

Rat Creek Press

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



BY THE COMMUNITY—FOR THE COMMUNITY

SUMMER 2025

Join this collective art story

A decade of art, community, and colour in the Kinnaird Ravine



Walking along the trail to enjoy the murals. Enter by way of Sheriff Robertson Park. | Photo by Constance Brissenden

effort is reviving not just the murals, but the spirit of the space itself.

The KinnArt Ravine Mural Project thrives because of the passion of volunteers, artists, and supporters. Each mural is painted at the Parkdale-Cromdale Community League, then carefully transported and installed along the ravine's retaining walls, a true labour of love and community.

"To keep something like this going is a major accomplishment," says Chris Ford, president of the Free Arts Edmonton board. "Funding is so tenuous. So many projects die, but ours lives on."

What does Edmonton get in return? A splash of colour, a spark of joy, and a sense of collective pride. "Visitors say, 'Yes, we are an amazing city, doing amazing things,'" observes Ford.

Sebastian Barrera adds a sincere invitation: "Join us to be part of the next chapter in this beautiful, collective story."

Free Arts Edmonton (formerly CreArt) has offered free arts programming to youth since 2012, from theatre to music, dance, and film. The KinnArt Ravine Mural Project is another way that art is empowering individuals, building community, and transforming public spaces

CONSTANCE BRISSENDEN

This year marks a joyful milestone for one of Edmonton's most cherished community art initiatives — the 10th anniversary of Free Arts Edmonton's KinnArt Ravine Mural Project.

What began in 2015 with just a few panels of painted plywood has grown into a vibrant, ever-evolving outdoor gallery nestled in the heart of the city. Thanks to ongoing support from the City of Edmonton, Parks Edmonton, Parkdale-Cromdale Community League, and the Edmonton Arts Council, this grassroots project has flourished — and 2025 will see its most exciting chapter yet: All 62 murals will be refreshed and renewed.

No experience required

From the end of May through September, volunteers will be painting every Saturday and Sunday from 10 am to 1 pm at Parkdale-Cromdale Community League. Everyone is welcome to be part of it. Whether you are a long-time resident,

a newcomer, a curious passerby, or a passionate artist, this project is for you.

Coordinators warmly invite:

- Families looking for a fun and meaningful weekend activity
- Indigenous artists and community members
- Immigrants and newcomers eager to connect and create
- Professional artists and dedicated hobbyists
- The 2SLGBTQIA+ community
- People of all gender identities and expressions
- And anyone who believes in the power of art to bring people together

"This is more than a mural project," says Sebastian Barrera, the project's coordinator. "It's a celebration of diversity, inclusion, and shared stories."

The murals wind through Kinnaird Ravine between Sheriff Robertson Park and the North Saskatchewan River,

offering bursts of colour and imagination at every turn. Look for everything from foxes and florals, to poetry, angels and apes — all painted by local hands and hearts. Access to the murals is by way of the public path into the forest from Sheriff Robertson Park at 82 Street and 111 Avenue.

"This is not public art — this is art made by the public," adds Barrera. "Artists of all ages and walks of life are welcome. No experience is required, just a love of creativity and community."

A stroll through the ravine is more than a walk: it's a journey through stories, symbols, and shared humanity. One visitor reflected, "I enjoy looking at the murals and trying to interpret them. I see them as a statement on humanity."

Although new murals are added every year, a decade of weather and wear has left its mark. Happily, this full restoration

"This is more than a mural project," says Sebastian Barrera, the project's coordinator. "It's a celebration of diversity, inclusion, and shared stories."

Want to support the project?
Call 587-879-7738 or send an e-transfer to creartedmonton@gmail.com.
Sign up on the website and access more info: www.free-artsociety.org



arts on the ave

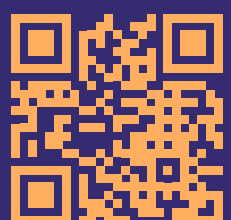
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More photos from a fun day out for community and family | Photos by Constance Brissenden

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ABOUT US
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Build Community, Encourage Communication, Increase Capacity.

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

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DELIVERY
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Summer 2025

Bronwen Thompson has been a resident of Eastwood for nearly 19 years. Her first career was in small town journalism and she is excited to go back to her roots.

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.

Derek Quittenton, a former financial planner, retired, sold his practice, bought a big honking touring motorcycle, and hit the road! Six years and 160,000 km later, all in Canada and a snippet in Alaska, he has seen this land.

Jacob Ulickij is a writer and craft beer professional living on Alberta Avenue with his three talkative chickens.

Julie McCrea is a 12 year resident of Alberta Avenue, and spent five years serving on the league board where she continues to help as an event volunteer. What free time she has between her work as an adult

educator at NAIT and the Newcomer Centre is spent gardening, reading, and as a foster mom for rescued dogs.

Karen Mykietka is a long-time resident who has poured her heart and soul into building community in the Alberta Avenue District. She lived in Eastwood, then Alberta Avenue, and now Parkdale.

Mikayla Pohl is a Journalism and Professional Communication student at MacEwan University. She also enjoys event videography and photography.

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

Sherridon Routley is a friend of the community who enjoys urban exploring every corner of the city by bicycle. Although he had previously owned a house south of the RCP district and understands the challenges of the area, he now resides in East Glenora.

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End of an era

Spruce Avenue School to be replaced under Alberta’s school accelerator program

MIKAYLA POHL

97-year-old life of Spruce Avenue School is coming to an end. After serving students for decades and acting as a heritage landmark for many residents, the building is set to face demolition as part of the Government of Alberta’s new school accelerator program.

On May 14, Edmonton Public Schools hosted an informational session where they told residents that a new school will be built, replacing Spruce Avenue School located on 114 Avenue and 102 Street. Despite the school board’s recent information session, some community members say they were left out of the planning process and their wishes to preserve the school were not considered.

Diana Sapozhnikov, president of the Spruce Avenue Community League, says, “They just ignored all of our attempts to be heard and to be part of the process.”

The league expressed their interest in preserving the 1928 school building to the public school board in 2022 and again this year. They were informed that many decisions regarding the school’s future had already been made.

“Our interest was in preserving the current building and modernizing it,” says Sapozhnikov. “It seems like the conversation is well past it.”

Nearly a century old, the school holds significant heritage value for many in the community. “It’s a landmark in the neighbourhood. It’s our namesake,” says Liz Hill, civics director of the community league.

Kim Smith, communications consultant with the Edmonton Public School Board (EPSB), says the board has had the Spruce Avenue School project in its capital plans for almost two decades, aiming to address the school’s accessibility challenges and aging infrastructure while ensuring students have access to modern, high-quality learning spaces.

“Given the age and condition of the current Spruce Avenue School building, and the least impact on students during construction, the Division supports a school replacement,” she says.

Smith cites the EPSB’s Three-Year Capital Plan as a resource for the public. She says they submitted these plans to the Government of Alberta, which decided what projects would be funded.



Spruce Avenue School, located on 114 Avenue and 102 Street, was built in 1928. The old red brick building holds historic significance for many in the community | Mikayla Pohl

While the design phase is underway for the new school, Smith emphasizes that the EPSB is also mindful of the school’s legacy.

“The Division is exploring how we can honour the history and reflect the identity of the school community and

the neighbourhood in the new designs,” Smith says.

Any information collected from the community will be shared with the provincial government during the design process, she adds.

Spruce Avenue is one of many schools a part of the School Construction Accelerator Program. The government has committed \$8.6 billion to the program, which aims to create more than 200,000 new or modernized student spaces.

During the information session, Kim Holowatuk, a representative from EPSB, explained that the decision to replace rather than modernize the school was based on a feasibility study conducted during the pre-planning phase. She noted that the new school would improve learning spaces and accommodate up to 605 students — an increase from the original school’s capacity of 450. The school is currently in the design phase and is expected to be built by 2028.

A statement on the accelerator program by Alberta Premier Danielle Smith says that, as Alberta’s population is rapidly growing, the government is taking action by funding and building the schools needed to support the province’s expanding communities.

“As we build, we’re asking school boards and municipalities to work with us so we can get shovels in the ground as quickly as possible,” the statement reads.

The public has shared their feedback on the project through Edmonton Public Schools’ Spruce Avenue School replacement survey, which was open until May 28.



The school serves students from grades 7 to 9, with a current capacity of 450 students. The replacement school will have a capacity of 605 students | Mikayla Pohl



The new school will be built in the soccer fields behind the current building and is set to be finished by 2028 | Mikayla Pohl

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One street, two visions

Some say the lanes mean safer streets, others fear lost parking



On 96 Street, a bike lane will be built from 119 Avenue to 124 Avenue, with permanent parking removed on the east side and minor removals on the west side. | Mikayla Pohl

MIKAYLA POHL

The City of Edmonton is expanding transit in the Delton and Alberta Avenue areas, with proposed bike lanes and plans to reduce parking, sparking mixed reactions within the community.

The expansion, based on the city’s Bike Plan, includes adding a protected bike lane on 96 Street between 119 Avenue and 124 Avenue and removing parking along 92 Street, 96 Street, and 124 Avenue. These changes are part of a larger \$100 million network expansion plan scheduled for completion by 2026.

The City says the Active Transportation Network Expansion is intended to improve access for Edmontonians and create a system that meets both current and future needs.

While the city sees the expansion as a step forward, some residents see it differently. Thomas Ogonoski, a senior living on 96 Street, says losing street parking would make day-to-day life harder for his multi-person household.

He questions where people will park going forward. “There’s just not enough room for everybody,” he adds.

When he received the City’s letter about the new infrastructure plans, he wished there had been better communication and more effort to involve residents in the decision-making process.

“It was too late for us to do any-

thing about it,” Ogonoski says.

Feelings of helplessness turned into action for some. Another Delton resident, Jeremiah Rawling, launched a petition opposing the bike network expansion. Rawling collected hundreds of signatures from community members in protest of the city’s plans.

“The people have spoken,” he says. “We expect our voices and our signatures to count.”

In addition to the petition, two community meetings were held for Delton and Alberta Avenue residents to discuss the proposed transit changes. Residents at the meetings voted to contact the provincial government for support. Rawling later reached out to the Minister of Municipal Affairs, Dan Williams, on behalf of the group.

“It’s so ridiculous that the only thing we can do is beg the province for help,” he says.

Devin Dreesen, Minister of Transportation and Economic Corridors, took to the social media platform, X, to express his concerns over planned bike lanes on 132 Avenue. He asked the City of Edmonton to stop building bike lanes at the expense of driving lanes.

“Albertans expect their tax dollars to build and expand infrastructure – not block and reduce it,” he said.

Amid the backlash, there’s also strong support. Many residents say the bike lanes offer several benefits to the community, including creating safer, more active, and better-connect-

ed streets.

Sasha Stanojevic, Alberta Avenue resident, says “It could save the life of someone from an inattentive motorist glancing at their phone, it could improve the commute of someone who needed a little more security to choose to bike to work, it could mean feeling more comfortable to walk somewhere and so getting to know a neighbour along the way, it could mean an alley is cleaned up and beautified for the regular use of a new parking spot. Most of these are small things and add up to a more pleasant way of living.”

Stanojevic says provincial intervention in a municipal matter is a dangerous overreach.

“The provincial government overriding our local vote and dictating how we design our neighbourhoods worries me even more than getting hit by a car,” he adds.

At the first Delton and Alberta Avenue community meeting, Stanojevic was limited to 90 seconds to speak in support of bike lanes. He expressed the positive impact that affordable bicycle transportation has on his family, with car expenses being so high.

Other bike lane supporters in the neighbourhood, like Brian Weber, say dedicated cycling infrastructure helps revitalize the area, connect people and create less car-dependent communities.

Weber also believes provincial intervention would be a poor indication of local democracy. “I would be kind of horrified if they do [intervene],” he says.

As tensions over the project continue, several residents have directly contacted Councillor Ashley Salvador, who represents the Delton and Alberta Avenue area, to share their concerns about the new transportation network.

In response, Salvador explained that 96 Street was identified as a priority because it builds on an existing active transportation route to the south. This new infrastructure will fill in a missing link, creating a continuous connection along 96 Street that extends as far south as Jasper Avenue.

Salvador emphasized that decisions impacting parking and operational changes are not taken lightly. “Designated curbside accessible parking that is actively in use will not be removed unless suitable alternatives are provided,” she added.

The City encourages residents to contact ActiveTransportation@edmonton.ca with questions and concerns.



Currently, protected bike lanes exist on 96 Street between 118 Avenue and 119 Avenue. The new infrastructure will connect the lanes north of 119 Avenue. | Mikayla Pohl

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ALBERTA AVENUE community league

Campfire and Pub Night!

Saturday, June 7, July 5, and August 9

from 7 pm to 11 pm in the garden 9210 118 ave

League membership required for admission.

Memberships available at the door. AlbertaAve.org



Partnership brings DishZero to the Ave.

La Morenita restaurant will pilot this initiative to reduce plastic waste



Shout out to the residents of Elizabeth Lodge for doing a litter pick up on Earth Day with the Alberta Avenue Community League. | Supplied

KEVIN BLAKEMAN

A new pilot scheme aimed at reducing single-use packaging waste is coming to Alberta Avenue thanks to a group of NAIT Business students and the Alberta Avenue Business Association.

DishZero started as a program to help University of Alberta students reduce waste and is now expanding into our community. It aims to reduce the single-use waste associated with takeout through a dish-sharing system that is as convenient to use as its disposable counterpart. Launched at La Morenita, the

plan is to encourage more businesses to participate and continue to expand the service as it gets more popular.

The whole process is straightforward and above all, free. All DishZero containers are also BPA free, National Sanitation Foundation certified, and microwave- and dishwasher-safe.

Calyca Greenwood, one of the NAIT students involved in this push, says she was inspired after visiting Denmark over the summer and seeing the “REUSEABLE” system, which has been rolled out across the entire city of Aarhus.

Erick Estrada, Executive Director of the Alberta Alberta Business Association, connected the NAIT and U of A groups and they began working together to deliver the pilot project.

“We’d love to see DishZero being used at multiple restaurants and cafes in the district and feel the Alberta Avenue community is the perfect neighbourhood to embrace this project!” says Greenwood.

While the model in Denmark is on a much larger scale, pilot schemes like this one could be a step on the path to helping Edmonton achieve the same level of adoption and help reduce the 91 million cups the City of Edmonton estimates is discarded every year.

NINETY-ONE MILLION!

That’s a lot of cups we are just throwing in the garbage (about seven per person every month). And they do go in the garbage. Despite paper cups often being made to look eco-friendly, the plastic they are lined with to make sure they are watertight means most are neither recyclable or compostable. The city doesn’t have the kind of industrial grade composter required to deal with these cups. Few cities do. So they go into the garbage and will likely take 20-30 years

to decompose in a landfill. And that’s just cups — the number of single-use plastics we discard every year runs into the hundreds of millions.

DishZero coming to our community seems like an opportunity for us to support the kinds of initiatives that might make long-term, structural changes to how we live in order to reduce waste in a meaningful way.

To support local businesses and back this ambitious venture, all you need to do is buy a coffee from a participating vendor and follow the instructions on the side of the cup



So how exactly does it work?

1. Scan the QR code on the side of the cup.
2. Sign it out using your Gmail address (the team plans to add other options at a later date).
3. The container is now yours for the next 48 hours.
4. Return it to the drop-off point at any supporting vendor.

Letters

Use of AI ironic and concerning

JEFF WOODWARD

I wanted to touch base this afternoon to express my concerns over the story that arrived in my inbox this morning about Earth Day activities that contained an AI generated image. As a person who writes and shares my own photography in the pages of the RCP occasionally, it was quite upsetting to see an AI generated image shared without any clarification or attribution. I believe that doing

so undermines RCP’s credibility as a journalistic endeavor. In this age of constant misinformation and deep fakes we must be vigilant about sharing verified, or better yet real, images with news stories, no matter how important or unimportant they might seem.

Secondly, the irony of the fact that this image accompanied a story about Earth Day activities is just a little too rich for me. Generative AI is a massive energy and water vampire and has as yet

unmeasured detrimental effects on the planet. The power of the tool is such that there are certainly uses that might justify such enormous energy and environment costs, but a cute picture in a local newspaper surely doesn’t meet that bar. I know that as a contributor to the paper I’ve never been given guidance on the use of AI generated materials in my work. I’m wondering if RCP has an AI usage framework in place, if we don’t, we absolutely should.

Bike lanes provide choices and benefits to many

REINIER LAMERS

[Excerpt] Biking and other forms of active transportation are a cheap and fun way to get around that’s also good for your health. I have lived most of my life in the Netherlands until I moved to Edmonton in December 2023. Anyone who has been to the country will remember how superb cycling infrastructure makes it so that Dutch people

of all ages can safely and pleasantly get around without a car. I want this same safety and pleasure for bikers, scooters, boarders, rollerbladers and wheelchair users of all ages in Edmonton.

A person who rides an e-scooter to yoga class or rides a bike to grab some beers from the liquor store can surely be the same person who drives a car to work in Spruce Grove or drives a truck to get compost at the eco station? Some trips are more practi-

cal with a motor vehicle, others are more efficient and affordable using something smaller. I want to be able to choose without getting pigeonholed into some supposed social group. And when a person chooses to ride a bike for a trip, that’s one less car to be stuck behind in traffic. Everybody benefits.

Bike lanes provide a framework of bike routes to navigate the city and make it clear to cars that the street is also a thoroughfare for bikes.

Bike lanes cause parking loss and reduce accessibility

JEREMIAH RAWLING

[Excerpt] We are urgently requesting that the Government of Alberta intervene and use all available legislative mechanisms to ensure our community’s voices are heard and respected. We feel we have exhausted all other recourse.

At a community meeting on April 30, 2025, held at the Delton Community League Hall, over 100 residents gathered to discuss the project. Of those, only four were in support. The remaining attendees

raised serious, repeated concerns about accessibility, emergency response delays, safety risks for children and seniors, parking loss, and the impact on disabled residents.

Let us be clear: our community is not opposed to cycling or safe transportation. What we oppose is the unfair, unsafe, and undemocratic way this particular plan has been forced upon us. The plan imposes dramatic changes to how people move, park, and live on our streets — with no prior consultation or meaningful engagement.

Our deepest concern is for seniors, disabled residents, caregivers, and the vulnerable — many of whom rely on on-street parking for safe access to homes, medical support, and essential services. We have already heard from disabled residents who say their handicap spots are routinely ignored by inconsiderate drivers. Removing street parking will only make this worse — and create new barriers for people who already face mobility challenges.

Garbage, garbage everywhere!

Tips on dealing with trash and big items



Shout out to the residents of Elizabeth Lodge for doing a litter pick up on Earth Day with the Alberta Avenue Community League. | Supplied

KAREN MYKIETKA & SHERRIDON ROUTLEY

After the bike discussion wrapped up at the April Coffee with Cops, there was plenty of input from community members on another issue: garbage! Many noted this spring brought illegal dumping of garbage and discarded items to the area. Others mentioned that people had gone through their garbage and scattered it all over the ground.

Edmonton Police said it was a good idea to never leave the garbage out overnight and only take it out to the alley on waste management days. Also, avoid putting things out in your alley for free or bagging bottles on your property as they encourage unwanted traffic.

As for illegal dumping, City of Edmonton bylaw liaison Dawn Freeman pointed out that, unfortunately, the garbage is now the property owner's problem. You can call 311 to report an incident, but unless you witnessed it and have details like the offender's license plate number, little can be done.

After a long winter, snow melts away and all the garbage is revealed. Pitch in to keep our neighbourhood clean and safe by picking up trash. You can even request litter kits from Capital City Clean Up. If you live in Alberta Avenue, contact the community league to pick up a kit. If you live in Parkdale, join

neighbours on community clean ups June 22 and July 19 from 12-3 p.m.

Got an issue with your garbage cart? You can submit a repair request online or submit a report for a lost or stolen cart. Is your garbage cart too small or too big? You can upsize from the 120L to the 240L cart, or downsize. You get one free cart exchange. After that, you'll be charged a \$18.50 admin fee.

Did you bag those piles of leaves? Trim your bushes? Pull all heaps of weeds? Did you know that the city runs two yard waste collection days between April 21 and June 16? Check the WasteWise app or the city website to find the dates for your neighbourhood. You can even sign up for reminders!

Have you seen a yard piling up with garbage bags? Maybe the resident is elderly, has a disability or is temporarily challenged and cannot get their garbage to the alley for pick up. You could offer to help or let them know about a free city program called Assisted Waste Collection, where staff can collect or help set out waste or recycling from outside the front or back door to the curb or lane. You complete an online form and get a health care provider to sign a form. Apartment and condo residents can also apply.

People often have big bulky items such as couches, chairs, mattresses, and appliances that can't be put out for regular garbage col-

lection. The city provides numerous Big Bin event weekends where you can bring those items for disposal free of charge from 9 am to 5 pm. Computer s and electronics will be accepted for recycling. Give a helping hand to a neighbour if you can — remember, many people do not have the strength or transportation to move big items.

City Big Bin Events	
June 28-29	All 4 Eco Stations
Aug 16-17	All 4 Eco Stations
Sept 20-21	Commonwealth
Sept 27-28	All 4 Eco Stations



Big Bin Event at Commonwealth Stadium lot. | Supplied

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Alberta Ave night markets are back

A summer series of food, music, and fun returns to bring the community together



This summer marks the third annual Alberta Avenue's night markets series. Each market is hosted at a unique location with various vendors and entertainment. | photo provided by Bottom Line Productions

MIKAYLA POHL

A summer series of food, music, and fun returns to bring the community together

Night markets are returning to Alberta Avenue this summer, with six events scheduled over the next four months. The first market will be hosted by Serengeti BBQ on June 6 from 6 to 10 pm.

The Alberta Avenue Business Association (AABA) has organized night markets for the past three years to showcase a variety of businesses, vendors, and community partners. The markets will feature local-

ly-made goods, unique foods, live music, and entertainment, creating a family-friendly atmosphere for everyone to enjoy.

David Plamondon, the AABA board president, says attending the markets is a great way to support many unique, diverse businesses that have been working hard to build a meaningful community on the avenue.

“What we want to do is create a fun, vibrant event for folks to enjoy themselves and get the most out of their time here,” he says.

Plamondon explains that the initiative was born to help change the perception that Alberta Avenue is a

dangerous area. He says the markets “really help push back on that stigma” and highlight local businesses in a way that makes people feel comfortable coming to the neighbourhood.

Plamondon says the first night market venue, Serengeti BBQ, was chosen because they have been so active in the community and have the space to make the night market a success.

Pastory Mandari, the owner of Serengeti BBQ, says the markets are a way to bring togetherness in the community and introduce people to different cultures. He attributes the night markets with making Alberta Avenue

a more popular spot in Edmonton.

“I would like people to come and see how Alberta Avenue is improving and becoming more family-friendly,” Mandari says.

For Plamondon, it has been wonderful to see not only the upswell of support from businesses on the avenue, but also people showing up from all areas of the city to attend the market in past years.

“The night markets are going to continue to grow and expand, and being part of seeing what that evolution looks like is going to be really exciting,” Plamondon says.

Night Markets
6 pm to 10 pm
July 25 at Battista's Calzone Co. (11745 84 St. NW)
August 22 at La French Taste (11401 95 St.)
September 5 at La Morenita (8501 118 Ave. NW)
September 19 at Canadian General Store (9035 118 Ave. NW)
September 26 at Freshco (8118 118 Ave. NW)
For more information and updates on the night markets, visit the AABA website or follow @albertaaveba on Instagram.



The markets often feature different live entertainment and locally produced items. All ages are welcome and many activities are suitable for families with young children. | photos provided by Bottom Line Productions

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Paraiso Tropical celebrates 34 years

An invaluable source for Latino food products continues to grow



Assistant manager Glenda Avalos (left) and Paraiso Tropical founder Jesus Gonzales Sr. share smiles in the packed store. | Constance Brissenden

CONSTANCE BRISSENDEN

Thirty-four years ago, a brave immigrant couple, Alba Gonzales Rivas and husband Jesus Gonzales Sr., saw a need in Edmonton. After arriving from El Salvador in the mid-1980s, they found it difficult to access food-related products from Central and South America. The couple’s decision to open Paraiso Tropical Latin Market proved challenging, but ultimately a wise one.

In 1990, Edmonton was a city of 605,538 residents, of which only a handful were Latinos. By 2021, the Latino population was almost 20,000 and continues to grow. Today, the Gonzales family own two stores — one on 118 Avenue, and the other on the South side. While working seven days a week, they raised two children to know their cultural traditions. Today,



Looking for spices or seasonings? Paraiso Tropical has hundreds of options. | Constance Brissenden

son Jesus Gonzales Jr. is proud president of the business.

I was with a group of seniors from Alberta Avenue Community League who decided to explore the 118 Avenue outlet. Many had been there only once or twice before. We hustled down various aisles, finding the store was crammed with goods. A steady stream of shoppers entered. “Lunch hour and after-work are our busy times,” said assistant manager Glenda Avalos. Tasty hot food is available seven days a week. The store’s own tender corn sweet tamale is joined by Mexican, Salvadoran, and Colombian styles. They sell five kinds of empanadas and dishes such as Mexican pozole soup and Yuca Frita.

Check Paraiso’s website for the full mouth-watering menu.

Displayed on one wall are spices and seasonings, teas, and dried products such

as chili peppers. The choice is tempting, and complete.

While basic dishes are much the same from country to country, Avalos explained that spices or seasonings will be different. El Salvador, Mexico, Dominican Republic, and Brazil are just four of the countries that are represented in the store.

Paraiso carries corn tamales eaten hot with cream for breakfast in El Salvador. Other countries use other toppings, also available here. “They are similar, but not the same,” says Avalos. “Every country has definite flavours that express the richness of our cultures.”

Five-pound tins of hot and spicy menudo, nachos, and Mexican style and purple hominy are examples of family-sized groceries piled high along an aisle. The array is dazzling.

For Alberta Avenue Community League senior Marie Schurko, her visit to Paraiso was rewarding. As she paid for a large bag of coloured mini marshmallows, she had a big smile on her face. “These coloured ones are really hard to find,” she said. “I’ve been looking for them to make treats for my grandchildren.”



Marie Schurko was fascinated by Paraiso Tropical on her first visit to the store. | Constance Brissenden



The menu board at Paraiso Tropical offers a variety of tasty meals. | Constance Brissenden

Brooks chose a package of Mexican conchas, four sweet buns destined for her husband Jordan. “He’s at home with a broken ankle and will really enjoy these,” she said.

Jesus Gonzales Jr. is passionate about the family business. “We aim to continue to provide the best quality available. We also provide services such as home delivery, catering for parties, and seasonal products.”

Success will soon force the 118 Avenue store to move out of its now overflowing quarters. They are planning to shift to a bigger space sometime this summer. “We will stay close to this welcoming neighborhood,” Gonzales Jr. promises.

Now is a good time to visit Paraiso Tropical and celebrate with them. Explore and enjoy this vital link to Latino food and culture.

Locations:

Paraiso Latin Market North,
9136 118 Ave, 780 479 6000

Paraiso Market South, 6926 104 St,
780 705 9711

Check the website paraiso-tropical.ca for specials like Tropical Tuesdays offering 15 per cent off.



Interested in gardening?



Need healthy fresh produce?

Growing together

A Community Supported Agriculture (CSA) program with hands-on opportunities for Alberta Avenue Residents.

Together, we’re growing food and sustainability skills in our communal garden. Learn and mentor with experienced gardeners while feeding those in need!

MORE INFO

Alberta Avenue Community Garden
jacob@albertaave.org, 780-477-2773



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Funded by Norwood Neighbourhood Association

Got bacon?

Green Onion Cake Man adds all-day breakfast



Siu To is still going strong, building and improving his Green Onion Cake Man business| Constance Brissenden

KAREN MYKIETKA

Many people love a traditional breakfast of bacon and eggs. Now there is another all-day breakfast option on the Avenue.

This week, Green Onion Cake Man started offering an all-day build-your-own breakfast menu. The new addition also came with changed hours: they are now open seven days a week from 9 a.m. to 5 p.m.

“I looked around the Avenue and didn’t see much for breakfast options,” said Siu To from Green Onion Cake Man. “So I figured, why not offer breakfast?”

There are no set breakfasts on the

menu. You choose up to six items at \$3 each - two eggs any style, two bacon, two sausages, hash brown potatoes, two thick slice pieces of toast, p a n -



Marie Schurko was fascinated by Paraiso Tropical on her first visit to the store. | Constance Brissenden

cakes. A coffee is also \$3. Your breakfast plate will come dressed up with a tomato slice.

The new offer joins other inexpensive all-day breakfast options on the Avenue, like Maria’s Place on 83 Street. Now, I will also have an anytime breakfast option just steps away from one of my workplaces which definitely beats grabbing a bag of chips when hunger hits.

And of course, there’s the very tempting green onion cakes, dumplings, hot and sour chicken soup, beef brisket on a bun, Shanghai noodles and a variety of other tasty pan-Asian dishes.

Siu To brought his famous and deli-

cious green onion cakes to Alberta Avenue in 2019, after introducing them to Edmonton in the 1980s. The pan-fried onion cakes, which are a Northern Chinese staple, are made with a simple dough followed by an onion mixture layered on top, then rolled up into a log and twisted and flattened into a pancake.

Despite being in his mid-80s, To is still quite active in his business, which includes local markets and a YouTube channel where he shares instructions on preparing his take-home meals.

When you walk into the restaurant on 118 Ave, you’ll find two lovely Asian ladies. They’ll take your order at the counter and prepare your food. You can choose one of the handful of tables, take the meal home, or head over to the grassy space across the street, St. Faith Park, or Alberta Avenue Park to sit and eat in the sun.

Wherever and whenever you choose to eat, your tummy will be happy with a comforting and delicious breakfast.

Green Onion Cake Man
9132 118 Ave
All-day breakfast
Seven days a week
9 a.m. to 5 p.m.

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Ethical bulk goods store to open?

Earth's Refillery Co-Op is a radical approach to feeding a community



JACOB ULICKIJ

Following the loss of Edmonton's locally-owned organic grocery store, a new venture from familiar faces aims to not only fill those empty shoes, but expand on the health store model for community good.

Earth's Refillery Co-Op is a new project from the ownership and management team of Ritchie's former organic grocer, Earth's General Store. With their decades of experience in health-focused goods and community engagement, the evolution to bulk goods reflects the values that Christina Neumann and her team hope to foster in the lives of their customers.

Earth's Refillery Co-Op standing in front of their newly leased space in McCauley's The Piazza YEG. | Photo Christina Neumann

"Our goal for the new space is to help people reduce their waste and build habits of reuse," Neumann says.

A refillery sells food and other goods in bulk to consumers who may already have reusable packaging on hand. The result is lower costs for the consumer and less waste for households as they stock up on pantry staples and cleaning supplies.

A flagship product of Earth's Refillery Co-Op will be freshly roasted coffee, processed in-house from ethically sourced organic beans.

Customers can take fresh beans home or enjoy them in an attached cafe with hot drinks, non-dairy options, and a handful of snacks.

Another unique offering of Earth's Refillery is its cooperative model, with decision-making including stakeholders from the employer down to the customer level. Memberships offer grocery and cafe discounts, though participation in the program is entirely optional for customers.

"We want to

show that businesses can be successful while being run as a co-op," Neumann says. "We've lost so many over the past few decades, but we believe there are alternatives to how big companies do business."

Neumann's co-op experience began at Toronto's Karma Co-Op — a food store for a community of participating members who felt connected to the food they ate. Neumann recalls the joy of working with cooperative principles and looks forward to melding that experience with Edmonton's ethical grocery community.

"It felt like

"The best way to support our launch is to pre-purchase a gift card, since it acts like a loan."
- Christina Neumann

such a tight-knit community of people who used the co-op in Toronto. It's been a big inspiration, and they've been a huge help in navigating the legality and helping me where I don't know what I'm doing," Neumann says, laughing with optimism.

With a late-spring opening date on the horizon, community members are encouraged to be an early part of the cooperative through monetary or hands-on support.

Dates and times for work bees (such as moving equipment and painting the new space) will be announced via ERC's Facebook, Instagram, and email list.

"Besides our GoFundMe, the best way to support our launch is to pre-purchase a gift card, since it acts like a loan. Send us an e-transfer, and we'll convert those funds into a gift card with a five per-cent bonus as a thank-you," Neumann explains. "It gives an extra incentive to donors, and we hope to use that money to source the rest of our equipment and inventory."

With new shopping experiences like ERC, business is booming for independent producers and shoppers in our neighbourhood.

"I'm really looking forward to getting more involved with the community, making connections, and taking opportunities to be a blueprint of something a little alternative," says Neumann.

"We want to be a business that leads by example."



Earth's Refillery Co-Op standing in front of their newly leased space in McCauley's The Piazza YEG. | Photo Christina Neumann



Parkdale Cromdale Community League

Programs:

- Freeart music: Sat. 10am-1pm createdmonton.com (mural painting on weekends starting in June, check website for details)
- Playwright Club for Teens: Tues. 4 30-5 30pm
- Norwood Family Centre Stay and Play: Thursdays 10am-12pm
- Yoga with Jesse: All levels. Tues 7-8pm
- Tango: Mon. 6:45-10pm
- Grower's Dozen Garden Club: Register for a spot on our website
- Latin Dance Classes: Tues 6-7pm
- League Swim at Commonwealth Rec Centre: Sat 3-5pm, Sun 1-3pm

Upcoming Events:

- Community fire pit nights June 6 and July 4, 6-10pm
- Father's Day Picnic and Family Slow pitch @Borden Park diamonds June 15 11am-2pm
- Community clean-ups June 22 and July 19, 12-3pm
- Latin Pub Night: June 28 7-11pm
- Community Garage Sale June 29 10am-4pm



Look for details/updates at: parkdalecromdale.org or email programs@parkdalecromdale.org

Membership at: www.parkdalecromdale.org/membership

Introducing Tulip Sandwich Shoppe

A daytime twist on Otto — Norwood’s famous eater

JACOB ULICKIJ

After months of careful planning, Ed Donzelman and his team are ready to debut Tulip Sandwich Shoppe — a daytime eatery specializing in fun, fresh sandwiches for eat-in and take-away.

The new dining experience carries a new name to reflect a different menu from Otto, but diners can expect the same warm service with many familiar faces, no matter the time of day they stop by.

“It’s been a dream for years,” says owner Edwin Donzelman, “and the staff finally kicked me in the butt.”

Following a grand opening Saturday and Sunday, Tulip Sandwich Shoppe is open 10 AM - 1 PM, Thursday through Sunday. Patio seating and liquor service will continue like normal for these expanded hours, with future opening times dependent on community feedback.

Tulip Sandwich Shoppe’s logo,

drawn by staff members Tess and Nat. | Instagram @Otto_Yeg

For Donzelman, it’s hard to pick menu standouts.

“You know, after eight years, I’m not so into sausage anymore,” says Donzelman with a laugh. “But the chorizo sausage on a bun is really something special. Same with our take on a mortadella, made with whipped ricotta, pistachio pesto, and pickled radish.”

Sandwiches are inspired by the same global feeling as Otto’s nighttime menu, with bread sourced from local baker Mr. Focaccia. The creative hot and cold menu is largely designed by Chef Rosalba Colangelo — an OTTO server who returned proudly as a chef after studying culinary arts at NAIT.

“The day she saw the posting,” Donzelman says, “She was in that same day.”

Otto’s journey has been one of growing bigger and reaching more of the community while staying small and heartfelt. Whether you’re picking up

food as you commute to work, catching up with a friend before an evening of activities, or looking for somewhere to enjoy fresh food under gorgeous blooms, Tulip Sandwich Shoppe is your next all-local destination.



You could be here! | Photo by Otto & Tulip Sandwich Shoppe

Tulip Sandwich Shoppe’s logo, drawn by staff members Tess and Nat. | Instagram @Otto_Yeg



Zocalo’s reopens in McCauley?

The greenhouse is bigger, brighter, and better than ever

JACOB ULICKIJ

When an act of arson forced McCauley’s treasured Zocalo greenhouse to shut down, it felt like a piece of summer itself was stolen from the neighborhood. Fourteen months later, the greenhouse is again bursting with blooms and community spirit.

With backgrounds in landscape and visual design, owners Ken and Miranda Ringma chose to open Zocalo in McCauley, their home of 35 years.

“We looked at properties all around the city, but in the end, we chose to open in our backyard,” Miranda Ringma says.

In 2003, Zocalo opened as a café and gift shop before expanding into a greenhouse in 2012. Inspired by the Mexican concept of zócalo (a public square), the space has offered handmade pottery, fresh flowers, plant starters, and a meeting place for the community for over twenty years.

Following the fire in January 2024,

quick thinking and collaboration with local entrepreneurs allowed the Ringmas to turn community support into a path forward. Today, their flower shop is operated by Love and Fantasy Flowers, while Aspen Coffee Roasters manages the fully licensed café.

“There’s a point where you have to consider what makes sense,” Miranda Ringma says, reflecting on the uncertainty of the transition and its challenges. “But in the end, we knew this is where we belong.”

Beyond structural improvements, notable changes include seating at the front of the greenhouse, where

you can again enjoy your coffee with plants. Next is an expanded customer service desk to assist with repotting and general plant questions.

Current greenhouse and shop hours are Wednesday through Saturday, 10 am - 6 pm, and Sunday, 10 am - 4 pm. Expanded hours are on the way as spring approaches, which

Zocalo will announce along with upcoming events on their Instagram page.

Inventory is growing weekly, and with a grand opening party, Tulip mania, and new classes on the horizon, plant lovers have plenty to look forward to inside the rejuvenated space.



A long-awaited reopening. | Jacob Ulickij

Seeds, potting supplies, and soil are ready for eager gardeners to take home. | Jacob Ulickij



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- Campfire & roast
- Create public art
- Share stories
- Swap books, toys, tools
- Clean up or block project

Growing together

One garden’s mission to feed and teach the Alberta Avenue community



Operating for 14 years, the garden has come a long way with the help of Alberta Avenue residents. Garden development began on May 11, 2011 (left) and now grows a variety of vegetables and plants (photos provided by Karen Mykietka)

MIKAYLA POHL

A new program in Edmonton called Growing Together is addressing food insecurity, limited access to healthy food, and a lack of gardening knowledge. These are critical issues in a city where over 21 per cent of households experience food insecurity, according to Statistics Canada.

The problem is particularly acute in inner-city neighbourhoods like Alberta Avenue, where the Alberta Avenue Community League (AACL) leads Growing Together. The program expands the use of AACL’s community garden, helping residents grow their own food and develop practical gardening skills.

What started out as a simple patch of lawn in 2011 has since flourished into a thriving community garden, growing food and sustainability skills in the neighbourhood. The evolving program offers Alberta Avenue residents hands-on gardening experience and access to fresh, free produce according to their needs.

“People like the idea of growing their own healthy food, but often they don’t have the knowledge and skills needed, or they

don’t realize how much time it takes,” says Karen Mykietka, garden administrator and manager of the AACL.

Through funding from the Norwood Neighbourhood Association, Mykietka recently hired a lead gardener to help facilitate and plant the communal garden.

“The garden is a lot of work, and we aren’t fully using its potential. Many people struggle with food insecurity. Many people don’t have gardening skills. I felt we could tackle all these issues by hiring a lead gardener,” Mykietka adds.

Jacob Ulickij, the recently hired lead gardener, moved to Alberta Avenue in 2023 and was immediately drawn to the low-stress, community-focused

environment of the local garden. Ulickij said the main goal of Growing Together is to provide food free of cost or any obligation, and to address food insecurity.

The biggest challenge to continuing and expanding the new project is finding the funding to support it. Ulickij was successful in securing a \$1,500 microgrant from the John Humphrey Centre for Peace and Human Rights, Righting Relations Canada, and the Royal Bank of Canada to support this year’s expenses.

“Nature gives us all of these foods in abundance if you give it the smallest amount of tending,” Ulickij says. “We can make it so why not give it away?”

With a background rooted in family gardening,

Ulickij would also like to share his expertise with residents through the program.

“I’m hoping that people take what I’m building here and can replicate it at their own home, for their own immediate family or community,” he says.

Are you in need of free produce? Do you want to learn gardening skills? Do you have time to share? Complete this questionnaire to participate in the Growing Together initiative.

A practical way to support Growing Together during harvest season is to volunteer in the garden, explains Ulickij. He encourages children and families of any gardening skill level or interest to come visit. Reach out to Jacob@albertaave.org to get involved.

“If you have space, you have brains and you have heart, you can create incredible things by yourself or with your community,” says Ulickij.



Jacob Ulickij was recently hired to be a lead gardener



The Garden is located behind the Alberta Avenue Community League at 9210 118 Ave. It currently has 45 individual plots and a large communal space. | Karen Mykietka

Building with intention

Explore form and function in your garden



Coming soon: a food tunnel of beans, peas, and cucamelon. | Jacob Ulickij



Always keep your leftover building materials for repurposing. | Jacob Ulickij

JACOB ULICKIJ

With social media and image boards, it's easier than ever to find yourself caught up in the aesthetics of gardening. But, behind every winding path of perennials and planter beds are untold costs — money, time, and sanity.

Simply put, many of the spaces you will see online were made with aesthetics in mind. From hundreds of dollars in attractive annuals that are ill-suited to ground conditions, to paint jobs that won't make it through the first hailstorm, social media gardening is selling a short-term dream. Those reclaimed door greenhouses will reach temperatures of 45° C or more in the summer sun, and those cute chicken coops made from old playhouses will collect more poop than they will likes in a few short weeks.



Pinterest-friendly, yet durable. | Jacob Ulickij

So, ask yourself: — Are you willing to trade years worth of expensive repairs and upkeep for a few more internet points? If not, follow along for examples of backyard builds that stand up to the seasons while bringing some brightness to your day.

Trellises are a fantastic way to support growing plants. They can come in all shapes and sizes, from sticks woven with horizontal string in garden beds to walk-

through structures like those at [Growing Together.]

When designing your trellis, there are two considerations you will have to keep in mind: —the structural integrity of the vertical structure and the density of the plant-supporting material.

If you're digging your posts in, ensure approximately ¼ of the total length of the supporting arms is under the ground. If tethering to existing structures, use pressure-treated wood and coated deck screws to ensure a long-lasting joint.

For the interior material (what the plants will attach to), ensure that the weave is suitable for your plants to grasp. The thin tendrils produced by peas and cucumbers will struggle with thick lattices and prefer thin weaves like chicken wire or fencing. On the other hand, large vines like zucchini will grow excellently through large openings, making harvesting from both sides much easier if should you go with 4"x 4 openings of cattle panels.

Raised Beds offer several advantages for home gardens — ease of harvest (especially for those with reduced mobility), reduced weed pressure, and infinite possibilities for arrangement. Best of all, they can be designed at a low cost to serve multiple needs like, whether integrated seating, storage, or even space for pets.

The only thing chickens love more than being underfoot is being in your freshly tilled soil. To overcome the logistical nightmare of growing food alongside livestock, I constructed 4-foot-tall beds with fenced pens underneath. The visual barrier prevents the birds from hopping up into the beds of vulnerable transplants. At the same time, the pens underneath offer secure spaces to isolate

and shuffle birds during coop cleaning or other chores.

The next step was to connect them. I constructed a small trellis out of PEX pipe and leftover fence materials. Additional vertical trellises at either end of the bed allow space for shorter vine plants like peas to thrive. This summer, I am using the shade from those plants to grow healthier lettuce crops — an idea I expanded on at the Alberta Avenue Community Garden in the next build.

In-ground planter boxes are inexpensive and durable, and can also be designed for specific crops to produce heavier yields.

Here, a burlap cover shades the lettuce box below, helping to maintain cooler temperatures and prevent bolting. At 4 feet tall, the posts allow ample room to reach in and harvest greens. When the season turns, a cover may be screwed to the top to prevent snow from piling on the cloth and tearing. It's functional, but immensely satisfying to watch ripple in the breeze.

This community garden's 12-foot by 12-foot build supports 30 thirty vining tomato plants, multiple hanging planters, and a harvest-friendly design. Integrating odd angles for the horizontal supports lends a whimsical aesthetic, almost like walking below a tangle of roots. As the tomato plants mature and are

staked to the twine, the inner tunnel will be shaded from light and wind, giving a sense of privacy and comfort in the blooms.

Building intentional garden structures involves creative thinking, an aesthetic eye, and a bit of planning to ensure your structures work towards your goals alongside your chosen plants' needs. Best of all, you don't need an expensive setup,



Fenced pens are perfect for keeping critters in — or out. | Jacob Ulickij

just some basic tools and a willingness to learn through mistakes — **hopefully not as many as I've made over the years.** Happy building!



The only tools you need are a saw and a drill. | Jacob Ulickij



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Working the Federal Election

Three community members share an insider’s look into the electoral process

**DEREK QUITTENTON,
BRONWEN THOMPSON
& SHERRIDON ROUTLEY**

If you’ve never worked an election, it may seem to be a smooth and simple process. Elections Canada works hard to make it seem that way. This is an insider’s perspective by three people who worked in the recent federal election.

The terminology can be different between municipal, provincial, and federal systems. In this article, we’ll use federal terms but relate them to the other orders of government.

are responsible for the final ballot count with the assistance of another worker.

The Central Poll Supervisor (CPS) manages the polling site and ensures it runs as efficiently as possible. They are the main contact with the returning office and make sure procedures are being followed and paperwork is completed correctly. When the polls close, a CPS supervises the counting of the ballots, collects the ballot boxes and election materials and transports all the material to the returning office.

persons and then a tick mark is placed beside the candidate’s name is inefficient, especially when pressed for time. At my table, the ballots were simply sorted — a pile of ballots for each candidate. Ballots marked “none of the above” are considered rejected ballots and set aside, there were several at our polling station this election.

The counting began with the smallest pile first and we proceeded pile to pile, carefully counting each ballot. Then every station is issued several ballot books, where each and every book and ballot is counted. And counted again!

ballot. You almost wish you could let them keep their ballot as a souvenir.

Get out and vote! Enjoy your democracy. Cherish your right to vote. We are the envy of the world.

An Unprecedented Voting Period - Bronwen Thompson

As a Central Poll Supervisor (CPS) in Edmonton Griesbach, I knew this election would be different from other elections with interest in advance voting at an all-time high. I was ready to jump in and help. Across the country, two million people voted on the first day and, by the end of the advance voting, 7.3 million people (a full quarter of registered electors) had voted!

I also worked as a CPS during election day. It started at 6:30 in the morning and stretched until the counting of ballots was complete. When I opened the door to check the line at 7:30 I was greeted by Jasper, the neighbourhood cat, determined to come into the school gym as my first voter. I was asked if a pawprint was deemed acceptable on the ballot, but I responded with a laugh that he couldn’t vote because he hadn’t brought his voter identification card.

Election day for us ran much smoother than the advance voting, with so many electors that I had to call the returning office for more ballots shortly after noon. Once the polls closed at 7:30 pm, the DROs sealed the ballot boxes and made sure that their paperwork was balanced.

On hand were the candidates’ representatives to watch the final count and dispute any decisions regarding questionable ballots. Once all the polling stations had completed their count, the CPSs completed their final paperwork and everything was gathered and transported in my car to the returning office.

Eighteen hours after I left, I returned home to a very unhappy cat and I spent the next day lying on the couch because I could barely walk. I didn’t mind because I had recorded all the CBC election night coverage, from the polls closing in Newfoundland all the way to



Some of the many items sent out to set up a polling station. | Elections Canada

The Basics

Anyone can apply online and through the returning office for your electoral division or constituency.

Poll workers must be Canadian citizens and can apply up to election day. They can work during the advance voting period and/or on election day, based on interest or level of election experience. Workers are not allowed to leave the polling site until the polls close and, on election day, until ballots have been counted.

Each worker goes through at least one three-hour supervised training session prior to the election and receives training materials to review and take to the polling site according to the role they were hired for..

The Information Officer (IO) helps to set up and close the polling site. They greet and support electors, check that they have IDs and registrations, and direct them to their polling stations. The IO can also assist in the final ballot count.

Registration Officers (RO) set up the registration desk and help prepare the polling site. They help register new electors or direct them to their proper polling site. They handle special registration processes for voters not on the list or not carrying a valid ID. Registration officers can assist in the final ballot count.

Deputy Returning Officers (DROs) ensure you are properly registered and account for newly registered voters. After giving you a ballot and instructions on how to properly fill it out, they direct you to the proper booth. When you return, they make sure your folded ballot is put in the box by you alone. They can manage the custody of the ballots and ballot boxes during the advance vote period and return to count their ballots on election night if they are not working as a DRO on election day. They

Candidates’ representatives, provincially known as Scrutineers, observe the election proceedings and provide the level of scrutiny necessary for a fair and transparent voting process. They are allowed at any poll station and can examine any part of the process.

My Experience as a Deputy Returning Office - Derek Quittenton

The ballots marked versus the ballots issued have to add up — if they don’t, the recounting would have to start again.

My poll count was one ballot too many and the station beside me was also one ballot short. We realized one voter had put his ballot into the other station’s ballot box!. This is the kind of mistake that creates extra paperwork and balancing. After reports were filed in triplicate, and signed in triplicate, it was time to close.



A DRO works their station. | Photo Elections Canada

The recent federal election was my fourth or fifth election working as a DRO. It was the end of night when the fun began! The ballot box was dumped on the table and carefully examined to make sure no votes were stuck inside the folds of the cardboard box before the count began.

The suggested counting method where each ballot is examined by two

That’s the numbers story, but the real story is watching the joy in an adult’s face as they get to cast their first vote as a Canadian citizen. Voting in a free, fair, and honest election is why these people came to Canada. They want a democracy that is honest and free, and this little piece of paper is huge to first-time voters. You see it in their faces, the tears in their eyes, they are overjoyed to cast their first

Mark Carney’s acceptance speech, which I watched from beginning to end. Yes, I’m a political junkie.

My First Election as a Poll Worker - Sherridon Routley

Being late to work the election, my training as a standby was a brief three-hour session the day before the event.

We had no knowledge of what role we'd be assigned, so we received a stack of manuals covering all positions to review that night. Admittedly, I only partially skimmed these as there were scant hours to sleep before the big day.

Arriving early to the local returning office, we learned that all of us were needed to fill absent roles. I was the only one volunteering to be a DRO, so I was assigned a station and off I went on my bike. My polling centre happened to be on the north side of the Victoria School of Arts and preparation was in full swing for the doors at 7:30 am.

I was surprised that some stations received as few as four electors whereas

my station was the busiest in the centre! A few people requested pen instead of pencil and they were happily facilitated. I prefer pens, but Elections Canada says it supplies pencils because they don't leak or dry up and spoil a good ballot. You only get two chances to get the ballot right.

The only real snag during the day was when the Elections Canada website went down and the services to quickly help unregistered voters weren't available. This caused the largest lineup of the day at the registration table, but it was dealt with as quickly as possible with the worst wait being 30 minutes.

My favourite part of the day was that no workers could discuss politics, and we extended that restriction to all politics. We agreed that avoiding the never-ending churn of opinions and divisions in our world for at least one day was a state of bliss.

The real work came when the polls closed and the count began. There was an 'observer', who oversaw the integrity of the process, and one of the Information Officers to help me count. I appreciated the IO's help to slog through what could have been an overwhelming process if the count did not add up properly... but it did!

The hardest part was closing the station to the strict rules of Elections Canada in as little time as possible. How my tired brain managed to power through the lengthy instructions, I have no idea. Once again, my IO came to the rescue, helping me follow the manual quickly. I learned the many processes in place to make sure the polls collected were accurate and honest.

You can get more interesting insights into the electoral process at the Election Canada website.



Electors waiting in line to vote. | Elections Canada



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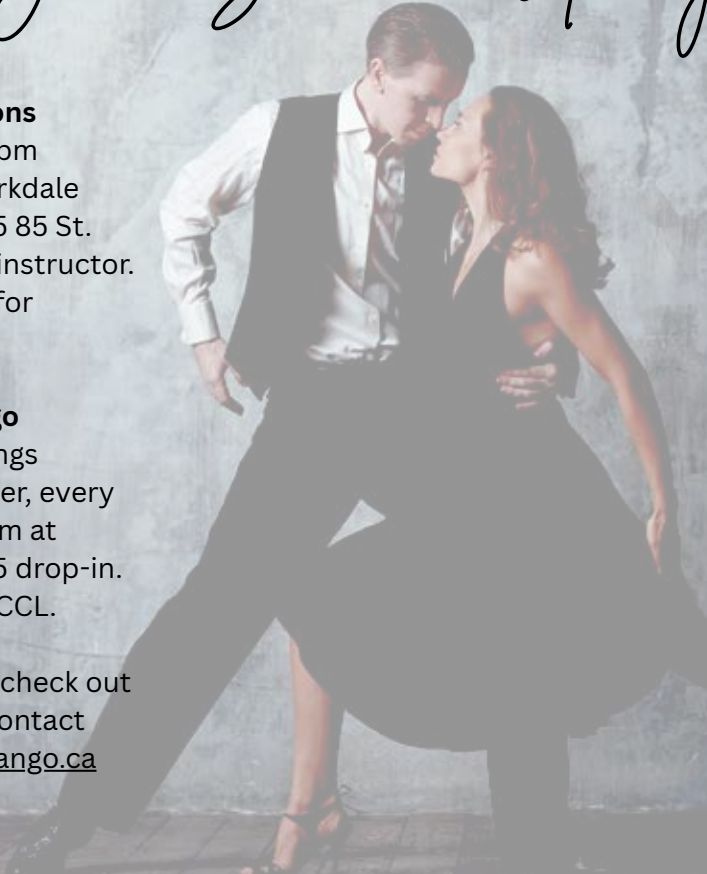
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For more information check out
www.yegtango.ca or contact
Aydan at tango@yegtango.ca



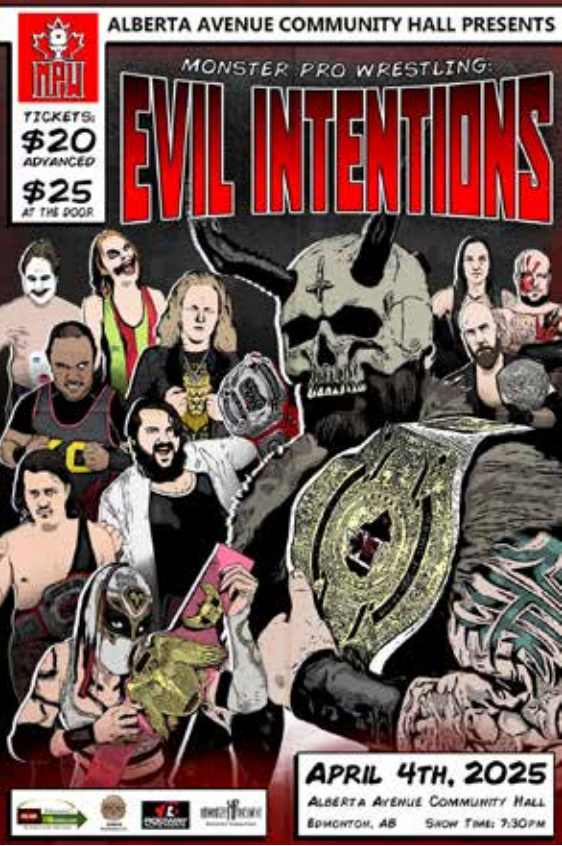
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Special guest instructor Tracy Renee
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Thursdays, 6:30-7:30 pm starting June 19
\$15 first session, includes mobility
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Registration is limited to maintain a 1:2
ratio of instructor to students. More info:
tango@yegtango.ca

The misunderstood monsters of Alberta Ave.

Experience storytelling through silliness, spectacle, and spandex



Larger-than-life characters will take the Alberta Avenue Stage on April 4 | Poster by Monster Pro Wrestling

JACOB ULICKIJ

Monster Pro Wrestling has been spinning tales of underdogs, betrayals, and pirates in the Alberta Ave Community League hall for over 20 years. But look beneath the spin kicks, and you'll see how they're spreading a message of resilience, strength, and positive change like no one else.

Monster Pro Wrestling is an Alberta Avenue institution. On the first Friday of every month, a rotating cast of performers, high-fliers, and athletes of every size, shape, ability, race, and gender identity perform fights between their characters and show the audience their virtues (or lack thereof).

However, it's more than simply an entertaining spectacle. Monster Pro

Wrestling serves a greater purpose by bringing together some of the most marginalized in our community and allowing athletes to tell the stories they want to tell — not just live the stories others assume about them.

Organizer Sean “Massive Damage” Dunster is no stranger to our community’s challenges. By overcoming his addictions with openness and compassion, he has connected with a diverse team of talented performers, coordinators, and event helpers to entertain and educate our community.

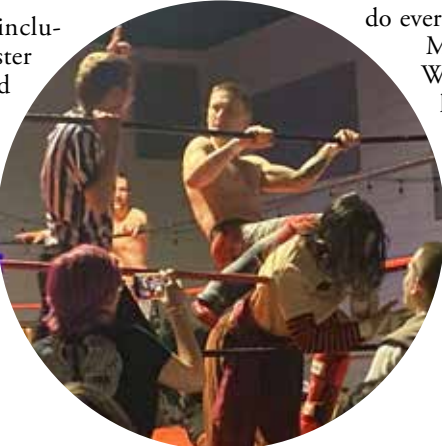
“I’ve lost a lot of friends to addictions,” Dunster says. “That’s why I speak to kids about drugs, bullying, and even suicide. We’re about connection and healing. Another wrestler here at the League, Matriarch, lost her son to a drunk driver.”

“For both of us and so many others, wrestling has been about finding and fighting for a different life.

A better life.”

Through the inclusive world of Monster Pro Wrestling and his public speaking through Fight for Life, Dunster hopes to inspire children to realize that it doesn’t take a larger-than-life personality like a wrestler to make a difference — you can be your own hero.

“We’re trying to help the community,” Dunster



A ringside moment between pirates Alex Houston and Cole Ram. | Jacob Ulickij



MPW performer and crowd favourite Matriarch faces Melisha in Fort McMurray. | Fort McMurray Today

reminds us. “We’re more than just a wrestling league. I hope people come to experience that.”

For curious community members, this is anything but a show of violence. Children laugh, cheer, and boo to the symphony of movement and stage presence that Dunster and his team orchestrate. Expect music, epic storylines, old grudges, and new faces as you cheer from the sidelines.

“We’re called Monster Pro Wrestling because we do it all,” Dunster says. “We’re a monster of a show. We do everything.”

Monster Pro Wrestling is a monthly all-ages event that everyone in the neighbourhood should experience once. Events feature a hot food concession stand, fully-licensed bar for drinks, and an engaged audience whose participation is half the show. According to Dunster, their April 4 show (Evil

Intentions) promises to expand on the stories introduced during last month’s performance.

“Massive Damage, my character, hit a referee. We don’t want to give a story away, but the commissioner needs to make a decision about my character. Our new ladies’ champion — who will she face? Will the Wild Boys keep pretending they won the championship rightfully? I can’t spoil everything, so stay tuned.”

For many, a night of fighting is a spectacle. For others, it’s a way of life — as natural as breathing. Local leaders like Sean Dunster are showing us the power of turning that fighting spirit into something beautiful, inspiring, and communal.

“Let’s connect with people,” he says, recalling the challenges he’s overcome. “Let’s connect with our youth. Let’s not tell people to change, but show them what it’s like to be different.”

Upcoming Shows

first Friday of every month:

July 4

Aug 1

Aug 29

Activities:

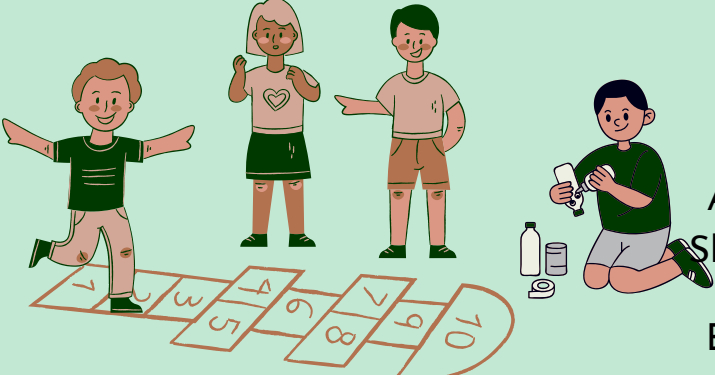
Organized for kids 6 to 10 years old

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GREEN SHACK

PROGRAMS



July 2 - Aug 21

Monday-Friday

10:30 am - 1:30 pm

Alberta Avenue, Delton, Elmwood Park, Parkdale, Spruce Avenue

2:30 - 5:30 pm

Alberta Avenue, Eastwood, Sheriff Robertson, Westwood

Edmonton.ca/Greenshacks

Coffee with Cops: Bike Safety

Prevention and awareness are key!



Beat cops, the local bylaw liaison, and community members met to discuss various issues. | Sherridon Routley

SHERRIDON ROUTLEY

Attending my first Coffee with Cops at The Carrot Community Arts Coffeehouse was a great opportunity to see a 17-year-old community outreach program in action.

A very informal discussion with Edmonton Police Services (EPS) beat cops and the community crime liaison brought many good ideas into the fore. I was glad, as the Rat Creek Press’ amateur bike enthusiast, to help bring questions and ideas to the table. Before we discussed actual bike safety, EPS addressed how important theft prevention was in limiting the trade of bikes as commodities for the abuse of illegal drugs.

A community member promoting the Bike Index registry handed out stickers you can affix to your bike after registration. The process works by adding your name, bike manufacturer, and serial number to the website, so that if your bike is lost or stolen you can report it in case it is found. This way, you can prove that you own the bike and easily get it returned. Often the bike shop seller also registers the bike at point of sale, so it’s a good idea to check with the index if you are buying a bike from a random seller to verify it is not stolen.

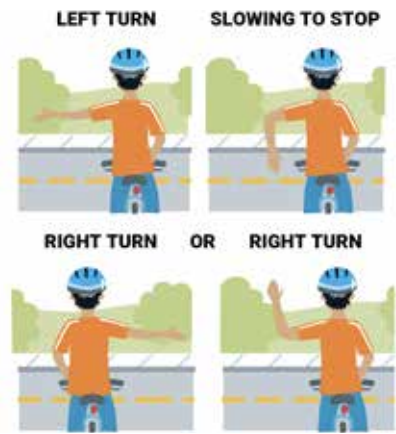
Beyond theft prevention, the site is a great place to keep pictures and part details of your two-wheeled companion. EPS collects 25-30 bicycles each week

and, in the past, only 24 percent of these were returned to owners. Those numbers have improved due to the Bike Index registry.

Theft prevention tips:

- Always secure bikes with high-quality U-locks or heavy-duty chain locks, not cables.
- Follow the “lock it or lose it” principle even for quick stops.
- Secure your bike properly by looping the lock through both the frame and rear wheel if possible.
- Use one of the many community bike parking loops or a secure pole that can’t be removed or broken.
- If your bike lights are valuable, consider removable lights when you park.
- For extra protection, if you are leaving your bike for a longer period, use a quick-release front tire that you can take with you.
- Lock up your bike even if you have it parked in your garage or yard, as thieves tend to commit crimes of opportunity when available.
- Report the theft to the EPS. As not only does this give the crime prevention officers an idea of where theft is happening, but there is always a chance of recovery. You can do this on the web-

- site linked here.
- Consider air tags to help aid the tracking of your stolen bike and don’t hesitate to call the police to help with retrieval. It may not seem a priority crime, but local enforcement officers are more than happy to assist at any level.
- Unique identifiers on your bike can aid in identification of a found bike and may deter theft. Make sure to note them in the Bike Index registration.
- You can find other great tips on our local Bike Edmonton website



General bike safety

- When it came to bike safety, the EPS reiterated the basic rules of the road and you can find more information on the City of Edmonton website.
- Here is a short list of the basics:
- Head Protection: Always wear a helmet that fits properly and is secured.
 - Visibility: Wear light-coloured or bright clothing and use reflectors on your helmet, clothes, and bike. Equip your bike with headlights and taillights for night riding.
 - Signaling: Use hand signals to indicate turns and other changes in direction. Be careful in traffic — shoulder check before sticking your hand out as you could get hit by a fast moving vehicle.
 - Stay off the sidewalks if you are

- cycling with an adult bike.
- Use designated bike lanes or routes whenever possible.
- Obey traffic laws: Follow all traffic signals, stop signs, and other traffic regulations.
- Bike checks: Regularly check your bike for proper functioning of brakes, tires, and other parts.
- Walk your bike across busy intersections, using the crosswalk and following traffic signals.

Additional bike safety tips

- If you stop in a bike lane or busy route, make sure to signal that you are stopping (see image above) and step to the side or off the path on the right side if possible. Not everyone behind you is paying attention, and many electric bikes and scooters go a lot faster than your amateur cyclist.
- Always shoulder check when making any turns or lane changes, even if you have the right of way.
- Watch your hand signals in bike lanes, shoulder check first before sticking your hand out as other riders could try to pass. I personally make a half arm signal when in a tight bike lane so as not to smack anyone in the face.
- Replace your chain yearly or seasonally depending on how much you ride. A stretched chain wears out the teeth on your chain wheel and can lead to slippage. I have learned this the hard way and injured myself a few times when engaging my pedals too hard from a stopped position.
- Never assume cars can see you in special situations, such as parking lots and driveways. Give wide berths or stop if necessary.

Visit The Carrot on June 11 for the next session on “communicating with police”!

Ask a vet: Restful nights

Prevent issues by understanding your pet’s resting habits



Photo by Alin Luna | Pexels

DR. NATASHA P. RUSSELL

As a veterinarian who focuses on the medicine that I can prevent instead of the medicine that I can provide, I thought that restful nights’ may be a good place to start this series. Early detection of changes happening in the body is key and I’m hoping that this will be an easy way for any pet family to “check in” and be on the lookout for abnormal changes.

There’s a lot of information about one’s general health when we look at resting routines. Over the next few nights, let’s start by paying special attention to our pet’s nighttime activities (or, hopefully, lack thereof).

A restful night should be a restorative time, without a lot of activity. If you’re noticing frequent physical shifting, increased bedtime sounds (sighing, whining, snoring or coughing, to name a few), pee or poop breaks, or even nocturnal trips to the water bowl... These symptoms are not considered normal.

Unfortunately, these extra nighttime activities may be early indicators that something in the natural balance of the body is amiss. Shifting pets who seem uncomfortable in many positions may have circulation issues (red blood cells, heart, and/or lung), breathing/airway issues, or even sore joints caused by progressing osteoarthritis, to name a few of the top medical offenders to rule out.

Sighing and whining may indicate chronic stress or an anxiety disorder (due to general needs not being met). Snoring may indicate the need for weight loss or the worsening of an obstructive airway disorder. For all senior pets and/or pets with chronic conditions, I recommend periodically checking in on their Sleeping Respiration Rate (SRR) — anything over 30 warrants some close monitoring and a conversation with your family vet. Instructions on how to best do this can be found online.

The need to empty the bowels or urinary bladder during sleep hours is not normal. I mean, all dog caregivers every-

where have had to clean up diarrhea at 2 am after our doggos got into something that they shouldn’t have (or maybe we shared something with them that we shouldn’t have). But this should be rare, and never daily.

The need to drink an excess of water means that our pets will also need many more bathroom breaks, even suffer from inappropriate urination or urinary accidents inside the home. It will be very important for your veterinary team to rule out which causes are treatable (salty diet/treats, UTIs) and which will need long-term medical management ASAP, like diabetes and declining kidney function. After all, early detection and intervention will allow for more success in our initial treatment attempts and prevent more expensive vet bills and heartaches down the road.

Until next time!
Your Community Vet

Coffee with Cops: Animal Bylaw Edition

Discussing problematic pets on The Ave

JACOB ULICKIJ

Quotations are to be left anonymous to preserve the casual premise of the evening.

Pets can be tricky territory to navigate as neighbours. We love our animals and are often quick to see past their behavioural issues. Yet, when nearby barking continues for too long past sundown, we're often just as quick to put the blame on others.

What can City of Edmonton officials do to balance the rights of pet owners with the concerns of community members? As an informal community discus-

sion at The Carrot Community Arts' Coffee House showed, peace officers working in animal bylaw departments are here to help us find the middle ground in any conflict.

Coffee with Cops is an informal meeting where community members are encouraged to attend a short informative panel with local beat officers, city specialists, and other officials who have served in teams relevant to the day's discussion. The event is supported by REACH Edmonton, who generously provide free snacks and drinks to participants. The March event speakers included animal control peace officers with over seven

years of experience in animal complaints — including stories such as chasing neighbourhood chickens, hosing down feral cats, and even more humane tales of chasing stray tails.

Community members asked questions about handling situations such as excessive defecation, noise complaints, and off-leash sightings. Each question came with a reasoned answer from the peace officers who felt best equipped

to answer. Much like the tangents that questions lead to as others weigh in, the answers display depth in how our city assesses and mediates animal complaints.

"Any complaint starts with calling 311 and filling out a witness form," the lead officer explained. "This builds evidence we can use. From that evidence-based perspective, our teams can liaise more effectively with Alberta Health Services or Fire Rescue Services to remedy the situation."

The throughline of the evening was how **dialing 311 is your best bet for resolving any animal-based concerns**. Whether it's researching permits for exotic pets, locating budget-friendly neutering services, or reporting a coyote, someone at 311 can determine your needs.

311 is also essential since evidence is stored over time. That means your report on a pet locked out in the cold may be the evidence needed to close an already-open file on a problematic property or owner.

"Many of the complaints we receive morph from simple animal control bylaws to court rulings on the Animal Protection Act," said the lead officer. "For instance, excessive barking may be caused by a neglected animal. At that point, it may mean seizing the animal under the APA."

Complaints on file ensure officers are equipped to make the right decision as they approach people and their pets with compassion, resulting in anything from warnings and fines, to support remedy-

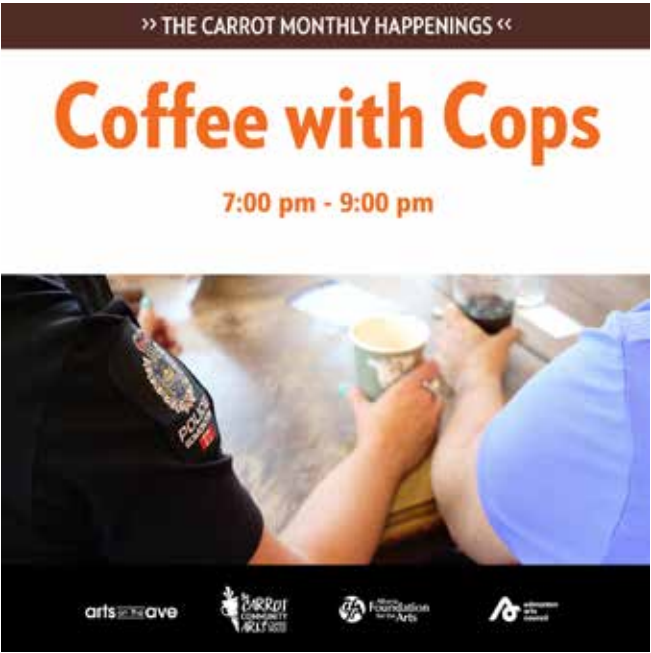
ing the animal situation for the better.

One of the most rewarding aspects of the evening was the wealth of knowledge that frank discussions with peace officers offer. Rumours were dispelled, facts were checked, and community members collaborated on solutions such as pooling local company names to help each other find low-cost health care for pets. Some of the surprising takeaways of the evening included the following:

- On-leash dogs are permitted only on paths and dog parks, not grass fields or school yards.
- The city rents out traps for catching unauthorized pets on your private property.
- The city cannot prevent people from owning pets, and courts can only place restrictions on the pets themselves.
- Spraying your garden with diluted hot sauce can prevent unwanted feline visitors.
- Permitting and education programs allow you to own a backyard chicken flock.

In short, call 311 and trust that animal bylaw peace officers are here to help — not punish.

Visit The Carrot on June 11 for the next session on "communicating with police"!





Delton Community League



COFFEE'S ON!



Are you a senior who is feeling bored or alone, or just wants to meet new friends?
Let's get together!
1st and 3rd Monday of every month,
starting June at 1 PM to 3 PM
Delton Community League
12325 88 Street NW
Coffee and snacks provided

If you prefer to meet Marian from Sage Seniors Association one on one first, or have questions, you can reach her at 780-267-1741 or at menow@mysage.ca



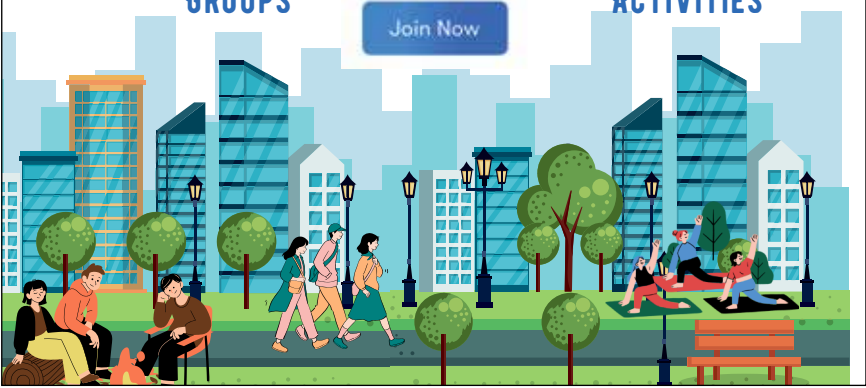


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Emerald Ash Borer Monitoring

A city-wide call to action to report the destructive beetle.



Edmonton is home to thousands of ash trees. They are most commonly found on city boulevards and are a target for the | Mikayla Pohl

MIKAYLA POHL

An invasive insect, the Emerald Ash Borer (EAB), may pose a threat to thousands of ash trees on the street boulevards of Edmonton. The EAB has been detected in six provinces across Canada, and Alberta may be next.

Sacha Curran, an expert in garden cultivation and management, has launched a city-wide community monitoring project that asks for Edmontonians’ help in protecting the city’s ash tree population.

“Be a part of something pretty cool and join your community,”



Sacha Curran is a graduate of the University of Guelph’s Plant Sciences program.

Curran says. “Let’s rally behind our urban forest.”

Curran urges Edmontonians to monitor ash trees in their area and report any signs of EAB to 311 or submit a tree concern online. The most common signs and symptoms of EAB infestation include overall thinning of the tree canopy, dead or dying branches, and yellowing leaves.

The Emerald Ash Borer was first detected near Ontario in 2002 and is now known to devastate forests at a rapid pace. Up to 99 per cent of trees infected with these wood-boring beetles die

within eight to 10 years, making early detection and community monitoring efforts essential.

“Early detection means targeted strategies, immediate management plans and quick implementation. If we don’t jump on this curve right away and we miss this window of early detection...it’s almost too late,” Curran says.

Ash trees make up 41 per cent of all boulevard trees in Edmonton, and replacing them would require a significant investment of public funds. This is an important consideration given the broader ecological value of our urban forest, which is estimated at \$2.7 billion, according to the City of Edmonton Urban Forest Asset Management Plan.

On an economic scale, the loss of ash trees may have larger ramifications, such as increasing homeowners’ cooling and heating costs and the significant financial impact of chemically treating and removing infected trees, as reported by the Government of Canada.

In 2025, The Nature Conservancy reported on the community importance of trees. They found a correlation between urban trees and increased physical activity, reduced stress, reduced air pol-

lution, and support for stormwater management.

Curran explains people should consider the social importance of a declining tree population on their mental and physical health. “Imagining these spaces without trees will make our lives a whole lot more uncomfortable,” she adds.

Many Edmonton neighbourhoods like Londonderry, Woodcroft, and Grandview Heights have already taken initiative in monitoring and reporting EAB. Curran hopes to raise greater awareness about the issue and even engage local school boards in the effort.



Visit Sacha Curran’s website for more information on how to identify ash trees and EAB, how to report a concern to 311, and what to do if you detect EAB during the monitoring season, which runs from May until October.

Agrilus planipennis, the emerald ash borer | Pennsylvania Department of Conservation and Natural Resources file photo

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Tariff troubles? Try these local lagers

Support your local economy with these “domestic” alternatives

JACOB ULICKIJ

On March 4, 2025, President Donald Trump enacted tariffs directly impacting supply lines between Canada, Mexico, and the United States. Details of these tariffs and Canadian retaliations are continually changing, with Edmonton consumers quickly rethinking their buying habits regarding American entertainment, food, and drink.

While the full scope of economic hardship is yet to be seen, local brewers are leading with their best foot forward by producing high-quality alternatives to imported beers. With 20 Edmonton breweries (and counting!) to choose from, even the most stubborn palate will find an alternative to their favourite American-brewed beers. Now more than ever, your purchasing power is the best way to protect local breweries threatened by tariffs.

Eight taps of Albertan craft beer and cider at OTTO Food & Drink in Norwood / Alberta Avenue. | Photo by Jacob Ulickij

“We’re lucky with our contracts regarding imported materials,” says Ben Rix of Edmonton’s Bent Stick Brewing. “We haven’t seen much change yet, but it could come. It’s tough for a business with thin margins when we need to predict cash flow — especially when the situation is always changing.”

Bent Stick Brewing was founded in 2016 off Fort Road in Edmonton’s Belvedere neighbourhood. Now, with a larger taproom and brewing space in Ritchie, they are producing a crisp lager that won #2 Best In Show at the 2024 Alberta Brewing Awards.

“If people are looking to support beers from neighbours rather than a brew from down South, Hay Maker is a tasty and

accessible option,” says Rix.

Bent Stick owners and staff celebrate their gold and silver medals. | Photo by Bent Stick Brewing

Local breweries do more for our city than just making beer. They often serve as a hub for connections, community initiatives, and platforms for other businesses, such as food producers or non-profits.

In addition to brewing exceptional beer, Darren McGeown of Arcadia Brewing Company uses his business to collect and share necessities with vulnerable populations. From his perspective, tariffs offer another opportunity for local consumers to tap into their community pride.

“It’s really interesting to me that you won’t hear much about American craft beer anymore,” says McGeown. “Even a few years ago, everyone was excited about B.C. and American craft beer, but not so much anymore.”

Arcadia owner Darren McGeown prepares to distribute food, warm drinks, and clothing to vulnerable populations. | Photo by Darren McGeown

“I think these tariffs will result in more local pride,” he says. “There’s a benefit hiding in all this.”

McGeown suggests their newest core beer, Likely Lads, for an import lager alternative. “It’s a ‘beer-beer’ for that Budweiser crowd,” he says.

Likely Lads and their Coliseum Blonde Ale are available year-round in their Wihkwentōwin (formerly Oliver) taproom. Residents may recognize their upstairs seating as salvaged chairs from Northlands Coliseum. Tickets are now available for their upcoming live music session with local folk icon Braden Gates on March 23, 2025. Proceeds from this show directly benefit McGeown’s



Bent Stick owners and staff celebrate their gold and silver medals. | Bent Stick Brewing

community outreach collective, Time for Kindness.

Local beer shopping also benefits our agricultural sector as a whole. Alberta has long been North America’s leading malted barley producer. Large maltsters like Rahr Malting in Alix, AB, and small-batch artisans like Hogarth Malt and Hammer Malt are turning locally grown barley into the base ingredients for crisp lagers without the additives you can expect from larger producers.

Since many large beer producers have elected to make their partial ingredient lists public, it is easy to compare their extensive recipes of imported corn syrup, malto-dextrin, rice, and artificial flavours to

the shorter lists on local cans — often limited to only malt, water, hops, and yeast sourced from Canadian companies like Guelph’s Escarpment Labs or Vancouver’s Hops Connect.

Next time you fill your fridge or pop out for a pint, support your local economy by sampling some beer from the prairies. Your support goes a long way toward securing the future of independent producers, retailers, and community builders.



Eight taps of Albertan craft beer and cider at OTTO Food & Drink in Norwood / Alberta Avenue. | Jacob Ulickij



Arcadia owner Darren McGeown prepares to distribute food, warm drinks, and clothing to vulnerable populations. | Darren McGeown

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Free access to hand, power, and garden tools for Alberta Avenue, Parkdale-Cromdale & Spruce Avenue league members. Individual membership \$50.

Volunteers are the heart of community

Learn about local programs you can join or support



The group meets on a sunny day with our guide, Megan on the right | Sherridon Routley

SHERRIDON ROUTLEY

In early May, Arts on the Ave (AOTA) hosted a Volunteer Stroll, which took participants interested in giving back to their community on a tour to see programs in action. Our hosts and tour guides were Megan Lindsay, AOTA’s volunteer coordinator, and Edwin Aquino, The Carrot Coffeehouse manager.

Bethel Food Pantry

Since the pandemic, AOTA has been hosting a food pantry every Monday (except holidays) from 3 to 5 pm at the Bethel Gospel Chapel on 95 Street and 114 Avenue. Ammar Alshikh leads the volunteers (now ranging from 20 to 30) as his passion project. Volunteers from The Carrot, the church, and the community support distribution to over 200 households each week.

“It’s called ‘Shopping with Dignity.’ It’s set up a bit like a little grocery aisle,” Lindsay explains. Groups of six or seven people are taken through and get an opportunity to select dry goods, clothing, household products, and children’s books. Various information resources are also available. To top it off, each person gets a little treat at the end.

“They are members of our community and we are treating them with dignity, and they actually get the choice of what they need,” says Lindsay.

Green Alleys project

Next, we were led down the adjacent alley to see an example of how everybody can benefit from neighbourhood awareness and beautification — especially in neglected corridors like our alleyways. We saw one of six sets of planters designed by Jonathan Luckhurst, an urban agriculture consultant, indoor farm builder, and biophilic designer. These robust planters are self-wicking and only need watering about once a month depending on the heat! Anyone is welcome to harvest from them. Lindsay says, “Take what you need! Parsley grows a lot, so if you need it, come and grab it.”

Make the Call initiative

Part of the Green Alleys project also involves brightening the area with art, establishing safer play areas for children, cleaning up the alleyway litter and debris and deterring crime. The “Make the Call” initiative gives guidance in how to report non-emergency situations such as

problem properties, needles in the alley, garbage dumping, speeding vehicles on residential streets, and other suspicious or criminal issues.

“A big initiative that we have been doing and pushing out is ‘see something, say something,’” says Lindsay. “Police will always tell you that they don’t know what they don’t know.” The more calls about that same issue or that same address help increase the priority.

She added, “Instead of just having some meetings, we walk around the neighborhood pointing out problems and asking questions. Residents are reminded that their voice matters and they can find a path to reporting their problem by following the guidance given on the website.

Families Helping Families

This grocery fulfillment program asks caring donors to help twice a month

with a \$75 shopping trip that is delivered directly to a family in need by the volunteers themselves. Right now they are overwhelmed with families needing assistance and you can find out more about how to help your community on the website.

Lodgepole Communitas

The next stop was St. Faith Church to meet host Betty Kaahwa. As a newcomer to Canada, Kaahwa took the love and support she received from the community and decided to give it back by being a cornerstone of the Lodgepole’s programs.

Their programs are varied and include Indigenous teachings, art therapy, recovery meetings, reintegration of people who have been incarcerated, a collective kitchen, a bakery, and weekly meals. They serve breakfast every Saturday 10-11 am, lunch on Thursdays 11:30-12:30 pm, and dinner on Fridays 5-6 pm.

The bakery program is a point of pride for Kaahwa. It brings together new immigrants and residents that needed a hand in their path forward. “We have a local bakery, it’s all for the community,” she explains. “The people reintegrating make cookies and sourdough bread, and the people from Africa, they make Ugandan treats like chapatis, samosas, and mandazi.”

“We work with reintegration, people who have been incarcerated who feel they have lost hope. They come and learn skills and they give us their skills as well,” adds Kaahwa.

She also reiterates the need for more volunteers in helping transform the lives

of those seeking support: “We need people for sales, people who can be in the kitchen. We especially need help with transportation.”

Lodgepole Communitas operates in two locations, and includes three churches and a wide-ranging community support program with many inclusive entry points. Go to their website to learn more and complete the volunteer form to help out.

The Nina

Our tour ended outside the The Nina Haggerty Centre for the Arts and Stollery Gallery, an organization that helps artists with disabilities or marginalized thrive and grow. While we didn’t do a tour, the facility regularly hosts exhibits and sells works at their shop and online. In addition to the ground floor, the building provides affordable apartment housing to those on a limited budget.

We thanked Megan for her time as she quickly headed to her next volunteer interaction. I was enamoured at the sense of community on the Ave, and how many members there were contributing to the common good on a daily basis. I am probably just scratching the surface,



Megan shows off the robust planters located in six alleyways | Sherridon Routley

If you want to fully explore a role as a much needed volunteer, visit The Carrot online or in person at 9351 118 Ave.



A beaming Betty Kaahwa greets us at the Lodgepole Communitas | Sherridon Routley

Somewhere Cycles

Affordable, personable, and community-focused bike care



Owner Kevin Schmidt overlooking his workbench | Jacob Ulickij

JACOB ULICKIJ

Tucked into a modest shopfront in McCauley is Edmonton’s newest bicycle repair shop, Somewhere Cycles. While bikes are powered by legs, chains, and gears, owner Kevin Schmidt proves his

small operation can run on a big heart. “Bikes transformed my life,” says Schmidt. “They changed how I approached the city. They changed how I approached the world.”

As a McCauley local, he has dreamed of using his years of bike repair experience to create a business that focuses on community building alongside the mechanics. For a neighbourhood like McCauley, that means engaging with all abilities, riders, and bike styles to come up with creative solutions that put families back on the road.

“I’ve wanted to open a bike shop for 10 years. Even more, I’ve wanted to be a hub. Somewhere for events and community, and where we can be advocates for biking.”

The notion of community building is part of the studio itself, as the striking workbench centrepiece is crafted out of lumber donated by the local restaurant OTTO.

“Ed [owner of OTTO] has been a tremendous help, I love the idea that this bench is like a seed of neighbourhood that’s fallen over here and taken root,” says Schmidt.

Following a bustling opening week, Somewhere Cycles is eager to fill its

books with new bicycles, faces, and opportunities to get involved with other businesses, such as an educational pop-up outside Paper Birch’s upcoming Canadian Independent Bookstore Day celebrations on Saturday, April 26.

Besides repair and maintenance, riders can expect upcoming events like community group rides that encourage cycling through McCauley’s diverse terrain and trails.

“The group rides I’m planning are more of a casual, experience-based ride than sports-focused,” Schmidt explains. “It’s something more like coffee in the park followed by an all-abilities ride and other fun experiences.”

There is no better time than spring to walk in for a tune-up. Somewhere Cycles’ experience in everything from e-bikes to trolleys means no ride is off the table, and every conversation offers something new to learn.

“People are welcome to bring anything in,” Schmidt says. “We’ll work together to make a meaningful decision about how you want to ride.”



Stepping outside for a drop-in | Jacob Ulickij

Somewhere Cycles is located at 10816 95 St, Edmonton, AB T5H 2E3. The shop is open to visitors from Wednesday to Sunday, 10 am to 6 pm.

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Wind therapy

If you're a biker, you know there's nothing like it!

DEREK QUITTENTON

Wind therapy? What's that?
Ask anyone who drives a motorcycle about wind therapy and you will get a heartfelt answer.
Wind therapy is riding eastbound along a quiet back road in the bottom of the Canadian Prairies. The westerly wind is at your back, the prairie grain crops are waving to you as you pass pattering along at 81 km/h in a 100 km zone.
Wind therapy is getting tired of riding east in the eastbound lane. You sift over to the westbound lane and ride east in the west lane. Against the non-existent oncoming traffic. No one is coming west. No one is coming east. Just you and the wind at your back. For that one crazy minute, you are blissfully alone, and loving it.
Wind therapy is riding past fields of Prairie canola and smelling the flowers. You ride past a field of sunflowers, six feet high, and you get their calming odour.
Wind therapy is roaring through a mountain pass in the northern Rocky Mountains. You are riding hard on a fat left-hand curve. You hold out your right hand and reach for the solid grey granite

wall of death just a fingertip away. There is no shoulder. Just road. Rock. The real possibility of death. Pure freedom.
Those of you, riding along in your steel and glass, all-wheel drive air-conditioned SUV cage watching, but never feeling, the world go by. We call you "cagers". Cagers ride with stereo blasting, strapped in seat-belted airbag protection. You don't "get" wind therapy.
Wind therapy is riding westbound through Gross Morne National Park in Newfoundland. Riding westbound against the wicked wind off the Labrador Current. Wind bounces fiercely along the rock walls of the Tablelands. A wind so strong that it lifts the front of your bike off the road. A wind so variable it bounces along the walls of the Tablelands and changes direction.
A powerful head wind is suddenly blowing so strong off your right that it wants to shove you into the oncoming lane. Or so strong off your left you are heading for the ditch.
The road in Gross Morne is almost hand-paved. It's the best road on the whole of The Rock. It's long, straight, without a single pothole. The road is



Heavy weather coming in – Destruction Bay, Yukon. | Derek Quittenton

raised up on a bed of rock. There is no shoulder. You must stay on the road, or you will drop six feet onto killing rocks. You keep going. You make it to a safe campground and set up for the night. And breathe a sigh of lovely relief.
Wind therapy is a cold morning riding south past Destruction Bay on the way to Whitehorse, Yukon. You are heading home from a ride to Alaska. The day is sunny, but cool. You look up ahead, way ahead. Weather is moving in. Clouds are tightening, blocking the sun. The wind is picking up and you are riding right

into it. You have no choice, other than finding a rock to hide under. You gear up and ride on.
Four hours later, you roll into Whitehorse, cold, wet, and sparkling clean. After a three-hour shower, you have to be clean. You are exhilarated and wouldn't have it any other way. You made it, you conquered the storm. You feel as if life is as good as it ever will be.
It is pure, unadulterated wind therapy. Ask a biker!



Took my life in my hands taking this picture! | Derek Quittenton

Thrift store savvy

Thrifting can be friend or enemy to your pocketbook



Student Natalia Wolffenbuttel is taking some thrift store gems back home to Brazil. | Constance Brissenden

CONSTANCE BRISSENDEN

I admit it: I bought a beautiful pair of new black shoes. The price was \$140. Lucky for me, I only paid \$12 at the Bissell Thrift Shop at 8818 118 Ave. NW.
Unlucky for me, they just don't fit.
The gleam of the unsullied leather and the lure of a desirable brand name sucked me in. I wanted to resist buying them, but I came up with excuses. Wear a thick insole, I told myself. Or maybe thicker socks.

Sitting in my closet, my new shoes have taught me a lesson. A thrift store bargain is only a bargain if you can actually use your purchase.
As my practical friend Larry Ellis observes, "I like to drop into the thrift stores. I wander through, and stop if something catches my attention, usually in the housewares area. Then I ask myself, 'Do I need it?' If I don't need it, I walk out empty-handed. Buying can be an open door to hoarding."
For some thrift shoppers, digging

around the racks is a delightful break from reality. "It's a time for myself," shopper Joan (last name held on request) told me. We were both flipping through the one-dollar rack at The Mustard Seed Thrift Store at 6527 118 Ave. NW.
I know the feeling, Joan! No one judges you. But, as Joan advised, "I know how much I have to spend every month. On-sale racks are my best friend."
Both The Mustard Seed and Bissell thrift stores have discount days. Sign up for notifications. If you can, be patient until you get a discount. The discounts usually apply to both in-store and online offerings.
I've bought winter coats, boots, hats, scarves, and gloves for winter. Bathing suits, beach shoes, bath robes, and camping chairs for summer.

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For some shoppers, like massage therapist Amanda Sayer, shopping seasonally is a strategy. At the start of each season, Sayer allocates a budget and buys a new wardrobe. At the end of the season, she returns the clothes to the thrift shop and starts again.
Sayer is in control of her spending. She knows how much she has to spend and sticks with her plan.
I've picked up useful strategies from other thrifters. Like so many, I watch my spending more closely these days. I'm learning when to say yes and when to

say no. I keep a record of my thrift store purchases. I "shop my closet," making note of what I need when I'm looking around. I still enjoy browsing, but don't always leave with a purchase.
I continue to enjoy my thrifting "mini-holidays." And I particularly enjoy introducing others to the thrill of the chase.
For Brazilian visitor, Natalia Wolffenbuttel, Edmonton's thrift stores have been a delight.
The 24-year-old Concordia University of Edmonton student will take back some true goodies when she returns to Sapiranga, a small city in the state of Rio Grande do Sul.

Among her favorite purchases are three pairs of designer jeans, bought for a total of \$22. "If I got these back home, each would cost at least \$40," she says." Yes, there are thrift stores in Brazil. But here, "the size range is better, and the clothing is better quality."
To prove her point that thrift stores are "one of the best things about Edmonton," her big red suitcase isn't enough. Wolffenbuttel bought a second one... You guessed it, from a thrift store.



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