

CULTURE SHOCK: Bohemian Nights in Charlottetown

by Mariève MacGregor

Take a bookstore, a little red and white wine, and a few eccentrics, and what do you have?

The Bohemian Literary Society, that's what. Since the Reading Well Bookstore opened six years ago, they have hosted numerous readings and literature-related events open to all eager book-enthusiasts. Now they have their own club.

The first meeting of the BLS was Tuesday night on September 23. Thirty-one bohemian-type-peoples showed up for the reading, which made it a packed house. (Yes, by all means enough to fill the space). It was a crowd of all ages, from the golden oldies to the mid-life artsy-fartsies to the

enthralled UPEI students. It's a wonder more people weren't in attendance, with readings by Poet Laureate John Smith, local Baba's bouncer and poet John MacKenzie, and Miq'mak poet Charlie Greg Sark. All three gents were made the first honorary members of the BLS.

Charlie Greg Sark opened the evening with poems about his people, poems about life and childhood, and some poems for humours' sake. John MacKenzie read poems which focussed mainly on PEI landscape and home life. He captured the energy that exists in the still winter months. He brought us to the beach with lines like, "You hear the miram grass sandpaper the wind." John Smith finished the evening with reading some Marcel Proust and Wallace

Stevens, as well as a few of his own works, which included a poem about a squirrel, and the Book of Squirrel.

Past events at the Reading Well were always held à la "Bohemian Literary Café." When the bookstore relocated for the third time this summer onto Water Street, the word "café" was removed from the title and from the window printings. The owner of the Reading Well, Louise Vergnano, realised this name enticed people more with the prospect of coffee than it did the prospect of books. The affiliation with food was also getting out of hand. She also felt the window looked a little ridiculous with only "Bohemian Literary" printed there. And so, a society was born, relieving Louise from brewing gallons of coffee and saving the window from pains of embarrassment.

So if you loved the "café" before and aren't sure about this whole "society" thing, well, they're the same thing. Just revamped.

Membership into the BLS is \$20.00 annually, which includes free admittance to all readings and events and the membership card acts much like the old "Rebel Reader" card. Don't worry, you still get 10% off of everything. But these cards are much cooler. The Rebel cards were so passe anyway. The membership fees also help to bring in artists and authors for these events since, you know, it's nice if we can pay them. If membership isn't your style and you have a phobia of commitment, fret ye not. Each event is a mere two bucks (\$2) if you're more inclined to the 'pay-as-you-go' idea.

The society also has a nifty new website at www.rebelreader.com. You'll find information on upcoming events, what's available from the Reading Well, and a section to put up unpublished work on the website.

The BLS will meet the first Tuesday of every month at 7:30pm for readings and wine. Check out the website for this year's line up.

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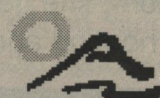
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