Northlands’ new vision
Proposed changes are both innovative and risky

The clock is ticking to determine the future of the aging hockey arena and the entire Northlands site.

Northlands’ proposed Vision 2020 strategy for its 160-acre “campus” is a huge gamble. On one hand, it’s a $165-million-dollar “re-creation of recreation,” marked by massive changes to its three main venues. On the other is the spectre of a derelict site inspiring falling housing values and increased crime.

“We don’t want Vision 2020 to be an all-or-nothing strategy, but we also don’t want Northlands to be the next not-for-profit society that is $20-million-dollars in the hole and no way to pay it back,” said Reid. “Edmonton could become the hockey tournament capital of Canada. We could host other indoor events, including soccer, volleyball, and lacrosse.”

The Expo Centre’s Hall D will be renovated to house a 5,000-seat venue for sports and concerts. A high-end hotel will be included. Both Expo Centre and the Ice Coliseum would include more dining and shopping.

Horse racing and perhaps the casino are on the way out. In their place is Northlands Urban Festival Site, a large park able to host massive-scale concerts, midways, festivals, and rodeos. The site will also be open to the public for sports, picnics, and other gatherings.

An updated agricultural strategy is in the works and may include a farmers market and a craft brewery. Residential development can also result on the Northlands site and adjacent vacant land. A high-rise student residence for Concordia University is a possible starting point.

“Vision 2020 gives us a great start at keeping the existing infrastructure, “observed Eastwood Community League president Tish Prouse. “It gives me an idea how change will impact my life and our children’s lives. The concept invests more strength into our neighborhoods.”

Deborah Rose, CEO of DECSA, sees the proposal as an opportunity to create employment. DECSA provides employment, education, and training to Albertans with barriers and disabilities. “The changes will also alter the perception of the rest of the city to northeast Edmonton. Vision 2020 is innovative and risky. But if you don’t try, you’ll never know if you could have succeeded,” said Rose.

“Most will see Vision 2020 as a positive thing,” said Dan Rietveld, vice-president of Highlands Community League. “We can use this as an opportunity to get our area back into the conversation.”

I think our team has done a brilliant job of giving Northlands’ neighbours something to talk about,” concluded Reid.

Northlands will present Vision 2020 to city council on March 17. Give feedback through a survey at northlands.com/vision2020/survey.

Constance’s writing and editing career spans more than 40 years. She lives in Parkdale-Cromdale.
Father Stempfle has been the resident priest at St. Patrick’s Church for 38 years

CHANTAL FIGEAT

Father Stempfle has been the resident priest at St. Patrick’s Church for 38 years.

ST. PATRICK’S DAY CELEBRATION

March 13, starting at 10:45 am in the church basement

Lunch & performances by Irish dancers. Tea & baked goods available for purchase.

St. Patrick’s Church
11811 96 St

Father Frank Stempfle loves working at the parish. | Rebecca Lippiatt

St. Patrick’s Roman Catholic Church is a quiet oasis of kindness and caring. An integral part of the church is Father Frank Stempfle, who has been a priest for over 60 years.

Stempfle was born in 1926 and lived on a farm near Stony, Alberta. He later resided in Primat, Saskatchewan, before returning to Alberta to live on a farm near Hayter.

He was inspired to enter the clergy by the priests he came into contact with as a boy and young man. “We had a very fine parish priest when I was growing up,” said Stempfle. Later on, he attended St. Anthony’s College in Edmonton where he was influenced by the Franciscan priests who ran the school. He spent seven years at St. Joseph Seminary and was ordained in 1952 by Archbishop John Hugh MacDonald.

Stempfle has been a priest at St. Patrick’s twice. His first position at the church began in 1970 and ended in 1978, when he left to be a priest for Assumption Parish. He returned to St. Patrick’s in 1985 and has remained there since then. “It’s a delightful little parish … people are so good to me,” said Stempfle.

The church has a history as well. Archbishop Henry Joseph O’Leary started St. Patrick’s parish in December 1934. The first chapel was at Fairview School at 120 Avenue and 95A Street. Formally opened in 1950, the present building has had only three priests. Monsignor Donahue served from 1949 to 1970. Father Stempfle had his first stint from 1970 to 1977, and then Father Purcell remained until 1985 when Stempfle returned.

Attendance at mass is now “holding its own” said Stempfle, with somewhat fewer than 100 people attending on Saturday afternoons and 100 on Sunday mornings.

At its height, St. Patrick’s had an active Knights of Columbus youth group and men’s club. Some parish women were affiliated with the Catholic Women’s League (CWL). No longer tied to the CWL, this group of women have a history of providing light meals for bereaved families in the church basement. They also run tea and bake sales.

The functional styling of the church is typical of post-war architecture. The idea that form should follow function has resulted in a design that’s functional and simple without a lot of detail. Another characteristic is the use of materials at 90 degrees to each other.

When he’s not attending to his priestly duties, Stempfle is an avid golfer. By all appearances a content and happy man, he credits his good health to walking the green, saying that he plays “three, sometimes four times a week” and still manages to keep up his work at the church.

Members of the parish cherish the priest. “We just love him,” said Kay O’Brien, the church secretary.

Chantal began professional writing while attending Carleton University. She enjoys the history of the Norwood area as well as the cultural diversity along Alberta Avenue.

Caring for St. Patrick’s Church

Father Stempfle loves working at the parish. | Rebecca Lippiatt

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Gotta story? Go digital!
The Nina's Digital Storytelling project guides storytellers through the process

JOCELYN BROWN

The Nina (n-eye-na) is an art-making centre for adults with developmental disabilities. If you have ever walked by and looked through our windows during the week, you likely saw a room full of people drawing and painting. If you came through the doors to visit, you probably saw our textile, ceramics, and printing studios bursting with activity. Over 170 people belong to the Nina's collective of artists.

At the Nina, we love being part of Alberta Avenue's thriving art scene and we offer free drop-in Community Art Nights on Tuesdays and Family Art Nights on Wednesdays for anyone wanting to create art. In the Stollery Gallery, we host 15 or more exhibits a year from other groups and individuals as well as Nina artists.

Now there's a new project that's all about community, and we'd like to invite you to join us. The Digital Storytelling Project is about (surprise!) digital stories, which is essentially a two-minute movie. The project tells a story through pictures, photographs, music and anything else the storyteller wants to use. People can record their own voices or use no words at all. The story can be as simple as getting a haircut or buying a new pair of boots or something as momentous as immigrating to a new country.

Over a year, a trained facilitator will lead five small groups of Nina artists, staff, and participants through the story-making process. We’ll share stories and support each other in learning the necessary technology, which isn’t difficult and doesn’t require any computer experience. Participants will meet for one and a half hours per week for six weeks. Once the stories are done, storytellers own their stories and can decide if they want to share them.

Digital stories have been used around the world to tell stories that otherwise would go untold. They have become a powerful tool for building community (check out www.storycenter.org to see lots of examples). We’re fortunate to have the support of two champions of inclusive community: the Edmonton Public Library and Arts on the Ave.

Contact Jocelyn@thenina for more information.

Jocelyn has published two novels and several short stories and articles. Writer in residence at EPL in 2012, she has worked at the Nina Haggerty Centre for five years.

The ARTery is reborn as The Aviary

DAVE VON BIEKER

Owners Philip (pictured) and Mark Muz hope to open The Aviary this spring at 9314 111 Ave. The Aviary is an all-ages arts venue and café with space for about 100 people. You can help by buying Aviary Victory Bonds for $20 or attending their fundraiser concert at Studio 96 on March 5. Details at facebook.com/arteryyeg/. Look for a full article on The Aviary soon.

Co-owner Philip Muz stands in The Aviary, which will soon open. | Dave Von Bieker
Striving for the Olympic Games
Parkdale resident and sabre fencer proves that dedication pays off

CONSTANCE BRISSENDEN

Nine years ago, Parkdale resident Marissa Ponich didn’t know much about sabres, a cavalry weapon used on horseback long ago.

Andrew Rusheleau, Ponich’s then-boyfriend (now husband) introduced her to sabre fencing when she was attending the University of Alberta. She came to love the sport under the guidance of coach Sergei Kazimirski, founder of Sergei’s Sabre Club.

Today she’s one of the top women’s sabre fencers in Canada. Ponich was 19 years old when she started to practice the sport, a decade older than most. “I’ve had to work hard,” she admitted. “I wouldn’t say I have a natural talent. I try to focus on the techniques I need to fix.”

Her training schedule is intense. She trains two to three times per day, six days per week. A typical day starts with yoga before work as a City of Edmonton clerk. At lunch, she heads to the gym for cross training and physical preparation, which generally includes activities such as plyometrics, jumps, squats, and sprinting. After work, she’s fencing at the club for two to three hours.

Her dedication has paid off. Ponich has been a national team member since 2013, representing Canada at the 2015 Pan American Games and at World Championships for the past three seasons. Some of the countries she has competed in include Canada, Venezuela, France, USA, Mexico, Turkey, Greece, Russia, Hungary, China, Costa Rica, Colombia, and Chile. Belgium, Italy, and Korea are ahead this spring.

Her goal for 2016 is to qualify for this August’s Olympic Games in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil. The push is on until April, the deadline for all Olympic qualifying events.

“I knew qualifying would be hard work, but I’m going to push until the last minute,” said Ponich. No matter what happens, she plans to continue fencing until 2020.

Unlike épée (heavier fencing sword) and foil fencers, sabre fencers score using not only the tip of the weapon but also the cutting edge of the blade. As her coach Kazimirski explained, the challenges are mental, technical, and physical. “To understand fencing, you need to understand that the movement is quick and instant. To win, you must be coordinated, think clearly, and be accurate in your techniques, as well as in peak physical shape.”

As for Ponich, Kazimirski observed, “She’s smart and incredibly hard-working, strong, and a positive person. She sees the good side to find something positive in her development and not repeat mistakes.”

Ponich does not receive any funding, so she relies on her full-time job and sponsorships for financial support. The City of Edmonton has been a strong supporter, allowing her to co-ordinate her annual vacation with her competitions. “My co-workers are supportive, always wishing me well,” said Ponich.

Another solution has been crowdfunding through the MAKEACHAMP website (https://makeachamp.com/mponich). “Crowdfunding is good for me, not only financially but also for the emotional support. It’s great to know that so many people support me to become the best fencer I can be,” she said.

Winning competitions is not the only satisfaction. At the 2015 Pan American Games in Toronto, Ponich met Brenna, a young girl attending the event. They had their photo taken together and Ponich gave her a pin from the Games. Brenna’s father, Paul, sent Ponich a Facebook message that included a video of Brenna thanking her for the pin and explaining that she was going to start fencing. He reported that both Brenna and her sister are taking fencing lessons.

“I helped inspire these girls to start fencing,” Ponich said proudly, “and that is incredible.”

Constance’s writing and editing career spans more than 40 years. She lives in Parkdale-Cromdale.
Welcoming Syrian refugees
How a group banded together to help a refugee family

ADYAN DUNNIGAN-VICKRUCK

Kathryn Rambow is still dragging around that cold. There has been no time to recuperate. A refugee family—the first installment—arrives on the plane tomorrow.

Rambow, an Alberta Avenue resident, has been busy ensuring a two bedroom apartment is outfitted for a young family of four. Rambow is part of the Refugee Response Group, a few dozen people (some local) who connected to welcome Syrian refugees.

“We have proxy sponsorship from Robertson-Wesley United Church which helped a lot with the red tape as well as with the money end of things,” explained Rambow.

The group sponsored 12 family members. They’ve been expecting four members of the family since early January (the remainder of the extended family is in Lebanon getting medical clearance). Bad weather delayed the flight and then the eight-month pregnant wife couldn’t travel because she was too close to giving birth. Last week they received news the family was coming. It’s been a bit of an emotional rollercoaster, said Rambow.

“We were so excited when we first got notice. Then disappointment when they were delayed. I even found myself feeling jealous when I would read about other groups who had received their families. Now of course, we are thrilled and stressed.”

Rambow said the group is in a Blended Visa Office-Referred program. The federal government covers the family’s basic expenses for six months of their first year, but the group covers the remaining six months and any additional support.

The group was able to raise $50,000 for the family of now 13 in less than three months from a variety of donations, such as bottle drives, bazaars, and individual donations.

She said “people have been amazing” in their response of the idea of bringing in a refugee family. “I continue to be astounded by the response. We haven’t met any negativity. And it seems that no sooner we envision a need than someone steps up to meet it. It has been a real exercise in faith and goodwill, that’s for sure. Edmonton is a great community. People can’t seem to do enough.”

“The support doesn’t stop with sponsorship. New Canadian families in the apartment complex want to help. The group also has a resettlement committee, which includes a health team, a school team, and people to help with shopping and cooking.

“There are so many things for them to learn: how to ride the ETS, how to use an electric stove, where to find cultural and religious supports, how to dress for winter. And of course the real big thing is the language, which has to happen before they can even begin to think about working.”

Rambow isn’t sure if the family speaks English.

“This young couple that is coming tomorrow did complete high school and English and French were part of the curriculum. The phone contact that we have had to this point has had to be through an interpreter. We will work closely with Catholic Social Services and the Mennonite Centre for Newcomers who do the ESL programs as well as counseling.”

Rambow said the biggest challenge isn’t raising the money or getting public support, it’s the hurry up and wait aspect of welcoming the family. She added, “but we did it, and we are still doing it and will continue to do so long after our official year commitment ends.”

Aydan is a social worker, blogger, tango dancer, outdoor enthusiast and co-parent with Patricia to 8 children and 16 grandchildren. He’s also a resident of the ‘hood and loving it.

The Refugee Response Group welcomed a Syrian refugee family on Valentine’s Day. | Rebecca Lippiatt
EDITORS
Karen Mykietka info@ratcreek.org

PUBLISHER
and develop leadership. can be exchanged, and help individuals learn new skills, acquire experience
Such bans mean low supply and correspondingly higher prices.

CONTRIBUTORS
John Larsen, Margaret Larsen, Arlene Kemble, Cantelon Family, and Karen Mykietka.

PROOFREADING
John Larsen, Margaret Larsen, Arlene Kemble, Cantelon Family, and Karen Mykietka.

DISTRIBUTION

EDITORIAL
Stretching the food budget
Creative ways to grow food, save money and stay healthy.

FRANKI HARROGATE
It’s no secret that food costs have increased. For some, that jump has barely registered, but for many of us, it has impacted our budgets noticeably. What has caused food prices to soar? Where does that leave us with tight finances? Are there alternatives to purchasing expensive fresh fruits and vegetables?

Part of the reason food costs have risen is because of the high price of oil. Large-scale farms require machinery to mechanically harvest products and the cost of transport has also increased. Climate change is another culprit, with floods, droughts, and storms in various areas destroying harvests. The low Canadian dollar is another, more recent factor.

Finally, some governments have banned exports of foods, fearing shortages and higher food prices.

Food Bank has seen a marked increase in clients due to the economic downturn, a cause for alarm. It’s easy to sacrifice luxuries, but eating is essential. Edmonton’s Food Bank has seen a marked increase in clients due to the economic downturn, a sign that food insecurity has only gotten worse for many.

If you already budget for your food, it can be difficult to make cuts. This is of particular concern when providing for children or working with specific dietary needs.

One way to stretch your food budget is to grow (or increase) your own food. Beans can be used as a meat substitute. Bulk beans, in particular, are far less expensive and do well in a variety of recipes, from chilis to rice and corn mixes. It’s important to learn how to prepare dried beans as well as factor in the extra time to cook.

The Internet is a useful source for recipes and helpful hints.

Another way to get around purchasing expensive fresh veggies is to purchase frozen frozen. They are just as nutritious and can be stored for far longer. If frozen vegetables aren’t an option, canned is the next best thing. While not as nutritious, they are better than nothing. Buying food in bulk with several people may trade doing so for a share of the spoils. Many community leagues and local groups offer cooking nights where a dish is communally prepared and everyone leaves with portions to take home. Such programs benefit all residents, not just meeting being a great way to generate community and wellbeing for everyone who attends.

Franki is a graduate student in counselling psychology and an active volunteer. She’s happily married to a talented acupuncturist, and mama to two fascinating miniature humans.

Rising food prices demand careful budgeting and creative thinking. | Foxbay

LETTER
Readers support Rat Creek Advertisers

Some months ago, I believe you ran a story about a local female plumber. Would you be able let me know who that was and/or the name of her plumbing company? Thank you.

Keep up the good work, by the way. We pick up a copy of your paper every edition and yes, we try to give business to advertisers in your paper when we can. Hope the Rat Creek Press remains running for many years to come.

Greg Pang
Real/Frame Law

LETTER
Concerns about Northlands new vision

The Northlands Park Vision 2020, particularly the outdoor concert space they are planning, will affect the horse racing community and people that live and work at the racetrack. This is a place that is more than an industry. It is a family, a way of life, and more importantly, a historic place that has been functioning in this city for over 100 years, 30 of mine.

My neighbourhood deals with issues like noise and parking. Patronos from Northlands Park currently do not respect the neighbourhood and the parking laws within it. If they intend to hold concerts/festivals that have an attendance of upward of 140,000 people, just think of the issues that will come with this type of traffic.

I hope to see in the next issue some information on how this will affect the communities that surround Northlands Park.

April Welch
A concerned resident and horse racing advocate

Keep feedback through a survey at northlands.com/vision2020/survey. Send us your thoughts on Northlands Vision 2020 in a Letter to the Editor.

COMMUNITY CALENDAR
Space is available to non-profit groups for event and program listings as well as volunteer opportunities on a first-come first-serve basis and will be printed as space permits.

EDITORIAL POLICY
The Rat Creek Press is a forum for all people. We encourage comments that further discussion on a given article or subject, provide constructive criticism, or offer an idea for community activity. Letters should be no longer than 250 words and must include the full name, location and contact information of the author. Op-Ed columns should be 400-700 words and observe formal rules of spelling and grammar. The RCP reserves the right to edit all material and to remove any electronic comment at any time. All columns, letters or cartoons submitted are attributed to the author and do not necessarily represent the views or opinions of the Rat Creek Press. Send submissions to the Rat Creek Press Editor via email at editor@ratcreek.org, or 9210 118 Avenue, Edmonton, AB T5G 0N2. Mail may also be dropped at the address above.

GIVE FEEDBACK TO
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GIVE FEEDBACK THROUGH A SURVEY AT
northlands.com/vision2020/survey

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ABOUT US
The Rat Creek Press is a non-profit community newspaper in central Edmonton serving the communities of Alberta Avenue, Dalst, Eastwood, Elwood Park, Parkdale-Cromdale, Spruce Avenue, and Westwood.

COMMUNITY, COMMUNICATION, CAPACITY
The Rat Creek Press goals are to help connect residents with what is happening in the community, provide a forum where information and ideas can be exchanged, and help individuals learn new skills, acquire experience and develop leadership.

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Celebrating women

International Women’s Day examines equality, challenges, and progress

TALEA MEDYNSKI

Women were instrumental in overturning the Supreme Court’s definition of a “person,” before their work, a “person” did not include individuals of a feminine gender. The rights all women now enjoy have been in effect for less than a century. On March 8, take a moment to appreciate the huge battle historical women fought.

Timeline on women’s right to vote

Federal voting rights

1918: Women over the age of 21 receive the right to vote federally. In effect on Jan. 1, 1919. Conditions attached: “age 21 or older, not alien-born and meet property requirements in provinces where they exist.”

1919: Women can run for federal elections.

1920: Federal electoral law changes include universal right to vote for men and women regardless of provincial law.

Provincial voting rights

1916: Manitoba, Saskatchewan, and Alberta

1917: British Columbia and Ontario

1918: Nova Scotia

1919: New Brunswick and Yukon

1922: Prince Edward Island

1925: Newfoundland and Labrador

1940: Quebec

1951: Northwest Territories

Women have come far in less than 100 years. | Pixabay

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Famous trailblazers

“Women hold up half the sky.” - Mao Zedong

Emily Howard Slowe: In 1868, Slowe became the first woman to practice medicine in Canada.

Marie Curie: famous for her work on radioactivity. Curie won the Nobel Prize in both Chemistry (1911) and Physics (1925).

Eileen Vollick: In 1928, she became the first Canadian woman to earn a private pilot’s licence.

Mary Pickford: Toronto-born Pickford was a famous silent movie star and in 1929, was the first Canadian-born woman to receive an Academy Award.

The Famous Five: Nellie McClung, Emily Murphy, Henrietta Muir Edwards, Louise McKinney, and Irene Parlby.

Women have come far in less than 100 years. | Pixabay

Famous women

Amelia Earhart: In 1932, Earhart was the first woman to fly solo across the Atlantic Ocean. Emily Carr: famous Canadian artist and writer, known for her vivid paintings of the natural world.

Mary G REGGIE (1919: She joined the Canadian Women’s Army Corps. She was the first First Nations woman to do so.

Rosemary Brown: the first black woman to serve in a provincial government as an MLA for the NDP party, from 1972-1986.


Roberta Bondar: In 1992, Bondar was the first Canadian female astronaut in space.

Kathryn Bigelow: In 2009, she was the first woman to receive an Oscar for best director for the movie The Hurt Locker.

Malala Yousafzai: A Pakistani activist who campaigns for women’s rights to education. She survived being shot in the head by the Taliban. She is also the youngest person to receive the Nobel Peace Prize, awarded to her in 2014.

Talea is the Rat Creek Press editor. She loves sharing the stories of our diverse neighbourhoods.

Brian Mason, MLA

EDMONTON-HIGHLANDS-NORWOOD

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The school with a heart in the heart of Edmonton.
The sound and story of The Secretaries

The decade-old Edmonton band is playing at SkirtsAfire

MARIA SASANO

The Secretaries are having brunch in Amy van Keeken’s kitchen on a Sunday afternoon, before rehearsal. Happy dogs lie at their feet. It’s a cozy domestic scene, but don’t be mistaken—this band isn’t made up of shrinking violets.

Colleen Brown, Natasha Fryzuk and Amy van Keeken work hard for the money (so hard for it, honey). “We just wanted to jam,” said guitarist van Keeken. Six people showed up at their first session, but by the second, the band was distilled to its core members. “Colleen and I just started playing, and it was Hey Girl. Our very first song. We just kept playing and I just sang the words. And after that, well, that’s a song. Now let’s write another one,” van Keeken said. Drummer Fryzuk agrees. “It was pretty alchemical.”

At the time, they were relatively new to their instruments, though all three had been involved in the music scene for many years—van Keeken and Brown as singer-songwriters and Fryzuk as a music journalist and DJ. Despite their experience, playing in a band was new to them. Ten years later, they’ve developed musically from three-chord rock with a punk attitude to a full band with Miss Mannered on synth, and the Brassholes, a horn section. They mesh up the harmonies of the Wilson sisters of Heart with a riot girl sensibility.

“I think the whole point is we’ve been a band for 10 years now and there has been a number of times when we’ve had to talk ourselves into our own worth,” said Fryzuk. Brown, whose ascending solo career is taking her to Toronto this month, notes they built their confidence and discovered new dimensions within themselves.

“I felt powerful in this band. Compared to Amy and I playing together at the Siderack in 2005—I remember that and everyone was like, “How quaint. Two lovely women and their pretty songs and pretty voices. What lovely young ladies.”

Leaving her ladylike demeanour behind was a welcome change. “Suddenly, we’re onstage playing rock ’n’ roll and swearing and drinking tequila and it’s just those rules, those labels no longer apply. Now we have our own rules.”

The Secretaries are unabashedly feminist. They have had to be in order to stand up for themselves in an industry that has often tried to dismiss them as a “girl band.” van Keeken describes one show where their opener performed songs with misogynist lyrics. She said although it was a horrible situation, they approached it as an opportunity to have the best show of their lives. They are looking forward to playing at SkirtsAfire, where they are unlikely to encounter such shenanigans, but Fryzuk notes that they have built a community that reflects their values. “We have a pretty good audience of all genders who have been really supportive and stuff, which is great because making music our way is attracting the right crowd.”

Brown leaving doesn’t mean the end of the band. They will be heading into the studio this spring, and Brown will be travelling enough to manage rehearsals when they need to prepare for a show. “It’s just the way it goes. But I miss the songs like an old friend when we don’t play for a while. I start get an itch. I feel like I need to do something with those songs. Those songs are beloved.”

Mari is a writer and civil servant.

Mari is a writer and civil servant.

THE SECRETARIES
March 11, 9:45-11 pm
Alberta Avenue Community League
9210 118 Ave
SkirtsAfire March 10-13
skirtsafire.com for more info & full schedule.

Band members from The Secretaries are ready to perform on March 11. | Darren Radbourne

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Everyone can be a little bit Irish
The Serca Festival of Irish Theatre showcases celtic culture on Alberta Ave

ALOUISE DITTRICK

For many people, St. Patrick’s Day is an opportunity to wear green and celebrate Irish culture, but organizers of Serca Festival are hoping to engage Edmontonians in Irish theatre.

Mark Henderson, the creative director and founder of Serca, explained the festival goes beyond a literal definition of Irish theatre. The plays featured at the festival could be about Ireland or by Irish playwrights, or they could be translations of non-Irish plays by Irish playwrights. They could also, as festival producer Michael Clark said, “be about the Irish experience.”

“It got me to thinking: what is Irish? There are all these English writers you think of as being Irish, like Oscar Wilde and George Bernard Shaw. There is also Canadian culture that we don’t really realize is Irish, like [Newfoundland comedy troupe] Codco,” said Henderson.

Some of the plays being staged include The Good Thief by Conor McPherson. It is a one-man show about a Dublin thug telling the tale of a job gone wrong and stars local actor Frank Zotter. Another play is Airswimming by Charlotte Jones. Airswimming is about two women who were put in an Irish mental asylum in the 1920s. The play stars Kendra Connor and Jenny McKillop and is directed by Amy DeFelice.

“[In] the Irish stories and the Irish theatre, there’s a simplicity to the storytelling. It goes right to the heart of the human condition. Even if it is bleak, it is incredibly full of heart and quick of mind at the same time,” said Henderson. The plays run from March 18 to 23 at Alberta Avenue Community Centre and the Nina Haggerty Centre for the Arts. While Irish theatre is showcased, the festival is evolving. Last year, organizers started to include more family-friendly events like a puppet show and dance workshops. This year, Serca is staging Finn McCool and the Fish of Wisdom and Other Ticklish Tales, a show about “legendary thumb-sucking Irish warrior giant, who has everything but the brains he needs. Along his journey to wisdom we meet an enchanted salmon, a wise woman, and terrible invaders from across the sea.” There is also a family-friendly event on March 17, St. Patrick’s Day will kick off the festival with an Irish ceilidh at the Alberta Avenue Community Centre. The ceilidh, a term for an Irish social gathering, will include dancing, a five piece band led by Juno award winner Jeremiah McDade, a sing-along, performances, and an Irish stew and soda bread dinner.

About 15 per cent of Edmontonians claim Irish ancestry, according to figures from Statistics Canada. However, everyone is encouraged to come to the festival to learn about Irish theatre and culture. Or, as Clark said, “Anybody who wants to be Irish can come to the festival.”

SERCA FESTIVAL OF IRISH THEATRE

March 17 to 23
Alberta Ave Community Centre
9210 118 Avenue

Festival admission is free. Donations are accepted.
For more information and a full schedule, visit www.sercafest.com

A St Patrick’s Day party for all ages with Irish stew, Irish dance, Irish music and an Irish price... Free! (By Donation)
@ 9210 118 Ave – Alberta Avenue Community Centre
The surprises of life lessons
What I’ve learned on my journey in motherhood

CYNTHIA C. MONSEIS, MD

Katherine Noreen arrived on a sunny July morning with a wide-eyed questioning glare, as if to say, “Why was I just pulled out of my warm comfy place?” Those two words have been the metaphor for the last six months of my life.

At 42 years old, I had nine months to consider what my life had become. Three years prior I was a pediatrician working in rural Bethel, Alaska. My parents were deceased and I was so engrossed in my work that I had no intentions of getting married or having children. Everything changed when I met my now-husband Justin while on vacation in Mexico and he showed me that life could be different. I took a leap of faith, moved to Edmonton and now I am a mother.

Considering I am a pediatrician, you would think I was well-prepared for motherhood. Well, not so much. My two worlds came together in a startling fashion on the day she was born. When I brought Katherine home, I was terrified but up for the adventure. My education taught me how to stay up all night while functioning. The same day, I learned how to take care of sick children and ensure they are developing properly. I also learned how to prevent SIDS and ensure they are alive. This has been a very useful skill. At work I gave the children back at the end of the visit. Now I had to take care of my little one 24 hours a day.

I had assumed that being a mother was intuitive. I had the same ideas about breastfeeding. I was wrong. I had to get acquainted with Katherine’s habits, needs and wants. She had to figure out it was her mother and could depend on me. And breastfeeding is a learned technique just like everything else we do. It takes time, patience and practice.

Learning how to be a mother is an evolving, complex process. I spent the first two weeks crying, moaning and hoping that I was doing a good job. All the things I didn’t know about babies in the practical day-to-day events surprised me. Babies make a vast array of noises while sleeping and they sleep at least up to 18 hours. I kept checking on her to make sure she was still breathing. I also wondered whether there was something wrong with her since she made so much noise. I could not shut off my medical brain and was constantly thinking of things that could be wrong. I calmed down when I realized it was just her vocalizing sounds.

Katherine has given me a world of knowledge. I get to share with my patients’ parents when I return to work. Becoming a mother has made me a better pediatrician. All the pieces have come together and I still have a lot to learn. I feel empowered by all the women I have encountered in my journey. There is no shame in seeking help or asking questions. There was so much support from both Alaska and from my new home.

I have found a warm comfy place in Edmonton. I am excited and curious to discover more about my daughter and myself.

Cynthia is a newcomer to Edmonton and a pediatrician in Bethel, Alaska. She is excited to learn more about this great city.

Looking for butterflies
This year, let’s resolve to help others

LORRAINE BERGSTROM

Have you ever been in a room where someone walked in and everyone’s face was immediately drawn to that person? That individual exudes easiness, openness, and genuine warmth, making them approachable. That person has a healthy self-image and is a soaring butterfly.

In order to experience happy human relationships, we must consider self-image. Relationships, we must consider self-image. Those words have been the metaphor for another and build each other up.’”

Let’s use a butterfly as a metaphor since it evolves and grows. Our self-image is crucial. We need consciously to develop everyday to be hurt and not to hurt others. Everyday we have the opportunity to lift up someone and help him or her soar. Sometimes we soar and other times we need a boost. We all need each other.

We are a caring society that believes in helping each other. Leaders are needed to get things rolling. Leaders are people who set the tone and vision and aren’t afraid to run into obstacles and make mistakes. Leaders recognize the value of a team or family. They inspire us so that we collectively can make things happen. We can all be soaring butterflies. Even the smallest step taken by one person can create change.

Part of the journey to forgiveness is using past failures to create a better way forward. It’s important to continue this important and to share our story with the world. We must be able to tell our story so that others will not fall into the same trap.

Loving others and being loved in return is the greatest gift. We are past the season that reminded us all about kindness, peace, and understanding. Let’s truly use that as a springboard for a better year.

So let’s encourage butterflies and not crush them.

Lorraine, a Parkside resident for almost 11 years, loves the potential and inclusiveness of this community. She’s currently helping facilitate jam sessions for community musicians and performers.

CHURCH SERVICES

ST. ANDREW’S PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH
8715 118 Avenue 780-477-0677
Sunday Services:
9:30 am - Family Bible Hour
11:00 am - Worship Service
10:30 am - Sunday School
Sundays at 11 am
St. Vincent de Paul Food Help Hotline: 780.477.3341

ST. ALPHONSUS CATHOLIC CHURCH
11461 95 Street 780.477.3341
Sunday Meetings:
9:30 am - Liturgy, Supper
11:00 am - Family Bible Hour
Saturday - Free English Conversation
Call for immigrants

EPIPHANY LUTHERAN CHURCH
8431-100 Street 780.474.8805
Wed, Thurs, Fri 10:30 am
Sundays at 10:30 am

AVE MARIA CHURCH
500-103 Street 780.471.5577
Sunday Worship:
7:30 am - Mass, Tuesday to Friday
4:00 pm - Mass, Sunday Vigil of 11:00 am - Mass, Sunday Mass Celebration

ST. FAITH AND ST. STEPHEN
7705-104 Street 780.471.8888
Service Times:
11:00 am - Mass, Sunday Main Celebration
9:30 am - Lord’s Supper
7:30 am - Mass, Tuesday to Friday

ANGELICAN CHURCHES OF ALBERTA
121-105 Street 780.474.5434
Service Times:
10:30 am - Family Bible Hour
9:30 am - Lord’s Supper
7:30 am - Mass, Tuesday to Friday

ST. FAITH: 780.477.5931
11725 93 Street
(location for more info)
St. Vincent de Paul Food Help Hotline: 780.477.3341

Tuesdays - Free English Conversation
11:00 am - Family Bible Hour
9:30 am - Lord’s Supper
7:30 am - Mass, Tuesday to Friday

ST. STEPHEN: 780.422.3240
11739 94 Street
(location for more info)
St. Vincent de Paul Food Help Hotline: 780.477.3341

Tuesdays - Free English Conversation
11:00 am - Family Bible Hour
9:30 am - Lord’s Supper
7:30 am - Mass, Tuesday to Friday

FLEXTREEL GALLERY- LA ZBOY- SIMMONS BEAUTY
ST. FAITH: 780.477.2233
info@avenuechurch.ca
11725 93 Street
(tues - sat: 10 am to 5:30 pm)
mon - sunclosed
(Tue evenings by appointment)

12317-82 St. 780.474.4830
Wed. Study/Prayer 6:30 pm
10:30 am Service

www.avenuechurch.ca
www.avenuevineyard.com
11725 93 Street
10:30 am Service
Wed. Study/Prayer 6:30 pm

MORNIG PRAYER FRIDAYS AT 9:00 AM
EDMONTON POLICE DEPARTMENT 780.477.8677
ST. ANDREW’S PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH
8715 118 Avenue 780-477-0677
Sunday Services:
9:30 am - Family Bible Hour
11:00 am - Worship Service
Sundays at 11 am
St. Vincent de Paul Food Help Hotline: 780.477.3341

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11725 93 Street
Sowing seeds for savings

Growing sustainable food from seed to table

NIKKI-KARYSSA SCOTT

Urban agriculture is on the rise in Edmonton. With tough economic times ahead and food prices steadily increasing, it’s a good time to turn that overgrown patch of lawn into a garden. Gardening can seem overwhelming, but it is simpler than it sounds. All you need is a few square feet of the great outdoors along with water and time. Even if you don’t have a yard, you can still grow food. Consider container gardening if you have a sunny balcony or patio, or even a herb garden on a bright windowsill. It’s amazing how many tomatoes or peppers can grow out of one pot. Another option is to take advantage of a community garden.

Starting a small co-op with neighbours and friends is both cost effective and a great way to involve everyone. Some people have yards ideal for full sun, high heat crops, while others may grow cool season crops better. Variety in your own garden is important, but why not expand and vary harvest, having fun with others doing it?

Edmonton has a relatively short growing season due to late snowfalls and frosts. This limits the crops we can grow; however, this can easily be overcome by sowing seeds indoors beginning this month and into April. This will also allow you to start your garden with some of the easiest crops to start indoors are herbs, strawberries, tomatoes, peppers, eggplants, artichokes and onions. Watermelons need extra time indoors before being transplanted into the ground. Most vegetables are so easy to raise from seed that you can become overrun with them. Seed packets contain far more seeds that you’ll need in a season, so don’t sow the whole packet. The most affordable seed is usually in bulk, which you can buy from catalogues such as Stokes, Veeses, and OSC. Brands like McKenzie are great.

Growing plants need space, so start small. If you are growing with friends or neighbours, share the seeds to provide smaller quantities and keep costs low.

You can also buy seedlings from stores. Canadian Tire’s prices are very reasonable, giving the best return for your money, with the plants in great shape. Additionally, the Edmonton Horticultural Society has a seed exchange and sale in May and has information on local sales. You can also check out the Green and Gold Garden’s sale at the University of Alberta.

But don’t buy seedlings too early to plant in your garden. Many garden centres start bringing out plants in April. Unless you know how to cover pots and protect plants from frost, seedlings may not survive in the garden that early. Instead, wait until end of May.

With a little bit of effort, you can grow all kinds of vegetables, fruits, greens and herbs in large and small containers, window boxes and gardens. There are so many good reasons to start gardening and really no reason not to.

Nikki-Karyssa grew up in the Okanagan Valley working in orchards and vineyards before moving to Edmonton in 2007. She received her BSc in Production Horticulture in 2012. She lives in Alberta Avenue and is the plant growth manager at the University of Alberta’s research greenhouse.

Explore mindfulness meditation

Parkdale-Cromdale offers free meditation classes on Tuesdays

CHARLES MARROW

A mindfulness meditation class is held every Tuesday between 7 and 8:30 pm at Parkdale-Cromdale Community League (11335 85 Street). This free class gives neighborhood residents an opportunity to explore how sitting meditation practice can help you become more calm. Over time, meditation helps develop serenity not only during class, but also in everyday life. People practicing mindfulness meditation use a relaxed yet upright posture and pay attention to the natural flow of breath. All are invited to attend.
Opening the door to change
Pursuing your passion with measured, thoughtful steps

DAVE VON BIEKER

Sitting across from me at the Carrot, Alex shares a slideshow on his iPad. A year ago, he left a well-paying job to become a writer and photographer. It’s clear he’s still excited by his choice.

Okay, Alex didn’t exactly leave his job. His employers laid him off when the economy sunk. This cold shower awakening helped him hear his dreams shouting for attention.

Around the same time last year, my dreams were getting louder. I told my boss I wanted to leave my secure job for the great unknown. In response, he gave me a book called Quitter.

I was grateful. Jon Acuff’s Quitter is a book about moving with measured steps towards a dream. Quit your day job, Acuff encourages, just maybe not yet. I stayed another year.

I am now three months into life as a freelance writer and musician. What I lack in financial stability, I’ve made up for in opportunities. I’ve landed a gig as an arts columnist for CBC Radio Active. This delightful surprise came as a direct result of making myself available.

Change calls you through a doorway. You can squint inside, but you cannot see the whole room until you cross the threshold. Until you enter, you will never know what is hiding behind the door.

Plans can empower, but they can also paralyze. Some things can only be known by taking action. Sometimes we have to believe before we see. This takes faith.

Are you standing outside the doorway of some great change? Take a breath. Just before you step inside, consider the three big ‘Rs’ if you hope to find success: Relationships, Responsibilities and Resources.

Relationships matter more than qualifications or even past successes. You cannot pursue your passions in isolation. Cultivate strong relationships today so they will flourish when you need them. Don’t underestimate support from those who know you best. Develop a network who will fund your ‘life’s work.’ Writers need readers. Musicians need an audience. Painters need patrons.

Relationships bring responsibilities. I am responsible for my children and my marriage. I keep our house (mostly) clean while my wife works full time. We have a mortgage and car payments. At the very least, our Netflix subscription must be maintained.

Responsibilities require resources. So do dreams. Time is a resource we often lack, so we quit our day job. But you will need more than time. You’ll need talent, money to invest, and an income to keep up those responsibilities, or stress will strangle the life out of your creativity. Without my wife’s steady income, I couldn’t take risks and keep up my responsibilities. My relationships are too important to let those responsibilities slip.

Maybe, like Alex, circumstance has led you to a doorway. Peek through that door and smell the fresh thrill of possibility. Maybe, like me, you are waiting, hand on the doorknob, to take your brave little step.

Dave holds a Bachelor of Theology and is Artistic Director of the Bleeding Heart Art Space. He lives in the inner city with his wife, two children and dog.
Improving neighbourhood connections

Elmwood Park is a tiny league making a big impact on the surrounding community

CHANTAL FIGEAT

Travel north from 118 Avenue on 75 Street and you will come across the Elmwood Park Community League. Situated by the Trans-Canada Highway to the north and surrounded by parkland, it’s an easy building to overlook. As league president Melanie Spitzer said, “we’re so tucked in, even the community hall is tucked into a corner of the community.”

Despite the location, league board members are making a difference in their community. “At our last few events, the awareness and participation has gone up,” said Spitzer, whose quiet enthusiasm for her task as president is obvious.

The community league has a history of which to be proud. In October, I met Spitzer and learned about Elmwood Park while writing an article on vintage documents discovered in the building (see the November 2015 Rat Creek Press issue). The files had been stored and forgotten under a water pipe.

The documents revealed that the community league was founded during post Second World War settlement and resulting community participation. Approximately 55 per cent of the area housing consists of single-family homes, many of which housed war veterans and their families. The name Elmwood Park was coined due to the elm trees veterans planted along the boulevards.

The league has a lot going on for community members. On May 7, the league is hosting a safety fair where a police constable will be present to answer questions. Board members are also considering a community walk.

Membership in the community league is free. Members are entitled to a free swim at the Commonwealth Pool on Saturdays from 5 to 7 pm. They are also provided with skate tags which give free access to community skating around the city. Board members are working to be responsive to their community. As Spitzer stated, they are “very interested in seeing what members of our community would like us to provide for them.”

MEET THE BOARD

Melanie Spitzer – President
Geri Redekop – Vice-President
Joleen Mazurat – Treasurer
Carissa Morissette – Secretary
Ricky Spitzer – Member at Large
Gillian Daley-deGroot – Member at Large
Cindy Verner – Member at Large
Tracy Richard – Member at Large
Gord Richard – Member at Large
George Blanchett - Member at Large

Elmwood Park board members from top left to right: Ricky Spitzer, Melanie Spitzer, Joleen Mazurat, Geri Redekop. Bottom left to right: Gillian Daley-deGroot, Cindy Verner, Carissa Morissette. | Supplied

MEET THE BOARD

Elmwood Park board members from top left to right: Ricky Spitzer, Melanie Spitzer, Joleen Mazurat, Geri Redekop. Bottom left to right: Gillian Daley-deGroot, Cindy Verner, Carissa Morissette. | Supplied

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ads@ratcreek.org

Elmwood Park Community League
12505 75 St
Amenities: playground, baseball diamond, park space.
Phone: 780.479.1035
E-mail: EPCL@shawbiz.ca

Alberta’s NDP Caucus — Working So Albertans Have Good Mortgage-Paying Jobs

- Up to 10,000 new jobs to build needed infrastructure — hospitals, housing for seniors, schools and roads
- Petrochemicals Diversification Program protects Alberta from fluctuating oil prices and creates up to 4,000 jobs
- Establishing an incentive program for employers who create new employment in 2016
I moved to the Alberta Avenue neighbourhood in 2006. I didn’t move here to be its savior. I moved here because I could afford it. The neighbourhood wasn’t even on my radar initially, but my then-boyfriend (now husband) suggested I look here as he had previously lived in the area. My realtor said she wasn’t willing to show a single woman houses in this area so I got a new realtor and a new house. I couldn’t be happier with the outcome! I love living here!

I have made friends of neighbours, ranging from young professionals who just moved here to seniors who have lived here for over 60 years. They have all become important to my husband and I. And I have seen amazing changes, small and large, occur in the decade we’ve lived here.

I am not an overly involved person. I don’t volunteer at our neighbourhood festivals or at The Carrot Co-op. I am not an overly involved person. I don’t volunteer at our neighbourhood festivals or at The Carrot Co-op. I am not an overly involved person. I don’t volunteer at our neighbourhood festivals or at The Carrot Co-op. I am not an overly involved person. I don’t volunteer at our neighbourhood festivals or at The Carrot Co-op. I am not an overly involved person. I don’t volunteer at our neighbourhood festivals or at The Carrot Co-op. I am not an overly involved person. I don’t volunteer at our neighbourhood festivals or at The Carrot Co-op. I am not an overly involved person. I don’t volunteer at our neighbourhood festivals or at The Carrot Co-op. I am not an overly involved person. I don’t volunteer at our neighbourhood festivals or at The Carrot Co-op. I am not an overly involved person. I don’t volunteer at our neighbourhood festivals or at The Carrot Co-op. I am not an overly involved person. I don’t volunteer at our neighbourhood festivals or at The Carrot Co-op. I am not an overly involved person. I don’t volunteer at our neighbourhood festivals or at The Carrot Co-op. I am not an overly involved person. I don’t volunteer at our neighbourhood festivals or at The Carrot Co-op. I am not an overly involved person. I don’t volunteer at our neighbourhood festivals or at The Carrot Co-op. I am not an overly involved person. I don’t volunteer at our neighbourhood festivals or at The Carrot Co-op. I am not an overly involved person. I don’t volunteer at our neighbourhood festivals or at The Carrot Co-op. I am not an overly involved person. I don’t volunteer at our neighbourhood festivals or at The Carrot Co-op. I am not an overly involved person. I don’t volunteer at our neighbourhood festivals or at The Carrot Co-op. I am not an overly involved person. I don’t volunteer at our neighbourhood festivals or at The Carrot Co-op. I am not an overly involved person. I don’t volunteer at our neighbourhood festivals or at The Carrot Co-op. I am not an overly involved person. I don’t volunteer at our neighbourhood festivals or at The Carrot Co-op. I am not an overly involved person. I don’t volunteer at our neighbourhood festivals or at The Carrot Co-op. I am not an overly involved person. I don’t volunteer at our neighbourhood festivals or at The Carrot Co-op. I am not an overly involved person. I don’t volunteer at our neighbourhood festivals or at The Carrot Co-op. I am not an overly involved person. I don’t volunteer at our neighbourhood festivals or at The Carrot Co-op. I am not an overly involved person. I don’t volunteer at our neighbourhood festivals or at The Carrot Co-op. I am not an overly involved person. I don’t volunteer at our neighbourhood festivals or at The Carrot Co-op. I am not an overly involved person. I don’t volunteer at our neighbourhood festivals or at The Carrot Co-op. I am not an overly involved person. I don’t volunteer at our neighbourhood festivals or at The Carrot Co-op. I am not an overly involved person. I don’t volunteer at our neighbourhood festivals or at The Carrot Co-op. I am not an overly involved person. I don’t volunteer at our neighbourhood festivals or at The Carrot Co-op. I am not an overly involved person. I don’t volunteer at our neighbourhood festivals or at The Carrot Co-op. I am not an overly involved person. I don’t volunteer at our neighbourhood festivals or at The Carrot Co-op. I am not an overly involved person. I don’t volunteer at our neighbourhood festivals or at The Carrot Co-op. I am not an overly involved person. I don’t volunteer at our neighbourhood festivals or at The Carrot Co-op.

Over the past few years, my neighbour and I have organized a block party. From this has come the opportunity to meet neighbours, learn names, and find common interests. I’ve met neighbours who I have made friends of neighbours, ranging from young professionals who just moved here to seniors who have lived here for over 60 years. They have all become important to my husband and I. And I have seen amazing changes, small and large, occur in the decade we’ve lived here.

So if you (like me) aren’t the type of person to get involved on a large scale, or feel that you can’t make change, know that simply saying hello to your neighbours, going for a walk through the area, or lending a cup of sugar all have lasting positive effects.

- Andrea Ruelling

Andrea is a speech-language pathologist who works as a clinical assistant professor at the University of Alberta. She is also an avid gardener and world traveler. She has lived in Alberta Avenue since 2006.
**ESL & LANGUAGE**


New Lanark (LACE program). Fridays 10:30 am at Highlands Library. More: 780.887.6825 or sarahdelano@hotmail.com.

**FOOD & SUPPORT**

Free indoor play space and robot challenges, Makey Makey hacks, LEGO at the Library. Free tax services for people with low income. More: 780.496.1806.

**FRIENDS OF THE LIBRARY**

A variety of free art activities for school age children accompanied by adults. Fridays 10 am - noon at The Carrot. More: charlesmarrow@yahoo.ca.

**WHAT’S ON IN MARCH**

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**IT’S TIME FOR YOU TO SHAPE NORTHLANDS**

We’ve recently announced our exciting new plan for future development and we want you to tell us what you think about it.


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**Neighbourhood Summer Daycamps**

City of Edmonton offers amazing summer daycamps at local community halls! Get full camp details in the 2016 Summer Daycamps guide available at schools, public libraries, City recreation centres and online.

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<td>Registration Opens March 16!</td>
<td>Register by calling 311 or online at edmonton.ca/daycamps</td>
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**Looking for an Intercultural Daycare?**

The Intercultural Child and Family Centre at McCauley School (9538-107 Ave) has child care spaces for children from 12 months to 12 years and is open from 6am to 5:30pm. ICFC is a non-profit, accredited centre providing a culturally enriched play and learning environment. Two healthy snacks and lunch are provided. Subsidy is available.

**For Information or To Apply Call 780.441.1443**

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