

Rat Creek Press

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BY THE COMMUNITY - FOR THE COMMUNITY

OCTOBER 2021

Sharing myths, sharing dreams

What's in store for this year's Thousand Faces Festival



Left: Thousand Faces Festival has been going for nine years. Right: Flamenco guitarist Sebastian Barrera and slam poet Lady Vanessa Cardona perform. | Mat Simpson Photography

- CONSTANCE BRISSENDEN -

Words rush from artistic director Mark Henderson as he talks of his inspirations for the Thousand Faces Festival, now in its ninth year. It's obvious that the brightness, the diversity, and the sheer joy of mixing and matching myths from a multitude of sources buoy Henderson's commitment.

His passion for myths started as a 12-year-old watching *Star Wars* from the front row of a movie theatre. "Great stories come from [the] roots of all cultures," Henderson says. "We always think of classical myths, but there are contemporary ones as well. I picked up on this as a young person watching *Star Wars*."

The festival launches on Oct. 15-16 with a public, multi-disciplinary event at Alberta Avenue Community Centre. Dubbed *A String of Mythic Pearls*, both evening performances feature a feast of multicultural food and art.

Audiences will enjoy short bursts of mythic theatre, dance, music, comedy, and other performances old and new, while feast-

ing on a multicultural banquet provided by Alberta Avenue's best restaurants. Doors open at 6:30 p.m. and pre-booking is required for this upbeat, uplifting evening.

These in-person events will have an RSVP link released on the festival's website one month before the festivities. A limited number of spectators will be at each performance, all vaccinated and following COVID guidelines around distancing and masking to ensure safety for all. Anyone attending the in-person events must have proof of full vaccination. A negative test result is not accepted. The online portion runs from Friday, Nov. 5 to Sunday, Nov. 7. Gather the family around the computer to watch *Strings of Puppet Stories*, featuring colourful, comical, and unique puppet performances.

Sharing in the festival's activities is a powerful reminder that we live in a fascinating and culturally diverse city. Henderson recounts stories of past Thousand Faces performances, reflecting South Asian, South African, Indigenous, and many other cultural backgrounds. Audiences have embraced the

music, dance, and storytelling around the myths highlighted, and the festival is warmly received every year.

Planning for this year's events was chaotic, "with plenty of uncertainty as to how the world, our province, and our city would look," says producer Aidan McBride. On the plus side, he notes, "We can reach people who could not come, for reasons of geography and others." Virtual festival programming has been shown to audiences across the province, including Grande Prairie, Calgary, and Red Earth Creek. Online donations are now also possible through the festival's RSVP link.

Henderson is jubilant about this year's offerings. "Audiences can learn about myths and art forms they might never have encountered. They can learn about themselves and what they love, fear, and aspire to through the myths. You can learn far more about a culture through its stories than any other means," he says.

Thousand Faces Festival defines myths as stories we keep coming back to. "Myths

rejuvenate us by taking us to the immortal, to the dream world, into the labyrinth, up to the shining summit, to the meeting with the ogre, the goddess, the hero, the guide. They take us into a realm where life has meaning and freshness at every turn," observes Henderson. "Myths can give us hope, stir up our will to live and share and come together."

Constance's writing and editing career spans more than 40 years. She lives in Parkdale-Cromdale.

THOUSAND FACES FESTIVAL

In person:
Oct. 15-16, Ab Ave Community Centre (9210 118 Ave)
Online: Nov. 5-7
www.thousandfaces.ca
info@thousandfaces.ca
780.761.2773

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THE HEADLESS CARROT HALLOWEEN
SUNDAY, OCTOBER 31

Alberta Ave to welcome artisan shop

While some businesses are closing, new ones are opening

- SHAREE ALUKO -

Alberta Avenue is well known for its arts community, and now it has one more option for shoppers looking for unique items and gifts with The Avenue Artisan Shop.

Ali Hammington created the business venture due to the inspiration and encouragement from another business owner on the Avenue.

Hammington says, "Priyank Patel of MedX Drugs [118 Ave and 90 St.] had some space in his pharmacy. Priyank is a big booster of the Alberta Avenue neighbourhood, and his generosity is well-known at the Alberta Ave Community League, where I serve as president. In conversation one day, he

mentioned to me that he'd like to open a neighbourhood gift shop where local artists and artisans could showcase their talent, and community members could find unique, affordable gifts. I thought it was a fabulous idea, and we immediately began brainstorming. The Avenue Artisan Shop was born."

People are always looking for unique gifts to show appreciation or to congratulate each other. We can all attest to the fact that most people love to receive gifts and we rarely ever say no to such kind gestures.

The shop will be located inside MedX Drugs, and will occupy the western half of

the space. The store is expected to open in October.

The Alberta Avenue Artisan Shop is based on a business model that will not only be beneficial for patrons buying the products, but also to local artists. The shop will promote a means of livelihood for these artists, hence boosting the local economy with an increased flow of disposable income. This income opportunity is definitely coming at a time when situations are dire and the additional circulation of cash is needed.

Hammington states, "We will feature works on consignment by artists and artisans from Edmonton and area, with a particular focus on the creative genius of our own neighbourhood. Anyone interested in placing their work with us is encouraged to email photos and prices to ali@medxdrugs.ca."

The opening of the shop will also provide more variety in shopping options for customers and will add to the vibrancy of the Alberta Avenue business community. In a period of economic downturn caused by the lengthy pandemic, the emergence of a new business is a welcome addition to the local economy. It brings hope that though some business owners have had to close their doors, new ones are opening.

Sharee has a Masters in Business Administration and is passionate about sharing information.

"We will feature works on consignment by artists and artisans from Edmonton and area, with a particular focus on the creative genius of our own neighbourhood. Anyone interested in placing their work with us is encouraged to email photos and prices to ali@medxdrugs.ca."



Ali Hammington, owner, says the shop is expected to open in October. | Supplied

Elect
ADRIAN BRUFF
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October 18, 2021

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ABOUT US

We are a non-profit community newspaper serving Alberta Avenue, Delton, Eastwood, Elmwood Park, Parkdale-Cromdale, Spruce Avenue, and Westwood. Published on Treaty 6 Territory. The opinions expressed in the paper are those of the people named as authors of the articles and do not necessarily reflect those of the board or staff.

GOALS

Build Community, Encourage Communication, Increase Capacity.

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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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CIRCULATION

Serving 12,500 community members.

DELIVERY

The paper is delivered by Canada Post to all houses, apartments, and businesses in the seven neighbourhoods listed above including those with no unaddressed mail notices. For the most part, delivery begins on the last Wednesday of the month.

DON'T MISS THESE ONLINE ARTICLES

Ambition, community, and 35mm film

A Canadian pilot's story takes flight with Alberta Ave filmmaker
Published Sept. 1

Transforming problem properties

Redeveloping problem properties to reinvigorate communities
Published Sept. 3

Understanding nature through food

Local cookbook explores diversity and belonging in Edmonton's urban green spaces
Published Sept. 5

Solving the job vacancy puzzle

Why Canadians aren't filling the thousands of vacant positions
Published Sept. 10

A gift of art to the community

AJA Loudon brightens up Avenue Theatre with a beautiful mural
Published Sept. 13

The potential for vote splitting

The likelihood of vote splitting for city council candidates in Ward O-day'min and Ward Métis
Published Sept. 13

Filling the food desert void

Two food initiatives are providing access to quality, affordable produce
Published Sept. 14

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LETTER TO THE EDITOR

Costly neighbourhood renewal

I live in north Delton. Neighbourhood renewal has been going on since 2015, but it is still not finished. Curbs and sidewalks have been left undone, and we have had issues with an alley entryway that holds too much water.

While the neighbourhood renewal seems simple, the City is not being upfront about how much it will cost taxpayers. The City makes it look simple, but simple is not free.

The City gives you a choice: you can choose to pay the lump sum for neighbourhood renewal along with your taxes, or you can pay a small yearly fee. If you choose the yearly option, you will pay the yearly fee for 20 years along with the interest on the unpaid balance, which is 3.52 per cent. This is outrageous, and it ends up costing much more than if you pay the lump sum.

The biggest issue is that we don't all pay the same amount for neighbourhood renewal. People who live

on a corner lot with sidewalks on both sides get charged double. My cost for neighbourhood renewal on 124 Ave is \$1,051.50 and the cost for 90 St. is \$2,414.75: a total cost of \$3,466.25, before interest.

I have brought this issue up with the City, and they couldn't care less. Hopefully this will be helpful to the community.

Doug Seaby

Filling the food desert void

Two food initiatives are providing access to quality, affordable produce

- MYA COLWELL -

Since the closing of Safeway at 118 Ave and 82 St, the Alberta Ave area has become more of a food desert, but initiatives like Lodgepole Market and Fresh Express are stepping up to provide the community with fresh, affordable produce.

Steve Smith, the Prayer Works coordinator at St. Faith's Anglican Church, organizes Lodgepole Market which runs out of the church. The market kicked off on Sept. 1, and it will continue indefinitely on Wednesdays from 12:30 p.m. to 2 p.m.

"A group of us who work here [at St. Faith's], we've realized that there's a strong demand in the community for food," says Smith. "It's becoming a bit of a food desert, and we wanted to offer something that would be affordable but nourishing for families."

Currently, produce and baking are available for purchase at the market, but Smith says that the hope is to expand the market even further once it gets off the ground. "We'd like to be able to have vendors in at some point and we're looking at offering bannock as well for sale," explains Smith. "We're just trying to grow [the market] as we see what the community's need is."

Lodgepole Market is partnering with Fatima's Market

to provide the community with affordably priced produce. Fatima's sells produce to Lodgepole Market at wholesale prices so that fruit and vegetables sold at Lodgepole Market can be available for low costs.

The community response for the market has been very positive, says Smith. "[The community] seemed really happy with the produce and with the prices that we were able to offer." Even though the turnout for the market has been small so far, Smith notes that "we still felt it was a success, just getting [the market] off the ground."

Alberta Avenue Community League is offering a space for a Fresh Express bus on Hub Nights (Thursdays from 5 to 8 p.m.). The buses have been outfitted as mobile grocery stores, and they primarily serve seniors and communities that experience food deserts.

"Because we're currently a food desert with our Safeway being closed down," says Ali Hammington, league president, "[the Fresh Express staff have] agreed to come park in our parking lot once a week."

Some items for sale include meat, eggs, and fresh produce, which can all be purchased at affordable prices.

Hammington notes that the Safeway was the only full-service grocery store in the Alberta Ave neighbour-

hood. "It still wasn't enough... but it was something. And now we don't have that at all."

A FreshCo is slated to replace the Safeway, but it is still under renovation. Hammington is unsure if the new store will be able to meet the needs of the community, but hopefully the grocery chain with the motto "lowering grocery prices every day" will provide the savings that community members are looking for.

Check out Lodgepole Market and the Fresh Express bus for fresh produce and groceries.

Mya is a student working toward a career in journalism and communications. Writing is one of her passions, besides baking and playing trombone.

GROCERY SOURCES

Lodgepole Market

St. Faith's Anglican Church (11725 93 St)
Wednesdays, 12:30 to 2 p.m.

Fresh Express bus
(9210 118 Ave)

Thursdays, 5 to 8 p.m.



Lodgepole Market offers a variety of fruits and vegetables, along with baked goods. | Steve Smith



Top: Produce available for sale at Lodgepole Market. | Steve Smith

Bottom: Lodgepole Market and Fresh Express are providing the community with fresh, affordable groceries. | Steve Smith

Bringing a love of hockey to youth

A hockey pilot will take place in outdoor rinks this winter



The hockey pilot is looking for sponsors to help with the cost. | Kate Wilson

- TALEA MEDYNSKI -

This winter, three local leagues are participating in a pilot helmed by Hockey Edmonton to get youth outside playing hockey.

Steve Hogle, the general manager of Hockey Edmonton, talked to the Edmonton Federation of Community Leagues last season along with Dale Clarke, a volunteer who used to lead hockey in northeast Edmonton.

"We had a virtual roundtable of league leaders," says Hogle. "That led to two meetings at Eastwood Community League. The first one was an informal meeting where we talked about the concept and the second one a more formal roundtable with more people from Eastwood as well as some people from some other communities."

So far, Eastwood Community League, Spruce Avenue Community League, and Delton Community League are participating.

The pilot, which will begin after the ice freezes at the outdoor rinks,

will recruit local youth from elementary school to junior high in playing hockey at the leagues' outdoor rinks. High school students are also welcome to join.

"A lot of kids can't get to the rink," says Hogle. "It's a great way to get kids there. We want to reach out to people who've never tried hockey before. There's no borders. Anyone who wants to play can play. Because of smaller numbers, we might have a greater range of players."

Organizers are in contact with local schools to assess which youth would want to participate.

The pilot will teach youth the skills needed to play hockey, such as skating and puck handling, and also hold games once a week. The practices and games will be held after school, and organizers will provide snacks beforehand.

Equipment will be provided.

"We want to make it easy for kids to walk to the rink," says Hogle.

He also sees the pilot as a way to build community. "We want it to be one family there on the ice."

Laura Cassidy, the sports director

at Delton Community League, says, "I think the pilot is a great opportunity to tie in with other leagues." Cassidy adds, "We're very proud of our rink. People from all over the city come to use it."

Farid Foroud, league president, adds, "I think socioeconomic status prevents families from participating in something like this. Communities like ours are where some of these kids are."

Hockey can be a costly sport, with the price of equipment, fees, and travelling to different locations for games. For many families, playing hockey isn't financially feasible.

"Having a true community-based program that is about the kids and not the profit would be great," says Foroud.

Cassidy says, "It'll be good for kids to be outside. Hopefully the weather will cooperate. Local means less travelling. It's good for the parents, too."

And with the ongoing pandemic, holding the games and practices out-

doors will make it more likely that they'll continue.

Foroud says some newcomers in the area may not have had much of a chance to play hockey. The fact that it's affordable and easy to access will have families more inclined to try it.

Hogle is hopeful the pilot is successful and takes off across the city.

"Kids don't get to play the game for a variety of reasons."

Organizers are currently looking for partners to help with the cost. "We're looking to have minimal costs, if any at all. We want to knock down these hurdles that would prevent kids from participating."

The pilot will be a program where kids

sign up to participate.

For more information, contact Donna Yateman at president@eastwoodhub.org.

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

"We want to reach out to people who've never tried hockey before. There's no borders. Anyone who wants to play can play."

**Steve Hogle,
GM of Hockey Edmonton**

The pilot will teach youth the skills needed to play hockey, such as skating and puck handling, and also hold games once a week.

The practices and games will be held after school, and organizers will provide snacks beforehand. Equipment will be provided.

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A taste of North African cuisine

Savour the flavours of Tunisia close to home

- CONSTANCE BRISSENDEN -

Before I ventured to Golden Fork Restaurant, I didn't know where Tunisia was located. A search online revealed that this fascinating North African country boasts a coastline along the Mediterranean Sea. The Sahara Desert, the largest desert in the world, covers the lower half of the country.

can be booked for private gatherings. Parking is plentiful out front.

My first impression was of simple cuisine that was satisfying to eat. Overall, the dishes had a spicy tang without blowing my tastebuds.

Couscous is a basic Tunisian dish that complements everything. Made with semolina wheat, couscous begs to

Sandwiches, ranging from \$9.99 to \$12.99, allow the diner to try Mediterranean and North African favourites in an affordable manner. Kafta kabab wrap with hummus (\$9.95) is served in pita bread. Shawarmas, falafels, and donairs range from \$9.99 to \$11.75. The ingredients are subtly blended and satisfyingly tasty. Because the restaurant is family-run and personable, you could ask Hela to add more or less spices to the order.

The Mediterranean Sea borders Tunisia, so it's not surprising that seafood is big on the Golden Fork Restaurant menu. I enjoyed sauteed shrimp with garlic and butter, and smacked my lips with pleasure. The \$24.99 meal, which includes salad and rice, is enough to share. Grilled sea bream, sea bass, red mullet, and sardines (both fried and breaded offerings) all range from \$22.99 to \$26.99. I can't wait to try more.

Working my way into the North African dishes, I recommend shish taouk (marinated chicken kabab, \$18.95), ojja sausages (spicy, garlicky, with baked eggs, \$18.95), or kammounia (beef stew with cumin powder, \$19.95). My next big splash will be lamb ribs (\$22.95).

Finally, there are "plates" on the menu, priced from \$16.95 to \$25.95. Spaghetti shrimp and spaghetti chicken

GOLDEN FORK RESTAURANT
 12118 90 St
 Open every day, 11 a.m. to 10 p.m.
 587.497.7738

Rating: **5/5 Forks**



Above: Hela Marzouki cooks a variety of Tunisian dishes, reflecting this North African country's slightly spicy fare | Constance Brissenden

Right: The Golden Fork Restaurant includes an inviting ground floor dining area as well as an upstairs Arabic seating room for special gatherings. | Constance Brissenden

Golden Fork Restaurant, across from Delton Elementary School, opened two years ago. It has been an uphill battle to survive, says owner Salah Marzouki, with COVID-19 closures and restrictions. Recently, repaving on 90 Street blocked access to the restaurant. Because of that, Salah and Hela (his wife and the chef) closed the restaurant for several weeks.

Inside the airy and comfortable restaurant, the couple have created a welcoming space with ample room for date nights as well as family groups. Upstairs is an Arabic-style seating room that

be smothered in Golden Fork sauces from its chicken, fish, beef, or lamb dishes, nicely enhanced with peppers and vegetables.

Start your day with a breakfast omelette with tuna, parsley, onion, and cheese for \$6.95. Chakchouka, a combo of eggs, green pepper, tomato, and onion is \$10.99. Splurge with the Golden Breakfast, including homemade bread, at \$13.99.

The kids' menu offers a choice of fish fingers, chicken nuggets, chicken strips, or pasta, and all are priced at \$8.95.



are accessible for diners of all ages, with no startling taste sensations for kids or adults.

Top your visit off with a sweet pastry dessert (kanafa, \$4.95), a fresh juice (\$7.99), or mint tea (\$1.75).

If you are into the delights of international coffee, try the Arabic coffee (\$3.00) in an espresso cup. Freshly ground, thick, and boasting a range of flavours, it's a must-try for coffee lovers.

Constance's writing and editing career spans more than 40 years. She lives in Parkdale-Cromdale.



"My job as your representative, is to take your concerns to City Hall, not City Hall's concerns to you"

ON OCTOBER 18th

VOTE ROB BERNSHAW

OPINION

Community-driven solutions work

Locally-led responses to issues creates connected, self-directed neighbourhoods

**- MARILYN GRAY -
REACH EDMONTON**

Local communities, at the neighbourhood level, are essential to solving their own problems.

As societies move away from relying solely on policing and other enforcement approaches, it is increasingly important to explore community-driven solutions to social issues.

When responses to community issues are guided by the people who live in those neighbourhoods, the results speak for themselves. For example, in McCauley and Chinatown, through eight litter clean-ups, 185 volunteers picked up 148 bags of litter. This activity promotes healthier public spaces, a sense of community pride, and connectivity in the neighbourhood.

Some similar community-driven initiatives include: dog walkabout groups, citizen patrols, and improved lighting for businesses. These initiatives resulted from neighbours identifying issues through digital surveys and community meetings.

A neighbourhood-specific approach is important. We need to view each geographic neighbourhood as a unique, integrated system that becomes stronger from constant work. For example, the needs of Alberta Avenue are distinct from the needs of North Glenora.

While the lines that divide these communities are abstract and somewhat arbitrary, their existence has encouraged the creation of unique cultures in each neighbourhood.

Because they're all unique, they require their own, neighbourhood-specific responses to challenges. The mobilization

of citizens in each community is essential to avoid cookie-cutter responses that often miss the mark.

When community members participate in addressing local issues and exploring solutions, the process itself is powerful. It creates a shared sense of purpose among neighbours who may not have previously

even known each other. Working together to solve problems creates cohesive communities. Working to fix a practical issue is proven to be a powerful connector that crosses political and cultural divisions.

Person-to-person relationships are the fuel that makes the process work. Research from the Proceedings of the National

Academy Sciences of the United States of America, published in February 2021, shows that shared experiences are more likely to bring people together than any amount of rational argument or presentation of facts.

Doing this work together has a tangible benefit to the community, regardless of whether the work being done accomplishes its goals.

Community connection has a real effect on quality of life, and affects the experience of everyone in a neighbourhood, even visitors who are in the area to shop or enjoy facilities.

The connections between us create the culture that we live in. They are the glue that keeps the community together in a way that no single project or program can.

We want to champion citizen-led projects that create more connected communities.

Do you have examples that you'd like to share of community members coming together to address an issue in your own neighbourhood?

We'd love to hear your stories.

If you have a story to share, or an idea for a locally-led initiative you'd like to get off the ground, contact Marilyn Gray at Marilyn.Gray@reachedmonton.ca.

Because [these communities are] all unique, they require their own, neighbourhood-specific responses to challenges. The mobilization of citizens in each community is essential to avoid cookie-cutter responses that often miss the mark.



An example of a community-led initiative was the Chinatown/ McCauley Litter Blitz. | Man Ho

The REACH Edmonton Council for Safe Communities was established in 2010. Its ambition is to, in one generation (25 years), significantly increase community safety in our region; increase Edmontonians' perception of safety and inclusion; and engage the people of Edmonton and the region in developing a culture of safety and crime prevention.

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James Kosowan

For Ward Métis



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- Championing affordable services
- Protecting the river valley

About James

- 41-year resident of Ward Métis
- Committed community volunteer and advocate

I want someone on City Council who will work tirelessly for the betterment of our entire city. I have known James for over 30 years. I know he will represent us extremely well at City Hall.

— Lida Lahola (lifelong Parkdale resident & business owner)

Contact James to find out more about his campaign to become your City Councillor in Ward Métis.

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www.jameskosowan.ca

The changing face of where we work

More and more employees no longer want to commute to work

- SHAREE ALUKO -

It was only two years ago that the idea of working from home was a luxury and a far-fetched idea. The true reasons why employers didn't want employees working remotely were likely due to a lack of trust, a need for control, or the idea that it may be abused by employees.

Well, the pandemic hit and whatever rationale existed for not endorsing remote work was thrown out the window because there was no other choice.

With working remotely being the standard for over a year now, how do employees and employers view our current situation? Are we faring better working from home? Are employees prepared to give up remote work or is it here to stay? Does it reduce productivity? These are some questions that both employees and employers need to answer as we chart our course of action in the future.

According to an npr.org article called *The Great Resignation: Why Millions of Workers are Quitting* published on June 24, 2021:

"The great migration to remote work in the pandemic has also had a profound impact on how people think about when and where they want to work.

"We have changed. Work has changed. The way we think about time and space has changed," says Tsedal Neeley, a professor at Harvard Business School and author of the book *Remote Work Revolution: Succeeding From Anywhere*. Workers now crave the flexibility given to them in the pandemic — which had previously been unattainable."

On June 17, 2021, washingtonpost.com published an article titled *Millions of workers are quitting their jobs during the pandemic. Meet six who made a big change*.

The article quotes Kristen Jennings Black, a professor who studies employee health and well-being. She states, "Once we figured out we can work from home, many of us pretty effectively, it was just the question of, 'Well, why would I go back?'"



More employees want a flexible working environment. | Pixabay

This point was further supported in another article published June 24, 2021 on cnbc.com titled *'I'd rather bet on myself': Workers are quitting their jobs to put themselves first*. "Some employees have enjoyed the flexibility of working from home so much that, according to one survey, 39% of people said they would consider quitting if their employers weren't flexible about remote work moving forward."

On July 8, 2021 hrreporter.com gave some indication that employers are embracing the change with the article *Sun Life announces super-flexible return to office*.

"Sun Life has shared its vision for post-pandemic work: Employees will be

allowed to choose when and where to work. Most of the company's 12,000 workers in Canada will be on a 'flexible' work arrangement, where they will not be required to work from the office any minimum or maximum number of days. Instead, they can choose where they work at any given time based on the activities they need to complete, guided by client and business needs."

Even banks like RBC have embraced the idea. A financialpost.com article from July 14, 2021 outlined RBC's plan to embrace flexible and hybrid work models and put into practice what they've learned from working during the pandemic.

Though some may argue that there are also many disadvantages to the remote work model, it is not expected to be one size fits all, but rather an opportunity for employees to have flexibility and choose what works best for their lifestyle.

Undoubtedly, other companies will follow suit to support a more flexible work arrangement for employees.

Both employees and employers have benefited from working remotely. Starting with the most obvious: there is no need to commute, which means more rest. People can also save a substantial amount of money on mileage, gas, daycare, before and after care services, work clothes, and lunches. More rested and happier employees may need to take fewer sick days and may be more productive during work.

Benefits to employers range from savings on commercial rental space, fewer

This may be the way of the future and in order for employers to be competitive and attract and retain top talent, they will need to be flexible in accommodating remote work.

sick days, less employee turnover, better quality of work, and less burnout from employees' daily commute.

Though some may argue that there are also many disadvantages to the remote work model, it

is not expected to be one size fits all, but rather an opportunity for employees to have flexibility and choose what works best for their lifestyle.

This may be the way of the future and in order for employers to be competitive and attract and retain top talent, they will need to be flexible in accommodating remote work. For years it was assumed that a remote model of work was not feasible or practical, but now it has been proven that it can be done. Therefore it will be extremely difficult to justify reverting to the traditional approach of working.

Sharee has a Masters in Business Administration and is passionate about sharing information.

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Ward Métis candidates tackled issues

Councillor candidates discussed the ward's hot topics

- REBECCA LIPPIATT -

On Sept. 16, the *Rat Creek Press* hosted the Ward Métis electoral forum. Matthew Kleywegt moderated the online forum, which is available on youtube.com/watch?v=p7cpdZuBoCI.

Redevelopment of the Exhibition Lands and the Stadium

All candidates agreed the current redevelopment timeline of 20-35 years is too long. Steven Townsend said crime and assaults in this under-used and deserted space are an issue. Ashley Salvador would bring “missing middle” affordable housing. Abdulhakim Dalel agreed that the land should be used to create affordable housing, saying “Edmonton is sitting on gold” and that many people he talks to are “paying between 50 and 80 per cent of their income for rent.” Liz John-West stated that the City must work to create meaningful community connections and a beautiful space.

The City's role in climate change

Salar Melli said his campaign is the only one to take a stand on waste and climate change, and that he has demonstrated his commitment by campaigning without signs or leaflets. Townsend stated, “The climate needs to be front and centre in all the decisions the City makes.” Salvador pointed out the high tax cost and unsustainability of urban sprawl.

Involvement with other political parties

John-West stated, “I think it’s appalling that political parties are involved in municipal elections.” The other candidates were adamant they did not belong to a political party. Cori Longo pointed to the importance of transparency when door knocking, responding to the question people ask: “who do you vote for?” Both Salvador and Longo have committed to disclosing their donations before the election.

view, stating that while he supports art, it has to fit within the budget.

Vacant commercial space

John-West noted that when businesses form an association, they are eligible for improvement grants. Melli noted the importance of increasing density, stating, “Businesses struggle to have enough customers.” Kosowan spoke to the City’s role in making sure business owners “do not run into a bureaucratic wall.” Townsend noted, “Property owners sit

candidates said it was important to use the right services in the right situations. Longo noted that the police commissioner admitted that 30 per cent of the police budget does not even go to policing. Dalel had the most impactful statement, noting that as a Black man, he has been stopped by the police 48 times, arrested twice, and because of these experiences in 2017 approached the police department to advocate for hiring more Black, Indigenous, and Muslim officers. He also calls for more community officers to become involved with youth to build trust.

Safe injection sites

All candidates unequivocally support safe injection sites. Candidates Dalel and Melli noted that it is important that other areas of the city share the social services that are currently concentrated in northside neighbourhoods.

Caroline Matthews, Rob Bernshaw, Jim Rickett, and Brian Kendrick were not present at the forum. Matthews was invited, originally committed to attend, but withdrew to attend a fundraising event. Bernshaw



Ward candidates discussed issues and answered questions in the online forum. | Rebecca Lippiatt

Arts and culture

All candidates were enthusiastic about arts and culture and the various community festivals. James Kosowan said art is a good investment with a three- to 10-fold return. Daniel Kornak stated, “The finest artists I have seen in my life are walking the streets of Edmonton.” Melli committed to using 100 per cent Edmonton artists for any city projects. Dalel had the only contrarian point of

on vacant land and boarded up properties waiting for a payday” and said the City could deal with this by increasing taxes every year on vacant properties. Salvador echoed this by pointing to the tools cities can use in zoning to increase density for living and working.

Police budgets

Kosowan and Kornak support keeping the budget the same. Most of the

had a family emergency.

Rebecca has attended free concerts as bouncer, juggled plates as a waitress, completed a degree in microbiology, laboured in the oilfield cleaning storage tanks, and worked as an editor. In her current incarnation, she has been a full-time photographer for over 10 years and is a mother to two boys and stepmother to two girls.

MORE ABOUT THE CANDIDATES

Jim Rickett and Brian Kendrick do not have campaign pages, and bios from them are not available.



Abdulhakim Dalel | Supplied

Abdulhakim Dalel wants to be the voice for workers and community members.



Ashley Salvador | Supplied

Ashley Salvador, an urban planner, brings an understanding of the complexity of running cities.



Caroline Matthews | Supplied

Caroline Matthews has worked as a police officer, in post-secondary education, and in small business.



Cori Longo | Supplied

Cori Longo, former nurse and postal worker, is running on a platform of supporting good jobs for Edmontonians.



Daniel Kornak | Supplied

Daniel Kornak, a surprise candidate who entered the ring at the last moment, spoke for those, who like himself, are unhoused.



James Kosowan | Supplied

James Kosowan has experience working for municipal and provincial governments.



Liz John-West | Supplied

Liz John-West made a career in social services and helping people from a variety of backgrounds and circumstances.



Rob Bernshaw | Supplied

Rob Bernshaw currently works as a consultant. He believes in solutions and working together.



Salar Melli | Supplied

Salar Melli, a business owner, is committed to working with vulnerable youth and finding innovative solutions to the city’s issues.



Stephen Townsend | Supplied

Steven Townsend has experience on various business and policing boards.

O-day'min forum addressed issues

City councillor candidates discussed their plans for the ward



Adrian Bruff | Supplied



Anne Stevenson | Supplied



Gabrielle Battiste | Supplied



Gino Akbari | Supplied



Joshua Wolchansky | Supplied



Naima Haile | Supplied

- MYA COLWELL -

On Sept. 15, *Rat Creek Press* hosted an online forum for the city councillor candidates in Ward O-day'min. Incumbent Ward 7 councillor Tony Caterina declined to attend, and there was no response from Adil Pirbhai. Ibrahim Wado and Mohammed Migdaddy entered the councillor race after the forum.

The forum, moderated by Matthew Kleywegt, set out to answer community questions and concerns.

Homelessness was an important topic.

Naima Haile says, "Canada is a rich country, and we should not even be having this conversation about homelessness." She suggests following a similar model that Finland used to eliminate homelessness and providing a greater emphasis on addiction and mental health supports.

Gino Akbari's first step in addressing homelessness would be to visit a homeless

camp with councillors to better understand the issue. He would also provide more support for homeless youth. "If we can provide services and involve [youth] in [the] community, then we have cut this at the root."

The candidates also discussed affordable housing, and their plans for creating it in Edmonton.

"Housing is a human right... there are people right now in our city, first of all, who don't have homes at all, [and] others where housing is costing them 70, 80, 90, and in some cases, 100 per cent of their income, and they aren't able to meet their other basic needs," says Anne Stevenson. Stevenson would invest in neighbourhoods so they are compact and walkable, and provide a range of housing options at different price points.

Adrian Bruff says affordable housing is being able to pay the property tax, mortgage, insurance, and "not being priced out of my community because of expensive developments next door." It is also about being able

to afford transportation, groceries, and contribute to the local economy. "I want to create a city where every single Edmontonian has a real chance at home ownership and being able to take care of their own homes."

Property tax is another hot topic issue.

"Stopping the sprawl is step one," says Joshua Wolchansky, explaining he wants to bring "investment back into the heart of our city." He believes we need to stop proposals for privatization and change the fundamental governance of our city. Wolchansky says the Municipal Government Act requires the City to ask the provincial government for approval on almost everything. "Let's redefine the relationship [between city and province] and let's take the training wheels off our city. It's time for Edmonton to stand on our own two feet and to realize the power of our own voice... and create an Edmonton that lasts and that's respectful with investments of taxpayer dollars."

Gabrielle Battiste says, "We need to live

within our means... we've spent, over the last 10 years, an awful lot of money on building a city that ideologically we wanted, and unfortunately in doing that, we have missed the boat on actually giving people what they need." She says the transit system is an example of this, especially since it has taken away transit from every seniors' residence in the ward. Battiste notes that we have to say yes to economic growth and stop pet projects "that want to turn us into Vancouver and Toronto [instead of building] an Edmonton for Edmontonians."

Watch the entire forum on YouTube at [youtube.com/watch?v=llkD248F7Fw](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=llkD248F7Fw).

The civic election will take place on Oct. 18.

Mya is a student working toward a career in journalism and communications. Writing is one of her passions, besides baking and playing trombone.

SOME INFORMATION ABOUT THE CANDIDATES

Ibrahim Wado, Adil Pirbhai, and Mohammed Migdaddy have no candidate pages and no bios.

Adrian Bruff is a community activist with a 10-year career in social work. His priorities include building a thriving economy, creating an affordable and inclusive city, addressing homelessness, and supporting small businesses.

Anne Stevenson has a background in urban planning. "Affordable housing and

addressing our homeless crisis is a top priority for me," she says.

Gabrielle Battiste lives in Rosedale, where her businesses and family are also based. Her priorities include creating a safe space for families, the elderly, and children, supporting small and local businesses, and encouraging healthy living.

Gino Akbari has been active in Edmonton's art and small business community, and he has worked as a civilian on

the Department of National Defence. His priorities include affordable housing, addressing homelessness, and supporting local businesses.

Joshua Wolchansky has worked in environmental protection, economic development, and international relations. His priorities include supporting the arts, working on the social and housing crisis, reigniting the downtown core, and stopping urban sprawl.

Naima Haile came to Canada 30 years

ago as a refugee from Somalia and she has worked with refugees since then. Her priorities include creating an inclusive, integrated, and safe city, with equal opportunities for everyone.

Tony Caterina is the current city councillor of Ward 7. He has a background in business.

Resilience in the time of COVID

Develop this life skill at any stage of life

- RUSTI L LEHAY -

Many parents now know the monumental difference between praising the outcome as opposed to rewarding and focusing on the effort. According to Stanford psychologist Carol Dweck, children reach new heights if they are encouraged to continue exerting effort on a task.

Jon Jon Rivero, the CEO of Qi Creative and a trauma expert, stresses the importance of practicing unconditional positive regard for children as a way to instill resilience. "Allow them to fail and struggle, and experience hardship with new things." It is through the trials and effort that "kids learn how awesome they can be."

According to Dweck's research discussed in the article *The Effort Effect*, this is key to developing resilience. Local therapeutic resources, Rivero and Franki Harrogate, a registered provisional psychologist, offer encouragement for adults who may have missed out on a childhood environment conducive to developing resilience.

The challenges of isolation have skyrocketed during enforced lockdowns and restrictions. Rivero suggests one easy way to develop resilience "is to remember how far you've come and recognize the challenges you've survived."

Harrogate points out the gaps in the

system. "What are we asking people to be strong from? How do we help people co-regulate to feel okay just living and breathing?" Often the cracks and crevasses are too wide for people to access resilience while they are still living the challenging conditions. "We must focus on meeting people's basic needs



Resilience is a lifelong skill that can be learned early on or later in life. | Pixabay

[housing, food, water, safety]." Developing resilience isn't possible if people are trying to survive.

To tap into inner resources and strengthen your resolve when options are few, eco-psychology is a tool Harrogate uses. Eco-psychology is essentially the emotional con-

nections between people and the earth." Hug a tree, lay down on some grass, hold hands, establish a connection with the green and growing world." Part of Harrogate's process is to ask people when they "last sat on the earth. We recuperate faster with an outside view."

If you lack someone to hold hands with,

change the meaning at any given time to what a challenging incident means to you." Change is a natural law. "When we can gently remind ourselves there will be changes and challenges, that mindset alone can help us as a human race."

The fear and division between people now is also a threat to our peace of mind. Rivero says, "It's important to keep in mind when disagreements arise that we need to hang onto the hope that what unites us is far stronger than what separates us."

When he reads a social media post by a friend with a completely different view, Rivero says, "I have to remember that everyone is entitled to their beliefs and opinions. I may not understand them, but it shouldn't make me feel better or worse."

Instead, it helps Rivero to focus on remembering why they were friends in the first place. In his mission to understand, Rivero is happy to discover "we have more similarities than differences, even though we might be polar opposites on politics or spirituality."

Keeping the connection lines open and friendships intact offers support when our inner resilience may flounder.

Rusti has been writing professionally since 1999. Her favourite word activities are coaching writers and offering online writing stay-treats.

"even touching your own skin for five minutes can regulate our nervous systems," says Harrogate.

Rivero says, "Resilience is a frame of mind that can be accessed by remembering life is supposed to have both positive and negative experiences." Pull back and reflect. "You can

Meet the mayoral candidates

Candidates discuss their plans for Edmonton in this online forum

- MYA COLWELL -

Rat Creek Press hosted an online forum with Edmonton's mayoral candidates on Sept. 15 as an opportunity for community members to have questions and concerns answered. Augustine Marah and Mike Nickel did not attend. Malik Chukwudi was not present for the entire forum, and he has now ended his candidacy for mayor to support Mike Nickel.

Homelessness was an important issue in the forum. Cheryll Watson is practical about homeless supports within the city's budget. Her focus is on human rights: installing water stations across the city and providing access to public washrooms. She also notes that it is important to stop criminalizing poverty: "Stop ticketing people and stop slashing tents and really treat people with dignity and respect." Instead of competing with existing social agencies, Watson plans to help those agencies have a greater impact by providing land purchase discounts, helping them secure partnerships with private industry, and setting service standards.

Rick Comrie believes a more proactive approach is necessary. He is tired of the same issue being discussed and of programs that don't effectively solve the issue. "We must look at what perpetuates societal issues, and economic downturn, be it through industry itself or pushed upon you by the federal government," Comrie says. "Economic downturn and economic hardships perpetuate suicide, substance abuse, [and] homelessness." Mayoral candidates discussed their plans

to counter racism. "In a city like ours which is a very inclusive and welcoming city, I am concerned by the rise of hate, hate violence, and racism, and discrimination," says Amarjeet Sohi. "It has no place in Edmonton." He has a 100-day action plan to end hate violence

racism isn't to fight it. "We're not going to whip and imprison people to make them be nicer," he says. "That's not the solution. The solution is education. We have to teach everyone, especially children, to love and respect everyone. We need more love in our society."

need to and I really can work with anyone," she says. "I don't see any problems in that role at all. I think I will be able to create a strong leadership team where everyone is supportive of everyone else."

"I recognize that the mayor is only one vote," says Kim Krushell, "and that if they are going to be successful in getting any vision passed, they need to work with councillors." She would meet with all the councillors to understand their priorities and find the common ground. As mayor, Krushell says she would take accountability and empower councillors in order for effective change to take place.

Candidates were also asked what they would do to address crime in Edmonton. Michael Oshry says that sometimes, a separate agency should be called to deal with a situation instead of the police, and he plans to allocate the police budget accordingly. "Our budget for the police department is about 15 per cent of our operating budget... and we have to make sure that that money is allocated to the entity that's going to do the best job for the services that are needed," he says. "We have to make sure that when [people] need the police, the police are available."

Watch the entire forum on YouTube at www.youtube.com/watch?v=Ske3csCqtuI.

The municipal election will be held on Oct. 18.

Mya is a student working toward a career in journalism and communications. Writing is one of her passions, besides baking and playing trombone.



Mayoral candidates discussed their plans for Edmonton in an online forum on Sept. 15. | Mya Colwell

that involves implementing policies and programs that empower communities and provide resources to fight racism and discrimination. "One of the reasons I am stepping up in this role is that I want Edmonton to continue to remain an inclusive and welcoming place for everyone, and I am going to work hard to end racism and discrimination."

Brian (Breezy) Gregg says the solution to

Although he notes that controls will need to be in place for extreme circumstances, he is reluctant to hand out punishments. "Let's talk about love," says Gregg. "Love and respect for everyone."

Communication is essential to having a successful term on council. Diana Steele sees no issues with building consensus on city council. "I'm able to compromise when I

MEET THE CANDIDATES:

Organizers could not reach Vanessa Denman; no campaign page for Denman is available, so there is also no bio.

Amarjeet Sohi is a former city councillor and member of parliament who plans to create an Edmonton where everyone has a good quality of life.

Augustine Marah is a bilingual educator and community activist who plans to improve and diversify job creation if elected.

Brian (Breezy) Gregg is a musician who plans to create a caring economy through affordable housing and free transit.

Cheryll Watson has experience in strategic business communication and tech innovation, and is committed to serving the city she loves.

Diana Steele is running to be the first female, Métis mayor, and has plans to support local businesses and end homelessness.

Kim Krushell is a former city councillor with 20 years in public service who plans to create a vibrant and connected city.

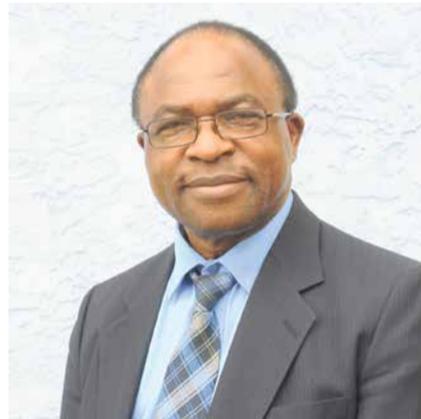
Michael Oshry is an entrepreneur and former city councillor who plans to create an Edmonton where no one is left behind.

Rick Comrie is a proud business owner who is focused on economic recovery and supporting local businesses.

Mike Nickel has spent three terms on city council and plans to restore the balance of interests in Edmonton, if elected.



Amarjeet Sohi | Supplied



Augustine Marah | Supplied



Brian (Breezy) Gregg | Supplied



Cheryll Watson | Supplied



Diana Steele | Supplied



Kim Krushell | Supplied



Michael Oshry | Supplied



Rick Comrie | Supplied



How online learning is evolving

Is online learning the future of education?

- MYA COLWELL -

Online learning has become more important than ever since the pandemic started, but that doesn't mean the process has been an easy one.

The Edmonton Mennonite Centre for Newcomers (EMCN) offers a variety of courses, and they have had to adapt their learning model as the pandemic progressed. "Newcomers... feel isolated at the best of times," says Julie McCrea, the e-learning and employment program specialist at EMCN, "especially if they come over and they don't have a lot of family or a developed network. So, having online [courses...] was not really making that connection."

Her goal throughout the pandemic has been to create that same connection participants would experience in a normal face-to-face classroom in an online setting.

McCrea explains that most of the courses EMCN offers have become hybrid classes. There are asynchronous components (where you learn on your own time), such as YouTube videos that McCrea creates, but there are also synchronous components (learning with the help of an instructor) where an instructor will meet with the class either online or in-person, depending on the participants' comfort level.

There were also obstacles during the initial transition online. "We have some people who just aren't as familiar with computers and technology, or don't have the... ability to purchase [technology]," McCrea explains.

"But there [were] challenges to face-to-face learning as well when you had parents that had a sick child or people who were working five jobs," she adds. "[Now], instead of somebody having to miss out on an opportunity, they have the ability to balance those obligations and responsibilities a lot easier [with online learning]."

While McCrea notes that in-person learning is still the preference for many people, online learning provides flexibility for those who can't attend class in a physical space.

"People are adaptable and people are hungry for that connection and hungry for that knowledge. So, we just wanted to do everything that we [could...] to make [online courses] as useful to them as possible."

Onlea is a Canadian company that develops engaging online courses for organizations. One of their most recognized courses is Indigenous Canada, a course run through the University of Alberta.

Adriana Lopez Forero, the president

and CEO of the company, says online learning is constantly evolving, and her team is always thinking about ways to incorporate new technology and make courses even better. "The pandemic did not change that," she notes.

learning]. In addition to that, the flexibility... allows us to reach a [larger] number of learners that we could not reach just with traditional methods."

This flexibility is one reason online learning is so valuable, says Lopez

ing enough, and that they don't provide enough support for students despite the increased potential for distractions and a less-than-ideal learning environment.

Online courses have been especially beneficial for lifelong learning. If you're



Above: Onlea, a local company, shares its recording process for online courses. | Supplied by Onlea

Below: Edmonton Public Library has plenty of online courses you can check out from the comfort of your own home. | Mya Colwell

"I believe [online learning is] not going to be a replacement for in-person education. I believe it's a complement to it, and it's a complement that gives us the ability to get the skills we need in the time we need them in."

**Adriana Lopez Forero,
CEO of Onlea**

What has changed is the speed at which they need to develop courses for the institutions they partner with. The need for digital learning has been heightened by the pandemic, and organizations need courses now, not sometime next year.

Lopez Forero says that one of the biggest misconceptions about online learning is that it will never be on par with in-person learning in terms of quality. "The quality [of the course...] can be on par or even better in some cases [than in-person

Forero, but it isn't required in all cases. "Synchronous, in-person learning has a time and a place and is the right tool in many cases," she notes. "I believe [online learning is] not going to be a replacement for in-person education. I believe it's a complement to it, and it's a complement that gives us the ability to get the skills we need in the time we need them in."

Mistakes Lopez Forero frequently sees with online courses are that they are formulated exactly the same as they would be in person, that they aren't engag-

interested in taking free online courses ranging from language learning to personal development, check out the Edmonton Public Library's database at epl.ca/learning-tools/courses-training/. There are thousands of courses at your fingertips, and they are all accessible from the comfort of your couch.

Mya is a student working toward a career in journalism and communications. Writing is one of her passions, besides baking and playing trombone.





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Project makes HIV testing easier

At-home testing aims to reduce barriers to care, community supports

**- MARILYN GRAY -
REACH EDMONTON**

Of the people living in Canada with HIV, an estimated 14 per cent don't know they have it.

A new cross-country partnership is aiming to change that.

I'm Ready to Know is a national project focused on implementing, scaling-up, and evaluating low-barrier options for access to HIV self-testing.

Antonio Bavaro, peer navigator with the I'm Ready, Talk program, explains the project aims to reach undiagnosed people and provide choices about any care needed. In fact, the I'm Ready research program is distributing 50,000 free HIV self-testing kits across the nation. "Through this research project, we're providing all Canadians with free access to three at-home, rapid tests to screen for HIV," says Bavaro.

Reach Nexus and Unity Health, part of St Michael's Hospital in Toronto, are working together to bring this innovative technology to all Canadians.

"Community Based Research Centre is one of several organizations involved in the rollout of the program which launched on May 18. Although the CBRC is based in Vancouver, Edmonton Men's Health Collective and their Peer-N-Peer program operate under their rainbow umbrella," says Bavaro.

While the testing service is available to all Canadians, the project is putting extra focus on connecting with marginalized communities.

"This is an avenue to introduce people with systemic barriers to services to the sup-

ports that are available so we can take an active role in trying to work with these populations more directly and shrink this gap in health care equity," says Bavaro.

Access to treatment and counselling, the first point of access for community care, is usually through the STI/AIDS test. Because of this, they want to focus on people who are proven to be facing additional barriers to care.

This includes newcomers to Canada, Indigenous people, LGBTQ2S+, and people who are living with disabilities or struggling with poverty. They might not know exactly what supports they can access.

This way, the test serves two purposes: know if you are HIV positive, and receive supports regardless of the test results.

Through the I'm Ready app, clients can book an appointment either on the phone, face to face, or via video chat. They can also skip the intake process and call the program directly if they don't want to fill out the survey that compiles the research data.

"Your privacy is protected and all this information will be destroyed when the research is complete," said Bavaro.

Stigma and privacy concerns are real barriers to people from all walks of life and class levels getting tested.

Kamoi Lyngo, a cultural navigator with the REACH Immigrant and Refugee Initiative, has seen access to home testing make a real difference.

"I worked with a team that did remote

testing back home in Jamaica and it was very effective," says Lyngo. "As a navigator primarily serving the newcomer LGBTQ community, I provide support to my community and do referrals to the STI clinic here in Edmonton."

"People will often ask if there is an option to do it more privately because they are afraid of being seen at the clinic, but previously this was not an option. I can personally see this being positively received by the community."

Bavaro says every effort to overcome systemic barriers to testing and care has been made.

"Anyone with an address or P.O. box can receive these discrete kits. If you don't have either of these, you can pick up a kit in person at one of our partner organizations."

More information about the program can be found at readytoknow.ca, or visit readytoknow.ca/ready-get-a-kit/pickup-locations for pickup locations.

The REACH Edmonton Council for Safe Communities was established in 2010. Its ambition is to, in one generation (25 years), significantly increase community safety in our region; increase Edmontonians' perception of safety and inclusion; and engage the people of Edmonton and the region in developing a culture of safety and crime prevention.

Reach Nexus and Unity Health are working to bring free HIV self-testing kits to Canadians. | Supplied



This is an avenue to introduce people with systemic barriers to services to the supports that are available so we can take an active role in trying to work with these populations more directly and shrink this gap in health care equity.

LET'S BUILD A CITY THAT WORKS.



WATSON FOR MAYOR

@CHERYLLYEG | CHERYLLWATSON.CA

Make gratitude a part of life

Thanksgiving is not just a date in the calendar

- NAZREENA ANWAR-TRAVAS -

As a new immigrant in Canada, comparison became a part of my life. When I first arrived in Canada, it was an endless comparison to my own comfortable past back in Doha, Qatar. Over time, I started comparing myself to fellow compatriots. It was never-ending and in the end, I either felt haughty or shattered with low self-esteem.

In 2012, during my second winter in Canada, I was depressed that I had to start building my career all over again. I had worked in the airline industry before I came to Canada, but I couldn't get a job in my industry and instead started a new career in financial services. I wistfully ordered a coffee at a coffee shop and sadly remembered the series of events following my landing in Canada. I gasped when I hit upon the memory of my debit card being declined in this very coffee shop for want of sufficient funds! Yet, two years later I had qualified for a low mortgage rate thanks to my good credit history. How could I have been so ungrateful to rant about little savings? My 2013 New Year's resolution was to never complain again, but I did.

I always believed we discover ourselves the most when we are alone. Yet in 2013, I was sad as I had very few friends. To wile away time, I learnt to crochet. But I was still disappointed and wished my weekends weren't so lonely. Months later when my crochet projects were admired by my many friends, I felt guilty to have not appreciated moments that actually helped me develop a skill that ended up being my favourite hobby. I was determined to savour each moment and to never complain again.

But in 2014, I was upset about living in a condo while my friends owned houses. To chase away self-pity, I started making a collage of pictures I took that year. Every

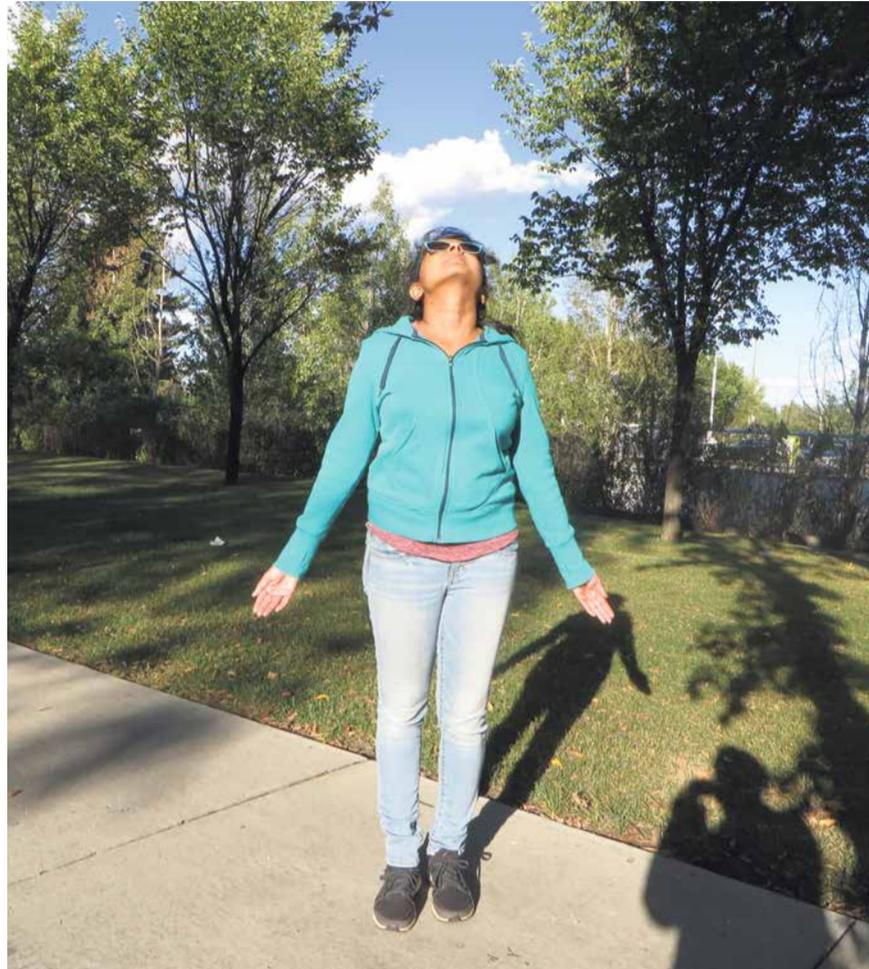
picture reflected a happy moment. My cat. My first car. Putting up the Christmas tree. The first big dinner. I photographed all of these moments in my condo. So why was I

so upset that I was living in it? It was never about where I lived, but about how I lived! I resolved firmly to stop this vicious cycle of ingratitude and guilt, but it resurfaced in 2017.

My husband Jacques was new to Canada and although he finally got employed, I fretted ceaselessly over dwindling finances. One day, on our way to work, Jacques suddenly collapsed. My mind froze. Good Samaritans ran to administer CPR while a kind transit bus driver called 911. Jacques miraculously woke up after eight minutes. A month later, I learned he had a type of heart disease. But those eight minutes had changed me forever. All the money in the world couldn't wake Jacques during those eight horrifying minutes. The me who had ceaselessly mulled over trivialities was gone. The vicious cycle was finally broken.

In the midst of never-ending comparison, I had forgotten to thank the small enriching experiences, help through mysterious ways, and blessings that framed my life. Life is so uncertain. Especially now in the midst of a pandemic, let us be thankful for what we have and not brood over what we don't have. Strive we must, but let us not forget to be grateful for the little moments of fun and laughter that may never return. When you start listing your blessings, you will be amazed to know that there is really a lot to be grateful for!

Writing has always been Nazreena's biggest passion besides crocheting and breeding birds. Having changed nine schools as a child in different countries, cultural tolerance and flexibility to adapt to diverse environments come naturally to her.



In this time of uncertainty, take the time to be grateful. | Supplied

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Housing Indigenous youth

Organizations are helping youth experiencing or at risk for homelessness

- MYA COLWELL -

During the pandemic, both the Bent Arrow Traditional Healing Society and the Native Counselling Services of Alberta (NCSA) began housing initiatives to help at-risk or homeless Indigenous youth.

“There are a lot of young Indigenous people who are at risk of homelessness, [and] who are experiencing homelessness,” says Melissa Meneen, project manager of the Indigenous Youth Housing First program at NCSA. “So, our role is to support these young people on a good path forward, and the first step is housing.”

“Many of our community members, our young Indigenous people, are impacted by [historic trauma and intergenerational trauma],” adds Meneen, “which impacts their housing.”

Homeward Trust shows that 61 per cent of homeless youth identify as Indigenous, and in 2018, there were 180 homeless youth in Edmonton. Housing initiatives for Indigenous youth are sorely needed.

Bent Arrow’s program is called Eagles Nest and is funded by Homeward Trust. Lovette Ferguson, a senior manager at Bent Arrow, says, “The goal [of Eagles Nest] is to look at supporting the youth in self-sufficiency, so they have a network of support, they have stability in terms of housing, [and stability in] financial and personal [matters].”

Indigenous youth between the ages of 16 and 24 who have barriers to housing stability are eligible for Eagles Nest. Their time in the program usually lasts nine months to a year. After their eligibility is confirmed, youth

complete an intake assessment with staff to determine their needs and are then put in touch with a housing outreach worker whose role is “to support the youth in finding affordable, sustainable housing,” says Ferguson.

Eagles Nest also has two youth engagement workers who help youth work on stability and self-sufficiency, both in housing and in their personal lives.

“To keep the process as independent for youth as possible, [we] provide a platform

Cultural supports are also available. Youth have the option to partake in culture through ceremony or by connecting to an elder or spiritual advisor. Cultural navigators check in with youth on a daily or weekly basis to support them in their goals.

NCSA’s program, Indigenous Youth Housing First, also operates with the support of Homeward Trust and is under the umbrella of Housing First. Participants that qualify for the program come from the Homeward

trauma.

“We have sharing circles and meetings with youth peers to talk about how to move forward in a good way,” explains Meneen. “Anything that [the youth] want to work on, we’ll support them moving forward.”

Youth don’t need to be homeless to qualify for the program, they only need to be at risk. “Say, for example, if you’re a young person and there’s discord in your family or your parents are getting divorced or they’ve lost their jobs and they’re at risk of addiction... there’s an opportunity there [for them in our program].” Other at-risk youth could be those staying in youth shelters or couch surfing.

“One of the things that’s important to us is to help our youth remember who they are and their identity,” says Meneen. So, the program invites participants to partake in culture. Cultural support workers are available to set up meetings and home visits with elders, and cultural programming like art installations with the Flying Canoe Festival. “Our approach is to think outside the box in how we can incorporate culture and identity through innovative ways,” explains Meneen.

For more information about Eagles Nest and the Indigenous Youth Housing First initiative, visit bentarrow.ca/eagles-nest and ncsa.ca/programs/indigenous-youth-housing-first.

Mya is a student working toward a career in journalism and communications. Writing is one of her passions, besides baking and playing trombone.



Bent Arrow and the NCSA are helping youth find housing and keeping them off the streets. | Pixabay

Homeward Trust shows that 61 per cent of homeless youth identify as Indigenous, and in 2018, there were 180 homeless youth in Edmonton. Housing initiatives for Indigenous youth are sorely needed.

where it is youth driven, so [the youth are] really going to be the ones that are telling us how we work with them [and] what they want to work on,” says Ferguson.

“Personal challenges can interfere with [a youth’s] ability to maintain employment and or education,” explains Ferguson, “so we want to take a look at what [their] goals for [their] personal life [are], what [they] would like to be, what [they] would like to improve... and how can we help support those changes.”

Trust By Names list, which is a list of people who are emergency sheltered, provisionally accommodated, unsheltered, or in unknown locations. The NCSA then puts these people in touch with housing outreach workers who help secure and set up housing.

Then, the youth work with a navigator who provides follow-up support for up to a year. Navigators help youth achieve both housing and personal goals such as family reunification, connecting with a family doctor, and working through a history of



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A resolution to move forward

The National Day for Truth and Reconciliation offers so much potential

- CHERYL WHISKEYJACK -

The Canadian government has declared Sept. 30 the National Day for Truth and Reconciliation and made it a federal statutory holiday. Alberta and Nova Scotia are the only provinces that decided to not recognize it as such, leaving it to each employer to make that determination, but that is not what I want to write about.

What I want to write about is the fact that at Bent Arrow Traditional Healing Society, our phones and emails are lighting up from fellow colleagues and community members looking for a meaningful way to observe this day and its intent.

This says so much about the potential and spirit as this day is inviting us all to learn, reflect, and be motivated to go forward in a good way.

I had a moment of intense emotion as I walked my dog this morning. While walking, I listen to talk radio and this morning a guest was on the show to talk about an adapted

Indigenous musical adding shows at this year's Fringe Festival due to its immense popularity. It was the only show to sell out this year. *Bear Grease* was adapted from the hugely popular feature film *Grease* released in the late '70s. The songs are the same, but the lyrics were changed to reflect indigenous experiences. The gals wore poodle skirts, but they were adorned with ribbons. The guys wore leather jackets, but also impressive Indigenous medallions. The producer and lead actor opened the show with some context. When *Grease* was released, Indigenous folks were living in a terrible time in history. Kids were in residential schools, we didn't have the right to vote, and the pass system was in effect where you needed permission to leave your reserve to conduct business. But we aren't there anymore! So, if we were allowed to participate the same as everyone else, we think it would've looked something like this. Then this wildly engaging and fun musical begins.

I knew these things. Many do. But as I walked, I got a wave of intense emotion. How different things could've been, would've

been. This was when my parents were growing up. The brilliance of this show is that it not only reflects what was, but also shows us what could have been and what direction we are still trying to get to. *Bear Grease* was simply brilliant and hopeful and hope was the emotion that overcame me.

As a nation, however, we are still in the earliest stages of the healing that needs to happen. When Indigenous folks get upset about a MMIWG art installation conceptualized by men, when Indigenous folks get upset about a Catholic school district selling orange shirts, we need to pause, listen, and then keep moving forward. Not at the exclusion of those voices,

but because of them. To stop because of the anger means we are not moving forward. Appropriation is a real issue; protocols are extremely important. We must call out appropriation when we see it, and not give it voice or a platform because it quite simply isn't our voice, nor will it benefit our people. Protocol is hugely important, but we cannot assume that because non-Indigenous folks are involved that protocol wasn't followed.

I think it's wonderful and appropriate that a man, the perpetrator of so much pain towards Indigenous women in the MMIWG scenario, conceptualized this moving and beautiful tribute meant to honour and raise awareness of our societal need to do better. I was invited to be a part of the art installation at Parkdale-Cromdale Community League, to share my knowledge and ideas, to ensure we followed protocol, to mobilize others from the Indigenous community to the project. To hear it was challenged does not surprise me, but boosts my resolve to go forward and bring more people in.

This is what this day invites us to do. This day for me is sombre. We will have failed, though, if it continues to be just a day of reflection and not also a call to action throughout the rest of the year.

Cheryl is the executive director of Bent Arrow Traditional Healing Society. She is a community leader with over 25 years' experience in the non-profit sector.

This is what this day invites us to do. This day for me is sombre. We will have failed, though, if it continues to be just a day of reflection and not also a call to action throughout the rest of the year.



Cheryl Whiskeyjack (pictured), says The National Day for Truth and Reconciliation can be not only a day of reflection, but also a call to action every day. | Supplied

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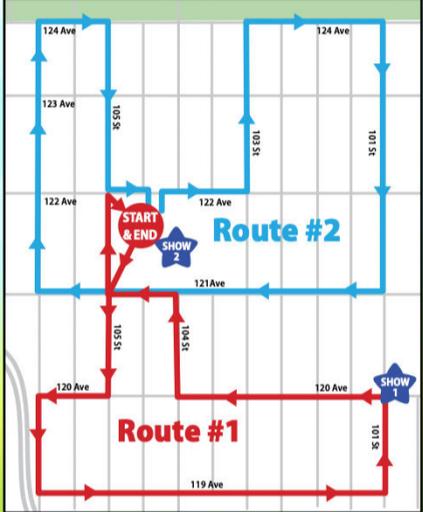
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