

DALHOUSIE GAZETTE

NORTH AMERICA'S OLDEST CAMPUS NEWSPAPER, EST. 1868



DR. ROBERT STRANG, NOVA SCOTIA'S CHIEF MEDICAL OFFICER, HASN'T BANNED TRICK-OR-TREATING THIS YEAR, BUT HALLOWEEN 2020 IS CERTAINLY GOING TO LOOK DIFFERENT THAN USUAL. (PHOTO BY GEOFFREY HOWARD)

Happy socially distanced Halloween

No parties this year

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LETTER FROM THE EDITOR

Don't go to that huge party

Dear Reader,

I miss parties. As a proud introvert, I never thought I'd feel this way.

I miss parties where I'm stuck in a corner making awkward banter with strangers. I miss parties where everyone's yelling over blaring music, dancing drunk and inches apart from one another. But I won't go to a party anytime soon. Usually the effort required for social interaction is what stops me from attending large gatherings. This year, it's the fear of a deadly virus.

Recent stories have revealed local university students are not all following COVID-19 restrictions: At Acadia University, a student was fined for hosting a party with more than 75 people. At St. Francis Xavier University, student athletes were disciplined after many of them attended a large party. (I have to say, it seems unfair all their athletes were disciplined, even those who didn't attend the party.)

My first thought when hearing these stories: This was bound to happen. A pandemic can't stop university students from partying. It took me a while to realize how terrible it was these parties took place.

We may feel safe in Nova Scotia with the currently low number of COVID-19 cases, but no one knows when another outbreak will happen. If you're thinking about going to some big Halloween party this month, consider the fact 65 people have already died in Nova Scotia from COVID-19. Imagine if a university party started another outbreak. How devastating would it be if that outbreak caused more people to die?

I have extroverted friends who have refrained from going to large parties. Whether you're an introvert or extrovert, know it's not just you who misses being in a room filled with people. That feeling doesn't give you an excuse to put other people's lives at risk. This pandemic isn't over. Hang out with people in your bubble. FaceTime friends who are outside of your bubble. And please, don't go to that huge party.



-Tarini Fernando, Editor-in-chief

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Another year, another low AGM turnout

The DSU struggles to meet quorum for the fifth time

BY LANE HARRISON, NEWS EDITOR



SINCE 2016, THE DSU HAS NEVER MET THEIR ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING (AGM) QUORUM, WHICH IS THE NUMBER OF PEOPLE REQUIRED TO ATTEND THE AGM IN ORDER TO PASS NEW BUSINESS. (PHOTO BY GEOFFREY HOWARD)

For the fifth year in a row, the DSU was unable to meet quorum, the minimum number of people required to pass new business, at its Annual General Meeting (AGM), which was held virtually through Microsoft Teams on Oct. 1.

Quorum rules

The quorum requirement is one per cent of the student population, which according to Dalhousie University's 2019 enrolment statistics is about 205 students. Twelve people were present at the 2020 AGM, including a member of the *Dalhousie Gazette* who was live-tweeting the event.

The quorum requirement was increased from 75 students to one per cent of the student population in 2016. That was the last meeting to hit quorum and also when bylaws were voted into effect, meaning the DSU is still operating on the 2016 bylaws.

DSU President Maddie Stinson would like to see the bylaws updated this year. She knew the DSU might face issues reaching quorum during the AGM, so bylaw amendments were

never on the agenda for the Oct. 1 meeting. Instead, the DSU will be hosting a spring AGM, and they'll spend the year working to increase student turnout after low numbers the first time around.

"We're hoping to roll it into some kind of an event or contest, something that will encourage students to come out, but is still also neutral. Of course, we want students to come for the right reasons and in an unbiased manner,"

Stinson said in an interview with the *Gazette*.

Prior to the 2016 quorum requirement change, DSU AGMs met quorum relatively consistently. When asked if she has considered reducing the quorum requirement, Stinson

said significant student representation is important for voting on DSU business. In an attempt to make it easier for students to be involved in the voting, the DSU is planning to adopt voting by proxy, something used by other student unions, according to Stinson.

"[A student] could vote on behalf of all of these students as one person, which makes it easier for quorum to be matched, because not that many physical bodies have to be in the space or logged on," she said.

Contention at AGM

Due to the inability to cast motions or votes, the 2020 AGM became more of an information session and updated DSU members on the activities of the executive. The meeting ended with a question and answer period.

During this period Mitchell Archibald, a Dal graduate student who will be running for board of governor's representative on DSU council in the upcoming byelection, brought up an issue that plagued the term of the 2018-2019 DSU executive: the union's relationship with the Canadian Federation of Students (CFS).

Mitchell asked a variety of questions, one of which was this: Of the current DSU senior staff, council and executive, how many hold or have held formal positions with CFS at the provincial or national level?

"It was a test," Archibald said in an interview with the *Gazette*. "I wanted to give them the opportunity to be forthright, which they weren't."

In response to Mitchell's question, Stinson said, "None of our current senior staff, executive, or council, to the best of my knowledge; and I can say this for certain with our staff and executives, that there are no currently held positions with the CFS and there are no affiliations that would constitute as a conflict of interest between CFS, our executive, and our staff."

While no DSU senior staffers, councillors or executive members are currently holding positions at the CFS, some have in the past.

The CFS national executive report, released in November 2019, lists DSU Vice-President (Finance and Operations) Isa Wright as the national women's representative. Trina James, DSU director of research and outreach, is also listed as national treasurer.

In an email to the *Gazette*, Stinson said she chose to answer the question selectively because she "assumed it was common knowledge that some of our exec and staff have past working relationships with CFS. Since CFS became a conversation on our campus, these affiliations have been widely discussed." Stinson continued to say that she did not want to bring up specific professional experiences of members of the DSU team and seemingly target those experiences.

The party, the petition and everything that followed

Jad Ghiz was accused of sexual assault in April, then reinstated as DSU VPSL after a third-party investigation concluded in July

BY LANE HARRISON, NEWS EDITOR



JAD GHIZ, THE CURRENT DSU VICE PRESIDENT (STUDENT LIFE), WAS TEMPORARILY REMOVED FROM HIS POSITION IN THE SPRING DUE TO SEXUAL ASSAULT ALLEGATIONS. (PHOTO ON RIGHT PROVIDED BY JAD GHIZ, PHOTO ON LEFT BY VERNE EQUINOX)

Editor's note and trigger warning: This article contains discussion of sexual assault. Additionally, the Dalhousie Gazette has honoured the request to withhold the last name of one source to protect their privacy and well-being.

Four months after Jad Ghiz was accused in a Change.org petition of committing sexual assault, he has been reinstated as the Dalhousie Student Union (DSU) vice-president (student life). He was found “more likely than not” innocent by a third-party investigator hired by the DSU, as stated in an investigation summary President Maddie Stinson announced at a July 30, 2020 council meeting.

The now widely shared Change.org petition was posted on April 29, 2020, two nights before the current DSU executive officially started their term. The author of the petition writes Ghiz invited them to his “Jadfest” campaign frat party” on the weekend of March 6, 2020.

The DSU’s third-party investigation, conducted by lawyer Kelly McMillan, concluded Ghiz likely did not drug or sexually assault the author of the petition at Jadfest. This finding was based on witness interviews, “hundreds of photographs,” emails and other online communications, according to the DSU’s published summary of the investigation.

McMillan also concluded the person who posted the petition is likely not who they claim to be. The author of the petition did provide a B00 student number to the DSU, which did match with a recent Dalhousie University alumna with the same name the author of the petition used: Olivia M. The *Dalhousie Gazette* contacted this alumna and she said she was not the person who wrote the petition.

The petition

In the petition, the author writes Ghiz gave them a drink in a cup at the March 6 party. About 10 minutes later, they began to feel dizzy and off balance. They were then guided to a bedroom by Ghiz.

“Next thing I remember is me laying on the bed fully naked with him undressing his pants in front of me. He notices that I weakly come to and starts shhing me, telling me to relax and that it’ll be OK and that I shouldn’t resist,” the petition reads. The author continues to say Ghiz attempted to physically overpower them. They kicked and bit Ghiz until he relented and let them leave, they write.

The petition also claims Ghiz, who worked at The Dome nightclub prior to the fall term, told people at Jadfest he could get them free drinks at the club in exchange for votes and offered to sneak underage students in.

The petition ends with the author stating if Ghiz is not impeached from the DSU executive, the author and five of their friends will transfer to another university. This statement contradicts the fact the B00 number the author provided to the DSU belonged to a student who already graduated from Dal.

Initial responses

“This is not the way I wanted to start the year,” said DSU President Maddie Stinson in an interview with the *Gazette*. Stinson was alerted of the petition the night it was posted and called Ghiz to inform him of it.

After Stinson explained to Ghiz what was written in the petition, Ghiz said he was “absolutely in shock.”

Ghiz released a statement responding to the petition on May 2 through his personal Twitter account. He denied all allegations of sexual assault and said he reached out to the Halifax Regional Police (HRP), Dal administration and Dal Human Rights and Equity Services (HRES) with the hopes of initiating an investigation.

The DSU released their first statement on May 5, which outlined their initial steps in responding to the petition. Similar to Ghiz, the DSU reached out to HRES, who told the DSU they would be unable to initiate an investigation. The DSU then contacted the Halifax Regional Police (HRP), but did not receive a response until after the statement was published.

The statement also announced the DSU was calling an extraordinary council meeting for May 7 to update councillors on the situation and determine what to do next.

The extraordinary council meeting

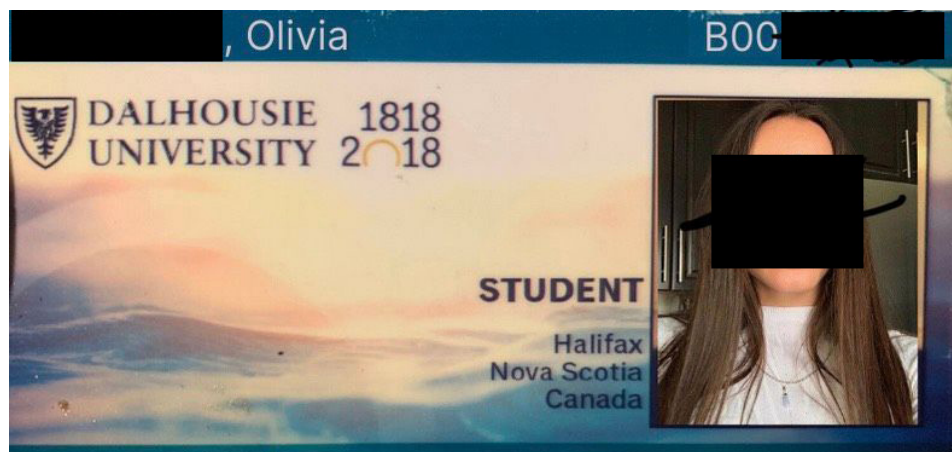
At the May 7 meeting, Stinson explained to DSU councillors that HRES only begins an investigation if asked by the survivor of the alleged assault. She also announced the HRP had responded to the DSU. The DSU had been contacted by the survivor, but would not share the survivor's information with the HRP unless the survivor requested it.

Next, Stinson motioned to suspend Ghiz for seven days with pay, a non-disciplinary measure to allow for any investigative proceedings to be carried out. Black Students Community representative Claudia Castillo-Prentt questioned the motion, citing concerns from membership about student fees being used to pay a potential perpetrator of sexual assault.

According to DSU bylaws, withholding Ghiz's pay constitutes a disciplinary action, said Vice-President (Finance and Operations) Isa Wright. Without any evidence of wrongdoing, the DSU could be vulnerable to a lawsuit if they withheld pay and Ghiz was later proven innocent, according to Wright. Stinson then called the DSU's legal counsel who confirmed Wright's claim to the rest of the council.

The motion to suspend Ghiz for seven days with pay then passed.

DSU bylaws stipulate a motion to discipline a councillor must be submitted to council at least 14 days before it is voted on. Before the meeting ended, Castillo-Prentt introduced a motion for the next meeting (scheduled for 14 days later) to sus-



THIS DALCARD PHOTO WAS SENT TO THE *DALHOUSIE GAZETTE* BY THE OLIVIA M. GMAIL ACCOUNT. THE SENDER HAD CROSSED OUT THE FACE AND B00 NUMBER ON THE CARD. THE *GAZETTE* ADDITIONALLY COVERED THE LAST NAME ON THE CARD TO PROTECT THE IDENTITY OF THE DAL ALUMNA WHO DID NOT WRITE THE PETITION. (PHOTO PROVIDED BY OLIVIA M. EMAIL ACCOUNT)

pend Ghiz without pay, with reimbursement of his missed pay at a later date pending the results of an investigation.

The account of the petition's author

Prior to the May 7 DSU council meeting, the *Gazette* contacted the petition's author through a Reddit account. When the *Gazette* requested a phone call interview, the account responded, “if I am honest I'd rather have this interview on email rather than on call. Just because last time I talked about this and even when I was writing the petition I kept breaking down.”

The *Gazette* then agreed to conduct the interview by email. On May 8, the email account, which was a Gmail address, responded:

“I get memories or flashbacks sometimes remembering things he might have done to me. I have been going therapy for a few weeks now trying to work through it. . . I don't remember feeling a lot of pain I just remember shock, confusion and fear when I came to,” they said in one of their responses.

The petition states Ghiz's history as a racist, homophobe and sexual predator can be “further verified by multiple people that have had similar interactions with him.” The *Gazette* asked to be put in contact with these alleged victims to corroborate stories about Ghiz.

“Feel free to send me questions directed at them and I can forward it to them and send you the responses,” the account responded and later said their stories could be shared anonymously since, “unfortunately none of them were willing to share their name.”

These stories were sent to the DSU by email and forwarded to the *Gazette* by the petition author. It included the petition, all of its comments and two screenshots – one from an email and the other a Reddit direct message. Both have the senders' name removed.

In the email screenshot, someone who claims to be a former friend of Ghiz's alleges they went with Ghiz and other friends to concerts. Ghiz allegedly once molested them while standing in the large

crowd by forcibly placing his hand under their clothes. Ghiz says he has only been to one large outdoor concert where patrons stood: the 2017 Osheaga Music and Arts Festival in Montreal, which he attended with a group of people he met there.

The Reddit message is from someone who says they met Ghiz at a University of Prince Edward Island University party in 2017. At the party, Ghiz allegedly bragged about having found a woman to “hook up” with and said he was in the process of getting her “too drunk to refuse,” the message reads. Ghiz attended high school in Prince Edward Island and graduated in 2017. Ghiz denies the allegation in the Reddit message. He says he was celibate until 2018 for religious reasons, influenced by his father who is a pastor.

“There was a strictness in the house. I grew up holding sex as like a very intimate and precious thing,” Ghiz said.

One comment on the petition, posted by a user named Fairs Raed, read, “This guy wouldn't let my friend into his party because she was wearing a hijab (a Muslim headscarf) he legit told her take it off or fuck off,” it reads. The *Gazette* was unable to find or contact Fairs Raed.

Ghiz, who was born in Lebanon, denies this incident taking place. “I'm a minority. I'm not against minorities,” he said.

On May 14, Ghiz uploaded his second statement on the allegations to his Twitter page.

“This Olivia [M.] does not exist,” he wrote. He believes the accusations were fabricated by someone pretending to be Olivia M. in an attempt to damage his reputation and remove him from the DSU executive, the statement read.

The *Gazette* emailed the Olivia M. account and asked if they could share their DalCard to prove they were a Dal student. On May 15, the *Gazette* received an image of a DalCard with the B00 student number digitally blocked. However when the image was compared to another DalCard, there were some noticeable differences, including the font used and image placement.

This was the last communication the *Gazette* received from the Olivia M. email address.

Note: Redacted version: Only names have been removed

- 10:00- party starts
- 10:19 pictured with [REDACTED] Evidence #1
- 10:30 Playing beer pong with [REDACTED], [REDACTED], and [REDACTED]: Evidence #2
- 10:42- playing beer pong with [REDACTED]: Evidence #3
- 10:45-11:20 approx - upstairs socialising with [REDACTED], [REDACTED], [REDACTED], [REDACTED], [REDACTED]. Showing people around and helping individuals safely store their belongings in different rooms. [REDACTED] statement: Jad entered the room after she took a picture with [REDACTED]
- 11:18 Jad is in his room talking to [REDACTED] Evidence #4
- 11:20- Jad downstairs for Jadfest chant: Evidence #5
- 11:28- post chant shown downstairs photo with [REDACTED]: Evidence #6
- 11:40- approx looking for crown and prepping for [REDACTED] recognition ceremony
- 11:51- [REDACTED] recognition ceremony: Evidence #7
- 11:54- coronation of [REDACTED] over: Evidence #8
- 12:00- approx upstairs with a drink see photos: Evidence #9
- 12:17- Jad in [REDACTED]'s room with friends see photo: Evidence Witnessed by: [REDACTED], [REDACTED], [REDACTED], [REDACTED], [REDACTED]
- 12:30- approx talking with [REDACTED] alone
- 12:38- Pic of jad with [REDACTED] in [REDACTED]'s room. Still talking to [REDACTED]: Evidence #10
- 1:00- [REDACTED] and [REDACTED] join Jad and [REDACTED], people coming in and out, socialising and goodbyes are said
- 1:20- approx party ends, 15 or so close friends are left
- 1:40- Jad, and [REDACTED] leave the house to get food from Macdonald's. They left with [REDACTED] who was going to visit a friend: [REDACTED] messages: Evidence #11a/b
- 1:50- approx at mcdonalds with [REDACTED], [REDACTED], and [REDACTED]
- 2:30- approx return home and fall asleep while watching Simpsons

GHIZ AND HIS ROOMMATES CREATED A PARTY TIMELINE (SHOWN), ACCORDING TO GHIZ, CROWN, CORONATION AND RECOGNITION CEREMONY, MENTIONED BETWEEN 11:40 P.M. AND 11:54 P.M., REFERENCE A TRADITION AMONG HIS FRIENDS WHERE THEY CROWN SOMEONE THE "QUINPOOL QUEEN," (PHOTO PROVIDED BY JAD GHIZ)

May 21 council meeting

On May 21, council held their second meeting in response to the petition. Stinson began by saying disciplinary action would be considered unusual at this point and the DSU is still vulnerable to a lawsuit should they discipline Ghiz. She then provided a timeline of the DSU's communications with the creator of the petition.

Between May 6 and 15, the DSU received emails from the sender showing interest in aiding an investigation and removing Ghiz from office. They also included questions concerning investigative options, consent for an investigation run by Dal and agreement to meet with the DSU executive. On May 15, the sender also requested the DSU imme-

diately post a statement confirming their identity was accurate.

No statement was posted as the DSU could not confirm the person they were in contact with was named Olivia M. The person would not email the DSU using a Dal email address.

The DSU and the person behind the email address had scheduled a meeting for May 20, which the person cancelled. It was rescheduled for May 21 prior to the council meeting and was again cancelled by the person.

Stinson then shared the DSU's investigative options. Because HRES wouldn't conduct the investigation, according to DSU legal counsel, the best path forward was to hire an experienced third-party investigator.

The person behind the petition had given their written consent through email to the DSU for a third-party investigation to take place, Stinson said.

According to the Stinson's report at the May 21 meeting, Dal administration verbally agreed to support the DSU to get the matter resolved as quickly as possible. When asked about this support, Dal spokesperson Janet Bryson said in an email to the *Gazette* that the DSU is an independent organization and should be consulted for information on their investigative process.

At the end of meeting, Castillo-Prentt rescinded her motion from the last council meeting to suspend Ghiz without pay. She asked that the meeting minutes reflect she did this solely to protect the survivor from potential legal action.

Investigation and results

The third-party investigation was conducted by Kelly McMillan, a lawyer from Nijhawan McMillan Petrunia Barristers.

McMillan declined an interview request from the *Gazette* to speak about the investigation, citing confidentiality obligations.

The DSU executive signed a contract with McMillan on June 2 and gave her a deadline of June 11. At the June 18 council meeting, it was announced McMillan had failed to meet this deadline and requested a month-long extension. The executive declined and instead offered a two-week extension. The DSU judicial board then had until July 30 to present their recommendations to council.

At the July 30 council meeting, Ghiz was reinstated as vice-president (student life) of the DSU after Stinson announced that McMillan completed her investigation on June 26 and concluded it was likely Ghiz did not drug or sexually assault the creator of the petition at Jadfest.

The investigation did find Ghiz broke DSU by-laws and code of conduct through breaching his loyalty to the DSU by criticizing the union in his statements.

"The DSU are not participating in [an investigation with the HRP] because they have decided to obey the wishes of a phantom masquerading as a survivor," Ghiz wrote in his May 14 statement.

While presenting the results of the investigation, Stinson said Ghiz's statement was not made with ill will and he was not disciplined for it.

The investigation summary continues to explain the parameters of the investigation to outline things that were not investigated in relation to these allegations.

The investigation did not address any additional allegations of sexualized violence against Ghiz that arose online during this period or alleged campaign violations in respect to the 2020 DSU election. There was no investigation into potential misuse of Dal property, which is in reference to complaints posted on Reddit in the days following the creation of the petition. Multiple Dalhousie stu-

dents and alumni said they received an email saying they signed the petition when they never had. No information on this aspect of the issue has since been revealed.

When asked if Ghiz thinks he's ever committed sexual assault, he said "I, without a shadow of a doubt, have never assaulted anybody."

Ghiz's account

"Within the first weekend, we had compiled enough evidence to clear my name," Ghiz said in an interview with the *Gazette*.

He and his roommates created a timeline of the night in question to track Ghiz's location every few minutes with a timestamp accompanied by an image including Ghiz or the names of partygoers who could confirm his whereabouts. Ghiz says he showed this timeline to the investigator. He provided a version of the timeline to the *Gazette* with redacted names.

There are a few inaccuracies in the petition about the circumstances of the party, mainly because it refers to Jadfest as a campaign and frat party.

According to Ghiz's roommate, Joshua Langston, the party was planned in Ghiz's honour. Langston and another roommate, Patrick Mackay, had recently hosted parties for their respective birthdays, but Ghiz missed both due to work commitments at The Dome. After his roommates realized they hadn't celebrated Ghiz's 2019 birthday, they decided to throw him a party, Langston said.

"I never invited anybody. I never did any advertising for that party. I had nothing to do with it," Ghiz said.

"It was just kind of a coincidence that it coincided with his campaign," said Langston.

Ghiz is a member of the Phi Delta Theta fraternity at Dalhousie, which according to Ghiz and his friends has a reputation contrary to the stereotypical frat image.

"I mean, they don't even drink at the fraternity," said Samantha Chu, a friend of Ghiz's. "They like to shovel people's driveways, you know."

"We're a strictly non-drinking fraternity," said Langston, who's the fraternity president.

According to Langston, the fraternity generally doesn't hold events at the fraternity house. When they do host events involving alcohol, they take place at the Grawood or University Club. Jadfest was held in Ghiz's house, not the Phi Delta Theta frat house. Additionally, the frat house is on Seymour Street and Ghiz lives on the second floor of a house on Quinpool Road, about a 15-minute walk away, making it difficult to confuse the two locations.

The petition implies the assault was possible because Ghiz drugged the author's drink.

"First of all, if I was going to make people drinks, I would at least make myself a good one," Ghiz said. Photos from the night confirmed he was drinking from a mason jar filled with orange soda and alcohol.

The *Gazette* spoke with Ghiz's roommates, friends



GHIZ HOLDING HIS MASON JAR OF ORANGE SODA AND ALCOHOL AT JADFEST, A PARTY HIS ROOMMATES THREW ON THE WEEKEND OF MARCH 6, 2020. THIS WAS THE PARTY WHERE THE ALLEGED ASSAULT TOOK PLACE. GHIZ DENIES HE EVER ASSAULTED ANYONE IN HIS LIFE. (PHOTO PROVIDED BY JAD GHIZ)

and party attendees, including Chu, Kheira Morrellon and Marike Pinsonneault. They all said Ghiz and his roommates could not afford to supply drinks to the party, everyone brought their own alcohol and no drinks were handed out in cups.

The Halifax Regional Police

Ghiz said he contacted the Halifax Regional Police (HRP) in May to attempt to launch an investigation into the assault and prove his innocence. The HRP were unable to start an investigation into the assault because neither Ghiz nor the DSU was the survivor of the assault, according to Stinson. But once it became clear the author of the petition was likely not former student Olivia M., the HRP began investigating a case of identity theft, according to the DSU and Ghiz.

In September 2020, the HRP shifted their investigation away from a case of identity fraud, according to Stinson. However the investigation is continuing, as the HRP recently court ordered the DSU to produce any and all documents or data related to Jad Ghiz and/or Olivia M., and the online post in question, including but not limited to: emails and council meeting minutes dated between

April 27, 2020 and June 24, 2020, according to Stinson. Most recently, the HRP have considered pursuing a charge under Section 312 of the Canadian Criminal Code, meaning libel and defamation, but this is the most recent update the DSU has received from the HRP.

The *Gazette* reached out to the HRP to try and confirm the investigation was happening. The HRP said they could not confirm the names of individuals involved in an ongoing investigation, with the exception of the name of the accused in a case where charges have been sworn before the courts. No charges have yet been laid.

Survivors of sexual assault, racism and other forms of violence looking for support can contact the following resources: DSU Survivor Support, phone: 902-425-1066, email: survivorsupport@dal.ca; Dal Student Health and Wellness Centre, phone: 902-494-2171; Dal Human Rights and Equity Services, phone: 902-494-6672, email: hres@dal.ca; Dal Security, phone: 902-494-4109, email: security@dal.ca; Avalon Sexual Assault Centre, phone: 902-422-4240; and South House Sexual and Gender Resource Centre, phone: 902-494-2432.

Festive ways to stay safe

Halifax mask makers help people get into the season's spirit

BY MAYA SCHWARTZ



AFTER SUFFERING FROM A STROKE, SHERRIE KEARNEY, OWNER OF THE MARITIME TARTAN COMPANY, SEWS AS A WAY TO WORK FROM HOME. SHE HAS MADE THOUSANDS OF MASKS. (PHOTO BY MARITIME TARTAN COMPANY)

Halloween marks the first holiday on the calendar in the Halifax Regional Municipality where masks are mandatory. For local mask makers like Lorelei Dwyer, taking advantage of Halloween 2020 and other seasonal mask opportunities is important for her small business.

Dwyer runs Cover Me Halifax, an online mask store, with her two daughters. Their masks feature spooky teeth, glow-in-the-dark skeletons and Ouija boards.

"Seasonal masks are going to help with the sales," Dwyer says.

The mask boom

In July, Halifax made non-medical masks mandatory in indoor public spaces. For a couple months, Dwyer and her daughters sewed for 20 hours a day.

"We had seven or eight weeks of no sleep, eating from Uber Eats every day. It was insane," Dwyer says.

When the race for masks in Halifax started to calm down, Dwyer was still busy shipping her masks to Newfoundland. Things are quieting down now, but Dwyer isn't discouraged.

"I don't believe masks are going to go away any time soon," Dwyer says.

Cover Me Halifax wanted to hit the market with the best possible product. Dwyer uses Egyptian cotton sheets on the inside of the mask to achieve a high thread count since studies have shown a higher thread count can improve protection against the virus. Instead of elastic around the ears, her masks

go around the head "so it doesn't feel like it's tearing your ears off," Dwyer explains. She also adds floral wire inside to prevent glasses from fogging up.

The design was largely influenced by her job as an educational program assistant at Citadel High School where she works with children with special needs. She asked herself, "Are they going to be able to wear my masks?"

Cover Me Halifax also sells other accessories, including hair bows, dog leashes and collars (so you can match with your pet). During a video chat interview with the *Dalhousie Gazette*, Dwyer displayed a matching beanie and face mask made with a Black Lives Matter print.

Fundraising through seasonal masks

Maritime Tartan Company, another Halifax-based business making face masks, decided to skip Halloween this year (although they do sell one mask with a pumpkin spice print).

Sherrie Kearney owns the company. After suffering a stroke, Sherrie sews as a way to work from home. Dale Kearney, her husband and media person, says, "A lot of our neighbours aren't even doing anything for Halloween. We're not giving anything out. We've been told the next big thing is Remembrance Day."

Sherrie sews poppy masks and donates 20 per cent of each mask sold to local branches of the Royal Canadian Legion. Sherrie and Dale are hoping to raise \$5,000 in total. So far, they have raised and donated \$3,000 to the legion. During the summer, the Kearneys donated more than \$10,000 to local organizations by selling masks.

The New Germany Legion, Branch 102, received a donation of \$1,000 from Maritime Tartan Company. Howard Gibson, president of the New Germany branch, says the legion is able to break even when it's open on Friday nights. All liquor sales are being used to pay expenses.

"We're not making any money, but we're not any losing money," Gibson says. The donation from Maritime Tartan Company will go toward their oil and power bills. It means the legion can keep their doors open.

"A lot of people buy from us because we donate back."

"A lot of people buy from us because we donate back," Dale says.

Since April 8, 2020, Maritime Tartan Company has made 14,000 masks. They ship worldwide with orders going to

Japan, England and France. Their Nova Scotia tartan mask is on display in Toronto at the Royal Ontario Museum, a story featured on CBC's *The National*.

Like Dwyer's Cover Me Halifax, Maritime Tartan Company will keep making masks as long as there is a need. Right now, their focus is poppy masks and orders can be placed up until Oct. 25. After that, there are lots of patterns to look forward to.

"We even have some fabric coming in for Hanukkah," Dale says.

Discovering life in the dead

Craig Ferguson, proprietor of popular Twitter page Dead in Halifax, takes us on a walking tour of local history

BY MANDY KING



CRAIG FERGUSON RUNS THE POPULAR TWITTER ACCOUNT @DEADINHALIFAX, WHERE HE TELLS THE FORGOTTEN HISTORY OF HALIFAX THROUGH ITS GRAVEYARDS. (PHOTO BY MANDY KING)

It is 12:30 p.m. on Oct. 6, 2020, and the Robie Street entrance of Camp Hill Cemetery is bustling with activity. Sunlight filters into the burial ground through tree branches, breaking against the ornate obelisks and tombstones. This is nothing like the creepy crypts depicted in classic horror movies.

Craig Ferguson appears at the gate with a wave. Ferguson is a local TV producer, writer, sports announcer and history buff. Since July 2019, he has also been managing a Twitter page called Dead in Halifax. Ferguson posts photos, descriptions and stories of gravesites around the Halifax Regional Municipality (HRM). Ferguson says he likes “the constraints of Twitter because it forces you to be very tight with your writing.”

As we walk into the cemetery, Ferguson says he doesn't find graveyards creepy, but they once gave him a feeling of unease.

“I used to avoid [Camp Hill Cemetery] all the time,” he says. “When my daughter was very young, our babysitter would walk her through here in the carriage. I thought, ‘She shouldn't be walking through there.’ I grew up very superstitious.”

Ferguson compares this feeling to the way some people hold their breath when they drive past a graveyard. However, he says he has now become better acquainted with burial grounds.

To people who are scared of walking through cemeteries, Ferguson says, “I understand [the

fear], but you're missing out on something.”

A new perspective on cemeteries

Ferguson now sees cemeteries as a place to think, sate curiosity and enjoy the calm beauty. In the United States, he explains, there was a 19th century movement called the rural cemetery movement, which centred on the premise that, “Cemeteries could be places of quiet contemplation and for nature; that they should be more than a burial ground.”

Established in 1844, as a replacement for the Old Burying Ground on Barrington Street, Camp Hill Cemetery is a resting place for many notable figures including Viola Desmond, Joseph Howe and Alexander Keith.

Today, Ferguson points out some lesser known stories buried within these hallowed grounds. As he walks past Alexander Keith's obelisk on the way to examine other stones, he stops to point out the various beer receptacles left standing against the nameplate. The Alexander Keith's brand of beer is one of the most popular in the province.

“I mean, obviously, I can't condone this, but people come in here and have a beer,” Ferguson says. “It's a tradition and I think it's obviously something that's passed on from person to person. It's not written down anywhere.”

Ferguson's version of Halifax history

Ferguson can trace the history of Halifax and its largest institutions by stopping to talk about certain gravestones.

Strolling along, Ferguson spots a stone related to Dalhousie University. This is the resting place of the Nordbeck sisters.

Ferguson explains the Nordbecks owned an estate called Studley Farm. One of the sisters was ill and after years of caring for her, the other sister hired a caregiver named Elizabeth Carey. After both sisters passed, they left the estate to Carey. Carey sold the land to Dalhousie and the property eventually became the building site of Dal's Studley Campus.

A Dal alumnus rests beneath a small obelisk with the name Abraham Gesner. Ferguson says the obelisk was recently cleaned by the Dalhousie geology department. Gesner was the inventor of kerosene oil. Before his invention, whale blubber

was often used as fuel for indoor lamps. Ferguson says he likes to believe Gesner has saved more whales than any other human, but he cannot be sure.

Moving closer to the opposite end of the graveyard, Ferguson explains, “The cemetery is historically segregated, and a lot of the graves in the Black section don't have gravestones. How can we get into the history of that and figure out how to tell those stories?”

Among these stones are several from the No. 2 Construction Battalion, an all-Black military battalion from the First World War. One headstone for Daniel Perry Sampson was funded by the Last Post Fund, a group dedicated to ensuring no veteran is buried without a name.

Sampson's story is filled with sadness, injustice and racism. It is the story of a man who suffered from mental illness after serving in the war and was arrested for the murder of two young white brothers named Edwin and Bramwell Heffernan. Facing an all-white jury, Sampson was found guilty. He was the last person to be sentenced to death by hanging in Halifax. Questions still remain on whether Sampson truly committed the murder. The further injustice lies in the implication the real murderer of the two boys may have gotten away.

Sampson's story points out a crucial role of graveyards in preserving history, good and bad. Ferguson says, “Graveyards are museums of people.”

Ferguson furthers proves this when he points out the obelisk for the Young family. Ferguson tells the story of a Scottish-born merchant, John Young, who felt Nova Scotia could do more agriculturally and wrote several letters to local newspapers saying so. To write these letters, he used the pseudonym, “Agricola,” which led to the Halifax street of the same name.

As it turns out, John Young had his portrait painted by a local artist, William Valentine, whose tombstone is a favourite of Ferguson's. Starting as a painter, Valentine became the first photographer in Halifax. This, Ferguson explains, was a major turning point in technology for Haligonians and the world at the time.

Find more stories about local HRM graveyards through Ferguson's Twitter feed Dead in Halifax.

“Graveyards are museums of people.”

What happens when AI choses your Halloween costume?

Sexy Michael Cera can teach us a lot about the limitations of AI

BY MAYOWA OLUWASANMI, OPINIONS EDITOR

Deciding on a Halloween costume can be tough, especially when your friends have taken all the good ideas already. How many more Harley Quinn costumes can a party have?

In 2017, researcher Janelle Shane released a machine learning experiment to solve this very issue. She trained a computer neural network to generate Halloween costume ideas.

AI costume generator

Artificial neural networks are a facet of artificial intelligence (AI). They are machine learning algorithms that extract meaning from large data collections, or datasets, to make decisions. Results vary depending on the complexity of the task. Neural networks (NNs) are used in a wide range of technology from rideshare apps to YouTube suggestions. So if NNs can get you an Uber, surely it can pick a Halloween costume, right?

Shane puts this question to the test. Through 4,500 Reddit submissions, she created a dataset of numerous Halloween costume ideas like witches, vampires and hundreds of costumes with the word sexy in it. (Sexy poop emoji, sexy Cookie Monster and so much more.) Some suggestions were more bizarre, like Fungus Fairy Princess and Deadpool on a unicorn. The range of the dataset is random and creative, making the task of creating a costume quite tricky for an NN. To make the results as weird as possible, Shane decided to use an NN that learns words letter by letter with no knowledge of the word's meaning.

The results were magnificent. Costume suggestions ranged from Shark Cow to Professional Panda to Vampire Big Bird. Other notable ones were Professional Panda and Sexy Michael Cera. These predictions were churned out of a two-step process: first, the NN predicts which letters should be used lexicographically to make the costume suggestion. Then it compares its prediction with the dataset it was fed. Every time there is a failed match, it refines the steps to make more accurate predictions.

The limitations of AI

Shane is the author of *You Look Like A Thing And I Love You*, where she writes about the funny, weird and spooky ways machine learning algorithms make incorrect decisions. Shane's Halloween costume AI gives us an interesting insight into the limits of AI generally.

One constraint of AI-generated Halloween costumes is the lack of creativity. While Shark Cow might be the best idea you've heard in a while, the NN cannot work outside the scope of its training data. It can't generate a suggestion from the latest news, trending topic or Netflix show. Also, the suggestions aren't built off the meaning of words, but from the most compatible match within its dataset. This is what makes algorithms so limited and yet so eerie: It is very difficult to tell how they can come up with Lady Garbage without knowing what either word means. This grey area of unexplainable AI systems and decisions is called a black box, and for the most part, making predictions without trying to understand the reasoning is strangely accepted.

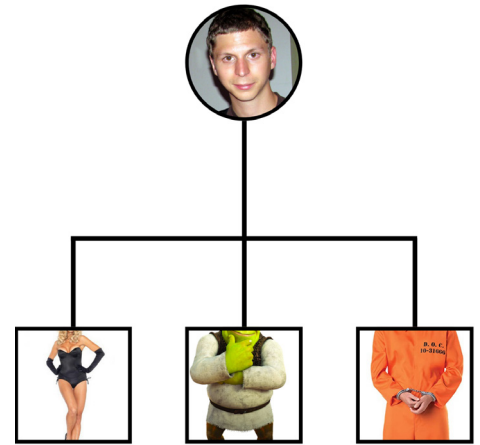
AI isn't just used for funny Halloween costume generators. NNs are used in decision-making across all spectrums from convenience-based apps

to loan eligibility to examinations and job hiring. The AI Ofqual scandal in the United Kingdom, where thousands of students were scored lower than their predicted grades for A-levels thus losing out on university offers, is just one harrowing consequence of the way algo-

rithms work.

We should be wary of trusting decisions we can't explain ourselves. NNs learn from the training data humans collect. What happens when those who collect the data, or the dataset itself, is biased? YouTube suggestions can sometimes be a maze of random videos and nothing like the videos in our history. If NNs can mess up something as simple as that, how can we trust a decision for loan eligibility, job qualifications or exam results? As Shane writes in her *New York Times* (NYT) article, "when we are using machine-learning algorithms, we get exactly what we ask for — for better or worse."

Over the past few years, rapid development in AI



IN 2017, JANELLE SHANE RELEASED AN AI COSTUME GENERATOR. SEXY MICHAEL CERA WAS ONE OF THE MANY SURPRISING YET WONDERFUL RESULTS. (GRAPHIC BY GEOFFREY HOWARD)

has led to several ethical consequences. One example is with applicant tracking systems (ATS): an automated resume AI that reads thousands of resumes against a dataset of job requirements and internal business hiring patterns. What happens when every employee hired for one position is white or has an English name? Those who don't match the data profile (i.e. white with English names) get immediately pushed aside and told someone better qualified has been selected.

Shane also writes in her NYT article that, "we didn't ask those algorithms what the best decisions would have been. We only asked them to predict which decisions the human in its training data would have made." In other words, NNs will simply imitate the bias of its human controller.

The future of costumes

As digital transformation becomes reality, holiday costumes may be just another thing getting an automation makeover. Maybe the lesson of Shane's Halloween AI isn't that you should dress up as Vampire Big Bird for Halloween. Maybe the lesson is not to expect what we create with AI to be any better than what we create on our own.

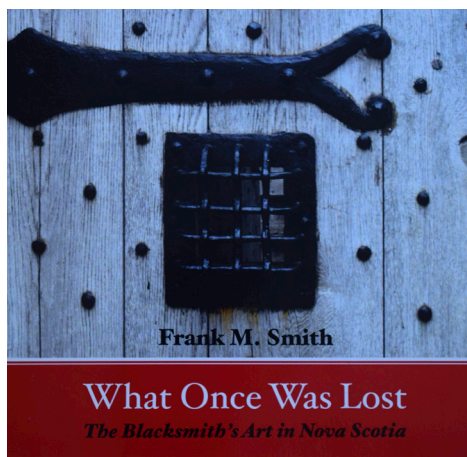
We cannot hold artificial intelligence to a moral standard that we ourselves do not uphold. We also can't expect it to be impartial when we aren't. It is too soon to tell whether Sexy Michael Cera will become a cult classic, but going forward, we should be mindful of the elusive algorithms that are making decisions, and whether those decisions are the best possible outcome.

"Neural networks are no more intelligent than humans — the algorithm will simply imitate the bias of its human controller."

The blacksmiths of Nova Scotia

Dal professor's latest book explores vibrant provincial tradition

BY LEAH SIMONOT



FRANK SMITH'S NEW NOVEL *WHAT ONCE WAS LOST* EXPLORES THE WORLD OF BLACKSMITHING IN NOVA SCOTIA. (PHOTO BY LEAH SIMONOT)

Frank Smith's new novel *What Once Was Lost: The Blacksmith's Art in Nova Scotia* refutes the idea that blacksmithing is archaic, obsolete and alive only in demonstrations by burly men at historic sites.

Discovering the community

Frank is a Dalhousie University professor of histology, a subfield of anatomy interested in the microscopic structure of tissue. He teaches in the department of medical neuroscience and researches how the nervous system affects the heart. What many of his colleagues in academia don't know is Frank is also an amateur blacksmith.

At 12 years old, Frank watched in wonder as a blacksmith repaired his father's pickaxe. The impression stayed in the back of his mind for nearly three decades until a working blacksmith invited him to try it on a Sunday outing to Ross Farm Museum.

"It is totally seductive once you start," says Frank, charmed as ever even 20 years later. "Working hot metal comes the closest to, I think, total bliss as I can describe."

Frank found blacksmiths welcoming and generous in sharing their knowledge of the craft. However, when it came to learning the local history, resources were slim and scattered. Frank aired this frustration at a dinner party in the

presence of SSP Publications owner H. M. Scott Smith (no relation to Frank), who challenged him to fill the gap.

For two years Frank mined archives and visited the forges of fellow Nova Scotian blacksmiths to collect their stories. He wanted to "recreate, as it were, the Zeitgeist of the time" and showcase the relevance of contemporary blacksmithing.

Nova Scotian blacksmiths

Profiles of 14 working blacksmiths comprise the backbone of the book, each written with a narrative candour reminiscent of Ernest Hemingway. Frank laughs off this comparison, but says he did try to avoid "dry history writing."

"This was about people doing real jobs in a real environment, so I tried to get some sort of sense of what that might be like," he says.

As recounted by Frank, ironwork was crucial to the survival of early Nova Scotian settlements. By the middle of the 20th century, however, machines could mimic the blacksmith's work with superior efficiency. A wave of blacksmiths closed shop and migrated towards mines, railyards and shipyards.

What Once Was Lost argues the market for handcrafted ironwork didn't collapse under this strain, but in fact leaned into artisanal and ornamental iterations of the craft.

John Little is among the blacksmiths featured in the book whose career spans the so-called "renaissance of blacksmithing," which began in the 1960s. Just shy of completing a master's degree in psychology at Dalhousie, John

scrapped his thesis, and turned to the land where he eventually built a shop and raised a family with his wife, Nancy. From improvising a shovel from an old oil drum to forging fishermen's hooks to

inventing one-of-a-kind instruments for musicians, he had no idea how his creativity would bloom over the years.

"Everything about this journey has had a feeling of inevitability," John says. "It's like I started and I just put one foot in front of the other."

In a chance meeting with Austrian blacksmith Paul Geyer, John happened upon his greatest inspiration: a decorative blacksmith and author by

the name of Edwin Roth, who'd come to work in the Annapolis Valley.

"[Geyer] opened [Roth's] book up and I can't begin to tell you — it was as exciting as the first hammer blow that made the metal move," John recalls.

"All of a sudden I saw all this modern, forward-thinking, unbelievably exquisite exploratory contemporary forge work and just such imagination. You could scrape me off the ceiling for two weeks after that. I was so excited."

John's ironwork has been featured in national and international collections. He is a two-time finalist for the Lieutenant Governor of Nova Scotia Masterworks Arts Award and has received six nominations for the Portia White Prize, a provincial award for a Nova Scotian artist who has achieved mastery in their field.

A family tradition

John's daughter is also featured in the book. Two years into her undergrad at Dalhousie, Becky Little decided blacksmithing would be her livelihood. She started out gaining experience in her father's shop, then received an invitation to work in Germany alongside a father and son duo she met while demonstrating at her first blacksmithing conference. She worked elsewhere in Germany and Switzerland before returning to Canada.

Becky currently owns an independent shop called Dragonfly Forge in Blind Bay, N.S. With children aged 1, 5 and 7, she says it's a challenge to spend enough time working. But one bonus to blacksmithing is just being part of a community.

"It's kind of unique to be in a business where, in theory, you might be in competition with each other but it's the absolute opposite. Everybody is trying to help each other out," Becky says. "[Blacksmithing] is not only a very exciting field to work in, but... it kind of covers a lot of territory in terms of teaching and being part of a community."

Becky says while demonstrating at conferences alongside people who were advanced in the craft, she started to see herself as a working blacksmith.

"[It] really made me feel like I could run with this," she says. "Being in that room and being included in that community and in that category made me think, 'You know, I have a place here.'"

Virtual tricks and treats

How to safely celebrate Halloween 2020

BY RACHEL COOKE



MANY PEOPLE MAY AVOID PARTYING AND TRICK-OR-TREATING THIS YEAR, BUT NEVER FEAR! THERE ARE PLENTY OF VIRTUAL WAYS TO CELEBRATE HALLOWEEN. (PHOTO BY GEOFFREY HOWARD)

This year Halloween will look different than ever before. Although COVID-19 has rendered it impossible to participate in many typical Halloween events, there are still dozens of fun things to do. Here is a list of a few options to make Halloween 2020 as great as any other year.

Halifax walking ghost tour

The Halifax Ghost Walk offers socially distanced walking ghost tours that begin at Citadel Hill and visit sites around the city.

Although there is no tour available on Oct. 31, there is a tour option on Oct. 30, as well as other dates all throughout the

month. This is a fun way to get into a spooky Halloween mood and spend safe time with friends.

Zoom costume party

Although an in-person costume party may not be possible this year, everyone can dress up in their best costumes and get together over video chat. To make the night more fun, play some games like Kahoot! Halloween trivia or Heads Up

charades. Tell your best ghost stories, create spooky backgrounds by decorating your spaces,

or send a Halloween-themed snack recipe to everyone and make it together. Another option for a virtual party is to carve or paint pumpkins.

Scary escape room experience

Captured Escape Rooms and Trapped Halifax, both on Barrington Street, are open and available for one bubble at a time to experience. Escape rooms are a thrilling experience where a group of people solves puzzles in a room against a ticking clock. Bring a few friends and try it out as a safe alternative to typical Halloween events.

Classic Halloween movie night

If you haven't seen all of the classic Halloween movies, this is your year to catch up! It could be something lighthearted like *Hocus Pocus*, *Halloweentown* or *The Addams Family*. It could also be a thriller night with some of the scariest movies like *The Exorcist*, *The Conjuring*, *Halloween*, or *Hereditary*. Whatever you decide, pair it with a creepy Halloween snack idea, like puff pastries that look like mummies or pizza bagels with ghost-shaped pieces of mozzarella.

Virtual haunted house tour

Don't let the fact face-to-face events are at an all-time low stop you from experiencing all the thrills, jumps and scares of a haunted house this Halloween. There are several virtual haunted tours online, which include some of the scariest locations on the planet like the Paris Catacombs, the Chernobyl zone and the Bran Castle in Romania. The Bran Castle is thought to be a possible inspiration for Bram Stoker's 1897 gothic novel *Dracula*.

Book a fortune teller or psychic reading

Lastly, and my personal favourite on the list: visiting a fortune teller or psychic online is the perfect way to get in a thrilling Halloween mood and celebrate the holiday while still staying safe. There are websites, such as Oranum.com and Psychicsource.com, with lots of different psychics available to book a reading with.

Although Halloween this year is a bit compromised, don't let the change in plans get down on your festivities. Use these ideas, or come up with more of your own, to still have a fun Halloween while celebrating safely.

“Visiting a fortune teller or psychic online is the perfect way to get in a thrilling Halloween mood.”

Fashion in the time of Coronavirus

Designing new sustainable clothing solutions

BY NATALIA TOLA



HIGH FASHION BRANDS SUCH AS LOUIS VUITTON ARE SLOWING DOWN PRODUCTION DUE TO COVID-19. BUT THE EFFECTS OF THE PANDEMIC IN THE FASHION INDUSTRY GO FAR BEYOND BIG NAME BRANDS. (PHOTO BY KENT WANG ON FLICKR)

Although it may not appear evident, the COVID-19 pandemic has turned the world of fashion from a space of glamour to a space of economic bankruptcy.

Unprecedented changes

Because buyers are staying indoors to avoid the virus, massive retail stores, such as JC Penney, have declared bankruptcy or permanently closed many locations. Thousands of fashion workers have been laid off from factories in countries like Bangladesh and India. Designers are rethinking their clothing lines and slowing down production in a way that is entirely uncharacteristic for the fast-paced fashion world of the 21st century.

But it isn't all bad. By analyzing the response of designers alongside the new initiatives that have bloomed in 2020, one can see how a fashion crisis can turn into a fashion revolution.

Every year, approximately 100 billion garments are produced worldwide. Most are made at lightning speed by large factories in developing nations such as Bangladesh and

China. A 2017 study found the fashion industry produces about 20 per cent of the world's industrial water pollution. All those statistics allow the fashion industry to earn US\$2.5 trillion annually.

A survey by Sustainable Apparel Coalition shows a third of decision makers from fashion brands, stores and manufacturers around the world felt very unprepared for COVID-19. Whether that means shifting to an entirely online service, firing many store attendants or modifying lines so they include more comfortable clothes instead of evening wear, each brand is encountering its own drama.

“Designers are rethinking their clothing lines and slowing down production in a way that is entirely uncharacteristic.”

Adapting to the situation

These issues have not stopped the fashion industry from moving forward in this time of crisis. In Milan, several designers released their lines at shows held in early February, which allowed

buyers to purchase fine clothes before the massive shut down of stores.

London Fashion Week took place online this past June and September, relying on YouTube and Instagram to display fewer but

equally glamorous models wearing couture at home.

There is also a rising trend of do-it-yourself fashion, with acid wash and tie-dye becoming a common hobby for people as social distancing continues. Platforms such as Instagram, YouTube and TikTok show young influencers transforming their clothes by cropping, colouring or adding pins to them. L.A.-based designer Reese Cooper fabricated a DIY kit to make his trademark work-wear coat at home. Cooper's 1,000 kits cost US\$98 each and sold out within days.

Buying local

The drive to move forward as the world of fashion slows down can even be seen at the local level. Denise Hajjar, a fashion designer from Quincy, Mass., has gained a lot of business since March 2020. She started sewing cloth masks and giving them out to healthcare workers for free, and charging US\$5 for other customers. Her masks were a local hit.

“Comfort and fit are most important,” Hajjar says. “My masks are three layers including a lining of Sea Island cotton for a soft feel against the face, a middle layer of organic boiled flannel to act as a natural filter, and the outer layer, which is a cotton with elastane blend, sourced from a European supplier, in a variety of patterns or solid colours. That’s where the fashionable and fun part comes in.”

As masks turn into a fashion piece required for our daily lives, it will adapt to what people want, whether that means masks match outfits or personalities. Nevertheless, the different layers in Hajjar’s work indicate that fashionable masks need not be impractical.

Beth Ardon, who owns the Halifax-based clothing company Poison Pear, also started making cloth masks due to COVID-19.

“The fabrics I use are soft and breathable bamboo, cotton, spandex, doubled up with a pocket for a filter should you wish to use one. They also have wires along the top to make it easier to wear with glasses,” Ardon says.

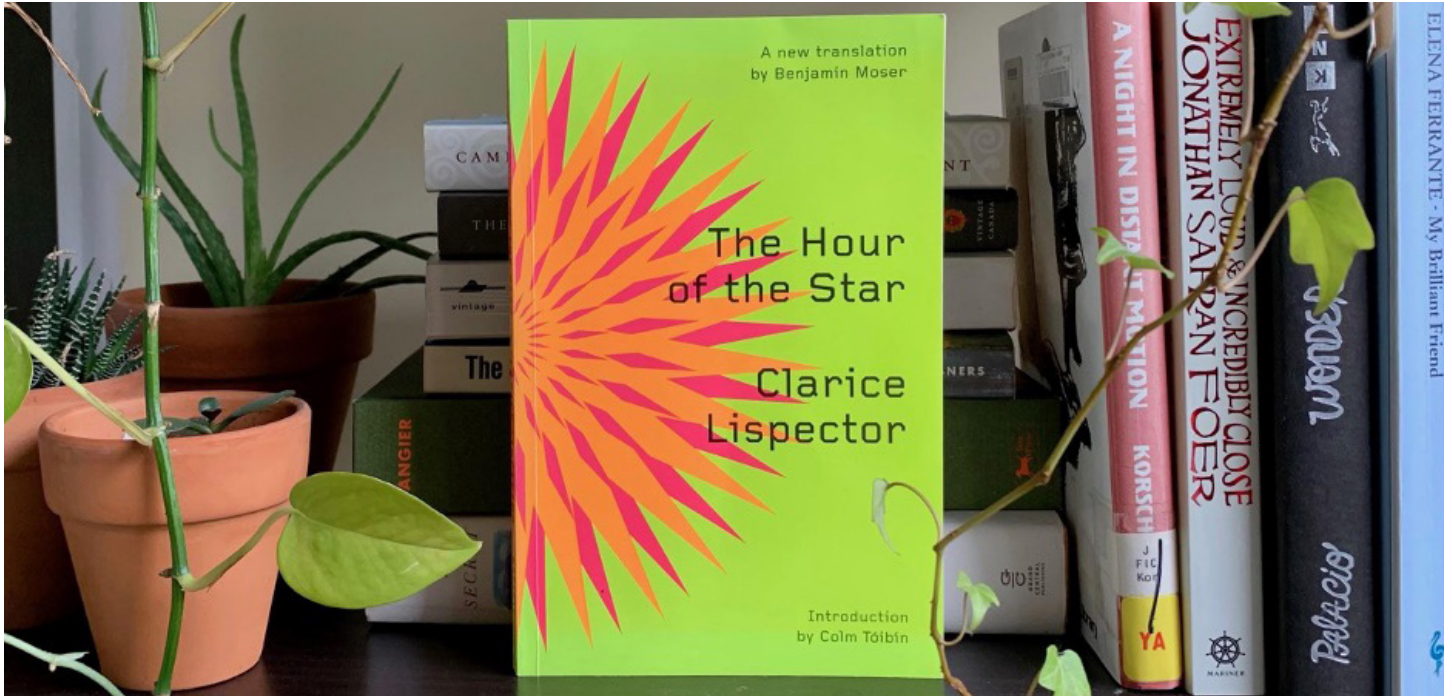
Ardon says her process is not only practical but also ecologically sustainable.

“I’m always looking for ways to use up all my little scraps of screen-printed fabric left over from producing my clothing,” she says.

Read This: *The Hour of the Star*

Clarice Lispector's novella touches on hardship and happiness

BY CHIARA FERRERO WONG AND HANNAH VAN DEN BOSCH



CLARICE LISPECTOR'S 1977 NOVEL, *THE HOUR OF THE STAR*, IS ABOUT A WOMAN LIVING IN THE SLUMS OF RIO DE JANEIRO, BRAZIL. (PHOTO BY HANNAH VAN DEN BOSCH AND CHIARA FERRERO WONG)

This summer we read and loved *The Hour of the Star* by one of Brazil's most brilliant novelists: Clarice Lispector. We like to recommend books you can read during your studies, and luckily, this month's read is only 77 pages! Although it's short, it's sure to have an impact.

About the author

Lispector spent the final years of her life writing *The Hour of the Star*, which was published two months before her death in 1977. Much of Lispector's writing is semi-autobiographical, incorporating emotions and thoughts from her childhood and the many tragedies that followed in her adult years.

Although she was born in the Ukraine to Jewish emigrants, Lispector and her family were forced to emigrate to Brazil due to the violence of the Russian Civil War. When she was nine years old, Lispector's mother passed away, and the family once again moved from Recife, Brazil to Rio de Janeiro.

Irish writer Colm Tóibín, in his introduction to *The Hour of the Star*, describes Lispector as "unliterary." She never studied writing or spent much time reading. She is unlike any other writer: Her word choices are bizarre and brilliant, her style surreal. She forged her own path

to becoming the novelist she is today and thank goodness she did. Every written word feels deliberate in a forceful way; it compels you to believe none of it was written as an afterthought.

The plot

The novella is about a young woman named Macabéa who lives in the slums of Rio de Janeiro. She is poor, uneducated and knows very little about the world around her. She also doesn't seem to realize how terrible her life is. Instead, she claims to be happy.

The story is narrated by Rodrigo S.M., a writer who feels an intense urgency to record her story. He struggles to portray her properly, but self-identifies as an unreliable narrator. Again and again, he repeats how ignorant and helpless Macabéa is and calls her an "accident of nature." But it's clear Rodrigo cares deeply for Macabéa and is writing her story out of some deep connection he can't understand. In his own words, "she didn't have that delicate thing called charm. I'm the only one who finds her

charming. Only I, her author, love her."

Lispector explores themes of belonging and agency through Macabéa. The narrator makes it clear: "the only thing she desired was to live." She drifts through her life listening to her clock radio,

and eating a diet that consists exclusively of hot dogs and coffee. She thinks she is happy only because "she did not know she existed. . . therefore she wasn't aware of her own unhappiness." Lispector's decision to write a story about someone who is supposed

"It's hard to believe someone as talented as Lispector just decided to pick up a pen one day and start writing."

to be completely uninteresting and unrelatable is a lot of what makes this story so phenomenal. Macabéa is an unsung hero in her own weird way.

This book was one of the most refreshing, confusing and astounding books we've read in a long time. It's hard to believe someone as talented as Lispector just decided to pick up a pen one day and start writing. If you're interested in a rollercoaster of a novella, there's a few copies at the Killam Memorial Library, or you can order one from Bookmark or other retailer if you're looking to buy it for yourself or a friend!

Playing the dead zone

Volleyball coach reflects on games haunted by the creepiest silences

BY LUKE DYMENT, SPORTS EDITOR



DAL'S WOMEN'S VOLLEYBALL COACH RICK SCOTT HAS LED HIS TEAM TO WIN THE LAST EIGHT AUS CHAMPIONSHIPS. ALTHOUGH NO STRANGER TO SUCCESS, SOME OF THE STRANGER EVENTS IN HIS COACHING CAREER STILL STAND OUT TO HIM TODAY. (PHOTO BY DALHOUSIE ATHLETICS)

As coach for 11 seasons with the Dalhousie University Tigers women's volleyball team, Rick Scott has coached in the biggest games in front of the loudest of crowds in Atlantic University Sport (AUS).

Whether it was the day after a residence extravaganza or in the middle of a blizzard, Scott has also coached in the eeriest and spookiest of dead silences.

In an interview with the *Dalhousie Gazette*, Scott shared two of the deadest places his teams have played at. The circumstances behind these games were unusual and fascinating, but the *Gazette* confirms the volleyball court built on top of a graveyard was not one of them.

Memorial University, February 2011

The women's volleyball team travelled to St. John's, Nfld. to play the Memorial University Sea-Hawks in 2011. They were set to play at 7 p.m. Friday night and 11 a.m. the next morning.

Minutes before the first game, Scott caught a funny feeling about the crowd from Memorial University (MUN).

"People started streaming in, literally by the hundreds," he said. "Then it just didn't stop."

Scott said MUN had a type of residence night, where students were encouraged to come to the game to support the Sea-Hawks and their own residences. The MUN Field House arena has a capacity of 1,400, but Scott guessed almost 2,000 fans squeezed in. That's compared to 400-500 at a well-attended game at the Dalplex.

"My team couldn't hear me in the warm-up. I had to yell the whole time so the girls could hear. The crowd was chanting, singing and cheering. It was wild," Scott said. "MUN beat us three games to none. That crowd inspired them."

The next day was the exact opposite.

"There might have been 30 people in the crowd, maybe 50," Scott said.

The big crowd from the night before, he said, slept in after likely celebrating the previous night's win.

"You could hear crickets compared to the night before when you couldn't hear me yelling from five feet away."

The dead silence was what pushed the Tigers to a win of their own that morning.

"You could hear crickets compared to the night before when you couldn't hear me yelling from five feet away. I didn't have to yell the next day," Scott laughed.

He said he's never coached in a louder building than that first game at MUN, and the odd silence of the second game made the experience much more memorable.

"The players and everyone there will remember that game forever," he said. "The girls I coached and I still talk about that weekend."

University of New Brunswick, February 2015

Four years later, Dal was in the hunt for their third straight AUS banner at the AUS Championships hosted by the University of New Brunswick (UNB).

Dal's Tigers beat the UNB's Varsity Reds Saturday night, setting the stage for the final against the Saint Mary's University (SMU) Huskies. The battle of Halifax universities, for the fourth straight season, would decide the AUS champion.

Then, Saturday night, a massive blizzard hit Fredericton.

"It lasted a couple of days. It was so bad, the highway didn't open until Monday evening for us to go home," Scott said. "But the game went on, even with snowdrifts and not good conditions. Both teams were there and the power was on. So, we played."

After being able to "get the bus through the snow," both teams played in front of an unsurprisingly smaller crowd. According to the AUS's records, 978 attended the Dal vs. UNB semi-final. At the final game on Sunday, there were only 152 people "made up mostly of parents from both teams," Scott said.

"It wasn't the usual loud, supportive crowd you'd see in an AUS championship," he said, comparing the game to those played without fans nowadays in pro sports. "Fredericton was shut down, so clearly not as many people were there."

What Scott remembers most about that game was how the intensity remained despite the lack of fans. Possibly, it's a lesson teams could use should they play games without fans in the future.

"It was a good battle," Scott said. "The game was still very hard-fought and exciting, and the win was just as exciting."

Questions linger for men's volleyball team

Tigers wonder how season will play out

BY LUKE DYMENT, SPORTS EDITOR



TWO DAL MEN'S VOLLEYBALL PLAYERS JUMP TO BLOCK AN OPPOSING SPIKE. (PHOTO BY KIT MORAN)

There will be a season. That's what Dalhousie University's athletic department told the Tigers men's volleyball team, said co-captain Jeff Walton. The question remains on what exactly that season looks like.

"That's what we're working toward. We're setting goals right now in the first semester for a second semester season," Walton said. "With the outbreak in Quebec, we assume it will impact us, but we haven't heard anything yet."

The Tigers men's volleyball team, along with the University of New Brunswick (UNB) Varsity Reds, play in Réseau du sport étudiant du Québec (RSEQ), Quebec's U Sports conference. Atlantic University Sport (AUS) doesn't have a men's volleyball league. Dal, UNB, the Université Laval Rouge et Or, the Université de Montréal Carabins and the Université de Sherbrooke Vert et Or make up the five-team league.

In a regular year, each team would take a number of trips to the other region to play two or three weekend games against their host. Now COVID-19 and the Atlantic bubble are in the way.

Decisions lie beyond the bubble

Even if the Atlantic bubble were to open, who's to say universities will allow their teams to travel to high-risk areas, said Dan Ota, Tigers men's volleyball head coach.

"Clearly there's a discrepancy right now in COVID cases between Atlantic Canada and Quebec. Who knows what that looks like in three months?" Ota said.

"It's a matter of when Dal feels safe to send us out [to play]. We're confident in them that the decision will be made properly," Walton said.

U Sports is expected to make decisions soon on the status of national championships for the winter semester, an announcement that could influence whether U Sports conferences want to start a season in the winter. Stéphane Boudreau, RSEQ's deputy CEO, said making such decisions are difficult in the COVID-19 climate.

"The situation changes now so fast. It's not every day anymore, it's every hour," Boudreau said. "One day we'll decide something, then the next day it's back to the drawing board."

Will the RSEQ try to get UNB and Dal to take part in a season if they decide to have one?

"Your guess is as good as mine," Boudreau said. "So many things, so many people, are involved in these decisions."

The ability to travel and play as a university team in the COVID-19 era is hard, and expectations are compared unreasonably to arrangements and bubbles seen in professional sports, Ota said.

"We're not in that world where we have a lot of resources. We can't constantly test our players [for COVID-19], have bubbles, or stay in hotels for a long time," he said. "Our reality looks very different."

Possibilities within Atlantic Canada

With the limited resources available and a good chance the Atlantic bubble stays closed into January, Dal's men's volleyball team is preparing for all options, especially options inside the bubble.

"UNB, being the only other Maritime team in the league, would hopefully show interest in playing soon. But with just us two, I don't know if we'd really even call it a season," said Walton.

Ota said a lot remains up in the air, even after any U Sports announcements regarding national championships.

"If there's no national championship, will there be regional play or playoffs?" Ota asked. Even if RSEQ suspends the winter season, athletic departments and organizations could organize games or even schedules between one another.

That, of course, is a whole different issue, depending on each organization's comfort level with playing at their own risk or playing without AUS benefits like insurance.

"Finances have been lost too through the pandemic. It's not an ideal situation," Ota said. "There's a lot of moving parts but we're trying to make the best of it."



THE 2019 DAL MEN'S VOLLEYBALL TEAM. THIS YEAR'S TEAM IS STILL UNSURE IF THEY'LL BE COMPETING AT ALL. (PHOTO PROVIDED BY DAN OTA)

New city, same friendship

Rookie hockey players continue to support each other

BY LUKE DYMENT, SPORTS EDITOR



MATTIE BASE (LEFT) AND GABBY NOORDIJK JOINED DALHOUSIE'S WOMEN'S HOCKEY TEAM AFTER PLAYING ON THE SAME TEAM THE LAST FOUR YEARS IN OAKVILLE, ONT. (PHOTO BY TROY RYAN)

Four seasons of hockey, two Dalhousie University acceptance letters and one global pandemic after meeting in eighth grade, Gabby Noordijk and Mattie Base find themselves grinding away at schoolwork in a small Halifax Starbucks. The two women's hockey rookies had a training session later that afternoon, so homework was the morning's priority.

Time management is one of their many adjustments into university life, a life that's even stranger than usual with online classes and COVID-19 still in the air.

Having one another for support benefited their transitions from their Oakville, Ont. high school to Dal.

"It made easier going so far away from home with someone from home. Together, we still have a piece of home," Base said about having a friend along for this journey.

Longtime friends

Noordijk and Base said they have a lot in common. Along with sharing the same hometown, school and hockey teams for years, both play defence in hockey and study commerce. Naturally, they are roommates.

"We've been together a lot. We've had the same friend group, high school and hockey teams, so we get along well," Noordijk said.

Their commitments to Dal were announced in June. Base and Noordijk have similar academic interests and Dal's hockey program made the move from Oakville to Halifax that much more attractive.

The move included the dreaded two-week quarantine.

"Our moms quarantined with us," Base said with a laugh. "Having Gabby there too was good. It's nice always having someone like her there."

Their coach Troy Ryan, a first-year head coach himself, said it was unique to have friends with so much in common join the team.

"You see recruiting like this happen with good teams," Ryan said. "You recruit a player that comes from a good program and other players follow. The good thing about getting two players that are familiar with each other is the transition is a lot smoother."

Fitting into new school and hockey environments

The smooth transition can be seen in their day-to-day lives, on and off the ice.

"We have the same courses, so we help each other and keep one another on top of everything," said Base.

"We'll watch lectures together on one of our computers," Noordijk said. "It's easier with these things living with someone else in the same situation as me."

How about the hockey side of university?

"Everyone on the team is really inclusive, especially since we have a lot of first years, it's been really good," said Noordijk. They make up two of 10 rookie players on the women's team.

"The team is really nice. Troy, too. He's an amazing coach," Base said.

Ryan said the similarities between Base and Noordijk aren't limited to off the ice. He described both as responsible, defensive-minded defenders. Not to mention Base shoots left and Noordijk right, a combination that gives them the chance to play on the same defence pairing once the season begins.

"They fit right in," Ryan said. "Although this isn't the ideal situation, we're at a point

in the year where people wish games were being played, it hasn't been a big negative. It's still a great environment they are in, where they can practice and train."

Noordijk and Base said they look to soak up what opportunities are there now with the team, even with the lack of games.

"A development year is what our program needs. Having no games isn't ideal, but we can practice and grow as players," said Base.

"We're still on the ice a lot, we're getting a lot of practice," Noordijk added. "We're developing individually and as a team. We're pushing each other to become better."

Several players, mostly rookies, live in residence like Noordijk and Base do. They said it helps their comfort level around teammates, having been able to meet them early and share the school-hockey balance that the life of a university student athlete commands.

"Even if there is no season, seeing how we improve from this year to next is exciting," Noordijk said. "What's going to happen with our program and team is exciting."



OFF THE ICE, BASE AND NOORDIJK ARE CLASSMATES AND ROOMMATES. (PHOTO BY TROY RYAN)