



# RAT CREEK PRESS

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

PUBLISHED ON TREATY 6 TERRITORY

WWW.RATCREEK.ORG OCTOBER 2020

## Local resident is continuing the conversation

Lawn signs a success for Black Lives Matter and Indigenous Lives Matter



Liz John-West is hoping to continue the conversation around racism with the lawn signs. | Geoff John-West

### TALEA MEDYNSKI

The Black Lives Matter movement has gained momentum worldwide, but one Alberta Avenue resident is doing her part to continue the conversation.

Liz John-West says it all started when she attended the Black Lives Matter rally at the Legislative grounds. "It's the first time in history that a movement has captured the attention of so many people."

Soon after, she was watching the *CBC National News* and discovered that Alicia Turner, an Ontario resident, had created Black Lives Matter and Indigenous Lives Matter lawn signs to demonstrate her support.

"I thought, what a great way to keep the issues in the forefront of the community," says John-West. "I contacted her, she was thrilled and made a website."

To be clear, John-West isn't part of the Black Lives Matter or Indigenous Lives Matter

movement. "I'm just the person who made the lawn signs, I'm not part of the organization. I'm just Liz, a private citizen doing her part to keep the conversation going."

She started making the signs in August, and made a total of 500 signs. "About 300 were gone in one month. Steven Townsend [president of Parkdale Cromdale Community League] was the first one to buy the signs. These signs have gone all over Edmonton."

Townsend says, "When I heard that Liz had these signs available, I knew I had to get one. This message of Black Lives Matter and Indigenous Lives Matter needs to be heard and understood. It has already sparked some conversations with neighbours who were at first triggered by the words on the sign, but after an open dialogue, better understood the expressions."

Townsend says another conversation was when a mother walked by with her four children. "One of the kids noticed

the sign and said to their mother, 'Look Mom, our lives matter.' It was right then I realized how important the signs really are and the impact they can have."

Out of the 280 neighbourhoods in Edmonton, 45 of them have signs now. Outside of Edmonton, Sherwood Park, Ponoka, and St. Albert have them. The success is due to the power of social media.

"These young people put it on Instagram and it just went crazy," says John-West.

The signs are affordable: \$15 for two or \$7.50 for one. But she doesn't want cost to be a barrier, either. "It's whatever people can afford." She explains some people will donate money so that others who can't afford to buy signs can still have them on their lawn. The Nook Cafe and Earth's General Store currently stock some signs for people to purchase.

The lawn signs are, as she says, "a very minor way to make a huge issue known. It creates the conversation. It helps people

unpack the issue. The hope is that the lawn signs would move the conversation forward."

And perhaps the continuing conversation can bring change. "The whole community is rallying behind [the movement]."

John-West hopes to sell the remaining signs in the next few weeks, and then reassess if she wants to buy more signs in the spring.

In the meantime, the success of the lawn signs is telling. "It speaks to how people are responding to the issues. People know they want to do better."

To buy any remaining lawn signs, visit <https://ilmb-lmsigns.wixsite.com/ilmb-lmsigns>. Proceeds cover the costs of making the signs. Any extra money will go to buying more signs if there's a demand or to Camp Pekiwewin.

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

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Priyah Naicker, Priyah Fashions

# Celebrating Halloween during a pandemic

Residents find creative and safe ways to celebrate the October holiday

## VICTORIA STEVENS

A chill is in the air, the leaves are turning orange, and the nights are getting longer and darker. Gone are the long warm days and the balmy nights of summer. It's autumn, and with autumn comes Halloween! This Halloween, people are being extra creative to ensure a fun, safe, and COVID-19-free night.

One of the biggest challenges this year will be ensuring there is adequate physical distancing and reducing the likelihood of virus transfer on surfaces. Although virus transfer from surfaces has been found to be rare, it is still best to be cautious.

Directly handing out candy at the door doesn't allow for two metres of space between people to ensure safety, and setting out a bowl for a bunch of tiny hands to rummage through doesn't solve the surface transfer concern. Have no fear! Some area residents have come up with fun and unique ways to ensure Halloween stays fun and safe.

Nadine Riopel plans to use string and tape to attach pre-made bags of treats to a bush just outside her front door.

"I'm picturing the bush festooned with candies that the kids can come and 'pick' as if it were fruit. We've got a battery-powered light that we can put in the bush to light it from

beneath." Riopel says she also plans to add some other decorations to the bush. "You could do something similar on a fence (especially a chain link fence)."

Another resident has decided on using a candy chute. Using a long, angled tube—cardboard, plastic, whatever you have—she plans to pass candies down the tube to the waiting Trick-or-Treaters. The tube can be decorated to fit in with your other Halloween decor.

Riopel also suggests parents only approach houses that appear to have a good COVID-safe setup, bring sanitizer and use it often, and avoid ringing doorbells or knocking on doors. Don't let anyone have any candy

until you get home and quarantine the candy for a time to ensure the virus is no longer on the packaging.

"I'd personally be comfortable overnight, but I'm no expert so do your own research in terms of length of time."

For the older crowd, or those who would normally be at Halloween parties, a virtual party through an online video chat program could be the perfect idea. Each invitee could set up their camera and a screen in their home. Dress up, decorate your house, grab your favourite drinks and snacks, turn on your favourite music, and interact with your friends through the screen.

Beyond being safe from the virus, a virtual party means you don't need to worry about party clean up come Nov. 1, or the cost of a ride to and from the party. There's no waiting in line for the restroom, no one to jostle you and cause your drink to spill, and no having to yell to be heard over the sound of music.

No matter how you decide to participate in Halloween, this year will be a truly unique experience for everyone. Keep it fun and keep it safe.

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



Local residents are exploring ways to celebrate Halloween safely. | Ulrich Dregler from Pixabay

RAT CREEK PRESS ASSOCIATION 9210 118 AVENUE, EDMONTON, AB T5G 0N2 | T: 780.479.6285

### 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.

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Build Community, Encourage Communication, Increase Capacity.

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Joe Wong, Mariam Masud, Steven Townsend, Sarah Dotimas, George Crawford and Sean MacQueen.

The board may be contacted at [board@ratcreek.org](mailto:board@ratcreek.org).

### PRODUCTION STAFF

PUBLISHER Karen Mykietka [info@ratcreek.org](mailto:info@ratcreek.org)  
EDITOR Talea Medynski [editor@ratcreek.org](mailto:editor@ratcreek.org)  
DESIGNER Lorraine Shulba [design@ratcreek.org](mailto:design@ratcreek.org)  
ADVERTISING [ads@ratcreek.org](mailto:ads@ratcreek.org)

### CONTRIBUTORS

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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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.

RATCREEK.ORG

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# Elmwood Park is taking time to focus on safety

League board member is spearheading the safety program

**CONSTANCE BRISSENDEN**

Steve Larson’s world revolves around safety and security. After 20 years in related industries, last year he jumped in with both feet as a board member of Elmwood Park Community League. His goal? An Elmwood Park safety program with official Edmonton Neighbourhood Watch membership.

Having lived in Elmwood Park for 12 years, Larson was only too aware of crime statistics.

“Basically, most of my neighbours have had some trouble. They were broken into. License plates were taken. Our alleys are frequented by some interesting characters,” he says. “Everybody

had an issue.”

A chance activity opened Larson’s eyes to the existence of Elmwood Park Community League. A friend asked Larson if he could borrow his truck during last year’s Big Bin event. “Elmwood Park Community League was involved,” recalls Larson. He got a league membership on the spot.

“I had thought something like a community league was needed for local safety and knowledge, but I didn’t know one already existed,” he says.

One of his first goals was to connect with Edmonton Neighbourhood Watch (ENW). Established in 1978, ENW works with local communities to make them safer. Larson discovered ENW’s

educational and crime prevention programs and knew they would fit well with the league’s own ideas on how to connect neighbours and promote safety awareness.

As ENW says on their website [enwatch.ca](http://enwatch.ca), residents who actively participate in their neighbourhood and know their neighbours are more likely to look out for each other.

All was going well with Elmwood Park’s new safety program. Then COVID-19 hit. Larson shakes his head. “Nothing that I wanted to do around community safety was allowed. I couldn’t even walk the neighbourhood to knock on doors or talk to people.”

He did take time out of a busy work schedule to train

online with ENW. “I have a package of crime prevention information waiting for me. Our Community League Day on Sept. 19 will have this stuff available at Elmwood Park. It’s a start.”

Walk Your Block is one of ENW’s programs that Larson wants to promote. The goal is to take a walk in your neighbourhood whenever you like in order to prevent crime before it happens. Says Larson, “It’s the least we can do at this point, and [it’s] something that can be done with social distancing. People are more receptive now to walking together in the neighbourhood.”

Other ideas percolating for Elmwood Park in 2021 include a block party promoting safety

and security. In the meantime, articles like this one, sharing safety literature, and walking in the community will all help spread the word.

“With COVID-19 restrictions, we have to work around the rules and fears. There are things that can be done, and areas that are opening up for action,” says Larson with conviction.

Steve Larson can be reached by email at [epcl.community.shaw@shaw.ca](mailto:epcl.community.shaw@shaw.ca).

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



Edmonton Neighbourhood Watch program director Hazel Mbabazi joined Steve Larson (right) at Elmwood Park Community League Day to share community safety tips. Edmonton police also supported the effort. | Constance Brissenden

Parkdale Cromdale Community League  
@PCCLYeg



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# For some, this virus can be a long haul

Living through COVID-19 and its aftermath

## TEKLA LUCHENSKI

There is a new demographic in our global society. It is not based on age, ethnicity, or socioeconomic factors. Its only marker is that the person has survived COVID-19, and yet continues to have symptoms. The people in this group have become known as “long-haulers.”

Vanessa Phillips is a long-hauler. She is over the acute infection, but finds her recovery is taking months.

Phillips contracted COVID-19 early in the pandemic. With no testing protocols in place, she was never officially diagnosed. She relied on updates as they were released. When she contacted Health Link, they advised, “If you don’t need the hospital, just isolate.”

In retrospect, Phillips says, “I’m one of the lucky ones because I was able to deal with this at home. I feel sorry for people in the hospital. In my head, the transfer to the hospital was a mental block for me. I was so afraid. I was lucky.”

On March 22, her workplace locked down. “On March 25,” Phillips says, “I got the weird sore throat in my life. It

felt spiky—like pinpricks of pain—and it got more and more painful.” She explains, “Each symptom on its own was manageable, but it’s a perfect storm with them all together.” She likened the experience to childbirth: “It’s like labour,

days” of self-isolation in her basement. That was not the end, though. She “didn’t sleep upstairs for months.” Phillips lives with husband, Charlie and son, Gareth. The way things worked out, each more or less had their own floor. Her family

Phillips remembers, “I was trying to convince everyone—and myself—that it was OK.”

Her mother, Parkdale resident Valerie Parr, had a hard time knowing her daughter was suffering. Parr said, “When she told me, my blood ran cold.

text because Phillips could not speak. Phillips says, “There is so much anxiety around COVID-19; it’s so new.”

Early on, her lifeline was a stream of mainly US long-haulers on Reddit. At the time, there was no treatment in Canada.

Over time, she distanced from Reddit, as an increase in users darkened the tone of conversation.

Phillips is back at work now, but reports feeling chest pain and throat pain. Even now, Parr says that Phillips “has functioning days and non-functioning days.”

“It’s just been a beast,” says Phillips. “It just stays and stays.”

Phillips’ best advice? “Wear your masks. Take this more seriously.”

*Tekla is a freelance writer loving life in the Parkdale neighbourhood since 2013.*

*At time of writing, she is self-isolating while waiting for results from a COVID-19 test.*



Vanessa Phillips (front) is grateful to be able to spend time with her mother, Valerie Parr (back), after a long bout of COVID-19. | Tekla Luchenski

where you can handle the next contraction, but you’re not sure. You think, ‘Do I have ten more hours of this?’ The unknown is the hardest.”

Phillips did “a hard 14

would leave food, tea, and whatever else she needed at the top of the basement stairs. Her one comfort was her dog, Rick, who stayed by her side through the entire ordeal.

It was horrible. Your daughter is in her unfinished basement by herself. She was alone and scared. The dog didn’t leave her side. That gave me comfort.”

Phillips and Parr could only

## Churches get creative to provide services

Connecting to parishioners is essential for churches

### STEPHEN STRAND

As the pandemic has swept the globe, churches have adapted so that people can still get comfort from their faith.

“We run both a congregation and community ministries and an outreach ministry to women on the streets,” says Maj. Karen Hoeft of the Salvation Army Crossroads Community Church. “Our outreach van ministry actually has not run since March 10 because we can’t observe six-foot distance.”

They have moved their services online. “We put up songs, at the very beginning, daily. But now it’s two or three times a week,” Hoeft explains. They also upload sermons to Facebook on Sundays, and some of their groups gather on their parking pad to help parishioners feel less alone.

They’ve been able to keep their food-sharing pantry going, and, thanks to a recent government grant, are able to help a bit more. They deliver food to the homes of the immunocompromised.

Their summer camps were cancelled, but they came up with alternatives. “We’ve actually sent out activity bags to the

children and teens since Easter. Every three weeks we send out an activity bag,” says Hoeft. The bags contain everything from garden seeds to kites to camp supplies.

The Salvation Army helps people and families in various ways, but they ask people to reach out to them.

“Essentially when lockdown came, we had to figure out how to go online in about a week,” says Aaron Au, co-pastor at Avenue Church. The church uses Zoom, and broadcasts on Facebook Live. “We’ve also had one outdoor service in July, at a farm.” They held a second one there in August.

They also experimented with evening gatherings. “Much smaller, much simpler, much shorter. Just trying to get creative in a time where it’s really hard to be together in person. And being a church, a lot of it is about being together,” explains Au.

To help with the disconnect, Au has been counselling parishioners over the phone. “When the weather’s been nice, we have been able to do a lot of backyard, socially distanced conversations as well,” he says. They have also partnered with

St. Faith’s Anglican church, getting meals out to people. A lot of it, Au says, is finding out how they can partner with people and support what’s already happening.

Because they don’t have their own building, they use house churches, which are small



Aaron Au, co-pastor at Avenue Church, says the church has gone online and has also experimented with smaller, outdoor gatherings and shorter services. | Supplied

groups that gather throughout Edmonton. House churches have allowed them to stay connected and help one another. “It’s cool to see how these house churches are gathering resources and coming together to meet needs and celebrate,” Au says.

Soon after the pandemic began, Bethel Gospel Chapel switched their services online.

Frank Parker, elder with the Bethel Gospel Chapel, explains, “We’ve met on Zoom for about 15 weeks. We also pre-recorded and published on YouTube.” They record a sermon and some songs every Saturday, and then put them on YouTube for Sunday morning.

Once stage 2 was announced, the restrictions eased off enough to allow them to start gathering, with proper protocols. But that doesn’t mean those who are immunocompromised are being

left out. “We’ve had to make special arrangements to check up on them to make sure that their needs are being met, and just being able to maintain a sense of community with them, with physical distancing,” says

Parker. “We’ve actually tried hard not to use the term social distancing. We use physical distancing, but we feel people still need to be social,” Parker adds. “In fact, a little motto we had was: ‘Keep social, phone somebody every day.’”

Even with half of their people comfortable meeting again, they are still keeping up their Zoom presence.

Bethel Gospel Chapel also hosts a wholesale food buying club, where people can buy groceries in bulk from The Grocery People.

“We are trying to do what we can and look for the opportunities to serve people.”

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

### LOCAL CHURCHES

**Avenue Church:**  
[avenuechurch.ca/](http://avenuechurch.ca/)

**Salvation Army:**  
[salvationarmy.ca/alberta/abnt/contact/](http://salvationarmy.ca/alberta/abnt/contact/)

**Bethel Gospel Chapel:**  
(780) 477-3341

# Take your writing skills to the next level

Workshops will help you craft words to speak to the reader

**NAZREENA ANWAR-TRAVAS**

Those who want to improve their persuasive writing skills and make their writing more impactful can participate in Rusti L Lehay's free writing workshops this October.

Lehay has been a creative writing instructor and editor for many years. Driven by a passion for editing memoirs and sharing stories, she specializes in bringing a heart-centred approach to help authors get the essence of their writing across to the reader. "The pen is mightier than the therapist," Lehay says. "Some issues may become clear on a person's journal pages without ever seeing a therapist. Word limits pose a challenge to most writers. Successful writing is not about writing concisely. It is more to do with the ability to write within set limits and yet being able to have an effect on your audience."

She conducts world-wide workshops for aspiring writers, authors, and public speakers. "Some people have great ideas. But by not being able to speak within an allotted time, many fail to get their message across," she remarks. Due to the pandemic situation and the need to physically distance, the two workshops will be virtual sessions over Zoom. Each workshop will be two

hours long and includes a Q & A session. Participation is free.

The first workshop on Oct. 7 will focus on pitching ideas and keeping a story journal. Participants will also learn to

your inspiration and experiences. Inspiration lands in funny ways, and ideas come and flit away. When you record ideas and note your experiences, you know what to write about."

"Past experiences often become invaluable resources in the future," she laughs.

The second workshop on Oct. 21 will focus on how to make ideas interesting by using

alive by personal experiences. The more you relate facts to a real-life story, the likelier your audience will be engaged and the more you increase the chances of gaining an impact through your words."

This holds true for interview-based articles, too. "Most of the time, it is only at the end when you are wrapping up that the interviewee opens up and narrates a personal experience that complements the main theme. Always listen and be mindful of key information."

Writing about ideas is one thing, but impacting others through your ideas is totally different. "It is a skill," concludes Lehay. "As writers, we have a responsibility to educate others and bring about social change and justice."

Learn more about Rusti Lehay at [www.rustilehay.ca](http://www.rustilehay.ca).

*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.*



Rusti guides writers to open up to what their story is and the most authentic way for them to share it. | Kersti Niglas

write concisely yet creatively within word count limits and focus on the main theme of the article.

Lehay explains a story journal "is about keeping track of

In fact, her all-time favourite quote is one by American satirical writer, Peter De Vries: "I write when I'm inspired, and I see to it that I'm inspired at nine o'clock every morning."

personal experiences and link them in a unique way to present day situations.

"It is just not about the facts," points out Lehay. "People relate to people. Facts are brought

**WORKSHOPS**

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**ELMWOOD PARK COMMUNITY LEAGUE**

**SAFETY PROGRAM**

**Headed by resident and board member Steve Larson. Elmwood Park has joined the Edmonton Neighbourhood Watch organization and is looking for interested neighbours to join the safety committee.**

EMAIL [EPCL.COMMUNITY.SAFETY@SHAW.CA](mailto:EPCL.COMMUNITY.SAFETY@SHAW.CA)

## OPINION

# Helping those who are homeless in the cold

Many Edmontonians will spend the winter outside in sub-zero temperatures

VICTORIA STEVENS

“A passerby discovered the frozen body of a man near Commonwealth Stadium Sunday morning in what police say is the weekend’s first cold weather-related fatality.”

The above quote is from the Feb. 3, 2019 edition of the *Edmonton Journal*. Temperatures that evening dropped to a low of minus 37 degrees. For most of us, the cold that night was barely a thought as we snuggled under blankets in our insulated and heated homes. Imagine not having a warm, secure, comfortable home on those cold winter nights. That is the reality for nearly 600 people in Edmonton each night, according to Homeward Trust.

This isn’t a new concern in Edmonton. Each winter, at least one chronically homeless person freezes to death on the street. A *Health Trends Alberta* report shows that from 2003

to 2014, roughly 15 per cent of frostbite with tissue necrosis discharges from Alberta hospitals were homeless people—people who make up only .25 per cent of the population, a staggering statistic. Not much has changed since 2014. With COVID-19 and the oil crash creating higher unemployment, this crisis will only get worse.

Long-term plans for more safe, affordable housing are in the works. The race track jockey dorm at Northlands is being renovated to work as bridge housing while people wait for permanent housing. The City is considering modular homes—which can be built 50 per cent faster than conventional housing—in the future.

All great ideas, but none address the immediate issues facing homeless people this coming winter. As residents of an area with the highest rates of homelessness and precariously housed individuals, we can take direct action to prevent these deaths and injuries.

One of the most accessible ways to help is to pay attention. When temperatures drop well below zero, watching out for others is vitally important. Homeward Trust, along with the City of Edmonton and 25 other organizations, coordinate to offer the Winter Emergency Response (WER). Dial 211 to be connected to WER, who will send out the appropriate supports for the person you are concerned about. This may include blankets, hot food and drink, and a ride to a shelter for the evening. If you are unsure if someone needs help, simply ask. If you can, bring them a blanket or some warm food until help arrives.

Organizing a donation drive for much-needed items such as blankets, tents, winter coats, warm socks, gloves, scarves, toques, and pocket warmers will go a long way. You can donate directly to people you know are sleeping rough or through the many organizations in Edmonton help-

ing the homeless population. The Bissell Centre on 96 St and 105 Ave and Boyle Street Community Services on 101 St and 105 Ave are excellent places to drop off warm winter clothing. Camp Pekiwin, in the Rosedale neighbourhood near Re/Max field, is another location to bring donations. Monetary donations are also an appropriate option, as it allows the organization to buy what is most needed.

For those who can crochet or wish to learn, crocheting sleeping mats out of plastic bags is a novel idea with a big impact. The mats keep those without a bed off the wet, cold ground, can be easily cleaned, are water resistant, and roll up easily, making them easy to transport. Although a seemingly small thing, keeping bodies dry and off the cold ground makes a huge difference to keeping people healthy and warm during the winter. If you’ve ever lain on a cement floor in a cold building, you know getting

warm is nearly impossible. This project has the added benefit of using up the plastic bags stashed all over your home.

Finally, one of the most important ways you can help is to advocate, loudly and persistently, for more safe and affordable housing. Reach out to your city councillor, your MLA, and even your federal MP. Reach out often through email or by phone. Join local rallies and protests aimed at protecting and helping our homeless population.

If we can all approach those struggling with housing with compassion, empathy, and concern at the forefront of our minds, we can help ensure that our neighbours and fellow Edmontonians make it through the winter alive.

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



Homelessness in Edmonton is an ongoing issue. | Wolfgang van de Rydt from Pixabay

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# Permaculture is nature’s way of growing food

Consider permaculture for personal food sustainability

**GILLIAN KERR**

What is this *permaculture* thing that is gaining so much airtime? With COVID-19 and discussions about disruptions in our food chains, people have been talking about growing their own food. This is not always an easy proposition for us in an urban context, but I have friends who have embraced permaculture for years.

In an article that Rob Sproule, co-owner of Salisbury Greenhouse wrote, he described the term simply as “permanent agriculture.” A key difference between permaculture and modern agriculture is that most current systems impose artificial techniques on nature. Permaculture, however, focuses on using nature’s way of growing food that adds to the sustainability of the broader ecosystem, including animals, bugs, and the soil itself.

From a rather obscure start in 1978 in Australia, Bill Mollison and David Holmgren predicated the process based on the fact

that the earth has been operating well on its own for millions of years. By focusing on ecological processes, permaculture has grown in just four decades into a vibrant worldwide movement. Approximately 20 years ago, the first permaculture courses were offered in Canada in British Columbia, having migrated up from California and the Pacific Northwest of the United States.

Permaculture’s philosophy is to practice “thoughtful observation over thoughtless action” and allow nature to be your guide. While today’s agri-industry focuses on single crops or livestock (monoculture), permaculture embraces polyculture, or growing numerous plants together. Polyculture reduces the incidence of pests and diseases while preserving biodiversity. The Edmonton Permaculture Guild provides a short and concise mantra: “Food Not Lawns”.

So, what can we do in our own backyards? Let’s look at how most gardening is currently done. Much of the work we do in our gardens, from plant-

ing non-local grasses, mowing, applying pesticides, weeding, and pruning, is, as Sproule says, “to keep nature’s natural processes at bay”. And, if we did stop doing all these actions, then our yards would quickly become a self-sustaining system and would not require fertilizers or pest control.

Permaculture focuses on practicality and creativity. To practice it, we need to understand how nature manages itself and then mimic it.

Sproule advises: “Wherever you see a system in a garden that utilizes nature’s own processes, you’re seeing permaculture at work. It could be as simple as a rain barrel to catch roof water, which utilizes rain instead of having to use treated, pumped-in water.” Or it could be a compost pile, turning plant waste into soil as a forest does while cutting back on packaged soils.

**Here are some design principles from Sproule:**

- Garden design is pivotal.

Spend time looking at your area and understanding the soil, sun access, water, and climate.

- Don’t dig the soil (it upsets soil-borne bacteria), and step on it as little as possible.
- Colonize soil with the plants you want or you’ll be vulnerable to weeds.
- Designing your yard in layers will model your garden after that most successful natural model: the forest. Trees for the canopy (often fruit or trees that provide food for larger animals, like mountain ash), shrubs below (edible or native varieties are best), with herbaceous plants like perennials spread among them.
- Incorporate pollinator-attracting perennials. Ground cover plants interspersed with root veggies comprise the ground layer so all soil is covered.
- Permaculture embraces succession planting. Take your time.

If you live in an apartment or space without your own garden plot, balcony gardens are an option. Permaculture can range in scale from a balcony to a large

acreage. We are also blessed to have a number of community gardens in the RCP area.

For more information, trained people and courses are available in Edmonton. Standard permaculture training is the 72-hour Permaculture Design Certificate program. If you want more information from local experts, look online for permaculture at Salisbury Greenhouse, theurbanfarmer.ca, Edmonton Permaculture, and Jasper Place Permaculture.

When I started writing for the *RCP* in 2019, I wanted to write articles about sustainability in our backyards and community. It has been a pleasure researching, talking to neighbours, and discovering what is pertinent. This will be my last article for a while, so I wish you all well.

*Gillian now splits her time between Norwood and Halifax, Nova Scotia. She is still active in our community. She now splits her time working and volunteering in the two provinces. At this point she is taking a break from writing for RCP.*



Utilizing permaculture can take some research, but it’s well worth it. | Gillian Kerr



Together we can have a sustainable community. | Gillian Kerr



A permaculture-crafted yard has both beauty and practicality. | Shelaine Sparrow

# Healthcare workers are facing extra stress

Trauma expert offers mental health strategies for work and home

## TALEA MEDYNSKI

Mental health is just as important as physical health, and that is especially crucial for healthcare workers right now.

Jon Jon Rivero, certified trauma practitioner at Qi Creative, says healthcare workers are facing extra pressure in the workplace. During the pandemic, they need to follow more safety procedures to keep patients safe, yet still need to get the same amount of work done.

Rivero adds, "Healthcare workers are in the giving profession. They're more prone to receiving other people's stress on top of the work." He explains that healthcare workers can take on a patient's own stress, verbally and non-verbally. "It's hard not to take it personally."

They can also be vulnerable to compassion fatigue. "It's a term used when a caring individual doesn't have the capacity to care for someone any longer." This can happen when a patient has high needs, or when there's no end in sight to the caregiving. "The needs surpass what someone is giving."

Given the higher stress of the job, healthcare professionals should be aware of some red

flags of trauma. One such sign is if you hate your work, even in general. Rivero says, "Ask, what parts of the job are triggering? Evaluate where you're at."

Another red flag is if work is significantly impacting personal relationships, and if it's impossible to disconnect from work or turn off the work brain.

One more sign is you're not engaging in self-care or leisure time.

"The important thing to know is that you're not alone,"

he suggests. Dancing and light stretches are also good. From a mental standpoint, think about why you chose to work in the healthcare industry. "Connect with your why," says Rivero. "Reaffirm yourself with reminders."

He also suggests enjoying activities like watching a comedy. "Find things that will help you enjoy the moment. Remind yourself of positive things."

Cultivating a practice of daily

When bad things happen, you can still go to a place of positivity."

And of course, a supportive network matters. "Surround yourself with supportive people who have your best interests in mind."

Mental health is always important, but even more so right now, says Rivero. "There's a lot of negative information that can contribute to negativity, depression, or contribute to trauma. Be a guardian to your brain and what you let in."

And be proactive about mental health. No one's mental health is perfect, of course, but be aware of where you're at. A stressful situation like this pandemic can bring pre-existing mental health challenges to the surface, whether or not you were aware of them.

Support is available for healthcare professionals and anyone else who may be struggling. That includes free resources, like walk-in centres for therapy, groups on social media, cohorts at work, trusted friends and family members. Other support may include group sessions or mental help therapists.

If you or someone else is in crisis, contact the Distress Line at 780.482.4357 or 211.

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



Healthcare workers are under more stress than normal, so it's important to take care of their mental health. | leo2014 from Pixabay

says Rivero. "It's okay to be there, but not forever."

Rivero offers some tips people can use everyday. First of all, be sure to take breaks. He suggests thinking about what would be

body," says Rivero. He suggests doing light weight-bearing exercises. Physical activity is helpful both to the body and the mind. "Do a brisk walk, do high knee walking in place, hold a plank,"

gratitude can also be helpful. "Think of one or two things that went right, and what was positive or even caused less pain. Tell our conscious and subconscious brain what to focus on.

# Learn some strategies to reduce stress

Stress is inevitable, so let's learn how to manage it

## SHAREE ALUKO

The pandemic has become synonymous with the phrase "we are living in unprecedented times." People around the world have been forced to adapt to this new reality, so there is much uncertainty ahead. Such unpredictability leads to increased stress and tension which can cause anxiety, depression, and a general feeling of unwellness.

You may say to yourself, "Stress is a part of every life." Yes it is, but there is a level of stress that is unhealthy and that is the type of stress that results in sickness.

Some symptoms of stress include fatigue, increase or loss of appetite, headaches, and insomnia. When stress becomes overwhelming, it can also create anxiety, mental gloominess, lack of concentration, hopelessness, and even suicidal thoughts.

So it's important to pay attention to the signs and take proactive measures to minimize or manage our stress level.

Research has shown that exercise releases endorphins or happy feelings. Adopting an active lifestyle could be a big mood booster. It is an avenue to release the tension built up

in our bodies.

According to the article *Working Out to Relieve Stress* posted by the American Heart Association, "regular physical activity can improve quality of life and relieve stress, tension, anxiety and depression. You may notice a 'feel good' sensation immediately following your workout and also see an improvement in overall well-being over time as physical activity becomes a regular part of your life."

Massage is another way to release the tension in our muscles.

It loosens the stiffness or tightness from everyday activities and leaves you in a relaxed state. Have you ever noticed the relaxing atmosphere at a spa with soothing music and essential oils? These are simple but practical ways to relax the mind.

Or, have a nice bath. Simply add epsom salt to the water, turn on your favourite music, and add a scented candle or diffuser. That could be the magic you need after a hectic day.

A nutritious diet with vitamins and minerals is necessary

neurological problems.

Stress depletes magnesium in the body, which is very important for neurological functions. According to the article *Why do we need magnesium?* posted by Medical News Today, "magnesium is an important mineral,

playing a role in over 300 enzyme reactions in the human body. Its many functions include helping with muscle and nerve function, regulating blood pressure, and supporting the immune system."

And, in *The relationship between stress and magnesium deficiency* article published by Health First Network, "Magnesium is known as the anti-stress mineral. But the relationship between magnesium

and stress works in two directions: stress depletes magnesium, but magnesium counteracts stress. Any stress, whether mental or physical, will deplete magnesium from the body. The body uses up magnesium stores in reacting to stress and a body without enough magnesium will exhibit more symptoms of stress."

Good sources of magnesium include kale, spinach, beans, and nuts. You could also take a supplement. Magnesium, zinc, and calcium work well together. As well, add some vitamin D, especially in the winter when there may not be enough sunshine.

With physical distancing requirements, connecting to others is difficult, but you can still take advantage of video conference technology to reduce stress, loneliness, and isolation. This is also a good time to do journaling or develop new skills.

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



Stress can be harmful, but there are different ways to reduce it. | PDPics from Pixabay

for maintaining a healthy mind and body. Omega is good for your brain and can help to reduce the negative effects of stress on your mental health. A lack of essential vitamins and minerals in the diet may cause

# Engage your body with simple exercises

Five effective exercises to keep you in shape at home and beyond

NAZREENA ANWAR-TRAVAS

Frustrated that you cannot get as much exercise done as before? Below are some exercises that can make your home workout just as effective as a gym workout.

## PLANKS

Begin on your hands and knees, positioning your wrists under your shoulders. Straighten one leg at a time, engaging your abs. Brace your hands against the floor. Your form should be straight from your shoulders to your heels. Hold for 30 to 60 seconds. If this pose hurts your wrists, try the forearm variation of the plank. | Supplied



## SQUATS

Stand up straight and place your feet shoulder-width apart. Bend your knees and tilt your hips back as if to sit in a chair. Extend arms if needed to steady your balance. Hold for up to a minute. Exhale and lift up slowly. Repeat. | Supplied



## WALKING

Walking is one of the best forms of exercise. Enjoy a walk alone or walk with friends or family. | Supplied



## BICYCLE CRUNCHES

Start on your back, with knees bent and hands behind your head. Contract your abs, bringing the right elbow to the left knee and straightening your right leg. Now bring the left elbow to the right knee. Start with 12 reps and gradually increase. | Supplied

## HULA HOOPING

Begin with your feet hip-width apart. Press the hoop into the small of your back and push it one direction. As the hoop starts spinning, move your waist in a circular motion to keep the hoop moving. | Supplied



# Teachers should take care of themselves first

Some mental health tips for teachers to get through the year

## NAZREENA ANWAR-TRAVAS

When schools reopened this fall, it was not only parents and students, but also teachers who were concerned over the transition. With the reality of returning to work in an uncertain environment, plus revised class structures and schedules, it's understandable that there might be apprehension and stress.

"The unfortunate fact is that teachers are not living in a vacuum," says Franki Harrogate, a registered provisional psychologist with her own private practice. "All of us are living through a pandemic, climate change, obvious economic inequality, and increasing financial precarity, particularly with disruptions to income from the lockdown."

Teachers have a caring role in the lives of students both as edu-

cators and mentors. "As such, they have a particular niche when it comes to stress levels," Harrogate points out. "Schools are basically petri dishes. Teachers have an increased risk of contracting COVID-19."

In school, younger children can pose a greater challenge as they may not really understand the gravity of the pandemic. Once they see their friends, excitement takes over and they could tend to forget about the need to socially distance and avoid touching objects unnecessarily.

Harrogate explains many older public schools have decades-old HVAC systems. The combination of the lack of either provincially-mandated mandatory masks in the classroom, or the ability to physically distance properly, together with collapsed class sizes and the possibility of having no educational aides or teachers

assistants, teachers face higher stress levels.

To maintain a healthy relationship with their students and make classrooms an effective learning place, teachers need to take care of themselves first. "Ever travel on an airplane?" Harrogate asks. "The reason you're told to wear your mask first is so that you have the capacity to help someone else."

Harrogate says it's essential to connect with loved ones. "Humans are social beings and thrive when we feel that we are part of a community. Feeling supported is key; burnout seems to be a case of becoming seriously stressed out but not being supported or receiving support from peers and/or family."

With all those factors, working in this kind of environment can understandably be stressful and create or exacerbate anxiety. Using coping mechanisms will help not only teachers, but ul-

timately students as well.

One such coping mechanism is self-care.

"Self-care includes taking medication, eating regularly, getting enough sleep, prioritizing our boundaries, and taking time to recharge. It's not optional, it is essential," Harrogate stresses.

As well, seek out mental health aid when needed, although where to go and what that aid may look like will vary from person to person.

"This is really dependent on individual context, honestly," says Harrogate. "Therapists and support programs vary greatly in specializations, cultural proficiency, and accessibility. Finding a program or practitioner who is a good fit is essential."

And it's important to have perspective on the situation. Teachers are often considered role models for future citizens,

never mind adding in this year's extra pressures. So with that in mind, compassion for oneself is key. No one is going to be perfect in this situation.

"It is okay to not be okay," Harrogate assures. "Children learn from their elders and teachers. Pretending like nothing is wrong and that everything is fine will only teach children that they can't be honest about their feelings."

*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.*



Teachers are facing a lot of extra stress this year. | Steve Riot from Pixabay

# Persist and find your own exercise niche

Don't be discouraged if it takes time to discover what works best

## CONSTANCE BRISSENDEN

If you're like me, you looked for the sunny side of COVID-19 self-isolation back in mid-March.

There wasn't much, but I did have a flash of hope. Here was my chance to get fit at home. No excuses, go for it! Exercise everyday!

Thus began my humbling discovery that I don't have habits. Not only that, I couldn't seem to establish any. In the end, I did learn about my exercise persona and that my style is unique to me. If you made the same commitment and also

"failed," you may be encouraged by my fitness journey.

My first choice was an early morning television show. One hour several days a week with Miranda Esmonde-White seemed simple. I had tried her Essentrics brand of exercise at the Central Lions Recreation Centre a few years back. Now I could do it for free.

I quickly found that getting up at six am to work on my connective tissues was not going to happen. Miranda was soon little more than a memory. I did like her style of smooth yet tough movement exercises and do recommend them.

My next step was to ask what

others were doing for self-isolating exercise.

Michael attacks his elliptical trainer daily. He has no trouble. Of course not. When I investigated, I found his exercise machine was in front of his television. I do have a television, but no elliptical, so that was out for me.

Diane walks everyday. She likes to walk, both alone and with a walking group. Her group wears masks and practices physical distancing. Four kilometres and more is nothing to them.

As for me, three kilometres is pushing it. Two is nice and feels like something has been

accomplished. Before COVID-19, I preferred walking indoors at Commonwealth Community Recreation Centre. I can make a reservation now, but it's not as much fun as when I could drop in anytime.

In the meantime, I force myself to walk at least three times a week, if only to Shoppers Drug Mart for an ice cream bar.

My sister, Louise, alerted me to YouTube. I found Paul Eugene, an exercise leader since 1989. Mr. Eugene is now in his 60s. His base is dance movement, with episodes like Old School Funk, Shut Up and Dance, and Senior Gold Disco Line Dance. Cheerful Mr.

Eugene has a pot belly. That endears him to me.

I finally found my niche. I like variety. I like to be in control of how much I exercise at any one time. My current favourites are riding my bicycle in Borden Park, self-directed water exercises at Clareview Community Recreation Centre, and YouTube classes.

I heartily recommend you find your niche. Do as much as you can and keep going.

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

# A pride of lions lives in the neighbourhood

Lion statues can be found on the grounds of local homes

ALYSSA BECKER-BURNS

On my evening walks in and around Alberta Avenue, I meet dogs, cats, magpies, crows, blue jays, and even the occasional jackrabbit. But lions?

Once I saw one, I started seeing lions everywhere. Cast from concrete, patinated or painted, no two have aged the same. Nor do they have the same manners. Some give a kindly greeting, claws withdrawn, but its paw is assertively planted atop a heraldic shield. Some eye me warily; I am sure I hear a low growl to keep me walking on by. And then there are the ones that roar their warnings, lest troublemakers even think to breach the gates they guard.

Since July, I have discovered 11 lion pairs, dutifully observing the streets outside their yards. Are other neighbourhoods so lucky? I wonder how many more I will find!

*Alyssa moved to Edmonton in 2017, choosing specifically to reside in the Alberta Avenue community because of its diversity and grass roots cultural vibrancy.*



A lion basks in the sun on a warm day.  
| Alyssa Becker-Burns



This friendly lion gazes at the street.  
| Alyssa Becker-Burns



A white lion is frozen in a roar.  
| Alyssa Becker-Burns

This statue had a fierce stare.  
| Alyssa Becker-Burns



Taking in the view from the lion's perspective.  
| Alyssa Becker-Burns



A fierce lion with gentle paws.  
| Alyssa Becker-Burns

# Long-time resident holds her celebration of life

Jessica Aube reflects on a life well lived with loved ones and community

## RUSTI L LEHAY

Bright copper kettles and warm woollen mittens worked for Julie Andrews. Jessica Aube, a long-time McCauley resident, loves Alberta Avenue, where family and friends recently held her celebration of life. They had “all my favourite things: drag queens, ice cream, and Indigenous drummers.”

She dreamt up the event. “I needed my friends, family, and mentors. We had to get together, share some stories, and have fun and look back.”

Alberta Avenue Community Hall was a perfect venue with indoor and outdoor space. “People just said, ‘What can I do? How can I help?’”

Someone donated a brisquet and four chefs stepped up, saying they would manage the food. A sound system with extra speakers was arranged. “We put a call out to the universe and it all worked out. Everything we needed came.” When the family considered the Polish Hall,

Aube said, “but I’d rather do it in my hood than in Kingsway.”

Her living life ceremony was absolutely incredible. “Nobody wants to go to my funeral. The celebration was like a wedding but no one got married.” Many people came, some driving far to attend the event. They brought messages from others and reminisced about memories that Aube had totally forgotten. “People came from British Columbia with Team Pocahontas shirts, giving me one. That was my nickname there.”

People also came from Winnipeg, Quebec, Vancouver, and Cold Lake First Nations. “We thought we would have 100 or so and in the sign-in book, there were well over 200. It was like a love bomb went off over there. So many generous and kind messages about the work I had done and the impact I had made. It pumped me up and yet exhausted me for days after.”

Aube worked for Indigenous

Affairs for the Government of Alberta. Working all over Northern Canada, she achieved some incredible groundbreaking cleanup contracts. One such job took place in Yellowknife and involved taking down the roaster stack on a giant mine. “It’s where contaminants like arsenic concentrates.”

She also worked for Indigenous Climate Leadership Initiative setting up wind and solar renewable energy in a number of communities.

Diagnosed with cancer at 31, she was then termed as clear for five years. Only 38 now, she retired a while back due to the cancer returning with a vengeance.

The communities of Alberta Avenue and McCauley are near and dear to Jessica and her twin, Sarah, an Alberta Avenue resident. “It was the convenience of the location and mostly the people. You can create community easily and know your neighbours. Not a lot of communities have that. Whatever

you need is all right here.”

As a member of the LGBTQ2S+ community, Aube shared another reason she loves the area. “This community is very friendly to gays, transgender” and is generally very inclusive.

Her first house was also in McCauley and then, says Aube, “I fell in love with this house here on 110th Avenue, just off 95th Street. There is always something going on in the area.” The proximity to downtown is a perk too, with the city square festivals, performers, and food trucks. “I took the bike lane to work every day. When I returned to work after my first round of cancer, it took me 14 minutes from my door to the elevator door in Commerce Place.”

The Aube sisters watched how the area music festivals started out small and have grown.

In addition to admiring the arts, “The Indigenous community is part of why I like it here.”

Being French/Métis herself, she was a natural at befriending two neighbourhood children who lived in the Métis housing community nearby.

“I kept my back door open, shared food, taught them to play guitar.” In a sense, Aube felt she grew up with them, maturing her sense of self. They were removed from their home. “Poverty is not a good enough reason to put kids in care. I’m still in touch with the two oldest ones on Facebook.”

Aube wants people to remember, “Know your neighbours. This is a great community. Play the game but don’t keep score. You only have this one precious life, so use your time wisely.”

*A member of the Professional Writers Association of Canada since 2003, Rusti has been writing professionally since 1999. Her favourite word activity is immersion editing with memoir writers.*



Jessica Aube (right) recently held her living life ceremony with loved ones. | Supplied

# Liz John-West is a lifelong community builder

Alberta Ave resident has a commitment to local issues and community

**STEPHEN STRAND**

It's a story as old as Canada. People around the world hear of opportunities for work and a better life in Canada, so they pack up their family and take a risk, often moving with little money or without even understanding the language. It is people like this who help Canada grow and become a better place.

Liz John-West's story begins in much the same way. She was born and raised in India, but eventually immigrated with her family to Kamloops, B.C.

Although her father had an engineering certificate, he couldn't use it in Canada, so he decided to work odd jobs instead. Eventually, he started a house building business.

"Meanwhile, my mom came to Canada with no English but with a strong work ethic. She went to school to learn English and then got her health care aide certificate and went to work as a health care aide worker," says John-West.

During her 10 years in Kamloops, John-West was surrounded by her extended family.

"In Kamloops, I grew up [with] my parents and my siblings but also with my aunts and uncles and cousins. This was my community when I was at home."

She adds: "My strong sense

of belonging and being part of a community and my ability to walk in two worlds [Indian and Canadian] is what I walk in on a regular and consistent basis."

After graduating high school, she moved to Edmonton to attend university. She studied

children's service sector. "We provide support to hundreds of families who are struggling with parenting, and trying to, at the same time, cope with their own addiction and mental illness plus poverty and homelessness and so on."

raised their three daughters in the McCauley and Alberta Avenue neighbourhoods, where she has been involved with the community as long as they have lived there. She delivered newspapers with her kids, helped with soccer teams, and

She explains, "We are hoping to dedicate a park to honour the murdered and missing women who have been taken from our neighbourhood. We are working closely with the Indigenous community and City of Edmonton to make sure the process is done well."

John-West also volunteered with the Edmonton Federation of Community Leagues, where she represented neighbourhoods bordering 118 Avenue (including Delton and Elmwood Park).

"Community leaguers are full of people who are community builders. They want to create space for neighbours to get to know each other. We have amazing individuals who have volunteered so much of their time to organize events which will bring neighbours together. As a representative of District G for all 13 community leagues in our area, I met amazing people who were dedicated, some for many years, to building their neighbourhood."

Politics is another interest of hers. Even with all of her commitments, she found time to run for Edmonton City Council in 2017. "I will be running again. The first time, I was very naïve, but I loved it. I loved meeting with people, door knocking," she says. "You get to hear what people are struggling with and you become an advocate for the issues people are raising."

Having been so involved with the community, John-West knows the issues it faces, along with the beauty it possesses.



Liz John-West (middle) with her husband and daughters. | Supplied

sociology and then completed grad studies in Indigenous community development.

Now, John-West works in the social services field at WJS Canada, where she oversees the

Community involvement is important to John-West. Through the years, she has volunteered in different communities in different roles. John-West and her husband Geoff

was involved with developing Giovanni Caboto Park.

She currently is a board member with Alberta Avenue Community League, where she is part of the Park Committee.

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

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# Yes, I feel thankful for the pandemic

Slowing down, regrouping, rethinking, and embracing naps

**TEKLA LUCHENSKI**

Don't hate me, but I miss lockdown. It made me more me.

As a writer, I work from home. I was already in a bubble of isolation because of my work, and because of my nature. Things have slowed down though, since I have dealt with my three kids' anxiety and school refusal for I don't even know how long now.

I like life slower. It is not just because I like empty stores where no one ever bumps into my cart, or traffic-free streets; I like that people stopped, for a moment, and took stock.

When the province announced school closure, and COVID-19 seemed like something that happened to other

people far away, I breathed a sigh of relief. Other parents experienced the shock of suddenly having to adjust to remote work while unexpectedly having to entertain and school their children. Their burden released me. My kids were already at home; I stopped feeling the all-day, every day drain of overwhelming guilt.

Thankfulness comes in ways we do not expect. Even with my sense of relief, I joined many others—or, more accurately, they joined me, a confirmed napper from way back—in a collective hibernation. It began in April or May, after the burst of energy that resisted the loneliness of lockdown with people singing from balconies, creating virtual activity groups (mine was a house cleaning challenge),

subscribing to Rosetta Stone to learn that language that always intrigued us (does anyone else speak Irish now? What? Me neither). I am grateful for the resilient spirit that rises out of adversity. I feel the tragedy, but I am not writing about that. This is a record of gratitude.

Gradually, we sort of went to sleep. For some of us, it was literal (see reference to napping, above). For others, life just got a little bit quieter. Sometimes that silence simmered into something sinister. Some people, unable to face themselves stripped of whatever used to help them soften the edge of imperfect humanity, became angry. Domestic violence increased. We all mused about that, for a bit. Mostly though, we were all confronted

with ourselves, and our relationships with others. Even at the thought of negativity, we related back to our own lives, and then to our place in society and what we want society to be like.

We were confronted with the dark reality of our mortality in at least one unexpected way by considering the fate of vulnerable people as we watched outbreaks decimate our elderly in care homes. "How fragile our lives are," we realized. It's too soon to tell if we will go back to sleep on that issue, but younger generations have seen our possible future, and we are afraid.

We transferred our own vulnerability onto the fate of George Floyd. That made us sit upright in our beds and gasp in dismay. Then we got out of

bed, alright, for a while.

We cannot know what life with COVID-19 will be like (there will never be life "after" COVID-19). We are changed forever. Part of the change, though, has been a collective existential quandary that will shape our futures.

From out of the fear and uncertainty, I can say that I am grateful for the global pause we have been forced to take. It began with lockdown. I hope we all remember what we awoke to during this time.

*Tekla is a freelance writer loving life in the Parkdale neighbourhood since 2013.*



Sometimes thankfulness can come from unexpected circumstances. | Alfonso Cerezo from Pixabay

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# Police commit to improving relationships

Systemic racism and community-police relationships to be addressed

**STEPHEN STRAND**

Edmonton Police Service (EPS) are committing to engage with the city's black, indigenous, racialized, and underserved communities, and intend to eliminate systemic racism from their ranks.

At a Sept. 21 press conference, Chief Dale McFee acknowledged it is time to improve the police-community relationship. "We are all committed to being better than we were yesterday and on a path forward," says McFee. "Racial injustice in our society is no longer a force to be collectively rationalized, studied, ignored, or worse yet, form another committee to assess."

McFee explains, "We have all heard the call for change and now it requires us to face uncomfortable truths and difficult, but necessary moments."

EPS will work with communities most affected through community engagement. "This path forward must lead us to an understanding of the role of our police service in the fight against systemic racism and redefine how police and other agencies contribute to community safety and well-being."

McFee acknowledges the role law enforcement played during Canada's history, such as policing of the Indian Act, colonization, the Sixties Scoop, and residential schools. The work includes identifying how their actions may reinforce inequities, racist legislation, policies, and practices. "We must do better and

we will do better. There is no place for any form of racism in policing, nor in any of our communities."

McFee says this effort will be different from past efforts because it's not a listening campaign. "This is not a campaign at all. It will not end," says McFee. "While some of these changes will take time, both to understand and implement,

people who have experienced marginalization, racism, and discrimination, alongside other community organizations. Its purpose is to hold EPS accountable as they implement recommendations and changes coming out of community engagement.

Applications for The Chief's Community Council will open in January 2021, and EPS is

murder, McFee states this is not a reactionary act. Rather, it expedited change already in progress.

"We are at a level where there are enough people paying attention that we can drive this change. Driving this change in policing alone isn't going to change anything. This is a community issue."

With City Council's decision

Alain Intwali, an Edmonton artist, says he thinks it's different this time. "When you talk to the community outreach team, you are talking to people. I think that's where it starts. I think they are willing and able to listen."

Intwali says a lot of people are being represented during roundtable conversations. "Again, the aspect of genuinely listening, I think, is a great start."

He says he feels there is a disconnect between cultures and the police, and that officers should spend time in a community so that there is some understanding. "When they get into uniform and carry the gun, they are able to think twice before they make the decision of using the weapon, for example."

The commitment is long overdue. "But, as the chief recognized himself, change has been slow. Sometimes stagnant. It starts with things like this. Just talking to the community and listening and just when you start treating the community like you are equals."

Intwali adds: "They are the ones reaching out to the people, as opposed to us coming to ask for change. It's them ready to work."

But, it is going to take patience from both sides, Intwali says, because there is a lot of work that still needs to be done. "It doesn't happen overnight."

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



EPS has committed to improving community-police relationships. | Stephen Strand

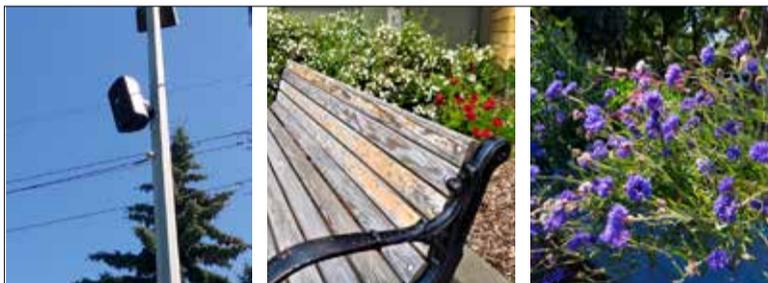
we know that other solutions will present themselves immediately."

The Chief's Community Council will be guided by

promising safe spaces for these conversations to happen.

Though all of this is happening after a summer of protests ignited by George Floyd's

to redirect \$11 million from the EPS budget, McFee is hoping other organizations will also commit money to help fund a social change.



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## POTATO CAKES

By: Tania

### INGREDIENTS

- 3 potatoes
- 1 egg
- 1 TBS of flour
- 3 TBS of cheese

### INSTRUCTIONS

Peel the potatoes first and then boil them, or boil them and then peel them. Anyway works the same. Once the potatoes are boiled and peeled, then mash them as in mashed potatoes. You can use 6 potatoes and 2 eggs or 3 potatoes and 1 egg, depending how much you want to make. Then add shredded cheese and a tablespoon of cornstarch or flour. Mix everything and once is all mixed make them in tortillas shape. Them you fry them in a frying pan with oil till golden brown.

Submit your recipe to [neighbourconnect.ca](http://neighbourconnect.ca)

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More info:  
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Tune into our **Annual General Meeting**  
Wednesday,  
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