

This month:

More security

Alberta's government is increasing funding for security at faith-based schools.

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Walking and talking

Edmonton Public Schools Trustee Jan Sawyer walked and talked with the editor of the *Mill Woods Mosaic*.

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Is peace viable?

How can we reduce the occurrence of warfare and its violence, asks Ron Kuban in his latest column.

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A dream come true

Stefanie and Torsten Schulz are living their dream: early retirement on a sailboat.

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Young community

Mill Woods is built where pioneer farms once stood, explains local historian Tom Monto.

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Meticulous Artist



Animator and filmmaker Scott Portingale meticulously creates motion through the frame-by-frame capturing of animation.

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Santa Claus is coming to Town Centre

Children and adults will have the opportunity to get their photograph taken with Santa Claus at Mill Woods Town Centre until Saturday, Dec. 24 (Christmas Eve).

For the hours, please visit the centre's website at millwoodstowncentre.com.

Pets photos are possible on Wednesday, Dec. 20, from 5 to 7 p.m. Mill Woods Town Centre will be closed on Christmas Day (Dec. 25) and New Year's Day (Jan. 1).

Photo: Provided by Mill Woods Town Centre

Revised requirements to better protect international students

Canada is a top destination for international students, thanks to our high-quality educational institutions; our welcoming, diverse society; and the opportunities for some to work or immigrate permanently after graduation. While international students have contributed to life on campuses and innovation across the country, they have also experienced some serious challenges, such as finding adequate housing, as they pursue their studies in Canada.

Marc Miller, Minister of Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship, announced on Dec. 7 that starting January 1, 2024, the cost-of-living financial requirement for study permit applicants will be raised so that international students are financially prepared for life in Canada. Moving forward, this threshold will be adjusted each year when Statistics Canada updates the low-income cut-off (LICO). LICO represents the minimum income necessary to ensure that an individual does not have to spend a greater than average portion of income on necessities.

The cost-of-living requirement for study permit applicants has not changed since the early 2000s, when it was set at \$10,000 for a single applicant. As such, the financial requirement hasn't kept up with the cost of living over time, resulting in students arriving in Canada only to learn that their funds aren't adequate. For 2024, a single applicant will need to show they have \$20,635, representing 75% of LICO, in addition to their first year of tuition and travel costs. This change will apply to new study permit applications received on or after January 1, 2024.

"While this will help prevent student vulnerability and exploitation, we recognize that the impact of the change could vary depending on the applicant," said Minister Miller. "Next year, in collaboration with partners, we intend to implement targeted pilots that will test new ideas aimed at helping underrepresented cohorts of international students pursue their studies in Canada."

The announcement follows important reforms to the International Student Program announced on October 27, 2023, regarding the development of a new framework to recognize learning institutions that provide top-quality services and support, including housing, to international students.

"We expect learning institutions to only accept the number of students that they can provide adequate supports for, including housing options," said Miller. "In welcoming international students, we have a responsibility to make sure that students are supported when they come to our country. Ahead of the September 2024 semester, we are prepared to take necessary measures, including limiting visas, to ensure that designated learning institutions provide adequate and sufficient student supports as part of the academic experience. In order to achieve this result, it is imperative to work together with provincial and territorial governments, learning institutions and other education stakeholders, so we can ensure international students are set up for success in Canada."

Minister Miller also provided an update on three temporary policies affecting international students that were all set to

expire at the end of 2023, including the following:

- The waiver on the 20-hour-per-week limit on the number of hours international students are allowed to work off campus while class is in session will be extended to April 30, 2024. International students already in Canada, as well as applicants who have already submitted an application for a study permit as of December 7, 2023, will be able to work off campus more than 20 hours per week until that time. "We continue to examine options for this policy in the future, such as expanding off-campus work hours for international students to 30 hours per week while class is in session."

- The facilitative measure that has allowed international students to count time spent studying online towards the length of a future post-graduation work permit, as long as it constitutes less than 50% of the program of study, will continue to be in place for students who begin a study program before September 1, 2024. This measure will no longer apply to students who begin a study program on or after that date. Distance learning facilitation measures were first implemented in 2020 in response to travel restrictions during the pandemic, and were reduced in scope in September 2022. At this point, the vast majority of international students are studying in person in Canada.

- In response to labour market disruptions during the pandemic and post-pandemic recovery, a temporary policy was introduced on 3 occasions to provide an additional 18-month work permit to post-

Continued on page 2

International students

Continued from front page

graduation work permit holders as their initial work permit was expiring. Foreign nationals with a post-graduation work permit expiring up to December 31, 2023, remain eligible to apply. However, this temporary policy will not be extended further.

"We value the significant social, cultural and economic benefits that international students bring to Canada, and for those benefits to continue, we must tackle issues that have made some students vulnerable and have challenged the integrity of the International Student Program," said Minister Miller. "With the long-overdue increase to the cost-of-living threshold, students arriving in Canada will be on a stronger financial footing as they begin their studies."

"International students provide significant cultural, social and economic benefits to their communities, but they have also faced challenges navigating life in Canada," said Miller. "We are revising the cost-of-living threshold so that international students understand the true cost of living here. This measure is key to their success in Canada."

We are also exploring options to ensure that students find adequate housing. These long-overdue changes will protect international students from financially vulnerable situations and exploitation."

Quick facts:

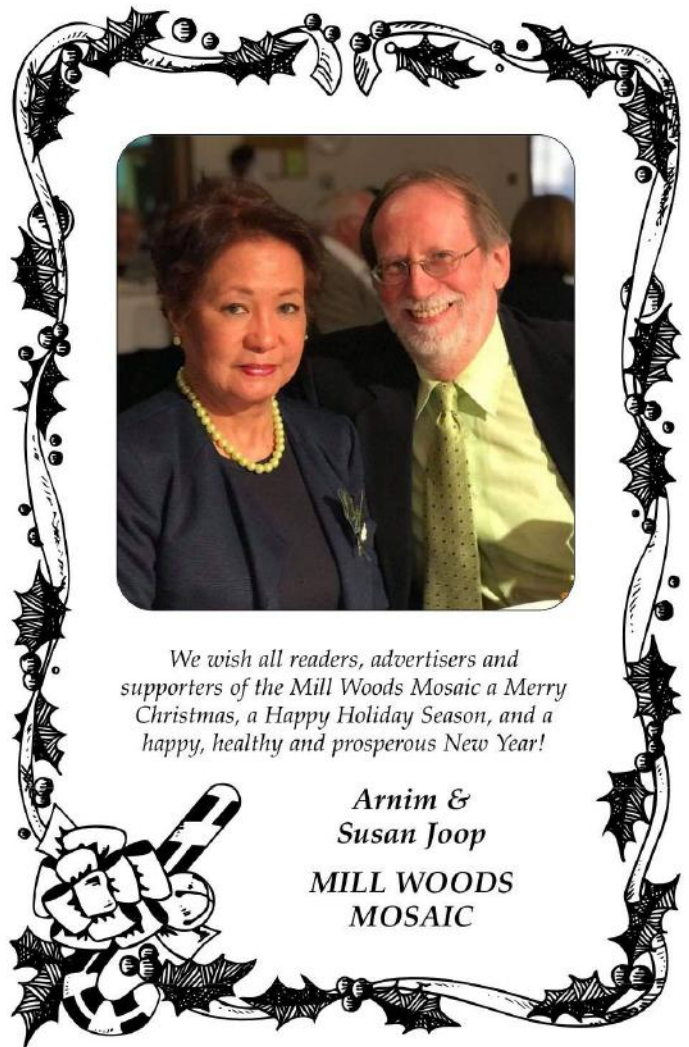
- International education accounts for more than \$22 billion in economic activity annually, greater than Canada's exports of auto parts, lumber or aircraft, and supports more than 200,000 jobs in Canada.
- Quebec establishes its own cost-of-living threshold for international students destined for Quebec's learning institutions and has continued to raise this threshold periodically.
- The new financial guidelines are also being applied to the Student Direct Stream, a special study permit application process available to residents of 14 countries that requires additional up-front information from the applicant and provides priority processing.

More information: www.canada.ca/en/immigration-refugees-citizenship

Letters to the editor welcome

We invite you to write letters to the editor. A maximum of 275 words is preferred. Letters must carry a first name or two initials with surname, and include an address and daytime telephone number. All letters are subject to editing. We don't publish letters addressed to others or sent to other publications.

E-mail your letter to: The Editor of the *Mill Woods Mosaic*, mwmosaic@telus.net.



We wish all readers, advertisers and supporters of the *Mill Woods Mosaic* a Merry Christmas, a Happy Holiday Season, and a happy, healthy and prosperous New Year!

Arnim &
Susan Joop

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**Discrimination and racism
have no place in our hearts,
our homes and our world.**



Christmas Eve Candle Light Service Sunday, December 24, 6:30 p.m.

Join us in person or online for a service of readings, carolling and reflecting on the birth of Jesus Christ and the good news his coming brings.

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Strengthening security for at-risk schools

Alberta's government is increasing funding for security infrastructure and officer presence at Islamic and Jewish faith-based schools to improve safety.

Albertans have the right to feel safe regardless of where they gather to learn, worship, or socialize. Due to rising antisemitism and Islamophobia, the government is taking direct action to ensure the safety of Jewish and Muslim students in Alberta. The Alberta Security Infrastructure Program (ASIP) grant is being expanded to include Jewish and Islamic faith-based schools for up to 12 months.

Eligible faith-based schools that have identified the need for short-term physical security on campus will be able to apply for up to \$20,000 in funding. The Alberta Sheriffs will also be made available upon request when asked by local police to support law enforcement in monitoring sensitive religious and cultural infrastructure such as synagogues, mosques, eligible schools, and community centres to deter hate-motivated vandalism and harassment.

"It has become clear that demand exists," said Mike Ellis, Minister of Public Safety and Emergency Services. "In recent months, schools and parents have approached the government, expressing concerns about school security and options for responding to the needs. We're taking proactive steps that will help keep stu-

dents and worshippers safe."

"The rise in hate-motivated violence has no place in Alberta," said Mickey Amery, Minister of Justice. "We are taking action to protect Albertans from this violence, with a particular emphasis on protecting our children in faith-based schools. Let me be perfectly clear – people from all faiths are welcome in Alberta and the fundamental right to peaceful protest belongs to all Canadians. As minister of justice and attorney general for the Province of Alberta, I will do everything necessary to protect those rights."

"The safety, security and well-being of students is the Alberta government's highest priority," said Demetrios Nicolaides, Minister of Education. "Every student in Alberta should feel safe and secure when they walk through the front door of their school. This additional funding will allow schools to enhance security for students."

ASIP funding currently supports non-profit organizations, eligible charities, and places of worship. This new temporary funding for Islamic and Jewish faith-based schools will help cover the costs of security assessments and enhancements.

Since its introduction in 2021, the ASIP grant has supported diverse communities and groups at risk of hate-motivated violence with financial help to address security needs. In 2022-23,

Alberta's government increased funding for ASIP to a total of \$5 million annually. To date, ASIP has distributed 231 individual grants totalling more than \$2.4 million.

"On behalf of Alberta's Jewish community, I want to express our sincere appreciation to the Government of Alberta for the expansion of the ASIP grant and for the provision of Alberta Sheriffs to protect our community as required," said Stacey Leavitt-Wright, CEO, Jewish Federation of Edmonton. "With a rise in antisemitism and incidents of hate targeted towards Alberta's Jewish community, we have required additional security measures so our children can attend school without fear of attack, so we can worship in our synagogues and so we can attend cultural community events. With this added layer of protection, our community obtains the security it needs to function."

"Edmonton Islamic Academy is grateful for the provincial government's commitment to include faith-based independent schools within the Alberta Security Infrastructure Program," said Abraham Abougouche, principal, Edmonton Islamic Academy. "This grant helps independent schools such as Edmonton Islamic Academy provide students and staff with appropriate supports and security measures and, ultimately, allows students to access their education in a safe

and secure environment."

"AISCA appreciates the Alberta government's commitment to enhancing security for vulnerable schools in our province," said John Jagersma, executive director, Association of Independent Schools and Colleges of Alberta (AISCA). "Such a proactive stance will create safer spaces for students, and is a prudent and necessary measure."

"The Alberta Sheriffs are an integral part of our province's law enforcement continuum and look forward to working with local police to ensure the safety of all Albertans at our educational institutions and places of worship," said Bob Andrews, acting chief, Alberta Sheriffs.

Quick facts

- The temporary expansion of the ASIP has two types of grant application:
 - the cost recovery grant (a reimbursement of expenses incurred after Oct. 7, 2023)
 - the regular grant for security assessment, infrastructure and equipment purchases, and related training
- There are three categories for funding. Eligible applicants can apply online for funding or cost reimbursement under one or more of these categories, depending on the security needs they identify.

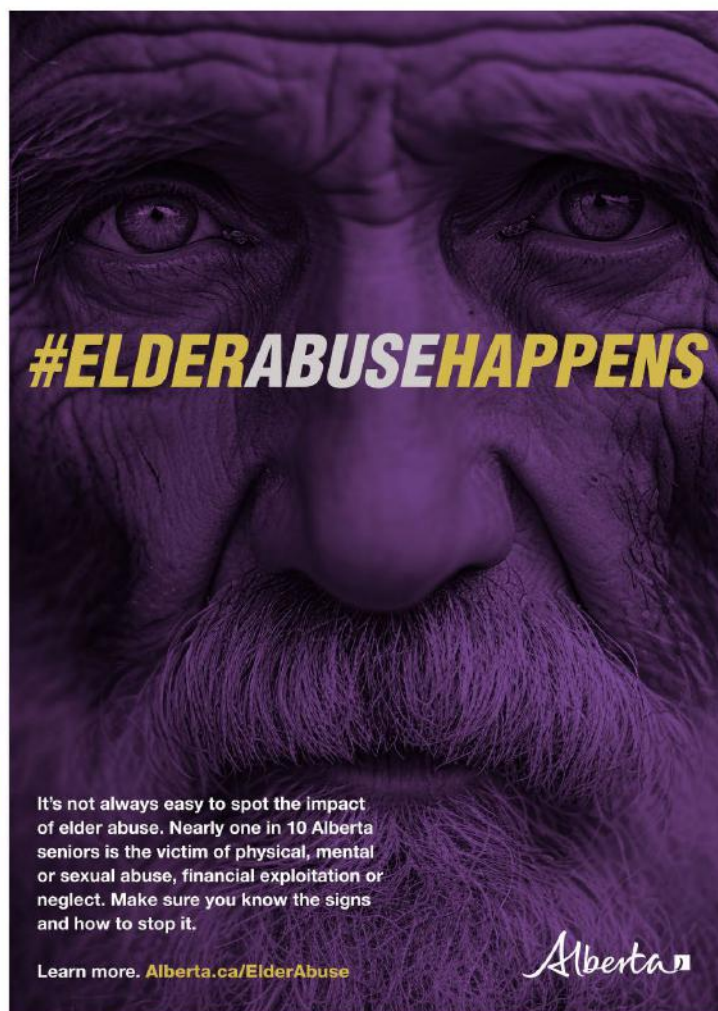


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Alberta

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Publisher & Editor: Arnim Joop

Phone: 780-465-7526

E-Mail: mwmosaic@telus.net

Website: www.mwmosaic.ca

The Mill Woods Mosaic publishes a variety of opinions.
Unsigned editorials express the view of the publisher.
Signed pieces express the views of the writers only.

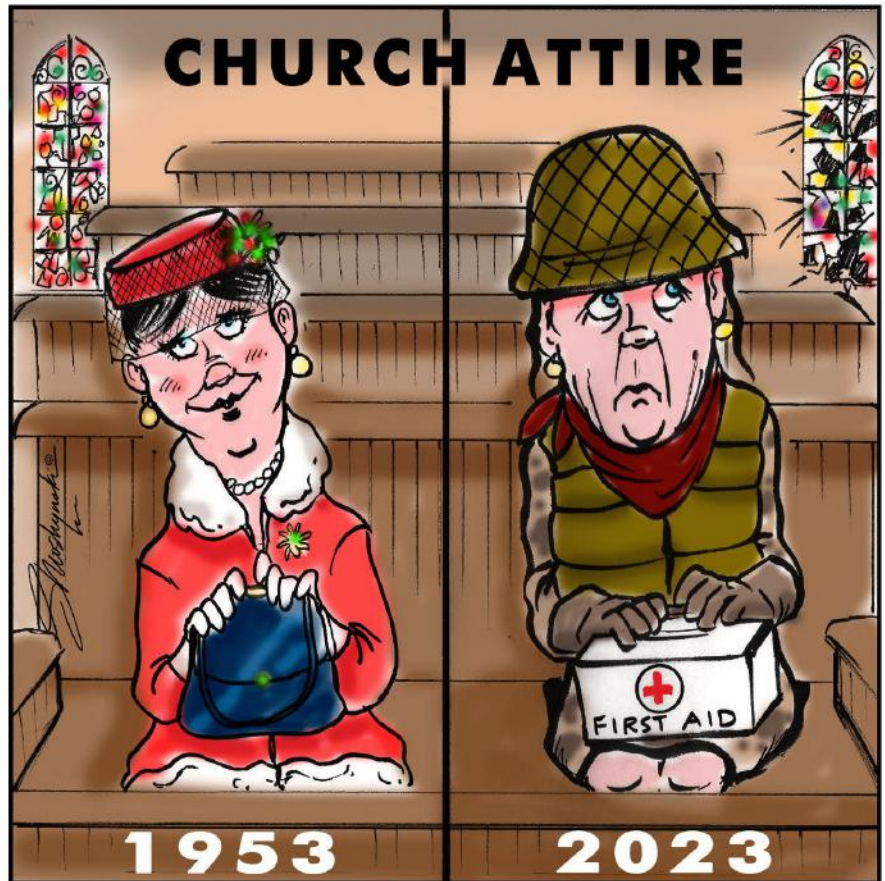
Our Opinion

Don't play with fire! – Part 2

Last month's headline of this editorial was "Don't play with fire", referring to unsafe fireworks during celebrations for the Hindu festival Diwali in our neighbourhoods. But one month later, on Dec. 7, two small churches were set on fire in the small town of Barrhead which is located about 120 kilometres northwest of Edmonton. Both churches were completely destroyed, and police suspects that both fires were set intentionally. Arson is a serious crime in Canada, and the penalty can be up to ten years in prison. It is not only destruction of property, which can be replaced, but also dangerous for people who can be seriously hurt or killed by such fires. Fortunately, nobody was injured by the fires in Barrhead, but they were close calls.

We can speculate if these arson attacks were vandalism, personal vendettas, or hate crimes, but it doesn't really matter, because any form of vicious violence like that is unacceptable in a civilized society like Canada. The Government of Alberta has just increased funding for more security at faith-based schools to improve safety (see page 3 of this issue), and it is to be hoped that not more of these measures will be necessary.

Followers of ALL religions have the right to worship safely without having to fear violent attacks.



Places of worship in the Edmonton area are under attack. On Dec. 7, two small churches in the Town of Barrhead northeast of Edmonton were set on fire intentionally, and the Government of Alberta has increased funding for more security at faith-based schools to improve safety.

Cartoon by Susan Moshynski (www.bythebay.squarespace.com)

Walking and talking with Edmonton Public School Trustee Jan Sawyer

Since my first "Walk and Talk" with a local politician was so much fun last month, I decided to make this a regular thing. Edmonton City Councillor JoAnne Wright, who was my first "victim", was very gracious and trusted me not to "wear a wire" when we walked and talked. We had agreed to have a conversation off the record, so I didn't take any notes and didn't use a tape recorder, and I promised not to quote her verbatim. But, of course, every experienced politician knows that there is no such thing as "off the record" when they talk with newspaper reporters. Whatever they say to a journalist, "can be used against them", but as publisher and editor of our community newspaper, I am not out there to get politicians. They are members of the community, and we have to hold them accountable, because we have elected them to represent us, but it has to be fair play.

My second "victim" for walking and talking was Jan Sawyer who is a member of the Edmonton Public School Board (EPSB), Trustee for Ward I, and also covers Ward H since Nathan Ip resigned from the school board after being elected as MLA for Edmonton-Southwest last May. Sawyer writes a column for the Mill Woods Mosaic every second month, and we communicate regularly, but I hadn't met her in person since she was elected more than two years ago.

We were planning to walk and talk on Dec. 7, but the day was snowy and icy, so we agreed to skip the walking and met for coffee and talking at Koffee Café in Mill Woods.

Sawyer was born in Fort Nelson,

Arnim Joop

From the Desk of the Publisher



B.C., but spent most of her life and professional career in Alberta. Her father was minister of the Mill Woods United Church when it was built, and her mother is a retired EPSB principal. Sawyer worked as a clerk, teacher, curriculum coordinator, assistant principal, and principal until she retired from the public school system in 2020. She has a Bachelor of Education and a Masters of Education (specializing in Educational Leadership), so she had a lot to offer when she ran for the EPSB in the 2021 municipal election and defeated six other candidates in Ward I. Ward I is located in southeast

Edmonton, south of 23 Avenue and between Gateway Boulevard and the city boundary in the east. It has 15 public schools, including eight schools in Mill Woods.

Sawyer misses working with students, teachers and support staff at the "front line", but she enjoys working as a trustee "on a bigger ship", because she can make more of a difference. There are 212 public schools in Edmonton, the district has more than 10,000 employees, and the annual operating budget is more than a billion dollars.

I did not know that working as a trustee of the EPSB is regarded as a part-time job, they don't even have assistants, and they earn only \$40,000 per year. Considering the many hours they work, that is almost minimum wage! They spend a lot of time attending meetings, have to read many reports, make important decisions, affecting thousands of families, and they are expected to represent Edmonton Public Schools at many community events. And doing double duty, covering two wards, doesn't make Sawyer's job easier.

Most of the feedback Sawyer receives from parents is about space, because many classrooms are overcrowded, and this problem can only be solved with more funding from the provincial government, and Sawyer is

optimistic that Alberta's new education minister Demetrios Nicolaides will understand the needs of school divisions.

Some parents are concerned about security at schools since the EPSB has suspended the School Resource Officer program, but Sawyer believes that Edmonton's public schools are very safe, and she mentioned that all schools are monitoring at all times who is in the building.

Sawyer is happy to see that some public schools have intramural activities again after many of those activities were suspended during the COVID-19 pandemic. For example, students at Kate Chegwin School in Mill Woods have the opportunity to participate in a variety of extracurricular sports and other activities.

Students learn the three "Rs" (reading, 'riting and 'rithmetic), but when I asked Sawyer if she thinks that students at Edmonton Public Schools are taught to be street-smart, she had to think for a moment and then agreed that there is room for improvement.

During our casual conversation I got the impression that Jan Sawyer is a thoughtful and dedicated school trustee with a lot of experience in education who is the right person for the job.

Arnim Joop is the founder, publisher and editor of the Mill Woods Mosaic. He also publishes the Albertaner which is the only German language newspaper in Canada.

Is Peace Viable?

The Oxford Dictionary defines peace as "freedom from disturbance" giving a sense of "tranquility." It is an attractive concept which has been sought after for generations, and once again during the Holiday Season, we are particularly hopeful for "Peace on Earth." Our greetings and fervent wishes clearly relay that hope. However, given our lengthy history of warfare, one has to wonder: Is the notion of peace viable, or is it just an illusion? For me, the answer is found within the natural world.

Peace and tranquility in nature exist only briefly, and always during the transition from one physical state or condition to another. Think for example of the constant back-and-forth interplay between hot and cold temperatures, bright light and darkness, growth and decay, motion and stillness, and many other dynamic opposites. Stability exists in the relatively brief pause between the end of one condition and the start of its opposite.

The challenging question is "How can we make peace last?" While fundamentally important, this question is misleading because our social environment does not exist in a void. Similar to all things within nature, human beings are not identical. We have different needs, capabilities, perspectives, and preferences. We live diverse lifestyles. These differences cannot be erased, ignored, or pressed into one mold. This, therefore, tends to generate conflict.

Aggression, or revenge and retaliation, which are reflected by the millennia-old notion of "an eye for an eye", still persist today. Some people even claim that human beings are naturally prone to aggression. They view life as being governed by the "law of the jungle" where the strong dominates the weak and as such, war and violence are but part of the human DNA. I completely disagree. Look, for example, at the interactions of pre-school children who can, and often do, overcome their differences by playing with and supporting each other. In fact, research in the behavioral sciences confirms that violence and aggression are learned behaviors.

Current social trends are disheartening. We have generally become less tolerant of each other, less accepting of differences of opinion or practice, and quicker to dismiss or belittle those we disagree with. Furthermore, lethal weapons have become more prolific, and the choice of using them has become more common.

History illustrates two main causes for war: Threats to a people's survival, or the injustice inflicted upon them due to prejudice and hate. Human beings

Ron Kuban

Time Passages



have always had similar basic survival needs - food, water, and shelter. Other common and equally important necessities include the need to feel secure, to have a sense of hope, to feel heard or valued, and to be connected with one's community. Time has proven that the longer people are deprived of their basic needs, the more likely they are to become agitated, aggressive, and potentially warlike.

Prejudice and hate are complex notions that typically underlie violence against others and have often been a key precursor when people or groups are enticed to go to war. However, more often than not, these notions are based on misguided or incomplete narratives about other people. Sometimes, that narrative is learned and slowly poisons our view of people or groups who are different from us. Sadly, we still have individuals who sow hate and divisiveness to gain power and material rewards for themselves.

Warfare is a costly enterprise which is estimated to involve \$2.24 trillion USD in global military spending this year alone. However, its primary costs are reflected by the millions of people who are killed, maimed, dispossessed, displaced, and traumatized annually by it. War's destruction of existing properties and infrastructure, and the cost of rebuilding these afterwards are monumental, but remain hidden. So is the damage to our environment.

Karl von Clausewitz perspective on war as an "extension of politics by other means" persists today, and occasionally has validity. Sometimes, military action is indeed necessary when stakes are existential and all other efforts to resolve matters have failed. However, this option is becoming more and more unsustainable. One of the main reasons is that human beings, who are the ultimate target of war,

continue to multiply exponentially and live in increasingly dense population centres. This compounds our vulnerability to becoming a casualty.

Additionally, constant enhancements to the weapons of war increase their lethality and destructiveness, while reducing the distinction between combatants and non-combatants.

Therefore, the main question we should be asking is not how we can achieve peace or make it last longer. Instead, we should be asking "how can we reduce the occurrence of warfare and its violence?"

If we truly want peace, we need to stop hate and prejudice

wherever and whenever we encounter them. Each of us has a part in this key effort, which starts with an examination of our biases and their sources. This is a tough task that demands consistency of application. We cannot accept rights and privileges for our own kind while denying them for others. It also requires us to stand up against bullies, hypocrites, and warmongers. Only by such persistent efforts can we reduce the occurrence of war and come closer to that elusive state—peace. May this Holiday Season bring us a step closer towards that goal.

Ron Kuban is a long-time community volunteer and builder.

EPSB Annual Education Results Report

Edmonton Public Schools Trustee Jan Sawyer (Ward 1)

Each year the Division submits an Annual Education Results Report (AERR) to Alberta Education. This year's 101-page AERR reports on the Division's progress from the 2022-2023 school year and was presented at the November 28th public Board meeting (if you have the time, I encourage you to read the full report at epsb.ca). Principals were at this meeting to answer questions and to tell stories that illustrate various strategies and to share some truly inspirational stories of the differences these strategies have made in the lives of students.

Data of Note:

- Between 2011 and 2022 student enrolment at Edmonton Public Schools has grown from 85,569 to 109,209 students, a 35.6% increase
- Since 2011, the Division has seen:
 - a significant increase (82.5%) in the number of students who are English Language Learners (ELL)
 - an increase (27.7%) in the number of students who self-identify as First Nations, Métis or Inuit
 - an increase (22.9%) in the number of students who meet provincial special education coding requirements

Provincial Achievement Tests and Diploma Exams

The Division uses results from a range of provincial and local assessments to gain insight into students' growth and achievement. While test scores in our Division reflect the disruption in learning caused by the pandemic, it's important to note that our test scores are comparable to what is being seen in other jurisdictions across the province.

While we know we have work to do, in many areas our students continue to achieve higher than the provincial average. For example, the overall percentage of students in Grade 6 and Grade 9 who achieved the "standard of excellence" on the Provincial Achievement Tests continues to be higher than the provincial rate. The overall percentage of students who achieved the "standard of excellence" on Diploma exams also continues to be higher than the provincial average. These

results reinforce the importance of the Division's focus on student growth and achievement.

First Nation, Métis and Inuit Students

We know we have more work to do when it comes to supporting First Nations, Métis and Inuit students. One way we're supporting First Nations, Métis and Inuit students is through the high school completion coach model. The model is an evidence-based approach and focuses on strengthening academic achievement in an environment that is welcoming and inclusive.

For the 2022-23 school year, nine high school completion coaches at three Division high schools supported:

- 2,577 individual coaching sessions
- 48 post-secondary transition sessions

• 500 engagements with self-identified First Nations, Métis and Inuit students and their families, including emails, phone calls, conferences and school family nights

Results from the ongoing monitoring of the model's impact have seen:

- 28.4 per cent increase in average credits earned from 2019-20 to 2022-23 at Queen Elizabeth High School
- 3.8 per cent increase in average credits earned from 2020-21 to 2022-23 at Eastglen High School
- 0.3 per cent increase in average credits earned from 2021-22 to 2022-23 at Jasper Place High School

Within the Division's culture of evidence-based decision-making, these reporting processes help the Division to monitor progress, reflect on what has been accomplished, determine strategic actions and the best use of resources. As well as data, the Division uses feedback from stakeholders to help inform ongoing work. With guidance from our Education and Strategic Plans, and in collaboration with families and community, we will continue our efforts to empower every student to live a life of dignity, fulfillment, empathy and possibility.

If you have any questions about this, or any other issue, please feel free to contact me at trustee.jan.sawyer@epsb.ca



Trustee Jan Sawyer



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Final SuperTrain of 2023 celebrates community gardening

The latest SuperTrain temporary public art project by local artists Helen Gerritzen and Kyla Fischer explores the ways community gardens connect us to the land and each other. The design was created as part of a public art initiative led by SNAP (The Society of Northern Alberta Print-artists) in partnership with the Edmonton Arts Council and Pattison Outdoor Advertising. The artists explored the relationship between the natural world and urban spaces during a two-month residency rooted in the theme of environmental stewardship.

Lush imagery adorns the exterior and interior of the SuperTrain — bringing the experience of a community garden abuzz with bees, birds and greenery to transit goers. Wrote the artists, “The project honours our connections to the land, environment, nature, and community, in turn, these connections encourage a sense of responsibility and respect for the complexity of ecosystems and how wildlife and plants support each other and support human life in an urban setting.”

Considering how the public would interact with their work was an interesting challenge for the artists. Wrote Kyla Fischer, “When creating artwork for such a unique space, a lot of interesting questions arise. How will the public see this particular image: looking up? looking down? being surrounded? We had the opportunity to make this ordinary aspect of life a little more extraordinary.”

Helen Gerritzen plays with symbol and myth while using objects to evoke visual metaphors relating to the body. Her work questions the body's long history as a repository of cultural, sexual, medical and religious meanings. Helen currently lives and works in Edmonton and has a MFA in Printmaking from the University of Alberta.

Kyla Fischer is inspired by the beauty of nature, from the smallest detail to the larger expanse of the surrounding environment. Organic patterns and objects are abstracted through drawing, photography, fibre manipulation



SuperTrain temporary public art project by Helen Gerritzen and Kyla Fischer

Photos: Provided by Pattison Outdoor Advertising

or printmaking processes. Kyla resides in Edmonton and received her MFA in Printmaking from the University of Alberta.

SNAP is a non-profit Artist-run centre for printmaking located in Amiskwaciwâskahikan, in Treaty Six Territory (Edmonton, Alberta, Canada). SNAP maintains a public professional gallery, a community printmaking studio, offers classes, workshops, and artist residencies, and engages in genuine community outreach and partnerships.

The Edmonton Arts Council is a not-for-profit organization that supports and promotes the arts community in Edmonton. The EAC works to increase the profile and involvement of arts and culture in all aspects of our community life.



Merry Christmas
&
Happy New Year

South Side Memorial Chapel

South Side Memorial Chapel
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"I am YEG Arts" Series: Scott Portingale

By Jessica Telford
Edmonton Arts Council

Animator and filmmaker Scott Portingale meticulously creates motion through the frame-by-frame capturing of animation and time-lapse photography. Fascinated by the intersection of the human experience, humour and culture, Scott invites us into a world typically beyond our perception with his experimental natural history films and stop-motion narrative films. In this month's *I Am YEG Arts Story*, Scott tells us about the important role the Film & Video Arts Society of Alberta (FAVA) played in his budding career, what his advice is for artists getting their start, and how the EATF award gave him the gift of time.

Tell us about your connection to Edmonton. What makes it home for you and keeps you living and working here?

I was born in Alberta, so Alberta is really home. I've been to around 25 countries and I've spent probably over three years overseas in various countries including Australia, Taiwan, India, Tanzania, and countries in Central America like Nicaragua and then shorter trips to other locations. Edmonton is where my family is. This is where everything is. If I was to be somewhere else, I wouldn't be home anymore.

What drew you to animation and cinematography? How did you get your start?

It was a slow progression. I never went to school for filmmaking or the arts. I was actually a welder and a commercial diver up until my mid to late 20s. There was a bit of an overlap with when I found my dad's film camera and started taking pictures of farms and rural Alberta and on my travels through India and Central America.

Seeing the world in a frame evolved into a newfound appreciation of movies and one night I just kind of thought, "Oh, I should do something different with my life and go to film school." I got into Vancouver Film School but dropped out before starting when I discovered the 16mm workshop at FAVA. At FAVA I had way more freedom and Vancouver Film School (at the time) structured their course using an industry-based model that did not guarantee I would get to write/direct a film while I was there.

I made one film through FAVA's 16mm workshop called *Photosynthesis* and submitted it to a few festivals and won an award. After that, it just sort of snowballed from there. I started writing grant applications that funded another film, *Midnight Matinée* and that one also went to festivals and won awards. After *Midnight Matinée*, I experienced a series of failures when producing more ambitious projects. I developed a puppet animation, and I went quite far with it, but it was just too ambitious and I never did get the funding to complete it. I learned some valuable lessons during that project. It was kind of a PhD course on the



Animator and filmmaker Scott Portingale meticulously creates motion through the frame-by-frame capturing of animation and time-lapse photography.

Photo: Talia Unger

realities of filmmaking and the tension between producing a project and directing a project.

As a storyteller, what narratives or themes do you find yourself returning to?

With the experimental natural history films that I create, I find myself returning to themes relating to patterns in nature. It's a refreshing departure from my narrative work. Narrative work is very, very arduous. I wouldn't call it stressful, but writing narrative is like feeling your way through a dark room. I'm feeling my way through the idea, trying to create a shape and translating that to a potential audience. With my experimental natural history work, I just set up the variables. I know the chemical reactions will take place. I know that plants grow even though I can't see them. I approach it from a documentarian perspective. As a witness. I set up cameras with macro lenses that expand the size to capture what is beyond our perception. So patterns in nature, I think will always be something that inspires me, and it has worked its way into the production design of my narrative work as well.

In my narrative stop-motion films, a theme that I return to is the dynamics between polar opposites such as light and dark, and evil and good. There's a tension between them that's more than just hero and villain, it goes deep down into our psychology where you also realize that you sometimes need to explore darkness to fully understand what you have in the light.

I like to explore that intersection between the human experience, and culture. There's a tension there because culture is made up in a way. I mean, that's a really distilled way to say it. But we just sort of wake up in history, making up cultural structures

like countries, and belief systems. If we were here 1500 years ago, during Roman times, it would have been a completely different experience, but everything would seem normal including togas and murderous gladiator entertainment.

What is the creative process like for you? Can you tell us about the experimental filmmaking techniques in your work?

I create films for the most part, frame by frame, so shooting sequences,

whether they be time-lapse like a plant growing or chemical reactions or stop-motion animation, one frame at a time with DSLRs and then I sew those still images together to create motion and to create a performance with puppets.

At the beginning of my career, I worked frame by frame because it was an inexpensive way to get high-resolution images. I wasn't able to afford the larger cameras. But even now with communities like FAVA,

Continued on page 8

AGE 6-10 YEARS

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The MEADOWS COMMUNITY LEAGUE

"I like to explore the intersection between human experience and culture"

Continued from page 7

where we have access to cameras like that, I still enjoy doing it frame by frame and while I don't know if I'll do it my entire career, it's definitely been a large part of my career so far.

What would your advice be for artists looking to get their start?

My main advice would be to travel, experience life and not waste time. If you were to break your life down by weeks, in a good situation with a little bit above the average life expectancy, you have 4000 weeks. There's this precious time between about the age of 20 up until when the responsibilities of life, whether that be through family or career, weigh on you. So, if you have time, don't waste it. It is a precious resource. Also, you can really set yourself apart if you embrace discipline. Waiting for motivation is like waiting for the weather. It's a feeling you have little control over when it shows up. Discipline is a choice but it gives you agency. The aggregate of your good choices and the bad choices will add up over time and shape your future whether or not you like what that future looks like.

This year we're celebrating 25 years of the Edmonton Artist Trust Fund awards. What does it mean to you to be a recipient and how has the award impacted your career in Edmonton?

Back when I first received the award it helped pay studio rent and enable me to create work. When I received the award again in 2019, a budget wasn't required which I think is quite amazing. It enables artists to do necessary things like buy a new laptop

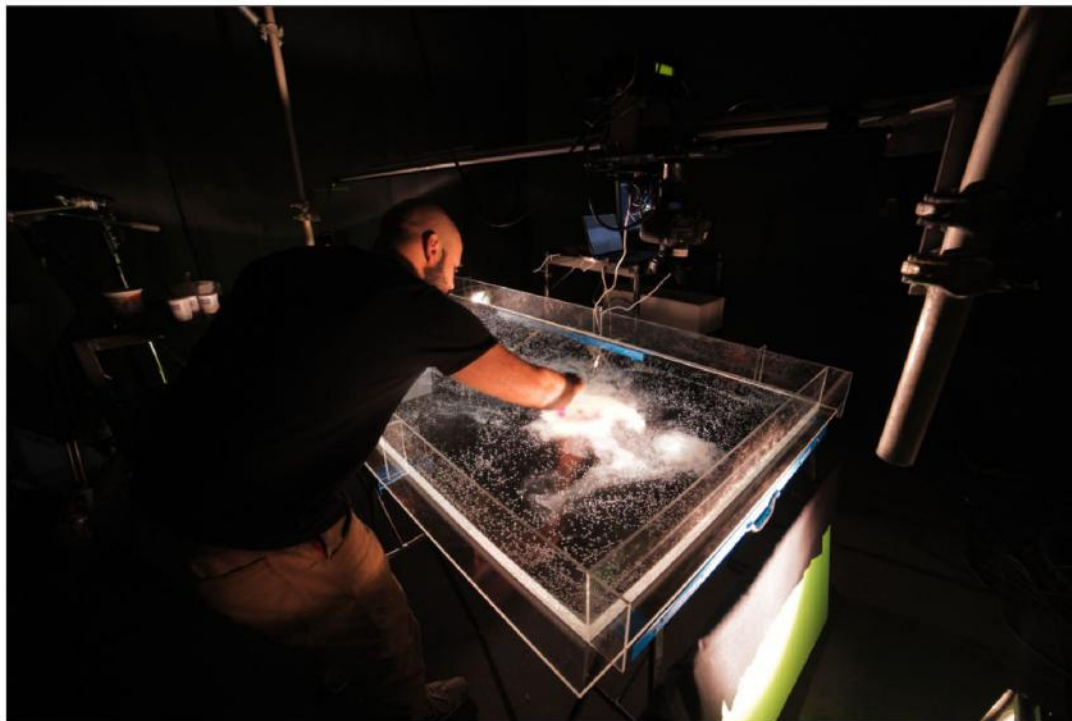


Photo of Scott Portingale from the *Making of Infinitude: Frame by Frame Filmmaking*

Photo: Supplied by Scott Portingale

— the type of big purchases that you have to make every so often. It was right before the pandemic as well, the award really helped me during that time.

About Scott Portingale

Scott Portingale is an award-winning animation director and cinematographer based out of North America's

most northern of northern metropolises Edmonton, Alberta. Scott is best known for experimental natural history time-lapse cinematography, stop-motion animation and cosmic practical effects work. His films have been programmed across multiple platforms including international film festivals, art galleries, and media art installations.

To keep up with Scott, check out his

website (www.scottportingale.com) or find him on YouTube or Instagram.

Want more YEG Arts Stories? We'll be sharing them here and on social media using the hashtag #IamYegArts. Follow along!

For more information about the Edmonton Arts Council, visit the new website edmontonarts.ca.

Letters to the editor are welcome

We invite you to write letters to the editor. A maximum of 275 words is preferred. Letters must carry a first name or two initials with surname, and include an address and daytime telephone number. All letters are subject to editing. We don't publish letters addressed to others or sent to other publications.

E-mail your letter to the Editor of the *Mill Woods Mosaic*:
mwmosaic@telus.net

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Local volunteer Tammy Farkes receives prestigious award

Tammy Farkes, a long-time volunteer in Mill Woods, is one of nine recipients of the 2023 Stars of Alberta Volunteer Awards.

Albertans are exceptional for their volunteerism. The Stars of Alberta Volunteer Awards celebrate the best among Albertans who give their time and talents to create strong, connected and vibrant communities in our province. This year, nine volunteers will be honoured in four categories: youth, adult, senior and breaking barriers.

The youth, adult and senior categories honour outstanding volunteers who are leaders within their age group. The breaking barriers category recognizes outstanding volunteers who are working to create communities that are diverse and inclusive by addressing racism, advocating for 2SLGBTQIA+ inclusion and fighting discrimination.

"These awards recognize our most exceptional community leaders and advocates," said Tanya Fir, Minister of Arts, Culture and Status of Women. "Congratulations to the recipients of this year's awards who stand as shining examples of Alberta's unwavering volunteer spirit. We are truly grateful for the life-changing impact they bring to our communities."

Volunteers are essential to creating a strong civil society, and they enrich communities out of the kindness of their hearts. Stars of Alberta is part of the government's efforts to recognize the invaluable contributions of Alberta volunteers.

Quick facts

- Since its inception in 2000, the Stars of Alberta Volunteer Awards program has honoured 162 exceptional Alberta volunteers.
- Alberta has nearly 26,000 non-profit organizations and, each year, 45.7 per cent of Albertans volunteer, providing 227 million volunteer hours to support



Tammy Farkes (middle) with Alberta's Lieutenant Governor Salma Lakhani (left) and Tanya Fir, Minister of Arts, Culture and Status of Women.

Photo: Government of Alberta

the non-profit and voluntary sector at a value of approximately \$5.6 billion.

One of the nine award recipients is Tammy Farkes from Mill Woods who was nominated by Barb Matwie.

Tammy Farkes may have a more than 50-year association with the Girl Guides of Canada as a member and a leader, but when it comes to doing good deeds, she is definitely one Good Scout.

It would be nearly impossible to list all the examples of volunteerism that Tammy has engaged in, in the more than 2,000 hours she has contributed over the last year, let alone her long and accomplished volunteer journey. It is safe to say, however, that there are few areas of life in the community that have not benefited from Tammy's

overwhelming generosity of spirit.

Tammy's 25 years of volunteerism in support of the Grey Nuns Hospital was recognized by Covenant Health earlier this year. Her love of the arts has led to her most recent role at the hospital as she has taken on the duties of Art Exhibit Coordinator working with artists and coordinating the display of artworks around the Grey Nuns complex. She has also stepped up to lend her voice to the "Mistletoes Choir."

Her love of music is seen through her participation in numerous choirs. With a song in her heart and a smile on her lips, Tammy's musical talents and volunteerism have supported numerous community events, and she has also been recognized by the Richard Eaton Singers, an organization that has honoured Tammy for 25 years of

service.

Tammy has demonstrated her service to youth and the community in her long association with the Alberta School Council Association (ASCA). Since 2010 she has served as school liaison with the Edmonton Southwood Community League (ESCL) and mentor to the ESCL representative from the Crawford Plains Elementary School. Tammy was recognized by the ASCA as Parent of Distinction for her voluminous volunteering at Crawford Plains.

Community organizations can always count on Tammy's helping hands. As a member of the Collective Community Initiatives group, Tammy has been involved in several of the Initiative's projects supporting donation drives for WIN House, Hope Mission, Water Warriors, Bear Clan, Little Warriors and the Edmonton Food Bank, an organization that recognized her with Volunteer of the Year honours.

From bike tune-ups to spearheading the redevelopment of a local playground and taking on shifts at the casino to raise funds for local community service organizations, Tammy is quick to enlist to meet the needs of her friends and neighbours.

And yes, Girl Guides make terrific Scouts as Tammy is a volunteer with more than five years of service with Scouts Canada.

As a volunteer, as a leader, as an inspiration to those seeking to make a difference, Tammy has crafted a life of service and has earned a well-deserved place among the galaxy of Volunteer Stars.

The other recipients are:

Deep Braich, Calgary
Marigold Mioc, Calgary
Syed Hassan, Calgary
Barry Watts, Calgary
Oryssia Lennie, Edmonton
Jarom Moriyama-Bondar, Calgary
Neisau Maria, Edmonton
Lavon Fleming, Lac La Biche

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Season's Greetings!

Whether you celebrate Christmas, Hanukkah, Kwanzaa, Solstice or just being together, I wish you the best during this winter season and a very Happy New Year!

JO-ANNE WRIGHT
COUNCILLOR • WARD SSPOMITAPI

At home on the sea – A dream come true

Stefanie and Torsten Schulz, who immigrated from Germany to Canada in 2000 and lived many years in Mill Woods, have chosen to spend their retirement on the sea.

Outside the wind is howling, the sun is shining, and *Fortitude X* is rocking leisurely at anchor in Bahia San Luis Gonzaga in the northern Gulf of California, Mexico.

The infamous “Northerlies” keep us in the bay for a few days more than planned, but that doesn’t matter because we don’t have to be anywhere at any time and our schedule actually always depends on the wind and weather.

That was not always the case. In August 2000 we immigrated from beautiful Hanover, Germany, to Edmonton, and I couldn’t imagine a better place to embrace Canada as we had always imagined it.

Our friends Marina and Michael, also long-time residents of Lower Saxony, had taken this step five years earlier and were now on our side whenever needed; a friendship that continues to this day.

The people we met were outstanding, the winters were cold and sunny, although far too long, the summers were hot and with way too many mosquitos- we loved it! We wore lumber jackets, spent weekends with friends at the cabin, played neighborhood hockey, and sat around campfires with our neighbours. It sounds like a cliché, but that’s how it was.

We also worked a lot: 35-hour weeks didn’t exist for either of us. My husband Torsten was a full-time engineer at PCL, and I have spent most of my Canadian career in economic development; at the Leduc-Nisku Economic Development Authority, and later as Executive Director at the Leduc Chamber of Commerce. Life was good!

Summer of 2013 presented an amazing opportunity: my husband’s company was involved in a major construction project in Melbourne, Australia and asked him if he would like to be involved.

Why not? We would probably always regret turning down such a chance. Two months later – the house was sold, I had quit my job, and farewell tears had been shed – we were on the plane to “Down Under.”

The “Most Liveable City in the World” did not disappoint, and the three years in southern Australia felt like a long, exciting vacation – minus the work, which was plenty. We worked AND partied hard; never stopped to explore the country and its people. We enjoyed the culinary and cultural aspects of this amazing country and attended numerous sports and music events the city and the country had to offer. We rediscovered our passion for sailing, especially here in the warm waters of the Southern Ocean.

But even the best times come to an end, and as exciting as life in the land of the kangaroos had been, Canada was our home, and there had never been a doubt that we would return.

We landed in Vancouver in May 2016, a dream city for many people whose geographical location between mountains, rainforest and sea is unpar-

alleled – and that comes with a price. We quickly said goodbye to our initial idea of purchasing a home; we were not prepared to get involved in the bidding war on the real estate market.

Now that we had moved to a city by the sea, why don’t we buy a boat instead, rent a home in the city centre, and enjoy as much time on the water as possible while enjoying all the amenities of urban living? Not an inexpensive decision either, especially in a city where the “parking space” for a boat can be compared to renting a three-bedroom apartment in most Canadian communities.

We followed the same motto: work hard, party hard and enjoy every day along the way! We got involved in clubs and the community work and met a lot of new people through sailing, many stayed as friends.

Some folks spent their free time at their cabins – we had the boat. *Fortitude X*, a Beneteau 423, was docked at Coal Harbor Marina, a 20-minute walk from our apartment in Gastown.

The close proximity to the marina allowed us to go for short sunset sails after work or, very often just to work on the boat; there was always something to repair, replace, or renew.

COVID-19 changed everything, life in the city almost came to a standstill. We spent every free minute on the water, a wonderful way to be isolated and feel freedom at the same time. The pandemic with all its effects has caused us, like many people, to reflect, to become more grateful and perhaps also more humble, to redefine priorities. The idea of making a change and not continuing to run on the same treadmill had been brewing in us for a while, and COVID only served as a catalyst. We no longer wanted to save everything for later, we wanted to start making our dreams come true now. Preparations took about a year; months in which we laid out and structured ideas of our new phase of life. We planned and arranged our finances, organized exits from our jobs, cleared out the apartment, and prepared family and friends for our new adventure.

Our new home, 13 meters long and almost four meters wide, is seaworthy, has a small kitchen including a refrigerator and a small freezer, a master sleeping cabin and a guest cabin, a large saloon and two toilets/showers. The cockpit offers space for 6-8 guests and is a popular spot for sundowns. Our boat is a 2008 model from the French company Beneteau, a reliable cruising yacht that has proven itself in regattas all over the world. Eight years is a young age for a sailing vessel and after we bought her in Nanaimo under the name “Irish Mist”, we renamed her “Fortitude X”.

Casting off! In April 2021 we left the safe harbor – not just literally. We spent our first sailing season on the west coast of British Columbia and circumnavigated Vancouver Island, months filled with new impressions and experiences. The phrase “Every day is a school day” became our mantra. Sailing challenges were one thing, full-time living in a small space was another. Situations that we



Torsten Schulz on the sailboat Fortitude X

Photos: Stefanie Schulz



Broughton Archipelago Marine Provincial Park in British Columbia

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“Retirement” on the high sea

Continued from page 10

thought would be critical – like maintaining our own space – turned out to be unproblematic. My husband and I have been partners for 34 years and, like most working couples, we had spent larger parts of our days apart from each other during this time. The new situation required new adjustments and defined communication, and somehow we managed that well. We developed new interests and hobbies and fairly divided the tasks and responsibilities on board according to our abilities.

Last season we covered more than 6,500 kilometres on our way from Canada to Mexico. We have seen, experienced and learned a lot, exceeding our comfort zone more than once and at the same time expanding it. We met incredible people, shared stories instead of just turning on the TV, and realized how little you need, not how much, to be happy.

Life at sea isn't just a walk in the park, and yet we can't imagine any-

thing else at the moment. There is a constant need to repair, replace, check, install and check again. Half of our boat consists of material storage: tools and spare parts, pumps, sails, lifeboat, first aid kit, sewing machine, dinghy, diving equipment, stand-up paddleboard, kayak, fishing equipment. There isn't much room for redundancy on board.

You learn to repair things yourself; we call it boat yoga in exotic places.

Communication and current marine weather forecasts are no longer a problem thanks to Starlink. We are often asked whether life on board is boring, and I can say with complete confidence that my days have never been so exciting.

We are looking forward to the next few months in Mexico before we continue towards the Panama Canal and are truly enjoying our no-plan plan.

For more information, the rest of our trip, and our travel blog: www.fortitude-x.com

Stefanie Schulz



Stefanie and Torsten Schulz on their boat in front of the Golden Gate Bridge in San Francisco.

Photos: Stefanie Schulz

Dolphins frolic on the coast of Mexico



Merry Christmas & Happy Holidays!



Jasvir Deol, MLA
Edmonton-Meadows
Unit 204B, 3323 - 34 St NW
Edmonton.Meadows@assembly.ab.ca
780-466-3737



Christina Gray, MLA
Edmonton-Mill Woods
3448 - 93 St NW
Edmonton.Millwoods@assembly.ab.ca
780-414-1000



Rod Loyola, MLA
Edmonton-Ellerslie
5732 - 19A Ave
Edmonton.Ellerslie@assembly.ab.ca
780-414-2000

Mill Woods is built where pioneer farms once stood

Mill Woods is a very young community. All of the houses and business buildings were built within the last 50 years. Mill Woods is built on land that once was earmarked for the Papaschase Indian band. When the band was dispossessed of it, it was a blank slate for a wave of settlement and immigration.

Pioneer families of a variety of nationalities arrived and made homes for themselves – literally – on land that in many cases bore no obvious sign of previous human occupation. And not only homes, they built barns, schools, churches, whole farm communities, out of logs made from trees that they felled and hauled themselves. The hard-won farms were passed on to sons and daughters or sold to later arrivals.

Meanwhile, the City of Edmonton several miles to the north grew and spread. Around 1970 it annexed the land that is now Mill Woods. Land developers began knocking on the doors of the farmhouses. With the area being within the city boundaries, change would come. Roads would be built to carry commuters. Services – running water, sewage and more – would be provided. City planners formed up plans for a whole development – almost a city unto itself.

What we now know as Millwoods was built on the site of the old pioneer farms. The old farms and the families that lived there were removed just as the Papaschase Indians had been before, leaving almost no trace of what had been.

Today we'll take a brief look at the history of the Hillview neighbourhood in modern Mill Woods. It is a story of two pioneer families in succession who worked the land and raised families there. Like most of us, they did not succeed famously nor fail miserably but did all they could and despite ups and downs, loved their lives and each other.

August and Sarah Schatz came to the site of Hillview in 1894. They had been immigrants even as children – August, born in Wisconsin, had been moved to Minnesota; Sarah, born in

Illinois, had been moved to Minnesota.

In 1876 they married, and in 1894 they emigrated to the Edmonton area with their five children, all younger than ten. At a Papaschase Indian Reserve land auction August purchased about 300 acres of land (130

of hard knocks.

Her father was Catholic, and Marie attended the Catholic Church with him while her mother and the other siblings were Lutheran. In 1885, the Catholic bishop ordered the whole family to attend Catholic church or he would excommunicate Marie and her father. That is how Marie became confirmed in the Lutheran faith.

She trained on the piano and practiced two to four hours every day. But in 1892 the family fell on hard times due to a business failure. Marie emigrated to the U.S. and became a maid in a hotel in Nebraska. John and Marie met and married.

After their wedding, Marie became busy due

to the quick arrival of seven children. John continued in the construction business but dreamed of owning land, pretty much an impossibility in Nebraska. In 1908, he and a few others scouted out the Edmonton area, and John jumped at the chance to buy the two quarter-sections that Housely had up for sale, the old Schatz farm.

Returning to Nebraska, he sold his share in the business and the family packed up their things to travel by train to their new home. The family filled several boxcars with horses, horse-drawn vehicles, furniture and personal goods.

They got off the train at the Strathcona railway station, and the family hired big horse-drawn freight wagons to carry their things to their new home. At the end of the day, their things were sitting in piles in front of their farmhouse. It began to snow. In a mad rush, family members and anyone who was around carried the things into the house. Many small articles fell in the snow and were lost until found again when the snow melted in the spring.

The farmhouse was very different to the proper, hooked-up home they had had in Nebraska. It did not have running water, indoor toilet, gas lights or

furnace. Heating was by woodstove, light by lantern. Water was brought in by the bucket from the well in the yard, where also sat an outhouse.

But John and Marie eventually got accustomed to their new surroundings. They enjoyed many musical evenings in their home, with Marie on the piano that they had brought with them.

Edmonton enjoyed a boom in 1912, and the Frieds sold their farm for \$40,000, to be paid off in installments. The purchasers planned to resell the land as acreages. But then the economy crashed, and the project was abandoned. The Frieds resumed their life on the farm.

A railway line was built across part of the farm. This was a Canadian Northern Railway line that went south-east to Camrose, and then to Calgary. Likely no evidence survives to show that a railway line went through what is now Mill Woods but it did, crossing 34th Avenue at about 58th Street. The Fried family working in their fields waved to troop trains carrying soldiers to Calgary during WWI.

Like many others they were caught off guard by the Great Depression. Grain prices crashed in 1929, but John thought the price would bounce back and held on to his grain. But the price remained low and the grain had to be sold just to pay off the storage fees.

By the 1940s, the economy had bounced back from the Depression, and John and Marie sold the farm and retired. They died in 1962, just a couple months apart. They did not live to see part of Millwoods built on their old farm.

With today's modern cars, electricity, computers, telephones, it may be difficult to imagine the rough living conditions that the early farm families put up with. But the experiences of these early farmers may resonate with families in Mill Woods today.

Happy Holidays.

Tom Monto is an Edmonton historian and author of Old Strathcona – Edmonton's Southside Roots and Protest and Progress – Three Labour Radicals in Early Edmonton. He is also author of the blogsite Montopedia.

**Tom
Monto**

**A
Different
Perspective**



hectares) along what is today's 66th Street. He paid just \$4 an acre. Back in the States, land was costing more than \$100 an acre. (Nowadays an acre of land (14 houselots) with full services would cost something like \$2M!)

The land he bought is now the site of the Hillview neighbourhood and the north part of the Minchau neighbourhood. More than 4000 people now live on the land where only one family lived back in 1900.

The Schatz farm grew to have 60 cattle, 10 horses and a large number of pigs. The pigs helped feed the family and found a ready market in city butcher shops.

The family sold their farm in 1907 for \$11,000 and returned to the U.S. The purchaser, Thomas Housely, had plans to run a dairy farm there. But only a few years later he sold to John and Marie Fried.

John was born in 1865 in Sweden. At birth his last name was Frid but upon arrival in the U.S. in 1881, an immigration official changed the spelling of his name to Fried. Settling down in Nebraska, Fried helped establish a cement company. In 1892 John married Marie Hass, who had been born in Germany in 1871. Her story was one

May peace and love
warm your heart
this holiday season.



Jan Sawyer
Ward 1 Trustee
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Embracing Advent and Celebrating Achievements

Embracing the Spirit of Advent

The glowing light of the Advent candles serves as a powerful reminder of the hope that Christ's coming brings to the world. As the anticipation of the birth of Jesus Christ fills our hearts, let us embrace the spirit of hope, peace, joy, and love during this Advent season. This special time serves as an opportunity for reflection and preparation for the blessings that the Christmas season brings. This Advent season, Edmonton Catholic Schools (ECSD), students and staff are actively engaging in various liturgical celebrations, Christmas concerts, and school-based social justice projects. As we immerse ourselves in this season of giving, my sincere hope is that your Advent is not only filled with abundant opportunities but also with the spirit of sharing these gifts with those around you.

ECSD's Commitment to Student Success

ECSD demonstrated a commitment to student success with the hosting of a Career and Bridging Fair for families and students in Grade 9-12. Featuring over 40 organizations, this event aimed to support students in planning

their future careers and shaping their high school academic journeys. It reflects ECSD's dedication to providing comprehensive support for students transitioning from high school.

ful 2022-2023 school year, showcasing ECSD's commitment to educational excellence. Visit www.ecsd.net to learn more.

Laura Thibert

Edmonton Catholic Schools Trustee



2022-2023 Annual Education Results Report

The Annual Education Results Report (AERR) provides a comprehensive overview required by Alberta Education, highlighting progress and innovation in learning and support programs, diversity and inclusion initiatives, family and community engagement, and financial stewardship. The report emphasizes a success-

Excellence in Education: Alberta Education Assurance Measure Results

Celebrating noteworthy achievements, the Alberta Education Assurance Measure Results Report amalgamates feedback from the Alberta Education Assurance Survey, provincial testing, and student outcome data. Completed last winter by students, teachers, staff, and parents/guardians in Grades 4 to 12, this survey plays a crucial role in evaluating success and identifying areas for improvement at the school, division, and provincial levels. Remarkably, Edmonton Catholic Schools exceeded provincial results in 11 out of 12 Assurance Measures, showcasing a commitment to excellence across various indicators, including student learning engagement, citizenship, high school completion rates, and more. The Board expressed satisfaction with the results, emphasizing

the report's role in reinforcing strengths and guiding efforts to address areas for growth. The Division is delighted to report our 3-year High School Completion Rate of 85.9% and a 5-year rate of 93.2%, surpassing provincial averages. The Division is committed to every student crossing the graduation stage, recognizing and embracing each unique journey. The focus on supporting varied paths reflects a proud stance on the Division's dedication to student success.

Community Involvement: ECSD Annual Survey

The commitment to transparency and accountability continues with the call for community involvement in shaping the future of Catholic education through this year's ECSD Annual Survey. This year, with a new approach, surveys will be completed using paper for students in grades 100 Voices (Pre-Kindergarten) to 9, distributed through schools, while those in grades 10-12 and alternative education will receive surveys by mail. The survey seeks feedback on school and Division performance, emphasizing the importance of community input in identifying strengths and areas for growth. Thank you in advance for completing the survey and adding your voice to the future of Catholic education. To learn more visit ecsd.net/annualsurvey.

Wishing You a Blessed Christmas and Prosperous New Year

As the year comes to a close and only a handful of school days remain, students and staff eagerly anticipate the Christmas break. This is a time to relax, spend time with loved ones, and reflect on the special meaning of Christmas. Wishing everyone a blessed Christmas and a prosperous New Year, may the peace and happiness of the holiday season be with you, your families, and your friends, always.

Laura Thibert is the Edmonton Catholic Schools Trustee for Ward 77.



Important addresses for immigrants and other newcomers

If you are new to Edmonton and don't know anybody, it can be tough to find a place to stay, a job, the right school for your children or good health care services, but there is plenty of help available.

Here are some of the main agencies specializing in helping immigrants and other newcomers in the Edmonton area:

Edmonton Mennonite Centre for Newcomers

11713 - 82 Street
Edmonton, Alberta
T5B 2V9
Tel. (780) 424-7709
Website: www.emcn.ab.ca

The Edmonton Mennonite Centre for Newcomers offers a wide variety of programs for newcomers and helps immigrants to find a place to live, a job and English classes.

Welcome Centre for Immigrants in Mill Woods

Suite 200, Tower II, Millbourne Mall
7609 - 38 Avenue
Edmonton, Alberta
T6K 3L6
Tel. (780) 462-6924
Website: www.mwci-edmonton.net

The Welcome Centre for Immigrants in Mill Woods offers many programs and services for immigrants, including settlement assistance, language and educational counseling, employment assistance, citizenship classes, English classes, computer classes, public speaking classes, and youth programs.

Changing Together Centre for Immigrant Women

3rd Floor, 9538 - 107 Avenue
Edmonton, Alberta
T5H 0T7
Tel. (780) 421-0175
Website: www.changingtogether.com

Founded in 1984, Changing Together is a non-profit, charitable organization operated by immigrant women for immigrant women. Its mission is to help Edmonton and area immigrant women and their families overcome personal and systemic barriers that keep them from participating fully in Canadian Society.

Catholic Social Services

8212 - 118 Avenue NW
Edmonton, Alberta
T5B 0S3
Tel. (780) 424-3545
Website: www.catholicsocialservices.ab.ca

For more than 50 years, Catholic Social Services has welcomed immigrants and refugees to Alberta. The services are free and offered in both official languages and more than 50 other languages. In the Meadows, CSS runs a drop-in group for women of all ages and backgrounds. Participants connect through diverse activities like speaking English, sharing cultural experiences, learning to use computers and connecting with useful resources. The program, called Tea Connections, runs every Friday from 10 a.m. to noon, in the room of The Meadows Community League on the 2nd floor of the Meadows Community Recreation Centre, 2704 - 17 Street. For more information, contact Raminder Dhindsa at raminder.dhindsa@cssalberta.ca or 780-391-3204.

Family Futures Resource Network

5704 - 19 A Avenue
Edmonton, Alberta
T6L 1L8
Tel. 413-4521
Website: www.familyfutures.ca

The Family Futures Resource Network (FFRN) is a non-profit organization providing support to families and parents in the areas of early childhood education, child and youth, family and adult support and parent education. The FFRN has three separate

locations in Mill Woods: Millhurst Site (5704 - 19 A Avenue), Knottwood Site (1733 Mill Woods Road) and Millbourne Community Site (3756 - 78 Street).

Multicultural Health Brokers Co-operative

9538 - 107 Avenue
Edmonton, Alberta
T5H 0T7
Tel. (780) 423-1973
Website: www.mchb.org

The Multicultural Health Brokers Co-operative is a registered worker's co-operative with members from immigrant and refugee communities, providing culturally and linguistically relevant prenatal education, post-natal outreach, parenting support, family liaison and community development support to immigrant and refugee families.

Indo-Canadian Women's Association

9324 - 34 Avenue
Edmonton, Alberta
T6E 5X8
Tel. (780) 490-0477

The Indo-Canadian Women's Association is a not-for-profit organization for enthusiastic volunteers committed to full participation of immigrant and visible minority women and men in economic, social and political life in Canada.

The Shaama Centre for Seniors and Women

(formerly Multicultural Women & Seniors

Services Association)
329 Woodvale Road West
Edmonton, Alberta
T6L 3Z7
Tel. (780) 465-2992

The Shaama Centre for Seniors and Women (SCSW) is a non-profit, organization. The focus is to provide service and programs for immigrant women and senior men and women. Program goal is to promote and enhance the well-being and self-reliance of seniors and women especially those at risk and isolated before a crisis situation occurs. SCSW provides social support, information sessions, and skill building classes, home and hospital visits, as well as translation, and referrals to other service providers. It also offers family support and crisis intervention. For youth, there are Urdu and math classes and homework help, and there is also an Urdu library with more than 2000 books. The SCSW is open from 9 am to 4:30 pm Monday to Friday.

Youth Empowerment and Support Services

9310 - Whyte Avenue (82 Ave.)
Edmonton, Alberta, T6C 0Z6
Tel. (780) 468-7070
Website: www.yess.org

The Youth Emergency Shelter Society is a not-for-profit organization serving young people between the ages of 15-18 who are in crisis, at risk or homeless.

Alberta Employment Standards

Edmonton Office - Main Floor Sterling Place
9940 - 106 Street
Edmonton, Alberta, T5K 2N2
Tel. (780) 427-3731
Website: www.employment.alberta.ca

Alberta Employment Standards is a provincial agency responsible for the administration and enforcement of employment standards in Alberta. AES has publications available for temporary for-

eign workers and their employers to help them understand their rights and responsibilities under Alberta's employment standards and workplace health and safety legislation. These publications are available in Chinese, English, French, German and Spanish.

NorQuest College

10215 - 108 Street NW
Edmonton, Alberta
T5J 1L6
Tel. (780) 422-2020
Website: www.norquest.ab.ca

NorQuest College is a public college offering many programs, including English as a Second Language classes and employment programs for immigrants.

Alberta Health and Wellness

Edmonton Office
Telus Tower North, Main Floor
10025 Jasper Avenue
Edmonton, Alberta
Tel. (780) 427-1432
Website: www.health.alberta.ca

Alberta Health and Wellness answers any questions about health care and health care insurance coverage in Alberta.

Immigrant Access Fund Canada

45, 9912 - 106 Street
Edmonton, Alberta
T5J 4M9
Tel. (Toll Free) 1-855-423-2262
Website: www.iafcanada.org

The Immigrant Access Fund provides micro loans to internationally trained immigrant professionals, trades people and skilled workers so they may obtain the Canadian licensing and/or training that will allow them to obtain employment in their field.

Other important phone numbers:

Edmonton Police Service

Emergency calls only 9-1-1
Police - Fire - Ambulance
Life & death, injury accident, crime in progress

Non-emergency calls
(Dispatch) 780-423-4567
Report of suspicious activity, calls for assistance, advice, etc.

Poison Centre 1-800-332-1414

Hazardous Material Spills 9-1-1

Utility Trouble Calls Only:

Power Emergency 780-412-4500
Within Edmonton

Gas Emergency 780-420-5585
Edmonton & Area

Drainage Trouble 780-496-1717

Sewer Trouble 780-496-1717

Wastewater (odour hotline) 780-469-8176

Water Emergency Service 780-412-6800

The next issue of the Mill Woods Mosaic will be published on January 15, 2024. The deadline for advertising and editorial is Friday, January 12, 2024

CHRISTMAS MASSES 2023**St. Theresa's Parish**

7508 - 29 Avenue, Edmonton

DECEMBER 24**CHRISTMAS EVE MASS:**

- 5:00 pm
- 7:00 pm
- 9:00 pm
- Midnight (Incense)

DECEMBER 25**CHRISTMAS DAY MASS:**

- 10:30 am
- 12:30 pm (Incense)

**NEW YEAR'S MASSES 2023/2024**

*Solemnity - MARY, HOLY MOTHER OF GOD
Holy Day of Obligation - January 1, 2024*

DECEMBER 31**NEW YEAR'S EVE MASS:**

- 6:00 pm followed by
Exposition & Adoration of
the Blessed Sacrament all
night with Benediction at
7:30 am

JANUARY 1, 2024**NEW YEAR'S DAY MASS:**

- 8:30 am
- 10:30 am
- 12:30 pm

Letters to the editor welcome

We invite you to write letters to the editor. A maximum of 275 words is preferred. Letters must carry a first name or two initials with surname, and include an address and daytime telephone number. All letters are subject to editing. We don't publish letters addressed to others or sent to other publications. Please e-mail your letter to: The Editor of the Mill Woods Mosaic, mwmosaic@telus.net.

What's up?**Community events in Mill Woods**

Nov. 25 - Dec. 24 - Get your photograph taken with

Santa Claus
Mill Woods Town Centre
2331 - 66 Street NW, Mill Woods
More info: www.millwoodstowncentre.com

Dec. 15 - A Country Christmas Dinner with local musician Colleen Rae
Mill Woods Seniors Association
2nd Floor, 2610 Hewes Way NW, Mill Woods
5:00 p.m.
More information: www.mwsac.ca

Dec. 16 & 17 - Candy Cane Christmas Market
Mill Woods Town Centre
2331 - 66 Street NW, Mill Woods
Saturday, Dec. 16, 10:00 a.m. - 5:30 p.m.
Sunday, Dec. 17, 10:00 a.m. - 5:00 p.m.
More info: www.millwoodstowncentre.com

Dec. 17 - An Afternoon of Christmas Music
with the Edmonton Swiss Men's Choir
St. Vital Catholic Church
4905 - 50 Street, Beaumont
3:00 p.m.
Admission is free. However, donations to the Beaumont/Nisku Christmas Elves are accepted as either unwrapped toys, food donations or cash donations.
More information about the Edmonton Swiss Men's Choir: www.esmca.ca

Dec. 25 - Free Christmas Dinner
Sponsored by Thrive Outreach
Leefield Community Centre
7910 - 36 Avenue NW, Mill Woods
3:00 - 6:00 p.m.
More information: www.leelefield.ca

Do you have a community event in Mill Woods to announce? Please send us the information, and we will include it in this community calendar in the next issue of the Mill Woods Mosaic.
Tel. (780) 465-7526 or e-mail to: mwmosaic@telus.net
The next deadline is Friday, January 12, 2024.

Life is a story. Tell it well.



How do you want to be remembered?



South Side Memorial Chapel
by Arbor Memorial

8310 - 104 Street, Edmonton, AB • 780-432-1601 • www.southsidememorial.com

**Do you have
any story ideas
for the *Mill
Woods Mosaic*?
Give us a call at
780-465-7526
or e-mail to
mwmosaic@telus.net**

***Mill Woods
Mosaic***

Canada needs a new commitment to housing

When a major holiday approaches, anywhere in the world, one of the most common conversations when people meet is, "Are you going home for the holiday?"

At the time of the Civil War in the USA there was a popular song, "Home Sweet Home." When it was played it affected soldiers so strongly that some would desert to go home, so playing the song for soldiers was banned.

During the Advent and Christmas season, Christians celebrate the birth of a baby born in an animal shed, a person who, as an adult, had no place of his own for the final three years of his life, yet on the evening before he was killed he took time to comfort his close friends who would be left behind by telling them he was going to prepare a home for them.

Recently I was looking at two plaques I sometimes use when giving a talk about housing security. On one is the word "Home" and on the other, the word "Hope." When I use them I remind listeners that in the alphabet the letters between the M of home and the P of hope are N-O – without Home it is hard to sustain Hope.

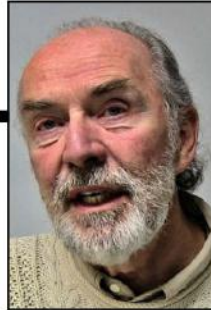
Over the past few weeks both Bissell Centre and Boyle Street Community Services, organizations that work with people struggling with deep poverty in the urban core of Edmonton, held memorial services for community members who have died this year. Nearly 400 people were mourned at these two services. Many of those who have died were killed by homelessness.

Having an adequate place to create a home is probably the major determi-

nant of good health and quality of life. Personal care, nutrition, rest, safety, relationships, recreation, and spiritual practices are all much more do-able when you have a little affordable, secure, healthy place of your own. And that means all sorts of other things

**Jim
Gurnett**

**Guest
Column**



become possible, including education, employment, and family stability.

There is no doubt that investment to ensure adequate housing for all will cost far less in both dollars and human well-being than failing to do so. Canada had a good record of ensuring such public investment for decades from the late 1940s until the late 1980s and it was a time of growth and prosperity. For all practical purposes, homelessness did not exist.

But after more than 30 years of governments abandoning this view of public housing as a social good, in Edmonton alone 50,000 households experience core housing need – they are living in places that are too expensive for their available finances, or are

unsafe, or lack security of tenure, or are inadequate for their needs. Civida, the largest provider of non-market housing, where tenants pay 30 percent of income rather than market rents, has 5,400 units and 3,700 more people with demonstrated need are in line for a place.

The long failure by governments to address the need for housing means that eventually some people end up entirely homeless. Most days in Edmonton that involves well over 3,000 people even in winter cold. In the early autumn the provincial government promised to have over 1,700 emergency shelter spaces available for these very challenged people by the beginning of November. On Dec. 13, there are 1,126 spaces. For more than 3,000 people. We are not even making sure there is a minimal secure place to sleep out of the weather for hundreds of people each day.

People are not homeless because of personal failure. People are homeless because as a society we have moved away from the commitment we had to use public resources to ensure that the most challenged people in our communities were provided with the services and supports to live with some dignity. We have let our governments deliver nice rhetoric, with headlines about all they are doing, without examining the evidence and seeing that, in relation to housing, the emperor has no clothes. They have failed year after year to

deliver.

I write at my desk in a warm home, a good light making it easy to work. When I want a break I walk to the kitchen and plug in a kettle and make a cup of tea, open the refrigerator and find a snack, walk into another room and choose some music to play. I brush my teeth and rinse with fresh running water and take my heart medication from the shelf where it waits for me. At bedtime, I have a comfortable bed with a cozy duvet and sleep, knowing my door is locked and I will be undisturbed until morning.

But I enjoy all that with the awareness always pressing on me that a few minutes drive away, sisters and brothers are in temporary shelters of cardboard, scrap lumber, and tarps, along noisy sidewalks, maybe trying to keep warm with a candle that might set the shelter on fire as they sleep, the nearest communal toilet two block walk away. This is not the Edmonton that should let any of us feel comfortable. Our voices can let elected leaders know we want a city where the human right to adequate housing, a city where each of us can create the home we want, is our expectation. For all, not only those who can afford the market rates. We have done it before – I grew up in such a Canada – so it is time to do it again.

Jim Gurnett has been an activist on housing security issues in Edmonton for many years and is a spokesperson for the Edmonton Coalition on Housing and Homelessness. He works with Inner City Pastoral Ministry in the downtown.



In Edmonton hundreds of people are living daily in dangerous and unhealthy temporary structures in parkland and along streets because of a severe lack of shelter facilities and non-market affordable housing.

Photos: Jim Gurnett

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