

العرش العربي

The Arabs at Dal

BY FADI MASOUD AND ADEL ISKANDAR

The story of the Dalhousie Arabic Society (DALAS) is one of dreamy ambition and glimmering success.

Since its establishment by Faisal Shehab Nasser, DALAS has undergone a period of exponential growth. The society was registered as an official Dalhousie Student Union (DSU) B-class society in February of 1994 with an initial membership list of 5 council members and no non-council members.

In its first year of establishment, DALAS organized a cultural exhibition in the SUB lobby to perpetuate knowledge about Arabian culture. Although rather premature, the exhibition displayed presentations from 6 of the 22 Arab nations.

With a membership list of 40 registered members, the society's second year — actually its first year of operation — was highlighted by two major events. The first was the annual cultural exhibition

which occupied much of the Green room on November 29, 1995. The displays from 12 Arab nations attracted several hundred onlookers.

However, the year's climax occurred with the formal *Arabian Night* banquet. Held in the McInnes room on January 12, 1996, this sold-out show consisted of a dozen Arabian folk dances, a cultural fashion show, and other traditional displays from many of the Arab countries.

DALAS also organized and offered a series of weekly Arabic language classes for beginners, especially non-Arabs, which will begin again in January.

Tarek Abouamin of CKDU's *Radio Egypt*, a member of DALAS, helped promote and establish an official radio broadcast for the society. *The Arabic Voice* is deejayed by DALAS members to offer Metro Halifax a wide variety of cultural music, and the latest news from the Arab World. Another radio show affiliated with DALAS is Firas El-Banna's *Mount Lebanon*.

Faisal Nasser received the honorary member of the year

award at the DSU Appreciation Night in recognition of his strenuous efforts. The society was presented with a DSU Appreciation award for the group's contribution to Dalhousie. In concluding the year, a new council was elected with Hazem Al-Agez as president.

During the summer, the new council not only created a firm foundation of sponsorship, but arranged several cultural dance performances for the Multicultural Festival, the Red Cross, and several high schools in the Metro area. A BBQ was held at Point Pleasant Park and a summer beach party was held on McNab's Island.

With a total of 60 members as it enters its third year, DALAS is hoping to achieve its original objectives of promoting and familiarizing Nova Scotia with Arabian culture, and to see the creation of comfortable homey surroundings for the Arabs at Dalhousie and throughout the city. Everyone and anyone is encouraged to attend the society's biweekly Friday meetings and all other DALAS events.

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Secret

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This group is unique to the province and has been proven an essential support for gay youth. Members are given the opportunity to meet with other youths of the same sexual orientations at weekly meetings. The meetings are open to everyone and there is no obligation to attend regularly. They usually begin with a social "hang out" period in a "gay friendly" environment; an atmosphere, generally, that is hard to find. Meeting topics, from gay and lesbian parents to safe sex, are picked by members and discussed. Some nights, though, are reserved for pizza, movies and board games.

The Lesbian, Gay, and Bisexual

Youth Project has a wide range of contacts throughout the province, including gay-positive individuals, for gays to contact. Young people who are gay, lesbian, or bisexual, especially those in rural areas, often feel alienated as they are often the only people of their orientation. The youth project plays an important role in getting these youths in contact with others of the same orientation and in educating them on the history and culture of the homosexual community. The youth group has done over 250 interactive, educational seminars for schools, businesses and various other organizations to assist young individuals and groups removing homophobia and heterosexism from their environments.

Aaron Wright claimed the youth group to be "very successful" in achieving their goals. In fact, the Youth Project was al-

lowed to do two workshops for "Young lives 2", a conference for Ontario's gay, lesbian and bisexual youth that was held in Toronto last weekend.

The Youth Project also provides an avenue of community and political action for these Nova Scotian youth, such as the Pride March and letter writing campaigns. Other projects include an annual retreat for gay, lesbian and bisexual youth — where youth camp out and relax away from the stresses of society and its biases — and OUTLine, a toll-free, anonymous support line staffed by members of the group under 25.

The Lesbian, Gay, and Bisexual Youth Group can be contacted through Planned Parenthood @ 492-0444 during regular hours or through the OutLine @ 1-800-566-2437, on Saturdays between 5:30 and 9:30 pm. Both are confidential and sometimes the voice at the other end can be a life saver.

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