

Rat Creek Press

Alberta Avenue • Delton • Eastwood • Elmwood Park • Parkdale-Cromdale • Spruce Avenue • Westwood



BY THE COMMUNITY - FOR THE COMMUNITY

DEC. 2022/JAN. 2023

Deep Freeze is back on the Ave

Organizers are bringing back festival essentials



Deep Freeze is back on 118 Avenue from Jan. 21-22. | Epic Photography

they'd like to increase representation of Inuit people and showcase their culture.

Morin explains that while the original Deep Freeze requires a lot of volunteer power, coordination, and strategic production, it's important to build community through artistic interaction for both the business and residents on the Avenue. It showcases the strong business district and depth of community in the neighbourhood.

Festivalgoers can also venture indoors to find food, galleries, workshops, and more.

"We're pretty excited," says Yateman. And with a theme of "The Enchanted Forest", there will be plenty of fascinating art to see. Yateman adds, "I can't wait to see the imagination and creativity the artists incorporate into our ice sculptures and the Lamppost Cozy Challenge."

The festival food is also back, with events like the tourtière challenge, and a new perogy challenge that features both sweet, savoury, and wildcard varieties.

"In the years gone by, it's around the kitchen table where laughter, food, and fiddle music are shared and memories made. We are so excited to see the same happen at the Deep Freeze Festival," says Morin.

Make sure you stop in the dining room at Alberta Avenue Community Centre to taste the Francophone offerings on Saturday and Ukrainian food on Sunday. Bannock and other treats will be available both days at the Papon Indigenous Village.

Festivalgoers can also venture indoors to find food, galleries, workshops, and more.

"Put on a toque, come volunteer and enjoy the winter festival; see you there!" says Morin.

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

TALEA MEDYNSKI

Get ready for the first festival of the year in Edmonton. From Jan. 21-22, Deep Freeze: A Byzantine Winter Festival is back home on Alberta Ave.

Since the pandemic started, festival organizers have adapted festival events to ensure they adhered to health regulations. In the past few years, Borden Park has featured art installations and Edmontonians were able to appreciate the festival in a different light. But now, organizers are happy to bring the festival

back to its roots.

"This year's festival will be similar to what it was like in 2020," says Christy Morin, artistic director of the festival. She explains that while Borden Park was a good location, they don't have the funding to hold the festival in two locations.

Enjoy festival classics, such as the Deep Freezer Races, horse and wagon rides, ice and snow sculptures, the giant ice slide, cultural dance, and fiddle music.

Morin says organizers are bringing back festival classics, such as the Deep Freezer Races, horse and wagon rides, ice and snow sculptures, the giant ice slide, cultural dance,

and fiddle music.

"We loved Borden Park and all the

beauty that the night sky brings! This year, we are thrilled to be back on The Ave to share live performances, public art interactions, and the glitter and wonder of the enchanted forest in winter," says Morin.

"It's exciting to bring back the spirit of the nostalgic Deep Freeze Festival," says Donna Yateman, festival manager.

As always, Deep Freeze is going to continue to celebrate cultural diversity and the cultural roots of the Alberta Avenue District. Ukrainian, French Canadian, French African, Asian, Indigenous, and Latin American cultures will be highlighted during the weekend with food, dance, music, and art.

While there is always an Indigenous component to the festival, Yateman says

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Usher in the holidays with league events

Find out what's going on in your league and celebrate the season



Left: Alessia (pictured) makes pomanders during an English class activity at Parkdale-Cromdale Community League. Participants will be making pomanders at the league's solstice carolling event. | Neida Goitia **Right:** Elmwood Park Community League is holding a sleigh ride on Jan. 14. | Supplied

TALEA MEDYNSKI

This December and January, local leagues are gearing up with seasonal events and plans for the new year.

Alberta Avenue

On Dec. 16, Alberta Avenue Community League is holding an Ugly Sweater Party.

"There will be dinner, games, and a dance," says Valda Roberts, league president. Roberts explains the event is a membership dinner. League members will pay \$10 for the event, and guests will pay \$20.

"We're going to do a full-on turkey dinner," says Roberts, adding that she thinks organizers may include a prize for the best ugly sweater.

At the beginning of December, the Salvation Army is distributing toys at

the league.

In February, the league will start up its Thursday night Community Nights once again.

"We're going to be focusing on different programming for every different [Thursday]," says Roberts. "The goal is to promote interactions between people. We want to facilitate fun, interesting, and engaging events." Organizers plan on holding nights focused on well-being, culture, experiences exchange, and a family night.

"This is a way for everyone to be involved at the community league," says Roberts.

Elmwood Park

Morgan Black, Elmwood Park League president, says, "A sleigh ride will be held on Saturday, Jan. 14 [from] noon to 2 pm, and Heights Residential will be decorating

our exterior fence for Christmas in the first week of December." The sleigh ride will include free hot chocolate at the league hall.

Parkdale-Cromdale

Parkdale-Cromdale Community League has two holiday events planned for Dec. 17 and Dec. 21.

Sarah DeLano, the league's program director, says, "We are going to have a holiday party on Dec. 17 with soup, Santa, and stockings stuffed with goodies for kids. We will accept food bank donations and suggest cans of soup to fit with our holiday soup warming theme."

The holiday party will be held during the afternoon, with exact times to be determined, and organizers will provide community members with different types of soup and biscuits.

"We will also do crafts and decorate gingerbread houses," DeLano adds.

On Dec. 21, organizers are also holding a solstice carolling event.

"Solstice carolling starts at 6:30 pm with a nightcap and solstice-related activities at 8 pm at the hall. We will have a fire and make pomanders [clove-decorated oranges]."

Westwood

And Westwood Community League will be holding Winterfest on Jan. 21 from 1 to 3 pm on league grounds.

Katie Hayes, communications director, says, "Winterfest will include snow painting, tobogganing, hot dogs, and s'mores."

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

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DON'T MISS THESE ONLINE ARTICLES

Walmart is now at Kingsway Mall

Residents share thoughts on the new addition to the area
Published Nov. 30

New development permit revoked

Boyle Street building relocated halted
Published Nov. 29

Reflections on past and present wars

Take the time to think about the war in Ukraine this Remembrance Day
Published Nov. 11

Offering information to seniors

Seniors Saturday events offered a wealth of information
Published Nov. 1

Providing newcomers with support

Local project looks back on a dozen years in community
Published Nov. 1

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ABOUT US

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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 8,000 community members.

DELIVERY

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A business with a worthy cause

More Than a Fad embraces the concept of a social enterprise

SHAREE ALUKO

Most people love to have a variety of affordable shopping options, and More Than a Fad, a thrift store on Princess Elizabeth Avenue, provides that and more.

Matthew Signore, the store manager, says, "More Than a Fad was started in 2020, with our first location opening in the southside of Edmonton. In July of 2021, the Kingsway location was opened. We are owned and operated under the umbrella of the non-profit we support, the Adeara Recovery Centre. Adeara is a fantastic centre that helps women in their recovery from addiction." All of the store's profits are allocated to supporting Adeara Recovery Centre.

More than a Fad is also unique in other beneficial ways, which makes it a welcome addition to the community. Signore states, "Since July 2022, our Kingsway location has become our 'outlet store,' which means we sell everything in the store for \$1! No other thrift store in the city has such low prices." He adds, "Customers love the fact that every dollar they spend at our store is going to such a great cause."

The initiative of More Than a Fad will have a good impact not just for the local area, but also for the entire society.

It was a strategic decision to choose its current location for a second store. "Opening our store along Princess Elizabeth Avenue provided our organization with an exciting opportunity to be closely located to many hubs of activity like NAIT and Kingsway Mall. Furthermore, we saw a great chance to bring the Alberta Avenue community a store with very affordable pricing," says Signore.

There is something for every member of the household at More Than a Fad, informs Signore. "We sell a large array of different items in our store. Our store is mainly clothing based; we sell clothing for women, men, children, and babies. However, we also carry a large quantity of other items such as kitchenware, home decor, toys, books, and of course Christmas items!"

The store is open from Tuesday to Saturday, 11 am to 4 pm. "We have an awesome website that gives many more details about who we are and what we do. Check us out at: morethanafad.ca/. We would love anyone and everyone to come check us out."

More Than a Fad is a social enterprise, which is defined on buysocialcanada.com



More Than a Fad's profits go towards Adeara Recovery Centre. | Sharee Aluko

as, "Businesses that sell goods and services, embed a social, cultural, or environmental purpose into the business, and reinvest the majority of profits into their social mission."

The importance of embracing social enterprise and social entrepreneurship is evident in the fact that the quality of life for many will be tremendously improved. The increased accessibility of goods and services will leave an indelible mark on society both now and in the future. The initiative of More Than a Fad exemplifies the business model of a social enterprise, which will have a good

impact not just for the local area, but also for the entire society.

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

MORE THAN A FAD
10131 Princess
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Tuesday to Saturday
11 am - 4 pm

Winter, a time of hope and renewal

Take the time to reflect on the winter season and the coming year

NATANEL KRIEKSFELD

Slowly the snow is falling upon Edmonton, soft and fluffy. It covers all of our greyness in white. On windows of homes, the frost is drawing ornaments with iridescent gray and silver. When the snow is falling, when looking into the skies, sometimes it becomes hard to understand whether the snowflakes are coming down, or you yourself are flying up. Snowflakes are small touches of the heavens. Winter was created in a white background so that we may begin our lives anew.

With the arrival of winter comes the most wonderful holiday season of the year. On those days, goodness is coming down from heaven, and light is shining in the darkness. Each person is celebrating those days in their own way, but one thing unites us all: the faith in miracles, hope, and magic. At this time of the year, the heart of each one of us is filled with

the anticipation of miracles.

Once on Christmas night, we were sitting around the table in the kitchen and drinking tea. My mom asked me, "What is your dream?" I said, "I would like to become a teacher and a writer." My mom replied, "If you have a dream, hold it strongly to yourself and never let it go. Then your dream will turn into reality."

Christmas is a time of forgetting about yourself and thinking about others. It is a day of joy, kindness, and reconciliation. On this day, we might ask for unusual gifts, such as some kindness, a bit of good health, a jug of joy, or a pack of happiness. Christmas is an invisible string that ties together our hearts. Christmas is a day when all families are gathering together around one table. It is a holiday in which Santa is bringing gifts and laying them underneath the Christmas tree. It is a day when candles are burning without sound, but are

simply giving themselves to the people. Christmas for children is a trip to a miraculous country, and for adults, it is new plans and new hopes for the future.

Following Christmas comes the wonderful holiday of New Years. Every new year in a person's life is fragile and unique, like the pattern of a snowflake, leaving great moments as well as shortcomings in memories of the past. Every new year in my life is the best gift from God. When the new year arrives, there opens a new book with 365 blank pages, and I always ask the question, "What would be written in them?" I would like to fill them with good deeds. Each day I would like to share at least a small bit of warmth with those who truly feel cold and lonely.

I have always believed that we should not complain about the cold surrounding us if we haven't put a bit of warmth into this world ourselves. This holiday season will be fairly difficult for many,

but I have hope that things will get better in the new year. At the moment, the world is facing many issues. Living in peace is the most important thing in the world.

Like many people, I have made goals for the upcoming year. I am planning to write my third book, continue writing articles and publishing them in Academia.edu as well as the *Rat Creek Press*, and read more books than I have read this past year.

In this holiday season, I wish that this year may easily enter the lives of each of us and give a sea of positivity, vitality, inspiration, love, creativity, and stability. And most important of all, health. Since without health, none of our goals or aspirations will manifest in the new year.

Natanel is originally from Israel and came to Canada with his family when he was a year old. Now 15 years old and in Grade 9, he's a new Canadian citizen.



Winter is a good time to reflect on life and the coming year. | Rebecca Lippiatt

Holiday looks: the homes edition

Winter traditions and decorations from around our neighbourhood

CHRISTINA IGNACIO-DEINES

RCP Home & Garden Tours highlights the beautiful spaces we are creating in north central Edmonton, and talks about the different ways we find value in this area from the perspective of our living spaces. Many of us are friendly, generous, and deeply invested in our homes and in the wellness of our community.

We showcase all kinds of living spaces, including single-family homes, townhouses, apartments, garden suites, live/work spaces, and small space and balcony gardens. We also would like to reflect the diversity of our residents and their families, including families with and without kids, couples and singles, all kinds of cultural backgrounds and abilities, 2SLGBTQIA+, young people, seniors, and more.

For this issue, we reached out to our local Facebook community groups and asked people to share photos of their holiday decorating and favourite winter traditions. Due to printing requirements, some photos will appear in print and online, and others will appear online only. Photos were lightly edited for consistency amongst the images. If you don't see your home in print, try checking out ratcreek.org, where you'll find this and earlier Home and Garden articles under the Features drop-down menu.

This is a year-round column. If you're interested in sharing your home, or if you have or know of a garden with winter features, I'd love to know more. All submissions are welcome and encouraged! Submission email: christina@ratcreek.org.

Christina is an award-winning designer and artist, and has lived in Alberta Avenue since 2007, with her husband and children. Her work is about connection and belonging, turning life's great moments into empathic, beautiful spaces.



A selection of ornaments hanging from the chandelier in the dining room. | FO Photography

My holiday traditions

Being second-generation Canadian Filipino, where my parents immigrated to Canada in the '70s, I'm not as connected to my family's cultural traditions as I'd like to be, but I've still inherited many ways to celebrate the holidays. The Philippines is the only predominantly Catholic country in Asia, and Christmas is one of the most important observances of the year.

My parents decorate a Christmas tree every year (even though the Philippines is a tropical country, many Filipinos decorate artificial pine or spruce trees in their homes and businesses). My Mom also likes to display her Christmas village collection—which is beloved by her *apo* (grandchildren in Filipino)—and she arranges a platter with 12 kinds of round fruit in anticipation of the New Year. For Christmas dinner, she always makes *leche flan* (a traditional custard dessert) and *pansit* (a noodle dish, said to encourage long life).

Recently, my Mom acquired a *parol* and she plans to hang it in her front window. A *parol* is an ornamental lantern, usually shaped like a star, and festooned with tassels and candles or multicoloured lights. Modern *parols* might be made from metal, plastic, paper, bamboo, or capiz shell.

My husband's family, being German and Irish farmers and entrepreneurs from generations back, have many traditions. He grew up on a homestead outside of Peace River, in the middle of the forest, so some of his family traditions are older and inherited (mainly related to food), whereas others are more recent and came from life on the farm.

His family traditions include: the annual Christmas tree felling, where the entire family walks deep into the forest on their property to harvest their Christmas tree, followed by hot coffee and cocoa enjoyed outside in the woods. In past years, this tree was as tall as 12 to 15 feet, but as the family has spread out across the province, its proportions have become more modest. We all decorate the tree together about a week before Christmas while doing puzzles, eating homemade cookies and snacks (like butter horns and cottage cheese dumplings), watching movies, and enjoying the smell of a log fire in the cast iron stove.

I have a personal holiday ritual of choosing one older tradition for our family to celebrate, and trying something new as a potential future tradition. For the past few years, I've enjoyed mulling cider on the stove because it smells so delicious. I also love shopping at our local craft and artist markets for locally made gifts and art for our friends and family.

CHRISTMAS LIGHTS CONTEST

Nominate a neighbor for the best holiday lights display this season!

Nomination period open December 1st to 16th. Winner announced during our Holiday Party on December 17th.

Send a photo along with the address to vp2@parkdalecromdale.org

ICE RINK GRAND OPENING EVENT

Sunday January 8th 1pm - 4pm

Outdoor bonfire, s'mores, hot chocolate

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CHECK OUR WEBSITE & SOCIAL MEDIA FOR DECEMBER/JANUARY ICE RINK SCHEDULE AND OPENING DAY

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Here are ways our readers like to celebrate this time of year:

Rachael Robertson

My favourite Christmas traditions are playing board games and having a charcuterie spread for dinner on Christmas Eve, opening new Christmas pyjamas, and being too excited to sleep. Christmas Eve is the one night the tree gets to stay on all night long, for when little feet start making their way downstairs to see the magical glow. It's truly the best. We always simmer homemade potpourri too, which is heavenly!



Top left: Homemade potpourri simmering on the stove.
| Rachael Robertson

Top right: Unique ornaments from her tree.
| Christie Mawer

Bottom right: A printed wall hanging evokes the glow of a warm fire.
| Jyening McLaren Rose

Bottom left: The Christmas tree makes their living room glow with warm light.
| Melanie Spitzer



Christie Mawer

I've never felt that we had many traditions in my family when it comes to the holidays, except for food. We must have shortbread (the soft crumbly kind), which has become expected of me to provide. Homemade butter tarts and pumpkin pie are a must. One thing we make that is unique to our family is apple salad. It has a homemade salad dressing (secret family recipe), whipped cream, and walnuts. Sweet as a dessert and very popular eaten with the big old bird.

Jyening McLaren Rose

We love Christmas in our house and make our house super cozy and winter bright inside. Every year we do seven days of Christmas, where everyday we get to do something super fun and then bless someone. I have two daughters and I give them a certain amount of money and they can choose to either use it all to bless one person, bless many people throughout the seven days, or bless many people in one day. It's their choice how they want to do it.

Also as a Caribbean, for breakfast every year (either Christmas Day or Boxing Day) we'll have fried bake and saltfish. Another big tradition is playing *parang* music the whole day, and really the weeks leading up to Christmas. *Parang* is traditional Trinidadian music.

Melanie Spitzer Watching Christmas movies by tree light!



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The cost of problem properties

Proposed increase in taxes may encourage owners to make changes

VICTORIA STEVENS

On the corner of 119 Avenue and 96 Street sits a large, old brick house. Nicknamed the Castle by local residents, it was built in 1944 and has been abandoned by the owners for nearly 20 years, allowing it to become derelict and a problem for those living in the area. The house is a hotbed for drug use, dumping, and fires. It is only one of nearly 500 properties throughout the city like it.

"When I first moved in, [police] discovered that there was a body buried underneath the garage," recalls Virginia Potkins about another property on the block. "We've had a SWAT team out there, lots of problems with people squatting, people dumping, fires."

Potkins moved to the area around five years ago and has been a voice for organizing and dealing with properties such as the Castle. According to *The Socio Economic Costs of Edmonton's Problem Properties*, a study done by the Edmonton Community Development Company (ECDC), the estimated financial cost of 31 problem properties over four years (2017 - 2020) is 6.2 million dollars, 76 per cent of which is borne by the neighbourhood residents.

The study states, "Results demonstrate that problem properties create extraordinary demands on government services" and "Derelict and problem properties also



Problem properties like this one are an issue in areas like Alberta Avenue, McCauley, and Eastwood. | Stephen Strand

trigger direct and indirect costs to neighbours and community members."

According to the study, there are around 250 such problem properties in the Alberta Avenue, McCauley, and Eastwood areas alone.

In April, city council approved the *2023 - 2026 Approach to Problem Properties* to provide the Problem Properties Initiative (PPI) with a long-term plan and funding increase to help deal with problem properties. One of the proposals is to create a new residential tax subclass, which allows the city to charge up to three times the regular tax rate to

owners of problem properties.

Ward O-day'min Coun. Anne Stevenson agrees with the tax increase proposal.

"The hope is that the tax changes behaviours," says Stevenson, whose ward includes the McCauley neighbourhood, one of most impacted by problem properties. "I think too... it is also an opportunity to reflect the fact that those properties have a more significant impact on city services and so it is fair and appropriate that they pay higher taxes to balance that out."

Ashley Salvador, the ward Métis councillor who represents most of the areas

surrounding Alberta Avenue (118 Ave), agrees with Stevenson.

"Derelict properties are an issue that touches every area in the City of Edmonton, but particularly Ward Métis... Over the past year-and-a-half, there has really been an increase in the number of folks who are experiencing challenges (with problem properties)... In this area, the fires have been a growing concern," Salvador says. "We would specifically be looking at properties that have an Alberta Health order and have been deemed as unfit for habitation."

This proposal will work in parallel with other City initiatives, including the Community Property Safety Team which uses an escalating enforcement model that includes boarding up, fencing, and even on-site security at the owner's expense.

Potkins says the tax increase is a good step, but more must be done.

"There needs to be time limits on how long these properties can stay derelict and abandoned," Potkins says, "[Owners] can't just walk away from a house."

The proposal is expected to take effect beginning in 2024, with the City using the 2023 year to identify properties that would be subjected to the tax increase.

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

LETTER TO THE EDITOR

It's time to help one another

This letter is for Edmonton, the city we call home, and the people who inhabit the traditional lands of the First Nations and Métis people.

Fellow citizens, we have come to a fork in the road, highlighted by the bitter transition of our natural environment. Some of us are lucky enough to live in a private dwelling, keeping us cozy in the depths of winter with somewhat little worry of what the effects this harsh winter climate could have on the body and mind. For others, it is a struggle to find any form of shelter. For those of us that encompass the former, I hope that we can all appreciate and thank how fortunate we are to find ourselves with such *hygge* (contentment and well-being).

I have a growing family and reside in north central Edmonton; some might call it northsiiiiide! We chose to call the neighbourhood around 118 Avenue home

because it is true to the philosophy of Edmonton. Kind, thoughtful, interesting, funny, frustrating, happy... the list goes on with an infinity of nouns. For my wife and I, what has been a godsend is the location, quality of care, and quite simply the existence of the Intercultural Child and Family Centre Daycare (ICFC) at the old McCauley School. Here you will find the most dedicated, hard-working, award-winning, and competent childcare workers the city has to offer. With its partner daycare - 1000 Women Child Care Centre, ICFC offers families in north central Edmonton a place where parents need not worry about the level of care.

If the tone of this letter is perceived as

a gushing yarn of civic pride and cheerfulness, I offer you a cautionary tale. Outside the window of my home is the symbolic tattered remains of Edmonton Elks flags flying steadily in a cold November breeze.

We as people and engaged citizens need to start helping each other by offering a hand, talking with, and helping our neighbours no matter what we call home.

Symbolic for one specific reason: neglect. Our city is faced with what seems to be an insurmountable challenge: that of homelessness and desperation in the neighbourhoods encompassing north central Edmonton.

Rampant drug use, desperation, tent cities, and an unknown level of human suffering are the challenges ICFC and other inner-city tenants face. Ignoring the problem will not work and is not a solution, and that is exactly the attitude our

landlords and landowners cannot have.

It is not right that childcare workers have to manage people with drug addiction, mental illness, and contend with racist graffiti. To say the system is overwhelmed with a population of desperate, vulnerable, and lost souls is not acceptable. We as people and engaged citizens need to start helping each other by offering a hand, talking with, and helping our neighbours no matter what we call home. If the wonderful educators at our childcare centres can do it, so can we. Let's take down the proverbial tattered flags, repair and store them for next season, because with civic pride and a sense of brotherhood, Edmonton could be the City of Champions once again.

Robert Orme, Edmontonian

Blake Desjarlais

Member of Parliament
Edmonton Griesbach

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10212 - 127th Avenue NW,
Suite 102
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Finding new family away from home

The anguish and joy of choosing where to spend the holidays

KEVIN BLAKEMAN

For some people, who they spend their Christmas with is the easiest decision in the world. This is a season for family, so you obviously spend it with those closest to you. Like many people of my generation, however, Christmas has always been a tumultuous time in this regard.

When I was a young boy growing up in the northwest of England, I can remember my parents arguing about which of their families we'd spend time with that year. Invariably, Christmas Eve was spent with my maternal grandmother and this was something I always looked forward to. It was a big family gathering where we'd meet all of our cousins, eat hot dogs, and sometimes, if we were lucky, granddad would sneak a handful of coins into our hands and let us play on the vintage slot machine he restored and kept in the basement. Christmas Day, however, was always a matter of contention for my folks. As I got a little older and my parents got considerably less married, this annual parental debate was supplanted by a discussion about where my brother and I would spend Christmas. Conflict resolution was as much a part of the season as Father Christmas or

the school nativity play.

I didn't know it then, but these decisions are a difficult part of the festive season for so many families that it's just a normal part of life. As adults, we manage this arbitration and allocate our time with the care and diplomacy that the season demands. We all make difficult decisions, not just about who to spend our time with but also about who we will disappoint. Yes, I always look forward to the season, but I also dread it a little, too.

I never thought I'd miss those difficult decisions which caused me so much anguish, but in moving to Canada I've come to realize how lucky I have been to have so many choices throughout my life.

In recent years, a combination of things has changed how I look at all of this. Firstly, I moved to Alberta from the UK about six years ago and 6,500 kilometres certainly adds some considerations to any Christmas travel decisions. Secondly, thanks to being immunocompromised, COVID-19 has made travel at worst impossible, and at best unwise. My granddad might have encouraged a little light gambling on his vintage slot machine, but he taught me better than to wager my life. Ultimately these difficult decisions, the ones I've always dreaded, were taken out of my hands.

Thankfully, I've been incredibly fortunate to find a new family here in Alberta. For the last few years, I have been welcomed into the homes of my

in-laws and slowly we are building new traditions. I won't get to eat hot dogs with my cousins anymore (at 42, I'm probably a little too old for that anyway); now it's a spiced rum or mulled wine with my brother-in-law as we walk the dogs after a hefty dinner.

I never thought I'd miss those difficult decisions which caused me so much anguish, but in moving to

Canada I've come to realize how lucky I have been to have so many choices throughout my life. This year I'll still be thousands of kilometres from home, but I'll still be with my family.

Kevin has been making video games for almost two decades and writes for fun. He is originally from England, but currently lives in Delton.



Thousands of kilometres away from home, the author has found new Christmas traditions. | Supplied

Jingle Jammin' at Eastwood
 Christmas Carolling & Winter Fun
 Friday, December 16th | 3-10 pm
 Eastwood Community League (11803 86 St)
 Join us for hay rides, shinny & road hockey, a visit from Santa and free chilli dinner! After dinner, come carolling and enjoy holiday movies and more.

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