

Rat Creek Press

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BY THE COMMUNITY—FOR THE COMMUNITY

FALL 2026

ArtsCommon 118 finds its ground

Federal, provincial, and municipal leadership celebrate the proposed arts hub

JACOB ULICKIJ

Arts on the Ave now has both land and \$3.3 million in city funding to begin converting a patch of green space on 92 Street and 118 Avenue into a permanent arts and housing complex.

In a rare pocket of welcoming weather, a few dozen gathered on a small strip of green space to celebrate Arts on the Ave and the first steps on a long road ahead.

“This is a day of celebration and gratitude,” says **Christy Morin**, executive director of Arts on the Ave, as she opens the floor to speakers, stakeholders, and representatives from every level of government.

The plan Morin and her board laid out is ambitious. A 200-seat theatre would host performances and community events, while 26 two-bedroom units would provide below-market housing for artists working in the community. Morin told the crowd she hopes to break ground within a year,

with move-in anticipated for 2029.

The project has been a goal Morin and the Arts on the Ave board have been inching towards across mayors, provincial elections, and countless city budget reviews. Former Edmonton mayor

Stephen

Mandel, whose time in office overlapped with the project’s earliest years, arrived at the announcement carrying flowers.

There is still considerable ground to cover. Of the project’s estimated \$10.4-million development cost, \$7.1 million has yet to be secured. Reimagine has worked pro bono for years to help develop the proposal, with architectural drawings already in place. **Vedran Škopac**, principal architect, says completed feasibility and financial work so far has left him confident in the project despite the funding still required.

“This is the right group to do it,” he says. “I’m convinced it’s going to happen.”

Qualico Developments will complete the work, with **Senior Vice-President of Strategic Initiatives Shane Erickson** adding, “The legacy built here will stand for a long,

long time.”

Ward Métis councillor Ashley Salvador was among the loudest voices in pushing for city support to develop the green space.

“I believe it will act as a catalyst of change and revitalization for the Avenue,” she says. “The area is well-amenitized, close to everything, accessible by transit, and there is a real sense of community.”

Salvador and Škopac are confident that having the city support the project — both financially and in providing the land — will help attract further partnerships.

“There are mature project partners out there,” says Salvador. “The city is committed on the land and funding side, and the breadth of experience coming to the table will help pull more forces in.”

“We knew we’d really have to stretch and expand our tent,” says Christy Morin. “We’d have to find people with the talent, heart, and expertise to make this happen.”

“There will be more need as we identify new challenges the board and the developers have,” she adds, urging anyone interested in contributing their time and expertise in the project to get in touch at info@artsontheave.org.

For nearly two decades, ArtsCommon 118 has largely existed in consultations, drawings and funding requests. With land and the city’s first major financial commitment now secured, Morin says the work changes from making the case for the project, to finding the people and money required to build it.

“We’ve done so many consultations over the years, and everyone says the same thing — they want a home, a game-changer, and a renewal,” says Morin.



A stiltwalker moves through the crowd. | Jacob Ulickij



presented & produced by **arts on the ave**

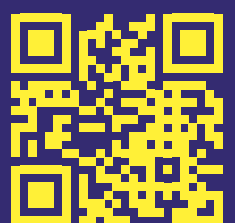
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Letter:

Dear Heart & Plate

I hope this note finds you well. I am writing to you on the recommendation of **Constance**, who kindly featured our new restaurant, **The Heart & Plate**, in a previous edition of the Rat Creek Press. We were so honored by that coverage, and the response from the community has been wonderful.

I wanted to share a story with you that highlights the impact your publication has on our guests. We have a wonderful regular named **Mr. Lorne** who visits us almost daily. His morning routine is not complete without a fresh meal and his copy of the Rat Creek Press. He is such a fan that he frequently shares stories from your paper with other guests at our tables.

In fact, we have become such big fans ourselves that we now keep several copies of your latest edition available at our front desk and in the dining area for our customers to read while they enjoy their meals. It has become a lovely way for us to share local news and support the important work you do.

Given our deep appreciation for your paper and the community connection we are building, I would love to know if you have a theme or a spot for a feature in your upcoming issues. We are a new business with a passion for fresh, local ingredients, and we would be thrilled to be a part of your future content in any way that fits your editorial vision. We would love to host you for Breakfast, lunch or Dinner.

Thank you again for your time, your support, and for keeping our neighborhood informed.

Warm regards,
Kavita



Janis Irwin

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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.

Fall 2026

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.

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. Recently retired from a 40-year technical and academic career, Dustin is a published author of several books.

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

Nan Marshall is an end-of-life pet doula who walks beside the dying and their loved ones—not to lead, not to follow, but to be fully present! She is founder of The Sanctuary, a heart-led, soul-centered space in St. Albert.

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.

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

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

Nour Sali is an Algerian journalist raised in Treaty 6. Her focus is community-centred approaches to news and media. A lot of her work revolves around decolonization and is a strong believer that built into the foundations of journalism is speaking truth to power.

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

Richard Williams is Vice President for the board of Parkdale-Cromdale Community League.

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GOALS
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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Serving 12,000 community members.

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Kaleido Festival 2026, now with gusto!

Finding the light after a stormy summer, Sept. 18–20



Giant puppets fill 118 Avenue. | Photo by Arts on the Ave

JACOB ULICKIJ

With a new year comes new programming, including a return to the **Alberta Avenue Community Centre** parking lot in lieu of a grassy stage. When heavy machinery and sound equipment could threaten rain-softened soil and sensitive foliage, the Arts on the Ave team was quick to adapt the festival layout to protect the green space for local families.

Adaptation is a two-way street this year, with new opportunities emerging alongside new budgeting challenges. One new opportunity came from **Arts on the Ave Special Events Intern Samuel Hoekman**, who pitched the idea of a Sunday chess tournament. The team quickly embraced the idea, planning a battle of wits for players of all skill levels. A professional chess arbiter who has represented **Team Canada** at the **World Youth**

Chess Championship, Hoekman will bring some serious credentials to the board and introduce locals to competitive chess.

“When a member of our team brings something original and passionate to the table, we always want to say yes,” says Christy Morin, executive director of Arts on the Ave. More difficult to adapt to have been delays in provincial and federal grant announcements, as fluctuating funding makes for a challenging balancing act when it comes to scheduling performers.

“There is a balance between paying contracts to secure performers and later finding out you’ve booked more than the budget allows,” says Morin, whose experience with Kaleido goes back 21 years. “Government grants have been slower this year, putting us into a waiting position.”

“Rest assured,” Morin adds, “we’ve

still cooked up plenty of surprises from all over Canada.”

Performer highlights this year include **JUNO Award-winning musician Tom Landa** and his Mexican-Canadian group **Locarno**. A new veterans display will bring an authentic 1944 Jeep from the Second World War, and interactive exhibits at the Filipino Pavilion and a 3-on-3 street basketball tournament will keep visitors entertained from early morning until late into the night.

With all of this great content comes a steep price tag and, like many organizations across Edmonton, Arts on the Ave is facing shortfalls. As a CRA-registered charity, Arts on the Ave can issue charitable tax receipts for eligible donations of \$20 or more. Those receipts can be claimed for federal and provincial charitable donation tax credits when filing an income tax return.

Rethinking the “hidden cost” of free programming is essential to organizers like Morin, who hopes guests realize the immense value in professional programming across small, free stages.

“You’re able to watch professional ballet for free on the main stage when tickets to another perfor-

mance might be \$35 at the cheapest,” explains Morin. “You can then walk past **Night Bird Alley** and catch **Jeremiah McDade** blasting jazz, then see world-class installations at the **Carrot** and **Jeff Collins’** studio gallery in the alleyways.”

“Of course, we’re keeping it all free. Any of these shows would be \$20 on their own. If you saw ten shows and donated even \$50 for the experience, you’re getting your money’s worth at least four times over, and a tax receipt on top of it all.

Besides programming, performances, and parades, it’s volunteers who keep the festival running year after year. Registration is fast (www.kaleidofest.ca/volunteer), with open opportunities for everything from cooking, to setup in the Indigenous village.

With hundreds of volunteers,



This year’s main stage headliner, Locarno. | Photo Supplied

three days of free programming and another unpredictable festival season ahead, Kaleido’s appetite remains characteristically large. Keeping the table full, however, depends on the community that gathers around it.

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The foundation to community support

Faith groups are brought into the affordable housing conversation



Reverend Travis Enright at Lodgepole
St Faith Anglican on 117 Ave & 93 St. | Karen Mykietka

NOUR SALHI

Faith is restored as a new affordable housing initiative was launched by the **City of Edmonton** in early June. “**Sacred Spaces to Community Places**,” an affordable housing incentive program, will provide faith groups looking to develop their land with access to pre-development funding through partnership with the **Edmonton Community Foundation (ECF)** and the **federal government**.

Currently, the city only has around 15,000 affordable housing units. A report by the city says that, with the increasing population, “approximately 48,830 affordable housing units will be needed by 2026 to address the shortage.” As the city works towards that number, faith groups are uniquely positioned to provide a solution. “They’re the second largest landowners in the country. So they have land and they have an opportunity,” says **Ryan Young**, **executive director of Impact Investments at the ECF**.

The city’s **Housing Action Team (HAT)** discussed required support with faith groups for months. HAT learned that, for many, getting started was the hardest part. The Sacred Spaces program is designed to do just that – help groups get started.

Two funding streams are made

available for eligible groups: \$35,000 for engagement & pre-planning and \$100,000 for pre-development. This program, however, will not fund construction of the development. Regardless, the city, and the Edmonton community at large, sees this as a necessary step.

Housing insecurity is a leading concern for Edmonton as 1 in 4 renters cannot afford their rent. In 2025, 349 people died from issues arising from homelessness. **Islamic Family and Social Services Executive Director Omar Yaqub** spoke about the impacts of housing insecurity that he’s witnessed. “The reason people come to our organization is because they’re leaving domestic violence, they’re about to face eviction, they’re looking for counseling, they need food. Those issues might seem different, but what underpins almost all of them is actually housing insecurity.”

Faith groups’ access to land, especially in areas near transit, and their community-centred mandates allow for a multi-faceted approach to affordable housing. **Marisa Redmond**, executive director of **Right at Home Housing Society**, says building these complexes offers “more than just the housing, you’re decreasing poverty on multiple levels, and you’re also increasing social determinants of health.”

Right at Home Housing has worked on faith-land development in the past: Westmount Presbyterian Church which has been developed into 16 affordable townhomes and **St. Paul’s Lutheran Church** which now includes 11 affordable units.

Ward O-day’mín Councillor Anne Stevenson hopes to see this replicated across Canada. “I think that Edmonton is going to be setting a trend nationally. I think as CMHC (Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation) sees the impact of this program, my hope is that they roll this out nationally.”

Coun. Stevenson was on the board of Right at Home Housing at the time of these developments. “This is a really beautiful way to send a legacy forward, recognize that their role was shifting, but that they could still be contributing to their mission and to the community.” She also spoke of the original resistance from the surrounding communities and how, in time, the respective communities felt the benefits of the re-development. The Westmount development specifically was able to keep the local school from closing when the first cohort moved in, due to higher demand.

An important part is to honour and respect the congregation’s history. The church in the St. Paul’s development was maintained, from the stained glass windows, to the spire on top, to a poem on the wall. A testament to the history of the building and those who made it what it was. “Probably cost us more to maintain them and build them into the new build than it would have to just tear it down ... It was meaningful for them, and we took the time to preserve that,” Redmond says.

While this program may be the solution for some faith groups, for others, it just isn’t feasible. Christian denominations have engaged with the Sacred Spaces program, but there’s a question for where other denominations fit in the conversation.

“Even though Muslims have double the post-secondary attainment of the average Canadian, they’re three times more likely to be in poverty. If they’re a black Muslim, they’re 16 times more likely to be in affordable housing,” says Yaqub from Islamic Family

and Social Services. Yet, despite the great need for the Muslim community to participate in affordable housing, debt-based financing precludes them from doing so.

“It’s just helping to bridge connections with groups that have resources and strengths that each other can benefit from,” Young says about ECF’s role in supporting interested groups. The hope is that a list of trusted and experienced developers and consultants can be recommended to participants as this program, and others like it, continue to be rolled out. However, there are many considerations about finding partners that can work with the requirement of affordable housing and understand tenants’ needs, as well as clarity on who will operate the properties.

“I really resist any narrative around us needing innovation in housing,” Stevenson says, “We have the models that work, we just need to scale them up, and more consistent funding is what helps us do that.”

With more funding and investment in housing, programs like Sacred Spaces can continue to develop and leave lasting impacts on their communities. And in looking beyond what makes a house to what makes a home, to what makes a community, the impact can last generations. St. Paul’s and Westmount Churches are a blueprint not just for Edmonton, but for many municipalities facing similar struggles. “When you look at the fact that we’ve created a community space, which can feed the entire community, then your social return on investment outweighs the cost per unit,” Redmond says. “You’re not just creating a building where you’re going to house people, you’re giving back to the community.”

Ultimately, the success of the Sacred Spaces program will depend on the city’s ability to work with all faith groups. The desire to help expands across and beyond denominations, so too should the program. But for now, laying the foundation is a start.

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Spruce Ave’s new housing project

Indigenous-led supportive project Ambrose II coming to the area



Artist’s rendering of the south-facing entrance to the new facility. | Sherridon Routley

SHERRIDON ROUTLEY

Late last year, **NiGiNan Housing Ventures** received nearly 0.3 hectares of land from the **City of Edmonton** to develop **Ambrose Place II**, which will provide permanent housing to people living on the streets. Following four similar Indigenous-led recovery homes, this 60-unit facility would house those with complex medical and social needs. The approved land sits at the southwest corner of the **Spruce Avenue** area, north of the **Glenrose Rehabilitation Hospital** and east of **Kingsway Mall**.

An information session was held at the original Ambrose Place in the heart of Chinatown. The room quickly filled with engaged citizens, community league representatives and local elected officials. **Christine Davies**, NiGiNan’s director of housing and programs, led the session along with **Lauren Staples** and **Tai Ziola** from **Dialog Architectural Design**, and **David Gibbs** from **Chandos Construction** amongst others.

The centre is named after **Ambrose Daniels**, who was born and raised in the Buffalo Lake Métis Settlement. He was an iron and oil worker for most of his life until he fell into addiction after health complications on the job. Unable to access services because of substance abuse, he contracted pneumonia and died living unhoused on the streets of Edmonton. Through Ambrose Place, NiGiNan carries his spirit forward in developing compassionate services for the Indigenous community. The suites in Ambrose II will be designed to relieve hospitals of repeat visits from people needing higher levels of care because of disabilities.

It did not take long for residents of the area to bring up several well-thought-out questions, paraphrased

here along with responses:

Regarding visitors, would the site become a gathering place or hangout for homeless people in the area?

NiGiNan: No. Visitors are limited to family and close friends, and only by arrangement and approval by residents and staff. The outdoor areas are also fenced and private.

Is there on-site care for residents to prevent constant ambulances disrupting the nearby neighbourhood and residents of the facility?

NiGiNan: Yes. There will be 24/7 access to licensed practical nurses, as well as home care aides and other professionals. Currently, there are about 10 staff members at the existing Ambrose facility during peak hours. There will also be additional support embedded through **Recovery Alberta**, including occupational and recreational therapists, psychiatrists, and Indigenous counselling to help keep residents in the program.

How will residents engage with the surrounding community?

NiGiNan: Generally, residents don’t leave the site, and there is an outdoor fenced, private area available to them. As for community engagement, well-trained staff will communicate openly with neighbours and meet with residents to encourage healthy relationships with the community when visiting parks or leaving the building.

Will tents and homeless people who are not residents of the facility be allowed to set up around the perimeter?

NiGiNan: Staff will do their best to conduct perimeter checks and connect people in the encampment with off-site services. If the situation is unsafe for the community, the city will get involved. Nearby residents will also have a contact number to reach Ambrose II staff with concerns,

as well as a Facebook page.

With the abundance of infill in the area, parking is already squeezed. How will the site affect parking?

NiGiNan: Limited on-site parking will be available for 11 vehicles, along with a bicycle shelter. Proximity to transit was a major factor in the site selection, and staff are expected to use transit as much as possible.

Councillor Anne Stevenson: Residents should look for changes to the Spruce Avenue residential parking program coming Q1 2027 which should help alleviate some of the pressure.

Dialog’s Tai Ziola affirmed the company’s commitment to supportive, affordable housing and expressed appreciation for NiGiNan’s dedication to a “dignity-first” approach. She noted that the space is designed to be culturally appropriate and trauma-informed, as well as constructed with high-quality materials meant to last. Ziola also credited Chandos Construction as a values-driven leader in energy-efficient and sustainable design and pointed to considerations for the community such as following zoning bylaws, preserving legacy trees, and positioning the entranceway to the south to minimize traffic.

Ziola and Staples walked through various features of the interior design, including sightlines allowing the front desk to monitor the entire space, as well as a variety of engagement levels residents could feel comfortable with. Residents were given the floor to ask questions of Dialog and David Gibbs of Chandos.

Won’t there be problems with emergency and construction vehicles finding parking on the street?

Dialog: Although that’s outside of our control, further discussions may

need to take place between the City and NiGiNan Housing Ventures.

How are residents funded in the program? Do they have to cook for themselves, and is that safe?

NiGiNan: All residents receive Assured Income for the Severely Handicapped (AISH). About a third of their \$1,900 to \$1,940 monthly payment goes toward rent. They are charged \$424 a month for food, with additional charges for laundry and utilities. Residents can spend the remainder on their own. Residents have access to a fridge, hotplate and microwave if they’re deemed capable, but most will depend on the cafeteria for meals.

What is the timeline for completion?

Chandos: The project has a two-year timeline, with shovels in the ground starting in July.

Are you removing all the legacy trees in the area?

Chandos: Although there are a couple of big trees coming down, four of them will stay, as well as existing boulevard trees, which will be protected.

Dialog: We are also adding many trees and other foliage to the landscape as noted on the plans.

What can we expect for construction traffic and disruptions in the area?

Chandos: We will be very mindful of sediment tracking and drainage. Street parking will be closed for trailers, and the area will be fenced off. Alley access will remain a priority, with trucks blocking it only when necessary and for brief periods of time. At peak, a year into construction, there will be about 50 workers on-site with site noise kept within city bylaws. Overnight or early-morning truck noise will not be allowed, but there will always be an open line of communication for ongoing concerns. One resident noted that, for construction parking, there have been past agreements with Kingsway Mall to use available space as a solution. It was also noted that there may be overlap with construction of a new school in the area as a concern.

What will site security look like during construction?

Chandos: There will be cameras on-site, with in-person security deployed when needed.

A few attendees noted some of the challenges of the area in keeping people off the site and from starting fires needs to be addressed with more scrutiny.

Overall, it was an informative meeting, with the community showing that their ideas and advice are important considerations. There was agreement that this was a first step in the engagement process, and that community leagues need to play a role in continuing the exchange. Beyond the concerns, there was agreement that moving residents off the street and into permanent supportive housing will benefit an already troubled area, saving time and money for an overburdened care system.

The Green Onion Cake Man

How Siu To changed Edmonton, one cake at a time



Siu To celebrates 45 years of Green Onion Cakes in Edmonton. | Dustin Covey.

DUSTIN COVEY

There are very few people who can honestly say they changed the culinary identity of an entire city. But Siu To can.

For 45 years, Edmontonians have known him simply as **The Green Onion Cake Man**. His namesake restaurant has introduced millions of people to a northern Chinese family recipe that has become one of Edmonton’s signature foods. Today, green onion cakes are found throughout the city—at festivals, neighbourhood restaurants, community celebrations and family dinners—but there was a time when almost no one in Edmonton had ever tasted one.



Siu To in the kitchen. | Dustin Covey.

This July marks the 45th anniversary of The Green Onion Cake Man, celebrating more than four decades since Siu To first shared his family’s recipe with his adopted city.

Every tradition has a beginning. His journey to Canada began not with dreams of opening a restaurant, but with a father’s concern for his family. Born in northern China in 1940, Siu To trained as a machinist. After marrying and becoming the father of two young children, he found himself asking a question familiar to parents everywhere: How could he give them the best possible future?

His brother, already living in Edmonton, encouraged him to come to Canada, promising opportunity and an excellent education for his children. In 1975, Siu To packed up his young family and made the move that would eventually change Edmonton’s food scene forever.

He had never owned a restaurant. Cooking, however, had always been part of his life.

“In northern China,” he explains, “every family has someone known as the good cook.” Recipes, techniques and even sourdough starters were shared among neighbours, much as prairie families once exchanged eggs, vegetables or a helping hand at harvest.

After arriving in Edmonton, he visited many Chinese restaurants. While he appreciated them, he couldn’t help thinking, “I have a better idea.”

Rather than imitate what others were serving, he decided to prepare the food he genuinely loved to eat himself.

For Siu To, cooking is about sharing something you truly believe in. Creating something with your own hands, sharing it with others, and enjoying the entire process. In an increasingly busy world, he believes that’s something worth preserving, and that philosophy still guides his kitchen today.

“I always tell my cooks, ‘Do you like the food you cook?’ If they say, ‘No, it’s just for the customer,’ they’re in the wrong business,” he says.

The dish that would define his career was already familiar to him. His family made green onion cakes nearly the size of a pizza, cutting them into wedges for everyone gathered around the table. Siu To realized that Canadian diners would probably prefer something smaller, so he adapted the traditional recipe into the personal-sized cakes that have become famous across Edmonton.

Even naming them created confusion.

“I called it a green onion cake,” he laughs.



“People thought cake meant dessert.”

Eventually, Edmontonians learned otherwise.

Introducing an unfamiliar food required confidence, and a little courage. When customers hesitated, Siu To had a simple offer: “Try it. If you like it, you pay me. If you don’t like it, tell me why.”

They liked it.

In fact, they loved it.

With a capacity of up to 600 green onion cakes a day, The Green Onion Cake Man has likely served between 8 and 10 million of these savoury

treats over the past 45 years — a remarkable legacy for a dish that has become woven into Edmonton’s culinary identity.

Think about that for a moment. Millions of Edmontonians and visitors have taken their first bite of a green onion cake because one man decided to share a family recipe from northern China with his adopted home.

Yet numbers tell only part of the story. When asked what he remembers most, Siu To doesn’t talk about sales or success. He talks about families.

Customers who once brought their young children now return with grandchildren of their own. Others stop in simply to say hello. Those moments, more than any business milestone, are what remain with him.

His advice to young entrepreneurs is refreshingly straightforward: Don’t chase trends. Don’t try to guess what people want. Instead, make something you truly love.

“If you don’t like it yourself,” he says, “don’t expect other people to like it.”

Near the end of our conversation, I asked whether he had a message for everyone who has enjoyed his cooking over the years. His answer was beautifully simple.

“Keep cooking.”

I was fortunate enough to enjoy a green onion cake fresh off the grill with Siu To, and it was one of the finest I can remember. As memorable as the food was, the real highlight of my visit was Siu To himself. Warm, energetic, quick with a joke, and genuinely interested in everyone he meets. He radiates the same enthusiasm that has sustained his restaurant for 45 years. He still speaks about cooking with the excitement of someone who has just discovered it.

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A culinary fusion arrives on 118 Avenue

Taste of Hakka and Thakali promises diverse flavours



Ravi stands proudly inside his new establishment.
| Sherridon Routley

SHERRIDON ROUTLEY

A new culinary destination is breathing fresh life into the Alberta Avenue neighbourhood. **Taste of Hakka and Thakali Kitchen & Bar** officially opened its doors on July 1 at 9563 118 Ave. NW, bringing



Hakka noodles and chili chicken.
| Sherridon Routley

a unique, multi-ethnic approach to dining that aims to cater to the diverse palates of Edmonton residents.

I sat down with **Rabindra “Ravi” Phuyal**, a hospitality veteran with a deep-rooted passion for the foods of his heritage. With a bachelor’s degree in hotel management from Nepal and previous experience running establishments in Canada — including a hotel in **Barrhead** and a five-year tenure managing a Ricky’s All Day Grill — he saw an opportunity to revitalize a space that had hosted several previous businesses.

“I recognized the previous business had good intentions and food, but needed an update in terms of management and responding to what the public wants to eat,” Ravi explains. His strategy for success? Variety.

The restaurant's core identity lies in its namesake: Hakka and Thakali cuisines. Ravi describes Hakka as a flavourful diaspora cuisine from the South Asian region, blending influences from India, Malaysia, Indonesia, and the Himalayas. It is characterized by hearty portions, bold spices, and a focus on vegetable and chicken dishes. At its heart, the Thakali Khana Thali offers a more refined, traditional Nepalese experience. This set meal features a delicate balance of northern and southern spices — including timur from the north and jimbu from the high Himalayas — paired with sizzling ghee rice, lentils, pickles, yogurt, and fermented lettuce.

However, Ravi is quick to emphasize that his vision goes beyond just these two specialties. "I want people to be able to try the various foods from the Himalayan and Indo-Chinese diaspora under one roof rather than have to go to separate specialized restaurants," he says. This inclusive approach means the

menu is a globe-trotting affair. Guests can find everything from standard Indian favourites like butter chicken and clay-oven chicken tikka, to Southeast Asian staples like Nasi Goreng, Thai green curry, and Tom Yum soup.

For those who want to dive into the full experience, Ravi recommends the Hakka or Thakali family combos. These offerings give a taste of the traditional set meals at a value-conscious price point. Furthermore, customization is a priority; the restaurant offers different proteins (all Halal) or vegetarian options and is happy to adjust spice levels for western tastes, offering meals that are mild by default unless diners request otherwise.

The commitment to authenticity is also evident in the kitchen's equipment, particularly the real clay oven used to prepare tandoori, naan and roti. For diners with dietary restrictions, the kitchen can even prepare chickpea flour roti upon request for a gluten-free option.

Ravi and his chef and business partner **Gir Raj Khatri** go way back. He worked with him in Dubai as a catering manager at Fly Emirates. Khatri was responsible for the food of the previous establishment and, with Ravi's management experience, the team is well-equipped to handle the operational demands of their eclectic menu. By creating a space that accommodates groups with varying comfort levels regarding ethnic food, Ravi hopes to foster a welcoming environment where community members can explore new

flavours together.

Post-interview, I tried a couple of the recommended dishes: the chili chicken Hakka noodle and the chicken momo. The noodle dish was an appealing stir-fry with a good helping of vegetables and meat. I found the spice level lower than what

I am used to, so I would request a spicier version next time. The momo was a traditional Nepalese steamed meat or vegetable dumpling that has a unique spice blend and came with homemade

chili and sesame dipping sauces. The masala spiced filling had quite a kick, and the dumpling was perfectly steamed so it wasn't too soft or too firm. At 10 large pieces, it would make a great appetizer for sharing.

As the Alberta Avenue dining
scene



The traditional momos done to perfection.
| Sherridon Routley

continues to evolve, Taste of Hakka and Thakali stands as a testament to the idea that great food, like the diverse communities it represents, is best enjoyed with variety and a sense of shared discovery.

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Measure What Matters

A Social Mobility Index for 118 Avenue



Photo AABA

ALBERTA AVENUE BUSINESS ASSOCIATION

The City of Edmonton knows how many building permits were issued last year. It knows how many hotel rooms were booked and how much the tax base grew. But It does not know whether a newcomer on 118 Avenue can start a business and keep it open. Or whether a young person in this neighbourhood can find a job that pays enough to live on. Or whether a family can build a future on main street.

We think that's wrong. And we think it's fixable.

What a Social Mobility Index actually does

Social mobility is the measure of whether people can get ahead; where you start your business determines how it ends up. Economists usually track it across generations and across whole countries. Cities have fewer levers, but they aren't powerless. Two of the strongest ones a municipality actually controls are whether people

- can start and sustain a business and whether local jobs pay a living wage. That's what we're proposing in the Edmonton measure. Not permits or hotel stays, but three questions:
- **Are community desired main street businesses surviving their first five years?** Survival is the difference between a storefront that builds equity for a family and one that drains their savings.
 - **Are young entrepreneurs getting a fair shot?** According to Stats Canada, the majority of business owners fall into the 50–64 age group. If business ownership is the on-ramp, we need to know who's getting on.
 - **Are local businesses creating jobs that pay enough to live on?** A job that doesn't cover rent isn't economic development.

These are proxies, not a perfect measure of mobility. But they are measurable, they are municipal, and they tell us something the current scorecard doesn't: whether growth

the ground. Business Improvement Areas (BIAs) are the organizations that help close that gap. We're on the street. We know the owners by name. We know which storefronts are struggling before the vacancy sign goes up. What we don't have is the mandate or the tools.

Why main streets are the right place to measure

Edmonton's main streets aren't a nice-to-have. They generate roughly \$8.5 billion a year and employ about 60,000 people. Nearly 90 per cent of Edmontonians live within a kilometer of one.

If you want to know whether this city's economy is working for regular people, the main streets are where you'd look. They're where younger Canadians open their first business. They're where a first job turns into a career. They're where wealth either builds locally or leaks out.

is creating opportunity or just concentrating wealth.

The gap we already know about

The city's own 2025 study found that **61 per cent of businesses are unaware of any city services.** Read that again. Six out of every ten business owners, the people the city's economic strategy is supposedly built for, don't know what's available to them. Whatever is being measured right now, it isn't reaching

What we are asking:

1. **A Social Mobility Index** adopted as a core measure of economic success reported publicly, alongside the permit and hotel occupancy counts.
2. **A BIA-led economic development function** to close the awareness gap the city's own research identified.
3. **Fair treatment on vacancy.** Right now, businesses that pay into BIAs are subsidizing a streetscape that vacant properties degrade for free. The Edmonton Journal recently covered our push to tax vacant commercial properties. Mayor Knack said he's open to thinking outside the box on this. We'd like to take him up on it.

The bottom line

At the end of the day, economic development is more than just infrastructure; it is the heartbeat of our people and the strength of the communities we call home. We're in this together, building a future that reflects the vibrance and potential of every street corner. We would love to hear your vision. Let's start a conversation about the city we're creating together. We encourage you to connect with us, whether by email, call, in-person or through our community on social media, as we shape this path forward.

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Is your community prepared for an emergency?

A safety and disaster preparedness strategy is in the works



Kelsey Truman (left) with Katie Heatherington read Rat Creek Press on a workshop break. Photo Constance Brissenden

RICHARD WILLIAMS & CONSTANCE BRISSENDEN

Many of us have watched disasters as they occur, on television or online. Here in Alberta, major fires have destroyed towns. This June, a tornado struck northern towns including Girouxville and Falher. Flooding from heavy rains damaged homes. Infrastructure failures resulted in extended power outages. How can we prepare for these events?

In May, a group of neighbours gathered at **Parkdale-Cromdale Community League** to outline preliminary thoughts for a community-wide safety and disaster preparedness strategy.

Adam Conway, head of the University of Alberta (U of A) emergency preparedness office, led the discussion. Under the banner of **WE'RE READY**, Conway led the brainstorming. "Our approach is community-based," he said. "Community league halls become a focal point during an emergency. But first, the community needs a plan to sustain the effort."

Important questions were asked. What disasters are possible? What can we do if confronted with a disaster? Where can we turn for information and physical support?

The core focus was on identifying potential hazards — ranging from natural disasters like wildfires and tornadoes to infrastructure failures — and establishing a network of community hubs to assist populations in need during events. Then a communication plan to reach residents via digital and analog methods (e.g., social media plus loudspeakers), and emergency plans and potential actions.

Whether you are a longtime Edmonton resident or a newcomer,

you need to be familiar with procedures and resources. This will take effort for a community to achieve. As participant **Loraine Wickremasinghe** noted, "Some residents may have obstacles to reaching out for support from police, Emergency Medical Services, Fire Rescue Services, or have language barriers."

The following is a summary of the discussions that took place. They are a jumping off point for future planning. The next step? Stay tuned this fall, said U of A's Adam Conway. Until then, take the time to discuss strategies with your family, and your neighbours. What would you do to save yourself and other members of your community if a disaster struck?

HOW TO PREPARE FOR EMERGENCIES

- **Hazard identification and risk assessment**
 - **Specific scenarios:** car/truck rollover, bombing, electronics, tornado, wildfire.
 - **Infrastructure/access:** electricity, access roads, accessibility of key community locations (churches, community leagues, recreation centres, fire stations, library, senior homes, Expo Centre).
- **Vulnerable populations and resource management**
 - **Needs:** food storage, medical supplies (including Naloxone kits), toiletries.
 - **Target groups:** reduced mobility, seniors, single-parent families, pets.
 - **Mitigation:** fire prevention (flammable items).

- **Communication and mobilization**
 - **Outreach networks:** schools, Bent Arrow, churches, social and homeless services, Rat Creek Press, cafes, Arts on the Ave, senior home maintenance managers.
 - **Tactics:** police loudspeakers, sidewalk chalk, social media, radio, news.
- **Response and recovery strategy**
 - **Immediate actions:** contact procedures, emergency plans, injury intervention levels created.
 - **Post-event:** looting prevention, cleanup, financial/resource management.

POTENTIAL ACTIONS

1. **Define hubs and roles:** Formalize the "Hub" concept by designating physical locations (e.g., community leagues, fire stations) as primary relief centres. Assign roles for resource distribution (food, medical, Naloxone).
2. **Develop a multi-channel communication strategy:**
 - Create a contact list for key community partners (schools, local businesses, senior homes).
 - Draft standard operating procedures for information sharing during electronic black-outs (utilizing sidewalk chalk, sirens, or local press like Rat Creek Press on Substack).

3. **Conduct a vulnerability audit:** Create a census or map identifying locations with high-risk populations (such as seniors, individuals with reduced mobility) to prioritize during the initial check of key locations.
4. **Establish response protocols:** Develop clear guidelines for what constitutes an actionable emergency, the scope of intervention allowed, and specific contact-trees for immediate response.
5. **Recovery planning:** Outline a post-event workflow that covers security measures (e.g., anti-looting) and recovery coordination (e.g., clean-up logistics).

Upcoming workshops
Get Ready in the Neighbourhood
Sept 17 Virtual
Oct 22 Evansdale CL
Register on Eventbrite

Richard Williams is Vice President for the board of Parkdale-Cromdale Community League. Please reach out to info@parkdalecromdale.org if you are interested in helping take forward a Community Plan or feel you have unique skills (e.g., plumbing, electrical or medical training) or assets (e.g., energy generator, water purification kits) that could be relied on in an emergency.



Adam Conway of U of A's WE'RE READY team inspired group sessions on the many issues related to community emergency response. Photo Constance Brissenden

Rat Creek Press

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An illustration of two stylized human figures. The figure on the left has purple hair and is wearing an orange shirt. The figure on the right has grey hair and is wearing an orange shirt. The figure on the right has a circular sticker on their chest that says "I love my RCP".

Dog walking with compassion

Safe walking is cooperative, aware, and thoughtful

DR. NATASHA P. RUSSELL

I smile every time I see a dog walker — and lately, there are so many! More wagging tails on the sidewalks is a beautiful thing. Our neighbourhood feels alive, active, and thoroughly dog-approved.

But as with all things, there are the good, the bad, and the occasionally chaotic. Increased dog traffic changes street dynamics. More dogs mean more variables. Urban life brings traffic, scooters, construction noise, food scraps, wildlife, and the occasional off-leash dog. We can't control all of it, but aware-

ness prevents accidents. Density matters. It calls for more awareness, more soft vigilance, and thoughtful handling: manage, monitor, move on.

Most dog encounters don't begin as joyful reunions. They often start as territorial, uncertain, or mildly stressful. Positive interactions happen

when exposure over time is balanced and well managed, not when every dog is expected to greet every other dog.

Not all dogs want to socialize. Many don't.

Imagine being expected to converse with every stranger you pass. Exhausting, right? Dogs that rush up to every person or dog aren't

If you're walking an anxious or reactive dog, you're not alone. Progress is incremental. Some walks will feel smooth, and others won't.



Image by Donald Clark from Pixabay

necessarily well socialized. In fact, “over-socialization” is a recognized pattern of chronic nervous system over-arousal and poor impulse control that can create behavioural issues over a lifetime. Socialization is about building neutrality and emotional regulation, not constant interaction.

Leash and/or fence greetings, especially in busy areas, are often the first ingredient in a dog fight recipe. When dogs meet on leash or through a fence, movement is restricted. These scenarios can create pressure, frustration, or false confidence. Even friendly dogs can react defensively when tension builds. “Friendly” is not the same as consensual — and that applies to our dogs too.

In denser areas, good leash etiquette looks like controlled movement:

- **Keep dogs on a short but loose leash.**
- **Avoid retractable leashes in busy zones.**
- **Keep moving rather than stopping for greetings.**

Create space rather than holding tension or closing distance.

Standing still while dogs bark at each other amplifies tension, especially for anxious dogs. Forward motion diffuses pressure. Mental and physical flow matter here.

Watch for early warning signals: staring, freezing, stiff posture, hyper-fixation. These are forms of communication, not “bad behaviour.” If your dog becomes fixated, calmly move along. Breaking eye contact early can prevent escalation.

Avoidance isn't failure; it's smart handling. Walk at quieter times if needed. Cross the street early. Use parked cars as visual barriers. Distance is not defeat — it's thoughtful canine care.

Respect extends beyond our dogs. Not everyone is comfortable around them. Some people have allergies, trauma, or cultural boundaries. Children move unpredictably and may squeeze or startle. Teach kids to ask before approaching and to avoid hugging animals. Even the gentlest dog can become overwhelmed.

Equipment matters. Use a properly fitted harness or collar. Carry waste bags. Ensure visible ID tags. Reflective gear increases nighttime safety. Preparation reduces stress.

If you're walking an anxious or reactive dog, you're not alone. Progress is incremental. Some walks will feel smooth, and others won't. Advocate for your dog's space. Intervene early. Reward calm behaviour. Stay grounded — tension travels down the leash too.

Ultimately, safe dog walking is cooperative. Lead by example. Normalize declining greetings. Share space generously. Set your dogs up for success and respect others doing the same. Remember that every dog you pass is on their own journey. Sometimes the kindest thing we can do is smile, wave, give space, and keep moving.

Safety creates freedom — when we move with intention and choose space over tension, we shape the neighbourhoods our dogs deserve.

BrokenMirror

A poem

Broken mirror on the floor
No need to keep you anymore
Shining there your silver light
Clasped now in my hand so tight
Reflecting back a hundred eyes
Of pain, of horror, and surprise
Of realization that, just like me
You broke apart, not meant to be
Not meant to be, but living still
No accident, but force of will
I've put my pieces back in place
Wiped blood and tears from my face
Refused to just be set aside
Distilled the truth from those who lied
Would not be brought low by hate
Would not leave my life to fate
I took this hill, I fought alone
I, the soldier, not unknown
These battle scars I proudly bare
Hide other wounds that once were there
Battered yes, but not undone
I chose to fight and not to run
So put away your silver sheen
Remove the shards that fell between
Your images are dull and faded
My eyes are dry, the storm abated
Inside I hold an image far more true
Than any that I saw in you
This vision clear, it serves to ground me
Though led astray, It's I who found me

BY JULIE R. MCCREA

ILLUSTRATION KATHRYN DUTCHAK

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Building from the ground up

NNA works to build a strong foundation and renewed vision



Community members meet for an NNA meeting. | Karen Mykietka

KAREN MYKIETKA

A handful of residents — sometimes as few as three — have been holding a community organization together for over a decade. Although the **Norwood Neighbourhood Association** (NNA) has been around for 53 years, my guess is most community members have never heard of it. For the last 15 years, it has been in the background, quietly supporting other organizations in their events and initiatives through monetary donations from their casino fundraising.

The NNA has been a partner with **Rat Creek Press** for many years. They have also supported the **Deep Freeze** and **Kaleido** festivals put on by **Arts on the Ave**, the **Thousand Faces Festival**, **Theatre Prospero**, and the **Alberta Avenue Community League garden** and programs.

This organization was also instrumental in securing and implementing neighbourhood improvement in

the late 1970s. They published the **Norwood News** from 1973 to 1990. In the 1990s, they partnered with other organizations on Family Day and Canada Day events. Numerous amazing community members have given time to the NNA over its history. While I have never been on the NNA board, I have been a member and supporter since 2002.

In 2021, the NNA expanded their boundaries to include the neighbourhoods of Alberta Avenue, Delton, Eastwood, Elmwood Park, Spruce Avenue, Parkdale-Cromdale, and Westwood with the hopes this would help with board and member recruitment. However, it continues to be a challenge.

This past May, the NNA held a casino fundraiser, but with their limited board and membership numbers it was a challenge to find the needed volunteers. Afterwards, due to the challenges and changing board of directors, **Alberta Gaming Liquor and Cannabis** (AGLC) had a meet-

ing with the remaining board. The NNA's gaming funds are frozen until they provide an operational plan and other eligibility requirements.

On the sunny Saturday afternoon of July 25, 19 community members gathered for a special general meeting of the Norwood Neighbourhood Association. The plan was simple: sign up members and adopt a resolution to hold an Annual General Meeting (AGM) by the end of October, since the AGM attempted in May failed.

Last year, a group of new NNA board members including **Erick Estrada**, **Edwin Shale**, **Maggie Glasgow**, **Amelia Hall**, and returning board members **Gerard Forget** and **Sarah Flynn**, worked through a strategic planning process with a provincial advisor. They envisioned a Norwood community that is vibrant, radically welcoming, diverse and empowering. As an organization, they want to lead, empower, celebrate, and grow capacity for inclusive

community building.

Now a working committee must develop a plan that meets the AGLC charitable gaming requirement that establishes volunteers must create, control and deliver a charitable program that benefits the broader community. A plan that holds their core values of community, empowerment, equity, integrity, stewardship, and hope.

Join your neighbours and support the NNA in this exciting rebuilding endeavor by becoming a member or, if you have more time, skills, and vision to offer, reach out about joining the board. Email norwood-nna@gmail.com



Parkdale Cromdale Community League

Programs:

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Tango: Mondays 6:45-10pm

Latin Dance Classes: Tuesdays 6-7pm

Yoga: All levels. Wednesdays 7-8pm

Art Classes: Wednesdays 7-9pm

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



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

Membership at: www.parkdalecromdale.org/membership

My forest bathing experience

Now with more intention!



Our host guides us deeper in the forest. | Sherridon Routley

SHERRIDON ROUTLEY

I recently attended a guided session sponsored by the **City of Edmonton**, where residents learn and participate in forest bathing led by certified **Shinrin-yoku** practitioners. The city’s program started last year and has grown in popularity. It welcomes folks at all levels of forest bathing experience and includes sensory exploration, meditation, immune system therapy, replanting, tea ceremony, and conservation presentations.

Our host **Allyn Esau** welcomed us at the entrance to the **South Whitemud Creek Ravine** on a beautiful May evening. She is a certified Shinrin-yoku guide and a lifelong Edmontonian.

“The term forest bathing and forest therapy are used interchangeably around the practice. Sometimes people hear the term forest bathing and they have some preconceptions, and they’re unsure what that might mean,” explained Esau, as we travelled a short way along the popular path. “It’s more like sunbathing where you’re immersing yourself with intention. At its core it’s about shifting from doing in nature, to being in nature, so it’s really about slowing down and engaging in sensory practices.”

Esau enlightened us that the

practice of Shinrin-yoku originated in 1980s Japan, where there was a major shift in how the population reacted to its fast-paced, high-pressure environment — **Shinrin** (森林) meaning “forest” and **Yoku** (浴) meaning “bathing.” Coined by the government’s Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries, Shinrin-yoku has roots in Shinto and Buddhist practices where trees are considered spiritual beings with which we are all connected. As we entered we were asked to visualize the Torii, the traditional red wooden gates that mark the boundary between the everyday world and a sacred space.

Veering into one of the many clearings that stem off the path, we paused in a natural seating area where Esau outlined some safety considerations when exploring and touching, including identifying stinging nettle. One thing we didn’t consider that day was the abundance of hungry mosquitoes out early — I encourage future participants to dress or spray accordingly.

Here we took in our first mindful exercise through box breathing, a technique that calms the nervous system and improves focus. It involved breathing deeply into our lungs, holding and exhaling completely through our mouths, with each step given equal time. There is

no one right way to be mindful, we were reminded, and you can do this process with eyes open or closed.

Venturing along a well-worn path, Esau explained the many physical benefits of forest bathing, including reductions in blood pressure and heart rate, as well as a decrease in cortisol, the body’s primary stress hormone. Peer-reviewed studies have also shown an increase in natural killer (NK) cells, which aid in fighting cancer. Mentally, a regular forest bathing routine has demonstrated reductions in anxiety, stress and depression that can last weeks. Esau herself confided that she had benefitted as a public speaker from the reduction in anxiety she overcame due to the practice.

Esau pointed out where compounds like phytoncides reach the environment, like the visible sticky sap that flows from wounded points on the tree’s surface. This sap has been sacred to Indigenous healing traditions globally for thousands of years, primarily utilized for its potent antimicrobial, anti-inflammatory and tissue-regenerating properties. She observed that this healing mechanism, although intended to heal the tree, also heals us — we too can “invest in ourselves, and our own individual well being, which in turn can have really broad ripple effects on our surrounding community.”

To take in these benefits we broke away from the group to take our own time deeply exploring our senses in the forest. We listened and observed

the birds and insects, touched the trees and the leaves, and smelled and tasted the fragrant spring air. Esau reminded us to respect the animals’ dominion around us and pay attention to signs that we are encroaching on their zones, like birds giving warning that their young are close by.

We were encouraged to try some deeper invitations by touching, tasting and sitting with intention on our own. “Sometimes, it’s as simple as just stopping and changing your perspective — sitting down, laying down and looking up,” Esau said, handing out mirrors we could place in the environment to aid this. I personally enjoyed simply watching the light that filtered through the trees in motion, poetically called **Komorebi** (木漏れ日) in Japanese.

For another exercise we chose simple instruments like chimes, maracas and tonal wooden blocks to play with on our own. Our host encouraged us to listen deeply or make our own noises to complement the forest soundscape.

As our session drew to a close, we were reminded that forest bathing is not a one-time practice but a

continuing relationship with yourself that can develop many forms over time. It can occur in any of the beautiful nature spaces Edmonton provides, or simply through listening to birds in a backyard or park.

One of the mindful exercises involved tonal instruments. | Sherridon Routley

“This healing mechanism, although intended to heal the tree, also heals us”
- Allyn Esau

My thanks to Allyn Esau and the forest bathing team. Find out more about this city-sponsored program at edmonton.ca. Register early! Sessions fill up quickly.



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Rat Creek Press tells our community story

Our newspaper shines a light on neighbours and neighbourhoods



Community members joined Dr. Ron Pate for a community regeneration conference. | Megan Lindsay

CONSTANCE BRISSENDEN

A visiting professor and urban planning expert recently confirmed what many of us already know: **Rat Creek Press** is more than a quarterly community newspaper. It is the voice for the good of our neighbours and neighbourhoods.

Dr. Ronald (Ron) Pate is best known for encouraging communities to practice “stories-telling.” In June, he spoke at a workshop organized by **Arts on the Ave** at the **Carrot Community Arts Coffeehouse**. The workshop focused on the art of community regeneration, “building up a good soil people across Edmonton.”

The speaker was worth hearing. He has a PhD in urban studies and planning from Portland State University and has spent decades observing the power of stories in communities, and

play, based on the words of these individuals. One such play, titled **Swamp Gravy**, in Colquitt, Georgia, did just that. The play shared the town’s cultural heritage, saving it from becoming a ghost town. It is now an annual tradition of togetherness.

“Story is the centrepiece of it all,” said Dr. Pate. “We use stories to sell ourselves and our ideas. The narratives that our communal stories tell is an attempt to recapture something human and meaningful.”

It’s a sentiment echoed by **Karen Mykietka**, publisher of Rat Creek Press for the past 20 years. Looking over the summer issue, readers learn about individuals like performer **Christie Mawer**, and organizations such as **The Afro-Caribbean Food Bank**. New businesses are featured. Good advice is given. The history of

the movements they inspire. His new book, *Community Found: A Process for Getting to Good Together*, was just published

The process isn’t complicated: community members share their life stories. The stories grow into awareness and activism. One example would be a

our neighbourhoods, such as **Spruce Avenue in the 1950s**, is recorded. Life and death situations are shared. Humour also plays its part.

“Stories are powerful. Stories change people. Stories drive social and economic change,” says Mykietka.

Some sensitivity is always required, says Dr. Pate. “No story is ever completely true. That’s why we need multiple stories.” He quoted writer **Barry Lopez**, who pointed out that “authentic stories” are by us, about us. Inauthentic stories are written about us by outsiders.

In an area like ours, we have all heard the inauthentic stories, with just enough of a grain of truth to be believed.



Sprucewood Branch library assistants Laura Visser (left) and Mimi Hoang enjoyed reading about the history of Spruce Avenue in the 1950s. | Constance Brissenden

The stories of a rundown and dangerous area of the city. As a local resident, I’ve been asked more than once if Parkdale-Cromdale, Alberta Avenue, and adjacent neighbourhoods are “safe.”

The majority of us love our tree-lined streets, the accessibility of shopping, recreation, and river valleys. But the negative reputation hangs on.

It is Rat Creek Press, our commu-

nity leagues, and groups such as Arts on the Ave that counter this reputation. Through these groups, we tell our stories.

Rat Creek Press recently invited local residents to reach out and share their stories. The profile of plumber and poet **Bruce Pigford**, in the summer issue, is one result. If you have a story to tell, write and submit it (around 500 words), or contact Karen Mykietka and she will try to help you shape it for publication.

“Together, we are motivated to create better lives around us. It’s similar to ‘falling in love.’” Dr. Pate says. “This is how we transform individuals into a community. Affection can hold a community together.”

Workshop participant Dorothy Ritz pointed out that building community affection and relatability is challenging. Governments revolve and representatives shift every four years.

One way to consistently build affection is to read and share the stories in Rat Creek Press. And bring your story to the table, if you so desire.

“The true storyteller makes time for all the stories to be heard,” Dr. Pate concluded.

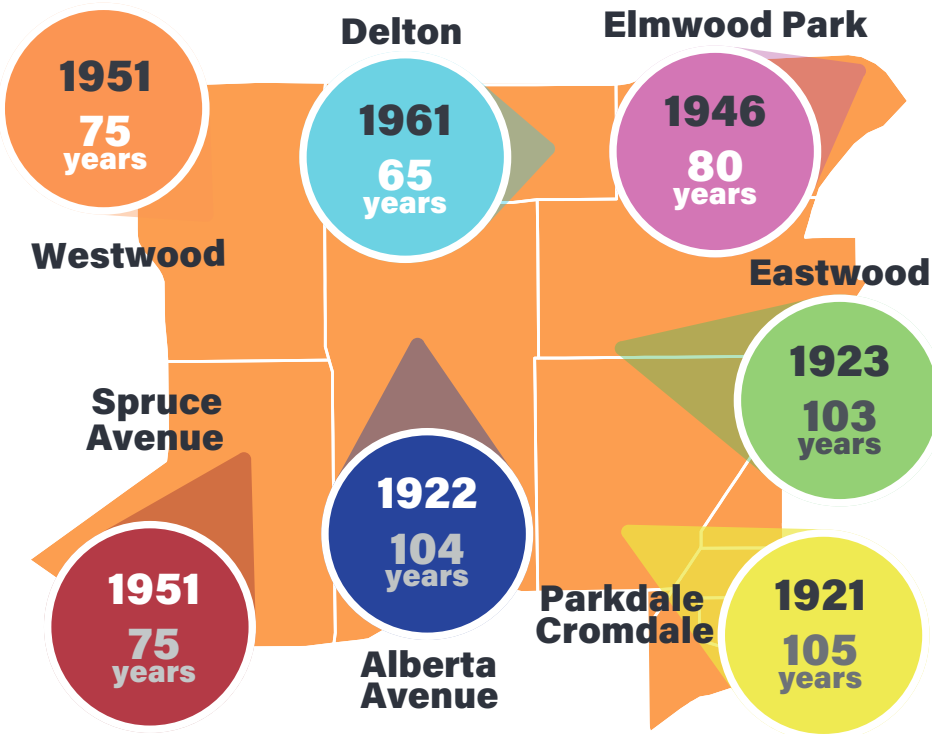
For more than two decades, Rat Creek Press has done just that.

To contact Rat Creek Press:
info@ratcreek.org



Local community leagues have been around for decades!

A community league is a place where neighbours meet and great things happen!
Continue the tradition of involvement and volunteerism at your local league.



Upcoming fall annual general meetings:

- Elmwood Park** Sept.
elmwoodparkcommunity.org
- Eastwood** Oct. 7
eastwoodhub.org
- Westwood** Oct.
westwoodcl.ca
- Spruce Avenue** Oct. 27
spruceavenuecommunity.com

Spring annual general meetings:

- Delton** Feb.
deltoncommunity.com
- Alberta Avenue** April
albertaave.org
- Parkdale-Cromdale** May
parkdalecromdale.org

Over a century of connection across the city

Community League Day celebrates a space where everyone is welcome

SUPPLIED BY EDMONTON FEDERATION OF COMMUNITY LEAGUES

A neighbourhood might only be the area in which you live, but a community is a place where you belong: it's about the things that make us feel connected, and the specific parts of our lives that make us feel at home.

This September, Edmonton's annual **Community League Day** returns with a message for everyone: you're welcome here. No two Community League Day events are identical, but they all share the same goal — making sure every Edmontonian knows they have a place to belong.

"Leagues continue to provide innovative and relevant opportunities for Edmontonians to connect with their neighbours across our city, and Community League Day is truly remarkable. We see events and opportunities for neighbourhood connection in every corner of our city. For over 100 years, Edmontonians have known the best way to get the most out of your neighbourhood is to be a part of their community league," says **Laura Cunningham-Shpeley**, Executive Director of the **Edmonton Federation of Community Leagues (EFCL)**.

This year, the EFCL notes the importance of reaching out to

Edmontonians who may not yet know about the league in their area and encouraging them to become members. Edmonton has welcomed hundreds of thousands of new residents in recent years, many of whom might not be familiar with community leagues — a one-of-a-kind, made-in-Edmonton institution designed specifically for fostering community connection.

"I think one of the really amazing things about community leagues is

that you shape them as you participate in them," says Cunningham-Shpeley. "They're all a reflection of their communities, which means all you need to do is show up, and you're a part of it."

As Edmonton continues to grow and change, Community League Day offers a crucial chance to strengthen the roots that hold the city together: neighbourhood camaraderie, participation, and experiencing the simple joy of feeling welcome.

To check event locations, an interactive map of **Community League Day** events, and info on how to join your local league, visit **CLDay.ca**



★★★★★

I would definitely rank this spot as one of Edmonton's 'hidden gems'

★★★★★

Super clean restaurant with a great staff. Had the breakfast special and it was plated perfectly

★★★★★

I loved the food and the chef and server were very friendly. Great place!

Classic Eggs Benedict

Pork Baby Back Ribs

Ham and Cheese Omelette

★★★★★

The mushroom burger is unique, whatever veggie they put there compliments the patty

From Canadian comfort food to Italian pastas.

Every dish is prepared with care, using quality ingredients and heart-forward recipes.

★★★★★

The food was amazing, care into how it tastes and the portions you got made sure you are full.

★★★★★

The fish was fresh and perfectly cooked, the batter was amazingly crispy! a wonderful addition to the neighborhood,

FRESH FOOD BIG FLAVOUR

BREAKFAST • LUNCH • DINNER

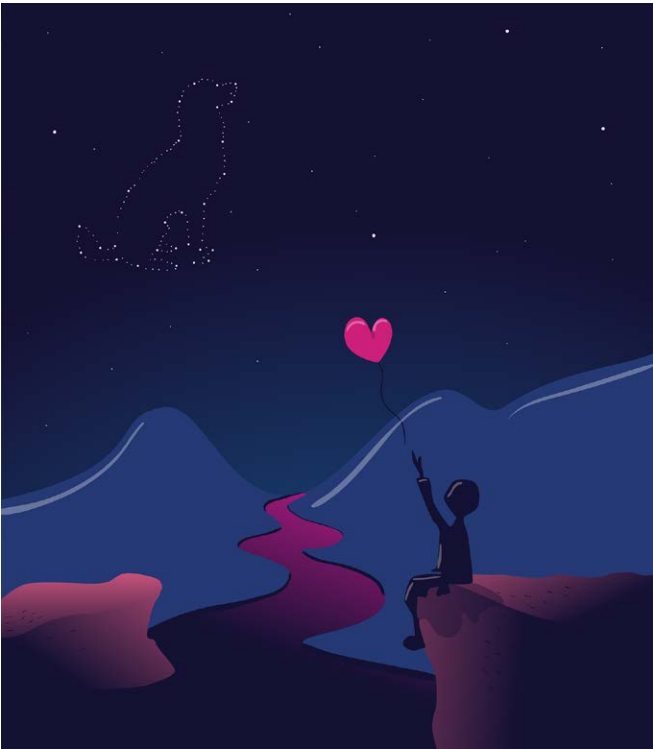
theheartandplate.com

8157 112 Ave NW

825-480-8811

Our final gift

Preparing for life’s meaningful moments ... including with our pets



Original artwork by Blambasa on Pixabay

NAN MARSHALL

We plan weddings, celebrate birthdays and gather to welcome new babies into the world. We instinctively understand that life’s biggest milestones deserve care, intention, and presence. Yet one of the most meaningful moments we will ever share with the animals we love is often the one we never prepare for.

Not because we don’t love them enough. Because we fear the conversation.

Over the years, the relationship with animals has changed. They are no longer simply pets. They are woven into our families, our routines and our stories. They greet us after difficult days, celebrate life’s happiest moments and offer a kind of unconditional love that quietly changes who we are. Yet while our relationship with animals has evolved, our conversations about saying goodbye haven’t always evolved with it.

Through her work providing in-home end-of-life veterinary care, **Dr. Natasha Russell** has supported countless families through one of life’s hardest decisions. As an end-of-life pet doula, I have the privilege of walking alongside families from a different perspective, creating space for reflection, meaningful conversations, and thoughtful planning before goodbye arrives. Although our roles are different, we’ve witnessed the same thing time and time again. Families rarely wish they had loved

their animals more. They wish they had felt more prepared.

What if planning ahead wasn’t about expecting the worst? What if it was about offering one final gift?

Not a perfect goodbye, because those don’t exist, but an intentional one.

One shaped by love instead of panic. By presence instead of fear. By thoughtful choices instead of rushed decisions.

Every family will have a different vision of what that looks like. For some it may mean creating a peaceful space at home. For others, it may be gathering loved ones, sharing stories, or simply understanding the options before a crisis forces difficult decisions.

There is no right way to say goodbye. But there is value in giving ourselves permission to think about it before we have to.

Rather than preparing for death, we’re preparing for one final opportunity to love with intention.

That belief inspired “The heart of their story“, a free community workshop where we’ll explore the extraordinary bond we share with the animals we love, talk openly about end-of-life planning, and discover how intention can transform fear into understanding. Our hope isn’t to take grief away, but to help families feel more informed, more supported, and more confident that, when the time comes, they can honour a lifetime of love with the same care they gave every day before it.

Perhaps one of the greatest gifts we can give the animals who have given us so much... is one final gift of intention.

THE HEART OF THEIR STORY

A free 5-part community workshop series with Dr. Natasha Russell, DVM & End-of-Life Pet Doula Nan Marshall

COMING SOON: SESSION #2: THE SHAPE OF GRIEF-UNDERSTANDING LOSS

September 3, 2026, 6:30 - 7:30 pm
Alberta Avenue Community Centre
9210 - 118 Avenue

To register, contact:
Nan Marshall
780-667-0670
thesanctuaryeold@gmail.com

Fall community programs

Weekly

- Mondays**
Tango 6:45-10 pm @ Parkdale Cromdale
Women’s support group by Soberhood Society, 6-8 pm @ Eastwood
The Larks! Choir, 7-8:30 pm @ Alberta Avenue
Public Skating 5:30-6:30 pm @ Westwood Area
- Tuesdays**
Salsa & Bachata, 6-7 pm @ Parkdale-Cromdale
Adult art night, 6:30-8:30 pm @ The Nina
Tai Chi, 7:30-8:30 pm @ Eastwood
Open bellydance, 7:30-9 pm @ Alberta Avenue
- Wednesdays**
Yoga, 7-8 pm @ Parkdale-Cromdale
Art classes, 7-9 pm @ Parkdale-Cromdale
- Thursdays**
Not Falling For You seniors fitness, 10-11:15 am @ Alberta Avenue
Toast & Jam, 11 am - 1 pm @ The Carrot
Youth Rise, 4:30-6:30 pm @ Alberta Avenue
Family Art Night, 6:30-8 pm @ The Nina
Community Night, 6:30-8:30 pm @ Alberta Avenue
E-Town A Cappella Choir @ Eastwood
- Fridays**
Live music, 7 pm @ The Carrot
- Saturdays**

- Guitar lessons, 10-11 am Free Arts Society @ Parkdale-Cromdale**
Jam session, 11 am - 1 pm Free Arts Society @ Parkdale-Cromdale
Community swim/gym, 3-5 pm @ Commonwealth &/or Eastglen
Open Mic, 7pm @ The Carrot
- Sundays**
Community swim/gym 1-3 pm @ Commonwealth &/or Eastglen
- Monthly**
Seniors Lunch, 12-2 pm @ Eastwood on second Monday
Knitting & Crochet, 6:30-8 pm @ Parkdale-Cromdale second Wednesday
Poetry Night, 7 pm @ The Carrot on second Wednesday
Coffee with Cops, 7 pm @ The Carrot on a Wednesday TBA
Hip Hop Showcase, 7 pm @ The Carrot on third Thursdays
Monster Pro Wrestling, 7:30 pm @ Alberta Avenue on first Friday. \$25
Movie night @ Spruce Avenue TBA
Line dancing with Melissa, 7 pm @ Delton every other Monday starting September 14

September

EXTRAVAGANZA!

FUN FOR EVERYONE!

SUNDAY
SEPT 13 | 12PM - 4PM

AT
ELMWOOD PARK
COMMUNITY LEAGUE

12505 75 STREET, EDMONTON, AB

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BOUNCY OBSTACLE COURSES

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Good Times. Great People. Our Community.

COME OUT, HAVE FUN & SUPPORT OUR COMMUNITY!

WESTWOOD PRESENTS THE 2026 ANNUAL

COMMUNITY LEAGUE DAY

SATURDAY SEPTEMBER 19th

FREE PANCAKE BREAKFAST 9AM

MEMBERSHIP PURCHASES AVAILABLE

BIG BIN EVENT AVAILABLE TO MEMBERS 10AM

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 www.westwoodcl.ca

Westwood

Community League

Visit The Westwood Community League Website for More information

COMMUNITY LEAGUE DAY!

SAVE THE DATE: SEPTEMBER 19TH

More details to come!









PARKDALE CROMDALE COMMUNITY LEAGUE

All Alberta Ave. Residents Welcome!

League Day

FREE Family Fun!

Music Games Food



Pancake Supper

LOCATION: 9210 118 AVE NW

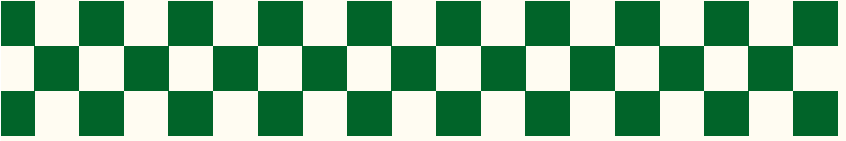
5PM TO 9PM

SATURDAY 12 SEPTEMBER

MORE INFO: ALBERTAAVE.ORG



ALBERTA AVENUE community league



Delton

COMMUNITY LEAGUE'S

MEMBERSHIP DAY!

 SATURDAY, SEPTEMBER 19, 2026
11 A.M. TO 2 P.M.

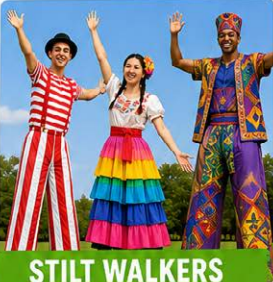
 AT THE DELTON COMMUNITY LEAGUE GROUNDS!
12325 88 St. NW, Edmonton, AB



BOUNCY CASTLE!



KONA ICE ON SITE!



STILT WALKERS & STILT WALKING WORKSHOP!

JOIN US FOR A FUN-FILLED DAY!

 ENJOY DISCOUNTED MEMBERSHIP RATES!

 REFRESHMENTS AVAILABLE!

 GAMES FOR ALL AGES!

 BUILDING A STRONGER COMMUNITY TOGETHER! 

 deltoncommunity.com |  communications@deltoncommunity.com



HARVEST FEST

Save the Date

Saturday, September 26th

Free Activities

- Vintage board games (afternoon)
- Community supper
- Outdoor screening of 1951 classic Alice

Do You know Spruce? 1950s Trivia

Sept 15

Otto Food And Drink

Doors at 6pm, Trivia at 7pm.

Max team size 6, \$5/per person.

Reserve online with note Trivia



UPCOMING EVENTS | SAVE THE DATE!

Sept. 18-20	Kaleido Family Arts Festival Alberta Avenue 90-95 St
Sept. 25-27	Tibetan Bazaar Alberta Ave Community Centre
Sept. 30	Truth & Reconciliation @ Bent Arrow
Oct. 14	Bent Arrow Open House
Oct. 30	Headless Carrot @ The Carrot
Nov. 14	Edmonton Potters' Show & Sale Alberta Ave Community Centre
Nov. 14	Carrot Christmas Arts Bazaar The Carrot
Dec. 5	Winter Feast Alberta Ave Community Centre
Dec. 18	Jingle Jammin Spruce Ave. Community Hall
Jan. 16-17	Deep Freeze Festival Alberta Avenue 90-95 St

National Day for Truth & Reconciliation aka Orange Shirt Day, Sept. 30

Provincial Referendum, Oct. 19

Kathleen Andrews Transit Garage, a second look

Decoding the mysteries of this award-winning building



Five rooftop sculptures top the stainless steel cladding of the Kathleen Andrews Transit Garage on Fort Road, just north of the Yellowhead Highway (Highway 16). | Constance Brissenden

CONSTANCE BRISSENDEN

For the past six years, I’ve driven by the **Kathleen Andrews Transit Garage** on Fort Road hundreds of times. The huge bus maintenance and storage facility with its mysterious rooftop sculptures intrigued me. The exterior is often a shimmery silver. Depending on the weather and time of day, the cladding can also reflect a golden glow, or a soft rose hue.

The five rooftop sculptures change as well. Researching the building, I discovered they are by Berlin artist **Thorsten Goldberg**. The crumpled look of the stainless steel reflects the topography of mountainous regions of the world. Not Alberta’s famed Rockies, I was surprised to learn, but mountains at the same latitude as our flat Edmonton. Thus, the title of the rooftop creation, which is “53 degrees 30’N.”

The exterior is marvelous. In my books, it’s a bold and astonishing creation. Edmonton is not noted for its fabulous buildings. But here we have one. Each time I pass, I find a new aspect reveals itself. It’s playful, and almost dances in certain lights.

As I researched, I discovered the rooftop, as well as the entire Kathleen

Andrews Transit Garage, is much more than meets the eye.

The five “mountains” double as rooftop light wells. They are purposeful, enclosing stairs and mechanical systems. What could easily be a boring box-like structure has instead won many awards for architectural firms **gh3*** and **Morrison Hershfield**.

As a former transit employee in Vancouver, I am also fascinated by the spacious and environmentally sensitive interior of the 50,000-square-metre building. On the roof, along with the sculptures, is a 1.5 million litre tank that collects rainwater. Drive your bus into the building and you get a great wash, courtesy of Mother Nature.

The facility handles 300 regular and articulated buses, as well as 40 electric ones. Thirty-five maintenance bays, plus wash and refuelling bays, are inside the gleaming interior.

The facility was built big to accommodate transit needs for many years to come. Included are environmentally conscious advancements such as LED lighting that reduces energy consumption. This and other innovations ensure that the City of Edmonton achieves its climate resilience goals.

I believe that Kathleen Andrews would be extremely proud of the building named after her. Hired in 1975 as a bus information clerk, the British-born, divorced single mother of two spent 23 years with ETS in various roles. After her first five months, she passed all driver requirements. This raised her salary from \$3 to \$7.50 an hour, the same as male drivers.

Known today as the First Lady of Transit, Kathleen Andrews died on November 17, 2013, at 73 years of age. Her time with ETS is memorial-

ized in an oil painting by Alberta’s **Daphne Côté**. The huge artwork hangs inside the transit garage. Kathleen Andrews is featured smiling, standing at the door of her ETS bus as passengers walk by.

To quote her daughter, Lisa Andrews, her mother “did not realize her impact.” It’s good to know that ETS has honoured Kathleen Andrews, a hardworking and competent woman, a true trailblazer and role model.



Outside is intriguing artwork; inside the Kathleen Andrews Transit Garage is a utilitarian space suitable for vehicle repair. | Courtesy ETS

GET INVOLVED

More Info: info@eastwoodhub.org

JOINING YOUR LEAGUE BOARD

Monday, Sept 21

Coffee & dessert, 7 pm

What is a community league?

Roles of board members

Volunteer opportunities

Q & A

ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

Wednesday

Oct 7

Food, 6pm

Reports, 7pm

Election, 7:45 pm

Is it Alberta Avenue or is it Norwood?

Neighbourhood identity and confusion has continued for decades



Norwood Foundry in 1947. | file photo Edmonton Archives EA-600-285

KAREN MYKIETKA

“**Alberta Avenue and Norwood suffer from a split personality**’, claims **Dick Benson, Alberta Avenue Community League president.**” This is the opening sentence of a 1981 Edmonton Journal article.

If you are a newcomer to the area, you may only know the neighbourhood between 89 and 97 Streets as **Alberta Avenue**. Longtime residents, however, often refer to the section between 111 and 118 Avenues as **Norwood**.

You can’t help running into “Norwood” everywhere you go: Norwood Boulevard, Norwood School, Norwood Square Park, Norwood Family & Child Resource Centre, Norwood Golden Manor, Norwood Dental, Norwood Legion, CapitalCare Norwood, Norwood Medical Centre. Our provincial electoral district is Edmonton Highlands-Norwood.

So why is the neighbourhood now officially known as Alberta Avenue? Let’s start at the beginning.

In 1894, a two-block area on what is now 118 Avenue between 90 and 92 Street was cleared of bush and subdivided. The area was called **Fairview** and was part of **North Edmonton village** until 1912 when it was amalgamated with Edmonton.

Land speculators **McDougall & Secord** subdivided the area between Fox Street (89 Street) and Namayo Avenue (97 Street), and Norwood Boulevard (112 Avenue) and Alberta Avenue (118 Avenue) in 1904. **Charles Leonard**, who had a store at the corner of Kirkness (95 Street) and Norwood Boulevard, was the agent for McDougall & Secord. Lots in Norwood were priced at \$700 — \$10 down and \$10 a month.

Workers from the meat-packing plants known as **Packingtown** (127 Avenue and 66 Street) were buying land and building homes

in Norwood.

The **Norwood Foundry** was founded in 1905 and produces castings for forestry, agriculture, manufacturing, and oil and gas industries. Its original operation was on 91 Street and 111 Avenue. It closed in 1992 when their plant in Nisku expanded.

Norwood School opened in 1909 replacing two wood-framed structures on the same site, which had been operating since 1906. It was modern for its time with indoor toilets, drinking fountains and green lithoplate black boards.

The **Norwood Residents Grievance Committee** was founded in 1910. It united citizens around specific issues like noxious fumes from the Burns Company slaughterhouse.

Parkdale was the first community league founded in the area in 1921, followed by Alberta Avenue and the **Norwood-Patricia** community leagues in 1922 (Patricia being the area to the south of 111 Avenue, now known as McCauley). **Eastwood Community League** was founded a year later in 1923.

A 1923 Edmonton Bulletin article about the annual meeting of the **Federated Community League** (now the Edmonton Federation of Community Leagues) reported that a dispute of boundaries between Alberta Avenue and Norwood Leagues was amicably settled.

The leagues were busy active community hubs for social activities, sports and recreation, and community improvement. They built clubhouses, halls, tennis courts, skating rinks, bowling greens, and more for residents to enjoy. Most leagues conducted whist drives, which are social gatherings and fundraising events where large groups played progressive whist (card game) across multiple tables.

Norwood volunteers planted over 4,000 trees along neighbourhood boulevards in 1923. **Patricia Hall** was built in 1924 on the square at 95 Street and 109A Avenue.

Alberta Avenue built a hall in 1931 at 92 Street and 118 Avenue, which cost \$3,000. In 1932, the grounds included a tennis court, a wading pool, playgrounds, and bowling green as well as a potato patch.

As is the case today, the health and vibrancy of community leagues ebbed and flowed like the tide. The Norwood-Patricia Community League disbanded during the early 1930s. In the late 1930s, Eastwood shut down temporarily. During the World War II years Parkdale shut down and wasn’t re-established until 1956.

The **McCauley Community League** was founded in 1935. The name seems to indicate that Norwood was no longer part of it. The Alberta Avenue & District Community League was incorporated in January 1935 with the boundaries of 89 to 97 Street from 115 to 125 Avenue. In 1958, the name was changed to Alberta Avenue Community League.

The boundaries changed soon after that. The residents north of 122 Avenue desired to form an independent league. In 1961, the area of Alberta Avenue north of 122 Avenue and a chunk of Eastwood from 86 to 89 Street north of 122 Avenue became the **Delton Community League**.

Searching through historical maps of Edmonton to determine how and when Norwood became Alberta Avenue was more confusing than helpful. Every map showed different boundaries for many of our local neighbourhoods. The Norwood neighbourhood boundaries, however, were fairly consistent on maps from 1912, 1956, and 1966.

A 1976 neighbourhood map is the first one that showed boundaries as they are today for our seven area leagues with Alberta Avenue on the map instead of Norwood.

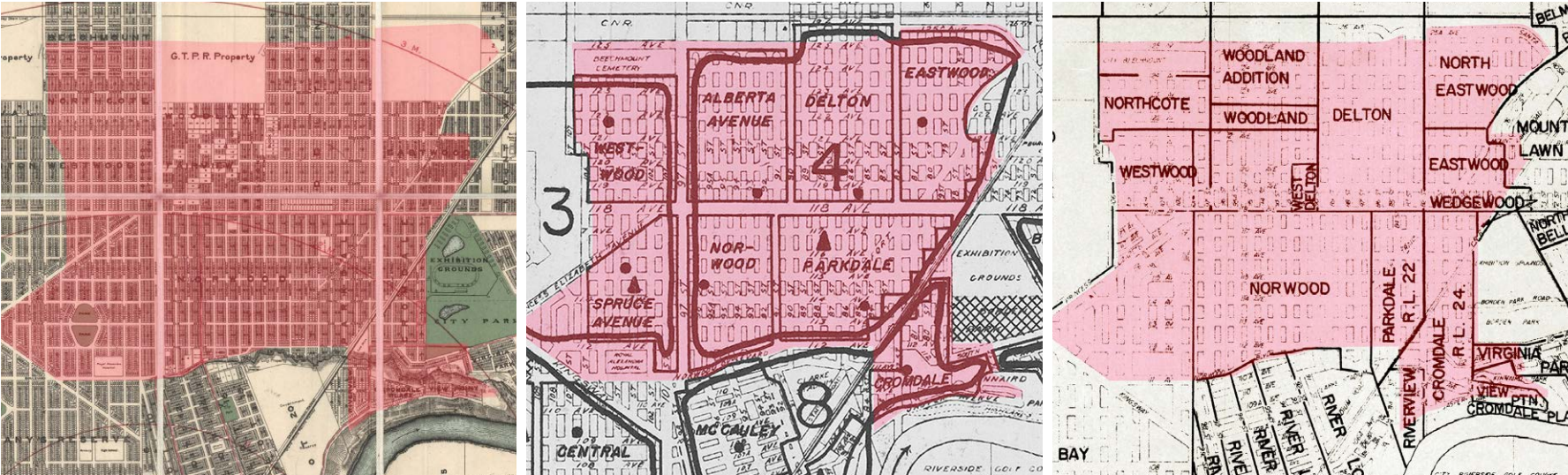
However, Norwood certainly did not disappear in 1976. The **Norwood Readiness Centre**, precursor to the **Norwood Family & Child Resource Centre**, began in 1963 as a preparatory class for five-year-olds. By the 1970s, the Centre (renamed to Norwood Community Service Centre) was a focal point for the political and environmental concerns of Norwood residents.

A resident action group, **Norwood Neighbourhood Association** (NNA), was formed. Its boundaries were 89 to 97 Street from 112 to 118 Avenue. NNA’s lobbying efforts got the neighbourhood designated as the **City’s Neighbourhood Improvement Area (NIP)** for 1975. The result of that was the Norwood Improvement Plan. Alberta Avenue and Eastwood were designated as Edmonton’s Neighbourhood Improvement Program (NIP) area in 1977. The result was the **Alberta Avenue Eastwood NIP** in 1979. These two plans resulted in major changes in the area during the 1970s.

In the end, the name of this area became somewhat interchangeable and Edmontonians referred to the community as Norwood or Alberta Avenue. The city officially termed the area Alberta Avenue in the 1980s.

In the 1981 Edmonton Journal article, Benson explains that Alberta Avenue Community League’s mandate is to provide sports and recreation for the area. **Annette Gurrette**, president of the Norwood Neighbourhood Association, states the association only focuses on the physical upgrading characteristics of Norwood and that the two groups participate on an area council.

The **Rat Creek Press** undertook a history project in 2012/2013 called **The Ave We Had**. The project outcomes included interviews, stories, a theatre performance, photography show, calendar, walking tour and website. Unfortunately the website is no longer live. Learn more about Norwood history in our Norwood Historical Walking Tour brochure available at the Alberta Avenue Community Centre.



Norwood neighbourhood boundaries over time with current Alberta Ave/Norwood overlaid (left 1912, middle 1956, right 1966) | Original source Edmonton Archives

Provincial referendum on October 19

Stay informed and have your say



www.elections.ab.ca/elections/referendum

While the next provincial election isn't until October 2027, voters need to head to the polls this October to vote on 10 referendum questions that will potentially determine a future direction and policy changes in Alberta. **It's important that voters turn out and have their voice.**

How to vote

- 1

Election day (Monday, Oct. 19) voting places will be open 9 am to 8 pm.
- 2

Advance voting will be open Tuesday, Oct. 13 to Saturday, Oct. 17 from 9 am to 8 pm. Electors may choose to vote at any advance voting place in their electoral division.
- 3

Mail-in ballot. Electors may apply to vote by special ballot by Oct. 9 if they are unable to vote during advance voting days or on Election Day. Electors choosing this voting option **do not require a reason** for voting by special ballot. Unlike a regular election, you can't drop off a special ballot at your local returning office. **Special ballots must be mailed to the Chief Electoral Officer and received by 5 pm Friday, Oct. 16**

Find out more information @ www.elections.ab.ca/voters/how-to-vote/voting-by-mail

Election questions in short (see official website for full versions)

Immigration questions YES/NO	Constitutional questions YES/NO	Separation question CHOOSE ONE
Do you support the Government of Alberta ... 1 Taking increased control over immigration for the purposes of decreasing immigration to more sustainable levels... 2 Letting only Canadian citizens, permanent residents and individuals with an Alberta approved immigration status will be eligible for provincially-funded programs, such as health care, education and other social services? 3 Introducing a law requiring all individuals with a non-permanent legal immigration status to reside in Alberta for at least 12 months before qualifying for any provincially-funded social support programs? 4 Charging a reasonable fee or premium to individuals with a non-permanent immigration status living in Alberta for their and their family's use of the healthcare and education systems? 5 Introducing a law requiring individuals to provide proof of citizenship, such as a passport, birth certificate or citizenship card, to vote in an Alberta provincial election?	Do you support the Government of Alberta ... 6 Selecting the justices appointed to provincial King's Bench and Appeal courts? 7 Amending the Canadian Constitution to abolish the unelected federal Senate? 8 Amending the Canadian Constitution to allow provinces to opt out of federal programs that intrude on provincial jurisdiction such as health care, education, and social services, without a province losing any of the associated federal funding for use in its social programs? 9 Amending the Canadian Constitution to better protect provincial rights from federal interference by giving a province's laws dealing with provincial or shared areas of constitutional jurisdiction priority over federal laws when the province's laws and federal laws	10 Should Alberta remain a province of Canada, or should the Government of Alberta commence the legal process required under the Canadian Constitution to hold a binding provincial referendum on whether or not Alberta should separate from Canada? Option 1 Alberta should remain a province of Canada. Option 2 The Government of Alberta should commence the legal process required under the Canadian Constitution to hold a binding provincial referendum on whether or not Alberta should separate from Canada.
	Due to the number of questions and expected number of ballots cast, it may take some time before results are known.	Getting informed The UCP government's information and position website: albertareferendum2026.ca Other viewpoints and information: albertareferendumb2026.ca albertataxpayers.ca/referendum You can also find a variety of videos on the referendum questions on Facebook or other social media such as blogger "Let's Be Clear". Read or listen to a variety of sources to understand different perspectives.

Indigenous youth celebrate through sports

2026 Alberta Indigenous Games kicked off around the city



Susan Barberstock and Jamie McCourt are proud supporters of youth in sport. | Sherridon Routley

SHERRIDON ROUTLEY

I attended the opening ceremonies for the **2026 Alberta Indigenous Games** this August, and the enthusiasm among the hundreds of youth and parents who readied for the grand entry was electric. Each team that participated in the first leg of the competition proudly flew their colours high in a parade around the large Expo Centre bay, led by cer-

emonial leaders and chiefs to the beat of the **Red Elk Drummers**.

This iteration of the Games is special, as it falls on the 150th anniversary of the historic signing of **Treaty 6** in 1876, and just a year before Edmonton co-hosts the **International Indigenous Games**. Bringing together over 7,000 kids and their families, the event is not only an opportunity for true and meaningful reconciliation, but also injects over \$20 million into the local economy.

Traditional leaders like **Dr. Chief Willie Littlechild** and **Treaty 8 Chief Trevor Mercredi** spoke on behalf of Alberta's youth, citing the event as an opportunity to show positive role models and activities that troubled communities could pursue. However, it was clear after the protocol that the youth were already on board, meeting their teammates and new friends in the gallery along with parents and coaches.

Susan Barberstock and **Jamie McCourt** both represent basketball groups from **Mohawks of the Bay of Quinte First Nation, Tyendinaga Mohawk Territory** in southeastern



Participants march around the large bay to applause as their communities are announced. | Sherridon Routley

Ontario. Their teams played three games, with their 16-year-old boys' team winning both of its games and their 19-year-old girls' team winning its game as well. They are experienced coaches who garnered several gold-medal wins for **Team Ontario** at the **World Indigenous Games in 2017** and have been supporting community sports for over a decade.

Barberstock points to the importance of the event in breaking down barriers for the kids, by giving them experience with their peers and letting them know there is something outside of their reserve. McCourt explains the benefits for the youth: "Being able to see other Indigenous athletes, how hard they work, the camaraderie, and helping each other up after. There's a difference at Indigenous games than in just regular tournaments."

McCourt also relates that many of their players have developed into high-level athletes, with one from this year getting offered a scholarship to Boston College. They both acknowledged the level of support they received to fund and organize such an event.

Not every team is as experienced and well prepared. I talked to an unnamed parent who was there with his young son. He was called in to coach at the last minute with only minimal experience to help lead their community soccer team. Even though they may not have won that day's match, for him it was worth it

for the smiles and to see other kids like his own enjoy good natured competition.

I also spoke with **Jordan Longbow**, a coach for two boys' basketball teams aged 15 and 19. Hailing mostly from **Six Nations of the Grand River** in Ontario, it represents the largest First Nations reserve in Canada. Longbow pointed to the logistics and costs of bringing a team this far from home as the toughest part of the competition, with the WestJet strike complicating travel.

Winning was less of a challenge for the experienced team: "We have been playing together for a while, we have a couple guys going to post-secondary next year and the young guys have been playing club basketball back home as well," says Longbow.

Graham and **Xander**, players for the Warriors, both expressed enthusiasm for their game that day, in which they scored 15 and 31 points, respectively, to top their competition by a hefty 100 points. Graham cites four years of playing together as their advantage: "There's a lot of tournaments down in Ontario ... everybody kind of knows each other down there in Native basketball. It's a pretty small world." When I asked what they were most excited about in their time in Edmonton, besides "winning," they pointed to "good food, especially burgers." I think we can all agree there.

"There's a difference at Indigenous games than in just regular tournaments"
- **Jamie McCourt**

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September 30



The RCP and its communities honour the residential school survivors, their families, and those who never returned home.

This day reminds us that "Every Child Matters".



Members of the Warriors Basketball team pose in front of a Expo Centre mural. | Sherridon Routley

Ordered back to class

Alberta's post-strike classrooms still waiting for change



Jen Heschuk's Grade 8 classroom. | Jen Heschuk

MIKAYLA POHL

The classroom was tense. Students sat down quietly, avoiding eye contact. Some shifted in their seats and clicked their pens, waiting for something to happen.

Their teacher walked to the front of the room, her mouth set in a straight line where a smile usually was. The lesson began as normal, but the tone had shifted. Frustration hung in the air.

In the last week of October 2025, Alberta teachers were ordered back to the classroom after a three-week strike.

Rachel Clark, a Grade 10 student, remembers the feeling of that first day back.

"The mood in the room was awkward," she says.

She recalls students feeling really anxious and filled with uncertainty about what might come next. Her teachers' irritation was very clear.

"When we first came back, we were all super stressed," she adds. "The teachers were still annoyed and the students were just confused. We were all nervous."

But Clark understood her teacher's reaction. To her, it was clear that nothing had really changed in the classroom.

Almost six months ago, the **Government of Alberta** passed the **Back to School Act**, ending a province-wide strike and imposing a collective agreement. But some Alberta teachers say they have yet to see meaningful change in their classrooms.

Jen Heschuk, a junior high teacher of 28 years, says things are the same as before, with the added stress of losing five weeks of school. Her

main concern is classroom conditions and the lack of resources to keep up with things like language barriers, behavioural issues, and diverse learning needs.

"It's hard to manage," she says. "I have one Grade 8 science class with 30 kids. Some kids are as low as Grade 5 and some are as high as high school. They are all learning differently."

"When you have that many bodies in a classroom with one teacher... it's hard," she adds.

Some of Heschuk's students require special accommodations like speech-to-text devices or different versions of a test.

She emphasizes the need for more educational assistants (EAs) in the classroom. In her school district, they are training EAs internally, who have no formal training, to make up for the lack of support.

"One of my EAs was a bus driver last year," she recalls.

Heschuk says she has been waiting since the strike for the government to address her concerns and nothing has changed yet.

The provincial government, however, has said the imposed agreement is intended to resolve these issues.

"Passing the Back to School Act means we are investing in our teachers," wrote **Premier Danielle Smith** in a letter to Alberta parents.

The agreement included a 12-17 per cent salary increase, as well as hiring 3,000 new teachers and 1,500 EAs. The government also committed to build 130 new schools by 2030.

The letter said many attempts to bargain with the teachers' union were made and that one week before the order back to work, the government

offered enhanced mediation. A process that would allow negotiations to continue with mediation from a third party, while teachers went back to work.

"Unfortunately, union leaders declined this offer," Smith wrote.

In response to the Back to School Act, **Alberta Teachers' Association** (ATA) President Jason Schilling said in a media release that teachers were being forced back to work with a collective agreement that 90 per cent of teachers had previously rejected, adding that it "does not meet the needs of their students, their classrooms or their profession."

Months later, the provincial government sent out a text message to Albertans on March 27, 2026, claiming to be building new schools, funding complexity teams, and hiring more teachers and educational assistant

Carryl Bennett, one of the local ATA presidents and teachers, responded to the message: "Did you really expect support from your blind promises, tone-deaf platitudes, and destructive manner?"

"It's a systematic attempt at breaking things," Bennett says.

Bennett references the government's recent pilot program that dedicates \$90 million to private schools: "Public schools could have done something with that. That would have been really helpful."

Bennett also says nothing has changed.

"I don't have any more teachers to help out. I don't have any more EAs to help out. There is not a single measurable difference in my classroom."

She said that she is not confident that any of the government's promises in the imposed agreement will actually occur.

On Nov. 6, 2025, the ATA took legal action to overturn sections of the provincial government's Back to School Act. The union also requested an injunction, or pause, on the act during legal proceedings. The union argued that the Act, which passed through the notwithstanding clause (used to temporarily override specific sections of the Charter, including fundamental freedoms, legal rights, and equality rights), violated their constitutional right to bargain

and strike.

The ATA's request to pause the act was denied by a judge on March 13. However, the union is still allowed to pursue their legal case, with the full hearing starting in September 2026.

"Until the full hearing, the Association will continue to hold the government accountable for everything promised to the public education system," said Schilling in a release.

For teachers like Jen Heschuk, this conflict goes beyond the classroom.

"This is a bigger issue, this is a social issue. These are human rights. It's not just about teachers on strike anymore," she says.

After the injunction was denied, Heschuk says all that teachers can do is wait. As a parent, she also recognizes how the strike last October impacted students.

"I felt bad because it adds extra stress on families especially with younger kids and it adds stress on students," she says.

Despite that, Heschuk feels that any more strike action would not be beneficial for her students.

"Going forward, I'm just going to keep doing what I do and hopefully change brings better conditions," she says.

For now, that wait isn't playing out in courtrooms. It's unfolding inside classrooms, filled with students like Rachel Clark.

Clark says stress levels are down and that student life has gone on as normal. Conversations between students no longer center around the conflict. Laughter is in the classroom again. Students are cracking jokes and talking over the teacher, the way it's always been.

But all of the issues that caused the strike in the first place still remain. She recalls teachers spending their own money on things like books, art supplies, and tools because the school could not afford them. She also said there is a lack of EAs.

"[Teachers] can't really do anything else without more resources and more help," Clark said.

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Common Edmonton weeds

Getting to know your unintended bumper crop

JACOB ULICKIJ

The irony of managing the Alberta Avenue Community Centre garden is that it's thriving — just not in a way I'd like.

Tremendous rain pressure, stretches of lower-than-average temperatures, and mosquitoes cutting weeding days short have made a challenging season for labourers, but the perfect conditions for common Albertan

urban plants. While I'd much rather show off bunches of radishes and bowls of fresh shelling peas, I'm choosing to show you a few of the regular faces our gardeners are getting to know during the brief windows of sunny weather. Early intervention with these plants (before the flowering stage) can help you reduce weed pressure next year and, hopefully, set the stage for a better crop as we try again next summer.



Redroot Pigweed
(Amaranthus Retroflexus)

How to spot: An upright, branching plant with dull, oval or egg-shaped leaves; hairy stems; dense, bristly green flower spikes; and often a reddish colour around the lower stem and root crown. Young leaves may have a small notch at the tip.

Young leaves can be cooked like spinach, and like much of the Amaranthaceae (amaranth) family it comes from, the seeds are edible. Early intervention with these plants (before the flowering stage) can help you reduce weed pressure next year and, hopefully, set the stage for a better crop as we try again next summer.



Spiny Annual Snow-Thistle
(Sonchus Asper)

How to spot: Glossy, dark-green leaves with sharply toothed or prickly margins; upper leaves clasp the stem with rounded basal lobes; hollow stems exude white milky sap when broken; yellow dandelion-like flowers produce fluffy, windborne seeds.

While it is named "thistle," this plant more closely relates to lettuce and dandelions. It may look intimidating, but its stems lack the rigid winged spines found on many true thistles.

Effective January 28, 2026, perennial sow thistle and creeping bellflower were removed from provincial noxious weed regulation.



Shepherd's Purse
(Capsella Bursa-Pastoris)

How to spot: A low basal rosette of toothed leaves followed by slender flowering stems; tiny, four-petalled white flowers; and unmistakable flat, triangular or heart-shaped seedpods spaced along the stem.

One of the more forgiving weeds for pulling by hand, with stems firmly attached to the shallow root system. The delicate seedpods resemble the small leather purses once carried by shepherds, lending the plant both its common and scientific names.



Common Groundsel
(Senecio Vulgaris)

How to spot: Soft, irregularly lobed leaves; branching stems; clusters of small cylindrical flowerheads with dark-tipped green bracts; and yellow flowers that usually lack obvious petals. Mature seedheads become white and fluffy, much like a miniature dandelion.

A tremendous little workhorse! When conditions are favourable (disturbed soil, steady moisture, ample sunlight), this common weed can complete its entire life-cycle multiple times over the same season. It's not uncommon to see a groundsel flowering at only a few centimetres tall.



White Clover
(Trifolium Repens)

How to spot: Three rounded leaflets (or four if you're lucky...), usually marked with pale crescent-shaped bands; creeping stems that root where their nodes touch soil; and round white or pale pink flowerheads held above the foliage.

Due to its perennial nature, white clover can span a few centimetres in diameter to several feet of tangled stems. It's not all bad — white clover partners with nitrogen-fixing bacteria in its roots, allowing it to infuse biologically available nitrogen into the soil. While it's an eyesore to some, it can be added deliberately to bee lawns, pasture mixtures, and living mulches in place of conventional lawns.



Canada Thistle
(Cirsium Arvense)

How to spot: Upright stems with alternate, wavy or deeply lobed leaves bearing sharp spines along their edges; clusters of relatively small purple flowerheads; and a network of pale, spreading underground roots. Unlike sow-thistles, its cut stems release clear rather than milky sap.

Despite the name, this scourge originates from Europe and Asia. It is the only plant in this list that is provincially regulated. The root network spreads several meters from taproots in the span of one growing season. By provincial regulation, regulated weeds should go into the black garbage bin rather than yard waste or compost, and homeowners are legally required to control its spread.



Common Lamb's-Quarters
(Chenopodium Album)

How to spot: Variable triangular, diamond-shaped or "goosefoot"-shaped leaves; toothed lower leaves and narrower upper leaves; a pale, dusty or mealy coating on young growth; and tight clusters of tiny green flowers rather than colourful blossoms.

While it is commonly confused with Orach, lamb's-quarters is a close relative of quinoa. Its tiny black seeds are nutritious, although separating them from the surrounding plant material makes for a mostly miserable task. This annual reproduces by seed and can build an exceptionally long-lived soil seed bank.



Common Purslane
(Portulaca Oleracea)

How to spot: Soft, irregularly lobed leaves; branching stems; clusters of small cylindrical flowerheads with dark-tipped green bracts; and yellow flowers that usually lack obvious petals. Mature seedheads become white and fluffy, much like a miniature dandelion.

A tremendous little workhorse! When conditions are favourable (disturbed soil, steady moisture, ample sunlight), this common weed can complete its entire life-cycle multiple times over the same season. It's not uncommon to see a groundsel flowering at only a few centimetres tall.

When crops fail, the question becomes how to find the middle ground between weeds and order in your garden bed. There's an old saying: bare soil is dead soil. Without living plants or protective cover, your soil food web starves and turns into lifeless dirt.

If you're thinking that some ground cover is better than none, you're right — it just shouldn't be any of these weeds. If you can pull

the majority of these weeds, given the water-softened soil, there is still time left to lay down some cover to prevent new weeds from taking hold.

Put simply, do not leave freshly weeded soil bare. Cover ornamental beds with 7–10 cm of wood mulch, use clean straw or leaves around vegetables, or seed unused ground with a quick, annual cover crop such as oats.

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