

THE ALTERNATIVE
UNITED VOICES



2021

16

Alternative United Voices

A compilation of articles from the students of Montreal's alternative high schools

Front cover by Karlie Artuso

Back cover by John Potts

An Alternative United publication

Organized by Colin Throness



Find out more about Alternative United and read the publication online at
alternativeunited.ca

Acknowledgements

Many thanks to the alternative school teachers for your kind encouragement and support with this contest and publication, in particular John Devlin, Jessica Hand, James Bray, Ava Nouraeyan, Lino Pietrantonio, Annie Ogle, Penny Arns, Ruwani Payoe and Alain Turgeon. Be proud of these young people! You've taught them well!

Thanks also to Craig Olenik, Donna D'Amato, Gina Mancini, Alessandra Furfaro and the English Montreal School Board for their backing. This publication would not have been possible without your financial support.

And a big thanks to Karlie Artuso and John Potts who did the awesome artwork on the front and back cover.

Enjoy!

Printed in June 2016 by



Foreword

Let me tell you, this was not an easy task. Picking one winner and ten finalists from 64 entries, every single one of them perfect in its own way. At the end of the day, I had to make some choices...

It donned on me as I read and reread the entries that it would be impossible to pick only one winner and ten finalists. There had to be at least two “Grand Prize Winners,” and beyond that, there had to be specific categories, because so many of these pieces were brilliant in their own way.

As I perused the articles I heard whispers of the classroom discussions and the guidance of the more powerful voices in the room. The majority decision that arose in the talks was clearly that alternative schools, although not perfect, are where it’s at. So be proud that you made it and make the best of it!

I decided to devote an entire awards section to this and call it, “The Alternative Voice Awards.” I chose seven, but I could have easily picked seventeen.

At one point I was juggling more than a dozen possible winners. They had all caught my eye. A few of them had remarkable style and panache, whether it was their sharp wit or their cutting critical approach. Another category came to mind: “The Style Awards.”

There were also several pieces that blew me away for their creative talent. These weren’t perfectly sculpted articles, per se, but the powerful imagery in their prose revealed a passion for words. I dubbed this category “The Creativity Awards.”

There were also a few articles that I felt could have easily been pitched to a publisher. Their topics and styles were reminiscent of what you’ll find in online and print publications. These were given “The Modern Journalism Awards.”

Perhaps the most moving aspect of reading the entries was in their honesty. These articles all have grit. The ones I found the most touching received “The Honesty Awards.” They bear your nicks and scars. They reveal the pain and the power in your voices. They tell your true stories.

The winners of “The Where I’m From Awards” dive into the world around us: our homes, our hoods, our histories. They tackle an important question: How does where you’re from define you?

As for the “Grand Prize Winners,” I boiled it down to a question: If I happened to be reading a newspaper, or perusing articles online, which of these stories would have really brought me out of my seat? These two stories did.

A sense of contentment came over me as I made those tough choices – I was so happy that all the entries would be published, not just because of their courage, but because of the talent each one boasts. All 64 of you need to know that you have something special in your back pocket. It’s a tool that should be continually honed and nurtured and explored.

Every single one of you should keep writing. I’m telling you.

Colin Throness, aka Mr. Collins

MILE END

Judging someone doesn't define who they are. It defines who you are.

By: Aaron James
Tuesday, May 10th 2016
Programme Mile-End

No school is easier than another... All schools follow the same outline from the school board and government. I go to an alternative school and I feel like my peers and I get judged a lot for being alternative students. People like to jump to conclusions and speak badly about alternative schools in general. I've had conversations with people that despise alternative school saying how if you cannot function in a "regular" school you should not be in school... I've even had people tell me I will not get a proper high school diploma.

I remember in elementary kids would be like "oh you're a retard you need to go to stupid school" and listening to this got me angry because nobody deserves to be called a retard and nobody deserves to be bullied. This happens in the world we live in. People like to judge and make fun of others and it is not right to do that.

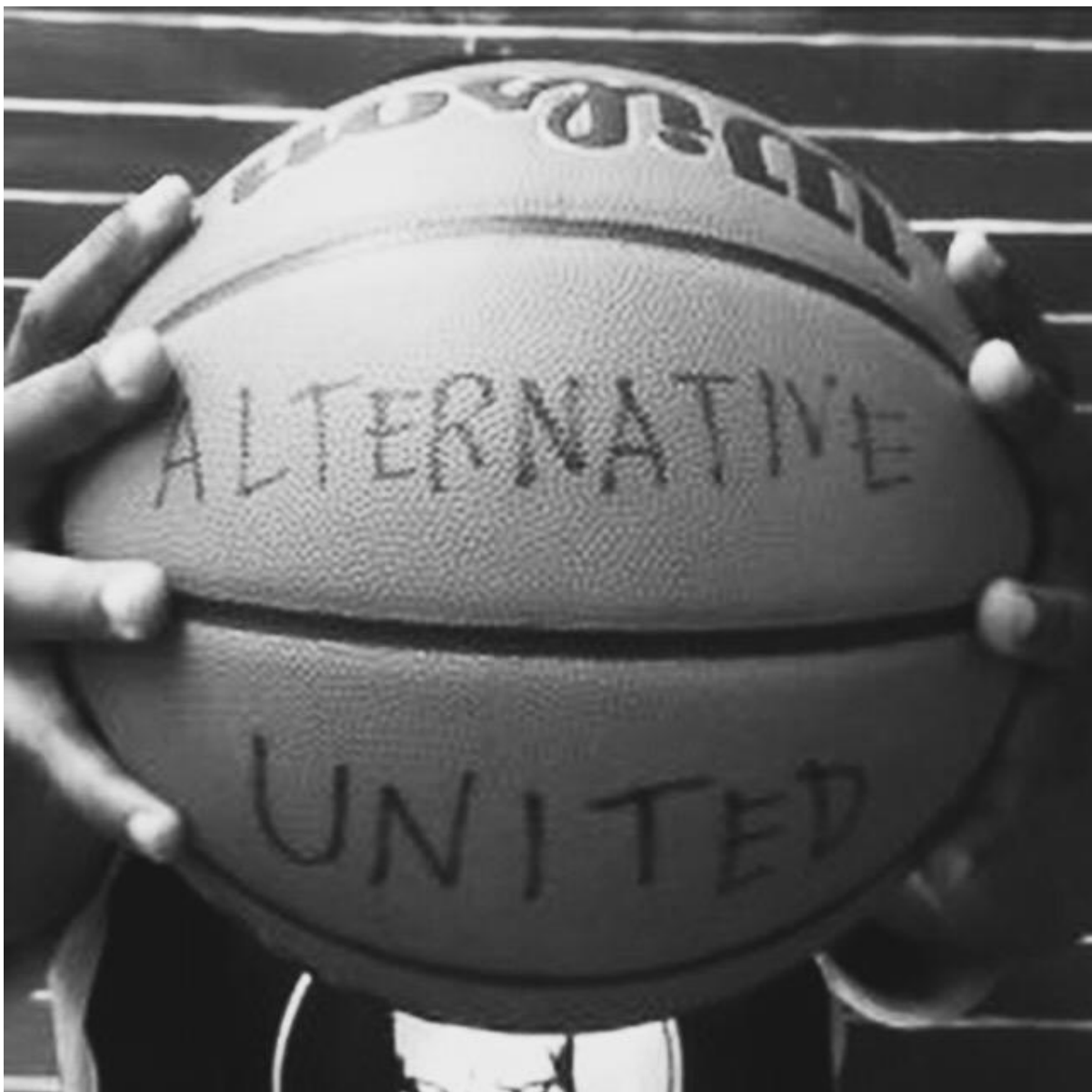
People judge situations, others, even a book before knowing anything about it. I remember losing my father in elementary and people saying how my mother killed him for his money because she never loved him. That got me very mad because I know my mom loved my dad and my dad loved my mom. I remember in Westmount High school when I was attending they had a program called Step120 and it was a tutoring class that helped kids who needed more help. Class was smaller and kids were mixed from different classes. Students were labelled as "retarded" because you would go for the extra help. Kids who were on Honor roll got the extra help and they were getting 90% averages, and I can tell you they were NOT "retards"

Coming to an alternative school wasn't too big of a change for me because it felt like my Step120 class I went to at Westmount. I hate when people judge alternative students because we are not stupid we are just as smart and some are even smarter than kids in "regular" schools or even private schools. I've heard kids say "oh you're not able to learn like us you're stupid in your weird school with only twenty kids". Being in an alternative school does not mean you are stupid!!! I keep saying it and I will always say it. I know people who have went to alternative school and are now lawyers. Does that mean they're stupid?? I don't think so.

When I was in secondary one which is my first year of high school, I had gym class for my first period class on Monday and I remember my gym teacher yelling at me while we had the first ten minutes for free gym. I was confused and asked him what I had done he told me to go the office. I asked him where the office was and he directed me. When I got to the office they asked me why I was there and I told them my gym teacher got mad at me and sent me here. The office was mad because I was new to the school and it was my first day. So they asked what I did and I replied I was playing basketball and he sent me here. When they asked him why I got sent there he told them I was a secondary five student. They told him that I was a new secondary one student and he felt bad. My point is because I was a big kid he judged me quick and thought I was trying to skip class, I felt insulted in a way because I was new, and I wasn't skipping class.

I hate judging people so I really try not to like when I get judged it hurts I feel insulted, especially when I go into any store and I see the undercover security following me till I get to the cash. I'm not somebody who robs stores but because I'm a big black man the automatically follow me and I've noticed this since I was a young kid it even happened to my dad.

It doesn't matter who you are, what culture you're from, or what language you speak. People will judge you because they have nothing better to do. Some judge to make themselves feel better some judge because they think they are better. Judging someone doesn't define who they are. It defines who you are. So, who are you?



The Dumb Question

By Adam Bitton

Alternative schools are considered by many to be the recesses of the public schooling system and pretty much the last educational stop before lockup.

I've been to a few public schools and a couple alternative schools, so I'm confident when I say that alternative schools are pretty much the other side of the same problem. I've also been to a couple private schools which really is what opened my eyes to how important money is when it comes to getting a proper education.

Like most situations in life money is usually the controlling factor. I've seen firsthand how especially in private schools, how money can affect your education in a variety of ways.

Most kids aren't too into school at a young age and I can tell you that I most definitely was at the forefront of that group.

The biggest difference between a private school and public school is definitely the cost setting aside from the curricular requirements. When a student's parents are paying for a premium education and their kid still fails, well that's just another reason to just send him to public school on top of the financial motives.

So, the basic idea is that if you're still passing then the cheques are still coming in. The same system seems to be applied in public schools, of course taking into account the impacts of financial difficulty on young minds and the curriculum requirements.

As mentioned before the biggest difference is the cost. We have a right in Quebec to free education but that doesn't seem to mean there's no cost.

Public schools systematically push school fees on parents in a manner which I can only describe as deceiving. Seeing as school fees are not mandatory but are pushed on unsuspecting parents as if they are, the parents are either forced to admit their shameful financial situation to some stranger or pay the fees.

This is not including the cost of uniforms many schools require, which can be very financially difficult for some families. Not to mention that they are charging more for cheaper articles of clothing that you have to continuously rebuy while you can buy the same thing but better quality anywhere else for half the cost but with no logo, which is of course mandatory.

Now when it comes to alternative schools, I have to say many of the educational characteristics are different and even better.

The school fees part is still present although less or not relevant to the quality of education you get and the way you are treated. This is among the most positive things about an alternative school although it is my opinion that an education untouched by the influence of money is supposed to be a right not a privilege.

Furthermore public school classes are more crowded which means there is less attention paid to each individual student. Alternative schools offer more individual attention to each student

which I also believe should be a given. It is also my opinion that the reason why public schools are so crowded leads directly back to a question of money.

Another one of the biggest differences I've experienced firsthand between alternative and public schools is the label you are given. Last year I tried to apply to a public school after having previously attending an alternative school.

After I applied the principal set up an appointment with me in which she told me that I could not attend the school because I was an alternative student. I took my discrimination complaint to the school board which in short produced no positive results.

The connection that the label we are given has with the money is evident. If you don't have money you are a bum, a criminal an uneducated ignorant person.

Whether the principal decided I was broke and then decided I was a bum or whether she decided I was a bum and then that I had no money doesn't matter because both assumption come hand in hand.

She was assuming that I wouldn't catch how discriminatory her statements were or that I didn't have the time or money to pursue them on a level that might actually affect her and she was right because all I did was waste my time putting in a complaint at the school board, becoming emotionally invested in something that nobody else seemed to acknowledge or care about.

And so, after having been turned away, I accepted my fate as an alternative student and continued my secondary education which brings me here, to secondary 5 where the school system has the audacity to ask me what it means to be an alternative student.

Well conclusively, to be an alternative student means that you are broke, troublesome, in need of individualised attention, a juvenile delinquent, and uneducated. But most of all, it means that even if you are none of the above you are still regarded as such.

Is being in an alternative school really that bad?

By Daniel Labelle

Tuesday, May 10, 2016

Mile End Discussion

Two plus two is equal to six! What? Don't blame me, I go to an alternative school. Just because a student has to or chooses to attend to an alternative school does not mean that they are stupid or delinquents. It simply means that certain students learn at a different pace than others. Students who go to alternative schools are the same as any other students getting an education.

When you are in a class with almost forty to fifty students, it can be difficult to actually pay attention and learn. Especially when all of those students are talking over each other and the teacher. This is where alternative schools come into play.

Classes in alternative schools are very small, consisting of fifteen students per class. Having such a small class helps the students and their concentration. When I use to attend Marymount Academy, there were about thirty five to forty students in my class. It was very hard to focus on what I needed to do on account of everyone talking at the same time.

However, as soon as I was placed in an alternative school I found it much easier to concentrate and it showed when report cards came around. When I use to attend to Marymount Academy my grades were pretty bad, not the worst but bad. Now that I'm in an alternative School, my grades have improved very much.

A lot of the problems are also because of teachers. Let it be known that it is not their fault ALL the time. Most teachers try their hardest to make sure us, the future generation get all the education we need in order to progress as leaders someday. Teachers aren't the only ones who have to make the effort though. So when a teacher is trying to teach a class of forty students and they're all talking, what is that teacher supposed to do? Then again you also have teachers who don't really care about their students' education but for the money and the benefits the job has to offer.

That has not much to do with what I have to say though. Students who go to alternative schools tend to progress faster when it comes to learning and understanding. This is because of my previous argument about classes being smaller, but another reason why students from alternative schools tend to progress and learn faster is because the teachers are more considerate. They have more understanding on where their students are coming from.

Teachers at alternative schools also have smaller classes to teach, taking it a lot easier because you don't have forty kids talking over each other. If anything, they have about fifteen students talking over each other which isn't as bad. Students are able to get closer with their teachers as well, leading to a great student/teacher relationship that you're most likely not going to find at a regular high school. It's possible, it's happened but not as much as it would normally happen in an alternative school.

A lot of people see alternative school students as delinquents, or stupid. Some people even say that we will amount to nothing. My argument towards these inconsiderate people is that I am a student from an alternative school and I have accomplished a lot. I can cook, clean, solve

problems with ease, etc. Just because someone doesn't go to a well-known school does not mean that they are stupid and will amount to nothing.

NEVER judge a book by its cover. Always read the pages in between because saying these things to certain people who go to alternative schools can really affect their self-respect and make them think they're worthless. I hope the next time someone says something about alternative schools they take the time to think about what benefits can really come from actually going to an alternative school and how it affects students for the better.



Pizza and proofing party. Hunt down those typos!

It Ain't What You Expect!

By Davian Huggins

Tuesday, May 10, 2016

Programme Mile End

Hey! Have you ever frowned upon the idea of attending an alternative school because of the generalization it comes with? Well you shouldn't.

In my opinion, I think that high schools have the craziest and most unrealistic rules applied to their students because of the large amount of students that attend a regular high school. With a large amount of students in one school it's hard to regulate each students so administration just sets out a bunch of ridiculous rules. If high schools had the rules that alternative schools have maybe some of the kids wouldn't misbehave.

A recent Huffington Post blog states that most kids in regular high school misbehave because of lack of stimulation and engagement with the teachers due to the amount of kids in one class room.

My good friend that goes to a high school, which is a normal high school, got kicked out of his old school for having a drug related text message sent to his phone prior to him being suspended because of it. This situation proves that most regular high schools are very strict and ridiculous with their rules applied to high school students.

My friend is now still in normal high school but is thinking of going to an alternative school because of all the positive things that he is hearing about it from other kids that are already attending alternative school.

An example of positive things that my friend is hearing is how the smaller amount of people in alternative school classes so it makes for a much easier time understanding the teacher and going at a slower pace so you understand every single detail that the teacher is explaining.

Another example of positive facts about alternative school is that the rules aren't as harsh and strict as normal high school. Of course there are still base rules in alternative school but the teachers are way easier going when it comes to rules.

In my opinion, I think that too many rules in high schools can really get in the way of an individual students education and learning process. Consequences that the regular schools give, do not help the kids learn to not misbehave again.

Instead it cripples the student's ability to get their school work done on time because they either have a detention for an hour after school or they are suspended for something stupid and ridiculous like being late too many times in one week or one month.

If regular schools had the rules and regulations that alternative schools have then I think that more school work would be completed from the students or even a better bond and relationship between teachers and students.

Absences also wouldn't be a problem if rules weren't so strict in high schools because for the most part students want to go to school and learn but the since they get hassled by the amount of ridiculous rules they tend to stay home and miss out on a day of school.

When schools have too many rules and are very strict with their students it makes the kids want to act up and rebel which gets them in even more trouble and that's when the marks in all of the student's subjects go downhill until the student fails.

I want people to understand that alternative school is nothing like what you expect. In some aspects, alternative school is better than normal high schools because of the smaller amount of people, the student and teacher bond, the communication between teachers and students and most importantly the behavior of students. If you are a student and thinking of going to an alternative school, always think about the positive things.



Okay, enough with the proofing. Where's the pizza?

Is It Really That Different?

By: De-Andre Steer-Morris

May 13 2016

New York Times

They told me I would have to watch my back as I walked through the hallways of my new school and make sure not to trust anyone. I wasn't too comfortable with changing schools, but honestly, I guess I needed it. Here is a bit of my story:

Did you know that not all kids attending an alternative School were sent there because of their behavior? We are labeled as "Bad Kids" because of the way people see us and there's a reason why. Back when I was in a regular school, I witnessed people getting kicked out for having a weapon in school or having drugs in their possession. They all ended up in an alternative school. This made a lot of people, including students, think that alternative schools were a bad place to be because of the clientele that gets sent there.

I was in a regular high school and was having a hard time with getting to school on time and keeping up with the class work. I ended up failing my secondary 4 year 9 (Grade 10) and was switched to an alternative high school. At first I wasn't too happy about the decision they made for me, but it was a consequence I had to deal with. Luckily for me, I can say it saved my education.

For one thing, I can say that the alternative program takes off a lot of stress because there are less students in the class room making it easier to focus. I get less distracted and can get my work done. Being able to keep up with the work load has given me the opportunity to get higher grades compared to my old "regular" high school. Having less students in your class causes less distractions from the opposite sex which limits the chances from getting caught up in a relationship and taking your focus away from your studies. The less people there are in a class, helps the teacher give their attention to specific students. This brings you the success rate in the classroom. Having a smaller classroom size motivates kids to work together on assignments and share their opinions without having that fear of being laughed at. The bullying is reduced and participation goes up allowing students to feel comfortable with each other. Since alternative schools are smaller it's easier for the teacher to see if a student is being bullied, and therefore, it can lower the chances of it happening to you.

Some kids in alternative schools deal with a lot of personal issues which causes them to act out and be labeled as bad. Just because someone is going through emotional, financial, family or physical issues does not mean you are a bad person. The struggle does not define us.

We may act out by doing bad things to deal with our problems, but that does not define the person we are inside.

People have it all wrong, we are not really the different and the schools are not that different. Yet the truth is, it's just hard to deal with some things and be at school listening to teachers go on and on. Then they wonder why I fell behind and started slacking off when it came to all my work.

Being in an alternative school helped me get through a lot of situations I was dealing with because of teachers who had the time to try and support me. The students never judged me and

treated me like they would want to be treated. Alternative school was a place I thought I'd never end up, but it was the best thing that ever happened to me. So let's face it, is it really that different?



This year's b-ball squad. One, two, three – United!

Look at an alternative school as a normal high school

By Elvis Li

Thursday May 12, 2016

Program Mile End

Who says what normal is?

When I first found out that I was switching to an alternative school I was very scared and didn't know what to expect first because I thought there would be a big difference between alternative schools and normal high schools. As time went on, I got to know more about the school while getting the help that I need. Slowly I changed my perspective. I'm getting better marks and passing the classes that I was failing. Our school is not a big school, but because we are not big, teachers get to spend more time with us. Our class is small so it makes our class easier to control. I remember what it was like being in a big class. Many teachers can't control their classes because they are too big. I'm not a hard worker, but teachers here are always willing to help me to finish the work that I didn't do.

We work hard to show that we are not stupid. We are just like normal high school students. We are close with each other like a family. Because there is less students it helps us all get along better. When we need help we all help each other no questions asked. We don't have drama between each other and there are barely any fights that break out because everyone works together.

Often people think alternative school is just full of bad kids and dumb students but they have never experienced what it is like being in a alternative school. We are not those bad kids or dumb kids, we don't pass with all 90's or 80's but we work our hardest, and I think that's the most important thing to do.

At the end, I think being an alternative student doesn't mean that we are not good or stupid. We do need the extra help in school, but at the end of the day we are still students. We do the same work that a normal high school student does. There is not difference between an alternative school and a normal high school. In fact, I think alternative students know more about life because of what they've gone through. No one deserves to be judged.

Different Skills, Successful Futures

By Emily Woodworth

Friday, May 12, 2016

Program Mile End

When you are told you have a learning disability, you automatically think you are vacuous. According to kidshealth.org, it was estimated that about 4 million high school students in America alone were affected by learning disabilities, let alone how many were sent to alternative schools for being “incompetent” at learning at a fast pace.

Alternative school are compatible to any skill level. Planting the idea that alternative is for the mindless, will only insult the students who attend. Due to the very small student population compared to a known public school, every student is able to have one-on-one attention and care from the staff, who are tolerant and understand the needs students require. Alternative schools are a second chance to succeed when the child was given up on or felt like a disappointment. The students require full support from both their parents and teachers. It would be an awful feeling for a student to graduate and not have anyone to spread their contentment towards their deserved success and promising futures.

Parents who send their children to alternative school may be doing them a favour. A student who is struggling with their studies may feel ashamed to speak up, fearing they will be judged. In any alternative school, every student respects another’s opinions or thoughts, regardless how obvious the answer. A good portion of the students were raised with constant struggle and forced independence. For a teen, to know how it is to feel insufficient at a young age, one needs to be understood and cared for when they are going through something. They won’t be alone going through it.

Being in an alternative school does not risk your chance of graduating and reaching life goals. It may even be better. Students who feel less skilled than others can sometimes give less effort. Teachers who have the patience and time to educate a student with any learning pace can successfully motivate them and get them ready for the next task. It is not about what the student is learning, but how they are learning it. In a school with teens who are basically forced to learn “like everyone else”, some students may feel a constraint in their ability to succeed. It is unacceptable for any student to feel less worthy because of their skills. Everyone learns differently, some need to read instructions, some need to physically do it, and others need one-on-one reading time. Nobody should be left out.

Alternative school is not for the unintelligent or for the unsuccessful. It is for communication, understandable education, unique personalities and positive environment. Nobody deserves to feel neglected or treated as a social pariah. Teenagers need to grow to learn wise and finish high school with satisfaction. You need to look back at high school and have good sentiments. If you ask me, does attending alternative school make you any different? Absolutely not.

We are the same as normal high school students

By: Esmeralda Guzman

Friday, May 13, 2016

You can do anything that you want to as long as you put your mind to it, obstacles don't exist they're created by your own mind.

I think that we are all in here for the same purpose to graduate and be successful, we all come from different backgrounds and have different stories and experiences.

The reason I changed to an alternative school wasn't because I was a bad student or got kicked out of my old school but because I needed more help that I wasn't getting. This was because the classes were too big, the teachers didn't really focus on you because they had many other students to help too.

When people started asking me, what school did I go to? I was shy and I didn't really wanted to tell them because I knew that as soon as I say I go to an alternative school, they would look at me like if I was someone else and that's when I realise that some people will be there to support you, and some will only want to celebrate at the end, not be with you in every journey. If you put your mind on your goals, you can achieve anything.

Also, when you get to secondary V, you realise who is going to be there with you after high school is finished. So many friendships ends when you finish high school or change schools. That's when you know who was there with you at the beginning.

People view alternative student's way differently than normal students and that's a problem because it makes Alternative students looks bad, when we are not any different from regular students. We all go to school to learn and try to graduate , alternative Schools are just school with a smaller amount of students, where teachers try to help you as much as possible and try to get you involve in activities .

Mile End is such a good program, teachers actually try and help you with what you need help with, provide us with breakfast, snacks, a program afterschool to help us if we have any questions or need extra help. We have many activities & outings such as a camping trip at the beginning of the year to get to know the new students and a ski trip which happens throughout the year and many more.

If we think about it, we are all learning the same things that a regular school would be learning at our own pace. We are also getting the same the diploma with the same honours at the end of the year.

Alternative school helps some of the students that have jobs to still continue school and manage to graduate on time with the rest of the class.

People will judge you because you go to an Alternative school forgetting that we are all getting the same education and probably would go far in life and even go to college.

I think we shouldn't be looked at like we are any different from other students from other schools, and you can do anything you want if you put your mind to it, as long as you come to school prepared to learn and get your work done and ask if you have any questions, at the end of the day you get what you put in. Some students have the audacity to argue with teachers about grades when they don't even put an effort in school and are always late for no reason. Yes, in alternative school you have more freedom but is up to you to put in the effort and care about your education and don't let what other students say get to you.

ALTERNATIVE IS BETTER

By: Imani Ollivierre-Quamina

Wednesday, May 11th, 2016

Mile End Journal

I'm not stupid, dumb, retarded, a dunce, nor a failure. I'm an alternative student and I can do anything, probably even better than you. In today's society alternative schools are branded as schools for dummies and failures. That is completely false.

Alternative students can be just as or more successful than normal high school students.

For example; at my old school "Lauren Hill Academy" I wasn't doing well at all, there are many factors as to why. I would be constantly stressing because I would have homework from all my classes plus projects in one day, not to mention having a test the next day. I would be struggling to do all my assignments. Eventually, I got discouraged and overwhelmed. I stopped trying. I stopped working. And my work started to pile up.

Over time I became incredibly disorganized and began losing all my work. My teachers would also often give work and not explain what to do. When I'd bring it home, I was befuddled on what to do. It was impossible to concentrate when I had so many things to concentrate on. That's why I would be passing with 60s and sometimes failing completely. Not to mention I found the school to be extremely strict.

In "Mile End" they give you a better and easier chance for success. It gives a better base for teens who have difficulty functioning in normal high schools. They get the feeling that they're at home but still act as though they're in school. They can relax more, the strictness is at a bare minimum but we still respect the schools rules and policies. We still get homework but it's easier to stay on top of it because the school does makes lists of all the homework we have to do for each class. Instead of us handing it in the next day, they created a thing called homework deadline, they choose a day close to the end of each term and collect all the homework so we don't have to be rushing to finish it.

I also never get disorganized because instead of having piles of books to carry around and take home, for each class we have one duo tang where all our work stays. We also leave it in class because they make us do all our homework in class but we can choose to take it home if we want. We also have fewer students so the teachers have more one on one time with each individual student and can explain the work incredibly. The school also offers pass class for those who need extra help. Students get to stay after school with the teachers. Overall, we are given everything we need to ensure that we pass and the only reason why we wouldn't is if we lay there like a potato.

I've had many people tell me "you're stupid" or "I'm smarter than you", all because I'm an alternative student. They view alternative schools as schools for delinquents and failure. They feel that they are better than me because they go to a "normal" high school but they are unaware that teens are more likely to graduate from alternative high schools than normal ones. Sometimes teens have problems at home that can affect their learning abilities and emotions, making them fail and end up in an alternative school.

It could also be that the budget of some parents aren't that stable and they can't afford to send their child to some fancy grade "A" high school. It could also be that teens have psychological problems where they're extremely shy and don't like big crowds. Alternative schools are so perfect for all of these reasons. There's hardly ever any pointless drama and everybody down to the staff is friends with each other, like a family.

So what if I'm an alternative student, being one is friggin' awesome and I wouldn't go back to a normal high school if I had the choice. Mile End is the best school in my books even though I don't have a lot. No one can tell me alternative schools are for failures, I mean look I'm graduating at the same time as my peers who are still at my old school aren't I?



Get up there!

Life of an alternative high school student

By Joe Chidiac

Thursday, May 12, 2016

Mile End High Journal

Getting your education at an alternative school is better than getting it at a regular school. In my opinion I think all schools should be run like an alternative schools because they offer students the support they need to succeed.

In alternative schools there's much more one on one with a student and a teacher which makes it much easier to understand a subject which leads it to an easier and less stressful year in general. In my experience as an alternative high school student every single one of my teacher had always sat down next to me when I was stuck on something and would then help me understand the subject also when there is more one on one with a teacher and a student, teachers and students tend to create a bond together that could be very useful and important in the future. Bonding is a very important thing to have with a teacher because in the future if you ever get in trouble or a second shot at a test the teacher will be there for you.

In general you still need to apply yourself to the work the only difference is that in alternative high school teachers will always push you to work hard if you're slacking, they won't stop until you stop slacking, just a heads up, and pick you up when your down or stuck, regular high school teachers would near do the same they would give you a warning to complete your work and that is it. In my old high school I would often get stuck and there would usually be no one on one because of the amount of students. I would always have to go to lunch tutorial and afterschool tutorials which really sucked because I didn't really have no brake and it would just give me a headache at the end of the day. But when I came here I found it much easier to succeed, focus and understand because the teachers explain the subject at a level that we could all understand.

The opposing view would say or state an argument like "at an alternative school there's bad stuff going around there's fights that happen every day the students there are slow, the teachers aren't good and the students will wind up in jail. The reason why I think that the reason why these regular high school students think that alternative schools are bad is because the majority of students that get sent to an alternative school had been kicked out of a regular school for either failing or doing bad things.

I think that this is just a lame excuse so these opposing students can just slack off and never do their work or not show up to school in general.

What I want my audience to think after they've read this article, is that alternative schools aren't bad at all and are actually much more helpful because there is more one on one and the teachers will always try to push you to do more work only for the reason that they want to see you succeed in life.

Alternative School: It's a Second Chance

By Joseph Myschkowski

May 12 2016

New York Times

A lot of students that don't go to an alternative school think they know how alternative schools are like but, in reality they don't know anything.

I have been to many high schools before and from many years of switching schools I have gained a lot of experience. I have learned about the harsh reality of how different high schools function. The reasons why I had switched to different schools was because I wasn't able to handle the rules and stress of coming to school on time.

I would receive detentions every day and it would waste a lot of my time. I felt that detention didn't teach me anything and I would keep making the same "mistakes." I would also get really mad when teachers would yell at students for stupid reasons and I didn't get the respect I deserved. So after switching schools I went to an alternative school and that's when I took school seriously.

Alternative school teachers have an easier time to help students out because the environment is much more relaxed. Unlike regular school I had asked a teacher for help and he refused to help me and would just tell me to look at my notes or come after school. Alternative school teachers can help one on one because classes are much smaller instead of 20 to 30 kids in a class there would be 10 to 15 and it gives the student a better chance to pass the year. Students from regular high schools might think that their school is better but they don't know because they never have come to an alternative school before and experienced it

Alternative schools don't have uniforms or unreasonable rules like my previous schools had. I find that the students in alternative schools are more mature than the ones that go to regular schools because they take school more seriously. Students from other schools might label kids from alternative schools as bad kids, drug dealers, or drug addicts, but in reality there are more students that steal and that do drugs in a regular schools than in alternative schools, which I myself have witnessed the major differences between alternative schools and regular schools.

Alternative schools are less likely to have drugs going around and there is less stealing happening than in a regular school because of how the smaller population of students in the alternative schools. I myself have seen kids steal from each other even if its shoes or food in regular high schools. They may be strict with rules but that doesn't mean bad things do not happen.

So my advice for students that are struggling is their school is that they should consider coming to try an alternative school. Regardless if their issue is about academics or other issues that they might have, they will have a better chance succeeding in graduating in an alternative school than a regular high school.

The True Potential of an Alternative School Student

By: Josh Malamud

Kids like me, we are constantly looked at as lazy, unproductive, and incompetent. People look at alternative school students as if we are hopeless and we can't be helped, but that is not true.

Alternative High Schools provide its students with a lot more one-on-one time, interaction with their teachers, smaller classes, more study periods, no homework, and the students themselves get a long a lot better than in regular schools. It is an easy learning environment for kids like me who struggle with school. The perception people have on us is entirely wrong, we have the potential and strength to amount to just as much someone who graduated from a regular high school, we just have a harder time at it and take longer.

For some students, a lot of students, alternative high schools are the answer, it is something a lot of people need, and that definitely includes me. Some kids just can't survive in a regular school environment, some of us cannot handle the stress of a large classroom, the distractions that come with the class, the daily homework and just the teachers in general. For myself, I can say I did not survive in a regular high school because of the class sizes, the daily homework and my teachers just never understood my needs as a student, and so I failed miserably. I was constantly distracted by my surroundings and the people in the class, I would always be speaking and not paying attention to the class work, and the daily homework was too much for me to handle, I never did my work at home.

Since I have entered alternative high schools, things for me have been a lot easier. I pass my classes here, and I believe that has a lot to do with all the one-on-one time I receive here from my teachers and all the interacting they do with us. A huge perk to it all is there is no homework given, which is pretty awesome. This gives me more time to study and focus on the work in class.

Lots of people believe there is no hope for alternative school students, but that is so not true. We all have so much potential to be successful and be happy with our lives, we just have a harder time with it all. Just because we aren't going to have some fancy Westmount or Lauren Hill diploma, does not mean we can't amount to anything. I know we all have the potential to be successful and live happy lives, we just have to work harder for it.

Just because we have a harder time passing in school, and we need more help than other students, doesn't mean we don't have the potential to have a successful and decent career, a happy life.

Are we that much different from regular students and schools?

By Josiah Payne-Patel
Tuesday May 10th 2016

Alternative schools and students have more to offer than you think. You shouldn't make generalizations about alternative schools and students.

I was moving at a slower pace than other students in my old school and that made me feel like I was stupid. I realized when I came to Mile End that every person moves and works at their own pace. Just because I work slower than some, does not mean I am dumb. People think because in an alternative school kids work slower than a kid in a regular school they are not smart. From personal experience I've seen kids in a regular school rush their work just to keep up with other students. In life it is not about quantity, it is about quality so don't judge alternative students because regular students could give poorer quality work than an alternative student.

A lot of kids in schools are going through personal things at home. Most of the time that affects their school work because they are not able to focus and concentrate so they need someone to express themselves to. Also they need a smaller and quiet environment. But most ignorant people would assume that the student just can't keep up. But it has nothing to do with that, but they are too blind and ignorant to realize the real problem of why they are not producing the work they should be. Therefore, you shouldn't make generalizations about alternative students because you don't know the real reason why they are in an alternative school, so don't assume.

People think we are less intelligent just because we aren't in a regular school. What does regular even mean? Who would actually want to say they are regular? We are all different for a reason. People go through their storms that make them who they are. They assume we all have behavioural issues because that is usually the reason why students go to alternative schools. Yet, that does not mean that we are actually different but that we are human.

People assume we don't produce the same quality and amount of work like regular students just because we are in a smaller environment and we require more assistance. They are wrong. First you shouldn't judge a book by its cover. Second, every alternative student is different from one another even regular students are different from one another. This goes to show that one alternative student does not speak for all alternative students. This mentality is completely wrong. So that is why I say that our schools are not much different and neither are the people in them. All students are humans and all schools are for education to better everyone in different but also the same way.

Why we need guns

May 13th 2016

By Julien Deveau

Let's discuss gun control & gun politics in Canada and the United States of America. I believe in gun control, and believe you should be able to purchase a fire arm, conceal your weapon on your person and use it for self-defence. There should be more gun rights in Canada and gun laws should be maintained in the United States of America.

I personally believe that I should be able to acquire and possess a firearm, which in Canada you can legally do. More than 7 million Canadians have access to firearms according to the RCMP. Firearms in Canada are mostly used for hunting, in the United States they are mostly used for self-protection, according to americangunfacts.com, there are 270 million civilian firearms. In Canada there are no laws supporting self-defence, which in my opinion is ludicrous. For example, if someone rushed into my house with a weapon, and I shot and killed them, I would probably be charged for murder or manslaughter and unlawful use of a firearm. The charges would just start slapping on. If someone is harming me , my family , or my property , I should be able to protect myself and my loved ones that should be a right . Let's be honest the police aren't going to save you, you should be able you to have the right to save yourself.

Also in the United States, many jurisdictions have outlawed guns. Outlawing guns doesn't work nor does it prevent violent crime. Guns don't kill people, people kill people. In inner cities, such as Chicago & Baltimore there are homicides daily in record numbers according to heyjackass.com. This is how the Obama administration has failed. Criminals go outside the law, that's what they do. In the United States of America there are homicides daily from unlicensed fire arms according to the FBI database, although it is very hard to determine. Outlawing guns doesn't work this has been proven. The argument of outlawing guns is negligent, if guns were illegal that would not stop the violent crime. As a person who knows there are criminals out there with unlicensed firearms, I would want to protect myself.

In conclusion, I believe Canada should change its self-defence laws to further protect its citizen's interests. And I hope the Unites States maintains its fire arms laws as well as their self-defence laws. I at this moment, Prime Minister Trudeau does not want fire arms and is furthering his effort to supress our gun laws, he believes that guns will make Canadians more vulnerable and our communities more dangerous (www.liberal.ca/realchange/guns/). We will see in the upcoming years.

Life of an alternative student

By Kadeem Folkes

Tuesday May 10, 2016

Being in an alternative school means I am still the same me, I am no different from any other human. We're just labeled like we're different from regular high school students. Alternative students aren't dumb or different, and a lot of people seem to think less of us "alternative" students because of the title the system gave us. When an alternative basketball team shows up to a "regular" high school they all, as in teachers and students, look down at us. They go straight to judging and talking down to them as if they're better than us because their school has more doors in the building.

In reality those "regular" students that are so perfect are actually ten times much worse because they dehumanise us as soon as they see us. It's funny because when we go in a normal sized high school and see all of those kids in uniforms, in their eyes you could see that they're hurting but they try to hide it, so we just laugh cause at least we all stay true to ourselves and were happier, inside and out. Other schools label alternative schools as a bad school or a school for bad kids, I don't even know how that started because I thought that alternative schools were just for kids who can't be in a big school for any kind of reason not just behaviour issues and not because they are retarded or suffer from a mental illness. It's just sometimes being amongst a large population causes some people to feel very insecure and a lot of insecurities could come with a lot of bad things like depression.

Depression could cause a kid to start failing all their classes and not even attend school. That's not even the half of it, depression is much more than just making a kid not attend school, depression could harm your health so bad that it could have you in a hospital bed or even worse a casket. Being switched to an alternative school is one of the best things that's happened to some people. I know it was for me, being in a regular high school filled with all kinds of fake people who show nothing but disloyalty, betrayal, and don't forget very extremely two faced to each other that includes teachers and guidance councillors. I remember them all telling me "you could trust me with whatever you want to tell me, everything is confidential," but as soon as I would tell them something by next period I'm being called to the office because the whole staff knows and I'm just thinking to myself where did the trust go. Then of course after that incident you don't want to tell any of them anything so that's when they want to call you in the office to question if you're going through a depression phase, and once that comes in their mind that's when they're thinking about switching your school to a smaller and more "suitable" school like they would know what's best for us when they don't even know us.

In conclusion and I'm speaking for myself right now but back when I was in Lauren Hill that place made me very and extremely miserable and frustrated over the years of being there. I would go to bed thinking how I didn't want to get up the next morning cause I had to go to that school and when the morning did come I would try thinking of many ways for me to stay home, also praying an accident would happen to me so I wouldn't have to go there. For example I would walk to school every morning so on my way there especially in the winter I would think if I slipped on ice and felt the tiniest bit of pain I would turn around and go straight back home so I would try to use any little thing or reason just so I didn't have to go there I even thought of dropping out like every day while I was sitting in my classes just thinking about how life would be so much better if I wasn't where I was at the time. Now that I go to Mile End I personally feel like my life got better inside and out I am a much happier person.

Misunderstandings about alternative schools

By: Kian Morot

At first alternative schools just seemed like a school for those who haven't found their place among public schools and wanted a change of pace and a smaller environment. At least that's what the guidance counselors and teachers have stated. However, if that's the case then why do most student teachers doing a stage at an alternative school act as if the students are imbeciles and need to be spoon fed in order for them comprehend something? It really isn't necessary in most cases. This results in students teachers coming across as condescending in the viewpoint of the students.

First off, what student teachers need to understand is that not all of the attendees of an alternative school are there due to poor grades or violent behavior. This common misconception leads to a different and easier teaching route which in the end really doesn't benefit the student. This is because it might make them realize that they're getting some kind of special treatment and being treated as inferiors to others in the same grade level, thus causing some self-oriented animosity and frustration. Also, simply because they're not learning at the proper pace intended by the school curriculum. Thus making it more difficult to prepare for final exams created by the government.

As previously stated, not all of the students are there due inadequate grades. Often cases, students whom have found themselves placed in an alternative schools are there simply because they do not show up to school or can't focus well due to personal reasons. Whether it'd be because of a bad home environment or just busy with work and find themselves in a difficult situation to balance their time. Furthermore, this implies that they are capable of learning as nothing suggests otherwise. This means that the students of an alternative school shouldn't be given lessen assignments or else it'll only get them used to this false perception of what is to be expected of them. Otherwise, they won't be able to complete any simple assignment without complaining about its length, regardless of situation. As stated, since they are busy, it's not the difficulty of the assignment that should be altered, but rather the capacity at which they are given.

It is possible to state that assignments need to be easier in order for the students to participate. That's my point exactly, it shouldn't be this way. If you look at most public schools, getting a student to participate is no problem. It's because they've gotten used to having it easy when it comes to assignments and just expect things to get easier at a constant rate, thus never moving forward. What would help would be if the student teachers stopped pushing this perception of inferiority in our heads. Also, to find a balance between interesting assignments and give a good work ethic to the students before they get used to having everything made out to be easy.

To summarize, I haven't seen this problem with the regular staff and teachers as they have been working alongside the same students for a while and realize what has been already stated. However, as of late, the only student teachers I have met this year have been pushing this negative ideology down our throats. For example, giving us assignments only related to rap music as we are labelled as gangsters. Or when asked to describe ourselves, they keep suggesting negative characteristics, even though it was never brought up. In conclusion, this wasn't meant as an attack on student teachers. It just seems as if it would benefit everyone if when student teachers did their stages it wouldn't affect the growth of the class. Since as mentioned, they tend to create easy assignments or misunderstandings between the student body and teachers.

ALTERNATIVE THOUGHTS

By: Kyle Black

Tuesday, May 5, 2016

Mile End

What is an alternative student? To me an alternative student is somebody trying to graduate and get a diploma in an easier way. Alternative student are students who don't have enough time to do homework on the daily basis or don't have enough time to study to prepare for a test, which eventually leads to failing. Some alternative students have problems learning certain subjects like math and science so they go to an alternative school to learn in a better smaller environment.

In an Alternative school there is around 50 students while in a regular school there is over 500 students. By having less students it helps the students focus more on work and they get more attention by the staff members. Too many students in one school usually leads to bullies, gossips and even cheating whether in a test or with their partner. By having a smaller school it makes it easier for students to get along and it is easier to walk around the school. Even though the school has less amount of students there is still always some type of confusion as to which class students have because our schedule changes every day. There is also a lack of communication between the teachers and sometimes we don't even have a teacher for a class or the teacher comes late.

Students in regular high school usually have a large amount of homework and projects but in an alternative school there is no homework unless you don't finish the work in class. Having no homework allows students to have jobs or hang out or even help students sleep better at night which allows them to retain the information they learned during the day. Alternative schools start at 9 and ends at 2:30 so the classes are 45 min which makes it easier for students to learn harder subjects like math and science. By having students in class for 45 min they learn more efficiently because there is not too much knowledge at once which allows us to learn more efficiently and memorize.

Students in alternative schools are allowed to wear whatever they want while students in regular high schools have to wear uniforms. By letting the students wear whatever they want it forces each student to respect and appreciate each other's style which makes us closer as classmates.

In a regular high school if you get in trouble they would normally give you a detention after school but in an alternative school they would send you home. In my opinion sending students home doesn't help if anything it makes things worse because that student has just lost a day of education.

Students in regular schools do homework, goes to school early end late and there is too much people. In reality there working twice as hard as alternative students but in the end they're going to get the same diploma as everybody. For example my friend Michael graduated in an alternative school and he was still able to go to college and get a decent career. He got the exact same diploma as a regular high school students doing less work!

Other people might think that students in alternative schools are dumb, violent, drug addicts trouble makers and misfits but in reality we are just students just like any other regular schools trying to pass.

In conclusion I think that people shouldn't assume anything about students because they don't know what we are learning in an alternative school. Alternative students are the exact same as regular students because at the end of the day we are all students. If you had the option of going to an alternative school would you?

What does it mean to be an alternative student?

By Mckenzy T

May 9th 2016

Program Mile End

Alternative is a word that people have misused. Alternative just means another way. It could be another way to learn, another way to go, to understand to work etc. Is there really that much of a difference between me an alternative student and those who are in regular schools? Honest, I personally feel that even though it is not a big deal what school you go to, there are actually benefits to going to an alternative school.

Classes should have a lesser amount of students. In a normal high school, classes can go up to thirty-two to forty students and there's only one teacher to teach the whole class. This is a disadvantage to the students who need the extra help. There are those students who don't understand what the teacher is explaining compared to the other students who do and the teacher just doesn't have enough time to re-explain to students who didn't understand.

Another disadvantage for being in a class that big is that, there is always those certain students who disturb the teacher and others who are motivated to learn but struggle paying attention to the teacher. As a student who had attended a normal high school, I found that it was hard to get the help I needed because of how many students the teacher had to see before coming to me.

There are many students at a normal high school who are facing this problem at the present time and in my opinion they should separate their classes in two for those who need the help.

In regular high school, new students feel intimidated by the amount of students and trying to fit in. In an alternative school that is small, you get along easy with other students. Through my point of view, I find that in regular high schools students are separated into different groups. There are the quiet kids who are mostly in the library or stay unnoticed. There are the others who picked activities that everyone knows and come out to watch. There are no gangs, no drama and also less noisy than a regular high school and all the kids get noticed.

As an alternative student, I am no different from a student who goes to a regular high school. We learn the same thing but at a different pace. We are labeled in a negative way, for example as students who were expelled for being troublemakers, thugs and bad examples for other students. We also have the same classes and we do the same work and attend at a different classes.

But when I came to an alternative school, I received more help and more time to complete an assignment. It was an adaptable learning environment and the students and teachers were all nice.

Compared to a regular high school, most teachers and students can be mean and rude. And since they have a huge amount of students in one class room the learning environment and tension in the class is tight. If your average drop, the class average drops and the teacher makes you feel like the pressure is on you to bring it up, at my an alternative school, the teacher helps the students bring up their average.

Being an alternative student does not make you a bad student, it just means that you needed extra help and a different learning environment. Being in an alternative school has helped me focus more on my work and become a better person in ways a regular high school never did.

It's Just a Word

Michael Agnello

May 10th, 2016

PMEHS News

The word “alternative” is what is ruining us right now because when people see “high school” and “alternative”, they automatically assume that were trouble kids and we don’t obey any rules. Also apparently we all do drugs and beat up people. Reality is if a child is In an “alternative school“, it’s most probably because they have a learning disability or have anger management problem but they're not bad kids. A lot of these kids have been through hell...

Some of us live in foster homes or group homes. Some of us have been abandoned. Basically what I’m saying is if you judge an “alternative school” then you're judging a book by its cover for no absolute reason. I went to a high school called Lester B. Pearson and in that school I was surrounded by only Italians. The atmosphere was the same for the four years that I was there and I loved it. I sadly ended up failing a year and chose to go to Mile End High school because it offered me the best program. When I arrived to this alternative school it was like entering a new world, diverse culture and just everything was so much different than my other school it freaked me out at first. Two days later I became friends with everyone in the school and teachers. I got to hear kids’ stories and how hard their lives were. These kids have been through so much and they told me all their stories, I was so surprised with what I heard I almost cried from how touching it was.

At my old school I didn’t get enough support from the teachers as I have at my current alternative school and they only concentrate on the negative stereotypes. Here, I’m getting all the help I need. The teachers are so patient with me and so understanding. I’m the type of student that’s going to need the extra help and support from a teacher and that’s what they offer me at my alternative high school. The difference between a high school and an alternative high school is that the alternative high school students just need the extra boost and support when it comes to handing in assignment and getting ready for exams. The homework is the same and so are the exams that are distributed at the end of the year.

A lot of people would disagree with me because when they hear the word alternative and see the students that go to an alternative high school. When society looks at alternative schools and the students, they see kids with baggy pants, with a cigarette in their mouth and automatically they think they’re bad kids. Society judges us on the word alternative and how we look but reality is you don’t know why we dress like that. Maybe that’s all we could afford and the setting at home is so stressful that the only thing calms us down is a cigarette. A lot of kids take the alternative school out of their options because of what they hear and the serious stereotypes. Some students at alternative schools do drugs, which makes other students that are going or thinking about going to alternative schools are afraid of getting influenced.

You shouldn’t judge us on how we look what school we go to. We go to a different school because we need more support, not because were bad students, we all want the same thing. We come to class everyday so we can start are future by getting our high school diplomas. Some of us are going through hell but we’re not letting the negatives get in the way of our lives. Judge us all you want, it really doesn’t bother us because at the end of the day will be the ones smiling with our high school diploma in our hands.

Remember, alternative, it’s just a word.

Alternative route to success

By: Nathaniel Assayag

May 13, 2016

Mile End Journal

Being an alternative student doesn't mean you're not capable of succeeding, some students just need an adapted learning environment in order to do well.

I have written this article in order to raise awareness that kids in alternative programs are simply different but not stupid. They are kids that require a different learning environment in order to succeed.

My personal view of an alternative school has changed since I've been in them, but my current opinion goes something like this: I believe that there are pros and cons. However, I believe that the pros outweigh the cons. For example, I tend to get distracted very easily, and since I missed a lot of school last year, I am trying to do sec 3 and sec 4 both in the same year in order for me to still go to sec 5 next year. I would have a lot more difficulty catching up if I weren't in an alternative program. But the alternative school that I am now attending is called Mile End and at this school they are able to offer me more individualized attention and they have different teaching techniques such as different pace and different ways of explaining in a way easy for me to understand.

As for many other kids in alternative schools, many struggle academically and have short attention spans. They require a more adapted and flexible environment in order to remain concentrated.

For kids, no matter their issues, alternative schools are able to help. Smaller classrooms with more individualized attention help the student get the help that he or she needs. I also believe that ending the day earlier encourages students to work hard during school hours, knowing that they will have plenty of free time once school is done.

Though there are many great things about alternative schools, there are also a few disadvantages.

Being in an alternative school could result in less of a social life since the school population is so small. For example, Mile End only has around 50 students whereas regular schools have in the hundreds. Another con can be the fact that some student may feel different or just dumb because there is a kind of mentality that alternative schools are for dumb kids.

Overall, alternative schools are more positive than negative. More useful than useless. Because a smaller population allows the students to have a different and closer relationship amongst themselves and the teachers. I find that in an alternative school the students are more comfortable and confident with peers and their surroundings.

If I would have known this before, I would have probably wanted to come to an alternative school sooner. Alternative school has helped me in ways other schools could not. There are less negative influences and less distractions. I truly think that alternative schools will help me get my high school diploma.

Labels, Labels, Labels. We're not Jars!

Rayhan Mkamel

May 13, 2016

Program Mile End

If you were the boss of a company, would you hire an ex-convict? Even if you knew he was a good person and the most qualified for the job?

I once had a Math teacher when I was 15 years old in Secondary 3. My high school at the time was Laurier Macdonald. Excuse my criticism but she was a horrible woman, the type you would hear of in a children's book. She used discouraging, degrading and extremely shameful ways to discipline and "correct" those who were slower at a subject. Miss A had the habit to place the kids who were failing in the back of the class and the ones who were passing in the front. As if they've committed some heinous crime. I asked her about three times why and she blatantly admitted that those with a future were more deserving.

During her teaching, I would try to understand, but if I couldn't and I raised my hand for help I would receive a sarcastic remark along the lines of, "It's simple, you should have been paying closer attention." Everybody knew there was no winning an argument with Miss A, so we didn't question her authority, we'd just nod our heads and shut up.

I'm guessing it's what she always wanted out of her students anyways... She will kick you out for irrelevant reasons and when she does, it's for the whole remainder of the class. I once was kicked out because I asked for a sharpener to the student next to me and so that meant I was "disruptive" and "unprepared for class." Long story short, I was the one who put an end to her long reign of terror. (35+ years)

One day, I laughed at a joke one of my fellow classmates had told us and I couldn't stop. She walked up to my desk with scissors in her hand and LITERALLY told me, "If you don't shut up, I'm going to cut your long hair." I replied confused and shocked, "What?!" and then she grabbed a lock of my hair and snipped it off. My whole class was freaked out and I got sent to the principal's office for disrupting. I explained this act of assault to my principal and that's when he took charge. I was known not only all over school, but also all over the EMSB.

I'm Rayhan Mkamel, the one who got Miss A out of there no matter how many years of seniority she had. In other circumstances, that wouldn't be an accomplishment to be proud of but trust me, I was even thanked by students' parents!

People think that alternative schools are for dumb kids and that we learn basic simplicities like, $2+2=4$. You'd be surprised how much work we actually accomplish. I can recognize how much I have learnt over these past two years in one single high school in comparison to four years in six other high schools. Unlike a certain school I've been at, the students here are very fond of our teachers. For one, they don't treat us like criminals even if some kids technically were. We also get to see how much we've progressed since our first day and bloomed into decent young adults thanks to our teachers. They're so caring, reasonable and very resourceful. We have grown to share great bonds between teacher and student.

I'm sure you'd find my opinion reliable due to the fact that I've got to be a part of and experience many different schools with different atmospheres and students in different

neighbourhoods. I guess you could say I've been around. Another beneficial aspect in comparison to other schools is that we have much smaller classes for a better attention span and after school recuperation if we're behind in our work.

Overall, my experience here was far more pleasant than anywhere else.

On the other hand, many would argue that alternative school students must have done mischievous things in order to get expelled from regular high schools and sent to such a delinquent place. I mean, it's your fault for being bad so you're placed with other kids that are the same as you, right? Wrong! Not necessarily...

Some kids were expelled for reasons such as, fighting, drug trafficking, bullying, stealing and other behavioural issues that can be worked on here. Although, many kids had been transferred because of their low grades in order to get the extra help they need. Others have mental or physical disabilities and need the available resources here in order to get through high school. Others left their regular high schools due to severe bullying which had led to serious conflicts.

In the least, I hope I have cleared up most of the myths and doubts people have when it comes to alternative schools and their students. I hope individuals reconsider their opinions before generalizing a whole group. Like the old saying goes, "Don't judge a book by its cover." Remember that we're all just kids who started off on different paths but we all have the same goal... And that's getting our diploma. We're not jars, please don't label us.



Box out!

ALTERNATIVE WAY

By Shyheem Gonsalves

Tuesday, May 10, 2016

Programme Mile End

Being an alternative school student is like being a student in any school. Being in an alternative school means being in a school with less students and a more manageable work load.

Despite learning differently, my goal stays the same: to get my high school diploma.

Being in a class with less students helps me focus and get more work done. The teachers are able to help me a lot as there are fewer students in each class. The teachers give us smaller workloads at a time but that doesn't mean work is not given. The work that is given is what we need to succeed. I find that less work is good because I can focus on the work I need and not the extra work. It makes me feel less overwhelmed. Having no work at home gives me time to study for other subjects as well.

This is my first year at an alternative school, I have never been a big fan of school but when I came to Mile End high school it made my life a lot easier. An alternative school isn't much different. We're still in a building, studying having normal high school courses and taking regular exams. There are few differences between a high school and an alternative high school but the concept is the same, it's all for the diploma at the end. The work in each course is the same as in other high schools. Though we might learn at a slower pace teachers make sure students understand the lesson and are better prepared for the exams.

What I've come to realize in my high school career, is that school isn't for everyone. We all have our own struggles and there are some courses we do enjoy but there are also some we just can't seem to master. With this being said, Mile End has helped me enjoy school more and has allowed me to recognize what makes a good school.

The way other students view alternative students is as being violent, having behaviour issues, or being involved with drug use. The public or other high school students believe that an alternative school is a small group of bad kids who don't put any effort into their school work. This isn't true, not all alternative students were sent here because they do drugs. There are "bad" students in all schools. Some students do not put enough effort in their work, so they are sent to an alternative school. However, some students are just not capable of regular high school work it might be too much to learn all at once.

Although the classes are shorter at an alternative school, the same courses are taught and learned but at a slower pace, the teachers give you more one on one attention to make sure what their teaching you really stays with you. Hard work must be done to receive the high school diploma just like in any other school and that is my purpose to continue working for the diploma, the key out of here.

Alternate Ending

Tyrone Chambers

12 May 2016

Mile End News

What if I told you I hated alternative school? I guess you'd expect most alternative students to hate school, right? Well, you're wrong.

The alternative school I'm going to helps me be successful in my school work that I have trouble in like math, French, English. I feel proud of myself that I'm doing math works on my own without a teacher. That shows improve every day. In French I didn't know many of the verbs or how to conjugate them. But now I can conjugate the verbs and I feel confident to use a *bescherelle*. I didn't always have the confidence back at my old school where there was so much work to do and then more work on top of that, so I felt pressured all the time. In this school I don't feel overwhelmed to do much work because they don't give homework so it makes it easy on you and for everyone. Back at my old school they had teachers in this class call S.T.E.P if you have work you wanted to work on you can but sometimes the class would be very full so I wouldn't have anyone to work with me. Here I would have someone to work with me but they also give me space while at the same time monitoring my progress

The reason why regular school should be like alternative school is because students get more help in small classes. Small classes are easier for the student because it is more comfortable for them to raise their hand and it is much quieter for the student. When you think, you can hear yourself. Regular schools should not give homework like alternative school because it gives students a time to study what they learn at school. Too much homework makes it hard for the student to learn what they know in class, so it is much better to have class notes to study at home. When it comes to tests, you can read those notes and you can pass easily instead of doing a bunch of workbook pages. Also regular schools should have more one-on-one with the students because sometimes the student does not raise their hand for help when they need it. So what the teachers do at alternative school is they walk around the class to support the students and what they're struggling at. It is good to have a support team for the student for any necessary problems from home or their personal lives. Alternative school also has after school programs like Pass Class for students who want to catch up on missed work or to get extra information on things they did not understand.

Students who cannot handle their behaviour like swearing, fighting or doing their homework might be sent to an alternative school. The reason why students skip school is because teachers give to follow and students don't like that because in their mind they don't want regulation on them. They want to do whatever they want. Being sent to an alternative school can feel like a prison for many students. The teachers make it feel less like a detention because they have activities to do and have recess breaks for the students who need a smoke.

Alternative schools keep you motivated to do better and have a chance of success in your schoolwork and give you an opportunity to do better than when you were at your old school. It also gives you an opportunity to make new friends.

My alternate beginning

By Wesley Thomas

2016-05-13

Mile End

Alternative school is given a bad rep but my transition from public school has brought me to the realisation that alternative school is simply not what all the negative stereotypes make it out to be. In reality it is a nurturing environment better suited to its students, it's not a place where low life youth and thugs are sent when they are no longer welcome in public school. It has really helped me and my other students my age graduate and make something of their lives.

Not all of the students are poorly educated as a matter of fact many if not all the students are smart I his or her way they just do not conform to the general guidelines set by the school board there for alternative school is a way to get them engaged and serve as a resource to better educate themselves.

I think many of the stereotypes that come with public school students are false. For example, I do not want to hear people saying public school students are stupid because they aren't some might be misunderstood but I don't think any human being in general is stupid. I believe everyone has potential and alternative school helps students unlock that hidden learning potential that they couldn't fully grasp in public school. People also create ideas that alternative school students are all thugs because they tend to link trouble with learning to gang violence and gang affiliation because that's how the media shows it.

In alternative school the teachers are much more lenient with homework and respect the fact that many of the students are also old enough to have jobs and other responsibilities they have to take care of on a daily basis. The schedule also changes from time to time to keep the students engaged and the teachers also go out of there ways to create fun and interesting extra-curricular activates for the students all in the name of keeping the students happy.

I have been told multiple times that since I go to alternative school 'I'm a special snow flake' or 'I'm never going to get a job when I'm older'. But in reality alternative school has increased my chance of contributing to society because now I'm grasping my high school education which I would have trouble doing in a public high school because the teachers and staff at my alternative school push me into doing better for myself and it gives me a heightened sense of self confidence that I can use in my other everyday activities.

In conclusion alternative school students are just as smart and competent as public school students but are given a bad reputation by mainstream media and other schools but in reality we stand united through a bond that the community and staff have created for us. This bond will last longer than other high school bonds because they allow us to flourish and become better students. We might not have been given these kind of opportunities if not for going to alternative school it also teaches us to be resourceful and not be shy to ask for help from the teachers since they are so dedicated to helping us succeed in life and get our high school diploma. At the end of the day all they want to see is successful students prospering and looking for more opportunities for our futures. My school had opened my eyes to many opportunities and I am forever indebted for that and if I had any word to kids struggling in high school don't be shy see help from your guidance counselor and don't be embarrassed to consider alternative school.

MOUNTAINVIEW

Reasons Why Weed Is Safer than Alcohol

By Julia Mouyal April 15, 2016

It was a Saturday night and one of my friends came to pick me up to go to a party. We were very excited. When we got there we were one of the first ones there. We helped organize and prepare everything for the party. Friends started showing up.

About an hour in the party, the loud music was playing and everyone was dancing, drinking, smoking and having fun. Some people were already drinking too much. Chris, one of the guys at the party, started to lose control because he drank too much. He threw up, which made him feel a little better, but 10 minutes later he passed out.

We stopped the music and tried to help Chris sober up but he was completely out of it. One of Chris's friends called his dad to come pick him up. We tried to get Chris down the stairs but he fell down the whole flight of stairs. I don't understand why people would make themselves look stupid like that. If you're going to drink, drink responsibly.

People always say weed is a gateway drug, but why don't we focus on alcohol and the harm it's doing to young people. I'm not saying weed is safe, it has its long term effects, but alcohol is much worse. And it's legal! On the other hand cannabis is often used as a medicine, but it's illegal.

The reason why I think teenagers shouldn't drink is because most of us teens don't know when to stop drinking and take it too far. Alcohol also affects our brain development and it's dangerous for people driving. Don't drink and drive because you're not just hurting yourself, you're hurting people around you and you're putting others in danger.

Alcohol is way more addictive than weed is. You see a lot more alcoholics than potheads. Excessive alcohol consumption is also way more damaging than smoking weed every day. When you drink and you wake up the next morning you get a hangover, but when you smoke and go to sleep, you sleep amazing. Weed is also used as medication. For example it reduces stress levels, and it reduces pain, so if you have arthritis, for example, weed will help with the pain. It also calms seizures down for people with epilepsy. For kids who have ADHD, weed might calm you down. It depends on the person, obviously. I bet you didn't know this, but scientists discovered that cannabis oil can even stop cancer cells from forming. If you don't believe me, ask your doctor or do the research. There's more proof every day.

A lot of people also use weed for self-medication if they have depression. I'm not saying everyone should go smoke weed. There are risks involved. Weed can trigger mental illnesses, like schizophrenia or psychosis, if these problems run in the family. So be careful before trying it because it can also be dangerous.

So what do you think? Yes, alcohol is fun once in a while, but we have to be responsible and not take it too far. When you drink make sure you're with friends you trust because people can easily take advantage of you when you're drunk. When it comes to marijuana, let's just hope it gets legalized soon. Imagine if we can tax the profits, cut down on criminal markets and keep specializing the different strains and methods of ingesting it so that people can use it for whatever purpose they need it for.

My life in a group home

By Samara Allison

When I was twelve I remember getting a big kiss from my parents after I walked down the aisle for my elementary school graduation in my big purple poofy princess dress. I got a certificate saying I made it to high school. I was so excited! I remember hearing people clapping and saying "You go girl!"

That was three years ago. By last year I was in Sec 1 and I was barely communicating with my parents. I lost my focus on school and I even lost my focus on myself. I never did my homework. I came home late. I was failing. When I did talk to my parents our tone of voice kept going louder and louder.

I had to go to summer school and finish up my Sec 1. This past year in Sec 2, things really got rough. I was always in the Vice Principal's office. I was skipping DTs. And my attitude towards teachers got really disrespectful at times. If they used their tone on me, I would lock myself in and keep my emotions to myself and just show, "I didn't give a shit."

Marymount, my parents, my social worker – everyone got fed up with me. Before I knew it I was expelled from school and placed into a group home.

The first week of my group home was the roughest time of my life. It's even hard to talk about it right now and I don't want this article to just be about me. My friend, who I will keep anonymous, went through this experience too and it was even worse for her.

What I'm going to do is interview her about how she fell into the Batshaw system herself so that we can show how our struggles are different and similar.

Questions:

What do you like about the group home?

What I like about the group home is that me and my family got even closer.

Do you like the food?

Sometimes, but the lady that cooks for us, she can't cook better like my mom! It's different when someone else cooks for you. Because I'm used to my mother cooking. My mother's cooking is blessss! Even if it's plain, like rice and chicken.

Do you like the staff at the group home?

Yeah, but at first I didn't like them. It's been two months I'm at the group home. I have to like them at a point, so yeah I do like them. Honestly some staff I don't like. They act like they're doing their job, but low key, it's like they're putting all the girls down. But there is this one staff I do like that does a great job.

Have you made some friends?

Yes, I made friends. I knew some of them before I was even in the group home. We're not really supposed to make friends! Girls in any group home are in different situations. We're supposed to focus on ourselves, so friends are secondary while we're there. It's hard to focus on yourself, but they try to get us doing that.

Once you got to the group home, did you cry the first day?

People have been telling me I was going to be in a group home and I wasn't scared, I told them. And then when I got to the group home I realized I had no freedom and I should have listened to people – I cried so much.

Do you love yourself more now?

Yes, I do. I had a lot of time to think and reflect on my actions, my life and my future.

Do you miss your family?

Yes, I do miss my family a lot. It doesn't feel right when you have to talk to your family from a distance, on the phone and that.

Thanks for doing the interview.

You're welcome.

So that was my anonymous friend talking about her experiences. Personally, what I love about the group home is that, just like my friend, it brought my family together. Me and my mom started talking again and we're honest to each other. I see my family every weekend and we chill at home. It feels like the old days but better. And when you have to leave for the group home again, you don't want to leave.

As I write this I have sixteen days left in the group home. I don't feel like I'm going home though. It just doesn't feel real. This is why you have to do good. You don't want to end up stuck there. You never know when you're leaving. It's based on the choices you make and what the court says, so you never know how long it might take to ever go home again.

And when you do get home, you have to make sure you stay.

How does your neighbourhood represent who you are?

By Shaianne Bhalai

In this generation people like to represent, or “rep,” where they are from. That’s what a lot of people say in their music. Most of the time it’s in rap music. Rappers like Eminem rep Detroit. It isn’t a bad thing at all.

Personally I like to rep my city and hood because on my spare time. My favourite hobby is music and I like to express myself by rapping to the beat about what it’s like to be in my shoes, in my city. Montreal and NDG (Notre-Dame de Grace) are like home to me. They are home. I know everybody and feel comfortable and safe everywhere I go because I know if something happens, people got my back.

Some people I know say that hoods such as Verdun, St .Michel or Walkley Street are ghetto and dirty neighbourhoods to live in, but in my opinion, it’s not where you live that is ghetto but how you live.

If you live in a poor neighbourhood, they say you’re most likely to get yourself involved with drugs and bad influences. I don’t know if some people realize, but in poorer communities, like where I come from, there’s always going to be trouble if you want to find it, but if you want to be successful in life you can choose a better route for yourself.

Growing up, I got picked on a lot in the area I was in, I went to Edinburgh Elementary where they had all kinds of rich Italians. The whole school was full of Caucasians, and I got picked on a lot for the colour of my skin. There were just two mixed girls including me, in the whole entire school. The school population was about 250 students. It’s not just bad hoods that are aggressive.

The area that I live in, my hood, is in Southside DG. They also call it 47 because 4 is the letter D and 7 is the number G. If anyone messes with my clique there will be consequences. Some crews are very serious (like mine) so if you either tell someone you have money or look like you have money, you’re mostly likely going to end up with nothing.

My hood also made me tougher because if my friends got into beef I’d be there for them and I know that as an experience. But there are dangers though to getting aggressive. I lost two friends last year to the pen because they were hanging with people causing violence in the neighbourhood.

So if you want to know how your neighbourhood represents who you are, ask yourself if you can define your neighbourhood.

Discrimination

Shamya Gagné

In our society, we are full of different cultures, religions and beliefs. Many people get discriminated against every day just because of the color of their skin or the length of their hair or by how much they weigh. Nobody is the same and that's what makes everybody unique in their own way. Many cultures that go throughout the world, have different beliefs, different thoughts, different ways of raising their children. Some people are very discriminatory towards things that they don't consider normal to them, such as a language or a smell.

All cultures have a stereotypes about them, such as black people love chicken, or they like beating their kids. Chinese people are good at math and eat animals, so on and so forth. Why? Why are people so critical against the differences we have from culture to culture? Our ancestors have a lot to do with the way we live now, and many people won't realise that things get carried on generation to generation. If we were all the same, life wouldn't have excitement. It would be boring if we all looked the same believed in the same religions and had all the same amount of money. The world wouldn't be multi-cultural and what fun would that be? You have different types of religions for different purposes.

We all discriminate but we are all hypocritical as well. We talk down on every culture but we still go out to restaurants because we want to try something new or we want to see how we will like it, and if you do you will continue spending your money on it. But you're still discriminatory about it. I don't feel as if any humans should be judged because at the end of the day, we are only human. Behind the skin and hair comes a skull, through an x-ray pattern. We are all the same we might be different sizes and forms but we were all made the same way and we should at least have a little more respect for our surrounding religions and cultures. Without certain cultures or religions we wouldn't have certain things in this world.

Try learning more about a culture before you want to discriminate on how they live or their lifestyle is set up. Take a glimpse of how they grew up and look into their culture, religions and beliefs before you talk down on them. You might be surprised of how intriguing certain cultures and people are in this world if you just give people a chance and not discriminate against them. If you have an open mind to things you'll be guaranteed to live a good life and know more than a discriminatory person. It makes life more enjoyable the more you know.

Hockey's Effect on my Life

By Stephen Pauze-Scott

Growing up in Montreal has always been a privilege, being around such a good hockey fan base and community has influenced me to find a hobby and something to enjoy. Growing up with my parents was not the easiest thing for a 3 year old – unfortunately drugs and alcohol were their priority. I felt neglected and hurt. I always ran to my grandmother for safety and security. Eventually I went to go live with her and life was just perfect for me.

Every time hockey was on I was just so fascinated by seeing those guys on the ice. I thought they were super heroes. I always watched the goaltenders and thought they were cool looking with their pads, so eventually I got my first set of pads of my own and skates – I thought I was a super hero just like them.



My favorite goaltender was always Carey Price. I always looked up to him because of his First Nations heritage. Being Native American too made me feel like him and unbeatable. Hockey's always been an escape for me when I had hard times. I was the delinquent in school and always fooled around and skipped class, getting myself in trouble.

When things got tough I always looked for something to blame. I let people point fingers at me and tell me I'm no good, somewhere along the line I changed. I was not me anymore. I started doing illegal things ending me up to get in serious trouble. I learned life's not all sunshine and

rainbows and no one can push me harder than life will. When I would get pushed around I gave up hockey. I gave up everything.

It's not how hard you can push, it's how hard you can get pushed and get on up and keep moving forward. I knew blaming my parents for my mistakes was not the answer. I know I was worth more than I told myself. Hockey was not a hobby anymore, it was a dream. I would train night in, night out on the ice, every opportunity I had, trying to make my dream a reality.

None of this would have been possible without commitment from me and my social worker. He gave me opportunities to be on the ice, he even got me a set of nice CCM Carey Price goalie equipment. Hockey has had such a great impact on me it really made me a better person and hopefully one day I will inspire others to work hard in their dreams and hopes.

The point I'm trying to get across is that no matter who you are and what you've been through, your past does not define you and your future is unwritten. So write it how you want to see it. Your actions become habits; habits become how people see you as a person. My goal is to get a scholarship in college hockey and eventually reach my dream and make it reality.



Launey and Jordan talking strategizing before gym class at Mountainview.

OPTIONS

I Am Where I Am From

By Kamesha Beckles

Where a person is from and the lifestyle of the area they are from can really shape who the person becomes. Sometimes people grow up only knowing one lifestyle and continue to live that way all through their life. Other times people live the complete opposite lifestyle of what lifestyle they grew up knowing. People view things different ways and that is why it can be unpredictable of how they will turn out in their future.

I believe that where you are from definitely shapes the person you become and how you live. It all depends on the lifestyle you live and what you want for your future. Either way whether it is the same lifestyle that you grew up with or not, your past will still what has affected your way of life. The way I am today is definitely because of where and how I grew up.

A perfect example is of a story of two twin brothers, Brother number one is an alcoholic he does crimes and is almost always drunk, doesn't have a stable job and is not doing very well. Brother number two is not an alcoholic, went to school, does not do any crimes and has a well paying stable job. They were both asked why they are the way that they are now. They both had the same answer and that was: "I am the way I am because I watched my father." You see it doesn't matter what lifestyle you turn out having no matter what it is based off of how and where you grew up. These twins grew up with an alcoholic father that did crimes and didn't have a proper job. One twin chose to copy his father and have the same lifestyle as him. The other twin decided that was not going to be his life and became the complete opposite. Without seeing that and growing up like that brother number one might have not been an alcoholic and brother number two might have. If they did not have that influence of their father they could have had a completely different life.

It is not always a bad thing to let your past affect your future, you could grow up having the lifestyle that everyone dreams of. Being rich having everything you ever wanted and you could continue to live that lifestyle or you could decide to live a simpler/common lifestyle. At the end of the day no matter how you grew up you get to choose your lifestyle; it's just a question of choosing to do the same as your past or better or worse.

One thing is for sure; that is you can always blame your lifestyle on your past, whether you live a great lifestyle or a bad one it is still that way because of your past. So if you are not living the best lifestyle blame it on your past and people will feel bad for you. If you are living great style blame it on your past and people will either think you are amazing or that you had it easy. Either way you chose to live that lifestyle because of your past.

Maybe It's Not So Bad After All

By Karlie Artuso

There are many ideas floating around through people's minds concerning what it actually means to be an alternative school student. Are they just stupider than other kids? Do they have anger issues or is it simply they can't handle regular schools so they come to an alternative one, in order to slack off and get an easy A? Well I'm glad to inform you that the answer is none of the above. The answer is more complex than that, and I'm going to fill you in on what you thought you already knew.

Students who attend alternative schools never seem to get the amount of credit they deserve. They are described as the outcasts of the academic society, straggling learners if you will, but this is far from the truth. Students in alternative schools work just as hard as any other student would. There are exceptions to which schools offer specific types of approaches to learning, when in reality there are alternative schools with much more enriched curricula than even certain public schools. These students such as myself also get the chance to develop closer relationships with the students and teachers to create a more home like environment that makes me happy to arrive at school everyday rather than dreading even getting out of bed for it. You feel like if you're missing it will be such a big difference and that people will miss you, which they do when you only have 50 people in the whole school.

The activities and extra things you are able to participate in when you attend certain alternative schools is something I personally have never experienced beforehand. Being able to spend a whole period in the kitchen preparing lunch for your class mates that day, and when the lunch bell goes it feels good when everyone enjoys what you made.

We also have access to food that we receive so that we are able to have a healthy breakfast before we start our day, if we weren't able to have one at home.

Alternative schools for me personally have changed the way I viewed a high school setting completely. Before I was transferred to my first alternative school I hated school, I would skip and miss half the day and sometimes not even show up at all. That resulted in my failure of secondary 2 which discouraged me a lot to keep going but I did, and boy am I glad I did. I then proceeded to repeat the grade knowing if my grades were suitable I would be transferred to my first alternative school. When it finally came to be I was so happy, it was unlike any school environment I had ever experienced before and I liked it. I feel like having the option to attend an alternative school gives you a much better chance of succeeding without feeling like you never have a moment to yourself away from homework and a job if you have one.

One of the biggest things that won me over about alternative schools, though it may seem insignificant, was the teachers. The teachers show you such involvement. They

care about how you're doing and how you're feeling. If your mood is affecting your work because of things at home or anything at all they understand. You don't need to pretend you're okay or "suck it up" as some people say. You have a right to how you feel and they understand that. If you didn't complete an assignment because of issues beyond your power they will sympathize with you. Alternative school teachers work in the schools they do because they know they can help and that's exactly what they're there to do.

At the end of the day, you can attend any school you wish, it may be a good fit for you, and it may not be. In life there are things that we have to do that we don't always want to. Things we don't see the point in when we start them, but I assure you. School is something you will always see the point of in the end and if finding a purpose is difficult for you; an alternative school will definitely help you see the light.



Congratulations to former Alt United Pit Bulls captain, AJ Fields, who recently completed his first year at Dawson!



Khashid's World

By Khashid "Koko" Anderson

I'm from Queens, New York where I was born in the Queen's Hospital Centre. I was five years old when I moved to Montreal, but before that I lived in the Projects with my mother, father and sister. I had a rough childhood; I never had what the other kids had. I went to Morrisania Elementary School for my first year where I got picked on and bullied because of the clothes I was wearing and where I lived. My mother and father didn't want to live in the life style of that area. There were shootings every morning and night, kids getting kidnapped, and people getting murdered. They didn't have food or money for my sister and me so my parents decided to move to Montreal because my grandmother lived here and she offered us a place to stay until my parents could find a job and have enough money to move out. My parents finally found a job and had enough money to move out into a little four and a half apartment.

My sister and I started going to Coronation Elementary School around that time where I was still getting bullied a little because I was the new kid and because my parents still didn't have a lot of money to buy school uniforms for my sister and me. My father was a coach for a football team, "Sunny Brooks" on the West Island. My father brought me to the field one night to show me and teach me about football and to see if I would like it or not. I ended up loving it; I signed up right away, and I started practice the next day. I was a running back and one of the fastest kids on the team and the tallest. I felt so cool because I didn't get bullied since everyone thought I was the best in football. The following week we had a game vs "Warriors" but I didn't really get to play in the game though because I was the rookie. At one of our games I got into an accident and broke my shoulder. After that I stopped playing football because I was scared to play again after that injury. When I was 13 years old my father and cousin told me I should go try out for "LaSalle Warrior," so I decided to do so. I ended up making the team but I forgot everything about football because I was now playing basketball.

Basketball wasn't a sport I loved like how I love football, it was just a sport I was good at and to keep me out of trouble when football season was over. Even though I wasn't crazy about it or loved it I became a superstar and I still play five times a week.

Now that I am about to graduate from high school I plan on going to CEGEP where I hope to continue playing football, my passion.

Passion which fuels my life

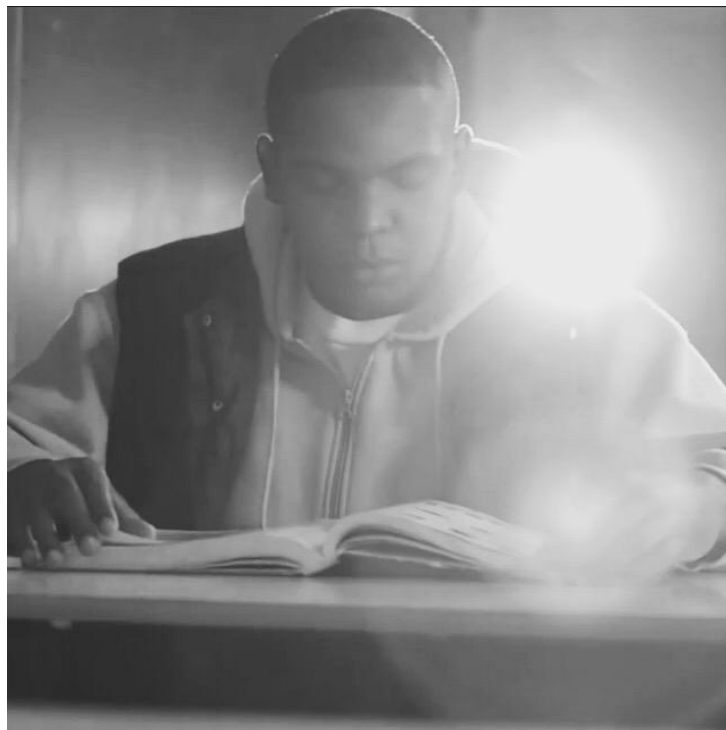
By Ryan Erskine

Do you have something so meaningful to you it's what keeps you going and something you just can't let go of? I do and it is camping, my most preferred recreational activity! Camping is a second nature to me. I have been camping since I was six years old. For me connecting with nature is an essential part of my routine as I believe I would go crazy being in the city 24/7.

I first began camping when I was six and joined Scouts Canada as a beaver. Started with one camp a year which took place in the winter and from that point I knew the woods would be a second home for me. I have been a member of scouting for 8 years now consecutively as I joined the Royal Canadian Air Cadets which also helped further my love, knowledge and appreciation for the Quebec wilderness.

The benefits of camping are endless; you get to experience the beautiful scenery of the region you are in as well as be able to enjoy the clean oxygen. The biggest benefit I receive from spending a day or even a weekend in the woods is the ability to have an awesome time with my cadets and/or friends and be able to clear my head and be able to think of the next chapter in my life.

I encourage everyone to get out and go camping or even hiking and just take in the scenery and take in all the scents and fresh air the wilderness has to offer. I have been doing it for some time now and I think you will see it the same way I do if you just get out there and have fun.



AJ, pretending to study for the Gatorade video.

How does where you're from define you?

By Shayla O'Toole

Do you ever feel like if you tell someone where you're from you're going to be judged based upon it? I know I do...

People out in the world can be very cruel and judgmental. Some people consider the neighborhood I live in to be a "ghetto" because some parts of the neighborhood look run down, and also because there are a lot of immigrants that live there too. So, therefore, unfortunately I get considered as a ghetto person. Well that's for the people who don't know me.

I also go to an alternative school. These kinds of schools have a lot of opinions regarding them. People think, "the work is easier there, it's for bad kids, it's for junkies, it's for people who cannot finish high school, etc.," but it is actually the opposite. Not everyone who goes to alternative schools is a junkie. The work is just the same as a regular high school and the alternative system is not just for bad kids; good kids go there too.

I don't think it's okay to be judged for anything if it does not affect the person who is doing the judging. If someone is wearing a certain type of clothing, I do not think that it is anyone else's business to worry about that. The person wearing the clothing is not forcing the person doing the judging to wear the clothing. I have also realized that some people are very judgmental when it comes to size or makeup. I know to you, you might be thinking, what does size and makeup have in common? Well let me tell you...

A lot of people think that females wear makeup to look like somebody else... but in most cases that is just not true! I have come across a bunch of females who wear makeup because they are insecure about blemishes, scars, discoloration etc... if you think about it, being insecure about your size is kind of the same thing. Some plus size women are insecure about their weight, that is why they won't wear tight clothing because they are afraid that it will show their curves, so instead they wear baggy clothing. For some skinnier girls with not a lot of curves at all, they will stuff their bras, wear butt padding, and put on layers of clothing. Do you see how these things relate to one another? They all try to cover something up with something else.

People have come from nothing and have made it to the top! A lot of celebrities were not born into fame; they came from "ghetto neighborhoods" and now they are some of the wealthiest people in the world. When I get judged because of where I am from, the negative judgments push me harder to want to succeed to prove everyone wrong and make my family proud. I want to bring everyone who believes in me to the top with me!

The moral of this article is to not to allow where you're from define you!

My Passion and How It Fuels Me

By Tyson Flegel

Basketball has been in my life since I was a very young age. The first time I played ball was at a camp called Trevor Williams Basketball Camp (T.W.B.A). The staff that were there at the time showed me all the fundamentals of the game that I still use to this day.

The reason I played ball at such a young age was because of my mother; she didn't want me wandering around and causing trouble in the summer so she enrolled me in the camp. I'm very thankful because if it wasn't for her I wouldn't have the skills I have today.

I love the game of basketball so much because no matter what happens to you in life basketball will always be there for you. And when you need to get your mind off things basketball allows you to do so, it's like the more shots I put up the clearer my mind gets.

A wise person once said: "You're only as good as your last performance." So when I play badly, my bad performance fuels me to improve on my game. Some people say, "If you're going to play ball at least try to make it to the league man." But basketball is not for everyone – the number one priority is to enjoy your time and have fun. But if making it to the league is your dream then you should put in an 110% effort in everything you do involving basketball and I'm almost positive you'll be successful.

"When you want to succeed as bad as you want to breathe then you'll be successful." This quote by Eric Thomas is extremely accurate. If you want to play professional basketball you have to give it your all because there are many other people out there trying to play pro ball as well. So if you only put in half the work while someone somewhere else is putting in all the work, they'll succeed before you do.

Even if you're talented you shouldn't take it for granted because hard work beats talent any day. I've seen it with my own eyes; talented people who know they're talented usually don't train and just stay at the same skill level for years. I've also seen average players with less raw talent put in work and surpass others with talent. At the end of the day it's the amount of work you put in that determines how good you are.

The True Value of Hemp: Why should we use hemp instead of common natural resources?

By Zoey Burns

Simply it's a matter of time that we recognize that cannabis has both a medical benefit, and it also has an economic benefit. This is due to marijuana being a plant with two genders. We know marijuana as the female plant which is consumed through smoke. But little do we know about the benefits of hemp. Which is why I'm going to talk about the potential uses for hemp in everyday life. It is capable of being used as a fuel, a fiber, milk, clothing, paper and even cheese!

Did you know that hemp doesn't mildew but cotton does? Another funny statistic is that one acre of hemp produces as much fibre as two to three acres of cotton. Also on an annual basis, one acre of hemp will produce as much paper as two to four acres of trees. Imagine all the trees we could save just by converting to hemp paper. Hemp is able to be used as tissue paper to cardboard, all types of paper products can be produced from hemp. Hemp paper last hundreds of years longer without degrading, and also can be recycled more times than tree pulp paper. Trees must grow for 20 to 50 years after planting before they can be harvested for commercial use. Within 4 months after it is planted, hemp grows 10 to 20 feet tall and it is ready for harvesting! Hemp can be grown on most farmland throughout the U.S., where forests require large tracts of land available in few locations. Substituting hemp for trees would save forests and

wildlife habitats and would eliminate erosion of topsoil due to logging. Plus less



harmful chemicals are used to make hemp paper.

Hemp doesn't require synthetic fertilizer, pesticides nor does it need herbicides, which GMO's like corn, soybean, and even cotton requires during its growth. Statistics from 2007 indicate that 877 million pounds of pesticides were used in the U.S.A. costing roughly around 7.9 billion dollars. Unlike many crops, hemp puts little strain on the soil and requires only moderate amounts of fertilizer. Less fertilizer used results in less runoff into waterways and groundwater; therefore, less water pollution.

If we substitute hemp for the genetically modified organisms we can totally cut the harsh and unnecessary chemicals out. This will allow us to save money, because hemp grows completely organically and causes little to no damage to the soil. This will lead to a decrease in the damage to our ecosystem, since using hemp instead of timber will reduce the carbon emission. Seeing that hemp has a lower carbon emission. While producing one metric ton of steel emits 1.46 tons of carbon dioxide, one square meter of timber-framed, hemp-lime wall stores 35.5kg of CO₂ and will not be released unless the material is composted or burned.

Hemp could even be used as a non-toxic diesel fuel, paint, varnish, detergent, ink and lubricating oil. Because hemp seeds account for up to half the weight of a mature hemp plant, they are a viable source for these products. Hemp produces more biomass than any plant that can be grown. This biomass can be converted to fuel in the form of clean-burning alcohol, or no-sulphur man-made coal. Hemp has more potential as a clean and renewable energy source than any crop on earth! It is estimated that if hemp was widely grown in the Canada for fuel/energy, it could supply 100% of all Canada's energy needs!

70% of the Cannabis Plant total weight is made up of woody inner core. This part of the plant is THC free (i.e. Hemp) and is used in housing construction. The silica leached from the soil by the plant combined with unslaked lime which forms a chemical bond similar to cement evidently its fire and water proof. So there's a plant called hemp with high-protein oils that can be used for human and animal consumption. Hemp can also be used as clothing, fiber, paper etc., yet we still misjudge hemp to be worthless.

If Canada started to grow hemp it would produce endless revenue, since hemp fibres and seeds can be used in so many countless ways. Hemp has the potential to preserve biodiversity, reduce pollution, cut emissions and protect cropland throughout the world. That's impressive for a crop that has been unfairly branded as a dangerous gateway drug. With hemp plants able to mature for fiber production within 60-90 days and 90-120 for grains, it's possible to build a 'hemp economy' very quickly. By relying on renewable, clean hemp, we can grow our economies more mindfully and leave our planet in better shape for future generations.



OUTREACH

The struggles of school

By: Ella

Do you know what it's like to wake up early on a Monday morning feeling tired, mentally sore and physically exhausted knowing you have school in an hour? If you're a teenager in high school you're most likely thinking "how the hell does she know about all of this?" I know exactly how all this feels because school is the place I hate the most.

School has always been hard for me. In elementary I used to skip school because I was treated badly and I just didn't understand what we were doing. The struggle to go to school for me really started in grade seven, though (about five years ago). The minute I started they hit me with a stack of homework (metaphorically, of course). Homework is like a nightmare within in a nightmare. You just can't escape it and the harder it is the less you feel like doing it and that's exactly how I feel.

There are so many different subjects in school that it's hard to keep track of all of them and in each subject the teachers give us a big amount of homework thinking, for some reason, the only class we have is theirs. The more homework we get and the pressure to finish all of it before the end of the week makes, I'm sure, most kids have a nervous breakdown.

Things like this make kids avoid school. I mean, honestly, who would want to go to school every day knowing you'll have so much homework by the end of the day, you most likely won't understand half of it, you'll be extremely tired, and you'll probably have to stay up late just to finish it? Reading those few sentences makes me want to crawl back in bed. I'm sure almost any teenager reading this would understand but those who don't, how would you feel about it?

Most people don't like getting up early in the morning. It's hard to get used to, but what I and some others like me face is very different then just being tired in the morning. When school is already hard enough for some people (including me) it makes it even harder to wake up early every morning and have to go to the place you dread the most. Not only am I tired in the morning but sometimes my body feels sore, I feel sad and I just want to go back to bed. It's always sad to me and people who face the same situation as me know that as soon as we are awoken each morning we know school is just in a few hours. School is a place where you're supposed to learn new things and feel safe, so why do I hate it so much? Most teenagers most likely ask themselves this more than five times a day.

Getting to school is only half the battle. Once I get to school there's work from different subjects in school. Work isn't all that bad if you understand what you're doing and all the work is easy, but what if you have a learning disability? How are we supposed to like going to school when we can't understand anything? Most teachers don't understand what we're going through. They don't know what it feels like to look at the homework they've given us and feel so stupid because we can't understand it. A lot of people don't know how that feels, but if you did, wouldn't you be avoiding school too? It's sad knowing that not many teachers can help people who feel that way and make them feel more comfortable being at school.

I get why being at school is important. Learning is a big part of life and it helps us grow. It's important to learn how to write properly in English and understand how to speak properly. It's important to know math to buy things or for your future job. It's important to know French

because we live in Montreal (sadly). It's important to know science for your future job and to understand a lot of things in life. Yes, all these subjects are important for us to learn, but is our health not important? Do we not deserve to live happy and healthy just like everyone else? We are just as important and we deserve to live stress free, healthy, and happy. We deserve to be kids because we still are. I'm not saying drop out of school and all your problems will be solved, all I'm saying is we should be fighting for a happier life while getting educated.

I know school is important and I know school is hard but my advice to you is to live **YOUR** life the way you please because we kids deserve to be just as happy as everyone else. No matter how hard school gets don't forget your happiness, because I did and I regret it. Learn from my mistakes and make your own happiness. Find something that keeps you going, something that keeps you happy, like books, movies or shows. Find something that distracts you just enough to get through the day, because school is hard but I know you'll get through it.



The Outreach fam “reaching” a field trip, on the hunt for some maple syrup.

Group homes: the quick fix?

By: Mia

Everyone deals with their struggles in their own way; whether it be healthy or not. At some point, most people decide to get help, and when they do, there is this expectation that they will be completely better and never have to worry about their problems again. But is it really that easy?

I was in a group home for just under six months. The idea of going was first presented to me as a place to get better, somewhere I could go to escape for a while and focus on improving myself. I was so against it because all I had ever heard from people were stories about how terrible the staff were, how they took away any freedom and privileges you had and how it would turn your life into an absolute living hell. I decided that maybe it would be different for me, maybe it would be nice to get away from living with my mom and have people watch over me 24/7, and maybe I wanted and needed that comfort. I think I was hoping that after being there for the recommended 6-9 months, I would leave completely fixed, meaning no more depression, anxiety, OCD or suicidal tendencies.

I was definitely wrong. Thinking back on it now, I don't know how I expected to just magically be better when I left. I think that's a big part of going to a group home voluntarily: you and everyone supporting your decision to go makes this big deal about how good it will be for you and how you'll be so much happier when you get out. That's a lot of pressure to put on someone, especially when you can't help but have some fears or doubts going into it. I wondered about how maybe living in the same house with people that have similar issues won't be helpful but would actually make me regress in my recovery.

I think people need to realize that not all group homes are the terrible places people make them out to be. From my experience at least, it's a wonderful home with staff that really care about you. But, no matter how great the group home is and how well it works for you, it can never be a complete fix to anything.

If someone doesn't want to get better, no matter how hard people try, they will not accept the help. I think parents or peers often blame themselves for not trying hard enough to help if they see their friend or child not improving, but there is absolutely nothing anyone can do if they aren't ready for recovery. Parents also have to be aware that their child could be manipulating them into thinking they are better just so they are released from the group home. In this case, you as the parent would think you're seeing great improvement in your child's behaviour and therefore wouldn't look out for the signs of them getting worse. Many parents assume that since their child spent time working on certain issues in the group home, those will have been taken care of. But they have to understand that while their kids could have learnt how to deal with their issues in treatment, they may instead have learned how to present *as though* they had dealt with their issues.

Maybe the group home was a great success for your child and they really did put in all the effort needed to improve themselves, but there is still the factor of being back at home after a while, which usually takes quite a bit of getting used to. Going home for weekend visits is different; it's usually full of seeing friends and going out which seems really exciting at the time since you

don't get to do that all week. When someone comes home for good, they have to deal with the stress of being back in reality. Whether you were not eating, self-harming or engaging in any other self-destructive behaviour, it can be very difficult to maintain how well you're doing when you come back home to the place you were living when you started those bad behaviours.

Even if you and everyone around you think that you are completely fine to go home, you might get there and soon realize it's a lot harder than you expected. It takes time to get used to new environments, and sometimes home feels like a new, strange place after not being there for so long. Whether you go back to your old school or a completely new one, either way you have to explain to people why you were gone or deal with the stress of trying to make new friends and feel comfortable in this new place. It's important that as a parent, you're there for your child and make sure that coming back to reality doesn't freak them out too much and result in them going back to destructive behaviours.

I do believe that group homes can help people to get better because spending time away from all the negativity in their daily lives and focusing on themselves is really helpful. But the work is definitely not over when you return home.

I understand that you might want life to go completely back to normal when your child gets home but sometimes trying too hard to achieve that isn't good for them. It can feel like a lot of pressure on them, and then they might not tell you how they are really feeling because they don't want to disappoint you. But that doesn't mean that they don't need extra support from you. When they first return home, make sure you pay attention to signs of them falling back into old habits, and be prepared to speak to them about what you notice.

I can't emphasize enough how important it is that you continue to support them as much as possible and that you help them through any difficulties that come around. You should show them how proud you are of how far they've come so they feel motivated to continue on improving themselves.



Those Magazines

Is it them or is it you?

By: Rhyan McNeill

"He who fights monsters should see to it that he himself does not become a monster. And if you gaze for long into an abyss, the abyss gazes also into you."

— **Friedrich Nietzsche**

Have you ever been in a supermarket buying some snacks or whatever? Then you turn to your right and boom! Out in your face someone defining who you are and how you should be. Yes that's right, I'm talking about Archie's adventures. He has stayed young his whole life, captain of the football team, has all the ladies... Clearly he has created unrealistic standards for high school kids. No one could look and act like that. As you can clearly tell, I'm kidding. No one feels self-conscious about Archie: that would be stupid, because he's not real. He's just shown that way because it's how the writers wrote the story.

But let's flip the situation and say it was a magazine model. She's posing however she's posing. Suddenly everyone judges themselves based on this. Suddenly she's causing people to hate themselves and their bodies. She's causing eating disorders and suicides. And want to know what's worse? The photo was touched up in Photoshop! So she's an unrealistic standard as well. She's not even real, a fake person. So why do people feel so much worse with the model who everyone claims is fake, than with Archie who everyone knows is fake? Why are the self-conscious thoughts triggered by the models?

I know most of us aren't happy with how we look. I'm not exactly the next Chris Pratt. But I know that it's on me. I accept that I could work to fix it if I wanted to, but I'm happy with who I am. When some buff guy is on TV I know that that's just a buff guy, not the evil corporations trying to force me to be something I don't want to be. The magazines choose the models that will play to our ideas of beauty. We control what models are chosen to fit our personal worldview and if we are uncomfortable with their choices we make claims against their character.

The problem isn't the magazines. We use them as scapegoats to avoid coming to terms with our own flaws. When you look in the mirror and you say "I'm kind of chubby" you have three options for how to deal with this: work on fixing the problem, live with it and don't let it affect you, or (the option most choose) blame something else instead of dealing with your problems. You point out that the problem is with "the media, models, the internet," avoiding any responsibility you might have for the way you look and feel.

This lets you off the hook, but causes more grief for people who are just doing their job. A model doesn't want to starve the children of America, she wants to get her next paycheck. And the guy who did the photoshopping was told to clean it up so they could sell more product, because people buy into the perfection. So instead of facing your own problems, you blame someone who has their own list of problems because you

think she/he is making you feel bad. Think about it for a second. This person has done nothing to you. She/he is told how to look, what to wear etc. Yet you make it seem like it's a personal attack instead of what it really is: A job.

"Each year, 34,000 people commit suicide, about twice as many deaths as caused by homicide. That is about one death per fifteen minutes. By 2030, suicide deaths will outpace cancer, stroke, war and accidents as the world's leading cause of disability and death."¹ This is something you see in the comment section in a lot of articles followed by a sob story about depression and that this is caused by whatever said commenter disagrees with. However, if you check the Canadian survey website, you see (circa 2012) deaths by suicide are generally lower, the only higher average being for people between 40-50. The use of suicide as a scapegoat to prove your point is sick, yet you see it common place in many articles referring to out of date or just plain wrong information.

I personally always view businesses as businesses no matter what "product" they sell. For example, a magazine picks its cover model not because they hate women or want everyone to look a specific way. They want to sell their magazine. They do studies to find what the average person finds attractive and find a model to look like that because sex sells. Using a model or photo shopping an image is a way to increase profits. Nothing else. So perhaps we should also start thinking that maybe our personal views on beauty are just that – personal – and that everyone else sees beauty differently.

My argument, to be frank, is that the touching up of pictures, the sizes of models, and who the photographers hire, are all because of us. Yet we can't accept that; it's a blame no one wants. It's much easier to blame the evil magazine corporations for ripping women's rights apart. But if we look honestly, there is a reason magazines are like this. It's because it sells. The models look like that because that is what studies found we want. When we asked for plus-sized models, they brought in plus-sized models.

Think for a second that perhaps those feelings you or your friend feel when looking at a poster are not just because of the look of the poster, but something more. We all have these bad feelings about ourselves and we're the ones who keep them inside us. I feel that the more we blame magazines, the more of an out we get, the easier it is to not blame ourselves for our own mistakes, or our own insecurities.

¹ <http://tinyurl.com/jblqdfq>

Rejecting Those Stares

By: Sabrina Begum

From my brown skin to my background to my headscarf all this defines me as who I truly am. Every day, just walking down the street I face dirty looks. People stare me down from top to bottom, from headscarf to skin to the footwear I wear.

Every morning, people leave the house with makeup on like it's their mask and they will feel naked without it. Hijab makes me feel like that. Without my hijab on, if I step outside my house, it feels like I'm naked. Leaving the house without my hijab is like a part of me went missing. A hijab is not just a piece of clothing, it's a valuable symbol that some Muslim girls respect and take seriously. A Hijab means to cover and to dress modestly. It's a cultural practice or a commitment that we make in life to God to cover our hair. Hijab doesn't only mean to cover our hair up, but to dress modestly. Modesty means to cover up and to dress appropriately without skin showing. Since we are covering our hair, might as well cover ourselves up.

Everyday, wherever I go, there are always going to be people just staring at me deep down with those dirty looks – non-stop staring without any reasons. Everywhere I go: the metro, the shopping mall, the bus, etc., people stare at me, either giving me those death stares, whispering ears to ears to each other or judging me behind my back. Unfortunately there's nothing to do but just ignore them, or, if you are like me, remain quiet and pray that it's just a nightmare.

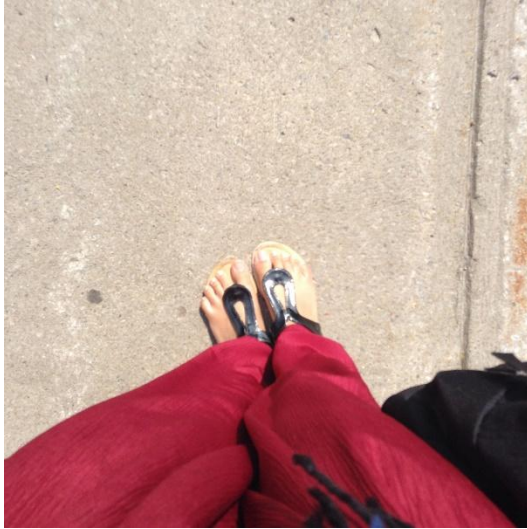
To all the girls who have already begun to wear their hijab, or the girls who are starting to wear the hijab, there's going to be lots of struggles and obstacles to go through. But you know what? That's life. Life has ups and downs and bunches of obstacles to go through. It will feel like it takes forever to get

used to it or feel comfortable with all the stares and judgements but trust me, Hijab can be a difficult task. It's worth it though, because it's a sacrifice to God, to not show your hair to any boys or feel the wind blowing in your hair or show off to the world the beautiful styles you have created with your hair.

I know these things, because I have also gone through the same thing. However, it will take time and just like that you will feel ready to rock that hijab look and brighten it up when you step outside your house with it. Also it comes with a lot of effort, strength and courage to go outside and face yourself everyday with new faces around you, and that's what you are, a strong, courageous, respected hijabi girl.

People can identify you by your styles, behaviour, etc. But as a Muslim girl you are identified by your cultural attire: hijab and dressing modestly. It's also a part of you that defines you and just speaks to you because it gets you, it's been with you and it's constantly with you, every day. Hijab defines me as who I am, because it's been a part of me ever since I have worn it. It's like a uniform I'm wearing that's constantly with me by my side. It allows me to focus more on who I am now instead of how I look.

I have chosen to be Muslim, and embraced this culture, but these are not the only things that define me. I have brown skin, and look like my Bengali grandmother. I sometimes wonder what it would feel like to walk around Montreal with white skin. Would I feel different? Would people stop treating me as an outsider? Would they accept me as one of them? Maybe, but my skin will never be white, and society will always judge me by the way I look.



I've been where people will not only judge my hijab but my skin colour. People throw dirty looks and racist comments at me. "Go back to your country", "brown type of people don't belong here" and "curry smell." All of these negative vibes, looks and comments made me feel unsafe, not good enough, and made me feel unwelcome in the country of my birth.

Eventually the comments stopped. However, the memory of them still stings me and never goes away. Sometimes when I look at the people around me I wonder will they throw those comments back at me like other people did before? Will they judge? Will they be racist again?" I've always kind of wished I had white skin... I wondered, should I change my skin colour to be like one of them? Could I "belong" to them so they will stop treating me this way?

I spent real time thinking about this, until I realized I wouldn't want to change my brown skin colour to something "better", to be accepted in Montreal society. It's like saying a cupcake is better off with frosting but you don't want the frosting, however you need to have the frosting to be part of the cool group.

Your skin colour might not define who you are, but it does express where you came

from. In fact, if you changed your skin colour you would be changing your own origin and everything about you and your family history. Having brown skin makes me unique. I'm not one of those that looks like everyone else but something different and interesting. I can be someone unique, and bring variety to society.

Your own skin colour expresses something about who you are. It brings out your origin, your background and the history of your ancestors. For this reason, it is important to show your beautiful skin colour to the world.

To all the people who have dealt with racism because of their appearance or anything else, it's not over. This is just the beginning of a whole new adventure. You can finally make a change and stand up for yourself. Or, if you are like me who remained quiet, then find a positive solution and look at all the positive stuff you have around you or on you. Keep shining as I am trying to and be proud of where you come from or what you have that defines you. We need to recognize ourselves and not be blind to these things that racism will try to make us fade away. These are significant things that define us.

One day we will wake up on a beautiful day with birds chirping outside and just feeling so proud. We will step outside of our houses with our hijabs on with no worries, no guilt, no sadness but pure happiness about a new day full of adventures. We will see a bunch of beautiful new faces waving hello to us at us with no shame, no disgust and no confusing looks. One day we will get that moment and cherish it. One day people will treat us with equality and racism will stop, and one day we will get the happiness that we have been waiting for. I believe we can hasten that day by shining bright our dignity, our origin and our culture.

School: Alternative or Public?

By: Rina

Are you finding yourself struggling in school? Getting headaches, have low self-esteem, waking up with a stomach ache or feeling stupid? Waking up every morning not wanting to go to school, knowing that you have to learn for 7 hours with only 2 breaks?

I know how you feel. Trust me, I was there just last year. Feeling like a failure was one of the things I was good at. I can remember sitting in the kitchen for 4 to 5 hours staring at my homework, thinking "I'm so stupid, why don't I understand this?" Complaining about the amount of work given to us. Crying because I was so frustrated about school.

The best thing to do now is to switch to an alternative school, because trust me, you'll do better. Changing schools was one of the best decisions I made. Not only did I see a big difference in myself but so did my family. They found that I was happier and wanting to go to school. I remember my mom telling me how impressed she was because she didn't have to wake me up anymore – I would wake up on my own. They had also noticed that my anxiety went down because there are fewer people in the class, and how I wanted to do better in school every day.

Smaller classes, less stress, and a gain in confidence is what you'll get in alternative schools. Having smaller classes means having more individual time with the teachers so that way they are able to explain to you in such a way that you can understand. They can also focus only on you and go to your individual pace. If the teacher is talking to the whole class it's harder to understand for some students because of the way the teacher might explain or the pace they're going at.

Alternative schools don't give as much homework as public or private schools, therefore students should be less stressed. Homework means pressure to work and spending hours at home without the help you need, so students end up not completing their homework. But if you switch to an alternative school you get less homework which means you get more hours of sleep, your eating habits improve and you can get fewer headaches.

Students do so well in alternative school that they gain self confidence. Their school is small and because of that most students tend to feel more comfortable and focused because they get that one-on-one contact. Teachers in alternative schools teach differently with each student so that way they can adapt to their individual learning standards. Students realize that they can reach more than the average marks in alternative schools therefore they want to improve because they're doing so well that they keep it up and that leads to that great feeling of success.

Everybody is different, and learns differently as well. Alternative schools teach in such a way to help students who have difficulties in school understand. Public schools can't provide that because the classes are too large for that flexibility.

I know, I know. What about your friends, activities and prom, or even the people there? I thought about those same exact things. You can easily make new friends and just because some of the students might do drugs that doesn't mean they're bad people. Don't think alternative schools are known for druggies. No, they are in every school, not just alternative. Even if there's no prom and activities honestly it's still worth it. In the end you'll still graduate with the same certificate but just with a better grade.

So now that you know everything about alternative schools, you know what to do. Talk to your guidance counsellor and he or she will tell you more information about the types of alternative schools available, and can refer you to one. Why stay at a place where you're suffering? It isn't worth it. There are easier options.



#mtl

The Unspoken Voice

By: Theara Nicole V.S.

Do you know how many animals are killed every year? Approximately 9 billion chickens are killed for their flesh and among mammals 41,700,000 are killed a year. How can we kill animals in a human way?

Maybe giving them medicine like pain killers or perhaps not brutally hurting them before slaughter time could help. We should always keep these questions in mind. We should acknowledge the fact that animals are important and they suffer a horrible death so that we humans CAN eat, dress and look "decent."

"Cruelty to animals, also called animal abuse or animal neglect, is the intentional infliction by humans of suffering or harm upon any nonhuman animal for purposes other than self--defence or survival." (ccqss.org/?gor=essay+writing+on+cruelty+to+animals)

I remember watching a documentary on animal abuse. It was my first time watching animal neglect and abuse, and it was terrifying because, the film called "slaughter houses" showed me how animals are being slaughtered in such an inhumane way. Poor defenseless creatures, being tortured even before being slaughtered! Watching this horrifying footage, was a real life changer in my perspective of the dairy and meat industry.

We can help prevent such horrible events for these creatures, by making small changes in our lifestyle habits. I need people to realize that animal abuse is out there and it does exist, and it will probably never stop without your help. "Why", you ask? Because, there are many people that do not care and they are aware of animal neglect. For example, the government has consent and is fully aware of animal neglect especially in the United States of America, and they don't take action or improve their laws on slaughterhouses. We can all make a difference in helping animal abuse by just going vegan, or trying to buy products that are not animal tested.

To begin with animals are being abused before being killed, and this is where most of the abuse and neglect comes through as being very brutal to animals, but why do animals get abused before being killed?

In what way are they being neglected? The answer is simple, workers force animals to grow enormously in such a short period of time that animals such as chickens, can't even walk, and have developed respiratory problems, because they are so fat and going through so much pain. The poultry industry doesn't really care because they make more money if the chickens look fat, so companies are going to want to buy their animals more.

The antibiotics that are thrown in by injecting them in the arms or sometimes their food, is extremely bad, because if the workers overuse them it can lead to antibiotic resistant bacteria that is harmful for human health. Animals who are kept in small cages, or in small areas with other animals could suffocate, or even die because there is not enough space and air. They are also kept in unsanitary conditions, and the animals are not kept clean.

There are workers that kick and, punch just for the fun of it. Some workers take out their frustration on these defenseless creatures and there is real footage as proof of it. In the United States in California, there was a video that demonstrated a man beating up a baby cow, and taking it away from its mother. It was very graphic footage, but it was reality.

(www.peta.org/features/10--shocking--peta--videos/) Now these poor animals are scared for their lives and nobody will help them in that very moment that they are being tormented and traumatized. These are some examples, of animal abuse and, how and why they are being treated this way.

More money is not a valid excuse for animals to be tortured this way.

“If slaughterhouses had glass walls we would all be vegetarian.”

How can we kill animals in a humane way? And if so, why don't people take measurements to proceed with it? This question arose in my mind. There are plenty of methods that animals can die, without being tortured or hurt. For example, they could be medicated and put to sleep or paralyzed so that they do not feel pain when they are being slaughtered. Some farmers have methods of making a cow drink beer or alcohol so that when it is being examined by a veterinarian it does not feel discomfort. There are different methods that people use to help make the animals suffer less. This is probably not the best option, but it would make a difference.

In my opinion, without a doubt, the industries could make a difference. But they just don't want to. They are heartless people who don't care. They just revolve around money and that's all they care about.

In China's fur industry, they have a really bad process for obtaining fur. The animals suffer enormously, as can be seen in a video on the internet called “bunny abuse”. Someone taped the process by which animals, such as sheep, were being killed in less than 20 minutes. A sheep was being skinned alive. That broke my heart, and terrified me.

The makeup industry has a big role in animal neglect. For example, the company Mac tests on animals such as mice and bunnies. They use their eyes to test their eye makeup products, before retail. This really hurts them, to the point where in some cases they bleed or lose their vision.

If you or anybody else come to a point where you see an animal being abused, seek help, and contact 1(800)363-9772 or go online to www.worldanimalprotection.ca. If you purchase something on retail, try avoiding products that aren't animal tested. Always keep this in mind please, and thank you.

There are so many people that think that animals are useless, stupid creatures but, those people are totally wrong! Without these “stupid animals” we wouldn't have a lot of things, such as food nutrients, clothes, bed covers, jackets with fur, purses, milk and so much more, the list can go on. The animals need to be treated more kindly, and killed in a humane way. It's our responsibility as humans to take care of these creatures, since they cannot fully take care of themselves, or have a voice to speak up.

I want people to understand that we need to keep in mind all these aspects of animal abuse, and there is something you can do. If we eat organic or become vegan, or buy products that are animal friendly, we can promote change in the food production practices. I encourage you to do so. I guarantee you will not only feel better about yourself, but you are saving animals lives.

Why not start today? By not, taking part in animal cruelty, we can be more self-conscious about animals, and make better and wiser life choices.

Sorry, I Was Texting

By Trinity

"I fear the day the technology will surpass our human interaction. The world will have a generation of idiots."

-Albert Einstein

All people do is look down at their phones all day. Texting, updating their Facebook statuses, telling everyone when they're about to go to the bathroom on Snapchat, showing a picture of their last meal on Instagram, etc. Nobody ever goes outside anymore to hang out with their friends.

When I was younger, I remember going outside every day and there were other kids everywhere, because we didn't spend every second of the day on our phones. I go to hang out with my friends today, and all we do is sit on the bed and go on our phones, or sit on the couch and watch TV. My brothers are 8 and 9 and at home they just watch TV and go on their tablets, and when they're with their friends, they're in the living room playing a video game. As a teenager, technology surrounds my life. But not just from me using it all the time, from my friends or family as well.

Social media runs the world nowadays. People use it to catch up with a friend who moved away or to see what their enemy is up too or maybe even to watch a funny video. But really the majority of social media is competition. People always want to show how much 'better' their lives are to all their 'friends.' And other people try to do something that much better and it just goes on and on.

FACT: 91% of mobile users keep their phones within 3 feet of themselves at all times. One of the biggest competitions in the world is cell phones. Everyone always wants the best of the best. People get made fun of because they don't have the latest smartphone. If you have a flip phone, GEEZ, forget about you. If you have the iPhone 4 instead of the iPhone 6s, you're so far behind, you may as well go get a flip phone.

Websites like Facebook, Instagram, Snapchat, Twitter, etc. can be pretty dangerous. There are many creepy people on these sites. Make sure you know who you're adding, go into your privacy settings and make sure only your friends can see your posts. Try not to put out too much information about your life on your profile. There are many scams and false accounts, so be careful.

Some people may disagree. Some people think that technology is a good thing. We are making life easier and we are becoming the future. Yes, maybe you are right. Technology helps us every day, with research for a project, getting directions for a restaurant, better effects for a movie, etc. But do you really want a future where interaction doesn't exist? Because it will only get worse.

I don't want to see my children, and my children's children to see the world through a screen. I want them to run around and learn about the world through their own eyes and their own experiences.

Technology is taking over our lives, and we let it. But the only way to make sure it doesn't take over our lives, is to change it ourselves.

Getting back on your feet

By: Victoria Villareal

Your body is a machine.

The engine is destroyed. The doors, windows, mirrors are shattered and smashed. The wheels are torn, and you can smell the hot burning rubber. Pieces of the car have been left behind. The further you go, the more pieces are lost. No gas. Powerless horsepower. The car is useless – the car can't go anywhere – the car should be thrown away...

That was me. The love of my life had left me: the only one who helped me along the way, who showed me love, and cared for me. He had treated me better than my own family. And then he left me to rot. My family had already abandoned me. My heart was destroyed. It was painful to go outside. It was painful to look at myself and to see people look at me. I was not well and people could tell. I could not bare to go outside because of the memories along the journey. Everything I had done, everyday, with that person, changed. Eating the food that we used to eat and walking down the streets we used to walk along became eating alone, waking up alone; being alone. I found myself sometimes living a lie, daydreaming creating the illusion that nothing had changed. I was delusional. Living through the vision of my loved one laughing at my jokes, smiling. Noticing his mannerisms, his walk, how he talks or how he shows his anger. In the end, though, I was just imagining it, laying in bed, rotting in sorrows.

I was not strong enough to take on the negative thoughts, nor to push myself. My heart and mind were weak. My goals were not set. I didn't notice when I hurt the people who cared and loved me. Alcohol became my medicine: it was a cure to emotional and mental breakdowns. I could not sleep sober for fear of where my thoughts would take me.

Whatever might be dragging you down, I have learned that you have to face it to beat it. You might think you can run away but you will just be dragged into a round-a-bout. The only way to escape the pain is to work through it.

This is how I recovered my machine: my mind and heart. This is how I faced the obstacle that life had given me to experience. This is how I got up, toughened up and set my goals.

Stand up and breath. Go to a mirror and look at yourself. Don't deny the changes you see. Remember you were once strong, polished and powerful. You need to see the consequences of your race from pain, so you know where the damages are and what to fix. That was my warm up, realizing the self harm and mapping my recovery.

In other words, you need to look at yourself. You need to remember how strong you used to be and how people saw you . You need to look at yourself through the eyes of the other people in your life. You have gone through a lot, don't deny yourself that. However, now you need to assess the damages that have been done and set a goal. Is sounds easy, but it is not. It's the hard work which makes you stronger, powerful and fierce.

You need to be immune to your sickness. You need face the problem and get straight into it. To do this, you will need to remember and picture everything that caused that pain. Everything or everyone that destroyed you. To challenge yourself or to make you feel stronger, picture every detail; the setting, where it took place, the smell, the weather, what you wore etc. Reminding yourself of the crisis will simply help you to not care anymore. You need to regularly face the pain and take the pain. You need to pick up the pieces you have lost. That was step one; acknowledge the problem.

Since you see all the damages that have been done, you can now realize where to improve. But, you will have to discipline yourself in order to accomplish step two: Know what is right for you. Toughen up, get up and start repairing yourself.

Start repairing little by little. You do not want to take on what you cannot handle, so start off at a steady pace. When you recognize the bad habits or mannerisms you have developed, you must try to do the opposite. For example, if you're always crying, you will need to toughen up, get up and distract yourself or get busy. Find a job. Spend most of your time working. Secure yourself and the people you care for. You could be making money instead of making yourself sad. You will need to realize that you need to be out more. You need to face the world and accept what people could bring to the table. Go out, go to the gym: gain muscle instead of depression.

You have now cleaned the interior of the machine. You have removed all the shattered glass along the floor and seats and replaced the mirrors and windows with brand new clear ones. You can now see clearer. You can now let people in without hurting them. However, they may have noticed that the exterior and under the hood is not in great shape. Cleaning up the interior could fool you into believing you are fine now, but you are not. If you let the people who care for you inside, they may or may not notice that there is still a dilemma. Either way, with or without their help, you can fix this.

When you notice that you no longer feel irritated when reminiscing then you should feel proud of yourself. Now you can move on to the source of your problem. You can do this by sorting through the pictures, clothes, etc. from that time in your life: Revisit the objects in order to redefine their role in your life.

Every time you take on a next step, keep track of how you feel when reminiscing. If you still feel hurt then do not take the next level and keep taking the pain until you do not feel it anymore. This is making you stronger.

Getting your mind and heart straightened out:

The next step is fixing your engine, how you run. You want to set your goals, practice achieving your goals and determine if you can make that finish line. For me, that meant being clear on who I cared for and loved, and who loved and cared for me back. You don't want to be wasting your time on the people or activities that will bring you down. Your heart and mind cannot always be on one focus. Fixing every part of the machine will obviously get you running, and that is what you need to do. You need to repair everything.

Once you cleaned up the interior, you can now let people in and no one can get hurt. Once you polish and wax the exterior and got new rims, you're settled to go out. Once you repaired your engine, you can now have the strength to push yourself to any amount of speed. The machine can now take on the bumps and potholes throughout its journey. Meaning, it doesn't matter how big the bumps are or how deep the potholes are, you now know you are strong enough to face it, get over it and not be affected. It is not a question of size or consequence, it's a question of how you will use your heart and mind to stand strong.

In conclusion, there may be heartbreaking situations that could have happened to you. It could destroy you and take you down so you feel you cannot get up. It is an experience in life we all should have in order to be more compassionate. Maybe, reading about my journey can help you get back on your own path. We cannot always be protected from getting hurt. But maybe, once you have made your own mistakes, this can help you get back on your feet.

PERSPECTIVES II

The Recipe

By Tommy Holweg

May 16, 2016

I am from the island. The crescent shaped island. And, like many from the crescent, I was given a recipe. The recipe was given by the roads, the mountains and the people. The people have been my biggest influence. People who are trying to hold on to their sanity and who search for a recipe to keep going. The recipe is my guide, my conscience and it's what gives me the daily wisdom to survive this funny thing called the modern world.

My recipe is made up of skateboarding, music, family, friends, my own imagination, school and many other intangible things that can't be purchased, held, or seen.

Who can I thank for this?

Being an alternative high school student is a blessing; it is a blessing to be seen as an artistic individual with different beliefs and values from others. Perspectives II was my home for two years, but two years wasn't enough to be here. My strength wouldn't be possible without all the experienced leaders I was surrounded by.

The most valuable lesson I have learned is empathy.

Empathy completes the recipe for now.

No matter how far I go or how far I feel from home, I can use my recipe to remember who I am and what I am made of.

This world is never too big if I just think back to the places where times were simpler, and think forward to the times that will be simple once again.

My recipe will keep me running fearless.

VENTURE

My Goal in Life

By: Cody Goulet

I am going to make it one day.

When I was younger something just hit me and all that I wanted to do was play basketball. After a few months of playing pick-up games my friends helped me realize that I was horrible. After that day all I would think about was practicing and getting better and better, so I began training harder.

I went to the park every day, even on the weekends. On the weekends I could train harder. I would wake up around 6 AM and go to the park until 2 PM and I would go back out until dinner time. Even after dinner I would go back outside until it was time for bed. The first time I left that early my mom freaked out until she saw the note on her door saying “hi mommy I went to the park if u need me.”

Still to this day I train, I work out, work on my shots, my dribbling and drills. I’ve changed my lifestyle by eating healthier. I enjoy what this sport brings to my life. The sport helped me a lot in my life by stopping me from doing things that I shouldn’t do. Helped me make the right choices when it was needed. By the right choices I mean not getting into scraps and not hurting people, because if I did one bad thing I would get kicked off the basketball team and I didn’t want that.

Therefore I will make it one day, I will make the right choices, and who knows, maybe I’ll make it to the NBA.



Nice shot, Cody. Or was it?

Kendrick Lamar – Hope for Hip-Hop/Rap

Article by Dylan Sawers



- Kendrick Live With His Band

You may know Kendrick as the man who made the instant hits “King Kunta,” “Alright,” “Levitate,” and “Poetic Justice,” but did you know that he is currently the best rapper in the world, a title given to him after the album, *To Pimp a Butterfly*, in 2015? If not then keep reading. You're in for a surprise...

Growing up in Compton:

As a kid Kendrick was very smart and tried his best to stay out of trouble because he knew that unlike others, he had a very unique talent. At the age of 15 Kendrick started writing stories about his city, Compton, and finally, after a few months of simply writing, he decided to turn those stories into music. In 2003 Kendrick dropped his first mixtape,

“Youngest Head Nigga in Charge.” Although this wasn't one of Kendrick's really good albums, it was still the one that had brought a lot of attention to his name in Compton which is something he needed if he wanted to succeed.

Getting noticed:

In the rap industry getting one or two hits won't always rise you up to fame, it's usually getting noticed by even better rappers that really gets the money rolling, that's what happened for Kendrick, Dr. Dre noticed him and from there, *Good Kid, M.A.A.D CITY* was made and business just started booming. Kendrick has made a few albums since then including the rap album of the year in 2015 “*To Pimp a Butterfly*.” He is now a multimillionaire but will never forget about where he comes from.

And now... My passion, music:

Whether it be rap, classical, pop or even heavy metal, music has always been something I've loved. When I'm feeling down, a good B.o.B song helps keep my head up. When I need to get pumped for a workout or a game, some fast rap will really get my adrenaline pumping. It all depends on how I want to feel, so when I put my earphones in and start looking for a song I'm really looking for how I want to feel at that moment.

What is your main passion and how does it fuel you?

By Jade Urwin

There are many passions in my life, but if I had to choose the most important one to me, it would be cosmetology. This started for me in my first year of high school. After elementary, I started practicing with my mom's make up, watching her put on makeup and observing her professional skills. I knew then that I have an admiration towards the beauty of cosmetology.

My mother is a former makeup artist; she used to work for one of the biggest make up companies in the world, "Mac Cosmetics." She influenced me on makeup, but my love for hairstyling and coloring came naturally. When I was about 11 years old, my step sister asked me if I could dye her hair. Ever since then, she would let me do whatever she wanted to her long beautiful hair. I continued practicing hairstyling on myself, my mother, and friends.

Cosmetology allows me to express my inner self better, meaning that with my hair and makeup done a certain way, you can tell more about who I am on the inside. Cosmetology allows me to express myself in many ways. It allows me to express my creativity, style, and attitude.

For example, with my hair long and fire red, you can tell that I am an opened minded person and artistic. I put on the same thick, winged eyeliner every day, and you can tell that I am a very bold person with this look.

Some people don't like the idea of colored hair or make up, and I respect that. Everyone's opinion is different. I react very politely to people who have negative comments about my style or "way of life." I just tell people not to look if they think something is wrong with my face or body. Not everyone is going to like you, but I remind myself that I don't need everyone either. I only need the ones that like and respect me. 😊

My passion helps with my confidence and insecurities. When I step outside feeling beautified, I feel like a different person. I feel like I am the true me when I am looking the way I want to look. I feel like I can express myself and my opinions without hesitating, and if anyone laughs or has something to say about me that is negative, I brush it off my shoulders instantly, because I feel like I truly love myself and agree with myself entirely. Without my passion, I wouldn't be me!

Alternative Life

By: Leah Poszwaylo

What is it like to be an alternative school student? I went to Royal Vale elementary and Royal Vale high school up until grade 8. In grade 9 I switched to Westmount high school because I wanted a change. I don't know if it was just me or Westmount, but I was really unhappy at that school, and then I got expelled for making poor choices, so they sent me to an Alternative School called Venture.

I have never been used to switching schools, and I think that might be why I was so unhappy at Westmount but when I went to Venture, the change was super easy. Even though there was many differences about the two schools, I got used to the way things worked around here.

The first two weeks I was at Venture I was in a really cool program called The Hub with James Bray where new students go to catch up on their work. I found it really helpful, and I also got the chance to meet a lot of cool people while staying there. I also got to learn how to play guitar and now I can play it at recess and lunch every day.

It's a lot of fun going to Venture because they don't have very strict rules and detentions. All my life, I always thought that getting detentions for small things, like forgetting your homework, or being a minute late for class was not a smart idea and doesn't teach a kid anything. In this school I find that I'm getting into a lot less trouble with small rules like that and it's really relieving a lot of stress.

In comparison to other regular schools I've been to, where I would be stressed, literally all of the time, the teachers would give so much homework in every single subject. I would be coming to school worried every day that I'm missing something, scared of the teachers yelling at me, and dreading the fact that I would have to sit for 45 minutes in detention. The teachers always put so much pressure on you to do all your work and for me, I can't work under pressure

At Venture they let you work at your own pace, and encourage you to finish your papers and work. Honestly, I'm doing a lot better at this school than I would be at Westmount, but still a lot of people say that if you go to an Alternative school it won't be good for your future, and nobody will want to accept you or hire you etc. That's definitely not the case because even though it's more of a stress free, laid back environment you still have to work to earn your grades, and in the end it's all the same credits!

I think that even though I got expelled from Westmount and sent here, I am so much happier than I would be if I were to stay in a regular school.

I Miss You, Milkshake

Lisa Freovitch-Valade

July 2nd, 2015 was the day I realized life would be dissimilar. The feeling of losing someone you love is absolutely indescribable. Part of yourself dies inside. In this article, I'll be telling you about how when I've adopted her till the day she died. Below this paragraph, I'll be explaining my unconditional love I had for her.

Milkshake has been such an amazing pet to have while growing up. She made all my insecurities go away because knowing the fact that I had her made me so happy. At some points she was my only friend I had while my actual human existing friends would use me, not ever speak to again. She made me laugh, smile and just made me feel as if I just needed her in my life, and I did only need her. When I went through break ups for example, I'd feel my heart burn and I'd cry myself to sleep but Milkshake, she wouldn't allow that to happen, she'd come into my bed, lay over my pillow and give me friendly kisses and love bites, meowing directly at me. I never loved someone more than I loved her, from this very day, I still cry not as often as I did the first four months after it happened, but every day I do think about her and I miss her more than ever.

On October 18th, 2004 it was my older sister, Melissa's Birthday. Melissa always wanted a friend, not a friend that you can easily assemble at school or outside but a pet. On her Birthday my Grandma brought the two of us to a pet store at Cote-Des-Neiges plaza. Melissa and I were enthusiastic inside of the store, looking around at all the cats and kittens. Most of the kittens were asleep, but we noticed this one kitten with black fur, white patches on her higher stomach staring at us with her large mixture of green and yellow eyes. Instantly, we knew she was the one. My grandma has bought her for my Melissa's birthday. When we brought our kitten home, we did not just let her go! The two of us were so happy. My mom asked Melissa what did she name her, and Melissa thought maybe we could name her Milkshake. So, that was her name, Milkshake.

During the beginning of the year of 2015, one night I was asleep in my mom's room, along with my mom in the same bed. Milkshake was above my pillow, sleeping. I heard a smash on my window which caused me to wake up. Milkshake's eyes were wide open, as a growl escaped her mouth from the banging on my window. I nudged my mom's shoulder as I whispered to her, "mom wake up, there's something near our window." She woke up. I got out of bed as I shuffled my feet across the room going to the curtains. I placed my hand onto the bottom corner of the curtain as I pushed it away, I looked out my window and it was my sister and her girlfriend outside. I left my apartment, running down the stairs to open the lobby door for them. After the two of them came in, they explained why they are here around 1 AM and the reason was because they forget their keys and had no place to go. We stayed up for a half an hour, as we were up I noticed a bump onto Milkshake's tummy. I got worried sick. My mom and my sister's girlfriend said that might be cancer. That night I cried myself to sleep, holding Milkshake in my arms as I tried putting myself to sleep. I couldn't believe that my cat might have gotten cancer. I was so clueless and asking how she might've gotten it.

July 2nd, 2015, my cousin, Jennifer, came over to my apartment around 4 PM, after work. It was time. It was time to let my baby get put down. We've arrived to the vet and we were in the room waiting for the veterinarian to come. While waiting, my cousin, my mom and Milkshake were on the couch. I held Milkshake into my arms giving her plenty of butterfly kisses on her head. I wasn't crying just yet, I was begging my cousin to not let this happen because I love her with all my heart. Finally, when the veterinarian has entered the room he told me he's going to put a needle to make Milkshake asleep, not to put her down but to sleep heavily. He took milkshake from my arms as he placed her onto the table, he made her lay down over a blanket as he was making her feel relaxed. Just as she got relaxed, he slowly stuck the needle inside of her. He passed her back over to me as she was placed onto my lap, slowly falling asleep. The veterinarian left the room to give me a bit of time with her. She fell asleep, her eyes were opened though. I haven't ever seen her sleep more peacefully. After so, he came back. It was time. She was placed back onto the table, I was on my knees in front of her, stroking her head softly. "I love you Milkshake, don't forget that. I never saw this day coming and I thought I we would die together, but I guess not. Just remember that you weren't only my pet, but you were my best friend. Please follow me everywhere I go, I want you by my side while so I know I won't need to struggle life by myself, but mentally I am." I said, as the words stuttered out of my lips, feeling tears roll down my cheeks, as I took huge breaths. He put in the needle inside of her. Milkshake's eyes automatically shut, her tongue came out of her mouth and she was no longer breathing. I felt my heart plop down into my stomach feeling like I couldn't breathe no longer. I ran out of the room crying as I took a sit in the lobby, waiting for my mom and cousin to come out so we can leave.

This article was about my best friend who died, and from today on, I still miss her very much and she will always be remembered.

Athletes going to alternative schools

By Reece Woods

When people hear athlete they instantly think of a role model or they think of someone who is great in school getting good marks and not getting in trouble but that's not always the case...

I am one of many athletes who currently go to an alternative school, because I go to a school like this in people's minds they think of a bad kid who isn't interested in getting an education or working on their future. That is not true a lot of students just don't have what it takes to manage properly in a regular class because they get distracted easily or they don't get the help they need because there's only one teacher and he/she can't attend to all the students questions at once. Me as a football player my education is really important but I didn't always know that, I thought that if I'm really good on the field people won't think about how I'm doing in school, but that is really not the case. My coach put me on the bench for two straight games, he didn't care at all if I made a difference on the field or not, he wanted to show me that school has to be my first priority. After that season I started actually putting in some effort in my work and my grades started going up.

In the NFL there is a player named Branden Albert he is currently playing for the Miami Dolphin's as an offensive tackle. Albert grew up in a single-parent home in Rochester, New York he failed his freshman year of high school twice and almost dropped out midway through his third year as a ninth-grader. Albert's mother decided to send him to Washington D.C. where his older brother was playing as a defensive lineman for Maryland Terrapins. That's when he started playing football and started going in the right direction and he eventually got drafted by the Kansas City Chiefs in 2008 as a first round fifteenth pick then got traded to Miami in 2013 and is still playing there now.

So that shows you that if you follow the right path and make the right decisions you can also achieve your goals.

My Alternative Life

By Shakeem Boyce

Have you ever wondered how going to an alternative school would affect your life?

For the people who haven't gone to an alternative school, have you ever wondered how much good will an alternative school put into your life? Forget those stereotypes like every time you hear alternative school: you think of getting a bad job and not a great lifestyle. Well, I'll tell you that's not true.

When you go into college they don't look at what school you go to because the curriculum is the same. As long as you get your high school diploma and have a pretty good average then your fine. If they did look at your school name, then it wouldn't be fair just because a kid who goes to LCC gets into college and I don't just because I go to an alternative school. It's also better because you can get 1 on 1 help by the teacher since there are not many kids in every class. Compared to LCC where there is like 30 kids in each class, so the teacher doesn't really give 1 on 1 help with the students. The most they can do is talk to you about your work and if you don't want to do it, then they just give up and leave you be.

These are the reasons why going to an alternative school is good. Like for example, venture had helped me a lot because when I was at Marymount academy I was failing almost every class compared to now where I'm passing all of my classes.



Hoops after school in the gym at Options/Venture/The Hub.

How my ethnicity affects me as a person

By Shlomo Bensimhon

As a Jew with deep roots to Judaism I had to learn about my people's history, a history that dates back five thousand years ago. A history filled with persecution, triumph, redemption. While learning about my ancestors, I developed a certain respect for them and a powerful sense of pride. In this article I'll be writing about how my ethnicity affects my beliefs and my way of living.

It's a known fact that the Jewish people suffered a great deal throughout their existence. I believe that because of all the obstacles we had to overcome together as a nation we have developed a brotherly bond and a mutual respect for one and other. Because of this bond we have organizations sure as MADA, Haverim, Hazala which are all non profit organization created by Jewish men and women with the sole purpose to help Jews in need.

Thanks to these organisations and the people running them, I am inspired as a person to do the most that I can to help my fellow Jews. I feel that because we are such a small people we need to do the most as we can to take care of each other and keep our traditions alive.

I would like to believe that if one day I were a millionaire I would invest most of my money trying to help my people because I feel they would do the same.



Basically.

What If?

Salma Allison

My real passion in life is people. In particular, this one girl I met.

Her mindset is beautiful and deep. She is beautiful and deep. What if people weren't slaves in their own minds? She makes my heart go puffy and swollen. She is very intelligent and her opinions are crazy good. What if they taught us what we actually needed to know? Her mindset is absolutely gorgeous. She's a Gemini. What if there was no communication? She's short, probably not even 5 feet and she's a free minded spirit. Her favorite animals are elephants. What if there were no trees? She is a free soul. Her words are strong for a 15 year old. What if we could free our minds? I'm attracted to her mind and souls. We are too deep. What if there was no water? We challenge each other and it's really attractive. She reads the dictionary when she's bored. What if we were patient? She's black. Mind skin complexion. What if we saw everything in black and grey? She's Scotian & Haitian. She has a lazy eye, her right eye. What if people didn't judge? She's thick. Very well spoken. What if life didn't depend on how well you did in school? She has nice lips and teeth. She's very intimate. What if we learned to forgive and forget? She has her septum pierced just like me. She often wears shaded colors like black and grey. What if Eric Garner could breathe? Her bottom lip is full but her lips are just amazing. She's a great kisser and both her lips and touch are soft. What if there were no wars? She's cute. She keeps saying she's breaking out but I think she is beautiful. What if we saved the children? I always kiss each side of her face and her forehead and remind her how cool she is. What if slavery didn't happen? She's pansexual. She has a fat ass with big breasts. What if we were free?



Time to regroup.

What life is like for me as a Cree person

By: Trent Napash-Mukash

Life isn't always the same for every Cree person, but I will try to explain as much as I can about my life.

My name Trent Napash-Mukash and I am Cree. As a Cree person I find the city very interesting although I still miss my community, family and friend. I very much enjoy going on the land hunting, fishing and many other things. And for my spiritual life I go to Sundances, which is when you praise the Spirits and celebrated. Shaking tents are when you get some tobacco and hold ceremony talk to the Spirits and I've been to Powwows, which are when you hold a dance and have singers and a drum. They are a fun event to hold.

Life has been pretty normal for me but I heard that it can be very hard as a Native person.

I don't really any other Native people except from my community, but I've been told it's a pretty harsh and hard life as a Native person. I heard there is a lot of suicide, alcohol, abuse, drugs, racism upon many other things. I myself never experienced these things because my mother didn't drink when I was growing up. I have three older sisters that are beautiful, although I consider myself to be the best looking. My mom got married two years ago to my step dad. He's a hunter and spent most of his life in the bush and I am very happy for both of them. My dad's a musician and my grandpa was the Grand Chief of the First Nations. My cousins are very talented people. They can play music, draw, and sing. I am very happy to live the life I have and be the person I am.

And that is my life as a Cree person. I hope to achieve my dreams one day.

What does it mean to be an alternative school student?

By: Tysen Roberts Downer

Everyone thinks that alternative school kids are crazy, but that just means that these people have never seen real crazy. Just because we're in alternative schools it doesn't mean we did something bad, but sometimes kids just need more one on one with teachers. If you hear people saying how crazy alternative schools are, tell them to go to prison and look at those people then come back and talk. Alternative school students are just kids who don't like being in big schools or don't get enough attention because the classes are too big, so they come here.

The reason for attending an alternative school is so kids get a second chance. Most kids got kicked out of their last school and this school will accept most kids any time during the school year. Many students don't like regular schools, which have thousands of kids, and teachers can't give their students more one on one time. Teachers have big classes and don't have time to give all the students the time that they need.

There are only two big reasons why alternative schools are different than regular schools. First, alternative schools give kids more time with teachers. Second, they get more attention in subjects that they have more difficulty in. But even though we get more attention and help sometimes in class it gets lonely because some classes might only have 10 students one day and another day we could be 1 or 2 kids in the class. That's the only thing I liked in my old school, having lots of friends in class.

I find that I best fit in an alternative school. But even in alternative schools I would best fit in a school like Perspectives. I have more friends there and it would be closer to my house, rather than taking the metro for almost an hour to come to Venture. I'm not saying Venture is a bad school it's just that it's not the right one for me, even though my grades have been going up since I got to this school I still would like it better somewhere I know more people. Even though it's almost the same, it would make a difference to me.

Problems

May, 5, 2016

Anonymous

It's hard growing up in this generation. Everything isn't cookies n' cream like it used to be. Our society has not improved very much, if anything things are much worse! The kids are meaner, the classes are harder and God forbid if anyone knew the true meaning of love.

What happened to fascination? We're leaving nothing to the imagination. Kids younger and younger are having sexual relations with one another. Nowadays we also seem to forget what loyalty and honesty is. Guys feel that there is no longer a reason to treat a girl right – like their moms didn't raise them better.

It's not only the guys though, girls play their part too. Don't get me wrong, we do some pretty petty stuff, exposing each others bodies or posting people's business over the net – not cool, “SMARTEN UP PEOPLE!”

Sadly that's not the only problem out there. This generation is being destroyed and we can only blame ourselves. Black, white, red, yellow, boy or girl it really doesn't matter anymore. Be the change you want to see in this generation.

How does where you're from define you?

Anonymous

My family and friends inspired me to grow up as a successful person. I am a quick learner, efficient worker, and a kind person. I want to grow up to be a mechanic and have my own garage. I've had this dream since the age of 6 and I'm dedicated to it. Growing up in a quiet town has made me an extroverted person.

Since I was 13, I have been chilling with bad people in my hood. I guess you can say that they are ghost strapped up spectres that move drugs. They have problems with anyone who tries to mess with them. I think my past could be a good example and inspiration to kids to think twice before making a bad decision.

When I was younger my father would bully me around and control everything, which caused me to grow up with a lot of anger. I have a lot of bad memories from when I was young. My dad even beat up my mom in front of me and I couldn't do anything because I was only 9 years old. I wish I could have been as strong as I am now so I could have protected my mom. I have a deep hate towards him. Since then he used to barge into my older brother and I's room when he was drunk and demand that we go fight him in the kitchen. I thought he hated us but he just doesn't know how to handle alcohol. Anyways I hope I can realize my dreams and one day have my own garage and have a beautiful family.

Transferring to an outreach school

ANONYMOUS

We're not all drug dealing psychopaths who enjoy stabbing up each other in the hallway. People often think of alternative students negatively because of the school they go to. But really, outreach schools aren't as bad as they seem. For some people being in such a large school can be very overwhelming, they probably don't fit in or cooperate well with their peers. Every student has some sort of conflict in their life, which can range from school, home, or within themselves. Going to an alternative school can reduce some of the stress by having shorter school days and a low student-teacher ratio.

I, on the other hand, despise school, I don't really care about it or anyone here, but I'd rather be here than any other school, just because we end at 2:20. If we didn't end early I would dislike this school as much as the other schools.

Anyway, regardless of how I feel about "school," my experience being in an alternative school isn't so bad. The only thing I don't like about it is that it's so far from my house and we start pretty early, other than that, it's fine. I like how it's not a strict school at all.

You can pretty much get away with anything you want. They do bug you at this school too, but they mind their own business most of the time. Classes are so easy; food is cheaper (even though it's whack), and Thursdays are half days. Our gym is small, but I hate gym, so it doesn't affect me. I wish our breaks were longer, because 10 minutes is not enough.

What most people are scared of when they transfer to a new school is that the students tend to be more savage, which might be true in some cases, but they're not so bad, the kids here can be really nice.

VEZINA

How I Met My Best Friend

By Hailey Danovitch

I am Hailey Danovitch and I am 15 years old. I was adopted from Ukraine by a couple named Donna and Sander Danovitch. I came to Montreal when I was five years old. My best friend is named Sarina Simon. She is from Russia and was adopted by a couple named Karen and Barry Simon. I will tell you how I met her, but first let me tell you about how my mom found out about the Simon family.

My mom used to take painting classes. One day, the art instructor, Lily, talked with my mom and my mom told her that she was going to adopt a child from Ukraine. Lily said to my mother, "I know a friend that is a mother of the couple that is going to adopt from Russia. The couple's names are Karen and Barry Simon, you should call them. Here is the number."

A few days later, my parents decided to call the Simons. It was no use because Karen and Barry Simon were in Russia getting Sarina, their daughter, so my parents left a message. The next day Donna and Sander went to the Ukraine to meet me for the first time. The Simons called.

When my parents came back to Montreal, my mother listened to the message that the Simons left. The message said, "Hi, this is Karen and Barry and we are calling to arrange for our daughters to get together." My mother called them and said, "We would love to get together and our daughters meet, but we just came back from Ukraine and in a few days, Sander and I need to go back to Ukraine to get our daughter, Hailey. When we come back from Ukraine we will wait a few months so our daughter can adapt to the new environment. Then we could meet each other."

Donna and Sander went back to Ukraine to get me. A few days after I was out of the orphanage, my dad needed to get back to Montreal to work. I cried because I wanted him to stay longer than a few days. My mom and I were in Ukraine until June 13, 2005 and then we came home to Montreal. When we arrived, my mom and I went to our apartment. I was excited to meet my relatives and my cat, Chico. I needed to adjust to Montreal before I could meet this girl named Sarina Simon.

It finally came to October 17, 2005, the day Sarina and I met for the first time. I was super excited to meet her. My parents and I were getting ready to go to the park to meet the Simons. I walked to the park with my parents. When we arrived, I saw three people waiting with a girl about my age and they were holding a big bicycle for me. My parents and I were finally in front of Karen, Barry and Sarina Simon. While Sarina's and my parents talked, my new and my only best friend, Sarina and I were playing. When it was time to go, I was sad because I made a new best friend for life.

Now Sarina is 14 years old and I am 15. We are still best friends. Sarina and I live in the same building and we hang out after school and more on the weekends. We like to go to the park near our building. Sarina and I have been friends for 10 years. We have a lot in common: we both speak Russian, we are both in high school, we live in the same building (she lives up above me), we are both adopted, and we like some of the same programs.

What I've Seen...

Anonymous

I've seen so much in such a small time frame of living, as the saying goes, "Your eyes are the windows to your soul", but how much can mine reveal?

I've seen my hands shake so much you might've mistaken me for an earthquake. So stressed out and scared, to the point where it's all I felt. I felt it when I saw the drama in the court room unravel, that thing you called fear. It consumes you with each step you take. It's all you can sense, it takes over your body as if it's nothing. When your own parents say you're delusional, and lie like their lives depend on it, I can assure you that fear, your one and true friend, will be there for you. It'll pop out and say "I'm here, and I'm taking over whether you like it or not."

I've seen the pain and hurt in my sister's eyes, trying to stay strong for me, but still trying to convince herself that things are alright. She hides it all with smiles and sarcasm, when truthfully she's as hurt as I am, maybe worse. I won't sit here and be a hypocrite. I myself sometimes like to make a few laughs out of any given situation, when in actual fact, I'm still hurt. Hurt with all the things I've been through, the people that hurt me, but mostly hurt I've let people do it time after time.

I've seen my own blood turn on me; one minute you're all they love and care about and the next you're nothing but scum on the street. I've had to avoid areas because I felt and still feel insecure. You'd think they would stop and ask how I'm doing, but all I get is, "Go kill yourself" and other colorful language. I'm considered the "black sheep" of my dysfunctional family. I'd much rather stay in school to have a better life for myself than drop out because of drugs and alcohol or live on welfare. I moved away from my "family" because I wanted help. I was in desperate need of it, and my "family" couldn't provide what I needed, so I left. As a result I had to stay in a residential hospital program for a while, only to be told that I had Depression, Anxiety and PTSD.

Despite all the negative things I've been through, I've seen strength, happiness and faces that are unforgettable. Being in a foster home away from "family" is what I needed. I found myself and found my peace of mind. I've learned how to be more independent, and how to deal with my mental illnesses. Usually when people read things they get something from the story, like a lesson. So here's one from me; forget about all the fairy tales you've read like "The Princess and the Frog." Life isn't perfect. It's not meant to be. Here's something you should know; no matter what background you come from, whether it is your home, school or family, you choose your life. If you come from a family of doctors and want to be a police officer, do it. It's your life, after all! The only thing stopping you from doing what you love is yourself.

The Eyes Behind Your Eyes

By Chrissy Hawkhurst

Being one of those who can see, I don't tend to appreciate every sight that there is to see. I believe that those who can see don't observe things like those who cannot. Those who are blind have eyes behind eyes. What I mean by this is when your eyesight goes away you see things in a different perspective. You start to live by every little detail, feeling every last thing just so you can, by chance, remember what it looks like. I am going to imagine that I have three days left to see, and then after that everything will be dark, lonely and scary. I am going to take you on a trip to all the places and people I'd like to see for the last time.

On the third day before I become blind, I would like to start my morning off with a picnic by the Saint Lawrence River in Verdun. As a kid this place felt like a jungle, but in all reality it's just a waterfront. I've created so many memories there, and I'd stand there and picture all the fun times I've had. Knowing I'll never see the waterfront changes in different seasons is unbelievable. I'd never see the children playing in the park, or the ducks and its ducklings. Eventually I fear that without being able to see this place ever again, my memories would fade away just like my sight. This morning I'd take the time to see the little things: the tree that hangs over the water like an umbrella or a lost shoe from a baby kicking its feet. Before today I never really took the chance to absorb everything, but now I realize it's the small things that count. I'd lay on the grass and listen to all the familiar sounds that surround me and take in all the different smell, since after today that's all I'm going to have of this place.

After I'm finished taking it all in I would visit my camp that I've been attending since I was nine. I would like to go there when all the children are there, because seeing everyone together is like one big happy family. The grins on all these beautiful kids' faces are contagious! I wonder when I am no longer able to see if I'd be the only one not smiling. I would miss the shows that the cabins perform before bed. To truly understand how amazing this camp is you need to see it, which is something I won't be able to do anymore. I'd walk around the cabins and feel the wooden oak walls, observe the grass stains on the campers' clothing and look up at the clouds in the sky that look like shapes of different items. Right before I'd go to bed I would sit at the campfire. I can never forget the feeling of happiness that this place brings me. Even when I lose my sight the smell of burning wood would bring me right back here.

On my second to last day with sight I would spend the morning at home with my brother and mother. I would search their faces for every bit of detail so the memories of what they look like could hopefully stay in my mind forever. When you see my brother he looks like a rough character but when you look into his gently brown eyes, you see that he has a huge heart. My brother acts tough but I can see he is crying on the inside. My mother looks very young; you'd never guess the pain and abuse she has endured. I'd look at the scar above her left eye, and think about how my mother is a soldier. I would go around the house and look and touch every object. I would sit there for about an hour staring at myself. I'd see the pain I've been through in my eyes. I worry that soon enough I'll forget what I look like. I'd picture myself as a faceless person. I'd look at all my scars and go down memory lane of how each one happened. After I'm done at my house, I would go to the Biodome. I've always loved to see the animals from all over

the world without having to take a plane. My very last place of the night would be Montreal's Old Port. I have been there so many times with my mom as a kid, and every time I'm still amazed at how beautiful it looks. I wouldn't just want to go on any night; I'd want there to be fireworks. I never really like fireworks; I always found them boring. That night I would enjoy all the different colours in the sky floating like fairy dust. I would walk around and see the horses and the clowns making balloon animals for kids. How would I ever be able to enjoy these things without sight?

On my last day with sight, I'd like to spend it with my close friends. I know that even without sight I'd still love them to death. You don't need to see their love; their vibrant personalities would shine so bright I wouldn't need sight. We would all hang out and listen to music and eat a bunch of pizza. The best times I've had with my friends are just the simple times. I would study every inch of them. After me and my friends hang out for a bit, I'd want to go to the metro. We would take the metro and go to each stop on the green line. Each metro station has its own unique vibe, its own colour and pattern. I'd see a whole bunch of different faces, styles, emotions and personalities. In my last few minutes before I become blind, I'd go through my photo albums, just so I could see the faces of my loved ones before I enter a world of total blindness.

When I go blind, memories will be all I have left; this is why I would go to the places that I've been a lot of times. I would look at the people who I never want to forget, studying every detail of things so I can remember. When blind, remembering is what would keep me going. Picturing the faces of my loved ones is what would keep me stronger even when I'd feel my weakest. I smelt each place I went so if I ever return, I might get a small whiff of a familiar smell and know where I am. I will try not to forget and always remember how lucky I was when the lights were on.

What I've Seen...

By Emma Lavis

There are so many things that I have seen in my life that I really wish I hadn't. These things that I have seen, have made me realize that I didn't want my life to be like this. I don't want to see these things ever again, because they have brought tears to my eyes.

I've seen myself sad and happy, heart broken and lost. I've seen people call me names and make of fun of me. I've seen my brothers get arrested and seen them locked up. I've seen my mother high on drugs and I've seen her forget who I was at times. I've seen my own two brother's fight each other. I've seen the police at my house looking for my brother because of drugs and weapons. I've been in court thinking how my life was. I've seen how it was to live in a group home for six months. The worst is that I've seen my parents argue to the point where they almost ended their marriage.

Seeing all of these things has changed my life. I learned that I don't want to be a mother who's always high and forgets who her daughter is. I don't want to have the police looking for me because I did something so stupid with drugs and weapons. I really don't want to be one of those people.

I want to see myself in ten years from now with my own house, a husband and kids. I want to see myself with a great job that pays well so I can support my family. I really don't want to see myself as a homeless drop-out who's doing drugs.

My life will go on and I will always have these things in my head. But it has made me who I am today. I know I will see better things as I grow older. But for now this is how it is.



Vezina on a walkabout.

Who am I and where did I come from?

By Madaline-Maria MacKay



I have always wondered, as I am sure others have, where do we come from? What part of the world? What time in history did we come from? What really flows through our blood? Were we part of a royal family, a family of poor farmers? Did we come from France, England, Canada, The United States of America, Russia, or Africa?

To answer these questions for myself I have spent the past years studying and looking for the answers to just where did my family come from, what blood flows through my blood? Well I have finally discovered some answers.

My name is Madaline-Maria MacKay. I was born here in Canada. But it's not the birthplace that tells you where you are from; it's the red hot blood that runs through your veins. The MacKays are born from the cold winds in the north of Scotland, in the District of Stathnaver. They were an ancient and once-powerful Scottish clan from the far North of the Scottish Highlands. They at one point helped uphold the old kingdom of Moray. The Mackays sat and ruled in a castle called Varrich Castle. Not much is left of that building today but it still holds history. Varrich castle is located in the far north of the Scottish highlands close to the village of Tongue, which has the population of 1,000 plus. The area was an historic crossroad for Gaels, Picts and Vikings. Tongue House is the historic seat of the Clan Mackay, after they abandoned *Caisteal Bharraich* (Castle Varrich).

The name MacKay is the Gaelic and English way of saying MacCaoidh or MacAoidh. MacAoidh means son/daughter of fire. Later on some of the MacAoidh's moved on to Ireland. Making some of the stories of how the Mackay's birth place came from Ireland and not Scotland. But that is a story not the truth! We MacKays are born of northern Scotland. Let the Irish lay with their beds of rock and sod. The MacKays will stay in the cold land of the north.

The MacKay motto is: "Manu forti. In English it means "With a strong hand." Another motto is "Bì tren" is Gaelic for 'Be true, Be valiant.'

The MacKay's war cry is "Bratach Bhan Chlann Aoidh" Meaning 'The white banner of MacKay'. Their plant badge is the Bulrush. Now the modern McKay tartan is green and blue and is called Clanmorgan tartan.

The MacKays supported Robert the Bruce during the Wars of Scottish Independence in the 14th century. The war started in 1296 and then later ended in 1328. Lasting only a mere 32 years.

The first MacKays came to North America in 1826. They came to what is now called Cape Breton, Nova Scotia. There was two of the brothers who stayed in Cape Breton and are buried there. The third named Donald went on to Montreal and later settled in what is now called St-Urbain-Premier, Quebec.

Donald later married Catherine MacCuaig. They had 8 children: Duncan (born 1832), Angus (Born 1838), Roderick (Born 1840), Donald (Born 1843), Mary (Born 1846), Malcom (Born 1850), John and Murdoch. Though I don't have the dates of birth for John and Murdoch or the dates of death for anyone on hand right now I can get them at a later date.

Duncan (my great grandfather times 5) married Christina MacPherson. They had 5 children together: Alexander (Born 1869), John Muir (Born 1871), Donald Murdoch (Born 1871), Kenneth Ewen (Born 1874) Margaret Mary (Born 1876).

Alexander married Annie Elizabeth Wilson and they had 4 children: Janet Christina (born 1895), John Roderick (Born 1896), Margaret Edith (Born 1898), and Alexander Wilson (Born 1904)

Alexander Wilson married Christie Isobel MacCuaig. They had three children: Kenneth Alexander (Born 1940), Neil Frederick (Born 1942), and Malcolm MacCuaig (Born 1943).

Neil Frederick married Ruby Sophia Buchanan. They have two children: Ronald Neil (Born 1969) and Maria Christie (Born 1972).

Ronald Neil married Shannon Maria Houle. They went on to have two daughters: Madaline Maria (Born 1999) and Victoria Brooke-Ann (Born 2002)

This is the list of the family tree dating to when the first MacKay came to Canada. I have the whole list of the MacKays back down home. It has everything, but it would be too much to put on this paper.

I spend every bit of free time I can spare on this topic. I have a thirst for knowledge when it comes to this kind of stuff. It is a thirst that not even the strongest waters can quench. It is a hunger that just never goes away no matter how much you feed it. I lay every nite with the hunger to know more. I hope that one day my hunger will bring me to the very spot in the highlands where the MacKay's legacy was first born. I want stand and touch the very walls of Varrich castle and feel like a queen pulled out of all the books I have read. I like knowing that long ago my name meant royalty. Knowing that makes me feel somewhat important. More than ever now I dream of what it was like in the days long ago with the new knowledge that somewhere in there, my name sake was more than just a few letters on a paper; they meant something.

I cross the days down and save pennies as much as I can in hopes that one day I will see myself across the sea and in the proud lands of the northern highlands, standing in Mackay country? But this time it will not be in dreams it will be person and in new eyes! My land will be written in my mind from then on without the need of closing my eyes to see it.



** What is in blue at the top is where the MacKay's ruled, the MacKay's land! **

And it will stay our land!

AWARD WINNERS

The Alternative Voice Awards

Emily Woodworth (Mile End) – “Different Skills, Successful Futures”

Imani Ollivierre-Quamina (Mile End) – “Alternative Is Better”

Karlie Artuso (Options) – “Maybe it’s Not So Bad After All”

Leah Poszwaylo (Venture) – “Alternative Life”

Michael Agnello (Mile End) – “It’s Just a Word”

Nathaniel Assayag (Mile End) – “Alternative route to success”

Shyheem Gonsalves (Mile End) – “Alternative Way”

The Where I’m From Awards

Madaline-Maria MacKay (Vezina) – “Who am I and where do I come from?”

Shayla O’Toole (Options) – “How Does Where You’re From Define You?”

Shaianne Bhalai (Mountainview) – “How does your neighbourhood represent who you are?”

The Honesty Awards

Emma Lavis (Vezina) – “What I’ve Seen”

Samara Allison (Mountainview) – “My life in a group home”

Stephen Pauze-Scott (Mountainview) – “Hockey’s Effect on my Life”

Sabrina Begum (Outreach) – “Rejecting Those Stares”

Lisa Freovitch-Valade (Venture) – “I Miss You, Milkshake”

The Modern Journalism Awards

Trinity (Outreach) – “Sorry, I Was Texting”

Zoey Burns (Options) – “The True Value of Hemp”

Theara Nicole V.S. (Outreach) – “The Unspoken Voice”

The Creativity Awards

Chrissy Hawkhurst (Vezina) – “The Eyes Behind Your Eyes”

Salma Allison (Venture) – “What If?”

Tommy Holweg (Perspectives II) – “The Recipe”

The Style Awards

Aaron James (Mile End) – “Judging someone doesn’t define who they are. It defines who you are.”

Adam Bitton (Mile End) – “The Dumb Question”

Rayhan Mkamel (Mile End) – “Labels, Labels, Labels. We’re not Jars!”

The Grand Prize Winners

Mia (Outreach) – “Group homes: the quick fix?”

Rhyan McNeill (Outreach) – “Those Magazines: Is it them or is it you?”

OUTREACH:

PERSPECTIVES
WOW!

^x
OPTION:

VENTURE

VERING

· MOUNTAIN
VIEW.

MILE END^x

EXPLORE!

