

Rat Creek Press

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BY THE COMMUNITY - FOR THE COMMUNITY

SPRING 2024



The face of the Street Team

Heather Cameron keeps 118 Ave litter free

Heather Cameron cleaning the Sculpture en Plein Air art lot at 118 Avenue and 92 Street. | Constance Brissenden

NATASHA RUSSELL

You may see Heather Cameron walking along 118 Avenue pushing her garbage cart, and wonder who she is. Every weekday from 7 am to 3 pm Cameron picks up litter as an Alberta Avenue Ambassador, making the avenue a healthier and more attractive place to walk and live.

Using the 311 app, Cameron reports any city maintenance needs along her route from NAIT to the Expo Centre. She safely disposes of any needles found along the way. Heather Cameron first hit Alberta Avenue employed by the Boyle Street Ventures Hiregood program. Through this social enterprise, she soon connected with neighbours at the Alberta Avenue Business Association (AABA) and Alberta Avenue Community League (AACL), who saw great potential and demand for increased street stewardship. The Alberta Avenue Ambassador Pilot Program from 2020 now had a new face.

It didn't take long before Cameron was well known and liked by the community of local businesses, neighbours, and visitors along 118 Avenue. Born in Beardy's and Okemasis' Cree Nation in Saskatchewan, Cameron set down new roots in Edmonton three years ago. She was a mother of three and an addiction counselor diploma holder at the time.

"I love this area," she says. "It's a beautiful community and all of it is my outdoor office. I think of 118 Avenue like my living room. I hate a messy living room, so I take pride in my work. I enjoy the fact that I'm keeping the community clean, and I feel like I'm appreciated and respected. When you have that, it doesn't feel like work."

Over this winter holiday season, Cameron started a pilot called Project Warmth. She cashed in empty bottles she had collected over the years. With the help of family and some generous local businesses, baggies were filled with toques, scarves, mitts, and granola bars.

Thanks to Cameron's initiative, 50 baggies landed into the hands of Alberta Avenue's unhoused community members in December 2023.

Cameron starts her workday with a cup of coffee in the AABA office while she checks her emails and reviews her reports. She also helps with the onboarding of new Street Team members. These invaluable individuals provided snow removal for local businesses and neighbours in need during the winter season. Budget dependent, the aim of the AABA is to grow the street stewardship teams to continue to meet our community's needs.

Has she changed? Cameron is emphatic: "Yes, my work on the Ave, it has changed something in me. I'm more energetic and excited to come to work."

When asked what else her time in this position has taught her, Cameron says she has gained compassion. She now takes the time to listen to people's stories and has learned to not judge a book by its cover.

She doesn't litter (or at least tries her very best not to) anymore. Whenever she walks past someone shoveling or doing any kind of clean-up work, she can't help but tell them "Thank you," and that they're doing a great job.

About her future goals, Cameron says: "I'd love to continue my growth. Maybe one day I'll be an addictions counselor on the Ave since that's what I got my diploma for, but I'd love to stay on the Ave for as long as possible."

Community street stewardship grows with all of us. Imagine if we all took a page out of Heather Cameron's book. She sees our neighbourhood blocks as an extension of her living room. Let's follow her inspiration and do that, too.

Natasha Russell trained as a biochemist and veterinarian, owns the Edmonton Community Vet Clinic, mentors Little Vets, and enjoys her time as an engaged community member.



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The Canadian Dental Care Plan is Here!

A message from MP Blake Desjarlais

No matter how hard it is to pay the bills, people shouldn't be forced to neglect their dental health because of high costs. That's why, for years, the NDP fought to deliver dental care for everyone who needs it. We used our power in this Parliament to force the implementation of a National Dental Care program for Canadians.

Since December, over 600,000 seniors have already been approved for the Canadian Dental Care Program (CDCP) and over 9 million Canadians will be eligible by 2025.

This is an important step toward the universal health coverage that Canadians need. It will make life more affordable for families and ensure everyone's healthier.

Who is eligible?

People who:

- have no access to employer/pension-sponsored or private dental insurance;
- have an annual adjusted family net income under \$90,000;
- are Canadian residents for tax purposes; and
- have filed their tax return in the previous year.

NOTE: Canadian residents who have access to dental benefits through a social program offered by their province or territory and/or by the federal government will be eligible for the CDCP if they meet all the eligibility criteria.

When can you apply?

- Seniors aged 70+ will be receiving a letter inviting them to apply by phone starting in December 2023 and through March 2024, in sequence based on age.
- Seniors aged 65-69 will be able to apply online starting in May 2024.
- People with a Disability Tax Credit certificate and children under 18 will be able to apply online in June 2024.

Applications for all remaining eligible Canadian residents should start by 2025.

I'm excited to share that I'll be hosting a Dental Care Open House with Norwood Dental on Sunday, April 28 from 9 am to 4 pm at Alberta Avenue Community League. Childcare will be available from 12 to 4 pm. Learn more about the program, take home some dental swag and enjoy oral health freebies and education for parents, children, and adults with Dr. William Chin.

For more information on the CDCP or the open house, please do not hesitate to reach out to my office at Blake.Desjarlais@parl.gc.ca or by phone at 780-495-3261, or visit www.canada.ca/en/services/benefits/dental/dental-care-plan.html

Every Canadian deserves health care that covers them from head to toe. That's why the NDP is using our power to secure new investments in dental care, pharmacare, mental health, and more.

Thank you, Merci, Hiy Hiy,

Blake Desjarlais
Member of Parliament, Edmonton Griesbach



Dr. Chin at Norwood Dental talks to a young patient about brushing teeth. | Supplied by Norwood Dental.



Janis Irwin, MLA

Edmonton-Highlands-Norwood

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GOALS
Build Community, Encourage Communication, Increase Capacity.

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Constance Brissenden, Victoria Stevens, Kevin Blakeman and Derek Quittenton. Isho Bailey, Summer Lyons, Aakhil Lakhani, Bronwen Thompsen, Cianne McKinnon

PRODUCTION STAFF
PUBLISHER Karen Mykietka info@ratcreek.org
EDITOR Laura Vega editor@ratcreek.org
DESIGN Brenda Fortin & Chelsea Boos design@ratcreek.org
ADVERTISING ads@ratcreek.org

CONTRIBUTORS
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Serving 12,000 community members.

DELIVERY
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Delivering Dental Care to seniors and families

DENTAL CARE OPEN HOUSE

CO-HOSTED BY NORWOOD DENTAL CLINIC

 **Sunday, April 28th, 9:00am - 4:00pm**
(Childcare available 12pm to 4pm)

 **Alberta Avenue Community League**
9210 118 Ave NW, Edmonton AB T5G 0N2

Blake Desjarlais, MP | Edmonton Griesbach
 780-495-3261  Blake.Desjarlais@parl.gc.ca

Public Spaces Bylaw: Helpful, or punitive?

The proposed bylaw has Edmontonians divided

MOLLY STALEY

During a special meeting of the Edmonton City Council on February 14, 53 representatives signed up to speak about the proposed Public Spaces Bylaw, resulting in an almost 12-hour meeting and very vocal opposition from different community groups.

The Public Spaces Bylaw (Bylaw 20700) was proposed to “regulate the City’s public spaces and other areas in a manner that supports fairness, fosters safe and viable communities and the well-being of the environment, and promotes responsible stewardship of City assets and resources.” It would outline the governing of “any space in the City of Edmonton that is open and accessible to the general public including parks, transit, sidewalks and other open areas,” according to the City of Edmonton administration.

The bylaw would consolidate and replace three of the City of Edmonton’s current bylaws: Parkland Bylaw 2202, Conduct of Transit Passengers Bylaw 8353, and Public Places Bylaw 14614 . Most of the three conglomerating bylaws remain unchanged, with some minor tweaking. However, the significant changes include:

- Prohibiting any public drug use, pan-handling near roads, and loitering in

transit spaces.

- Limiting space for temporary shelters on public property.
- Requiring permits for gatherings of more than 50 people in any public space, and
- Banning sound amplification systems without a permit.
- The vast majority of the speakers opposed the changes.

Some notable opposing groups included the City of Edmonton Youth Council, Pride Corner on Whyte, Tawâw Outreach Collective, and Dr. Elaine Hyshka, a Canada Research Chair in Health Systems Innovation at the University of Alberta’s School of Public Health.

In May 2023, 6,425 Edmontonians completed the city’s online survey and shared their opinions on Edmonton’s public spaces. The Public Spaces Bylaw Report presents a high-level overview of the feedback. Residents were most concerned with open drug use, the misuse of family-friendly spaces during peak times, and those sleeping in public spaces overnight. The surveyed Edmontonians also expressed the need for safe public sidewalks, transit stations, and transit stops.

During the February meeting, opposing groups expressed concern about the further marginalization of house-

less people, those experiencing substance abuse issues, and the limitation of people’s right to free speech. Some community advocates quickly pointed out the curious timing of the council’s decision to bring forward the bylaw.

“Given the big-stick police response to encampments during the coldest week of the year and the Federal Housing Advocate’s recent advisement that encampments are a basic human right, the scope of this bylaw is surprising, to say the least,” said Christina Ignacio-Deines, an Alberta Avenue Community member, parent, and local business owner.

Freelance journalist Zach Dafoe has been monitoring the Edmonton City Council’s activities since the recent encampment removal crisis began. “It seems to me that, despite the performative call for a ‘state of emergency on homelessness’ made by our city, the actions that immediately follow are just pushing harder and harder to criminalize unhoused community members,” he observed.

Edmonton business sector representatives, including members of the Edmonton Chamber of Commerce and the Downtown Business Association of Edmonton, presented in favour of the bylaw.

“We supported the bylaw because it makes doing business in Edmonton easier and safer for people accessing those businesses,” said Akanksha Bhatnagar, Director of Communications and Marketing for the Edmonton Chamber of Commerce. Bhatnagar added that, although the Edmonton Chamber of Commerce is in favour, they want to see better wrap-around services for our vulnerable community.

“We need better housing, access to health care, better programs for them to access – but this bylaw doesn’t address those pieces.”

In a 9-0 vote, the council sent the bylaw back to the administration for amendments. Commenting on why the council voted to amend the bylaw, Councillor Andrew Knack said, “There’s this tension between compassion and wanting to feel safe, and it’s hard to navigate.” He stressed that the bylaw presented was a first draft and that the council would take the opposition’s comments seriously.

The council has agreed to have an amended bylaw ready between July and late August.

Molly is a journalist and communications specialist in Edmonton, Alberta. More than writing, she loves her pug, Garry.

Increase in derelict building demolitions

Edmonton’s Problem Property Initiative tears down house in Parkdale

CITY OF EDMONTON

Residents of a central Edmonton community say they are feeling safer now that a long-standing derelict property has been demolished and the lot cleared of debris thanks to Edmonton’s Problem Property Initiative (PPI).

“The house was always derelict and falling apart and it just got worse and worse,” said Jeremiah Valleau, who also expressed feeling anxious for his personal safety living next to the Parkdale property since 2015. “The roof caved in. I’m sure it was full of mould and, for whatever reason, no one was willing to take care of the property. Living next to it, I noticed myself feeling a lot of anxiety. Fire was always a big fear. I was always worried about someone starting a fire. It was two metres away from my house and the main exit for my basement renters.”

Demolition of the derelict home, which included removing the structure, cleaning debris, and returning the property to level grade, took crews approximately one week.

John Bale, Operational Supervisor of Safety Codes Compliance who led the demolition project team with the City of Edmonton, says it’s all about engaging with communities and keeping neighbourhoods safe. “Our primary focus is on public safety and the well being of communities. Derelict properties are very unsafe structurally, but they also attract unwanted activity like illegal dumping and squatting which can lead to fire related issues.”

The Problem Property Initiative coordinates the efforts of multiple City departments, the Edmonton Police Services, Alberta Health Services, and the Government of Alberta to address the issues associated with problem properties. Each organization brings different regulations and enforcement approaches to the initiative’s teams.

One key team in the initiative - the Demolition Assessment and Response

Committee, or “DARC” - is leading the City’s approach to the demolition of larger unsafe structures.

DARC combines the regulations and enforcement approaches of four different City areas: Community Standards &

tion coordinated by DARC in Parkdale.

After years of such dealings, residents like Jeremiah Valleau are happy that something could finally be done.

“For a long time it felt like the City wasn’t able to do anything about these

Problem Property Initiative. In December of 2022, City Council approved permanent funding to implement the City’s long-term strategy to address properties that cause frequent and serious safety concerns and complaints to the City.



Before and after images of a demolition coordinated by DARC in Parkdale. [Supplied

Neighbourhoods, Fire Rescue Services, Legal Services, and Safety Codes. The committee identifies and prioritizes properties for demolition and uses the most effective legislation available to expedite demolitions where required.

The recent demotion in Parkdale was DARC’s first large-scale project. The property had caused considerable concern for neighbours, repeated calls for service, and had been dealt with by various PPI partners for several years. Ultimately, it was identified by DARC as unsafe to the surrounding community. And in December 2023, DARC, led by Safety Codes, demolished the house and backfilled the basement with dirt.

Before and after images of a demoli-

properties,” he said. “It’s good to know that’s changed. And it’s good to know someone’s listening. The demolition company did a good job. Everyone in the neighbourhood was so happy to see the fences go up and the house come down. It was a glorious day. It was a joy to watch it come down.”

The property is surrounded by other residential properties and having this derelict structure removed has improved the safety of the surrounding community.

In all cases where the Problem Property Initiative facilitates the demolition of unsafe buildings, the costs incurred by the City are transferred to the property owner.

This work is part of Edmonton’s

Keep in Touch with Edmonton’s Problem Property Initiative

Edmontonians can now access several resources to stay informed about how the City’s Problem Property Initiative and its partners are addressing problem properties.

An electronic newsletter - The Problem Property Initiative News - has been launched and is available for anyone interested to subscribe to get news delivered directly to their email inbox. Residents can sign up by visiting edmonton.ca/ProblemProperties.

To learn more about the Problem Property Initiative or to report a problem property, visit edmonton.ca/ProblemProperties or call 311.

Information provided by City of Edmonton.

How does your garden grow?

Tips for spring planting from an organic master gardener



An inviting tray of pea shoots, ready for eating. | Gail Silvius

TAMIE PERRYMENT

It’s still winter, but the sun is shining and it makes me think of spring. My mind is always on my plants. I worry about my perennials and fruit trees, because we had a period of really cold weather and no snow for most of our Edmonton winter. However, there’s not much I can do to see how they fared until April or May.

At this time of year, I prepare for the upcoming planting season. It’s fun

to build on the plants from last year, to revamp my garden design, think about planting some new perennials and decide on what I need to plant in my vegetable beds.

As a gardener, one thing that’s important — if you haven’t done it already — is to start a gardening book. It’s always good to write down what you planted each year, when you planted it, and how it turned out. Keep a record of what you did or need to do to supplement your soil. Make a plan in your gardening

book regarding what you want to grow this year.

Moving into spring, the new season of gardening, think about what you need to begin. Whenever I looked over my seeds, I wasn’t sure how long I’d had them. I now have a seed binder that I created to organize my seeds and other information I need for my garden. The binder that I developed is not only practical, but also fun. It allows me to focus on seeds without confusion.

I found a site that helped me develop my seed binder, which includes a useful page with PDF templates. You can use these to adapt your own seed binder: gardenvariety.life/make-your-own-seed-binder

Vellum envelopes have proved to be a useful tool for seeds that I collect over the summer. They are transparent and I can see my seeds — I prefer them over brown paper ones that don’t have this option. I can also get vellum envelopes in a smaller size. I inscribe them with the date, the type of seed, and whether it’s a fall or spring/summer seed.

Plastic photo holders are also great for seeds. I have small card boxes for overflow.

As your seed binder can be a keepsake, decorate as it inspires you. There’s information online about seed saving (mostly vegetables) and when to plant them.

Tamie Perryment has an Organic Master Gardener’s Certificate from Gaia College, and is on the board of the Edmonton Horticultural Society. A longtime member of Parkdale Cromdale Community League, she coordinates award-winning front garden design and maintenance.

PLANNING FOR MARCH

- Seed starting begins!
- Plan a list of what you wish to plant indoors and what you want to buy.
- Make a list of items to purchase such as organic fertilizer, soil, compost if needed, peat moss, etc.
- Research the best places to get the items for your garden.
- Continue with the garden planning in your gardening book and seed binder.
- Order a catalog from one of the seed places below:
- McKenzie Seeds (mckenzie-seeds.com)
- Burpee (burpee.com)
- W.H.Perron (whperron.com/en/)
- Stokes Seeds (stokesseeds.com)
- Veseys Seeds (veseys.com)
- Full Circle Seeds (fullcircleseeds.com)
- Richters (richters.com)
- Ontario Seed Company (oscseeds.com). Native Seeds for Conservation and Reclamation.

Growing food, flowers, and knowledge

Local workshops are a great way to learn more about gardening.



Delton Community League is hosting a series of gardening workshops, like this one for beginners. | Constance Brissenden

CONSTANCE BRISSENDEN

My goal this season is to go from one-pot balcony gardening to at least five pots. I want tomatoes, lettuce, basil, parsley, and flowering plants. I eagerly attended Delton Community League’s free beginner gardening workshop late in February. The free workshop was part of the league’s Climate Action Workshop series, with three more to follow in March, April, and May.

Regarding my summer planting, my approach is simple: My style of gardening is to get a bag of potting soil, dump it in a pot,

push in some seeds, water, and wait.

As I learned from workshop instructor Mark Stumpf-Allen, simple is a good start.

“Can you read the back of a seed package?” he asked. Participant Jonny Wakefield held one up and scrutinized the instructions. Later, he told me that the workshop got him thinking. “It looks like I will attend again,” said Wakefield. “I really don’t know much, and there’s a lot to learn.”

Mark Stumpf-Allen is a 29-year Delton resident and administrator of the master gardener program in Parkland County. He’s

a man who knows his stuff: the difference between soil, dirt, silt, sand, and clay, and where to get cost-effective mulch (getchippedrop.com). Yet even this walking encyclopedia of planting admits his yard “is a work in progress.” He has tried every gardening trend. “Right now, I’m playing with regenerative and ecological gardening,” he says.

After I master my five-pot balcony, I want to be like longtime gardener Frances Williams, a small woman with big ambitions when it comes to her vegetable garden. She has put one in for many decades and

knows her soil (good) from her dirt (not good). “I’m always learning new stuff,” she told workshop attendees. “The season is happening. I’m going to be outside a lot.”

You may be gardening for food sustainability, or simply for a view of pretty flowers. The message at Delton is, “Go for it” — for fresh food, for healthy bodies, and for a healthy planet. Simple or complex, it’s a world of green and goodness you will heartily enjoy.

Constance Brissenden is an experienced presenter, writer, editor, and historian living in Cromdale. She is co-author of nine award-winning books by Cree author Larry Loyie (1933-2016), in addition to more than 20 books of history and travel.

- CLIMATE ACTION WORKSHOPS
- Delton Community League
- 12325 88 St.
- All workshops are free or pay-what-you-will
- RSVP to GreenerDelton@gmail.com
- Attracting Pollinators
- Tuesday, March 19, 7 pm or Saturday, March 23, 10 am
- Home Composting
- Tuesday, April 16, 7 pm or Saturday, April 20, 10 am
- Regenerative Lawn Care
- Tuesday, May 21, 7 pm or Saturday, May 25, 10 am

Get grounded in earth

Find the joy of spring with the Seedy Sunday event



Seedy Sunday resumes | Supplied



Seed Swapping | Supplied

CHELSEA BOOS

Seedy Saturday and Seedy Sunday seed swap events spread to this land in the 1990s after originating in Vancouver and have been popping up like fungi ever since, sometimes going online when necessary. The current collective of local organizers has doubled since it started as a group of four women behind the scenes in 2007. Seventeen years on, over 40 volunteers are involved in the annual event called Seedy Sunday, happening this year on March 24 from 11 am to 4 pm at Alberta Avenue Community Hall.

I talked to Suzanne Cook about her Vendor Coordinator role on an overcast February day, when the thought of spring

felt like a distant mirage. She has been gardening passionately for over 50 years. Luckily, she will be giving a presentation (including book recommendations) where everyone can learn about seed saving at 12:30 pm. Cook will share highly knowledgeable advice from her experience as a volunteer with the Seed Library, which is presently looking for a permanent home that can keep up with its high demand since the pilot ended at Stanley Milner Library.

This year, Cook is excited about lots of new small seed sellers at the vendor tables. She also looks forward to welcoming special guests Rocky Ferroe and Dustin Baijer, who will prompt workshop attendees to brainstorm on the proposition of repurposing five urban golf courses in the city.

The event has something for everyone and welcomes gardeners of all levels. The discussion format encourages conversation not only about seeds, but also the soil we grow in and the environment. Visitors will find seeds, soil, and community groups that are regionally relevant, giving their plants stronger chances of surviving the harsh prairie ecosystem. Attendees include the Edmonton and Area Land Trust, Edmonton Horticultural Society, Edmonton Native Plant Society, Edmonton Urban Farm, Evergreen Garden Supply Exchange, Master Gardener Association of Alberta, National Farmer’s Union (new this year), Shrubscriber, Wagner Natural Area Society, and Wild Outside.

Multitudes are expected to come for the main attraction: a moneyless seed exchange room, where contributors bring as much information as they can about saved seeds for the volunteers to help identify and package. Visitors are invited to help themselves to any open-pollinated seeds they desire at this free event.

Also working in the space is Seeds of Diversity, dedicated to open-pollinated, non-hybrid varieties of plants that conserve biodiversity and improve chances of long-term success in more extreme weather. The hybridization process of selective breeding narrows genetic material by producing seed with a desired trait, at the expense of other qualities like drought-tolerance or insect-resistance. Unlike seed giants owned by multinational corporations you might find in grocery store aisles, Seeds of Diversity member seed growers have taken the “safe-seed pledge” and are committed to refreshing the stock of seeds with epigenetics,

which studies traits and reactions to the environment aiming to better adapt to a changing climate. Become a member to help keep the seed bank fresh and well-adapted to a new level of hardiness necessary to weather the storm.

Come for the learning, stay for snacks from food vendors and the in-house cafe. Bring the kids — they will have fun planting tomato seeds and making crafts!

Chelsea Boos can be found with 2 cats and hoards of plants at her Alberta Avenue home, or often doing guerilla gardening around amiskwaciwāskahikan. She is grateful to continue a timeless tradition of seed saving stewarded by the First Peoples of Turtle Island.

IS YOUR INTEREST IN SEEDS BEGINNING TO SPROUT?

Suzanne Cook is reading the book What We Sow by Jennifer Jewell. It widely covers seed-related issues like the Gates Foundation’s New Green Revolution in Africa and the dangers of dependence on corporate agribusiness and hybrid seed monocultures with heavy pesticide and fertilizer use. You can find the book online or in local bookstores.

Spruce Avenue Community Garden



Join us for the 2024 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

Applications for Elmwood Park Community Garden are now open!

What’s the cost?

\$40 refundable deposit & \$40 box rental

What do you get?

8x10x12 raised garden bed

Contact Audreylynn at elmwoodparkcl.info@gmail.com to register



Ever wanted to grow your own vegetables? Get down in the dirt?

JOIN EASTWOOD COMMUNITY GARDEN



info@eastwoodhub.org
780 - 477 - 2354

alberta avenue COMMUNITY GARDEN

Taking applications for 2024 albertaave.org

Pick up on Saturday, May 11 from 1-4pm

COMPOST SALE

Bulk order delivery May 9-11
Five 5 gallon pails for \$40
Scan QR code or go to website to order



Complex housing issues in communities

Pimatisiwin provides shelter to unhoused Edmontonians, but lack of communication and security measures bring concerns to Elmwood Park



Over 40 Elmwood community members attended a meeting with NiGiNan Housing Ventures on January 16 in an effort to resolve the concerns regarding trailers being used for temporary emergency housing. | Rebecca Lippiatt

REBECCA LIPPIATT

In 2021, NiGiNan Housing Ventures was given \$5 million by the City of Edmonton and \$5.7 million from the federal government’s Rapid Housing Initiative to develop the former Sands Hotel into 53 units of supportive housing. The site was named Pimatisiwin (translation: life).

Since November 2021, the site provided temporary shelter and supported COVID-19 physical distancing needs at the time for 105 unhoused Edmontonians. In early 2022, NiGiNan began renovations to transition the hotel to supportive housing. Initial plans were to have the project completed by the end of the year, but the opening date was moved to 2023 due to undetected asbestos contamination. The project seemed to be complete according to plan. But in December 2023, the Elmwood Park community felt blindsided when two large CIVEO trailers and four small structures appeared in the parking lot of Pimatisiwin late one night.

There had been no notice or discussion shared with the community that additional spaces would be added.

“If you want to maintain a good relationship with people, come to us at the beginning [of a project],” says Morgan Wolf, Chair of the Elmwood Park Community League. She sums up the community’s feelings that the way it was handled “does not give you trust with people. You have to be transparent.”

A Tense Meeting

In 2021, the community met with NiGiNan Housing Ventures regarding the plan to build Pimatisiwin as supportive housing to help individuals exit homelessness. The consultation made the community feel their concerns were heard. They knew the renovations were near complete and were prepared to welcome their new neighbours.

The overnight appearance of trailers two years later surprised residents.

On January 16, 2024, in an effort to resolve the concerns regarding the trailers, over 40 Elmwood community members (from a community of fewer than 1,200) met with administrative representatives from the City of Edmonton and Métis Ward Councillor Ashley Salvador, Métis Ward Councillor; Edmonton Police Services (EPS); Keri Cardinal-Shulte, CEO for NiGiNan housing; Cala Hills, site manager at Pimatisiwin; Janis Irwin, Edmonton-Highlands-Norwood MLA; and Blake Desjarlais, Edmonton Griesbach MP.

Missing was representation from the Government of Alberta Ministry of Seniors, Community and Social Services.

The atmosphere in the hall was tense. The community correlated the rise in disorder to the presence of the shelter. One woman stated that drug dealers regularly meet on the corner of her property and she sees a lot of used drug paraphernalia. “We understood it would be recovery; we did

not know it would be a shelter,” followed Virginia Gardner. The community had additional concerns articulated by Gardner. “I totally agree with what you are doing, but I disagree with harm reduction.”

The number of unhoused individuals in Edmonton has doubled in four years due to the COVID-19 pandemic, static social support from the provincial government, lack of public housing, and a recession. With no stability or access to help with food, limited clothing and shelter, and virtually non-existent mental health support, many people without homes resort to theft to shelter themselves and are often mired in mental health or addiction crisis.

The effects of these events spill over to housed people: overdoses, needles in the park, attacks, and theft, from toys and bikes to tires off cars. Bob Acker shared how he called 911 to report an attempted break-in at 2 am only to be told that kicking at a door in the middle of the night is not a crime. Acker asked, “What does it take to get a police response?”

At the meeting, EPS, Neighbourhood Empowerment Team (N.E.T.) representatives, and Park Rangers (responsible for encampments) listed the ways the community can reach out for help: calling 211, 311, or 911, or documenting a complaint with the EPS non-emergency line. One community member, who is home during the day, responded. “You keep telling us to document and call you. I could spend all day doing this. It feels like it’s my full-time job. I feel traumatized from witnessing all this [disorder]. Why is it my job to get you to keep our streets safe?” Her comments were greeted with applause.

Steve Larson said he has begun patrolling Elmwood Park twice a day, bringing bottled water and snacks to people unable to get into the shelter before asking them to dismantle their tents. The Elmwood Park resident has become someone the community calls when they have concerns. He stated that he “appreciates the reaction time” from NiGiNan and says that when he calls Cala Hills, “she deals with it.”

Despite his good relationship with NiGiNan, Larson said the presence of the shelter attracts “bad guys” travelling along 75 Street north to south. “That’s where the crime is,” he added. He requested that EPS drive through the community when they’re around the 82 Street corridor. EPS representatives agreed to increase their presence in the community.

Confusion and Mistrust

Much of the frustration and mistrust regarding the shelter came from a surprisingly quick bureaucratic decision and two layers of government with their own communication issues.

In a follow-up interview, Cardinal-Shulte points out that NiGiNan staff deal with city and provincial administration, not elected officials. City administration — both the city housing department and the city

permitting department — have no say as to whether or not a project will proceed. Projects only happen if the province provides funding through the Homeless Supports and Housing Stability Department (HSHS), Ministry of Community and Social Services. Elected officials (City Council) are often not advised of the outcome of a project until both the plans and permitting (administration) and the provincial funding are both in place.

According to Cardinal-Shulte, the city housing department had approached NiGiNan to ask if they would partner to trial four Pallet homes for the Cold Weather Shelter Pilot. Pallet, an Oregon-based Public Benefit Corporation that builds emergency shelters, wanted to test their product in a Canadian winter.

City council meeting minutes from April 17, 2023, show that Administration was asked to provide a report regarding Indigenous-led shelter and transitional spaces. The Cold Weather Shelter Pilot report was presented to Council in December 2023, with a design plan expected by January 2024.

In the meantime, NiGiNan applied to the province (HSHS) for operational funding for their ongoing emergency shelter in the Tavern at the beginning of November 2023. They added the Pallet homes to their application. HSHS advised that they fund a minimum of 50 temporary emergency spaces and required the application to include additional spaces. To prepare for winter if their funding application was approved, NiGiNan also submitted a development permit to the city to “move on 3 temporary buildings (dormitory, dining Car and Pallet Homes (4 of) for a Supportive Housing Use (53-person capacity).” At that point, they did not know what funding they would receive from the province.

At the end of November, NiGiNan found out they received money from the province for the project. Then they had two days’ notice that the trailers would be arriving from British Columbia. These tight turnaround times meant that community members were not informed about the 2023/24 emergency shelter project, with the exception of a notice to the nearest neighbour within 60 metres who fell under development bylaw).

When asked about the funding for the trailers at the January 16 meeting, Councillor Salvador stated, “I am not sure what went into making that decision but I am disappointed that a provincial representative is not here to speak to it.”

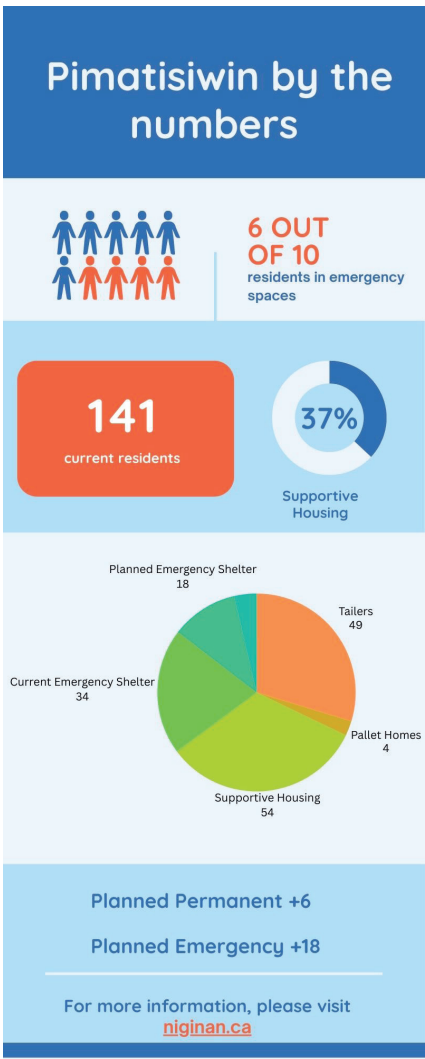
Coexistence

The appearance of the trailers on the heels of negative interactions with unhoused individuals exacerbated Elmwood Park’s frustration.

Initially, the community had requested a fence to separate Pimatisiwin from the playground across the back alley. At the January meeting, a community member pointed out that there is a hole in the fence along NiGiNan property and stated that drugs were being sold to Pimatisiwin residents through the fence. The community member also stated that people use a two-by-four to jump over the fence. Cardinal-Shulte responded that trying to meet the competing needs of the community is difficult. “We put in the fence at the community request, but then we get complaints from people stating ‘that is where we walk,’” she said.

Cardinal-Shulte also noted that the privacy screen on the fence had still not been installed, and that she needed to follow up with the fencing company.

Morgan Wolf presented two requests on behalf of the Elmwood Park community at the meeting: First, community members want a dedicated number to call when they



have issues with people using or attempting to use the shelter. Second, they wish to have security patrol the area. NiGiNan reiterated that community members can email anytime or pass on concerns through Wolf or Steve Larson.

Wolf said that the community wants to have good relations with people. She reiterated that Elmwood Park Community League would like NiGiNan residents and staff to attend their events.

Cardinal-Shulte said she understands the frustration with people who are acting inappropriately and creating problems. “The damage which has happened over 200 years cannot be undone in 30 days,” she stated. “We meet people where they are at.”

When asked about how she would respond to questions from the community, Cardinal-Shulte said she is always available, because she feels so strongly about what NiGiNan does. She concluded by saying, “I am committed to doing the best we can with what we have.” At the meeting, she also invited community members to arrange a visit to Pimatisiwin any time they wanted.

“I want people to have safe and loving housing,” said Cardinal-Shulte. “NiGiNan’s job is to find solutions for Indigenous people. We do whatever we can to get people off the street.”

Elmwood Park resident Andrew Altimas is uniquely positioned to articulate the complexity of the situation. He has lived experience of former homelessness and recently witnessed his roommate being assaulted by five people. “If one person is suffering, we are all suffering,” he states. “We cannot separate ourselves from it. We all have to have healing.” Above all, Altimas has hope for the community.

“If we all work together, we can find a unique solution for Edmonton.”

Rebecca has attended free concerts as a bouncer, juggled plates as a waitress, completed a degree in microbiology, laboured in the oilfield cleaning storage tanks, and worked as an editor for the Government of Alberta. In her current incarnation, she has been a full-time photographer for the last 15 years, is exploring writing and co-parents four nearly-grown children.

What is possible beyond making the call??

Rethinking neighbourhood safety and well-being



Art by Micah Bazant. Developed as part of the annual Night Out for Safety & Liberation
| <https://nosl.us>

JOSHUA MIRA GOLDBERG

In 2023, Arts on the Ave launched the Make the Call campaign. This campaign encourages people to call police, Crime Stoppers, or Bylaw to try to build community safety and well-being.

The intention is good. We all need healthy neighbourhoods. Community safety and well-being are very important. But law enforcement isn't the right response to many neighbourhood issues.

It starts with how we define what is a problem in our community. There's a big difference between a hate crime and someone living outside or youth doing street art. Many neighbourhood clean-up campaigns promote fear of people who use drugs, people who don't have anywhere indoors to store their belongings, and people who can't afford to fix up their homes. The "report-a-john" part of Make the Call mixes up the real problem of sexual harassment with the non-problem of someone paying for sex.

Law enforcement doesn't solve poverty or other health and social issues. It can't prevent violence or other real problems. Police and bylaw officers can't be everywhere all the time, and can only respond after something has already happened.

Calling officers can result in harm. We live in a society with a lot of stereotypes and assumptions. It's hurtful to have neighbours treat you as suspicious or dangerous because of the colour of your skin or for being visibly poor. It's scary to have the police called on you, especially for people who have had past traumatic experiences.

What else can we do to build healthy

and safe communities, instead of calling law enforcement?

If we are creative and think outside the box, what could we do that would make our neighbourhoods safer for everyone?

From my past experiences of being harassed and assaulted, I am safest when I know my neighbours and know that if I'm in trouble there are people nearby who care about me and will want to help. I am safest when my neighbourhood has a culture of respect and inclusion, rather than fear and suspicion. When we need help, we reach out to people we trust. How can we build that trust in

What else can we do to build healthy and safe communities, instead of calling law enforcement? If we are creative and think outside the box, what could we do that would make our neighbourhoods safer for everyone?

punishment. Over the next year I'll be sharing stories of what ordinary people are doing in the Alberta Ave neighbourhood to look after each other and build safe, respectful, and inclusive communities. I'll also be sharing examples from other cities. Stay tuned!

Joshua Mira Goldberg moved to the Alberta Ave neighbourhood in August 2023, after gentrification destroyed the diversity and vibrancy of his previous home. He is grateful for friendly neighbours, magpies, and green onion cakes.



Mother's / *yummy* Day Brunch

 **Parkdale Cromdale
Community League**

**SUNDAY MAY 12
10AM - 12PM @ PCCL HALL**

MEMBERS-ONLY EVENT

MIMOSAS AVAILABLE FOR PURCHASE

FOOD BY PCCL RESIDENT CHEF RAULY

Vegan & GF options will be available!

TAKE SOMETHING OFF YOUR MOM'S PLATE

THIS MOTHER'S DAY

Boot Scootin’ at Delton

Kick up your heels for real

KEVIN BLAKEMAN

Nestled in the heart of Delton lies a hidden gem, pulsating with energy and rhythm. Every week, a diverse group of individuals spanning all ages and backgrounds converge on Delton Community League to kick up their heels and dance the night away.

Stepping through the doors, I am immediately greeted by the infectious sounds of country music, setting the tone for an evening of fun and camaraderie. The room is alive with laughter and chatter as participants eagerly gather, swapping stories and sharing their excitement for the evening ahead. Soon all will be “boot scooting,” learning line dances that follow a choreographed pattern of steps to country music.

Led by enthusiastic instructors who boast years of experience and a passion for dance, these classes accept everyone from beginners to seasoned pros. Instructor Dwayne Hryniw informs me he’s been teaching for 101 years (though admits it might be closer to 30). As to the breadth of their appeal, I’m told that they recently had their youngest attendee and can now genuinely boast of participants aged eight to 80. It’s clear that they are intent on fostering an inclusive and supportive environment where everyone feels welcome.

The music continues to play, and the room ripples with closely coordinated movement. From classic line dances to more contemporary routines set to modern tunes, there’s something for everyone to enjoy. The joy of synchronized movement is palpable as participants follow along. Each step brings



Terrylynn Kuhl (foreground) teaches line dance at Delton Community League on Thursdays | Rebecca Lippiatt

them closer together as they share in the collective experience.

At the partners’ night on Wednesday, Alan and Yan say they have been coming for a couple of months. The classes are a great opportunity to get some exercise, they add, with the bonus of being able to spend time together.

Beyond the physical benefits, the dances serve as a hub for social connection and community bonding. Friendships are forged on the dance floor, with participants often gathering for post-class dinners or weekend outings to see live music. For many, it’s not only about the dancing, but also the sense of belonging and cama-

raderie that keeps them coming back week after week. Many even followed the class from its previous location to its new home at Delton Community League.

Sometimes the reasons for coming are as simple as just wanting to line dance. Participant Ken attends the Thursday evening line dance class on his own, making the trip — 40 minutes each way — simply because he enjoys the dancing and the music. It helps that Terrylynn Kuhl is a great teacher.

Participant Linda says she also just likes to dance, so trying the class seemed like a good thing. She’s been attending for three months after finding out about

it through a Facebook group.

As the evening draws to a close and the final chords fade away, a sense of contentment and fulfillment permeates the room. Participants bid farewell until next time, already counting down the days until they can once again “scoot their boots” on the dance floor. With the growing popularity of the event, they are also anticipating the prospect of welcoming new friends.

If you want to join dance classes:

All ages and abilities are invited to dance classes Wednesday and Thursday nights, with no partner required, at Delton Community League, 12325 88 Street.

Wednesday nights, 7 pm: Learn and practise a different partner dance each month. Come single or with a partner.

Thursday nights, 7 pm: Get Boot Scootin’ with the Boot Scootin’ Boogie Line Dance Crew.

Lessons are free for 2024 Delton Community League members. For everyone else, punch cards provide a chance to have \$5 lessons.

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



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BUSINESS ASSOCIATION

THE MINGKEE HAS SOLD!

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Are you interested in being part of the transformation?



Scan the QR code
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questionnaire

or

email us with your idea!
info@alberta-avenue.com

Tango is Back

Argentine-style tango returns to the community



Instructor Aydan Dunnigan-Vickruck demonstrates a tango move on a Monday night at PCCL. | Constance Brissenden

CONSTANCE BRISSENDEN

Tango is back at Parkdale Cromdale Community League (PCCL). For close to 20 years, Vince and Cindy Davis were a mainstay of the Edmonton tango community, teaching and hosting tango dances out of the community hall. Then COVID-19 hit the scene.

Nothing broadcasts “no social distancing” louder than Argentine tango. Naturally, it was the first casualty of the lockdown and the last to recover.

In the summer of 2023, the Edmonton tango community was on life support.

Many of the teachers had taken the lockdown as an opportunity to turn their attention to other ventures. The tango dance community lost its weekly venue and could not afford to rent a mainstream dance hall.

As is often the case, a community league came to the rescue. A Parkdale Cromdale board member suggested that PCCL host the tango community rent-free as a senior-friendly program. All ages could join in, with the tango class including adaptations for a 55+ crowd with limited dance experience or mobility chal-

lenges. The class, followed by a dancing session, would operate by donations only.

This focus fit perfectly with co-teachers Julia Kopala and Aydan Dunnigan-Vickruck. Theirs is a distinctive perspective on teaching and dancing tango.

“Frequently, tango is taught as a series of complex, technical-step sequences,” notes Dunnigan-Vickruck. “But there are difficulties. Although this translates into very attractive styling, it’s often not readily accessible for those with little dance experience.”

The teaching partners compiled a series of exercises to focus on essential tango movements rather than step sequences. This makes learning tango easier, and also enhances general mobility and musicality.

Julia Kopala’s background includes more than 15 years of tango dancing, as well as teaching experience in brain gym, yoga, and Reiki. Dunnigan-Vickruck has integrated his tango practice with Tai Chi for two decades and has served as host for the tango community for more than 10 years. They both share an interest in the ergonomic, energetic, and relational elements of tango.

Work your brain first with brain gym exercises like the cross-crawl led by Kopala. Tango “flo” movements follow, taught by Dunnigan-Vickruck, with titles such as rag-doll shuffle, slinky slide, and power skate. “These moves are learned in childhood, though we may have neglected them in later years,” he observes. “We shape these core movements into dance

steps, paying attention to how the whole body moves, not just the foot placement.”

Does it “take two to tango”? “It helps,” he admits. “But our exercises are lighthearted and easy to practice alone at home.”

The Monday night activity at PCCL has caught on, with attendance continuing to grow. Doors open at 6:45, classes are 7 - 8 pm, followed by two hours of tango dancing with traditional and alternative music. No previous dance experience or partner is required — just an adventurous spirit. Bring a water bottle and indoor shoes.

Constance Brissenden is an experienced presenter, writer, editor, and historian living in Cromdale. She is co-author of nine award-winning books by Cree author Larry Loyie (1933-2016), in addition to more than 20 books of history and travel.

GIVE TANGO A TRY
Mondays: doors 6:45 pm, class 7-8 pm
11335 85 St
parkdalecromdale.org
Cover is \$5 or by donation (free to PCCL members).
Instructor: Aydan Dunnigan-Vickruck tango@yegtango.ca

Casino volunteers
needed for June 9 & 10

JOIN US!

Annual
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Meeting

New board
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with Connie Kulhavy

WEDNESDAY, MARCH 27

Flower Sketching

with Edwin Aquino

SATURDAY, MARCH 30

DIP DYE Easter Eggs

Rebuilding community through cooking

The journey of Ukraine’s Kitchen



Jorgia (left) and Janice (right) Krissa-Moore co-founders of Ukraine’s Kitchen, a frozen food and catering business. | Supplied

HAYDEN KOCH

Just over a year since their first pop-up at Cook County Saloon, Ukraine’s Kitchen has become a cultural anchor for the Ukrainian newcomer community.

“Jorgia and I have both quit our day jobs. We just keep growing, we had an amazing Christmas. ... They’ve served our varenyky at hotel arts in Calgary, the Moose Hotel in Banff,” says Janice Krissa-Moore, reflecting on the success of Ukraine’s Kitchen this past year.

“To see our food being served in these places is amazing.”

Janice and her daughter Jorgia are co-founders of Ukraine’s Kitchen, a frozen food and catering business staffed entirely by newcomers who’ve fled the war in Ukraine.

After doing some “couch surfing” between multiple commercial kitchens through 2023, the business now has a long-term home on Fort Road. Upon walking in, you’ll see that Ukraine’s Kitchen lives up to its name: The ovens, appliances, refrigerators, and prep areas are all in open view, attended to by ladies chatting and singing in Ukrainian as they go about preparing the food.

This isn’t the first such effort by the Krissa-Moores, who are themselves third- and fourth-generation Ukrainians. In fact, the Kitchen was born out of the Free Store for Ukrainian Newcomers, their other ongoing endeavour that provides free essential goods for Ukrainians fleeing the war with Russia.

The origins of the Free Store date back

to well before Russia’s all-out invasion in 2022. In 2018, Janice was working as an associate producer for an independent film, *They Who Surround Us*, which portrays a Ukrainian immigrant in Alberta. To gain a deeper understanding of the country and its people, Janice and Jorgia visited Ukraine. There, they saw a nation already locked into a small-scale conflict with Russia.

“We originally went to do research about Ukrainians leaving due to war [in the] 30s and 40s. ... It was hard, because we came to research something that was supposed to be history, and we realized it was still ongoing,” Janice explains.

Having some friends in the region, Janice and Jorgia decided they needed to lend a hand. Upon reaching out for support back home, they received a plethora of donations — mostly clothes, since many had to flee with little more than a small suitcase.

Things escalated very quickly upon Russia’s full-scale invasion in early 2022. With tens of thousands of refugees fleeing to Canada — including, at the outset, 30 a day to Edmonton alone — Janice and Jorgia upscaled their charitable efforts and officially launched the Free Store. It soon evolved into something greater than a charity: In their words, it became a shared space where newcomers could come together, reflect, and rebuild their shattered community in a new land.

“These people became friends and family. Whenever something was happening in Ukraine, they would come together and relate to each other with their shared

experience,” says Janice.

Launching the Kitchen

On top of having this supportive space, the newcomers were comforted by the warm reception from Albertans and Edmontonians, a reflection of the deep Ukrainian roots in this region. They also noticed that Ukrainian cuisine is a widely beloved staple here. Eventually, some of the newcomers pitched the idea of starting a kitchen for Ukrainian cuisine. Janice and Jorgia figured it was worth a try. They launched a website, immediately received 18 orders, and set up shop with chef Matthew Potts at Cook County Saloon for a temporary pop-up engagement.

“Then the media came. They loved our story,” explains Jorgia. “Suddenly, we were in deep, \$30,000 of orders within 24 hours. We didn’t know how we were going to get there.”

The steep increase in demand posed a new challenge: To keep this food initiative going, they would need their own long-term commercial kitchen. Things looked uncertain for a while, but this was no longer simply a joyous distraction for the newcomers. Ukraine’s Kitchen now played a stabilizing role in their lives, providing the paycheques for their rent and much-needed work hours for their immigration status.

In their hour of need, Scott Kelly, owner of a kitchen supply store called Butchers & Packers Supplies, offered a helping hand. Ukraine’s Kitchen now officially sits on the right-hand side of this business on Fort Road. The stability allows Ukraine’s Kitchen to both fulfill catering orders and serve hot, fresh food to curious foodies who come in to shop for kitchen supplies.

A fresh taste of Ukraine

The food offered by Ukraine’s Kitchen closely reflects the journey of the newcomers who staff it. Forced to put their lives back together in a new land, they’ve strived to replicate the modern, authentic Ukrainian food experience, which is quite different from what most Albertans are used to. Many Ukrainian foods familiar to us are hybridized spins on older dishes, or mislabelled entirely. For example, varenyky, Janice clarified, is essentially what we commonly refer to as pierogi — an important distinction because pierogies are, in fact, Polish.

“[The staff] is always saying, ‘This one is like my grandmother’s recipe, but slightly different.’ Language evolves, and so does food,” Janice explains. She sees this as a key piece of their mission: cascading a refreshed understanding of Ukrainian culture through our region.

To help realize this, Janice and Jorgia sought out Edmonton chef Brad Smoliak,

who’s been lending a hand with the new location in a mentorship role. Even with his own Ukrainian background and decades of culinary experience, he says this experience has taught him a great deal about modern Ukrainian cuisine, and he sees a lot of potential in it.

“It’s going to be the new [Italian food], if you ask me,” says Smoliak. “The country itself has growing regions that are very different from west to east, north to south, and the foods incorporate that a lot more than I ever thought. It’s been very interesting for me to learn about.”

On that note, Janice and Jorgia have big things in mind for the future. They’re aiming to open a full sit-down dining location in June. If that proves to be a success, the possibilities are endless.

Whatever the outcome, Ukraine’s Kitchen functions as an important anchor for the rapidly growing Ukrainian community in Edmonton, as well as a vehicle for preserving and advancing their culture.

Janice remembers how important this mission is with a memory from their original pop-up at Cook County Saloon. Chef Matthew Potts, who is Indigenous, remarked how nice it was to hear the girls singing in the kitchen: “I don’t know my language because it was taken away from me... “I will do anything I can to make sure this language doesn’t get taken away from them.”

Hayden Koch is a writer based in Edmonton, Alberta. His lifelong passion for storytelling led to him studying Communications and Journalism at MacEwan University. Originally from southern Alberta, Hayden is a relative newcomer to this city—he enjoys connecting with the community through his writing.

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Ukraineskitchen.ca
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9 am to 5 pm and Saturday
11 am to 3 pm
Hot Lunch on Thursday,
Friday, Saturday 11
am to 2 pm

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LAST FRIDAY OF THE MONTH BINGO NIGHT 6PM

2ND SUNDAY OF THE MONTH GAME DAY 2PM

MAR 24 EASTER WORKSHOPS

MAR 31 EASTER HUNT

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AlbertaAve.org
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WestwoodCL.ca



Staff of Ukraine's Kitchen. From left to right: Svitlana Boyko, Yelyzaveta Brusevych, Yuilya Shabanova, Anna Kachmar, Anhelina Shkykava, and Olga Birchak. | Supplied



Edmonton chef Brad Smoliak provides mentorship at Ukraine's Kitchen. | Hayden Koch



The kitchen is in open view and you will see women singing in Ukrainian as they go about preparing the food. | Hayden Koch

SATURDAY, MARCH 16
6:30 PM

Sober
St. Patrick's Day
Folk Revival
OPEN MIC

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INDIGENOUS HAND DRUMMING CIRCLE
EVERY OTHER SUNDAY!
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One Drip Coffee & One Cookie Included

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Still here: Growing and adapting

A Message From The Publisher

KAREN MYKIETKA

The last six months have been challenging, but exciting. In September 2023, my message on the front page of the print issue was that the RCP could disappear without more community participation. The response was encouraging! Here are some comments:

The RCP...

- is the only newspaper I care about these days.
- makes me feel connected to the community.
- is such a great neighbourhood connector and info source.
- has taught me so much about my neighborhood.

We included a reader survey with the message. It was completed by 81 people and a number of people emailed me directly. In October 2023, 41 people attended our AGM and nine people put their names forward for the five available board positions. RCP now has a full board of nine directors. We took some time to regroup and then put out a 16-page winter issue in December.

Survey respondents prefer to receive news from RCP via a print edition (88 per cent) or eNewsletter (60 per cent). Facebook and Instagram were the most used social media platforms; however, as

a news organization ratcreek.org is now banned on Meta. Of the 81 respondents, 39 indicated an interest in contributing in some way. That's amazing! My profuse apologies for not following up with everyone who offered help. It takes time to reach out, connect, and onboard new people. I've been doing what I can in the limited time available.

The last six months have been full of change. Thankfully, I like change but it does take up a lot of time! We decided to move to a quarterly print schedule, migrated our website to a lower-cost provider, added an events page and welcomed a new editor. This issue, we expanded from 16 to 20 pages and have seven new writers! Brenda Fortin, who has been our designer since September 2021, is passing the reins to Chelsea Boos. We are planning for our summer issue to be 24 pages!

RCP has three goals: build community, encourage communication and increase capacity. In 2024, we are focusing on developing capacity. We are working on a team/mentoring leadership model. Everyone can contribute content, whether it is community info, events, articles, photos, illustrations, or just a story idea.

Everyone can contribute content, whether it is community info, events, articles, photos, illustrations, or just a story idea.

2024 PRINT SCHEDULE
Summer delivered by June 7
Fall delivered by Sept 1
Winter delivered by Dec 1

Someone with more experience can help someone with less.

RCP is working with partners to seek funding for a Community Ambassador Program that will recruit and train local residents to welcome and connect with both community members and visitors, to show them what makes north central Edmonton an incredible place to live, work, play, and shop.

We are launching a Substack. Substack is an online publishing platform with an email newsletter. It includes posts, podcasts and videos. You can have free and paid content, and the posts will be shareable on Facebook! Find us at ratcreekpress.substack.com. Subscribe to get news articles and posts sent to your email inbox! Paid subscribers will receive online content first, but all content will become free and be sent to all subscribers after some time.

So much to do and look forward to in 2024!

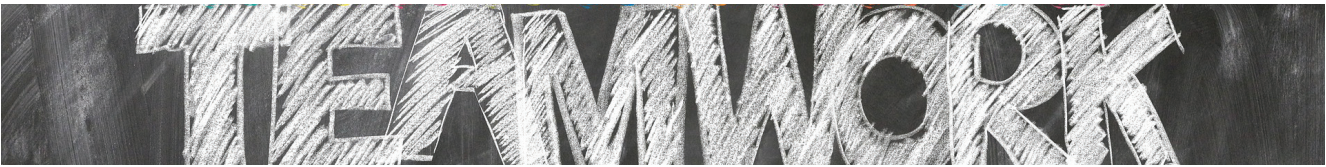
WELCOME!

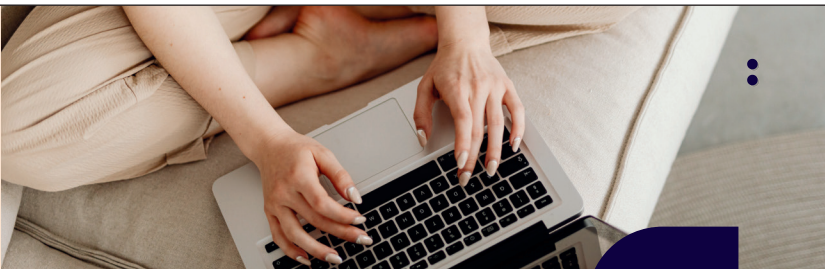
New Editor:

Laura Vega is a professional in communications and marketing with more than 15 years of experience. She migrated from Latin America to Edmonton almost a decade ago, and still gets to discover new neighbourhoods, activities, and kind people. Laura likes to spend time exploring River Valley trails with her dog, growing her plant collection, and enjoying live music and arts.

New Designer:

Chelsea Boos is passionate about art and design co-created with the community as a decorated cultural worker, arts non-profit administrator, and long-time neighbour. An author and documentarian of visual culture by the people for her column Back Words, she contributed to local and national fine art publications, as well as working on staff at Vue Weekly doing cover illustrations, graphics production, photo styling, and production design. Check out chelsea-boos.com for a portfolio of more writing, lens-based work, and illustration.





WE ARE SEEKING — CONTRIBUTORS

Contribute once or regularly! We welcome letters, profiles, reviews, opinions, news and more!

PITCH AN IDEA!

info@ratcreek.org

TAKE A SHOT.

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What’s your name?

Whether given or chosen, our names can have a profound impact on our lives and identities

RCP COLLABORATIVE

Many people go by chosen names or nicknames instead of their legal name. Sometimes parents call their children by one name, but friends or others use a different name. While people have to use their legal name on legal documents, many people use a variety of names and nicknames informally.

Our premier, who goes by Danielle Smith but whose legal name is Marlaina Danielle Smith, is bringing in a pronoun and name policy that requires parental consent for students aged 15 and under to use a different name or pronoun at school (and parental notification for students 16 and 17).

There is no shortage of important societal issues to be addressed — from homelessness, to inflation, to the drug poisoning epidemic — but our provincial government feels it's important to legislate the use of names and pronouns.

Why are names important for us?

Rusti L. Leahy

When my son was 10 and living with his dad, he uttered an ultimatum in a halting, teary voice that he couldn't see me anymore unless I allowed him to change his name from Justin Rathe Doering to Clayton W. Fox. I had chosen his name with great care. I grieved a bit. Anger floated to the surface too at his dad, who encouraged this change after studying the Kabalarian philosophy. Based on what the vibration of the new name was going to attract, he chose characteristics for our son. I do not know whether or not he chose these characteristics altruistically.

Joshua Mira Goldberg

I was born in 1971. My parents named me Mira, from the Russian mir, or “peace.” Both the Russian context and the meaning of the word were important to my parents, who were peace activists. My dad fled to Canada as a Vietnam War resister, and my mom and her parents were involved in the campaign for nuclear disarmament. Our family includes some Russian ancestors who fled anti-Jewish pogroms, and my mom grew up with communist parents who survived McCarthyism, so I think choosing a Russian name felt rebellious in that way too. When I went through gender transition in 1997, it was important to me to keep my old name as a way of honouring my parents and the first 26 years of my life. But I also wanted a masculine first name so people would not call me “she.” Our names are so deeply personal,

and I hope they will always be treated with respect.

Lillian Constance Brissenden

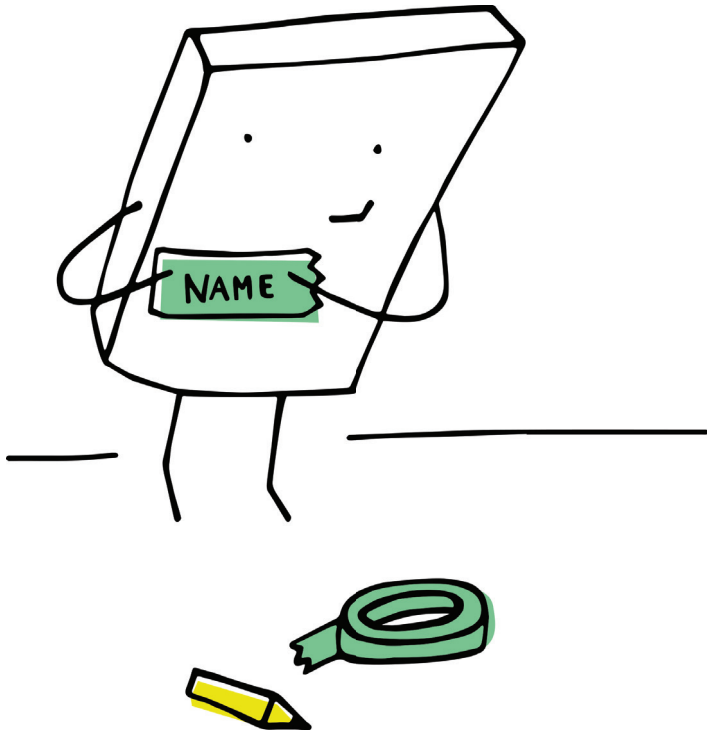
My official first and middle names are Lillian Constance. Named Lillian after my great-aunt Lil on my dad’s side. My mother thought aunt Lil might leave me some money when she died (she did not). The name Constance came from a character in a book my mom was reading at the time. I was Connie as a child; now, decidedly Constance. When I think of it, maybe I was destined to be a writer! My recommendation: Always call your child by the first official name and not the second name. It has created a lot of confusion for me over the years.

Victoria Stevens

There is power in a name. I have gone by many names over my life for various reasons. Dee is a family nickname; Victoria is my legal name, and Vickie was the nickname I chose to go by as a kid. A few names I go by: Maniac and Barb have a different beginning. I played roller derby for eight years. Most players choose a “derby name” they feel represents them. My chosen name was Barbicidal Maniac (I'm a hairstylist). The moment the roller skates went on, I became her. And she is powerful. As Barbicidal Maniac, I had the courage to face any fear I had. I found my voice and my strength, and I found myself. Even though I no longer play, I carry that strength with me. My best friend’s kids still call me Maniac and more than a few people from those days still call me Barb. Every time I hear them, I am reminded of the power that name gave and continues to give me to this day. The power in names is why I am so supportive of anyone who wants to change their name to something that they feel fits them best. No one should need permission to do so.

Summer Lyons

I go by Summer, but it would appear that this changes with the seasons. Winter, Fall, Spring, I might as well have four names at this point. As for the story behind my name... Well, it has little to do with my date of birth. The real reason was because my mother apparently used it as her so-called ‘street name’ (with her friends being the other seasons). With that added context, it is not surprising to see why others may want to go by another name. Even though I am fine with this one, I’m sure other people have their reasons.



Pixabay

Aydan Dunnigan-Vickruck

I got my name out of a closet. I had been looking for a new first name. My namesake was a pervert who had molested us. Not that my parents knew, of course, and I didn't become aware of the offenses either until deep into therapy as an adult. A good reason for a name change. Back to the closet. I was discussing my dilemma with my wife Patricia. She muttered into her wardrobe, “I like Adrien.” I heard “Aidan” and thought,

“Sounds good.” A little research after the fact supported my selective hearing. Aidan was the Celtic saint of social workers, whose claim to fame was the miraculous refill of a leaky keg of beer for his parched parishioners. All of those particulars fit me perfectly. So, with a spelling variant suggested by my numerologist, Aydan stuck. Soon after, Aidan with its various spellings became the most popular children's name for several years. I only claim partial credit.

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Magpies: friends and tricksters

Magpies are a staple in Edmonton communities and our stories

CONSTANCE BRISSENDEN

When you mention their name in Edmonton, some people will react with a smile and others will roll their eyes in frustration. Love ‘em or hate ‘em, magpies are a constant presence in Alberta.

“Magpies have desirable as well as undesirable qualities,” observes Pat Marklevitz, a professional biologist and avid birder. “Out in rural Alberta, they’re not as numerous. Cities like Edmonton suit them. They are opportunistic feeders and there’s lots to eat here.”

On the one hand, magpies are good — they eat insects, garbage, and carrion (dead animals). On the other, they attack and kill other animals, and will dive-bomb humans and animals to protect their chicks. Flocks of magpies are known as “tidings.”

One thing is certain: Magpies are among the most intelligent birds we have. Their breeding season starts in March, but you can observe their fascinating behaviours year-round. Members of the crow family (Corvidae), they can mimic human speech, invent tools, and play tricks on other magpies. They can also play tricks on humans.

Karen Mykietka, publisher at the Rat Creek Press, laughs at one strange encounter with the multi-coloured bird. Working in her office, she heard a repeated *tap, tap*, from somewhere in the Alberta Avenue Community Centre.



Top: A one-legged magpie was a memorable visitor to Don Reykdal's carport feeder. | Don Reykdal
Circle: Lucky magpies get leftovers from Don Reykdal, known as the BBQ King. | Supplied.



Stepping into the lobby, she searched for the source of the sound. With nothing evident, she returned to work. “There it was again,” Mykietka recalls. Another search ensued. Finally, she spotted a magpie energetically tapping at a roof window overlooking the lobby. She went back to work.

Tap, tap. The sound came again. Only this time, the same bird was tapping on the window of the front door. “I think if

I had opened the door, the magpie would have waltzed in,” says Mykietka.

Years ago, I was a newcomer to Alberta and lived near High Prairie in a log house. The snow had fallen for several weeks, piling up in the backyard at the edge of a forest. A weary moose made its way, lifting its long legs across the snowbanks. Then it flopped down in a sunny spot and was soon snoozing. Within minutes, a magpie flew down to the big beast’s back. It began to peck away

at annoying ticks on the moose. “Good for you,” I thought. I couldn’t help but praise the bird.

Here in Edmonton, Don Reykdal got to know one magpie well over a five-year period. The bird stood out, with only one leg and a left wing that hung down. Reykdal shared his story one Tuesday with the seniors group at the Alberta Avenue Community Centre. Reykdal, creator of the website BBQ Secrets (bbqsecrets.ca) and known as the Barbecue King locally and internationally, shares leftover food with magpies. He kept seeing the injured bird and started taking photos and videos. “That magpie really was a survivor,” recounted Reykdal. “I felt good that I helped him get by.”

Not all magpies form bonds with humans. Bronwen Thompson is the facility coordinator of both Eastwood and Parkdale-Cromdale (PCCL) community halls. She recalls saving her cat, Shiloh, from a magpie once. More recently, she arrived for work at PCCL to be confronted by a magpie at the entrance. “I looked right at it, and said hello,” recalls Thompson. “It didn’t give me a second glance. Just flew up and away.”

That’s how it works sometimes. Not every magpie has a story to share.

Constance Brissenden is an experienced presenter, writer, editor, and historian living in Cromdale. She is co-author of nine award-winning books by Cree author Larry Loyie (1933-2016), in addition to more than 20 books of history and travel.

EASTER EGG HUNT & SLEIGH RIDE

SATURDAY MARCH 30

11:00-11:30 TODDLER & BABY HUNT

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SLEIGH RIDES 11:00 TO 1:00

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Don't worry, he's friendly!

Owners can't read the minds of their off-leash dogs

JENIPHER LAUGHTON

Early this year, a dog ran up and jumped on me while I was on a walk, just as its owner called out, "Don't worry, he's friendly!"

Several weeks ago, a colleague was heading to a meeting when a dog blocked her path and refused to let her pass. When she asked the owner to recall the dog, the person responded with hostility. And last year, a close friend was bitten while trying to protect her dog from another one that had gotten out of its house.

The common thread between these events is that all three dogs were off leash in areas where they were required to be on leash. Two-thirds of the dogs had poor recall and wouldn't return to their owners on command.

The City of Edmonton states that dogs "are not allowed to be loose unless they are on your property or in a designated off-leash area." Violations to the bylaw come with a \$100 price tag.

There will always be instances in our city where individuals accidentally or willfully ignore bylaws. When it comes to unleashed dogs, the consequences can range from mild annoyance to a hospital visit. In order to lessen the frequency and severity of such events, it's necessary to have both knowledge of city bylaws and appropriate training

for one's dog.

Local dog trainer Marty Springstead also teaches mushing and skijoring in the river valley. One of the key things, he advises, is to know your dog and its habits and quirks.

"If you're looking to get a dog, you need to be honest with yourself," says Springstead. "What is your activity level? Does your chosen dog match you and your lifestyle?" He points out that, just like people, dogs possess a myriad of personalities: some are energetic, others are calm; some are super friendly, and others just want to be left in peace.

Springstead recommends that training starts with a younger dog, and smaller in the case of larger breeds. "As with children, training that starts with younger dogs will provide better learning results," he explains. "If one type of training doesn't work, then try another technique. Dogs, like people, also have different learning styles."

If the cost of training is prohibitive, there are good online resources to help and guide owners. Springstead also suggests that if a dog isn't good at sitting or staying, something like agility training or "learning through play" could be more beneficial than stereotypical "obedience" training.

An energetic dog can use up energy while passively learning other skills,



Dog owners are required to have their dogs on leash at all times unless on their own property or in a designated off-leash area. | Canva

such as recall. This could lower the likelihood of altercations in the future if they are off leash or in a dangerous situation. With this kind of training, there's less possibility of a disturbing interaction with an individual — or another pet — who doesn't like dogs or doesn't wish to engage with one.

Whether you're looking at getting a dog, or already have one, it's important

to understand their behaviours. Take the time to learn how to manage your pet's needs for both its benefit and the safety of your community: even friendly dogs can be unpredictable.

Jenipher Laughton is a graduate student who enjoys aerial sports (hoop, pole, and silks) and napping with her two cats.

UPCOMING
EVENTS

ALBERTA
AVENUE
COMMUNITY
LEAGUE

APR 4

STORYTELLING WITH KATHY JESSUP
7:00 - 8:00 pm
A wonderful opportunity for youth, children and their families, presented by Young Alberta Book Society!

BID & SIP FUNDRAISER

7:00pm

APR 27

Our annual fundraiser is back for it's 3rd year! Join us for wine tasting, appetizers, and our silent auction. **Tickets: \$40**

MEMBERS PUB NIGHTS
7:00pm
An evening for members, neighbours and invited guests to gather for an evening of socializing and at the community league. Check website for event details.

Upcoming dates:
April 13th May 11th June 15th

MORE INFO:

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SHE SAVED MY LIFE

Edmonton resident Dawn had been experiencing the painful side effects of peripheral neuropathy, "My feet and legs were extremely painful and my doctor told me there was nothing they could do. That I would have to take gabapentin for the rest of my life." Then she met Edmonton's very own Acupuncturist, Dr. Melanie Morrill Ac.



Peripheral neuropathy is the pain, discomfort and numbness caused by nerve damage to the peripheral nervous system. Dawn explained that daily tasks like opening doors and using the washroom were overwhelmingly painful.

"How can you live for the next 30 years when you don't even want to get out of bed to do the simple things?"

She was experiencing the burning, numbness, tingling, and sharp pains that those suffering from peripheral neuropathy often describe **"The way that I would describe it, it's the equivalent to walking on glass."** Dawn hadn't worn socks in five years and was wearing shoes two sizes too big so that nothing would "touch" her feet.

Unfortunately, Dawn's story is all too familiar for the over one million people in Canada suffering from peripheral neuropathy.

If you're unfortunate enough to be facing the same disheartening prognosis you're not sleeping at night because of the burning in your feet. You have difficulty walking, shopping, or doing any activity for more than 30 minutes because of the pain. Your's struggling with balance and living in fear that you might fall. Your doctor told you to, "just live with the pain" and you are taking medications that just aren't working or have uncomfortable side effects.

Fortunately, four months ago Dawn read an article about Dr. Melanie Morrill Ac. and the work she was doing to treat those suffering from peripheral neuropathy without invasive surgery or medication.

Doctor of Acupuncture, Dr. Melanie Morrill Ac. founder of Accessible Acupuncture in Edmonton, AB, is using the time-tested science of acupuncture and technology originally developed by NASA that assists in increasing blood flow and expediting recovery and healing to treat this debilitating disease.

"Now when I go to bed at night I don't have those shooting pains. I don't have the burning sensation. I don't have pain coming up my legs,"

Dawn enthusiastically describes life after receiving Melanie's treatments.

"I can wear socks and shoes!"

Dawn and her sister now operate a successful dog-walking business, sometimes covering 5 kilometres a day.

"Its' life-altering. As far as I'm concerned Melanie saved my life!"



Dr. Melanie Morrill Ac. has been helping the senior community for over five years using the most cutting-edge and innovative integrative medicine, with a special interest in chronic pain and helping people who have been deemed 'hopeless' or 'untreatable', she consistently generates unparalleled results.

What was once a missing link in senior health care is now easily accessible to the residents of the greater Edmonton area.

If you have been missing too many tee times because of your pain or you've passed on dancing because you're afraid of calling it's time to call Dr. Melanie Morrill Ac and the staff at Accessible Acupuncture.

It's time you let your golden years BE GOLDEN!

Accessible Acupuncture is now accepting new patients but only for a limited time. In an effort to protect her patients, both current and future, she has made the difficult decision to limit the number of new patients. Only 10 new neuropathy patients will be accepted each month.

Call 587-879-7122 now to schedule your consultation.

Peripheral Neuropathy?
SCHEDULE a consultation TODAY
CALL 587-879-7122

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600, 11010 101 st NW Edmonton, AB
AccessibleAcupuncture.ca

Bingo supports Edmonton charities

Volunteers and community leagues make all the difference in fundraising

CONSTANCE BRISSENDEN

When I walk into the Fort Road Bingo Hall, it feels like I'm coming home.

Not because I'm a bingo player, but because I've volunteered for Parkdale Cromdale Community League for the past four years as its gaming coordinator. I've been to the Fort Road Bingo hall many times as a volunteer.

I've learned a lot. Most importantly, I've learned that Edmonton bingos are vital to raising funds for charities like Parkdale Cromdale, Eastwood, Gold Bar, Glengarry, and Fraser community leagues. At the annual meeting last fall, 42 out of the 45 clubs that are members of Fort Road Bingo were present.

Bingos fall under the scrutiny of Alberta Gaming, Liquor & Cannabis. AGLC is serious about responsibility, structure, rules, and regulations. Fort Road Bingo Association clubs are owners of the business. The number of clubs at Fort Road is restricted. No new charity can sign on unless one of the current clubs drops out.

Hundreds of thousands of dollars are distributed annually. The money to eligible charitable or religious organizations is earmarked for four criteria: relief of poverty, advancement of education, advancement of religion, and other purposes beneficial to the community. Without bingo money, many of the charities would not survive.

I've met some special people at bingo. Beyond the world of Bonanzas, Frenzy, and Flip, permanent staff at Fort Road Bingo work hard. They want the clubs to benefit.



Inside the cage, Troy Girard (left), manager of bingo operations, advises Parkdale Cromdale Community League volunteers Bronwen Thompson and Kevin Blakeman. | Constance Brissenden

Dave Herwander is one of Edmonton's angels who gladly volunteer for charity events on an as-needed basis. The former trucker can often be found at Fort Road Bingo filling in for a missing club volunteer. "I would rather be here as a volunteer than sitting at home doing nothing," he explains.

Herwander's volunteering career is deep, with a commitment to many clubs. He continues an involvement that began when his wife, Shirley, was alive and the two worked together at bingos.

"I enjoy the people I meet. I know that I am needed," he adds. "The

clubs do good things in our communities, especially for youth. That's important to me."

Herwander is appreciated by bingo staff. His in-depth knowledge of procedures helps struggling volunteers learn the ropes.

Volunteers at Fort Road Bingo put in a five-hour shift. In the mornings they arrive by 10:15; afternoon shifts start at 4:15. Five volunteers must show up for each shift. At other bingo halls in Edmonton, the number of volunteers can be as high as 15 people per shift.

Not showing up to a Fort Road shift means a penalty of \$100 per missing

person. The money adds up. Last year, around \$10,000 was deducted from the annual charitable contribution. The money collected from fines in 2023/24 will support the hall's concession with its tasty menu.

Dan Malainey, general manager for the Fort Road board, weathered the hall's difficult COVID-19 months. He was relieved that the hall's intake was up by 30 per cent in the first four months of 2023. "Our aim is to raise \$1.7 million for charity in 2024," says Malainey.

As the cry of "Bingo!" echoes through the hall, those of us volunteering in the office area — known as the cage — prepare to pay out the winner. But the biggest winner of all is the charity club providing volunteers that day.

Constance Brissenden is an experienced presenter, writer, editor, and historian living in Cromdale. She is co-author of nine award-winning books by Cree author Larry Loyie (1933-2016), in addition to more than 20 books of history and travel.

WANT TO VOLUNTEER FOR BINGO?

Parkdale-
gaming@parkdalecromdale.org

Eastwood-
info@eastwoodhub.org

Delton-
bingo@deltoncommunity.com

SPRUCE AVENUE COMMUNITY LEAGUE

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EASTER MARKET

MARCH 31ST 1:00PM

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MAY 6TH - 7:00PM

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Delton Outdoor Soccer Registration

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Spring Craft and Garage Sale
Delton Community League
12325-88 Street
Saturday, April 13/24
10am to 4pm

Interested in becoming a vendor?
Contact: Janet @
pastpresident@deltoncommunity.com

DON'T miss it!

Spark! Youth Camp

For ages 8-14, July 15-26 @ Alberta Avenue CL
Cost \$500. Financial aid available

Unleash your creative potential through the arts to create an original short film for the whole family. More: albertaave.org

Teachings that open hearts and minds

Communities of the Medicine Wheel is part of an anti-racism series

GAIL SILVIUS

Thirty people gathered in February to learn and participate in teachings from the Medicine Wheel. The workshop was led by Bent Arrow Traditional Healing Society, in partnership with Alberta Avenue Community League and Edmonton Federation of Community Leagues (EFCL).

The event was led by cultural connectors Leslie Ross and Bernard Dumas, who work with families throughout Edmonton. Dumas describes himself as *oskâpêwis* (a Cree word for Elder's Helper at ceremonies). They're both part of the Practise as Ceremony team.

Right from the start, the two connectors put everyone at ease. They knew how to connect with participants at whatever level was comfortable, showing respect for differing models of belief. They explained the protocol, which included the gift of tobacco from participant Christine Turrene to them. At all stages of the presentation, there was an emphasis on connection and how we are all humans sharing this planet.

Before the smudge, Ross explained that it was a personal choice whether or not to join in, which established a comfort level. The opening prayer, led by Terry Aleck (who introduced himself as Coyote), came next.

After the smudge and prayer, we were taught about the Medicine Wheel and its significance in Indigenous cultures. The connectors were careful to point out that each First Nation has their own teachings and nuances. They taught what they knew from their own perspective and cultural practices.

From the perspectives of spiritual, emotional,

physical, and mental well-being, the participants used a diagram of the Medicine Wheel to reflect on their lives. The focus was on how their lives were balanced or imbalanced.

"Imbalance is normal," said Ross, bringing relief to those of us whose results with the Medicine Wheel diagram seemed alarmingly skewed! She also emphasized that each of us has this knowledge of balance within. The exercise was another way to learn more about ourselves.

We were invited to sit in a sharing circle. Ross compared this to a tipi where energy flows and no one person sits "above" another. A stone was passed from speaker to speaker, giving each person a chance to share and, just as importantly, to be heard.

Participant Vernelle Halisheff reflected on the Medicine Wheel and its representation of the human race, saying that it's vital that we find a place of equality among races. All colours of the wheel were represented by the participants at the workshop.

Others spoke about using this teaching tool to monitor self-care and set realistic goals. One person shared that the exercise gave her the knowledge that she could do one thing each day to address imbalance, and it empowered her. Another spoke about her children, her role as a mother and teacher, and the importance of sharing knowledge with the next generation.

Many participants expressed their gratitude for the workshop as a step toward reconciliation.

Gail is recently retired and enjoys exploring her Delton neighbourhood.



Leslie Ross, cultural connector. | Gail Silvius

At all stages of the presentation, there was an emphasis on connection and how we are all humans sharing this planet.

JOIN THE EFCL'S ANTI-RACISM SERIES
The next event at Alberta Avenue Community League is Saturday, April 20. This workshop, part of the Anti-Oppression Learning Curve, is called "Are you really anti-racist?". It will be led by the organization Sisters Dialogue, founded by Muslim women to foster bridge-building with Indigenous and other racialized communities. Sign up for the event at efcl.org

Seasonal ingredients, but at what cost?

Twyla Campbell talks about seasonal eating and the food affordability crisis

MYAH JUNEAU

The Edmonton Downtown Farmers Market (previously located at 10305 97 Street) hosted over 60 small farms and food businesses. Canadian author and former CBC Edmonton AM's restaurant reviewer Twyla Campbell was among those present at the market last fall to celebrate the launch of her latest cookbook, *PRAIRIE*, which focuses on seasonal eating — a type of cuisine that uses only seasonal ingredients and limits food waste. Seasonal eating supports a nutritious diet favouring in-season ingredients from local vendors and farmers.

Campbell believes Albertans are being forced to compromise their diet in order to afford necessities such as shelter and utilities.

"A lot of people will buy cheaper food so that they can afford their rent," she says. "It comes down to dollars and cents."

Canadians are feeling the impact of inflation more than ever — and their



Author Twyla Campbell believes small-scale farmers need more consumer and government support to maintain a sustainable business for themselves and their communities. | Myah Juneau

eating habits are proof. Due to the increase in food pricing, food quality is among the priorities people are cutting back on in 2024. According to Food Banks Alberta, one in five Albertans is experiencing food insecurity caused by growing costs of living and nutrition.

Campbell adds that Western Canadians

can sustainably avoid high grocery prices by supporting local, small-scale farmers and maintaining a seasonal-based diet. But she recognizes that affording in-season foods isn't always realistic for all.

"People just gotta do what they gotta do, and that's survival," says Campbell, iterating the importance of not judging or criticizing others' food habits.

Looking for affordable, seasonal options?

- You can purchase Twyla Campbell and Dan Clapson's *PRAIRIE* in local bookstores or online and learn more about seasonal eating.
- If you are struggling with groceries, there are ways to get support. Contact the Edmonton Food Bank online (edmontonsfoodbank.com) or call 780-425-2133.

Myah Juneau is a journalist and photographer in Edmonton, Alberta. Aside from writing, Myah enjoys reading and playing hockey.

THE ANTI-OPPRESSION LEARNING CURVE

Are you really anti-racist?

A hands-on workshop hosted by Alberta Avenue Community League and facilitated by Sisters Dialogue.

April 20, 2024, 2-5pm
Alberta Avenue Community League
9210 118 Avenue, Edmonton

SISTERS DIALOGUE





Free! Tickets: sisters-dialogue-alberta-ave.eventbrite.ca

Support mental health care in Alberta

The province must make it easier to access professional help

FRANKI HARROGATE

What does mental health mean in general, to you specifically, and to your community?

According to the World Health Organization, “Mental health is a state of mental well-being that enables people to cope with the stresses of life, realize their abilities, learn well and work well, and contribute to their community. It is an integral component of health and well-being that underpins our individual and collective abilities to make decisions, build relationships and shape the world we live in. Mental health is a basic human right. And it is crucial to personal, community and socio-economic development.”

Most of us are unclear about the different types of mental health services on offer. For example, what is the difference between a psychologist, a therapist, and a counsellor?

Let’s start with psychologists. They are professionals regulated by provincial and territorial bodies, specializing in mental health assessment, diagnosis, treatment, and consultation. Educational requirements include four years as an undergraduate, followed by up to six years in a specialized graduate or doctoral program. They must also complete supervised clinical practice hours, ethics exams, and a national licensing examination.

Next, we have therapists. These clinicians include a variety of practitioners, such as social workers, family therapists, and those with graduate or doctoral degrees in psychology. They generally engage in long-term work, treating ongoing mental health concerns and symptom management. Some (but not all) are registered with and regulated by the Canadian Counselling & Psychotherapy Association.

Finally, we have counsellors. Like therapists, counsellors are not currently required to register with a professional regulatory college. They may have an undergraduate degree and/or a certificate or diploma in counselling. Counsellors tend to focus on solutions such as estab-

lishing and meeting specific treatment goals. Sessions are usually short-term, responding to specific life challenges and their impact on an individual. Examples include career counsellors, addictions counsellors, and grief counsellors. Some (but not all) are regulated by the Canadian Counselling & Psychotherapy Association.

Some mental health services are available under the public system; however,



Therapy is a useful tool to improve mental health; unfortunately, not everyone can easily access it. | Pixabay

most Albertans have difficulty finding appropriate therapeutic services. Most treatment takes place in private facilities, creating an immediate financial barrier for those seeking services. If you do get a referral through a Primary Care Network (PCN) via Alberta Health Services, you may still end up on a wait list. Stephen Jay Gould, an American paleontologist, evolutionary biologist, and science historian, eloquently wrote, “I am, somehow, less interested in the weight and convolutions of Einstein’s brain than in the near certainty that people of equal talent

have lived and died in cotton fields and sweatshops.”

This brings us back to well-being. Indian philosopher Jiddu Krishnamurti provided food for thought when he said, “It is no measure of health to be well-adjusted to a profoundly sick society.”

Well-being is more than how we feel about ourselves, our lives, and our ability to navigate society and engage in work or other (paid or unpaid) labour. Neither the federal nor provincial governments have committed to robust, consistent funding of mental health services.



support programs to beef up law enforcement budgets. This tells us something about the priorities of both governments and policing as an institution, as I’ve never once needed a gun to respond to anyone in crisis.

It can take years for a mental health professional to be deemed competent to practise independently, and the need to understand and abide by ethical obligations is central to this expertise. The minimum requirement for becoming a police officer is completion of high school, yet police are deemed appropriate emergency responders for mental health crises (often to the detriment of the person in distress). I will explore this dynamic further in another part of this series.

Franki Harrogate is a non-binary Registered Provisional Psychologist who seeks to interrogate and trouble the current frameworks connected to both perceptions of mental health and delivery of mental health services. They reside in Edmonton and enjoy wandering around the Rat Creek green spaces as well as dreaming of and working toward a world built on equity and justice.

WANT TO SUPPORT MENTAL HEALTH?

- Don’t call the police on people experiencing a mental health crisis. Call 211 and press 3 for the 24/7 Crisis Diversion Team.
- Pay for or contribute to someone’s therapy costs, especially marginalized people.
- Write your MLA and Minister of Health asking for more funding for mental health.
- Vote for governments that support mental health funding.

CONNECTING THOSE IN CRISIS
TO THE SUPPORTS THEY NEED

SAFETY FOR ALL
COMPASSION FOR ALL

WHEN YOU SEE
SOMEONE
IN DISTRESS

#JUSTCALL211+PRESS 3



CRISIS
DIVERSION
TEAM

Up Coming Events at Elmwood Park!

March 30 - Easter Egg hunt & Sleigh Ride

April 28 - Free Cupcake decorating

May 4 - Big Bin Event

June 22 - Community Wide Garage Sale

July 6 - Muttstock Festival

**September 6 - Oktoberfest & AGM
(presidential elections!)**



ALBERTA AVENUE COMMUNITY LEAGUE

Annual General Meeting

6 April 2024
2:00 pm
9210 118 Ave

Vote
Participate on a Committee
Join the Board
Volunteer

BE THE COMMUNITY



PARKDALE CROMDALE COMMUNITY LEAGUE 2024 AGM

THURSDAY MAY 30 6:30PM - 9:30PM
Meeting starts at 7pm.
Refreshments will be provided.
Open to all residents living in
Parkdale and Cromdale.

Must be a registered member to
vote.

Various Board positions up for
election - come get involved!

Scan the QR code for more info!



Parkdale Cromdale
Community League



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