

Photo by Felix Chagnon

Trucks from the Freedom Convoy occupy three lanes on Metcalf Street from Lisgar Street to Albert Street in Ottawa. This weekend marks the third week of the Freedom Convoy's occupancy in the capital's downtown core.

# Occupancy continues in Ottawa

By Felix Chagnon

On Feb. 14, Canadian Prime Minister Justin Trudeau announced that he has invoked the Emergency Act. For the first time in Canada's history, the Emergency Act has been brought in to give all enforcement agencies more tools to resolve the protest and blockades that have been seen throughout the country.

This past Saturday marked the beginning of the third week of the Freedom Convoy's occupancy on Parliament Hill in Ottawa, Ont.

Since Jan. 29, thousands of demonstrators have gathered in the downtown core of the capital to protest COVID-19 vaccine mandates and regulations. What started as a movement by truckers and supporters against COVID-19 vaccine mandates and quarantine rules for cross-

border truck drivers, quickly became a national protest against all government regulations surrounding the COVID-19 pandemic.

As the occupation unfolded, demonstrators were seen making themselves comfortable by building wooden structures, installing porta potties, and dining accessories like barbecues and tables.

The loud crowd has sparked a lot of outrage among the residents living in the downtown core of the city. Many residents have turned to social media to express their anger and discomfort caused by what they call the disruptive crowd of protesters.

"To anyone who doesn't live downtown Ottawa: The noise level is maddening. It's non-stop honking. Non. Stop. Honking," said resident Julie S. Lalonde, a women's rights advocate and public educator, on

Twitter. "Then for fun, add in the seemingly non-stop helicopters whirling overhead and it's a recipe for a nervous breakdown," she adds.

The disruptiveness is not only affecting residents. Businesses located in the downtown core are suffering as well, many of which have been forced to close their doors for the protection of their staff and customers.

As an answer to the chaos, Mayor Jim Watson declared a state of emergency in the city on Saturday, Feb. 6.

"Declaring a state of emergency reflects the serious danger and threat to the safety and security of residents posed by the ongoing demonstrations and highlights the need for support from other jurisdictions and levels of government," stated the media release issued on the city's website. "It also provides greater flexibility within the

municipal administration to enable the City of Ottawa to manage business continuity for essential services for its residents and enables a more flexible procurement process, which could help purchase equipment required by frontline workers and first responders."

So far, police intervention has been limited to assuring the overall safety of the population. For instance, on Saturday Feb. 5, over 450 tickets were issued for infractions like excessive noise, use of fireworks, driving a motor vehicle on a sidewalk, stunt driving, suspended licence, driving under the influence, etc. In total, police have issued over 2,600 tickets and arrested 26 protesters.

However, residents are still demanding more intervention from the Ottawa Police Service. Counter protesters have been seen daily in front of the police station,

and hundreds have marched in the streets with signs reading "Go Home!" and "We don't support inaction. #FreeOurStreets."

On Feb. 12, an estimated 500 counter protesters marched from Lansdowne Park to Parliament Hill to confront the Freedom Convoy demonstrators.

This counter protest came a day after Ontario Premier Doug Ford announced a state of emergency for the entire province.

"Today, I am using my authority as premier of Ontario to declare a state of emergency in our province," stated Ford during his announcement. "And I will convene cabinet to use legal authorities to urgently enact orders that will make crystal clear it is illegal and punishable to block and impede the movement of goods, people and services along critical infrastructure."

# Helping make her community a better place

By Christie Leja

Rihanna Harris, a 12-year-old resident of Wellington in Prince Edward County, Ont., reflects on her previous anti-racism advocacy work in her community and frustrations on how Black history still isn't a mandatory part of the Ontario curriculum in the year 2022.

"When I was in Grade one, my teacher... used to tell me, a girl who came from my background could never achieve anything. It kinda defeated me, then I wanted to do something about it. That's what has inspired me to do this."

The 'this' Harris is referring to is her advocacy efforts to making Black history education a part of the Ontario and Hasting Prince Edward District School Board (HPEDSB) curriculum. In October of 2020, as a Grade 6 student from Prince Edward Collegiate Institute, Harris made a deputation to the HPEDSB at their board meeting via video chat and spoke about how critical it is that Black history be included in the curriculum.

The House of Commons declared February to be Black History Month in Canada in December 1995. Every February, people all around Canada celebrate Black History Month, which honours the contributions of Black Canadians and their communities to our history.

"I am doing this for every other child who is a minority and for our generations to come. It's important I stand up for what is right and to be a part of making a change and a difference for the better. We don't live in a white world. We live in a multi-racial world so we should be learning both sides of the coin," Harris said at the public meeting on Oct. 26, 2020.

The community reaction and support from Harris's insightful and articulate speech, which can still be viewed on the HPEDSB YouTube page, was loud and swift at the time. By January of 2021, the HPEDSB approved a motion that would "encourage and support the celebration" of Black History Month, Pride Month and National Indigenous History Month.

Between that success, multiple



Photo by Christie Leja

Rihanna Harris sits on a bench at Wellington Main Street Park and reflects on the positives of her anti-racism advocacy work in her community. "Lots of kids have reached out to me, saying how thankful they are that I talked to teachers about this."

interviews Harris participated in, and a spot as special correspondent on The County Grapevine, Prince Edward County's community radio station, I was excited to meet up with her and see how she was feeling about progress being made a year later.

"Some teachers have decided to take it upon themselves and speak about the importance of it (Black History month) and some teachers haven't. I know I haven't started it in my class yet," Harris said.

After 15 months of ongoing advocacy, inspirational and hard conversations with promises of doing better, Harris said she feels like she is back at square one with the

lack of recognition Black History Month has this year.

"I tell her all the time that I don't want to see her work too hard and get too tired. She's 12. It's not up to her to educate everyone. Some teachers are participating willingly and other teachers don't talk about it at all," adds Barbie Harris, Rihanna's mother.

Harris, though a remarkable and precocious kid, is still that, a kid. She is currently enrolled in the Grade 7 destinations program at Queen Elizabeth School in Belleville, plans on becoming a pediatric surgeon, and her eyes light up when she talks about how she dances competitively. It is evident that she is

passionate about learning and educating as many people as she can, but she does find the lack of support and conversation in the community to be discouraging, especially with how busy she is.

"I would love to see a BIPOC (BIPOC: Black, Indigenous and People of Colour) youth group, but do I have to be the one to organize it? It would be nice to see other people do the work as well," Harris says.

All Welcome Here (AWH) was founded in 2019 by Judith Burfoot, a Black woman living and working in Prince Edward County. AWH is a non-profit, BIPOC-led organization that provides support, social connections, and business assistance to

people of colour in the County. Harris interview Burfoot last February while she was a special correspondent on The County Grapevine during Black History Month, a local radio station.

Burfoot moved to Prince Edward County with her family in 2009 to farm and provide a better life for her children. Throughout her life, she has been active in anti-racist activities and has been involved in the fight against apartheid, police violence and killings, sexism and homophobia within liberation movements, as well as addressing discrimination within institutions, and hopes to bring more awareness to the community.

"I genuinely feel an energy in our community to make this an inclusive home for all, including consciously anti-racist initiatives. There's much to be done, as ever, but there are more of us stepping up and stepping forward," Burfoot comments on a AWH Instagram post.

Burfoot's comments ring true, as just this year, Mayor of Prince Edward County Steve Ferguson, proclaimed that as of Jan. 11, 2022, "the month of February 2022 as "Black History Month," and encourage our citizens to celebrate cultural diversity in our community that we all call home."

While wrapping up the conversation with the Harris family, the topic of the Trucker Convoy happening in Ottawa comes up, and Rihanna, once again, speaks wisely beyond her years.

"I just find it heartbreaking...I don't understand how we can raise millions of dollars for this but we can't put that into getting clean water for our Indigenous communities?" Harris says.

Harris goes on to add that education is key to understanding and helping each other.

After only meeting her once, the passion this 12-year-old has to create a better tomorrow for her generation is breathtaking. Harris plans to continue making waves doing anything she sets her mind to, but emphasized how ongoing support from the community will only help make those much needed changes happen faster.





Photo by Sabah Rahman

Don McCulloch (left) and Bill Croson poses for a photo during an interview in front of Hart House in the University of Toronto campus in Toronto where the couple met in 1987.

# Hardships bring couple closer together

By Sabah Rahman

"Hart House, that's where we met," said an enthusiastic Bill Croson before the recorder even started. Croson is referring to the Oxford-esque, lookalike Hart House, a student centre at the University of Toronto campus in downtown Toronto.

Bill was still using Hart House's swimming pool at his old university campus in 1987. He had not started his swim yet and was casually chatting with the lifeguard that he was friends with at the other end of the pool.

Soon enough, the lifeguard friend poked him and said, "Look, there's one," pointing to then 24-year-old Don McCulloch who just entered the pool area from the men's changeroom. Bill wasn't wearing contact lenses, and responded back to her with squinted eyes, "Where? I can't see him."

They did connect and their next date was at Swiss Chalet in 1987. Don remembers what he ordered down to the desert item, even though for Don it felt like a casual relationship. A year later, Don would be leaving for Montreal to start law school. They even made separate plans for the new year.

Months passed and they had gone down to Montreal to look for a place for Don, who would start law school that September. That Friday, Don started getting painless rashes that were noticeably spreading on his skin. They went to Mon-

trepreneur's emergency and Don was diagnosed with shingles. Don remembers how they casually told him that he likely had HIV because he was gay.

"It was a lousy weekend," said Bill. They were in shock. "I had this ability to put on blinders," said Don.

In the 1980s, the average life expectancy of someone diagnosed with AIDS was approximately one year.

At the time, there was no available testing in Ontario, Don had to get a formal test for HIV in Montreal. At the HIV-testing clinic, Don thought he was being paranoid at first but later he was sure that the person who drew his blood did not want to be near him or touch him.

The test results showed that Don was HIV positive. The AIDS specialist they connected with afterwards in Montreal gave Don six months to live and asked him to put his affairs in order. Bill loudly chimes in, "I am so glad [the specialist] did not know what he was talking about."

Don quit law school, explaining it made his decision to leave law school easier because the doctor gave him six months to a year to live. Don did not want to spend the rest of his remaining time stuck in school.

By the end of 1990, Don's ex-partner died from AIDS, who Don suspected he contracted HIV from. "We were living in three-month chunks," said Bill, but life still had to go on.

Bill left his statistician job by then and

began independent consulting work. Having HIV made Don fearless, he explains, "What is the worst that could happen?" and knowing his time was short. The couple had the resources, so they bought a car and a house.

Throughout the first half of the '90s, they were doing major renovations and Don led most of the construction work around the house. It was at this stressful and busy time when Don got his latest blood count result.

The results were alarming. It showed that Don's T-Cell count had dropped dramatically. "I technically did have AIDS, and then I didn't," said Don. Bills explains it is a bit like having less soldiers in your battleship.

By 1996, the triple combination antiretroviral therapy was developed, and it could not have been better timing from Don and Bill's perspectives.

The drugs came with a strict regimen of 14 pills a day over four doses with mealtime restrictions. Failure to maintain compliance with the strict schedule and food restrictions could make the medication ineffective against the virus. Don knows it is an absolute fact that he never slept more than eight hours during that time because he had to take his medication at 11 p.m. and again at 7 a.m.

At the time people were very guarded about their positive HIV status. It took a while before Don disclosed his status to his family. The family was going on a

holiday together and there would be no way for Don to hide his medication and mealtime routine from his family.

Bill remembers there was a huge build-up of anxiety between the couple about giving Don's parents the news. Bill comedically adds the fuss was all for nothing because the whole thing was over in minutes. Bill remembered leaving the room to use the washroom and by the time he was back Don had already told his parents.

Don quietly remembers that his parents were great. "They were very low key," said Don. Don's parents right away offered to help financially with the medication, knowing they were expensive.

The triple-combination antiretroviral therapy drugs were expensive, which most people could not afford. Don pegs the total cost of his own medications somewhere between \$250,000 to \$300,000 that has been spent to date.

Don was part of care teams for other people with AIDS throughout the 1990s, and some of them became close friends of the couple. Don explains it was a big step for him to acknowledge he could potentially end up in the same place two years onwards when he watched one by one die from AIDS around him.

"Every gay man of our generation has this specific year when they were going to funerals every other week," said Don, referring to the death toll of the HIV/AIDS epidemic in the 1990s. The couple remember the year 1996 to be that hor-

rific year for them, and they lost so many friends to AIDS.

Don continues, "You have survivor's guilt because you watch your friends die. You don't want to be going through that [yourself] but they are going through that."

Bill thinks it is partly good genetics that saved Don. "I was lucky. If my immune system had crashed eight months sooner, I probably would have died," said Don.

"I suspect that if I had not tested positive, we would have drifted apart during law school," said Don. Bill realized the prospects were not great for people with AIDS, but he adds, "I don't think it even crossed my mind to cut and run." Don thinks it brought them closer because he was HIV positive.

Don added, "For me, knowing that I was leaving the city [for Montreal for law school] made the relationship much more casual [to start], and therefore prone to success." Bill chimed in, nodding in agreement, "No expectations."

"A lot of queer people we know have never seen a [queer] couple who have been together for 35 years," said Don and he added despite feeling the pressure he is glad to be an elder role model in the community.

"We are better together. We strengthen each other somehow," said Bill. Bill looked at Don sitting across the table from him and said, "Would you be happier apart? I don't think so."

# Museums impacted by convoy protest

By Felix Chagnon

Following the provincial lockdown that occurred from Jan. 5 to Jan. 31, the Canadian Museum of Nature was initially set to open its doors to the public once again on Feb. 9.

On Feb. 7, the museum announced they would delay their opening day due to the ongoing demonstrations in downtown Ottawa and the city's suggestion to the public to avoid any visits to the downtown core.

Since Jan. 29, the "Freedom Convoy" protest held on Parliament Hill has caused numerous stores and restaurants to close due to safety precautions and traffic disturbances. Some of the capital's museums, including the Canadian War Museum in Ottawa and the Canadian Museum of History in Gatineau, Que., have remained closed as well throughout the demonstrations.

"The decision of delaying the opening day was made due to the current demonstration and significant traffic disruption in the downtown core. Although we are not directly in front of Parliament Hill, we are still considered a part of the downtown core," said the director of visitor experience at the Canadian Museum of Nature, Angeline Laffin. "Every Monday, the management and our business continuity plan team will meet to assess the situation and follow advice from the authorities in order to make a decision."

In the meantime, the staff at the Canadian Museum of Nature has continued creating a better and safe experience for the future visitors by improving their ticketing operations, flow of traffic system as well as sanitary measures.

This closure represents the fifth time the museum has been closed for a lengthy period since March 2020, but with all obstacles comes many lessons.

Laffin said they have learned a lot from the pandemic, lessons that will allow them to be more effective as they move forward in these difficult times.

Exhibits are also undergoing modifications as the staff prepares new exhibits and brings modifications to some of the permanent ones.

"We continuously work on trying to upgrade our permanent galleries. For instance, we are working on a new addition to the Water Gallery and a new feature for the Nature Live, which has been relocated in the museum," announced Laffin.

Last December, the museum introduced Shadowland, an art-based gallery created by Lorraine Simms who used drawings that reveals shadows cast by preserved remains of animals. Other temporary exhibits like Owls Rendez-vous, Gaia and Qilalukkat! will be available to the public once the museum opens.

With the Mayor of Ottawa and the Prime Minister declaring a state of emergency, things could be looking up



Photo by Felix Chagnon

The Canadian Museum of Nature has been closed since Jan. 5. Initially closed due to the provincial lockdown, the museum has now extended its opening day due to the current "Freedom Convoy" demonstrations held in the downtown core of Ottawa.

for the businesses which are currently shut down in the downtown core of Ottawa, including the Canadian

Museum of Nature.

"We are hopeful that the issue will get resolved as soon as possible so we

can be able to showcase all the great things we have to offer to the public," added Laffin.





Photo by Bradley Edgley

David Maracle, a stone carver, musician, and artist from Tyendinaga Mohawk Territory, plays a traditional Indigenous flute inside his gallery, Eagle Pod, where he displays his carvings and other works of art. Maracle has sold over one million albums across the world, his music is used by former soldiers to help treat PTSD.

# Artist uses carvings to tell stories

By Bradley Edgley

September 30, 2021, marked the first National Orange Shirt Day in Canada, the day of Truth and Reconciliation.

In 1973, Phyllis Webstad, a Northern Secwepemc (Shuswap) from the Stswecem'c Xgat'tem First Nation, had her new orange shirt taken from her, by the residential school she attended on her first day. In the wake of the discovery of the remains of 215 children found buried on the site of a former residential school in Kamloops, B.C., May 28, 2021. Canada saw a nation-wide, Indigenous-led grassroots movement, calling for the commemoration of this tragic discovery. Webstad's orange shirt now serves as a symbol of the stripping away of culture, freedom and self-esteem experienced by Indigenous children over generations of residential schools.

David Maracle, a stone carver, musician, and artist from Tyendinaga Mo-

hawk Territory, said he was deeply affected by the discovery in Kamloops. Maracle commissioned an art piece in honour of the lost children and survivors of residential schools, their families and communities, a bright orange tricycle.

"It embodies the grief we are feeling as a nation across Turtle Island after the findings of our Indigenous children who suffered or went missing and died due to residential school atrocities. For the children who were never able to have a bike, and for those who never made it home, we honour you. This is my action, for my father who was a survivor, and for all our Indigenous children."

Maracle grew up creating art as a storytelling method. Carving intricate detail into stone, Maracle tells the stories of his people, and gives history lessons of their culture. From a young age, travelling to pow wows, Maracle was crafting authentic tomahawks, bow and arrows,

spears, knives, sheaths there geared to children.

"I was making them out of real leather, beads, feathers, and was hand painting everything. I was getting orders right across Canada and the U.S., and I was turning into a little factory by myself."

Maracle discovered his love of crafting at an early age, from his father Andrew Maracle Sr., who worked with leather. Maracle's father also inspired a life-long sense of self confidence, belief, and passion, when he would take David's stone carvings on the road with him to sell at events. Returning with sales that ranges from \$500-1,200, David's father showed him a path for becoming successful doing what he loves and gave him the tools to reach his full potential.

When Andrew Maracle Sr. passed away, David and his family gathered at their parents' home to be together and remember their father.

"While walking through the house, I

knew dad had these spots that he did his crafts. I wanted to see dad's old leather place, where he used to make his stuff, and I was just feeling sad that day.

"I knew this little spot in the attic where there was a little trap door. I just felt compelled to push it open and look in there, you know. I walk around and there were all these carvings of mine," said Maracle. "Dad was breaking the bank; him and mom were going broke, giving me money to inspire me to be an artist. He was buying all my carvings and paying, keeping them, and he knew one day somebody would find him in the attic, I think."

David's father left a lasting mark on his community. A lecturer, Andrew Maracle Sr., spoke all the languages of the Iroquois Confederacy, and passed his knowledge of his people, history, and culture to those in the community, through storytelling.

"My dad was a residential school survivor," said Maracle. "He was in one of the first residential schools, and they beat him for speaking his language all the time. They didn't want to teach the children the language growing up, because they thought, they're just going to go through the hassle, and be beaten and criticized for having their culture and language. But later on, people were gathered around, and my dad was happy to dish it back out."

Maracle owns Eagle Pod Gallery, located on the Tyendinaga Mohawk Territory, where his art can be viewed and purchased. Maracle also has several music albums, which have sold more than one million records worldwide, and feature traditional Indigenous flute, and many other world instruments.

For more on Maracle's story, click on the link: <https://vimeo.com/loyalistphotoj/maracle>

# Birds have a special home in sanctuary

By Sabah Rahman

In the early 2000s, Marie-Élisabeth Gagnon was volunteering for the Toronto Humane Society, interviewing potential adopters for dogs. Gagnon was in her early 30s at the time and decided to take a break and, "Go on an adventure trip to Australia." It was there that she encountered the beauty of parrots firsthand.

The humane society where Gagnon continued to volunteer after her trip to Australia would receive a constant stream of birds being rescued or given up for adoption, among them most common were parakeets, commonly known as budgies, a form of parrot.

To support the birds that came into the shelter, Gagnon started doing research on the best ways to manage a bird and their diet. Soon enough, Gagnon became the unofficial local "expert" on exotic birds.

One time, around 30 budgies came into the shelter, Gagnon recalled. Gagnon volunteered to take the whole flock home and observe them to find the pairs that could be adopted out.

Gagnon spoke softly behind a mask while stroking the back of the head of a full-sized, white and pink-feathered cockatoo named Merlin. Merlin, who was fine to take a trip on Gagnon's shoulder during the interview and be out of her cage, would bob her head every so often and cry out, "I love you, Merlin."

Merlin would also start picking at her chest feathers every so often. Gagnon kept on gently nudging Merlin's head away from the spot to interrupt her habit, all the while Gagnon answered interview questions.

"I think parrots are very misunderstood because (people) see things (online) and (they think that) it's cute (that) it talks," said Gagnon, explaining that the Parrot Sanctuary evolved from wanting to educate people and facilitate a harmonious relationship so that people can properly care for them.

Gagnon remembers Sammy, a parrot, being almost naked, severely mutilated



Photo by Sabah Rahman

Marie-Elisabeth Gagnon gives Freddie, an Amazon parrot, a head scratch at the Parrot Sanctuary in Toronto.

with cuts, when he came in. Gagnon explains his owners tried to do their best, but Sammy, who was only a few inches tall, was put in the same cage as a macaw, more than five times its size if you consider its tail length.

In the wild, parrots, like other birds, fly across great distances solving complex problems while foraging or hunting for food. Well-meaning owners often put these parrots in cages with little to no intellectual stimulation or activities.

Sometimes enrichment itself is not enough. "(The parrots) can't reach above their neck, and the (other) birds usually preen them," said Gagnon. These behaviours are hard to be replicated by a hu-

man and for a single bird sitting in a cage all day with nothing to do.

"In the absence of something to do, they get into a zone like people do. I found the idea that a bird can voluntarily hurt themselves like people (can hurt themselves) to be horrifying," said Gagnon, referring to maladaptive behaviours that exotic birds in captivity often experience.

She focused on Sammy and worked with him on behavioural modification and co-operative husbandry has guided her work since then. "In the beginning stages, I would be heartbroken seeing birds that needed homes," said Gagnon.

"The big picture (of the Parrot Sanc-

tuary) is to facilitate how to care for an animal (properly) so that (the bird) does not go to the point of removing its feathers and (also stop) their self-destructive nature," explains Gagnon.

Gagnon has seen a growing trend of birds relinquished by an aging population who no longer have the resources to continue to care for their pets. A lot of people who have had a parrot for 30 years do not realize that the bird will still live another decade or so when they may be too old to care for them.

People also do not realize that natural behaviours for the parrots in the wild make them noisy pets to have around. In the wild, parrots would call back to each

other, so they could become incredibly loud in the small confines of people's homes.

As Gagnon continued to talk about how loud parrots can get, Merlin started mimicking whispering noises, as if to let her handler know that she could be quiet too. It is just one example of how intelligent parrots are and their ability to respond by mimicking human language in the context of a given situation.

Merlin's owner had fallen on challenging times and Merlin was being fed Cheerios that the owner had received from a food bank. Merlin developed the maladaptive behaviour of plucking the feather off her chest and exposing raw flesh beneath. When Merlin came in, Gagnon noted that Merlin had a history of ripping her own feathers.

Gagnon said she always found it fascinating when an animal chose to interact with you. Co-operative husbandry principles have been shown to have an enriching effect on the animal. Instead of forcing human will, the focus is on developing a more trusting relationship between handler and the animal.

Gagnon's husband, Kevin, who is in earshot, adds that from the sanctuary's point of view, trying to keep birds in place with their owners is a lot more economical and manageable than meeting the demand of a tidal wave of birds people give up because of varying reasons.

Gagnon talks about the \$4,000 it took to get one of the resident macaws his surgery for a broken leg. It got so desperate that Gagnon sent out an alert over social media for the first time requesting donations to cover the surgery cost.

The sanctuary is filled to the brim with more than 30 birds. The care of all the parrots is costly and has strained Gagnon and her husband's finances during COVID. To adopt or make a donation toward the care of Merlin and friends, please visit: <https://www.parrotsanctuary.ca/>



# Biker shares story of his notorious life

By Bradley Edgley

It is 7:08 a.m., eastern standard time, Feb. 1, and I am on the phone. As I sit, listening to the ring, gazing out the window at the pale-pink winter sunrise, I see the thermometer reading -11 degrees C.

It is also 1:08 p.m., central Europe time, Feb. 1, and a cool breeze flows through the bright sun of the Spanish countryside. The weather is warm, there is not a cloud in sight, and people are out enjoying the day. On the patio of a café, a man's phone rings.

"Hello?" I hear a gruff, hard voice ask. I return hello and ask the man how he is doing. "Well, thanks," the voice volleys back. It is the voice of George Christie, notorious outlaw biker, and infamous leader of the Hells Angels motorcycle club. Christie, 75, was born in Ventura, Calif., to a family of Greek immigrants. Currently, he is living in Spain, filming a television show.

Despite the rough sound of his voice, which has an engine-like quality in the way it grumbles and growls as he speaks, Christie is a natural storyteller. Certainly not a man lacking in life experience, Christie paints a vivid picture of some of the key stops along his journey. Do you remember the first time you saw a motorcycle? I asked.

"I do," said Christie. "It was the mid-'50s, in the San Fernando Valley. I was standing on the street corner with my father, and a guy rolled up on a chopped Harley Davidson. His jacket stood out to me, there was a significance to it and what it meant. The rider was getting a reaction or a look from everyone around him, but here was a guy who was not paying any attention to anything but riding; he had this metaphysical power over the people."

It is a strange thing to sit and listen to Christie recount this story to me. Suddenly, I am no longer staring at the snow-covered grounds outside my window. With my eyes closed, I am transported through time, standing on a street corner in California in 1956.

"My dad looked uncomfortable," Christie explains. "He was talking to another man and when the rider on the Harley took off, the man went into a rage. He looked at me, spat on the ground and said, 'That's your America.' You can view that experience as a positive or a negative, but it certainly had an effect on me. I thought, 'Geez, that's a lot of power... and he looked cool.' It left a lasting image on my life."

A decade later, Christie bought his first bike. At the time, it was important to build and maintain one's own bike. During the 1960s, the world of aftermarket and custom parts was non-existent. Motorcycles in this era were built stylistically by region. If a biker from the Bay area in San Francisco went to a bar down in southern California, Christie could tell just from the build of his ride. As a member of The Question Marks motorcycle club, Christie experienced the boom of the biker lifestyle.

"The outlaw bike scene was birthed in southern California, by returning veterans from World War Two," explained Christie. "These guys came



Submitted Photo

George Christie is shown in his early days as a biker. He became leader of the Hells Angels motorcycle club. He resigned as president of the club in 2011.

back from the war, they were displaced, they probably were suffering from undiagnosed PTSD, and looking for excitement, they gravitated together. There were the Booth Fighters, the 13 Rebels, the Galloping Goose, and the Pissed Off Bastards. The Bastards were from Bloomington. They split in half and became the Hells Angels."

In 1948, the American Motorcycle Association (AMA) disavowed these and other biker clubs, as the one per cent of the otherwise wholesome riders. Rallying around this, the clubs wrapped their arms around the sentiment of being the one per cent of riders, which Christie describes as the birth of the outlaw motorcyclist to the United States.

"What you have to understand," says Christie, "is this culture of biker clubs, is original to southern California. It's like jazz in New Orleans. It's an American original."

At the age of 19, Christie joined The Question Marks and by the time he was 30, was leading the Ventura California chapter of the Hells Angels motorcycle club. He would spend the next three decades battling law enforcement, rival biker gangs, and dissenting members of his own club. The lifestyle of an outlaw is a road that takes many turns and strays from the beaten path. Christie describes his life spent in the saddle as one spent free from control, in a true pursuit of

freedom.

His ultimate struggle came when trying to change the attitudes of his fellow club members. In an attempt to create peace among rival motorcycle clubs, Christie wanted to unite bikers against one common foe, the police. However, some wounds are too deep to heal. Decades of rivaling factions, wars in the streets of California, and the bodies that had piled up of former outlaws, were perhaps too ingrained within some members of Christie's club, or any of their rivals, for peace to ever truly exist.

In 2011, Christie resigned as president of the Hells Angels and was excommunicated as a result. A 2006 conspiracy to firebomb two Ventura tattoo shops saw Christie facing a mandatory life sentence if found guilty. Despite being found to not have directed anyone to commit the crime, by the court, Christie accepted responsibility for poor leadership of the club. The court accepted his plea, and after two years on house arrest recovering from double hip replacement surgery, Christie left for a federal prison in Texas, where he would spend the next year. In August of 2014, he was released from custody.

Christie currently serves as a consultant for defence attorneys, news outlets and works with first time offenders to understand the judicial process.



Submitted photo

George Christie, 74, in this 2021 photo.

# Library introduces new world of technology

By Christie Leja

Belleville Public Library has introduced a 3D printing class for children over March break and is showcasing a new world of technology available to residents of Belleville.

Jenny Pust, an information services librarian, who has been with the library since last April, spoke about the exciting opportunity this tool brings.

"3D printers are pretty popular right now in libraries. It gives the community the opportunity to learn new and emerging technologies."

While access to the printer has been open to the public since before Pust started, she has noticed an uptick in objects being printed since the library held its first virtual 3D Printing 101 class back in November of 2021. At the workshop, users learned how to find and download 3D models, design their own object files and prepare 3D object files for printing using MakerBot Print software. From there, users fill out a 3D Print form, found on the library's website, and library staff prints their object and will contact them when it's ready for pickup.

The library's desktop 3D printer, the MakerBot Replicator+, uses an extruder to melt plastic and lay it down on the print platform via a nozzle, like a computerized, super-accurate hot glue gun. To form a three-dimensional object, thin filaments of the melted plastic are applied layer by layer, and over time, create the model that was designed and uploaded to the machine.

Pust explains that currently the patrons using the machine have been adults and some of the prints have been quite extraordinary. From a doll

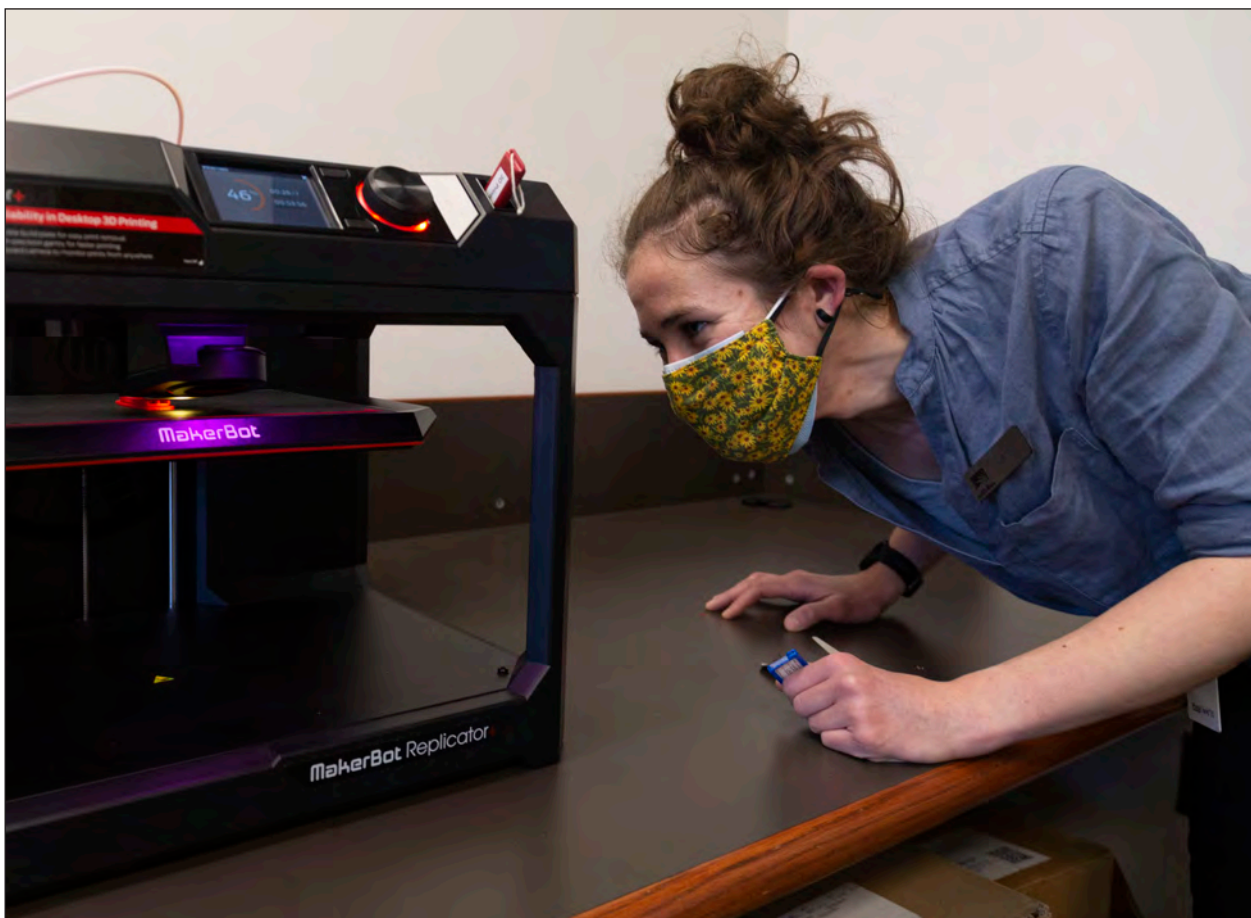


Photo by Christie Leja

Jenny Pust, information services librarian at Belleville Public Library, checks on a model being printed on their desktop 3D printer, the MakerBot Replicator+.

printed piece by piece, and a Star Trek Deep Space Nine spaceship, to phone holders and items for cable management, the options are endless when it comes to this 3D printing technology.

There are some limitations to the printing that users must keep in mind. There is a size maximum of 29.5 centi-

metre length x 19.5 centimetre width x 16.5 centimetre height, or three hours in print time for your print project, and the type of filament material the printer uses cannot be custom in colour, but can be sanded and painted with acrylic paint. Library staff has suggested breaking your project up

into smaller pieces, like the doll mentioned above, to create the project of your dreams.

"It's fun to do new things, and it's a great way to try the technology without having to buy it all," Pust adds.

Jonathan Powel, co-ordinator of

children's, youth & readers' services is in charge of organizing the children's March Break classes and hopes it becomes a staple in the library.

"We hope to provide a brief introduction to 3D printing (with these classes), with children designing a custom key chain. We will be offering a more in-depth four-week class for children in the spring," Powel says.

Feedback from the community has been so positive that the first class on March 14 is already full, and spaces are limited in the second class from 3 p.m. to 3:45 p.m. In the class, kids will learn about 3D printing, then design and print a custom key chain, using the 3D software Tinkercad. Although the age for the class starts at 7+, staff has confirmed classes will be best suited for children 10+.

As well as offering more in-depth 3D printing classes in the spring, the library will be bringing back its Saturday Club and after-school STEAM club.

Belleville resident, Rylie Dunn, who started working as a product development engineer at Hanon Systems after he graduated from the mechanical engineering program at McMaster University, was thrilled to learn the library has these resources for kids in the community.

"Kids learning how printers work is a fantastic idea. I know I would've loved one as a kid, being able to make my own toys, etc. I think it also brings them into the world of 3D computer design which is a huge asset for anyone considering STEM as they get older," Dunn explains.

To register for the 3D printing class, or other events happening at the library over March break, visit [bellevillelibrary.ca/marchbreak](http://bellevillelibrary.ca/marchbreak).