

RAT CREEK PRESS

ALBERTA AVENUE • DELTON • EASTWOOD • ELMWOOD PARK • PARKDALE-CROMDALE • SPRUCE AVENUE • WESTWOOD

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Area organizations help ensure food security

Organizations are hard at work preparing much-needed food



Katya was delighted to find out about the hot daily lunches at St. Faith's Anglican Church. | Rusti L Lehay

RUSTI L LEHAY

In the St. Faith's lunch lineup, Lois shared her first name. "I can't talk about what this lunch means to me. I'll start crying."

St. Faith's priest, Rev. Venerable Travis Enright, organizes four rotating teams of seven volunteers. After food prep, they serve hot lunches from their door, then deliver more to the EXPO Centre, Boyle, and McCauley areas.

Enright says, "We have been making and serving meals for years and were already in the food security groove following safety guidelines." When Alberta Health Services (AHS) came in to check their COVID-19 routines, they were told, "You are so far ahead of the curve."

The pandemic has created gaps, though. Mainly, they could no longer utilize their senior volunteers. Age alone put them at risk. Ironically, Enright easily filled this gap. The now-housebound, young, strong, and healthy professionals also fit the new protocols.

Enright says, "A senior engineer daily disinfects the stove area. The dean of a department, law professors, and other professionals handle various other tasks. These are highly trained individuals, plus we have a medical professional who tests for COVID-19 in her hazmat suit. We have security and safety covered."

"It was a difficult email telling potential volunteers 'no' if they failed any of the 15 online tests." Many donated cash instead. Enright planned to prepare and dispense all the meals there, serving four hot lunches each week. Then he heard of people at the EXPO Centre's makeshift shelter who stay put, worried about leaving their belongings. Enright's team created a space on the street with signs and boundary pylons. "It helps to have an authoritative fireball of a volunteer telling them no meals are served until after set up." It then goes smoothly despite fear and scarcity. Enright adds, "That is the safest way to deliver the food."

Other services informed Enright of additional gaps. Spruce Avenue School, for one. "So we now give

50 kid-friendly, peanut-free [and pork-free] lunches for the Muslim, African population. Now people on AISH can't find or work jobs to supplement their income." St. Faith's plans 25 daily meals for this sector. Other agencies are pitching in.

Holy Trinity volunteers make 600-800 buns per week. Another church donates juice. Enright says, "We call our lunches the daily bread because each container holds enough calories to sustain a person for a day." A sandwich for immediate eating and a protein 'balm' balanced hot meal for later.

The pandemic also required Crystal Kids to drastically change their operations. Supervisor Aoife Colfer says, "The online mentoring is new, but it's working. We have staff making food Monday through Friday." The centre opens at 3 pm so struggling families can pick up a much-needed meal. "We've noticed a decrease and hope to deliver food hampers to others in need."

For all agencies wanting to help, Enright feels a strong pull to set the bar for delivering food in a healthy way. "There are people out there

with big hearts, God love them, who cause big problems." Enright explains, "People just dropping off food without a sense of order creates crowding. The problem in allowing this clustering is that it creates more chances of the virus spreading. Part of our job is to help other agencies follow food safety guidelines well."

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.

RESOURCES

<https://tinyurl.com/y8e7xuw2>

ATB CARES

It Takes A Village: Covid-19 School Project Donations will help Ab Ave residents.
Donate here: <https://tinyurl.com/y9zzgbnu>

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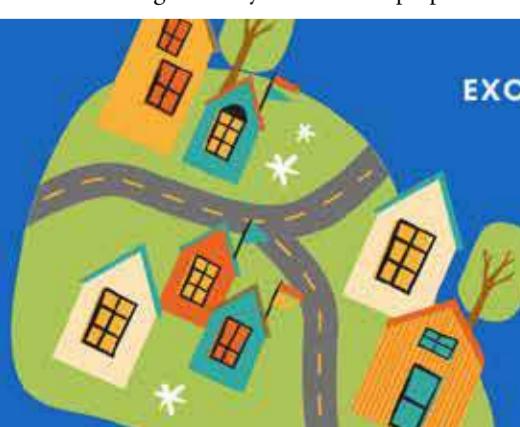
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Nurture mental health during the pandemic

Helpful strategies to use during this time of uncertainty

TALEA MEDYNSKI

During COVID-19, our physical health isn't the only thing to safeguard; our mental health is important, too.

Jon Jon Rivero, chief executive officer and founder of Qi Creative, is a certified trauma practitioner.

"[The pandemic is] impacting our brains; we get into that fight, flight, or freeze mode," he says.

One example is how people have been buying up toilet paper or hand sanitizer. "It's an action that people have control over."

The important thing to know about this pandemic is that because this is new to all of us,

everyone is affected.

"It doesn't spare anybody. We all need help," says Rivero.

That said, some people may be affected more than others. In terms of that fight-or-flight response, this pandemic may affect those already vulnerable to emotional, physical, or mental challenges.

"These challenges amplify already existing challenges."

Rivero offers a few suggestions that can help people navigate these uncertain times.

Try performing a body scan. This involves noting how each part of your body feels from head to toe. During that time, breathe in for seven seconds and

then out, as slow or as fast as is preferred.

"This will engage your parasympathetic nervous system. It helps our brains connect to social engagement systems and helps bring feelings of safety and belonging. It will help regulate the fight, flight, freeze response," Rivero says.

He suggests doing the body scan on a daily basis. "It impacts muscles, breathing, heart rate—it's actually an evidence-based approach."

Other activities that help engage the parasympathetic nervous system include yoga, singing, facial massage, exercise, or aromatherapy.

He also suggests paying attention to inspiring stories of hope.

"Don't just focus on negativity," says Rivero. "I read an amazing story of someone who's 100 years old and recovered from COVID-19."

He adds, "Don't keep [your feelings] inside. Please reach out. Call a friend, a family member, or a help line like the Distress Line, especially if you're in crisis."

It's important to pay special attention to mental health during this time.

"In a panicked state, we may not make the best decisions. It's OK to know we're not alone and it doesn't make us less of a

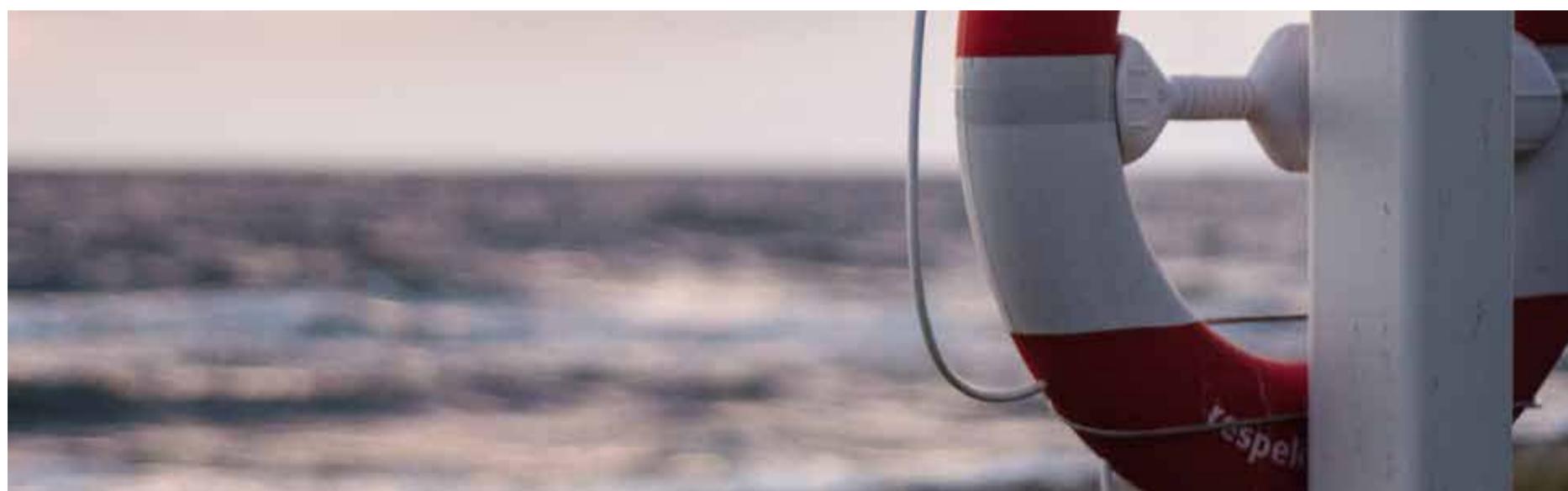
person to know we're not feeling our best."

Rivero's website, mynameis-trauma.com, has other helpful strategies.

"We're all in this together. You can't compare one person's situation to another. It's best to be extra kind to everyone. Be as kind and as loving to as many people as possible."

Call the Distress Line at 780.482.HELP (4357) for 24-hour support or call 211 to access an information and referral line.

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



Looking after your mental health is a priority. | Pixabay

Waiting is the hardest thing everyone can do

The importance of our school's community hubs and staying connected

TRISHA ESTABROOKS

It's been a month since we all retreated indoors and started figuring out ways to support our kids in their learning at home.

It's not been easy: the uncertainty, the balancing act of suddenly having your children at home all the time, and the pressure of everything else that's happening.

Personally, I value my kids' teachers now more than ever. I am grateful for moments when both kids are tucked into a book or when they're imagining what

life will be like when this is all over. I am also grateful to have the distraction of my kids when life feels uncertain and overwhelming.

I have been thinking a lot about the community that springs up around our schools and how not having that community, in the way that we are used to, feels like a loss for so many.

Our school communities support and inspire not just our children but also us as parents. Please reach out to the people around you and ask for help if you need it. For example,

Edmonton Public Schools has been working really hard to ensure there is access to technology like Chromebooks for kids who need it, and that families that have been supported through breakfast and lunch programs continue to receive the support they need. Schools are more than just classrooms and playgrounds; they are community hubs. We need these communities now more than ever. We are stronger together, even if it means we are together six feet apart or tethered through an Internet connection.

We also have to remember

that we are asking our children to make a sacrifice. We, under the guidance of our amazing chief medical officer of health, Dr. Deena Hinshaw, have told our kids to stay home, to postpone hanging out with their friends, and that they can't go to school, for now, so that others can be safe and remain healthy. Our own kids and our neighbourhood kids are listening to us and making a sacrifice, not for themselves but for our community. They are doing this for people they know, but also for people they don't know and will never know. Kids are doing their

part. That's commendable and should be celebrated.

Just imagine the celebration we will all have when this is over!

In the meantime, we can find hope in the belief that our community will be stronger when we come back together, to the place that we call home.

Please, if you have questions or concerns reach out to trisha.estabrooks@epsb.ca.

Trisha is the publicly elected school board Trustee for Ward D and Board Chair for Edmonton Public Schools.

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ABOUT US

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Our writers vary from trained journalists to community residents with varying backgrounds. We strive to be a place where individuals can learn new skills and acquire experience—whether in writing, editing, photography, or illustration. We welcome letters, unsolicited submissions, and story ideas.

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RCP

Supporting local businesses during COVID-19

How the pandemic has affected different small businesses

STEPHEN STRAND

Since COVID-19 began, local businesses have had to make tough decisions. Many have had to either close temporarily or adjust how they do business.

OTTO Food & Drink and YEG Smoked Meats LTD. have both found ways to deliver their food to the public.

Ed Donszelmann, owner of OTTO Food & Drink, says he initially tried offering three days of heated takeaway for customers. Safety was an issue. "OTTO is so tiny, there was no such thing as social distancing going on. We weren't able to stay two metres apart, so we just decided this is too dangerous, we have to close now."

They now sell fresh, vacuum-packed sausages. Customers can place an order on otto-foodanddrink.com/ and curbside pickup will be arranged. "Fingers crossed that our little venture will work."

YEG Smoked Meats LTD. have also adapted.

"We have created weekly Social Distancing Snack Packs which we offer with free delivery to our customers every Sunday. As well, we have made curbside pickup available at the shop," say owners Lindsay Gorda and Tilo Paravlos. "Shopping online for delivery or curbside pickup is the biggest contribution [customers] can do currently. These purchases are keeping local shops afloat these days, so hopefully they can be here after the pandemic." They have a menu and an order form on their website yegsmokedmeats.ca for people to place their orders.

Some businesses, like Bedouin Beats, are now doing business online via bedouin-beats.myshopify.com/.

"I decided to close the store on [March] 16th. No one had come in. Things were really starting to get ramped up with the news and everything at that

point. My instructor was in that evening and I told her, 'We need to call it. We can't be risking people's health by having them come in here,'" explains Michelle Kaplan, owner of Bedouin Beats.

Bedouin Beats has provided classes for 19 different styles of

and 15 people in a class. "Right now, we are looking at between two and six."

Kaplan will also be adding inventory to the online store. But even with the online classes and store, there is still the chance they could shut down permanently. Paying instructors

"I'm actually having to pay out more because of this."

Other businesses have had to close temporarily.

"I currently have no income as my business requires very close contact with people and it's not safe to do right now," says Victoria Stevens, owner

meantime, Stevens has been creating videos to help educate and teach people about hair care and styling. She's also selling and delivering professional hair products and tools via metropolitanrockabilly.ca/. As well, you can buy a t-shirt with her salon's logo on it from hereforgood.printmachine.ca/hereforgood_by_printmachineca/shop/home. The proceeds will help her salon.

For businesses that had to close, there are ways to still help them. Donate money, buy gift cards, or reach out and ask if they have the items you need, even if they're closed.

"I strongly encourage [local business owners], if they haven't already done so, to connect with their landlord, suppliers, banker, as well as family," says Joachim Holtz, executive director of Alberta Avenue Business Association (AABA). "Stay in touch with existing customers and treat them like gold nuggets. Do everything possible to keep them, because new customers are very much harder to find."

Holtz stresses the importance of talking to landlords. "Landlords have their expenses too, but they also don't want to have empty unrented buildings."

The future is unclear. Each business is different and some business owners may find a new path.

Holtz says, "Many of our businesses are true and courageous entrepreneurs. They are used to adversity and taking risks, and hopefully will re-emerge stronger for it."

Visit ratcreek.org for business resources.

Stephen works in broadcasting and writes for fun. He can be seen walking through the neighbourhood.



Ed Donszelmann, owner of OTTO Food & Drink, is now selling vacuum-sealed sausages. | Stephen Strand



Michelle Kaplan, owner of Bedouin Beats, is offering online dance classes. | Supplied

belly dancing. Kaplan says the benefit of online classes is that anyone worldwide can enroll.

"In our hayday, we used to get between 15 and 20 people in a class," says Kaplan. She says registration has declined over the last few years due to the economy and during that time, they'd have between five

and covering operating costs are becoming difficult. "I don't know what's going to happen with our studio. I don't know if we are going to be able to make enough money through all of this to be able to cover operating costs." Kaplan says she now has extra operating expenses with the online classes.

and hairstylist at Metropolitan Rockabilly Hair Design.

Stevens closed her business in mid-March before the mandated closures. "I closed because the close contact nature of the work made it impossible for me to ensure the virus wasn't being passed from either myself to clients or vice versa." In the



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Ways of keeping the community spirit alive

Local leagues are finding ways to connect with their community

STEPHEN STRAND

Although community leagues are now closed to the public, they've still found ways to keep the community spirit alive.

"I think we're still figuring that out a bit (as are a lot of groups) in terms of what does it mean to be a community in a time of social distancing and increased physical isolation," says Brendan Van Alstine, president of Alberta Avenue Community League.

The league is figuring out online programming, so keep an eye on their Facebook page. He explains, "All in-person programs are cancelled or postponed." This includes the Bloomin' Garden Show.

Spruce Avenue Community League's May garage sale is cancelled, but they're working on making some events accessible online.

"Our events are mostly in-person events, although our Heritage/History Committee is working on a virtual component for our upcoming Jane's Walk so that it can proceed, even if a walking group is not possible," says Kate Boorman, league president.

Along with moving their board meetings online, they've planned a noise-making initiative for healthcare workers for the nearby Royal Alex and Glenrose hospitals. "We've also initiated a teddy bear hunt in our neighbourhood, with participating houses putting a bear in their window for residents and children to spot while they are getting fresh air."

They're also helping isolating seniors and families. "We have a group of volunteers who can help with deliveries and other errands for those in need (SpruceAvenueCovid19 Community Group) and we

or other essentials, [we're] offering seniors and people with limited mobility free grocery delivery through the University of Alberta Bag Half Full YEG student volunteers."

Kevin Wong, presi-

er, Mike, is connecting with people, especially senior league members. Mike has been identifying useful neighbourhood resources on the NextDoor app.

"We also sent out a volunteer call for the Carrot Coffeehouse;

We've also encouraged more online connections."

Some events included a neighbourhood Netflix movie party where participants watched separately at home, a window Easter egg hunt, Sidewalk Chalk Stories where people decorated sidewalks in front of their homes, and the 10-Day Step Challenge to encourage walking 10,000 steps a day.

For information on what Elmwood Community League is doing, visit their website.

View the remaining article on ratcreek.org.

Stephen works in broadcasting and writes for fun. He can be seen walking through the neighbourhood.



Working from home can have its challenges.
| Lorraine Shulba

are brainstorming ways to keep our community spirit alive as we remain physically distant," says Boorman.

Eastwood Community League had to cancel a number of regular events, including two community churches, weekly meditation, and an upcoming conference.

Kate Wilson, facility coordinator, says, "Our board meetings are also on hold."

Though they aren't planning any online programming, they're helping the community. "In terms of assisting community members who may be unable to get out for groceries

dent of Parkdale-Cromdale Community League, says, "We have shifted some of our events online. We did one virtual pub night and that was very successful." Wong explains how it worked. "You pour yourself a drink and we organize some online games where everybody can play through the video conference feature. So, we play games and have a drink and meet our neighbours."

Other online programming will be available, such as music lessons. Wong says it's about finding new ways of connecting and making sure people are okay. Their office manag-

they are partnering with Free Footie to do a food hamper system," says Wong.

Delton Community League was renovating its hall when the pandemic hit, so they didn't have any events planned. Keep an eye on updates regarding sports leagues based out of the league.

Westwood Community League have planned some online and at-home activities, shared via their social media channels and their newsletter.

Katie Hayes, director with the league, says, "We want to encourage people to still be active outside their homes.

COMMUNITY LEAGUE WEBSITES- You can also follow leagues' Facebook pages

Spruce Avenue Community League
spruceavenuecommunity.com

Eastwood Community League
eastwoodcommunity.org

Parkdale-Cromdale Community League
parkdalecromdale.org

Delton Community League
deltoncommunity.com

Westwood Community League
westwoodcl.ca/

Elmwood Park Community League
elmwoodparkcommunity.org/

Alberta Avenue Community League
albertaave.org

Online art classes for the whole family

The Nina Haggerty Centre for the Arts ensures art is accessible

VICTORIA STEVENS

Operations will look a bit different for The Nina Haggerty Centre for the Arts this spring after suspending their studio and community programs earlier this year due to COVID-19. Instead of in-studio events and classes, the centre will be offering art classes for the whole family online throughout the month of May and into June.

Lorraine Shulba, a practicing artist, will be facilitating both the Community Art Night and the Family Art Night remotely through Zoom meetings for all who would like to follow along. Beginning the last week in April, The Nina website will include a list of supplies needed for each upcoming class and instructions on how to get the supplies yourself, including delivery through The Nina, prior to each class. The classes are free and instructions on how to join will be posted on the website.

"Classes will follow the same format and will be kept simple," says Shulba, referencing the in-studio classes they would

normally hold twice a week. Instruction in a variety of different art forms will be offered, including painting, sculpting, and fibre arts. This is a great opportunity to expand your creative repertoire safely from the comfort of your home.

The Nina, founded in 2003, is a non-profit centre for art consisting of artists with developmental disabilities, facilitated by professional, practicing artists through mentorship, workshops, and small group sessions. The centre has grown to include over 200 members with their work being exhibited across Canada and internationally. They also run the Stollery Gallery at the Stollery Children's Hospital.

Information on the classes offered can be found on thenina.ca.

Victoria is an entrepreneur, roller derby player, and basset hound lover living in the Delton area.

NINA CLASSES

thenina.ca



Lorraine Shulba will be instructing participants remotely. | Supplied

Local artist sculpted iconic characters

Bob and Doug McKenzie sculptures installed in Rogers Place

TALEA MEDYNSKI

Alberta Ave resident Ritchie Velthuis' bronze sculpture of the iconic Bob & Doug McKenzie SCTV characters has been in the works since 2012-2013.

Second City Television (SCTV) was a Canadian sketch comedy show that ran from the late 70s to the mid-80s. The characters Bob & Doug McKenzie were played by Rick Moranis and Dave Thomas. In fact, those characters were developed in Edmonton when the show was filmed here. Originally shot in Toronto, it was cancelled.

"Dr. Allard, philanthropist of Edmonton, owned ITV. He agreed to fund the series as long as it was filmed in Edmonton," says Velthuis.

Eight years ago, the non-profit SCTV Committee, Paul Allard, and Avenue Magazine started a petition to have an artist create sculptures of the cast, and an RFP was sent out. Velthuis was successful in his bid for the project.

"I spent the summer creating small models for the six original characters."

The idea was that the original cast would be sculpted out of bronze. But after Velthuis made

the miniatures, the decision was made that it would be far too costly to make all six characters. Instead, Velthuis suggested he sculpt Bob and Doug McKenzie since they're iconic.

When funding was secured, he started working on the sculptures in 2016.

another three months.

He adds that it was a little intimidating to sculpt famous people. "Part of them [Moranis and Thomas] agreeing to have it done was giving input in the process. It was super helpful and it was good to have their notes. They were very pointed

working in layers. First he carved Styrofoam on a metal armature. Then, he sculpted powdered clay, wax, and petroleum jelly.

When he was finally done, off the sculpture went to Bronzeart Casting in Calgary for 18 months.

Velthuis has sculpted for over 30 years, but doing this was a particularly unique opportunity.

"As an independent artist, I'd been practicing and waiting for this opportunity," he says. "I had applied for other public art pieces and was unsuccessful. I wanted to create my own bronze piece."

He adds, "I was grateful I wasn't rushed. The likenesses changed many, many times until I was satisfied."

In late March, the sculptures were installed at Rogers Place in the entrance of the Winter Garden, which Velthuis says seemed suitable. Unfortunately because of COVID-19, the unveiling had to be postponed.

"Originally, the unveiling was supposed to be at the end of March, and I was supposed to meet the actors," Velthuis says. But although he was understandably disappointed, "The outpouring of positive responses was amazing and I'm glad I brought some brightness to people."

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



The iconic Bob and Doug McKenzie are now installed at Rogers Place Winter Garden.

| Marc J Chalifoux Photography

"It took approximately six months in my studio working on it intensely," he says.

He worked on fine tuning the characters of the sculptures for

and very direct, which I appreciated."

The process involved in creating these sculptures was rather involved and had Velthuis

"There were very little changes—it was a testament to their mould making," he says. "Once it was welded back together, I painted it and did the patina."

Documenting history for future generations

Photographer hopes to create a multimedia exhibit about the pandemic

TALEA MEDYNSKI

Rebecca Lippiatt is more than a photographer: she also has a degree in microbiology, along with an interest in history and pandemics. So it's no surprise she is applying for a grant to document the pandemic in the area.

Lippiatt plans to apply for Edmonton Heritage Council's project accelerator grant, along with the *RCP*. She would photograph area residents outside their homes (from a distance), long lines in front of grocery stores, and empty streets.

"I would love to photograph different families and individuals outside their homes and where one or both parents are working out of the home," says Lippiatt. "[I also] want to document people who are the support structure of our society and are working through the pandemic, including paramedics, nurses, postal workers, and grocery store staff. I would like to photograph these people in their work uniforms to help create a sense of who these people are and what they do for us."

If she receives the grant, she

would hire a few writers to collect stories from people and perform interviews.

Lippiatt was inspired by photos of people during previous pandemics and wanted to know how they managed

front porch shoots gave me the seed of the idea of how to document this."

She would likely take photos of two families from every block on Alberta Avenue, along with business owners in front of

exhibit involving photography, written portions, and recorded interviews. She would like to hold the exhibition somewhere local like the Nina Haggerty Centre for the Arts. As the exhibition is intended to be an

Lippiatt plans to submit it to the City of Edmonton Archives and the Provincial Archives of Alberta so that the gallery could be stored for future exhibits.

Documenting this unprecedented time is important. The last pandemic of this scale was the Spanish Flu, which happened over a century ago.

"My children's great-grandmother was born in 1912 and remembers the Spanish Flu coming through Britannia Beach [B.C.]," says Lippiatt. "She had to nurse everyone in her household. She was six years old. She remembers the coffins coming down from the mountain."

She loves documentary photography and says this project would be important to share with future generations.

"I think having the detail would be very important. Our grandchildren are going to be asking about this pandemic," Lippiatt says. "How awesome would it be to hand this down to future generations?"



Rebecca Lippiatt plans to photograph local residents outside their homes. | Rebecca Lippiatt

and what daily life was like for them. "I want to give that information to future generations. Seeing photographers doing

their stores, particularly since so many of them are family-run.

If all goes well, she would create a multimedia gallery

archival project, she hopes that it can be shown every decade or so.

When the project is finished,

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

OPINION

Long-term care residents deserve better

Staff at continuing care facilities aren't the problem

MIMI WILLIAMS

The first waged job I ever had was at the Craigie Nursing Home in Scarborough, Ontario. It was around the corner from my home and the pay was \$11.36 an hour. This was a great score for a 14-year-old me, given that the minimum wage then was \$2.65 per hour, \$2.15 if you were under 18.

I lasted four shifts before I quit. The physical space was depressing and dark. The building, privately owned and operated, had been open since 1966 so was exempt from the laws imposed by the 1972 Nursing Homes Act. There was not enough time to engage with the residents who so clearly needed it. The work was too hard; I was completely out of my depth and had received little training. I went to work at Burger King for \$2.15 an hour.

My grandmother moved into that nursing home a few years after that. It was convenient for my mother to visit frequently and ensure she got the care she needed. This was a huge concern at the time; the poor quality of care in nursing homes for seniors, the disabled, and those with mental health issues was frequently in the headlines and those headlines often contained words like 'abuse' and 'neglect'.

I take you on this little trip down memory lane for a few reasons. First, to illustrate that four decades ago, workers in long-term care facilities were paid relatively well. Office clerks with a high school education earned about four dollars an hour; my cousins and aunt working on the General Motors assembly line and members of the autoworkers' union made seven. That changed. Why are

workers in these facilities today paid so little that they are forced to work two or three different jobs just to feed their families?

Second, problems with continuing care in this country have been going on for almost my entire life. While COVID-19 and the disproportionate number of deaths in seniors homes these past weeks have turned our attention to the problems in our continuing care system, many have been raising the alarms about these problems for decades. That hasn't changed. And, again, we need to ask ourselves why.

Long-term care in our country is offered through a mix of public, private for-profit, private not-for-profit, and religious-based providers. Since the 1990s, the shift away from public provision of care for our most vulnerable to for-profit has been profound.

Not long after British Columbia reported its first confirmed case of COVID-19 on Jan. 28, the province's Seniors Advocate tabled 'A Billion Reasons to Care', a report on the first review of the \$1.4 billion-dollar contracted long-term care sector in the province.

That report found that 33 per cent of publicly funded long-term-care beds in B.C. are operated directly by public health authorities. The remainder are operated by for-profit companies (35 per cent) and not-for-profit societies (32 per cent) on contract with one of the five regional health authorities. This report showed how much for-profit operations divert the money going to direct care. And, it showed the incursion of for-profit provision of long-term care since the 1990s.

According to the report, "For-profit care homes, by the

nature of their business, expect to demonstrate a profit/surplus; this underlying fact sets in motion incentives that may, at times, conflict with the best interests of the resident."

These findings echo a 2016 study by the University of Alberta's Parkland Institute which showed the disproportionate growth of the for-profit long-term care industry in Alberta over six years. This didn't end when the NDP were elected in our province. This is a multi-partisan failure.

Workers in private for-profit homes are just as dedicated as those in publicly-operated and non-profit facilities. That isn't the problem. The problem is that their employers aren't motivated to provide a public good; they're motivated by profit. And funding formulas delivered by governments are driving non-profit employers to devalue their staff just as much as the for-profits.

In 2018, the Conference Board of Canada forecasted that, by 2035, an additional 199,000 new long-term care beds will be needed to accommodate new demand in this country. We don't have the luxury of thinking long and hard about how to deal with this. What is clearly lacking is the political will.

Mimi is a writer who first moved to the Alberta Avenue area over 20 years ago. She has participated in a number of revitalization initiatives and continues to promote the Ave as one of the best areas to live, work, and play in Edmonton. She currently works for the members of Alberta's largest public sector union which represents workers in both private and public continuing care facilities.

Care homes and beds over time

■ Health authority ■ For-profit ■ Not-for-profit



This graphic shows how funding for long-term care beds has changed over time. | Office of the Seniors Advocate British Columbia, from A Billion Reasons to Care report



Canada has had problems with continuing care for decades. | Pixabay

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Unintended effects of COVID-19

Worldwide response to alleviate the pandemic has numerous effects

GILLIAN KERR

Numerous media reports, papers, and studies have been published about COVID-19 and society. Urban Chinese citizens are seeing blue skies and hearing birds for the first time in 40 years. There are pictures of clean Venice canals where fish and other wildlife have returned after decades. Recent studies have measured the substantial decrease in motor vehicle mortalities in the past few months. A striking report in the *Boston Globe* discussed the lack of school and mall shooting deaths. Our global response to the pandemic has unintentionally produced numerous effects, from local to large scale.

This article looks at what some environmental experts are observing and learning from the pandemic. My *RCP* articles are about the environment, society, and sustainability; therefore, it is important to be clear that we should be looking at observable, measurable evidence and emerging lessons about the environment. Any commentary that uses language about the “benefits of COVID-19” for the environment are not help-

ful. Regardless of the intent, they can be viewed as insensitive, opportunistic, and out-of-touch, and I agree.

Satellites measure reductions in air pollution

High above Earth, satellites are detecting a significant decrease in the concentration of common air pollutants. Decreased emission results in China and the European Union have tracked strongly with stringent social-distancing practices. One result is that the closing of the hole in the ozone layer has accelerated because of the break in air pollution.

As we know, air pollution can seriously damage the ozone layer and our health. “The World Health Organization states that conditions stemming from exposure to ambient pollution—including stroke, heart disease, and respiratory illnesses—kill about 4.2 million people a year,” reported Marina Koren in *The Atlantic*. Decreased air pollution leads to decreased disease. Therefore, we can expect to see a decrease in short-term health issues caused by air pollution as long as we are operating in this pandemic.

Climate change emission is lower with broad social distancing practices

We have heard that greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions have dropped, which is expected. We are driving less, and most factories and industries are shut or operating at lower output. In fact, the rapid halt of flights around the world could reduce GHGs more than the Paris Climate Agreement. So then, isn’t the pandemic beneficial for reducing climate change? Greenpeace Canada researcher Loujain Kurdi says, “No, not at all. Firstly, this one-time drop in air pollution and emissions comes after a long period of sustained increase.”

And we will likely return to the same trajectory if our global society returns to “business-as-usual.”

Soundscapes are changing

In her April article in *The Atlantic*, Marina Koren reported on the changing sounds around us. What do you hear in your neighbourhood these days? With so many people staying home—and public transit cutting service as a result—there’s less noise from cars, buses, trains, and other transportation. Koren interviewed a public

health researcher at Boston University who was recording measurements on her decibel meter when out on walks. She was stunned by the results—yes, it was a lot quieter!

Koren also interviewed a marine ecologist at Cornell who studies aquatic acoustic environments. She noted that sea creatures would benefit from decreased human-produced noise. The ecologist is hoping to study the new quiet in the oceans from, for example, the cessation of cruises which reduced the amount of global ocean noise almost instantaneously.

Next steps

Our collective response to COVID-19 illustrates the remarkable capacity of society to stop “business-as-usual.” What emerges in our post-pandemic world remains to be seen, but could our strategies to suppress COVID-19 be a lesson on how we respond to climate change, biodiversity loss, and our relationship with the environment?

To quote Vijay Kolinjivadi, of *Uneven Earth*, “COVID-19 can serve as a lesson showing the interconnectedness of society’s impacts and actions on the

planet and the immediacy of response required to shift our relationships to the world. The lag time between when social distancing measures are put in place and impacts on the reduction of COVID-19 cases once again shows us that biological systems do not obey human-imposed rules.”

This article was informed by reports released from *The Atlantic*, Greenpeace Canada, *The Guardian*, the Climate Action Network Canada, *The Boston Globe*, and *Uneven Earth*. Email me for links to any of these articles.

Gillian has lived in Norwood since 2006 and loves the community. She worked for the Ministry of Environment for over a decade until she finished her PhD on environmental governance. She is currently researching, teaching, and consulting. She volunteers with a number of social society and environmental groups. If you have any comments or ideas for a future article, email gilliankerr@fastmail.fm.



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The pandemic has had unexpected effects. | Pixabay

Working together is crucial.
| Gillian Kerr

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