

February started with lots of shovelling. Within the Act Five house, each person has a house chore, like cleaning the bathroom, organizing the fridges, etc. Mine for this semester is the outside areas, including shovelling. There was one day when my activities for the day were cancelled due to shovelling and so I went and shovelled the sidewalk of the entire street. As a community house, the snow also meant that we were frequently summoned to push out people's cars as a house of sixteen people can free a car from a snowbank fairly quickly most of the time.

February was also the beginning of our placements. They are similar to a coop, they count as a course and each student has a placement with an organization around Hamilton. Usually these placements are in our respective vocations or the fields we'd like to work in in the future. Some people work at nonprofits like Indwell and 541 Eatery and Exchange. I get to work at the central branch of the Hamilton Public Library. Every Tuesday and Thursday I ride the bus downtown and walk into the library. It's a place of excitement and possibilities. But also, for many people it's a sanctuary. The library is a place where people can exist without an expectation to leave quickly or buy anything. From 8 am until midnight the library is open and on days with bad weather or when it's cold, homeless people will spend their time in the library and they are welcome to. I could go on forever about the absolute gift to the universe that libraries are and I greatly encourage you to go support your local library.

At the library I'm on a team with the people known as the "pages". They're the ones who shelve books, find books, organize books, collect the books that people have put on hold and so much more. I've loved the library my whole life and so it has been really cool to be able to see the behind the scenes of everything that goes on there. The systems are a lot more complex than you might think and it's amazing to get to be a part of something that's been such a big part of my life for such a long time.

February also ended with a lot of shovelling. However, this time it was because we were building quinzhees, not clearing sidewalks. We ventured out into the wilderness for a second time with Coldwater Canada, this time to go winter camping in Muskoka, about half way between Bracebridge and Gravenhurst. It was a lot of fun to spend four days becoming one with the snow. Overnight we slept in things called quinzhees, which are essentially just very large piles of snow that are then dug out. The difference between quinzhees and igloos is that igloos are cubes of ice or snow and quinzhees are piles. Quinzhees are perfectly safe to sleep in since once the snow settles they hold their own shape. The other really cool thing about them is that regardless of how cold it is outside, the internal temperature of the quinzhees will remain at about 0°C. While winter camping we got to experience a bunch of cool activities, like snowshoeing and carrying our gear on sleds. On a more personal level, it was an important experience for me because I grew up hearing stories from my dad about winter camping trips and now I have gone on one, even using some of the same gear he used decades ago. I had a ton of fun getting to become one with the snow and I fully intend to build another quinzhee next winter.

Spaghetti Wednesdays have restarted at Act Five and it would be great to get to see you come out to 75 Blake Street, Hamilton and join us for dinner at 6:00 pm. The remaining dates are March 26 and April 9 & 23!