community Services are willing to admit.



The violent death of a resident of Quest Regional Rehabilitation Centre in Lower Sackville is causing advocates to ask for an immediate closure of large institutions. Charlie Lemon, past president of People First Nova Scotia, and Cindy Carruthers, a coordinator with the organization, spoke at a press conference held outside of the Quest facilities. | Photo Robert Devet

She wonders why it took Quest four days to call in the police and has little faith in an investigation initiated by Community Services. "That's like the RCMP investigating the RCMP," she said. "I think an independent body needs to come in."

Charlie Lemon is a past president and founding member of the Nova Scotia chapter of People First, a group of self advocates for those who have been labeled as living with intellectual disabilities. Their motto is "Nothing about us without us."

Lemon lived in a large institution for years but now has his own apartment and works at a pizza shop.

"I am very upset about this death," Lemon told reporters.

"A large group of people forced to live in institutions against their will, that will cause problems like this."

"People First members believe that people should not be locked away in institutions.

They have a right to live in a home, in a community of their choosing," said Lemon.

Cindy Carruthers, Administrative Support Coordinator for People First Nova Scotia agrees.

"Many of our People First members lived in institutions, and they are all very successful out in their own communities," Carruthers says.

"Some receive special supports but they live independently, working or doing volunteer work, having friends, and having what every other Nova Scotian enjoys - choice, equality and the ability to interact with your community."

Lemon, Carruthers and Hardiman all expressed support for a Community Services roadmap that sees large institutions entirely eliminated over the next ten years. But even a proposed moratorium on new intakes by the spring of 2015 is not soon enough for them.

Beat Nation: Art, Hip-Hop and Aboriginal Culture at Dal and SMU

by STEPHANIE TAYLOR

Beat Nation: Art, Hip-Hop and Aboriginal Culture' was on display throughout May at the Dalhousie Art Gallery and Saint Mary's University Art Gallery. The gathered more than 20 artists from across North America who question aboriginal identity through hip-hop culture.

With its mixture of mediums, including paintings, sound exhibits, installation and film, the show expresses the many ways a generation of artists have used hip hop to re-interpret what it means to be aboriginal, while at the same time confronting notions of stereotype and cultural appropriation.

The exhibitions' title 'Beat Nation' points to the ways hip-hop has become a driving force for activism in urban aboriginal communities over the past two decades. Although at first it seems the stylish edge of hip-hop does not fit with the stoicism of traditional aboriginal art, both visibly share in the art of storytelling.

For aboriginal artists, hip-hop has allowed them the chance to re-mix the new with the old and to re-invent a visual language that speaks to the current realities of urban aboriginal life. As you walk through the gallery it is easy to find yourself surprised by the graffiti murals of Haida figures or skateboards carved from animal bone. But these are visual reminders of the changing definition of what it means to be aboriginal today.

In Anishnaabensag Blimskowebshikgewag (2012), Métis artist and art historian Dylan

Miner, revisits the theme of migration, a major part in the history of all aboriginal peoples.

His work involves four low-rider bicycles, each of which are designed by an emerging aboriginal Vancouver artist. The bikes are coloured with the four cardinal directions, black, red, yellow and white, and are decorated with furs, traditional beadwork and feathers. Miner's playful look at contemporary transportation methods as mediums of traditional myth introduces viewers to a new chapter on an ancient narrative.

Like any good hip-hop beat, the exhibit has an electric feel to it, created by the visual rhythm of artistic invention coupled with diverse imagery. The show's hybrid of modern and traditional art is best illustrated in the work of Jordan Bennett, a Mi'kmaq artist from Newfoundland's west coast.

His three works, Marrow Truck (2008), Carved Skateboard (2009) and Turning Tables (2010), discuss ideas of traditional aboriginal craft and artefacts in contemporary society. In Turning Tables, for example, he used walnut, spruce and oak to build a set of wooden turntables that play sounds of him learning his Mi'kmaq language.

Many of the artists in the show, as in real life, explore aboriginal identity through the lens of popular culture. One of the show's most intriguing pieces belongs to multimedia Cree artist Kent Monkman and his stiletto-wearing transvestite alter-

ego, Miss Chief Eagle Testickle. In a video performance titled, Dance to Miss Chief (2010), his alter-ego seductively dances in a music video to stereotypical images of an aboriginal character as often seen depicted in an old western films.

Similarly, a number of works featured are from well-known hip-hop artists and music producers, such as Bear Witness of A Tribe Called Red and Jackson2Bears. In a series of video-installation, these artists remix traditional sounds of throat singing and drumming with historical footage to reclaim the Canadian aboriginal identity.

As aboriginal identity and culture continues to be change, artists will keep turning to images of status and rebellion to express their struggle. From Rolande Souliere's large-scale installation of street barrier tape that represents the government's control of land claims, to Sonny Assu's 67 mounted gold records that stand for every year the potlatch was banned in Canada, the show resounds loudly with a call to sovereignty and political action.

Beat Nation was curated by the Vancouver Art Gallery and brought to Halifax through a grant from the Museums Assistance Program, Department of Canadian Heritage.

The exhibit has been dedicated to the memory of Loretta Saunders and to a call for a nation inquiry into Canada's murdered and missing aboriginal women.

NEW local hip hop: For 16-year-old BenG, the sky is the limit

by RANA ENCOL

A year and a half ago, a friend introduced then 15-year-old Ben Castrilli, aka BenG, to Centreline Studio on Gottingen Street, where he wrote his first rap song for fun. The song was recorded by producer Jordan Williams, aka Jordan Metro, on his first day after graduating from recording arts at NSCC.

That was the beginning of the collaboration which would lead to Genesis, a full-length debut album ten months in the making and released last week. The first half takes

its musical cues from jazz and classic hip hop samples, but the songs also flow into expansive club and radio-friendly "bangers" featuring local artists Shevy Price, Alfie, and Tania. BenG's poetic imagination transcends his age, unless BenG has really wine and dined on steak and champagne with his lyrical lady loves.

Heaven only knows, but it's evident that this first effort is about finding his confidence and strength in cool, cocky wordplay while he takes his time to mature as an artist. "My voice was changing while I was recording,"

he says. He's bursting to be more than a studio kid like many who find their wings at Centreline, run by Sobaz Benjamin, El Jones, and Lindell Smith to provide an artistic haven for youth in the north end and beyond.

Halifax is ideal for finding your voice and your audience: "With all the social media, you don't need an A&R rep," he says. "I can get my short term rep here." When people think about Halifax hip hop, he hopes they'll be thinking "Classified, Kayo, Alfie, and BenG." >>><http://beng416.bandcamp.com/releases>

R.A.W. Cypher brings freestyle parties to North End Halifax

Local hip hop talent gathers on Gottingen Street

by RANA ENCOL

Martez Wiggins, a.k.a. Woozy Blanks, is setting up his second cypher night when hot pink lights flood the Alteregos cafe on Gottingen Street. DJ Hot Cue is behind a laptop and mixer where guests usually check in to the adjacent hostel.

It was the night after Ghostface Killah hit up town just up the street, but one didn't need to stray farther to find the heart of Halifax's local rap scene paying homage to the core element of hip hop: the freestyle party!

"Did you see Ghostface last night?" Woozy recalls someone asking.

"No, but he's opening up the weekend for me!" he cheekily replies.

Whether it was J Pimpin rapping sly, boastful verse for the ladies (rapping "make the people jealous next door" over Wu-Tang's C.R.E.A.M. Instrumentals), or Micky Blanks bringing the party and persona, the night was a showcase for local artists from Dartmouth, from North Preston, from Uniacke Square.

A cypher is pure fun – a few drinks and a few people combine to make a freewheeling, freestyling good time. It's a chance for MCs to feed off each others' energy with sometimes written, but more often improvised rhymes.

22-year-old Woozy affirms how it's a building block of the craft: "People used to stand around on street corners and pass around verses for hours," he says. "It's a lost religion."

Nowadays, Woozy will meet up with his brother (Alvero) and best friend (Micky) at their apartments, sometimes with a case of beer to get the verses flowing. On one such occasion he got the idea to host this event: "we're not as big as we think we are," he humbly admits. The cypher is his step towards that kind of artistic community – to challenge one another and forge connections amongst artists.

It's an energy everyone wants to be a part of – people in the crowd really want to spit, he says, even if they're not part of the lineup.

I meet Native Son, MC for the Lost Boys (rap group who signed to Arista Records in the 1990s), while waiting for the cypher to



Woozy Blanks grew up in Uniacke Square, spent some time in Dartmouth, but has always called Halifax's north end home. | Photo Rana Encol

begin. He was part of that early East Coast hip hop sound, and remembers his own cyphers with Special Ed (later member of the Crooklyn Dodgers; "I Got it Made").

Though he says he's more into slam poetry these days, he kills it when he steps up the mic and delivers some deep, soulful verse with a bit of beat boxing thrown in for good measure – drawing some admiring "oh, that '90s sound" oohs and ahs from the crowd.

Local filmmaker Michael MacDonald is producing the documentary tentatively entitled "R.A.W. Cypher," and says he'll follow the musicians making street art and poetry throughout the summer with a crew of camera and sound technicians, who are mostly student apprentices through the Centre for Arts and Technology.

Fateh Ahmed is directing the film, which the makers hope to finance through crowdfunding. MacDonald met Woozy in the cafe when casual conversation turned to the idea of a film documentary spotlighting Woozy, his life, and his music.

The young rapper says he can only work on his craft between 11pm-4am – with a full-time work schedule and a baby on the

way, he has to pay to be in the game: "Rap's not paying me." Whether it's studio time or purchasing the rights to a beat, it all costs money.

It's harder to establish oneself in a small city, where the pool of record label executives scouting for raw talent is much smaller. "Businesswise, I'd like to follow the business model of Jay-Z," Woozy laughs: "He came from nothing and now has everything!" He also admires Kanye West and Kendrick Lamar for their pure talent and commitment to the craft.

Hip hop means so much to him: it's the one thing that helps him focus on something while escaping life stresses at the same time.

He started playing around with the craft at 14, and only got serious after his sister passed away. He credits the L.O.V.E. program for providing a family which encouraged creative expression like photography and poetry for kids who might otherwise get in trouble at home or on the streets. Considering himself fairly fortunate, it was a humbling experience to witness others' life struggles, he says.

His moral motto? "Learn as much as you can from anybody else."

ROLLER DERBY

Black Rock Bandits beat Dead Ringers at season opener

PHOTOS and TEXT by SARAH SLAUNWHITE

Anchor City Rollers, Halifax's flat-track derby league, opened the 2014 season with a face-off between the two home teams on May 31, 2014: the Black Rock Bandits and the Dead Ringers.

Over 400 derby fans crammed into Shannon Park Arena to cheer on their favorite derby players and teams.

After a close game, the Black Rock Bandits came out victorious with a final score of 162-125.

Anchor City Rollers are in their Fourth season of roller derby, with about 100 members in their league including Skaters, Referees, Non-Skate Officials, and Volunteers.

To find out when the next Derby bout will be, or to find out how you can learn to skate or volunteer, check out: anchorcityrollers.ca, www.facebook.com/AnchorCityRollers, or follow @AnchorCityDerby on Twitter.



Fi Fi La Flirte, above right, is a referee for the Anchor City Rollers.





"Smashy" jamming for the Black Rock Bandits, and "Block and Deck'her" trying to stop her (left).



"Coffin" of the Harbour Grudges pushing past "Box Blocker" of the Black Rock Bandits (below, right).

"You thin eyes" (below)



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The HMC meets 8pm, every Monday,
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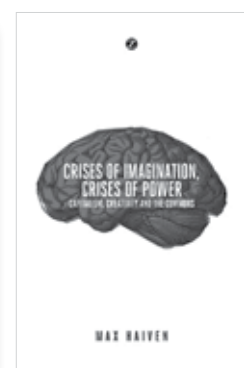
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