

# Rat Creek Press

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BY THE COMMUNITY - FOR THE COMMUNITY

MARCH 2023

## Easy dining at your fingertips

Boosting the Ave onto Edmonton's culinary scene



### ANDRES CALDERON

The potential for 118 Avenue to become one of Edmonton's culinary hubs is receiving a considerable boost thanks to a new app available for iOS and Android. According to the Alberta Avenue Business Association (AABA) website, the Alberta Avenue Dining Pass aims to be a "passport to indulge in food from around the world, all in one place."

Made up of 10 participating businesses to date, the app doesn't limit itself exclusively to restaurants. It also includes locations such as YEG Smoked Meats and Paraiso Tropical, both of which sell foods for take-out and a variety of products to use when cooking at home.

Though recently launched, the app has already begun to make its presence felt.

"Just yesterday we had someone come in using the coupon from the app," says Judith Montoya, manager at Paraiso Tropical. "During the Deep Freeze festival, we had three to five people come in using it as well." The store currently offers a 10 per cent discount on all take-out food items, and Montoya adds that future plans could see this expand to include other products.

Christina Varvis, whose family owns and operates Coliseum Steak & Pizza, includes her restaurant as one of the participating businesses, offering a deal to anyone who downloads the Dining Pass. A board member with AABA, who is responsible for launching the app, Varvis is confident the app will play a significant role in "putting Alberta Avenue on the map with Edmonton's culinary scene."

"The Alberta Avenue Business Association does great work in attracting people to the Avenue," adds Varvis. "We have great businesses [in the area] that have products worth sharing."

A self-described foodie, Varvis is excited to mention that the Dining Pass

already functions as a "little directory" that has the "addresses, phone numbers, social media, reviews, and menus," for all of the participating locations already linked and readily accessible directly from the app.

Newer by comparison, Battista's Calzone has been a neighbourhood presence since its opening in 2010. Despite having a solid existing customer base, owner Battista Vecchio asserts it's "always good to be involved with [this] type of marketing, because it brings people in."

"People will come in and say, 'I never knew you were here' or 'I heard about you, but I never had a chance to come in,' [and it was] the Dining Pass that brought them," he adds. "It's good for the neighbouring businesses, other restaurants, of course my restaurant. It brings people into the area, which is another [good] thing."

Despite expanding to sell his food to other parts of the city via catering and wholesale, Vecchio confirms he is in no rush to move his business away from the Avenue. "I've been [here] for 12-and-a-half years, but I've owned the building for a lot longer, so I'm meant to be [here]," he notes.

It's encouraging to think the app will follow in a similar tradition and continue to grow alongside not just its members but also 118 Avenue as a whole.

*Andres is slowly studying nursing while working full time. He spends most of his free time either reading or going to used book stores. He has a collection of over 1,200 books.*

**Edmonton's culinary hubs is receiving a considerable boost thanks to a new app available for iOS and Android.**

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Available for download on iOS and Android, the app includes deals for and information on participating local restaurants. | Supplied



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# Seedy Sunday sprouts community

Annual event returns to Alberta Avenue Community League

MYA COLWELL

With spring just around the corner, we have the Edmonton Seedy Sunday's annual gardening event to look forward to. On March 26 from 11 am to 4 pm, the event is returning to Alberta Avenue Community League. It's free and open to everyone, although donations are encouraged.

"We're very excited to be finally [holding the event] in person again," says Suzanne Cook, long-time gardener and organizer of Edmonton Seedy Sunday. "We have had it online for the last few years during the pandemic, so it's going to be good."

Organizers hosted their event at the league until about 2015 before moving to a bigger venue. This year they're back with a range of speakers, a variety of seed vendors, a free book and magazine exchange, and a seed exchange. A kids' table will also be available for kids to pot tomato plants and work on crafts. Meat Street Pies will provide food for the event.

"The heart of Seedy Sunday is really the seed exchange table," says Cook. Event attendees can bring seeds in and swap with others, but Cook says that bringing seeds isn't required to participate.

Some of the fun is trying to figure out what seeds have been brought in, says Cook. Not all seeds are labelled clearly, and while volunteers do their best to help identify the seeds, it can still be an adventure to see what sprouts once the mystery seeds have been planted. Magic beanstalks, anyone?



A past Seedy Sunday event. | Supplied

Some vendors at the event will include No Coast Seeds, Moonglow Gardens, Seeds of the Revolution by Saanich Organics, Medieval Manor Gardens, Circle Farms, and more. Additionally, programs including the Edmonton Horticultural Society, the Edmonton Native Plant Society, the Edmonton Tool Library, and the Stanley Milner Seed Library will be in attendance. Participants can attend several panels

on topics like gardening and climate change, beginner gardening tips, and seed saving.

Calgary is holding a Seedy Saturday on the same weekend, so many of the vendors, especially the ones from B.C. and Saskatchewan, will come to Edmonton the next day.

Cook, with four other gardener friends, has been organizing Seedy Saturday and Sunday events since 2007.

Their goal is to raise awareness about open pollinated and heirloom seeds and help distribute them to gardeners.

Open pollinated seeds are pollinated naturally by insects, birds, wind, and other natural means. They produce the same plant as the one they came from, although there is an amount of genetic variation. Seeds collected from hybrid

**This year they're back with a range of speakers, a variety of seed vendors, a free book and magazine exchange, and a seed exchange.**

plants, in comparison, are unstable and can't be saved and used in subsequent growing seasons. They won't grow into a plant with the same characteristics as the parent plant.

"If you just depend on hybrid seeds, you must buy them from a seed company every year because they don't come true. You can't save them," says Cook. "Seedy Sunday is promoting independence for people."

Edmonton Seedy Sunday's event promises to be full of community and gardening knowledge, and there will be plenty of seeds to go around. Visit [edmontonseedsunday.org/](http://edmontonseedsunday.org/) for more information.

*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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#### ABOUT US

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

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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.

# Welcome to your local bookstore

Paper Birch Books takes root in McCauley



Céline Chuang and Benjamin Hertwig are the owners of Paper Birch Books in McCauley. | Devyn Ens

## DEVYN ENS

Owning a bookstore is a dream most writers have. The idea is heady when thinking of walls lined with well-loved titles, chatting about your favourite authors all day, and helping customers find their perfect paperback match. Yet, it's an idea often out of reach, especially in the age of online shopping and same-day shipping.

The owners of McCauley's newest bookstore, however, have made that dream a reality. Céline Chuang, a graphic designer and writer, and Benjamin Hertwig, also a writer, opened Paper Birch Books in December 2022.

Paper Birch Books is a used bookstore with a cozy, welcoming atmosphere and a focus on community and inclusivity.

"I think we just wanted to create a space that people could enter as a kind of sanctuary and feel a sense of comfort and quiet, and also find some really wonderful books," says Chuang.

Located at 108 Avenue and 95 Street, the shop features floor-to-ceiling book-

shelves and eclectic wall art. A small seating area encourages shoppers to stop and stay awhile, and there's something for everyone on the shelves.

"I think there are some collector's editions of books that people will always be looking for, like nice leather bounds, or Franklins or Folios, and then there are titles that are considered classic, like Jane Eyre, or a lot of Vonnegut; we always pick that stuff up," says Chuang.

"But something we wanted from the beginning was to have an intentionally inclusive eye for our curation," she adds. "So we pick works that might not often be included and what people consider classic or literature, even in terms of just the writing of people of colour, or from non-Western countries in English."

Chuang and Hertwig also aim to be inclusive with their pricing system.

"We have books for \$1 or \$2, so that anyone coming in would be able to afford to buy something," says Hertwig. "I mean, yes, it's nice when you sell an expensive book, but honestly, selling a book for \$2 to someone who is incredibly excited to read it, I like that more than selling a \$100 book to someone who likes it because it's pretty."

Opening a store in McCauley is something of a homecoming for Hertwig, who grew up in the area. After spending close to a decade in Vancouver, the couple decided to return to Edmonton to be closer to family after Hertwig was diagnosed with multiple sclerosis.

"We thought, if we ever do move back to Edmonton, this is the neighbourhood we wanted to live in," he says.

"It kind of came together when we heard that this space was available in the neighbourhood that we love, and it's

like a two-minute walk from wherever you live. So it's a dream," adds Chuang.

While the store has only been open for a few months, Chuang and Hertwig have been enjoying being in McCauley and becoming part of the community.

"My favourite part is the in-person interactions with people. That's really the best part about this. This business is being able to have conversations with people about books and stories and give recommendations," says Chuang.

*Devyn is a reformed Calgarian who now calls Edmonton home. She spent a previous life in community journalism, and currently spends her days filing lawsuits and volunteering to help rescue cats.*

**"We have books for \$1 or \$2, so that anyone coming in would be able to afford to buy something."**

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# This word farmer is thriving

## Catherine Owen has made Alberta Avenue her home

RUSTI L LEHAY

Some people call plants that grow of their own volition weeds. Catherine Owen, a local writer and all-around creative, calls them gifts. Originally from Vancouver, Owen moved to Alberta Avenue in 2018. "I've put roots down here through owning a house and planting a garden!" says Owen.

Firmly rooting herself in this region, the theme of soil and growing things might reflect the logo and theme colours she inherited in the house. "My partner calls me 'the word farmer.'" Her writing style matches the farming lifestyle, putting in two to three hours of writing before breakfast. Fueled by coffee, her mornings are reserved for writing poetry, no matter the time of year.

Calling her house Delilah may balance the masculine energy of a previous owner, who was the John Deere fan and collector. The apt *word farmer* nickname fits. Owen says, "I need the focus of my John Deere writing studio." Her writing space is indeed dark green with yellow accent colours and has an original John Deere logo on the wall.

Unlike farmers, she takes one day off a week, aiming for 1,500 words of prose in the afternoon on the other six days.

When she's not planting words in her journals in the summer, her backyard calls her. Owen admits, "My little garden is crazy." Never having had one before, "I now can't go away between May and October." She plans her writing around the seasons. "Prose is for winter survival when I write novels. Poetry takes over in the summer." While poem drafts can be dashed off, most writers will agree that writing prose requires more concentrat-

ed time, making it perfect for blustery, snowed-in days.

"House ownership is a different life." Owen says, "I have to focus and cut out things I used to do when I just had an apartment."

Owen composed her first poem around the age of four. "Then I wrote horrible heavy metal lyrics in high school. I called one song 'Hellhole,' but then at 19, I dedicated myself to poetry." The song title is ironic when you consider her mother was a nun for 12 years before she left the convent and had a child with a man 11 years younger than her.

The oldest of five, Owen says, "My parents are the most supportive, wonderful human beings. Never once did they tell me to make a more sensible, logical money-making choice in life. They always come to my readings and talk about my books." Owen's dad is an "extreme pun master." A truck driver for 50 years, he would write little poems on the back of his waybills. "I'd buy him a notebook and nope. He stuck to the back of waybills: 'That is too serious.'"

Describing her parents as culturally-minded people, Owen says, "They made sure their five children had access to art and culture in the '70s and '80s." Owen took violin lessons, but clearly words are her jam, as she has also interspersed publishing poetry collections with fiction and memoir. In addition to the inspiration and support of her parents, two writers have been major influences. John Ashbery, a surrealist American poet, inspired Owen's book *Dear Ghost*.

She mentions Neil Peart (the drummer from Rush) next, who wrote a



Catherine Owen in her writing studio. | Catherine Owen

memoir of loss called *Ghost Rider: Travels on the Healing Road* after his wife and daughter died. "It is the best book about grief, offering a brief overview of the whole process."

Owen has published 15 books, 11 of them poetry, and the 16th book coming out in spring of 2024 is called *Moving to Delilah*. "It's about relocating

from Vancouver to Edmonton in 2018." Owen is a welcome transplant to the Alberta Avenue area and growing like a weed in her profession.

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

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**International Women's Day**  
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**#IWD2023 #EmbraceEquity**

## WOMEN'S WORDS ARE WISDOM

Everyone struggles at some point during their lives, but often women's struggles or experience of struggle are unique. In honour of **International Women's Day on March 8**, we asked women to share their stories of both trials and triumphs. Women's stories and experiences are valid and important. Women's wisdom is profound and deep. Let's honour, support, and hold each other up. Let's celebrate women and demand gender equity.

## I matter, damn it, and so do you!

**KAREN MYKIETKA**

I've been doing a lot of reflecting over the past year, trying to figure out who I am and what I want to do. This is a common thing for people in mid-life, but it's even more common for women as our children become adults. I spent the last two decades putting the best interests of my children first. I was a stay-at-home mom who homeschooled for a number of years. I felt guilty when I sent my kids to school and wasn't very involved in their education or school. But I was already giving so much of my time to my community.

I have enjoyed my community work, both volunteer and paid. I developed many valuable skills over the years. Yet, I always put myself last: work, family, friends; they all came first. Someone always needed something, or I had a long to-do list. Personal things like exercising and reading rarely made it to the top of the list. Days off or vacations without work were few and far between.

Since divorcing and becoming a single parent 11 years ago, I've lived under the poverty line. Another thing many women have in common, sadly. Despite being financially poor, I feel I've had a rich life. My children are now adults, and I've finally decided to start putting myself first. I want to travel. I want to pay off my mortgage before I'm 65. I want time to read, to exercise, and to hang with friends.

I stopped working for free. I started applying for jobs with salaries two to three times of what I earn now, the ones that I should be doing with my master's degree and 20 years of community devel-

opment experience. I don't have any big career aspirations. I don't even know if I'd be happy working such jobs. But that's where I should be...right?

It's where I would have been had I put career and work ahead of family and community. But the sad truth now is that my seven years of university are getting me nowhere, job wise. I have applied for dozens of career jobs and even just basic administrative jobs with little success. I have good self-esteem and I know I'm very skilled; however, it's still hard on the ego. The career path not taken is likely not open to me anymore. And do I even want it?

It's hard to find your true self under all the familial, cultural, and societal expectations. Even when I know what I want, I often battle the "shoulds". I should want a career. I should be excited to be a grandma. I should help that person in need. I recently realized I have an underlying worldview of "I don't matter" that's colouring everything.

I take care of people and I do things that need to be done. These are admirable qualities, aren't they? They're certainly qualities that our society wants women to take on. Women are socialized to be caregivers. This impacts the careers they choose and the careers they don't have because they choose to provide care. The impact this has on all aspects of their health—financial, physical, mental, and emotional—cannot be overstated.

Note to myself and all women: we need to take flight attendant safety instructions to heart. "Put your oxygen mask on first, before helping others."

Take care of yourselves first, because you matter, damn it!



This poet writes of a life-changing event. | Pixabay

*This poem, "chapter", is from my poetry manuscript, below the belt, and speaks to recovering after having been discarded by a life partner who decided to build a life with another woman—overlapping with ours—and neglected to tell me for six months. It was a time full of shock and...awful. This poem was the beginning of going around...and back to myself...taking my power back.*

## chapter

**KATHY FISHER**

i learn you are the chapter  
not the book  
i write the preface foreword credits  
hook laughter returns  
absolves hot pain obsessing brain  
surrenders search for something  
that was maybe never  
real reorients resets and redirects  
new meaning and old friends come  
into focus time's hocus pocus  
works its magic tricks no longer hunt  
and seek to score romantic fix love  
junkie twelve steps march  
to mature love  
of self  
respect and honour without  
you  
a year ago impossible

to fathom  
fresh scar a badge—still pink—marks  
wound is healing your severing  
now cauterised contained beginning  
end no tears horizons broaden  
breast swells puffs up expands  
with blush  
enriched with promise spirit  
aligns with ever holy  
purpose hones link with Mother  
Earth Creator stars  
i shift the gears to drive  
my right foot hits  
the gas  
what's done is done  
time to consign you  
to  
the past

## The story of my breasts

**ANONYMOUS**

When I was five, I sat in a blow-up pool outside my house, and when the big kids walked by after school, I covered my ponytails because I was only wearing shorts and no top. I knew girls weren't allowed to go without a top, but I didn't know why, so I covered my ponytails so they wouldn't know I was a girl.

When I was 13, my breasts grew very fast and soon I was a C cup. I dropped out of the swim team because I got sexually harassed so badly that I no longer felt comfortable or safe in a bathing suit. They bounced when I ran, and boys along the track would shout out at me and make jokes. So I dropped out of track and field, too.

In my teens, some boys wrote about my breasts on the boys' bathroom wall and the principal of my junior high made me scrub it off.

In my 20s, something very bad happened to me, so I decided to be a bad girl and was tough so that I could control my sexuality.

I was a plus-size pin-up girl in my 30s, when weight gain made me go up to a double D size.

I worked with children who never noticed anything about my body except that I was soft to hug.

In my 40s, I was busy making my career work after a big move. I dealt with sexist comments from the men I taught computer skills to. I had to work twice as hard as the male instructors to get respect. I wore suits and made sure that the air conditioning never made my nipples visible through my conservative blouses.

One day I found a lump in my breast. It took three operations and chemotherapy and radiation, until I was left with one breast and one big, mangled scar. I worked so hard to gain my strength and my health back. I lost weight and I exercised and I was able to return to work.

When I met the surgeon to talk about reconstruction, she told me I didn't have enough belly fat to rebuild a breast to the size I'd had before. That's how surgeons do it now, after years of poisoning women with implants. They rebuild a breast out of your own tissue. But I'd lost too much weight and had a prior surgery in my belly that meant they only had a small amount to harvest.

I told her I no longer identified as a big busted woman but as an athletic body type. I said I would be happy to go down to a smaller size.

It's a brutal operation. It's a long, hard recovery. But when it's done, I will run again and swim again like that little girl I used to be.

## Learning to love yourself

**CORINE DEMAS**

I was miserable in my 20s and 30s. I was single, lonely, and found it hard to form long-term relationships. People used to tell me I needed to learn to love myself before I could love anyone else. It took me many years to figure out how to recognize and let go of what doesn't serve me. I had to develop my own tool set and learn how to use those tools for myself.

I love being 45, and I feel like I've earned the right to share three things I've learned to implement that keeps me happy.

1. Be grateful for what you have.
2. Live for now.
3. Be self-centered. I don't mean selfish. Be kind and generous with your time, resources, and talents. But if something doesn't serve you, cut it from your life.

At this point, I'm not just surviving, I'm thriving. I'm happier than I've ever been, still single and living life.

I'm developing a one-woman show called *2 orgasms; 23 years apart*. It's an exploration of female sexuality and follows the story of how I overcame trauma and religious oppression to go from inorgasmic to orgasmic sexual goddess in a 23-year journey. I tell the story of my first orgasm at 17, and how I didn't have another until I was 40. The play will be showing at the Garneau Theatre as part of the Edmonton International Fringe Festival this summer.

*Corine Demas is a queer and disabled singer-songwriter, poet, storyteller, stand up comic, playwright, actor, and producer working here in Edmonton.*



It's important to take care of yourself. | Pixabay

# Combining a home and business

## Vintage Fork is now open for walk-in customers

**RUSTI L LEHAY**

It was once common for business owners to live above or behind their storefronts. Although this practice is now an anomaly, Sarah Melli and her husband, Salar, a chef, just might renew the trend with their business, Vintage Fork.

The Mellis bought the historic and then-neglected Barto residence in 2016. Sarah says, "To locate, purchase, and buy a commercial business is crippling for entrepreneurs to start out." For the Mellis, combining the purchase of a home and business in one building made the expenses more manageable.

Respecting the couple's plans, Sarah's grandmother hid her distress regarding the purchase, later confessing to Sarah that she went home and cried. Sarah admits, "It looked like it should have been torn down. The veranda was falling off. The three dormers were completely rotten."

When the house was built in 1913, 95A Street was called Sinclair Street and marked the very edge of the city. "This was the only house we looked at. We just knew it was the one. That it happened to be in Alberta Avenue was a huge bonus because it's a neighbourhood we believe in."

**After selling tea online for three years, the Mellis opened the tea shop in November.**

Sarah says there are benefits to combining a home and a business. The first is the lack of a commute. She adds, "There is a different level of excitement when people arrive. It's like receiving a guest into my home." The kitchen is the only private space the Mellis have on the main floor. Upstairs, they have a designated space solely for packing up tea orders that they ship Canada-wide. They also offer free personalized local delivery.

What used to be the main floor's living and dining rooms are now the display area for the teas they sell and



Sarah Melli, co-owner of Vintage Fork, says there are benefits to having a business in a home. | Rusti L Lehay



Vintage Fork sells a variety of teas, including caffeinated and herbal. Customers can buy the teas online or in the store itself. | Rusti L Lehay

the creation area of the most delectable, unique lattes and fogs to go. They do not offer a sit-down or food service. Drop in to peruse the 90 types of tea openly displayed and enjoy the aromas. If you want to sit and enjoy their teas, The Carrot Coffeehouse will soon offer a selection.

"We are the only tea shop where people can look and explore independently instead of having to ask for something behind counters."

The Mellis have collaboration partners as unique as they are. Landlords across the street supply the honey from hives they manage in Belgravia.

Then there is Alysia, who makes Caramunchies, a caramel-drizzled Corn Flake treat sold at the shop. Salar says, "They are quite addictive." A local downtown family-owned cafe, Cookie Love, provides cookies, a perfect accompaniment to the tea they sell.

The most unique treat is possibly created by Kerri Bauer of Soul House Sweets. "[She's] a Beaumont chocolatier who infuses our teas in Belgian Chocolate," says Sarah. These are a must-try treat. Free of extra sugar or artificial ingredients, "Kerri's bars and tea cup-shaped chocolates must be eaten within two weeks." Coincidentally, Bauer also owns a historic house, and the house images adorn the bar wrappers.

Handmade ceramic mugs from a local potter make a beautiful addition to the displays.

After selling tea online for three years, the Mellis opened the tea shop in November. Sarah says, "Excited neighbours, after watching the external renovation, were curious to see the inside and [they] love the space. Traffic has been steady." Salar convinced Sarah to paint the outside of the house his favourite shade of blue.

"We did want it to stand out in the neighbourhood." It does, and the colour is not the final unique facet. Sarah says, "As far as I know, our house is the only municipally designated historic building open to the public."

Possibly even more important, Sarah's grandmother, now a huge supporter, donated plants and her artwork, which are displayed in the shop.

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

**VINTAGE FORK**

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**vintagefork.ca**

**Ph: 780.619.7272**

**Tues to Fri: 9 am to 4 pm**

**Sat: 10 am to 5 pm**

PCCL Presents

## INTERNATIONAL WOMEN'S DAY

Pub Night & Clothing Swap  
with Live Music by Party Jacket

Saturday March 18th

Clothing Swap 5pm - 7pm | Pub Night 7pm - Midnight

Members Only Event (\$5 Membership Available at the Door)  
\$5 Drinks // Snacks Provided

Email [info@parkdalecromdale.org](mailto:info@parkdalecromdale.org)  
for more info

Scan the QR code to join our newsletter!

Join us Saturday March 18th  
from 5pm to 7pm for a  
CLOTHING SWAP, to find the  
perfect party-worthy  
wardrobe!

Donations for the clothing swap can  
be dropped off as early as 4pm on  
March 18th.

For earlier drop offs, call Sarah at  
780-987-6825.

Any remaining clothing from the swap  
will be located to local organizations.

Then join women-led Edmonton group  
Party Jacket, described as one part  
sequins, one part satin leopard print  
and three parts well-worn denim, for a  
night of cocktails and party anthems  
from across the decades.

COME FOR THE JACKET, STAY FOR THE PARTY

**Parkdale Cromdale  
Community League**

Visit us at [www.parkdalecromdale.org](http://www.parkdalecromdale.org)  
or [www.facebook.com/PCCLYEG](https://www.facebook.com/PCCLYEG)

**Drop-In  
Homework Club**

Students Age 10+  
Wednesdays 4:15pm - 5:30pm  
Snacks Provided

# An oasis opens on The Avenue

Bringing dreams to a local business

**ANDRES CALDERON**

Out of all the visions that may occur while standing on 118 Avenue, a self-sustaining farm may not be the first one that comes to mind. Yet one store in particular can count its origins in exactly that way.

Mamour Ba, sole owner of Oasis Fish & Meat Ltd, says eventually he'd like to own a farm that runs on sustainable energy and to sell its products to local businesses. "But it's something very heavy. So I said, 'Okay, how about me? I become one of those people that experience the buying and selling and see how it goes.'"

Arriving in Canada from Senegal four years ago, Ba previously lived in Calgary before opening the store that specializes in halal meats at 95 Street and 118 Avenue just over two months ago. He explains the decision to open at this location as a mixture of luck and intention. "This building was brand new. I saw a sign and...there's a big Muslim community around here, the mosque is around here. From my research, I was told that 118 is a very busy avenue, [so I] said, 'this a good spot.'"

Inspired by a friend who owns a similar business in Calgary, Ba notes that the decision was also strategic since Edmonton does not seem to have a comparable presence of halal meat shops. "Calgary is more saturated in terms of this business, you see...so many of them, but not too many [here]."



Oasis Fish & Meat offers spices and products from West Africa and India, and the owner is planning to bring in more products from Senegal. | Andres Calderon

Though Ba acknowledges that his store caters to the African diaspora living in the city, he is proud to list regular customers from communities as diverse as Ukraine, India, and the Dominican Republic. Selling a variety of chicken, turkey, lamb, goat, beef, and seafood, Ba offers to cut the meat according to customer requests, free of charge. Add to this a selection of

spices, and Ba is confident that his business can be a "one stop shop. You can buy meat and fish and the different ingredients that go with it. You don't have to go to Superstore or whatever."

Ba is an engineer by trade, and he says most days he's able to work remotely while managing the store. The tendency to think of this business as separate from

engineering, however, would be to miss the point. He not only used his expertise to set up the equipment he uses on site, but he is also quick to explain that his vision for Oasis Fish & Meat is part of a larger drive to use any profits and invest these in the farm he wants to create. He adds that his dream would be to share any farming lessons learned with his homeland.

For now, Ba is happy to focus just as much on comparatively smaller goals alongside his more noble intentions. When asked what he would like to see for his shop in five years' time, his reply was admirable: "A big, happy customer base, because for me happy customers are everything. First and foremost, we are here to serve the people."

Seems to me as good a reason as any other to support this up-and-coming shop.

*Andres is slowly studying nursing while working full time. He spends most of his free time either reading or going to used book stores. He has a collection of over 1,200 books.*

**OASIS FISH & MEAT LTD.**  
 9506 118 Ave  
 Mon to Sun: 10 am to 7 pm  
 Business: 780.760.8885  
 Owner: 403.690.8824

# Islamic centre opens its doors

St. Patrick's Church is now a centre for Islamic community and worship

**MYA COLWELL**

The former St. Patrick's Church, located at 118 Avenue and 96 Street, is now an Islamic Centre called Faizan-e-Madina. In 2022, Dawat-e-Islami, a religious Islamic organization that operates globally, bought the property.

Muhammad Safder, a volunteer at the Islamic centre, says that the main goal with purchasing the building was to foster community and worship.

"This is already a worship place, and in the future it will be a worship place again for a different community. Previously it was for the Christians and now it's for the Muslims," says Safder.

The centre is open as a space for prayer and worship every day. After prayer, Safder notes that community members socialize and share refreshments. "In

this way, people get connected and they get to know what's going on with other people. If someone is in need, if someone is there and facing any problems or any issues... we can help each other."

Currently, about 30 to 40 people gather regularly for worship.

Additionally, the centre runs different programs for youth and seniors, including an Islamic school for kids. They also organize various community events to give youth the chance to socialize and build relationships, which Safder sees as vital.

"The kids and the youth, they are our future," he says.

The centre has also opened its doors to community members in need of a place to stay. Safder explains that there are currently 13 rooms in the centre furnished with donated items, and most

of the rooms are occupied. The people who stay there don't have to pay rent and they have access to a kitchen and laundry area.

While Safder says it has been difficult reaching new community members during the winter, he hopes to involve more people once the weather warms up. "We'll be arranging a lot of outdoor activities to invite the community and we also... would like to invite the community here on Alberta Ave," he says. "They can come, they can join us in every prayer [at] any time... But we highly recommend that if you want to come, you can join us on Friday prayers."

Safder adds that there is no pressure to join in on prayer. Community members can observe instead. "And if you have any questions, you can ask. We can give you [a] tour of the whole facility."

Despite the big community around the centre, so far, not many people know about it. He hopes to continue to build community at the Islamic centre and further their goals of community and worship.

If anyone is interested in volunteering at the centre, there are lots of opportunities to get involved.

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

**FAIZAN-E-MADINA**  
 11089 93 St  
 Ph: 780.851.5160  
[www.dawateislami.net](http://www.dawateislami.net)

## Spruce Avenue Community Garden



Join us for the 2023 growing season! There are raised and in-ground beds as well as a wheelchair friendly option available for rental. Enjoy your own garden plot while meeting neighbours, beautifying your community, taking educational workshops and helping grow this community space.

**Reserve your plot today! Email: [garden@spruceavenuecommunity.com](mailto:garden@spruceavenuecommunity.com)**

**YOUTH RISE**  
**FREE Drop-in** for youth ages 12-18

**Wednesdays 4-6 pm**  
 Vanguard College 12140 103 St  
 Free food & basketball

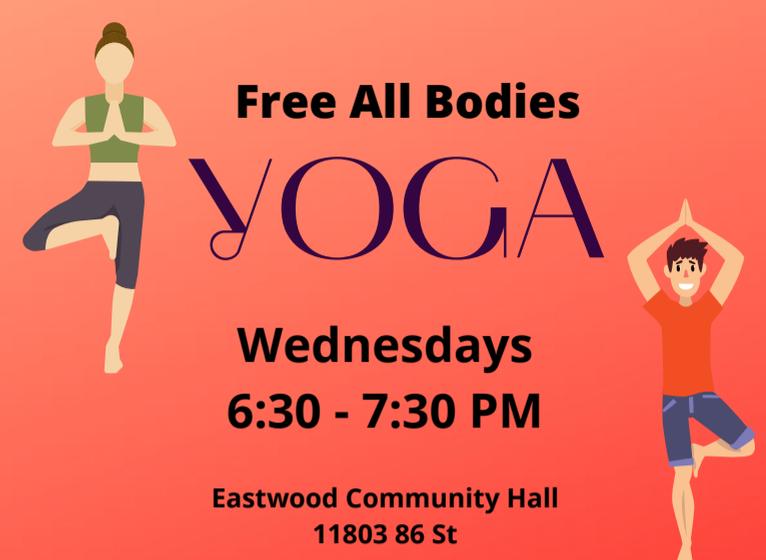
**Thursdays 4-6 pm**  
 Alberta Ave 9210 118 Ave  
 Free food, gym, video games

All welcome!  
 780.905.2656  
[youthrise.ca](http://youthrise.ca)



**ELMWOOD PARK**  
Presents the 2023  
**COMMUNITY GARDEN**

We have garden plots available. If you are interested please email [epcl.info@shaw.ca](mailto:epcl.info@shaw.ca)



**Free All Bodies**  
**YOGA**

**Wednesdays**  
**6:30 - 7:30 PM**

**Eastwood Community Hall**  
**11803 86 St**

## A Different Kind of Doctor.

A local Doctor of Acupuncture provides truly compassionate care and proven solutions for chronic pain and complicated conditions.

**Care Rooted in Empathy and Experience**

Do you ever wonder what it is that makes some Doctors so incredibly compassionate, while others have a bedside manner better suited for Tim Horton's?

In the case of Dr. Melanie Morrill Ac. of Accessible Acupuncture, it is a case of true empathy. "I suffered from migraines in my twenties." Migraine Headaches are named such for their debilitating pain, which is a step above the normal headache. "I had migraine headaches that were so intense I was bedridden and would become physically sick."

Since migraines are one of those complicated conditions not fully understood, Dr. Morrill Ac.'s options were prescription medications that often did not work and lifestyle changes to limit triggers that often cause migraine. "It was no way to live," she shares, "I was young and should've been living a bright, vibrant life. Instead, I was monitoring long exposure to fluorescent lights and doing my best to prepare for changing weather conditions."

We lived in Alberta, it was Winter in the morning and Summer by the afternoon! "It wasn't until her family doctor sent her to an acupuncturist that she found real relief."

"This is why I often refer to my practice as 'The Last Resort With The Best Results.' You've been everywhere else and been given the same disheartening prognosis, prescribed the same medications and told 'this is just something you're going to have to learn to live."

Soon after her incredible experience she made the life-changing decision to study acupuncture, "acupuncture quite literally saved my life and I wanted to share that with the world."

While in school she watched as her grandmother began to suffer from peripheral neuropathy. "Your golden years should be golden, not plagued with insufferable pain while doctors and specialists tell you there is nothing they can do."

Understanding that Eastern Medicine excels where Western Medicine fails, Dr. Morrill Ac. set forth to develop treatment protocols for all variations of Peripheral Neuropathy (including diabetic and chemotherapy-induced) and now has a 90% success rate.

**"I was tired of seeing the older generation suffer unnecessarily," shares Dr. Morrill Ac. "Diagnosing them as 'just getting older' and giving them a treatment plan of 'you're just going to have to get used to it' has never sat well with me so I wanted to offer them a real option for treatment and care."**

Dr. Morrill Ac. has designed similar treatment protocols for other complicated, chronic conditions including fibromyalgia, rheumatoid arthritis, and post-shingles pain. While each patient plan is tailored specifically to that patient's concerns and goals, all of her treatments are based on a framework that's years in the making.

In addition, Dr. Morrill Ac. isn't opposed to more modern medical solutions.

**"It's in blending the time-tested science of acupuncture with recent innovations in medicine that get me the best results."**

One of those advancements is ATP Resonance BioTherapy, originally developed by NASA it aids nerves in regeneration by providing them with the nutrients they need to repair and renew, "very similar to what water does for a plant!"

**The Magic of Compassionate Care**

And what do those in her care have to say?

"Dr. Morrill Ac. looked me in my eyes and wanted to know about me, not just my condition, I feel like a person, not just a patient," shares Barb. "In fact, I don't think she ever used the word patient." Others proclaim "her neuropathy treatments gave me my life back," and "it's a miracle she treated my fibromyalgia, I don't know how else to explain it."

Dr. Melanie Morrill Ac. has a long personal history of complicated, difficult to understand conditions and understands how tragic it can be if left untreated.

I have sat where my patients sit. I've experienced their pain in a very real way. I know the frustration of feeling hopeless on an intimate level. It's why I practice the brand of medicine I do and why I've made it my life's mission to treat the 'untreatable'. It brings me such incredible joy when I get to say 'I can help you!'"

Furthermore, Dr. Morrill Ac. has surrounded herself with staff that embraces this same approach to patient care. "You can ask any one of my patients and they will tell you that their favourite part about treatment is my staff." "I just love everyone here" shares Barb, "The girls are always so kind, it's like going to the doctor with my girlfriends."



"Melanie is just wonderful, you mention what is bothering you and before you know it, it is gone"

Dr. Melanie Morrill Ac. and her staff specialize in treating chronic pain, complicated neurological conditions, and autoimmune diseases that leave other professionals scratching their heads. Ready to schedule? Call 587-879-7122 for a comprehensive consultation today. For more information about Dr. Melanie Morrill Ac. and what she treats, visit [accessibleacupuncture.ca](http://accessibleacupuncture.ca)

**SCHEDULE a consultation TODAY**  
**CALL 587-879-7122**

**HYS Centre 600, 11010 101 ST NW**  
**Edmonton, AB**  
**AccessibleAcupuncture.ca**



**Alberta needs pharmacare.**

Tell MP Randy Boissonnault to keep his promise to Albertans and deliver on a universal drug plan for all!

**Add your voice!**  
[friendsofmedicare.org/ABpharmacare](http://friendsofmedicare.org/ABpharmacare)




**Northgate Lions Marathon**



**Good Friday, April 7 @ 7524 139 Ave**

**First 100 Games**  
**8:30 am - 4 pm**



**Second 100 Games**  
**4:30 pm - Midnight**

**Tickets available at the door. Doors open 6:30 am. Food truck available.**  
**Door prizes! Give Aways! Balls available \$500/\$1000. \$100 cash game.**  
**Pre sales April 4-6 in the Lions Dens from 2-8 pm. Call 780-496-4888.**