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Determination is crucial for success

Inner City High students work towards a better life



Katrina, Naomi, Isaiah, and Kirkland, along with the other students, are determined to work against odds and succeed. | Rebecca Lippiatt

NADINE RIOPEL

Students at Inner City High School, a school for high-risk youth, are self-aware about personal responsibility.

"It's all on you if you're going to succeed," stressed Kirkland, whose cousins suggested he attend the school after he was kicked out of his home in Maskwacis. "You've got to be determined. The negative experiences push you to succeed. Everybody has hardships. It's how you deal with them."

Of the seven teens I interviewed, none live with their parents. They live with friends and/or siblings. Some work part time, but most receive Learner Income Support Benefits of less than \$900 a month to cover basic living expenses.

The school provides a different educational experience than most schools. Classes are smaller, students and teachers are on a first name basis, and everyone is put on the same level through practices like

sitting in circle instead of a more conventional classroom setup. Each student also receives individual academic assessments.

The students report better communication and more of a community within the school. At other schools they've attended, such as M.E. LaZerte and Ross Sheppard, they say that the teachers care, but they have too many students to provide the kind of attention needed.

"At my old school," said Kirkland, "it focused on independent learning; here the focus is on you."

In addition to academics, the school provides assistance in sorting out housing, food, and medical needs so that students can focus on their studies.

This means a lot to students like Naomi, who said, "From a young age, I loved school as a place to expand my horizons, but for a while that got driven out by bad teachers and bullying. I came to Inner City

and got the support I needed to succeed without worrying about basic needs."

Kaesha credits the school with changing her path. "I'm going to graduate now, and I probably wouldn't have."

Kaesha admitted that for her first year there, she wasn't making good use of her time.

"One day I was talking to my auntie and she said that the school did so much for me but I wasn't trying to meet them halfway. Now I am."

The quieter members of the group echoed their classmates' sentiments.

"I want a better life in the future," said Isaiah, whose passion for sports helps motivate him.

Shayla said she stays in school, "So I can be successful and get the job I want, maybe something like being a vet."

Katrina described herself as "independent...my mom kicked

me out." She nearly dropped out of school altogether before friends told her about the school. She stays because of "the teachers we have and the resources the school gives."

Kaesha said, "A lot of us are here because it's hard for us to attend other schools because of outside circumstances. So be a little understanding. We're trying."

Added Kirkland, half joking, "We're not that bad. It's not like we're all criminals!"

These youth are working hard against some tough odds. Between the school's support and their own determination, I have high hopes that they will find success.

Nadine Riopel is a professional facilitator and connector. She is also an enthusiastic member of the Spruce Avenue community, where she lives with her husband and young son.

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Residents share ideas during city workshop

Alberta Avenue slated for upcoming neighbourhood renewal

ALITA RICKARDS

Participants at the Alberta Avenue Community Walk and Ideas Workshop on Feb. 10 appreciated the mild - 6 C weather since everyone had ideas about how to renew Alberta Avenue's mature neighbourhood.

The high level of public engagement is what City of Edmonton project managers had hoped for.

"A big part of the walk is that it's so great to see firsthand, and it sparks these natural conversations," said Debbie Cashion-Kalinowski, city project manager. "We get a better understanding because we see it too."

Alberta Avenue's neighbourhood renewal is scheduled to last twice as long as most neighbourhoods due to its size. Work

on residential roads, sidewalks, and other potential upgrades will be ongoing from spring 2019 to fall 2022.

"The best benefit is to make it more community friendly," said Emily Zukowski, city project manager. "Small perks we can add to make life more enjoyable, or big perks depending on the budget."

The city will invest approximately \$60 million, with sidewalk reconstruction split equally between homeowners and the municipality.

Workshop organizers held activities to help participants share their ideas, including walking around Alberta Avenue, creating speech bubbles, collaborating on envisioning projects, and sketching how they might look.

One idea was to make St. Faith Park an official dog park by closing off each end (it's

already being used by pooches informally).

Terry Ferguson, who uses a motorized scooter, said that because of the lack of curb ramps, her mobility is limited, forcing her to detour to find ways to cross the street.

"I want to see everyone in Alberta Ave have wheelchair ramps at both ends [of sidewalks]," Ferguson said.

Cora Shaw, a long-time resident who uses a walker, agreed with Ferguson.

"Accessibility is a big one, being able to walk the community. When you have no ramps it's difficult to maneuver," Shaw said.

Other participants voiced their interest in local art and culture.

"There's a lot of rich history. Seeing statues and plaques in the parks to talk about the history and pay homage to the art

culture, [and] have art pieces from local artists would make walking more interesting," said Jermaine Smith.

His wife, Mélanie Légaré, voiced the practical worries of many women in the area.

"The biggest thing is connectivity to get places. The bus stop to my home doesn't feel super safe because there's not enough lighting."

Gérard Forget, community garden coordinator for Alberta Avenue, had another concern: "I'm very much into trying to improve social issues and incorporate this into the planning of the infrastructure. What would deter the johns and drug dealers?"

Others want improved or new bike lanes, with a potential shared use path along 96 Street. But the renewal program doesn't address alleys.

"A new program will be

coming in to look at that. You can't rip out the entirety of a neighbourhood. Folks still need to live there while all this is going on," said Cashion-Kalinowski.

The workshop fulfilled some of what Cashion-Kalinowski was hoping for: "There's an opportunity to talk and get to know neighbours," she said.

Stay tuned for further involvement at edmonton.ca/BuildingAlbertaAvenue. More info at edmonton.ca/localimprovements.

Alita moonlights as a freelance writer focused on interesting people, music, arts, food, culture, sustainable lifestyles, and human rights. These same things attracted her to become a homeowner in vibrant, diverse, walkable Alberta Avenue.



Participants share and examine ideas about neighbourhood renewal. | Alita Rickards



Terry Ferguson was unable to join the walk around the community because of a lack of curb ramps. | Alita Rickards

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ABOUT US

We are a non-profit community newspaper serving Alberta Avenue, Delton, Eastwood, Elmwood Park, Parkdale-Cromdale, Spruce Avenue, and Westwood. The opinions expressed in the paper are those of the people named as authors of the articles and do not necessarily reflect those of the board or staff.

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Build Community, Encourage Communication, Increase Capacity.

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I ♥ my RCP

Local business struggles to stay afloat

Bedouin Beats hopes to increase interest in belly dancing

AYDAN DUNNIGAN-VICKRUCK

“Anybody, any body” is the motto of Bedouin Beats co-owners Michelle Kaplan and Stacie Clarke.

“It doesn’t matter what body size or age or ability, belly dancing can work for you,” said Kaplan.

But that’s a tough sell these days. Clarke recently posted on their Facebook page: “With registration and sales at record lows, we are not sure how long we can sustain this business as we hoped we could. If you had been considering taking a class, now is definitely the time to register.”

Clarke said the drop in business could be attributed to the fact that interest in activities like belly dancing tends to go in cycles.

“Belly dancing really took off 2008 in North America. In some respects, it was kind of a fitness fad which has started to wear off the past couple of years. People need to appreciate that belly dancing has something that brings richness to their lives at so many levels. It is certainly a way to get fit, but also an exotic way to learn about your body and express it with rhythm and beauty,” said Clarke.

Kaplan added, “I don’t know how many times women have come up to me and said, ‘I could never do that,’ or ‘I don’t have the right body shape to dance in public.’ The unique thing about belly dancing is that there is no right body shape. Everything works. It

is an art form, a mode of self-expression. Everybody is unique and everyone expresses themselves uniquely.”

Clarke said another problem may be that dance isn’t as prominent or culturally significant in Canada as it is in other countries and cultures.

“Belly dancing comes from the Middle East with a unique style of music. It took me a while before I grew to love it,” said Clarke.

The owners say Alberta Avenue has been a good place to operate a business.

“Community support has been tremendous. Very encouraging. We love being part of all the festivals like Kaleido and SkirtsAfire. There are four studios in Edmonton, but we are the mothership. No competition; co-operation. [We] participate in each other’s shows. Edmonton is special in that way. We value working together rather than being in competition,” said Clarke.

That said, more arts would make Alberta Avenue more business friendly.

“It is a challenge to make a viable business in dance,” said Clarke. “We have developed into a spectator society. We would rather sit back and watch someone do something fabulous on TV than get up and do it ourselves, put in the effort. It certainly takes time to learn to dance.”

While it can be a challenge to learn to dance, Bedouin Beats can help with that.

“I teach basic music courses on how to recognize a

down beat, which has to come before even learning how to move your body,” said Kaplan.

Bedouin Beats will also be holding a student showcase featuring all levels of dancers on April 8 at the Westbury Theatre at the ATB Financial Arts Barns.

“We hope to remain open for a long time. The studio has evolved into an incredible and loving place for dancers to eventually and openly call home. It has become our home as well,” said Clarke.

Aydan is a social worker, blogger, tango dancer, outdoor enthusiast and co-parent with Patricia to eight children and 16 grandchildren. He’s also a resident of the ‘hood and loving it.

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www.bedouinbeats.com/classes.php



Bedouin Beats has been part of Alberta Avenue for a long time and could use some increased business. | Kazoo Productions

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Bringing residents together in summer project

Summer job and internship opportunities available for community engagement work

STEPHEN STRAND

With 100 blocks and over 6,000 people living in the Alberta Avenue community, it is easy to become disconnected and not know those living in the neighbourhood. The Alberta Avenue Community League wishes to change that with its Neighbour Connect Project.

“We are hiring, at the moment, 12 positions this summer,” said Lenn Wheatley, neighbourhood connector with Alberta Avenue Community League.

The league is hiring two full-time summer student posi-

tions, known as neighbourhood engagement coordinators, and 10 student interns. The summer students and interns will support the Neighbourhood Connect Project.

“We will go to a block and do an event, so that we can make connections on that block, and so neighbours can meet each other,” explained Karen Mykietka, facility and program manager with Alberta Avenue Community League. “That’s why it’s called the Neighbour Connect Project. It’s about getting neighbours connected to each other. When neighbours are connected and know each

other, the neighbourhood is safer. They can watch out for each other.”

The full-time positions are 16 weeks long, begin May 1, and pay \$15 an hour for 35 hours per week. The interns will be asked to work between 60 to 100 hours over the summer for a \$1,000 bursary. The full-time positions require student applicants who are returning to school in the fall.

The community league applied for funding from the provincial and federal governments for the two full-time positions. The internships are through Volunteer

Alberta’s Serving Communities Internship Program. Check eligibility criteria at joinscip.ca.

“We are going to hire one full-time person regardless,” added Mykietka. “But if we get funding, it will allow us to hire two people.” And they really need two people because they have an ambitious plan in place.

During the summer months, the plan is to host 50 different activities on 50 different blocks to help connect the people who live there. On top of that, organizers also plan to make contact with at least some people on all 100 blocks.

“Without the people power,

we cannot do it,” explained Mykietka. Wheatley added that the project will also require numerous community volunteers. If you are interested in helping out, email engage@albertaave.org. A volunteer sign up for tasks and events is coming soon.

To learn more about the positions and the project, visit the Alberta Avenue Community League website albertaave.org.

Stephen writes for fun. He can be seen walking through the neighbourhood with a bag covered in pins and filled with books and notepads.



This summer, Alberta Avenue neighbourhood residents can look forward to plenty of events meant to connect the community. | Supplied

Council discusses the Coliseum site’s fate

Options are limited when re-developing the site

CADENCE BERGMAN

The debate over the Coliseum site’s future is ongoing, but the city’s executive committee supported Mayor Don Iveson’s motion to confirm the closure of the Coliseum. City council will vote on the motion on Feb. 27.

On Feb. 22, city administration presented a report about re-developing the site. Estimates for demolition costs are \$15-20 million, and the yearly cost of maintaining the empty building is \$1.5 million. Having the site sit empty is not ideal, but there are problems with immediately taking it to the market.

Questions remain about the future of the building, its 17-acre site, and the adja-

cent land, which includes the Edmonton Expo Centre, Northlands Park, Borden Park, and two major transit stations.

Community members were on hand to speak at the meeting, including Jim Gendron and Brian Finley from Parkdale-Cromdale and Bellevue. They support a group called the District G Community Collaboration, which includes community leagues adjacent to the planning area.

“At the first meeting, we agreed on the need for a strengthened and active role with nearby communities in defining the future of the exhibition lands,” said Gendron.

Rob Bernshaw, who also spoke at the meeting, presented a vision of the Coliseum building re-purposed as affordable

housing.

City officials recommend that council complete its work on a development concept for the 160-acre site and consider offering the land to the market when a coordinated vision for the area has been finalized. This would likely be in 2019.

Council’s options are limited when it comes to finding other purposes for the Coliseum building, since an agreement between the city and the Oilers Entertainment Group (OEG) stipulates that the building cannot be used for sports or entertainment.

Last September, council supported the intention to close the Coliseum, but the formal motion hasn’t yet passed. Council committed in principle to closing the Coliseum, and

the OEG agreed to release the city from a sponsorship commitment that required the city to pay \$2 million a year for 10 years.

The project is still exploring ideas. By the middle of 2018, the city’s goal is to gather ideas, study them for feasibility, and produce a short list.

Gendron is optimistic about continued engagement with the project, but said some opportunities haven’t been realized, and the city needs to build trust with neighbourhoods surrounding the planning area.

“This is a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity for city building. The planning area covers in excess of 140 acres that are strategically located near the heart of the city with numerous existing amenities,” Gendron said.

Gendron explained the Stadium Station Area Redevelopment Plan (ARP) will bring high-density housing opportunities and possible services and access.

“Success will ultimately turn on how well the proposed developments fit into the existing community. This can only be accomplished by having the community engaged in a meaningful, authentic, well-planned and constructive way to help frame decisions that account for the local residents throughout the life cycle of the project,” Gendron said.

For more information, visit edmonton.ca/exhibitionlands.

SkirtsAfire celebrates female-centric work

Annual festival brings audiences together to enjoy art

MARI SASANO

Actor Annette Loisel has always intuitively known that women were at a disadvantage in the arts, but it took her some time to really pin it down.

"I don't know if there was a specific point, because when I was in theatre school it didn't even occur to me that things are stacked against us," Loisel said. "Even though, when I auditioned for the BFA program, one of their stipulations when they were putting together a class for that year [was] it had to be two-thirds men and one-third women."

She figured most of her classmates were men because most of the roles in plays were for men. But as she progressed in her career, she noticed that she and her peers would be competing for the same small pool of work, while men had a much

broader choice. She noticed, too, that directors and artistic directors were almost all men, even though most students in theatre school were women.

Over time, it became clear to her that lack of opportunity created an imbalance in which artists end up working and in what audiences end up seeing. In 2012, she took things into her own hands and held the first SkirtsAfire Festival, a multi-disciplinary festival focusing on women as creators of art.

The festival defines womanhood as anyone who identifies as a woman, and Loisel stresses that it's important for the festival to show work by and for women in all our diversity.

"I try to see as much as I can, but theatre is my discipline and I'm not an expert on the other arts. I hire curators. Visual arts, spoken word, choir festival, new play development. I rely on other experts."

This means providing opportunities for artists to step into a leadership role, like visual artist Lana Whiskeyjack, curator of this year's visual arts exhibition, *The Wombs We Come From*, showing at the Nina Haggerty's Stollery Gallery.

"Her work was in the festival last year, and so I asked her to curate, and that's not something she'd done before, but she's versatile and knows a lot of artists in the Indigenous community, and I wanted her to make that a focus of the show. I love meeting artists from different communities of artists. I want to be really open to as many different voices as possible."

When so many women come together, interesting connections and collaborations can result.

"I love the synergy of different artists from different disciplines," she said. For example, a conversation with spoken word

curator and Edmonton's youth poet laureate Nasra Adem led to including musician Stephanie Harpe in the *Words Unzipped* spoken word night on March 9.

Loiselle hopes that by bringing together so many artists, she can spark conversations and provide a chance for networking in an open, organic setting.

"For the A-Line Variety Show, that's sort of the opening night, they're all there and they all see each other's work and you hope some connections get made there. For over 100 artists who are performing, we encourage them to come to other events."

The A-Line Variety Show, held on International Women's Day (March 8), showcases a little of everything, from music to dance to the all-women and non-binary improv comedy troupe, the Rapid Fire SPHINXES. Wind down with dance parties on Friday (with

the Kimberley MacGregor Band) and on Saturday (with Amy van Keeken's Rock and Roll Sing-a-Long).

"It's not about creating an audience. The audiences are there; it's [about] bringing them together, getting the word out, about amazing work being done by women. Come out and see it."

Mari is a writer and civil servant.

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1PM - 5PM			THE KEY OF SHE AT THE CARROT 1:00pm - 3:00pm THE CARROT SILENCED 2:00pm - 3:00pm CABARET THEATRE A PLACE FOR PROSE 2:00pm - 4:00pm NINA HAGGERTY GALLERY SKIRT DESIGN GALLERY 3:00pm - 5:00pm CABARET THEATRE	THE KEY OF SHE AT THE CARROT 1:00pm - 3:00pm THE CARROT THE ROMEO INITIATIVE 1:30pm - 3:30pm CABARET THEATRE PEEP SHOW! IN THE PLACE OF STARS 3:30pm - 4:30pm NINA HAGGERTY GALLERY
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9PM - 11PM		FRIDAY NIGHT DANCE PARTY THE KIMBERLEY MACGREGOR BAND 10:00pm - 11:00pm CABARET THEATRE	SATURDAY NIGHT DANCE PARTY AMY VAN KEEKEN'S ROCK AND ROLL SING A LONG 10:00pm - 11:00pm CABARET THEATRE	

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EDITORIAL

Challenges and rewards of modern teaching

Diversity in the classroom depends on a community of support

KATE WILSON

Increased diversity in classrooms brings a huge importance in encouraging inclusivity.

A participant in a 2014 study on inclusivity in Alberta schools expressed the experience of a contemporary classroom: “I find it more and more difficult to support these students as the needs of students increase, class sizes increase, the complexity of students increases, and the complexity of social situations becomes more dire.”

A school superintendent in the same study echoed the sentiment. “Teachers’ roles are becoming more diverse, and so . . . teachers are definitely needing further training and further opportunities to collaborate to be prepared to address the needs of their students.”

The University of Alberta study, completed for the Alberta Teachers’ Association, was published in Report of the Blue Ribbon Panel on Inclusive Education in Alberta Schools. Despite highlighting the challenges, teachers and school administrators were overwhelmingly in support of the principle of inclusion.

As one participant noted: “Inclusion is the ideal . . . Students feel like part of the classroom family and we help each other out. They gain a sense of empathy and responsibility.”

Today’s classrooms are large, diverse communities. At the same time, Alberta teachers have been describing inclusion as one of their biggest areas of

concern.

It’s a timely discussion, and recently it’s been shining a light on “the paradox of growing exclusion in the classrooms of societies that profess to be inclusive.”

The above statement, made by Linda Graham and Markku Jahnukainen of Macquarie University in Australia and University of Alberta in 2011, highlights that while inclusive education offers equal opportunities, it can also contribute to student segregation.

The researchers compared inclusive school models in Finland, Alberta, and New

South Wales (Australia) in the early 21st century, within the wider landscape of expanded options for students with learning disabilities.

South Wales (Australia) in the early 21st century, within the wider landscape of expanded options for students with learning disabilities.

South Wales (Australia) in the early 21st century, within the wider landscape of expanded options for students with learning disabilities.



Classrooms are becoming more diverse. | Pixabay

South Wales (Australia) in the early 21st century, within the wider landscape of expanded options for students with learning disabilities.

The authors discovered that as funding follows these students, it creates incentives for schools to identify them within categories that bring the highest funds. One possible unintended result is an increase in the labelling, diagnosis and, in some cases, student segregation.

They noted that Finland bypassed the effects of catego-

framework, and a new inclusive education funding model was launched in 2012/13. The Alberta Education website states inclusive education funding is currently allocated through a formula geared toward ensuring an equitable distribution of funding.

According to Alberta Education, inclusion “is an attitude and approach that embraces diversity and learner differences and promotes equal opportunities for all learners in Alberta.” It is not just about

learners with special needs; instruction rather than setting is the key to success.

Schools are embracing the challenges and the opportunities. Edmonton Public Schools’ Diversity Education unit offers resources and cultural awareness to all schools, its major work guided by principles of multicultural education and sexual orientation and gender identity. Nine service teams offer schools services ranging from individual child consultation to specialized assessment.

Marlene Hanson, Edmonton Public School’s director of diversity education, explained

one testament to the stakes involved. In their final report in 2015, researchers noted the tremendous support for the project from teacher organizations, showing that teachers understand that safety requires inclusion.

Another priority is support for Indigenous studies and students. Under the province’s Education for Reconciliation, learning specific to First Nations, Métis and Inuit perspectives as well as content on residential schools and treaties, is part of the curriculum.

Teachers, government, teacher organizations and school boards are demonstrating their approval of inclusion. At the same time, classrooms are getting more diverse. They reflect the wider community, and being part of a community is the true meaning of inclusion, according to one Alberta educator.

Hanson agreed. She said partnerships with organizations such as the Mennonite Centre for Newcomers and Catholic Social Services are vital and community plays a critical role in schools.

Because that community includes everyone, we all have a role.

Kate took up the reporter’s pad and pen while living in northern Alberta. The writing bug stuck, and the next 20 years were spent covering everything from local politics to community happenings. She lives in Alberta Avenue with her daughter.

the intercultural services unit as well as consultants on staff and in the community offer things like language translation.

In its 2016/17 report, Edmonton Catholic Schools noted teacher training in a social-emotional learning program. Teachers received further training for things like decreasing stigma and providing in-school supports for students who seek help.

The Every Teacher Project on LGBTQ-inclusive education in Canada’s schools is

LETTER TO THE EDITOR

Response to “Enforcement agencies focus on trivialities” in February issue

The law was set in place so that a population with a variety of backgrounds, a variety of cultures, and a variety of beliefs could have one set of rules on how to co-exist. This means there are penalties for infractions of that *commonly* agreed-to law.

Mr. Millie refers to jaywalking fines as trivial and a waste of resources. Consider the situation if jaywalking was commonly acceptable. Pedestrian traffic would become completely unpredictable and vehicle traffic slowed greatly. And since pedestrians, not vehicles have the right of way, there would be chaos. If people become accustomed to crossing the street where they wish, would it become acceptable to not stop at stop signs when driving, or

to just drive through if there is enough room, and if no vehicle is coming?

In order to live in a community and in a civil society, it is necessary for everyone to do what works best for the greatest number of people. Sometimes people don’t like it and don’t believe in it. But, that’s how a democracy works.

So don’t criticize the cops and the people enforcing the city’s bylaws. They are for the most part nice people, doing their best to make Alberta Avenue a better place to live, and they have been strong partners in our journey to get here. We owe them.

Alberta Avenue went from a place with a very bad rep, to currently undergoing an amazing revitalization with their

help. We also have had the help of a strong community league and a lot of money from the City of Edmonton. We have festivals, we have activities, we have clubs, and so much more. We have the cops at The Carrot. Our bakeries and restaurants have groupies from other parts of the city. All of it makes us a neighbourhood worthy of being on the evening news regularly.

And to continue to be a thriving community, we need rules that apply equally to everyone, and we need to have the rules enforced, and we need to have it known by everyone within the community that the rules will be enforced.

Linda Thompson
Alberta Avenue resident

EDITORIAL NOTE:

We apologize for not identifying our three opinion pieces on pages 6, 7, and 13 in the February issue as such. A few people reacted to Adam Millie’s article “Enforcement agencies focus on trivialities,” as you can see from the above letter. Differences of opinion are fine and we support respectful discussion and debate on issues. Please send us Letters to the Editor about any of our articles or other community issues about which you would like to voice an opinion.

OPINION

Choosing where to send your child to school

Decide what you want for your child's school experience

NADINE RIOPEL

My four-year-old son will be entering kindergarten next year and it's got me thinking about which school he will attend and what I believe about schools.

Schools should act as community hubs, creating relationships between families that endure for years and contribute to neighbourhood resiliency. This is particularly important in inner city neighbourhoods like ours.

Schools should contain a wide variety of kids, with as many income levels, ethnicities, ability levels, and other demographics as possible. Kids then learn that not everyone looks the same, thinks the same, talks the same, or lives the same. Homogeneity in schools means some schools end up with all the high needs kids and resource-

strapped parents while others have a glut of parent volunteers and high achievers. I don't think that's the best way, either for the kids or for the society for which we're preparing them.

One of the most important functions of a school, especially in the early years, is to teach kids how to be part of a group, manage interpersonal relations, handle authority, and work within a system. This is especially true of systems that aren't perfect, as kids will encounter those throughout their lives. These lessons are at least as important as the academic ones we often think of first as the reason we send our kids to school.

Because of these beliefs, my husband and I will be sending our son to the neighbourhood public school.

Meanwhile, I've noticed many of my peers from around

the area do not plan to do the same. When I hear why, it's tough to fault them for it.

One reason is the desire for children to learn a second language, which drives parents to choose an immersion school. As a product of French immersion schools, I struggled with this one myself.

Others are motivated by the fact that their neighbourhood school is actually nowhere their home due to how the boundaries are drawn. If your kid is going to have to cross several big, busy streets to get to school, is it really in your neighbourhood at all?

Academics are a big concern. Since our local schools tend to have more high needs students, parents worry that their own children will not get their share of the teachers' time and attention.

Social factors also play into

it. As one mother pointed out to me, "environment matters." Children are influenced by their peers. If those peers are involved in high-risk behaviours, it increases the risk that our own kids will follow suit.

For all these reasons, I understand being wary of the neighbourhood schools. But I also know my peers and I represent some of the most fortunate of residents in our neighbourhoods.

We are the ones with the resources to volunteer, to advocate, to help our kids with their homework, to have homes where other kids can come hang out and feel safe. If we all check out of the neighbourhood public system and take our resources with us, the worrying reasons that make us leery of it will only get worse, and our neighbourhoods will get worse right along with them.

In five years, I might be eating these words. I might be shell shocked and exhausted by the experience of engaging with an inner city public school. I might be wishing we had sent our son to French immersion in a suburb somewhere. You never know.

But for now, although I admit there are some persuasive cons, I think they are outweighed by the pros. We've decided, for now at least, that the potential benefits to my son, my family, and my community of sticking with the local public school are worth it.

Nadine is a professional facilitator and connector. She is also an enthusiastic member of the Spruce Avenue community, where she lives with her husband and young son.



When choosing a school, think about what you want your child to get out of the experience. | Pixabay

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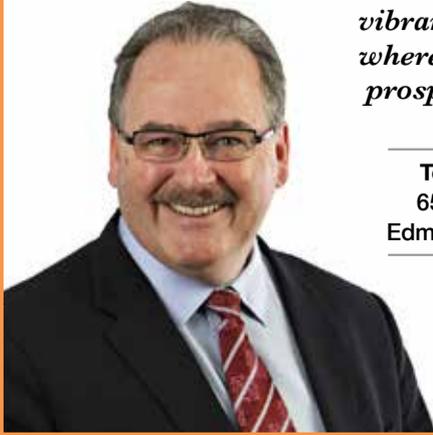


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Sample contemporary and traditional flavours

Babylon Restaurant shares Middle Eastern and Iraqi fare

BREANN GURNEY

Babylon Restaurant is new to 118 Avenue since the end of December. Located inside the Coliseum Inn, the restaurant delivers authentic Middle Eastern and Iraqi cuisine.

The restaurant blends contemporary and traditional flavours of the Middle East and offers a comprehensive menu selection. On the weekends, a buffet is available with different food each week for \$25 per adult and \$10 for kids.

Eager to expand our list of dining hotspots in Edmonton, my dinner companion and I went out to eat at Babylon Restaurant. We felt instantly transported to the Middle East upon entering the restaurant

with the vibrant brown, red, gold, and white decor, and the pleasant smells wafting from the kitchen.

When we arrived, our waitress greeted us, offering us menus, complimentary bowls of soup, and a plate of soft, fresh Iraqi flatbread. She then disappeared with no trace of our drink order; she delivered it 15 minutes later. Be prepared to do some tableside Googling or talk to your server if you're unfamiliar with the cuisine, as there aren't any meal descriptions in the menu.

For dinner, we ordered the Shawarma plate (\$18), made up of spit-roasted and spiced beef wrapped in a pita and served with french fries, and the Lebanese Kofta plate (\$17.50) consisting of grilled lamb

kebabs wrapped in a pita and served with yellow rice topped with almonds.

Included with each dish is a side of rice or french fries, hummus, garlic sauce, Iraqi flatbread, and pickled vegetables. A word from my dinner partner: if you don't like parsley, tell your server skip it, as you get a generous portion on top of your food.

Our food was fresh and plentiful. Their servings were large enough that we each brought home leftovers for lunch the next day.

Despite the meat in the Shawarma having a powdery texture I didn't care for, the flatbread was soft and chewy, the rice was well seasoned, the roasted vegetables that accompanied the Kofta were warm

from the grill, and the mango smoothie was worth the wait.

Other entrees on the menu include assorted kebabs, barbecued fish, and sandwiches, which can be paired with side dishes such as Sambusa (fried pastry dish with savoury filling), Kubba (beef croquettes), or Tabouleh (salad usually made of bulgur wheat, parsley, tomatoes, cucumbers, mint, and lemon juice).

The owner still needs to work some kinks out, including increased lighting, signage, and more music selection (at a lower volume); however, I was impressed by the details already put into place since their grand opening at the end of December.

Overall, Babylon Restaurant certainly has the potential to

become a popular destination in Edmonton by offering their patrons a rewarding visit. I recommend trying it and supporting new and local businesses while taking advantage of their contemporary spin on traditional Middle Eastern dishes.

Breann is a journalism student and intern at Rat Creek Press. She focuses on political issues, multiculturalism, and human rights.

BABYLON RESTAURANT

11845 Wayne Gretzky Drive
Inside the Coliseum Inn
Mon-Sun: noon-10 pm

3.5 out of 5 forks



The Shawarma plate served with French fries. | Breann Gurney



Babylon's complimentary soup. | Breann Gurney

Roma Bistro serves up tasty Colombian food

Local restaurant offers food and plenty of entertainment

AYDAN DUNNIGAN-VICKRUCK

True confession: it has been several years since my wife and I were last at Roma Bistro and it was because of dance lessons, not the food.

We had a few tortillas as appetizers, but did not explore their diverse and intriguing menu. In the meantime, friends kept encouraging us, "You have to go there. The sopa de mariscos is to die for."

Patricia and I came with an appetite and arrived before Latin dancing and karaoke starts. From Thursday to Saturday after 10 pm, Roma Bistro offers Latin dancing, salsa, and rumba and karaoke. On Fridays, there is mariachi dancing with two DJs. The dancing is free on Thursdays and Fridays.

On Saturday there's a \$5 cover charge, and people can enjoy live music and music from DJs.

Arriving early gave us time to visit with hospitable owners and operators Maria Moy and Osvaldo Corsi, a wife and hus-

band team. Moy has been in the restaurant business for most of her adult life. For the past 16 years, Moy and Corsi have been at this location.

"This is the only authentic Colombian food in town,"

You might expect to wait a little longer for your selection for this reason. Whether empanadas or tortillas, they make it when you order it.

Moy said business has been a little slow, but attributes it

meantime, we pay the bills."

Enough conversation and down to ordering. Patricia settles on ordering Mexican tacos with shrimp, chicken, and avocado accented with cilantro. I order the chicharron con yuca, which is pork and fried cassava root. The cassava root is lightly deep fried and has slightly more flavour than potato and, according to Moy, also nutrition. Everything was as fresh as Moy claimed it would be, including spices and seasoning.

The dessert menu was simpler but still left me conflicted: flan or banana flambé? I always choose flan at Latin American restaurants because it is consistently delicious and because every establishment has their own special recipe.

Moy is no exception. "We make ours with coconut milk, which gives a slightly lighter texture but more intense flavour."

Very tempting, but at the last minute I defer to the banana flambé with chocolate sauce and rum lathered on ice cream and fried banana. Moy apologizes that the dessert is not actually

flambéed. A fire marshall said they'd have to attend every table with a fire extinguisher!

A delicious choice, but that leaves me with the compulsion to go back and try the flan. I won't wait nearly as long next time. I may even hang around until the Spanish karaoke to practice my Spanish.

Meal cost: \$53 for an appetizer, two entrees with two alcoholic beverages, and dessert. Left stuffed as an empanada.

Aydan is a social worker, blogger, tango dancer, outdoor enthusiast and co-parent with Patricia to eight children and 16 grandchildren. He's also a resident of the 'hood and loving it.



Expect a fresh and tasty selection of food at Roma Bistro. | Aydan Dunnigan-Vickruck

Moy said. But Colombia is only where their menu begins. It includes entrees from Chile to Peru to Mexico, and even offer some Italian pasta specialties.

"All the food is made fresh, nothing frozen," Moy stated.

to the cold weather and the economy.

"We recently signed up with Skip the Dishes and that is helping. Orders are coming and they did an attractive website for us," Moy said. "In the

ROMA BISTRO

9737 118 Ave
780.479.8838
Hours: Tues-Wed, 4-10 pm
Thu-Sat, 4 pm-2 am
Sun: 1-9 pm
Mon: closed

Local business owners bring legacy to area

Closing a chapter on Champions of Alberta Avenue

This month heralds the last installment of the Champions of Alberta Avenue profiles, written by Shirley Serviss.

Readers have had the opportunity to learn about some business owners along 118 Avenue. These individuals have fascinating stories and all share a commitment to their customers and the area. Enjoy reading about the work these individuals have done to enrich their businesses and their community. Visit artsontheave.org for any further news on this project.

T&D Noodle House: Legacy of love for the next generation

Thien Truong and Diep Tran came to Canada in 1992 as refugees, sponsored by a relative in Edmonton. They came from Hong Kong, where they had gone to escape the Vietnam War and where their two daughters were born. Their youngest daughter, Laura Truong, was only five when they came to Edmonton and doesn't remember the refugee camp or the journey, only that Canada was very welcoming.

Truong, who is working on a business degree, runs T & D Vietnamese Noodle House, which her parents opened in 2013 at 8405 118 Ave. The family lived in the 118 Avenue area when they first arrived and came back during the revitalization when they saw an opportunity to start a business.

Truong has noticed a real change in the area. It's a lot safer, property values have increased, and there's a diverse population. She also appreciates the art and the festivals.

"It's one big, happy family," she said. "Everybody is really friendly. A lot of people know each other."

The family is still involved in the restaurant. "My mom is a chef and my sister-in-law, Sophoan Heang, works in the Noodle House part time."

Most menu items are traditional, although perhaps not as spicy as they might be in Vietnam. "We try to keep the food as authentic as possible," Truong said.

The restaurant is spotless and provides a serene atmosphere to enjoy an important aspect of Vietnamese culture—the cuisine.

Owning and operating a restaurant is a lot of work. "I didn't know what I was getting myself into," Truong said, "but when you're working for yourself, it doesn't really feel like work."

She recognizes she owes her parents for their years of hard work. They moved to a country where they didn't know the language, took whatever jobs they could, and looked for business opportunities so they could smooth the way for their children.



Yem Nguyen (left), Diep Tran (middle), and Laura Truong (right) are all involved with T & D Noodle House. | Kaye Ly

El Rancho carries on a legacy of sharing food

Alba Arevalo and her daughter Dora Arevalo started El Rancho Spanish Restaurant at 11810 87 Street in 2004 with only six tables. They didn't have a business plan, but they did love cooking and entertaining and had a legacy of sharing their food with others, passed on from Dora's maternal grandmother who ran a take-out business from her home in El Salvador.

The family came to Edmonton in 1986 when political unrest during the civil war made it unsafe for them to stay. Once the family was established, they used to take beans and rice to a hotel where they had come when they first arrived, welcoming other newcomers who might be feeling equally lost and alone.

"Mom used to cook like there was no tomorrow and always had people over," said Dora, who learned to cook from her grandmother and was making soup by the time she was eight. The restaurant is an extension of that caring and the desire to share the love that Dora's grandmother gave them through her food.

They expanded into the adjacent space in 2008, which provided room for more tables and walls to adorn with colourful pictures and artifacts from their homeland. Lively Spanish music completes the illusion that you're in another country.

Choosing to locate in the 118 Avenue area was no accident. "It felt familiar here and looked more like home," Dora said. "There were more families walking on the street, and the Italians and Portuguese would all smile and say hi to you."



Dora Arevalo (pictured) started El Rancho Spanish Restaurant with her mother, Alba Arevalo, in 2004. | Kaye Ly

Harassment doesn't need to leave you helpless

Resources are available if you are being harassed or threatened

BREANN GURNEY

The #MeToo movement is sweeping across the country to raise awareness about harassment and foster community support for those affected.

Garrett Johnson (who requested his name be changed) discussed his experience when an ex-boyfriend attacked him outside of a nightclub. He said he felt uneasy upon arriving to the nightclub, but brushed the anxiety aside.

"The next thing I remember, he had shoved me hard enough to fall down and his hands wrapped around my throat. He slammed my head against the ground three times before others pulled him off and I ran. I was terrified; I thought he would kill me. And I thought it was my fault."

"Make lots of noise and draw attention to the situation so that someone on the outside can call 911," said Cheryl Sheppard, communications advisor for EPS. "Any person who feels they've been a victim of a crime, that includes harassment, is encouraged to contact the Edmonton Police Service as soon as possible."

EPS encourages citizens to report all incidents of harassment. "If we don't know about

it, there's not a whole lot we can do," said Sheppard. "When we know about it, then we can do something about it. If something is happening in the moment, it's important to call 911, otherwise call the complaint line at 780.423.4567."

"At the time I didn't know what to do. I always thought I'd fight in a situation like that, but I felt helpless instead," said Johnson.



Harassment includes repeatedly following someone. | Pixabay

According to Edmonton Police Service, harassment is repeatedly following a person or people they know; repeatedly indirectly or directly communicating with a person or people they know; watching wherever that person or people they know happen to be; and threatening or harming someone or people they know.

There are many ways to react to harassment proactively. Available resources include an emergency protection order, a restraining order, and a peace bond.

An Emergency Protection Order is specific to family violence and is used for immediate protection and if violence will continue.

Ask about a peace bond if someone has threatened you, and if you have "reasonable fear" for your safety, your spouse's safety, or your child's safety. A peace bond may also help if you think someone intends to damage your property.

Restraining orders are non-criminal court orders with specific conditions, such as forbidding contact with someone.

According to the EPS website, if you think you are being harassed you should: record all incidents, don't initiate contact, and don't approach the person in question.

"This is the first time I've told [my] story outside of my close friends," said Johnson. "I believe awareness is important so that victims of harassment can feel safe when telling their story. Being unaware of harassment leads us to treat victims without listening; I have never believed that is the correct way."

Breann is a journalism student and intern at Rat Creek Press. She focuses on political issues, multiculturalism, and human rights.

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First Nations Women in Ministry

The First Nations Women in Ministry seeks to help women from all walks of life.

The next group meeting is on March 10 at Eastwood Community League. From noon to 5 pm, take in songs, worship, testimonies, and prayer, all with the intent of building self-worth and self-esteem and addressing fulfillment of physical, spiritual, and emotional needs. During this time, attendance is for women only.

From 6 to 9:30 pm, enjoy snacks and dinner. At this point, attendance will be open to men as well.

Garden expansion

Visit our website to apply for plots in our community garden. We're also expanding the garden with 18 more plots. Members can rent a plot for \$20 or participate in our garden team co-op

to grow and harvest produce together. On May 19, we are installing new garden beds and will need plenty of help. If you can offer your time, equipment, sponsorship, or trade skills, sign up at eastwoodcommunity.org.

Help! I need somebody! Help! Not just anybody!

Support your community with your interests, skills, and abilities. We are seeking people interested in garden coordination, kids sports programming, crime and safety advocacy, artistic literacy, environmental stewardship, interior design, and more. If you have an interest or skill to share, let us know.

We are also hiring a facility manager and custodial staff person. We will post job descriptions and start interviewing in May.

Volunteer & Notices

Brought to you in partnership with NorwoodNeighbourhoodAssociation.ca

GREEN SHACK

Come enjoy games and fun. Tuesdays & Thursdays, 3:30-6 pm and Saturdays, 1-5 pm at Elmwood Park in March (12505 75 St).

FUNDING OPPORTUNITY

Norwood Neighbourhood Association is accepting applications to partner with neighbourhood non-profit projects and events. Details: norwoodneighbourhoodassociation.ca

SUMMER JOBS & INTERNSHIPS

Alberta Avenue Community League will be hiring two summer students and 10 interns to work on our Abundant Community neighbour engagement team. More: info@albertaave.org.

AFFORDABLE ACCESS TO HAND & POWER TOOLS

If you're a do-it-yourselfer, enjoy making things, or want to connect with a community of builders, check out the Edmonton Tool Library: edmontontool-library.ca.

CASINO VOLUNTEERS NEEDED

For Spruce Avenue on April 7 & 8 in the evenings at Grand Villa Casino downtown. Contact Verna 780.479.8019 or treasurer@spruceavenuecommunity.com.

REGISTER FOR OUTDOOR SOCCER

March is registration month for outdoor soccer! For dates, fees, and available funding: <http://emsanorth.com/>. Complete registration at Delton hall on March 5 (6-8 pm), March 6 (6-8 pm), & March 11 (2-5 pm).

ALBERTA AVENUE AGM

The community league annual general meeting is April 24 at 7 pm. Get info on street rehabilitation and on our summer Neighbour Connect project. Board elections: we're seeking a treasurer!

GUIDED MEDITATION SITS

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your community league!

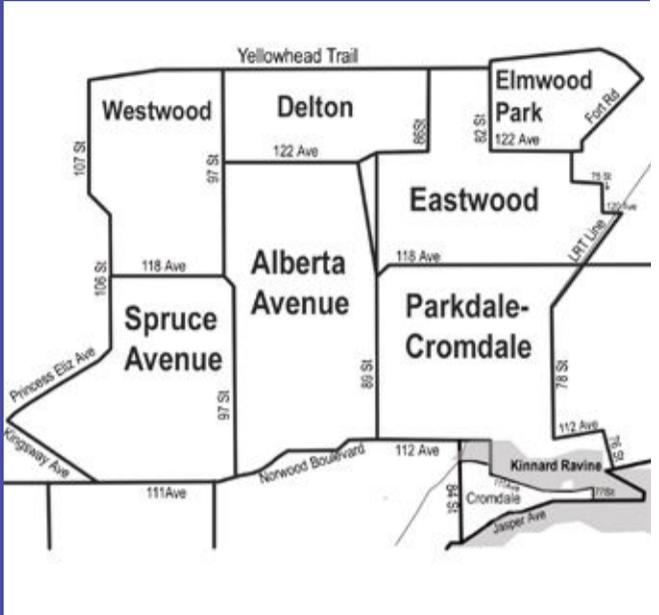


OUTDOOR SOCCER REGISTRATION

Check for dates, fees, funding and **pre-register online** at EMSANORTH.COM

Attend a payment session to complete registration: Feb 24 from 11am - 2pm, March 5 & 6 from 6-8 pm, or March 11 from 2-5 pm.

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elmwoodparkcommunity.org

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April 7 & 8 at Grand Villa Casino downtown
Need evening chip runners and count room on Sunday and a cashier for Saturday and Sunday.



Call: Verna 780.479.8019
Email: treasurer@spruceavenuecommunity.com

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<http://www.albertaave.org/spark.html>

Learn new things in a stress-free environment

Non-profit association helps promote lifelong learning

RUSTI LEHAY

If memories of academia make you shudder with the studying, assignments, and tests, consider the Edmonton Lifelong Learners Association (ELLA), a non-profit association working in partnership with the University of Alberta's Faculty of Extension to promote lifelong learning opportunities for adults 50 years and older.

Cindy Hanson, chair of the marketing and communications committee, said, "There is something amazing in discovering new interests, learning new information, and staying in touch with how things are changing in the world."

With over 50 courses from which to choose, participants can take up to four different courses over three weeks. There is no reason for boredom or stagnation. Better yet, students don't have to worry about pre-

requisites, exams, or homework.

Wendy Davis, quoted on ELLA's website, attended her first Spring Session for Older Adults (the precursor to ELLA) 16 years ago. Attending each spring, "changed my life," said Davis. "Being retired and single can drive you berserk. So many retired people just talk about their physical problems and it can be so depressing. At ELLA we have stimulating conversations about all the new things we've learned."

In 2001, when the faculty announced that funding cut-backs would end the program, massive rebellion, collaboration, and volunteer action coalesced into the non-profit ELLA. A petition quoted the medical fact that mentally stimulated seniors lead healthier and more productive lives, thus reducing the burden on society.

Those initial activists formed a partnership with the univer-

sity. Hanson said, "Volunteers now operate the program, find qualified instructors who enjoy the opportunity to teach and learn from their students, select the course topics, and perform a host of other administrative tasks. The university provides classroom space, vets and pays instructors, and manages registration."

The program continued and grew to over 600 learners registered last spring. This year's program covers the gamut, including sciences, humanities, arts, culture, well-being, digital photography, choral music, and even paleontology.

Hanson attended courses before becoming a volunteer. "Lifelong learning is important for everybody. It keeps people vibrant, connected to their community, and keeps them interested and interesting. It is an opportunity to stay current and learn new things."

When jobs require complete

focus and regular upgrading, it can keep people from appreciating other vocations, limit connections with others, and interfere with community connections.

The courses offer connections to community, other age groups, other demographics, and perhaps your own family. Imagine the potential conversations opening up by learning subject matter aligned with a granddaughter or grandson's chosen vocations. Just avoid telling them you pay way less.

Hanson said, "The tuition is reasonably priced, \$250 for four courses." Registration covers the three weeks offered from April 30 to May 18. "Thanks to ELLA's partnership with the university, people can self-identify as having financial need and bursaries of \$175 are available, reducing the course registration fee to the participant to \$75."

The university also has a fund to assist the subsidization of

tuition for seniors who require financial assistance in order to attend.

What participants enroll in depends on what they wish to learn. Some participants love their life's work and choose courses to stay current. Others, like Hanson, want to learn something new.

"I'll see a course that is being offered and say to myself, 'I know nothing about that field of study, but would really like to learn about THAT!'"

The choices are wide open to explore topics inside and outside of your everyday life and life experiences. Visit my-ella.com or call 780.492.5055 for more information.

A member of the Professional Writers Association of Canada since 2003, Rusti has been writing professionally since 1999. Her favourite word activity is immersion editing with memoir writers.



ELLA's wood carving instructor, Laurie Wilson-Larson. | Supplied



The digital photography course students practicing outdoors. | Supplied

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Powwow dancing is a great way to stay fit

Drum beats are central to this Indigenous dance

PATRICIA DUNNIGAN

Powwow dancing requires agility, cardio fitness, stamina, and grace. Dustin Stamp, a fancy dancer from Saddle Lake Cree Nation, is committed to helping people develop and maintain these qualities in the Canadian Native Friendship Centre's Pow Wow Practice.

"The class is for anyone and any age. We start with easy movements then add basic workout steps that get more intense with each song. I incorporate steps from the various dance styles and from my training in the gym into my program."

Stamp decided a year ago that the powwow practices needed more structure for skill development and safety reasons.

"People from preschoolers to adults were jumping, spinning in all directions. A child could get knocked over quite easily," said Stamp.

I observed two classes,

one at the Canadian Native Friendship Centre and the other at their new location, MacEwan University's Allard Hall.

Powwows, before colonialism, were intertribal cultural gatherings with drumming, dance, healing ceremonies, feasting, and an exchange of gifts. They were outlawed in the late 1800s through the Indian Act and although Treaty 4 and 6 elders petitioned the government and suggested adaptations, the prohibitions continued. But First Nations individuals continued powwows in secret.

A renewal began in the last half of the 20th century when Indigenous veterans returned from the Second World War. Men's grass dance, fancy dance, women's jingle dress dance, and fancy shawl dance were added to the traditional repertoire. Each dance has its own origin and meaning.

Competitions with cash prizes are now part of the event.

At last year's K-Days powwow, the first five male and female dancers took home between \$2,000 to \$800 each.

"I started dancing five years ago," Stamp said, "because of my daughter Kylie. She wanted to learn, so I stayed and learned along with her."

He lights sage and smudges before class. He starts the class off with a standing jog step, knee raises, butt kicks, squats and high kicks to accompanying drum beats, which is integral to the dance. He progresses to include twists, stretches, and balancing positions, while continually jumping to the rhythm of the song. As the aerobic demands intensify, the class takes timed walking breaks to catch their breath.

Stamp then leads the class in a series of dervish turns while bouncing the feet, then jumps and kicks from a squatting position. The class ends with a set of cool down stretches.

Tyson Frencheater has been coming to the class for the past

year.

"It helps strengthen me and I find it therapeutic. Practice improves my tolerance for the spinning required in the fancy dance competitions," Frencheater said.

A student at the University of Alberta, Frencheater comes from the Sunchild First Nation in the Rocky Mountain House area. His seven-year old son Treven is with him.

"The Frencheaters, who are of Cree and Ojibway heritage, are known historically to excel at fancy dance competitions. Dustin and I competed in Kamloops last summer and I won that time. My next powwow is Albuquerque in March."

Stamp explains it's a lot of commitment to get to the events.

"I'm a mechanic and use my holidays and take days off without pay to travel to them," said Stamp.

The 20 plus participants at the class also benefit and learn

from his dedication. The free classes are held on Thursdays from 6-8 pm.

Patricia Dunnigan lives in Alberta Avenue with her husband Aydan. She is writing a book of short stories. She is a member of the Saint City Writers and has works published in two anthologies.

POWOW PRACTICE

Free & drop-in
Thursdays, 6-8 pm
MacEwan University's
Allard Hall, 11110 104 Ave
Room 11-308

POWOW

Mondays, 6-8 pm
Westmount Junior High,
11124 130 St



The Powwow Practice class runs Thursdays at MacEwan University's Allard Hall. | Aydan Dunnigan-Vickruck



Tyson Frencheater dances during the Powwow Practice class. | Aydan Dunnigan-Vickruck



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ALITA RICKARDS

I didn't intend to be car-free.

When I was 18, like many Canadians, I studied the learner's handbook, practiced driving, and got my license. I'm still shocked it's that easy to let someone barely out of their teens drive a vehicle made of thousands of pounds of metal. My first car was a 1973 Dodge Dart my grandma gave me. I'd jam punk rock mix-tapes in the radio cassette player, rev my engine, and speed around with all the reckless naivety of youth.

Then in university, I couldn't afford the parking, never mind the other expenses of driving

a car. I haven't owned a car since. I left Edmonton three days after my last exam to work in Dawson City, Yukon as a waitress to make enough money to leave Canada. My first year out, I lived in Prague, which has an extensive and efficient tram system. I also developed a love of walking as I strolled or strode across the cobblestoned streets.

After that, I moved to Asia "for just one year," which turned into 15 before I moved back to Canada. I lived mostly in Taiwan, but also went back to Prague for a year, and traveled India and Thailand for a year each. In India, I rode trains and rickshaws and walked until I wore out my camel leather

sandals to paper-thin soles. In Thailand, I took tuk-tuks and little taxi boats, but mostly I walked through the jungle and hot sand until the soles of my feet were as leathery as those hippy sandals I'd worn in India.

While living in Taipei, I developed a deep and lifelong love of bicycle commuting. I used to joke that I could ride a bike through Taipei rush hour traffic with no hands. Look ma, no brains!

I moved back to Canada in 2013, and winter scared me off cycling the first year. I got quite depressed. The second winter, I decided to ride my bicycle year round. It changed everything. I arrive to work pink-cheeked

and cheerful every day that I cycle. I don't have to pay to use a spin machine in a gym. I pack shopping items and groceries in my back rack panniers and front basket.

When people ask me about the inconvenience, I think of buying, registering, and insuring a vehicle I can't afford to park at my downtown job, or that I won't drive in the evenings when I go out with friends for beer or wine. Instead, I prefer to cycle, walk, bus, or use Uber.

People ask, "Well, what about going out of town?" I don't like to road trip alone, so I go with friends who have vehicles. If it's just two of us, I can drive. If it's more than two of us, they don't

need me to drive. I watch people plugging in their cars, scraping their windshields, idling them to warm up, digging them out of the snow, and think "Isn't that inconvenient?"

I appreciate the rides I occasionally get from friends, but I also encourage others to try my carefree, car-free existence.

Alita moonlights as a freelance writer focused on interesting people, music, arts, food, culture, sustainable lifestyles, and human rights. These same things attracted her to become a homeowner in vibrant, diverse, walkable Alberta Avenue.



Alita on her bicycle. | Cherie Rickards



WHAT'S ON IN MARCH

COFFEE WITH COPS

Tuesday, March 6, 10-11 am. | The Carrot Coffeehouse (9351 118 Ave). Join a roundtable conversation with EPS.

MONSTER PRO WRESTLING

Saturday, March 10, 6:30 pm at Knoxville's Tavern (10736 Jasper Ave). April 7, 7:30 pm at Alberta Avenue. | More: monsterprowrestling.com.

HIP HOP SHOWCASE

Wednesday, March 21, 7-9 pm. FREE | The Carrot Coffeehouse (9351 118 Ave). Hosted by hip hop duo Locution Revolution. Get connected to Edmonton's local hip hop community! Listen to sick beats and step up on our open stage for hip hop artists, rappers, spoken word artists, and poets. Rated PG.

FRIDAY NIGHT LIVE

Fridays, 7:30-9 pm. Cover: \$5, 18 & under free. | The Carrot Coffeehouse (9351 118 Ave).

OPEN MIC

Saturdays, 6-10 pm. | The Carrot (9351 118 Ave). All stages & ages. Acts must be PG /family friendly. Sign up upon arrival to guarantee a spot.

AT THE AVIARY

9314 111 Avenue
The-aviary.net

The Aviary hosts a variety of activities and events, such as musical performances, art shows, and pop-up food events.

Some March events include:

- March 9 - Karaoke Night Berserker (open stage)
- March 14 - JCL Productions presents The Dears with guests
- March 17 - Jet Power with Alloys and guests
- March 21 - Paradise Sandwich Shop POP UP! Featuring DJ Wayne Jetski
- March 27 - The Aviary Bluegrass Night presents Jim and Penny Malmberg



NINA'S STOLLERY GALLERY

March 8-11 & hold-over: SkirtsAfire Festival "The Wombs We All Come From" March 21-April 21: David Phillips & Nina Haggerty members collective



THE CARROT

Jill Thomson & Sara Norquay. Opening reception on March 7, 7-9 pm | The Carrot Coffeehouse (9351 118 Ave). Free. Jill Thomson's artwork evokes her history of her childhood, young adulthood, and motherhood. Sara Norquay's books have been made in different mediums.

2018 FESTIVAL LINE UP

- Deep Freeze January 13-14
- SkirtsAfire March 8-11
- GOBfest April 13-15
- Bloomin' Garden Show May 12
- Thousand Faces May 25-27
- Heart of the City June 2 & 3
- Pure Speculation June 15 & 16
- Rubber Boots & Bow Tie Garden Party June 23
- Muttstock July 7
- Mi Tierra Calle 87 July 13-15
- Kaleido Family Arts September 14-16
- Tibetan Bazaar September 21-22
- Edmonton Potters' Guild Sale November 17
- Yule Ave A Merry Christmas December 15

FREE COMMUNITY PROGRAMS

Brought to you in partnership with NorwoodNeighbourhoodAssociation.ca

ESL & LANGUAGE

PRACTICE ENGLISH
Conversation circle, Mondays 7-8 pm at Sprucewood Library.

ESL ENGLISH LESSONS
Thursdays from 11:30 am to 1:30 pm at Parkdale-Cromdale.

ALL-AGES SPANISH LESSONS
Free every Monday from 6-7:30 pm at Parkdale hall.

GLOBAL VOICES CHOIR
An informal way to practice English. No experience with singing or English is required. Light lunch is provided. Thursdays noon - 1 pm at Mennonite Centre. More: Suzanne 780.423.9682.

ENGLISH CONVERSATION CIRCLE
Fridays, 10:30-12 pm at Highlands Library. Part of Catholic Social Services LACE program. More: 780-424-3545.

LANGUAGE INSTRUCTION FOR NEWCOMERS TO CANADA (LINC)
More: Edmonton Mennonite Centre 780.423.9522 or info@emcn.ab.ca

FOOD & SUPPORT

PRAYERWORKS COMMUNITY
Hot meals & warm friendship at St. Faith's/ St. Stephen's Anglican Church hall. Thurs: serving 11 am-1 pm; open 10 am-1:30 pm. Fri: serving 5-6 pm; open 3:30-6:30 pm. Sat: serving 8:30-9:30 am; open 8-10 am. More: 780.477.5931.

COLLECTIVE KITCHEN
Cook with friends, try new recipes, help your food budget. St. Faith/St. Stephen: Cost: \$3. Second Tuesday: 1-3:30 pm. Trish 780.464.5444. Third Wednesday, 5:30-8 pm. Amanda: 587.930.8238. Call ahead. Parkdale Hall: Last Sunday of the month. Check parkdalecromdale.org for details. Alberta Avenue: If interested email info@albertaave.org.

PARENTS & PRE-SCHOOLERS

GROWING TOGETHER
A free drop-in group for pregnant women and women with babies up to 3 months of age. Free resources including milk coupons and prenatal vitamins. Tuesdays 1:30-3 pm at Norwood Centre. More: 780.471.3737.

STAY AND PLAY
Free indoor play space and unstructured group for parents and children. Snack included. Mondays 10 am - noon at Norwood Centre.

BABES IN ARMS
A wonderful casual parent group Fridays 10 am - noon at The Carrot.

PARENTING & LITERACY
English classes, free childcare, parent-child activities, parenting support. Tuesday and Thursday, 9:30 - 12 pm from Sept 19 to Dec 7 at Norwood Centre. Register 780.471.3737.

SING, SIGN, LAUGH & LEARN
Mondays and Tuesdays 10:30 am at Sprucewood Library. Wednesdays and Thursdays, 10:30 am at Highlands Library. More: 780.496.7099.

BABY LAPTIME
Stories, songs, books, rhymes, finger play for baby up to 12 months. Tuesdays 10:15-10:45 am at Highlands Library

FAMILY STORYTIME
Share stories, songs and games. Wednesdays, 10:30-11 am at Sprucewood Library.

CHILDREN

LEGO AT THE LIBRARY
Design and build a lego creation. Ages 6-12. Saturdays 3-4 pm at Highlands Library.

GIRL GUIDES
Girl Guides meeting Mondays from September to June at St. Andrew's. More: 39thedmontonguiding@gmail.com or 1.800.565.8111 (answered locally).

YOUTH

EVIL GENIUS CLUB
Robot battles, Arduino hacks, DIY music, art, Minecraft, photography, 3-D design & printing are just the beginning for this club. Fridays, 4-5 pm Highlands Library.

TEEN LOUNGE
Play video games, make a DIY project, or just hang out. Thursdays, 6:00-8:30 pm. at Sprucewood Library.

GLOBAL GIRLS
Build new relationships, develop a sense of self-confidence and identify pathways to be able to achieve your goals. Every other Thursday, 3:15 - 5:30 pm at the Mennonite Centre. Register: 780.423.9691.

TEEN LOUNGE JR.
Play video games, make a DIY project, meet friends. Thursdays, 3:30-5 pm at Sprucewood Library, 3:30-4:30 pm at Highlands Library.

ADULTS

AVENUE BOOK CLUB
Meets the first Wednesday of each month 7 pm at The Carrot. More: Lorraine 780.934.3209.

COFFEE FRIENDSHIP CLUB
Wednesdays, 1-2 pm. | The Carrot Coffeehouse (9351 118 Ave). Have coffee with individuals who are single, divorced, or widowed and looking to meet new people in Delton, Eastwood, Parkdale-Cromdale, Westwood, Spruce Ave, and Ab Ave.

COMMUNITY ART NIGHT
Free art workshop for adults. Tuesdays 6:30-8:30 pm at The Nina.

SENIORS

NORWOOD LEGION SENIORS GROUP
Cribbage, Wednesdays at 1 pm at Norwood Legion.

SENIORS BREAKFAST & SOCIAL (55+)
Join us for breakfast, visit, play cards, or

billiards. Wednesdays 11:30 am - 12:45 pm (10:30-11:45 am during the summer) at Crystal Kids.

FAMILIES

POP-UP MAKERSPACE
Makey Makey hack, DIY music, Art, 3-D design and more. First Wednesday of the month from 6:30-7:30 pm at Highlands Library.

TABLE TOP GAMES NIGHT
Cozy up inside The Carrot with a slice of our carrot cake, a brownie, or a beverage. Tables are free! Choose from over 20 board games and let fun fill your table. Last Tuesday of the month, 6 pm at The Carrot Coffeehouse.

FAMILY ART NIGHT
A variety of free art activities for school age children accompanied by adults. Thursdays, 6:30-8 pm at The Nina.

MUSIC LESSONS BY CREAT
Free group music lessons Saturdays at Parkdale-Cromdale from 10 am to 12 pm. More: creatredmonton@gmail.com or 587.336.5480.

FREE COMMUNITY REC ACCESS
At Commonwealth Stadium on Saturdays from 5-7 pm and Sundays from 1-3 pm. Check with your league to see if they participate and on which day.

LOCATIONS

- Community Leagues - see page 12
- St. Faith/St. Stephen Church 11725 93 St
- Highlands Library 6710 118 Ave
- Sprucewood Library 11555 95 St
- Norwood Family Centre 9516 114 Ave
- Carrot Coffeehouse 9351 118 Ave
- The Nina 9225 118 Ave
- Norwood Legion 11150 82 St
- Crystal Kids 8715 118 Ave
- St. Andrew's Church 8715 118 Ave
- Bethel Gospel 11461 95 St
- Mennonite Centre 11713 82 St



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St. Stephen: 780.422.3240
Sunday Worship:
 8:30 am - Low Mass
 9:00 am - Morning Prayer
 9:30 am - High Mass
 7:00 pm - Evensong
St. Faith: 780.477.5931
Sunday Worship:
 9:00 am Friday Prayer
 11:00 am Sunday Worship
 1st Sunday Common
 2nd Sunday Trad. Anglican
 3rd Sunday Aboriginal Form
 4th Sunday Trad. Anglican

AVENUE CHURCH
A community to belong in...a community to serve with.
11335 85 Street (Parkdale Hall) avenuechurch.ca
Sundays coffee fellowship - 9:30am 10:00 am Service

BETHEL GOSPEL CHAPEL
A Bible-based, multi-ethnic fellowship.
11461 95 Street 780.477.3341
Sunday Meetings:
 9:30 am - Lord's Supper
 11:00 am - Family Bible Hour

AVENUE VINEYARD CHURCH
A friendly, informal, non-judgmental and safe place to grow spiritually. Traditional Christian values in a non-traditional way.
8718 118 Avenue (Crystal Kids Building) avenuevineyard.com
Sundays at 10:30 am

NORWOOD WESLEYAN CHURCH
 Meeting needs with love and compassion
 11306 91 St
 10:00 am Sunday School
 11:00 am Sunday Service

EVANGELICAL BAPTIST CHURCH
'Be kind and compassionate to one another, forgiving each other, just as in Christ God forgave you... Therefore encourage one another and build each other up' Eph. 4:32, 1 Th. 5:11a
12317-82 St. 780.474.4830
Sunday School 10:00 am
Sunday Worship 11:00 am
Wed. Study/Prayer 6:30 pm

ST. ANDREW'S PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH
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