

Rat Creek Press

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BY THE COMMUNITY—FOR THE COMMUNITY

SUMMER 2026

A new flock joins the garden

Alberta Ave's new chicken residents give urban agriculture a boost



Jacob Ulickij & Erick Estrada and the recent additions to the Alberta Avenue Community Garden—four Lohmann Brown hens. | Karen Mykietka

TERENCE J. FOUGERE

Community gardens bring much needed green life to the area after a long winter, and healthy produce to local gardening families. The **Alberta Avenue Community League** has been growing community and plant life in its community garden since 2011. But this summer, there is a special addition. In May, four feathered friends joined the garden — chickens!

“After running a pretty successful vegetable donation program, it seemed a pretty logical next step to use some of the skills we have in-house, some of the connections and experience to show people, even more, what urban agriculture should be,” shares **Jacob Ulickij**, staff gardener at the community league,

about the introduction of **Lohmann Brown** chickens to the community garden.

Ulickij adds, “We also wanted to showcase that you could do this in your own backyard. The chickens are in a 10-by-10 square foot area, and that’s all it takes.”

The project was the idea of **Erick Estrada**, a community gardener and former league board member.

So, why chickens?

“We noted a lack of connection to our food systems in our urban context, and my personal desire to teach kids in our community how protein gets to our table,” says Estrada. He feels that introducing chickens is a great way to teach people in the community about topics like food sustainability and food cycles.

“Understanding how the food cycles work within our urban context and how many of our neighbourhood kids have never seen a live chicken, so that was one of the main drivers to bring knowledge closer,” adds Estrada. “As the program progresses, more kids seeing a live chicken and figuring out where eggs come from and how much work it takes to take care of livestock will be huge for them.”

It’s a process to get chickens. The province and city have rules and regulations for owning livestock.

Some of Edmonton’s Urban Livestock requirements for hens are: obtain a **Provincial Premises ID** (PID), which registers the owner’s flock in a provincial database; submit a site plan for the chicken coop and run; complete the Chickens 101 Course; and many other small details that go along with the process.

Despite the rules and regulations, Ulickij said that the City of Edmonton makes it easy to get a permit and was very helpful through the process.

But paperwork was just the start. Ulickij also spent many hours building a chicken coop and run. The coop is equipped with an automatic door with a timer and light sensor. The run includes an auto-feeder and waterer to make managing the chickens easier.

Another consideration was how to integrate the chickens into the busy, multi-use space. The solution was to

put them in a fenced yard, not visible from the main event space. Then openings were cut in the fence facing the garden and screened so people could view the chickens.

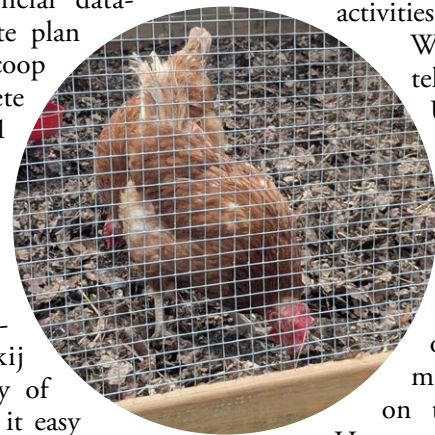
The four chickens could lay up to four eggs a day, but so far have been averaging one or two. “Eggs will be used for our programs such as seniors lunch,” says Ulickij.

A number of residents stopped by to see the chickens during the first weekly Open Garden Night on Thursday, May 21. Children and adults alike were excited to see them. Ulickij and another community gardener will be in the garden every Thursday to give tours and answer questions. Some weeks may have activities or educational talks.

When asked how to tell the chickens apart,

Ulickij says: “In this case, their comb, this would be the easiest way. This girl (chicken) has a medium-sized comb, one of the other hens has a much floppier thing on top of her head.”

However, after getting to know them more, Ulickij says he can tell them by the hens’ distinct personalities.



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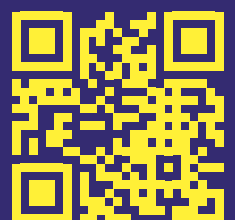
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Small park, big history

A little green space that goes a long way



Photo Dustin Covey

DUSTIN COVEY

Lorne Street Park is easy to miss, which is part of its charm. It is not one of Edmonton’s grand destination parks. It is a small neighbourhood green space near **92 Street and 113 Avenue**, the kind of place that belongs mostly to the people who live around it.

In the course of a day, Lorne Street Park is seldom busy, but it sees a lot of visitors. A parent may stop there with a child for half an hour. Someone walking a dog may cut through on the familiar path. A neighbour may sit for a few minutes in the shade or pause on the way back from an

errand. It is used in small pieces, by many people, in the ordinary rhythm of the neighbourhood.

Lorne Street Park does not need crowds to be important. Its value is in its availability. It offers a little open space, a little play space, and a little breathing room in a part of the city where those small public places matter. It is seldom crowded, but almost always in use.

But its name carries a piece of

“Local history does not always arrive with a plaque. Sometimes it’s just a wooden sign on a quiet intersection.”

Alberta Avenue history.

Before 92 Street was 92 Street, it was Lorne Street. The name appears to date from around 1908, when Edmonton’s north side was still taking shape and many local streets still had names rather than numbers. Lorne Street was likely named in honour of **John Douglas Sutherland Campbell**, the Marquess of Lorne, who served as Canada’s Governor General from 1878 to 1883.

That kind of name reflected the habits of the time. Early Canadian cities often borrowed names from British aristocracy, colonial officials, royalty, and empire. To modern ears, those names can feel distant from the lived reality of a neighbourhood like Alberta Avenue. At the time, colonial influences strongly affected naming choices, and the park’s name reflects the cultural history of the early 20th century.

In 1913, Edmonton officially renamed Lorne Street as 92 Street. The change was part of a larger municipal shift toward the numbered grid system we still use today. As the city expanded, numbered streets and avenues made Edmonton easier to organize, navigate, and manage. The change was practical, but it also meant that many

older street names disappeared from daily use.

The street name vanished from addresses and signs, but it survives in Lorne Street Park. That makes the park more than a small green space. It is also a modest reminder of an earlier map, when this part of the city was still being named, organized, and settled into the shape we recognize today. Its contributions to Edmonton as an inner-city green space, rest and play area, gathering and hang out have enriched the neighbourhood and Edmonton for generations.

For longtime residents, this kind of layered history may feel familiar. Alberta Avenue and the surrounding communities are full of small survivals: older houses with new families, commercial buildings with changed purposes, former schools, remembered businesses, and street corners that carry more history than they show at first glance.

Local history does not always arrive with a plaque. Sometimes it’s just a wooden sign on a quiet intersection. A spot of relaxing green that sits on more than a century of change.

Once you notice that, the park becomes a little lusher, richer and vibrant.

And so do we.

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Contributors

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

Summer 2026

Alexander Dowsey is a historian and archaeologist living in Alberta Avenue, with a passion for politics, and a penchant for gardening.

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).

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 is spent gardening, reading, and as a foster mom for rescued dogs.

Kathryn Dutchak is an artist and illustrator based out of the Edmonton area, you can find her work at kakkysticker.studio.

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.

Sherridon Routley is a friend of the community who enjoys urban exploring every corner of the city by bicycle.

Dustin D. Covey known artistically as Dook, is a western Canadian artist, illustrator, and author whose life spans pioneer prairie beginnings and the digital studio.

Terence J. Fougere is an Edmonton-based journalist studying for a Bachelor of Communications in Journalism at MacEwan University.

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ABOUT US
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The paper is delivered by Canada Post to all houses, apartments, and businesses in the seven neighbourhoods listed above including those with no unaddressed mail notices. For the most part, delivery begins on the last Wednesday of the month.

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Everyone deserves healthy food

WECAN Food Basket Society expands its base



WECAN volunteer Harley Pawluk (left), with AACL's WECAN volunteer coordinator Christine Turenne organizing meat distribution in February. | Photo Constance Brissenden

CONSTANCE BRISSENDEN

Aimee Villeneuve was a social work graduate in 1996 when she discovered **WECAN Food Basket Society**. Searching for a job, she could barely make ends meet.

She learned WECAN was a healthy and affordable way to buy food every month. For a \$5 annual membership, she ordered a selection of meats for \$20, and fruits and vegetables for \$15. “It was one less thing to worry about,” recalls Villeneuve. Nearly 30 years later, and now a rehab practitioner for **Recovery Alberta**, she is still a WECAN member, picking up her order from the **Alberta Avenue Community League (AACL)** depot.

WECAN Food Basket Society was launched in 1993. Many Edmonton families and individuals were experi-

encing “empty fridge syndrome,” an end-of-the-month issue. Today we refer to the situation as food insecurity, and it’s as real now as it was back then. A 2022 survey found that over 20 per cent of Albertans face food insecurity due to low wages, rising food prices, and the cost of everyday living.

Back in 1993, City of Edmonton social workers **Cathy Vereyken** and **Alecia D’Elia** observed the problem first-hand. They launched **WECAN Food Basket Society** to ensure that people could access fresh and nutritious food near the end of the month, when finances were running low. To lower food costs, the founders encouraged the community of Abbotsfield to pool money and buy meat and produce in bulk. Today, the program has grown from 150 to 1,500 members, with delivery at neighbourhood



Aimee Villeneuve has been a WECAN member for more than 30 years. | Constance Brissenden

“depots” in Edmonton and as far away as Westlock.

Depots are hosted by churches, parent link centres, tenant buildings, community leagues, daycares and other organizations. **Alberta Avenue Community League** and **Bethel Gospel Chapel** act as depots in the Rat Creek Press area.

Now halfway through a four-year plan, WECAN is looking to grow. “There are no restrictions to becoming a member,” says **Program Coordinator Joseph Flesch**. “Anyone can join, without filling in forms or showing financial status.”

In fact, WECAN wants to grow. Flesch invites your membership. “The more members we have, the better bulk-buying deals we can make on the foods we purchase. Everyone deserves healthy food.” There is no limit on the number of orders a household can make.

Pre-paid orders must be placed by the end of the first week of every month. Pickup is in the third week, at a pre-arranged depot, in a one-hour timeslot.

WECAN chair and volunteer, **Jennifer Scherer**, stresses that the society is not a charity. “We are a food co-op, with strength in numbers. We rely heavily on our volunteers. Without volunteers, we would be in a really hard spot.”

Volunteers go above and beyond. Once a month, a volunteer driver from Westlock, 90 km away, arrives to pick up more than 40 orders to deliver in the town. “Rural depots benefit communities,” says Joseph Flesch. “All it takes are volunteers like in Westlock.” He looks forward to growth in this area.

Longtime Edmonton member Keith Kasha appreciates the reliability of ordering from WECAN. “The budget is set, and the price



Fruit and veggies waiting for pickup at the Alberta Avenue Community League “depot.” | Constance Brissenden

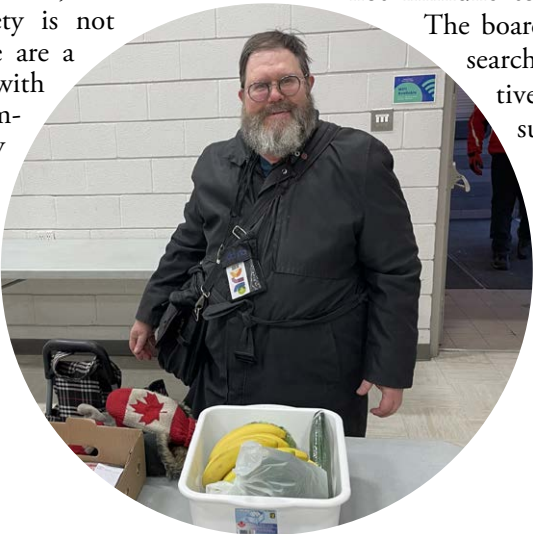
doesn’t go up or down. I get a good variety of food for my money.” A meat box includes lean ground beef and chicken, with a no-pork option available. A fruit and vegetable box usually includes three veggies and three fruits.

WECAN Food Basket Society is not immune to rising prices.

The board continues to search out alternatives and make substitutions if required due to price. It works hard to continue to be an alternative in the face of inflation and food scarcity.

An informative monthly newsletter includes upcoming

WECAN events, tasty recipes, and price comparisons.



WECAN member Keith Kasha volunteered for the casino fundraiser in February. | Constance Brissenden

For more information and to order: **WECANfood.com**; **info@WECANfood.com**; **780 413 4525**.

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If you are hungry, you are hungry

The Afro-Caribbean Food Bank provides food for our community

CONSTANCE BRISSENDEN

The first time I dropped into the **Afro-Caribbean Food Bank**, I met a woman from Cameroon. She was preparing to leave, lugging a heavy grocery bag the five blocks to the LRT. I offered to drive her and was glad I did. I learned that she had three children, from a teenager down to an eight-month-old. To help make ends meet, she was willing to walk a long way with a very heavy bag filled with food.

Participants in the Afro-Caribbean Food Bank, like this mother, confront food insecurity on a daily basis, says **Program Director Ranti George**. “When you are hungry, you are hungry.” Hunger drives away all other thoughts, goals, dreams, and possibilities. “Our participants come from all walks of life, all ages, and all sexes. We use our voice to help those who need our help.”

As an official **Food Bank Alberta** depot, the Afro-Caribbean Food Bank serves approximately 400 people every month.

Participants include 10 per cent Caucasian, plus Asian, Indigenous, African, Caribbean, and others. “Alberta has the highest food insecurity of all the provinces,” says George.

As a mother herself, she under-



Staff with Afro-Caribbean Food Bank delivery van: (left to right) Angel, Ranti, Rosemonde, Joseph. | Constance Brissenden

stands that children don't understand why they are hungry and don't have enough food to eat. “I am proud that we can remove the barriers for families and individuals to have cultural, familiar food. Among other benefits, the food bank reduces stress, depression, and related mental health issues.”

Originally from Nigeria, Ranti George has been in Canada for 24 years. A social worker, she is one of the founders of the Afro-Caribbean Food Bank. One of its unique aspects is its mission “to bring culturally significant food to underserved communities in Edmonton.” Through a series of programs, cultural iden-

tity and heritage are fostered. Staple foods reflecting diverse communities are offered.

In addition, the food bank has a series of programs to introduce Canada's foods and lifeways to its participants.

The **Beyond Food Program** offers workshops on financial awareness, a settlement program, and a navigation program, among others. Participants in the navigation program meet others, share experiences, prepare resumes, and carry out job searches.

Cooking classes are held every month to introduce healthy, tasty, flexible, and cost-saving Canadian foods such as tuna casseroles and mac

and cheese.

A kids' summer program in July and August is an annual event. Children are introduced to community needs, volunteering, kindness, and giving back.

Five staff members are supported by volunteers. Everyone starts as a volunteer and can gradually work their way into a job, George points out.

The goal is to be as supportive as possible. If a participant lives too far away, the food bank's delivery van can bring food to them. This is especially important for seniors and those with disabilities.

A small thrift store on the site also provides funds for the food bank. I bought a nifty collection of embroidery thread for five dollars, glad that my small purchase could help.

“Food knows no culture,” says George. “Even though we are called the Afro-Caribbean Food Bank, we serve everybody.”

For more information:
Afro-Caribbean Food Bank, 11546 80 Street NW
info@acfoodbank.ca;
phone 780 477 8220

The Heart & Plate offers fresh, quality dining

New Parkdale Cromdale restaurant fills a niche



Server Shubhneet (left) and chef Shavi are both graduates of NAIT business school. | Constance Brissenden

CONSTANCE BRISSENDEN

Every new business needs a Mr. Lorne.

Let me explain. The new **Heart & Plate Restaurant (8157 112 Ave)** is nestled in the mini-plaza across from Save-On-Foods. The owners, **Kavita** and **Neeraj Sharma**, spent more than a year converting the corner unit into a sit-down restaurant after the closing of a donair take-out.

I drove by dozens of times, watched workers entering and motion inside. A sign outside promised the res-

taurant would be opening soon.

Behind the scenes, City of Edmonton permits were on a slow track. Finally, on March 20, 2026, the official day came. Spanking new, the Heart & Plate was ready to welcome diners.

The only problem was that you couldn't tell that the restaurant was open. One small neon sign above the door didn't have much impact. Considering that this is a seven-day-a-week restaurant, open from 8 am to 9 pm daily, this was a pity.

That is, until Mr. Lorne Billingsley-Smith came along. The Alberta Avenue resident obviously found what he was looking for: a place for a good breakfast, well presented, with a bottomless cup of coffee. He brought his own newspaper subscription to read at his leisure.

Mr. Lorne, as he's known to staff, printed off “We are open” signs, and they were taped to the windows. He told his friends about the restaurant. He suggested that the owners contact Rat Creek Press about the new café.

If you, like Mr. Lorne, are looking for a tasty breakfast, the chocolate dream pancakes with whipped cream and two eggs any style will tempt you. You can also try classic eggs benedict with fresh fruit.

“There is no comparable offering in the entire Rat Creek service

area,” says Billingsley-Smith. “Even the bacon and eggs get a great presentation.” The retired businessman can be found at breakfast several times a week.

Lunch and dinner offer dozens of dishes. Chef Neeraj Sharma brings 15 years of experience with him — seven as chef at Marriott Hotels, where he mastered high-end techniques and quality control. He and wife Kavita are committed to fresh ingredients with a noticeably better taste.

Says manager Kavita Sharma, “We have a slow-food philosophy. Our focus is on fresh, non-processed ingredients. We believe the quality of a meal starts with the quality of the raw ingredients — nothing is pre-packaged.”

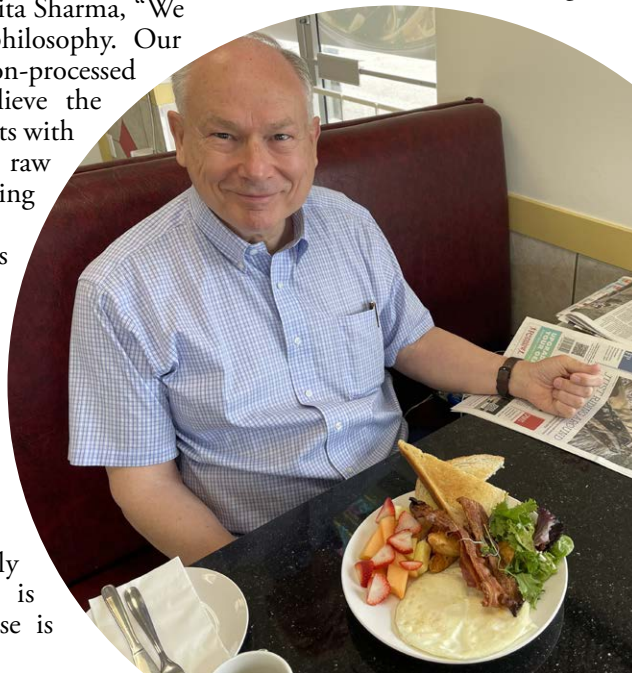
Signature dishes include Fish & Chips, Pollo Parmigiana, and fresh-fruit shakes. Finish up with a mouth-watering desert such as choco lava cake or turtle cheesecake.

There are daily specials. Parking is free. A liquor license is on its way.

The Heart & Plate definitely fills a gap. The place is spanking new; the staff are attentive. It's a place to slow down with friends

or have a meeting. A big screen television is a plus for sports lovers. With room for 35 people, it would be a good spot for a family party.

Best wishes to our latest culinary entry into the neighbourhood. As Mr. Lorne also pointed out, The Heart & Plate is located at the headwaters of Rat Creek. Underground, to be sure, but a good omen for a new local hang-out.



Local resident Lorne Billingsley-Smith enjoys breakfast along with reading his daily newspaper at The Heart & Plate. | Constance Brissenden

A journey of faith and food

Liberian Cuisine’s unconventional success story



John Freeman stands proud in his 118 Avenue restaurant | Sherridon Routley

AUTHOR

I visited **Liberian Cuisine** in between lunch and dinner rush to sit down with proprietor **John Freeman**. His surname is commovmerican-Liberian descent, the freed slaves who recolonized Africa in the 1800s and returned to North America in more recent times. “My mom was a cook, you know?” he told me. “It’s in the family. My parents are business people. We never believed in working for anybody in life.”

Although his love of cooking was inspired by his mom, Freeman’s first business was a junkyard and used car business 23 years ago in Ottawa. His first restaurant was not ethnic cuisine but a **Wimpy’s Diner** chain restaurant in Toronto. Eventually moving to Edmonton in 2013, Freeman worked in the oil field to pay the bills. Besides his wife Gloria’s enthusiasm for the move, he felt out of place, “When I first came here I didn’t like it, really, really boring. I had no friends here. I didn’t hang out. Just stuck

at home-work-home.” When he had enough and wanted to return to Eastern Canada, his wife told him to have faith, “You gotta stay here because there’s a future here. I prayed about it and had a vision that God wanted me to stay even if it wasn’t easy.”

That vision came to light when he and many field workers were laid off during the 2019 Covid outbreak and Freeman decided to give the restaurant business another try. A regular attendee of his community church, the **Solid Rock** (now **Royal Faith**), he explained, “My wife, on Sunday, she would cook. Do meat pie or Liberian dry rice. We’d take it to the church and let people buy, it was very popular.” Freeman had an unusual plan of how to turn this into a business, “Instead of opening a restaurant... what I do? I just cook the food in my house, right?, then I put it on social media. And I say, ‘free delivery!’” There was no place too far for him to deliver, from St. Albert to Sherwood Park, all for \$19.99.

For Freeman, it was about building clientele and not business sense: “People thought it was stupid. Yeah, crazy. But the customers always call for more.” So when the pandemic ended, he marketed directly to his newfound connections through emails, group chats and social media. True to his vision, on opening day, there was a lineup down the street!

Liberian food combines West

African flavours and coastal ingredients with American cooking methods and staples. Freeman caters to his customers’ tastes by making adjustments to spice levels or letting them choose the protein in the dishes made to order. Popular choices include Jollof Rice, served with chicken or fish and plantain, or Egusi, a pumpkin seed-based soup which is surprisingly popular amongst young kids. “I’m amazed about it. This is a typical African dish but a lot of Canadian kids come here for that every day,” he says.

I tried the ‘desert’ meat pie, which was a blend of savoury and sweet, and it did not disappoint. With many positive reviews on Google, there are more than a few dishes I would return to try.

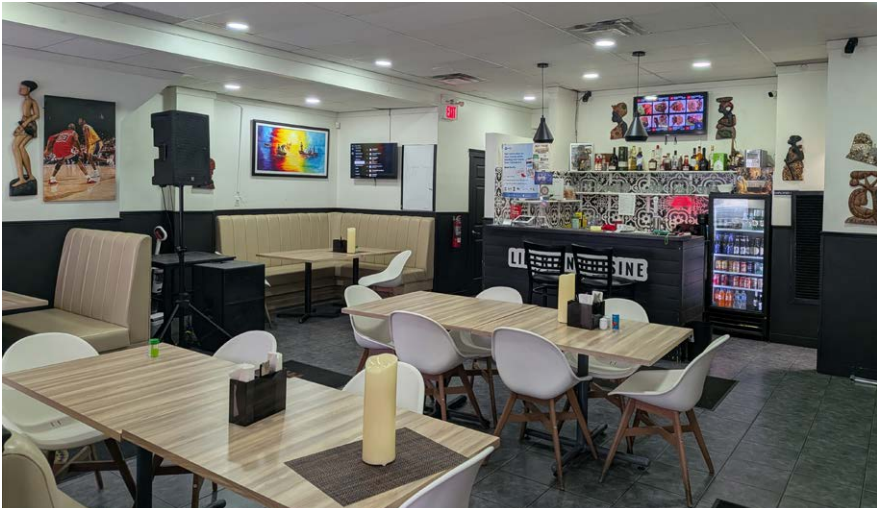
Freeman’s customers are from all ethnicities and walks of life, and the secret to getting them to return is not just great food — it’s making them feel at home. “I got everybody. Canadians, Spanish, South Africans, Nigerians, Zimbabwean. The mayor of Edmonton comes here to eat and many from the Canadian gov-

ernment and Alberta government,” he beamed. “It’s how you present yourself. How can I make your day better? But when you are miserable, they are miserable, you ruin a day for that person. They want to see the atmosphere, the attitude.”

The clean white interior of his 84 Street location on Alberta Avenue is indeed welcoming, with a variety of country flags and soundsystem ready for events and traditional Liberian music on the weekends. Freeman now does most of the cooking and he keeps his kitchen open and orderly, proudly telling me one of his returning customers is a Minister of Health who has been coming since it opened.

He summarized his approach to success and life: “Do something good for people. The money will come later, but once you’ve been renowned people will know you’re legit and they will continue coming. God’s been providing for me and I’m a true believer.”

“Do something good for people. The money will come later”
- John Freeman



A homestyle energy greets you at Liberian Cuisine | Sherridon Routley



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The magic of performance at any age

At 61, Delton resident reinvents herself for the Fringe Theatre



Christie Mawer | Photo by Russ Hewitt

KATHRYN DUTCHAK

As the ice melts, new music, arts and theatre emerge every year. This is a fact of life for Alberta Avenue area resident, .

“I have always wanted to be on stage. Even as a child who had no real idea what that meant and no opportunities to do so, I knew I wanted it,” says **Mawer**. “Part of it stemmed from being really shy and moving a lot as a child. Being on stage was a way to be seen and be someone

else to escape real life for a while and have adventures I may never get to do otherwise.”

Financial struggles throughout her life and into her early adulthood prevented the singer from being able to take classes. As arts, like other industries, struggle with rising inflation and the economy, artistic people like Mawer make the life and soul of our entertainment sector.

“The immediacy of theatre trumps film/tv,” she continues. “The interaction, the immediate response from the audience is electric. A great show can take me through so many emotions, and a great musical makes my heart sing.” Working with theatre groups such as the **Edmonton Musical Theatre**, the **Festival Place Players**, **Nouvo**, and **Pop Goes the Opera**, Mawer is no stranger to being entwined with the theatre scene. With up to four community theatre musicals a year, the 61-year-old Edmontonian knows hard work and dedication.

Her show I ain’t no ingenue but I (used to) sing like one is a one-

woman wonder. It is a tale about dreams and how to adjust them as you age, an appropriate subject matter for someone who may have seen a lot in her time in the theatre.

“Scheduling a group can be a bear!” she said when asked why a one-woman show. “Beyond that, it is my story.” Twenty years ago, Mawer produced several **Fringe** plays, with two that she wrote called We’re all naked under our clothes and A closet diva’s diary. Many years later, she is still grappling with the changes to the Fringe Theatre.

“Once upon a time you lined up to get your spot in Fringe,” she recalls. “When lineups began days ahead of application day, they changed to a lottery. The bin for the lottery is HUGE so your chances of getting a lottery show are slim.”

“For tickets, they used to sell 25 per cent in advance and you had to line up at the individual venue before the show for the rest. Now they sell 100 per cent in advance,” the gifted performer explains.

As for this show, the title came to her one day.

“I thought of this show a few years ago when thinking about how many roles I will never get to play now due to my age,” Mawer explains. “Since I got into theatre older than most do, I was already almost too old to play the romantic lead — the ingénue. I’m also six feet tall, so not really the physical type and I’m not a great dancer. But my voice was the right type. That kept me away from doing musicals for years as I thought I’d

never get a decent role. When I got back into it, I was wondering how I would fit.”

“A way to sing those songs without actually being the ingenue. Brilliant! When I told my voice teacher that I got into this year’s Fringe and the above title, she said, ‘But you don’t sing like one anymore, I’ve been training it out of you’. So, I added ‘used to’ to the title.”

As age in Hollywood and art make up many of the anxieties female actors have about their time and talent, at 61, Mawer’s new production should shake up what we consider the perfect age to be the perfect singer. As Fringe acts contribute to the vibrancy of our local community and talent by questioning the very fundamentals of art on the local level, support to people like Christie Mawer goes a long way. Check out 2026’s Fringe line up to find out how you can contribute to successes like hers.

“A great show can take me through so many emotions, and a great musical makes my heart sing”
- Christie Mawer



Letter:

Neighbours, stand your ground

NITA JALKANEN

Parkdale is a dignified and cherished neighbourhood with all the conveniences of being centrally located. Out of love for their community, with its gardens, sunshine, and green spaces, a number of homeowners in Parkdale-Cromdale have decided to enter into an agreement to protect their properties from future over-development. This agreement is called a Restrictive Covenant, and homeowners in over 25 other neighbourhoods in Edmonton are doing similar agreements in an effort to protect their properties from preda-

tory infill.

Once signed, the Restrictive Covenant is then filed/attached to each property title, and it remains in place until or unless the owners (or future owners) both agree to remove it. It protects properties from ever being developed into anything but a single-family dwelling. This is most important to many of us given the numerous low-cost multi-family rental projects cropping up in our community.

A Restrictive Covenant protects your property, but it also protects your neighbour’s. You will be able to rest easy knowing that a low-budget

apartment building will not get built next to YOU, and your neighbour(s) will know the same.

The legal fees to prepare the agreement have already been paid. For you to add your signature would not be very expensive (maybe around \$200). Depending on how many people are interested, the lawyer could come to our community and several people could sign at once. This is a small price for getting peace of mind!

If you and/or your neighbours are interested in joining the agreement, please contact me.

Learn more about Restrictive

Covenants in this CBC Explains - *Why Edmontonians are using restrictive covenants to shield against infill.*

NITA JALKANEN,
Parkdale resident

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Healing the divide in a digital age

Warm coffee and honest chats challenge the aggressive social media discourse

ALEXANDER DOWSEY

In recent years, it has become clear that the digital world — more specifically, the wide array of social media platforms clamouring for our attention — have been carefully crafted to prioritize content that evokes, and increasingly provokes, strong emotional responses.

Beyond the inherent limitations of short-form social media platforms, content leans into ‘rage baiting’ as a marketing and engagement tactic, intended to elicit an emotional response like rage in order to farm engagement. This affects the way we approach interactions with others; the backdrop is marred with suspicion, anger, fear, and our digital forums of discussion are tailored to favour limited dialogue as gut reactions are monetized.

One of the most surprising contrasts I found to the hostilities of online discourse was around the kitchen tables of family friends and neighbours, mostly those inclined to participate in such discourses through social media. I must admit that it was, and is, still rather jarring to have rather normal conversations over a cup of coffee with someone who had been sharing comments and posts asserting irreconcilable differences with me.

Even more surreal were the moments which sprinkled those conversations with points of common ground, points which seemed in total and complete contradiction of those which they championed on social media. It showed me the remarkable capacity for connection we still share as humans in a digital age, and the vital importance of tangible community connections outside the social media feeds.

Not all people in such a scenario are the same; on the flipside of that

surreal experience are those I’ve had with people who are so committed to their hatred and fear that dialogue is impossible. All the words in the world aren’t enough to convince someone to shake a deeply held hatred, and it is not a fair assumption that those who are the target of that hatred must tolerate it.

It does, however, demonstrate a difference in the outcomes of interaction between the digital world and the world of the proverbial coffee table, and the importance of facilitating dialogue within and outside our communities. In an era of echo chambers, the diversity of our communities and the variety of opportunities for conversation, mutual understanding and, of course, coffee have never been more important.

Seeing the human in each other, in all of its messiness, is vitally important as we grapple with the social consequences of digital isolation, and preserving the common spaces where that can happen is of equally vital importance.

Healing the divide, as the sign created by **Toni Latour** calls us to do, begins in the places we share in our community, in the small moments of connection. Humble gatherings, festivals, leagues, and block parties. Moments like those are what have shaped our communities into the places we love today — messy, complicated, and full of life. And as we eagerly await the arrival of spring, we also look forward to the opportunity to carry that legacy forward.



Small moments of connection can heal the divide.
Alex Dowsey (left) and Colby Crossley (right) | Karen Mykietka

Alberta Avenue Community League

SUMMER

Open Garden Night

THURSDAYS
6:30-8:30 PM

Campfire Music Nights

JUNE 6
JULY 4
AUG 8
SEPT 12

LEARN MORE: ALBERTAAVE.ORG

Spruce Avenue in the 1950s

Jane's Walk celebrates 75 years of community

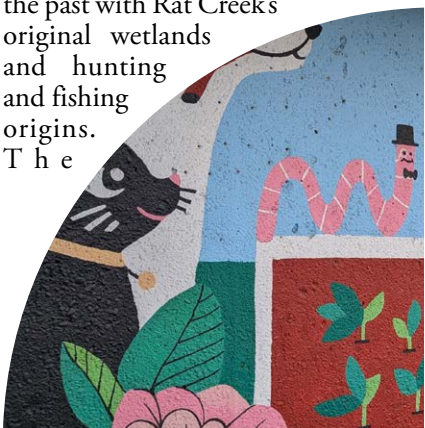


Alita Rickards and Art Sproul in front of the Holy Rosary Catholic Church dress for the 1950s | Sherridon Routley

SHERRIDON ROUTLEY

Jane's Walk is an annual festival of citizen-led walking events held on the first weekend of May, inspired by urban activist **Jane Jacobs**. The walks encourage people to learn, share, and explore the rich history of their neighbourhoods. The session held on May 1 was no exception — it celebrated the **75th anniversary of the Spruce Avenue Community League** (SACL) and brought to light the importance of the area in Edmonton's development.

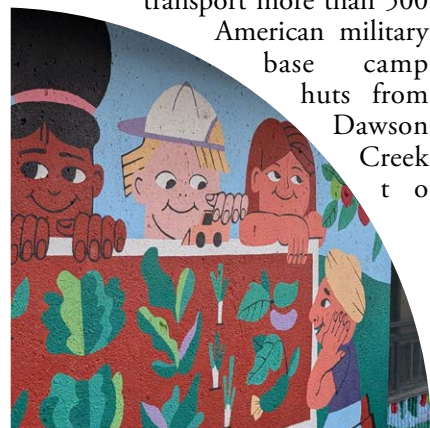
SACL's secretary **Wesley Andreas** led the walk on a lovely evening, along with his assistants and a well-rounded group of locals. We gathered in front of the beautiful mural designed by **Emily Chu**, and were guided through some of the themes and details that make it fitting. The mural represents the community in the past with Rat Creek's original wetlands and hunting and fishing origins. The



Jane's Walk society was consulted in the design process to properly reflect the history as it progressed into the present. Local plant life is highlighted like peonies, apple trees, lilacs, and of course spruce trees.

Back to the '50s

The period after the Second World War was a challenging time for Edmonton. Returning soldiers with young families and a large influx of immigrants needed housing. **Blatchford Field** — now the **Alberta Aviation Museum** — was used by the Americans to ferry planes to the Soviet Union, and the Spruce Avenue area was in high demand. At the same time, Edmonton's oil boom had nearly doubled the population to 269,000. This influx required emergency measures from the federal government, which paid \$1 million to transport more than 500



provide housing for 2,500 residents. The Spruce Avenue camp housed 133 people until units like the **Princess Elizabeth Apartments** were built to fill a need for affordable family housing.

The bungalow boom and neighbourhood character

The Spruce Avenue area covers a five-by-five-block area and is named after the original avenue now known as 114 Avenue. It is defined by the popular 1950s-style bungalow: a single-storey house with a pronounced horizontal profile and large picture window dominating the living room. The street layout reflected a new trend in community planning, with the neighbourhood sheltered from main roads by a central park and curvilinear streets that departed from the usual grid system. Businesses and institutions were positioned on the edges facing main roads, while the school was located centrally.

Feminist icons and modern design

Jean Wallbridge and Mary Louise Imrie

were pioneering architects who began their careers in the 1940s and went on to develop the **Princess Elizabeth Apartments** (now called the **Garden Court**). Their

partnership in business and in life is not only an important part of Spruce Avenue's post-war history, but of LGBTQ+ history as well.

Both women began studying architecture at a time when nearly 80 per cent of the general workforce was male — and women in the architectural profession were nearly unheard of. Both began their careers as city planners and inspectors in Edmonton, working for respect and recognition. Much of their thinking was influenced by post-war construction in Europe, and the pair were the only Canadians selected for an architectural study tour overseas that helped inform their modern approach to urban design. They later formed **Wallbridge and Imrie Architects**, the first women-led archi-

tectural firm in Canada. Over the course of their partnership, they completed 224 architectural projects in 29 years, with the **Princess Elizabeth Apartments** serving as a template for low-cost family living. Their so-called patio homes are still inhabited and enjoyed throughout the city.

Completed in 1957, the development is notable for its large open central green spaces where residents can gather and play, and for two-tone brick apartments designed to maximize occupancy. Although the buildings are part of the **Historic Resources Inventory**, they are not protected from redevelopment — a sad reality that is common in the Spruce Avenue area.

The private details of their life together are not well-documented, but glimpses emerge through their shared commitment to nature, privacy, and the well-being of residents — values reflected in their choice of affordable, community-based development projects. **Wallbridge** passed



Jean Wallbridge and Mary Louise Imrie Awaiting Luggage at the Station (European Trip). | Provincial Archives of Alberta, PR1988.0290.0853.0001

away in 1979 at age 67 due to cancer and Imrie immediately retired from the profession to tour the world. Upon Imrie's passing in 1988 at age 69, she bequeathed records of their travels and plein-air paintings, along with their home, to the province of Alberta.

You can read more about this remarkable duo on the **Edmonton Queer History Project** website or at the **Women Building Alberta** project.

The Polish Catholic Church

The 1950s were a defining decade for Edmonton's Polish Catholic community. With the influx of post-war Polish immigrants and returning soldiers, the need arose to build a larger church than the original **Holy**



Area residents and Jane's Walk guides gather in front of the SACL mural | Sherridon Routley

Care centre reflects the voices of Elders

Kihew Awasis Wakamik Cultural Society opens welcoming doors



Co-Directors Nadia Houle (left) and Lori Inkster
| All photos Constance Brissenden



Son Kade (left) studies a Scavenger Hunt sheet with sister Brea and mom Heather Casselman at the 10th anniversary



Melissa Cardinal-Grant, a registered midwife, is a project coordinator at Kihew Awasis Wakamik Society.

CONSTANCE BRISSENDEN

Outside the **Kihew Awasis Wakamik Cultural Society** (KAWCS), 111 Avenue is bustling. Rain is falling and winds are blowing. Inside, a warmth, both physical and emotional, envelops the visitor.

In a comfy living room area, small family groups chat while children look for objects in a scavenger hunt. The lively atmosphere is perfect for the official opening of KAWCS new Indigenous care centre.

The relatively small two-storey building holds ambitious goals. Many programs are already well established, including a community-based midwife training program. And new programs are gathering strength.

Inspiration comes from co-directors **Nadia Houle** and **Lori Inkster**, members of **Otipemisiwak Métis Government**, backed by Elders, Knowledge Keepers, mentors, students, midwives, and a host of family and friends.

“Our focus is multi-pronged,” says Nadia Houle. “We support families in the major transitions of life, starting with pregnancy and birth, to the rites of passage into and out of

adulthood, and to families experiencing the grief of a loved one journeying home.”

Houle and Inkster have impressive university credentials. Degrees are useful, but without cultural knowledge they would not go far in their work, says Inkster. “A lot of resources rely on government health funding. Through our experience, we know conventional health care doesn’t work well as the only option for Indigenous people.”

Both co-directors have been immersed in the teachings of Elders and Knowledge Keepers for a total of more than 55 years. The programs they now provide support KAWCS’ Indigenous participants with land-based teachings, ceremony, and evidence-based care.

Having a new, dedicated space allows families to have a soft landing for prenatal classes, parenting circles, Wellbriety, ceremony and, most recently, midwifery care. Since 2021, 65 women have participated in a two-year midwifery program with KAWCS.

On the second floor, the midwifery clinic includes relaxing seating and a kitchenette. A plastic pool

by a bookshelf invites the question: do you do births here? No, says registered midwife and project coordinator **Melissa Cardinal-Grant**. It is only a display item to illustrate a birthing pool during the open house. Moms-to-be chose to give birth in hospital, at home, or in a birth centre elsewhere.

A KAWCS midwife and project coordinator, Cardinal-Grant also runs her own business, **Bunny Trail Midwifery Inc.** She wears several hats, specializing in low-risk pregnancy, birth, and post-partum clinical care. “I just love what I do,” she says. “As my work progressed, I realized that the need for culturally based pregnancy care was only growing.”

In response, KAWCS added a learning component to their already well-attended mentorship program. The **Second Birth Attendant** program provides pre-training for the now in-progress development of an Indigenous Midwifery curriculum.

Heather Casselman, a mom of three, always had a passion for birth work through an Indigenous lens. She could not find a way to learn, she says. Then she met Nadia Houle, who got the ball rolling.

Now a potential Indigenous student midwife, Casselman is part of a mentorship program and is training as a Second Birth Attendant with the Kihew Awasis Wakamik Cultural Society.

“These programs are huge for so many of us,” says Casselman. “The centre really is creative at creating a new pathway for midwifery.”

The new KAWCS location officially opened its doors in December as a safe, welcoming space for community members to connect with culture, access “Aunty” emotional support, and midwifery care. It’s a gentle place to build safe relationships while moving through big transitions in life: the experiences of pregnancy, as well as the very human process of grieving.

“We take pride in providing culturally grounded support and programming that honours the strengths, teachings, and resilience of our families during the most intense times of their lives,” says Inkster.

The doors are now open, and visitors are welcome.

Jane’s Walk continued

Rosary, erected in 1913. The new church opened on the corner of 106 Street and Princess Elizabeth Avenue in 1955, though the full construction was not completed until 1959.

The church was a hub of the community and was even home to its own Polish credit union, founded by community members in the 1960s. It continued to serve as the centre of the Polish community in north Edmonton through a wave of immigrants fleeing communism in the 1980s, and remains an important landmark in the area’s history.

The Klondike Days mystery house

On the corner of 102 Street and 112 Avenue, we stopped at an iconic 1959 home rumoured to be a Klondike Days lottery dream home. From 1955 to 2010, the festival held a dream home lottery where the public could walk through the actual house before it was moved to a permanent location. Although the locations of most of those homes have been traced, the one from 1955 had not — and this home bears a striking resemblance to the house featured in

the 1955 dream home promotion.

Supporting this theory is the fact that few other homes built in the area match this modern style of low-slung bungalow with exposed rafters. The lot also faces an avenue, while the rest of the homes in the area were built to face the street.

Questions remain. The first residents, Raleigh and Merle Douziech — relatives of Roland Douziech, who operated the Kingsway Hatchery — were not the registered recipients of the home. The contest winner never occupied the house but may have sold it to the Douzieches in 1959.

Explore on your own

There were many other historical touchpoints explored along the walk, including **St. Basil’s School** and the original **Royal Alexandra Hospital**. You can explore a virtual Jane’s Walk for a previous Spruce Avenue session at sites.google.com/view/spruceave-janeswalk. Thanks to the SACL for their thorough research and preparation — and be sure to mark the league’s anniversary with a monthly historical scavenger hunt contest on their website.

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Finding healing in the forest

Ali Hammington’s journey with nature



Ali Hammington at the Carrot. | Sherridon Routley

SHERRIDON ROUTLEY

There have been numerous studies supporting the notion that just viewing and moving through natural spaces provides many benefits to mental health, especially for our current screen obsessed culture. However, I learned something new after sitting down with **Ali Hammington** at **The Carrot Cafe** to talk about her experience.

When Hammington first knew she was moving to Edmonton 30 years ago, she saw the river valley as a highlight of the move. The first chilly morning in the city meant a nature valley trip with her kids to view the treasure that would shape her life here.

“My father was a professor of plant science at University of Manitoba for 35 years, so I grew up with him deliberately doing everything he could to imbue me with a love of nature. We would go through the woods, dig up

licorice roots, and drink water from springs – this was just a natural part of my life,” says Hammington.

Two years ago, Hammington was diagnosed with **complex post-traumatic stress disorder** (CPTSD) stemming from undressed childhood abuse and her later work as a crisis counselor. While waiting to access subsidized therapy – a familiar struggle in our care system – her own research led her to reconnect with nature in a new way.

“I knew that being in nature made me feel better. I didn’t know why, it just did,” Hammington said, leading her to look into it further.

Forest Bathing

Her research led her to the Japanese practice of forest bathing, known as **Shinrin-yoku** — a form of mindful immersion in nature that encourages people to slow down and engage their senses while walking quietly through forests.

“I could feel my muscles relax, my blood pressure go down, my breathing slow. I would put my hand on the ground and dig into the soil, touch the bark of trees,” Hammington related. “The nice thing about **Mill Creek** is the way it’s designed, you can’t hear the traffic — just birds and wind. I would eat any safe little plants that I found, smell them, and taste them.”

Unlike hiking or exercise-focused outdoor activities, forest bathing emphasizes presence over performance. There’s no goal beyond simply being in the forest, noticing small details, and allowing the environment to have a calming effect.

“The concept is that you can actually heal yourself using natural elements. They were doing everything I was already doing, but with intention, mindfully. And the first time I tried it blew my mind,” Hammington says.

And the science backs her up: A 2019 systematic review combining 28 peer-reviewed studies showed improvements in cardiovascular function, immune markers, stress hormones, mood, anxiety and depression thanks to nature. Research also suggests that phytoncides — compounds emitted by trees — boost natural killer (NK) cell activity that plays a key role in improved immune function and cancer prevention.

Hammington also points to the forest’s underground mycelium networks — the so-called “wood wide web” — as another invisible force connecting us to nature in ways science is still uncovering. “Anytime you walk down into the river valley, into Mill Creek Ravine, into a public park, trees are sending out pheromones and chemicals

and you’re breathing them in. You’re absorbing them through your skin, even though you’re not aware of it,” she says.

Hammington also has her own rituals that deepen the practice, including foraging plants to make a homemade midwinter tea from purple prairie clover, chamomile, plantain, rosehips and more — a blend informed by her botanical upbringing. She recommends forest bathing to everyone, not just those managing trauma or mental health challenges: “It’s a natural high and an important connection to the natural world around us.”

The **City of Edmonton** organizes guided forest bathing sessions yearly, but due to their popularity they are often sold out. There’s more information on their website. You can also learn more about the science of forest bathing online through academic articles.



One of my healing spots at the Larch Sanctuary. | Sherridon Routley



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SCAN FOR UPDATES

Spruce Avenue Community League is Celebrating our 75th anniversary all summer!

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- Monthly Movie Event: Jun 19, Jul 24, Aug 28
- This Month in 1951: Newsletter segments
- September Harvest Festival: Date TBA
- Sign up to our newsletter or check out: spruceavenuecommunity.com/75-anniversary



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welcome

to the community

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Pe Metawe Games is a community hub

Owner David Plamondon opens door to all

CONSTANCE BRISSENDEN

Enter **Pe Metawe Games**, at the corner of 118 Avenue and 94 Street, and a new world opens. It's soon obvious this is a unique space, a place where everyone can feel at home. No matter your age, sex, race, preferences, orV lifestyle, Pe Metawe welcomes you.

Having survived five years in business, owner **David Plamondon** decided to hold an open house to celebrate. The Indigenous owner originally named his store Pe Metawe after the **nēhiyawēwin/Cree** phrase meaning "come and play." I have purchased several board games here, and when he asked, I volunteered to set up a table to introduce Rat Creek Press to visitors.

There were plenty of drop-ins. **GOBfest**, a major Edmonton game board convention, was taking place one block away at **Alberta Avenue Community League**. When I arrived with copies of Rat Creek Press, Pe Metawe was buzzing. Table and role playing games were selling in twos and threes.

As the afternoon continued, I saw that Pe Metawe was more than a store. At a corner booth in a back room, three people played **Fossilis**, a family-friendly board game designed by **Kids Table Board Gaming**, a Canadian company. The players were acting as paleontologists. In their "dig" for dinosaur bones, they moved terrain tiles, collected fossils, and completed dinosaur skeletons.

"A lot of people are looking for alternative entertainment these days," noted store **operations manager Catherine Little**. "During COVID, people played online. Families and friends are now finding that playing in person is fun."

In another room, piles of free clothing from **Chubby Fem Thrift** attracted another crowd. Chubby Fem Thrift is a black and queer-owned business. Several times a year, giveaways like this are held. The back



Councillor Ashley Salvador (left) presented David Plamondon and Catherine Little with a certificate celebrating their fifth year in business. | Constance Brissenden

““Highlighting diversity in games is especially important to Pe Metawe. How can we promote diversification in the city? By providing a safe space for all people.” - David Plamondon

room at Pe Metawe Games was a perfect fit.

By mid-afternoon, chairs were set up for a panel of four Canadian board game designers. I took a corner seat to listen and learn. One of the designers, **Luke Ehrenholz**, is based in **Edmonton**. He created his family-friendly game, **Almost Words**, with his brother **Ryan**

and **Ryan's wife Natalie**, both now residing in **Calgary**. "I was a huge game nerd since I was a little kid," Ehrenholz shared.

Looking back, he noted that it's a different world



A family plays **Fossilis**, a Canadian-designed board game, at Pe Metawe Games. | Constance Brissenden

for the activity. "There's a more passionate following of board games now. And way more variety in the types of games. People spend a lot of their free time exploring and trying out

new games."

For the panelists, a venue like Pe Metawe Games has been a haven. Ehrenholz expressed his appreciation, echoed by game developers **Avery Alder, Roberta Taylor, and Chris Cooke**. "Pe Metawe has been the most supportive community game store since I was starting out. David invited us to do demos in the store to share with the community, featured our game on the store's media, and keeps it stocked on the shelf," he says.

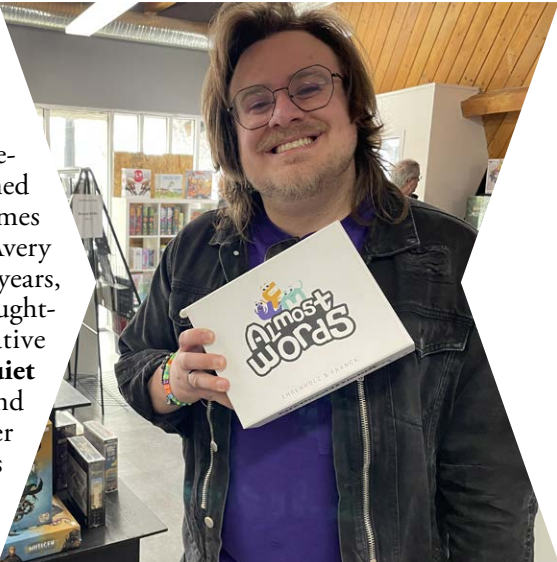
Panels are useful, especially free ones! I learned about role playing games (RPG) from panelist **Avery Alder**. For almost 20 years, Alder has designed thought-provoking, transformative games, including **The Quiet Year, Monsterhearts, and Going For Broke**. Her award-winning games focus on themes of **LGBTQ self-discovery, community building, and post-apocalyptic survival**.

Observed Alder, "I explore what happens when communities are fractured." Pe Metawe Games has her respect. "This store is a really genuine community builder,"

she told the audience. Well-known board game designer **Roberta Taylor** and go-getter **Chris Cooke** also shared their perspectives. Taylor makes family-friendly games

because she likes to sit around a table, playing with people. One of her creations, **Creature Comforts**, published by **Kids Table Board Games**, has been translated into thirteen languages.

Chris Cooke's background in design led him to become a game designer. His advice to newcomers keen to try game design: "Kill your ego as fast as possible. Just get your



Designer **Luke Ehrenholz** holds **Almost Words**, his family friendly board game. | Constance Brissenden

game out there." Surrounded by eager game board players, I listened and learned from the speakers. Pe Metawe Games is a hub for players of all ages and interests. At the close of the panel, owner **David Plamondon** said it clearly: "Highlighting diversity in games is especially important to Pe Metawe. How can we promote diversification in the city? By providing a safe space for all people."

I was grateful that I could represent Rat Creek Press and attend Pe Metawe Games' fifth anniversary party. And a true party it was. I had fun, learned about a fascinating world, and listened to intriguing people. I left with a smile on my face. Congratulations to **David Plamondon** and staff. Your store is another example of why Edmonton, and our **Alberta Avenue** area businesses and people, never cease to amaze me.

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Discover the Diversity in Your Own Backyard!

"I am not safe"

The reality of living with trauma



Generated image

JULIE MCCREA

"I am not safe."

That is a mantra that can go through the brain and body of people who have been impacted by trauma. The strange and sad part is, this is often in what most people would consider pretty run-of-the-mill and even dull everyday situations that shouldn't make people feel that way. Like going grocery shopping, walking through a park, sitting on a bus, eating at a restaurant and a million other things that shouldn't be connected with such strong negative feelings. Well, that is the legacy of living with trauma.

According to a study done by **Statistics Canada** in 2023, nearly **two-thirds** of adults in Canada have been exposed to a potentially traumatic event, such as:

Experiencing (or being a witness to) a natural disaster or accident

Sudden loss of a loved one (prolonged medical issues, accident, suicide, etc.)

Being the victim of abuse (such as sexual assault, domestic violence, bullying)

Frontline worker experiences (police, EMTs, etc.)

Combat trauma

That means that 2.4 to 3 million of us end up developing **Post Traumatic Stress disorder** (PTSD). Some even develop CPTSD, which is **Complex Post Traumatic Stress Disorder**. This is when trauma is experienced either from multiple traumatic events, or long-term situations like abuse suffered over time as a child or with an intimate partner.

There is still so much stigma attached to anything related to mental health challenges, that people who experience these conditions are reluctant to not just talk about them to friends and family, also to seek help. Yet,

if you broke your leg, you probably wouldn't be looking to try to put a cast on it or operate on it yourself. Unfortunately, that is exactly the attitude people take to their own mental health struggles, or those of others.

Your brain is an organ in your body, and trauma can change how that particular organ works. Even when it comes to something as serious as dealing with the effects of trauma, people are surprisingly dismissive. Some of the most painful things that have been said to me by often well-meaning, yet uniformed family and friends have been things like "Just get over it," or "But the person who hurt you said they are sorry," or "You can't let it control your life."

Trust me, someone with CPTSD or PTSD would never choose to have their sleep interrupted by nightmares. They would never choose to

turn down invites and isolate themselves because their brain is telling them that they are not safe. They would never choose to have panic attacks or start crying when they experience something that triggers a traumatic memory. This is not a choice. Can you imagine saying to someone who has been diagnosed with cancer or suffering from serious asthma attacks "just get over it and don't let it control your life"? In a world that already tends to exclude people suffering from mental health issues, it can be another layer or trauma and another reason to isolate. It is a vicious cycle.

So, what can you do if someone in your life is dealing with the negative effects of trauma?

Educate yourself. There is a lot of information out there, and even a little bit can make a world of difference to how you interact with the impacted person in your life.

Don't push for information. Some people want to talk about their experiences, but some do not. Let them know you are there if they want to talk.

Protect your own mental health. Sometimes hearing about the trauma someone else experienced can be traumatizing in and of itself. It is OK to set your own boundaries and still be a support to someone else struggling.

Learn about and respect people's triggers. Do you know someone who cannot sit with their back to the door at a venue or are uncomfortable sitting in the backseat of a car? There are reasons they have difficulty with these things. It doesn't have to make sense to you and, to be honest, you are lucky you don't understand why these things are triggering. When

people feel like a burden on others, they tend to isolate and that could only deepen their sense of disconnectedness from the world.

These are only a few ways that you can be a true support, but the more you educate yourself the more you will be a safe place for a person in your life who is dealing with the day-to-day struggles of trauma. Our communities include many people who have dealt with things no one should have to deal with, and are trying their best to handle it and still take up space in the world.

We are friends, family, coworkers, volunteers, and business owners. We are people who are just trying to get through life and find ways to experience the joys and handle the disappointments that are part of the human experience. However, our brains are often stuck in loops that cannot simply be broken by "thinking positive."

Do you suspect you may be suffering from PTSD or CPTD (or any mental health issue)? Reach out! Talk to your doctor, ask for a referral, educate yourself on what help is out there. Our mental health services are not as good as they need to be, but there are supports out there. People can improve and reduce how the symptoms impact their lives. Staying silent might make the people around you more comfortable, but self-advocacy is what you need to embrace to start making yourself more comfortable.

Although what you went through — or are still going through — has left its mark on you, it doesn't define you. Regardless of how you might be feeling, please know that you matter and you deserve to feel like there is space in this world for you.

"Your brain is an organ in your body, and trauma can change how that particular organ works."

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EFCL.ORG / BIKE-MONTH-SCAVENGER-HUNT /

◆ COMMUNITY LEAGUE BIKE MONTH ◆
SCAVENGER HUNT

We've selected **60 locations** around the city, ranging from Community League amenities to City of Edmonton landmarks, neighbourhood gems to some incredible local businesses who've promised to **reward** our intrepid hunters. And all you have to do to take part is ride your bike and have a **Community League membership**.

.....

1) Visit one of the designated locations on your bike. See our map.

2) Snap a picture of you/your bike at the location of your choice.

3) Tag us to be included in the draw. Tag us on Instagram (@theefcl) with hashtag #efclbikemonth or email your pictures to communications@efcl.org

4) Show our business Community League membership and enjoy a special reward

Keeping the drains and words flowing

Fortitude Plumbing was born from hard work and resilience



Bruce Pigford owner-operator of Fortitude Plumbing | Dustin Covey

DUSTIN COVEY

Bruce Pigford is a busy man. As owner-operator of **Fortitude Plumbing**, finding time for an interview can be a challenge. We were able to find a moment for Bruce to tell us a little more about his business.

The road to plumbing wasn't a straight pipe. Bruce came up through baking — night shifts, young kids, a schedule that eventually wore him down. A near-miss in traffic due to fatigue was the turning point. After a stint driving a bus, a layoff opened a door. He looked at the trades, weighed his options, and plumbing clicked. That was 22 years ago.

Fortitude itself grew out of a similar turning point. Tired of the feast-or-famine cycle and the workplace politics that tend to reward the wrong things, Bruce got laid off and saw an opening. He credits the

Anderson Career Institute — and a mentor named Paul Anderson — with helping him build the business from the ground up. Year one was lean. He took warehouse work and commission gigs on the side to keep things moving while Fortitude found its feet. Today, the company runs residential, commercial, and emergency services across the spectrum, with Bruce, his technician Mike, and office manager Bernice holding it together.

What makes Fortitude different? Bruce will tell you it's the attitude. "We do care about our clients," he says. "Mike and I, we like what we do." That's not a small thing — he's seen what the alternative looks like, and it costs businesses. Word of mouth is his top marketing tool, full stop. He's supplemented it with lawn signs, the Nextdoor app, and some Facebook presence, but he's

skeptical of the marketing arms race. "Keep it small and personal," he advises. "Don't try and market to Edmonton. Market to the people in your neighbourhood."

He's also investing in education — currently eyeing a backflow preventer certification that would open doors with commercial clients across the city. Like many in the trades, Bruce knows the frustration of civic permitting intimately. A recent job took nearly six months to get a permit approved — a delay that costs clients money and contractors momentum. It's a complaint heard widely across Edmonton's construction sector, and one Bruce hopes the city takes seriously.

Fortitude serves both residential and commercial clients across Edmonton and area. On the home side, that means everything from emergency repairs and routine maintenance to full bathroom and kitchen plumbing, hot water tanks, and furnace work. For businesses and commercial properties, Fortitude handles more specialized work including boiler systems and (soon) backflow preventer installation and certification. Whether it's a ghost flush in a bungalow or a boiler system in a commercial building, Bruce and Mike bring the same approach: show up, do it right, leave the client better informed than when you arrived.

For homeowners, Bruce's advice is practical and hard-won. When budgeting a renovation, build in a buffer — expect 15 to 20 per cent above the quoted price once walls open up and surprises emerge. "That's not being negative," he says. "That's just being honest." Beyond renovations, he's a firm believer in setting aside a small amount regularly — even \$25 every two weeks — earmarked for the inevitable: a furnace that quits, a hot water tank on its last legs, the slow drip that becomes a flood. Small things ignored become expen-

sive things fast. Watch the dripping tap, the ghost flush, the aging water filter. The details, Bruce will tell you, always collect their debt eventually.

Bruce doesn't just fix pipes — he gives back. Fortitude supports **Youth Empowerment and Support Services (YESS)**, and for Bruce it's personal. "I did want to run away at 15, 16," he admits quietly. He knows what it feels like to be a young person without good options, staring at a very short horizon. YESS operates a 24/7 Youth Support Centre in Edmonton providing immediate, low-barrier shelter and physical, mental, cultural, and emotional health support for youth aged 15 to 21 in crisis, with **Resource and Health Hubs** serving young people up to age 24. For Bruce, knowing that a safety net exists matters. "There's options now," he says. "You don't have to start down that road."

There's one more thing about Bruce Pigford that doesn't appear on the Fortitude website. He's a poet. Two self-published collections sit quietly alongside a working life built on early mornings and honest labour: **Time Is Essence** and **Writing on Canvas**, the latter a gathering of verse that found its first audience far from Edmonton. "When we first came to Canada," he says, "movies were my escape." Poetry became another one. It still is. Something is fitting about that — a man who unblocks drains for a living, and on his own time, finds words for things that have no obvious outlet. The plumber-poet. You wouldn't necessarily see it coming. But then, with Bruce Pigford, that seems to be the point.

Fortitude Plumbing —
780-818-0994 | fortplumb.
wordpress.com/projects



Parkdale Cromdale Community League

Programs:

Freeart music: Sat. 10am-1pm createdmonton.com (mural painting on weekends starting in June, check website for details)

Norwood Family Centre Stay and Play: Thursdays 10am-12pm

Tango: Mondays 6:45-10pm

Latin Dance Classes: Tuesdays 6-7pm

Yoga: All levels. Wednesdays 7-8pm

League Swim at Commonwealth Rec Centre: Sat 3-5pm, Sun 1-3pm

Upcoming Events:

Community fire pit nights: June 26, July 10 and 24, August 7. 6-10pm

Open Mic Nights: June 19, August 22. 6-10pm

Father's Day BBQ: June 21. 11am-1pm

Trivia Nights: July 31, August 14. 7-10pm

Community Garage Sale: July 11. 11am-4pm

Kids Program: Wednesdays starting July 8. 2-3pm

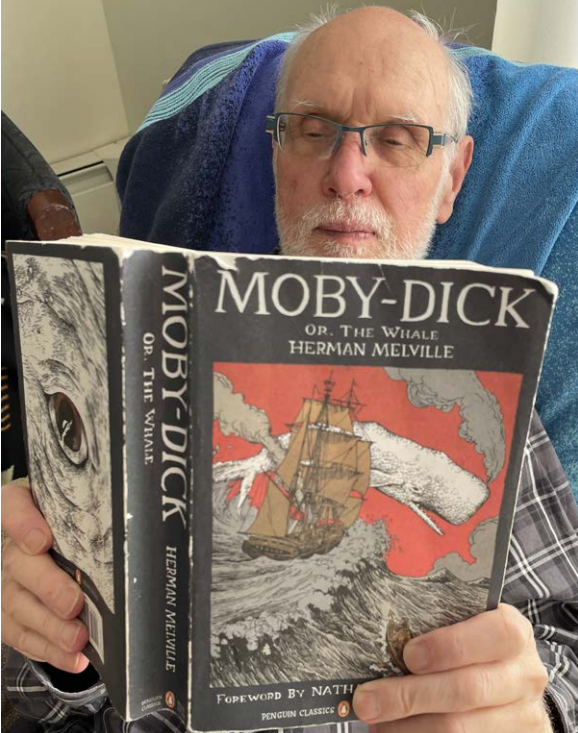


Look for details/updates at: parkdalecromdale.org or email programs@parkdalecromdale.org

Membership at: www.parkdalecromdale.org/membership

A whale of a winter

The famed Moby Dick, all 619 pages, saved my Edmonton winter



Launching the great winter read, 619 pages to go.
| Constance Brissenden

DEREK QUITTENTON

Ha! I survived another winter’s hibernation. How did you manage six months of lousy weather?

Me? I read a book. A grand book, a true classic.

Never visit used bookstores. You never know what you will find. I found a classic for only \$5. **Herman Melville’s Moby Dick**, all 619 pages of heavy description upon heavy description. Melville was an author who would never use a single word when a hundred words would do. A true, thick winter read.

My motorcycle was on life support; its battery on a slow trickle charger. The battery had to be kept fresh if my bike was to start in the spring. I was trying to survive another long, cold winter. The wind howled and the temperature fell. My only saviour was the trials and tribulations of Captain Ahab out on a historic sea voyage, searching for revenge on Moby Dick, the white sperm whale that had rammed a rowboat and tore off the Captain’s leg.

For those fans of a good sermon of the hell fire-damnation-and-eternity version, Melville penned it. The preacher’s sermon in the harbour church will fill you with the fear of

the wrath of God. Hear the word of the Lord, the preacher thunders, feel the jaws of Moby Dick, and ride his teeth to the bottom of the sea. Be spat out into the gates of Hell. Great stuff! I could not sleep for a week.

The hunt for a whale goes on for days, or at least another thousand words. The dead whale is strapped to the outside of the wooden sailing ship. Two brave crew men are tied to a rope and lowered over the side. Equipped with long sharp blades attached to wooden poles, they walk up and down the dead whale, cutting huge strips of blubber. This is hauled aboard and stuffed into boiler pots to cook out the whale oil. Dangerous work for these lads. A slip on a greasy, bloody whale would see them slide into the ocean where schools of sharks were waiting. More than one dead man is pulled back aboard after his legs and waist have fed a couple of sharks.

All night, the sailors sleep exhausted in their hammocks. Swinging in the belly of the ship, they hear the slap of sharks against the outside. The sharks tear ever-increasing chunks of whale off the carcass. Money, chunks of money, are being torn away by an army of sharks.

It was January, and I laid in my bed, hearing the wind howl as another storm blew in. I got up and continued reading in my easy chair. Captain Ahab’s fanatical pursuit of Moby Dick was all powerful. Revenge would be his.

Two men were hoisted to the main mast high above the ship. “Thar she blows,” was a call to arms. A breaching whale would often smash asunder one of two little wooden pursuers. Whaling was a tough life. It paid well if you made it back to port. Not all sailors did. Not all boats did. Ahab’s vessel, Pequod, did not.

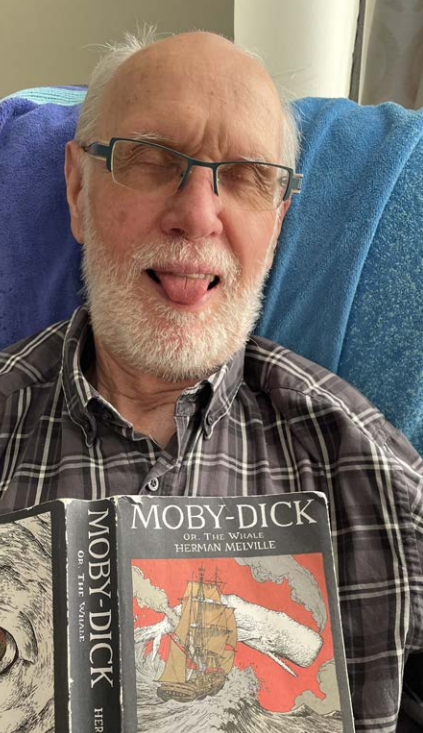
What about Ahab’s wooden leg?

During the day, the Captain stayed in his cabin, lost in his hatred of the

white whale. He could be heard pegging about the deck on his wooden leg in the middle of the night. Pegging back and forth, ever watching for a sign in the dark of night. A haunted, demented, mad man.

Yikes! By page 276, in February, another snowstorm! “When will this winter end?” I cried out in the style of Melville’s preacher. It nearly ended for me in March, when I slipped and fell crossing 118 Avenue. I found myself lying in the middle of the avenue. I crawled back to my feet as a car was proceeding through the intersection across my path to safety. I gave the driver an ugly look and he stopped. I staggered to the safety of the sidewalk.

Where, when, which way was the white demon going? Not Ahab’s sperm whale, but our Edmonton winter. April refused to let it go. Four days of snow kept me indoors, finishing the last 50 pages of Melville’s masterpiece. Ahab’s crew finally spots Moby Dick. The pursuit is on. Moby Dick is a vicious fighter, made mad



An exhausted Derek Quittenton after finishing Herman Melville’s Moby Dick. | Constance Brissenden

by the harpoons that land on his body. He smashes the Pequod into pieces. Nearly all hands are lost. Only the first mate is saved to tell the tale.

I close the book and look outside. Daffodils are finally sprouting in the front yard. Like the first mate, I have survived. Winter is behind me, thanks to Herman Melville and Moby Dick.

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WEDNESDAYS 6 - 8 PM
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CITY OF EDMONTON

Summer Green Shack

JUNE 29 - AUG 21

MONDAY TO FRIDAY

Free Drop-In Fun!

for ages 6-12

Games, crafts & outdoor activities at your local park!



10 am - 1 pm

Alberta Avenue
Elmwood Park
Parkdale
Spruce Avenue

2 pm - 5 pm

Alberta Avenue
Eastwood
Sheriff Roboston
Westwood

More info: edmonton.ca/GreenShacks

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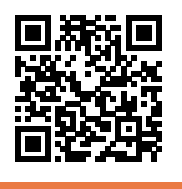
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What's On Summer

SOCIAL ART EXPERIENCES AT THE CARROT!



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Roots * Blues * Jazz * Folk

June 18 | July 2
July 30 | August 6
September 10



9319 - 118 Avenue | 7 pm – 9 pm

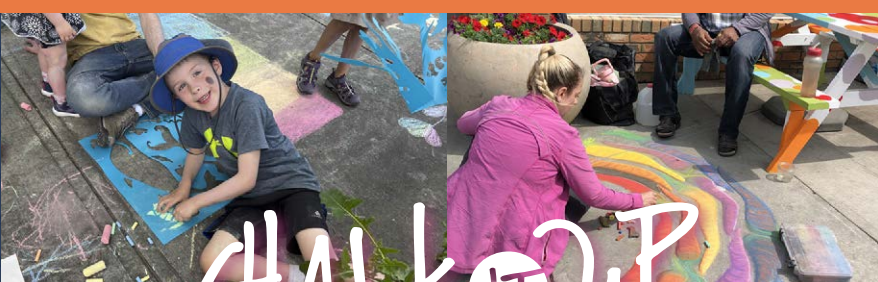


ULTIMATE Community GARAGE SALE

SATURDAY, JUNE 27 | 9 AM-5 PM | 92 ST & 118 AVE

BOOK YOUR SPOT, SELL YOUR ITEMS!





CHALK UP

9 am: FREE Pancake Breakfast
12 pm - 5 pm: Toonie BBQ
Live Music, Performances, Art Markets
ALL DAY MINI STREET FESTIVAL!



SATURDAY
JULY 18, 2026
94 ST & 118 AVE



Kaleido FAMILY ARTS FESTIVAL

♥ HEARTS FULL OF GUSTO ✨

SEPTEMBER 18-20, 2026
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400 VOLUNTEERS NEEDED!

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